Flagship Regeneration: panacea or urban problem?

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Abstract
Large scale flagship urban regeneration projects have been a favoured tool for economic growth and city boosterism by civic leaders for more than two decades. Such projects are intended to play a catalytic role in urban regeneration often by creating high profile and high end retail, residential, entertainment and tourist spaces in what were once derelict or underused urban space. They are often tied into aggressive city re-branding or marketing campaigns which seek to launch a new urban vision (away from an industrial city to a creative, dynamic, profitable environment to visit and invest in). They are seen by planners, developers and local politicians as a panacea for the problems of deindustrialisation and regional economic stagnation. However, this support for flagships from civic leaders and developers is in stark contrast to much of the scholarly literature, which states that rather than contributing to overall economic growth, this form of regeneration diverts scarce resources from areas such as housing and education. In addition, rather than mitigating socioeconomic polarisation, it is argued by many that flagship regeneration actually contributes to it, and creates a new form of spatial division within cities. Yet despite these vocal criticisms from the academic community, this type of regeneration continues into the Twenty-first Century. Lost in this debate is the perspective of urban residents, who must live with these flagships on a daily basis. While there are many theories related to how residents would react to flagships, there is little empirical evidence to validate these claims. This paper will outline and critically analyse the arguments for flagships, and the major criticisms of them, from the perspective of urban residents.

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I Introduction

"Building a city as an entertainment venue is a very different undertaking than building a city to accommodate residential interests." Eisinger (2000, p.317)

"Focus of much urban governmental activity is no longer the provision of services for city residents, but a concern with the prosperity of the city and its ability to attract jobs and investments." (Hubbard, 1996, p. 1441)

There was a time when the main focus of urban governments was to provide for the basic needs of their inhabitants. They focused infrastructure and public works efforts on the provision of water, sewage, transport, housing, and other services that directly impacted the quality of life of residents, particularly the most vulnerable. Cities such as Glasgow were renowned for their public water systems, and municipal transport. Even the now much maligned housing estates from the post-World War II period were largely built with the best of intentions to provide safe, affordable and comfortable accommodation and to alleviate slum conditions for the urban poor. In keeping with the national Keynesian economic systems dominant in most Western nations, cities tried to ensure that a basic minimum was provided for and redistribution policies and practises were implemented to attempt to bring about this vision (Eisinger, 2000; MacLeod, 2002).

For the past several decades, however, the primary role of urban governments, or more appropriately, urban governance in Western Europe and North America, has been less about ensuring a basic minimum for its inhabitants, and more about creating an appropriate climate for economic growth. As Harvey (1989a) noted, this shift has been from managerial to more entrepreneurial forms of urban governance.

Rather than being directly concerned with quality of life for all urban residents, today's large urban development projects are more likely to be site specific, real estate developments aimed at providing new harbours for investment, luring high end residents (back) to the city, or providing a safe base for urban tourism, which is seen by many government officials and city boosters as a panacea to combined problems of unemployment, urban decay, deflated property values and poor city image. These large-scale projects, often referred to as flagships are "significant, high-profile and prestigious land and property developments which play an influential and catalytic role in urban regeneration" (Bianchini, et al, 1992, p. 246). Flagships can

come in the form of convention centres, stadiums, luxury shopping malls, themed districts, iconic structures, waterfronts, aquariums, museums, and high-end hotels or housing developments. Commonly-cited examples include Baltimore's Inner Harbour (Bianchini et al 1992; Eisinger, 2000; Harvey, 1989a, c; Seo, 2002) , London's Canary Wharf (Bianchini et al 1992) and the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (Gomez, 1998; Miles, 2005; Plaza, 2000; Rodríguez et al 2001; Vicario and Martínez Monje, 2003). Their target audiences tend to be outsiders: investors, tourists or potential high-income residents, rather than existing urban residents. Partly because of this, they play a central role in city marketing or re-branding campaigns; many serve as the new iconic image of the city.

Those behind flagships view them as a panacea to reviving cities. Many city boosters, local politicians, business leaders and urban elites build and finance flagship projects with the expectations that they will enhance the image of their city, be a catalyst for further economic growth, provide new and exciting spaces, and attract new residents, businesses and tourists. It is claimed that these benefits will also be enjoyed by local urban residents.

But within the academic community, flagship urban regeneration is often seen as an urban problem. These criticisms are both social: the benefits of flagships are not enjoyed by all residents, nor do they represent the values of all residents; and spatial: their concentration in specific locations (based largely on profit potential) exacerbates differences between various parts of the city.

An important element remains unanswered: where do ordinary urban residents fit into this picture? Do they welcome and use these new spaces? Do the new iconic places lead to a greater sense of civic pride? Or are they alienated by them and feel that they are not a part of *their* city? To date, there is insufficient empirical evidence to either accept or reject these claims. The main aim of this paper is to examine the reasons behind pursuing flagships as well as the major criticisms of them, through the perspective of local residents. Section two will provide a brief outline of the geopolitical shifts that have brought about flagships. Section three will provide insight as to why this type of regeneration is still a preferred mode of urban regeneration, particularly in cities adversely affected by deindustrialisation. Section four will examine five key criticisms of flagships that have been identified in over twenty years of the academic literature. Finally, the concluding section will outline how the resident perspective fits into these criticisms and claims that flagships are both a panacea, and a phenomenon that can create further urban problems.

