

**TRINITY COLLEGE  
DUBLIN DEBATE: REGENERATION  
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## INTRODUCTION

Planning is not a **dirty** word, but it does **operate** in a **messy world** - in a **democracy**

But if done **well** it should bring **happiness and beauty**.

The setting is a **city** and the issues are **complex**. The **city** is the most **complicated** creation by man.

So what's messy?

1. The need to reconcile **different values**.  
Those that are **right** and those others that are **also right**.  
There are so many different vested interests
2. The **growth** and spread of multiracial urban populations
3. The need to provide **new jobs** and **new housing**.
4. The conservation of **threatened** heritage, **containing explosive forces** - like leisure and cyclical markets

**And that is just for starters.**

5. **Knowledge** of the environment **changes** all the time - **noisy jets** to **whisper jets**; **polluting cars** to **silent cars**
6. **ill qualified** and **ill informed** participants
7. it is a **slow process** and consequently is at the **mercy of politicians** and others
8. There are many and **different authority levels** in the process from **government** to local community
9. Human **values change** - **aesthetics** - pylons; **attitudes** towards the **horse** and the **car**.  
Different **generations** have **different values**.  
Do you **plan for now** because problems are serious, or do you **plan for children** who have **not yet been born**?
10. The **language** of planning changes, a bit like **fashion** - it re-invents itself with **new words every spring**. We hardly have a **common language**.
11. Rich versus poor - (the rich nearly always win)
12. Planning is **not rational**. It may **appear** to be on **paper** but **not** in the **real world**.
13. Planning is **not** high on the agenda - though **fragments** are regularly appropriated momentarily **by politicians** - transport, housing, airports and **stadiums**.
14. There are simply **too many barriers** to make regeneration work

Let us consider **The Language of Planning and the Language of Regeneration** for it is here that we start with so many myths, ambiguities and misunderstandings.

### The Language of Planning

Before yesterday: **Comprehensive redevelopment** - The aesthetic clean sheet: La Défense

Yesterday: **Planning for Real** - Covent Garden

Today: **Mixed-use development** - a shop and something above!

Tomorrow: **SDS, Spatial Development Strategy** - Greater London Authority

After Tomorrow: **Environmental Space Planning** - the laws of physics rule - light, sound, and smell.

### The Language of Regeneration

Let me try out some **slick-speak**, words from the world of the **myth makers** -advertising agencies who seem to have a significant role in regeneration.

“**Dublin** joins other **great** cities of the **world** which are **transforming** redundant port and industrial areas to **create new centres of vigour, growth** and economic activity”

“**Dublin is a city on the move**”

“**Dynamic Dublin** has developed a **confidence** about its **future** and **experiments** with **new designs.**”

**Digital Harbour; Photon Port;**

**Planning is dead** - we have a world of **visions**,  
of **design frameworks**,  
of **development and investment opportunities**,  
of **artists impressions**.

**And, let us consider the visual language.**

We are in **collage futures**, where images of test tubes and fibre optic cables **cohabit** with **wildlife** and water; where **nanotechniques** and satellites **align** themselves with **Georgian** architecture and other indigenous images - like squares. This is the world of **glossy brochures** of **borrowed** images extended into new territories - like docklands.

This is **vision without content**, the appropriation of anything from **technology to culture** in the name of **commerce** presented as a **scheme that**:

“**makes a positive contribution....is global landmark development....is a waterfront signature building for Dublin....is a gateway to....Mythical worlds of commercial make-believe.**”

**We need a reality check.**

Others are researching, debating, philosophising, criticising and commenting upon Dublin's **horses, in-migration, racialism, housing need and transport infrastructure**. I am not sufficiently informed to participate at this level. However, I would like to **raise the horizon** a little to **escape the mess**.

**Barriers are stopping regeneration from working** (\* primary source CABE)

I'll be bold enough to say what some of them are and how to break them.

### 1. **Lack of Money in the right place**

Funding must be provided **up front**.

Regeneration is seriously **risky** for all involved.

If there is insufficient money up front to enable those leading regeneration to **think and prepare** then the following investment will more often end up **down the pan**.

This means **questioning** revenue versus capital; **and**, why not **pool** heritage funds **with** regeneration funds.

### 2. **There is a scale to regeneration**

and it's **big** - it's **big** in **intent** - politically and socially, and **big** physically. The small interventions are appreciated very locally but they **do not** solve problems of crime ridden estates and they **do not reverse decline**.

### 3. **Devolution of Power and Decision Making**

Some centrally defined policies are not **flexible** to local conditions.

Defining outputs that are unreceptive to local differences - e.g. business support grants / evolving commerce-residential balance.

Define local outputs (outcomes) rather than centralised assumptions/targets.

### 4. **Regeneration Skills**

Earlier I mentioned **ill** qualified and **ill** informed participants.

There has to be **training** for those on the **ground** from regeneration agencies **and** the community.

**Trinity College** should **set up** the **Eire Academy of City Development** - or if you want to go farther into the future - **COPE** the Centre of Philosophy for the Environment!

### 5. **Total Neighbourhood Regeneration**

Not just **commerce or housing** investors, but **also** landowners, health care providers, education authorities, heritage agencies - bring them all **together** and establish the management tools to ensure that **coordination** happens across **all** sectors. Planners do not have all the answers. **Bring in** the other agencies from the beginning - like Health, education, social services, the business community

### 6. **Not just Buildings - but Public Spaces between them**

The public realm is a major contributor to health or illness.

