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[ENGLAND NAICS/Industry Codes: 92512](#) Administration of Urban Planning and Community and Rural Development Abstract: One of the techniques that has been used as a tool for *urban* development in recent years is that of cultural regeneration. This is seen as a means of restoring and improving the quality of *urban* life through the enhancement and development of the unique characteristics of a place and its people. This article argues that *urban design* is integral to the process of cultural regeneration, as such things as mixed-use developments, environmental improvement schemes and, in particular, public art help in the expression and development of the *culture* of an area. The article looks at how specific cultural quarters are developed in city centre areas, focusing on an area of Manchester known as the Northern Quarter, and outlines the ways in which *urban design* techniques are used as part of the process of wider cultural regeneration. It is suggested that, for improved chances of success, the adoption of a holistic approach to *urban* regeneration is required, with policy-makers using *culture* as an organizing principle for city management and *urban design*. [ABSTRACT FROM AUTHOR] Author Affiliations: ¹School of Planning and Landscape, University of Manchester, Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL, UK Full Text Word Count: 8304 ISSN: 1357-4809 DOI: 10.1080/13574800050076040 Accession Number: 3409400 Persistent link to this record: <http://search.epnet.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&an=3409400> Database:

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THE ROLE OF *URBAN DESIGN* IN CULTURAL REGENERATION

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ABSTRACT One of the techniques that has been used as a tool for *urban* development in recent years is that of cultural regeneration. This is seen as a means of restoring and improving the quality of *urban* life through the enhancement and development of the unique characteristics of a place and its people. This article argues that *urban design* is integral to the process of cultural regeneration, as such things as mixed-use developments, environmental improvement schemes and, in particular, public art help in the expression and development of the *culture* of an area. The article looks at how specific cultural quarters are developed in city centre areas, focusing on an area of Manchester known as the Northern Quarter, and outlines the ways in which *urban design* techniques are used as part of the process of wider cultural regeneration. It is suggested that, for improved chances of success, the adoption of a holistic approach to *urban* regeneration is required, with policy-makers using *culture* as an organizing principle for city management and *urban design*.

Introduction

Although '*culture*' has been used as an expression of both civic pride and economic vitality since Victorian times, it has, in the last 20 years, enjoyed a renaissance as many city governments in both the USA and Europe have developed cultural strategies as a means of encouraging local economic development and as a tool for city marketing. In practice, the experience of cultural regeneration has been characterized by a wide variety of approaches with no standard or easily defined process being apparent. It has frequently taken the form of a general arts- and *culture*-led strategy for regeneration which is carried out in particular parts of a city using a variety of techniques. This variability of approach is mirrored by a variability in success, with many city governments uncertain whether or to what extent the *culture* of an area has been developed.

This article argues that a more effective approach to cultural regeneration may involve making *urban design* central to the process of revitalizing *urban* areas. This requires the notion of *urban design* to be firmly derived from an understanding of *culture* in both the general and particular sense. In other words, the practice of *urban design* in such areas should be closely linked to the practice of artistic and cultural activities.

Within the confines of this article, this is achieved firstly through a review of the growth in influence of *culture* in *urban* regeneration schemes and of what contribution it can and should make, followed by an outline of how *urban design* theory can be linked with cultural regeneration practice. The practical integration of *urban design* and cultural regeneration is further explored through an empirical study, undertaken during the summer of 1998, of an area of Manchester city centre known as the Northern Quarter (NQ), with particular regard to the influence that a number of regeneration projects have had on the *culture* of the area (Wansborough, 1998). The article concludes with some

recommendations for future projects which can act as a guide for all *design* professionals, be they policy-makers or practitioners.

Using Culture in Urban Regeneration

It is important to begin by clarifying what is meant by the term '*culture*' as understood by this article. The traditional notion of *culture* as 'high art' and an indulgence for *urban* elites is not appropriate here. *Culture* should be seen as a more complex entity, a process as well as a product, a way of life as well as an artefact, a mode of production as well as a mode of consumption (Montgomery, 1990). *Culture* is an expression of certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in ordinary and institutional behaviour (Williams, 1981).

Much of the theoretical and practical basis of a cultural approach to *urban* regeneration has been developed from models provided by cities in continental Europe (Bianchini & Parkinson, 1993) and central *urban* districts in the USA (Zukin, 1982). The UK experience has, so far, been rather more limited, although there have been a few exceptions, most notably Glasgow. It usually takes the form of a broad arts and cultural strategy implemented by city governments, with cultural regeneration being seen more as a by-product of general (but integrated) arts, community and economic policies. The use of *culture* in *urban* regeneration in the UK is increasing, however, as it is related to an increase in the understanding of the links between *culture* and more conventional techniques such as land-use planning and economic development.

