Requalifying the Built Environment:
Challenges and Responses
The new book series *Advances in People-Environment Studies*, published in collaboration with the International Association for People-Environment Studies (IAPS; www.iaps-association.org), is a timely initiative to provide researchers with up-to-date reviews and commentaries on the diverse areas of people-environment studies that are of current concern. The series focuses on significant and currently debated themes. The books are interdisciplinary, drawing on expert authors from the social, environmental, and design disciplines, especially those who are working at the interface between the design (e.g., architects, landscape planners, urban designers, urban planners) and the social sciences (e.g., environmental psychologists, sociologists, geographers). Each volume reports on the latest research and applications of research in the field. The series is meant to provide a bridge, not only between disciplines but also between cultures. The authors and contributors come from many different countries and are undertaking research and practicing in culturally diverse environments. Books in the series are therefore a precious source for those who want to know what is going on in a specific field elsewhere and to find ideas and inspiration for their own work.
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Foreword

Whilst change and transformation are natural and essential traits of urban environments, never before in history have their pace and scale been of the magnitude witnessed recently. For thousands of years cities have adapted to changing social, economic, and political circumstances through the operation of their inhabitants, with or without the driving influence of major plans. Change has been assimilated by our cities in a progressive manner and this has given continuity to places, and to the cultures and habits that are able to take root and flourish. The co-ordination of different actors, requirements, and budgets within malleable environments has made places relatively responsive and where responsiveness lacked, change was relatively easy to pursue and implement, resulting in urban environments characterised by gradual, incremental development.

It is only since the early 1920s that cities have changed their structure and form, to one which makes localised adaptation and transition increasingly difficult to achieve. Urban form today has changed scale and is now heavily reliant on programmed intervention supported and controlled by major investment agencies often indifferent to social processes and vulnerable to fluctuating global and regional economic circumstances. Whilst coordinated action at national, regional, and municipal scales is fundamental, especially in the face of unarguable globalisation and environmental pressures, a more subtle, complex approach inherent to places and cultures remains crucial for the delivery of socially sustainable places. The organised complexity that Jane Jacobs (1961) so longed for is still a dream today; it is also alien to mainstream approaches to urban regeneration and development.

The International symposium “Revitalising Built Environments: Requalifying Old Places for New Uses” was structured to reflect on the potential that “old” places (a relative term, to be intended as lived and existing, not necessarily antique) can hold as locations of local resources, repositories of identity and synergies in the process of urban transformation.

The symposium was jointly organised by two of the International Association for People Environments Studies’ (IAPS) most active Networks – Housing and Culture and Space in the Built Environment. This collaboration has drawn together expertise in the built form, as well as the cultural values of those who live and use it in the routine of daily life.

Almost 50 countries were represented in the Symposium, a proof that the theme addresses an issue of prominent and urgent global significance. The symposium linked current phenomena (globalisation, urban change, and transformation), to different types of environments (traditional settlements, residential, industrial, green and brownfield sites), and to different strategies (revitalisation, gentrification, adaptive reuse), through the discussion of critical issues such as social integration, equity, efficiency of the built environment, and reuse of buildings.
Urban development is putting almost every country, albeit at different pace, under pressure for land and resources. Calculations of our ecological footprint have shown a heavy current imbalance between consumption in developed and developing countries, and a dangerously speedy trajectory towards the overall depletion of productive land (Frey & Yaneske, 2007); the impact of this change on culture and values is homogenizing traditions and diversity. In the face of these events, it is fundamental to question whether the practices we are using to address their implications are appropriate or if they are undermining even more the values they were set to protect.

The content of this book, which is an edited collection of contributions and a reflection on the discussions which occurred in Istanbul, offers the reader many important messages. Amongst these are:

- policies need to critically re-assess their motives rather than efficiently pursuing their set goals;
- there is value in what is not new, a value which could contribute much to efficiency and sense of place even if through unconventional and non-mainstream angles;
- the approaches, theories and frames of mind which make up “environment-behaviour studies,” and the disciplines represented by the authors of these chapters, are an immensely valuable repository of that complexity of facets which are so natural of urban environments, and that policy should be much more alert to this;
- the links between theory, practice, and policy need to be strengthened and at times re-imagined in order to accommodate a more critical and problem specific approach where values of the receivers of policies are properly addressed.

