

The Future of Cities

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Eccentricity is the vital ingredient for success

Cities have always been big business machines but they must retain diversity, writes *Edwin Heathcote*

The future of the city is an industry. Cities have always been big business, machines for creating money and culture, a means for people to gather and create a civilised, comfortable life. The making of the city is itself a fundamental process in the development of capitalism. The city's property and infrastructure have always been vehicles for speculation and, on occasion, stupendous profit.

The modern, successful city is a realisation of what the late French filmmaker and provocateur Guy Debord forecast would be a "Society of Spectacle". Within this, success is gauged by

skyscrapers and super-luxury apartments that come with record prices attached. It is measured by blockbuster cultural institutions and shopping streets sparkling with the logos of global brands. It is assessed by spurious quality of life surveys that rate the availability of exotic coffees and artisan cheeses above the quality of social housing or healthcare.

Over the past decade or so, the city has been monetised as a futures market – not only in the old fashioned manner of property development and speculation but through reconceiving its inhabitants as consumers rather than citizens. We have all become data. The technology



Data farm: thanks to social media, the potential to become lost in the heart of a crowded city may be waning – Dreamstime

we use at home, in the office and, above all, carry in our pockets has radically transformed the way we can be tracked and the way we will be targeted.

The city's characteristic cocktail of anonymity and sociability – the potential to become lost in a crowd – is changing fast. Already, smartphones have transformed the way we use the city. Our reliance on Google Maps and apps strips us of our observation and our need to understand the grain and texture of the city streets. Disruptive apps such as Uber are changing the way we move around.

How do we make a sustainable city, in which citizens are treated with respect

rather than as data? How will they compete with each other beyond being mere vehicles for property investment or as instruments of the markets?

There is a lot of hype surrounding the so-called Smart City – the idea of the city as a connected network in which mass information collection allows more efficient operation. Its potential has been overstated, but its arrival does signal a change in the idea of the city into a forum for hyper-surveillance and data farming. That change is compounded by a marked shift from the city as public realm to a new conception of its streets and squares as a massive mall without walls.

The creation of business investment districts across the UK and US and the construction of privately owned developments blur the boundaries between the genuine public commons and private property. As the public sector continues to shrink in the neoliberal city, infrastructure is increasingly left to private capital and the economies of cities are driven by the mantra of "regeneration".

This has become a cliché and it can be a very blunt device. The line between regeneration and gentrification is often virtually invisible. There is, of course, nothing new in these issues. When the

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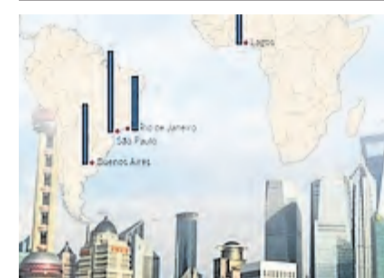
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Safety obsession creates risk of 'fortresslike' environment

Security

Anti-terrorist and crime prevention measures, plus the urge to keep people moving, are producing a hostile urban landscape, reports *Lucy Killgren*

When the new US embassy in London, just along the river Thames from Battersea power station, opens its doors in late 2016, it will be one of the most secure buildings in Britain.

Architects KieranTimberlake trumpet its high-spec, high-security features: "In contrast to high perimeter walls and fences, security requirements are achieved through landscape design – such as the large pond, low garden walls with bench seating, and differences in elevation that create natural, unobtrusive barriers."

The embassy's own description of the building as "modern, welcoming, safe" sums up the challenge planners have in reconciling the conflicting desires for security and openness in contemporary urban environments.

But while the embassy design is a far cry from the more obviously militarised current site in Grosvenor Square, critics say it is emblematic of a broader trend. The past decade, has seen highly defended spaces spring up across towns and cities, creating what some describe as a hostile "fortresslike" environment.

The new US embassy is "like a Norman castle," says Stephen Graham, professor of cities and society at Newcastle University. "It even has a moat and is set back, with empty space to protect it from truck bombs or blast," he adds. "This is the logic of what an antiterrorist city would look like."

Such fortified buildings are one aspect of a trend that has introduced several forms of "defensible space" into the landscape. A public outcry greeted the "anti-homeless" spikes that were spotted fixed into the ground outside a private apartment block in south London's Southwark Bridge Road last summer.

Boris Johnson, London's mayor, called them "ugly, self-defeating and stupid" and they were later removed.

Retailers have courted controversy by installing so-called "Mosquito" alarms, which emit a high-pitched sound heard



US embassy: 'modern, welcoming'

only by young people and babies, to discourage loitering. In New York, spiked coverings have been attached to fire hydrants to prevent people sitting on them. Other examples include sloped bus shelter seats, park benches you cannot lie down on and the Camden bench, designed to deter skateboarders.

