

**Workshop Report****Regeneration of Disused Industrial  
Heritage Spaces of Europe and Beyond:  
Recreated Spaces, Transformed  
Communities and Contested  
Sustainability?****Eamon Reid\***

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This Special Issue journal would not have been possible without the sharing and transferal of knowledge that took place in at De Ceugel, Amsterdam. The site is an award-winning community based ‘bottom-up’ project initiated by the architect Sascha Glasl. The Amsterdam workshop intended to provide a forum for an exchange of ideas concerning innovative community-based projects (De Ceugel – a business park constituted out of an assemblage of disused boats and structures – is such a project) and the intersection between planning and community identities. The workshop featured academics, researchers, graduate students, and community-based activists. Presentations ranged from local (i.e., Dutch) re-deployments of industrial heritage to global examples of industrial regeneration and community development.

Tasleem Shakur’s introduction focused on the notion of disused industrial heritage and how regeneration; the re-creation and re-articulation of spaces; identification and community; and sustainability are inter-related and intersecting terms when addressing contemporary community based architectural projects. Shakur also indicates that the meanings of such developments are contested: who is included and excluded in such developments. Who is counted among the re-articulated communities; or, in the language of Rancière (2013): how does the distribution of who is visible concern community-based design? Shakur also notes

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that such developments are quintessentially *post*-industrial. Thus, our categories and concepts must consider this significant global shift.

The activist, designer and planner Eva de Klerk delivered her Keynote address, focusing on the NDSM project (Amsterdam). Her talk references her latest book *Make Your City: The City as a Shell* (2017). The talk (much like the book) was broken into three parts: the history and philosophy of ‘the city as shell’; the case of NDSM; and the contemporary relevance of the book. Her talk traces the history of the NDSM project: the re-activation and the re-utilization of the industrial buildings around NDSM. The story of NDSM concerns myriad actors, including the Dutch government; communities of squatters, artists, and creators; an industrial buildings guild; the buildings themselves; and so on. De Klerk’s approach both aims to utilize the existing structures (‘shells’) and the existing communities (those who ‘do not fit within established structures’). It is a bottom up approach through and through, focusing on the capacity of users to self-develop and self-organize. The concept of ‘flexible planning’ and ‘mixed used’ planning does not necessitate a rejection of commercial interests: Red Bull and MTV utilize parts of the land. To paraphrase de Klerk, fighting the system is difficult. Projects like NDSM illustrate the power of self-organization and development, but their longevity is problematised by the global ‘system’ (specifically, neoliberal capitalism in Europe).

Beata Labuhn’s presentation on Amsterdam’s mid-20th century Dutch counterculture and its spatial manifestations introduced the term ‘cultural incubator’ into the workshop’s vocabulary. Her presentation discussed the ‘Provos’ movement, a radical political group (like the French Situationists) that promoted anti-consumer and anti-capitalist activism in Amsterdam. The spatial significance concerns the establishment and constitution of ‘free spaces’ [vrije plaatsen]: places occupied by squatters and artists. In contemporary Amsterdam, the ‘creative and free spirit’ that animated Amsterdam’s radical is encapsulated by the hipster and yuppie ‘creative class’ (a creative petit bourgeois). Beata contrasts the radical vrije plaatsen with the corporate *broedplaatsen* (translated as cultural incubators). The free spaces of the 20th century have become sites of capitalistic cultural production of the 21st: cultural production separated from its politico-ideological matrix changes the function of such spaces, even though there is an aesthetic continuity.

Declan Fairey presentation concerned his research on the Baltic Triangle, Liverpool. He discusses the relevance and importance of the ‘collective memories’ expressed by cultural objects: the ‘art of memory’ is expressed through architectural means (an insight that can be

found in Walter Benjamin's famous essay on art and reproducibility). The post-industrial space of the Baltic Triangle attempted to 'restore the space' and 'improve lives' (satisfy a pre-existing community in Shakur's vernacular). Declan hints at how the process of recreating spaces may introduce a schism between cultural perception and the historical significance of place.

