

FIBRE SERIES

URBAN REGENERATION IS IN YOUR HANDS!
THE RICS SUSTAINABLE URBAN REGENERATION LECTURE SERIES 2008



Public and private partners need to work together to make Sustainable Urban Regeneration happen. Involvement of citizens and the community is crucial, as regeneration is ultimately for them.

a single policy

COMMUNICATION

deliberate development

CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

SCBA



RICS

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“ IF YOU CHANGE YOUR THINKING ABOUT ECONOMY AND ECOLOGY AND THINK OF THE TERMS AS PART OF THE SAME CONCEPT, YOU CAN BEGIN TO UNDERSTAND SUSTAINABILITY.

Green Building & Remodelling for Dummies

“ IF EVER THERE WAS A TIME TO ACT IT IS NOW. THOUGH CITIES ARE IMPORTANT ENGINES OF GROWTH AND PROVIDE ECONOMIES OF SCALE IN THE PROVISION OF SERVICES, MOST OF THEM ARE ENVIRONMENTALLY UNSUSTAINABLE. IN ADDITION (...) MANY CITIES ARE RAPIDLY BECOMING SOCIALLY UNSUSTAINABLE.

2007 State of the World; The Worldwatch Institute

Background

The world is becoming increasingly urban...

Population growth, higher living standards (e.g. more living space per person) and demographic change (e.g. more single-person households) are some of the developments which have changed our environment into an increasingly urban one. In Europe, around 4 out of every 5 citizens are currently living in what can be described as an urban environment.

...it is also becoming increasingly unsustainable...

The high intensity of human activities in cities has led to a number of challenges, including climate change, rising energy consumption and fossil fuel prices, contaminated land, uncontrollable urban sprawl, social instability, urban poverty, increasing disparities, crime and alienation. In such an urban unsustainable environment, “business as usual” models focusing on economic aspects alone are no longer sufficient to address these problems effectively.

...and there is a need to act!

This increased awareness needs to be transformed into concrete action. In the built environment, case studies already exist that demonstrate the vast potential of the sustainable urban regeneration approach. The challenge rests in building upon these examples and fine-tune them to suit local requirements. The ambition of this FiBRE is to play a part in the search for a more sustainable future.

What is sustainable urban regeneration?

The most widely used and accepted definition of sustainable development comes from a 1987 report written by the *Brundtland Commission*¹ stating that “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”

Commonly, sustainable development has three pillars: economic, social and environmental. Sustainability, therefore, is more than being green in terms of the environmental aspects; it is about the triple bottom line of people, planet and profit. Therefore sustainable urban regeneration is urban (re)development taking into account all three aspects simultaneously.

¹The Brundtland Commission, formally the ‘World Commission on Environment and Development’ (WCED), was convened by the United Nations in 1983 to address growing concern “about the accelerating deterioration of the human environment and natural resources and the consequences of that deterioration for economic and social development.” The report, titled ‘Our Common Future’, was published in 1987.

**“ BUSINESS AS USUAL
MODELS FOCUSING ON
ECONOMICS ASPECTS ALONE
ARE NO LONGER SUFFICIENT.**



The RICS Sustainable Urban Regeneration Lecture Series

The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and its members are represented throughout the property lifecycle, including the planning and development stage. RICS has members operating out of 146 countries. It also has a Royal Charter, which requires it to act in the public interest. RICS is very keen on stimulating debate on two seemingly separate, but converging, ideas. The first is the world of property and its value, the second is an increasing awareness of the responsibilities towards society and the environment born by individuals.

Between March and June 2008, the EU Public Affairs team of RICS organised a series of evening lectures to stimulate a debate based on case studies presented by experts in the field of sustainable urban regeneration:

- ▶ March 2008 – Pierre Laconte – *Brussels: Perspectives on a European Capital*
- ▶ April 2008 – Rob de Wildt – *The Social Impact of Urban Regeneration Measures*
- ▶ May 2008 – Chris Brown – *The Economics of Urban Regeneration and Public Policy Responses*
- ▶ June 2008 – Stephen Hill & Indy Johar – *Sustainable Suburbs*

This FIBRE presents 5 recommendations on the basis of these lectures and discussions. The conclusions are by no means the final solution. They are examples on how sustainable concepts and ideas can, and in our minds should, be taken into account when engaging in urban regeneration.

