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RECYCLING URBAN LANDSCAPES - BEYOND THE POWER

Harri Andersson
University of Turku, Finland

The urban landscape is a cultural product of social change. It connects architecture, urban planning and economy to urban form, and simultaneously reflects and hides the existing power structures. A typical change that has been taking place in urban development is that from state institutions or other unambiguous institutions of power to the power blocs of industry and commerce, and to the new concepts of growth and effectiveness characteristic of those blocs. Internationalized production and consumption have meant a more international form, or postmodern urban identity, which reflects fragmented and more problematic forms of power.

This paper examines the relationships between urban renewal processes involving the reuse of built-up environments and the power structures behind those renewal processes. The intention is to specify the different meanings of the urban landscape (historical, cultural, functional, and structural) and the changing concepts of power relations (material vs. symbolic, local preferences vs. multinational claims, individual vs. collective). As a specific example, the processes in which a former industrial space, the 'Verkatehdas textile mill' in the inner city area of Turku is being transformed into a luxurious housing and service unit 'Verkahovi'. Industrial power based on production is replaced by a power bloc of urban marketing systems which offer future forms of urban living instead of traditional urban life.

The interpretation of an urban landscape

The spatial form of a city is the outcome of a variety of social, economic and political processes, and the factors contributing to it serve to depict certain historical situations which are part of a larger social reality but will explain the changes which have taken place in the urban landscape at particular moments in time. Any city will yield examples of physical and social environments which have been created at different periods in time and under different historical conditions. The economic and social processes describing the structure and functioning of the society in which the town is located determine the nature and extent of the spatial variants to be found within its economic and social functions ('power structures') and the influence that these have on certain urban landscapes inside the city. The power structures in society and the allocation of resources form the key to understanding and interpreting the processes of change in urban landscape.

In his numerous works published between 1975 and 1980, PAHL combines the view of various groups exercising different degrees of power within society with the concept of urban managerialism. PAHL's 'managerialist thesis', derived from urban conflict theory and notions of the post-industrial state, provides a framework for research which points to the existence of a set of factors governing the allocation of urban functions, comprising the representatives of the building companies, property agents and local authorities. By studying the activities of these people and the

institutions they stand for, one can move towards an understanding of the functioning of urban markets. The institutional approach is very useful for classifying 'urban managers' as producers, consumers and changers of urban land. As the initiators of structural changes, private developers (producers of urban land) have been the true architects of the urban spatial structure and urban landscape. Even though the developers are operating in an unstable system consisting of the value judgments of private individuals, and under increasing public surveillance, they are still able to assume the dominant role, since they are producers of the majority of the new buildings which households and businesses come to occupy (cf. BOURNE 1976: 539).

Urban models conceived of within the managerial frame of reference take account of the historical dimension to a certain extent and bear a direct relationship to other, broader social processes, but even so, doubts have arisen regarding the capacity of such an approach to comprehend the real nature of society and its influence upon urban processes and the socio-spatial forms within cities. The development of a political economy approach has meant the adoption of a more critical view of changes in urban structure. Instead of institutional conflicts and constraints, urban growth should be viewed as one aspect of a more extensive process of social development, and an urban structure as a product of this development at a given point in time. This also means that 'the faces of power' are more complicated than they are assumed to be in the case of institutional explanations. The spatial restructuring of the city is organized by various 'place entrepreneurs' who practice the politics of local economic development by forming growth coalitions. In their book 'Urban fortunes: the political economy of place', LOGAN and MOLOTCH (1987) speak about 'systemic power', which is a result of business people's continuous interaction with public officials. The organization of the growth coalitions ('the growth machine') included anybody who became an entrepreneur in a particular place: politicians, local media, public utilities, financial institutions, even including universities and cultural organizations. Later (e.g. HARVEY 1989, COUCH 1990) this relationship between the private sector and the public sector ('private-public partnership') seemed to rise to the status of a leading instrument for urban development, especially in urban renewal.