Khuala Dar's presentation on the Siemensbahn and the Spreeinsel (Berlin) concerns the re-actualization of greenspaces. The disused rail tracks were identified as potential sites for development and re-deployment. The lack of public participation within the disused space was identified as a problem for the architectural firm she represents. Dar indicates that public use itself could be *problematic*: should the 'natural form' be preserved, or should the site be redeveloped? Thus, the space was redeveloped with the local ecological system in mind – leading to the development of walkways and green parks.

Konstantina Zerva's presentation concerned the relation between tourists, managers and residents in the city of Barcelona. This discussion focused on the ongoing economic and political problemata that arises out of the intensifications of Tourist activities. Her presentation focuses on her analysis of local journals and publications and how, to put it in Noortje Marres's (2005) terms, how the public *becomes* a (political) problem through the articulation of an issue. Zerva's discussion of the instability of local and trans-national identities enhanced the workshop discussions.

Emma Grayson's presentation compared the community-based community projects of De Ceuvel and the Lancaster Co-Housing Project. The former is a commercial site and the latter is a domestic housing site. However, both sites are sustainable environments. The discussion highlighted that localization is a transformative process: the notion of 'sustainable community design' must be translated and adapted for specific purposes. There is no 'one glove fits all' template that can be used. The expression of identities and the methodological approaches to sustainable design must take the particularity of local contexts into account.

Fatma Dokcan's presentation on the De Hallen 'cultural hotspot' in Amsterdam on how a former tram depot was converted into a mixed-use commercial space. Dokcan emphasises the disjunction between the 'ethnic' communities surrounding the area and the 'hipster' business that are indicative of De Hallen. While the architecture (the building) remains the same, the site may not connect with the local community. The marketing of the place, according to Fatma, focuses on tourists and yuppies. De Hallen could be described as a 'non-place' (Ague, 2009), or in Dokcan's words, a 'globalized non-cultural yuppie project'. Her polemical orientation

allowed the audience to consider the impact of commercial non-places that are not connected to the local community. Does De Hallen have the capacity to represent ethnic minorities in the first place? (Within the current system alluded to by de Klerk?).

Finally, Eamon Reid's presentation focused on the redeployment of industrial objects in post-industrial contexts, focusing on the de-industrialized fishing town of Grimsby (UK) and re-developed drydocks in Rotterdam (Netherlands). Instead of NDSM, there is RDM (Research, Design & Manufacturing). The approach taken in Rotterdam mobilizes the educational sector and the tech-industry sector. To use Labuhn's terminology, RDM can be conceptualized as a cultural incubator: it is a commercial site where technological products are developed and researched. Reid then discussed the social, political and economic context of Grimsby and its industrial regeneration. The proposed regeneration projects concerning Grimsby concern a declining (or, more accurately, a declined) fishing port. The decline in British maritime economic activity deeply effected the communities of towns like Grimsby. The proposed developments of the town acknowledge and recognize the old ice factory, the 'Kasbah', and the (Grade II listed) Victoria Mill Silo as significant for cultural identity and collective memory. While the preservation of English industrial heritage is significant, one can be sceptical about the neoliberal plans for the space.

All the presentations contribute to the discourse around the politics of community and the production (or, re-production) of spaces. The role of vernacular (local) communities (see Reid, 2017) within contemporary architectural design projects is a complex and messy subject to approach. But the subject is becoming more and more relevant, especially if we attempt to take those who 'do not fit within established structures' (to paraphrase de Klerk again) into account.

## References

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- Rancière, J. 2013. *The Politics of Aesthetics*. Bloomsbury, London.
- Reid, E. 2017. *Transitioning Cities: A commentary on Cities in Transition and beyond*. *Global Built Environment Review*. Special Issue.



Some of the of Workshop participants at the Crossboat, De Ceuvel Amsterdam (standing from left to right: Eamon Reid, Konstantina Zerva, Emma Grayson, and Beata Labhun; sitting from left to right: Khuala Dar, Tasleem Shakur, Eva De Klerk, and Fatma Dokcan.



Eva De Klerk with Tasleem Shakur, Beata Labuhn, Konstantina Zerva, Khuala Dar, Emma Grayson, Fatma Dokcan and Declan Fairey.



Participants and the GBER team enjoying drinks at the Café De Cuevel!



The Café De Ceuvel, The Netherlands.



The Crossboat conference venue at De Ceuvel, The Netherlands.