The specific reasons for the greater use of cultural strategies by local governments as a means of city development and regeneration are complex, but it is possible to identify three recent political, cultural and economic shifts that have served to legitimate the wider role for *culture* in *urban* policy (Bassett, 1993).

In terms of the recent political life of the UK, there have been two major changes that have resulted in the development of cultural strategies in many towns and cities. The first relates to central government's attitude towards the arts, as, before the 1980s, the Arts Council had operated a distinctive system of state patronage ideologically based on the principles of the post-war welfare state. This had resulted in a notion of cultural provision and investment concentrated on centres of excellence, usually London, with a limited role for local or community groups. With the arrival of Thatcherism, however, the logic of neo-liberalism was applied to many traditional arts institutions with the aim of changing their role from providing a fixed service to satisfying consumer demand. This resulted in cultural provision being characterized by increased financial pressure on elite institutions, and local government, in partnership with regional arts bodies and the private sector, becoming more responsible for arts services and provision.

Coinciding with this devolution of central government control over cultural provision, there was a rise during the 1980s of local government provision, particularly associated with the ideologies of left-wing councils in metropolitan areas. The first major local authority to promote a successful arts policy was the Greater London Council (GLC),

which, in addition to providing a generous public subsidy for many arts events, also recognized that policies should be directed towards helping cultural producers as well. As a result, such things as managed workspace were provided for local cultural industries as part of a local economic development strategy and, although in many ways the GLC's work was not completed due to its abolition in 1986, it set a precedent and provided a model for cultural strategies in other local authorities (Bianchini, 1989).

However, the changes in political attitudes to *culture* must be seen in the context of a wider shift in the modes of cultural consumption and demand which have been characterized by a distinctive 'post-modern' aesthetic. This is manifest not only in the rise of popular *culture* but also in the breaking down of barriers between it and high art through the eclectic sampling of different cultural forms and the rejection of traditional (modernist) art work and media. These new patterns of consumption are closely linked to the dominance of certain social groups due to their possession of different combinations of economic and cultural capital. These social groups have come to be identified with the 'service class' who have found employment as multi-skilled professionals and managers in the high-paying corporate or service sectors of the economy, such as finance and commerce. Due to their higher economic capital, they have increasingly been targeted by market-segmented advertising and so, in turn, they have increased their cultural capital through their ability and desire to define standards in fashion, taste and style for society as a whole (Featherstone, 1991).

The most important group in identifying, creating or defining these new standards and patterns of consumption (and which ultimately comes to influence cultural policy) has been the 'new cultural intermediaries'. These are defined as artists, media professionals or intellectuals who specialize in symbolic production and consumption and who are often spatially concentrated in areas rich in cultural capital (usually city centres) (O'Connor & Wynne, 1995). It should also be noted here that these new cultural intermediaries are not necessarily the ones to exploit the new patterns of consumption: that role may be filled by more traditional entrepreneurs such as bar owners and property developers, etc. These entrepreneurs represent the new 'economic' intermediaries who attempt to meet the demand created by changes in fashion and taste by providing symbols of post-modern *culture*--clothes, music and films, etc.--which are the symbols of an *urban* life-style. This in turn impacts on the built environment through such things as gentrification, loft-living, mixed-use schemes, the development of cultural facilities, architectural fashion, club *culture*, cafe *culture* and public art (Griffiths, 1993).

The third, and dominant, reason for the development of cultural strategies has been the growing importance of the role of the arts in both economic development and place-marketing. The indigenous artistic and cultural life of a city has been seized upon by city governments and made a part of the process of re-imagining in order to help distinguish cities from their competitors and attract investors by stressing the quality of life available for executives, managers and skilled workers. This idea of the arts as crucial to city marketing originated in the USA and was characterized by 'growth coalitions' between corporations, banks, property developers, arts organizations, local government and (sometimes, though not always) local communities. This has frequently led to *urban*

development and regeneration strategies being based upon consumption, with tourists and locals often being attracted by mixed-use developments or cultural districts, with their synergy of offices, shops, cafes, restaurants and cultural facilities (Snedcof, 1985).

Such models for cultural and economic regeneration have been, to a large extent, replicated in the UK through such things as *Urban* Development Corporations, although allowance has been made for differing financial, business, political and cultural structures. This has subsequently resulted in big changes in the nature of the built environment, whereby cultural centres (such as concert halls, art galleries or museums) have become a popular and natural choice for prestige or flagship projects. Suddenly, *culture* has become a more prominent feature of the urban landscape. Both locally and globally, it is seen as playing a vital role in place-marketing strategies by representing the identity of a city and, through its expression, demonstrating the city's qualities, with the result of both attracting investment and improving civic pride.

