



Title	Urban Governance and the 'European City': Ideals and Realities in Dublin, Ireland
Authors(s)	Lawton, Philip, Punch, Michael
Publication date	2014
Publication information	Lawton, Philip, and Michael Punch. "Urban Governance and the 'European City': Ideals and Realities in Dublin, Ireland." Wiley, 2014. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12152 .
Publisher	Wiley
Item record/more information	http://hdl.handle.net/10197/5479
Publisher's statement	This is the author's version of the following article: Lawton, Philip, Punch, Michael (2014) "Urban Governance and the 'European City': Ideals and Realities in Dublin, Ireland" International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 38(3): 864-885 which has been published in final form at http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/1468-2427.12152
Publisher's version (DOI)	10.1111/1468-2427.12152

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Urban Governance and the 'European City': Ideals and Realities in Dublin, Ireland

Philip Lawton and Michael Punch

Abstract

Throughout the last number of decades, a significant amount of attention has been given to the notion of the 'European city' within policy formation and academic enquiry. From one perspective, the ideal of the 'European city' is presented as a densely developed urban area with a focus on quality public transport and a more balanced social structure. More recently, however, the particular elements of the 'European city' associated with pedestrianized public space, urban design and image-making strategies have become central features of entrepreneurial urban policies throughout Europe. This article seeks to undertake an examination of the notion of the 'European city' in urban change in Dublin since the 1990s. Specifically, the article illustrates the degree to which a wholly positive spin on the urban design and image-making elements of the 'European city' in Dublin has served as a thin veil for the desired transformation of Dublin according to neoliberal principles.

Key Words: 'European city', Dublin, urban design, entrepreneurial planning, Neoliberalism

Introduction: the European city ideal in urban governance

The ideal of the 'European city' has over the last number of decades become a dominant trope within policy approaches and academic writing throughout Western Europe (McNeill, 1999; Molnar, 2010). From one perspective the 'European city' is taken to exemplify a more socially equitable form of urban society. Drawing upon neo-Weberian notions, this approach upholds the merits of good public transport, high-density living, a balanced social structure and the progressive redistribution of wealth in contrast to a North American model of segregation and sprawl (Häußermann and Haila, 2005; Molnar, 2010). However, pointedly, recent decades have also witnessed a considerable shift to various extents in the structures of governance within European cities (Le Galès, 2002; Kazepov, 2005). With the ending of Fordism and the fiscal crisis of the welfare state and the consequent rise of post-Fordism and neoliberalism, cities have come under considerable pressure to re-mould their image in a manner that is attractive to investment and tourists (Boyle, 2011). Since the late 1980s and early 1990s, such a focus has gradually merged with factors related to urban

design and the greater levels of attention to 'place-making' associated with consumption (Gospodoni, 2002).

As a result of such factors, another overlapping, yet somewhat distinct, strand that can be identified is concerned with celebrating the image of the 'European city' as a dynamic and entrepreneurial entity. Here, the transformations taking place — through the infusing of terms such as the 'Barcelona Model' or 'urban renaissance' — are perceived largely in a positive manner (Monclus, 2003). Thus, the identification of the 'European city' as being representative of equitable and efficient social spaces has often been conflated with a concern with urban form, image making and design.

With city authorities paying a greater level of attention towards other cities internationally for inspiration, the ideal of the 'European city' has spread to represent a cross-city and cross-cultural ideal of harmonious social interaction associated with the middle class, which takes place within surroundings presented as befitting of refined and dignified patterns of urban life (Montgomery, 1998; 2008). Such a viewpoint often serves to ignore the reality of cities as places of inequality, tension and political difference (Novy and Mayer, 2009). As an example, while the transformations to Barcelona from the 1980s to the early 1990s are often related to an ideal of social balance and harmony, it has recently been argued that this agenda was side-lined in the increasing turn towards city marketing, events, tourism and, more recently, the creative-knowledge economy (Degen and García, 2012).

Moreover, that particular ideals of the 'European city' can be adapted in a manner that is reduced largely to issues of urban form and design removes a significant amount of the context without giving any explicit indication of so doing. This raises important cultural questions about the entanglement between narrative, image, representation and memory in urban space. It also raises questions about our understanding of what, if anything, is distinctive about the 'European city'. Indeed, the notion of the 'European city' needs to be understood as a dynamic rather than a monolithic concept, as the precise practical application of 'European city' ideals has varied and evolved across space and time within different cultural and political-economic contexts (Latham, 2006).

Such a perspective is in keeping with McCann and Ward's (2010) analysis of why the circulation of urban strategies and policies must be viewed as being simultaneously relational and territorial. In this regard, it is necessary to critically analyze the manner in which ideals shift in space and time, and what the significance of such shifts are.

To demonstrate the mutual inflection of the political economy of entrepreneurialism and intellectual cultures of urban design and planning, this article will trace the meanings, variability and significance of the 'European city', assessing the extent to which such a model exists, what it stands for and how it plays out in practice in a specific cultural and political-economic context. The article presents research into the case of Dublin, Ireland from the early 1990s until today. During this time frame, Dublin has undergone a significant amount of transformation, with the city and urban development acting as a focal point of the so-called 'Celtic Tiger' boom years and subsequent economic bust. Moreover, Dublin has been at the confluence of Anglo-American and European influences, all coming together to form a unique form of entrepreneurial urban development (McGuirk and MacLaran, 2001). As a result, the example of Dublin demonstrates how the 'European city' ideal can be incorporated within new urban governance trajectories as a means of legitimizing and pacifying the urban transformation according to broadly neoliberal principles. More specifically, the article argues that urban design, and particularly that associated with the 'European city', became a means by which the transition to an entrepreneurial city was 'naturalized' as representing the path to the creation of what is presented as a more socially and environmentally sustainable urban order. Thus, while the ideal of the 'European city' is often presented as being representative of a more equal urban society, in the example of Dublin it became increasingly associated with the development of a city image that is orientated towards the assumed tastes and desires of the emergent urban professional classes. While the intense entrepreneurialism of Irish urban planning has been well documented in the literature (McGuirk and MacLaran, 2001; Kelly and MacLaran, 2004), the main contribution of this article is to unpack how the 'European City', with its emphasis on urban design, social balance, density etc, has been deeply

implicated in this neoliberal turn. Moreover, following from McCann and Ward (2010), the article illustrates the manner in which, in Dublin, a wide variety of disparate influences, from 'critical reconstruction', to the 'Barcelona model' to 'Europocompetitiveness' (McNeill, 2003) were selectively chosen and drawn under the umbrella of a loose notion of the 'European city'. Following from McCann and Ward (2010), it is argued that this tendency is illustrative of the degree to which policy formation, while drawing on international circuits of knowledge, is also local and grounded. Finally, the article illustrates how, in light of a continuously globalizing realm of influence, and increased pressure to compete on the global stage, that the notion of the 'European city' has, in recent years, become increasingly diluted amid a range of competing policy ideas. In the context of the current economic crisis and the desire to boost the international profile of the city, the ideal of the 'European city', while still carrying some influence, can be seen to form an element of wider discussions on the role of design in the city.

The argument is built upon a number of research projects examining the community and public space impacts of urban regeneration. These included active engagement in an advisory and research capacity with community groups and networks embroiled in participation in integrated area plans (IAPs) and public-private partnership (PPP) schemes, notably the Cork Street and Maryland Association in the Liberties and the cross-city organization Tenants First. It also draws on in-depth analysis of key policy documents related to urban transformation in Dublin since the early 1990s. Finally, the role of design professionals, such as architects, was examined through a series of semi-formal interviews with key practitioners involved in the most important urban regeneration schemes about the design of public space throughout different parts of Dublin city centre.

