

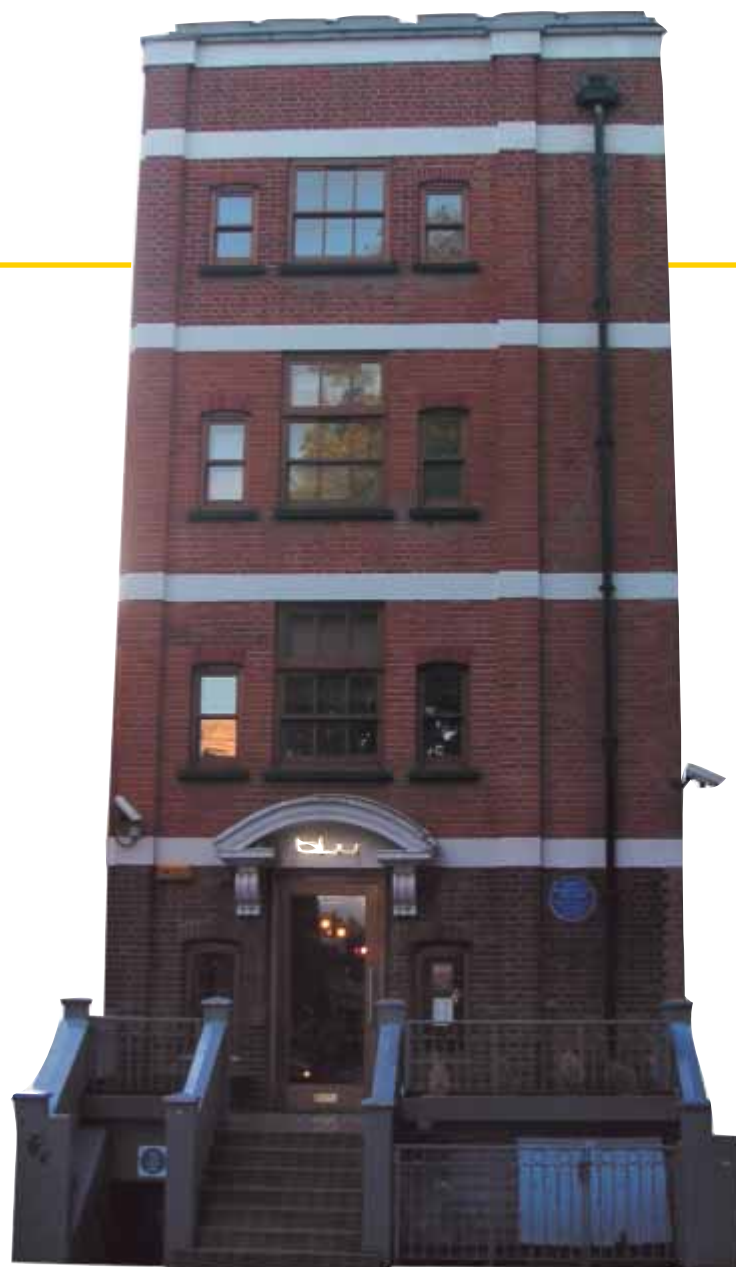


## Designing to Create Value

Joanna Averley

Joanna Averley, outlines her observations on how public agencies and developers alike can think about using culture and design to create value in mixed-use places.

A wide range of people across the public and private sectors are now committed to proactively managing change in our cities: whether they see it as retro-fitting, reintegrating, reinventing, revitalizing, or rejuvenating, they are helping to realize the potential of once economically depressed cities across the UK. Some dramatic transformations have been brought about. And in the hearts of many of our most depressed towns and cities, such as Newcastle and Gateshead, this transformation has been rooted in a strategy to breathe new life into city centres with mixed-use developments and in particular with cultural infrastructure.



## Hoxton, London

- Identified in the late 80's as a derelict area unaffected by the property boom, Hoxton initially received attention as a popular district for artists
- Rapid Development during the 1990s
  - Exclusive apartments e.g. Discovery Dock
  - Restaurants, bars and galleries e.g. Jamie Oliver's 'Fifteen' and Jay Joplin's 'White Cube' gallery
  - Urban Space Management's 'Container City' completed May 2001. Made from 80% recycled material, the project offered 4,800 feet of office space. An extra floor was added in 2003
  - Charitable projects include 'Circus Space' — a scheme offering a 'diverse artistic programme' and based in a previously derelict generating station. Over £1.2 million in private and public funds has been spent on the project hitherto
- 2000 - £59.4 million allocated under the New Deal for communities channelled through the Shoreditch Trust
- Hoxton is generally perceived as a negative example of regeneration with ongoing social issues including:
  - A 'yuppie' culture alien to long-term residents, most of whom live in 25 council estates in the neighbouring areas
  - Continued high unemployment (5.5%)
  - A tendency for locals to only find low-paid fields such as bars and security
  - An escalation in land value of 141%, preventing most young residents from buying or renting
  - A lack of community buildings



*Hoxton Square, London*

But how do we measure the 'success' of these transformations? There are, of course, plenty of economic indicators that we can use, according to our particular interest – the numbers of jobs, the increase in floor space, the levels of investment, or the number of people – but taken together, all these and more add up to the idea of a distinctive 'place'. This is not simply the ingredients of a place, but how they are put together. It is also more than individual buildings - it is also the spaces between them.

