

The privatisation of public space

Anna Minton



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Executive summary

This report looks at the growing private ownership and management of the public realm and argues that a quiet revolution in landownership, replicating Victorian patterns, is just beginning. It is the sequel to 'Building Balanced Communities', a report published by RICS three years ago,¹ which compared American trends towards the spread of gated communities and ghettos with the growing British phenomenon of 'hot spots' of affluence and 'cold spots' of exclusion.

Over the last three years this pattern has accelerated dramatically, with astronomically high property prices in the hot areas, all too often just a mile or so away from cold areas of exclusion. Accompanying this new patchwork is the growing privatisation of the public realm which is gradually changing the nature of our towns and cities.

The backdrop to this changing urban landscape is post-industrial change, as the UK economy completes the painful shift from an industrial-based economy to a knowledge-based 'new' economy, driven by the high earning globalised financial services industries. The consequence is rising affluence for the majority and a drop in living standards for the minority increasingly termed 'excluded' – a term which covers some of the 2.7 million on sickness benefit, the rising numbers of homeless and the unquantifiable numbers who have simply dropped out of the system, functioning instead in a growing black economy.

Post-industrial change is also offering unprecedented opportunities for new development, with the consequences only now starting to become visible as huge new regeneration schemes in former industrial areas start to come on stream, from Stratford City, King's Cross and Paddington Basin in London, to the centres of Liverpool, Hove and Sheffield.

Just as development in the 1950s and '60s followed clearly defined trends – driven then by centralised planning and the system building of tower blocks – this latest wave of urban change is also characterised by certain key trends, relating this time to the private ownership and management of the public realm, which has now become part of the process identified by the government as the 'urban renaissance', as the former industrial areas of the city are redeveloped and revitalised.

This process has created a tremendous opportunity for cities, transforming warehouses, docks and riverfronts up and down the country into thriving centres of the new economy. But the problem now, as really large regeneration schemes get underway, accompanied by new policies aimed at 'reclaiming' the public realm, is that the very nature of public space is changing.

In Liverpool, an enormous new regeneration scheme is prompting fears that the city centre is to be entirely privatised and sanitised, policed by its own security force and ruled by its own laws. The plans, approved by the city council, will see developer Grosvenor Estates redevelop 35 streets in the heart of the city, replacing traditional rights of way with 'public realm arrangements', policed by US-style 'quartermasters' or 'sheriffs'.

In an echo of mega-mall Bluewater's recent banning of 'hoodies', begging, skateboarding and rollerblading will be banned, alcohol and food consumption allowed only in certain designated areas and any form of demonstration will require police permission.

But while the development in Liverpool has received considerable adverse publicity it is far from unique. In fact, it is an example of what is increasingly known as 'private-public' space. Termed by some commentators as 'malls without walls', these new developments are privately owned and policed by private security in the same way as covered shopping malls, and like shopping malls they are also criticised for producing bland and sterile environments which all look eerily similar no matter where they might be.

Accompanying these new developments, new policies towards town centres, which aim to 'reclaim the public realm', are also being imported from the US – policies which overlap significantly with the current emphasis on the anti-social behaviour agenda.

Chief among these is the introduction of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), which recently received parliamentary approval, paving the way for private control of town and city centres through the payment of a levy by local businesses. So far 20 BIDs are up and running in towns and cities around the UK, with more in the pipeline.

But in the US BID areas have proved as controversial as gated communities, and for similar reasons, relating to the erosion of local democracy, as decisions over the future of the public realm now lie in the hands of business leaders rather than democratically elected representatives. In the US they are widely recognised as reflecting the rise of private sector government but in the UK policymakers promise they will only provide 'additionality' – in other words only additional services to those provided by the local authority. Whether or not this is the case or whether they signal the erosion of local government control over the public realm remains to be seen.

The displacement of social problems into neighbouring districts is another criticism of the policy. Inevitably while strict rules of behaviour may clean up the BID area, the consequence is that social problems are displaced elsewhere.

This report argues that the privatisation of the public realm, through the growth of 'private-public' space, produces over-controlled, sterile places which lack connection to the reality and diversity of the local environment, with the result that they all tend to look the same. They also raise serious questions about democracy and accountability. But perhaps most worrying of all are the effects on cohesion, battered by the creation of atomised enclaves of private space which displace social problems into neighbouring districts. This process enhances the 'hot spot'/'cold spot' pattern which is already an entrenched part of the urban landscape.

It is this loss of cohesion that explains the irony that the police call 'the success gap'. This term refers to the soaring fear of crime which is entirely out of kilter with the reality of crime statistics which show that while crime has been falling steadily since 1995, 70% of the population believe it is rising. The key to this is research which shows that fear of crime correlates with levels of trust in society rather than actual crime figures. Inevitably the creation of atomised and polarised communities, which harbour mutual suspicions of each other, are particularly damaging to levels of trust and safety, no matter how much private security is employed to keep these fears at bay.

In an interesting parallel with recent research on 'happiness' by economist Richard Layard, levels of trust between people are also shown to be a key 'happiness indicator'. Consequently Layard finds that in Scandinavia, contrary to the myth of a high suicide rate, levels of trust, happiness and indeed mental health are far higher than in the UK.

The growth in private security, which is accompanying both BID areas and the recent Police Reform Act – which provides for the 'exercise of police powers by persons who are not police officers' – is also raising concerns about the 'marketisation' of the police among senior policemen. Metropolitan Police Commissioner Sir Ian Blair has spoken out on the need 'to defend the blue force' and has drawn worrying comparisons with the US – where spending on private security outstrips money spent on the publicly-funded police by an astonishing 73%. He has described Miami, where 19% of streets are not covered by the police, relying on private security instead, as 'the final nightmare for society'. Miami is also the murder capital of the US revealing that private security does not equate with safety.

Underpinning the changing urban picture are significant changes in landownership which are seeing the rise of individual landlords owning and managing entire city centre schemes, in place of the dense network of local shops and businesses which provide automatic diversity and enhance local culture and local identity. Consequently, in terms of ownership and control, it seems that we are increasingly replicating the patterns of the 18th and 19th century landlords, at a time when parallels with the inequalities of the Victorian period are also increasingly being drawn.

But while some of the more enlightened landlords were responsible for outstanding examples of city planning, from the Georgian squares and terraces of Bloomsbury to the Duke of Westminster's domain in Mayfair, the concern is that today's developers are more concerned with the principles of the shopping mall than with creating places able to stand the test of time.

This is because they are too narrowly focused simply on creating places which generate maximum returns in terms of shopping and spending. But while economic viability is important, successful places must be about more than a balance sheet, or they will fail to connect with local communities. City centres which are designed purely with shopping and leisure in mind produce strangely 'placeless' places, cut off from their original wellsprings of local life and vitality, characterised instead by a fake, theme-park atmosphere which is a result of disconnection from the local environment.

This is a period of great opportunity for change – the most significant chance to transform the landscape since the post-war building boom of the 1950s and '60s.

In order to take full advantage of this, a new, genuinely inclusive, approach to public space and community is needed. The aim of this report is to voice concerns over the rise of private space, with the specific intention of provoking debate before it is too late.

But as well as hoping to raise a debate it also puts forward alternative approaches to creating places, which are able to work with the reality and diversity of social and economic change rather than trying to sweep it under the carpet.

Inevitably this does have ramifications for a purely market-focused approach as property-led regeneration aims for higher property prices which displace local people, breaking up local cultures and communities. Instead all the evidence of successful regeneration – exemplified by the Coin Street development which kick-started the transformation of the South Bank – points to the need to also work with the original diversity, local identity and culture of places.

This translates into a call for a new approach to urban change based on innovative and unexpected disciplines such as environmental psychology, which builds on concepts such as 'place attachment' and 'place identity'. In pragmatic policy terms 'place attachment' can only take root if a place remains in changing areas for local people, local shops, culture and identity. This means that policies which ring-fence affordable space for community needs must be taken seriously if cohesive, genuinely sustainable communities are to have any chance of success.

This was the type of approach which underpinned Ebenezer Howard's inspirational garden city movement. It also underpins the concept of Community Land Trusts and current discussions of affordable planning policies.

Unfortunately the suspicion is that moving these ideas into the mainstream would be politically unacceptable in a climate where generating maximum returns from places is the overriding goal. However, the aim of this report is not only to point to the disturbing consequences of privatising the public realm, but to show that there are alternatives if policymakers are brave enough to consider them.

If this seems a depressing state of affairs it is important to note that the rise of 'private-public' space has only just begun. It is therefore a particularly appropriate time to start a reasoned debate on the future of the public realm in the hope that today's architects of urban change do not blight the landscape as their modernist predecessors did before them.

The theory: What is the post-modern city?

The post-modern city is a term beloved by academics but obscure to the wider world. Nonetheless, it is relevant to this discussion as it provides a definition for the complex social, political, economic and technological transformation that has accompanied the decline of industry and the rise of the new economy. Just as modernism saw the city as the canvas upon which industrial change was writ large, so the post-modern city provides the context for the social, economic and cultural changes brought about by the globalised new economy. At the forefront of these changes is the growing privatisation of the public realm.

The economic context

The post-modern city is also termed the post-Fordist city, so called after the decline of the mass assembly lines of the car manufacturer. If Fordism – the age of the mass assembly line – symbolised the collective consensus, post-Fordism is the era of the knowledge-based new economy.

As a stereotype, this city is characterised by growing polarisation and inequality between social groups, with soaring wealth for those working in the high earning finance and IT sectors, in contrast with the millions on sickness benefit and the growing numbers of homeless. Consequently commentators are increasingly drawing parallels with the divisions of the Victorian period.²

In 1845, in 'The condition of the working class in England', Engels wrote how 'close to the splendid houses of the rich... a lurking place of the bitterest poverty may often be found'. During the same year Disraeli wrote of 'two nations' with 'no intercourse and no sympathy between rich and poor, they enjoyed different breeding, different food, different manners and different laws'.

Today, inequalities in the city are reflected by a patchwork of segregation. In cities, from Rio to Miami, where disparities between rich and poor are particularly extreme, this is embodied by a pattern of gated communities, side by side with ghettos of exclusion. But in the UK, although the number of gated communities is rising, polarisation is most clearly visible in the pattern of 'hot spots' and 'cold spots', which are increasingly coming to characterise every town and city.

Polarisation – like inequality – is not an easy concept to grasp, particularly as it is linked to the rising affluence of western market economies, where the majority have benefited financially from the massive expansion in the global financial services and knowledge industries.

In particular, the new economy has provided unprecedented windfalls for those knowledge workers in the financial services industries, such as banking, accountancy and law. The creative industries in the ever-expanding media, technology and IT sectors also offer significant returns. When Margaret Thatcher came to power in 1979, just under 6% of national income went to the top 1% of the population. A decade later the figure stood at 9% and today it is at least 13%, which effectively means that a tiny group receives nearly an eighth of the country's collective wealth.³

On the other hand public sector workers, such as nurses and teachers, have been left far behind on the earnings ladder, leading to the much-vaunted 'key workers crisis', where it is acknowledged that it is simply impossible for these professionals to get onto the property ladder as house price inflation continues to rise. Another swathe of low-income workers with next to no chance of purchasing property are those working in an expanded service sector, employed in call centres, catering or retail.

But those who are providing the most cause for concern are the group termed 'socially excluded' who do not appear to be feeling any benefits at all from the new economy. Quite how big this group is remains unclear but a telling statistic is that while the financial gains of the new economy have seen huge rises in wealth for the UK economy as a whole, for the poorest 10% of the population real incomes have declined during the last 20 years. Falling unemployment figures do little to clarify the situation as they do not include the 2.7 million people on sickness benefit, neither do they include the growing numbers who appear to have simply dropped out of the economy, functioning instead in a growing black economy.