II The geopolitical context for flagships

Over the past few decades, the role of urban governments, both in terms of the services they deliver, and the manner in which they are implemented, has fundamentally changed. During the industrial era, until the early 1970s, urban governments functioned as managers of the city, providing essential public services for health, safety and public education (Eisinger, 2000). All levels of government pursued, to varying degrees, redistributive policies aimed at full employment, and a basic national minimum (Cook, 2004). In the Western-European welfare system, the post-World War II period (1945-1970) was characterised by the construction of large public housing units aimed at providing for the direct needs of the population (MacLeod, 2002). However, beginning in the 1970s, the role of the state began to change, and a retrenchment away from blanket redistributive policies started to emerge (Swyngedouw et al, 2002). Government redistribution is now often seen as an outmoded policy and not within the current trends of globalisation (MacLeod, 2002); the promotion of full employment has been taken off the top of the policy agenda (Harvey, 1989a).

Combined with this changing role for government has been the globalisation of the economy and the resulting impact on manufacturing in Western economies, as well as the subsequent rise of the importance in service- and knowledge-based industries. For cities, this has meant a transformation from places of production to places of consumption (Fainstein and Judd, 1999), and has led to the growing importance in sectors such as leisure, tourism, business and professional services and retail (Hall, 1993). This transition has been more tenuous in cities which had a large industrial base, rather than those that historically had a more diversified economy (Hall, 1993; Loftman and Nevin, 1996; Murie and Musterd, 2004).

With these changes, the role of municipal governments has changed. As Harvey (1989a) notes, cities have moved from providing a managerial role outlined above, to pursuing more entrepreneurial policies of growth and development, more akin to practices found in the private sector. Such policies are often seen as risky, speculative, and more concerned with creating the appropriate climate to attract further investment, rather than wealth redistribution and social welfare (Boyle and Hughes, 1994; MacLeod, 2002). But the retreat of the welfare state has placed strong pressure on local governments to pursue pro-growth policies as a way of generating jobs and investments (Cook, 2004). In addition, the declining role of the nation state has also meant that cities are less insulated from outside forces, and must be more proactive in accumulating investment in a context of increased competition (Quilley, 1999).

Competition between cities for jobs, investment and tourists has also increased, and spread beyond regional or national boundaries with globalisation of the world's economy. This

competition has increasingly focused on consumption factors, such as quality of life, the built environment, local amenities, cultural and social factors, rather than production factors such as labour costs, and quality, and access or proximity to raw materials (Hall, 1993; Healey et al, 1992). As a result, using the environment to create or modify places that emphasise consumption factors has been a popular way not only of regenerating the urban economy and encouraging inward investment, but also of changing the image of an area or city. These are two of the main changes that flagship regeneration projects seek to bring about.

Flagships focus on specific locations, rather than being spread across a wide geographical area. This has led to a change in emphasis from that of the overall city, to an emphasis on zones or districts (Tavsanoglu and Healey, 1992). Because of the involvement of the private sector, and a strong profit-motive in creating flagships, locations selected tend to be high-profile, city centre or waterfront sites. The selection of locations is generally based not on greatest need, but rather greatest potential for profit.

In the more than two decades since the first flagship projects emerged (first in the United States, shortly thereafter in Britain, and subsequently mainland Europe) they have been a common method of trying to regenerate cities. Two of the first flagship regeneration projects, Baltimore's Inner Harbour, and Boston's Faneuil Hall, have spawned hundreds of replicas. By the early 1990s, they became so common that a perception emerged that a city without a flagship lacked a regeneration strategy (O'Toole and Usher, 1992). They have been used to create and sell the image of economic revival, entrepreneurialism and competitiveness in an era of increasing globalisation (Cook, 2004; Swynegouw et al 2002).

This is the context in which flagship projects have emerged, and become a major mode of urban regeneration and city re-branding. At the same time, these forces have had a major impact on urban populations. The remainder of this paper will examine why flagships still have widespread support among many, and why they are criticised by much of the academic community. This will be done by examining these arguments through the perspective of urban residents.

III Why cities pursue flagships?

Why do cities still use this model for regeneration? There are several reasons which will be outlined in the following section. Some reasons have to deal with the fact that those behind flagships (city boosters, urban elites, local politicians) believe in what they are doing, and the positive impact it will have on the city. Some of this comes out of a necessity to re-image and sell

their city to the outside world; the flagship becomes the perfect launching pad for such re-imaging campaigns. However, another reason is because many cities have little other choice but to embark on this type of regeneration; if they do not, other cities will, and will continue to be further ahead in pursuing capital and high-end visitors. So cities become caught in a 'keeping up with the Jones' scenario. It is clear by an examination of the literature on flagships, though, that the improvement of quality of life for lower-income urban residents is not the highest motivator for this method of economic development. This section will outline these reasons in more detail.

1. Ideological shift

Changes in policy and ideology have been a major factor in the use of flagship regeneration. This has largely been as a result of a general shift in policy outlined earlier away from redistributive measures towards economic growth models, property-based regeneration, and more entrepreneurial forms of urban governance (Bianchini et al 1992; Harvey, 1989a; Loftman and Nevin, 1995; 1996).

There is a belief among many in government that flagship and property-based regeneration will alleviate urban social problems. In Britain, during the era of the most recent Conservative government, this was the approach towards urban regeneration. Loftman and Nevin (1995) quote the then-Secretary of State for the Environment, Nicholas Ridley as saying: "if you regenerate the land, automatically it will solve the problems of unemployment." While the Labour government has focused on other forms of regeneration, it has not completely distanced itself from a belief in flagship regeneration. In fact, its 'winner take all' philosophy has largely abandoned equality as a goal (Kearns and Turok, 2000).

Neo-liberal policies and ideologies which focus on deregulation, private investment, privatisation and consumption are in sync with the general direction and conditions that most flagships take. There is a highly competitive culture that exists within many of these regeneration schemes, particularly those bidding for funding (Edwards, 1997). There is also a belief that this type of development can promote an entrepreneurial culture, and lead to more imaginative strategies for urban regeneration.