The term "defensible space" was coined by the US architect Oscar Newman in the 1970s. This spawned an industry based on the principles of Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED), ideas that journeyed across the Atlantic and have a far-reaching influence on urban policy through, for example, the UK police's initiative, Secured by Design.

Antisocial street furniture makes cities 'more liveable for consumers and less liveable for other people'

Prof Graham comments: "We are redesigning the city so that anyone who doesn't move is deemed a threat, which includes someone who is pregnant, who has young kids or a disability. I can't deny there are attacks and dangers and vulnerabilities, but sometimes those are exaggerated and the terrorist threat becomes a massive obsession."

Phoebe Boulton Jaggi, a student at the

London College of Communication who has researched antisocial street furniture says cities become "more liveable for consumers and less liveable for other people". While architects may attract support for building defences into potential targets such as the US embassy, critics object to fortress security levels grafted on to other public buildings, including schools, hospitals and housing. These often incorporate features such as high-perimeter fencing, barbed wire and CCTV cameras.

"Secured by Design has become the template for all new development today," says Anna Minton, author of *Ground Control* and reader in architecture at the University of East London. The threat of terrorism has become the "justification for ever-increasing security" as part of the daily environment, she adds.

Secured by Design, wholly-owned by the Association of Chief Police Officers, was formed in 1989. It supports the concept of "designing out crime", with, for example, specially constructed doors and fencing, which, it says, can reduce burglary by 75 per cent.

"Security measures can be invisible," says Jon Cole, Secured by Design's national operations manager. "If you build in security at the outset, then the building will generally be far more aesthetically pleasing."

There has been something of a reaction to hyper-secured, exclusive city spaces. London's Oxford Circus is an example of the European idea of "shared space", which focuses on improving traffic safety through the removal of barriers, roundabouts and even traffic lights.

In the US, organisations such as San Francisco Rebar, a landscape design group, are influencing the debate on public space. Meanwhile, in Hamburg, designer Oliver Schau has used yellow drainage pipes to create impromptu "guerrilla seating" in urban areas.

In Canada, RainCity Housing, an independent charity that helps the homeless, installed a roofed bench in the city to provide shelter to street sleepers, in contrast to the anti-homeless spikes that have made their appearance on London's streets.

Prof Graham thinks the debate will intensify. "Raising awareness of what is going on is a challenge," he says. "It is such a massive thing for people to get their heads round."

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The Future of Cities

Priced-out workers forced into long commute

Housing

Rapid expansion can leave a shortage of affordable property, writes *Kate Allen*

The oft-used advertisement — “If you lived here, you’d be home by now” — usually seen stretched across blocks of new high-rise flats overlooking commuter train lines, carries a cruel irony for the passengers who pass it every day. Many of them would love to live there but cannot afford to. So they live outside the city and travel in each day.

Economically successful cities are growing rapidly and struggling to find housing for their swelling populations. At the same time some have seen an influx of the international rich, although this is said to benefit an area’s economy, according to research published last year by property analysts Ramidus Consulting. The average buyer of a £15m UK home, it said, spent £4m to £5m a year on goods and services in Britain. In total, Ramidus calculated, London’s super-rich added £4bn a year to the capital’s economy.

But by flocking to thriving conurbations

such as London, incomers risk killing some of the things they may love about an area. By driving up house prices, they push out the diverse mix of locals who give the place its buzzy vibe.

City dwellers around the world pay \$650bn more a year in housing costs than they can afford as rapid urban growth meets a constrained supply, research published last year by consultants McKinsey found.

Some of the world’s leading urban areas face the biggest housing cost problems, with New York, Tokyo and London among the worst affected. Beijing, São Paulo and Buenos Aires are among those suffering most in lower-income cities.

Toby Lloyd, head of policy at Shelter, a British housing charity, says that cities need to accommodate people on a wide range of incomes in order to thrive. “If a city can’t provide the homes its nurses, teachers, shop workers and cleaners can afford, eventually it will choke off its own economic success,” he says.

A third of workers in developed economies need some form of housing subsidy, according to Christine Whitehead, a professor of housing economics at the London School of Economics. But many big cities’ policy makers have not kept

up with their rising populations. As a result, more people are moving further away from their workplaces and commuting long distances.

In London, which is battling rapidly rising house prices, the problem has become acute. House prices increased by 9.4 per cent in the past year, according to official data. KPMG research says a Londoner must earn £77,000 a year in order to be able to buy. Salaries in the city average £34,320.