Unpacking the 'European city'

It is possible to document the emergence of a contemporary 'European city' based around a number of key themes. First, it is constructed upon a particular set of political and cultural institutions, which are perceived as the basis for

European urban society (Le Galès, 2002; Kazepov, 2005). Second, this model is often used to counterpoise the perceived standardization and homogenization of cities caused by globalization. Finally, emerging from such perspectives, is the current dominant perspective, which views the 'European city' as representing idealized social interaction within a harmonious public domain primarily associated with high-quality design. However, in distilling these core elements it is not intended to oversimplify the complexities of geographic variation and differential historical evolution. There is no monolithic 'European city' in reality, but the most influential ideals associated with this concept have variously interacted with the historical evolution of each city's planning discourses and practices within a specific economic, political and cultural milieu (Latham, 2006).

Throughout the last number of decades, through the influence of theories of globalization, urban scholarship has become increasingly interested in the degree to which cities are becoming homogenous in the realms of culture, urban form and, indeed, political aspirations (Brenner, 2003). The re-emergence of a 'European city' discourse as a self-contained and distinct form, defined by a set of features that set it out as being in some way unique can, at least in part, be seen as a response to such perspectives. As commented by De Frantz (2008: 467): 'Roughly speaking, the global homogenization hypothesis stands now opposed to a European model where social and political institutions mediate globalization and diversify urban development paths.' Thus the 'European city' is often held as an ideal socio-spatial form which, through an association with social harmony, a balanced class structure, high-quality urban form and design, high-density and emphasis on public transport, is held opposite to a model of ghettoization, urban sprawl and car-orientated modes of transportation, often associated with a US form of urbanization (Molnar, 2010). Increasingly practitioners have been drawn to consider how this ideal can be reinvented within the varied contexts of different European cities. The spirit of these ideas has also been brought into conversation with North American planning thought and practice via, for example, New Urbanism (*ibid.*).

In effect the 'European city' encompasses two discursive fields relating to the sociocultural and political order and the role of urban design and form — encompassing questions of architecture, planning and other related fields. Here,

urban form, and particularly that which is associated with the pre-twentieth century city, is seen as being representative of a distinct set of values which are perceived, in a largely uncritical manner, to be defining elements of European cities. With the emergence of cultural planning, such a discourse has taken on a renewed vigour over the last number of decades (Monclus, 2003).

While the emergence of modernism from the early twentieth century onwards can be seen to have distinctly European roots through the likes of Adolf Loos, Le Corbusier and Mies van der Rohe, the vision of the 'European city', as it took hold from the early 1960s onwards, was focused on recapturing elements of a lost tradition of city building. Here, through the emergence of neo-rationalist approaches of architects such as Aldo Rossi, the modernist approach was critiqued. Neo-rationalism essentially favoured a return to the classical European city, where the street and square are seen as the fundamental elements of urban life (Frampton, 1992; Ellin, 1996) over and above the notion of the 'tower in the park'. Rossis' search for an 'analogous city' became representative of the desire to 'return' to a more contextual or historically sensitive form of city associated with collective memory and its relationship to urban form: 'One can say that the city itself is the collective memory of its people, and like memory it is associated with objects and places. The city is the *locus* of the collective memory' (Rossi, 1982: 130, emphasis in original). However, Rossi was not advocating a return to an imagined past. He rejected 'facadism' and the pastiche, and admired the freedom of approach of architects such as Le Corbusier, while also rejecting the promotion of the isolated or free-floating modernist building (Hebbert, 2004; 2005). Instead, he sought to bring cohesion back to the city or the town through urban form. As commented by Hebbert (2005, p.587): 'Rossi looked for urban memory not in buildings but in the voids between them, the space pattern that constitutes the enduring skeleton of a town.' Thus, in the face of the modernist desire to ignore historical urban form and divide the city along purely functional lines, emphasis was again placed upon mixed uses and social groups within tightly-knit urban spaces associated with the pre-twentieth century city.

The re-emergence of a focus on the historical form of the 'European city' was also a central element of *The Movement for the Reconstruction of the European*

City (Ellin, 1999). Through the publication of *Rational architecture: the reconstruction of the European city* (Delevoy, 1978), architects such as Louis Delevoy, Leon Krier and Anthony Idler sought to challenge the dogmatic approach of the modern movement while also launching a form of manifesto for urban redevelopment according to a normative representation of the 'European city'. Krier (1978: 163) outlined what would become a central feature of the redevelopment of European cities as follows:

Against the amorphous social and physical form of functional zones and neighbourhoods, the quartier represents a social organism of a definite physical size. It integrates work, culture, leisure and residence into a dense urban environment, into a city within the city.

Implicitly, the social failure of cities was associated with the failures of modernism. Therefore the solution to such ills was presented in a dismissal of such forms and a return to the forms associated with 'urbanity' and the civilized city. However, in contrast to the approach of Rossi, the physical manifestation of Leon Krier's urban ideal is more akin to a desired return to pre-modern forms of urbanism, such as that associated with the neo-traditional village of Poundbury in the U.K. (Thompson-Fawcett, 1998). What is of key importance is that emerging at a similar point in time were various approaches towards European cities that sought in some way to return to a form of urbanism that was perceived to have been lost. To a greater or lesser extent, these formulations perceived this reappraisal as the re-emergence of a form of 'the good city'.

Certainly it is clear that, to varying extents, the transformation of European cities from the 1960s onwards has been directly informed by these overlapping design ideals. This became emphasized through a number of large-scale projects, such as the International Building Exhibition Berlin (IBA-Berlin), which was a show-case for architecture inspired by the 'neo-rationalist' movement from the 1960s onwards. Through the direction of architect Josef Paul Kleihues, and the promotion of 'critical reconstruction', the parameters of redevelopment became focused on the layout of the 19th century city, with individual blocks and streets becoming the predominant focus of redevelopment. Moreover, as pointed out by Hebbert (2006), 'critical reconstruction' also involved the coming together of the

design process with grassroots organizations. This form of development would become the defining paradigm upon which the redevelopment of post-wall Berlin was based, recapturing a lost period associated with the division of the city. As summarized by Molnar (2010: 292): 'The restoration ("critical reconstruction") of the nineteenth-century city, and particularly, the "beauty" of its cityscape, was supposed to have a healing effect on Berlin's postwar wounds.' However, Berlin's transformation was subject to a wide variety of competing visions and viewpoints, which question the extent to which it is representative of any form of unifying model of urban development (*ibid.*; Latham, 2006).

Over a similar period, Barcelona has taken on something of a mythical presence within discourses of architecture and urban planning in Europe (McNeill, 2003; Garcia, 2004). This began in the early 1980s with small-scale insertions in public space, which were focused on the reprioritizing human interaction, and gradually expanded in scale and ambition to include the hosting of the 1992 Olympic Games. Pointedly, this transformation also involved a reimagining of the city as a popular tourist destination, with the transformation of the waterfront being a key example of such endeavours (McNeill, 2001; Degen and García, 2012). Indeed, through the transmission of a 'Barcelona model', Barcelona has had a particular influence on the relationship between urban design and every day urban life — which has also either explicitly or implicitly implied a return to the traditional form of the 'European city' as being the defining element of the city. Former Mayor of Barcelona, Joan Clos (2005: 1), outlined this perspective as follows:

The normative European city is a dense, compact area where a host of various activities occur in the same place and where there are also people from a substantial mix of social backgrounds. Its public areas are places of peaceful, enriching co-existence. Its residents' mobility is not entirely dependent on cars and public transport plays a major role.

