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To cite this article: Barry Goodchild (2022): Replanning the central area of Wakefield, West Yorkshire: culture and regeneration, 1990–2021, Planning Perspectives, DOI: [10.1080/02665433.2022.2142841](https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2022.2142841)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/02665433.2022.2142841>



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Published online: 20 Dec 2022.



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Replanning the central area of Wakefield, West Yorkshire: culture and regeneration, 1990–2021

Barry Goodchild

Sheffield Hallam University, Centre for Regional, Economic and Social Research, Sheffield United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

ABSTRACT

Towns and cities in the industrial and former coal mining areas of England have often struggled to cope with economic restructuring. This article offers a near contemporary history of the central area of one such city, where culture has become a key device for promoting development and regeneration. Three episodes of policy are distinguished: from 1990 to about 2011, the emergence of a twin-track economic strategy that combined out-of-town business parks with the remodelling of the central area partly on 'Urban Renaissance' principles; from 2011 onwards, continued city centre decline when previous investments had little economic impact; and after about 2020, a process of re-orientation; and as part of this, a reinvigorated attempt to rebrand the city, albeit within the continuing framework of the twin-track strategy. A reflexive methodology is used to construct the narrative. That methodology enables a joint consideration of discourse and economic realities, showing how place, branding, and planning come together in representational logics that generate both supportive and counter narratives.

KEYWORDS

Adaptive planning;
branding; creative industries;
master plans; urban
representations

Introduction

The recent history of planning in the central area of Wakefield deserves to be better known. It deserves to be better known, in part, as a means of documenting the emergence of new forms of culture-led regeneration, a topical subject in the context of recent initiatives in England in favour of 'levelling up'.¹ As this article will show, the experience in Wakefield reveals significant changes in the treatment of culture within planning documents, from the time of the Urban Renaissance initiatives of the early 2000s to the present. In addition, the history of planning and regeneration in Wakefield offers a complement to other, more common and better-known case studies of big cities and/ or regions. Wakefield is a small city, with a population of about 117,000² within a larger local authority district of the same name.

Identifying change over time implies a historical narrative. However, the near contemporary character of this account, together with the extensive published literature on similar interventions elsewhere, implies an approach that clarifies history through the methodological assumptions of

CONTACT Barry Goodchild  b.j.goodchild@shu.ac.uk

¹HMG, *Press Release*; NCAPPG, *The Case for Culture*.

²Calculated by the author from the 2020 population estimates of NOMIS (<https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/default.asp>) for the aggregate of the following electoral wards: Wakefield East, Wakefield North, Wakefield Rural, Wakefield South, Wakefield West, Stanley and Outwood East, Wrenthorpe and Outwood West.

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social research. To that effect, the paper uses a reflexive methodology to provide both an exposition of relevant theories and, as the analysis proceeds, references back to theory and the literature.³

The article comprises three main sections and a set of conclusions. The first section comprises a brief description of the area and a summary of the various sources used in the account. The second section ‘Grounded and critical understandings’ is about methodology, including a discussion of what to expect from previous studies. The third section ‘Coping with decline, promoting regeneration’ is the narrative, organized around a series of chronological episodes starting from the collapse of coal mining and manufacturing in the late twentieth century.

Characteristics of the area and sources

Figure 1 shows the case study area, with the boundaries fixed in local planning documents from 2009 onwards.⁴ The area contains the historic core of Wakefield city, including the Cathedral and its pedestrianized precinct, a Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) in operation for four years from 2020, and a cluster of cultural resources, notably along or near to Westgate. Other significant buildings and uses comprise the main offices of the Council, the most extensive retail area in Wakefield District, and the main railway station. In addition, on the banks of the River Calder, the area extends to a museum and art gallery, the ‘Hepworth’ completed in 2011 and intended as a flagship project that would promote the city as a centre for modern sculpture, cultural tourism and art. Alongside the Hepworth is a complex of former woollen mills currently being transformed into a commercial creative hub under the name of Tileyard North.

As shown in Figure 2, the morphology of the core central area mostly comprises a mixture of dense, two-storey rectilinear streets and courtyards developed before 1914, together with a 20th/early twenty-first century urban landscape of dual carriageway roads, roundabouts, extensive car parking, and large flat-roofed retail units, notably a big box retail park along Ings Road.

Maps and aerial photographs show the characteristics of an area at a particular point in time. To an extent, the history of that area can be reconstructed from the remaining traces of the past and the landscape patterns with which those traces are associated. In Figure 2, for example, the gaps in the pre-1914 landscape indicate the existence of extensive redevelopment that earlier maps and archival sources show as having occurred over a long period from the 1930s to the late 1970s.

In contrast, a study of urban regeneration is concerned with the social and economic context of intervention and with the multiple consequences of individual and collective actions, as revealed by mostly qualitative sources of information. In the present case study, information is available in part from the extensive local planning and other policy documentation, including the minutes of the local ‘Task Force’, the main advisory body for regeneration proposals. For the views of residents, relevant information is available through local consultation events and social media discussions. In addition to all this, reports in the local newspaper, the ‘Wakefield Express’, provide statements from all relevant parties, including local businesses. Further, the author has benefited in the past three years from attendance at local policy seminars and launch events dealing with place branding and culture, as well as a Local Plan examination.

The sources offer a combination of primary information, or so-called ‘remnants’, and secondary or ‘narrating’ information.⁵ Remnants record events or trends and, depending on their

³Decker et al, ‘Rethinking History and Memory in Organization Studies’; Alvesson and Skölberg *Reflexive Methodologies*, 69–77: 232–5.

⁴WC, *Central Wakefield Area Action Plan*.

⁵Alvesson and Skölberg, *Reflexive Methodologies*, 109–10.

