

Editorial**Recreated spaces, transformed
communities and contested sustainability****Tasleem Shakur and Eamon Reid**

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While many large high rise housing blocks, designed and constructed during the post-war Modernist period are being demolished in many parts of Western Europe (as dissatisfied communities have caused a rise in anti-social activities), there also seems to be a rise of an interesting new phenomenon: *satisfied* communities living in the old quarters of the historic cities of the world, or in the fringe derelict areas of Europe. These are regenerated and inspired community spaces created in the old city centres like in Bursa (Turkey) or in the fringe urban areas of historic port cities in the Netherlands (NDSM and De Ceuvel in Amsterdam).

The experience of heritage architecture, planning and urban design from both developed and the developing world in the 21st century suggest that visibly vibrant communities have flourished within historical quarters, when developed and regenerated through strategic development plans. In some cases, while the existence of serious contestations of land uses or legal rights issues are apparent, the end products still appear to have favoured the communities living or working in those spaces.

Historical and traditional buildings still tend to provide enormous imagination, due to their technical and cultural ingenuity. The process of 'quick fix' modernist or post-modernist design and, at times, the lack of understanding in relation to emerging cultures have not enabled us to provide, build and design satisfactory spaces for impoverished communities (Shakur, T: 2014).

A snapshot of the development of 'contested spaces' and the rise of 'disaffected communities' from the period of western industrialization to the present, highlight the linkages between the changing nature and identities of the built environments of different parts of the world at different times. Some contemporary urban initiatives and projects seem to have produced satisfied communities (Like the historic shrine area development in New Delhi, India or the Co-housing and Green Architecture project at Lancaster, UK). Some contemporary urban

projects re-actualize and redeploy certain elements of the historical industrial built environment, in the production of innovative community spaces.

To explore the links with such 're-created spaces' which may have 'transformed the communities' and possible 'contestation' with 'sustainability', a GBER international workshop was convened on 4 April 2018 at Amsterdam. It was intended that the Workshop to provide a forum for an exchange of ideas relating to innovative community based projects and the related urban areas of the different parts of the world, with the aim of helping architects, planners, environmentalists, social and urban geographers, and activists to understand the changing interconnections between 'community identities' and the 'built environments'. Efforts were made to provide case studies from different periods of time and places (and the corresponding planning and design practices) to discuss and extract lessons gained, helping in the reconceptualization the related theories. An innovative creative site of 'De-Ceuvel' near the northern disused old shipyard area was chosen for the forum. This was a heavily polluted ground and I have a first hand knowledge of a German academic turned practising architect (Sascha Glasl of Spacematter) who along with his team initiated a prize winning sort of 'sustainable architecture/community project involving sustainable building, energy and waste management techniques along with recycled materials. We do not wish to provide more information or details of this project site as at least two contributors analysed it in more details in this volume.

All I (Tasleem) could say that I am quite familiar with the site since its inception and later in completion (while some bits still continues to grow) through my Human Geography student field trips for the last 3-4 years, which provided and insightful thoughts to both the tutors and the students of the field trip while we had talks from Sascha Glasl and some of other architects and urbanists like Beata Labuhn and Monica Velasco. Without being too biased, I could safely describe De Ceuvel as a recently created unique space with an aspiration to provide a multi-dimensional and micro-sustainable community. This special issue is concerned with myriad unique spaces, communities and the historical transformation of community spaces.

We are quite pleased to provide our lead full blown commentary/article, painstakingly developed by Beata Labuhn (a Dutch research Architect, now a doctoral candidate at Oslo School of Architecture) on the historical background context to the transformation of the Amsterdam's squatter clearances to the politicized cultural movements of artist led spontaneous settlements (alternative spaces), from the 1970s to the present time. This,

somewhat longish but carefully substantiated commentary, backed up by a host of relevant old photos and documents, should set the scene for conceptualizing the themes of this particular special issue: attempting to deal with the emerging micro-urban peripheral architectural/planning issues of the ‘recreated spaces and transformed communities’ and its implications on the perceived ‘contested sustainability’. Indeed, it was Beata who first introduced us to the fascinating project, some ten years ago, which since then, got included in one of our Human Geography students’ field trip sites, dealing with the fascinating concept of ‘cultural incubator/bottom up’ regeneration of a disused heritage industrial site (NDSM) in Amsterdam near the bank of river Ij (which was a brain child of the celebrated urban regeneration activist Eva de Klerk, who provided the key note talk on this issue at our Workshop at the most recent award winning sustainable micro community site at De Cuevel, near NDSM). As mentioned before of a German academic architect (later turned a practising innovative/sustainable architecture in Amsterdam) Sascha Glasl. Glasl won the prize winning project for De Ceuvel, turning a somewhat poisonous derelict site on the bank of Ij river (close to NDSM), into a totally sustainable architecture with innovative office designs with old pre 1950s house boats for similar business entrepreneurs (like artists communities of NDSM) and a thriving and highly successful café. Has also provided illustrated talks for our Human Geography field trip students for the last ten years being introduced by Beata Labuhn.