But what is clear is that a generation ago 'social exclusion' and associated problems such as homelessness and begging simply did not exist on anything like today's scale.

Broadly speaking the explanation offered is that the new economy has benefited highly educated skilled labour at the top end of the spectrum, while the flexible economy has also provided opportunities in semi-skilled service industries, particularly suitable for women and part-time workers. But those who have suffered are the blue collar, low-skilled workers, bereft of the traditional 'muscular employment' of the production lines and assembly plants of heavy industry. An examination of sickness benefit across the country, which reveals particular concentrations in former industrial areas, makes this clear.

Compounding this is the targeted assistance provided to low-income groups since 1997, which has favoured children and pensioners, while outcomes for working age adults, and men in particular, continue to worsen.

The result of this polarisation is a pattern of segregation increasingly reflected in the urban landscape. In the US this is demarcated particularly sharply by gated communities, which now account for 80% of all new development, alongside an increasingly privatised public realm.

In Britain the picture is quite different but a number of these trends are becoming entrenched as polarisation grows. While there are around 1 000 gated communities, the majority built since 1995, a far more marked development has been the emergence of 'two-speed economies' of 'hot' and 'cold' areas, which co-exist in cities from London to Newcastle, York to Edinburgh and Leeds to Cardiff.

In the hot areas property prices are out of reach for all but the most affluent, continuously boosted upwards by the financial muscle of high-earning knowledge workers competing with each other for properties in sought after areas. With an uncertain stock market the fact that property is increasingly seen as the investment vehicle of choice also helps to push prices up further among those with money to spend. The presence of well-regarded schools in an area also has an inordinate effect on prices with families prepared to pay way above the market average simply to be near good schools.

The consequence of this has been to create unbalanced communities of mono-cultural areas, as the housing affordability crisis in the hot areas means they are out of reach to all but the well off. While policies to provide low cost homes for key workers are in place they have so far made little impact.

The cold areas, on the other hand, often little more than a mile or two away, become breeding grounds for social exclusion, dominated by drug dealing and the black economy.

At the same time, in parallel with this pattern of 'hot spots' and 'cold spots', is the growing privatisation of the public realm, which is both a symptom and a cause of polarisation.

A widely-held view is that this changing patchwork is an economic inevitability and a small price to pay for rising living standards for the majority. However, while the country as a whole may be richer, lack of social cohesion has instead become the central concern for policymakers. This loss of cohesion, fuelled by a decline in levels of trust between social groups, is driven by polarisation. This is what lies behind the growing climate of fear in society, often termed as fear of 'the other', which is also a key characteristic of the post-modern city and which will be discussed in the next section.

The cultural context

Just as the city was deemed by artists to be the location for modernism, so too it is for post-modernism. But where modernism was rooted in a particular place – Paris and later New York – post-modernism, taking its cue from technological change, is more of a rootless, placeless, phenomenon.

Turn of the century Paris was the ultimate modernist city, with the fractures of industrialisation counterbalanced by the excitement of the urban. In this environment the flotsam and jetsam of society came to prominence, symbolised by the prostitute in the paintings of Toulouse Lautrec. Alongside the importance of the demi-monde, the 'flâneur' – the man who goes out and seeks chance encounters in this twilight world – was also glorified.

In the ultimate post-modern city, by contrast, chance encounters are minimised in an environment stereotyped as one of segregation and fear, surveillance and control. Simultaneously, changing technologies and the pressures of consumerism – selling 'experiences' as products – ensure the triumph of image and unreality over 'authenticity' in places.

During the late 20th century Los Angeles was hailed by writers such as Mike Davis as the emblematic post-modern city, a fearful place where the rich lived in gated enclaves and the poor languished in ghettos of exclusion.⁴ In the US 15% of the population live in gated communities while a similar proportion are trapped in ghettos. For the American academic Edward Soja, as well as providing a stark reflection of division 'LA has come to resemble more than ever a gigantic agglomeration of theme parks, a life space composed of Disneyworlds'.⁵



More recently Las Vegas has taken on the mantle of the post-modern city where nothing is real and images dominate, transforming public space and saturating it with media content. The aim, with the help of new technologies enabling such phenomena as streaming news and video walls, is to create havens of entertainment and to encourage people to enjoy themselves by spending their money, in a city driven by entertainment complexes and shopping malls. In contrast to the chance encounters of the flâneur with fractured urban reality, this city offers encounters with the images of virtual reality. As for the real flotsam and jetsam of urban life they are nowhere to be seen.

Now, it seems that the latest city to take on this role is Dubai, where oil wealth, a tax friendly regime and unrestricted freehold ownership for foreigners, is fuelling a gigantic construction boom. This is witnessing the building of the world's largest mall, the world's tallest building, an artificial archipelago and a theme park housing a domed ski resort permanently maintained in 40 degree heat. As for the army of contract labourers they are 'invisible', housed in work camps on the city's outskirts.⁶

But while Los Angeles, Las Vegas and Dubai may display many 'post-modern' characteristics, one of the central tenets of the post-modern city is that it could be anywhere, with each space and place driven by the same new technology and the same economic needs in the same real time.

So, for many commentators, the consequence of the global economy's reliance on information technology is an increased disconnection with place, which has led to French sociologist Marc Augé's 'non places' being seized upon as typical of post-modern places. These 'non places', which look exactly the same no matter where in the world they might be, include airports, malls, conference centres and motorway service areas, which have little or no connection at all to their local environment.

At the same time, passing through these 'non-places' individuals are becoming ever-more plugged into their own choice of environment rather than that around them, listening to their iPod, talking on a mobile or emailing the other side of the world by Blackberry.

'Non places' are arguably at the extreme end of the spectrum in terms of disconnection with their surroundings. However, the growing 'sameness' and lack of local identity of everyday environments, such as high streets and city centres, is becoming a widespread cause for concern with recent reports such as 'Clone Town Britain'⁷ and 'Northern soul'⁸ tapping into a growing discontent at the prevalence of identikit high streets up and down the country, dominated by the same chain store retailers, bars and restaurants.

In the US many American commentators have written of the 'theme park' atmosphere and air of unreality, kitsch imitation and sameness which characterises more and more spaces dedicated entirely to entertainment and shopping. While IT may be the driver for the growing presence of virtual reality images in public spaces, unreality is also enhanced by 'faux heritage' spaces, such as historic quarters, which while intended to attract visitors to an area, provide the sterile, theme park feel under attack. This is symptomatic of another theme central to post-modernism, that it is inauthentic, substituting parodies of the past in place of a sense of true local history and memories of tradition. New York's Battery Park City has come in for just such criticism while particularly extreme examples of this type of parodying are increasingly found in theme parks all over the world, such as China's Shenzhen theme park, a town of miniature models of landmarks such as Sydney Harbour and the Eiffel Tower.

'The other'

An aspect critical to this segregated city is an increased level of control over the environment to counterbalance the threat of 'the other' – the poor, the excluded and the badly behaved, who are never far away.

This concept of 'the other' is a key theme in academic debates on public space, brought to prominence by French philosopher Michel Foucault and now relevant to contemporary discussions on the city, with the rhetoric of anti-social behaviour increasingly defining what is required from our cities and public spaces and who is and is not allowed to use them.

The political context

In political terms the changing nature of the city is being accompanied by a radical rethink regarding the welfare state and the role of government in the provision of public services.

The concept of public services only entered the political lexicon during the early half of the nineteenth century, coinciding with the gradual widening of the vote and the formation of the Metropolitan Police in the 1830s. Prior to the late Victorian age of municipalism, services such as water, sewers and street cleaning were provided privately, at the discretion of private landlords. But it was not until strong local government became an entrenched part of the political system that the lauded civic achievements of the Victorians really started to take off.

Later, the post-war heyday of the public sector saw a welfare state consensus that ensured that an ethos of universal provision became embedded in the political culture. This coincided with, and was underpinned by, a post-war boom in the west, which lasted between the 1950s and the 1970s.

Now, however, these long-held assumptions are changing dramatically, driven by the sharp changes in political direction which followed the financial crisis of the late 1970s.

Today, the need to lever in funds from the private sector is behind what is often described as the 'marketisation' of the public sector, facing growing financial pressure from a number of different directions.

On the one hand the pressures exerted by the post-industrial economy include steadily rising benefit bills to help support those on the margins of society who remain outside the labour market. The cost of housing benefit, sickness benefit and unemployment benefit was £137 billion in 2004 and has risen from £91 billion in 1997 and £6.1 billion in 1979.⁹



At the same time the growing affluence, access to information and individualism of the majority has led to a demand for improved services, particularly in health, which is suffering both the demographic pressures of an aging society and advances in medicine which enable new and very costly methods of treatment.

This individualism, in contrast to the collective consensus of the welfare state, has led to a perceived reluctance to pay higher taxes. Today the income tax burden is 11.1% of GDP compared to 20.1% in 1979.¹⁰

Consequently throughout the public sector, private finance is playing a larger role, through for example the Private Finance Initiative. The political slogan of the day in this regard is 'what works' so long as it gets the public services up and running and as a result many local authorities – at the behest of central government – are contracting out a growing number of services, from rubbish collection to street cleaning, which can be provided more cheaply by the private sector.

The result of what has been described as this 'quasi market', in former local authority fiefdoms ranging from housing to social services, is that councils are increasingly taking on an 'enabling role',¹¹ guiding the provision of services through the private sector rather than undertaking it themselves.

This model, of an enabling council guiding the private sector, is clearly highly relevant to the provision of 'private-public' space and the environments it creates. It is also equally relevant to the growth of private security with some in the police fearing that a similar 'marketisation'¹² of the police force is inevitable, with the traditional role of the public police undermined by privatised 'policing on the cheap', a trend which will be described in later chapters.

The shrinking local government model of 'enabler' rather than 'provider' of services is also at the heart of the question of whether new approaches to managing the public realm, such as Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), will provide additional services to those provided by councils or whether they signal the further erosion of local government.

What is public space?

Public space is very difficult to define, not least because very few spaces and places are, or ever have been, truly public.

As a concept, public space can be traced back at the very least to the ancient Greek agora, while throughout history, forums, parks, commons, market places, squares and streets have been seen as the embodiment of public space.

In Ancient Greece the agora or marketplace was the place where citizens came to meet, talk, trade and vote, intertwining the concepts of democracy and citizenship with public space. But as citizenship rights in ancient Greek democracy were only awarded to free, non-foreign men and denied to slaves, women and foreigners¹³ more than half the population were not part of this 'public', excluded from the arena for debate. Lack of inclusion, then, as much as citizenship, has characterised the nature of 'public' space from the outset.

Access is therefore clearly a key component of public space, as is the question of who controls the space,¹⁴ determining who is or is not allowed to use it. Of course, ownership too, while not always the determining factor behind how a space is used and controlled, tends to play a central role.

Today nearly all space is owned by somebody – be it government, private organisations, private individuals or financial institutions such as pension funds or international finance consortiums. For example, most beaches and foreshores in the UK are owned by the Crown, while parks, apart from the Royal Parks, tend to be owned by local authorities. The idea of 'free space' or 'open plan' space is occasionally discussed, particularly as a utopian idea, but is rare in practice.

As a generalisation government owned space is often thought of as 'public', particularly public buildings, squares and parks. Such spaces have also long been associated both with revolutionary political struggle and with exhibitions of state power, Tiananmen Square being a case in point, while in Paris the parks, squares and streets were the focus of protest in 1789, 1871 and 1968.

On the other hand, 'the commons' – land which people had common rights to – which characterised much of the UK landscape before the enclosures of the 18th and 19th century – is also associated with public space, particularly in a rural context.