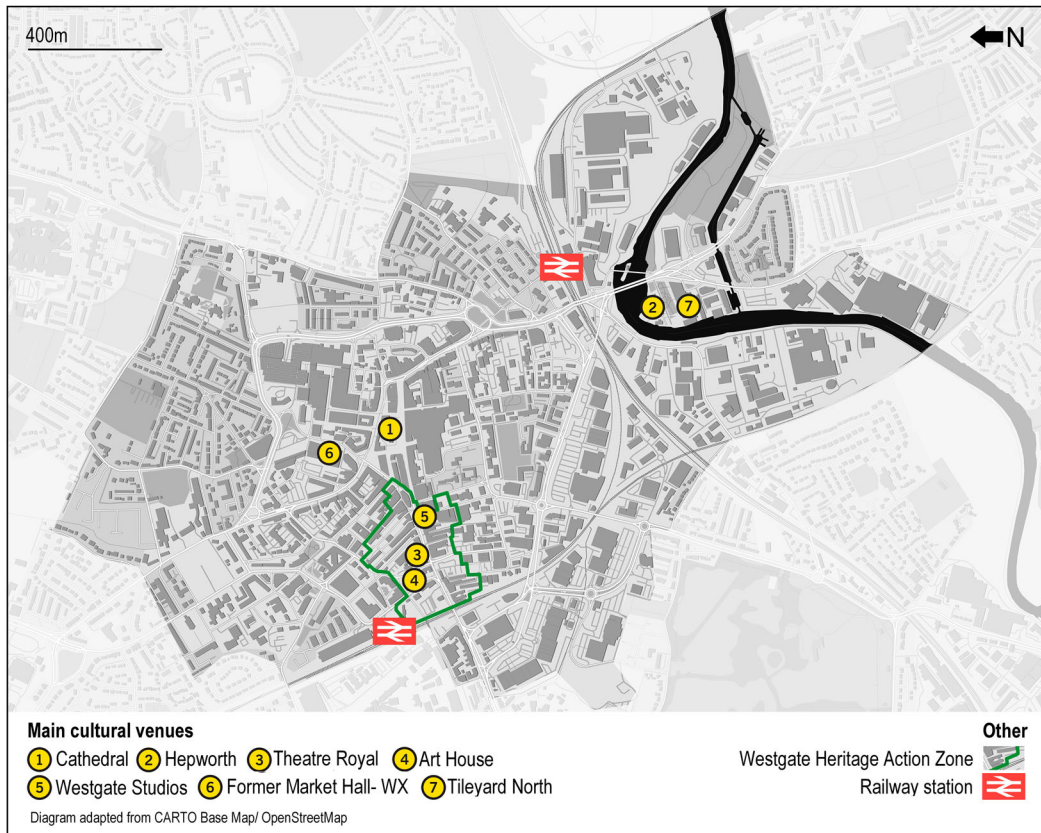


Figure 1. The central area.

character, also reveal intentions and motives. Secondary or ‘narrating’ information helps to interpret events and statements in terms of their implied values, aims and/ or consequences.⁶

Advisory plans and planning reports, by Koetter Kim dating from 2002 and 2005,⁷ and a strategic master plan by Farrells dating from 2021⁸ are examples of remnants. They provide statements of intention at a specific time and place, and since they were both accepted by the Council, they also act as carriers and markers of policy change. Equally, the same plans have to be examined in relation to the evidence offered in a network of other documents. For example, the Koetter Kim reports reflect an Urban Renaissance policy agenda, prepared in the light of a national report of the same name and intended to improve urban design and the quality of urban spaces.⁹ The Koetter Kim design principles were, however, applied in an Action Plan¹⁰ that had other concerns, for example, road improvements and the improvement of the local retail offer, and that changed the outcome.

⁶Ibid.

⁷Koetter and Associates Ltd. *Wakefield District Study: Koetter Kim, Developing the Vision*, unpaginated leaflet.

⁸Farrells, *This is Wakefield*.

⁹Urban Task Force, *Towards an Urban Renaissance*.

¹⁰WC, Central Area Action Plan.

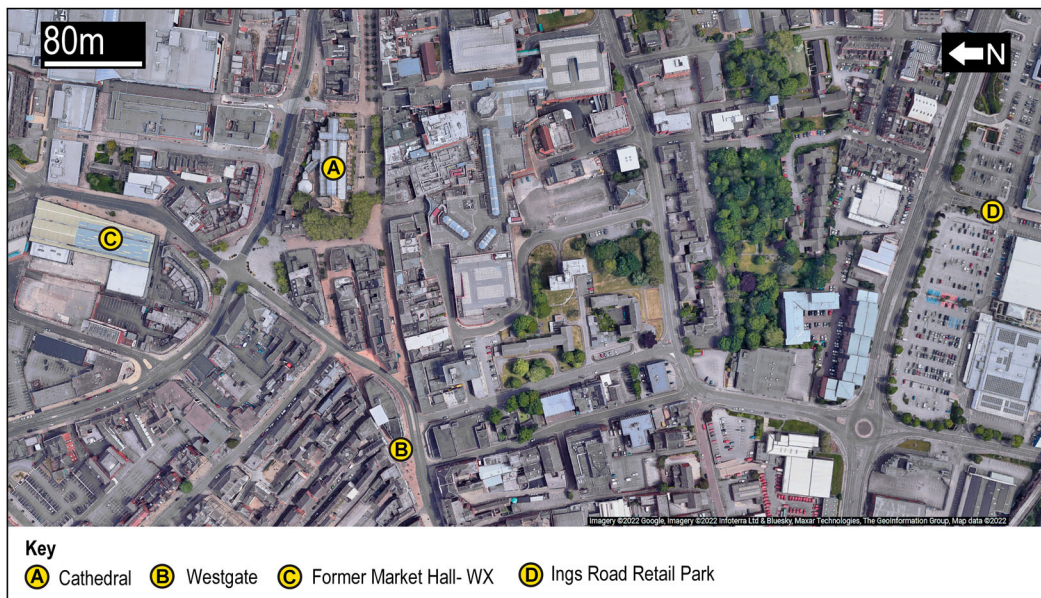


Figure 2. The central area building morphology (*Imagery from Google, 2022*).

In contrast, studies undertaken by previous researchers, either in Wakefield¹¹ or in comparable towns and cities are examples of secondary, narrating sources that help in interpretation. A study of Urban Renaissance era master planning in Sheffield city centre helps illuminate the difficulties of implementation in a period of economic downturn.¹² In addition, studies of branding in other small towns and cities are useful in understanding the local counter narratives that have emerged to contest the assumptions of regeneration.¹³

For the local sources, there is only a fine line, and some overlap, between primary or remnant and secondary narrative sources. Documents may combine both types of information in different passages. The documentation associated with a published plan will, for example, commonly contain an interpretive narrative of recent events as well as a statement about future intentions. Interpretive documents sometimes also provide specific information that is not otherwise available. Attendance at local events has likewise helped both reveal and interpret intentions.

Grounded and critical understandings

The distinction between remnants and narrating sources overlaps another distinction, between ‘grounded’ and ‘critical’ methodologies. The latter distinction may involve gradations and levels of critical understanding. Reduced to the simplest terms, however, the distinction is as follows. ‘Grounded’ understandings mean an account that identifies and assesses the logic of action, in its own terms, taking statements and practices at their face value as they express a view of reality.¹⁴

¹¹Harker, ‘The Beam Archive, Wakefield’; Richardson, *The Hepworth Wakefield and its Audience(s)*; Shutt and Henderson, ‘Future Local Economic Development under New Labour?’; Swales, ‘Desperate Pragmatism or Shrewd Optimism?’.

¹²Madanipour et al, ‘Master Plans and Urban Change’.

¹³Jensen, ‘Culture Stories’; Medway and Warnaby, ‘What’s in a Name?’; Van Hoose et al. ‘Marketing the Unmarketable’.

¹⁴Alvesson and Skölberg, *Reflexive Methodologies*, 175.