With the growth of the popularity of cities such as Barcelona, the very fact that they are composed of high-density housing with a relative mixture of social groups has been used as a means of unproblematically proposing the

reproduction of associated urban forms in cities throughout Europe. Through the promotion of Barcelona and the emergence of a form of 'Barcelona model', a geographical imaginary (McCann, 2008) of unproblematic interaction in public space primarily focused upon consumption has therefore come to the fore.

However, even assuming Barcelona can be taken as an exemplar of these practices is unsafe insofar as it ignores the complexity of the evolution of its planning and design model. In particular, there has been an identifiable shift from an earlier phase which emphasized democratic participation to a recent top-down focus on supporting the knowledge and creative economies and generally selling the Barcelona brand through the development of areas such as the @22 (Degen and García, 2012). The manner in which ideals of urban development are transferred from one place to another must therefore be read from the perspective of the particular political and economic circumstances in which it becomes embedded.

One striking example of such is the implementation of the design-led version of the 'European city' as a key reference point in the promotion of the 'urban renaissance' in the UK throughout the late 1990s and early 2000s, which was led by high-profile names such as Richard Rogers. As highlighted by Atkinson (2004: 121): 'the desired urban renaissance was largely built on a European model of high quality urban public space and design using high density, mixed use development to encourage what were felt to be more sustainable forms of community'. That Barcelona in particular had become such a dominant frame of reference was further illustrated through the awarding of the Royal Institute of British Architects the Gold Medal for Architecture to the City of Barcelona in 1999 (*Journal of Architecture*, 1999).

Pointedly, in the UK context, as rhetoric surrounding the imported ideals of the 'European city' became dominant from the late 1990s onwards, more emphasis was placed on the connection between urban design and the promotion of 'acceptable' forms of behaviour in public space (Helms *et al.*, 2007). Thus, in as much as it served to promote a geographical imaginary (McCann, 2008) of harmonious interaction, urban design became a key reference point in the transfer and adaptation of the 'Barcelona model' to the UK context.

Alongside the increased importance of design and visual transformation throughout the 1990s, the emergence of Richard Florida's (2002) 'creative class' thesis further influenced the particularities of the ideal form of the 'European city' (Montgomery, 2003), and as argued by Peck (2012), in reference to Amsterdam, could often fit within already-existing objectives and established pathways. More generally, from the late 1990s onwards, design and place-making were becoming even more dominant within planning discourse. For example, writing at the same time as Florida (2002), and with a European focus, Gospodini (2002: 60) posits the importance of urban design in urban economic development as follows:

While for centuries the quality of the urban environment has been an outcome of economic growth of cities, nowadays the quality of urban space has become a prerequisite for the economic development of cities; and urban design has undertaken an enhanced new role as a means of economic development.

With an increasing mixture of reference points, the specifics of a 'European city' as pertaining to policy gradually became more fragmented. Here, the design references became increasingly focused upon mixing high-profile insertions by famous high-profile architects, including Daniel Libeskind, Santiago Calatrava and Frank Gehry with the more contextual approaches towards the historic centres of European cities (McNeill, 2003).

However, the notion of the 'European city' as an ideal point of reference has not been without its critics. Pointedly, at the same time as the 'European city' has been upheld as a model of inclusion and democracy by practitioners and policy makers alike, the actual transformations taking place throughout European cities have been critiqued based on the reduction and withdrawal of the very factors which demarcated it as 'European' in the first place, such as public housing and other social services. As commented by Novy and Mayer (2009: 106) in response to Fainstein's (2010) perspective on Amsterdam as a 'Just City':

Calls for different urban forms do not suffice to move towards more socially just, politically emancipatory and ecologically sound cities. At best, they ameliorate urban conditions. At worst they amount to caricatures of European cities' past that camouflage their present-day problems and serve the interests of real-estate developers, urban boosters, and other local elites.

This argument is taken up by Uitermark (2010), who stresses that while sustainability and diversity might well be among the hallmarks of a good city, it does not necessarily make them 'just'. Such critiques highlight the manner in which cities can place bounds around the definition of notions of what diversity *is*. Increasingly, such perspectives are dominated by a desire to promote forms of diversity that achieve economic success, while downplaying key issues such as welfare and equality. Indeed it could be argued that the dilution of the social balance principles of the 'European city' within a predominantly design-oriented urban-space discourse has bequeathed a planning model more attuned to reshaping and marketing city images and fostering a civic realm than dealing with the inequalities and tensions that also trouble cities.

It is also possible to further question the unexamined assumption that culture is a neutral factor in making cities. As commented by Degen and García (2012: 1024): 'within cultural planning policy one can observe a marked economic determinism that assumes that creating a culturally competitive city guarantees social cohesion'. The toolkit of the 'European city' and the increasingly dominant urban design 'fix' emphasizes such elements as mixed uses, high density, sustainable communities, the civic realm, culture and creativity and urban meaning. There is a tendency within this approach to emphasize spatial aspects of urban form at the expense of a necessary critical awareness of the complexities of how memory and meaning become embedded in the built environment. This raises in particular questions about signification — the way in which significant meanings and stories are inscribed, celebrated and contained in the built form itself. But this is immediately also a power-ridden dynamic as there is unevenness in how the city either supports and encourages the continuation of such meanings and stories, or contributes to their obliteration and loss.

This raises a critical research question regarding how urban design 'fixes'

tend to downplay or obfuscate the class character of city regeneration strategies. The main aim of the empirical discussion on central Dublin that follows is to explore some of these concerns by tracing the uneven influence of the ideals of the 'European city' in the transformation of the urban environment since the 1990s.

The 'European city' and urban governance in Dublin

A number of contextual factors combined to shape the initial emergence of a version of the ideal of the 'European city' in Dublin. Broadly since 1958 the state has pursued a suite of developmental strategies built around the need to attract in transnational capital, particularly from the US. The eventual economic success of such policies was a central element in the Celtic Tiger phenomenon, as was the property boom of 1995–2007. In part the grounds for these transformations in Dublin were put in place during the economic depression of the 1980s. Initially the only urban policy pursued at this time involved the creation of government tax incentives from 1986 onwards. These included a number of area-based property renewal schemes introduced via central government legislative changes (designed jointly by the Departments of Finance and Environment) (Bartley and Threadwell Shine, 2000; McGuirk and MacLaran, 2001). These measures were aimed simply to pump prime development in the ailing construction sector (offices and apartments) and to recreate a key docklands site as a centre for international financial services.

The introduction of the above-mentioned tax-incentive renewal schemes marked a departure in terms of the overall approach towards urban development in Dublin. From the period of independence up until and including the 1980s, urban discourse in Dublin had been dominated by legacies of post-colonialism (Kincaid, 2006). In an effort to establish the iconography of the newly emerging republic, much of the architectural manifestations from the 1940s and 1950s onwards were dominated by international influences from Europe and North America. Indeed, throughout this time, the mix of influences was eclectic, ranging from the 'Amsterdam School' apartments of the 1930s and 1940s (Kincaid, 2006) to the corporate-modernist buildings of the 1970s, such

as the Bank of Ireland headquarters, regarded as almost a carbon copy of Mies van der Rohe's Seagram building (McDonald, 1985).