Businesses are worried. The London Chamber of Commerce and fellow lobbyists London First have cited housing affordability as one of their members’ biggest concerns. More than half of employees surveyed by London First say rent or mortgage costs make it difficult for them to live and work in the capital.

Baroness Jo Valentine, London First chief executive, says: “London’s chronic housing shortage is making it difficult for many of those with the talents the capital needs to live and work here, and this problem will only get worse unless we start building more homes.” Particularly badly hit are younger workers, aged between 25 and 40.

“For a world-leading city that owes much of its success to the service sector

and knowledge-based industries, losing a tranche of its young professionals would be disastrous,” she adds.

High housing costs in cities often spread into areas to which priced-out former city-dwellers move. Their influx pushes up prices in other parts of the country, as workers commute ever longer distances.

Savills, a property group, last year found that growing numbers of London employees are becoming “work tourists”, while areas with more London workers have seen house price rises.

Perhaps the best-known example of new housing built for those priced out of cities was US housebuilder William Levitt’s post-second world war prefabricated suburbs known as “Levittowns”. He had four of these developments built in New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Puerto Rico.

The houses were sold to war veterans who wished to move out of poky city apartments into spacious family housing, which meant a long commute for those wanting to keep their jobs.

En route to and from the city, Levitt-town residents probably went past highly-priced new developments, which, like many of today’s workers, they simply could not afford.

‘For a world-leading city, losing a tranche of its young professional residents would be disastrous’

Your average public piazza may not really belong to you

Civic space

The state has been withdrawing in favour of commercial interests, writes *Edwin Heathcote*

Beneath the pavement, the beach” was a rallying cry of the 1968 student protesters in Paris.

Ripping up the cobbled paving stones revealed the sand beds on which they were laid and the poetic metaphor took on both the literal appearance of the sandy substrate and the idea that the city was a playground to be reappropriated from the robber barons, politicians and establishment. Through transforming the urban fabric into barricades, a new city of endless possibilities was excavated in the imagination.

As the students dug up the cobbles, Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre produced his book *The Right to the City*. His idea was that the city needed to be taken back through collective action and its processes controlled by its citizens to reflect their needs and desires.

Contemporary cities are driven far more by private interest than was the city of 1968. Almost all major cities then were building huge volumes of social housing and public infrastructure, from schools and hospitals to public housing and public spaces. They were by no means all successful but the feeling was that governments and municipalities had a responsibility to create a modern public city.

The world’s largest architectural office was the London County Council. Housing estates and arts centres flowed from the drawing boards, often

A view on the bridge

People like public space. Just as they like to work in a coffee shop on a laptop surrounded by others, they want to hang out with friends, to people-watch, flirt, take part in the rituals of public life.

In the suburbs, the 20th-century answer to the need for “public” space was the mall. The first were in the US in the 1950s, conceived as public places with kindergartens, medical centres and community facilities alongside the shops. Within a few years, only the shopping was left.

Malls have come a long way since. “Malls without walls”, whole shopping districts, resemble parts of the city, with real streets and brick and stone façades, and transpire to be privately owned. Liverpool One is an example. Cash-strapped municipalities cannot compete and people throng to these places. Users, once citizens, are rebranded as consumers.

London’s latest blockbuster is the Garden Bridge, a strip of park spanning the Thames. This is not public infrastructure, but a privately owned and maintained tourist attraction. There is a need for more public space in London, across the deprived boroughs with some of Europe’s poorest populations, but here, across the river linking two wealthy city centre enclaves?

It is a regeneration project for a part of the city that is doing just fine: public money going towards private space.

EH



Right to the city: contemporary cities are driven far more by commercial interest than in the radical 1960s

Alamy

unpopular but now revered as the last explosion of municipal vision.

As London was building these projects, the consensus was that the city would continue to shrink and suburbanisation leave it as a commuter and cultural playground that people would visit by car and leave.

Things changed and the city centre became fashionable again, a pattern mirrored in Paris, New York, Sydney and across the world. But this was accompanied by a shift in responsibility for the city.

By the time of the urban renaissance in the 1980s, cities, particularly Anglo-Saxon ones, had been abandoned by the state and left to the private sector.

New public space is determined by commercial needs. It is commonly “donated” to a pseudo-public realm by developers as “planning gain”, or privately owned public space, POPS.

The city wants something back for granting permission for big developments and it may come in the form of a piazza, a street or a park that the public is allowed to use as long as it does so in the right way.

One might argue there is little difference between what cities do now and the way in which those of the Renaissance — financed by the wealthiest patrons, princes, bankers and the Church — were

created and that architecture has almost always been a monument to the power of those who funded it.