Despite being seen by many as being highly speculative ventures, cities believe that their investments are secure, and the benefits will be enjoyed by a wide spectrum of the population. Loftman and Nevin (2003) illustrate the case of regeneration projects in Birmingham that were predicated on three assumptions: they would directly and indirectly produce substantial benefits to the whole city, all residents would benefit from the developments, and public-sector costs would be minimised.

For urban elites and local politicians, large flagship projects can serve to bolster their own image and status (Loftman and Nevin, 1995). Flagships can also serve as a way of attracting urban elites; Searle (2002) uses the example of stadiums that can be used to secure professional sports franchises, something he notes is of particular importance to many urban elites. However, he goes on to note that for many such people, solving issues, such as poverty in the city, do not rank high on the agenda. Despite academic evidence concluding that professional sports teams and new stadiums have a negligible impact on the urban economy, many urban leaders still believe that this will help regenerate cities. The last fifteen years has witnessed a stadium building boom, particularly in North America, largely predicated on the economic benefits they are seen to bring (or to keep increasingly footloose professional sports teams in the city). Many stadiums become financed partially by local governments.

2. Tangible benefits of flagships

Proponents of flagship regeneration also point to tangible benefits that come to their cities as a result of this type of development. They are seen as an effective and fast way of physically transforming derelict and neglected parts of the city (Loftman and Nevin, 1995; 1996). Large flagships provide a visible sign of change and investment that can be easily recognised by residents and potential investors and visitors.

One of the main roles of flagship projects is to act as a catalyst for further regeneration and development. As a result, they are often seen as loss leaders (Harvey, 1989a). This loss can be acceptable if the end result is more private sector development. Flagships can act as a catalyst for an emerging tourist industry particularly such as Bradford, England's Film and Television Museum. Bianchini et al (1992) note that more than three million visitors came to this attraction in the first five years, whereas before the city had virtually no tourist industry.

It is then hoped that this physical transformation will not only increase investment and development, but also boost civic pride. Flagships can also serve as new urban spaces, which it is hoped that residents can visit, admire and enjoy (Cook, 2004; Loftman and Nevin, 1995). Having new stadiums with professional sports teams, and top-class cultural facilities brought about by flagships will also serve to boost urban pride (noted in Eisinger, 2000). There are, therefore, some quality-of-life factors, which can be enjoyed by urban residents, that come about as a result of flagship projects. This relationship between flagships and their role in increasing civic pride has yet to be fully explored.

One benefit seen by many promoters is the subsequent increase in property prices in adjacent areas. While this has been criticised in many academic circles as leading to gentrification

(Evans, 2005; Miles, 2005; Seo, 2002), many government leaders see this as a strategy for repopulating the inner city with middle-class residents. Cook (2004) cites Portsmouth city council's belief in gentrification because if would bring about land value increases, raise tax revenues and attract skilled residents. In Britain, the Labour government has blurred the difference between gentrification and urban regeneration so that the two are now linked together as part of the government's policy to tackle urban problems (Cook, 2004). While gentrification is seen in many academic circles as being a 'dirty word' (Smith, 1996), it is clear that this is not always the view held by those in government or urban regeneration, who continue to believe that this type of regeneration will improve the urban environment, and provide tangible benefits in the form of property price increases and more appealing environments. From a residents' perspective, gentrification of adjacent areas can serve to open up new sections of the city for middle class residents to live in and enjoy. Of course, the reverse side of this (which will be discussed in section four) is that many lower-income residents who inhabited these areas can become displaced, and may hold an entirely different view concerning the changes in their neighbourhood.

3. The re-branding and re-imaging of cities

Flagships are linked to extensive place-marketing and re-imaging campaigns designed to shed old, tired industrial images, and sell cities in a global marketplace to investors, potential residents and tourists alike. Flagships are closely linked to the re-imaging of a new urban vision (Seo, 2002). Bianchini et al (1992, p. 249) note that flagships all have one goal:

> They are all striving to recreate the image of the city. The negative perceptions of declining, dirty and inhospitable urban environments are being replaced by the city advertisers' marketing icons – gleaming office blocks, cultural centres and chic retail venues. Conviviality, quality and entertainment are the post-industrial city Utopia. Cities are no longer portrayed primarily as centres of production but of consumption. In changing perceptions of urbanism, the flagship project plays a central and crucial role.

Part and parcel of this re-imaging is a rejection of the old image, and the creation of a new one, more attractive to a post-modern world. As Healey et al (1992, p.278) state: "Flagship development projects and promotional imagery were used vigorously to supplant the imagery of

rustbelt cities and clothcap citizens which, it was assumed, would inhibit inward investment by the private sector, with the lifestyle imagery of a globalised 'yuppified' middle class." A flagship development's role in this re-imaging is to serve as the iconic image or landmark that is saleable and marketable; flagships such as Baltimore's Inner Harbour have become the new symbols of a dynamic, vibrant post-industrial city. Smyth (1994, p. 21) states: "In essence, the flagship is acting as a large advertising hoarding for the area, the implied message being that this is the place for others to spend or invest." They aim to be symbols of success that cast an image of innovation and creativity in the midst of a revitalised and restructured city (Swyngedouw et al, 2002).

These marketing strategies and re-branding campaigns, to which flagships play a leading role, tend to be geared towards outsiders, rather than the local population. 'Putting cities on the map' therefore becomes the rationale for flagship developments, place marketing or re-imaging campaigns, and other similar types of strategies (Rodrieguez et al, 2001). In the fierce competition for investment that most cities are now facing, presenting a post-modern, prosperous, creative or culture-based image is seen by local elites and politicians as paramount to securing further investment, tourists and potential high-income residents, all of whom are attracted to these ideas (Kong, 2000; Loftman and Nevin, 1995; Paddison, 1993).