It is clear, then, that *culture* is able to contribute to physical, economic and social renewal in *urban* areas in a number of different ways and that these principles have, to varying degrees, been adopted by city governments as techniques of cultural regeneration. When applied in combination, it is suggested here that the following principles help to show the importance of *culture* as a tool for effective regeneration.

- Consumption of the arts and cultural activities (such as performances, events, concerts, festivals and screenings, etc.) can help generate other economic activity by attracting into an area people who then use other 'non-cultural' facilities, e.g. bars, hotels and public transport, etc. In this way, cultural venues act as a catalyst for both activity and investment.
- Following on from this, the time-frame for cultural consumption is not limited to the pattern of the normal working day. In other words, cultural activity can be used as the basis for an evening economy as it is able to attract people not only into different places but also at different times through such things as longer shop-opening hours, evening theatre, film and music performances and extended licences for bars and night-clubs. The logical conclusion of this concept is for the creation of the '24-hour city' (Lovatt & O'Connor, 1995; Heath, 1997);
- Due to an increase in both the amount and the time-scale of activity it is apparent that *culture* can also help to provide the critical mass which makes an area work, both socially and economically. This is achieved by creating a range and mix of uses and activities in an area which support and reinforce each other and help to restore previously derelict areas through the conversion of properties for cultural uses. Thus cultural quarters are created.
- *Culture* also plays an important role by providing the content for activity, using programmes of cultural animation to create lively *urban* areas (Montgomery, 1995a). Events in public spaces, squares and parks help bring meaning and, therefore, vitality to those spaces. In this way *culture*, in combination with the built environment, helps to create place.
- Finally, and most importantly, *culture* is a vital component of the *urban* public realm as its spaces, streets and squares all help to create the identity of a city. In

order to ensure a healthy and vital public realm, *culture* should inform the process of *urban design* through the medium of such things as new developments, environmental improvement schemes and public art. To improve the understanding of how this can be achieved in practice, it is now necessary to study the theoretical relationship between culture and the built environment in order to make the interventions of *design* professionals more effective.

Integrating Urban Design with Cultural Regeneration

The use of *culture* in the regeneration of post-industrial cities is linked to *urban design* through the process of creating what is known as the 'entrepreneurial city' (Hall & Hubbard, 1996). The major economic restructuring that occurred with the shift from Fordist to post-Fordist modes of production has resulted in changes in the way cities are being governed, with the new *urban* politics being characterized by a concern with the extent to which a city is able to attract jobs and investment in an increasingly competitive, global marketplace. The local provision of welfare and services has been reduced, with city governments concentrating increasingly on local economic development and growth in attempts to regenerate and develop *urban* areas through such things as public-private partnerships and place-marketing. This relationship has led to public sector bodies in *urban* areas often being involved in activities and possessing characteristics normally associated with the private sector--risk-taking, promotion and marketing.

Hand in hand with the development of a new civic pride and the marketing of a newly conceived place is the physical reconstruction of the old city and the creation of a new *urban* landscape. This is the result of the need by city governors to distinguish their city from others in the global marketplace, which has had a particular emphasis on the environmental, social and cultural life of the city. Flagship regeneration projects are important symbols of change in the *urban* landscape and their *design* and the *design* of city areas as a whole play a crucial role in the process of *urban* regeneration.

This argument, that *urban design* is closely linked to the politics of place-marketing and that it is used to legitimate entrepreneurial forms of governance, has been chiefly associated with David Harvey. He suggests that the trend away from uniform and ubiquitous modern architectural styles and *urban* forms to eclectic and unique post-modern architectural styles and *urban* forms is a consequence of attempts by city governors to assert an individual identity in the face of inter-*urban* competition and to attract potential investors (Harvey, 1989). He also argues that this serves a dual purpose, as the new landscape of consumption, both materially and symbolically, represents a revitalized *urban* economy and civic pride, so reducing local feelings of alienation and exclusion caused by the effects of globalization. Local people now have the chance to effectively 'buy into' their own city. In this way, the built environment has become little more than a new commodity within a regime of flexible accumulation, with *urban design* being used as a tool to ease the transition between managerialism and entrepreneurialism in *urban* governance (Harvey, 1993).

The creation of a new *urban* landscape is not merely a physical or economic process, but also involves assumptions about the social, political and cultural life of the city. However, the nature of the relationship between these different factors may be more complex than it first appears and it is possible to take the view that notions of *urban design*, although they may come to represent a dominant ideology, are inevitably open to individual interpretation; that they may, in reality, reflect a more fragmented, problematic view of *urban culture*. Bourdieu (1977) argues that the meanings of cultural artefacts (such as the built environment) are not experienced unreflectively. Users of an artefact or a space have the ability to actively negotiate, contest or even corrupt socially constructed meanings.