Today’s new spaces are based around consumption, not civic activity. Piazzas are conceived as places for café terraces, streets as shopping centres, gardens as amenities to increase sale prices.

They are billed as publicly accessible, in the way a hotel or a shopping mall might be. We can use them at the discretion of the owners. They do not belong to us, which is the very meaning of public space.

“We’re making sterile, heavily policed and controlled zones, patrolled by private security,” says Anna Minton at the University of East London. Swaths of activities are banned, she adds, from skateboarding and photography to “more importantly, protest”.

New York-based architect and writer Michael Sorkin argues that the erosion of our public space “comes simultaneously from the elimination of privacy by Big Brother’s all-seeing eye and from the privatisation of that same space as so-called ‘public-private partnerships’”.

Such critical perspective suggests that, with transferral of ownership and continuity of use, changes may look small but amount to a redrawing of the nature of the city: a privatisation of public life.

Aerotropolis readies for take-off

Air travel is the thread that stitches the modern world together.

Airlines carry a total of about 3bn passengers a year and air freight conveys more than a third, by value, of world trade. That ability to connect should put airports and the areas around them into the centre of town planning and even cities themselves.

But even if aviation, according to the Air Transport Action Group, contributes just 2 per cent of human-generated carbon dioxide emissions, concerns about noise and pollution have put airports on the fringes.

It was not always so. In the early days of flight, towns and cities competed to build easily accessible airports that would attract the new, fire-breathing engines of growth.

Urban areas were later forced to relocate city-centre airports that grew into international hubs or were swallowed by urban sprawl.

Kai Tak’s 1998 replacement by Chek Lap Kok makes for a less exciting final descent into Hong Kong, but the new airport handles more traffic, more safely. In 2008, Berlin’s Tempelhof, within easy cycling distance of the city centre, was another casualty.

In London, many of the arguments against expanding Heathrow are based on its location within the UK metropolis.

Proponents of “Boris Island”, the Thames estuary site for a new airport favoured by London mayor Boris Johnson, have pointed to its remoteness as an advantage.

Against that is the idea of an airport as the integral centre of a city, suggested in the last century by French cultural theorist Paul Virilio and championed more recently as the “aerotropolis” by US academic John Kasarda.

The US has a scattering of fly-in air parks, communities of houses that centre on a runway to which the hangar/garage of each property has taxiway access. Spruce Creek in Florida is home to 5,000 aviation-friendly folk. Counterparts are to be found across the globe.

On a much larger scale, Memphis in Tennessee, the home of logistics giant FedEx, has completed a plan for bringing order to haphazard development that resulted in “middle-class flight, crime and blight” around Memphis international airport.

Chad Bowman, aerotropolis project manager at the city’s planning development division, says Memphis and the federal government have put \$1.9m into

formulating an economic development strategy that takes advantage of air, road, rail and river transport all converging in the central US city. Over the next five to 10 years, he expects this to result in investment by companies of “hundreds of millions, if not billions” of dollars.

“We can package incentives and show companies that locating their business here makes sense because of the multimodal transportation system,” says Mr Bowman. “That will create jobs, increase our tax base, and make the area more attractive to investors.”

The chief value of the aerotropolis concept, says Mr Kasarda, is that “it provides its businesses with speedy connectivity to their long-distance suppliers, customers and enterprise partners, increasing company and urban efficiency.”

He is advising Zhengzhou, a provincial capital south of Beijing. “The 415 sq km Zhengzhou airport economic zone, or aerotropolis, is coming along nicely,” he says, pointing to substantial increases in property investment and industrial growth in the area.

The zone has become the world’s largest site for smartphone production. This, he adds, has pushed its airport to the top of the cargo growth table in China.

Such feats of single-minded planning remain rare. Perhaps it is no surprise that the regions most “enthusiastic” about aerotropolises, says Mr Kasarda, are Asia and the Middle East.

According to Rose Bridger, UK-based co-founder of the Global Anti-Aerotropolis Movement, “communities are largely excluded from planning and governance” and projects often entail the “displacement of rural people”. She adds: “Airports should revert to the established development model — being built to serve existing cities.”

But, says Mr Bowman: “The aerotropolis concept is not just about more planes and more trains and more automobiles. It is about moving people closer to the centre of commerce and being more sustainable in our business practices. It’s about tying transportation systems together.”

In London, perhaps one gap in its air services could be filled by a floating Thames heliport. That would put a liquid noise barrier between it and opponents, yet give much-needed proximity to the financial centres of the City and Docklands.