Critical analysis is about the underlying meaning, values and politics of place, together with the implicit contradictions inherent in a policy narrative or narratives.¹⁵ As part of this, the dominant policy agenda is identified, along with whether and how this agenda changes. ‘Unscripted deviations’ from the main policy message, as well as alternatives to that policy must also be identified if only to avoid any suggestion that actions or outcomes are somehow predetermined.¹⁶

Reflexive methodologies assume that both grounded and critical understandings are of potential value, but are of most analytical value when ‘they are played off against each other’.¹⁷ Specific texts, statements and practices are related to each other but above all considered in a historical context in which ‘theoretical, methodological and factual aspects interact’.¹⁸ The subject under consideration is analysed and reanalysed to create an account that is simultaneously plausible and transparent,¹⁹ and comes across as ‘rich in points’.²⁰

Image and economic prosperity

The initial task is to ground the account in the expressed aims of local policies, plans and practices, and to ascertain how these conceive of culture. Levelling-up and urban regeneration both have strong economic and business rationales and this is amply expressed in the aims of the Koetter Kim reports and the Farrells plan. Koetter Kim prepared its reports as part of a regional initiative intended to improve the image of Yorkshire cities otherwise ignored by private investors.²¹ The purpose of the Farrells plan is likewise ‘to help address issues of decline in the retail and business sectors.’²²

The question is to determine exactly how culture facilitates economic and business growth. As a device for economic regeneration, culture has the major disadvantage of only accounting for a minor element in local labour markets. In the UK standard industrial classification, cultural activities are associated with ‘the arts, entertainment and recreation sector’ where they accounted for about 2.9% of all jobs in England in 2019, before the impact of Covid restrictions.²³ In Wakefield District, in the same year, the sector accounted for 2,500 employees or just 1.7 per cent of all employees, less than the regional and national averages.²⁴ Indeed, the same source suggests a declining number of jobs in the relevant sector over the previous four years.

In relation to planning, culture may be defined in different terms as the ‘city beautiful’ of art, festivals, heritage, and urban design, together with the city of multi-cultural expression.²⁵ So defined, culture may still have an indirect economic impact, creating a new ‘symbolic’ economy for investors and visitors, as was an effect of the former Urbis museum in Manchester.²⁶ Heritage in particular helps differentiate one place from another and provides a resource for new economic identities. Heritage may comprise the built form of a locality, as shown in case studies of the Castlefields area of

¹⁵Ibid, 190.

¹⁶Peck and Theodore. “Follow the Policy,” 29.

¹⁷Alvesson and Skölberg, *Reflexive Methodologies*, 272.

¹⁸Ibid, 61–3.

¹⁹Metzer et al, “Ideology in Practice,” 310.

²⁰Alvesson and Skölberg, *Reflexive Methodologies*, 305–7.

²¹HoC, *The Work of Yorkshire Forward*, 36; McDonnell and Newby, *Learning Legacy Module 12 Urban Renaissance and Physical Development*, 3.

²²Farrells, *This is Wakefield*, 8.

²³NOMIS- https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/gor/2092957699/subreports/gor_wfjsa_time_series/report.aspx?

²⁴Nomis- Employee Jobs by Industry (2020) <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157128/report.aspx#tabjobs> (Consulted February 2022).

The NOMIS definition differs from that used by the DCMS, but is adequate for an assessment of urban regeneration policy.

²⁵Pratt, *Cities*, 9.

²⁶Hetherington, “Manchester’s Urbis”; Pratt, *Cities*.

Manchester,²⁷ the Hamburg waterfront²⁸ and former industrial sites in the Ruhr region.²⁹ The resource may also comprise the association between a place and an artist, as in the seaside town of Margate with the painter J.W. Turner³⁰ or in Wakefield with the sculptor Barbara Hepworth.

The regeneration effect of cultural investment has been questioned. The Centre for Cities has warned against over-optimistic expectations, citing the limited impact of the Hepworth, albeit some years before the completion of Tileyard North.³¹ However, as this same report and others³² have noted, cultural investment is also desirable for non-economic reasons, for example in protecting the sense of place, providing an educational resource or bringing people together.

As an extension of the new ‘symbolic’ economy, culture is also said to promote the ‘creative industries’ sector- a concept covering the production of intellectual property, including art, design, advertising, music, and the media.³³ In 2017, the creative economy accounted for about 4.6% of the working population in Britain, with major concentrations in a few large cities, notably London.³⁴ The concentration of creative industries in the largest cities is repeated in the international literature,³⁵ and is also apparent in the Yorkshire and Humber region. In 2017, Leeds accounted for about a third of all creative industries employment in the region.³⁶ The equivalent figure for Wakefield was 3.7 per cent of the regional total or 2,460 jobs.

The creative industries have added jobs every year since the number was first estimated at a national level in 2011.³⁷ Their association with growth and innovation is attractive for Councils seeking to promote investment. Conversely, engagement with ‘culture’ is not always an easy concept to sell or explain to the public.³⁸

As a result, the terms ‘creative industries’ and the ‘creative economy’ have run alongside or replaced ‘culture’ as a policy label even in a city such as Wakefield where creative industry employment has been relatively low. In Wakefield, the Council established a cultural and creative industries network in 2019, with assistance from the Arts Council England.³⁹ In the following year, the Council published a formal policy statement ‘Creative Wakefield’⁴⁰ and a generic District-wide branding ‘toolkit’, prepared by a national place marketing consultancy ‘Thinking Place’.⁴¹

²⁷Madgin, “Reconceptualising the Historic Urban Environment”.

²⁸Sepe, “Urban History and Cultural Resources in Urban Regeneration”.

²⁹Raines “*Wandel durch (Industrie) Kultur* [Change through (industrial) culture”.

³⁰Ward, “Down by the Sea”.

³¹Swinney, “Is Regeneration through Culture the way Forward”.

³²Pratt, *Cities: The Cultural Dimension*.

³³DCMS Sector Economic Estimates Methodology, <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/dcms-sectors-economic-estimates-methodology/dcms-sector-economic-estimates-methodology> (Updated 26 August 2021, consulted September 2022).

³⁴Swords and Townsend, *Mapping the Scale and Scope of the Creative Industries in Yorkshire and the Humber*, 20.

The Swords and Townsend study is one of the few to give regional and local estimates of creative industries employment. Some accounts of the national statistics give a higher proportion of jobs in the creative industries sector.

³⁵Pratt and Hutton, “Reconceptualising the Relationship between the Creative Economy and the City”.

³⁶Swords and Townsend, *Mapping the Scale and Scope of the Creative Industries in Yorkshire and the Humber*, 20.

³⁷UK Has Almost 2.3m Creative Industries Jobs- Official Data,

<https://www.https://www.thecreativeindustries.co.uk/facts-figures/uk-has-almost-2-3m-creative-industries-jobs-official-data> (Consulted September 2022)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/dcms-sector-national-economic-estimates-2011-to-2020/dcms-sector-national-economic-estimates-2011-2020#creative-industries> (Consulted September 2022).

³⁸K. Merrin, Director, Tyne and Wear Archives and Museums, Oral evidence to a House of Commons Committee (HOC, DCMS), response to q.73.

K. Trickett, President of Wakefield Civic Society, Blog, 29 June 2020: <https://itbroadenthemind.com/2019/06/> (Consulted September 2022).

³⁹<https://www.wakefield.gov.uk/events-and-culture/creative-wakefield>: <https://creativewakefield.net/cdf/>

⁴⁰Wakefield Council *Creative Wakefield Framework*.