The French sociologist Henri Lefebvre, who began writing about the 'production of space' 30 years ago, argued that every society in history shapes a distinctive social space to meet its social and economic requirements. Just as the agora, peopled only by its free, male citizens, reflected the social and political culture of its time, so public space continues to be viewed by sociologists and anthropologists as a social and political barometer.¹⁵

Who owns Britain?

In the UK over the last few hundred years the ebb and flow of private and public space has mirrored the fortunes of local government, local representation and local democracy.

However, it is surprisingly difficult to pin these shifts down with any precision as landownership arrangements remain opaque to say the least. The Land Registry does have a land database but it only covers 50% of all land and does not aggregate landowners' interests. 'We are often asked who owns Britain and people are often astonished and disappointed when we say we don't know,' a solicitor for the Land Registry revealed. For example, the Duke of Devonshire, one of Britain's largest landowners, is not registered while lands owned by the Queen, Ministry of Defence and Forestry Commission are not registered in 'any significant measure'.

But the broad trends which occurred during the 18th and 19th century, and before the advent of local government, are relatively clear. During this time the enclosures, which parcelled up so much of the countryside for country landowners, were formalised by hundreds of acts of parliament, leaving according to today's estimates only 4% of land in England and Wales registered as 'commons'.¹⁶

Meanwhile, large sections of urban centres such as London, were owned by a small group of wealthy landlords who controlled vast swathes of the capital. For example, the Duke of Westminster owned the whole of northern Mayfair, Belgravia and Pimlico, the Duke of Bedford owned Covent Garden while the Earl of Southampton owned the Bloomsbury Estate.

Reflecting both the social divisions of the time and the management practices of the private landlords, the capital in this period was characterised by numerous gated squares and private streets, where public access was restricted or blocked by hundreds of gates, bars and posts.

As the Victorian period progressed, however, a major shift in opinion generated widespread controversy and public debate on the question of gating and the restriction of public access to such large parts of the city. Consequently by 1865, 163 miles of road were turned over to local authority control and 140 tollbars removed, while the London Building Act of 1894 prevented the unauthorised erection of 'any post, rail, fence, bar, obstruction or encroachment whatsoever'.¹⁷

As the public sector grew so did central and local government control of land and property, from public buildings such as hospitals and schools, to roads, motorways, public parks, squares and, of course, streets. At the same time the post-war period saw the large-scale sites of nationalised heavy industry dominate the landscape.

Today, land and property in the UK is a patchwork of leasehold and freehold arrangements, with the old traditional landlords still owning many freeholds, while global finance institutions, central and local government and private individuals retain land and property both through leasehold and freehold.

However, the rapid pace of post-industrial change, alongside powers of land assembly, means that this picture is changing fast. The huge sites of former heavy industry offer the greatest opportunities for new development while the regeneration of city centres in declining former industrial powerhouses such as Liverpool reflect similar trends. The important point here is that these often very large new developments tend to be owned and managed by a single private landlord, in contrast to the last hundred years where the ownership and management of property in cities has been a diverse patchwork of private landlords, institutions, local government and private individuals.

In Liverpool the dominance of a single private landlord has been chosen by the city council as their preferred model with Grosvenor effectively owning the 34 streets or 42.5 acres, which have been leased out by the council to the developer on a 250-year lease. In Stratford City, while an international finance consortium owns the site, the huge scheme will still be controlled and managed by one private management group, acting effectively as a single landlord.

While it is only now that the 'private-public' space model is rolling out around the country a few examples of private ownership of public space under a single landlord – such as the Broadgate Centre and Canary Wharf – have existed since the 1980s. For covered shopping malls on the other hand, from Milton Keynes to Bluewater, such arrangements have long been the norm.

In terms of public space the key issue is that while local government has previously controlled, managed and maintained all streets and public squares the creation of these new 'private-public' places means that, as in the early Victorian period, they will be owned and managed by individual private landlords who have the power to restrict access and control activities.

Yet despite the importance of these changes, owing to the complexities of obtaining information pertaining to landownership, it is nigh on impossible to quantitatively track just how extensive this shift in ownership from public to private is. This is a quiet revolution, but despite the lack of fanfare it nonetheless appears to be leaving us with what are increasingly coming to resemble Victorian patterns of landownership.

Homelessness and 'the other'

A key feature of the new 'private-public' developments are the rules governing behaviour which ensure that only certain types of activities and certain types of people will be allowed to enjoy the spaces created. Typically, in 'private-public' space beggars and homeless are 'moved on' by private security, while behaviours ranging from skateboarding to rollerblading are banned.

Such policies, which overlap significantly with the anti-social behaviour agenda discussed later, come under the banner of 'reclaiming the public realm', with proponents arguing that they provide a 'clean and safe' environment. Critics on the other hand claim they create sterile, uniform places, which inhibit genuine public access and lack the diversity and humanity of traditional street life, while also displacing social problems into neighbouring ghettoised enclaves.

These approaches originated in the US with initiatives such as former New York Mayor Giuliani's 'zero tolerance' strategy to clean up the city, which he described as dedicated to 'reclaiming the public spaces of New York'. To these ends he identified the homeless, beggars, squeegee cleaners, squatters, graffiti artists, reckless cyclists and unruly youths as elements whose presence would not be tolerated.¹⁸ In a similar vein, by 1997 more than 70 cities around the US had passed legislation banning or severely circumscribing begging, sleeping in public places and other homeless behaviours. For example, in Dallas begging is banned and the current mayor of the city is also planning to introduce legislation to make voluntary giving to homeless people illegal.

For many commentators, ranging from academics to activists, homelessness is seen as the 'litmus test'¹⁹ of whether or not a space is truly public and consequently these trends are raising worrying concerns about the rights of individuals in a democratic society, leading to a number of American commentators predicting 'the end of public space'.²⁰

For them, such trends are threatening to undermine the foundations of liberal democracy, calling into question the central principle of John Stuart Mill's tract 'On Liberty', that people should be allowed to do what they want so long as it does not harm others, with Mill writing that there should be 'different experiments of living; that free scope should be given to the varieties of character; short of injury to others'.

In the UK, although issues of inclusion and exclusion have historically been connected with definitions of public space, the consensus has been that public space is space that is accessible to all. But, as difficult social phenomena such as begging and homelessness were on nothing like the current scale this was a relatively easy consensus to reach.

Tramps, of course, have long been an accepted feature of urban life and did not provoke any of these debates, considered instead to be harmless. But this was an attitude no doubt fostered by the fact that there were so few of them.

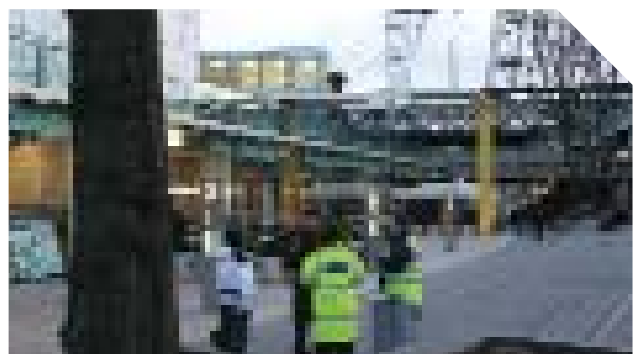
But by the late 1980s homelessness had become a significant social problem in the UK, following changes in housing policy and mental health policy. The house price crash of the late '80s forced thousands into negative equity and saw them lose their homes while changes in policy towards social housing have seen far fewer homes being built. At the same time the closure of the old mental hospitals released thousands of people with mental health problems into the community, many of whom slipped through the welfare net, ending up on the streets.

Today, while the numbers of rough sleepers has declined, figures from the homeless charity Shelter estimate that there are more than 101 000 homeless households.

Consequently the old consensus that the public realm should be accessible to all appears to be changing, with 'private-public' developments and policies to 'reclaim public space' ensuring the exclusion of certain types of people and certain types of behaviour.

In this context the rise in homelessness and begging, which has accompanied the shift to the new economy, can be seen to reflect the prominence of the role of 'the other' in the debates on the nature of the post-modern city.

The application of these trends on the ground is described by the case studies and policy developments detailed in the next section.



How the theory plays out on the ground

Trends in new development

The UK is witnessing the largest surge in new development, and hence urban change, since the post-war wave of construction of the 1950s and 1960s.

Although this boom has its roots in economic change, policy makers have also responded to the shift, which is characterised by a move back into the former industrial areas of the city. The introduction of the term 'urban renaissance', a phrase never far from ministers' lips since Lord Rogers's Urban Task Force report coined the concept in 1999, is the most obvious example of this.²¹

The first stage of the 'urban renaissance' was the drive to redevelop the often very attractive former industrial warehouses and dockyards for the financial and knowledge workers of the new economy. Today dockside areas from Leith in Edinburgh to the Albert Dock in Liverpool are a mix of expensive penthouse apartments, restaurants and bars, characteristic of the booming leisure economy. This trend began with the development of London Docklands and continued throughout the '90s and into the new Millennium.

Now, the second stage, which is the development of really large-scale regeneration schemes, is properly beginning to get underway, with the aim of transforming the fortunes of entire post-industrial centres. In Liverpool, Grosvenor is to redevelop 42.5 acres in the centre of the city in what is one of the largest regeneration schemes currently underway in Western Europe. In London, Argent are hoping to get planning permission to regenerate 67 acres around King's Cross while the 170 acre scheme planned for Stratford City is intended to kick start the regeneration of East London and the Thames Gateway in time for the London Olympics of 2012. Meanwhile in Brighton and Hove, Frank Gehry's proposals for billowing iconic towers, which will be housed in similar 'private-public' surroundings, are generating considerable controversy.

While these are the flagship schemes, many other very significant developments are also in the pipeline in towns and cities around the country, from Chelsfield's development of Paddington Basin in West London to Hammerson's planned retail quarter in Sheffield. Other new schemes, currently under construction or completed recently, include Brindley Place in Birmingham and More London which is home to the Greater London Authority.

These are the developments which define today's building boom, and just as the modernism of the post-war period was reflected by certain key trends, so too the post-modern renaissance is typified by its own set of defining features.

Where the modernism – not to mention brutalism – of the post-war tower blocks and arterial roads of 1950s and 1960s Britain rested on a highly centralised planning system and state control of public space, contemporary development rests instead on the emergence of 'private-public' space. Privately owned, but largely accessible, it is managed and maintained as a consumer product and characterised by high levels of control over the environment.

The post-war planning period was an inglorious one, with a great many of the tower blocks now torn down, while arterial road systems continue to blight many towns and cities.

In the years that followed much has been said about the need not to repeat the mistakes of the past. Now, as this latest wave of development is set to make another imprint on the landscape there are a number of key concerns that need to be addressed to ensure that post-modern urban change is more successful than its modernist predecessor.

Four case studies

While the following four case studies are all examples of 'private-public' space and have certain elements in common they also illustrate four very different approaches to the private management of the public realm. This reveals that the way these new estates are run is very much at the discretion of their landlords, rather like the early 19th century landlords. Consequently each of the examples chosen highlight different concerns.

But each of the case studies also have points in common, in particular that they are managed by a single private landlord or managing agent. This landlord provides a uniformed private security presence and a pro-active street cleaning service and aims, like BIDs, to provide a 'clean and safe' environment similar to covered shopping malls. And like shopping malls such as Bluewater – which has famously banned 'hoodies' – the tendency is for certain behaviours deemed inappropriate to be banned.

In return for these management services, from private security and cleaning to the monitoring of unacceptable behaviours, service charges are paid.

The other common point shared by each case study relates to the issue of displacement, a theme central both to the case studies and policies towards managing city centres, outlined in the next section. As well as highlighting the problem of exclusion and the creation of ghettoised enclaves of the dispossessed, a discussion of displacement also overlaps with concerns about the controlled, homogenous and sometimes sterile environments being created, questions looked at in depth in later chapters.