Like landscape is to architecture, public spaces is to urbanism. They both get left 'til last, and they get cut when the money runs out.

It is vital to find new methods of financing these spaces from increasing land values - and not capital at the moment of sale - but ongoing revenue as land values rise over time - 25 years and more - this ensures the maintenance of these spaces.

## 7. Long Term Thinking

It took **decades** to deliver the regenerated **Paris**

**One** of the biggest **barriers** to long term thinking is **changing governments**.

**Start** with a **philosophy**, not a vision

**Forget** initiatives, **establish** policies

**Then**

Plan, develop strategies,

Commit, Design and implement.

### Consider Paris

In **1954** General de Gaulle asked his office to produce a philosophy for Paris. Fearing the worst, a few weeks later he asked that it be kept to **one** side of a piece of paper. A group that included an historian, an economist, a poet, a musician, a scientist and a few others agreed a text. De Gaulle read only the **first sentence**. "**Paris risque de tomber dans l'Atlantique.**"

**The group had anticipated the economic banana belt of Europe.**

**Results were tangible**

First, not Paris **itself** but **connecting** Paris to Europe and beyond: Concorde, TGV, HV Electricity network.

Paris came **later** - the east/west and north/south axes of the RER.

La Defense and Bercy, then Roissy, La Villette and Place d'Italie.

Then re-invent culture as a leisure industry - the economic driver for the city - starting with Centre Pompidou, then La Villette under Giscard d'Estaing, and the Louvre under Mitterrand.

**The power of a continuity - consecutive presidents - all driving culture**

Paris, through president after president after president bought into reality an idea - and the mayors of Paris did not block it when they arrived.

### Conclusion

What is Dublin and **where** is it going? Does it **have** a philosophy?

**Can** it have a philosophy? Do Dubliners think Dublin is a global city and if so in what ways?

Can Dublin see itself as **part** of the **Green City** that surrounds it?

Dublin has a **proud history** of **vital** public debate and a **legacy** of public space making. **Please** do not sacrifice **these** at the altar of Market Forces.

The Market led approach leads to the **quasi-privatisation** of the planning and urban design process - i.e. they are sub-contracted to developers. This **alienates** people from the process and ultimately leads to privatised ghettos.

**Re-invent** public debate, **re-invent** public participation, **re-invent** public planning and **re-invent** public spaces and let these be the **drivers** for investment. If individuals and social groups **can sense** that their efforts are **vital** to Dublin's regeneration - then **real** investment and commitment will be made by people **and** this **city** of Dublin will flourish - **and** uniquely - **and** be more beautiful.

Establishing society's **shared values** and the **high value** that society places upon **planning** reveals whether regeneration is working or not. Regenerating **democratic cities** requires an act of **collective will**.

**At the moment I do not see the evidence of these very clearly.**

To quote Stanley Diamond:

"Civilisation may be regarded as a system in internal disequilibrium; technology or ideology or social organisation are always out of joint with each other - that is what propels the system along a given track. Our sense of movement, of incompleteness, contributes to the idea of progress."

To put it another way - when we are able to appreciate the way the world is really working, it is never quite the way we would like it to be working."

**"Progress is nothing but the victory of laughter over dogma."** (*Benjamin de Cessaris*)

END

## SPARE NOTES

Vilém Flusser, the Czech-born philosopher, made a convincing argument in his short essay *The Factory*, that it is through 'the factory', i.e. the place of manufacture, that we can understand the science, politics, art, religion and perhaps structure of a society, and also identify some of the human beings in that society. His sense of humour suggested that *homo faber* (maker) was perhaps a better description of the common characteristic of human beings rather than *homo sapiens*.

I mention this as I find it difficult but fascinating as a source of investigation to try and see the society we are in now from the perspective of a future looking back; rather than trying fruitlessly to present some future notion of utopia or urban arcadia.

The materiality and physicality that our urban and architectural thinking ultimately has to engage with is a powerful witness to *homo faber*, but today, we must ask deeper and more difficult questions if we are to find solutions that respond to the idea of *homo sapiens sapiens*. These questions do not begin within *homo faber*.

As an architect and designer, the 20<sup>th</sup> century design world concluded with the fact that we have to fundamentally re-investigate design to enable us, hopefully, to be more intelligent in the way in which we negate the status quo. By this I mean that our very existence, as individuals and as a society dealing with our need to survive changes the balance of nature.

The early reflections of *ecology to design* as a pragmatic search for a clean, green or eco-design methodology has in fact become an investigation into the problem of design in general. The shift from an *industrial reductivist* to a *post-industrial holistic* design, requires a more complex inquiry. The new design methodology has to embrace social, political and philosophical criticism of design if we are to redefine design with any sense of value and meaning. The problem is vast.

In the first years, Thatcher set up the London Docklands Development Corporation. Under Thatcher's government of the early 80's, the LDDC 'stole' hundreds of acres from three London Boroughs - Tower Hamlets, Southwark and Newham - the LDDC remit was to produce economic, social and physical regeneration. In the first years of the 21<sup>st</sup> century the Greater London Authority under Mayor Ken Livingstone is about to implement its Spatial Development Strategy. Its key objectives being to provide the framework within which economic, social and environmental regeneration can take place. The difference this time is that it is intended that the transport infrastructure and transport tournequet (congestion charging) will be implemented ahead of development investments.

Please note that physical has become environmental.