As has been documented by McDonald (1985), throughout the 1960s and 1970s, the development of speculative office buildings, which stood in stark contrast to their surroundings, resulted in the destruction of many of Dublin's Georgian buildings. Emerging in the late 1960s, much discussion about the built fabric of the city was dominated by concerns over the loss of Dublin's Georgian Heritage (Kearns, 1982; McDonald, 1985; Hanna, 2013). However, at least at the official level of government, by the early 1980s, a shift could be discerned with either preservation of Georgian Dublin — along with other eras of Dublin's built heritage — being seen as increasingly important (Negussie, 2004), or replacements being built in a manner that replicated the Georgian style. This shift can be seen both as an example of the reappraisal of the historical city centre, such as was happening throughout Europe at this time, and an indicator of a fledgling 'back to the city' movement in Dublin (Kearns, 1982).

The combination of the growth of the importance of cultural planning and the designation of Dublin as the European City of Culture in 1991 provided a new impetus to redevelop Dublin's city centre in a manner that moved beyond the Colonial legacy and pitched Dublin's urban form on a European and global stage. As commented by Kincaid (2006: 202):

Urban renewal takes over the semiotics of Georgian Dublin to gain an aura of urban authenticity and distinction. In doing so, the meaning of the original Georgian moment — the consolidation of Ireland within the empire — is recast with the ethos of the contemporary economy: financial security, symbolic capital, and urban individualism.

Such factors are in keeping with the emergence of entrepreneurialism in planning and urban governance internationally (Harvey, 1989). The impetus for Dublin City Council to pursue such strategies was perhaps uniquely strong. To begin with, the central state took a lead role in the first urban regeneration schemes with little or no consultation with the local authority (McGuirk, 1994; McGuirk and MacLaran, 2001). These included the top-down creation of special

authorities to lead urban regeneration processes, most notably the Customs House Docks Development Authority (expanded in 1997 to form the Dublin Docklands Development Authority) and Temple Bar Renewal Ltd and Temple Bar Properties Ltd.¹ Effectively these new governance structures absorbed responsibilities and powers to pursue the regeneration of key spaces of the city centre that ordinarily would be under the remit of the local authority. So while central government was the major driver of entrepreneurialism in urban governance, the city council's response was to 'get in the game' by taking on more pro-development attitudes as well as experimentation with more creative cultural-economy policies.² The result was a certain tension in the emerging urban governance systems between cultural, social and design ideals, that although coming from a wide set of influences, became associated with the 'European city', and financial and entrepreneurial mechanisms of delivery that were closer in spirit to Anglo-American neoliberal ideologies that had also taken hold internationally over a similar period.

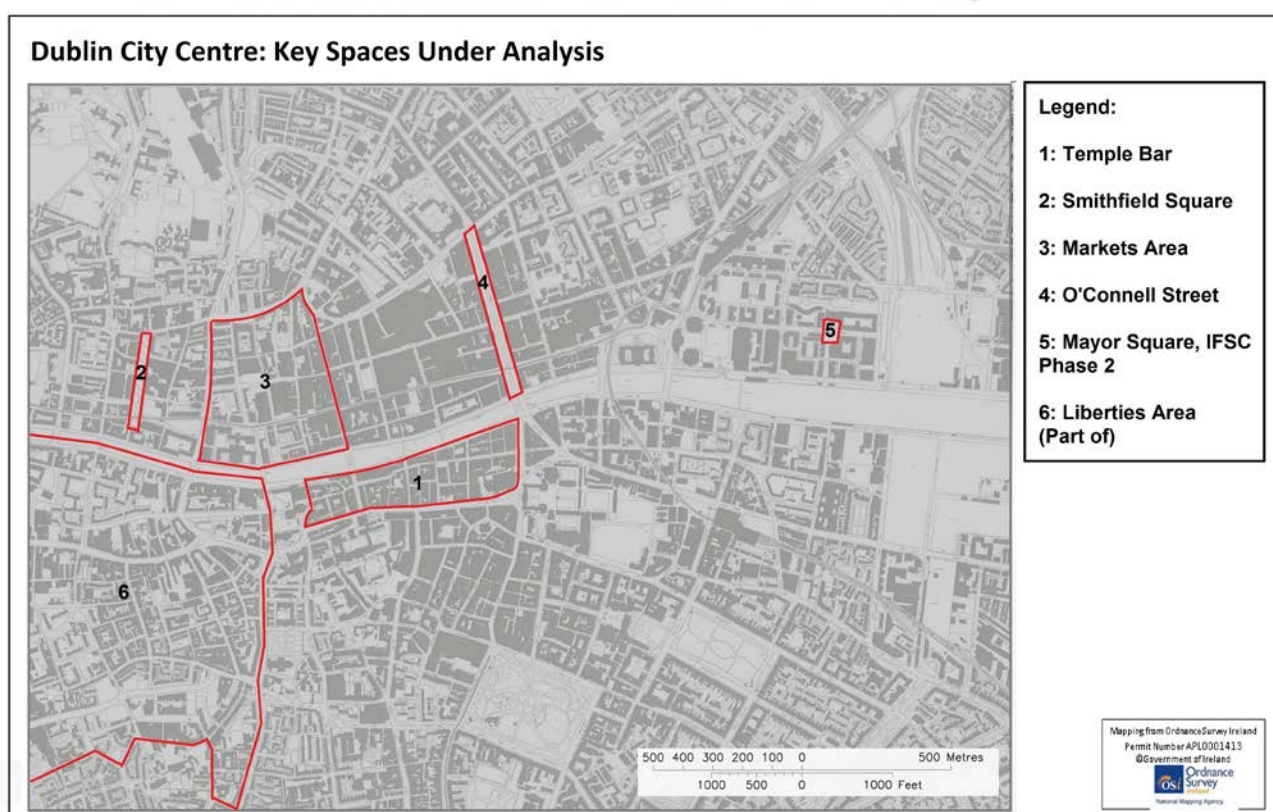


Figure 1 Map of Central Dublin indicating key areas analyzed in the text (map reproduced under license from Ordnance Survey Ireland, permit number APL0001413)

Origins: Temple Bar as a European city quarter

Although, the first tax-incentive schemes had impacted in the main upon the physical redevelopment of central Dublin (offices and new apartment blocks), the designation as European City of Culture in 1991 acted as a departure point in terms of the reconfiguration of Dublin along the lines of a 'European city'. From this point onwards, through the emergence of various design competitions, the virtues and vibrancy of city-centre living were promoted with the desire to attract people — implicitly middle class people — back to the city centre. While early manifestations of this city image, such as *The Smithfield design competition: a new perspective on working and living* (Graby, 1991), are indicative of the desire to reappraise the everyday meanings and use of the historic centre of Dublin along these principles, the transformation of Temple Bar became an iconographic representation of the emergence of the discourse of the 'European city' ideal within Dublin.

The Temple Bar example is illustrative of how an ideal of the 'European city' became established in the context of an increasingly entrepreneurial approach to urban planning in Ireland. The *Temple Bar Area Renewal and Development Act 1991* (Department of Environment and Local Government, 1991) acted as a point of confluence, whereby European funding, cultural planning, and a generation of design professionals influenced by European ideals of city-making all came together to create a new vision for a 'cultural quarter' in the Temple Bar area. The redevelopment of the area was carried out under the auspices of the aforementioned: Temple Bar Properties Ltd and Temple Bar Renewal Ltd, who in combination carried out the redevelopment of the area. Thus, Temple Bar fitted within the emerging remit of entrepreneurial urban development in Dublin (Montgomery, 1995; McCarthy, 1998); albeit one with a more 'cultural' remit.