The Broadgate Centre, London EC2

The Broadgate Centre, with Canary Wharf, is among the first examples of 'private-public' space and preceded the 'urban renaissance' of the late 1990s. But like today's large-scale developments it was also fuelled by economic and technological change, in this case the 'big bang' of 1985 which followed the deregulation of the financial markets.

Broadgate and Canary Wharf can, therefore, be seen as the first major developments to reflect the needs of the new economy, providing new office space to match the demands of US banks, in search of large floorplate buildings similar to those in America.



Broadgate, a 30 acre site, adjacent to Liverpool Street Station is owned entirely by British Land and is maintained and managed by its management arm Broadgate Estates, a management company which also manages 'private-public' estates at More London, Chiswick Park, Regents Place, Paternoster Square and Fleet Place. Private security patrol the estate 24 hours a day – although the spaces are only closed down entirely on Christmas Day to preserve the ownership point – and it is well known that at the first sign of trouble people will be thrown off the estate. Although the private security officers have no greater powers than the ordinary citizen because this is private property they are allowed to use 'reasonable force' to remove people, in contrast for example to private security guards in BIDs.

The aim of both the design and level of security, according to a developer involved with the initial concept, was to 'create something inward looking', providing high earning employees with high class buildings and facilities in a location they wouldn't otherwise come to.

He describes Bishopsgate as built 'like a wall – like a castle', to a design which deliberately set out to achieve a 'fortress-like quality – we used to call Bishopsgate the hard edge development line,' he said.

Concerns: connectivity to the local environment

While a high quality working environment has arguably been created – although some may dislike the uniformity and sterility – the nature of the development raises very significant issues regarding its relationship with the local environment. Seen by some as a citadel bordered by areas of acute deprivation, it does not seem unfair to characterise it as an enclave for the financial services industries which have no connection at all to areas such as neighbouring Dalston.

This lack of connection with the local environment, local residents and local culture is particularly stark in the case of Broadgate, but is a theme common to all the case studies.



The Paradise Street Development Area, Liverpool

Developer Grosvenor's Paradise Street scheme in Liverpool is one of the largest regeneration schemes currently under construction in Western Europe, redeveloping 42.5 acres, including 34 streets, in the heart of Liverpool.

But while many in Liverpool have welcomed the injection of £750 million into the city, the development has also been accompanied by negative publicity from the start over plans to replace traditional rights of way with 'public realm arrangements' policed by private security guards known as 'quartermasters' or 'sheriffs'.²² Begging, skateboarding and rollerblading will be banned, alcohol and food are only to be consumed in certain designated areas and any form of demonstration will require police permission. Consequently, alongside the negative publicity, organisations ranging from human rights group Liberty to the Open Spaces Society have voiced serious concern about the restrictions on public access and behaviour.

At the same time all maintenance functions – from rubbish collection to street cleaning – will be contracted out by local government to the developer, who will have sole responsibility for managing and maintaining the space.

In fact the Paradise Street scheme is not in essence very different from other developments – already completed or in the pipeline – but in this case both the developer and Liverpool City Council have been more blatant about the future management and control of the space.

A developer close to the scheme explained that its design rests on the application of 'shopping mall' principles, based on the presence of a single landlord managing such a large area, enabled by local authority powers of land assembly which have paved the way for the compulsory purchase of 200 properties. As for ownership, while the council retains the freehold, it has leased the entire site to Grosvenor for 250 years.

'Our desire, as at Bluewater, is to apply the principles applied to the major shopping malls, but using the existing street pattern as much as possible. I think what's been going on in the last few years is that people have been visiting the regional shopping centres – like Bluewater and Meadowhall – and finding them much cleaner than other parts of city centres. They don't care about the legal niceties, they just wonder why some parts are managed better,' the developer said.

Concerns: civil liberties

Although the Paradise Street scheme has attracted considerable negative publicity Grosvenor are far from alone in this approach, echoing themes common both to new developments and current approaches to the management of city and neighbourhood centres.

However, the Grosvenor example has aroused particular controversy because it appears to be the first time that an entire city centre is to be privatised, even if current trends indicate it is unlikely to be the last. For civil liberties campaigners such as Liberty, the fear is that it will set a dangerous precedent.

King's Cross Central, London

The development of the vast tracts of railway lands around King's Cross and the regeneration of the area has been under discussion since 1987 with a series of schemes failing to get off the ground.

Now, developers Argent are hoping that they will get planning permission to regenerate the 67 acre site with a huge 'mixed use' scheme that includes new housing, office space, leisure, retail and improvements to the public realm, aiming to transform an area more traditionally associated with prostitution and drugs.

Undoubtedly they hope to avoid the controversy which has engulfed Grosvenor in Liverpool, however, the signs are that this will not be easy with one regeneration expert close to the scheme revealing that 'there's a big row brewing between the developer and local authority over who's in control of the space'. The key difference between the Paradise Street and King's Cross schemes is that while Liverpool City Council were very keen for Grosvenor to assume responsibility for managing and maintaining the area, Camden wish to retain a level of local authority control over King's Cross.

What the outcome will be remains uncertain at the time of writing but one option under discussion is a 'hybrid' or 'split approach' with the local authority 'adopting' and retaining responsibility for managing the streets while Argent will control the public spaces, branding and marketing them as destinations for 100 events a year.

With both Camden and Argent wanting control over the development these unusual arrangements are the result of hard fought compromise. But whether the local authority and developer have similar aspirations for the development as a whole remains unclear. On the one hand Argent are keen to emphasise that the feel of the entire regenerated area will have little in common with the private feel of Canary Wharf or Broadgate stating in their public realm strategy for King's Cross: 'the public realm within these developments [Broadgate and Canary Wharf] is entirely private in its feel, with strong controls over who uses the space and how'.

In contrast, the document continues, 'there are examples of unrestricted use of public realm which is owned and managed privately', pointing to the recently completed 17 acre Brindley Place in Birmingham. Brindley Place is effectively owned and managed by Argent (on a 999 year lease from Birmingham City Council) and is according to a developer connected with the scheme, an example of 'publicly orientated private management'. Others, however, disagree, with a leading regeneration expert claiming that 'Brindley Place is far nearer to Canary Wharf' than what is envisaged for King's Cross. Interestingly, Brindley Place featured on the front cover of the Urban White Paper, indicating that the government clearly see it as emblematic of the 'urban renaissance'.

As for Camden's director of environmental services, Peter Bishop, he believes that emphasising 'the primacy of the streets', underlined by their 'adoption' by the local authority, will ensure the development remains truly public rather than 'private-public'. An agreement on genuinely unrestricted public access is also being drafted, alongside a policy of 'no gating' throughout the development.

Concerns: public or private?

Camden claim that by pursuing a policy of 'adopting' the streets they are bucking the trend with regard to 'private-public' space, an approach which will be underpinned by an agreement with the developer ensuring unrestricted public access. Only time will tell if these aspirations will be met. If they are they may provide a useful template for future development.

Excel Centre, Royal Victoria Dock, London, E16

The 100 acre private 'campus' which opened in 2000 is a mix of enclosed mall, conference and shopping centre with six on-site hotels and, by the time the scheme is finished, 2 000 homes. The majority owners are the Malaysian conglomerate Usaha Taegus, who also partly own the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur, and control of the estate is in the hands of their management company Excel London. The site is on a 199 year lease from the London Development Agency.

While the estate is entirely private Excel do have an obligation to maintain public rights of way through the uncovered sections of the site except on a designated number of days per year when they can apply to the local authority to close these for security reasons.

At such times, for example when Excel hosts the Defence Systems and Equipment International conference, the estate is surrounded by a 'ring of steel' and becomes a 'completely secure site'. At all other times, although there is an active security presence, Excel say that visitors are not discouraged.

Concerns: connectivity to the local environment

Although it can be reached by the Docklands Light Railway the Excel Centre is extremely difficult for people to access on foot, giving it a feeling of disconnection from the surrounding environment. While this is a bonus for the management when a high security conference environment is required, it ensures the development has the feel of one of Marc Auge's 'non places' discussed earlier. At the same time vandalism is a problem with kids who live in adjacent but sharply contrasting areas jumping onto the DLR to come and cause trouble on the estate.



Business Improvement Districts

Alongside the wave of new development sweeping the country, new policies to lever private finance into urban areas are also changing the look and feel of towns and cities.

Chief among these is the introduction of Business Improvement Districts (BIDs), which share many elements in common with the new 'private-public' developments. The concept is based on raising a tax from local businesses to go towards creating an attractive consumer environment similar to the covered shopping mall. This emphasis has led some commentators to describe BIDs as 'malls without walls'.²³

In the US, where the policy originated, BIDs have proved very controversial. Supporters point to the range of improvements to the public realm provided, but critics claim they are undemocratic and create controlled, exclusionary environments, ghettoising and polarising areas by displacing social problems into neighbouring districts.

Like 'private-public' developments they are characterised by a uniformed private security presence and the banning of anti-social behaviours, from skateboarding to begging. They also share a vision of public space as a consumer product, sold through the branding and marketing of the area as a 'location destination', offering a particular 'experience'. Supporters of this approach see it as a strength, differentiating one location from another, while critics point out that, ironically, the result is that these destinations all tend to look the same.

However, there are differences between BIDs and new developments in the UK, in particular regarding their exact status. While the 'public' or 'private' nature of new developments is relatively straightforward, in that they are privately owned and managed, the implications of BIDs and their relationship with local government, in the UK at least, have yet to become clear.

In the US commentators are agreed that BIDs reflect the rise of private sector government, but in the UK, where the policy remains in its infancy, the key question is whether it will provide additional services to local government or whether it signals the erosion of local authority – and hence democratic – control of the public realm.

The US model

Despite their controversial nature there are currently more than 1 500 BIDs in the US with New York home to a patchwork of 50 BIDs. Other cities, however, such as Boston, continue to view BIDs as an assault on local government and have so far resisted them.

Their emergence in the early 1980s is seen as a symptom of the post-industrial decline of both inner cities and municipal government, with BIDs the way in which commercial downtown property owners chose to revive the inner city by mirroring the popularity of the suburban mall. With American local government facing fiscal crisis property owners stepped into the breach by agreeing amongst themselves to pay a tax for local improvements to create this type of environment.

According to the American BID model if the majority of property owners in a given district vote in favour of establishing a BID, all the property owners in the area have to pay an annual tax, which goes towards creating a more attractive and consumer friendly environment.

As a consequence of their revenue-raising abilities BIDs manage their own budgets, which range from \$10 000 to \$15 million per annum, and decide what improvements to carry out. But critics see this as the privatisation of public services and the erosion of local democracy – as the decision makers are not elected by the public at large – while proponents point to the range of improvements to the public realm.

According to guidelines from the New York Mayor's office the slogan 'clean and safe' is the overriding concern for BIDs, with private security and sanitation top of the list of priorities. In this, the BIDs management model owes a lot to the 'broken windows' theory, which has also strongly influenced UK policy makers with regard to current anti-social behaviour strategies.

This theory, developed by James Q Wilson and George Kelling in their famous 1982 article from *Atlantic Monthly*²⁴, holds that tolerating minor routine incivilities, such as window breaking, begging and drunkenness, increases 'respectable fears' and encourages a spiral of community decline. Consequently BID areas are governed by rules of behaviour similar to those which prevail in 'private-public' spaces.



However, while the emphasis on strict rules of behaviour and the effective banning of homelessness may clean up the BID area the consequence is that, inevitably, these activities are displaced elsewhere. In New York, for example, commentators describe how homelessness has simply been shifted to non-BID areas while equally worrying are the over zealous attempts of private security to remove undesirables, a concern echoed in UK BID areas.