The postmodern debate in the late 1980's also emphasized the meaning of the urban landscape as part of a set of changing power relations (see ZUKIN 1988, 1991, 1992, and KNOX 1993). ZUKIN in particular integrates the urban landscape with structural forces and political, economic and cultural institutions: "The constant rebuilding of cities in core capitalist societies suggests that the major condition of architectural production is to create shifting material landscapes. These landscapes bridge space and time; they also directly mediate economic power by both conforming to and structuring norms of market-driven investment, production and consumption" (ZUKIN 1988: 435). Later ZUKIN emphasizes that new architecture and urban forms are produced under almost the same social conditions as consumer products (1991: 42). In urban renewal, especially concerning the reuse and recycling of urban built-up environments, the power structure is more fragmented than earlier, consisting of various consumption and cultural experts, estate investors and more or

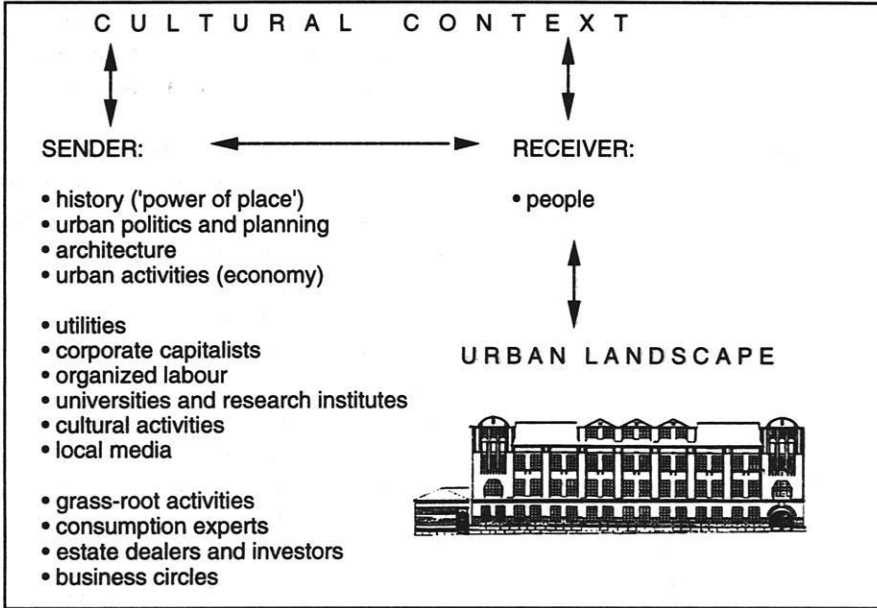
less obscure business circles. (Post)-modern urban landscapes are organized around principles of consumption rather than production, which means a new and different way of interpreting them. As KNOX (1993: 3) puts it: "The built environment, then, must be seen as simultaneously dependent and conditioning, outcome and mechanism of the dynamics of investments, production and consumption... approaching the built environment in these terms presents a considerable challenge".

In terms of the urban landscape, the postmodern trend reflects the city of signs and various species of information. The scheme in Figure 1 follows the idea of interpreting urban landscapes in the field of cultural semiotics (see BENGIS and his applications of Juri LOTMAN's text analysis to urban planning - 'the city as a cultural text', 1993). In this scheme the sender represent various power structures (from urban managerialism to the postmodern debate), the receiver is a city resident, and the urban landscape is a result of the exercise of power ('text'). The cultural context is a society reflecting the imperatives of cultural, economic, political and social forces at particular times. The sender communicates with the receiver through the urban landscape. In this sense the urban landscape is full of remains representing the exercise of power at different periods in time (old industrial buildings or areas are connected with historical urban activities, industrial capitalists, organized labour, estate investors, business circles etc.).