The important lesson from this book is that the speed and efficiency of development required today does not necessarily have to conflict with targets such as social and environmental sustainability. The challenge though is to not become complacent in how we pursue such efficiency. There is in fact such an abundance of practices pursuing sustainable development that delivery becomes often a matter of selecting and applying one, aligning actions to goals or presumed requirements. We have in our contemporary approaches to urban development an over-professionalization of these approaches, which only increases the gap between programmes and delivery, and reduces their long-term efficiency. Perhaps we have allowed ourselves to succumb to an “all hat and no cows” approach, where the style and status of professional action has become more valued than the social quality of what it delivers. We need to offer a more balanced form of collaboration between all parties involved. In so doing, their efforts in understanding places and requirements, in engaging with local situations and traits, and in reflecting strategically on the adaptiveness of action need to cut across disciplinary barriers to be truthful to place and people.

Whilst no panacea is offered, this book provides important reflections on some of the faults of complacency. It includes numerous examples where this risk is avoided.
by an excellent targeted balance of expertise. As an output of an event organised on behalf of IAPS, it well illustrates one of our main ambitions, the joint pursuit of social and environmental sustainability.

Ombretta Romice,
IAPS President

References

Introduction
Urban Requalification, Renewal, and Regeneration

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The 20th century has been designated as the century of urbanization. Urban development has become a key component of the changes in today’s world of dynamic and constant environmental, economic, political, and social change. Today, cities throughout the world are experiencing fundamental social, cultural, and economic transformations which are reflected in changes in their human-made environments. Socio-cultural and urban identities are being radically transformed. Globalization, internationalization, and the rapid flow of information are playing a significant role in changing the built form and the human activities in cities. During the last three decades significant investments of monetary resources and professional expertise have led to numerous projects and programmes concerning urban regeneration, housing renovation, and the revitalization of old neighbourhoods. Many countries have witnessed significant changes in recent decades and these have been reflected in urban renewal projects. In recent urban planning and design projects, the transformation and renewal of existing buildings and public spaces have gained importance. Urban transformation and renewal are agents of urban visions which aim at regenerating buildings and places on the verge of physical and social collapse, by activating existing dynamics rooted in the local economy. In many countries the most common approach has been based largely on quantifiable criteria related to the functional and physical performance of buildings and public space, the financial return of monetary investments, and projections about demographic and economic trends. It has been rare to explicitly integrate the aspirations, preferences, and values of local residents living in or adjacent to these projects. The key question today is: How can future projects define a comprehensive programme of work that meets the needs of communities if they continue to ignore the point of view of the local population? Instead of relying heavily on technical solutions by professionals, both quantitative and qualitative approaches are necessary and they should involve a wide range of actors from the public and private sectors including citizens. An international symposium was jointly organized in Istanbul by two networks of the International Association of People-Environment Studies (IAPS) in October 2009 to consider these challenging issues. These two IAPS networks are Culture and Space in the Built Environment – CSBE and Housing which have accumulated considerable scientific
knowledge and experience. The symposium was addressed to an international audience of researchers, postgraduate students, teachers, and professional practitioners involved in different disciplines including architecture, cultural studies, geography, sociology, economics, planning, political science, and urban history. The objective of this initiative was to explore the interrelationships between new urban dynamics, urban renewal and transformation projects within the global restructuring process. This focus provided a framework for examining new approaches to revitalising built environments in many countries. In addition, Istanbul’s strategic location made the symposium a vital point of reference for understanding urban trends in Europe and the Middle East.

Although there is a large consensus on what is required to create successful urban developments, different countries have adopted contrasting strategies for urban transformation. National and local governments, as well as regional authorities in many countries now recognise that problems related to the deteriorating state of commercial and residential buildings and decreasing new building construction must be handled. The rehabilitation of housing estates and urban residential environments require careful co-ordination at both the national and local levels.

During recent decades, various terminologies have been used to interpret these concerns. A number of related concepts present overlapping meanings despite their basic differences in functions, objects, aims, and methods: renewal, renovation, restructuring, rehabilitation, revitalization, and gentrification are all relevant in this respect and they are used by professionals in diverse fields. Urban renewal is the transformation and renewal of the old structures of the city in line with the social and dynamic conjuncture of the age. The aim of urban renewal within this context is to revitalize these older parts of urban areas which have lost their previous functions for diverse reasons, including changing manufacturing practices and locations. Parts of urban space may be derelict, threatened, physically degraded, damaged, obsolete, and even destroyed by numerous factors including the impact of urban development activities and changing economic policies.