In the case of the creation of entrepreneurial landscapes, there is evidence to suggest that such things as flagship projects provide a focus for criticism and allow communities the potential to question who profits from the new *urban* politics (Boyle & Hughes, 1995). This emphasizes the point that *culture*, and *urban culture* in particular, is a complex entity and that it is not possible to treat the *urban* landscape as simply the result of a specific set of economic forces. *Culture* is negotiated and contested between different social groups; therefore, it follows that the nature of the built environment is a result of many different forces and cannot be ascribed to a single cause.

The *urban* landscape, then, could be said to be the result of a social representation, in which meaning is constructed or 'mapped' by individuals and groups to create a shared, 'commonsense' or mutually accepted framework for experiencing a place. Such 'maps of meaning' are not limited to purely spatial information but incorporate many different experiences and personal perceptions gathered from many different sources. This results in the creation of a hierarchy of social representations, which together make up the characteristics of an environment and ultimately help to provide the identity of a place. Although places are (physically and symbolically) constructed by a collective social interaction, they are translated and articulated by individuals, thus reinforcing the point that cultural meaning is apparently a consensus reached after negotiation between affected individuals and so is constantly being changed and reinterpreted through time as different configurations of individuals and groups reach a different consensus. This concept provides a key to the understanding of how cities and *urban* places develop.

If the built environment is a product of two types of *design* (the one imposed by the dominant social groups and the one contested and re-interpreted by everyday users), over time and as a result of many different *design* decisions made by many different people a recognizable landscape is produced--a city. Therefore, as Rapoport (1984) notes, this suggests that all these people must share certain rules for making such choices: there must be certain models or 'mental templates' (cognitive schemata) which guide the decisions made in a given cultural context. Therefore, all cities and all built environments are ordered and are the result of a systematic arrangement of their elements. Cities, like *culture*, are based on shared schemata, a consensus for activity. In other words, "all cities have an order, and that order is intimately (and ultimately) related to *culture* via schemata" (Rapoport, 1984, p. 56).

Therefore, the schemata that are used for *urban design* and the schemata that are used for *culture* need to be intimately related, if they are not already. In other words, the social groups that are involved in producing a city's *culture* need to be involved in producing the built environment of that city. What is needed is a mechanism that is able to link a city's cultural life (be it consumption or production) with the built environment (as it is produced and consumed). Cultural planning may be this mechanism. Through its study, an understanding of the process of *urban design* in the context of the post-modern, post-Fordist 'entrepreneurial' city can be achieved.

Culture should, therefore, provide city governors with the necessary impetus and inspiration for *urban* regeneration and, by linking it to *urban design*, the sense of place can be developed in the built environment. The city's *culture* can be used to express the individual identities, character and uniqueness of its people and is able to contribute to the development of a sense of place. It is, therefore, essential to link *urban design* and improvements in the built environment with the political, economic and social processes implicit in the cultural planning approach in order for *urban* designers to be more effective in their interventions in the built environment (Montgomery, 1995b).

The imperative to integrate *urban design* with cultural regeneration is provided by the growing concern over the condition and quality of the *urban* public realm, particularly in the UK. The combined effects of the suburbanization, standardization and privatization of *urban* development have resulted in the experience of the public realm being characterized by a general collapse of civility and social cohesion, a lack of vitality in public spaces and problems of safety and convenience in the use of city space (see Punter, 1990a). It is suggested that the poor quality of the public realm and the built environment is directly related to the poor quality of the social life of a city and so should provide the moral, social, psychological and economic stimulus for an attempt to revive the social life of cities (Jacobs, 1961).

The chief response to the crisis in the public realm has been the rise of a post-modern approach to *urban design*. The idea of post-modernism when applied to the *design* of *urban* space allows for a greater appreciation of traditional *urban* processes and the context for new developments. It is about the restoration of the spatial discipline of the traditional city through such things as streets and squares. In conjunction with the ethos of conservation, this has resulted in an increase in the importance of local and historic context, with a greater respect for the uniqueness of particular places and concern for the continuity of their particular traditions. Post-modernism is about a sense of place, the local and the particular.

Recently, this has begun to find expression in ideas about and conceptions of *urban* quarters or *urban* village--distinct areas of cities defined by their limited area, their mix of types and sizes of buildings and tenure, their human scale and their individual character and intrinsic identity. In relation to the process of cultural regeneration in post-industrial cities, these characteristics are often developed in specific quarters of the city, usually central areas that have historically been the location of manufacturing and warehousing. Since the rapid decline of these economic sectors in the 1970s and 1980s,

in many areas more marginal businesses run by younger entrepreneurs have moved in, attracted by cheap rents and an *urban* location. Often these people are involved in artistic or creative enterprises, and are keen to adopt an *urban* life-style and develop an *urban* aesthetic. In this way they provide the catalyst for the regeneration of the area as a 'cultural quarter'.

