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REVIEW ARTICLES AND REPORTS

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THE REGENERATION OF URBAN WATERFRONTS: a comparison of practice in the UK and the Netherlands

1. INTRODUCTION

Many waterfront areas in European port cities have become obsolescent because of factors such as technological change and pressure for redevelopment for service uses (Hoyle and Pinder, 1992; Riley and Shurmer-Smith, 1994). The resulting redundant waterfront areas are particularly prevalent in the Netherlands, where there has been a relatively sophisticated policy response (van der Knaap and Pinder, 1992; McCarthy, 1996) and a consistent emphasis on the need for consensus on the part of actors involved in the process of regeneration (Needham *et al.*, 1993). This provides a contrast with practice in the UK, where there has been much evidence of conflict in the application of policy for waterfront regeneration. This article will explore these issues by comparing cases in the UK with analogous cases in the Netherlands, in the hope that this can inform a wider debate concerning policy effectiveness.

Relevant conceptual frameworks for addressing these issues may be considered in terms of two basic approaches (Jauhiainen, 1995). The first makes use of a life-cycle model that shows how port areas decline because of factors such as the development of transport technology. Charlier (1992) and Hoyle (1994) develop this approach in detail, with the latter indicating how industrial restructuring may also cause waterfront obsolescence. The second approach situates waterfront regeneration within wider urban regeneration issues, and van der Knaap and Pinder (1992) for instance, explain the development of waterfront regeneration policy as part of more general urban policy in the Netherlands. In particular, they show how different periods of Dutch urban policy can be

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distinguished, with the latest phase being marked by an entrepreneurial approach. It is now appropriate to consider waterfront regeneration in the different contexts of the UK and the Netherlands.

2. WATERFRONT REGENERATION IN THE UK

2.1. Urban regeneration policy

Inner city policy in the UK was initiated in 1968 by the introduction of the Urban Programme, which provided grant aid to local authorities faced with extreme cases of social need, urban deprivation and racial tension (Blackman, 1995; Lawless, 1989). The 1977 White Paper *Policy for the inner cities* widened the scope of the Urban Programme, encouraged a greater contribution from the private sector and highlighted the importance of partnership between the public agencies involved in urban regeneration (DoE, 1977; Cullingworth, 1994; Deakin and Edwards, 1993). However, there was a shift in the direction of regeneration policy after 1979, with an increased role for the private sector (Blackman, 1995; Lawless, 1989) and an emphasis on the physical, as opposed to social, aspects of regeneration. This was shown by the introduction of Urban Development Corporations (UDCs) which took over local authority powers in order to promote property development-led regeneration (DoE, 1994).

The shift in priority to inner city areas in England in 1977 was paralleled by a similar shift in Scotland (Keating and Boyle, 1986; Lawless, 1989). Turok (1987) identifies three phases of urban policy in both countries, namely: a social orientation until the mid-1970s, a concentration on economic factors and employment in the late 1970s, and an increasing reliance on the private sector since 1979. However, specific urban policy mechanisms evolved differently in England and Scotland (McCrone, 1991), and Turok (1987) acknowledges the significant role played by the (then) Scottish Development Agency (SDA) in this respect. The distinctiveness of Scottish urban policy initiatives arose in part because of the legacy of municipal intervention and the interventionist role of the SDA (Boyle, 1988), which was set up with the aim of enabling economic regeneration in partnership with the existing agencies (Keating, 1988).

In fact it may be suggested that the Scottish approach to urban regeneration has been more effective than that adopted in England, particularly in terms of the effectiveness of links between policy and implementation (Lawless, 1989). For instance, until its demise in 1991 the Scottish Development Agency effectively co-ordinated the actions of other partners, using finance as an inducement (Donnison and Middleton, 1987; Wannop and Leclerc, 1987), but without usurping the role of accountable local authorities (Boyle, 1988). Consequently, it avoided much of the 'provoked antagonism' that arose from the actions of many English Urban Development Corporations (McCrone, 1991). However, the case studies of waterfront development in London and Dundee, considered below, show that they experienced similar problems.

2.2. The London Docklands

Many of the above factors are exemplified by the redevelopment of the docklands area of London in the 1980s. This area had become obsolescent because of factors such as the rise of containerisation and overcapacity in dock space. Reductions in public spending in the UK in the mid-1970s reduced the ability of local authorities to initiate positive implementation projects (Ambrose, 1994), and the Conservative government in 1979 therefore introduced Urban Development Corporations to bring about the private sector-led redevelopment of selected areas. Consequently, the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) was created to acquire sites, provide infrastructure, and dispose of improved sites to the highest bidder to encourage development (Ambrose, 1994; Brindley *et al.*, 1986; Thornley, 1991).

