Culture and Local Governance
Culture et gouvernance locale

Real urban images: Policy and culture in northern Britain

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Volume 4, Number 1, 2012

URI: https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1108027ar
DOI: https://doi.org/10.18192/clg-cgl.v4i1.824

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Publisher(s)

Centre d'étude en gouvernance, Université d'Ottawa

ISSN

1911-7469 (digital)

Explore this journal

Cite this article

Wharton, C. & Fenwick, J. (2012). Real urban images: Policy and culture in northern Britain. *Culture and Local Governance / Culture et gouvernance locale*, *4*(1), 1–29. https://doi.org/10.18192/clg-cgl.v4i1.824

Article abstract

This paper explores recent attempts to re-imagine and re-brand northern British cities through processes of economic and (mainly) cultural regeneration. It analyses the creation of new contemporary urban images and presentations and compares these with the economic, social and cultural life experiences of people living in the areas. It examines the process of recharacterising former industrial conurbations as being at the cutting edge of contemporary, postmodern culture. A range of features is identified here within similar political, economic and policy contexts: deindustrialisation and regeneration driven by local business and political elites; emphasis on culture as spectacle to the exclusion of other cultural configurations; reliance on tourism and advertising, hyper consumption and leisure as determining aspects of the local economy; and the reorganisation of city populations.

Real urban images: policy and culture in northern Britain

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Abstract: This paper explores recent attempts to re-imagine and re-brand northern British cities through processes of economic and (mainly) cultural regeneration. It analyses the creation of new contemporary urban images and presentations and compares these with the economic, social and cultural life experiences of people living in the areas. It examines the process of recharacterising former industrial conurbations as being at the cutting edge of contemporary, postmodern culture. A range of features is identified here within similar political, economic and policy contexts: deindustrialisation and regeneration driven by local business and political elites; emphasis on culture as spectacle to the exclusion of other cultural configurations; reliance on tourism and advertising, hyper consumption and leisure as determining aspects of the local economy; and the reorganisation of city populations.

Keywords: Visual culture; city; Britain; cultural policy; cultural regeneration

Résumé: Cet article explore les tentatives récentes de ré-imaginer et de « re-brander » les villes du nord de la Grande-Bretagne par le biais de stratégies de régénération urbaine mettant principalement l'accent sur les interventions de nature culturelle. Cet article met en relief la recomposition du paysage visuel urbain des villes du nord pour les contraster avec les conditions économiques, sociales et culturelles qui caractérisent l'existence et l'expérience des citadins qui y vivent. En particulier, il s'agit notamment d'examiner les pratiques et le processus de redéfinition des espaces industriels en lieux qui incarnent le contemporain et l'avant-garde de la culture postmoderne. De ces observations, on constate des similitudes dans les moyens utilisés par les autorités dans des contextes qui partagent les mêmes conditions politiques et économiques, à savoir : la régénération entendue comme un projet porté par les élites politiques et économiques locales; un accent mis sur la culture « spectacle » au détriment d'une compréhension et d'un usage plus inclusif de cette dernière; un accent marqué sur les activités de promotion touristique; l'hyperconsommation et le loisir en tant que moyens de développement local; et la réorganisation et la recomposition de la population urbaine comme conséquence de ces mobilisations de la culture.

Mots clé : Culture visuelle, ville; Grande-Bretagne; politiques culturelles; régénération urbaine

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Introduction

Newcastle upon Tyne, and the neighbouring town of Gateshead, are at the centre of our enquiry and we will also make reference to Liverpool, Glasgow and other cities. We investigate two areas of Newcastle-Gateshead in detail. Gateshead town centre is a mix of traditional 19th and 20th century housing, shops, civic and cultural amenities, situated on the south bank of the River Tyne. To the north, Scotswood, part of the city of Newcastle, is a largely working class housing estate in the process of being re-generated.

A common thread within the processes we describe is involvement in the European City/Capital of Culture programmes (ECOC). The programme, originally referred to as the European City of Culture, was developed in the early 1980s with the intention of representing European cultures through a series of events organised by a selected host city. Since 1985, when Athens became the first ECOC, cities have competed for cultural recognition. Subsequently, Florence, Amsterdam and Berlin were successful, as was Glasgow in 1990. By the 1990s urban economic regeneration was becoming associated with the project and in 1999 it was renamed European Capital of Culture. In 2001 Newcastle-Gateshead formally launched a bid to become ECOC 2008, the year designated for the UK to host the event. Newcastle was unsuccessful. Liverpool was declared the winner and became, along with the Norwegian city of Stavanger, ECOC for 2008. Cities involved in the ECOC bidding process experience an intense preparation for the event and this we argue can have a profound effect on the image, organisation and even layout of the city. The look and feel of Newcastle-Gateshead changed visibly, although Liverpool experienced more lasting material change to its city centre. The UK will again host the European event in 2023. In addition to the ECOC programme the UK government has initiated a similar programme that of UK City of Culture (UKCOC). Northern Ireland's Derry-Londonderry has been awarded that status for 2013.

'Culture', as conceived in these processes, is a policy product of local government, regeneration partnerships, government agencies and business interests. This can be contrasted with culture as a way of life or lived urban experience (Williams, 1981). As Williams defines it culture is a complex set of relations and artefacts comprised of documents, ideal forms and social behaviour that, crucially, develop over time as a result of deep and enduring social and economic trends. In the UK process for selecting the 2008 ECOC, 'culture' was heavily promoted through local and national media, and significant material changes became apparent locally in cultural provision and building programmes.

Methodologically, our discussion draws from interpretive narratives of public policy in postmodern times (Fenwick & McMillan, 2010) and from the critical perspectives of media and cultural studies (Williams, 1981; Hall, 1981; Rojek, 2007; McGuigan, 2010). This theoretical orientation by definition rules out any grand explanatory meta-narrative (Fenwick & McMillan, 2010, p 205). Instead we explore depictions of culture and urban imagery and interpretations of their meaning. Within this framework we also take the opportunity to offer visual and textual narratives of our own, drawn from walking, viewing and recording the cultural artefacts we describe. These provide the heuristic filters through which we engage with local urban public policy and cultural representation. Specifically, we refer to the artefacts of the ECOC process (documents, visual displays and vocabulary) and their place within the urban physical environment. These artefacts become part of the cultural product that ECOC bids claim to represent and the spectacle with which we are concerned. The idea and image of the spectacle is drawn from the work of the Situationists (Barnard, 2004; Stallabrass, 2006). The term was part of the group's critical analysis of a capitalist, consumer orientated society (Debord, 1977; 1991). Intensified commodification aided by new technologies, information and communication systems and flows, extended frames of representation in which

increasingly ‘all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles’ (Seltzer, 2010, p.125). The discussion is placed within an interpretive historical context, exploring the evolution of the city from the industrial to the post-industrial era, illuminated in our narrative accounts of the urban walks. Rejecting any grand meta-narrative (see Parsons, 2010) the perspective of the discussion remains critical, its sources drawn from observation and reflexive experience of the lived urban culture of which the authors are a part.

In the three sections that follow we explore attempts to represent and rebrand northern cities with particular reference to Newcastle-Gateshead. The recently constructed urban image of the northern city and the cultural impression it creates exist alongside residual elements of urban landscapes, economies and cultures. Our enquiry looks in two directions – towards the real and towards the representation, and it attempts to chart the distance between the two. The first section outlines the background to the process: the transformation from industrial to postindustrial city; the political and economic changes associated with this; and the policy contexts that give rise to a policy driven concept of culture. The second section explores the form of urban rebranding and spectacle characterised by the image of party city with a reliance on advertising and consumption and certain forms of cultural participation. The third section involves a series of observations of two areas of Newcastle-Gateshead viewed through the filter of policy presentation, urban rebranding and spectacle. Our findings and conclusion point towards a considerable difference between existing reality in the area of culture and the social and economic fabric of northern cities and representations of the rebranded urban.

Figure 1 Antony Gormley’s Angel of the North – erected in 1998 and viewed by many as a sign of the regenerated north of England

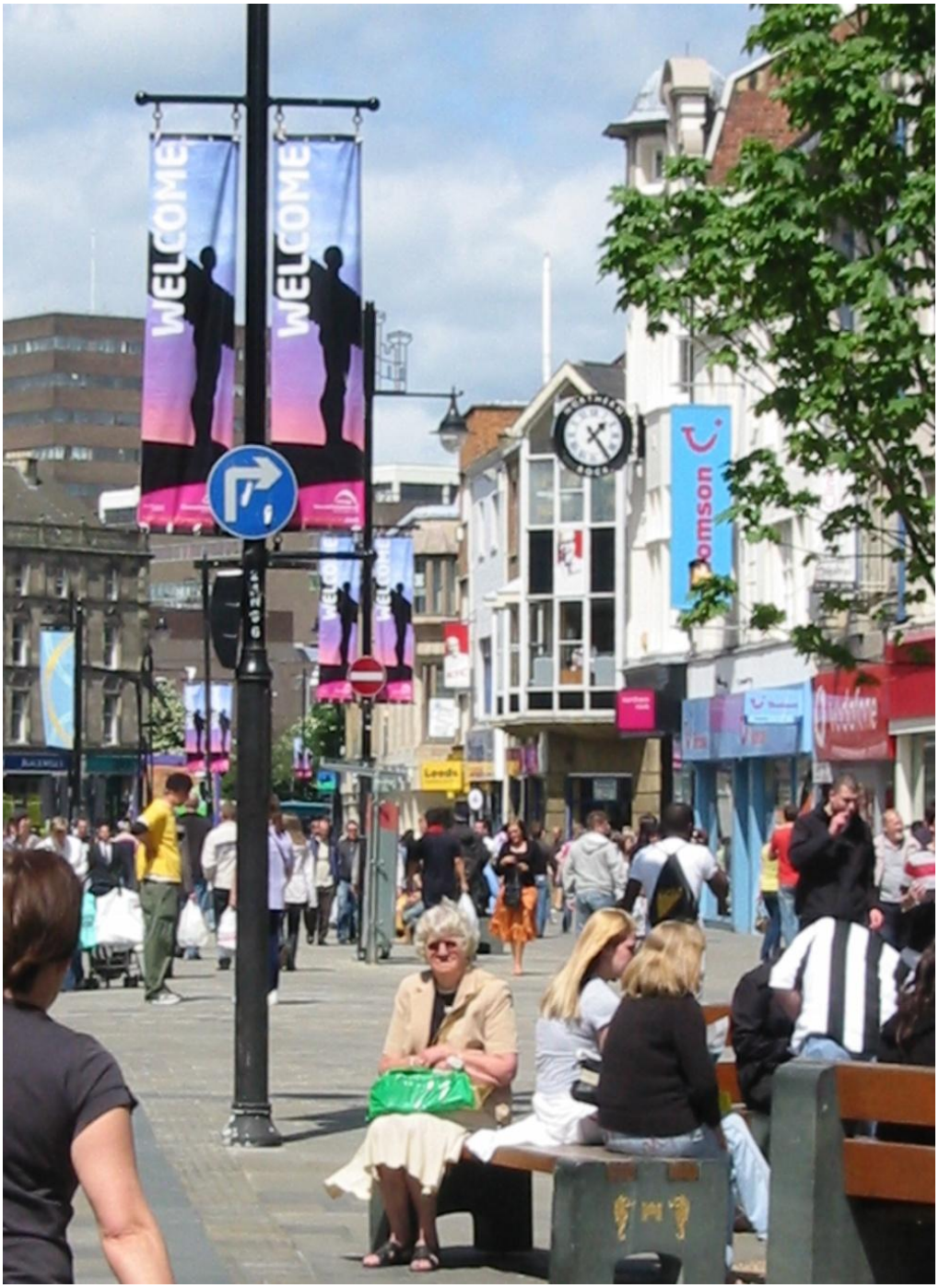


Figure 2 Northumberland St - Newcastle upon Tyne's main shopping street with welcome angel banners

Section One – politics and economics, policy and culture

From industrial to post industrial cities

Cities are transformed over time with economic, political and administrative change creating new cultural formulations. Liverpool and Newcastle are positioned to the south of Hadrian's Wall, the second century northern frontier of the Roman Empire, with Glasgow over one hundred miles to its north. From the eighteenth century, a common experience of intense industrialisation, inward and outward flows of people; the creation of distinctive working class cultures and politics was followed in the twentieth century by de-industrialisation. No longer significant northern ports of the British Empire, the English cities of Liverpool and Newcastle share with Glasgow, as the second city of a now-devolved Scotland, major pockets of deprivation.