Rohit Jaggi



Hong Kong grows increasingly frustrated by mainland dominance

Character

Developers are serving the influx of wealthier residents at the expense of old communities, says *Denise Law*

Kennedy Town is among the few remaining districts on Hong Kong island where hole-in-the-wall noodle joints and traditional tea houses outnumber clothing stores and US coffee shops.

The town, named after Hong Kong’s seventh British governor Arthur Edward Kennedy, was for many years inhabited by a working-class community. Low-rise apartment blocks and industrial buildings dating back to the 1950s have yet to be knocked down despite planned redevelopment.

To the relief of many locals, few main-

land Chinese tourists venture into this part of town. No high-end retail stores are here to sate their appetite for luxury goods. As the last stop on the tram line, Kennedy Town has developed far more slowly than other areas on the island.

However, this appears to be changing. A new subway station connecting Kennedy Town to central Hong Kong has opened, while western-themed restaurants and bars are replacing local diners. Developers are determined to revitalise the area to serve a growing number of wealthier residents, which means rents and property prices will rise. The remaining working-class community is starting to shift to the New Territories north of Hong Kong island.

For many locals, these changes are yet another sign that Hong Kong’s local culture is eroding. At street level, there is a sense that the city is becoming less “Hong Kong” and more mainland

Chinese in character and that the lines between both are blurring.

In Causeway Bay, a crowded district on Hong Kong island, rising rents — buoyed by an influx of mainland Chinese property buyers — have forced traditional clothing stores to shut down. Only a handful of high-margin businesses, such as luxury European retailers or pharmacies selling milk powder to mainland Chinese mums, are able to afford the rents. Louis Vuitton, the French luxury retailer, has two stores in Causeway Bay and more stores across all of Hong Kong than in London.

“Imagine 10 shops on one street, of

which eight are watch and jewellery shops or pharmacy stores selling milk powder,” says Ho Chun Sing, a self-employed resident of Hong Kong who recently moved out of Causeway Bay in search of a quieter neighbourhood.

“Do the people of Hong Kong really need that many? How do large shopping centres and entertainment complexes that cater to mainland Chinese people benefit Hong Kong residents?” What angers locals, he adds, is that the government does not seem interested in improving the lives of ordinary Hong Kong people.

Mr Ho is one of an increasing number of younger residents who believe their prospects under Chinese rule have deteriorated. Rising inequality is a key issue. Hong Kong’s property market has seen average prices more than double in the past decade, according to Centaline, a property agent.

The city’s gini coefficient, a measure of income inequality, is up 25 per cent from the 1970s and higher than in many developed countries including Singapore. Ordinary locals are frustrated with what they view as China’s rising influence in all aspects of their lives from everyday business to politics and culture.

“All decisions by the government seem oriented towards serving mainland Chinese tourists,” says Pamela Low, who moved back to Hong Kong after the handover.

The frustrations of the island’s inhabitants are manifested by the increasingly common sight of a local deriding mainland Chinese visitors for behaviours such as spitting, jumping the queue or eating on the subway.

The Chinese government recently introduced measures encouraging tourists to improve their etiquette when

10%

Mainland Chinese shoppers’ contribution to Hong Kong GDP

25%

Rise in Hong Kong’s income inequality since the 1970s

The Future of Cities

Place to escape from evolves into place to be

Suburbs Life on the urban fringe is one of the main problems confronting planners, writes *Edwin Heathcote*

Cities are endlessly celebrated; the suburbs are derided. Urban culture is the apex of cool. Suburbs are places to leave, settlements on a horizon just close enough to the glamour of the metropolis to feel its glow yet too far to feel a part of it.

They are places for parents, not youth, despite the irony that couples move to the suburbs to find better conditions for their children: housing, schooling, more space and safety. It is no accident that the music and fashion movements that come from the suburbs – Mod, Punk, New Wave and onwards – are based on a particularly suburban alienation and a desire for the coolness or the anarchy of the urban future.

With the suburb as a place for the young to escape from, what happens when the city becomes too successful?

When the young can no longer afford to rent even the tiniest of apartments? What has tended to happen is that the centre grows, subsuming successive once-suburban centres into its maw.

Whether it is Red Hook in Brooklyn or Peckham in southeast London, gentrified suburbs cease to be suburban, price their original residents out and the suburbs move further from the centre. The future of suburbs is one of the biggest questions facing cities today.

The British invented them. Bedford Park in west London and Hampstead Garden Suburb to the north, were conceived a century or so ago as antidotes to city horrors. Britain's great contribution to urbanism amounts to a subversion of the city, mankind's great invention, into a poor imitation of the country.

In the UK, about 80 per cent (in the US about half) of the population live in areas that could be called suburban. Yet very little thought in architecture, planning and culture, is given to the suburbs.