In the globalised world, cities are sold just like any other product; each city therefore tries to market itself as a unique and wonderful place (Fainstein and Judd, 1999). These qualities are marketed to an outside population of investors or tourists, rather than making local residents feel happy about their city's place in the urban hierarchy. Swyngedouw et al (2002, p545-6) note that: "Repositioning the city on the map of the competitive landscape meant re-imagining and recreating urban space, not just in the eyes of master planners and city fathers and mothers, but primarily for the outsider, the investor, developer, businesswoman or man, or the money-packed tourist." This all helps give cities a more high-profile, international orientation (Spaans, 2004).

Cities such as Baltimore have been successful in putting themselves on the tourist and investor maps, and shedding their old, industrial images as a result of flagship regeneration and aggressive re-imaging. Glasgow was able to use flagships such as the Burrell Collection, the Scottish Exhibition and Convention Centre and other developments to help create the image of a dynamic, modern and cosmopolitan city (Bianchini et al 1992). However, much of this has been done to attract outsiders, rather than simply serving the needs of the local population, or re-imaging cities to their needs and visions.

4. Cities have few other options

One final reason why flagships have been adopted is worth noting. Bianchini et al (1992) note that many local councils in Britain, even Labour-controlled ones, adopted a policy of flagship regeneration because there appeared to be little else they could do to attract both private and public sector resources. While this may not be a compelling reason to pursue this type of regeneration, it appears that many urban areas have little choice; they are faced with not only increasing competition, but also declining revenues, and severe economic and unemployment problems. In this light, not only do they need to be seen as keeping up with the Jones, but also seen to be doing *something* to ameliorate their urban problems and attract further growth.

Cities are now forced to re-image themselves and play the place-promotion game largely because every other city is now doing it. As Thornley (2002, p.814) states: "There is now a widespread attitude held by city leaders that they must take a proactive role and promote and market their cities if they are to keep up with the competition." This was particularly true in many British cities, where declining public revenues and a loss of the traditional industrial base left cities with little else (Hubbard, 1996).

While this may not be a totally valid reason for embarking on this type of regeneration, and may indeed be masked by those promoting flagships, it does represent the tenuous position many cities find themselves in in the post-industrial, globalised world, where competition between cities extends beyond regional or national lines.

IV Five critiques of flagships

This section will outline five critiques of flagship regeneration, which have been developed in the academic literature over the past twenty years, and how they are related to the perspective of local residents. Much of the criticism comes from the left-wing literature, with some drawing on a Marxist political economy perspective. However, it is important to bear in mind that much of the academic literature related to flagships takes a particularly critical approach.

1. Conflicting visions of the city

It has already been noted that flagships are key to re-imaging and re-branding of cities. However, a major criticism is that the image being portrayed, marketed and sold, may not reflect the reality of the city, or the views that urban residents themselves hold of their city. From the perspective of the local populations, this is one of the strongest criticisms, because it has the

potential to be divisive and confrontational. This critique has been backed up in some cases by empirical evidence that shows the confrontations that can exist between those selling the cities, and those living in them.

An important question is raised when dealing with this issue: who are flagships designed for: the local population or outsiders? The answer to this question will not only influence the design and uses of flagships, but also their reception and acceptance by the local population. It has been noted that in order for a development to be successful, it must fit into the identity of the place concerned, rather than being forced upon it (Miles, 2005). However, this is not generally the case with most flagship projects.

Several studies have examined the way that working-class histories and cultures have been hidden or sanitised in order to make the city more suitable for investors and tourists. Glasgow's use of its designation of European Capital of Culture in 1990 has been criticised as hiding its grim working-class history (Laurier, 1999), and covering up its proud socialist heritage (MacLeod, 2002). The places and imagery used in redevelopment can mean different things to different groups of people. A derelict industrial site can have a totally different meaning to a redundant factory worker than it does to a developer or local politician (Goodwin, 1993). However it can also have a different interpretation among various groups of residents; those who saw these spaces as a blight on the city may look more favourably on their regeneration than those who had a personal connection to the old industrial landscape.

The battleground for this confrontation often takes place with regards to culture and history: boosters try to promote a marketable, or even sanitised, image of the city that can be sold to outsiders, while many local residents try to preserve their own identities which may not fit into the desired image being marketed. In their book *Selling Places*, Philo and Kearns (1993) outline this situation: "Conflicts *do* frequently arise because the manipulation of culture and history by the place marketers runs against the understandings of local culture and history built into the daily encounters with city spaces of the city's 'other peoples" (p.25). They go on to add that:

> We think it important that these 'other pasts' of 'other peoples' should not be so easily sidelined, and that strenuous efforts should be made to aid in their rediscovery – complete with the stories about past struggles, past wrongs, past victories that they often contain – as a tool to use in the contestation of selling places in the present, particularly when this practice of selling places leads (for instance) to massive redevelopment schemes such as London Docklands that are so damaging to pre-existing communities and their livelihoods. (p.27)

In many flagships, there is little space not only for marginalised groups in the city, but also for local participation. Many are corporate spaces that are driven by profit and therefore seek the highest potential returns.

The language of this type of regeneration often claims to make cities more liveable. But as Smith (1996) notes, the idea of liveability is restricted to middle- and upper-income residents. He states that: "it focuses on 'making cities liveable,' meaning liveable for the middle class. In fact, and of necessity, they have always been 'liveable' for the working class. The so-called renaissance is advertised and sold as bringing benefits to everyone regardless of class, but available evidence suggests otherwise."(p.89) This represents a different vision for the city, and one in which the lower-income residents generally lose out.