Glasgow's industrial experience - coal, iron, cotton, textiles and shipbuilding - gave shape to its social, cultural and political profile, and it developed into a vital city regarded by some as the second city of the whole British Empire. The political struggles of the early twentieth century created the image of Red Clydeside, and its legacy in the 1970s Upper Clyde Ship Workers occupation. This gave prominence to radical left wing politics and a vibrant working class political culture. Today Glasgow retains a strong public sector and collectivist ethos. However, the prevailing impression of the city up until the 1980s was one of industrial decline with the dominant media image one of 'street violence and urban decay' (Tucker, 2008, p. 22; Blanchini and Parkinson, 1993).

In many ways the historical and contemporary experiences of Liverpool and Newcastle are similar. Liverpool, developing around its river and docks became one of the British Empire's most important ports. Facing the Atlantic, it traded in goods such as cotton and, before the abolition of slavery, people. On the east coast Newcastle's industrial profile was based on coal, iron and shipbuilding. By the late twentieth century, both places were characterised by industrial and economic decay. Regeneration began with the Albert Dock redevelopment in Liverpool and the Quayside in Newcastle, with 'culture' an important symbolic element of both.

Liverpool's decline is the most marked of the three cities. Liverpool lost over 192,000 jobs, a 53% decline in total employment between the early 1970s and mid 1990s and by the late 1980s the city was placed 114th out 117 city regions in a European Community economic performance league (Jones & Wilks-Heeg, 2004, p. 344). The wageless life remains a significant element of deprivation and a profound experience for many (Denning, 2010). In a report commissioned by the Department for Communities and Local Government amidst the cultural celebrations of the ECOC and extensive re-construction of the city centre, Liverpool was deemed the most deprived area out of England's 354 local authorities. UK newspaper *The Independent* reported that the Health and Wealth Commission confirmed the city as capital of deprivation; with incapacity benefit levels 75% higher than, and life expectancy, three years below the national average. As the newspaper put it: a city 'rich in culture and poor nearly everywhere else' (Independent, May 2nd, 2008).

Liverpool, like Newcastle and Glasgow, had to manage post industrialism and a city culture which at its core was a working class 'way of life' from which the work and economic background had been stripped away. As the importance of image and place marketing took hold, Liverpool retained an image of a city based on 1980s' left wing politics (represented by the Trotskyist Militant Council of Deputy Leader Derek Hatton), of urban unrest (the 1981 Toxteth riots) and worker solidarity (dockers' strike 1996-8). Laurier, discussing Glasgow's experience in 1990, suggested: 'There is nothing more useless to a city-seller than a working class city that is still working class' (Laurier, 1993, p. 276).

Political and economic change

Significant shifts in political and economic circumstances are evident in the period between Glasgow becoming ECOC in 1990 and preparations for Derry-Londonderry's stint as first UKCOC in 2013. The economic and cultural life of a city is dependent upon international, national and regional trends and developments in addition to any intrinsic or manufactured cultural elements. The financial crisis that became apparent in 2007 with the report of difficulties in the sub-prime household mortgage market in the United States quickly widened and deepened activating a 'wave of bank insolvencies and rescues around the world, and rapidly led to a general collapse of business and consumer credit' (Radice, 2011, p. 21). This may well lead to a double dip recession, and is part of a 'recurrent pattern of capitalist accumulation in which long booms eventually give way to long downturns' (Shaik, 2011, p. 44). Intense political protests against austerity measures have been evident across Europe. In Britain campaigns and occupations against Higher Education fees and cuts - instigated by a generation utilising social media as a new form of political communication - are being joined by protests and strikes against threats to jobs, pensions, services and further privatisations.

The Conservatives with their junior partners the Liberal Democrats formed a government after the UK general election in May 2010, as a coalition of the centre/centre-Right of British politics. However the comprehensive spending review of the autumn unveiled a policy of cuts, closures and redundancies which will affect society's poorest and most needy (McKibbin, 2010). The coalition came into being after thirteen years of Labour government under Tony Blair, whose New Labour 'project', third-way spin and postmodern politics of surface seemed well suited to the place-marketing, urban branding and spectacle of culture that came to challenge and in some areas replace traditional politics and working class culture of northern cities.

The Department of Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) set up in July 1997 after New Labour's first election victory is to be maintained by the Conservative Coalition, but will operate on a budget to be reduced by a quarter by 2014-15 (Department of Culture, Media & Sport, 2011).The UK City of Culture programme is set to continue until 2017 but with little or no funding from central government. Following on from the 2012 London Olympics, projected to cost around £20-25 billion, Derry-Londonderry in 2013 will be the first UKCOC. At a time when local authorities and other funding bodies face cuts with libraries and museums under threat the question of funding is sure to impact on culture and on the presentation of culture. The economic downturn is likely to undermine funding to the 'policy product culture' of urban spectacle and branding, but may also in creating a political opposition to austerity strengthen existing cultural formulations based on place and class and create new cultures based on political campaigns and opposition to austerity programmes.

Policy contexts

Under successive governments, from the Labour Party administrations of the 1960s through to the Conservative coalition of the present day, the policy imperative for cities in Northern England has been one of regeneration: either directly led by central government or, as in the baleful neoliberal experiments of Thatcherism, 'led' by market mechanisms such as the Enterprise Zones of the 1980s. The latter were reintroduced in England in 2012. Local urban policy in Northern cities, including cultural policy, has been predicated upon such physical and economic regeneration. This is the lens through which cultural policy is to be interpreted. Thus 'culture', as artefact and process, becomes in essence the policy product of private sector business and local public agencies.

This process involves both networks and hierarchies. At the core of the process in bidding for the ECOC were coalitions of elites drawn from policy actors within the local and regional state: local

authorities, influential businesses and high-profile individuals. The argument for linking regeneration with success in promoting the ECOC bid as part of an avowedly cultural initiative was made explicit by local political representatives. Arts and culture were seen – and, in the absence of the manufacturing and extractive industries which previously generated wealth, are still seen – as the drivers of regeneration, evidenced by the national and local funding allocated to high-profile arts projects in northern cities. Culture has thus been used in a special sense, and one divorced from its historical and class origins. 'Culture', in the particular sense defined within the bidding process, was seen as a policy vehicle for securing this regeneration. Yet we would argue that this conception of culture is limiting, a pale imitation of rich cultural traditions deriving from lived experience, defined and constrained by the political and economic order of a declining polity.

Thus we see the bidding process to be ECOC as essentially a managerialist project. The hierarchies have driven the disparate elements of local networks and communities in order to generate the required cultural policy product. This has had the character of an elite process. The 'old' manifestations of culture came to be seen as something of an embarrassment in a policy environment of modernisation - and postmodernism. Just as heavy industry has gradually given way to service industries and illusory financial enterprises, so has culture been transformed into something else: the resolutely new, postmodern, visual urban spectacle.

The new culture of regeneration of course reflects consumption rather than production, in parallel with the economic transformation it mirrors. In both Liverpool and Newcastle, the policy process was also affected by the geographical locations of the cities. These are not only in the North in the sense of geographical position, they are Northern in the sense of peripheral to the mainstream of economic and political power. They, and other Northern cities, have been hardest hit by fundamental economic deconstruction. Far from the centres of influence in London, the cultural disposition of these cities tends toward making a virtue of such distance, accentuated in humour and self-image.

All these factors influenced the ways in which influential policy actors sought to maximise the chances of success for their respective ECOC bids. A particular construction of culture was seen as a crucial element of the bid, a key to success. Clearly, this stance was not always successful, nor could it be. In a competitive process, there are losers as well as winners. Within the local elites that shape regeneration processes as well as the specifics of the bid, some actors were of course more powerful than others. There are differences of access to power and influence. Historically, the relationship between Newcastle and Gateshead also involved different degrees of influence and differences of perception. The merged terminology of 'Newcastle-Gateshead' is a feature of many local policy initiatives but it blurs a sometimes difficult and uneven relationship.

An Instrumental Conception of Culture

For the purposes of the bid, the merging of historical rivals Newcastle and Gateshead (for centuries gazing, with mutual hostility, across the river from their respective counties of Northumberland and Durham) into one awkward concept of 'NewcastleGateshead' was significant. It was a marriage based within a conception of shared economic interests: of attracting investment. Not surprisingly, the key focus of 'cultural' development was focussed on a quayside area where the two places are geographically close, and where the feeling can be engendered that this might after all be one place, not two. The large scale artefacts of culture are now on the Gateshead side of the River.

As Hickling (2002) comments:
"Historically, it was Newcastle that retained all the commercial benefits of the river, so that the north bank flourished while Gateshead remained the poor relation.

Not any longer. The extraordinary surge of creative enterprise that lies behind Newcastle and Gateshead's joint bid to become European Capital of Culture in 2008 originates south of the river. The scale of the cultural rebranding of Gateshead is unprecedented...

...Tyneside's cultural heritage runs much deeper than the rash of millennial projects, however. The region is as rich in writers and artists as it used to be in coal... one can trace an unbroken seam of influence from the novelist Sid Chaplin and the playwright CP Taylor through to Alan Plater and Peter Flannery and the young inheritors of the tradition, Lee Hall and Peter Straughan. Novelists such as Pat Barker and Julia Darling continue to make the north-east their home, as do acclaimed children's writer David Almond and poets Tony Harrison and Sean O'Brien.

Tyneside's established artists view the new developments with a degree of scepticism. "We now have a waterfront that contains more art galleries than shipyards," observes Plater...

...O'Brien, meanwhile, says: "Though many of us would agree that it is better to have lots of art galleries than no art galleries at all, it is ironic that big cultural gestures are somehow seen to redress history, while effacing it at the same time."....

This eloquent analysis of the cultural strength and rich cultural history of the area is strikingly at odds with the business-led, economic orientation of the ECOC bid. The images of culture offered within the ECOC bid in Newcastle emerge as a pale reflection of the potential richness of regional culture: spectacle, rather than substance. The official cultural 'offer' arose through a branding and marketing exercise, and the spectacle of culture was an essential component of this brand.

In the next section we look at the form that city regeneration has taken and the image of urban rebranding, the spectacle of culture based on the party-city concept and a reliance on advertising, consumption and leisure as aspects of culture as a policy product.