This is very different from the US postwar period, when they were seen as the engine of the consumer economy. Every family that moved from a city apartment to a suburban house would need to fill it with goods, buy a car, a lawnmower. The suburbs were substi-



dised by stealth with mortgage tax relief, road building and utilities infrastructure and the money flowed back in manufacturing and white collar jobs and taxes. In the UK the move started earlier, as London's underground railway extended beyond the confines of the city into a countryside that would allow the English idyll of rural living.

The key difference between US and UK suburbs was transport. In Britain, they were located around bus, tube and

UK invention: suburbia was created as an antidote to city horror — Dreamstime

'The suburban mix makes it both a perfect place for start-ups and a front window for the economy'

train routes. US suburbia was based on the car. The atomisation of the auto-suburb did little for community or cohesion. Endless plots of detached houses echoed the homesteader's dream of independent living but also created a landscape of social isolation.

US suburbs often contain the wealth. Downtown Detroit might appear an apocalyptic landscape but its suburbs provide the leafy surrounds and affluent homes of the executives who work in its glossy towers. The suburbs of Paris, by contrast, are dominated by the landscape of alienation that is the banlieues.

The pressing question, given the centrality of the suburb to the housing problem, is what can be done to make the suburbs better places, more efficient, more desirable. "The solution will require the densification of the city fringes," says Ellis Woodman, director of London's Architecture Foundation.

The challenge "is how you make them more than just dormitory villages. The great value of residential property means other uses are being driven out."

"Densification" means the intensification of use and density to make the suburbs more populous and efficient. That process carries with it destruction of qualities – greenery, privacy, space –

that attracted people to the suburbs, but another way to look at it is that this is the nature of cities as they grow.

The argument is that the suburbs should, effectively, be made more like the centre. Mark Brearley, professor at the Cass School in London, suggests the future for the suburb rests in its High Street or Main Street.

This "can be an ideal for the future not just a residue from the past", he says. The mix of shops, services, small-scale manufacturing, garages and churches "make it a perfect place for start-ups and a front window for the economy". That, he suggests, is what attracts people from elsewhere, slowly making a place more urban and less suburban.

In the UK, Croydon, to the south of London, has shown what can be done. Designated in the 1960s as an overspill for London commerce, its centre was densified with towers in a way that was much derided yet has proved successful and adaptable. It has some awful buildings but retains a sense of 1960s idealism which has served it well.

Is a densified suburb a suburb? What of Kensington, Neuilly-sur-Seine or Nassau County, Long Island. They retain much of what made them desirable, yet have become absorbed into the city.

Eccentricity is the vital ingredient for success

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notorious Old Nichol slums in London's East End were cleared to make way for the London County Council's Boundary Estate, opened in 1900, residents complained that they were being turfed out. The hard drinkers were discriminated against in favour of what politicians might now call "hard working families".

The urban renewal strategies of the 1960s and 1970s in US city centres were dismissed by African-Americans in poorer districts as designed to remove them. In London more recently, the efforts to demolish and rebuild many of the few remaining city centre social housing estates – notably the Aylesbury estate in Southwark, in the southeast of the capital – have led to protest and squatting, as residents accuse the authorities of social cleansing.

The question for city centres is how they can embrace the complexity of uses and the social mix from which their character has derived – and whether there is any way to maintain these communities and relationships. Or alternatively, do we just accept that cities change and that we need to adapt?

For the moment, there is a sense that New York, London, Paris and other global cities are resting on their laurels. They revel in their continued popularity and the status of their property as what

New York was at a creative peak after the second world war and in the 1970s, when it was virtually bankrupt

the City of London's former planner, Peter Rees called "safe deposit boxes" for the super-rich, while failing to ensure they remain accessible to a social mix.

These are real problems, because what makes cities great is the dynamism that derives from their particular cocktails of class, ethnicity, eccentricity and opportunity. Without that blend they become either dull tourist centres – take central Paris, for example, or, increasingly, central London – with little authentic life, or two-tier cities with the poor populations marginalised on the edges and effectively disenfranchised from urban processes. Paris, again, strikes as an example.



The most successful and creative cities tend to be those with a degree of redundancy, that is to say with a little slack in their space where property value does not dictate every move or development. These are not necessarily the same as those cities that are the wealthiest or the most equitable or even the most liveable.

New York, for instance, was at a creative peak in the period after the second world war and, arguably, again in the 1970s, when it was virtually bankrupt, sliding into a massive crime wave and suffering from radical depopulation as the middle class moved out to the suburbs. Everything from abstract expressionism and jazz to literature and graphics thrived there in that period.