The approach of the LDDC relied heavily on the attraction of private investment, and it gave priority to the 'leverage' of private investment by public investment. Moreover, it avoided a clear planning strategy, with 'flexible' and 'responsive' 'frameworks' being substituted for restrictive plans (Brownill, 1990; Ambrose, 1986). A 'project-led' approach therefore prevailed within the Docklands area, with individual, prestige development projects, exemplified by the Canary Wharf scheme, being regarded as 'catalysts' which, it was assumed, would attract further investment and thereby bring about the speedy regeneration of the area (Brownill, 1990). The traditional planning function therefore seems to have been largely replaced by one of marketing, with considerable effort being made to make development opportunities attractive to investors (Ambrose, 1994; Colenutt, 1997; Thornley, 1991).

Unfortunately, such an approach to regeneration had many disadvantages; for instance, it became clear that development opportunities were being prejudiced by a non-strategic approach to infrastructure provision. This is perhaps best illustrated by the lack of co-ordination between land use and transport factors, since the provision of appropriate infrastructure was neglected. For instance, the Docklands Light Railway proved to be woefully inadequate as a means of mass transit, and essential road infrastructure was provided too late (Brownill, 1990; Ambrose, 1994). While the extension of the underground Jubilee Line will substantially improve the transport infrastructure serving the area, funding for

this project was uncertain during the period when much of the Docklands was developed, and the completion of the Jubilee Line project has been substantially delayed.

The mix of uses within the London Docklands was also substantially affected by the approach adopted by the 'market-led' approach of the LDDC, which resulted in a predominance of higher-value uses such as offices and high-value housing, which had most commercial appeal. This approach has posed several problems. For instance, it has failed to provide a mix of uses that meets local needs (Brindley *et al.*, 1986; Colenutt, 1997). This applies particularly to housing, since the vast majority of the residents in the Docklands area could not afford to purchase the new housing, in spite of the LDDC's original aim to take account of local needs (Brownill, 1990). In addition, the amount of office floorspace developed has been far more than what was needed, a problem exacerbated by the depressed economic conditions that prevailed in London's property market for several years after 1989 (Brownill, 1990).

The issue of design has also been contentious within the London Docklands, since poor overall quality of design seems to have resulted from the lack of planning control within the LDDC area (Brownill, 1990). While the LDDC stressed the need for prestige, high-quality developments because of the importance of the area's image for the attraction of further investment, the primary importance of market factors and the overriding need to ensure speedy development led to a lack of design coherence. In broader terms, development in the Docklands also strengthened the boundaries between public and private areas, exacerbating social polarisation and social tensions (Colenutt, 1997; Thornley, 1991).

2.3. The Central Waterfront, Dundee

The docks area of Dundee in Scotland became obsolescent because of decline in the jute trade, on which the manufacturing base of the city depended until the early years of this century. Partly because of the failure of successive land use plans to regenerate the waterfront area, it became evident in the 1980s that a and co-ordinated approach to regeneration proactive was necessary. Consequently, the 'Dundee Project' was set up, a partnership of public sector agencies with an interest in regeneration, comprising Tayside Regional Council, Dundee District Council and the Scottish Development Agency (McCarthy, 1995). One early achievement of the Dundee Project was the successful bid for the Tayside Enterprise Zone, declared in 1984. The Enterprise Zone concept, like the Urban Development Corporation mechanism, applied a property development-led approach to regeneration, and the Enterprise Zone involved

subsidies for rates' relief and tax credits as well as exemption from many normal planning restraints and regulations.

In fact, Dundee's central waterfront area formed one of the two most important sites in the Tayside Enterprise Zone, the latter being unusual in that it was split over several sites. However, in spite of the site's importance in strategic terms, much of it was developed for retail superstores, though a visitor attraction was also incorporated (McCarthy, 1995). This pattern of uses did not satisfy the objectives of the Scottish Development Agency's original development brief for the area, which called for a greater mix of uses incorporating housing, leisure and speciality retailing, proscribing retail superstores. Moreover, a large part of the central waterfront area remained vacant in spite of the attraction to investors of Enterprise Zone status. Consequently, the development of this area is at best as a mixed success, and it has been criticised in terms of visual unattractiveness, inappropriate uses that fail to meet local needs, failure to capitalise on what is a focal development site and failure to bring about an integrated and coherent development scheme (McCarthy, 1995).

3. WATERFRONT REGENERATION IN THE NETHERLANDS

3.1. Urban regeneration policy

While new so-called 'growth centres' were developed in the 1970s, comprising new areas where future development in the Netherlands was to be concentrated (Needham *et al.*, 1993), the government's 1985 'compact city' policy aimed to direct development to existing urban centres. This shift in policy arose because of the perceived necessity to minimise transport costs, implying the need for urban development schemes to comprise mixed uses. In spite of this shift in policy, the role of local municipalities in urban regeneration has remained critical, since they not only use powers of development control but also frequently act as a provider of land for development by acquiring land and providing necessary servicing. While the development of problem sites often requires subsidy, central government provides grant aid for social housing, for instance (Needham and van de Ven, 1995).