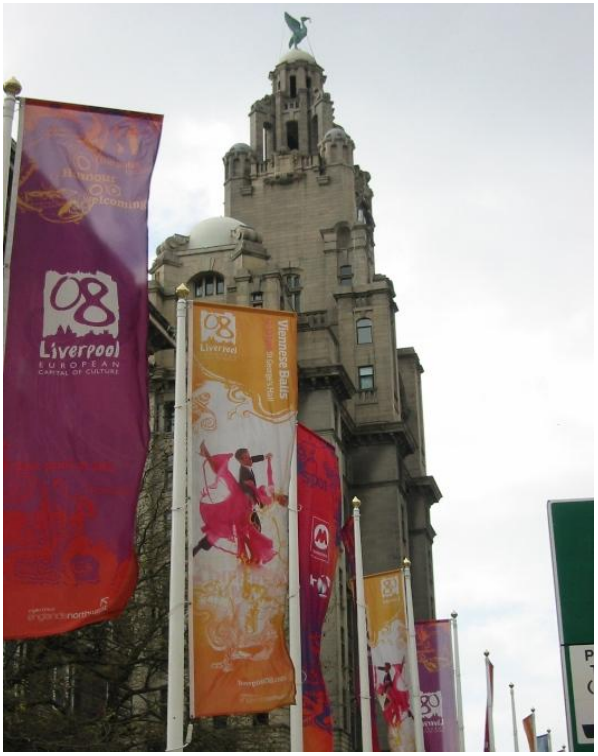


Figure 3 Liverpool's Liver Building with Capital of Culture banners 2008

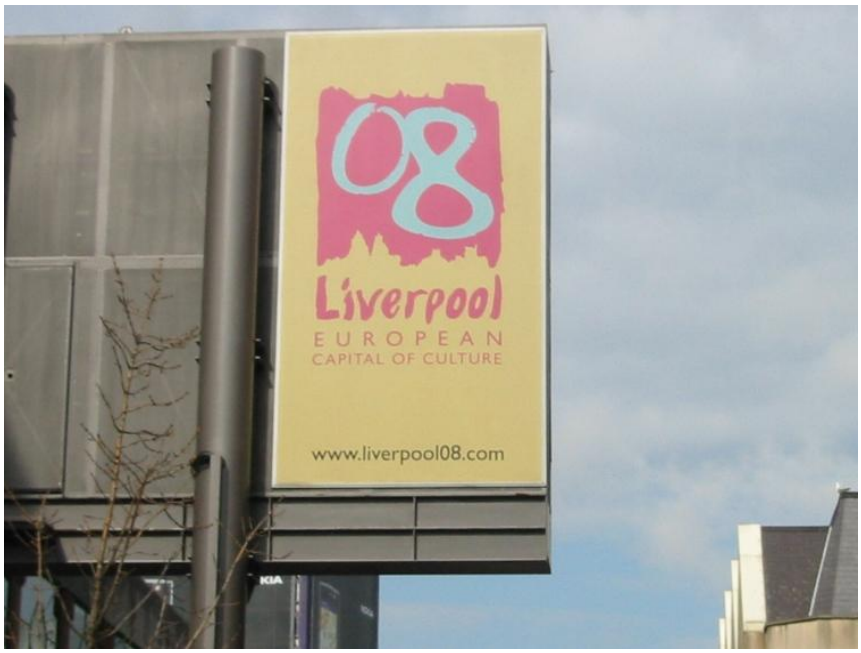


Figure 4 Liverpool celebrating European Capital of Culture 2008

Section two – brands and ads, party and participation

City branding

In the period between Glasgow becoming ECOC in 1990 and Liverpool celebrating its status as ECOC in 2008, northern cities came to promote themselves through a specific form of cultural identity that relied heavily on image (Figures 3 & 4). This promotion was closely tied to the creation of the city brand. In 'Newcastle-Gateshead' the process began as the city prepared itself to bid for the ECOC status in the late 1990s which came towards the close of a long period of Labour party control of the City Council and continued across the new millennium. In 2004 the newly elected Liberal Democrat Leader of the Council and others used similar terms to the previous Labour administration, describing Newcastle-Gateshead as a 'vibrant…and modern European city' (Newcastle City Council, 2004).

Urban branding is an increasingly familiar process and one that is indeed intended to signify 'modernity and vibrancy' and is associated with a wide range of UK cities stretching from London to Leeds in addition to Liverpool and Glasgow (Independent, April 3rd, 2006). The city of Aalborg and the Oresund region of Denmark are good European comparisons (Jensen 2005) and the phenomenon can be represented as far afield as Washington DC in the USA (Gibson, 2005). The concept of the 'city brand' is to be found in trends and developments within advertising which, virtually abandoning its faith in promoting the intrinsic values and functions of products, has increasingly turned its attention to the representation of brands in which discourse and packaging are prominent (Danesi, 2006, p. 2-3). At the same time profound changes in the role and function of local government have taken place. For instance Compulsory Competitive Tendering introduced by the Conservatives in the 1980s resulted in fewer services being delivered directly by local government, and more being delivered by private companies. Local governance has now come to be predicated on a range of partnerships arranged between democratically elected bodies and profit-driven organisations. The outcome is that the provision of services and facilities in the city have changed for reasons of improved economy, efficiency, quality or simply making further areas of public provision available to

capital. Alongside this, local authorities have engaged design consultants and advertising agencies in attempts to redesign and transform not the city, its facilities and services but its image and how it is discussed. Advertising semiotics involving logos, soundbites and straplines create levels of connotation far in excess of what is denoted. The urban signifier of image and motif hovers precariously in these fading postmodern and post-industrial times over the signified – the lived experience of cities.

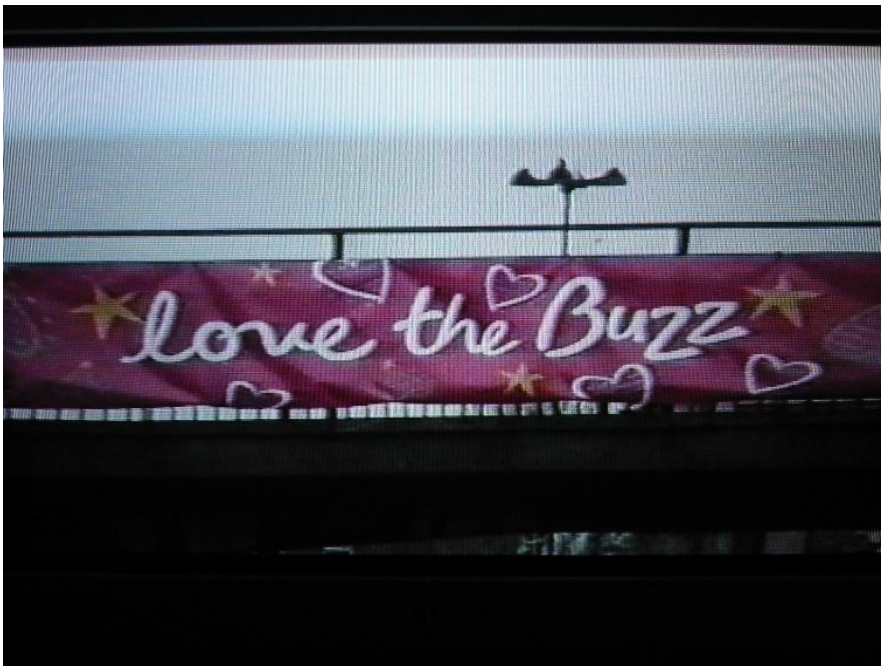
A good example of this is the relationship between the agency Placebrands and Southampton City Council. With an impressive client portfolio including newly independent countries of Slovenia and Croatia, Placebrands was appointed in 2005 by Southampton to develop a 'brand strategy' for the city. Although acknowledging that Southampton 'never experienced major decline of the order of other port cities such as Glasgow, Liverpool and Newcastle', the council's Communication Department formed a City Identity Group to address 'concern about its future economic position' and the agency was engaged to develop a cultural strategy to counter economic shortcomings 'by changing the way people viewed the city' (Placebrands, 2011). Working alongside organisations such as the Port Authority, Chamber of Commerce, City Health Authority and the Universities, and deploying the now familiar but often hollow language of 'public and private'; the various 'stakeholders' represented by the 'brand leadership team' engaged in 'systemic creativity' on 'brand activities' in order to produce a 'cultural offer'. The offer involved preliminary conceptualisations of the city as 'water city', 'clockwork city' and as a 'magnet for innovation'. 'Sea city' was the product label that emerged from the process, a format as unsurprising as the vast amount of ocean to the immediate south of the brand. The term is still currently in use (Seacity, 2011).

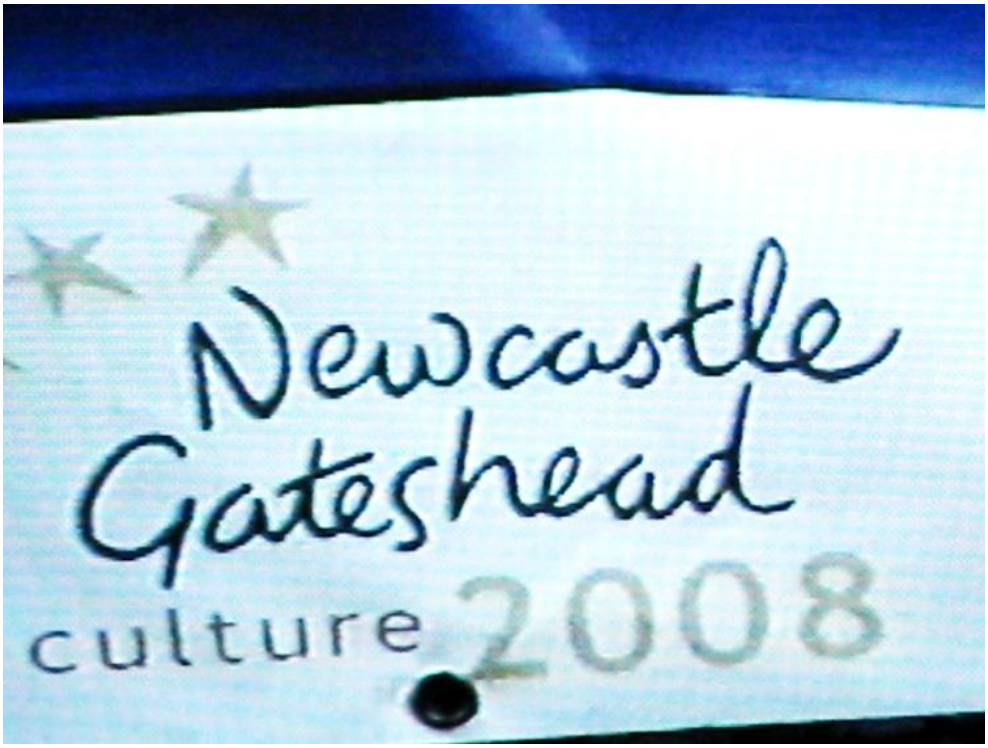
Newcastle-Gateshead, in the period up to 2003, promoted itself through a form of identity relying heavily on culture as image, in particular that of the party city and hyper-consumption. This resulted in culture as display – a visible spectacle of culture. This was a positive projection on the part of the local authority describing it as 'a modern business friendly city…with a friendly strong cultural brand image' (Newcastle Plan, 2004). The spectacle became increasingly visually manifest, changing not only how the city looked but also how it felt – how it was experienced by residents and visitors alike.

The spectacle of culture as part of rebranding became evident as a visual 'make over'. City public spaces – streets, motorways and squares were adorned with banners, flags and drapes hung from lampposts and other city features announcing and advertising aspects of the city, its culture and amenities. This has become a common feature of cities such as Paris celebrating Chinese culture in the 13e arrondisement in 2006 and Nice promoting its 2009 cultural image. In Newcastle the display was an extensive marketing exercise rather than a real attempt at street or urban aesthetics (Greenberg, 2000; Moore, 2003). The new-Newcastle brand image appeared along the newly created 'boulevards' that swept traffic into the city; into the bustling shopping areas, but rarely into the working class housing estates like Scotswood - then facing large scale demolition as part of the local authority's regeneration plans (see below for further discussion).

Newcastle city centre, celebrated for its Neo-classical and early Victorian architecture, was re-branded as Grainger Town, named after Richard Grainger the 19th century architect responsible for much of the original city architecture. Street signs were replaced in a notionally more 'traditional' form. Banners bearing visual and textual statements lined the pavements fronted by the pilasters and columns of traditional nineteenth century, neo-classical buildings. The banners also hung outside the concrete and stucco facades of twentieth century modernist buildings and fluttered over the newly paved twenty first century pedestrianised areas, with state-of-the-art steel and glass street furniture of cycle racks, seating units and waste disposal bins. Slogans, often reminiscent of advertising strap lines, decorated the banners with exhortations to 'love the buzz' (Figure 5). The 'buzz' was the

mythic and spectacular description of the lived experience of the city used by the local authority. Some banners displayed enigmatic single word statements such as ‘smile’, ‘merry’ etc. (Newcastle City Council, 2002).[1] This created a uniform style comparable to a corporate make-over in an attempt to create a visual rebrand of the city. The outcome was a postmodern, fragmented civic imagery fluttering above, but far removed from, the social and economic urban realities of the region and the city.