⁴¹Peter Anderson Studio, A thinking place toolkit produced for Wakefield, <https://bewakefield.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Wakefield-Toolkit-reduced.pdf>

Critical analysis: identity and representation

The critical perspective is that culture represents and promotes a collective identity and/ or multiple collective identities.⁴² Culture is about life-styles and the relation between those life-styles and proposals, places and artefacts. Critical analysis asks therefore who and what is represented in urban regeneration, and how differences are revealed and acted on.⁴³

From a critical perspective, contemporary forms of urban regeneration may be further conceptualized in terms of the emergence from the 1980s onwards of entrepreneurial local authorities that promote rather than manage growth, and that work with private developers to do this.⁴⁴ To an extent, an entrepreneurial approach is inevitable. Working with private developers and promoting investment is a functional consequence of efforts to promote urban regeneration with limited public funds. However, national policy guidelines in England, including the Urban Renaissance policy agenda have also repeatedly prioritized the ‘leverage’ of private funds as the ‘guiding principle’ of public sector investment,⁴⁵ and, with some exceptions, have neglected the use of public funds for social or cultural provision. For example, the minutes of the Wakefield Task Force record how in 2020, the Ministry refused to grant funding for the conversion of an empty retail store into an information and cultural hub, owing to the ‘lack of a private sector partner’.⁴⁶

Promoting growth and private investment means attracting tourists and visitors. In addition, and more important for the long-term future of a city, promoting growth means attracting highly skilled, creative workers, so encouraging gentrification.⁴⁷ Echoing such ideas, the Farrells master plan has the explicit aim of ‘maximising’ the ability of the city ‘to attract and grow creative businesses and individuals’.⁴⁸

Despite the aims of the Farrells plan, there is as yet little evidence of gentrification in Wakefield’s central area, most of which is characterized by the highest or above average levels of household deprivation.⁴⁹ A lack of impact on local social characteristics is not a full measure of the implications of a plan, however. The politics of culture-led regeneration are about what a place and planning policy represents- how change and proposed change in the built environment relate to the identity of different social groups. Place, branding and planning come together in a ‘representational logic’, a concept invented by Jensen to study the place narratives that accompanied a planned cultural hub in Aarlborg in Denmark. The same concept may be applied to interventions elsewhere.⁵⁰

Adaptive and directive styles of intervention

Reflexive methodologies are close to discourse analysis, understood as the analysis of the discursive practices (mechanisms, procedures and relations) that produce ‘knowledge’ and define a policy area and response.⁵¹ Master plans, other policy statements and branding are all aspects of discursive

⁴²De Frantz, “Culture-led Urban Regeneration,” 8.

⁴³Sharp et al, “Just Art for a Just City”.

⁴⁴Harvey, “From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism”.

⁴⁵Urban Task Force, *Towards an Urban Renaissance*, 210.

⁴⁶Wakefield Task Force Meeting minutes, 29 January 2021.

⁴⁷Colomb, “Unpacking New Labour’s ‘Urban Renaissance’ agenda”; Lees, “Visions of ‘Urban Renaissance’”; Markusen and Gadwa, “Arts and Culture in Urban or Regional Planning”; Ward, “Down by the Sea”.

⁴⁸Farrells, *This is Wakefield*, 54.

⁴⁹Index of Multiple Deprivation for England 2019. As revealed in an interactive map at <https://www.arcgis.com/home/item.html?id=85c8b350c1a4442eacefc1bbe1b03205> (Consulted February 2022).

⁵⁰Jensen, “Culture Stories”.

⁵¹Bacchi and J. Bonham, “Reclaiming Discursive Practices as an Analytic Focus”.

practice. As presented by Flyvbjerg and others, discourse analysis is particularly concerned with the relation between what is said and written and local centres of power.⁵²

Yet power is always limited. In discourse analysis, power is exercised from different points whose influence is unequal and variable. In addition, in reflexive methodology, the limitations of knowledge, in particular the limited ability to predict the future, are recognized as a limitation on power. Knowledge of reality is constructed, as is the assumption of discourse analysis. Unlike discourse analysis, however, reflexive methodologies are sufficiently flexible to accept the existence of a complex reality ‘out there’ that is itself capable of influencing events, constraining action and opening up new opportunities.⁵³

Recognition of uncertainty and the unpredictability of events is important for histories of planning. Retailing provides an obvious example. Before about 2010, discussions of retail in the UK planning literature rarely discussed the implications of online sales, though they did discuss the impact of out-of-town centres.⁵⁴ The scale of the subsequent decline in so-called ‘High Street’ shopping was not anticipated. Contemporary regeneration schemes that involved retail expansion, and this includes the Action Plan in Wakefield were as a result vulnerable to events.

Conversely, new and unexpected potential opportunities may emerge. Due to the proximity of Leeds city centre, nine miles away, the central area of Wakefield offers an accessible and affordable location within a much larger city regional cultural sector, as ‘Creative Wakefield’ explicitly recognizes.⁵⁵ The central area is therefore, in principle, a viable location for cultural and creative activities, whether these are planned, like the Hepworth and the adjacent former mills complex, or the result of a felicitous combination of private and piecemeal public intervention, as in the cluster of cultural facilities in the Westgate area- the Theatre Royal, Westgate Studios, the Art House and joined in 2022 by the completion nearby of a performing arts school called ‘CAPA’. There was no long-term overall strategy to create or to enhance this cluster. The different elements came into being at different times as the opportunity appeared.

The existence of cultural clusters does not mean, however, that planning for culture should favour the creation of distinct cultural quarters, as argued in the past.⁵⁶ Spontaneous growth may instead lead to a dispersal of cultural activities within a broad city region.⁵⁷ Cultural facilities such as the Yorkshire Sculpture Park and Production Park (a support and technology centre for live entertainment) exist elsewhere in Wakefield District, for example. The craft, digital and cultural production industries are diverse in their locational requirements.

Tracing planning and regeneration strategies over time is therefore a study of how local centres of power respond to situations and to patterns over which they have only partial control. In this context, a distinction may be drawn between directive and adaptive strategies. As conceived in organizational and business studies, directive strategies comprise, in the words of Mintzberg & Waters, ‘a system of beliefs’⁵⁸ or a vision of the future that is derived from those beliefs or borrowed from other contexts.⁵⁹ In adaptive strategies, in contrast, the strategy grows out of a ‘mutual adjustment among different actors’.⁶⁰ Adaptive strategies may be piecemeal. As a result, an organization

⁵²Flyvbjerg, “Phronetic Planning Research”.

⁵³Alvesson and Skölberg, *Reflexive Methodologies*, 318.

⁵⁴See, for example, Guy, “Planning for Retail Development”.

⁵⁵Wakefield Council, *Creative Wakefield Framework*, 16.

⁵⁶For an example, see: Montgomery, “Cultural Quarters as Mechanisms for Urban Regeneration. Part 1”.

⁵⁷Markusen and Gadwa, “Arts and Culture in Urban or Regional Planning,” 386–7.

⁵⁸Mintzberg and Waters, “Of Strategies, Deliberate and Emergent,” *Ibid*, 267.

⁵⁹*Ibid*, 259.