Raluca Iagher & Sander Scheurwater

RICS EU Public Affairs

September 2008

“ SUSTAINABILITY (...) IS MORE THAN BEING GREEN. ”



Sustainable Urban Regeneration is in Your Hands - Lessons Learnt

INVOLVE THE
CITIZENS IN
THE PROCESS
OF URBAN
PLANNING AND
DEVELOPMENT

DEVELOP AND
REGENERATE
BY MEANS OF
DELIBERATE
CONSTRUCTION
TO ENSURE
LEGITIMACY
AND ACCEPTANCE

The continued development of Europe's urban spaces as places where people want to work and live is vital to the economic and social success of Europe as a whole. Throughout the lectures, several aspects of sustainable regeneration were elaborated. This section summarises the main recommendations for policy makers and other stakeholders to take into account when planning or undertaking sustainable urban regeneration projects.

One of the common threads uniting the lectures has clearly been the theme of people and the community.

Delivery of successful sustainable urban regeneration can only be achieved if those for whom the regeneration is meant are part of the process. Community involvement will create acceptance and good, innovative ideas.

During the first lecture on the development of the European Union's headquarters in Brussels, the idea that citizens should have been involved in the process of urban planning and development became evident. The Brussels story is revealing: the absence of an informed dialogue between those constructing and developing and those already living in the area resulted not only in a lack of legitimacy of the new EU buildings but it also missed the integration of local preferences and concerns in the European quarter. Any sustainable urban development must therefore take into account a deliberate construction and involvement of the local citizens and other stakeholders.

The second lecture highlighted the idea of involving more social aspects in assessing a sustainable urban regeneration project. Although economics is essential, environmental and social concerns should be considered simultaneously. In this way, a project





FOR AN OVERALL
SUCCESSFUL URBAN
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IMPLEMENTED

AS MARKETS ALONE
CAN NOT PROVIDE
FOR SUSTAINABLE
REGENERATION
A SINGLE COHERENT
EUROPEAN POLICY
SHOULD BE DEVELOPED
TO OFFER CLEAR
INCENTIVES FOR
SUSTAINABLE URBAN
REGENERATION

COMMUNICATION
BETWEEN MEMBERS
OF A COMMUNITY
AND THE CREATION
OF COHESION ARE
ESSENTIAL IN
DELIVERING
SUSTAINABLE
URBAN REGENERATION

is analysed not only from a financial cost-benefit perspective, but looks at the whole picture in order to develop a sustainable community. Therefore, however challenging, developing a sustainable cost-benefit analysis is a step towards integrating welfare effects for the community where and when urban regeneration takes place. A further recommendation is thus formed.

The third lecture focused on the vital relationship between regeneration and public policy. It argued that despite the fact that economic benefits of regeneration are unquestionable, the market itself will not deliver sustainable urban regeneration. In this sense, public policy has an important role to play in providing an incentive for developers to deliver sustainable urban regeneration. Policy should be coherent and clear if regeneration is to have an impact. There are numerous public policy 'silos' which affect regeneration, including regional funding mechanisms, state aid, transport, energy, air quality and waste. Urban regeneration should be a policy area of its own.

Discussing ways in which our suburbs can become sustainable, the last lecture introduced valuable

insights into the important role of communication. The focus was on the ways in which urban design and regeneration can shape local identities and manage co-existence in a shared space. Community cohesion and communication are key elements without which urban regeneration will most likely fail. The last recommendation focuses once again on people and community.

Currently, many urban 'solutions' (e.g. providing more roads to accommodate more cars) are only put in place to maintain, rather than change, the way the world works today. What we need to do is look at things differently, which will inevitably lead to addressing them differently.

For sustainable urban regeneration to happen, politicians need to show leadership, private stakeholders need to see the financial and long-term benefits (not mutually exclusive), and citizens need to be given and seize opportunities to get engaged and take responsibility.

It is time to stop looking at each other and start acting. For us, one thing is clear, sustainable urban regeneration is in your hands!

Brussels - Perspectives on a European Capital

The Debate

A focus on the much debated topic of density indicated that besides being an issue of definition (e.g. dwellings per hectare or jobs and people per hectare), density is more about perception than number of floors. Compared to other European capitals, Brussels has a low density. Whilst it seems unavoidable that a compact city and sustainable development go hand in hand, building sizes need to remain humane for people to feel at home, leading towards high-density low-rise urban forms.