The shift in urban meaning from production to consumption has blurred the distinctions between market and non-market norms. ZUKIN maintains that there are two cultural products that most directly map the landscape: architecture and urban form. Neither is free of market forces and the attachments of place nor entirely bound by them. Where changing urban landscapes are concerned, ZUKIN also emphasizes the concept of liminality (or 'liminal space') which mediates between nature and the artifice, public use and private value, global markets and local space. The commercialization of urban architecture (and urban planning) reflects the increasing commercialization of the social category of design, which means that the liminal experience is broadened so that new urban spaces are formed, permeated, and defined by liminality (see ZUKIN 1991: 41-42). Liminal spaces complicate the effort to construct a spatial identity, which means that mapping the urban landscape entails admitting more interpretations than in the earlier periods of urban development... and at the same time it has broadened in meaning to include an appreciation of material culture ('the landscape as material culture'), a linguistic metaphor ('the landscape as text'), an economic activity ('the financial landscape'), a cognitive construct ('the abstract landscape) and an existing social order, 'the historical landscape' (see ROWNTREE 1986: 580-581 and ZUKIN 1992: 223-224).

The most typical examples of 'landscape manipulation' have taken place in the interior space of the city when reorganizing the quality of urban living (c.f. gentrification, new consumption areas and sophisticated entertainment). Many traditional urban shopping districts are undergoing metamorphoses from realistic to artificial environments. Senders who communicate with city dwellers via shopping

Figure 1 Interpreting an urban landscape as part of a body of information sent and received

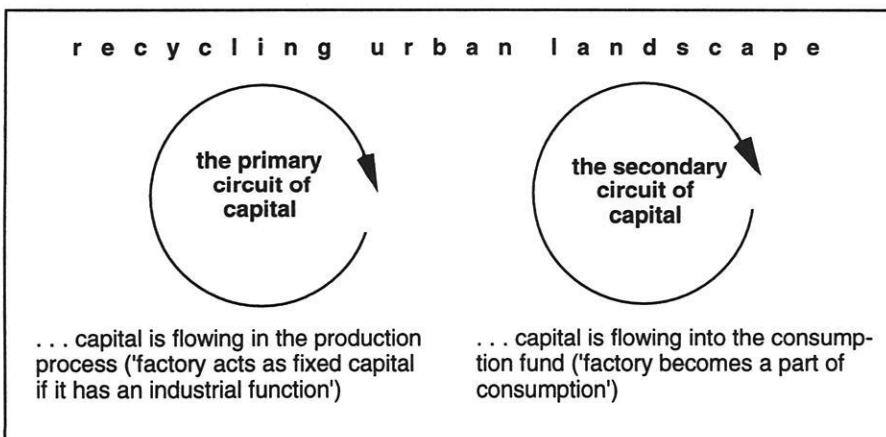


districts have connections with architects, estate investors and international investments which are transforming districts from locations of crafts to sites of mass production and consumption. On the other hand, landscape manipulation also refers to the restoration and redevelopment of older locales, their abstraction from a logic of mercantile or industrial capitalism and their renewal as up-to-date consumption spaces behind the red-brick or cast-iron façade of the past (ZUKIN 1992: 222). Reuse (recycling) of urban landscapes has led to accelerated land use, which in some cases defies the traditional methods of urban planning. The focus of investors (and local authorities) has shifted from sustained long-term yield from property to speculation in land and short-term development rights (BOURNE 1991: 188). This also means a shift in power structures - or at least a situation in which the so-called postmodern urban landscape has more 'senders' and more 'speculators' who are willing to participate in new action on the urban scene. Where the industrial order of the modern city created homogeneity, rationality, mass production and modern residential developments as part of urban living and understanding, the (post)industrial order of the (post)modern city has created plurality, flexibility, small batch production and fragmentation - a process in which recycled urban landscapes are fruitful for all kind of experimentation in urban marketing and future urban life.