⁶⁰*Ibid*, 267.

may also bring the elements together under an ‘umbrella’ strategy that allows flexibility within a general direction.⁶¹ Likewise, in a study of urban design, Bullivant has conceived of ‘adaptive planning’ as an alternative to abstract, top-down (and therefore directive) master planning. Adaptive planning is an ‘envisioning exercise’ that ‘must relate closely to an individual context’ and that typically results in a policy framework.⁶²

Case studies of Morpeth, Llanelli and Stockton on Tees, undertaken by Powe, suggest that the current crisis in retailing requires a shift in the style of town centre planning- towards more reflective, adaptive and emergent management strategies and away from the property-led master plans of the recent past.⁶³ Putting aside the pedantic objection that Wakefield is a city rather than a town, one might expect a similar shift in strategy in Wakefield, given the uncertainties caused by the decline of retailing. Bullivant suggests, moreover, that in a complex world, planning has to be adaptive.⁶⁴

The assumptions of analysis still require clarification. The case studies of Powe use a methodological approach that relies on systems analysis and the metaphors of a semi-natural process of adaptation. Likewise, Bullivant conceives of urban order as being ‘expressed as dynamic interdependencies between evolving conditions and systems’.⁶⁵ Reflexive methodologies, in contrast, assume that the complex, changing, but impersonal reality of systems and the human world of discourse and politics need to be examined together.

A narrative of decline and regeneration

Discussion of types of strategy takes the narrative too far, too quickly. In Wakefield, recent concerns about central area retailing followed a long period of declining or low levels of economic activity. The city centre lost much of its former administrative importance with the abolition of the West Yorkshire County Council in 1986 and the later establishment of city region functions in Leeds. In addition, the wider District experienced catastrophic job losses in the 1980s and 1990s associated with the closure of coal mines and manufacturing industries. Finally, the city lacked and continues to lack a university- elsewhere a major source of higher value economic growth.

To an extent, the local economy has recovered. Over the past ten years, employment and unemployment rates in Wakefield District have fluctuated, with marked neighbourhood variations, but are currently about the city region and national averages.⁶⁶ On the other hand, the available jobs have been relatively poorly paid compared to the national average, with lower proportions of professional jobs and jobs in information technology and communications.⁶⁷ The Centre for Cities has argued that this dependence on relatively low-paid jobs is itself a product of the failure of the city centre to attract professional and creative industries, with the obvious implication that city centre regeneration should remain a priority.⁶⁸

The response to decline has generated three episodes of intervention:

⁶¹Ibid, 262.

⁶²Bullivant, *Masterplanning Futures*, 3–4.

⁶³Powe, “Redesigning Town Centre Planning”.

⁶⁴Bullivant, *Masterplanning Futures*, 2–3.

⁶⁵Ibid, 8.

⁶⁶<http://www.wakefieldjsna.co.uk/wider-determinants/economy-and-employment/> (Consulted March 2022).

⁶⁷Nomis, Employment by Occupation (October 2020- September 2021) <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/la/1946157128/report.aspx#tabempocc> (Consulted March 2022).

⁶⁸Sivaev, “Beyond the High Street”.

- From about 1990 to about 2011, the emergence of a twin-track economic and spatial strategy that has combined out-of-town business development with the remodelling of the central area;
- From 2011 to about 2020, continued city centre decline when the earlier initiatives had little economic impact but were not superseded or replaced;
- After about 2020, a process of policy and plan re-orientation; and, as part of this,
- A reinvigorated attempt to change and rebrand the image of the city, but continuing with the earlier twin-track economic strategy.

The action plan, Koetter Kim and their context: 1990- 2011.

Faced with major job losses, the Council's initial strategy was to reclaim former coal sites for a combination of uses, using one for the National Coal Mining Museum for England. More importantly for job creation, the Council sought to develop business estates close to motorway junctions. In 1994, Swales examined the changing image of the towns and cities in West Yorkshire and explained how local authorities were using heritage to attract tourists and change their image. Wakefield had few potential heritage attractions and had 'to sweep aside much of its recent past in the name of economic survival'.⁶⁹ The city's future lay in the 'clean, bland image' of business parks. Wakefield Civic Society, already campaigning for the conservation of the older building stock, would have disputed the comments of Swales. The comments are nevertheless indicative of a poor local image that subsequent policy has sought to reverse.

The initial emphasis on business parks corresponded to an era in the 1980s and 1990s when national planning policy emphasized the need for business-friendly land allocations.⁷⁰ The development of the big box retail park along Ings Road, outside the main retailing core but within the central area, also dates from this period, stimulated by a desire to provide retailing facilities for goods that could not easily be transported from city centre shops.

An early example of culture-led regeneration was a public realm project designed by the abstract artist Tess Jaray and completed in 1992 in the Cathedral precinct (Figure 3). The remodelling of the precinct helped establish a public arts company, that, trading under the name of 'Beam', has continued to work in Wakefield and elsewhere.⁷¹

After the completion of the Cathedral project, there is no record of further significant public investment in the central area until the projects and improvements associated with the Action Plan of 2009.⁷² By then, policy had evolved in response to new national and regional initiatives including the Urban Renaissance programme and as part of this the Koetter Kim design and strategy statements. The older policy of out-of-town employment land allocations did not disappear, however. Instead, a twin-track economic strategy emerged of city centre regeneration and the promotion of employment on greenfield sites. City centre regeneration would take advantage of the rail connection along the London-Leeds main line.⁷³ The development of out-of-town employment areas would take advantage of the District's location at one of the main crossroads in the motorway network in the north of England.⁷⁴

The Action Plan proposed four 'key development areas'. These covered the mixed public/ private projects that would lead to the Trinity Walk retail mall and the Merchant Gate offices and a further

⁶⁹Swales, "Desperate Pragmatism or Shrewd Optimism?".

⁷⁰Healey, "Sites, Jobs and Portfolios".

⁷¹Harker, "The Beam Archive, Wakefield".

⁷²WC, Central Area Action Plan.

⁷³Koetter Kim, *Developing the Vision*, unpaginated.

⁷⁴Shutt and Henderson, "Future Local Economic Development under New Labour?"



Figure 3. The Cathedral Precinct: (Author, March 2022). The paved area and stone terraces are the product of the remodelling exercise by Jaray. In February of each year, the precinct hosts a food festival, celebrating the local delicacy of winter rhubarb.

publicly funded redevelopment project that would eventually lead to the Hepworth. This latter drew on contributions from the National Lottery, the Arts Council and the local Council. A fourth proposal did not go ahead. This was for mixed-use housing and green space to replace the Ings Road retail park, with the opening of a culverted stream. Instead, most of the retail park units were subject to privately funded rehabilitation, completed in 2017.⁷⁵ As is apparent from this example, implementation of the Area Plan depended crucially on the availability of private funding.