London's greatest modern creative spurt may well have been during roughly the same period, namely from the Swinging Sixties to the mid-1980s, when it was a city in transition, pock-marked with bomb sites and with social housing going up in once-affluent and central areas.

Berlin's best periods were the fraught 1920s, when the city was recovering from a devastating lost war, and the 1990s, when it found a huge property resource in the office space left over when the Communist political bureaucracy – and the endless web of buildings inhabited by the Stasi intelligence network – was dismantled and left redundant. This all left property affordable and available to students, artists and anyone else.

The traditional measures of success – wealth and GDP – might serve to underline profitability and suitability of the city as a place for the global rich to park their money, but they do little to ensure that success will be sustained.

When cities become too successful, they marginalise exactly the eccentricity and experimentation that lead to new ideas. An overdose of success can kill a city.

Perhaps the message is to be careful what you wish for.

THE PACE OF URBANISATION IS UNPRECEDENTED. SO ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES.

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The price tag for infrastructure alone could reach \$50 trillion. Twenty-six billion wired connections will link these cities by 2020. Tens of millions of economical housing units will have to be built in emerging market cities.

What does this 'prime time' of urbanisation mean for investors?

In our special report, *The Wealth of Cities*, **PRAMERICA INVESTMENT MANAGEMENT** examines four key investable themes from the urbanisation megatrend.

Download our report at wealthofcities.com

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The Future of Cities

To pull down or to refurbish, that is the question

Demolition Starting afresh is a part of the urban life cycle but fixing things up has its merits, notes *Kate Allen*

What, in its day, was one of London's most ambitious regeneration schemes has come to an ignominious end as a dusty pile of rubble.

The Aylesbury estate in Walworth, south London, was built in the 1960s and 1970s during an egalitarian push to replace slums with modern, rented, council-owned homes.

It was one of the biggest estates in Europe. Its planners dreamt that, by connecting its high-rise pedestrian walkways to those of two other neighbouring estates, Londoners would be able to walk three miles across the city without touching the ground.

But poor construction quality and a lack of investment by the local council meant that by the 21st century, it had become one of the city's most notoriously rundown and crime-ridden areas.

Despite a 2001 ballot in which 73 per cent of tenants who voted rejected the idea, the Aylesbury's landlord, the London Borough of Southwark, is knocking it down in order to start again. A small group of activists is squatting in the last few blocks in an attempt to save them.

This is the latest in a wave of housing demolitions in Britain, in which council blocks are being knocked down and replaced with new homes for sale. These usually comprise a more traditional terraced streetscape, or low-rise apartment blocks.

As countries around the world urbanise rapidly, planners and architects say it is essential that cities make the most efficient use of their limited supply of land. This means painful decisions have to be taken about whether to preserve existing buildings.

The trend is not restricted to housing. Commercial property developers prefer to demolish old office buildings and start afresh. This is set to pose a challenge in many of the world's leading business districts, where a large proportion of older offices must either be expensively refurbished – often producing dissatisfying results for tenants – or knocked down and rebuilt.

Demolition is a natural part of the life



Painful: activists argue that demolition amounts to social cleansing — Oil Scarriff/Getty

cycle of cities and is necessary for urban areas to change and evolve, says Peter Rees, former City of London planning officer and now a professor of places and

city planning at University College London. Too much reconstruction, he adds, amplifies the impact of social and economic change on highly stressed

citizens, but, on the other hand, "hanging on to everything which is old and familiar risks [the neighbourhood] being relegated to the tourist circuit".

The controversy over knocking down buildings is not a new phenomenon. The shaper of central Paris, Georges-Eugène Haussmann demolished the city's medieval streets in order to install broad boulevards that were much harder for rioters to barricade – conveniently for his boss Napoleon III.

The town planners of post-second world war US cities thought they were improving downtown areas by replacing older buildings with high-rises and free-ways. In many cases, their creations have not stood the test of time.

Boston's North End, a dense collection of tenements and historic buildings that was first settled in the 17th century, was partially destroyed for the construction of a 1950s expressway. The rest of the area faced down the bulldozers and has since become a tourist destination.

Campaigners complain that developers often fail to acknowledge that large-scale demolition can brutalise a neighbourhood. Feelings can run high and buildings' defenders often ask whom the demolition will benefit.

In the Aylesbury case, anti-demoli-

tionists contend that the tenants for whose benefit the estate was first built are the ones who have lost the most. Former tenants who were evicted to make way for the demolition have been scattered far and wide, they add, with some moving out of the city completely. The estate will be replaced by expensive flats for sale, with a net loss of nearly 1,000 social rented homes.

