

Working Paper 87



**The Absence of the Social Actor in Considerations of
the Landscapes of Regeneration in ‘Global Cities’.**

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ISBN: 978-1-904815-55-3

Abstract:

In recent times a great deal of research has been carried out on 'regeneration', largely from a policy analysis perspective. There is a noticeable shortage of empirical qualitative research, which has attempted to employ sociological concepts to examine the social organisation and subjective experience of these regenerated spaces. There is a common failure to locate the social actor within these carefully constructed urban landscapes both within sociology and wider planning discourse. This failure is most apparent in existing audit technologies surrounding the measuring of the success of regeneration projects which fail to conceptualise these spaces as interactional contexts which profoundly shape the contours of contemporary urban subjectivities.

Using data gathered in Cardiff Bay, I will outline how utilising an innovative methodology incorporating a range of qualitative techniques, including visual research, is potentially capable of examining the way in which the various discursive fields that meet and are embodied in these urban spaces impact upon issues such as inclusion and exclusion, social control and organisation and how these life-worlds are interpreted and negotiated by those who appropriate them. Furthermore, based upon the notion that global discourses of urban design, planning, production and consumption are incorporated in to these life-worlds, it will be argued that this approach is capable of examining the complex interactions between the global and the local at their interface. This approach promises to yield theoretical and practical implications, beyond the immediate subject area, for urban sociology, city planning and the understanding of contemporary global complexities.

Keywords: Regeneration, Locality, Space, Representation, Subjectivity, Interaction

A Qualitative Approach to Regeneration:

This paper will be concerned with outlining the particular approach to understanding regeneration, the methodology which emerges from this conceptualisation and some of the early findings of my PhD research. What is being suggested here is an approach to the conceptualisation of regeneration which draws on existing sociological concepts and techniques to demonstrate the impact of particular modalities and technologies of regeneration upon both the subjectivity of local social actors and wider, and increasingly global, themes of power and social organisation. Through the application of various theories of the urban and the social it is possible to conceptualise regeneration as having an impact far beyond the reaches of traditional indices of measurement that are central to the 'audit culture' surrounding regeneration. In this proposition I am not claiming that policy and economic analysis are not fundamental to understanding and evaluating the regeneration process but in this paper I will propose an approach that adds a qualitative level to the understanding and assessment of regeneration projects which is capable of re-positioning and comprehending the social actor within urban landscapes in which various tensions between the global and local are played out.

First it should be appreciated that in this approach regeneration is seen as a particular era in the life of the metropolis, one that is born of well documented social and economic changes such as the decline in mass-industry (see Blackaby, 1979; Bauman, 1998) the 'inner city problem' (Harrison, 1992; Murray, 1990, 1994) of the 1980s and more recently the discourse of the 'global city' (Sassen, 2006, see also Hannerz, 1996). This connects regeneration to past temporalities as well as indicating possible futures for the sites. In this research I focus specifically upon the regeneration of Cardiff Bay, an example of property, design and consumer led regeneration, coupled with the interesting addition of the symbol and home of devolved Welsh democracy. The process of regeneration in this research is conceptualised as the embodiment of various discourses surrounding the 'problem' of cities which led to the creation of a particular approach to regeneration and also discourses surrounding the nature of the urban and the urban citizen. There has also been a re-configuration of regeneration projects to render themselves attractive to global forms of capital, investment and tourism. I suggest that this modality of regeneration produces a site in which, through the application of various technologies, a model of an ideal type urban locale is

created, which is in turn interpreted by its appropriators and those who are excluded from it. It is this conceptualisation which leads to a need to consider the role and experience of the social actor.

The Cardiff Bay Development Corporation was established in 1987 and spent the following 12 years creating Cardiff Bay. Some £2.2 billion were spent in creating “Europe’s Most Exciting Waterfront” as the corporations publicity machine would have you believe. Focusing on design and property led regeneration in the Inner Harbour the derelict warehouses and dockland were swept away and replaced with ‘Mermaid Quay’ a collection of restaurants, bars and a limited number of shops. In addition to the central site of consumptive leisure there is also the highly visible presence of the ‘cultural’ in the form of the Millennium Centre (of course Raymond Williams (1958) would take issue with this description) and the symbolic and actual presence political in the form of the Senedd. These developments have created an interactional milieu and conceptual space which has served to distance the area from its history as an industrial port which came to prominence in the boom days of the coal and steel industries. How this has been achieved and, perhaps more importantly, how the development of this area has impacted upon the residents of the city is the focus of this research.

To begin to move toward a consideration of the regeneration’s effect upon individual experience and subjectivity and the forms of social organisation which are fostered by the re-configuring of the urban landscape it is first essential to theoretically apprehend what we are dealing with. Beyond the policy and economic considerations is a physical (I am reluctant to say real) space in which people in the words of the CBDC “live, work and play”. This is the point of departure in terms of the approach I am proposing and warrants explanation.