Figures 5 & 6 Newcastle-Gateshead banners - love the buzz & culture 2008

[1] ‘Newcastle is buzzing 24 hours a day.’ from Newcastle in the year 2020, Newcastle City Council, City Centre Action Plan 1999/2000.

Cultural participation

Rebranding the city is not only about concept and image involving public spaces: it is also about organising the public through events and public celebrations. In the combination of these elements the new 'policy culture' can be seen to approximate to a spectacle of culture. In Newcastle-Gateshead, critics pointed to evidence suggesting that culture in the city was largely seen as the big statement leading to the big event, where citizen and community involvement is only that of the spectator. The big cultural events tended to overlook the small scale festivals, concerts, poetry readings, street theatre, and other aspects of arts and culture generated from below. It ignores other more mundane but no less important aspects of culture, the sense of local belonging, the 'being-in-community' generated from citizen participation in community activity.[2]

The spectacle of culture is an assembly of manufactured cultural events that demand mass participation for their effect. A good example was the Tall Ships Race, annually visiting different European ports. Arriving in Newcastle-Gateshead in 2005, media representations played not only on images of the ships and the river's bridges but the crowds milling on the redeveloped quayside, with its newly built and converted middle-class apartment blocks and facilities. Pictures recorded, celebrated, and made newsworthy the event itself and the crowds it drew, with media images promoting development of Newcastle Quayside, replete with the street imagery of banners, drapes and cultural slogans an important element of the city regeneration strategy (Wharton, 2005). Both the representation of the event and the event itself were disconnected from the history of the riverside and its locality (Byrne, 2005). The spectacle of culture is in part a product of urban branding: an aspect of the 'urban imaginary' created through an 'ensemble of representations drawn from the architecture and street plans of the city…the images of and discourse on the city as seen, heard or read in movies, television, in magazines and other forms of mass media' (Greenberg, 2000, p. 228).

For the people of the locality, as participants and observers, the spectacle of culture became an increasingly significant element of the lived experience of their city and region in the build up to 2003. Residual lived cultures were in competition with the spectacle: a competition to represent the city and its people (Jensen, 2005).

The concept of the spectacle was originally developed by Guy Debord and has recently been characterised as 'the submission of more and more facets of human sociability - areas of everyday life, forms of recreation, patterns of speech, idioms of local solidarity…to the deadly solicitations (the lifeless bright sameness) of the market' (Boal, Clark, Matthews, & Watts, 2005, p. 19). The spectacle of culture is about 'an unstoppable barrage of…image-motifs…aimed at sewing the citizen back (unobtrusively), individually into a deadly simulacrum of community' (Boal et al., 2005, p. 21). The spectacle of culture requires not only presence and participation at public events associated with the rebranded cities; it also demands a very specific form of involvement: participant observation (Figure 7). The spectacle demands constant observation, representation and replication through the technologies of digital, phone and video cameras. Being there, and looking, is not enough. The participant observer captures the spectacle on camera and on video and at the same time is captured by other participants whilst the media reports and represents the event more widely. What this cultural display is not based upon is the unmediated life experience of people: their experience of work, life, community and the creativity that might be associated with these things and deemed worthy of celebration.

This recent manifestation of the spectacle is a combination of inclusion, projection and distance. It involves a form of splitting: the 'being-there' of assembly and attendance and the 'being in

[2] See Jensen (2005) for a general commentary and Byrne & Wharton (2004) specifically on Newcastle.

space' anchored in the shared experience of the crowd against an awareness as a self projection through mobile and video technologies - bound elsewhere.

However contemporary this phenomenon may be, it is part of a historical relationship between the crowd, open public space and cultural display.[3] The recent experience of the spectacle and public gatherings might be understood in relation to other contemporary public gatherings, suggesting a general stylistic and organisational shift in the nature of public events. Central to this is the purpose of the public gathering and its relation to themes or historical events extraneous to it. Often these connections in the era of the spectacle of culture are either nebulous or non existent and the gathering becomes a self contained 'crowd spectacle': the crowd organised as *the* event. Parallels exist with other manifestations of the crowd and of the movement and behaviour of crowds as political demonstrations from Reclaim the Streets in 1990s Britain to the student protests of 2010 against higher fees.

On the one hand there are public events that have some extraneous focus, a raison d'être beyond or in addition to the fact of the crowd's gathering. For instance, Manchester's 'Procession' organised by artist Jeremy Deller as part of the city's 2009 international festival in which aspects of the community as diverse as Scout bands, former mill workers representing the city's industrial past and references to the popular culture of defunct nightclubs such as the Hacienda and Wigan Casino formed part of the parade. The display of popular cultural and historical themes in director Danny Boyle's opening ceremony of the 2012 London Olympics followed the pattern of the Manchester procession. Liverpool's celebration of its ECOC status in September 2008 saw a 50ft-high mechanical spider make its way through the streets of Liverpool: its theatrical presence and symbolic associations drawing the gaze of the assembled crowd. In both the Liverpool and Manchester cases, some reference to history or the general purpose of the event was present.

On the other hand, there are examples of the crowds coming together in a manner that appears spontaneous and where any extraneous purpose or historic referent is absent, but often in reality it is a commercial promotion in which the organisational mechanisms are hidden. London's Trafalgar Square in May 2009 was used for a T-mobile promotion in which an apparently directionless and unwitting crowd spontaneously broke into song. Participants reported that the effect was created through the use of a big screen and the presence of actors with microphones mingling with the crowd. In this case the 'spontaneity' of a 'flash mob' and its performative being-in-space was no more than a carefully organised promotional stunt as part of an advertising amplification effect (Stephenson, 2012).

Much of this, both local authority-inspired and promotional events can be read as a response to fragmented culture, generating a new urban culture as image. The re-establishment of a type of urban culture was to be found within the crowds who watch, celebrate and themselves constitute the spectacle. At best this was intended to work against the fragmented aspect of modern mass culture, reassembling crowds as part of a new regenerated outdoor urban culture.

[3] Examples abound: from the cultural representations of ancient Athens in the form of the Panathenaic Festival depicted on the Parthenon Frieze; the painter David's 1793 Festival of Unity and Indivisibility with the crowd as part of the celebration of the revolution moving from site to site; to C20 media presented public occasions such as the grief-display on Diana Spencer's death.

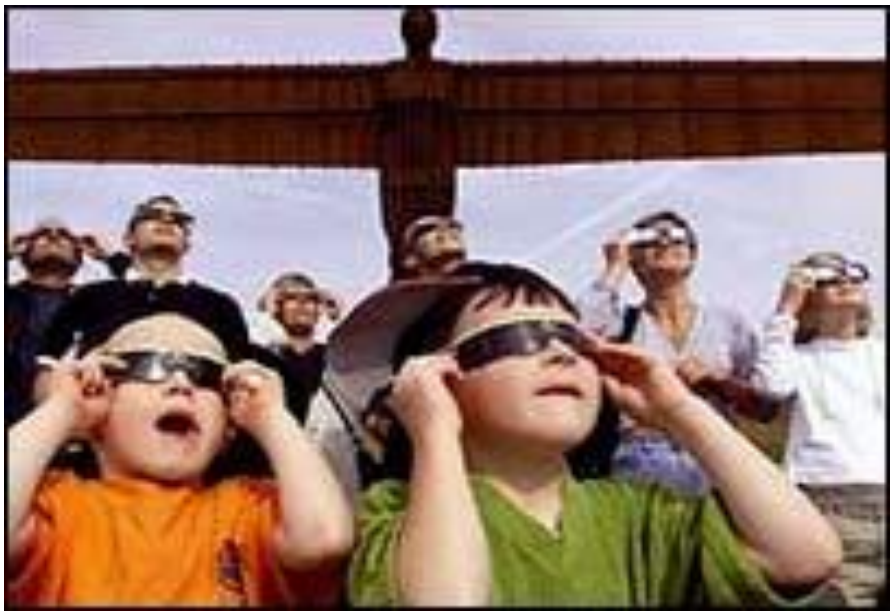


Figure 7 The Angel of the Spectacle

Consumption

As the banners of regeneration took their place amongst the ever-present commercial advertisements in city spaces this attempt at a new urban culture became visually enmeshed and frequently indistinguishable from the visual signs of a culture of hyper-consumption. The volume and intensity of private provision, retail and promotional discourses and collective consumption fill the field of vision. The centre of the contemporary inner city is now occupied almost exclusively with retailing, the sales outlets required to market the commodities, attendant practices and spatial requirements such as malls and pedestrianised ways and the ubiquitous advertisements - from large scale billboards to small scale panel ads - visually dominate city centres.

Consumption as culture features prominently in the presentation of place through local government, commercial and media discourses. For instance, Newcastle City Council chose to identify the city in the visitor's section of its web site at the outset of the make over as offering 'Britain's finest city centre shopping. Its fantastic choice of shops in the heart of the compact city is without equal outside London…national names to elegant arcades, designer stores and street barrows…' (Newcastle City Council, 2003).

As Liverpool prepared itself for the ECOC year of 2008 the city centre underwent enormous redevelopment. The restructuring of the city has included not only a focus on culture, the arts, and tourism but at the heart of the city centre a £1bn private retail and commercial development known as the Liverpool One Project. The leasehold of the 42.5 acre site was obtained by the Duke of Westminster's company Grosvenor from the local authority and the privately owned space is intended to draw 'high class' shoppers back into the city. Policing by a private security force has given rise to fears about maintaining universal access and rights of way from which 'undesirables' might be excluded (Guardian, 28th May, 2008). The project relied on private funding but much of the cultural strategy for ECOC 2008 rested with organisations such as Liverpool Vision and Liverpool Culture Company largely made up of private sector business in a partnership between private and public sectors in the creation of 'circuits of power in the trajectory of city centre regeneration' (Coleman 2004, p. 119). Not only is there an issue of accountability here, but these developments also marked a change in Liverpool regeneration policy, away from direct attempts to alleviate social deprivation in

inner city areas and peripheral sink estates toward 'the promotion of business growth in the city centre' (Jones & Wilks-Heeg, 2004, p. 346). Coleman identifies this as a feature of the 'neoliberal city' where the focus is on 'revitalising city centres and downtowns and the built in assumption...that these investment-come-growth strategies will result in a "trickle down" of wealth creation to replenish poorer constituencies' (Coleman, 2004, p. 231). Property prices in the centre of Liverpool reportedly rose by 20% on the day that the ECOC announcement was made with the local media forecasting increases in property development, investment and tourism in what was referred to, in the local press, as 'Boom Town' (Liverpool Echo, 6th June, 2003).

Party cities

'Newcastle is rapidly becoming one of the top UK destinations for short breaks, not just the "Party City", but a city that welcomes everyone - passionate, resilient, inventive, with a sense of carnival and zest for life' (Newcastle City Council web site, 2003).

The idea of the party city has been important to the creation of recent images of northern cities where local authorities and other bodies have highlighted consumption over production, where shopping and partying are to the forefront of a city's cultural projection. This has involved making culture an important part of the local and regional economy in which visible, commodified leisure is emphatically emphasised and presented as the domain of young culture and where alcohol is a central element. This drinking culture is derived from historical patterns of behaviour in an area of male-dominated heavy industry. The party city image is multifaceted, in part referencing the traditional working class drinking culture of the traditional pubs, but one already changing into a more cosmopolitan 'cafe bar' style environment.

Regeneration of the Quayside and other areas has now created a less gendered, more fluid social space, suited to the promenade and display that are part of party city culture. In the early years of the decade the council's use of design consultants to design and hang banners in support of the culture bid added to the spectacle of party city. Poorly designed and inappropriate to the task, hundreds of banners adorned the city proclaiming 'Newcastle – Gateshead buzzin', 'Love the buzz' (Figure 5). The 'buzz' was joined by an extensive advertising campaign that combined this slogan with references to 'café bar society' and the city centre's 'golden square mile of leisure' creating an image of party city. To whom was this aimed: tourists, potential incoming residents; high-banded council tax payers; business investors; actual and potential employers? Or was it just an advertising agency's perception, passed off as the local population's self-image and identity?