Through the launch in 1991 by Temple Bar Renewal Ltd of a design competition, the focus was placed on the development of public space orientated towards everyday interaction of people. Cities such as Barcelona, which had been successfully reinvented through the transformation of public space, now became a direct point of reference for the transformations that were to take place in Temple Bar (Mackay, 1996). Moreover, urban design was now seen as central,

and more particularly, the role of design professionals, who were seen as leaders in this transformation, were given new status. As an assessor in the design competition, David Mackay, who had been involved in the transformation of Barcelona in the lead up to the 1992 Olympic Games, commented:

For too long in Europe there has been not only a neglect of responsibility towards understanding the historical significance of the public space, the ongoing creation of new places, but cities have not even been aware that it is their responsibility. This is no doubt due to the fact that architects themselves have neglected to exercise their professional skills in this task of urban design. They have allowed the decisions about the form of the public space to be determined by sectoral interests. These, however, valid they may be, have led in many instances to the destruction of the multiple identities of our cities and neighbourhoods (Temple Bar Properties, 1991: 11).

Thus, the transfer of the image of the 'European city' to the Dublin context was perceived as a means of rejecting the path that city development had taken in previous decades and presented a vision of design professionals as the defenders of the public realm.

The winning framework plan for Temple Bar was by a group of architects returning to Ireland after periods spent abroad, collectively referred to as Group '91.³ Group '91 had originally formed to promote a project entitled *Making a Modern Street* in 1991. Pointedly, this project explicitly expressed a desire to re-establish Dublin's credentials as a 'European city'. This un-built project set out the principles which would subsequently be applied in Temple Bar, including a mixture of uses within contemporary infill of small plot ratios in a historic context (see Group '91, 1991).⁴ Drawing upon influences of the aforementioned aspects of 'neo-rationalism', 'critical reconstruction', and having worked with architects such as James Sterling and Josef Paul Kleihues, the ideals of the 'European city' became a reality within Group '91's plan for Temple Bar (see also Kincaid, 2006). One of the architects involved described how architects such as Josef Paul Kleihues in Berlin had important formative influences on their future work:

The idea was to try and have a vision for what the city could become in terms of a place for people to live, work, walk and not just drive through. So again it was the idea of the European city, what it had been, how it had degenerated in terms of what had happened to Berlin after the war. And just how to somehow address that, and to create places for people to live in again, public space being a primary expression of community, society and the strength and power of European Cities, which is about the making of public space (interview with former member of Group '91 Architects, 1).

The desire to create a city based on these principles — and the implicit rejection of development models based on urban sprawl and private transport — became a guiding force directing the transformation of Temple Bar. This was evidenced both in terms of the careful insertion of contemporary infill — often cultural venues — within an historic context and the attention to public space. Three distinct public squares were to act as the focal points in the area. Two of these, Temple Bar Square and Meeting House Square, were developed as originally envisaged. The latter was created as a space for outdoor theatre and film events and is flanked by the Irish Film Institute, the Gallery of Photography and the Irish Photographic Archive (Figure 2, left). The former was developed as a central space within Temple Bar. Each of the spaces was configured in a manner that was based on the human scale, with either the total elimination of traffic or the prioritization of pedestrians. Finally, a new street — Curved Street — was carved out of the older built fabric. Again, the emphasis here was on cultural venues, pedestrianization, and the creation of contemporary infill buildings in keeping with the scale of their surroundings.



Figure 2 Left, Meeting House Square, Temple Bar; right, Mayor Square (photos by Philip Lawton, 2013)

The desired mix of uses within Temple Bar was aimed at 'getting back' to lost principles of city making. In discussing such potential in Temple Bar, McDonald (1996: 41), commented as follows: 'In Paris, the quintessential European city, there is a symbiotic relationship between the survival of the boulangeries, charcuteries and patisseries and the continued existence of a residential population in the city centre'; such was the desired outcome for Temple Bar (*ibid.*). As it has evolved, the example of Temple Bar has pointed towards some of the contradictions and tensions within the redevelopment of Dublin over the last number of decades. While the emphasis in the example of Temple Bar had been placed upon the form of spontaneous interaction imagined according to the hallmark of the 'European city' (*ibid.*; Maxwell, 1996), its reality became dominated by two specific discourses. On the one hand, the control of the public spaces in Temple Bar by a quasi-private organization ensured that by the early to mid 2000s the public realm was increasingly privatized. The public plaza of Temple Bar Square had become dominated by the seating of surrounding restaurants. Meanwhile, the smaller Meeting House Square became a semi-privatized space enclosed by a gate at night. Its closure points to the second discourse to emerge in reference to Temple Bar. The mixed-use quarter had, by the late 1990s, turned into a dominant area of Dublin's nightlife scene, an unplanned evolution that became the focus of much popular debate. Concerns emerged within both media and official circles regarding the degree to which the area had become, in the words of Roberts (2006: 332), a 'booze sodden

destination for stag and hen parties'. This view was further emphasized in the 2004 draft framework plan for Temple Bar: 'Antisocial behaviour, especially when fuelled by excessive consumption of alcohol, leads to an intimidating, aggressive and sometimes violent atmosphere. The anticipation of such an atmosphere is a turnoff for many people, especially in the 30+ age group' (Howley Harrington Architects, 2004: 8). Thus, instead of the imagined space of mixed-use European style city-centre living, the area had become a strange mix of the tendencies towards privatization and the focal-point of a 24-hour city, including an uneasy juxtaposition of late-night revellers and homelessness.⁵ Indeed, while Dublin has thrived on becoming a nightlife destination, the forms of actually existing behaviour within public space has increasingly become a focal point of administrative and legal action. Thus there have been recent legislative changes to control or eliminate begging and street drinking near commercial facilities (Dublin City Council, 2008a; Government of Ireland, 2011). Such moves — focused more on social control and image than on social justice and protection — portend a distinctly *revanchist* (Smith, 1996) edge to the city regeneration narrative.

The 'European city' model spreads outwards

From the late 1990s onwards, the influence of the 'European city' ideal became copperfastened as a dominant mode of representation in Dublin. From a design and image-making perspective, it largely replaced earlier narratives and practices, which primarily drew upon UK and US models of city development, such as the 'festive market' of the first phase of the International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in Dublin's Docklands (Malone, 1996). Whereas this earlier incarnation of the Docklands (1986–96) placed an emphasis on 'defensible space', enclosure and the 'invisible reminders' that one was on private space, in the second phase of the IFSC (1994–c. 2002), the emphasis drew upon a 'European tradition of making public space' (interview with Architect involved in IFSC Phase II, 1), with mixed-use urban blocks and a direct relationship to the street. Thus, the second phase of the IFSC was designed according to the principles of the 'European city'. This was evidenced through the retention of Mayor Street, which runs through the second phase of the

development in an east–west direction. In keeping with the desire to return to a more 'European' style of development, the street is flanked on either side by a mixture of apartment and offices over shops, and a largely uniform parapet height level. This linearity is broken at two points. The first of these is through the retention of the historic Bonded Warehouse building. Then, directly beside this, the street opens up to a newly created public space called Mayor Square. Again, the square is developed in a manner which picks up on European ideals of city making through the promotion of a mixture of uses and a direct connection between the public and private realms: 'Our proposition would have been different, coming from the Temple Bar stuff, coming from the idea of making the street, coming from an the idea of that irrigation and intensification of the street, would have been the more uses we got the better' (interview with architect involved in IFSC Phase II, 1) (Figure 2, right). Pointedly, this mix of uses was something that was promoted and pushed primarily by the architects (interview with architect involved in IFSC Phase II, 2). Moreover, one of the main buildings fronting the square — Clarion Quay — was developed as a socially mixed development, thus reinforcing the desire for the IFSC Phase II to move on from the earlier model of segregation from the wider social context of the Docklands. However, similarly to the earlier incarnation of the IFSC, Mayor Square was developed as a privately owned and managed public space. One side of the space was retained under the management of the surrounding apartment building, called Custom House Square, while the other remained under the control of the IFSC. Thus, increasingly, the ideal of the 'European city' was being remoulded in a manner that was in keeping with the broader dynamics of urban transformation in Dublin driven by tax incentives for private investment and the emergence of a related property boom.