In general terms, a cultural or entertainment quarter can be defined as a spatially limited and distinct area which contains a high concentration of cultural facilities compared with other areas of a town or city (Wynne, 1989). More specifically, it is possible to identify a number of key characteristics which help to define it, firstly, as a distinct quarter and, secondly, as an area of cultural activity (Table 1).

In terms of developing strategy frameworks which can encourage and support such characteristics, it is possible to identify a number of key themes and urban *design* concepts which focus on the processes by which the built environment is created and which are synergic with the essential components of cultural strategies (Table 2). This framework is adapted from a combination of existing models of *urban design*, cultural regeneration, building development and community participation. This list is not intended to be exhaustive, definitive or too prescriptive about *design* solutions or cultural activities and how they might be related to each other. Rather, it represents the fundamental elements of existing knowledge and practice and, as such, can be used to assess the effectiveness of the role of *urban design* in a particular case-study of an existing cultural quarter.

The Northern Quarter

It is now useful to look at a particular example in more detail in order to test the model of a cultural quarter outlined in Table 1 and also examine how *urban design* theory can be integrated with a project of cultural regeneration in practice. The NQ is a relatively compact district of 56 hectares on the north-eastern side of Manchester city centre which lies adjacent to the retail core of the city (Figure 1). In *design* terms the area is characterized by a generally dense built environment with large numbers of late 19th and early 20th century warehouses. Once a thriving commercial and retail district of Manchester, by the 1980s the area had declined economically and the physical environment had deteriorated.

In a similar way to Temple Bar (McCarthy, 1998), the area subsequently began to be colonized by younger, artistic types and in the early 1990s the area had become synonymous with the cultural phenomenon known as 'Madchester', bringing places like Affleck's Palace and Dry Bar into the national consciousness. By 1993, the area had been designated as a 'cultural quarter'.

The regeneration of the NQ has been developed principally through a partnership between local traders and residents (represented by the Northern Quarter Association) and the City Council. In 1993, Manchester City Council commissioned a study from the arts consultancy Projects Environment, who suggested that the NQ would benefit from

the intervention of an artist in the local community to help initiate and focus creative activity within the area. As a result, Projects Environment jointly sponsored with the City Council the appointment of an artist-in-residence in the city Planning Department on a 6 month contract to advise on policy and co-ordinate individual projects. This appointment proved to be the catalyst for wider regeneration activity by both the City Council and the Northern Quarter Association, making the regeneration project in the NQ unique in this respect.

In September of the same year, Manchester City Council and the Northern Quarter Association jointly commissioned a study of economic, cultural and physical conditions in the area which would form the basis of a regeneration strategy. The Northern Quarter Regeneration Study (Urbanistics, 1995) was approved by Manchester City Council in October 1994. The study involved a detailed analysis of the existing economic situation in the area, noting the established nature of the textile industry and the emergence of the newer cultural sector which gave the area a vibrant and diverse economy. However, it went on to note that, because of other factors (in particular, the poor physical environment), the area's economy was in a marginal, fragile state, with both the cultural businesses and the textile industries experiencing difficulties in establishing themselves and developing their businesses in the long term. Consequently, the report suggested that the area was at a critical point in its development in that it could either become a successful, vibrant, attractive part of the city centre, or fall into slow but absolute decline.

In November 1994, the City Council made an initial contribution to the delivery of the strategy by providing £20 000 for a 6-month development programme. During this period the City Council also assisted in the preparation of a number of bids to a variety of sources in order to gain further funding so that the regeneration process could continue. In addition, a strategic working party was set up in order to influence the outcome of policy decisions and provide a point of reference for developers, funders or council members.

The Northern Quarter Association was given responsibility for the implementation of the regeneration strategy and has adopted an 'organic' or 'grass-roots-led' approach. It remains a voluntary organization, with 130 members drawn from local traders, residents and users of the area. In the 4 years since the regeneration study was approved, the Association has secured £93 000 of revenue funding and £320 000 of project-related funding, and an additional £20 million of known capital investment was attracted into the area. The public sector funding has been obtained from three main sources: firstly, the NQ area was included in the successful Single Regeneration Budget 2 bid of £5.6 million for Ancoats and Miles Platting, from which it will receive £30 000 per annum towards environmental improvements and the funds to appoint a project co-ordinator until the year 2002; secondly, the European Regional Development Fund contributed £200 000 towards environmental improvements on Tib Street; this was recently matched by the National Heritage Lottery Fund, which contributed a further £200 000 to the Tib Street scheme.