Nevertheless, partly because of the need to improve the competitiveness of the economy as a whole, the private sector has been encouraged to play a greater role in the provision of implementation funding since the mid-1980s. The use of public-private partnership development schemes has been particularly important in this respect (Kohnstamm, 1993) though, as in the UK, municipalities have had to concede some of their control over development in order to facilitate such partnerships. Moreover, the government's 1989 Fourth Report on Physical Planning identified thirteen cities as 'urban intersections' that displayed key advantages such as well-developed business uses, a good location in relation to transport infrastructure and a high level of amenities. Because of their consequent potential for growth they were assigned priority by the government in the funding of infrastructure (Spaans, 1995), and 'key projects' were identified to apply this priority in specific areas within these cities.

These 'key projects', incorporated into the 1990 Fourth Report for Planning Extra, were intended as models for public/private partnerships that involved a substantial leverage of private sector resources. They were initially allocated to Maastricht, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague and Groningen (Needham *et al.*, 1993), and the projects applied an integrated approach by the public sector, which had often been fragmented in the past (Spaans, 1995). However, the operation of public-private partnerships in the 'key projects' should be considered in the wider political and administrative context of the Netherlands, within which a consensual approach is highly developed (Lijphart, 1968; Needham *et al.*, 1993). The 'key project' approach therefore simply extended and formalised such an approach. The development of 'key projects' in Rotterdam and Maastricht will now be considered.

3.2. The Kop van Zuid project, Rotterdam

Like many other port cities, Rotterdam suffered in the 1970s from decline of the port function, and the south bank of the River Maas was particularly marginalised (Hajer, 1993; Pinder and Rosing, 1994). The Kop van Zuid 'key project' therefore encourages higher-value uses in the south bank, and the proposals involve the development of $60,000 \text{ m}^2$ of new office space, 5,500 dwelling units, $60,000 \text{ m}^2$ of retail space, hotels and a convention centre (Colquhoun, 1995). The scheme applies the government's 'compact city' policy by encouraging the integration of residential, employment and recreational uses (McCarthy, 1996), and it makes use of a strategic planning framework aiming at conservation and rehabilitation as well as high quality new build. The role of the planning authorities was central, and an urban design plan for the area provided the basis for a statutory land use plan which set out detailed criteria for development (Informatiecentrum Kop van Zuid, 1995).

Because of the need to improve accessibility, the national and municipal authorities guaranteed finance for the Erasmus Bridge, the Varkenoordse Viaduct, the Wilhelminaplein metro station, the tramway connection and a new road. Early completion of essential transport infrastructure was considered critical to the success of the scheme, and the Erasmus Bridge was completed first in order to connect the area with the city centre. The rest of the project was planned to be completed in phases, and construction of the Entrepot. Vuurplaat and Wilhelminahof areas started in February 1994 (Informatiecentrum Kop van Zuid, 1995), though it is anticipated that the proposals will take 15 years to be implemented.

This project is intended to bring about a significant element of social benefit for the residents of the surrounding districts, and many new jobs are to be created as a result. However, local unemployed people will only benefit directly if specific action is taken to increase opportunities for them, and two centres to train local unemployed people have therefore been established in Feijenoord and Afrikaanderwijk, close to the Kop van Zuid area. These centres have been established in co-operation with voluntary organisations and the city authorities, and they are sponsored by the European Community's European Fund for Regional Development (Informatiecentrum Kop van Zuid, 1994).

3.3. The Céramique project, Maastricht

Maastricht has a population of around 120,000 people, and the most important new site recently available for development in the central area is the Céramique site, comprising 23 hectares opposite the city's central core. This is the site of a former ceramics factory, and a 'key project' for the site is intended to provide a functional and physical link between the two banks of the river. The scheme includes a new pedestrian bridge over the river, and incorporates 70,000 m² of office space, 20,000 m² of hotel accommodation, 20,000 m² of cultural uses and 5,000 m² of retail uses, with 1,600 housing units (Infocentrum Céramique, 1991). The project applies the government's 'compact city' policy by incorporating an integrated land-use pattern with mixed uses, and it is to be implemented by a public-private partnership between the City of Maastricht and the General Pension Fund for Public Employees (ABP). High-profile architects have been designated to design key aspects of the scheme, and the municipality has integrated the scheme into a more extensive plan for environmental improvements along both banks of the River Maas (Gemeente Maastricht, 1992). As of December 1995, the new Bonnefanten Museum, the Indigo office building and the first apartment units had been completed (Infocentrum Céramique, 1995).

4. ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION

While the UK cases considered above are at a much more advanced stage of development than those in the Netherlands, it is possible to reach some initial

comparative conclusions as to the approach to waterfront regeneration in both countries. The cases will be considered in terms of the extent to which they have involved innovative public-private partnerships, encouraged integrated, high-quality mixed-use development proposals, and provided the basis for physical regeneration of surrounding areas and economic regeneration of the surrounding city and region.

4.1. Use of public-private partnerships

The Dutch 'key projects' considered have encouraged partnerships that involve a key role for public agencies, including accountable local municipalities. By contrast, the operation of the LDDC in the UK seems to have resulted in a lack of real partnership, partly because of the control exercised by the LDDC, a non-elected agency. Moreover, the LDDC sought to override local authorities (Brownill, 1990), reducing local accountability. While Dundee's central water-front scheme brought together public sector partners in a co-ordinated way, the distribution of power within the partnership was inequitable, and the local planning authority (Dundee District Council) in particular proved to be a weak player because of the lack of planning control in the Enterprise Zone. These factors contributed to the incoherence of the resulting scheme, and its failure to meet the objectives of the original development brief for the site (McCarthy, 1995).

4.2. Integration of land-uses

The Dutch 'key projects' have involved a relatively high level of internal functional integration, particularly of residential and commercial uses. The role of the Dutch government has been significant in this respect since it has encouraged mixing of uses by the application of the 'compact city' policy, though this may be seen as part of a wider trend reflected in recent calls for mixed-use schemes throughout Europe (Colquhoun, 1995; Falk, 1992; *Gummer goes...*, 1995). By contrast, the market-led operation of the LDDC seems to have led to a lack of functional integration of land uses, as indicated by homogeneous areas of offices and high-value housing in London Docklands (Brownill, 1990). Furthermore, in Dundee's central waterfront, the operation of the Enterprise Zone seems to have contributed to the failure to bring about an integrated and co-ordinated scheme (McCarthy, 1995).

4.3. Integration with the surrounding area

The Dutch 'key projects' also aimed to bring about development that was integrated with the city as a whole, and both the Kop van Zuid and Céramique projects were developed as strategic links between different functional areas of the city. The UK case studies provide a contrast in terms of the application of this criterion also; for instance, there was a lack of any attempt to consider strategic planning factors within the LDDC area, as exemplified by the failure to take account of the need to link transport and land use planning factors. Moreover, in Dundee's central waterfront, the lack of influence of the local authority and the ineffectiveness of planning restrictions meant that in practice the resulting scheme was not integrated effectively with the surrounding area (McCarthy, 1995).

4.4. Wider regeneration effects

While Jauhiainen (1995) and Cooper and Spinks (1995) point out that waterfront development has often failed to bring about effective local regeneration, particularly in terms of job creation, this does not seem to apply in the Dutch 'key projects' considered. For instance, in the Kop van Zuid project the provision of training centres is intended to ensure that local people have the opportunity to benefit from the project. Again, by contrast, the LDDC seems to have failed to bring about the social aspects of regeneration, since local employment needs were not met and there was an absence of training initiatives to ensure that local people could obtain jobs in the area. There was also a lack of social housing, which was clearly needed by people in the surrounding area (Brownill, 1990). Similarly, in Dundee's central waterfront, the emphasis on physical, property-led regeneration meant that office and retail uses predominated, while the original aspirations for housing have failed to be implemented (McCarthy, 1995).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The case studies considered above suggest that many common factors apply to waterfront regeneration in the UK and the Netherlands, partly as a result of Europe-wide factors which have influenced policy in both contexts. For instance, attempts to curb public expenditure in both the UK and the Netherlands have resulted in priority for subsidy allocation for schemes levering substantial private sector funds (Clark, 1994; Needham *et al.*, 1993). This seems to have

contributed to the predominance of high-value uses such as private housing, offices and leisure facilities in waterfront areas in both countries (Law, 1994; Tweedale, 1994).

However, the case studies also show major differences in practice between the two countries. For instance, the Dutch case studies illustrate the incorporation of mixed uses, encouraged by a 'plan-led' approach to urban regeneration within which local authorities play a key role. Conversely, the UK case studies illustrate an absence of effective planning policy, arising in part from a lack of an effective role for local authorities. This has led to isolated and fragmented projects and the functional separation of uses, rather than integrated development schemes (Tavsanoglu and Healey, 1992; Church, 1994). It would therefore seem that, in the UK, "short-term political considerations and pragmatism can easily overrule the medium-to long-term consensus element of planning" (Clark, 1994: 228).¹

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