This issue exploded into the media in 1995 when the New York Times ran a front page investigation alleging that 'goon squads' working for the Grand Central Partnership BID 'threatened, bullied and attacked homeless people to force them from doorways, bank vestibules, plazas and sidewalks all over Manhattan'.²⁵

Advocates, however, claim that if BIDs can successfully link attempts to reduce homelessness with support services and shelters than this is in fact a progressive approach. But, the consensus so far is that although some BID areas do try to do this most just pay lip service to the idea.

Critics also claim BIDs ghettoise and polarise areas, not only through displacement, but through their ability to fund large-scale infrastructure projects, for their areas alone. The Grand Central Partnership, which is one of the largest BIDs, has issued \$33.3 million in bonds to fund longer term capital improvements to the area, which have a far better credit rating than New York City itself. Other richer BIDs similarly have started to undertake extensive public works, modifying street systems, transport routes and utilities according to the wishes of BID members.

The other main criticism that they face is that the carefully themed, uniform street furniture and streetscapes create an inauthentic 'theme park' environment. Their supporters, on the other hand, claim that they offer a proven way of revitalising former no-go areas in city centres.

How strong BIDs may eventually become is unclear but for their critics, who liken them to 'cities within cities' or 'micropolises',²⁶ it is not unlikely that they will eventually dominate local government in the US.

'In the long run it is not difficult to envisage such BIDs growing more powerful,' write academics Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin. 'It seems possible that they will gradually be able to take control of the wider development and management of both urban spaces and the infrastructure networks that come to underpin them. They may even in the long run be able to secede completely from public taxation systems,' they continue.²⁷

The UK model

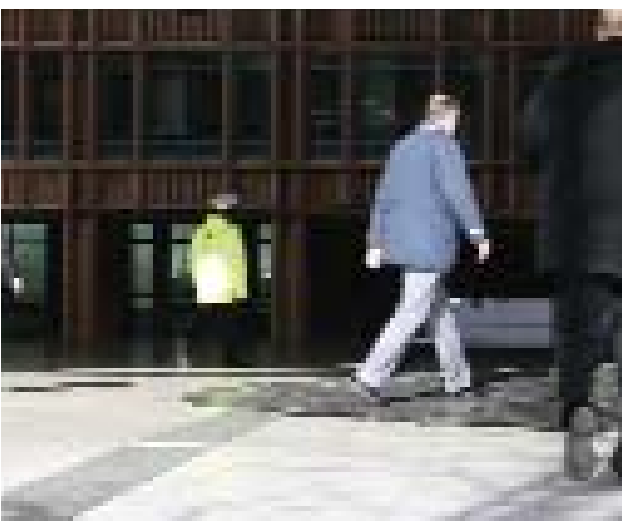
BIDs are a very new policy in the UK and with the first 20 up and running at the time of writing it is as yet too early to say how extensive their impact will be. However, even at this stage it is clear that they reflect many of the trends witnessed by the growth of 'private-public' space, emphasising private security, the targeting of anti-social behaviour and the creation of a 'clean and safe' environment geared to shoppers' needs.

The policy was introduced to the UK in the late 1990s, brought over according to a leading retailer by one of its American architects, Dan Biederman, the director of the Grand Central Partnership and former director of two other New York BIDs.

'In the second half of the 1990s academics were picking up that the UK was going the same route as the US with retail leaving town centres. A number of Americans came over including Dan Biederman who said he'd got a product he could market in the UK. He met government and leading retailers – the impetus came from him,' the retailer said.²⁸

Meanwhile, at the same time the Circle Initiative, a London based business partnership, was also examining the possibility of raising revenue through a BIDs-type model, which resulted in the establishment of five voluntary BIDs in 2001.

However, when the official policy finally emerged from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in 2003 it contained one significant difference to its American counterpart, in that the levy would be applied to local property occupiers rather than owners. The assumption among many is that the government would have liked to replicate the US model more closely, but making property owners liable would have required fundamental changes to tax legislation and would have delayed the introduction of BIDs substantially.



But the big difference with the US is the question of 'additionality' – in other words whether or not BIDs will provide additional services to local government or whether they will replace them. As in the US this has significant implications for local democracy as it determines whether locally-elected officials or unelected business leaders decide how best to manage and maintain the local environment. At the same time many local businesses are loath to pay a tax for improvements which they feel the local authority should provide.

As in the US the larger BIDs have considerable urban planning powers and match funding abilities. For example, the New West End Company in Central London has drawn up a strategic development framework and will receive £18 million over three years from the Mayor's office to fund improvements.

So far the jury is out as regards the weakening of local democracy. 'Will the public sector see it as a loosening of democracy? Some local authorities will, some won't. Inevitably there will be some decisions made by this new body which would historically have been made by others,' a retailer predicted.

Another important difference with the UK response to BIDs is that, while broadly supportive of the policy, the police are not happy with the emphasis on private security, preferring that their own Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) be used to police BID areas. BIDs on the other hand prefer to employ private security, because it is cheaper and easier to control and manage.

The other concern in the UK is that the BID model adopted is too focussed on the trading environment and 'footfall' as a result of the ODPM's close collaboration with the Association of Town Centre Managers in working up the policy.

For some critics, this model is too driven by a single-minded desire to increase footfall and consumption, rather than the broader list of priorities that should drive the creation of successful, sustainable places.

'BIDs come from town centre management and town centre management comes from the drive to increase footfall. It's Bluewater and the out-of-town mall model influencing how we look at all other retail and commercial space,' said one leading private sector developer.

Case study

Ensuring the anonymity of the sources interviewed, to enable them to speak freely, is a feature of this report. Consequently this case study is a hybrid of a number of different BIDs across the UK, based on off-the record interviews with a wide range of BID employees, including directors, managers, security guards, wardens and rangers.

Although every BID varies considerably according to the needs of its locality the guidelines issued by the New York Mayor's Office are the foundation for many UK BIDs. Their overriding priority, in keeping with the 'broken windows' theory, is the creation of a 'clean and safe' environment.

What emerged through the interviews is that the focus on safety and security, through the presence of private security, is not linked to reality of crime figures but to perceptions of crime, which is what the 'broken windows' theory tries to address. For example, in one particularly low crime BID area the whole borough is only subject to three quarters of a street crime per day, which the BID manager said would be impossible to 'manage down'. But for him the importance of private security is that it adds to a perception of safety which, he believes, encourages people to go shopping.

In this regard the BID directors interviewed were clear that the emphasis on a 'clean and safe' environment is driven primarily by the needs of retailers rather than the creation of sustainable places.

'It's nice to make it clean but we're not doing it for the community agenda but for the bottom line. It's all about the bottom line – we're a commercial organisation which retailers invest in to improve the retail environment,' a BID manager said.

He was similarly honest about the issue of displacement, which every BID employee interviewed agreed was a central, though unfortunate, feature of the policy.

'It's not my job to care about displacement. We have to be a little bit selfish, we're business-led, we're funded by business so we have to improve the area for them,' he explained.

'Am I going to pretend part of the response isn't to displace the problem to somewhere else? No I'm not. If King's Cross changes and the problems move onto Euston then they'll address it there,' another said.

Displacement takes a variety of forms, both overt and covert. One city centre BID manager made it clear that he is keen to encourage more high earning shoppers and fewer less affluent customers. 'High margins come with ABC1s, low margins with C2DEs. My job is to create an environment which will bring in more ABC1s,' he said.

In terms of more overt forms of displacement which necessitate 'moving people on' another director of a BID said: 'The whole business of BIDs is moving the problem on, either by putting homeless people in a hostel or making sure they go somewhere else. In the US they've moved them out of state or to the non-BID areas of Manhattan.' Another manager added: 'It's a really difficult scenario. ASBOs [Anti-Social Behaviour Orders] face similar criticisms.'

More worryingly, echoing American concerns, although each BID denied using illegal force with homeless people they all said they knew that this occurred in other BID areas.

A private security guard who has worked for a number of BIDs described his contrasting experiences. 'We're not supposed to touch homeless people to wake them up because that's considered assault, but where I worked before, they do that, they're more "hands-on". We refer homeless people to hostels but they don't do any of that, they just move them on.' Another manager added: 'We might say, "do you mind moving on" but we don't physically grab them, but other BIDs do.'

The growth of private security

The 'wider police family'

The growth of privately owned space for public use has been accompanied by a huge rise in private security.

This growing demand for private security has also been accompanied by significant, if little reported, legislative change, in particular the Private Security Industry Act 2001, the Police Reform Act 2002 and the Serious and Organised Crime and Police Act 2005.

The Police Reform Act states clearly that it plans to increase the powers of private security, gradually bringing them into line with the police, by providing 'for the exercise of police powers by persons who are not police officers'.²⁹ According to the act, neighbourhood and street wardens, security guards in shopping centres and other 'authority figures' can be accredited by the approval of the chief constable of an area to work alongside the police in a formal capacity, with this range of security personnel rather euphemistically termed 'the wider police family'.

The broad range of powers available to accredited security personnel under this raft of legislation focuses on the anti-social behaviour agenda and echoes both the 'broken windows' theory and New York's zero tolerance approach. It will include powers to deal with begging and the taking down of names and addresses of people behaving in anti-social manner, as well as tackling graffiti and dealing with people cycling on footpaths and the issuing of fixed penalty notices for minor offences.

So far the legislation is still in its infancy with private security organisations only just beginning to gain accreditation in different parts of the country but police and academics are in agreement that the Act signals the start of a far closer relationship between the security industry and the police, which many fear will ultimately undermine the future of the publicly funded police.

For criminologists Tim Newburn and Robert Reiner such changes are witnessing the 'ending of the idea of a police 'monopoly' in policing as a broadening array of private, municipal and civilian guards, officers and wardens become ever more visible'.

At the same time many leading figures in the police, including Sir Ian Blair, Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, believe this is a very worrying trend which, following the American example, threatens to call into question the long-term future of the police as a publicly funded service.

Consequently Sir Ian speaks out regularly on the need 'to defend the blue force', drawing comparisons with the United States where private security outspends funding on the public police by an astonishing 73%.³⁰ In this vein he has described Miami, where 19% of streets are policed by private security as 'the final nightmare for society'.³¹ Miami is also the murder capital of the US, making it clear that private security does not equate with safety.

The fear is that the growth of private security is encroaching on traditional police territory because of funding concerns. 'It's policing on the cheap. Over the next few years we will see dramatic changes in policing and we need to be careful. It's all to do with finance – we will see a market economy in the police,' one leading policeman said, repeating concerns voiced earlier about the 'marketisation' of the police.

Anti-social behaviour and 'broken windows' – criminalising 'the other'

The recent change in legislation towards anti-social behaviour is the other key piece of the changing policy jigsaw towards security.

Anti-Social Behaviour Orders (ASBOs) were introduced by the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 but they only began to emerge as a major policy tool in 2002, at the instigation of the then Home Secretary David Blunkett. The Anti-Social Behaviour Act 2003 added further powers including the dispersal of young people in particular areas.

One of the main features of ASBOs is that they are very loosely defined and hence cover a multitude of sins. According to the Crime and Disorder Act 'anti-social conduct' is behaviour which is likely to cause 'harassment, alarm or distress', which could arguably mean just about anything.

Even so despite its vagueness, there is no doubt that the concept, like the new private security legislation, derives an enormous amount from the 'broken windows' theory and American zero tolerance policies.



In the populist discourse of recent ministerial speeches the term appears to cover anything from the wearing of hoodies and the dropping of chewing gum in the street, all the way to the operation of crackdens. But as activities involving illegal drugs are criminal anyway the main target would seem to be prohibiting low level disorder, enforcing similar principles to those used by private security guards in 'private-public' places.