Regenerated Space: Concrete or Construct

To begin to proceed toward a theoretical conceptualisation of the regeneration of urban space, and the role of agency and subjectivity within it, it is necessary to first pin down exactly what is meant by ‘space’ and how this informs the inclusion of subjective experience as pivotal to both the nature of the space itself and the study of regenerated spaces. If it is possible to consider a conceptualisation of urban space

beyond the realms of the physical and the material, as is suggested within this research, one must first view contemporary urban space as a complex whole, and distinct mode of organisation. A site within which a myriad of networks of power relations and interactions between subjects themselves and subjects and the social are played out in the discursive and cultural field to both constitutive and restrictive, liberating and oppressive, effect. This approach draws on various theoretical considerations of space, notably Lefebvre (1991) and Foucault (1984), the early man-environment work of Amos Rapoport (1990) as well as contemporary applications of existing theory within various disciplines such as geography and housing studies.

Michel Foucault in his discussion *Of Other Spaces* proposes a position on the continuum between the utopia (a perceived real site) and the heterotopia (a simulation of real sites) which is useful in conceptualising regenerated space, a 'joint experience'; the mirror. The mirror is simultaneously a real site and an unreal space. As Foucault (1984: 3) describes;

“In the mirror, I see myself there where I am not, in an unreal, virtual space that opens up behind the surface; I am over there, there where I am not, a sort of shadow that gives my own visibility to myself, that enables me to see myself there where I am absent: such is the utopia of the mirror. But it is also a heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction on the position that I occupy. From the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there. Starting from this gaze that is, as it were, directed toward me, from the ground of this virtual space that is on the other side of the glass, I come back toward myself; I begin again to direct my eyes toward myself and to reconstitute myself there where I am”.

One reconstitutes ones real position through a gaze that passes through a virtual and unreal space. The position of the viewer is at once absolutely real and absolutely unreal. This notion is extremely useful for conceptualising the way in which subjects both perceive space and perceive themselves in a given space. The subject both re-interprets the space and uses the space to re-interpret themselves, positioning them

within the represented sites contained within the real space in a way that is both constitutive and constituting. It is this process which highlights the impact of re-shaping the urban landscape upon contemporary local subjectivities.

This approach is also supported by Edward Soja's (2000) discussion of the 'urban imaginary' and the way in which the nature of the post-industrial metropolis not only constitutes a shift in the usage of urban space but also constitutes a change in the way that these spaces, and more importantly, urban social organisation are regulated and controlled. In this conceptualisation order is maintained through the careful manipulation of civic consciousness and popular images of cityspaces and urban life; a theme that can be seen to be central to the 'themeing' and identity work that has been carried out in Cardiff Bay. What is at stake here is the analysis of the both the process and product of regeneration and the way in which the product, "Cardiff Bay" and "Mermaid Quay", is interpreted by various social groups to various constraining, empowering, inclusive and excluding effects.

There is an extremely rich theoretical and empirical tradition from which to draw when discussing the urban and of course the shaping of subjectivity within the urban setting is not a new concern. Simmel's (1950) essay *Metropolis and Mental Life* remains prescient and can be seen to be a conceptual predecessor to aspects of the corpus of literature regarding 'post-modern' culture and the contemporary metropolis. Neither is it new to talk about the way in which culture and the emergence of the symbolic economy has and is shaping our urban landscape (Zukin, 1995). The Chicago School pioneered the empirical study of urban life, developing from the earlier 'social explorers' (see Keating, 1976) and there have been many ethnographies of urban communities and space (for example Duneier, 1999 and Jacobs, 1961) and a call for a renewed vigour in urban ethnography (Kasinitz, 1992). What is interesting however is the concerns of the early urban theorists about the organisation and life of the city have not subsided, they have taken on a new face and urban theorists and researchers are faced with new concerns to address. There is a clear need for the reconnection of existing theories and techniques of understanding interaction and subjectivity within the city to the understanding of both regeneration and globalisation and the effect that these processes are having upon both the city and its inhabitants.

It is the analysis of the interaction between the construction of the space, the discourses governing the process of the creation of Cardiff Bay and their representation in the built environment, and the way in which the actor interprets and uses this space, which underpins the empirical stages of this research. This particular conception of regenerated urban space emphasises the value of theoretically informed empirical ethnographic projects (see Atkinson, 1997; Beynon, 1975; Delamont, 1983; Dicks, 1996; Latimer, 1997); projects which seek to maintain considerations of the actor at the centre of our discipline, whilst incorporating a rigorous and sophisticated approach to the theorising of issues of social organisation and power relations. It is an incomplete project to analyse the features of a site without including an account of the way in which subjective experience and interpretation may recast and reconstruct the space, just as it is inadequate to attempt to understand the actor without equal attention given to the spaces and places which may direct and constrain their actions within it. The methodology that I will now describe is a result of this particular conceptualisation of urban social space and the modality of regeneration witnessed in Cardiff Bay.