**Structure and Contents of the Volume**

The objective of this monograph is to present a selected number of ideas and case studies that were discussed during the international symposium in Istanbul. Collectively these contributions present and analyse the relationships between new urban dynamics, urban renewal and transformation projects within the global economy of urbanization around the World. To highlight the aims, definitions and applications of urban renewal, the editors have selected 10 contributions among those presented at the symposium to explore the current strategies and practices of different countries in order to provide a framework for new applications for revitalizing urban environments. The authors of the selected papers analyse different urban revitalisation and requalification approaches in Barcelona (Spain), Beirut (Lebanon), Cairo (Egypt), Istanbul, (Turkey), London (United Kingdom), Medellin (Colombia), Quebec (Canada), and Stockholm (Sweden).
Section 1: Heritage and Cultural Identity: Key Issues

The first section of this book includes three contributions that address the historical and cultural dimensions of urban heritage, urban renewal and redevelopment. In the opening chapter of this section, Gregory Ashworth presents and discusses the main paradigms of heritage as an instrument for the conservation, upgrading, or redevelopment of the built environment. The idea of heritage as development is first discussed as viewed from different paradigmatic perspectives. The successive introduction of preservation, conservation, and heritage paradigms has led to an incomplete paradigm shift and a growing gap between theorists, resource managers, and development practitioners. The consequence of this has been the emergence of a number of paradoxes and contradictions with important impacts upon the uses of heritage as development. These include the way pasts, presents and futures are envisaged, the evaluation of heritage as a development resource, the different meanings of collective and individual heritage and the impacts of heritage as development upon social division or cohesion. Then, the idea of heritage and development, whether mutually supportive or destructive, is discussed in the context of these paradoxes. Finally, the various roles played by heritage in development may be a source of conflict and contradiction. The conclusions return to the general themes of the book about the conditions under which the heritage-built environment can play a major role in local development strategies.

In their chapter, Amira Elnokaly and Ahmed Elseragy discuss how the accumulation of several layers of history tends to reveal a great deal about a city’s past, present, and even future. Historical city centres usually symbolise the origins of the city, and developing urban fabrics tend to radiate out from them, but they are also the areas most prone to the undesirable and consequential effects of growth and urbanisation, including overcrowding, air emissions, and poor environmental quality. Historical buildings provide a foundation for the regeneration of many of our towns and cities. Regenerating these buildings can reinforce a sense of community that promotes social interaction between the residents and plays a central role in the local economy by serving as a vehicle for improvements to the wider area. The conservation and renovation of historic city centres serves as a fundamental catalyst for change; first, they add notable value and eminence to the city and promote its cultural heritage; second, they also enhance the environmental performance and sustainability of the city, and contribute positively towards its socio-economic and cultural performance. This chapter scrutinizes the historical centre of Barcelona, Spain. This is officially known as the Core City of Barcelona and serves as its central business district. The historical centre of this Mediterranean city has undergone a variety of projects and strategic plans for urban regeneration, development, and beautification. Moreover, various attempts have been made for the improvement of environmental quality and ecological performance of this historical centre. This is by increases in urban green spaces and public parks, increased dependence on renewable energy technologies and adopting sustainable transportation modes as opposed to undesirable and harmful vehicular transport. Furthermore, many urban regeneration plans have been aimed at...
conserving and preserving buildings and sites that are considered symbolic of the city’s heritage and legacy. The chapter also analyses the strategies that have been used in various urban regeneration projects and development plans for the improvement of the historical city centre of Barcelona.

The following chapter by Rolf Johansson addresses the role of case-based reasoning in the field of architecture and planning. Professionals in the “making professions” who need to handle problems which are complex and have many possible solutions – so called wicked problems – makes use of a repertoire. Access to a repertoire enables them to act. One of the most important components of a professional’s repertoire is socialised cases. What architects and planners know is embedded in what they do. The author argues that more attention should be given to learning by doing, in a broader sense, through systematic development of a repertoire that is socialised within the profession and that constitutes a common ground. Evaluative case studies make important contributions to a shared repertoire. Therefore, this chapter describes and discusses the characteristics of case study methodology and how they can be adapted to the study of specific projects of architectural design, building construction, and urban redevelopment. The case of Hammarby Sjöstad, a new ecologically designed neighbourhood in Stockholm, is presented and analysed as an example.