But despite their popularity with politicians, highlighted by the current emphasis on Tony Blair's 'Respect' agenda, ASBOs have faced a storm of criticism from human rights organisations and civil liberties groups, most notably the Council of Europe's human rights commissioner Alvaro Gil-Robles who attacked the policy in a recent report.

For him and for criminologists the main concern is an ethical one, that the legislation not only criminalises non-criminal acts such as begging, but that it personalises the traditional concept of universal deterrence, to enforce the exclusion of specific individuals from specific areas.

This has led to a significant change in criminal law, based for centuries on the universal premise that anyone who carries out certain acts will face certain consequences. Instead ASBOs target specific individuals and are not conduct dependent, since the person may be barred from entering the space even if he desists from the behaviour which triggered the order in the first place.

Of course, in exactly the same way as the clean-up of 'private-public' places simply displaces social problems, ASBOs similarly just move the problem onto ghettoised areas of exclusion.

Consequences: Cohesion, fear and unhappiness

The idea of reclaiming public space for the majority, ensuring it is clean and safe and carrying out significant public realm improvements, undeniably sounds appealing. Bearing in mind the importance of high street spending to the health of the economy, if areas also become successful shopping destinations, that is surely even more of a positive, both for consumers and economic growth.

However, this report argues that instead of reclaiming public space the UK is sleepwalking its way to a privatisation of the public realm, with far reaching consequences for the cohesion and health of urban society.

Sustainable communities and cohesion

Cohesion has been one of the government's key buzzwords since New Labour came to power in 1997. The need to create 'sustainable communities' is another.

Sustainability is a difficult term because, once again like so much contemporary policy jargon, it is very loosely defined and so can be – and often is – used as all things to all people. For some a sustainable community is an affluent one, for others it is a socially mixed housing estate. It might be a small development or it might be an entire neighbourhood. The vagueness of the term is such that all can apply. Essentially creating sustainable communities is taken to mean creating successful communities.

More interesting, however, than this fairly meaningless definition is the second half of the phrase, which reflects another policy preoccupation – the current emphasis on 'community', a term often interchangeable with the concept of 'cohesion'. In this context historian Robert Colls's observation of a time when nobody talked about community and everybody belonged to one³² seems particularly apt, highlighting the gulf between the aspirations of political rhetoric and the widely acknowledged realities of community breakdown.

Of course community breakdown has multiple causes, from mobility to demography, but although the rise of 'private-public' space is not solely to blame it is certainly an important contributory factor, as it underpins the trend towards the creation of individual neighbourhoods of atomised communities, which lack connectivity to the surrounding environment and to each other and displace social problems out of their district and into areas of exclusion.



On a micro level this is mirrored by the fact that we are no longer building new homes and shops on traditional streets. Instead 'private-public' development is creating 'complexes', either for housing or leisure. Today nearly all new housing and leisure development is being built in this off-street, 'complex' style which, despite not being physically gated, effectively separates it from the surrounding environment.

In part this is due to issues such as land assembly on brownfield sites and safety restrictions imposed by highway departments. However, a far more important driver is the desire of developers to maintain maximum control over the space and what goes on there, in the ways already described in previous chapters.

Yet, despite this, and assisted by the looseness of the definition, 'private-public' development is in fact underpinning the government's current drive towards the creation of 'sustainable communities', a point amply illustrated by the choice of Argent's Brindley Place development for the front cover of the Urban White Paper.

However, even if 'private-public' places can be squeezed into conveniently flexible definitions of what constitutes sustainability, the problem which cannot be glossed over relates to cohesion – accurately recognised by policymakers as the glue of any functioning society.

Fear, crime and unhappiness

The clearest indication that the creation of atomised 'private-public' communities is undermining cohesion relates to crime and, in particular, the soaring fear of crime which is out of all proportion to the realities of crimes committed. Instead research shows that while there is no relationship between fear of crime and actual levels of crime, fear of crime does correlate to levels of trust between people.³³

This explains the conundrum which the police refer to as 'the success gap', which is that while crime has been declining steadily since 1995 the majority of the population believe it is rising, a fact which once again has worrying parallels with the US. In the US 90% of Americans think crime is rising although it is falling, while here 70% of Britons think it is going up rather than down.

Of course, it is notoriously hard to get agreement across the board on crime statistics, which are muddled by factors such as the relatively recent growth in the reporting of certain crimes such as rape, which previously went unrecorded. However, figures from the British Crime Survey show that burglary, street robbery and car theft has fallen, with burglary down 17% on last year, car theft 10% and violence 7%. The risk of being a victim of any crime is at an all time low (since the survey began in 1982), while violent crime, which politicians often claim is rising, has in fact dropped by 36% since 1995.

The changing nature of the media and the immediate availability of information has a significant role to play in distorting perceptions here, with rolling news bringing horror stories into people's living rooms the moment they happen. Inevitably then, the blanket coverage of crimes such as child murders present a skewed picture of reality, borne out by a telling statistic from the children's charity Barnardo's which reveals that crimes against children have remained static for the last 30 years, despite wildly differing perceptions to the contrary.

Even so, although instant news is undoubtedly a factor, it is the creation of atomised and polarised communities which is particularly damaging to levels of trust and feelings of safety and security – cohesion in other words.

This is backed up by research from the US which points to the pivotal role of levels of trust between people, by revealing that the perception of rising crime is linked to the presence of visibly different groups in close proximity to each other who harbour mutual suspicions of the other.³⁴ So, for example, the presence of homeless people is often associated with crime although in reality they may rarely have anything to do with crime.

Another example is the testimony of an employee at the Broadgate Centre who revealed his fears on having once ventured into neighbouring Dalston, one of the most deprived wards in the country, which he described as 'a world away' and 'almost a no-go area', despite the fact that neither he or anyone he knew had come to any harm there.

In an interesting parallel, recent research on happiness by economist Richard Layard,³⁵ points out that levels of trust between people are 'a very important happiness indicator' as they measure the involvement of people with each other. Consequently Layard finds that in Scandinavia, contrary to the myth of a high suicide rate, both trust and happiness indicators are far higher than in the UK.

It is also cohesion and levels of trust within communities that government is attempting to address by employing the 'clean-up' strategies of the 'broken windows theory', which not only overlap with but underpin the anti-social behaviour agenda.

In many ways it is understandable that the presence of 'the other' – undesirables such as homeless people and beggars – may enhance lack of trust and create feelings of unease among the more affluent and consequently in a bid to reassure them the clean-up policies of the 'broken windows' theory are enforced, in order to 'reclaim' the public realm.

The problem is that while often well-intentioned these solutions are counterproductive to wider levels of trust – and hence fear of crime and indeed happiness – for a number of key reasons.

Firstly, the paradox is that although it is often claimed that private security is introduced to make people feel safer it often has the opposite effect reinforcing instead the feeling of ever-present danger lurking around the corner. While homeless people may make people feel unsafe it equally stands to reason that the presence of ever-more visible security to keep them out is hardly likely to increase levels of trust.

In a particularly revealing anecdote a resident of a gated community who had formerly lived on a terraced London street for 20 years told how one night the electronic gates went wrong and had to be propped open. Consequently she spent the whole night lying awake and far more scared than she had ever been in her previous street, despite the more than adequate locks on her front door. Extending this idea further it is not hard to see how 'micro-gating' practices, such as installing panic rooms, far from producing reassurance, induce an atmosphere of permanent paranoia and indeed panic.

Even so, if people believe they feel safer in an environment of ubiquitous security then that is their choice, but the problem for them is how they feel on leaving the closely-guarded environment, which given the proximity of 'hot spots' and 'cold spots' may occasionally happen, as in the case of the Broadgate employee.

In a particularly extreme illustration of the breakdown of trust between communities the super rich in Rio entirely avoid the barrios by travelling between their fortified enclaves by helicopter. The skywalks of some US cities achieve a similar objective, linking office and leisure complexes with luxury housing while ensuring that the ghetto housing of the ground level 'projects' is bypassed. An especially distressing example of this type of urban fracturing, where third-world conditions lie hidden alongside the affluence of the first-world, was revealed when Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, exposing America's invisible – and mainly black – poor to the world's TV cameras for the first time.

But although these examples may seem far from the UK experience the lack of connectivity of, for example, the Excel Centre in Docklands with ground level, reveals similar trends as do the recent riots in France, fuelled by a cocktail of racial ghettoisation and suburban deprivation.

Essentially the current approach favoured by UK policymakers focuses on ensuring specifically delineated places, from town centres to large-scale regeneration schemes, are kept 'clean and safe' by displacing social problems and making them invisible. Meanwhile, although ASBOs and the 'respect' agenda are enforced in areas of exclusion the tendency is for these 'cold spots' to get worse, with the result that the ever more visible differences between communities, which are at the root of today's loss of cohesion, are enhanced.

However, even if policies resting on displacement and the 'broken windows' theory are misplaced and actually enhance polarisation, there is no getting away from the fact that they are far from the root cause of widening inequalities, which, as is widely recognised, is structural social and economic change.

Given this, town centre managers and developers are surely right to argue that they are not responsible for addressing these wider social issues. As one said: 'It is not for us to solve society's ills. That's for government to do.'

This is undoubtedly a valid viewpoint and the challenge now for policymakers is to adopt a different approach to creating places, which involves working with the grain and reality of social and economic change rather than trying to sweep it under the carpet.

When everywhere looks the same

'Private-public' spaces are designed with the consumer in mind, with the aim of creating 'location destinations' which will attract the maximum number of appropriate shoppers keen to spend their money in the shops, restaurants and bars of the retail and leisure economy.

Jacque Reilly, National BIDs project director, underlined this emphasis speaking at a recent conference: 'The trading environment is the public realm and the public realm is the trading environment,' she explained. Developers are also in agreement with this approach as Argent acknowledge in their public realm strategy for King's Cross: 'As the role of public authorities in the public realm has declined, the role of development companies has grown stronger, and the public realm, in many instances, has become more of a commodity,' they state.

As such it is therefore apt to see 'private-public' space as a carefully designed consumer product in itself, manufactured in the hope of attracting as many customers as possible.

This consumer product is characterised by two trends. The first is the increased level of control over the environment necessitated both by the demands of high quality product management and the need to exclude undesirables. The second is that, ironically, despite their competing claims of uniqueness 'private-public' locations display a tendency to look the same and to exhibit a very similar 'feel', in part as a result of the relatively controlled nature of the environment.

These outcomes are entirely in keeping with Lefebvre's writings on 'the production of space' 30 years ago. For him space is both 'a product' and 'a means of production', while the characteristic of contemporary post-industrial space is the creation of many identical units of similar places.³⁶

However, that is not to suggest that the drive to create economically viable places in city centres and new developments is not of vital importance. But the problem is that current approaches to creating places seem to be too narrowly focused on only this aim, missing out other aspects of the process essential to creating successful places.

In particular, the first factor often overlooked is the need to work with the intrinsic character of the place, which means looking to its cultural traditions and the diversity of its original inhabitants. Instead the emphasis on turning places into consumer products tends to suck the original life out of them – in all its diversity and unpredictability – with the consequence that places seem to become unreal, characterised by soullessness and sterility rather than organic activity.

A large part of the reason for this, in addition to the issue of the relatively high levels of control in these environments, is the changing pattern of ownership described earlier, with the tendency of single landlords to own and manage new 'private-public' developments in their entirety, in place of the more heterogeneous pattern of owners and occupiers in the past.

For architect Adam Caruso 'density of ownership' and the resulting heterogeneity that results is 'characteristic of and necessary to a liberal and democratic society', as it is the only way of ensuring the diversity necessary to city life.