One common thread that many authors have commented on is that flagships, because of their design, uses and target audience, can lead to a sense of exclusion by many residents, particularly lower-income groups. This can be felt through the architecture, specifically if the flagships are high-end consumption-orientated (Smyth, 1994). Healey et al (1992, p.7) note that: "The distance between the new, buoyant activities within a city, and the lives of the poorest citizens has…tended to increase. It is not surprising if many poor people then feel excluded." These sentiments can also extend to the cultural amenities being situated in flagships, leading to a sense that they are culturally inaccessible and not for the local population (Evans, 2005).

However, many of these claims, while backed by theory, have little empirical evidence to support them. There are a few exceptions to this; Woodward's (1993) study of the redevelopment of the Spittlefield Market in London highlighted the strong divisions between developers and the local population over the use of the space and of the image of the area. In Birmingham, Loftman and Nevin (2003) cite a survey conducted among residents that concluded that while most believed their city was an 'international conference and business city,' many also had concerns that their city was not safe and their neighbourhoods contained poor quality housing. While these are interesting cases, they are insufficient to gain a wider understanding of whether or not flagships do alienate segments of the population that do not share the vision of the city that they seek to portray.

2. Flagships as a diversion for the masses

Anyone who has witnessed a winning bid for an Olympic Games being awarded, or the opening of a new stadium or waterfront attraction will be aware of the euphoria that it produces among people who are there. These mass celebrations and giant spectacles are seen and

participated by many local residents, and there is no doubt that they can lead to a greater sense of civic pride. However, these celebrations, and the projects to which they lead, have been criticised as being a diversion for urban population and a way of taking attention away from declining public services, crime or poor housing with which many residents deal on a daily basis. On the surface, the city may appear prosperous, dynamic and ready to accommodate outside capital, yet this only serves to mask the increasing poverty and deterioration (Harvey, 1989a).

Harvey and others (Eisinger, 2000; Harvey, 1989c; Philo and Kearns, 1993; Waitt, 2001) have cited the classic Roman formula of bread and circuses. The idea is that by giving citizens a base level of sustenance, and occasionally providing large spectacles, they will be caught up in the moment of the event, thereby ignoring the real problems. Eisinger (2000, p. 316) quotes then-Philadelphia mayor Edward Rendell on the opening of the city's new convention centre in 1993: "I feel like a Roman emperor. I can't give decent city services, I want to close [city] health centres, and I want to cut back on library hours and here I am giving bread and circuses to the people."

Hosting a large event, or launching a new flagship can generate feelings of success, and urban pride amongst the local population. However, the Marxist political economy perspective states that such spectacles are one mechanism that local business and political elites can use to prevent social unrest between high- and low-income residents. (Waitt, 2001) Waitt goes on to state that: "In this reading of hallmark events, they function to legitimise political projects that function primarily in the interests of the business and political elite, whilst creating and sustaining a local and/or national collective identity that undermines internal social divides along class or ethnic lines" (p. 254).

Harvey also argues that such schemes serve as a diversion from the problems of ordinary urban life and can serve to further belief in the beneficence of the political and social system. But again, there is an element of critique: "if it brightens the urban scene then it does so in the vein of a carnival mast that diverts and entertains, leaving the social problems that lie behind the mask unseen and uncared for" (1989b, p. 21).

Flagship projects have the potential to increase civic pride by the spectacles that they produce. But as has been noted in this criticism, they are also seen as an instrument to distract from the hardships of urban life that many residents face. The question remains as to whether or not residents become distracted from the problems of their lives and get caught up in the euphoria flagships can bring, or whether or not they see through the spectacle and are not caught up in its hype.

3. The Cookie-cutter effect

Most flagships follow patterns that replicate previous developments that are seen as being successful. This leads to what Law (1993, from Loftman and Nevin 1995) calls 'clone cities.' Harvey (1989b, p. 21) outlines this formula which reads almost like it was out of a cookbook:

> The recipe is pretty standard. Take a run-down segment of the inner city and depopulate it of unwanted characters. Blend an enclosed and secure space for retailing (preferably post-modern in design and populated with Laura Ashleys, Benettons and a few up-market stores) with highly functional office space (preferably masked also with most-modern facades). Mix in either some imitation Italian piazzas, fishing wharves, medieval-looking squares lined with fake Georgian or Tudor shops and housing, or, appropriate the traditional spaces of working-class living (terraced houses) and working (wharves, warehouses and factories) and rehabilitate them to bourgeois taste. Top it all off with entertainment and cultural facilities galore and designate the whole space as an historic monument, worthy of entry into the catalogues of contemporary heritage culture.

The fact that flagships have been replicated in their appearance and form in cities throughout the world has had an effect on their impact. Smith (2005) notes that tourists may suffer from 'architectural fatigue,' and become impervious to the effects of new iconic buildings. He goes on to note that this has already happened with waterfront developments and aquariums; they have become so serially reproduced that they have lost their potency as a re-imaging tool.

Many flagship museums have been become franchised, being replicated in numerous cities. This diminishes the originality and novelty of the flagship, if it becomes one of many. The franchising of the Guggenheim is an example of this; in their study of the Guggenheim in Bilbao (perceived as one of the more successful re-imaging campaigns) Rodríguez et al (2001) worry that the impact of the museum could be lessened if it becomes franchised, thereby losing its uniqueness. Coles (2003, p.194) outlines how the over-reproduction of such spaces can lead to diminishing returns for each:

> such a remorseless commodification of place has created a paradox: promotional measures which were intended to deliver to innovative destinations unique selling propositions, emphasize their differences over rivals, and thereby attract greater visitor numbers have, in fact, been replicated so widely and closely that they have

> conspired to deny singularity, produce homogeneity in place, product and experience and, thereby, it is theorised, limit returns to initiators and imitators alike.

