

Flagship Regeneration: panacea or urban problem?



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What are flagships?

- Large scale land and property developments which play an influential role in urban regeneration
- Catalyst for further regeneration and development
- Marketing tool or advertising board for re-imaging cities



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Examples

- Convention Centres (SECC, Glasgow)
- Luxury shopping malls (Faneuil Hall, Boston)
- Museums (Guggenheim, Bilbao)
- High-profile office developments (Canary Wharf)
- Waterfront developments (Inner Harbour, Baltimore)
- Also some tourist attractions, high profile housing developments (Montevideo, Kop van Zuid, Rotterdam)



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Inner Harbour, Baltimore



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Kop van Zuid, Rotterdam



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Aims of this paper:

- To better understand:
- Why flagships are still a popular form of urban regeneration?
- What have been the major criticisms of flagships?
- How these relate to the perspective of local residents.



Why do cities still pursue flagships?



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1. Ideological shift

- Shift in public policy away from redistributive measures
- Belief that they will solve urban problems
- Belief that they are secure investments



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2. Tangible benefits of flagships

- Physical transformation of areas/symbol of change
- Catalyst for further development
- Catalyst for a new industry (i.e. tourism)
- Increase property prices, gentrification
- Residents: hope to boost civic pride, provide new spaces to visit



3. Re-branding and re-imaging

- Flagships are linked to re-imaging campaigns
- Large advertising billboards
- Primarily aimed at outsiders, rather than residents
- Copy successes in other cities (Baltimore, Glasgow)



4. Cities have few other options

- Little else that city councils can do to attract public and private investment
- “Keeping up with the Joneses”
- Because other cities are launching flagships and re-branding themselves, others must follow suit



Critiques of flagships



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1. Conflicting visions of the city

- Vision of the city promoted by boosters is different from one seen by residents
- Who are flagships designed for: residents or outsiders?
- Selective idea of 'liveability'
- Will many residents feel excluded?



2. Flagships as a diversion for the masses

- Spectacle serves to divert attention from the real social problems of the city
- Roman Bread and Circuses formula
- To what extent are residents aware of this?



3. The Cookie-cutter effect

- “Clone Cities”
- Not every city that wants to have a major international flagship can have one
- “How many successful stadia, Disney-worlds, harbour places and spectacular shopping malls can there be?” (Harvey)
- AutoWorld, Flint Michigan



4. Greater socioeconomic polarisation

- Focus on wealth creation, rather than distribution
- Failures of trickle-down (jobs)
- Divert scarce municipal funds
- Create high-end consumption-based spaces
- Resident responses: cynicism, exclusion?



5. Greater Spatial Polarisation

- 'Two Speed Revitalisation'
- Site Specific, focus on areas of highest return (city centres, waterfronts)
- Examples: Baltimore, Glasgow
- Flagships as a catalyst for gentrification



Conclusions

- Flagships are necessary to create a new image of a city, and act as a catalyst for further investment
- Flagships as a regeneration tool cannot adequately address issues of poverty and inequality



- But what are the views and perspectives of residents towards flagships?
- Do they embrace them or do they feel alienated by them?
- How would these results vary among different socioeconomic groups? In different neighbourhoods?



Questions? Comments?

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