Dublin City Council and the 'European city' ideal

Subsequent experiments in regeneration elsewhere in the city — under the auspices of Dublin City Council rather than special regeneration authorities — confirmed the rise-to-dominion of these urban-design articles of faith and broader 'European city' rhetoric. There were two overlapping strands to this

approach. The first was largely focused on ideals of social mix, and the second focused explicitly upon urban design and the public realm.

Integrated area plans and the imperative for social mix

Similarly to other European cities over the last number of decades, recent years have seen the emergence of urban policies that have their roots in alleviating the problems of isolated deprivation within specific parts of the larger urban centres in Ireland (Redmond and Russell, 2008). For example, through the implementation of IAPs from 1998 onwards, five city quarters in Dublin were transformed in a manner that drew upon the rhetorical packaging of social balance, density, city living, sustainable communities and participatory planning. However, under the surface the major engine of change was a familiar dynamic of fiscal-incentivized property construction (McGuirk and MacLaran, 2001; Williams and Boyle, 2012).

Although there was more attention in the planning discourse to cultural concerns and public participation, experiences of such processes at the grassroots were complex and conflicted. As highlighted by Brudell *et al.* (2004), activists who engaged as participants in the local consultative structures for the Liberties-Coombe IAP documented their experiences of disempowerment through participation due to the real dynamics of power in urban redevelopment. Despite exhausting participation within the microstructures set up to oversee the IAP, key decisions and policies were essentially shaped by central government, private development interests and the City Council. The overall effect was 'to preclude and negate the emergence of any legitimate criticism of what is being done to working-class communities in the name of urban renewal' (Brudell *et al.* 2004: 69).

What was being done to such communities became starkly evident from an official assessment of a range of tax-incentive property schemes put in place by the Irish state carried out by Goodbody Economic Consultants (2005). While such schemes certainly engendered considerable investment in property development and physical change, the report also raised deep concerns. Overall the initiative proved costly to the state and income regressive. Under the urban renewal schemes (IAPs) the tax foregone equated to a handout of almost

€41,000 per residential unit and €498 per square metre of commercial space. The scheme engendered considerable inflation in property prices in renewal areas and attracted intense speculative interest in what were marginal inner-city spaces in real-estate terms (90% of tax-incentivized properties were purchased as investments), while failing to deliver meaningful social and community gains. Thus the impact of the schemes was highly inequitable (*ibid.*).

In their research, Kelly and MacLaran (2004) demonstrated that in practice a general process of incentivized gentrification was put in motion as a result of the regeneration strategies with their overbearing emphasis on financial inducements for property investment and commitment to 'social mix' (which, in the example of Dublin, translated into twin policies of reducing social housing in the area and increasing private developments targeted at the professional urban classes). While the contribution of property incentives to gentrification is immediately apparent, the pursuit of greater social balance therefore also emerged as a contributory factor. For example, the City Council has used a particular interpretation of the notion of social mix (in fact taken to mean tenure mix) as an argument for its policy of withdrawing from the provision of social housing in the inner city, where there is an existing concentration of such housing, despite the very high levels of housing need recorded in these areas (City Development Plans, 1999–2005 and 2005–11). This regressive tendency — quite contrary to the social principles often related to the 'European city' — was for the most part politically (and publicly) uncontroversial largely due to the peculiarities of the Irish housing system (see Redmond and Russell, 2008). It is classically 'dualist', to use Kemeney's (1994) typology, with social housing residualized to a welfare role or safety net, while the market is protected from serious competition from non-profit provision (Drudy and Punch, 2002). In such a context social housing is politically very vulnerable as it seems uneconomic taken at face value (as access is based on poverty and rents are geared to income) and public tenants are drawn from the most marginalized and disempowered groups in society. Thus the city council was able to combine a commitment to urban design and commercial investment and a deepening stigmatization of social housing within a wider framework of a

'European city' discourse with little political or public opposition outside of tenants' groups.

In the Liberties-Coombe case 100 sites received tax incentives and were developed for private housing between 1998 and 2004; and yet no social units were achieved and financial contributions from developers (who benefited from the tax breaks) to community gain amounted to €439,000 in total (Kelly and MacLaran, 2004). The developments were intense and in some cases were allowed to contravene the urban design framework agreed under the IAP. Moreover, it emerged that central government's residential density guidelines trumped agreements reached locally in the IAP negotiations (Brudell *et al.*, 2004). Indeed, as the property-led economic boom proceeded in Dublin, increased scales, which were primarily driven by market concerns, remained caged behind the rhetoric of the sustainable 'European city'. As an example, the *The Liberties: Draft Local Area Plan* (Dublin City Council, 2008b) drew upon the 2005 *Bristol Accord* and the 2007 *Leipzig Charter of Sustainable European Cities* in outlining the proposed regeneration of the area. This was supported by a strong emphasis on design mixed with a certain amount of rhetoric about social inclusion and balance. Yet, whatever the merits of such a plan, by 2009, the impacts of a property-dominated urban development approach were becoming increasingly evident within The Liberties and the wider urban landscapes of Dublin. The final irony is that consequent to the property bust (2007 onwards) many of these incentivized units lie empty (Punch, 2009) while official housing need figures in Dublin City have reached record levels.

The 'European city', public space, and the design turn

More overt attempts at reinventing Dublin along 'European city' lines came about via projects which had a specific focus on the public realm, such as The O'Connell Street IAP regeneration (Dublin Corporation, 1998; see also, Lawton 2009; van Melik and Lawton, 2011). The central aim of the latter was to reinstate this urban thoroughfare as 'one of the great streets of Europe' (Dublin City Council, 2003: 1). However, the transformation of Smithfield Square as part of the Historic Area Rejuvenation Project (HARP, also an IAP scheme) from the late 1990s onwards is perhaps the most striking example of the shift in emphasis in

design principles and planning goals (Lawton, 2009; 2010). Whereas earlier incarnations of the 'European city' were focused on the creation of public space, tenure balance and a dense urban fabric, the desire in the regeneration of Smithfield gradually became less about the public space itself, and more about attracting investment into the area. Thus, while the architects involved in the redesign of the space — who had also been part of Group '91⁶— drew upon a historic affiliation with European public space, the reality of the development of the Square as it evolved was based more on an entrepreneurial model of urban public space (Lawton, 2010). Much of the critique of the square has been directed at its failure to become a focal point in the city and the unsympathetic character of later additions to the square. For example, O'Toole (2010: 200) comments: 'The genius loci demanded that the west wall of Smithfield should be of red brick, no more than five storeys high and as plain as possible. Instead, the city got an over-scaled travesty with a façade so busy that the lighting masts almost disappear when seen against it.' While such perspectives pay little attention to the development context, the focus on overscaling within the city points to the gradual incorporation and evolution of a 'European city' discourse to suit a wider neoliberal dynamic, as the power of real estate investment proved the stronger force over and above the creation of a functioning public realm (Figure 3, left). The result was a dense, bleak built environment around a barely functioning (and largely deserted) public realm far removed from any ideals of a European square. However, later additions, including seating and a playground, completed in 2012, resulted in promoting a greater level of public usage in the southern and northern parts of the square.