Ironically, however, as such spaces become more and more alike, and when the attractions or icons are created rather than being endowed by history or nature, it becomes easier for cities to create tourist sites or to remake themselves as tourist destinations (Judd, 1999).

Competition for regeneration investment can also have an impact on the type of project being proposed. If many cities are competing for a limited amount of government investment, this could lead to projects designed to win the funding (and therefore being more glamorous, or more profitable), rather than providing for the greatest need. Edwards argues that managers and local governments "will *not* primarily be drawing up a policy the focus of which is improving the quality of life of those who need it most. Indeed, there will be considerations to be incorporated into the bid proposal in the interests of maximising its competitiveness which will certainly prejudice the satisfaction of the needs of the most deprived" (1997, p. 836).

A major problem is that it is simply not possible for every city that wants a major international museum, attraction or flagship to have one (Evans, 2005). There are simply too many places competing for too few visitors, high-end residents and capital. Flint, Michigan tried to re-invent itself as a tourist destination with the decline of the auto industry. The city opened AutoWorld in 1984, as well as a major hotel, both of which closed within two years (Judd, 1999). As Harvey (1989a, p.12) notes: "how many successful convention centres, sports stadia, Disney-worlds, harbour places and spectacular shopping malls can there be?"

While the replication of flagships has been a major theme of their critiques in the literature, it is questionable how relevant this is from the perspective of local residents. The extent to which local populations are aware of, and have contact with, other regeneration efforts in different cities is uncertain. But this is evidence of the different geographies that do exist: while cities are competing with cities throughout the world for capital and tourists, urban residents are generally more locally focused. Many of the critiques in this section are related to capital being spread too thinly, or to tourists who can become oblivious to the effects of new flagships, because they have been so serially reproduced. However, if such projects were to fail for these reasons, such as the example of AutoWorld in Flint, this could have an impact on how residents view these developments and their sense of civic pride.

4. Greater socioeconomic polarisation

There is an extensive amount of literature in which it has been argued that flagship projects lead to greater socioeconomic divisions within cities (see in particular: Cook, 2004; Deffner and Labrianidis, 2005; Seo, 2002; Swyngedouw et al, 2002). However, much of this literature does not have empirical (particularly quantitative) data to further these claims.

Partly because they are created by city boosters and local business leaders and targeted to middle-class and tourist audiences, flagships do not address issues concerning poverty and social equity. Harvey (1989a) criticises this type of development because it focuses on the speculative construction of place rather than ameliorating the socioeconomic conditions in an area. While they may create exciting new spaces, "the underlying, deep-rooted problems of inner-city poverty, economic and social polarisation, high unemployment, under-investment, dilapidated housing and high council house waiting lists among others, show little signs of being solved, even if they have been moved about slightly" (Cook, 2004 p.51). This is largely due to the fact that they focus on wealth creation, rather than wealth distribution (Loftman and Nevin, 1995). As Loftman and Nevin (1995; 2003) argue, these projects are primarily concerned with harnessing and creating growth, and few flagships have been developed with the social needs of the poor as a priority. One reason for this is the element of profit, which often excludes certain aspects in the developments which may be more community oriented (Law, 1992).

Proponents claim that the social benefits will trickle down to lower-levels of society (Loftman and Nevin, 1995; Healey et al, 1992). The idea is that flagships will generate wealth, and that this increased prosperity will eventually filter its way down to the lower strata of society. Such spin-offs are usually touted as increased jobs, both in the construction of flagships, and in their subsequent operation, an overall level of economic growth, a better physical environment as well as through new facilities which can be used by all residents. However, the claim that all levels of society will benefit through the trickle-down effects of flagships is a highly contentious one. The failures of the trickle down theory have been criticised heavily in the academic community.

One of the heaviest criticisms in this regard has been the ability for flagships to provide jobs, particularly to the segments of society with the greatest need for employment. Many schemes highlight the fact that they are going to provide jobs to local residents, however the reality is often not so. In many cases, there are fewer jobs than planned, and those that are created are often low-wage and low-skill, doing little to help people climb the social ladder (Cook, 2004; Loftman and Nevin, 1996; O'Toole and Usher, 1992). In other cases, there arises a mismatch of available jobs and the skills of the local population; many flagships, such as Canary Wharf, are aimed to attract high-end business services, while much of the local population who are in need

of employment do not have the required qualifications for such work. And in most cases, the jobs created have not replaced the jobs lost due to deindustrialisation (MacLeod, 2002; Smyth, 1994). As a result, many of the poorest residents do not stand to gain from the addition of a flagship regeneration project.

These ideas would not be so pertinent if it was not for the fact that many flagships rely on a high degree of public funding for their construction and operation. This raises the question of whether or not it is appropriate to use of scarce public funds to finance highly speculate flagships. Indeed, such investments can be equated with a subsidy for affluent consumers and corporations at the expense of the working class and the poor (Harvey, 1989a).

Several authors have commented that flagships divert much-needed funds from municipal budgets that could be spent on the provision of basic services (Bianchini et al, 1992; Hubbard, 1996; Loftman and Nevin, 1996; 2003; Searle, 2002). Harvey (1989a p. 8) sums up this view: "place-specific projects of this sort also have the habit of becoming such a focus of public and political attention that they divert concern and even resources from the broader problems that may beset the region or territory as a whole." This is evident in the lack of attention for services such as public housing. In the UK, this diversion of funds has contributed to a backlog of public housing repairs in many cities (Loftman and Nevin, 2003).

