

Urban regeneration and placemaking



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Outline

Basics of urban regeneration

Placemaking and quality places

Some essentials for urban
regeneration and placemaking

Concluding comments

1 Urban regeneration and urban problems

Urban regeneration is a multi-dimensional process, and a key element of urban planning policy, which seeks to address urban problems in existing urban areas.

It has social, economic and environmental/physical dimensions – and is often led by a particular theme (Culture-led, housing-led etc.).

It is longer-term and area-based. It should result in real and tangible improvements.

Partnership is a key feature, along with broader governance structures.



Urban problems are complex, and many result from urban processes related to larger, longer-term changes in society and the economy. These problems are often spatially concentrated and presented as problem-sets..

We have problems of loss of community and business due to the established trend of suburbanisation/decentralisation (moving from the urban centre to the urban edge/periphery).

This comes with a range of the associated problems for the centre, such as shrinking and less diverse communities, the decline of local economy, decaying, vacant or underused urban fabric, traffic congestion, and poor quality urban space.

And we have issues in other more peripheral areas where the economic base has declined or disappeared.

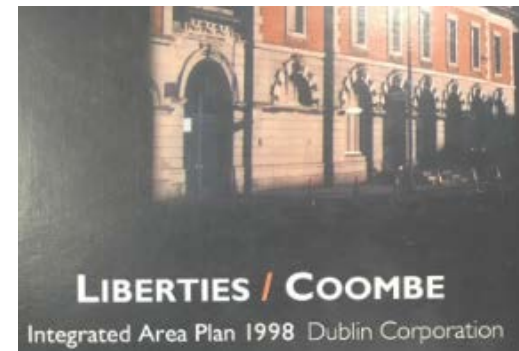
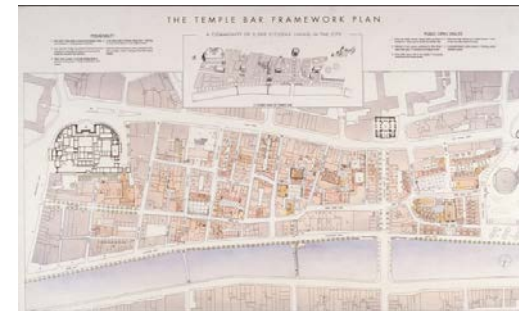


Changing approaches

As with other countries, approaches to urban regeneration in Ireland have changed over the years.

Urban regeneration was a late arrival to public and urban policy compared to other European countries.

- Pre-1980s – social housing in derelict or decaying and ‘obsolete areas’;
- 1980s – Urban renewal and development-led approaches;
- 1990s – Integrated urban regeneration;
- 2008 to 2016 – Wind down and scale down; and
- 2016 – NPF and URDF, and urban regeneration projects.



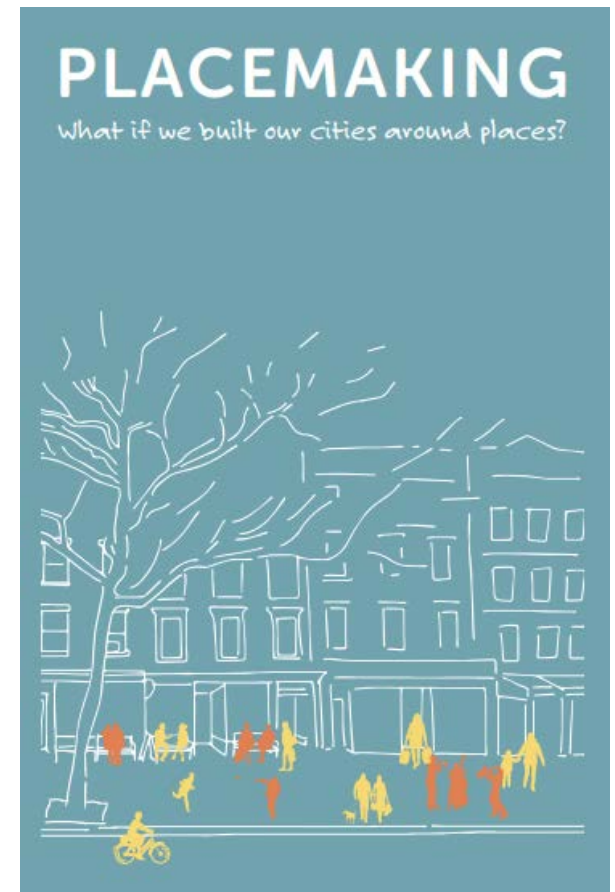
2 Placemaking and quality places

Placemaking is an multi-faceted and multi-party approach to improving and creating quality places.