Advertising and tourism

A further important element is the way the city is advertised and the role this has in promoting tourism. In Glasgow £32.7m of public and £6.1m of private funding brought a net income gain from increased tourism. Indeed, the term 'cultural tourism' became attached to Glasgow's experience of its ECOC year. In addition there were wider cultural gains with increased attendance at arts and cultural events and a high level of local approval. Tucker notes that the 'short term impacts...were huge and early indications were that the policy of targeting cultural tourism was successful' (Tucker, 2008, p. 27).

For Liverpool, increased tourism was also identified as an outcome for the rebranded city with the claim that annual visitor numbers would double in the year of the ECOC, 2008. By May of that year, visitor numbers were for a range of venues showing a 25% increase on the previous year. It

is worth noting that claims to tourism growth – both numbers visiting ECOC events and in subsequent years – have been challenged (Griffiths, 2006).

Building tourism as part of the local and regional economy involves increased deployment of advertising techniques. Advertising is an important element of 'place marketing'. In 2008, an extensive advertising campaign proclaiming that 'This is Liverpool's year. Make yours with a visit' appeared during the summer months in a range of media outlets from London Underground billboards to double page spreads in the national newsprint media (Figure 8). In one such example, one of Anthony Gormley's life size cast iron figures from the installation 'Another Place' on the coast at Crosby was juxtaposed with a series of Liverpool cultural signifiers of 'high' culture - art exhibitions and a prestige neo-classical building facade. Gazing down the River Mersey the figure looks across the Liverpool City skyline bathed in an orange-yellow glow but one curiously omitting the ubiquitous contemporary signifiers of city centre reconstruction and regeneration: the cranes and skeletal buildings that dominated Liverpool's lived reality skyline (The Observer, August 24th, 2008) (Figure 9). The advert offered the promise of 'chic boutiques...stunning new shops...cool bars and eateries', using a similar style to Newcastle in selling the image of the rebranded city.

Advertising language has been moulded and stretched in order to sell the city. The place marketing slogan 'Newcastle-Gateshead buzzing' appeared as a strap line for the city's advertising strategy with only a hazy relationship with any referent in lived reality. However, Liverpool's slogan 'the world in one city' appeared to refer to some form of tangible reality attached to the city's multicultural experience based not least on its position as a leading port through which inward and outward migration has taken place (Lane, 1997) acknowledging the presence of ethnically diverse peoples including Black, Chinese, Irish, Somalian and other communities that make up the Liverpool population. Several commentators have also pointed to the ambiguity of 'the world in one city' slogan. On the one hand it seems to refer to the world being represented in the city or of the city constituted of many peoples through a plurality of cultures. On the other hand it points to global features of inequality in income and wealth, health, access to resources, power and the conflicts that arise from these inequalities both globally and in the city of Liverpool (Coleman, 2004: Jones & Wilks-Heeg, 2004). Liverpool like Newcastle and Glasgow has been taken through a process of rebranding, intended to be amenable to tourism and retail and property development.

The following and final section of this paper involves an analysis of two areas of Newcastle-Gateshead. The first is of Gateshead town centre and is based on observation of the area of study viewed through the filter of policy presentation, urban rebranding and the spectacle of culture. The second is of Scotswood in Newcastle and involves observations and document analysis of the controversial demolition of a working class district and the onset of housing development on the site.

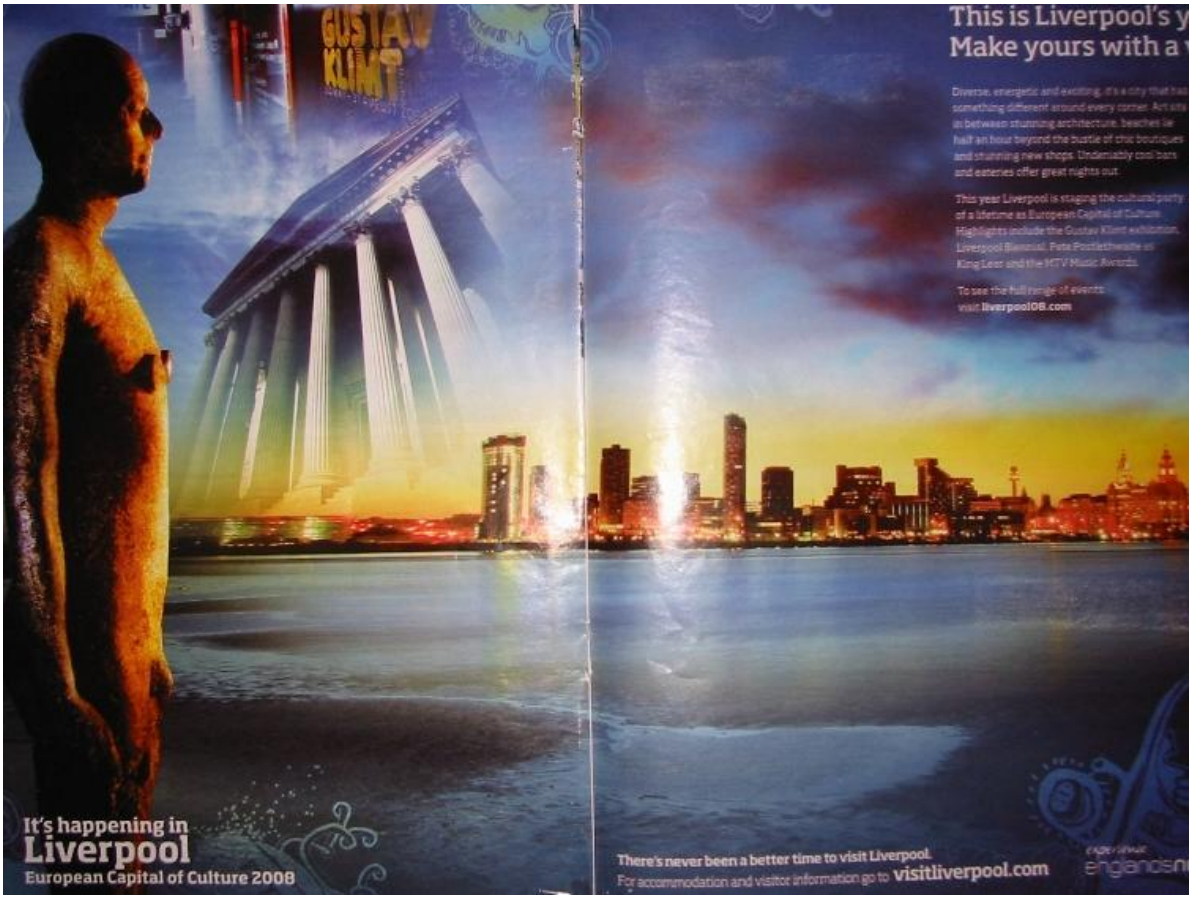


Figure 8 Advertising Liverpool 2008

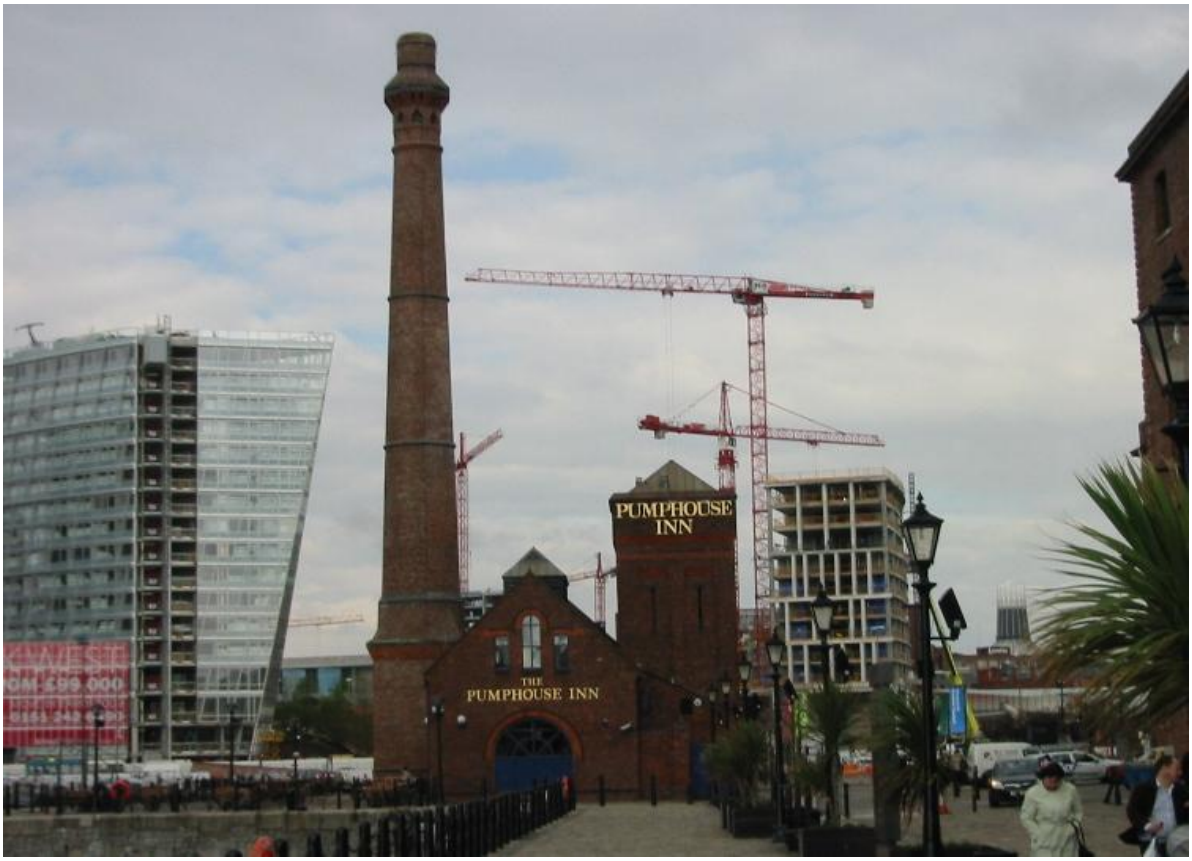


Figure 9 Liverpool regeneration 2007

Section three - urban realities observed

A walk in Gateshead

Across the river from the city of Newcastle lies Gateshead, an urban town with an extensive rural hinterland that unsuccessfully bid for its own city status in 2011. To the casual visitor, or the passenger on the main railway line from Edinburgh to London, Newcastle and Gateshead might seem to be the 'same place' but this perception would be blind to significant historical and economic rivalries that have only latterly, and only partially, been submerged by the manufacture of cultural spectacle and the bureaucratic structures of local authority 'partnership', the latter chiefly concerned with aspects of regeneration.

Gateshead has distinct but overlooked cultural traditions in, for instance, music and the legacy of coal mining. It also continues to exhibit the artefacts of important cultural strands which predate the current concern with 'cultural display' along the riverside. Once rediscovered, these older cultural reference points dwarf some of the images of recent cultural 'initiatives'. To access these cultural references, we embarked upon a visual narrative – a loosely-defined walk from the river to the Angel of the North (a major public art project): a journey, via a meandering route, of around 8 km (5 miles). The walk was conceived as a journey on foot between two highly visible cultural reference points: the Sage/Baltic development at Gateshead quay and the Angel of the North (Figures10 & 1). Both of these are tangible, and relatively recent, artefacts of public art and indeed of 'spectacle' in their own right. This status however by no means implies any active participation by the viewer – they can be given meaning, positive or negative, by the passive onlooker who might never contemplate entering the Sage or Baltic buildings for their art displays or their musical performances. The route of the walk was only tentatively defined at the outset. It would remain fluid, aimed at producing a photographic record and textual commentary to inform our broader discussions of regeneration, public participation and the 'spectacle of culture'.

Beginning at the Newcastle side of the river, on a summer day in 2008, a temporary rope bridge installation – part of a visiting display team - frames the bridges of the Tyne with horizontal and vertical lines, a figure works on this ephemeral structure high above the river as the skies darken with cloud (Figure 18). This bridge-as-art would disappear forever in the next few days, soon to be followed by the elderly boat moored alongside for a previous generation of party-goers...now destined for a new lease of life in the Mediterranean, as the axis of popular culture gravitates elsewhere (Figure 10).