In many of the most 'successful' places, culture has been a driver for sustained regeneration, supporting and creating distinctiveness in some of the most marginal areas. For example, Hoxton today is one of the most fashionable parts of inner London, yet within living memory it was the capital's most notorious slum area. 'Hoxton is the leading criminal quarter of London, and indeed of all England', wrote Charles Booth in a report at the beginning of the twentieth century. Its rags to riches transformation has in part come about through a fine-grained regeneration, and a strategy – 'Hackney: Cultural Workshop of London' - that recognised the potential of flagships such as the Lux Cinema and Circus Space to create a distinctive offer for creative entrepreneurs. However, one price of success is that a rapid increase in land values means that loft apartments have now replaced the artist squats.





Rents in Hoxton may have become stratospheric, but new marginal opportunities still exist. Eric Reynolds's company Urban Space Management wanted to find the cheapest possible way of building artists' accommodation and so created Container City at Trinity Buoy Wharf, London, using old shipping containers.

Where masterplans have re-sculpted whole quarters of cities, the value created by mixed-use and in particular by cultural infrastructure, has also become apparent. This has certainly been the case with the development of the Ikon Gallery, at the heart of Argent's commercial development of Brindleyplace in Birmingham's city centre. The redbrick former school dating from 1878 re-opened in 1998 as a new home to this innovative gallery and educational charity. It has become central to the success of Brindleyplace, which in turn has given confidence to other investors in Birmingham, acting as a catalyst for the exponential changes that have followed. Cultural attractions such as the Ikon can give a place a distinctiveness that is crucial. After all, as Alan Scott, the American Economic Geographer put it, it is generally not advisable to attempt to become Silicon Valley when Silicon Valley exists elsewhere.



The value of culture in mixed-use regeneration is not limited to the iconic flagships: a new scale of cultural destination is also thriving. Spike Island Studios in Bristol is a former tea-packing factory in the Cumberland Basin at the edge of Bristol's Harbourside. Owned by Bristol City Council and rented to the Spike Island charity for a peppercorn rent it has been used as an artist studio facility since 1997 and has built up as considerable local, national and international audience. Commercial cultural industries such as filmmakers have been attracted, and a second phase of capital investment is now expanding the residential as well as studio and café space at the studios.

With culture and design as drivers for sustained regeneration, distinctiveness can be created and marginal places can be changed into valuable places. Cultural buildings are now to be found at the heart of many regeneration and mixed-use schemes. And yet, if the value of design and culture in mixed-use seems to be clear, why is it still so often the case that it is the public sector setting the quality agenda and the private sector that bumps up against the requirements that they seek. Surely now is the time when the private sector should be taking the lead in creating well-designed, distinctive and valuable mixed-use quarters in our towns and cities?

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## Container City

- Devised by Urban Space Management (Eric Reynolds)
- Provides affordable accommodation in buildings made from shipping containers
- Flagship scheme based at Trinity Buoy Wharf, London Docklands — completed May 2001 in 5 months
- Originally 3 stories high providing 4,800 square feet of office space. A further level was added in 2003
- Made from 80% recyclable material

## Covent Garden, London

- Redevelopment has been consistent following a period of stagnation in the 1970's caused by the relocation of the fruit and vegetable market to Nine Elms.
- Significant development includes:
  - The London Transport Museum - opened 1980 as a non-profit organisation
  - Redevelopment of the Jubilee Market — opened 1987
  - Establishment of the Somerset House Trust in 1997 as part of the Heritage Lottery Fund to conserve and develop Somerset House
  - Lottery funded £214 million redevelopment of the Royal Opera House, reopened 1999

[www.ikon-gallery.co.uk](http://www.ikon-gallery.co.uk)  
[www.spikeisland.org.uk](http://www.spikeisland.org.uk)  
[www.covent-garden.co.uk](http://www.covent-garden.co.uk)  
[www.ltmuseum.co.uk](http://www.ltmuseum.co.uk)  
[www.jmh.company.org.uk](http://www.jmh.company.org.uk)  
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