The most distinctive aspect of the Koetter Kim reports lay in their urban design aesthetic. Rowe & Koetter, writing as the leading theorists of Koetter Kim, had previously argued for a pluralist design strategy, but only for the street and building layouts of the era before mass car use.⁷⁶ The design reports for Wakefield had a similar emphasis. The city had ‘a distinctive and highly identifiable historic core’, much of which was ‘of very high quality’ and ‘still intact’ and that merited conservation. The plan then offered a vision of change, based on the concept of an ‘Emerald Ring’, a tree-lined boulevard around the historic core; the need for better pedestrian connections within the city centre and between the city centre and its surrounding neighbourhoods; and, finally, the use of the waterfront as ‘a wonderful resource’, this latter being a reference to the proposed Hepworth museum and art gallery.⁷⁷

⁷⁵<https://smrarchitects.co.uk/completion-of-beck-retail-park-wakefield/> (Consulted February 2022).

⁷⁶Rowe and Koetter, *Collage city*, 181.

⁷⁷Koetter Kim, *Developing the Vision*, unpaginated.

The call for better pedestrian connectivity was supported in the reports of other consultants.⁷⁸ A later design guide provided more detail.⁷⁹ The Koetter Kim plan, therefore, led to an increased status for urban design within local decision-making, as has been noted elsewhere of Urban Renaissance initiatives.⁸⁰ The results can be seen, for example, in the detailed design of the Merchant Gate project (Figure 4).

On the other hand, pedestrianization and traffic calming beyond the existing Cathedral precinct were limited. Elsewhere one-way systems were introduced to speed up traffic flows. Additional crossing points were added to the newly designated Emerald Ring, but tree planting remained too discontinuous to provide the impression of ‘a green boulevard’ as originally intended (Figure 5). Failing to implement the Emerald Ring, on a significant, visible scale, was, moreover, a real limitation to the aspiration of changing Wakefield’s image. Without a substantial, visible impact, it is difficult to see how urban design can change the image of a place.

The decline of the city centre: 2011 to date

Of the various projects identified in the Action Plan, the Trinity Walk proposals continued older policies to keep up with competing centres through additional retail investment. Completion was delayed by the financial crash of 2008. By the time that Trinity Walk opened in 2011, retail vacancy rates were already of national concern.⁸¹ Soon afterward, as market conditions became less favourable, vacancy rates were of local concern. A survey of retailing in Wakefield in 2013 noted vacancies in secondary retail zones as potentially linked to ‘a transition period’ after the opening of Trinity Walk.⁸² In 2018, another retail survey revealed Wakefield was amongst the worst affected locations in Yorkshire experiencing a net reduction of 25 stores or 8.9% of all stores.⁸³

Closures extended in the same year to the indoor market that had been relocated as part of the development of Trinity Walk. The new site was adjacent to a new bus station, but the stall holders stated footfall was not as good as expected (‘Wakefield Express’ 12/02/2010). After closure of the market, the remaining stalls were moved to the Cathedral precinct. The market hall itself, was, for a time, threatened with demolition. Under a new name, ‘WX- Wakefield Exchange’, it has proved sufficiently flexible to offer an indoor space for exhibitions and other events, and is also being converted into small-scale business workspaces.

Other regeneration projects had little impact. The construction of the Hepworth had been intended to proceed alongside the rehabilitation and redevelopment of the adjoining mills complex. Work on the latter did not go ahead until almost 10 years later. Moreover, neither the Hepworth nor other initiatives were successful in attracting investment in the development of a four or five star city centre hotel.

Visitor numbers at the Hepworth surged immediately after opening in 2011, but then fell back to a fluctuating annual level of between 195,000 and 220,000 between 2014/ 15 and 2019/ 20.⁸⁴ To better understand visitor preferences, the museum commissioned a market research study in

⁷⁸Gehl Architects; Wakefield Council and Gillespies.

⁷⁹Integreat PLUS, *Wakefield City Centre*.

⁸⁰Punter, “Urban Design and the English Urban Renaissance 1999–2009”.

⁸¹See Portas, *An Independent Review into the Future of Our High Streets*.

⁸²GVA (Consultancy) *Wakefield Retail, Leisure & Town Centres Study*, 3.

⁸³<https://www.pwc.co.uk/who-we-are/regional-sites/north/press-releases/yorkshire--humber-sees-biggest-net-fall-in-number-of-stores-in-.html> (Consulted February 2022).

⁸⁴<http://www.wakefieldjsna.co.uk/wider-determinants/culture-and-sport/>



Figure 4. The Merchant Gate office project (Author, August 2022) The influence of Urban Renaissance place-making is apparent in the inclusion of the small area of open space and the direction of the footpath so that it enables a view of the Town Hall tower. The offices, though well located and of good quality, have proved difficult to let.

2014, and this suggested that non-local visitors were deterred by the absence of other attractions or amenities in the immediate vicinity.⁸⁵ Getting to Wakefield just to see the Hepworth was not worth the effort, especially given the distance of the gallery from city centre shops and restaurants.

The economic impact of the Hepworth was therefore disappointing, especially in the light of the financial support from the Council at the outset and for some years afterwards. However, the museum administration also argued that its work should not be assessed purely as a means of promoting economic development. The Hepworth offers youth, schools and family programmes,⁸⁶ and has also created a publicly accessible garden within its grounds.

Further, efforts to promote city centre offices achieved little. In 2018, an assessment of the office market in Wakefield concluded that it ‘is relatively subdued and characterized by small transactions, predominantly in out-of-town locations’.⁸⁷ As a location for office employment, the central area of Wakefield could not easily compete with Leeds, whose centre is ‘perceived to be a more attractive, amenity-rich and cosmopolitan location by occupiers and workers’.⁸⁸

Lack of investment was, and to an extent remains, compounded by the poor reputation of the city’s night-time economy, in particular the concentration of bars, pubs and nightclubs along

⁸⁵As reported by Richardson, *The Hepworth Wakefield and its Audience(s)*, 150.

⁸⁶Hepworth Wakefield, *Report and Financial Statement*.

⁸⁷Cushman and Wakefield, *Wakefield Office Market Assessment*, 16.

⁸⁸*Ibid*, 17.



Figure 5. The ‘Emerald Ring’/ inner ring road with Trinity Walk: (Author, March 2022). The road in the foreground is part of the city centre ring and was criticized in the Koetter Kim reports for severing pedestrian movement. The ‘Debenhams’ store is closed and vacant.

the so-called ‘Westgate Run’. The traditional name of Wakefield as the ‘Merrie City’ is likewise associated with drinking and partying. The name itself persists in social media and has also been used in tourist promotion. However, the same reputation of the city centre as a ‘wet led retail centre’, namely a retail centre based on drink, has hindered efforts to attract a new cinema and family-run restaurants and, in the words of the minutes of the local Task Force, had ‘in the past’ ‘tarnished the city’.⁸⁹

The night-time economy has, moreover, not been good for the fabric of the building stock in the Westgate area (Figure 6), much of which dates from the 18th and 19th centuries. The background report for the HAZ, declared in 2020, ‘Over a third of the houses and shops on Westgate are classed as unoccupied’. The same report added: ‘some of the town’s most beautiful historic buildings are in disrepair and sit alongside neglected, under-used areas’.⁹⁰

There are signs that the external image of Wakefield has improved, at least for some streets. The Food and Drink section of the ‘Yorkshire Post’ (08/02/2022) has suggested that growth in the number and diversity of restaurants was changing the character of the ‘Merrie City’. In addition, since the announcement of the Towns Fund, developers based in Leeds have started to take an interest

⁸⁹Wakefield Task Force Meeting, Minutes 20 November 2020.