The creation of the European quarter in Brussels shows that **applying mere market economics does not necessarily generate good urban design**. In the 1950s, the area around the North Station had been cleared by the local governments and was ready to accommodate office buildings, thus making for an ideal location for a European quarter, accessible by train from the airport in fifteen minutes. However, developers opted for developing the European institution buildings on a plot by plot basis in the residential Cinquantenaire area – an area of particular architectural interest due to its late nineteenth century building stock. It was obviously cheaper for them to buy out the residents, tear down their houses and build office blocks in their place than building on vacant, but more expensive, land designated for commercial use.

The current image of the European quarter as a series of chaotic, non-integrated office buildings without any spaces for interaction and social gathering, except perhaps the ones that emerged spontaneously (Jourdan and Luxembourg), has its roots in **a lack of long-term vision of both the responsible Belgian and the European administrators who were led by speculative developers**. At the same time, besides exceptions such as the Berlaymont building and the European Parliament premises, the European constructions do not differ from other nondescript office buildings, resulting in a lack of symbolism and imagery relating to the EU.



Therefore, a crucial factor in any sustainable urban development must be **public involvement** including those whose lives are affected by a new development or a regeneration project. Such **a dialogue between developers and the citizens** would respond to local interests and preferences while formulating appropriate aesthetic and political architecture for a European Capital. Indeed, one should always involve the public in the process of urban planning and development.

A European Stakeholders Forum would provide a place where all stakeholders could meet and discuss the integration of the proposed buildings and sites in the existing city or area. These stakeholders could include, depending on the case, national and regional government officials, representatives of civil society, citizens groups, the private sector and the media. The common formulation of guidelines for the proposed developments would support the legitimacy of the new initiative. For a successful regeneration project, a recommendation would be to develop a targeted discussion, such as a European Stakeholder Forum, to ensure **legitimacy and acceptance**.



Speaker Profile

Pierre Laconte is a founding partner of the *Groupe Urbanisme-Architecture*, which in 1970 produced the master plan of Louvain-la-Neuve (Belgium), the new university town and co-ordinated its implementation.

From 1984 until 1998 he was the secretary general of the *International Union of Public Transport* (UITP), a think-tank on urban mobility and intermodality.

Since 2006, he is president of the *International Society of City and Regional Planners* (ISOCARP). He is also the *European Environment Agency's* scientific committee member in charge of urban matters.

“ INVOLVE THE PUBLIC IN THE PROCESS OF URBAN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT. ”

Case Study 1 - The European Quarter, Brussels, Belgium

Brussels became a seat to the largest number and the most powerful institutions in Europe **almost by accident and despite a lack of planning**. In 1952, the refusal of Belgium's national government to host the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC) in Brussels, and thus make Brussels the capital of all future European institutions, determined the remaining ECSC nations to select Luxembourg and Strasbourg as temporary capitals. It was only in 1957, when the location of the new European Community became an important issue, that Belgium proposed Brussels as a seat for the European Economic Community (EEC) and Euratom.

The first presidency was hosted by Belgium in 1958, as it was the first of the six founding members in alphabetical order. It was only then that a provisional secretariat was set up. Brussels thus became de facto one of the three capitals of Europe, together with Luxembourg and Strasbourg. The three capitals kept a temporary status until 1992, when the Council of Edinburgh confirmed them as the definitive ones.

Due to the temporary status of Brussels, **the Belgian government never invested in its European image**, with the exception of the Berlaymont, therefore allowing for a day to day addition of speculative projects on former residential plots, which did not consider the integration of the new buildings in their neighborhoods. Even the landmark buildings of the European Parliament were originally planned as a congress center. It just so happened that they complied with the requirements of the European Parliament for its meetings at the time.

The Social Impact of Urban Regeneration Measures



The Debate

In urban regeneration projects, **a qualitative analysis should become standard practice.** Good quality housing in itself is not sufficient to ensure successful urban regeneration if, for example, quality of services or the perception of their quality remain low.

Ultimately, **urban renewal is about people.** Therefore any analysis must contain quality of life indicators. These indicators include unemployment, safety, neighbourhood satisfaction, public space, community cohesion and the environment. To enhance a sense of community it is also essential to have a 'pride of place'.

Therefore, sustainable urban regeneration needs to consider environmental, social and economical aspects simultaneously. A simple cost-benefit analysis which focuses on economics and profitability is clearly not enough. To correctly assess future urban regeneration projects we need to go a step further and develop a **sustainable cost-benefit analysis.** This not only includes the monetary costs and gains, but also the larger social and sustainable goals of a community, allowing for several important welfare effects.