Recycling urban landscapes

The reuse of existing urban areas has become prevalent in the course of the intensification of land use in the city centres and the redevelopment of old industrial and waterfront areas. This has indeed been the predominant form of development in many western market societies - e.g. over half of the new urban land use in Great Britain is now taking place through projects for the reuse of built environments. David HARVEY (1985: 3-7) characterizes the economic process whereby consumption has become dominant over production as a movement of capital away from the primary circuit (capital flows in the production process) to the secondary circuit (involving the capital which flows into fixed assets in the built environment and into the consumption fund, see Figure 2). The gradual erosion of the 'industrial hegemony' is encouraged by a number of circumstances which arise periodically within the process of de-industrialization (overproduction, falling rates of industrial profit, the lack of investment opportunities etc.). Instead of traditional investments in industrial growth, these factors lead to 'flexible accumulation', when too much capital is produced relative to the available opportunities to employ it. Financial institutions and estate investors seeking to invest their considerable pools of capital in projects with maximal returns, invest more readily in the built environment under conditions of flexible accumulation (cf. TWEEDALE 1988: 189). In periods of general prosperity, redevelopment of the built environment is one lucrative form of investment and property speculation. The latest ideas have been to recycle existing buildings or built environments, 'a cultural act' which hides the investor's potential profits.

Figure 2 Transformation of urban space - primary and secondary circuits of capital



There has been a number of renewal projects in Finnish cities since the mid-1980's, mainly concerning the intensification of land use in city centres and the reuse of old inner city industrial areas. One common feature of all these projects has been the miscellaneous nature of the land use agreements reached between the property owners and the local authorities. A typical solution is that property owners submit to conditions which impose more financial burdens on them than under the regulations of the Building Act, in exchange for a greater permitted building volume, which will increase the value of the property. Land use agreements usually contain various stipulations which should allow the local authorities to influence the implementation of the land use plans, but even so it has been the practice that quite extensive responsibility and latitude in the renewal process has been delegated from the public to the private sector. This could lead to excessive sameness and expense in urban renewal, and, what is particular important, a slackening of local government responsibility for the urban landscape. In most cases of redevelopment, local politicians have to learn a new way of handling land use policy. Traditional policy was connected with the supply of 'raw land', and usually took the form of contractual agreements between the city authorities and building companies (developers). In the recycling of urban space, however, the private sector is more fragmented, and local government is actually uncertain as to what it is supplying and to whom.

Most of the old industrial buildings or districts in the inner city area of Turku are owned by the city council itself or estate investors, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Owners of old industrial premises in the inner city area of Turku
 (arrows indicate directions of changes in power relations)

owner	industrialists	city of Turku (or state)	building companies (developers)	estate investors (<i>'business circles'</i>)
location				
city centre (CBD)	2	5	-	8
	<i>marketing companies</i> →			
downtown (including harbour)	13	13	5	18
	<i>board members</i> - - - - - →			
riverfront	-	6	2	6
	<i>estate agents</i> →			
total (78)	15	24	7	32

Only a few premises are in the possession of industrialists. Typically, the industrialists have either sold their industrial spaces or established marketing companies for the purpose of negotiating good zoning contracts for future

redevelopment or recycling of these areas. The private sector has also been active in taking over industrial premises predominantly occupying or located adjacent to sites which offer the greatest private sector development potential and financial returns - in most cases in the city centre or waterfront area (cf. LOFTMAN 1994: 1). The power relations that lie beyond these reproduced urban landscapes and the meaning of 'urban function' also reflect future forms of urban living - different from the typically gentrified urban areas. The chronology of the development of the Verkatehdas textile mill in Turku gives an example of a recycling process in which the industrial building and its environment have been used for a number of purposes during this century.

Chronology of the transformation of the Verkatehdas textile mill

The history of the Verkatehdas textile mill and its nearby environment from the old industrial space to the luxurious housing and service unit 'Verkahovi' is described in Table 2. These developmental phases reflect interpretative changes in the urban landscape, various power structures lying behind the process of urban renewal and more or less manipulated expectations regarding (future) urban living.

Table 2 Chronology of the transformation of the Verkatehdas textile mill in the inner city area of Turku

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- 1875** Master dyer Johan Linnell founds a weaving mill and dyehouse on the banks of the River Aura.
 - 1885** Johan Linnell is declared bankrupt and a new textile company is founded by a group of businessmen.
 - 1905** Working-class suburbs begin to develop in the area between the textile mill and the River Aura, producing a tightly meshed clump of city streets by around 1910.
 - 1938** First red-brick factory building erected, a landmark for the industrial area.
 - 1950** Second red-brick building erected, the last factory building in the area, completing the formation of the industrial landscape. The working-class suburb next to the mill has preserved its social content and physical features.
 - 1964** The Hyvilla corporation, the last industrial owner of the Verkatehdas area, goes bankrupt, and the Union Bank of Finland becomes the new owner. The bank forms two property companies, Ekku Oy and Tervatori Oy, to organize the future redevelopment of the area. The first red-brick factory building is rented out to various small companies, mainly for industrial purposes. The second remains empty.

