

Environmental Concerns in Waterfront Development
Scottish Universities Insight Institute
The Lighthouse, Glasgow - Monday 27 October 2014

Introduction

This Knowledge Exchange programme is bringing together practitioners, policy makers and academics involved with regeneration processes in Glasgow, Dundee and Edinburgh, which account for a substantial part of overall urban regeneration activity currently under way in Scotland, and have the potential to make a huge impact on Scotland's future economic and social development. These three initiatives are evolving in parallel, developing their own independent approaches to city-building and to shaping the new places where people will live and work.

Through sharing experiences, the programme aims to contribute to the future development of the waterfront areas directly involved in the programme as well as other waterfront regeneration processes emerging in Scotland. In addition, it aims to guide a debate over issues surrounding economic, social and environmental aspects of regeneration activities in the country, in order to inform policy development and implementation.

The programme includes 4 workshops over 6 months, each exploring an aspect of development from each city (and including a field trip), with a final workshop providing the opportunity to draw together conclusions and identify next steps for an ongoing knowledge exchange network of policy-makers, practitioners and academics.

The first seminar in the series took place at The Lighthouse, in Glasgow on Monday 27 October 2014 where **Soledad Ferrari (University of Edinburgh) and Harry Smith (Heriot Watt University)** introduced the event on behalf of the Scottish Universities Insight Institute.

Michael Ward, Glasgow City Council, provided an introduction by noting 'Glasgow is its river' and the waterfront's importance in the city's story. The city is proud of recent change: formerly run down and deprived (e.g. quotes: '*worse than East Berlin*'; '*Glasgow's miles worse*'; '*a second class city*') there is now a more positive story being told: '*UK's coolest city*'; '*the new Berlin*'. The strong policy context – e.g. City Development Plan and the National Economic Strategy – seeks to transform and build upon the city's strengths by putting people and place at the heart of the story; supporting key growth sectors, and ensuring inclusion and connections.

Three main waterfront areas are: Clyde Waterfront, City Centre (e.g. new Financial District), and Clyde Gateway (e.g. Commonwealth Games, Athlete's Village). New high profile regeneration has occurred (e.g. BBC, Transport Museum, etc), but huge voids are evident in the figure ground – where objects sit in 'splendid isolation'; the challenge is to bring the river into more active use, overcome barriers, e.g. the Clydeside Expressway, and ensure better connectivity.

GCC is seeking to develop Strategic Development Frameworks for areas (e.g. for Partick/Govan – make connections) and along the entire Clyde corridor. Canals, closed in 1960s, are now a catalyst for positive change and visitor destinations, e.g. focus on leisure: paddle centre.

Richard Millar, Scottish Canals, (Forth & Clyde, Crinan, Caledonian, Union and (part) Monkland canals) described how the 70 miles of waterway provide 140 miles of waterfront opportunities. The canals originated 1768-1820s from enterprise born of the Scottish enlightenment, moving freight

and delivering jobs. In the 1850s canals were challenged by the railways and by the 1940/50s had fallen into decline and disrepair; the eventual motorways led to the abandonment of the canals in the 1960s. By 1990s there was belief that they could come back to life to support communities. The Millenium funded Falkirk Wheel and the more recent Kelpies/Helix projects are visitor attractions providing local employment and supporting the local economy.

Canal regeneration projects help to bring uplift in adjacent land and property values; work with local social enterprise to transform existing run down assets (e.g. heritage buildings); provide linear parks; act as a catalyst to bring new life to areas; benchmark quality for new development; work with assets to create identity. River / motorway / canal have acted as boundaries/barriers to disconnect communities; efforts are being made to re-connect (e.g. 'metal petal' motorway underpass). At Speirs Wharf working with cultural organisations (e.g. Scottish Opera) to transform and change perceptions of the area: The Whisky Bond, The Glue Factory, sculpture studios, creative hubs.

Scottish Canals are exploring new ways of commercialising the water – residential moorings provide new ways of living and are in demand; areas for sports activities; 'go ape' over the water; paddle centre; trim trail; white water sports training – all with intention of involving local communities; in association with distillery; as hold and attenuation areas for run-off from new development; health benefits; arts based projects. Canals contribute £55m GVA; investments lever considerable returns and wide benefits.

A field trip study tour took participants to visit Port Dundas (from the Pinkston Water Sports centre to The Whiskey Bond) and Govan.



Daniel Skog, City of Malmo, described how Malmo's main employer, the shipyard, had gone from prosperous low unemployment in the 1960s to decline in the 1970/80s; by 1986 the shipyard had closed. Major rescue plans (e.g. new SAAB car production plant) were unsuccessful, and people lost hope. The city bought the entire western harbour and invested in the land which was then sold on in small packages to developers to ensure diversity. Although the harbour area feels 'far away', it is close to the centre of a compact city which made a decision not to extend beyond the outer ring road. New housing for 100k people was to be provided on old vacant industrial land. A new university of 25k students has a significant impact in a city of 3.5k inhabitants; helping to attract and retain a younger population (50% < 35).