Methodology:

The methodology used in this research is analogous to a lens which will be focused upon the space and will 'zoom in' through various levels of the social, from the realm of the spatial, visual and representational to the experiential and subjective. Each 'layer' is linked to a specific method, beginning with documentary analysis followed by visual analysis, observations and various forms of interviewing. Although each level of data is treated separately it is important to note that the interconnections between the various levels of the social and the bodies of data produced are preserved throughout the data collection and analysis stages. It is essential to note at this point that no one method or body of data produced is valued above another, but are seen to be interconnected, maintaining the conceptualisation I have outlined throughout the data collection and analysis stages which presents space as a complex social whole and interactional milieu. Central to this research and methodology is the proposition that in order to study the social it is imperative to understand the constitution of any aspect of social life or organisation as being comprised of, and also influencing, others. For example 'space' is not treated as distinct from the interactions which occur within it and the local and specific is not seen to be distinct from wider patterns of

social organisation. It is suggested that there exists a reflexive relation between what are seen as dichotomous aspects of social life. It is argued that, in this instance, it is theoretically and methodologically detrimental to place emphasis purely upon the study of the local or specific and it is suggested that it is necessary for the qualitative researcher to be inclusive of multiple layers of experience, which are mediated through interaction, representation and discourse, power relations and which affect, and are in turn affected by, wider patterns of social organisation.

The first stage of data collection is an analysis of the various discourses that have shaped the process by which the setting of Cardiff Bay, has been created. The data that are analysed during this stage of the research comprise of minutes of meetings, official documents and media publications, as well as interviews with key decision makers. This research provides a basis for the following stages of data collection and allows an understanding of some of the policy and political factors that are behind, and embodied in, the regeneration of Cardiff Bay. Again this stage of the research enables an understanding of how the project creates and utilises a model for what is seen to be ideal use of the space, constructed around the maximisation of profit through the control of the area's image and organisation.

The second body of data collection techniques and analysis are aspects of visual research and visual ethnography to document the 'signscape' of the Bay. The purpose of this approach is gain an understanding of the how relations embodied in the space and representations which it is of which it is comprised first 'select' those who may appropriate it and then may go on to shape subjects' experience and their interaction within it. This section will also include an analysis of the way in which themes of the local and the global are represented in the design of the space through an analysis of the presence (or lack) of representations of heritage and the local and appeals to the global consumer and tourist. This method is extremely important in understanding Cardiff Bay as 'looking' and the 'gaze' can be seen to be central elements in its construction. The understanding and use of appeals to the 'gaze' of various groups, such as the 'tourist gaze' (Urry, 1990) are fundamental to the organisation of this area. Indeed the prevalence of the discourse of the visual and the 'gaze' can be seen to be present in all areas of the Bay and the notion is at the heart of the concept and design of the Senedd building (in this case used to represent the 'transparency' of the Welsh

political process). As suggested by Emmison and Smith (2000) all the visual analysis is conducted in-situ rather than relying on photographs which act to frame the particular feature being analysed and remove both their physical and semiotic context and their social nature. Preserving the social context of the objects, buildings and representations allows for a further level of analysis to be conducted of the interconnections between various visual features and the way in which they act to constitute a visual or semiotic whole.

The third layer of the research will be closer to traditional ethnography and will be a series of systematically scheduled observations that will seek to elucidate the experiences of those who appropriate the space and the way in which they interact within and with the research setting. Focusing on the seemingly mundane activity that occurs throughout the day and into the night the period of observation will determine how the space is used by individuals and groups and if these uses conflict with the intended dynamics of the space envisioned by its designers and planners. Through the use of a scheduled systematic timetable, a second outcome of the design of this observation stage is the ability to analyse and comment upon temporal patterns within the regenerated spaces, offering the elucidation of a further level of social organisation and the opportunity to document the social rhythm that is fostered, or possibly denied, by the locale. This systematic approach will be further enhanced by photographs taken at scheduled intervals both to record (in a realist sense) and to provide additional data.

The fourth layer of the research design is comprised of series of interviews. These interviews take on three forms but each is centred on the concern of eliciting extended narratives from the participants regarding their reasons for visiting the area, their impressions of it and their experiences. The first series of interviews will be ethnographic in nature and will be conducted 'off the cuff' during the observation phase. The second type of interview to be employed will be the semi-structured interview. These will be conducted with individuals present in the space and participants will be from three groups; local residents, visitors or tourists and employees. The fact that the interviews are conducted in the space itself, and preferably whilst moving through the environment (see Anderson, 2004; Kusenbach, 2003; Hall, Lashua and Coffey, 2007), will also preserve the interactional nature of

the site as participants will be able to draw from the environment around them. This approach allows for an analysis of the way in which participants construct accounts and narrative of space and place using present visual 'cues' and memories that they elicit. The third type of interviews will be photo elicitation interviews. Participants in these interviews will be asked to produce their own representations of the space and discuss images produced by the researcher. These interviews add a further level of sophistication to the analysis of the representations within the space and also address some of the issues that arise from the use of photography. This series of interviews will examine how individuals construct a narrative of experience and place and how individuals see and record the space in different lights.