However, given the complexity of such an approach, the incentive to perform truly sustainable urban regeneration schemes is very low. Although the economic benefits of sustainable design are well-documented, there are still misalignments between those providing the regeneration works and those who are going to benefit from them.

To address this gap, **urban renewal must be accommodated for in legislative mechanisms.** While urban areas in the EU face similar types of problems, there are significant cultural and practical differences between urban systems in the member states, which means that urban policy and regeneration efforts should primarily remain at the local level. However, **a clear signal and steer is needed from the level of European policy.** EU policy should not restrict itself to guidelines, of a voluntary nature, but should provide enough incentives for sustainable cost-benefit analysis.



Speaker Profile

Rob de Wildt (Fellow of RICS) has been working for *RIGO Research en Advies* in Amsterdam, the Netherlands, since 1979 and is a partner since 1990. He carries out research and consults on architectural and construction-economical matters. He is involved in policy studies for the *Dutch Ministry of Housing, Planning and Environment*.

Rob studied building engineering in Delft and specialised in architecture and construction economy. He has been chairman of the *Dutch Society of Construction Cost Experts* (Nederlandse Vereniging van Bouwkostendeskundigen), the *European Committee of Construction Economists* (CEEC) and of the *European Building Surveyors Platform* (AEBC).

Case Study 2 - A Social Cost Benefit Analysis of Hoogvliet, Rotterdam, the Netherlands

The case study presented the **added-value of applying a Social Cost Benefit Analysis** (SCBA) in a pilot study of Hoogvliet, a borough of Rotterdam, the second largest city in the Netherlands.

As urban renewal and regeneration projects are not necessarily profitable from a traditional cost-benefit point of view, **the methodology of SCBA takes into account government investment** which provides a new approach and can turn around the profitability of such urban renewal schemes.

The welfare effects identifiable in an SCBA can assess whether spending public money on urban renewal is justified. These welfare effects can be direct (quality of housing and neighbourhoods, accessibility, public spaces and shops, education and jobs), indirect (health, safety, density, perception of the social environment), external (air quality, noise) and relate to distribution (income, employment, ripple-effect).

The application of an SCBA in the case of urban renewal in Hoogvliet gave rise to several important findings. One conclusion is that **SCBA can be positive for the physical project** and indeed, governmental subsidies create important welfare effects. These effects can be difficult to measure, but the study shows that urban renewal, if done with a view to the social aspects, can transform such regeneration schemes into viable projects.



“ **EU POLICY (...) SHOULD PROVIDE ENOUGH INCENTIVES FOR SUSTAINABLE COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS.** ”

The Economics of Urban Regeneration and Public Policy Responses

The Debate

Our current lifestyles are fundamentally unsustainable. On the one hand, citizens are looking towards politicians to show leadership; on the other, politicians need to keep a fine balance between what is best for the public interest in the long-term and the short term goal of getting re-elected. However, both have to take action to address today's challenges, including climate change, rising fossil fuel prices, social instability, urban poverty, crime and alienation, the credit crunch and recession.

Sustainable urban regeneration is not only about property development. It is about the **creation of liveable cities and neighbourhoods, a vibrant mixed use and the reduction of car use**. Apart from the social and the environmental aspects, urban regeneration also brings economic benefits. Today, most of the economic growth in Europe comes from personal services and knowledge-based industries, both of which benefit from regenerated urban areas.

For example, successful regeneration in Amsterdam and Malmö has resulted in more affordable housing, a reduction in carbon emissions, more efficient recycling rates and increased community cohesion. In other words, **successful regeneration increases economic competitiveness**.

The importance of private investment and expertise in urban regeneration is unquestionable; however, markets alone will not deliver sustainable urban regeneration. **Policy has a vital role to play**, provided it moves in the same direction as the market, and not against it.

There are numerous public policy 'silos', including transport, energy, competition, cohesion, economic and environment. These silos appear at all levels: local, regional, national and international. However, urban regeneration does not fit into any of these silos – on the contrary, it horizontally cuts across all of them. **To make an impact, a single coherent policy for regeneration is needed.**



**“ MARKETS ALONE
WILL NOT DELIVER
SUSTAINABLE URBAN
REGENERATION.**



Speaker Profile

Chris Brown (Fellow of RICS) is chief executive of *igloo Regeneration* and director of *Isis Waterside Regeneration*, a joint venture between *igloo*, *British Waterways* and *Amec* that regenerates brownfield waterside sites around the UK. The *igloo Regeneration Partnership* is a partnership of pension and life funds managed by *Morley*, which invests in and develops urban regeneration sites across the UK. *igloo* has been described by the United Nations as the world's first sustainable property fund.