Up the steep incline to the modern structure of the Gateshead Hilton, the sweeping view takes the eye back across the Tyne to castle and church, but a sideways glance from the same spot captures the image of the Central hotel, at the time of the walk locked into a different time and place, its shape mimicking the trams that rolled by between the wars. This too has latterly been transformed into a modern, younger, bar, its reference point being the redeveloped quay below rather than working class housing of the older town above.

Further up the hill to the old Town Hall – proudly boasting 'erected 1868' – once a focus of civic power on behalf of the emancipated voting public, commanding a view across to the Tyne and beyond, and since then a vehicle for everyday municipal management of a disintegrating economy - latterly serving as temporary location for the celebrated Tyneside Cinema before the picture house reverted in 2008 to its old home in central Newcastle, forming a link to film culture across the river.
The brutalist multi-storey car park of the 1960s cements the relationship to popular film as a key site in the 1971 film 'Get Carter' (Figure 11). Its fans trekked to see it, while close-up it openly decayed, pieces falling off. Its battlements resembled a medieval building in the visible process of ruin. It was

demolished in 2010. Pieces were sold off to collectors, in a manner reminiscent of the Berlin Wall. Now people trek to see where it used to be.

Away to each side, the buildings of the town centre reflect the decline of local retailing as it has been overtaken by other ways of consuming – the Co-operative department store finally closing in recent memory – while some proud, assertive, buildings – '1925' – push themselves shamelessly forward amidst the boarded up shop fronts.

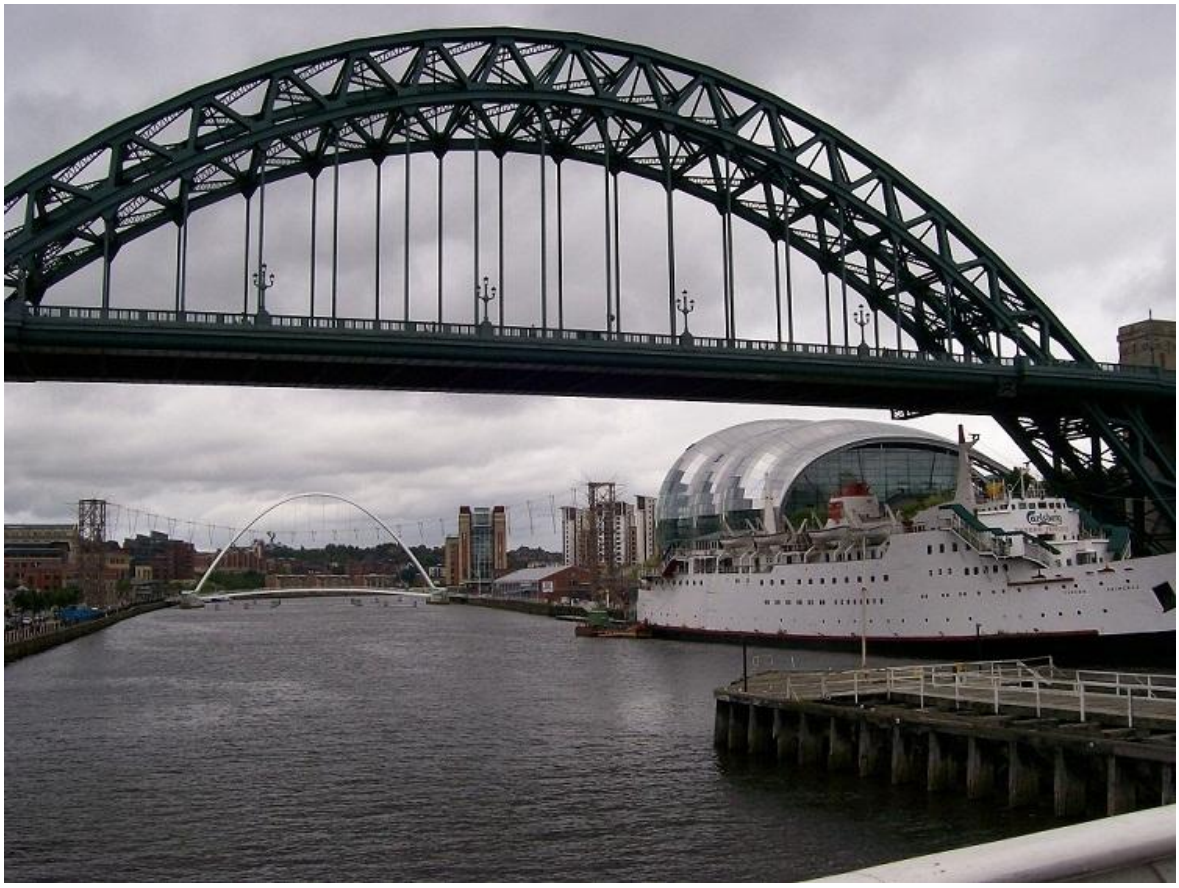


Figure 10 Newcastle's Tyne Bridge, Sage and Baltic

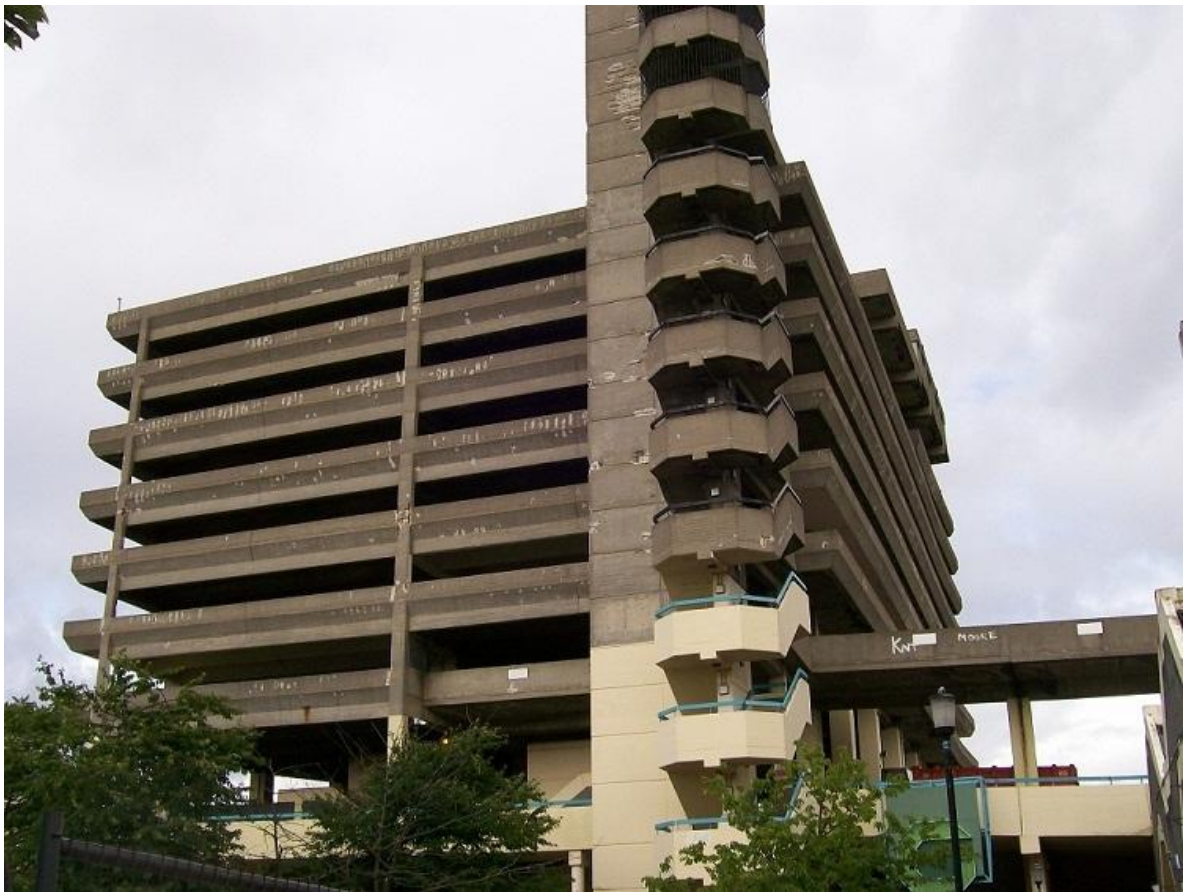


Figure 11 Gateshead's car park

Past the contemporary Civic Centre - the modern political site of local administration - through the terraces and the orthodox Jewish community which has long roots here alongside an urban working class and its schools and Christian churches, and then coming across older embodiments of public culture in the shape of the Central Library, the Shipley Art Gallery, alongside the stone-fronted building of the former Education Offices and its promise of what would once have been called 'betterment' and enlightenment. Then immediately to the delightful prospect of Saltwell Park, its gates firmly locked today as part of a council workers' strike, but a view through the iron bars accentuates the arcadian imagery of this rural idyll, deserted and silent, looking across to the green fells beyond, amidst what was industry and pollution before the disappearance of the old economy (Figure 12).

Through an avenue in late afternoon sunlight, before a walk uphill to the middle class communities of Low Fell, the main road south suddenly generating sounds and multiple images all around the viewer - the Progressive Players offering a Dario Fo play at the Little Theatre; the co-opted image of the Angel on a lurid field of pink with every bus that roars past between Newcastle and Gateshead; local pubs; local churches; a settled community whose central focus is merely a frantic traffic north and south beyond the community itself (Figure 13).

As the road opens up, the southbound traffic yawns and stretches its legs as it prepares for the A1 ahead and the Angel itself appears above the houses of Harlow Green and the fields beyond, closing the loop with where we began and marking the boundary of Gateshead itself. Has the beginning and end of cultural spectacle been mapped out on this five mile walk? Not quite. Travellers on the express trains below, speeding between Scotland and England, will see the Angel above them every time they pass, barely allowing time for reflection before they are propelled north or south. And

those pausing for a drink as they contemplate public transport back to the start of this journey are confronted with a painted depiction of the Angel bidding welcome to a public house...thus it stands as a symbol for the immediate area (Gateshead not Newcastle), the region as a whole (the North not the South), transport, alcoholic drink, retailing, estate agency – the Agent of the North, lunch for office workers – implausibly enough, the Bagel of the North - and wherever else the imagery leads. The symbol is both inclusive and exclusive, depending on audience, time and context. The walk between two prominent cultural reference points demonstrated above all that they are only part of – indeed, they are overwhelmed by – the innumerable, and largely unrecognised, cultural reference points in between.