The Northern Quarter Association has been involved in a number of projects in the area, including the development of the Smithfield Buildings on Oldham Street (Figure 2) and

other mixed-use/residential developments, an environmental improvement scheme on Tib Street, the installation of several public art works in the area, the production of a quarterly newsletter, a radio station, an annual street festival and the conversion of several premises for cultural/educational/voluntary sector uses such as a Buddhist centre, a music centre and the headquarters of The Big Issue In The North. This is in addition to several prominent cultural venues, such as Band-On-The-Wall, the Manchester Craft Centre, Cafe Pop and Dry Bar, which have been established in the area for a number of years.

Each of these has combined to enhance the image and perception of the area and has made significant contributions to the process of regeneration. In the immediate future, regeneration will be focused on the redevelopment of the old Smithfield Market (Figure 3), a large site in the north-west corner of the NQ which will involve the development of a number of residential, commercial and cultural projects.

The Role of Urban Design in the Cultural Regeneration of the NQ

Ideas about the theory and practice of *urban design* have influenced the process of regeneration in the NQ in a number of different ways. Activities and initiatives undertaken in the area over the past 5 years will be examined in relation to the suggested framework for integrating *urban design* principles and processes with cultural regeneration that was identified earlier (Table 2).

The regeneration process adopted in the NQ has produced improvements in the *urban* public realm and has contributed to the development of a greater and more positive sense of place in the area. This has chiefly been achieved through the enhancement of the existing built environment rather than the production of anything new on a large scale. The flexibility of the existing stock has allowed for the easy conversion of a number of older buildings, which has, in turn, helped to conserve the traditional *urban design* elements of the NQ whilst ensuring new uses and new perceptions of the area. Although the buildings in the NQ demonstrate a certain degree of adaptability, more work needs to be done to improve public space in the area, particularly with regard to hard and soft landscaping. Comfort and safety are still a major problem. The encouragement of ground-floor uses in mixed-use schemes has helped to improve surveillance and soften the boundary between public and private space. The legibility of the area is relatively strong and has been improved by the installation of over 120 ceramic street signs at various locations. It is hoped that the public art can continue to contribute to the users' understanding in other ways and further enhance their sense of place.

While the environmental improvements that have been carried out in the area have been welcomed and have been largely successful, they have only had a limited spatial impact on the area as a whole. In other words, more are needed in other parts of the NQ, in particular in Oldham Street and Stevenson Square. These improvements are essential in order to enhance the vitality of the public realm in the area. Perhaps the best aspect of the environmental improvements has been the restoration of a reasonable floorscape, especially where it has been integrated with public art works. The elements of the

environmental improvement strategy which are perhaps lacking include the provision of street furniture, soft landscaping and the wider and more creative provision of street-lighting.

The development of cultural activity has been a major contributor to the success of the regeneration project. The amount and variety of cultural facilities in the area have steadily increased over the last few years and, although some venues have suffered from the vagaries of the market and have closed down, the longer-standing facilities, such as Band-On-The-Wall, Affleck's Palace and the Craft Centre, have continued to attract people into the area. In addition, the newer cultural developments, such as the Buddhist Centre, the Chinese Arts Centre and the NQ Street Festival, have succeeded in bringing new users and uses to the public realm of the area. Public art schemes are helping to develop the cultural role and identity of the area and the night-time economy of the area remains healthy. More difficult to assess are the impact of new architectural developments in the area in a cultural sense and the influence of personalization on building facades in the public realm. It is suggested that the creativity apparent in other areas of cultural activity also applies here and has been developed as such in the NQ.

Following on from this idea, the progress of building development in the area has been characterized by a degree of innovation through the encouragement of new and varied uses, and it is hoped this will continue through the further conversion of old warehouses and department stores into residential and retail uses. However, what is functionally or visually appropriate for the area should also not solely be based on historic features and events. There is a place for new types and *designs* of buildings in the area, and indeed it is essential that such innovation is encouraged. Experience in the NQ has shown that public art in general, and where it has been incorporated into building developments in particular, can prove very useful in creating a new conception of what is appropriate for the built environment of an area. For example, it could certainly be argued that the use of neon in the NQ is now highly appropriate given the success of the night-time economy in recent years and that the light tower on Tib Street (Figure 4) provides excellent use and contextual cues in this respect.

The principle of community participation in the development process has been integral to the process of regeneration in the NQ, particularly with regard to the public art schemes. Other projects, such as the radio station and the Street Festival, have provided an important focus for the local community and have provided them with an opportunity to be directly involved in cultural activity in the area. While there has been less community involvement in the *design* process (due mainly to the fact that there has been no overall redesign proposal for the area), in the future there will be an extensive public consultation over the redevelopment of the Smithfield Market site. One other issue, which may need to be addressed, is the integration of the newer residents and users of the area with the existing community and its representative structure. Clearly, the Northern Quarter Association needs to make efforts to involve the newer community and encourage it to develop an awareness of the nature of the area and so increase its level of participation and commitment.