⁹⁰Historic England, Wakefield Upper Westgate High Street Heritage Action Zone <https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/heritage-action-zones/wakefield/> (Undated Webpage: Consulted March 2022).



Figure 6. The upper end of Westgate (Author, March 2022). The white building on the left, Westgate Studios, offers space for working artists. Other artists' spaces are available in an annexe to Westgate Studio and in the Art House, both in side streets. Restaurants, take-aways, clubs and drinking establishments occupy the ground floor of all the buildings in view.

and are developing another, positive narrative.⁹¹ For the moment, however, the city centre economy remains relatively 'weak' as classified by the Centre for Cities.⁹²

Reorientation: the Farrells master plan, 2021

The continued decline of the city centre, combined with the promise of funding under the Towns Fund and other initiatives framed the Farrells master plan, commissioned in early 2020. Faced with continuing uncertainty, notably about the future scale of retailing and office work, the Farrells master plan promotes a 'flexible' and 'adaptable' city centre- 'a multi-functional place of cultural, social and economic exchange'.⁹³ Compared to the Area Action Plan of 2009 and its associated design guidance, the plan has therefore marked a move towards an 'adaptive' and 'emergent' strategy, as defined in both organizational and urban design theory.⁹⁴ The plan is for example based on extensive public and stakeholder consultation, and an understanding of the multiple specific ways in which the area could be improved.

⁹¹ For example, <https://www.cityrise.co.uk/property/grosvenor-house/>

⁹² <https://www.centreforcities.org/data/high-streets-recovery-tracker/> (Consulted September 2022)

⁹³ Farrells, *This is Wakefield*, 60.

⁹⁴ Bullivant, *Masterplanning Futures: Mintzberg and Waters, "Of Strategies, Deliberate and Emergent"; Powe, "Redesigning Town Centre Planning"*.

From a different perspective, an adaptive strategy is also well suited to a vision of a revived and modernized multi-functional city centre, with a reduced emphasis on retailing.⁹⁵ In this, the Farrells plan follows the lessons of earlier national reports on the decline of town centres. Indeed the plan cites a House of Commons report that has likewise argued for flexible ‘future-proofed’ town and city centres, organized around a distinctive set of principles- a defined cultural identity, the experience of place and the promotion of community activities.⁹⁶

Concerning the principle of cultural identity, the plan recognizes the city’s ‘historic character’, much in the same way as the earlier reports by Koetter Kim. In addition, the plan notes that ‘much of the recent city centre investment ... centres around the cultural industries’. The plan even states that ‘Wakefield is in a position to emerge from the pandemic as an exemplar for culture-led revitalisation of its city centre’.⁹⁷ Concerning the principles of place experience and community, the plan proposes reduced traffic flows on city centre streets and the creation of a network of green, open spaces. As a result, the plan recognizes the need for selective demolition, either to create more open space, as for example around the Cathedral or to reduce the number of retail units or both. While the scale of redevelopment is less than that in the Action Plan of 2009, the Farrells proposals involve more than area management.⁹⁸

The logic of an emergent, culture-led and community-based plan did not satisfy those who wanted more radical, business-oriented measures. Whilst the Farrells plan was being prepared, the newly elected local Member of Parliament argued for the construction of a large convention centre, served by a new light rail network. In terms of discourse theory, the proposal amounted to ‘an unscripted deviation’ from the main direction of planning policy and, if adopted, would have marked a change in both the assumptions and the form of the master plan. The style of the master plan would have become more ‘directive’, organized around the convention centre and its infrastructure as a single large project, rather than many small and medium sized improvement and redevelopment projects, as is the implication of a flexible, adaptable city centre.

The convention centre was discussed in the meetings of the Task Force.⁹⁹ However, discussions did not reach the point of identifying viable sources of finance, whether private or public and, soon afterwards, the local MP resigned for other reasons. To this extent, the adaptive, emergent character of the Farrells plan, as well as the focus on culture was, and remains based on a realization that there are few other ways in which the central area might either be managed or given a renewed economic rationale.

Reorientation: branding and counter narratives

Promoting culture has led to calls, again apparent in Farrells master plan for the creation of ‘a powerful and unifying narrative’,¹⁰⁰ a branding exercise that would inspire change and attract visitors and business. Whether such a unifying narrative exists is another matter. The current District-wide branding exercise promotes the attractions of Wakefield for visitors and creative businesses, without becoming embroiled in local details or rivalries. However, the branding exercise is also

⁹⁵Farrells, *This is Wakefield*, 27.

⁹⁶Ibid., 52: HoC, High streets and town centres in 2030, 62.

⁹⁷Farrells, *This is Wakefield*, 52.

⁹⁸As is the implication of the case studies documented by Powe, “Redesigning Town Centre Planning”.

⁹⁹Wakefield Task Force Meeting, Minutes 4 September 2020.

¹⁰⁰Farrells, *This is Wakefield*, 54.



Figure 7. The Creative Wakefield brand (*Author, March 2022*). The poster is fixed to a wooden barrier that surrounds the ongoing conversion of a complex of semi-derelict former woollen mills into the Tileyard North creative industries hub. Tileyard North summarizes in a single project how culture-led regeneration now seeks to combine production with visitor attractions.

placeless and abstract (Figure 7). The brand comprises a set of standardized colour palettes, fonts and illustrations, and a slogan ‘dare to be different’ that is rarely used.¹⁰¹

Other marketing documents are about attracting business investment in out-of-town locations.¹⁰² The twin-track strategy of greenfield business parks and city centre regeneration remains in place. The creative economy and creative industry policy is, in any case, District-wide and seeks to nurture and promote cultural economic activities wherever they are located.

Otherwise, a different type of branding has been undertaken for specific streets in the city centre and for the historical figures associated with those streets. Voluntary bodies (the Civic Society, the Historical Society and a social enterprise company called Dream Time Creative), together with working artists, have documented and celebrated the city’s heritage through visitors’ guides, walking trails and public art. The dependence of conservation narratives on the work of voluntary agencies was also noted in the regeneration of Castlefields, Manchester.¹⁰³ Voluntary agencies are able to collate and present historical knowledge to a wider public and sometimes able to mobilize wider public support for heritage causes and conservation.

The Creative Wakefield brand has generated little public comment, as has also been noted of generic branding elsewhere.¹⁰⁴ However, the underlying narratives of culture-led regeneration

¹⁰¹Peter Anderson Studio, A thinking place toolkit produced for Wakefield, <https://bewakefield.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Wakefield-Toolkit-reduced.pdf>

¹⁰²Wakefield First-Invest-Key Sites: <https://www.wakefieldfirst.com/advanced-manufacturing/> (Promotional Website: Consulted March 2022): Also see Wakefield Council, *Green Belt Exceptional Circumstances Statement*, 7.

¹⁰³Madgin, “Reconceptualising the Historic Urban Environment”.