Data and Initial Findings:

The following section will present data from the early stages of my PhD research and will focus on the visual and spatial analysis that has been conducted as well as early fieldnotes made from observations conducted over the period of approximately two months in 2007. The extracts that are included below are from brief photo-elicitation exercises and ethnographic interviews that followed.

The first stages of the research were the documentary analysis of the board meetings and the visual analysis of the space itself. Early board meetings were concerned with establishing the aims and intentions of the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation as well as discursively defining the 'problem' and the area which fell under their remit. The initial goals of the CBDC were identified as regenerating the area in order to:

- Reunite the city with its waterfront
- Promote development which provides a superb environment in which people will want to live, work and play.
- Achieve the highest standards of design and quality in all types of investment.
- Bring forward a mix of development which will create a wide range of opportunities and reflect the hopes and aspirations of the communities in the area.

- Stimulate residential development which provides homes for a cross-section of the population.
- Establish the area as a recognised centre of excellence and innovation in the field of urban regeneration.

Moving forward to 2007 and the Bay as it now stands represents an intriguing interactional setting in which several key, and at times contradictory, elements are juxtaposed creating what appears a fairly chaotic blend of 'luxury' accommodation, retail, consumption, culture, tourism, education and politics. The combination of these elements have much in common with the characteristics of many 'post-modern' city spaces as discussed by Hannerz (1996), Hannigan (1998) among others. However with the opening of the Senedd building, the home and symbolic representation of the Welsh Assembly, there is a further element added which has changed the nature of the space and due to its location and design connects the political with elements of the consumer society in a way which poses several questions regarding the way in which the space, Welsh politics and Cardiff Bay are perceived. I will return to some of these questions later in the paper as it is first necessary to interrogate the nature of the space itself before moving on to discuss the implications of the presence of the symbol and home of the Welsh political system and the impact upon notions of the political and the identity of contemporary Cardiff and Wales that this development has had.

The first step that I took in analysing the visual nature and representations within the regenerated area was to divide the Inner Harbour area into visually coherent zones. As mentioned above this process was conducted in the space itself and the zones are not arbitrary but have been drawn from the nature of the space itself. Perhaps unsurprisingly the visual nature of the zones exhibit a strong coherence with their functional purpose and, as observations have shown, with their usage by social actors. Although it will not be discussed in this paper the way actors make the transition between the zones is also of interest. Below is a representation of the zones taken from my notes:

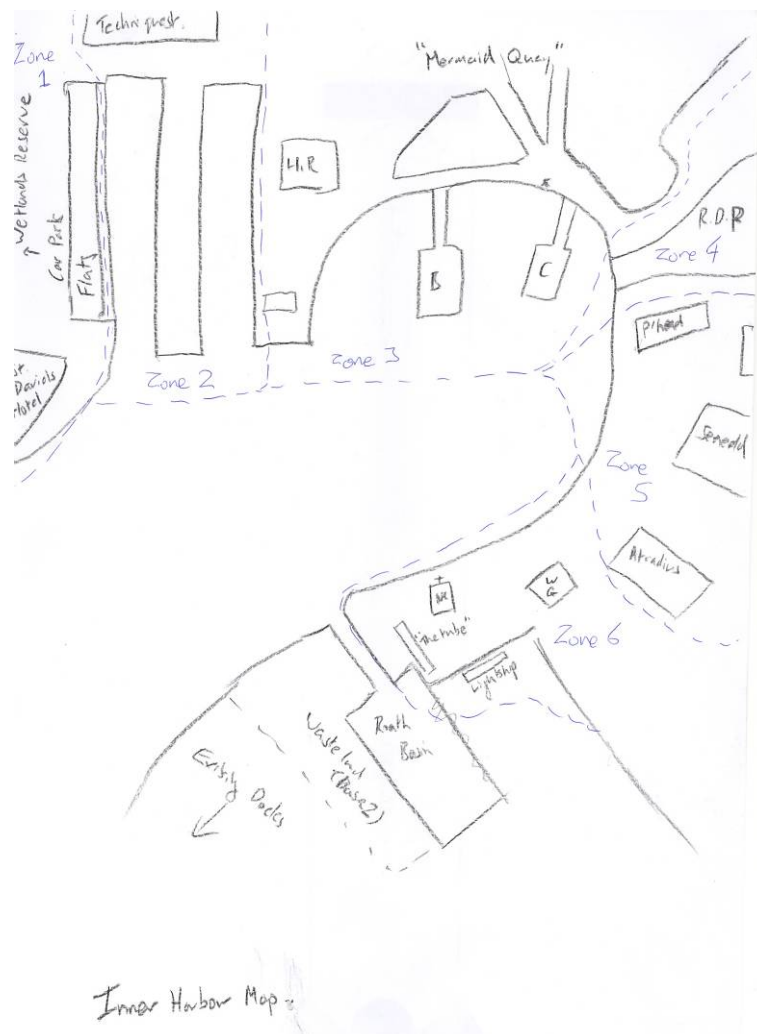


Figure 1: Sketch of Inner Harbour showing analytical zones.