As suggested above, there has been no overall *design* strategy for the NQ beyond that which was set out in the Regeneration Study. It is important to remember that this study has always been regarded as a 'vision' rather than a 'blueprint' for the future development of the area. Consequently, no formal strategies for *urban design* have been produced recently, there is no comprehensive landscape strategy and a dedicated *urban design* team has not been appointed to oversee development in the area. Nor is it likely that any of these projects will be developed in the foreseeable future. The pursuit of *urban design* and cultural goals has largely been carried out through individual projects (such as the Street Festival or the Smithfield Market site) which are co-ordinated by the Northern Quarter Association in collaboration with the City Council. In theory, this flexibility in the implementation of *urban design* and environmental improvement projects is something that appeals to the creative instincts of people in the NQ. In practice, however, the general lack of public sector resources for *urban design* projects makes it rather difficult to be creative in any sense when it comes to environmental improvements. A quarter-specific *design* strategy would be a suitable basis for future funding bids and could provide a formal link between *urban design* and cultural regeneration in the area.

Although an awareness of the relationship between *urban design* and *culture* is evident in many of the projects that have been undertaken, it has proved difficult to define clearly how quality in both these areas has been and can be achieved. While the evidence of an improved public realm suggests a compelling link has been made between *urban design* and cultural activity in the regeneration of the NQ, a description of the process by which this has been achieved remains elusive. The role of *urban design* in the cultural regeneration of the NQ is, therefore, uncertain.

This assessment is confirmed by reference to the idea of *urban* stewardship suggested by John Montgomery. This was defined as "helping a place to look after itself, a sort of management by incremental change, coupled with selective strategic interventions to effect wider progress and improvement" (Montgomery, 1995a, p. 108), which "might be referred to as 'post-Fordist' . . . that is to say supportive, strategic, flexible and subtle as opposed to dirigiste and didactic" with the task being "not to plan cultural and other activity but to plan for cultural development and the ebb and flow of activity. In other words, planning for uncertainty" (Montgomery, 1995b, p. 169).

Certainly the NQ has been 'helped to look after itself' and has been subject to 'incremental change', not least because of the limited public sector funding; certainly the strategic interventions have been 'selective', not least because of the City Council's other priorities; certainly the approach has been 'supportive, flexible and subtle', partly because the resources were not there and partly because people preferred it that way; and certainly regeneration activity has 'ebbed and flowed'. However, it is important to realize that, at least in the case of the NQ, it would seem that 'uncertainty' is a necessary precondition for 'creativity' and is an essential and inevitable ingredient in the process of cultural regeneration. It is the place where the best art comes from.

[The Role of Urban Design in Cultural Regeneration](#)

It is important to appreciate that the appropriateness of *urban design* techniques in cultural regeneration projects largely depends on the individual circumstances of a place and the formulation of new strategies for regeneration should always be approached with this in mind. The process of cultural regeneration evident in the NQ has clearly been derived from the unique character and resources of the area and its people. Whilst it is difficult to draw general conclusions from one case-study, some recommendations can be suggested. Thus, it appears that, to be most effective, the role of *urban design* in cultural regeneration involves both the integration of arts policy with more mundane services, such as public transport, crime prevention or street maintenance, as well as the integration of 'hard' infrastructure with a variety of 'soft' uses, events and activities (Montgomery, 1990). This is achieved through a process of *urban* stewardship outlined in the previous section. By concentrating on the processes of *urban design* and their relation to cultural activity in particular areas, it is hoped to create the preconditions for cultural regeneration rather than attempting to impose a definition of *culture* on an area through certain fixed *urban design* solutions.

The framework for *urban design* in cultural regeneration, therefore, should be based on those principles of *urban design* which highlight the process by which the built environment is created and which can also be integrated with cultural strategies. From the experience gained in the NQ and other, similar, cultural districts, such as Temple Bar (Montgomery, 1995b), and from broader *urban design* strategies, for example Birmingham City Centre (Walker & Davison, 1997), it is possible to conclude that there are a number of concepts, techniques or policy areas which can act as a guide for the use of *urban design* as part of a strategy of cultural regeneration (Table 2). Whilst this framework has formed the basis of this research into the role of *urban design* in cultural regeneration, and is suggested as a starting point for similar exploratory and evaluative work in this area, the experience of the NQ suggests that it can only guide practice in the very loosest sense.