It focuses on the interaction between people and the urban environment and achieving a high quality of life, sense of place and belonging.

It is supportive of and overlaps with the concept of sustainable towns and cities.

Planning and urban design play a central role in realising quality places.



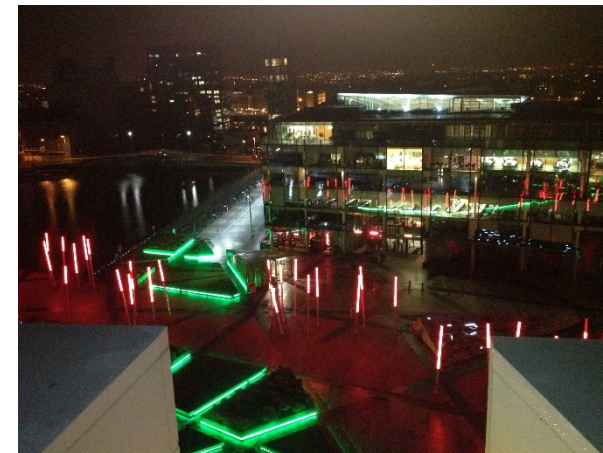
What makes a quality place?

Quality places share some common characteristics:

A strong character and sense of place – cultural, built and natural heritage is understood, valued and enhanced.

A rich diversity of functions and activities – underpinning viability and vitality.

A highly adaptable urban structure and buildings – for future, longer-term changes in society and economy.



A well-connected network of streets and spaces of high quality for all users – to promote urban life and a sense of shared ownership. Important public contribution to urban regeneration.

Priority for walking, cycling and public transport – to reduce our reliance on the car, (and by so doing improving health and wellbeing).

Coherent, legible and attractive streetscapes – providing continuity and enclosure, variety of frontages, vibrancy and interest.

Integration of the various characteristics of quality places.



3 Some essentials for placemaking and urban regeneration

Area-based approach

Places are the basic unit for place-making. Urban problems are often spatially-concentrated and need a spatial response.

Plan-led approach

Informed and up-to-date plans within the hierarchy of plans and policy.

Appropriately detailed plans. Certainty and flexibility for investment. In some cases special plans are required.

Plans should be innovative and informed by best-practice in other places (Ireland and abroad).



Integrated urban development

Urban development is a catalyst for place-making.

It should produce lasting social, economic and environmental/physical benefits.

Ideally, regeneration projects should be integrated in nature, incorporating mixed-use, community and cultural infrastructure, quality public spaces, improved local accessibility/mobility.



Exemplar projects

Projects should emerge from the larger regeneration plan strategy. They should fulfil needs or contribute to new activities and functions.

Projects should be exemplars and must be forward looking, innovative, and exceed standards and expectations.

Funding, feasibility and viability

The funding model needs to be clear – this is likely to multi-source.

Feasibility needs to be understood, but longer-term viability/robustness is crucial. Alignment with longer term vision and objectives should be demonstrated.



Expertise

Planners should gather and manage multi-disciplinary teams in preparing plans for urban regeneration.

Planners should have strong understanding of placemaking and engage urban design skills and advice.

New roles have emerged for planners in preparing bids for funding, project management and area management. These skills will need to be developed.

Partnership and governance

Successful urban regeneration is predicated on strong and broad partnership (e.g. Community, local business, state agencies, funding bodies etc.). The right governance structures are needed, and this will depend on size, complexity and ability of existing agencies to deliver.

4 Finally

Urban regeneration will become a greater part of planning practice in the future given persistent urban problems (e.g. urban centres and in ‘twilight’ areas) and policy for more compact growth.

We may need to develop new local specialist, regeneration agencies and special planning instruments to tackle more complex urban regeneration areas.

A coherent national policy on urban regeneration is needed to guide regional and local policy, plans and approaches.

We need to ensure that public agencies, such as the Land Development Agency, are aligned with the objective of urban regeneration and satisfy the role of an Urban Regeneration and Development Agency (NPF, National Policy Objective 12).

Post-Covid-19

We are facing into an uncertain future post-Covid-19. Local urban economies have suffered a major shock. For many towns this is a very unwelcome addition to an already difficult problem-set.

A rapid health check is needed. And we need to repurpose plans as soon as possible, where necessary.

Urban regeneration can and should make a strong contribution to the recovery at national, regional and local level.

The public finances will be stretched following the current crisis. However, we must advocate for the URDF and RRDF as very important catalysts for national recovery, through the regeneration of local communities and economies.

Thank you!



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