He writes: 'While planning authorities may argue about façade materials and the survival of medieval street patterns in the masterplan, several city blocks, that once housed thousands of tenants and was in the ownership of hundreds, are now controlled by one owner backed by international financial institutions.

'Do not be fooled by the medieval street pattern, the well maintained squares, the lunch time activities, these developments constitute a serious erosion of democracy and the public realm. This process is taking place all over London and in all major cities.'³⁷

Of course, it is not only property ownership but the linked question of rent levels which is also critical to the diversity of activities on offer and the retention of community-led businesses such as locally-run cafes and bookstores. This key issue of affordable property will be looked at in the next section.

Even so, control, ownership, property prices and rent levels are not the only factors responsible for the growing 'sameness' of the environment. The marketing of 'place' as a consumer product also plays a role, which is ironic given that the aim of place marketing is to differentiate every destination by highlighting its unique qualities.

Instead the pro-active marketing of 'location destinations' often adds to the fake feel with carefully themed, uniform street furniture and streetscapes, creating the 'theme park' environment characteristic of the post-modern city.

The feeling of fakeness and unreality is also boosted by the multiplicity of electronic images in contemporary public places, most often the 'infotainment' of rolling 'news', from disasters to the latest celebrity union, alongside streaming advertising. Times Square, one of the larger New York BIDs, is the ultimate example of this type of environment, although many smaller new shopping and entertainment complexes in high streets around the UK exemplify similar trends.

The contradiction, however, is the recognition that consumers continue to want to visit genuinely atmospheric and vibrant places, so as a result attempts are made to imitate the genuine excitement of urban life, which end up seeming simply fake and inauthentic. The new Spitalfields market development is a prime example of this. Clearly a 'private-public' development, policed by its own security guards emblazoned with 'Spitalfields Estate' on their jackets, the sterile feel of the place – despite the presence of market stalls – is in stark contrast to the old Spitalfields market next door, with its natural bustle and character. Another example is the ubiquitous trend towards creating 'faux heritage' places, which while attempting to tap into a correctly identified thirst for the history of places, achieves the opposite of its objectives by failing to build on genuine historic traditions, so adding to the lack of authenticity.

At the same time the consumption first agenda is accompanied by another central contradiction which is that certain types of consumption activities, in particular the emphasis on the 'evening economy', clearly result in the type of anti-social behaviour these areas are so keen to prohibit. The prevalence of binge drinking zones which characterise so many of today's leisure and entertainment districts is the most obvious example of this.

However, despite the growing sameness of the environment, which is accompanying the narrow focus on space as a consumer product, it is important to recognise that these trends need not be an economic inevitability.

Instead a broader approach to creating places, which includes economic viability alongside a range of other factors, is more likely to underpin the creation of places able to stand the test the time.

This approach needs to take a long hard look at the vapid consequences of merely viewing space as a consumer product and halt the onward march of 'private-public' space. But that is not to argue for a luddite stance, inimical to change. Instead new ways forward need to be encouraged, which stress innovative and perhaps unexpected disciplines. Environmental psychology, which emphasises issues such as 'place attachment' and does not normally have a role in the discourse of policymakers, is one such area.

If policymakers are brave enough to question the 'private-public' status quo then some of today's most difficult social problems, in particular cohesion, will at least be on the table and up for genuine discussion and debate. Simultaneously the public places created should offer far greater reward than the 'placelessness' which characterises so much of the contemporary landscape.



Alternative approaches

What is 'place attachment'?

Environmental psychology is a relatively little-known discipline which takes central psychological concepts such as 'attachment' and 'identity' and applies them to the relationship between people and place. So, in this way 'place attachment' is described as a psychological process similar to the infant's attachment to parental figures.

Inevitably attachment – to parent and place – is very closely bound up with past memories and experiences and therefore 'place attachment' is intricately tied up with memories and histories, personal and collective, of places.

Academics Proshansky, Fialian and Kaminoff have described 'place identity' as a 'pot pourri of memories, conceptions, interpretations, ideas and related feelings about specific physical settings'.³⁸

A strong sense of place and identity then, will be enhanced by the preservation of history rooted in real memories, another concept which academic Dolores Hayden calls 'place memory'. In her writing on the 'power of place' she describes how identity is intimately connected to memory, in terms of personal memories of where we have come from and where we have lived, as well as collective or social memories connected with the histories of our families, neighbours, colleagues and ethnic communities.

Consequently she views urban landscapes as 'storehouses for these collective memories', where features such as hills, harbours, streets and buildings frame people's lives and outlast many lifetimes. This is the 'power of place' – the power of the ordinary urban landscape 'to nurture citizens' public memory, to encompass shared time in the form of shared territory'.

But despite the potential of the power of place, writing with reference to the United States, she believes it remains largely untapped, with the result that 'the sense of civic identity that shared history can convey is missing'.³⁹

Instead the emphasis on place as a consumer product often has the opposite effect, removing places from the surrounding community and responding to the genuine desire for history with the misplaced creation of 'faux heritage' environments which fast turn into tourist traps rather than crucibles of local culture. The consequence is not only the sterility of the environment created but the lack of cohesion which is the result of the failure to bind the majority of the population to place.

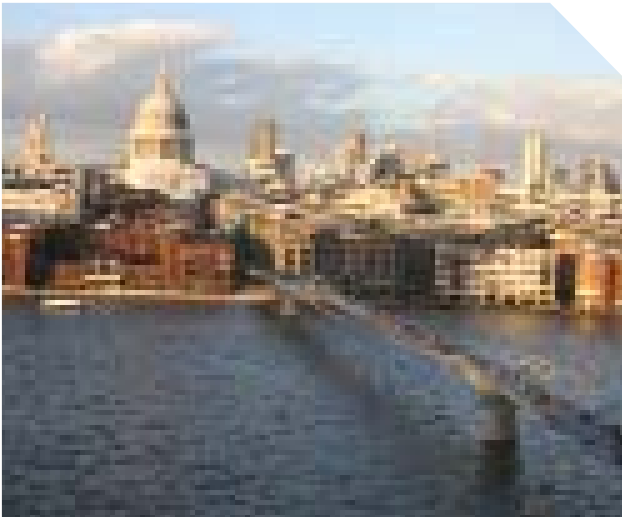
In contrast, regeneration which involves the re-use of old buildings for new, unexpected and innovative purposes does tap into this power of place by retaining people's memories, and indeed love for a place, while at the same time creating new and exciting uses.

The failure of the Millennium Dome as a regeneration project compared to the success of Banksie on the south side of the River Thames is a prime example of the difference that working with the local identity and grain of an area really makes.

The Dome, with little connection to the community in the surrounding Isle of Dogs, appeared to have been catapulted into the area in the vain hope that its popularity would generate an economic boosterism effect. Instead the embarrassing failure of its corporate exhibition simply highlighted the disconnection of the project to its environment, fuelling local resentment further.

Banksie, on the other hand, with its centrepiece conversion of the old power station into the Tate Modern art gallery, is described as embodying a 'sense of time as history'.⁴⁰ In the same way that change is etched on people's faces to produce a lived in feel, successful places keep visible the stages of their development ensuring that the community as a whole retains its attachment. The view to St Paul's opposite, linked by the new Millennium Bridge, adds to this continuity and fills the vista with 'place memory'.

But Banksie also benefited in a number of other respects, which illustrate the overlap between the importance of concepts such as 'place attachment' with some of the more established shibboleths of successful regeneration, in particular community consultation and participation. After all, 'place attachment' is in many ways another means of reframing the 'stakeholder' argument, which aims to enhance 'local ownership' of places.



In an overlap with recent work on 'neighbourhood attachment'⁴¹ research has shown that there is a clear correlation between 'place attachment' and long-term residence of an area, which for residents means the locale is inevitably suffused with sentimental ties and significant life experiences.

Once again, this links with Richard Layard's argument on the correlation between levels of trust, crime and happiness. 'If people are highly mobile, they feel less bonded to the people among who they live and crime is more common. A good predictor of low crime rates is how many friends people have within fifteen minutes walk. Crime is lower when people trust each other, and people trust each other more if fewer people are moving house and the community is homogenous,' he writes, flagging up the conclusion that the high levels of mobility favoured by policymakers have less than positive impacts on community.



There is no doubt that it was long term local residents who underpinned the transformation of Bankside, coming together under the banner of local activists group Coin Street Community Builders and vehemently opposing plans for massive office developments which would displace the local community. Instead they drew up alternative plans for a mixed development including housing, a park, workshops and leisure activities, which would retain a place for local people and local businesses. After more than 20 years campaigning, today the Oxo Tower development is a mix of affordable housing for local people, subsidised businesses and leisure activities and is widely recognised as a key catalyst behind the conversion of Tate Modern and the transformation of the area as a whole.



The way forward: Recommendations

Attachment and affordable space

If 'place attachment' is strengthened by ensuring a place remains for the original residents of regenerated areas, then affordability becomes a central policy issue.

This is because, inevitably, the drive towards creating place purely as a consumer product contradicts the creation of this sense of place, as the aim of property-led regeneration is higher property prices and higher rents, out of reach of local residents and local shopkeepers.

The provision of sufficient affordable housing in gentrifying areas and new communities is crucial to maintaining this vital balance with the original community and the planning rules known as Section 106 go some way to ensuring this is provided. But as policymakers now appear to be favouring the extension of homeownership rather than the building of significantly more social rented housing – despite the recommendations of the Treasury's own advisor Kate Barker – this approach is being thrown into doubt.

At the same time, in terms of community cohesion and the creation of places where collective 'place memory' can flourish, at least as important as affordable housing is the retention of premises for local businesses, such as cafes with their roots in the area, perhaps for generations. Independent businesses, such as bookshops, local pubs and newsagents serve a similar function, where the owners and regulars know each other, creating the kind of binding social ties that cement cohesion.

But instead, over the last decade the steady erosion of these types of businesses in high streets and new developments has led to concern at the creation of identikit environments up and down the country with more than 20 000 independent shops closing since 1997.



'La Londonisation'

Across the channel, this problem of property-led regeneration displacing local culture is recognised as so severe that French policymakers have actually termed it 'la Londonisation', and constructed a policy specifically to prevent the same process taking place in Paris.⁴² Consequently around half the 71 000 shops in Paris are to have restrictions placed on them to prevent inappropriate change of use when the shopkeeper sells up or retires, with the result that a food shop would remain a food shop and a bookshop, butcher or greengrocer could not be replaced by a mobile phone shop chain.⁴³

Affluent middle class communities in the UK have also clearly recognised this with well-heeled enclaves such as Queen's Park, Crouch End, Hampstead and Wimbledon Village in London characterised by a dense web of delis, cafes and bookshops. In less affluent areas, however, where the small independent shopkeeper is correspondingly less affluent as well, the independents go under fast. For example, Brixton in south London is a mixed income area which, despite considerable community opposition, has witnessed the closure of a number of independent businesses recently while at the same time the council is to go ahead with plans to sell-off many local properties, placing other independents under threat. Similarly in Broadway Market in East London's Hackney local businesses are in conflict with the council over plans to sell many of the premises on the street to three developers, despite repeated attempts by the businesses themselves to buy the premises.⁴⁴

Yet again, as well as raising serious questions about democracy and accountability this also relates back to the growing interest in 'happiness' with research showing that verbal interaction in local shops can significantly reduce levels of depression.⁴⁵

There is some recognition among policymakers in the UK that squeezing out independent businesses creates a loss for communities and a few local authorities have adopted policies to stem the tide. In Newcastle the City Council has appointed a cultural estates manager who is a chartered surveyor seconded from the property department to culture and environment. Her role is to assist small, independent, in particular creative businesses in the city to find affordable space, often on council-owned land.⁴⁶

But while laudable such initiatives are little more than a drop in the ocean against the tidal wave of chain-store homogenisation undermining place and community. In order to really make a difference the type of policy step-change on affordable property, proposed by the New Economics Foundation in its 'Clone Town Britain' report, needs to be considered.