For the purposes of this paper I will focus on one of the six visual zones, namely zone three, in order to demonstrate the application of this methodology and also some of the initial findings of this research. Zone 3 is comprised of the central 'Mermaid Quay' retail, restaurant and bar area. This is the zone in which the majority of the 'play' in the Bay takes place and is one of the major identifiable signifiers of the Bay along with the St. David's hotel, the Millennium Centre and the Senedd. This, despite the claims of the Senedd building, is also the most accessible area of the Bay and almost every user passes through it or spends time there whether on their way to work or as part of their visit to the area. The focus on consumption in this area is clear, however it is the nature of this space and the representations contained within it that warrant investigation as they are directly related to the organisation of this particular form of consumption and the way in which this area, the wider Bay and even the city of Cardiff are perceived. This area is central to a particular manipulation of the 'urban

imaginary' and its influence can be seen to extend through the other zones and spaces in the Bay. To illustrate and support this discussion I will draw on data from the visual analysis stage, field notes and extracts from short ethnographic interviews.

The Visual and Spatial Nature of 'Mermaid Quay':

Let us begin with a discussion of the particular imagery that has been used in creating this space. Firstly the name chosen for the area, 'Mermaid Quay' has several connotations. It is obviously an allusion to fantasy and myth and a powerful one at that. It successfully combines myth and the unknown with temptation and desire. Furthermore there is something enduring about the name, something which draws upon the romance associated with mariners and the tales they told, it is a call from a by-gone age of adventure and discovery on the sea. Furthermore this is one of the first signs of the regeneration of this area conceptually distancing itself from its geographical location. The symbol of the mermaid represents a distancing from history of the area, replacing it with a mythical one, a distancing from the existing culture and community of the area which had their own name for the area (Tiger Bay) and folklore surrounding its origins, and a total disconnection with the Welsh language. There are clear discourses of femininity and sexuality which are mobilised by this name and logo (Figure 2) which is suggestive of a particular form of femininity, of allure, temptation and desire. Of course it is suggested by Bauman (2002) that the manipulation of desire is fundamental to consumerism of the late-capitalist era. However he notes that the continual production and re-production of desire is a costly business and that the wish has become more central to the 'consumerist syndrome' (2005: 83). Harvie Ferguson (1996: 205) states that consumerism today is not "founded upon the regulation (stimulation) of desires, but upon the liberation of wishful fantasies"; the symbolism of the mermaid a clear embodiment and representation of this relation.



Fig. 2: 'Mermaid Quay' logo

The waterfront side of the space itself is 'themed' along similarly romanticised notions of the sea and maritime life. The warehouses and dockside buildings have been swept away and replaced with decked walkways, restaurants, coffee shops, bars and a small row of shops. There is a strong Mediterranean accent to the design of this area; the bricks are pale in colour, the roofs are painted white as are the rails which line the second level of restaurants which can be seen in Fig. 3 and 4 below.



Fig. 3: Mermaid Quay



Fig 4: Mermaid Quay (2)

The prominent use of wood on the side of the buildings again reinforces a particular era in a simulated maritime history. Of course boats and ships have been clad in, or made from, metal for over a century, but this is a softer side of maritime life that is being represented here. The fact that wood is a natural material also has an effect of making the development seem somewhat less artificial. The two short pier buildings also strengthen the hyper-real simulated representation of a waterfront setting that has been created in place of the area's industrial heritage and previously existing buildings. The romanticised imagery of the Bay is further represented in two art installations; "People Like Us" (Fig. 5) and "Cargoes" (Fig. 6) shown below:



Fig. 5: 'People Like Us' sculpture.



Fig. 6: 'Cargoes' art installations.

The 'People Like Us' sculpture located in a prominent position at the waterfront edge of Mermaid Quay created by John Clinch and installed in 1993. The statue is one of the only representations of local identity in the area and celebrates the historically mixed ethnic community of Butetown. The statue is of a Welsh dock worker and an Afro-Caribbean woman with their dog enjoying Cardiff Bay. It is of course an aestheticised version of what is a recognised and valued aspect of the areas history, however how many of the visitors who have their photo taken in front of it and pat the dog on the nose understand or appreciate what it is representing? At this time I can not answer this question. What can be discussed here are the effects of this particular representation in the space it is situated. On the one hand, and this is one the problems

with installations of this kind is that it is 'just a sculpture'. People may look at it without any connection to its signification of an area with a rich and mixed cultural tradition. This is acceptable as there will be people who do appreciate this representation however at the level of connotation (especially a contextual connotation) this sculpture suggests that the regeneration process itself values the heterogeneous nature of the existing communities. Money has been spent in creating this tribute to them and it is in a prominent location. There is the connotation that diversity and ethnic heterogeneity are valued *within* this space, and further more that this is a space in which this heterogeneity is encouraged and actually occurs. The statue also breaks down the temporal distance between the past and current temporalities, masking the disjuncture between the lives of past and present inhabitants of the area.

