



Space, Place, Life

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It's strange to think that the industrialized world had its humble beginnings in a handful of small towns in Northern England, where proximity to a major port, coal supply, soft water and a working population combined with technological advances to create the textile trade. Within a hundred years the whole of the country had industrialized, and the urban landscape transformed with factories, mills, potteries, foundries, canals, railways, docks, worker housing – and eventually, through Victorian reforms and philanthropy, hospitals, schools and cultural institutions.

But just as the UK reaped the benefits of being the world's industrial pioneer, so it was also one of the first to feel the social and economic pain of deindustrialization. After WWII, improved transportation and communications, new technologies, lower wages and a host of other factors saw manufacturing gradually shift to other parts of the globe. As a result, the last fifty years have been challenging times for the urban environment, as towns and cities struggled to find new purpose for buildings and spaces created to serve the purposes of the industrial age.

This task was made all the harder as a result of the well-intentioned, but disastrous experiments in planning and architecture during the 1960's and 70's, which replaced traditional places with contemporary forms alien to everyday life. Acting as a catalyst for crime and anti-social behavior, these first attempts at remaking cities led, instead, to their wilderness years and a mass migration to suburbia. So today, as well as re-purposing spaces and structures from the industrial past, solutions must also be found to mitigate the mistakes of far more recent times.

Drawing on more than three decades of work by John Thompson & Partners and research undertaken by The Academy of Urbanism, this presentation looks at approaches to the two great challenges of the Post-Industrial era.

First, the enduring principles involved in the successful re-purposing of different kinds of inherited environments, together with how new agendas and technologies can inform and shape the cities of the future.

Second, how a meaningful and lasting Urban Renaissance can be created by engaging local communities in the change process itself, through participatory planning, co-operative development and the creation of town charters and community development trusts. For while large scale, Post-Industrial projects

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such as cultural complexes for tourism or new financial service districts are best served by traditional master planning—delivering the vibrancy, character and quality of life of a successful city requires thinking and designing at a much finer level of detail, drawing on collective memories and ideas, to create authentic urban places where people can realize their own ambitions.