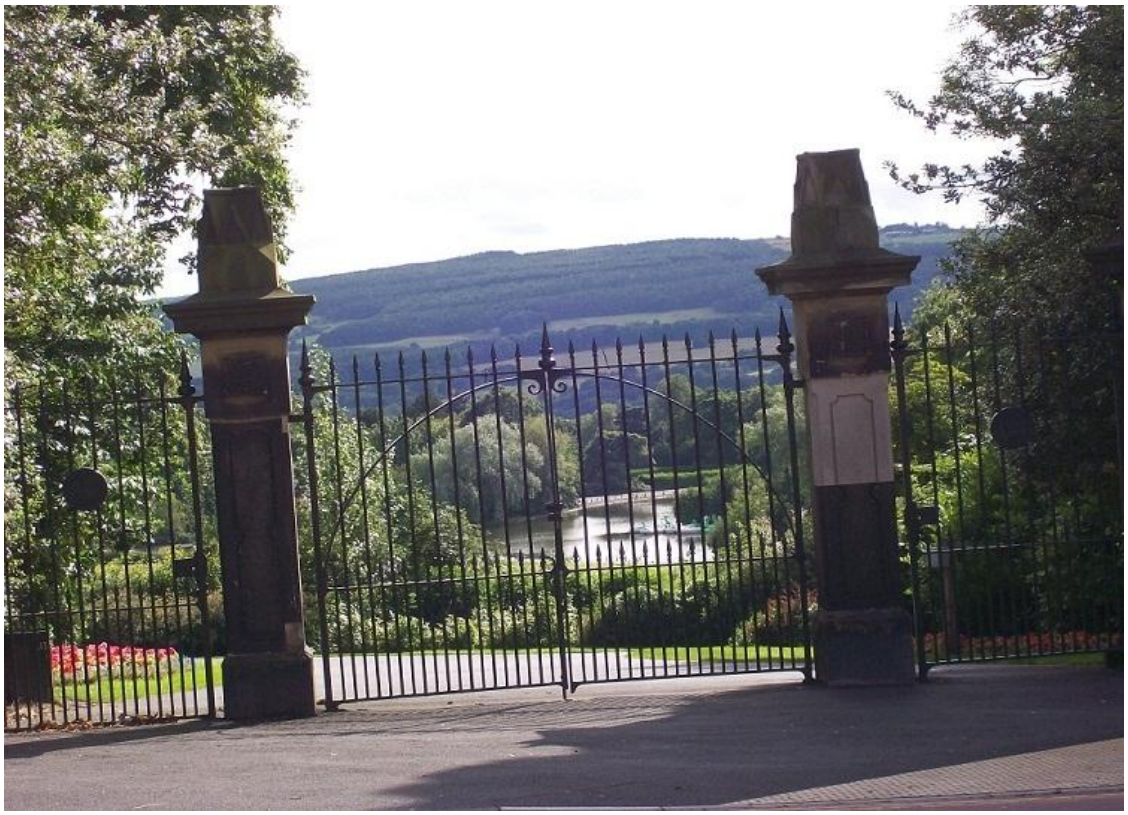


Figure 12 Saltwell Park, Gateshead

Figure 13 Gateshead bus with Angel

The Case of Scotswood

Between the walls that mark the medieval boundary of Newcastle and the A1 Western Bypass, completed in 1990 and five kilometres west of the city centre are the areas of Elswick, Benwell and Scotswood. Developed and expanded across the industrial period the area became the site of manufacturing and heavy engineering with largely working class housing and amenities. Extending up the valley from the River Tyne, the area about two kilometres in width is contained at the top of the hill by Westgate Road following the line of Hadrian's Wall. Sections of the wall that stretched from coast to coast across Roman Britain are still visible including a mile castle, fort and civilian settlement. Below, and running parallel with the river is Scotswood Rd, celebrated in the Blaydon Races, a Geordie folksong from the music hall of the 1860s that's still represents the vibrant popular culture of the period and place.[4] The pubs that lined the route are now demolished, but the names evoked the nature of work to do with shipbuilding, armaments and heavy industry at the nearby Armstrong Works (1847) and other sites on the river bank. The Hydraulic Crane, Blast Furnace, Forge Hammer, Rifle, Shell and Mechanics stood alongside the Miner's Arms a reminder of the coal producing past of the area. Coal, extracted from numerous sites along the valley, was transported down the wagonways running along both banks of the river. Later, with the development of steam and

[4] 'Thur wes lots o' lads an' lasses there, all wi smiling faces,
Gawn along the Scotswood Road to see the Blaydon Races…
We flew past Airmstrongs' factory and up to the Robin Adair
Just gannin down to the railway bridge, the bus wheel flew off there…'
Ridley, 1862.
The image of the wheel coming off the bus was perhaps an ominous sign of the demise of the popular and highly populated Scotswood Rd.

rail engineering pioneered in the Tyne valley, these became the railways serving iron and glass works, brick and tile yards and bridging the Tyne at Scotswood. Heavy engineering work continued into the twentieth century. At the close of the Second World War Vickers Armstrong at Elswick and Scotswood was the city's largest employer before the onset of de-industrialisation (Burke & Buswell, 1980, p. 50). The Montagu Colliery at Scotswood one of the last remaining pits in the valley closed in 1959.

House building in the west of the city continued with the process of industrialisation up to and after the First World War. Benwell for instance grew rapidly after the 1870s with tightly packed terraced homes being constructed: some were built by local employer Lord Armstrong to house workers from his rapidly expanding engineering works. In 1930s Scotswood, a private development of 600 homes by local builders Longstaff and Bain was accompanied by the building of Tyneside council flats. By the 1960s and 70s original terraces were beginning to be demolished and replaced by council estates and high rise flats.[5] By the close of the twentieth century housing built in the 1950s, and renovated as recently as 1980s became part of large scale demolitions. High levels of unemployment and concentrations of poor, economically inactive people saw an increase in crime, anti-social behaviour and disorder. In the absence of successful social policy aimed at addressing the complex social, economic and cultural problems of a post-industrial society, the area become stigmatised and notorious.

In 2002 a plan to redevelop large sections of the city of Newcastle which had at its core 'the creation of new neighbourhoods and populations large enough to challenge the stigmatised image…' was adopted by the Labour run local authority (Cameron, 2003, p. 2376). Known as 'Going for Growth' (GfG), the plan involved 'large-scale redevelopment of low-income housing neighbourhoods and the introduction of a more affluent population to these areas' (Cameron, 2003, p. 2367). Social mixing as it is known, involves 'moving middle income people into low income inner city neighbourhoods' in the hope of creating stronger local economies, improved public resources and beneficial social networks. As Lees has argued. '…the rhetoric of social mix hides a gentrification strategy and in that a hidden social cleansing agenda' (Lees, 2008, p. 2451). The language of regeneration policy rarely uses the term 'gentrification', choosing to refer to 'urban renaissance', that is making cities more attractive places in an attempt to retain populations and 'neighbourhood renewal' where policy and resources are focused on 'problem' areas. Attempts at 'gentrification' in run down city areas have been much criticised in the academic literature 'either as justification to obey market forces…or as a tool to direct market processes in the hopes of restructuring urban landscapes in a slightly more benevolent fashion' (Wyly & Hammel 2005, p. 35). The 'old' Scotswood stands on one side of the Tyne overlooking what remains of the working site of Vickers Armstrong and on the other the Metro Centre promoted as Britain's largest shopping centre (Figure 14). The Tyne valley continues to be de-industrialised but with the housing development site already supported by wider city infrastructure of transport and services. Consequently, the 'positive gentrification' of Scotswood (Cameron, 2003, p. 2367) became the basis for a further partnership between the public and private sector where the local authority made available 60 hectares of land as equity, and £19 million is being provided through the Homes and Community Agency and local Pathfinder scheme to clear and prepare the ground for development and awaiting private sector investment and return on capital.

[5] The area is recorded in the book of photographs 'Scotswood Rd' by Jimmy Forsyth 2001 and forms the material for Sid Chaplin's novel 'The watchers and the watched' 1962.

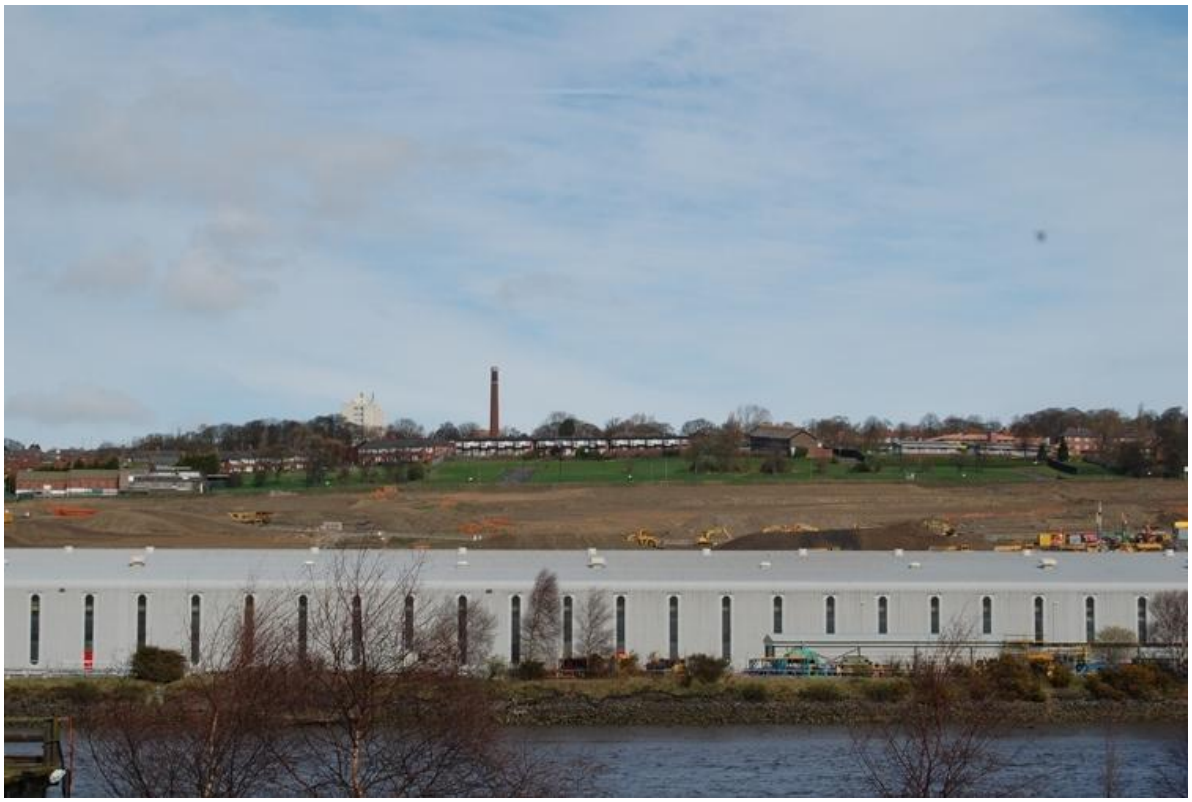
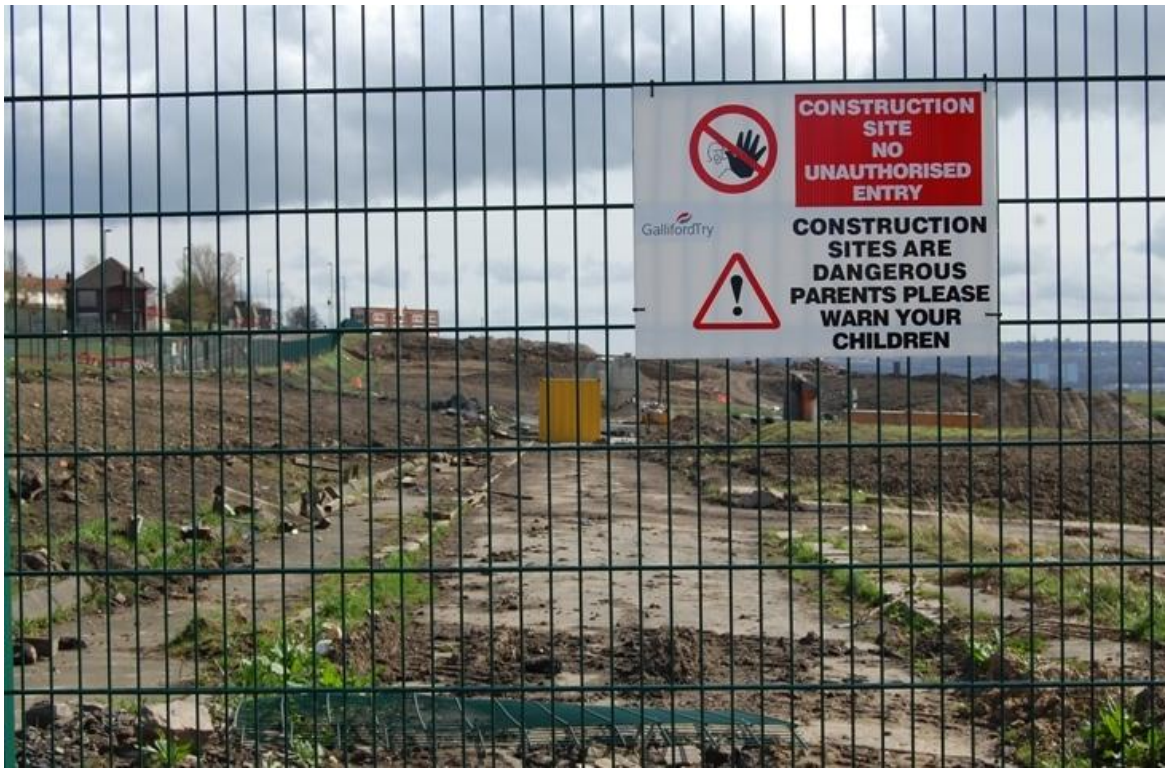


Figure 14 The Armstrong works with Scotswood beyond

The original GfG plans anticipated that 6000 homes would be demolished and these replaced with the building of 20,000 new homes across the city. 5000 of the demolitions were to be in the West End of the city which includes the Scotswood area. This required the displacement of existing lower income populations, moving to vacant local council housing in the city but not necessarily within their own area and the compulsory purchase of private homes. This met with fierce criticism and public opposition when it was announced. Critics argued that it would lead to the fragmentation of long-established communities. The Newcastle Community Alliance was formed from the communities involved demanding the council withdraw its demolition proposals and enter into dialogue, which it did but without providing an alternative. In sharp contrast to the official flags soon to adorn the city centre announcing the council's commitment to culture, the ECOC bid and the city's new, rebranded image, Scotswood was draped in homemade banners declaring 'We shall not be moved' (Guardian, 13th September, 2000). The Liberal Democrats replaced Labour in the June 2004 council elections and announced that GfG would be scrapped, however 1500 homes had already been demolished and elements of the GfG were included in the Pathfinder plans known as Bridging NewcastleGateshead (BNG).