Section 2: Challenges of the Institutional, Economic, and Political Context

The three contributions in the second section of this book address the institutional, political and economic contexts of urban conservation, upgrading, and redevelopment. This opening chapter by Loretta Lees considers how the recent urban revitalization strategies of neoliberal cities in the Global North have co-opted the left-liberal, sometimes counter-cultural, ideologies of pioneer or first wave gentrification from the late 1950s to the 1970s. Lees focuses on three ideologies – “urbanity,” “diversity,” and “mixed communities/social mix” – that have become synonymous with contemporary urban revitalisation initiatives. She discusses how the process of gentrification has progressed in the Global North from a first wave of emancipatory politics that encapsulated these ideologies towards a third and fourth wave (1990s and 2000s) of gentrification that used these ideas but produced a very different revanchist urban politics. The progression from first to third and fourth wave gentrification has had significant impact on Rights to the City in the Global North. The mismatch between the rhetoric of “urbanity,” “diversity,” and “social mix” and the reality of social control and social segregation is exposed. Lees argues that gentrification in the Global South is somewhat different – arriving later it has taken on an even more revanchist and visceral form (the “brutal tectonics of neo-liberal globalisation”) and with a somewhat different rhetoric – aligned around modernization and development. This chapter concludes by reflecting on the relevance of the discussion of ideologies of gentrification and the Right to the City in the Global North for rapidly gentrifying cities in the Global South.
Global South. In essence, we need to rethink the global geography of gentrification by drawing on the theoretical, conceptual and methodological work of the renascent research agenda of comparative urbanism. In that way we can move towards a more global attention to the Right to the inner City around the world.

The chapter by Hulya Turgut and Begum Sismanyazici argues that cities have become the prime reflectors of social and economic change in the world today. As is the case elsewhere, globalization, internationalization, and the rapid flow of information have had a significant effect on the city of Istanbul and its people. The disruptive quality of such restructuring processes has been exacerbated in Turkey over the last 20 years by the government’s decision to embrace urban transformation as a tool to speed the country’s integration into the global economy. This chapter examines the process of social and spatial restructuring of inner-city housing in Istanbul as part of this larger phenomenon. Its particular focus is gentrification, the process of regeneration by which historical housing districts are reclaimed through rehabilitation. It begins by developing a theoretical framework to highlight the multidimensional quality of urban transformation, then goes on to show how planning for such projects in Turkey currently fails to adequately account for these complexities by comparing the designs of two such efforts in Istanbul’s Fener-Balat district. Fener-Balat was chosen because the two projects there illustrate different approaches to the same conditions. They also reveal the importance of active participation of the inhabitants of districts where the forces of regeneration and gentrification coexist. One project provides a successful model for urban regeneration; it was organized by the European Union and sought the active participation of district inhabitants through regular feedback on implementation and decision-making. The other project is more recent and part of a much-disputed urban-transformation partnership between a private company and the municipality.

In his chapter, Tarek Saad Ragab addresses the subject of cultural identity in a post-conflict region with significant history. The dilemma of devising a theme that can convincingly and collectively express the cultural identity of a nation usually surfaces at the time of planning the reconstruction and rehabilitation of devastated sites of significance. Particularly following civil wars, both the planning phase and the procedures for rehabilitation often exhibit an extension of the civil conflict over the issues of identity and cultural ideology. The 15-year Lebanese civil war (1975–1991) left Beirut severely damaged. Almost two decades after the end of the war, the city centre rehabilitation is in its final stages and presents an explicit paradigm of urban governance and management in a severely damaged urban setting claimed by a community of multilayered culture stratum. The construction and reconstruction effort has aspired to resurrect pre-war cosmopolitan Beirut, and has not only achieved the rehabilitation of the infrastructure and devastated structures, but has equally attempted to reinterpret Lebanon’s tumultuous past and to create a new collective memory for the nation. For many, most of this effort has been in vain for multiple reasons, but more notably, it was a catalyst for endless cultural conflict in the historical city overlooking the sea. The objective of this chapter is to develop a better understanding of the specific socio-political dynamics and attributes influencing the rehabilitation process of the historic Beirut city centre. The chapter examines the capacity of the chosen
Section 3: Implementation Addressing Key Challenges