Case Study 3 - Holbeck Urban Village, Leeds, UK

Holbeck is an area just south of Leeds city centre. It has been designated an urban village and is the focus of a multi-million pound regeneration programme. The aim is to create a sustainable development, combining a mix of uses including residential, business, leisure and community uses. Amenities such as bars, cafes, and shops form the key focus for ground level development. Healthcare, primary and nursery schooling, together with recreational and cultural facilities are also provided.

The regeneration of the area is expected to create investment of around £800 million. Along with this investment, developers suggest that thousands of new jobs will be created in the high value digital and creative media sector and support services. In addition, a total of around 800.000 square feet of office space will be made available and 2.500 residential apartments will be developed.



“ A SINGLE COHERENT
POLICY FOR REGENERATION
IS NEEDED. ”

Sustainable Suburbs

The Debate

One of the key challenges affecting our understanding of suburbia is the **lack of definition and classification**. In the UK, for example, a place is defined as either urban or rural. The term ‘suburban’ does not exist, although 84% of UK citizens call suburbia home. Drawing a boundary between rural and urban spaces implies a sharp separation between countryside and built-up area that simply does not exist in most places.

At the same time, suburbs are often regarded as unsustainable, mainly due to car dependency. Indeed, the theory of the walkable or cycleable town is desirable, but often unattainable.

The reality is one of ‘super sprawl’.

From a historical point of view, suburbs have usually enjoyed very good public transport connections to the city centre. But as these infrastructures have not been able to accommodate the changing needs of many suburbanites whose commuting patterns have become increasingly diverse, the car is indispensable for many.

In addition to these changing needs, local amenities have also disappeared over time. This has happened due to economies of scale and increased mobility, but also because density, in terms of population and not dwellings, has gone down.

What we need to do is to look at things differently. Yet, looking at things differently also means addressing them differently. For example, changing people’s energy behaviour could be achieved by looking at the amount of energy used per person instead of per square metre. In this way, people become aware of their own individual energy ‘footprint’ and may start to change it in view of the social element involved.

Communication is key to a sustainable future. Today, people no longer meet their neighbours, which is the biggest challenge in re-building the local community. The fact that one third of UK citizens would not trust their neighbours with their key while away shows the need for strengthening community ties. Although building relationships is a long term exercise, **communication amongst residents and professionals will result in trust, and that will contribute to increased community cohesion.** Without the community, there is nothing and without community cohesion, urban regeneration will most likely fail. Therefore, discussions on regeneration should always revolve around use and people.

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COMMUNICATION IS KEY TO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.



Speaker Profiles

Stephen Hill (Member of RICS) is director of *C2O Futureplanners*, which is part of a network of independent practitioners and thinkers concerned with the sustainability of the built environment. Besides being a Member of RICS, Stephen is also a Chartered Environmentalist (CEnv).



Indy Johar is director of *00:/ Architecture*, a research and strategy led architecture practice, focused on designing projects as prototypes for people-centred sustainability in design and ethical workspaces.

“ WITHOUT THE COMMUNITY
THERE IS NOTHING.

Case Study 4 - The Barking Project, The London Borough of Barking & Dagenham, UK

The London Borough of Barking & Dagenham is an outer London borough to the east of the city, on the north bank of the river Thames, and can therefore be considered a suburb of London. It is well connected and is close to, but not a part of the capital. Although attractively located, the borough is perceived to lack attractive design. For example, **public space is often uninviting and fenced, hindering social and community interaction.**

The Barking project is large scale and long term, focusing on delivering a sustainable, regenerated community in 20 years time. In achieving this objective, the concept of ‘Place Shaping’ is central.



Place Shaping is about the production of space and place to enhance the general well-being of a community and its residents.

Place Shaping addresses important issues such as: building and shaping local identity; managing co-existence in a shared space; representing the community; working to make the local economy more successful while being sensitive to pressures on the environment and ensuring that there is a link between the public space (the ‘outside’) and the private (the ‘inside’).

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The Holbeck Urban Village, www.holbeckurbanvillage.co.uk

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To ensure that our members are able to provide the quality of advice and **level of integrity** required by the market, RICS qualifications are only awarded to individuals who meet the most rigorous requirement for both education and experience and who are prepared to maintain **high standards** in the public interest. With this in mind it's perhaps not surprising that the letters RICS represent the mark of property professionalism worldwide.

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