Work, funded by BNG and the Home and Communities Agency, to clear and level the ground left after the Scotswood demolitions, was delayed until 2010. By May that year, the contract to build 1,800 new homes, shops, offices, leisure and community facilities was awarded to Barratt Developments, Keepmoat and Yuill Homes (BKY) and the first phase of building commenced in late 2011, almost a decade after the original demolition (Figures 15 & 16). In the Government's comprehensive spending review of October 2010 the Pathfinder scheme was cancelled to be replaced by a new Regional Growth Fund (RGF), creating uncertainty for residents in areas like Liverpool, Hull and Oldham where properties were scheduled for demolition or refurbishment (Booth, 2010; Inside Housing, 2011). However according to Interim Director of BNG, Sheila Tooley, the funding

for the redevelopment ‘was made available to Scotswood before the cuts to the Pathfinder programme were implemented’ (Keep Moat Homes, 2011).



Figures 15 & 16 Demolished Scotswood from east and west

A BKY spokesperson recently described the launch of the Scotswood Urban Renewal Vehicle (SURV) as 'a major step towards the creation and regeneration of a key Newcastle community'. This begs the question of what remains of the Scotswood community and what can be expected of the future? Part of the community has been displaced never to return, some will return but to a different kind of place and culture; others are living on the periphery of development (Figure 17). Going for Growth was intended to reverse the trend of a dwindling post industrial population. Shafto Street, a terrace of handsome Tyneside houses similar to the one demolished, sits behind newly placed railings on the edge of the development and looks out across the vast building site enclosed by a two and a half metre high fence.[6] The ground is being levelled and prepared for the building programme which is expected to last for 15 years. Work has already slowed because of the discovery of mine shafts from the industrial past.

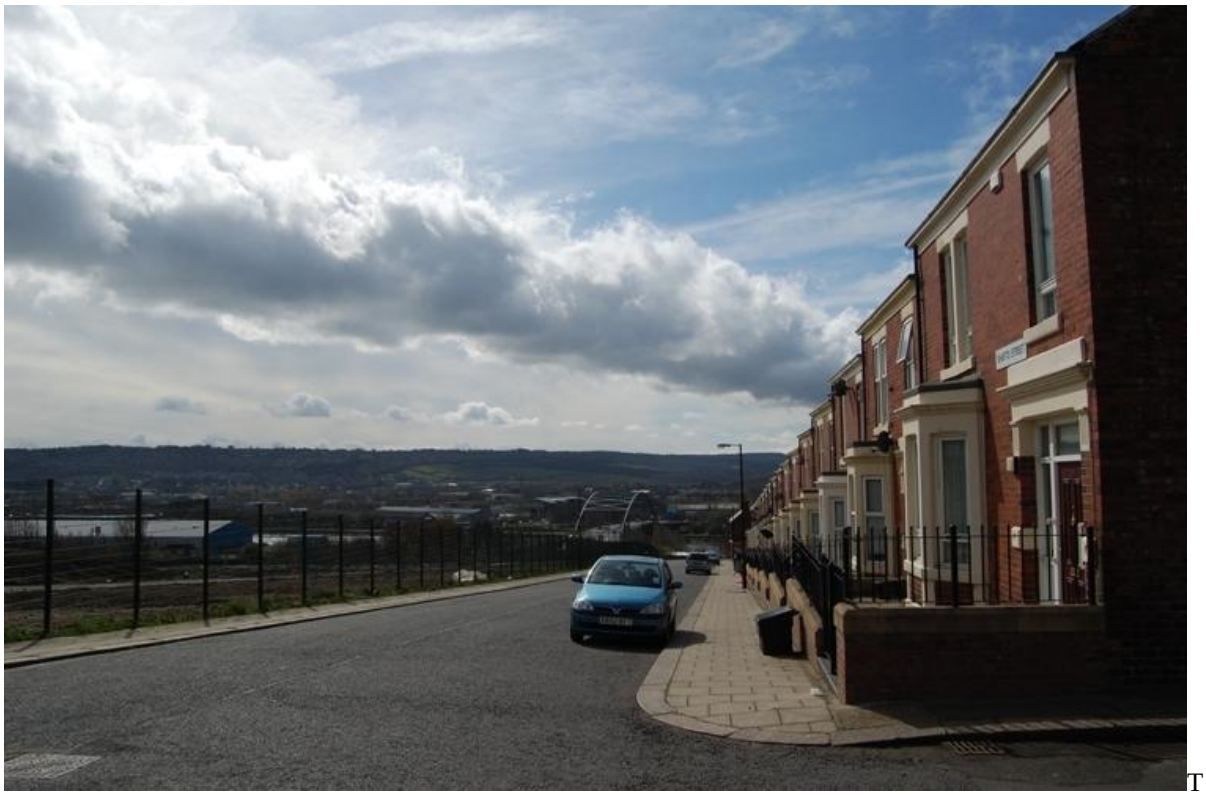
 T

Figure 17 Shaftoe Street, Scotswood

Conclusion

Attempting to re-present and rebrand cities by creating new urban images of them is now an established feature of a local public policy driven by government and business elites. Economic regeneration and large scale building programmes have played a part in this. To varying degrees in Britain, the process has been articulated as a particular depiction of culture manufactured through

[6] In the folk song Bobby Shafto, associated with the north east and known from at least the eighteenth century the narrator confidently looks to the future:
'He'll come back and marry me,
Bonny Bobby Shafto...
Bobby Shafto's getting a bairn,
For to dangle on his arm;'

economic, political and media discourses but having a material and very visible presence. This spectacle of culture takes various and distinctive forms and is associated with the notion of the party city, hyper-consumption, visual urban culture and advertising, the tourist and leisure economy and new forms of social assembly. The new urban image is not only designed as an outward projection but is inwardly aimed: competing with residual cultures with deep foundations and occupying the ground of those that have been displaced. The difference between existing reality and representation in the urban rebranding process is in all cases worthy of exploration. In northern Britain the breach is difficult to avoid and the analysis, through a critical interpretive lens, becomes more urgent.

This is not just a problem of how cities and citizens view themselves or the validity of representations of cities, cultures and amenities presented to the wider world. It is at heart a question of how to manage the process of de-industrialisation and the economic, social and cultural challenges of post-industrialism. These are not just issues of periodisation and theory: of modernity and postmodernity; industrialism and post-industrialism or questions of public policy in changing times. It is within this political space that the dizzy legacy of postmodernism's preoccupation with surface over substance and of signs floating free of referents served to shape northern urban rebranding. It also provides through an analysis of its excess the possibility, in a paraphrase of Marx's manifesto, of facing with sober senses the real conditions of life as the basis for action.

Life is experienced, for most people in Britain's northern cities, as uncertainty, conditioned by the national and regional economic effects of the financial and political crisis. Politics, as it currently moves through most people's lives in the north, is about price fluctuation, job losses, and cuts to health and social services, education and cultural provision. In response to this a more volatile politics of community action, student protest, trades union resistance, and direct street action is gaining ground. This finds its place within a wider global environment in which the struggle for democratic rights and institutions predominate.

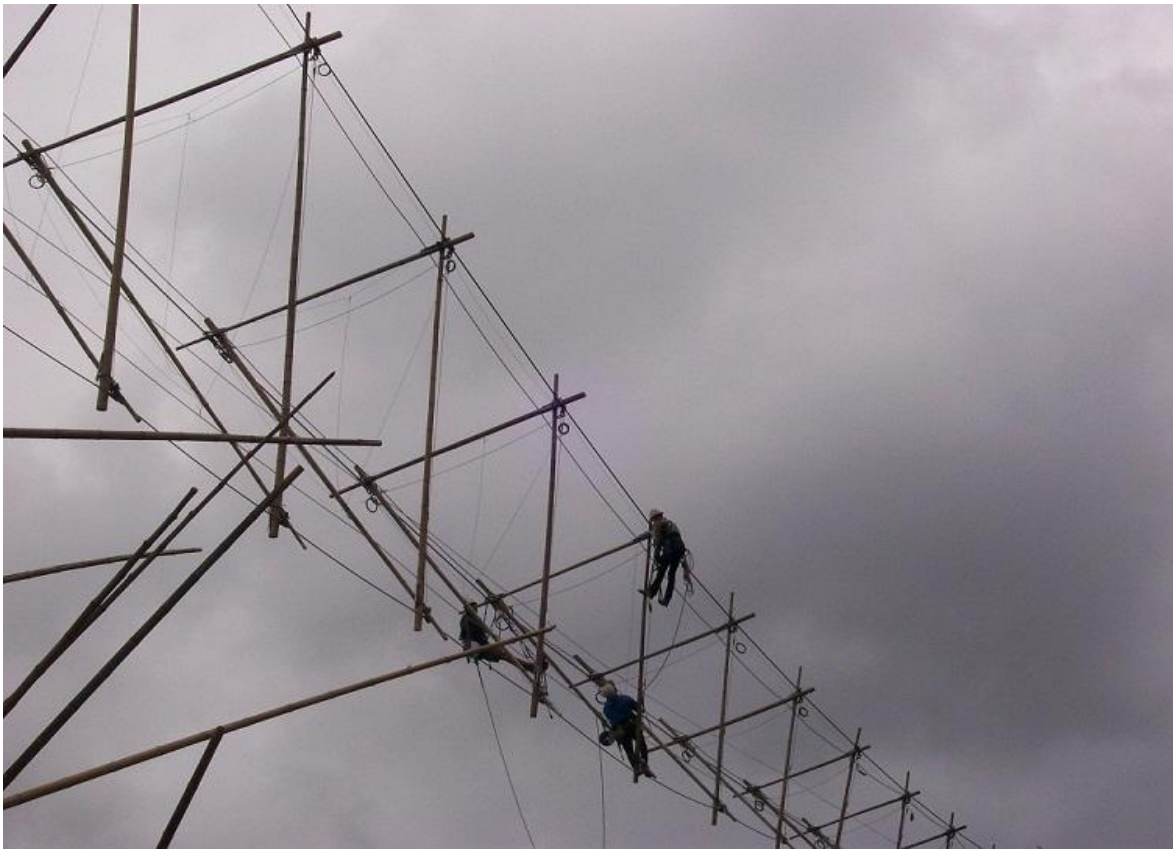


Figure 18 Bamboo bridge arts project spanning the Tyne, by Bambuco

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