The fundamental starting point for future practice in this area must be the recognition of the uniqueness of places as a basis for their regeneration. An *urban* design strategy which taps into and facilitates the development of established, latent or undiscovered cultural dimensions of place will go some way towards securing the foundations of a self-sustaining regeneration strategy. However, whilst it is possible to identify themes and policies which might guide the development of place-specific strategies, of greater importance is the establishment of an appropriate environment to encourage creativity to flourish. It is clear that an effective relationship between local communities and statutory bodies, ideally through a dedicated creative team and a steady though not necessarily substantial stream of funding, is also an important component of a successful regeneration programme. Thus, the experience of the NQ suggests that a clearer focus on the creative process as well as on the cultural product of *urban design* could form the basis for more effective action to secure cultural regeneration.

[Table 1. Characteristics of cultural quarters](#)

(1) Central location within the city, frequently adjacent to major retail or commercial areas. The central location makes such areas more accessible and also invites less formal usage, which is in character with many of the activities that occur here (e.g. bars and cafes), as well as making them ideal centres for specific uses and specialist interests (e.g. small retailers and night-clubs, etc.).

(2) Cultural facilities concerned with both consumption and production, i.e. music venues and recording studios, cinemas and film schools, market stalls and craft workshops. However, most cultural quarters tend to become centres of consumption (i.e. tourist attractions) rather than providing a balance of the two. Less formal facilities are also required, such as the street and the square, in order to accommodate programmed events and festivals, etc.

(3) Mixed use allows for economic diversity, provides a more human-scale environment and helps to increase the sense of containment and self-sufficiency of the area. A mixture of small-to medium-scale businesses (shops, studios, and performance venues), cafes, bars, pubs, clubs, hotels, cinemas and theatres as well as residential developments allows for diversity and activity at all times.

(4) 'Cross-over' between production and consumption. Due to the relatively high value-added nature of the production process for many cultural industries, it is important that there are close (geographical) links between the point of production and the point of consumption. Due to the smaller scale and local mix, businesses are more able and willing to share or use each other's resources, skills and facilities, etc. It is this general relationship between cultural consumption and cultural production that is a crucial factor for both the general functioning and the successful functioning of cultural quarters.

*(5) Public art and its integration with the built environment. Once again, this calls for a balance between production and consumption, as local artists can be used to create attractions for their local environment. It also suggests that cultural quarters should be characterized by good **urban design** and, consequently, by a vital and vibrant public realm. This is achieved by creating art that engages and involves people with the environment in order to contribute to a greater understanding of the area.*

Table 2. A suggested framework for using urban design in cultural regeneration

Legend for Chart:

A - Strategic theme
B - Concept
C - Policy area

A

B

C

(1) Public

Permeability

realm/place-making

Linked series of public spaces
Views/vistas

Variety/diversity

Mixed uses
Small horizontal and vertical grain

Legibility

Nodes, edges, paths, districts, landmarks
Architectural distinctiveness

Robustness/adaptability

Building depth/access/height
Hard/soft, active/passive areas

Comfort/safety

Human scale
Natural surveillance
Pedestrian/car interface

Defining spaces

Envelopes
Containment

(2) Environmental
improvement

Floorscape
Street furniture
Street maintenance
Lighting
Soft landscaping
Variety of colours, patterns and materials

(3) Cultural
activity

Cultural facilities

Consumption
Production

Festivals and events
Public art schemes
Night-time economy
Architecture as art

Personalization

Signs/adornment

(4) Building

Conservation

development

District strategy for designation/protection
Architectural heritage/craftsmanship

Innovation

Mixed use
Residential development

Sustainability

Sympathetic re-use

Visual

Contextual cues

appropriateness

Use cues

(5) Community
participation
and access

Involvement in **design** process
Involvement in cultural activity
Improved public transport
Signposting

(6) **Design** strategy

Cultural strategy

Audit
Area marketing and promotion
Monitoring and evaluation

Development guide

Facilitating effective change

Landscape strategy

Integrating built/natural environment
concerns

Urban design team

Dedicated multi-professional policy/implementation
group

Note: Adapted from Bentley et al. (1985), Buchanan (1988), Lynch (1959), Montgomery (1990, 1995a), Punter (1990b), Punter & Carmona (1996) and Tibbalds (1992).

MAP: Figure 1. Location of the NQ within Manchester city centre (reproduced with permission of Manchester Institute for Popular *Culture*, Manchester Metropolitan University).

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): Figure 2. Smithfield Buildings on Oldhan Street: a former department store converted into loft apartment, with quality independent shops and services at street level.

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): Figure 3. Smithfield Market site. The biggest redevelopment project to be carried out in the NQ, it will involve the creation of new streets and squares and the development of buildings for residential, commercial and cultural uses.

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): Figure 4. Neon light tower on multi-storey car park. Designed by Peter Freeman and built by local people, the tower acts as a beacon for the area.

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