Another way that flagships are related to greater socioeconomic divisions is through housing. Many of the homes associated with flagships (either as part of the initial project, or as a spin off from the flagship) are geared to the high-end segment of the market, and there is very little (if any) provision for social or affordable housing. This lack of low-income housing can be particularly problematic if the project is partially supported by public finds (Moulaert et al, 2001). Vicario and Martínez (2003, p. 2388) use promotional material from a residential development in Bilbao to brutally illustrate how such housing furthers such divisions: "Many will see it from the outside…Only a few will enjoy it from the inside."

Although their proponents may claim otherwise, most flagships are not created for the betterment of the local population (particularly lower-income groups), but rather for affluent and middle-class residents, visitors and investors. As a result, the main beneficiaries of these places are these groups (Healey et al 1992; Miles, 2005). Pollard (2004) argues that because they are high-end consumption spaces, they can only be used by affluent people. While there is little empirical evidence on the uses of flagships, the theory states that lower-income residents tend to be excluded because of the high costs for shops, restaurants and attractions, as well as an alien or unwelcoming social atmosphere (Bianchini et al 1992; Cook, 2004).

What is the perspective of residents in relation to greater socioeconomic polarisation that flagships are claimed to induce? In addition to the sense of exclusion based on use noted above, it has been suggested that the funding of such projects by governments in place of more core-based services can lead to cynicism and mistrust among inhabitants. This is particularly true if the public subsidy is aimed towards large entertainment projects that are designed to attract outside visitors (Eisinger, 2000).

5. Greater spatial polarisation

The socioeconomic impact also has a spatial form. The major criticism in the academic literature is that the spatial concentration and isolation of flagships has exacerbated the divisions between wealthy and poorer districts. This argument is stated succinctly by MacLeod (2002, p.605): "the new urban glamour zones conceal a brutalising demarcation of winners and losers, included and excluded."

A major reason why spatial divisions emerge is because flagships are, by their nature, place-bound and site-specific. Rather than being projects that can be built and distributed across a wide geographic area, they are concentrated in specific locations. Because they are taking an increasingly large portion of urban budgets, this can also skew the way in which funds are distributed across space. In planning terms, this has led to a change in emphasis from that of the overall city, in the form of plans, to a focus on specific zones, districts or projects (Tavsanoglu and Healey, 1992).

Flagships are based on making a profit. As a result, the spatial locations of these projects will invariably seek the area of highest potential return. These are generally city centre, waterfront or other prominent locations. Areas that may have greater need but a less desirable location often do not see this type of regeneration, as Vicario and Martinez (2003, p. 2386) note: "urban regeneration strategies concentrated on the physical and economic restructuring of the downtown areas, relegating to lower priority other districts which, although they had deteriorated and were in need of investments, did not offer the same 'opportunities". Healey et al (1992, p. 281) also note that: "the strategy with its focus on a few locales (the city centre, waterfronts), has concentrated development and investment activity on a few places only. With little investment to go round, other areas have been blighted." It is, therefore, rare to see flagships located in deprived peripheral housing estates, largely due to the fact that the accessibility, profitability and reputation of these (and other similar areas) is much lower than city centre sites, despite the fact that the need for regeneration and investment may be higher in the former.

This has been called ‘two speed revitalisation’ (Rodríguez et al, 2001), a process whereby downtown regeneration and revitalisation occurs simultaneously with continuing poverty and unemployment in the surrounding areas. This is evident when examining two cities that feature prominently in the literature: Glasgow and Baltimore. Baltimore’s Inner Harbour regeneration was among the first to use flagship projects. Yet, rather than creating a better quality of life for all residents of the city, it has created two Baltimores: the business, cultural and tourist centre, and the adjacent neighbourhoods consisting of poor, largely black inhabitants (Eisinger, 2000; Seo, 2002). However, tourists and affluent residents are protected from seeing the ‘other Baltimore,’ because the regenerated places where most tourists visit and the deprived neighbourhoods where most of the population lives are spatially separated (Judd, 1999). The regenerated Baltimore also failed to stimulate further regeneration in adjacent low-income neighbourhoods; there was also insufficient revenue generated from the flagship to subsequently invest in the deprived parts of the city (Eisinger, 2000). In Glasgow, the selection of the city centre as the site for much of the regeneration has been controversial as it has been accompanied by increasing poverty and deprivation in peripheral housing estates (MacLeod, 2002; O’Toole and Usher, 1992).

Tourism is a major element of flagship regeneration, but as Law (1992) notes, while tourism can bring increased visitors and income, these positive impacts are hardly felt in poor inner-city areas surrounding tourist zones. These tourist areas have also been criticised as being ‘fortified cells of affluence’ (Judd, 1999) and areas that are isolated from surrounding areas of decay (Fainstein and Judd, 1999). As a result, while some areas can benefit from the regeneration, it is clear that others can be adversely affected. The result can be a zero-sum game, where the problems are not solved, but rather moved about the city (Cook, 2004).

As neighbourhoods around flagships adapt to their changing surroundings, one result can be gentrification, and subsequent displacement of low-income residents. The link between flagship regeneration and gentrification is well established within the literature (Miles, 2005; Seo, 2002; Smith, 1996; Vicario and Martinez, 2003) If Flagship projects work as their promoters intend, this will cause adjacent areas to witness increasing property prices. This can lead to a further spatial segregation of the population because of displacement (Evans, 2003; O’Toole and Usher, 1992; Seo, 2002; Smith, 2005). There is often fear among residents of this change, with concern that property price increases will force them to become displaced (Sassen and Roost, 1999).