The design by an architect employed by the city (Klaus Tham) was inspired by medieval designs that offer unexpected encounters. Leadership was provided by the Mayor (a former architect). A new landmark building – the twisting torso – is a signal / recognition point (replacing the former crane) and an exclamation mark signifying the debate about the future of the area. Six storey external perimeter blocks shelter the interior of the site from the exposed winds and ensure a good micro climate; a European housing expo in 2001 attracted a range of architects to ensure diversity. 100% renewable energy is produced on site and stored in underground basins integrated into the design.

The city co-operates with developers in a positive way to create common development goals (what should we achieve?... how parking should be handled?...) and oblige developers to co-operate with each other: i.e. install common waste handling systems (food waste produces bio-gas to power cars, taxis, buses); district heating solutions; common study tours to get the same kind of background information; think about energy and consumption; green space factors; bio-diversity; above ground rainwater handling; easy and attractive mobility; operating public transport from the beginning. Developers put savings from not having to provide car parking into supporting a car club (by day for companies; by evening for residents) to reduce car ownership and provide free membership to new residents. The City contacts new occupiers to provide travel maps and timetables to help establish new behaviours.

The ocean wall is a popular spot for Malmo people; a place where people from all parts of the city come to mix and enjoy. Cafes and restaurants have opened; outside concerts take place. Things that are unexpected have happened: people started to swim in the sea; instead of stopping this, the city has facilitated this by employing lifeguards and providing steps and ladders down to the water level. The area has become a destination. A further decked area had to be provided. Old buildings have been re-used.

Originally the shipyard employed 7k people; today 10k people are employed in a variety of different companies. People engage in civic processes and sit on a community panel to guide budget investments. There are benefits from the bridge link to Copenhagen where 40k people commute daily. Co-operative and 'unholy' alliances have been formed. Future phases (including in private ownership) are being informed by the first successful development phase.

Justin Abbott, Arup, gave a presentation on water sensitive urban design and noted there are significant global drivers for thinking about water. He spoke about 'water management as a source of civic pride...'; a starting point for bringing together multiple interests; where lots of small interventions can offer better alternatives to one heavily engineered solution, and adaptive interventions ensure a 'no regrets' approach which allows for future variation. Water influences urban form and there is a need to reconnect people with water.

When investments are made there is a need to achieve other benefits through overcoming silo thinking; a business case for delivery may fracture across various parties. Understanding benefits can be through monetising: all bodies have an interest in water – how can they all be joined up and linked? E.g. energy use, food production, connections, water management, etc. All can be combined to bring together different outcomes. Current ways of working are not sustainable. Various international case studies showed how it is possible to see projects in terms of wider catchment areas with the potential to deliver more than just the project.

A subsequent group discussion reflected on lessons from the site visits and presentations to identify factors contributing to environmentally sustainable waterfront regeneration in Scotland under three areas: a) resources, b) rules and organisations and c) ideas and mindsets. Issues raised included:

- People have a psychological connection to water
- The market collapse has offered new 'small' opportunities to do things differently
- There are global climate challenges that require new ways of thinking and doing
- Community action - Involving the community / social enterprise
- Unplanned things can happen – resulting in happy accidents: allow things to happen within an overall policy framework
- Be bloody minded and make things happen; start by doing something
- Issues of land assembly and management; leverage outcomes
- Buy up land before 'vision' and land values rise
- Partnerships, discussions, buy-in – essential to delivery
- Buildings focus on, and commit resources to, one place; lots of small
- Scale of opportunity - possibilities; vast swathes of vacant and derelict land – promote a 'big idea'
- Become a better place through integration with the context

What makes a waterfront environmentally sustainable?

1. Activity
2. Bio-diversity
3. Energy efficiency (e.g Malmo initiatives)
4. Effective transport capacity – barrier v connection
5. Water as a catalyst for making things happen

What attitudes are [not!] in place to contribute to an environmentally sustainable waterfront?

1. Attitudes to risk - e.g. funding
2. Attitudes to risk – e.g. access to water
3. Leadership – realise scale of opportunity; land assembly
4. Changing silo culture
5. Holistic / corporate approach to delivering outcomes (too compartmentalised)

The next seminar will take place in Dundee on Monday 1 December. For more information refer to <http://www.scottishinsight.ac.uk/Programmes/Programmes20142015/WaterfrontRegeneration.aspx> or contact [Dr Soledad Garcia Ferrari](#) (University of Edinburgh) or [Dr Harry Smith](#) (Heriot Watt University).