Opponents say the Aylesbury homes were not in poor enough condition to justify demolition. Aysen Dennis of campaign group Aylesbury Tenants and Leaseholders First says: "We all want secure council homes we can afford, in a community that works. Demolition means loss of all that, replaced with more homes for the better-off."

The demolitions amount to "social cleansing", she adds.

In order to keep a blend of new and old, Mr Rees urges developers to put more effort into refurbishment, which they are getting better at, he says.

Fixing up existing buildings, rather than knocking them down, can be cheaper and more environmentally friendly, Mr Rees says. As construction techniques evolve, this can produce results that are "indistinguishable from a freshly created building".

No time like now to look to the future

VIEWPOINT

Michael R. Bloomberg



Bloomberg: 'good reason for hope'

Seeing the future does not require a crystal ball – just an understanding of cities.

The world is moving from agrarian to urban at a startling pace. In 1900, two out of 10 of the world's population lived in urban areas. As of 1990, it was less than four in 10. Today, it is more than half and by 2050 two of every three people will live in urban areas. This trend is creating enormous challenges for local and national governments, but also unprecedented opportunities for societal progress. How well cities meet those challenges, and capitalise on the opportunities, will have profound consequences.

There is good reason to be hopeful. Urbanisation has always served as a catalyst for innovation that expands access to education and economic opportunity, raises living standards and improves public health. Over the past several decades, the world has witnessed the fastest period of poverty reduction in human history – and it is no coincidence that it has happened alongside the fastest period of urbanisation in history. In fact, poverty reduction has been largely driven by urbanisation. For that trend to continue apace, cities must take bold actions to prepare for the growth, or else risk being overwhelmed by it.

Traditionally, people moving from rural to urban areas could find low-skill industrial jobs. Now, however, the very technological forces that made agriculture less labour-intensive are having had the same impact on manufacturing. To prevent chronic unemployment and its attendant ills, including crime and civil unrest, cities must find ways to create jobs for people of every skill level.

The recent riots in Baltimore and

'Today, great cities are being built around people and the benefits will extend with each passing year'

Ferguson in the US reflect not only tensions with police, but also longstanding frustration over poverty and lack of economic mobility.

The future of cities rests on their ability to offer people hope of a better life, which requires them to create schools where all students can get the education necessary to succeed in the new economy – and infrastructure that will attract private sector investment and raise living standards.

Today, people around the world are more likely to have access to high-tech resources than to basic infrastructure that was pioneered in the 19th century. According to a UN study of the world's 7bn people, 6bn have access to a mobile phone, but only 4.5bn have access to a toilet; 1.5bn people still lack access to electricity.

It is not just in the developing world that infrastructure investment lags behind demand. In the G20 countries,

governments face ageing water, sewer, transportation and energy systems. As urban populations rise, modernising and expanding infrastructure becomes increasingly important. In the next 50 years, cities in the US and Europe will need to replace or modernise nearly all of the infrastructure that was built over the past 200.

Urban infrastructure will play a critical role in the battle against climate change. Cities produce about 70 per cent of world greenhouse gas emissions, a figure that will rise as urbanisation accelerates. Most cities are located on coastal waters, meaning the world will become increasingly vulnerable to sea level rise. This gives cities a powerful – almost existential – reason to mitigate the causes and effects of climate change.

City leaders understand this and they have been leading the way in adopting ambitious climate strategies. During my time as mayor of New York, we reduced the city's carbon footprint by 19 per cent, even as our population grew. We developed and implemented a long-term plan (PlaNYC) to accommodate population growth. As part of this, we borrowed ideas from cities around the world that were testing new ways of improving their residents' lives.

Such sharing among cities will increase and governments would be wise to give them greater authority over their critical infrastructure systems. The World Bank estimates that only 4 per cent of the 500 largest cities in developing countries have internationally recognised credit ratings, making it all but impossible for them to finance the modern infrastructure they need. Providing cities with greater access to capital markets is one of the best ways for national governments to help them take control of their futures.

Cities that succeed in creating the conditions that attract talented and hard-working people – safe streets, good schools, clean air, beautiful parks, exciting cultural opportunities – will become magnets for an increasingly mobile workforce – and, as result, for employers, too. Talent, I have always believed, attracts capital far more effectively than capital attracts talent.

Great cities were once built around rich natural resources: a deep harbour, a wealth of minerals, an abundant fuel supply. Today, great cities are being built around people – and the benefits will extend with each passing year, provided we prepare for the future now.

Michael R. Bloomberg served as mayor of New York City from 2002 to 2013

North America will export more oil than it imports by 2020.

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