The installation based on the poem 'Cargoes' by John Masefield further reinforces the romanticised notion of the maritime in Cardiff Bay and again the distancing from local cultures and artistic production and the Welsh language. The poem has been cast in iron on the walkway and displayed in the sign shown above. The various 'cargoes' have been displayed around Mermaid Quay in a kind of artistic 'treasure trail'. Interestingly the poem itself, albeit from a previous era, emphasises the distant and the exotic as being central to this area:

Quinquireme of Nineveh from distant Ophir,
Rowing home to haven in sunny Palestine,
With a cargo of ivory,
And apes and peacocks,
Sandalwood, cedarwood, and sweet white wine.

Stately Spanish galleon coming from the Isthmus,
Dipping through the Tropics by the palm-green shores,
With a cargo of diamonds,
Emeralds, amethysts,
Topazes, and cinnamon, and gold moidores.

Dirty British coaster with a salt-caked smoke stack,
Butting through the Channel in the mad March days,
With a cargo of Tyne coal,
Road-rails, pig-lead,
Firewood, iron-ware, and cheap tin trays.

The imagery of the poem in the first two stanzas conjure up images of grandeur and the exotic whilst the imagery of the 'Dirty British (not Welsh) coaster' is very

different. In its present setting the poem seems to be used to again make a break with the areas industrial heritage whilst simultaneously acknowledging it. The final stanza in this setting seems as distant as the first two as it is difficult to picture the ‘dirty British coaster’ anywhere near Mermaid Quay.

The visual aspects of Mermaid Quay which I have described here all perform ‘themeing’ and ultimately identity work in the area and represent notions of and links to a ‘European waterfront’. But of course this is not a recreation, or even a representation, of an actual ‘European waterfront’ (which of course does not exist anyway) but an unreal and vague, hybridised and simulated, re-presentation of the idea of an ‘European waterfront’ and more importantly of an unreal and vague Cardiff. As Baudrillard (1983) suggested it would appear the difference between the two has become irrelevant as the representation is of another representation which is taken as the real. Indeed there are extremely few representations of local identity in this area, and those that are there tend to be highly romanticised, as discussed above, or subsumed in to the over-riding emphasis on visual distancing the locale from its geographical location. This distancing is further enhanced by the variation in the restaurants that are present in the area. As would be expected they draw from a wide range of cuisines and all offer the promise of authenticity, which again is an authenticity of somewhere else, a hyper-real authenticity whose hyper-real nature is increased by the fact that they now stand as representative of the Welsh capital city.

The design of the space and the ‘could be anywhere’ feel of the area combine to create a space that mobilises global discourses of consumption and how a waterfront should appear. Indeed in contemporary planning and urban design I would suggest that one of the key focal points in the design of sites such as this is the attempt to make it instantly recognisable to global visitors and tourists. As noted by Dicks (2003:1)

“Places today have become exhibitions of themselves. Through heavy investment in architecture, art, design, exhibition, space, landscaping and various kinds of redevelopment towns, cities and countryside proclaim their possession of various cultural values – such as unchanging nature, the historic past, the

dynamic future, multiculturalism, fun and pleasure, bohemianism, artistic creativity or simply stylishness”

Of course in the case of regeneration projects such as this the first sentence of this extract is where the illusion lies. Cardiff Bay is not an exhibition of itself, it is an exhibition of a body of knowledge which informs planners of what is desirable, what people expect and how profit is maximised by the application of this knowledge. The way in which the global tourist gaze is conceived by designers informs the visual and spatial nature of what is created and the spaces that are visited by the tourist inform the construction of what is expected in future visits. It is a reflexive relationship, apparently set in perpetual motion, which is shaping both urban spaces and those who appropriate them. What is created is a recognisable space in which the ‘culture’ of an area (which is in this instance a re-created culture) is re-packaged and made visible in ways that are in accordance with what is expected by visitors. It would appear that surprises and diversity are bad for business.

Interpretations and Interactions

The following extracts are from brief photo-elicitation exercises that have been conducted to date and the discussion is supported by fieldnotes during observation periods in the Bay. The aim of the photo-elicitation exercise (as well as being a good ‘ice-breaker’) was to elicit the meanings that people drew from the area, as well as offering them the opportunity to speak about the area in general. The majority of the responses support the notion of a conceptual distancing with many participants expressing sentiments such as

(1)“Walking around (Mermaid Quay) I felt that I could have been anywhere in the world.”