¹⁰⁴Medway and Warnaby, “What’s in a Name?”

have not been universally welcomed. As revealed in letters to the Wakefield Express and on social media sites, opposition mostly concerns specific arts and heritage projects.

For example, in 2022 a Wakefield Express article on a publicly funded rehabilitation project in the Westgate HAZ was posted on Facebook.¹⁰⁵ The posting quickly generated a vigorous debate, with about half of the comments welcoming the proposed rehabilitation work and the rest expressing counter narratives of loss, futility, and a waste of public money. Typical counter narrative comments include ‘too little, too late’, that the rehabilitation work would not make up for the earlier demolition of buildings, that it would be better to build a purpose designed building for a wider range of community groups and that the city centre was no longer safe to visit and ‘looks dead’. Similar critiques are not unusual in social media. They have also been applied in the past to the Hepworth.

The scale of dissent is difficult to quantify. Social media debates tend to attract those who feel strongly about an issue. The counter narratives also have the obvious limitation that they are disparate and do not offer an effective regeneration alternative. In any case, the spending programmes that are the subject of criticism are mostly funded externally in the light of criteria set by national funding agencies (the Arts Council or English Heritage) and national regeneration programmes such as the Towns Fund. Funding cannot be redirected to other projects, to the frustration of local councillors who would prefer more flexibility in how they use funds.

The counter narratives are a reminder of ‘the representational logics of urban intervention’ to use Jensen’s term. Irrespective of whether regeneration ‘works’ or ‘fails’, the policies portray a future in which many find no recognition of their previous life experiences and from which they see no obvious benefits. The main issue is not so much gentrification, as is a common theme in critiques of culture-led regeneration.¹⁰⁶ The Farrells plan, unlike the earlier Area Action Plan incorporates a commitment to the provision of social housing on cleared sites. Instead, the failure is to meet the long-standing needs of an existing population, as well as a linked concern that the priority given to culture in its various forms of heritage and art is wasted money, diverting attention away from these social needs. The provision of social facilities such as health centres or activity centres for young and old is consistent with the idea of a multi-functional city centre. However, in terms of delivery, the priority remains one of attracting private investment and, in this context, social provision is easily ignored.

Conclusions

This paper has sought to provide a reflexive history of urban regeneration based on a ‘precarious balance between accepting the existence of some sort of reality “out there” and also accepting the rhetorical and narrative nature of our knowledge of this reality’.¹⁰⁷ The promotion of regeneration is a rhetorical and narrative exercise, intended to appeal to as many interest groups and publics as possible. In addition, in seeking to boost the attractions of a place, regeneration is also rhetorical, most notably in branding exercises. The scope for regeneration is limited, however, by the reality of the resources at hand and by a dependence of external funds for investment. In Wakefield, those limitations have been compounded by tendencies for creative industry employment to be concentrated in large cities.

¹⁰⁵Facebook, Wakefield Historical Appreciation Site, 19 January 2022, “Restoring the Merrie City”.

¹⁰⁶For a parallel case, see Van Hoose et al, “Marketing the Unmarketable”.

¹⁰⁷Alvesson and Skölberg, *Reflexive Methodologies*, 289.

Given the constraints, the outcomes of regeneration in Wakefield remain ambiguous. The various cultural initiatives have offered additional spaces for working artists, new ways in which working artists can support each other, new forms of community cultural education and have, in addition, encouraged the protection of the city's built heritage. Cultural investment has also offered new narratives about the contribution of the city to the world of art, independent of coal mining or the tainted reputation of the Westgate run. Voluntary groups have been particularly active in providing much of the relevant historical detail. For small-scale economic activities and in non-economic terms, culture-led regeneration has realized many benefits.

On the other hand, these same initiatives have, as yet, created too few jobs to make a significant difference to the prosperity of the central area and cultural activities have been too small in scale to occupy all the empty premises left by the collapse in retailing. Moreover, the persistence of a twin-track economic strategy, with the continuing development of greenfield business parks, is an implicit recognition of the economic limitations of both city centre and culture-led regeneration. Culture has provided a useful and possibly even a necessary, but as yet limited policy instrument.

Over time, different plans have conceived of culture in different ways. The Koetter Kim reports and the Area Action Plan of 2009, effectively defined culture as heritage, place-making and museums in a directive vision of a city centre where retailing and the night-time economy would remain the main private sector activities, hopefully supplemented by offices. The subsequent emergence of problems of building disrepair and vacant property made the plan and its design guidance largely irrelevant. In this, the experience in Wakefield has parallels with the lessons of Renaissance era master planning in Sheffield and shows how fixed design visions are vulnerable to urban change and decline.¹⁰⁸

The Farrells master plan, in contrast, rests on a wider concept of the 'creative industries' and an imagined 'creative city' that is integral to the private sector economy, is growing in scale, is innovative and modern, and is not confined to a specific 'cultural quarter'. Promoting the creative industries has therefore come to offer an umbrella strategy, as envisaged by Mintzberg & Waters, that combines culture-led regeneration and economic modernization, and offers a continued, pragmatic commitment to action across the District.

The central area of Wakefield remains a focus for action. Much of the local policy discourse continues to emphasize heritage, local pride and, in the case of the counter narratives, the loss of pride caused by a tangible sense of decline. The existence of vacant retail premises remains a spur to public intervention, though much depends on whether the Council can work within national funding requirements to identify a viable mix of public and private investment that meets local needs. Adaptive planning of which the Farrells master plan is an example, suits an area with a multiplicity of possible improvements. It is not the only style of intervention, however, and not a panacea that might resolve the funding constraints and equity dilemmas of urban regeneration. It is instead a means of coping with these constraints and dilemmas.

Given a continuing interest in culture and regeneration, a future extension of this study would be to investigate more examples of branding, planning and the meaning of place as interrelated and overlapping 'logics of representation'. Looking at branding, planning and place together also means identifying cases, such as the current 'creative Wakefield' brand, that do not address the specific characteristics of place. Much of the branding and regeneration literature is about promoting an attractive, but distinctive, place identity and image. It would be of interest to establish through further case studies whether and to what extent place branding in practice actually expresses

¹⁰⁸Madanipour et al, "Master Plans and Urban Change".

local distinctiveness. A single place and even more so a local authority district such as Wakefield may also contain multiple local identities. Case studies are needed about how branding exercises cope with local variations. In addition, exactly because culture and branding are about representation, a key question is the relation between the logic of intervention and different age and community groups, including those whose voice is not easily heard.

Acknowledgements

The author received no financial aid in preparing this paper. He is grateful for the extensive comments made by the anonymous reviewers and by Mr. Kevin Trickett, MBE.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

Notes on contributor

Barry Goodchild is Emeritus Professor of Housing and Urban Planning at Sheffield Hallam University. Barry has experience of research and teaching in the fields of professional town planning, housing management and urban policy, including mentoring and supervision of successful doctorates. The most widely cited works are those dealing with postmodernism, with social balance policies in Britain, with the perception of the urban environment and the experience of living in innovatory low carbon housing. He is a trustee of the Wakefield Civic Society but has prepared this article in a personal capacity.

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