- 1982** The Union Bank of Finland sells the second building, that administered by Tervatori Oy, to the construction company Polar. The gentrification process is gradually beginning in the old working-class suburb.
- 1986** The Polar company decides to demolish some of the old factory buildings. A local citizens' organization Enemmistö ('Majority') lodges a proposal that it should be protected as a historical industrial site. The National Board of Antiquities and Historical Monuments suggests preservation under the zoning regulations. The building company nevertheless demolishes some of the buildings and starts work on a new, expensive housing area. Social and physical gentrification is total and irreversible.
- 1990** The Union Bank of Finland applies for changes in the zoning regulations concerning the remaining factory building. The bank and the building company Haka form a property company Verkahovi Oy to convert the old industrial site to consumer use. The insurance company Apollo raises the idea of building suites for elderly people financed out of their retirement pension insurances. The leases of the small companies occupying the building expire. All activity in the area is suspended on account of the recession. Haka and Apollo both go bankrupt.
- 1993** The Union Bank of Finland revives its earlier plan to transform the industrial building into housing and service premises (restaurant, solarium, medical centre, library, swimming and bathing pool etc.). The four cornerstones of the project are: finance of apartments (Union Bank of Finland and the Stella insurance company owned by it), finance of service premises (Finnish Slot Machine Association - a private investment company), suitable buyers for investment stock (Turku University Foundation and the Foundation of the Swedish-language university Åbo Akademi) and the marketing of suites (retirement pension insurances, a 'personal way to live').
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The Verkatehdas textile mill is one of the four old industrial districts of any size in the inner city area of Turku. Industrial operations began there in 1875, when the master dyer Johan Linnell founded a weaving mill and dyehouse on the banks of the River Aura, and continued until the 1950's, when the last of the eight industrial buildings was erected. The ninety-year history of the industrial urban landscape ended in 1964, when the owner at that time, the industrial corporation Hyvilla Oy, went bankrupt and the Verkatehdas area passed into the hands of a bank. The mill had been part of a power block maintained by textile industrialists, which had greatly affected the urban history and autonomy of the city, even though Turku was never such a powerful 'textile town' as Tampere, for example. The Verkatehdas site and the working-class suburbs surrounding it were signs of quite unambiguous social relations between a 'sender' and a 'receiver'. People understood the meaning of industrial work in everyday life, and they were able to connect this interpretation with the cultural context of a growing modern city.

The events of the last thirty years point to conflicts, changes in ownership and speculations concerning the future use of the former industrial area. The short boom at the end of the 1980's led to extraordinary economic and political manipulations in the urban world of Finnish society, which in the case of the Verkatehdas site meant the demolition of some of the old industrial buildings (in spite of public appeals and suggestions by central government authorities). The second phase in the urban transformation started in 1993, this time through the medium of complicated marketing systems. The owner, the Union Bank of Finland, was not willing to take any risks in the redevelopment process (cf. the bank crisis in Finland in the early 1990's). A new marketing system was created around four cornerstones: financing of apartments by the bank itself and Stella, an insurance company owned by it, financing of the service premises by the Finnish Slot Machine Association, a private investment company, the finding of suitable buyers for investment stock, the Turku University Foundation and the foundation of the Swedish-language university, Åbo Akademi, and the marketing of suites for retired persons, funded out of their pension insurances and advertised as representing a 'personal way to live'. The first three of these solutions tell us something of the multifarious power structures in which the various estate investors were involved, including both private and public sector operators, while the fourth 'suites for a personal way of life' serves as a sign of the nature of future urban living - and its financing.

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