Planning policy: Extending Section 106

This is the extension of Section 106, the planning policy which ensures a percentage of affordable housing is built in new developments, to guarantee affordable space for local businesses in all new developments. This policy could not fail but to have a very significant effect on the feel of the new 'private-public' developments being created, allowing space for real diversity and a greater spectrum of genuine local inclusion.

There is no denying that such an extension of Section 106 would be a significant change but it would be no harder to implement than the politically charged policies – undertaken by then environment secretary John Gummer in the mid-1990s – to stem the development of out-of-town superstores after a recognition that high streets were being irreparably damaged.

Subsidising values

The success of Coin Street Community Builders at Bankside underlines the importance of policies towards affordable space, with the activities of the community group underpinned by the fact that the then Greater London Council sold the site to them for £1 million in 1984. This was far less than the market price and is the factor which kick-started the transformation of the area, in place of an office complex vigorously opposed by the local community. This affordable price was achieved by placing restrictive covenants on the site, restricting development to a mix of affordable homes, workshop space and leisure uses – covenants which brought the value of the land right down.

Yet in today's climate, where the value of space and the returns it can generate is the paramount factor in creating place, it seems highly unlikely that such restrictive planning policies would be considered, despite the fact that Coin Street is recognised as a key catalyst behind the regeneration of the South Bank as a whole.

Instead councils are usually compelled to seek 'best value' when selling off commercial property, an obscure technical term that tends to place councils under a legal obligation to accept only the highest bids for the properties they wish to sell.





Even so, despite the strength of these trends, the market distortions created by rising land value is a subject very much at the heart of the Treasury's current review of the housing market, with proposals for a land tax being looked at very closely. In the same way that the Treasury hopes a land tax might provide funds for community infrastructure, it could also address the issue of soaring land values displacing the small independent businesses which are the lifeblood of communities.

Community Land Trusts

The question of using rising land values to benefit local communities has always been right at the heart of inspirational approaches to planning. Probably the most famous example is Ebenezer Howard's model for Letchworth Garden City, pioneered in 1903. Howard's particular model rested on philanthropic investment into a private limited company structure, setting aside the profits from rising land values for community benefit. It failed to last but the principle, described by planning academic Peter Hall as 'the financial key',⁴⁷ was established and later underpinned the growth of the UK's new towns programme, which held land under public ownership. This was followed in the 1980s and '90s by the Urban Development Corporations which also held land under public ownership.

More recently the renewed discussion about a possible land tax, or 'planning gain supplement', to capture windfall gains in land prices, has also been accompanied by interest in the concept of Community Land Trusts, particularly on the part of the Greater London Authority.⁴⁸

A Community Land Trust (CLT) is defined by The American Institute for Community Economics as a 'democratically controlled non-profit organisation that owns real estate in order to provide benefits to its local community'.

In an interesting parallel with the rise of BIDs, CLTs have also spread across the US where there are now 130 in operation, compared to just 30 a decade ago. Although they were pioneered during the civil rights movement to enable African Americans to gain access to affordable housing and farmland, their roots are said to date back to the traditions of the New England settlers who brought the practices of the 'commons' with them. Today policymakers view them as an alternative to privatisation, as a vehicle to 'communalise and mutualise rather than privatise assets'.⁴⁹

Although much of the current interest in CLTs in the UK focuses on housing, the National Parks and the National Trust can also be seen as variants on the model, using trust law as a means of protecting public land assets from the market for a public purpose. In London the Environment Trust has used the model to provide housing, workspace and community facilities and was responsible for the new park in Mile End, while the Development Trusts Association – of which Coin Street is a founding member – works on similar principles.

In policy terms London Mayor Ken Livingstone has expressed support for the idea and has commissioned a feasibility study but the sticking point, once again, is likely to be that land will need to be gifted from the public sector and that public subsidy may be needed as well to get Trusts off the ground.

Currently it seems doubtful that the political will exists to ring-fence public land for community benefit. Nonetheless, the emergence of these policies reveals that such alternatives may yet be part of the picture of future urban planning.

Endpiece: A walk down the South Bank

The South Bank and the continuous change which has characterised the area over the last 20 years provides a patchwork of different approaches to the public realm, reflected in the creation of very different types of environments.

To chart the changes in terms of private and public space a walk along this stretch of river, from Westminster Bridge to Tower Bridge, provides an illuminating look at the differing effects of private and public space and their positive and negative effects.

Today the area as a whole is justifiably hailed as a success, and cited as reflecting the verve of the government's much vaunted 'urban renaissance'. However, while the first phase of the transformation has clearly worked very well, the worry is that the growing emphasis on space as a consumer product and overhasty development in some parts may threaten the remarkable achievement to date. This concern is unfortunately shared with a number of other post-industrial riverfront developments around the country from Newcastle to Liverpool.

Like Bankside, Newcastle and Gateshead similarly took full advantage of post-industrial change to create inspiring regeneration – again in the form of a former industrial centre turned art gallery, alongside a superb Millennium Bridge. Now, however, architecturally uninspiring apartments have blighted the skyline while ubiquitous chain bars and restaurants are undermining the very strong innate identity of the area.

In common with land ownership patterns in towns and cities across the country it is surprisingly difficult to establish exactly what the varying landownership arrangements along the South Bank are, but it is clear that the pattern is changing and moving as Adam Caruso notes from 'density of ownership' to the single ownership of areas.

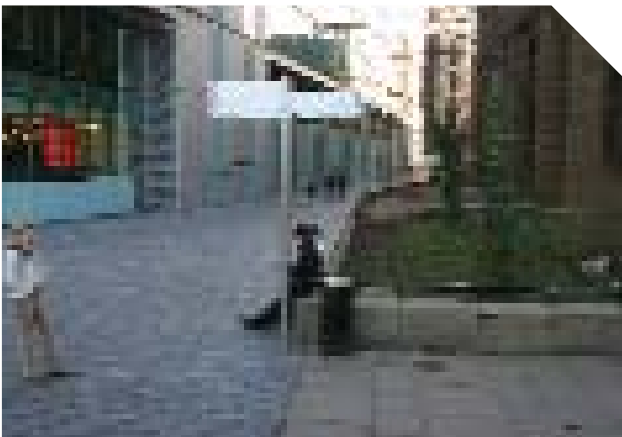
The result is that the South Bank can now be clearly divided into chunks or enclaves which have a clearly defined feel from one to the other.

Starting at the former seat of municipal government in London, County Hall, the space between Westminster Bridge and Hungerford Bridge has today been transformed into a typical 'private-public' space. This area is designated 'private property' by small but clearly visible plaques, which reveal the area is owned by Shirayama Shokusan Co Ltd and managed by Metropolitan Estates. Private security is very evident and seems to divide into two levels with uniformed guards working alongside more informal ranger-style security dressed in orange polo shirts.

With the Millennium Wheel, Saatchi Gallery and Aquarium, the area is a key tourist destination for the capital and is chock full of franchised souvenir stores, cafes and restaurants such as McDonalds and Manga Café, while unlicensed street sellers, skateboarding and cycling are prohibited and the homeless are, according to one of the security guards, 'moved on'. Licensed street theatre, on the other hand, is an integral part of the atmosphere with mime artists and magicians occupying spots every 20 yards or so.

After Hungerford Bridge, however, the atmosphere changes entirely and has a far freer, not to say anarchic, feel to it which is immediately reflected by the noisy skateboard park which heralds the presence of the South Bank Centre. The permanent presence of the second hand book fair outside the National Film Theatre and tables of riverfront drinkers from the NFT bar sit side by side with a new bar and restaurant development, including a number of well-known chains, but it is undeniable that the area has a far more genuinely 'public' feel than its neighbour. This is reflected in the landownership arrangements as the owner, the South Bank Centre, depends heavily on public subsidy.

Different again is the Coin Street area, between Waterloo and Blackfriars Bridge, which is owned by Coin Street Community Builders, the non-profit social enterprise credited with kick-starting the regeneration of the entire south bank 20 years ago. As discussed, affordable land was integral to its success and affordability remains a key aspect of activities in the area, with Gabriel's Wharf market a mix of low-cost, independent businesses, bars and restaurants while the Oxo Tower includes shops, a luxury restaurant, retail design studios and affordable homes.





After Blackfriars Bridge the area is again sharply delineated, this time with gates which cut the Coin Street area off from the next piece of territory which spans Tate Modern up to London Bridge. This area recently became the Business Improvement District (BID), 'Better Bankside'.

This part of the South Bank offers a particularly clear illustration of the processes under discussion. While the conversion of the old power station to art gallery is an outstanding example of regeneration working sympathetically with place, there are growing fears that the growing emphasis on the area as a consumer product, in this case a tourist destination in particular, is undermining its sense of place. According to the Bankside Residents Forum what may appear a minor issue – that hard landscaping is displacing green space – is actually having an inordinate effect on the sense of community in the area. 'In terms of the soul of the area and having a sense of place, that is being lost because there's nowhere for people to go and sit and spend time, for their kids to play – it's all designed for short term visitors and that has a completely different feel to it,' a spokesperson explained.

As to the future of the Bankside area, plans by the BID, Tate Modern and Southwark Council were unclear at the time of writing but locals feared they would involve yet more emphasis on private space to the detriment of place.

This is in spite of an influential urban study of Bankside, commissioned by English Heritage as far back as 1999, which warned that 'the type and intensity of current market forces... could steam roller the special complexity of the area. It needs a firm but imaginative direction, based on an understanding of the spaces, communities and uses which make the place special. Ultimately it is this unique character and identity which will keep people wanting to live and work in the area – keep it alive and sane'. The report warned that the area needed a 'keeper of its soul' able to stand back from the 'hectic process' and provide an overall vision to guard against 'the uncontrolled haste of developments'.

Moving further east, the Pool of London, between London Bridge and Tower Bridge is tipped to become another BID. In terms of the riverfront it currently spans two privately owned and managed areas, More London, the complex which includes the Greater London Authority, and Hays Galleria, a gated shopping and leisure complex geared towards office workers.

Here the separation between places is clearest of all, highlighted by sharply contrasting colour and type of paving and architectural styles in the More London and Hays Galleria areas, reinforcing the feeling that the entire riverfront walk is a series of different enclaves which lack connection to each other. The More London area itself, today's seat of municipal power in the capital, is also clearly designated private property, dotted with similar plaques to those found in the County Hall area at the other end of the South Bank.

Currently much of More London is still under construction but there are fears that, as in Manchester, Liverpool and Newcastle to name but a few, the planned apartment complexes will house a transient community of private renters rather than the mix of local residents and incoming owners who are likely to put down the roots needed to create a community.

This walk along the South Bank illustrates both positives and negatives. Above all it reflects the astonishing opportunities for change provided by the post-industrial landscape, which can be said to have characterised the first phase of the 'urban renaissance'. However, it equally reflects many of the concerns posed by the growing emphasis on 'private-public' space as a consumer product, to the detriment of place and community. Unfortunately this is emerging as a key characteristic of the second phase of the renaissance and it is this tension between development and community that this report is trying to address.

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About the author

Anna Minton is a writer and journalist focussing on social policy. She appears regularly on television and radio and is a frequent conference speaker.

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The Royal Institution
of Chartered Surveyors
12 Great George Street
Parliament Square
London SW1P 3AD
United Kingdom

T +44 (0)870 333 1600
F +44 (0)20 7334 3811
contactrics@rics.org
www.rics.org