The third section of this book presents specific examples of how concepts, principles and methods derived from people-environment studies have been successfully applied in professional practice. In their chapter, Carole Després and her colleagues discuss and illustrate how teachers, graduate students, researchers, and professional practitioners can collaborate to requalify suburbs that no longer meet the needs of ageing communities in Quebec, Canada. Aging suburbs and their future in Quebec City, Canada, are discussed to exemplify how a combination of quantitative and qualitative research, design and participatory processes led to a better understanding of the issues and challenges at stake with regard to the requalification of these neighbourhoods. The resulting “transdisciplinary” knowledge outlines the complexity of the problem and its multi-faceted reality. It suggests that new uses are not always desirable, despite strong political or economical wills, because of enduring behaviours, meanings, and representations. Action research by the authors clearly shows that academics can play a leadership role in promoting the requalification of existing places over new construction. The need for academics trained in cultural aspects of housing to act simultaneously as agents of change and as gatekeepers of local uses and meanings is stressed because a deep understanding of local culture can help decide which changes are desirable or undesirable throughout the process. If universities have the responsibility to train future professionals for sustainable development, researchers in the field of people-environment studies have the responsibility of assuring that it includes cultural sustainability. This requires drawing environmental sciences closer to human and social sciences, as well as to design practice and action research.

In his chapter, Levent Kerimol, a practising architect in London, discusses physical urban regeneration in relation to the social notions of local community, equity, and freedom. Like the preceding chapter, this one also proposes greater resident involvement in the process of development and suggests ways in which self build could become a viable mainstream alternative for large-scale developments. Applying several different perspectives the author addresses some of the difficulties in bringing this about and suggests strategies for mitigating potential negative consequences further down the line. This chapter is based on a design thesis carried out at the Architectural Association and was further developed with experience gained by working at Design for London, a small unit of urban designers and architects within the Greater London Authority.

Camilo Calderon’s chapter presents the use of participatory approaches in the context of urban upgrading. The chapter describes a participatory urban upgrading strategy of the city of Medellin, Colombia, called “Social Urbanism,” and focuses on the first project implementing the strategy, the “PUI-Nororiental.” Discussing this project, the author presents what can be considered a successful example of participatory urban upgrading while also reviewing its weaknesses. This discussion touches on the ongoing debate about planning...
theory of consensus versus agonism. Despite its shortcomings, the “PUI-Nororiental” is an example of how the strategic combination of participation and integrated solutions, embedded within the upgrading of the built environment, can create benefits that go beyond physically tangible improvements. Urban upgrading calls for practical solutions informed by innovative thinking that comes from participatory and integrated approaches.

In Maye Yehia’s chapter, a successful model of comprehensive conservation planning within the historic city of Cairo is presented. Based on project and technical briefs, research papers, publications, interviews, and field observations, the factors that made the meaningful requalification of the quarter Al-Darb al-Ahmar possible are described. The Aga Khan Trust for Culture’s Historic Cities Support Programme not only aims at the rehabilitation of the physical environment but also supports community development of the whole area. The most relevant principle behind this rehabilitation programme is in fact the involvement of different institutional agencies in the socio-economic development of the local community. Through the active involvement of residents and stakeholders, it was possible to identify different needs, issues, and aspirations and to include them in the decision-making process. This chapter concludes with a set of fresh insights deduced from the earlier empowerment experience and examines their possible implementation in the city of Alexandria.

The authors of the contributions in this volume apply a number of definitions of urban transformation which vary according to different visions, objectives, strategies, and methods. Urban requalification expresses a wide range of strategies and actions as applied in comprehensive and integrated approaches for improving economic, social, physical, and environmental conditions of decay and collapse of urban areas. The scope and nature of requalification programmes and projects therefore modify the existing structure of cities and the physical, social, and economic future of the people who live there with potentially significant impacts on local traditions and quality of life. This underlines the need and value of interdisciplinary collaborative practices underpinned by theoretical inquiry, methodological rigour, and international experience which ought to be shared as widely as possible at the beginning of the 21st century. Hopefully this monograph will be one of many contributions that help achieve these objectives.
Heritage and Cultural Identity: Key Issues