De Klerk’s manifesto for her ground breaking recent volume *‘Make your city: The City as a Shell’* (2017) is fuelled by the clearance of a group of artists, artisans and other makers who were forced out of Amsterdam’s city centre (for a prestigious high rise project), which later the author/activist Eva identified a disused shipyard NDSM and facilitated a nouvelle entrepreneurial/co-operative ‘bottom-up’ project. The transformation of this disused and neglected site into a unique development, along with the ‘co-operative/self-help concept’ (although not always experiencing a smooth developmental curve and conflict free environment with the Urban managers), it certainly has a phenomenal positive ‘model’ from both conceptual and theoretical perspectives. While De Klerk’s volume highlights the concept of *De Sta dals Casco* (The city as a shell) which essentially deals with sustainable social, physical, financial and administrative development, advocating the lessons for ‘self-rule’ and ‘property development’; the papers in this issue focus mainly on the ‘recreated and transformed spaces’ both in the developed and the developing world. However, we still think De Klerk’s insightful experience and wisdom of ‘property development’ and ‘conflicts/mismatch’ with Urban authorities and Multinational Business Enterprises are very relevant to our third focus

on the ‘contestation of sustainability’ aspects. Having previously researched and written on developing countries potentials and limitations of the ‘Self-help’ and ‘Un-regulated housing’ for the urban poor, I (Tasleem) am now intrigued to test Eva’s ‘Self-rule’ and the ‘bottom-up/cultural incubator in a few relevant places in the developing world where I have spotted similar disused and neglected industrial sites. Beata Labuhn also refers to Eva De Klerk’s ‘cultural incubators’ and discusses transient nature of Amsterdam’s spontaneous settlements with the evolving culturally re-created spaces. Eamon Reid adds a summary of De Klerk’s keynote talk (who also provided many talks to our Human geography field trip students like Beata and Sacha for the last ten years or so) along with the reporting of all other contributors’ presentations at the Crossboat workshop in De Cuevel in 2018.

Labuhn’s article is a retrospective analysis and discussion of the spatial, cultural and political dimensions of Amsterdam’s ‘Provo’ movement and the historical transformation of radical squatters. In short, political actors and the derelict buildings they occupied in the 1970’s have been institutionalized by the state. Exploitation of the hard working, economically vulnerable ‘non-capitalists’ and ‘artists’ recurs, but now the exploited are used as elements in neo-liberal gentrification strategies.

The countercultural images of Amsterdam’s contemporary cultural incubators are integrated into the neo-liberal city: cultural production navigates with capitalist co-ordinates. The aesthetics of the 70’s counterculture and the allegorical manifestation of anti-consumerist mannerisms is problematized by the fact that such aesthetics are not outside of the ‘system’. Labuhn finishes the essay with a reflection on shifting values. The reader is provoked: is an anamnesis of ‘another system of values’ required when considering the politics of spatial production?

Grayson’s article is a comparative study looking into two different forms of sustainable communities: the Lancaster CoHousing Project (UK), and the De Ceuvel Project (NL). The article examines the different features of the sustainable communities and compares them. The former project is a sustainable co-housing project that enacts a form of localized direct democracy (in terms of alterations and adjustments to the social and built environment); and the latter project is primarily an office park built on restored contaminated ‘brownfield’ land, utilizing derelict ships and boats and other materials.

Grayson situates her paper within the context of global warming and climate change, emphasising the fundamental significance and importance of conducting research on

contemporary green architecture and sustainable design projects. If there is any hope in positively changing and contesting the ‘unsustainable built environment’, then this type of research will become more and more significant. Designing the future requires a radical shift in the way architects and designers approach the built and ‘natural’ environments.

Notable is how Grayson indicates the contested nature of sustainable development: “a struggle for sustainable developments is being able to maintain the processes while not allowing for the new economic benefits take over the initial aims of creating the sustainable area”. This is one of the contestations she indicates, the other is the social and cultural: “New sustainable green architectural areas should consider the identity of spaces, to allow for meaningful representation”. These two points of contestation – the interference of socio-economic and political dynamics and the desire to either meaningfully represent a community or to see one’s identity represented within the built environment – effect both sites. Neither sustainable development nor green architectural design projects don’t happen within a vacuum.