(2)“I felt that I was not in Cardiff but it reminded me of Italy”

(3)“Hot sunny days, cold beer and ice creams. Lunch breaks make it feel like I’m on holiday”

From the extracts above there is a sense of escapism here; lunch hours which seem like holidays and expression of being reminded of other European countries provide examples of the way in which the distancing from geographical location appears to be highly valued and yet when asked to comment on the development in general a sense of pride is expressed by those who work there and visitors from other parts of Wales;

(4)“I’m proud to live and work in the area”

(5)“Keep on and make it the best in Europe and the world,
show Europe and the world what Wales has got to offer”

(6)“I’m proud to bring friends and relatives to show off
Cardiff”

Extracts 5 and 6 highlight this sense of locality and pride that has been reported in the research to date and demonstrate how the location and development are viewed as a product of the locality and not an imposition of forces of capital and global ‘consumer flows’ and yet when asked to comment on the space itself it does not bring to mind ‘Cardiff’ in any sense but this vague ‘European’ otherness which is embodied as being Cardiff itself. Even from this limited number of extracts we can begin to see a somewhat contradictory relationship between locality and the visual connection to an unreal and simulated notion of ‘being somewhere else’. Hannerz (1996) elucidates the relation between the periphery and the local and notes that those who live at the periphery are aware of the cultural influence of a given locality and centre, however at the centre whatever passes as a product of local culture is seen to be invaded by local representations of the periphery. Some groups react to this situation by distancing themselves from the surrounding periphery, whilst others, for example tourists, embrace the representation of the local as ‘real’. People actually feel that they have experienced Cardiff by visiting the simulated sites of culture, consumption and politics that are present in the Bay.

Of course in one sense they have experienced this; the area is geographically and physically ‘real’, however as with the Foucault’s (1984) discussion of the mirror, the area is simultaneously unreal as it connects to and mobilises global discourses and

representations which mean one is at once in an absolutely real Cardiff (the position in front of the mirror) and an absolutely unreal Cardiff which creates the feeling of being 'somewhere else'. Similarly to the experience of looking in the mirror I would suggest that the sense of what it is to be in Cardiff and notions of urban citizenship that arise from this are constituted by the unreal position of being in the global and distant Cardiff Bay. These are seemingly mundane examples but when this process is considered in a wider context then we can begin to interrogate some of the technologies that have been implemented in creating this altered sense of place and locality.

Let us not forget that Cardiff Bay, and the landmark buildings that have been constructed there, are increasingly being used as the representation and signification of Cardiff's identity on the international stage. This research is designed to try and determine what the impact that the connection to global flows of capital and contours of cultural representation has had upon both the local population who are excluded and those who are integrated in to the particular patterns of consumption and lifestyle that is promoted in this setting. The definition of the space itself as providing an attractive lifestyle is just one of the measures, another is the simple fact that there is very little to do in Cardiff Bay unless you are spending money. This research will offer a detailed understanding of the process by which contours of subjectivity and experience are affected by the re-configuring of Cardiff Bay and potentially how these manipulations of the cities landscape and interactions within it form part of a wider process of urban social re-ordering and control.

Exclusion and the Bay

The impact upon those who have access to the space is clear and there is a sense that this kind of development is good for Cardiff and, more importantly that this simulated urban space actually *is* Cardiff. However this form of design and property led regeneration project has excluding effects upon existing communities in the Bay. The way that members of the existing local communities perceive the space is essential here, interviews which will be intended to investigate their conceptions will be conducted at a later date. Data that are available reveal a second stage in the process of exclusion; the spatial and visual lay-out of the Bay and the way in which Mermaid Quay, quite literally, has turned its back on the surrounding community. There is very

much a front and back stage to Mermaid Quay, the front stage evoking images of Mediterranean waterfronts, the back stage evoking images of distance and exclusion. There is the open expanse of Roald Dahl Plas, a 'festival setting' (Hannerz, 1996) that when empty forms an ambiguous and liminal space which very few people use (although a recent resurfacing brought skate boarders the very next day) or even walk across. Then there is Lloyd George Avenue which runs along the Eastern side of Butetown, which is surrounded on the other side by Century Wharf (a collection of luxury flats). Of course physical access is not prevented, but the desire to access and the financial means to consume within the space are severely limited. I am not claiming that these are intentional design feature however intent comes second to effect.

A female community worker (not from Cardiff) that I spoke to in the Bay's visitor centre approached me to be included in the research. Her initial statement was that the regeneration project in Cardiff had "completely marginalised ethnic minority groups" in the area. When I told her of the CBDC's aim to "Bring forward a mix of development which will create a wide range of opportunities and reflect the hopes and aspirations of the communities in the area" she laughed and asked where that had happened. She went on to raise the issue that the predominance of the 'drinking culture' in Cardiff Bay was highly excluding as a large proportion of the population of nearby Butetown were Muslim. She re-stated the apparent idiom of Cardiff Bay

(7) "Well it could be anywhere in the world couldn't it"

and gestured across the Bay, however this time this was not born of escapism or in a positive light and went on to describe Cardiff Bay as a 'veneer'. When I asked her what she meant by this she said,

(8) "Well it all very nice, but it's just a veneer. They had the opportunity to make this a really multi-cultural centre but they (the CBDC) just haven't included them (existing communities) at all. There's such a rich history here and it's been ignored"

(9) "You only need to walk 5 mins from the Bay to find yourself

in a pretty squalid estate.”