Figure 3 Left, Smithfield Square; right, Wolfe Tone Square (photos by Philip Lawton, 2013)

Following from the development of Smithfield Square, a more recent feature of HARP, the *Markets area: draft framework plan* (Dublin City Council et al., 2006), was initiated in 2001. The intention here involved the desired transformation of the Fruit and Vegetable Market and Fish Market into new vibrant city-centre markets, akin to La Boqueria in Barcelona. Indeed, the example of the Markets plan, although not as of yet executed, is noteworthy, in as much as it symbolized the role that 'soft' design-oriented urbanism was playing in the transformation of Dublin.⁷ The naturalization of the removal of traditional wholesale functions and their replacement was furthered in the *Markets area: draft framework plan* (Dublin City Council et al., 2006: 3): 'Building on the creation of a vibrant, new retail food market ... an opportunity now exists to rejuvenate this part of the city to create sustainable employment, leisure, cultural and residential opportunities.' Here, the team selected to develop the Framework Plan was led by the Catalan architecture firm MBM; at the same time one of its partners, David Mackay, was acting as an advisor to Dublin City Council. The example of Mackay is noteworthy, in as much as his involvement illustrated how embedded the form of urban development associated with cities such as Barcelona had now become within the context of Dublin's evolution. Moreover, it was also indicative of the emerging role of individual 'personalities' of international reputation in Dublin's transformation. Beginning with his involvement in the Temple Bar framework competition in the early 1990s, this involvement culminated in being commissioned to design a new City Council

building located within a 'pocket park' beside Dublin City Hall.

From the 'European city' to 'global icons'

By the early to mid 2000s, there were a number of distinct areas in Dublin in which the forms of social life loosely associated with the 'European city'. On top of the aforementioned Temple Bar and Smithfield Square, this was also illustrated through a number of extra insertions of a smaller scale. Wolfe Tone Square, which was formerly a small enclosed graveyard, was converted into a hard-landscaped public plaza in 2002 (Figure 3, right). Meanwhile, Quartier Bloom, which was finished in 2003, is a mixed-use area focused around a pedestrianized street. Through the explicit intention of the responsible development company, it is predominated by 'European' forms of dining outlets and cafes. As a result, it has, in recent years, garnered the colloquial name: 'The Italian Quarter'. At a slightly increased scale, from 2000 onwards, Dublin City Council began to construct a new pedestrian Boardwalk on the River Liffey. While not drawing explicitly upon a 'European' frame of reference, the Boardwalk sat within the reappraisal of the role of public space within Dublin, and, indeed, reflected wider trends within Europe.⁸

Gradually, the change in approach towards urban regeneration within Dublin was increasing in intensity and scale, and there also emerged greater emphasis on international urban competition. For example, while drawing upon references and inspiration from Barcelona in the early 1990s, Dublin City Council was, by the middle of the last decade, aspiring to compete with such cities directly. This was highlighted in the 2005–11 Development Plan for Dublin as follows: 'Major European cities like Copenhagen, Helsinki, Lyon and Barcelona now constitute a frame of reference for Dublin in terms of quality and profile and approaches to city administration and governance' (Dublin City Council, 2005: 9).

Indeed, this increase in intent is also marked by an opening up of the city to new trends emerging within an increasingly globalized urban realm. Along with the allure of archetypal European cities as models to be imitated, the cult of individual 'personalities' is a further factor that became strongly established. The

adoption of ideas of Richard Florida served as one example of such. Beginning with the 2007 conference 'Dublin: Creative City Region', at which Florida was the keynote speaker, the influence of the 'creative class' thesis gradually took hold (see Lawton *et al.*, 2010). While the 'creative class' thesis (Florida, 2002) is North American in origin, its image of tightly knit mixed-use urban neighbourhoods sat easily within the image of the 'European city' model as it was being adapted in Dublin (Lawton *et al.*, 2013). That Florida (2002) had drawn upon Temple Bar as an exemplary of his 'creative class' ideals gave a direct reference point to such. Indeed, as argued by Lawton *et al.* (2010), the transformation of Dublin as an 'entrepreneurial city' in the preceding decades acted as the ideal basis for the adaptation of Florida's ideas within the development of urban policy. Such findings reflect a now common critique of the adaptability of the 'creative class' thesis to a wide variety of contexts (Peck, 2012).

During this period, several 'star architects' were also invited to design iconic structures. This included Daniel Libeskind's Grand Canal Theatre, which is surrounded by a Martha Schwartz designed public space, Norman Foster's designs for the Clarence Hotel restoration and the U2 Tower, and Santiago Calatrava's James Joyce and Samuel Beckett bridges over the River Liffey. In keeping with trends emerging in continental Europe, the role of design forms was now evolving further. Pointedly, the focus on tightly knit streets, as associated with Temple Bar of the early 1990s, was now being upstaged by high-profile ambitions to reconstruct old city spaces on a much grander scale. This included the employment of Dutch landscape architects, West 8, to create a master-plan for the Eastern tip of the docklands and develop man-made 'islands' protruding from the edge of the River Liffey and the aforementioned 'U2 Tower' in Dublin's Docklands, which has yet to be built. While those parts of the docklands that were built during this period attempted to promote social mix and a mixture of uses within the setting of an urban block, the frame of reference from a design perspective drew on a wide array of influences, from the loft aesthetic to the corporatized image of glass and steel.⁹

To a large extent the ideal of the 'European city' has therefore been diluted in recent years with the city taking a more 'global' outlook in terms of image-making and design. Indeed, since the economic collapse of 2008, Dublin

City Council has sought to continue to promote the merits of design-led solutions, such as 'Designing Dublin' (see Lawton *et al.*, 2010) and the short-listed bid to become 'World Design Capital' for 2014. Moreover, the city continues to draw upon a wide frame of reference, such as the implementation of a business improvement district (BID) in Dublin in 2008 (see van Melik and Lawton, 2011). However, the notion of the 'European city' remains an important strand within the ambitions for Dublin's urban transformation. This influence was confirmed with the *Design + Cities: Lessons from Barcelona* symposium hosted jointly by Dublin City Council and the Royal Institute of Architects in Ireland (RIAI) in October 2011, which was organized to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of Dublin as European City of Culture in 1991.¹⁰ During the symposium RIAI Honorary Membership was awarded to Pasqual Maragall, the former President of Catalonia and Mayor of Barcelona during its major years of transformation. Many urban design and architectural professionals who contributed emphasized a virtual roll call of 'European city' ideals — density, social mix, cultural diversity, public transport, public space, city markets and the need to transform the image of inner neighbourhoods to attract middle class residents back into city living. There was no element of social realism or critical reflection on such issues as gentrification and inequality. The image of the 'European city', when viewed in this manner, thus tends to downplay the importance of more pressing social factors in favour of what is deemed an attractive city, with design presented as neutral and apolitical. In reality there is a much more complex interpenetration in the emerging urban governance model between the selective appropriation of key elements of the 'European city' ideal and a wider political economy which emphasized economic growth goals, the 'engine' of property development and a desire to renew and 'upgrade' the class structure of key central residential spaces.