According to Smith, gentrification and flagship regeneration are part and parcel of the same thing. He questions (1996, p. 39):

> How, in the larger context of changing social geographies, are we to distinguish adequately between the rehabilitation of nineteenth century housing, the construction of new condominium towers, the opening of festival markets to attract local and not so local tourists, the proliferation of wine bars – and boutiques for everything – and the construction of modern and post-modern office buildings employing thousands of professionals, all looking for a place to live.

This is, according to Smith, because the whole process is part of the "class remake of the central urban landscape." (1996, p. 39)

From the perspective of urban residents, flagships tend to be situated in parts of the city where many people do not live, such as downtowns and industrial waterfronts. However, this does not mean that they will not have an impact on the local population, even those living further away. In areas adjacent to flagships, gentrification pressures are often evident, with a subsequent negative impact on lower-income residents. The opposite, of course, is that some more-affluent residents may stand to benefit at the expense of those being displaced. There is at present insufficient empirical evidence on how residents from different socioeconomic backgrounds, and coming from different locations within the city, view flagship regeneration, and its associated effects.

VI Conclusions

Flagships are designed to be catalysts for further development and regeneration, and to become iconic landmarks for their cities. This is the belief of practitioners who build and finance such projects. Cities must sell themselves to the outside world. When local politicians and business leaders ask themselves why people would want to come to visit their city the answer, for tourists, investors and potential high-income residents is not because the city has high quality public housing, or good quality libraries in every neighbourhood. The answer is because the city has exclusive city centre housing, a spectacular waterfront, a professional sports team, preferably with a new post-modern stadium, excellent convention centres and first rate cultural facilities. If these do not exist, then they must be created, and if they are unknown, then they should be marketed and sold. It is these activities that consume more and more of the budget and resources of urban governments in the post-industrial, globalised world. While this might create a city fit to attract inward investment, the type of community it creates for the local population is less certain.

More than two decades after they became a common feature of the entrepreneurial city, flagships continue to be a popular way of regenerating cities. This is largely because those

involved in the projects genuinely believe that they will be effective in generating new wealth and investment. Ideology has been important; there has been a shift in priorities away from serving the needs of the poorest or most vulnerable in the city, towards creating a pro-growth agenda that focuses on wealth creation rather than wealth distribution. In addition, as cities have been forced into competition with each other, re-imaging and marketing have become essential in order to stay ahead of the game. Flagships act as the advertising or the iconic image that becomes saleable and marketable to the outside world. From the position of residents, proponents argue that flagships will enhance civic pride and provide new places for residents to enjoy (see Miles, 2005; Law, 1992; Wansborough and Mageean, 2000).

However, within the academic community, the reaction to flagships has been less than positive. Criticism centres on their role in furthering socioeconomic divisions within the city. This also has taken a spatial form, helping to create two cities: the regenerated, tourist-oriented, gentrified consumption- and service-based city, which tourists visit, and a select few urban residents enjoy, and the marginalised, poor and decaying city where much of the population lives. The argument made in several cases has been that local residents, particularly lower-income groups, will feel marginalised and alienated by these projects, which could lead to resentment or even cynicism towards governments (Eisinger, 2000; Hubbard, 1996)

The central point of critique is that flagships are unable to adequately address issues of poverty and inequality. They are more concerned with creating new spaces, promoting a new image and becoming a catalyst for further investment and development than creating a high quality of life for all sectors of society. If these were purely private-sector ventures, then this would not be such a concern, but the fact that flagships are often financed and managed by the public sector has led many scholars to question whether or not this is the most appropriate use of scarce public resources, in particular when many other urban problems such as poverty, lack of affordable housing and declining municipal services are becoming more severe.

In addition, the benefits claimed by those supporting flagships do not centre on improving quality of life for all urban residents; if quality of life is mentioned, it is generally under the guise of new jobs that will trickle down to those who need them, or by creating new spaces that residents can enjoy. As we have seen however, this is rarely the case; there are either fewer jobs than promised, or they do not help people climb the social ladder (either because they are low-skill, low-wage jobs, or because they are too highly-skilled for the segment of the population who needs them the most). Further, the benefits in quality of life appear to be selective, similar to Smith's idea of selective liveability mentioned earlier. There very well may be substantial quality-of-life improvements for those who enjoy or can afford to use new

flagships. The arrival of luxury shopping, high-end cultural facilities or new professional sports stadiums will not only attract tourists to the city, but can be enjoyed by affluent city residents. The main point of critique in this argument is that those who will benefit and enjoy these new flagships represents only a select group of urban residents, and that these benefits will not 'trickle down' to all levels of society.

While these criticisms do have valid and accepted theoretical arguments to back them up, they are lacking in empirical evidence, particularly from the perspective of urban residents. While it is clear that the term urban residents represent a wide spectrum of voices and opinions, these are voices that need to be more fully understood. Hall notes: "to date too little attention has been paid to the voices of ordinary citizens whose cities have been reshaped, who live with these landscapes every day and whose experiences would validate or refute the theses put forward by others' (quoted in Evans, 2005 p.976). Will urban residents realise that flagships represent a drain on public resources that have led to an increased backlog in repairs to social housing, as Loftman and Nevin have claimed? Will they be 'distracted' by the urban spectacles that are produced with flagships and other large scale events, or will they recognise that flagships are an attempt at a distraction which, in fact, fails to cover up the social and economic problems they are facing?

Flagships are largely designed to attract outsiders: tourists, investors, high-end residents. But while visitors to a city may only have contact with a flagship for a few days, residents must live with them on a constant basis, and live with the consequences of what they bring to their city. A better understanding of how local residents view and use them, will not only help in our understanding of this frequently-used type of urban regeneration, but also further our knowledge of the local impacts of entrepreneurial governance and the post-industrial city.

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