She went on to speak of frustration in getting money directed in to community projects and how it appeared that Local Authorities actually felt threatened when faced with local activists and again she laughed when I asked her what she thought of the vision of ‘accessible politics’ represented by the Senedd.

There were also less politicised negative accounts of the space. One woman after completing a brief photo-elicitation exercise I had given her in which she was very positive about the regeneration went on to say;

(10)“I expect this place has lost it’s atmosphere”

When I asked her what she meant she went on to talk about how what had been here before had been lost and that it had lost some of its identity because there was nothing left of the old buildings (apart from the Pierhead building) and it was in someway quite sad. Her husband spoke of the regeneration of the Albert Dock in Liverpool and how you couldn’t compare the two projects as they had made good use of existing buildings in Liverpool but Cardiff Bay was ‘all modern’.

What has occurred in Cardiff Bay, beyond the £2.2 billion spent, beyond the creation of jobs and new accommodation is the manipulation of the image of the urban and the image of Cardiff itself. The ‘themeing’ and identity of Cardiff is centred on the Bay development (and the Millennium Stadium) and it would appear that local appropriators and tourists have embodied the association. It would also seem that there is a very clear understanding by those who appropriate Cardiff Bay, and those who do not, what is expected here. Indeed observations have revealed a formatted urban organisation; there is little evidence of Jacobs (1961) sidewalk ballet here, rather a concentrated and controlled consuming experience. There is a very clear flow of people from the main car-parks and coach drop of points in the west around the Bay through Mermaid Quay, perhaps stopping for a coffee or to sit and look at the water, past the Senedd building (which it appears a number of people are unsure as to what it is) to the visitor centre and the Norwegian Church and back again. There is little or no security presence for the majority of the time and the closest act

resembling deviance to which the security guards reacted to was a school child swinging on a chain outside a bar. That is not to say that during busy times there is not a certain bustle and atmosphere to the space, but there is a visible absence of diversity, an absence of some of the celebrated aspects of urban life. This is not a space in which noticeably different social groups interact with each other, as it is suggested happens in the 'global city' (of which Cardiff Bay is surely a microcosm). There are no street sellers or vendors, no beggars (and only on two occasions have I seen a Big Issue seller in the Bay), none of the 'characters' from Cardiff city centre such as Toy Mike Trevor (a gentleman who croons Ratpack songs down a plastic microphone) or Ninja (a rather vocal individual who can be found drumming on bins and dispensing wisdom to passers by) venture down to "Europe's most exciting waterfront". Indeed when I asked him why he doesn't drum the bins in the Bay he replied "Because that place is all about spending money man. As soon as you get down there you're spending and they've got you".

Conclusions:

In this paper I have presented some early findings from a project which will demonstrate the contribution of various empirical methods of qualitative interpretative sociology to the documenting and understanding the way in which global discourses of consumption and modes of representation are shaping localities and local lives. Saskia Sassen (2006) has already highlighted the need to analyse the territorialisation of various global networks in 'global cities' and the interrelations that these produce between various social groups. Whilst this is a step that definitely needed taking I would suggest that this approach to understanding cities and those who live within them seems to present cities either as somewhat neutral sites or focuses upon their infrastructure. What is clear is that regeneration projects do align themselves to the perceived gaze of the global consuming tourist and to the gaze of international investors and employers. It is no coincidence that many waterfronts, shopping malls and urban developments across the world appear strikingly similar. So again if we are to understand the spatial and visual elements of these locales as more than backdrops for the urban citizen it is important to interrogate what the effect of the globally reconfigured urban locale is upon the local urban imaginary (Soja, 2000). Through the application of this theoretical and methodological approach I feel there is an opportunity to empirically document how elements of the global and the periphery are

not only represented in regenerated spaces but how they actively shape and govern the contours of local subjectivity and organisation.

What I have outlined here is an approach that using existing theories and methods of data collection in a new application is capable of relocating the social actor in the landscape of regeneration, a landscape which being re-shaped in increasing accordance with global discourses and with the global consumer firmly in the foreground. The impact of this process upon those who are tied in to these particular consuming flows creates a reconfigured notion of urban citizenship and what it means to live in a given locality, and a reconfigured pattern of organisation to accompany it in which diversity is minimised. However the effect upon those who are excluded from these flows of capital and consumption are facing very different questions about their position in an urban landscape which is becoming increasingly precarious. We are aware of the impacts of exclusion, poor housing, low education and high unemployment but here is a further element of exclusion; a re-writing of local identity, a statement that this city is not designed for you and furthermore a city in which planning concerns, resources and perhaps even civic consciousness and morality “might as well be anywhere”.

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