Conclusions: social reality and the 'European city'

A recent literature has looked backwards to revive an ideal of the 'European city', drawing from classical ideas from Max Weber, in an effort to explore and promote the vitality and distinctiveness of European urbanism and urban form, as well as

wider social and political principles like egalitarianism and strong public intervention (Häußermann and Haila, 2005). These ideals have translated variously into planning practice and urban governance in different contexts across time and space. This has been made particularly evident through the popularity and emulation of cities such as Barcelona and Berlin. In the Dublin case, its structural situation as a small, open economy on the edge of Europe and a high degree of centralization of state power has created conditions within which considerable experimentation and an intense entrepreneurialism in urban governance flourished against a wider backdrop of neoliberal economic development policies.

In such a context the idea of the 'European city' was seized upon by the planning and architectural professions, partly as a way of re-establishing status within the urban development dynamic. Thus some definitive features of European urbanism were central to the major regeneration plans that emerged from the 1990s onwards. However, following from McCann and Ward (2010) the manner in which the particular ideal of the 'European city' played out in the context of Dublin is rooted within its specific economic and social context of the last two decades. While cities such as Berlin and Barcelona formed the dominant frame of reference for number of regeneration projects, such as Temple Bar, in general the approach was more open, with core elements of the 'European city' being central to various projects. These elements included a focus on, for example, smaller plot ratios, public space, walkability, social mix and an idealized image of what was perceived as representing social life associated with 'European' ways of life, including outdoor dining and café facilities. Moreover, while Temple Bar itself had evolved in varying ways, from a design perspective, it became a core frame of reference for later developments, such as Smithfield and Mayor Square. This is evident in terms of the involvement of former members of Group '91 and policy references. When taken at face value, such factors can perhaps be seen as evidence of a deeply rooted desire among the design and planning professions to get back to a city which is focused around mixed-use, walkable neighbourhoods. Perhaps of greater significance, however, is how the associated urban design turn associated with the 'European city' can be seen as an example of the perhaps unintended complicity of some fashionable academic literatures in the unfolding of

a primarily neoliberal urban planning and housing policy regime in Dublin. That the severe imbalances of the IAPs discussed in this article were paralleled by a largely design-oriented notion of the 'European city' ideal is illustrative of such. When viewed in this light, the adaptation of the 'European city' ideal can be seen as an outcome of the pressure on cities to constantly renew their image so as to compete for investment. That the 'European city' has, throughout the last number of years, been gradually subsumed into a more global frame of reference in Dublin is a further indication of such tendencies.

Nevertheless, the example of the 'European city' and how it played out in Dublin provides a cautionary tale about the strength of rhetoric within urban planning and related discourses. City officials have perhaps convinced themselves and others that they were promoting the common good and a progressive city through such projects by constructing a complex discourse of regeneration (instead of gentrification) and participation. But the experiences on the ground raise serious concerns about the unfolding social realities. 'Creative ideas' about regeneration, participation and urban design (including public spaces, urban sociability, density and social mixing) are in fact deeply implicated in some of the harsher social realities (housing need and homelessness, gentrification and other injustices and inequalities), inefficiencies and financial irrationalities that were hallmarks of the neoliberal economic model of Celtic Tiger Ireland. It could be that the leading contribution of the ideal of the 'European city' was to obfuscate to some degree the class character of urban development priorities in the transformation of the city. Further work might thus seek to analyze the wider significance of design and image-making in Dublin in the context of current approaches to urban development.

Overall it can be argued that academic narratives such as the 'European city', though flawed and open to criticism in themselves, can sometimes offer a seductive ideological 'new suit of clothes' for planning. The 'European city' narrative can also be seen as a discursive hook in the business of competing for status internationally and selling the city as dynamic, interesting, and different yet quintessentially 'European'. As shown in this article, Dublin may represent an extreme case of this process. The academic narrative was incorporated

selectively and became a 'soft' legitimation tool for the hard outcomes (to paraphrase Peck, 2001) of neoliberal urban governance regimes experienced in the city over at least 20 years. The main aim of the article has been to contribute some fresh insights to how a largely design and image-driven discourse revolving around a loose notion of the 'European city' acted as a hegemonic device in the wider toolkit of Dublin's developmental trajectory. It reveals the tension that exists between such discourses and the realities of politics and power in concrete decisions and policies, as well as the resulting accommodations and omissions.

The sad irony is that this period of urban development, involving intense real-estate investment guided in part by the urban design turn, may actually have had destructive consequences for some of the very features that might indeed be components of a more progressive and open 'European city': the received social and physical fabric, traditional life and collective memories and associations, and the meanings inscribed and enacted in socially constructed historic streets and public spaces.

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- ¹Temple Bar Renewal was given the broad cultural regeneration remit in this city centre quarter, while Temple Bar Properties (now Temple Bar Cultural Trust) was set up as a development company that took control of all publicly owned properties in the renewal area and proceeded with an ambitious refurbishment and construction programme.
- ²It should be noted that in the case of Dublin, local government representatives are relatively limited in their impact upon policy formation, with their primary influence being on land zoning. Thus, much of the ideals of the 'European city' have been influenced by a combination of wider structures, such as central government tax incentives, and management personnel within the relevant bodies discussed throughout the paper.
- ³Group '91 comprised 13 architects: Rachael Chidlow, Shay Cleary, Yvonne Farrell, Shelley McNamara, Paul Keogh, Niall McCullough, Michael McGarry, Valerie Mulvin, Siobhan Ní Éanaigh, Sheila O'Donnell, Shane O'Toole, John Tuomey and Derek Tynan.
- ⁴*Making a Modern Street* was a project initiated by the Architektur Forum, Zurich as part of the celebration of Dublin as European City of Culture in 1991. It was exhibited in both Dublin and Zurich between May and July 1991.
- ⁵The 2011 Housing Needs survey recorded almost 1000 homeless in Dublin City, while voluntary agencies estimate much higher figures. The Homeless Agency's 2008 *Counted In* survey recorded 2366 homeless adults in Dublin and 110 rough sleepers. This reality is very visible in and around Temple Bar at night.
- ⁶For their original redesign of the public plaza of Smithfield in 1997, McGarry Ní Éanaigh Architects were joint winners of the European Prize for Public Space in 2000. The European Prize for Public Space is an initiative of the Centre for Contemporary Culture of Barcelona (CCCB). It has been running since 2000, which aspires 'to foster recognition of a particular form of city-building through urban planning focused on public space and with citizens, in particular, in mind' (Fogué, 2010: 9).
- ⁷Although un-executed during the economic boom, in August 2013, Dublin City Council announced new plans for a 'continental-style market' in the former Fruit and Vegetable Market (see: <http://www.irishtimes.com/news/consumer/dublin-s-victorian-fruit-market-to-be-redeveloped-1.1498008>).
- ⁸The Boardwalk was designed by McGarry Ní Éanaigh Architects, who had been involved in Temple Bar and who had been responsible for the original redesign of the public plaza at Smithfield. In 2002, its credentials were reviewed by the Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona as part of its public space prize (see: <http://www.publicspace.org/en/works/b045-liffey-boardwalk>)
- ⁹Some of these shifts were subtle in form. For example, while the Grand Canal Dock Planning Scheme of 2000 (Dublin Docklands Development Authority, 2000) draws directly on *Making a Modern Street* by Group '91, in advocating achieving a 'fine grain' through smaller plot ratios, the emphasis in the revised scheme of 2006 (Dublin Docklands Development Authority, 2006) allows for the disruption of the block structure in particular places and also allows for the increased scale at particular locations, such as the designated location of the U2 Tower.
- ¹⁰*Design + Cities: Lessons From Barcelona* was held on Thursday 13 October 2011 at Liberty Hall.