Following from Greyson, Fairey’s article (partially) contrasts the ‘Baltic Triangle’ site in Liverpool city centre with the re-appropriated Dutch space, NDSM, Amsterdam North. This comparative analysis (that only really takes place within the introductory section and the concluding section) is situated within the context of the transition from production-based economies to service-based economies. This political-economic transition caused industrial spaces (like those found in both Amsterdam and Liverpool) to close, becoming disused. The re-activation of these spaces can be understood as part of the broader ‘cities in transition’ theme. The intensification of services in the city centre (e.g., the ‘Baltic Market’ in Liverpool – transforming the function of post-industrial spaces) and the intensification of production-economies in the global south (e.g., Indian steel manufacturing) contextualizes such developments. It should be emphasised that all of Declan’s data in the article focuses on the Baltic Triangle

The article, while comparing NDSM and the Baltic Triangle, focuses on the Baltic Triangle. There is a large amount of empirical data data (adapted from his academic dissertation writing) utilized within the article. The focus seems to be directed towards two trends: (a) post-industrial community identity; and (b) the tourist perceptions of post-industrial space. Like the past 2017 GBER Special Issue volume, Declan pays attention to the contested nature of ‘public/collective memory’. Post-industrial Liverpool’s contested industrial history shapes and informs how spaces like the Baltic Triangle is experienced. The complication of ‘outside’ (those not

accustomed with the industrial history of Liverpool – and the potential representations of such history) perspectives gives this dynamic a further contested nature. Contestable from the inside (different perceptions of place, different representations, articulations and understandings of community identity), and contestable from the outside (differencing cultural orientations not in tune with localized identities and communities).

Declan brings the article to a close, discussing the ramifications of the perceptions of the Baltic Triangle, comparing it with NDSM in the concluding section. He asserts that (following Bourdieu) that both spaces are ‘fields of cultural production’. NDSM possess more global cultural capital, but the Baltic Triangle – if not constricted by gentrification practices- has the chance to become a significant cultural site within the larger British context and within the local context of Merseyside

Kacar & Alpan’s article focuses on the Porsuk River in Eskisehir. This article shifts the focus from Europe (as in the previous two articles) to Turkey. Industrialization and urbanization have affected the condition of the riverfront. The value of the space was rediscovered in the 21st century, encapsulated by the ‘riverfront and the city’ program. The article focuses on the future role of the rehabilitated river and the improvements to the industrial heritage of Eskisehir. The article contextualizes the city and the Porsuk river through the historical development along the city, namely the ‘industrialization’ of specific zones of the city.

Rehabilitation of the de-industrialized and deteriorated riverfront began in 2001 with European capital (credit from the European Investment Bank – the EIB). This rehabilitation included “the cleaning of the riverbed; landscape design; renewal of old vehicle and pedestrian bridges; reduction of disaster risks commences of boat and gondola trips for recreational purposes”. The outcomes of the rehabilitation project lead to the assembling of a “green spine” that runs through the city, due to the increase in green spaces along the riverfront.

The rehabilitation lead to the unification of these sites spatially and conceptually, further incorporating and re-using the industrial heritage of the city within the sustainable green architectural projects (referred to as the ‘rehabilitation’). Like the other articles, there is an emphasis on the need for public participation in such projects: “The need for increasing public participation for local governments' projects to be established by taking the citizens' discourses into consideration, is still substantial for the transformation of water into a centre of attraction.”

The final article focuses on contestation within the built environment. Zerva *et al's* article focuses on hosts’ public narratives of tourism have changed in the city of Barcelona (Spain)

from 2004 to 2015, analyzing any common and opposing points of their argumentation over time. Two groups – residents and Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) – are posited as oppositional and code tourism narratives differently. Residents code tourism narratives from a ‘tourism-phobic’ orientation, while DMOs code their narratives from a ‘tourism-philic’ orientation.

The article illustrates how perceptions and narratives shifted and changed over time. The authors investigate three specific stages – 2004-2007, 2008-2011, and 2012-2015 – that constitute the ‘trajectory’ of the issue (to paraphrase Noortje Marres). The temporal aspect of urban contestation (explored in socio-economic fashion in this article) is a necessary addition within this journal. Urban development does not solely concern space, but time. The focus on the social dynamics of temporal urban change contrasts positively with Kacar & Alpan’s article, that charts the architectural (physical) change of an urban site over time.

The production of satisfied communities requires compromise, adaptation negotiation, translation and innovation. These articles empirically example how these aspects effecting ongoing projects internationally (Spain, Turkey, the UK, and the Netherlands). Urban environmental developments do not happen in a vacuum. The ‘nowness’ of contemporary innovative spaces and their corresponding communities necessitates continued research, and continued innovation.

This is the first GBER volume since my (Tasleem’s) retirement from English academic life about a year ago, but I am delighted to have continued to enjoy the tremendous contribution from my past dedicated and loyal students from Edge Hill University (from where it emerged some 18 years ago, a no-frill, open access, international refereed journal and is going from strength to strength).

I am particularly grateful to my co-editor Eamon Reid and editorial assistant Declan Fairey, both being the members of the GBER editorial team, who meticulously contributed in the compiling of this issue with continuous disruptions from both the authors and the editors.

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