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Ailtearachd is Dealbhadh na h-Alba



What is a master

Master planning is rightly criticised as
the end state, and not with how to
approach- the linear process to a
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Master Planning Process Under Current Conditions (Symposium)

A report on the Symposium
proceedings by Architecture and
Design Scotland and University of
Dundee

October 2012

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**The Geddes Institute for Urban Research
School of the Environment
University of Dundee**

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Organized by Dr. Husam Al Waer

A report on the Symposium proceedings
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Introduction

This report, prepared by Architecture and Design Scotland and University of Dundee, summarises key themes from the 2012 Symposium on the 'Masterplanning process in current conditions'. It is laid out in three sections: the first summarises key issues discussed by presenters and delegates, the second derives key themes, and the third draws reflections.

The report has been prepared by Diarmaid Lawlor, Head of Urbanism at A+DS with Dr. Husam Al Waer. It has been edited by Eric Dawson at A+DS.

The content of this report seeks to provide an authentic record of the discussions at the Dundee Symposium, with some observations by the authors on the themes emerging during the discussion. They do not necessarily reflect the official views or policy of Architecture and Design Scotland

Background

The economic downturn has challenged the processes of designing and implementing change. In recent times the masterplan has been promoted as a key tool to guide change. How does the process of masterplanning work, what does it deliver, who does it deliver for, and what is the role of the masterplanning process in a recession?

The Geddes Institute for Urban Research organized a Symposium to examine the masterplanning process in the current contexts. The purpose was to engage practitioners and researchers in a debate about what we understand the masterplanning process to be, where it is now and how it might develop.

The Symposium, organized by Dr. Husam al Waer, brought together practitioners, researchers and policymakers to discuss the issue. The abstract for the Symposium is set out as follows:

"Master-planning has had a strong revival in recent years. However, significant socio-demographic changes are on-going amidst the constraints of the current economic stagnation, the policy of reduced public spending and added pressure the search for growth places on the environment. This changing environment poses a major challenge for master-planning. The way we conceive of master-planning now requires re-visiting. The traditional perspective of master-planning as a design-led activity concerned with the architectural form of buildings, spaces and infrastructures which is not only out-dated, but lacks the instruments needed to realize a visually pleasing townscape that is capable of sustaining such development. Uncertainty affecting market conditions and the availability of investment, as well as policy change will affect how master-planning can meet the challenge sustainable development poses. The symposium explores how the 'master-planning process' can meet this challenge and become the basis of just such a sustainable development."

The Symposium opened with an introduction to the Geddes Institute for Urban Research by Dr. Lorens Holm, Director of the Institute. Dr. Husam al Waer set the context for the debate by focusing on the idea of impact: if we all understand what a masterplan is, and share views on the process, why do they fail? Are we clear on the impacts we are trying to achieve from the outset, and who has been involved in sharing this vision or change?

Dr. Al Waer framed these thoughts around three drivers of change in settlements:

- *Public life*: The desire to create places where people want to be, that are enjoyable and sustainable means that we should look to lever as much impact as possible from each intervention in settlements to enable mixed public life to emerge and prosper. This is key to wealth, equalities and sustainability.
- *Efficiencies*: The resources available to implement change are finite. Some, such as finance and people skills, are challenged by the current economic climate. Achieving the greatest efficiencies with the resources available is a key concern of investors and stewards of places. Efficiency on its own is necessary to achieve better buildings and spaces, but is not sufficient to create great places. The overlap of efficiency and public life/leverage is key. This sets a key challenge for thinking through the process of change to achieve great places. How does the masterplanning process respond to these challenges?

- *Collaboration:* The urban environment is complex. There are many communities, stakeholders and processes. The process of change can be complex and complicated. To achieve effective change - lasting impact which is sustainable over time - necessitates collaboration between decisionmakers, communities and professionals. Design is a vehicle to move through this complexity. The masterplanning process is one design route to move through this complex landscape, guiding people and agendas towards a consensus on what needs to be done; where and why to achieve mutually beneficial impacts.

For Dr. Al Waer the process of getting to a masterplan is important. The masterplan is a tool for implementing change. The process of making a masterplan is a process of deciding what change should look like. Al Waer contends that this is a dynamic process: it changes, and it involves many people. How we understand and practice this process of change matters.

In these contexts, Dr. Al Waer opened the Symposium debate with two open questions around the masterplanning process:

- What are we trying to do – i.e. what is the narrative of the practice of creating masterplans for change?
- What works and why – i.e. what does success look like and how do we know?

The response to these questions was presented in three forms:

First, Diarmaid Lawlor, Head of Urbanism at Architecture and Design Scotland, facilitated a short participatory exercise with delegates around the benefits and problems with the masterplanning process to get a sense of how people in the room perceive the issue.

Second, a series of presentations were delivered by experts in the field of urban design including:

- *How can a sustainable master plan create value for local people?*
This was delivered by Professor Brian Evans, Partner at Gillespies LLP, and Head of Urbanism at the Glasgow School of Art
- *Masterplanning as medium-term placemaking*
This was delivered by Professor Kevin Murray, Director of Kevin Murray Associates, Chair of The Academy of Urbanism, and Past President of the Royal Town Planning Institute
- *Ninety-four per cent of masterplans fail. What can we learn from that, and how can we make the most of what is still one of the most powerful concepts in urban design?*
This was delivered by Rob Cowan, Director of Urban Design Skills, joint author of By Design, and originator of three influential urban design methods: the *Placecheck* method of urban design audit, the skills appraisal method *Capacitycheck*; and the design appraisal method *Qualityreviewer*.

Finally, delegates engaged in a lively questions and answers session with the panel of speakers who were joined by Dr. David Kirk, and Rowena Statt, Associate with Anderson Bell Christie. Diarmaid Lawlor concluded with a summary of the feedback from the first participation session and the key themes discussed during the Symposium.

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values, processes, positioning

Section 1: Summary of presentations

1.1 Defining the masterplanning process

At the outset of the Symposium, there were discussions about meaning. Typically, these differentiated between two ideas:

- masterplan as a 'blueprint', which is primarily about short term solutions framed around buildings and spaces [i.e. the masterplan as an idea about organizing the physical environment only], and
- the masterplanning process as an integrated process of change, linking social, economic and physical issues.

As part of this discussion about concepts and clarity, Husam al Waer presented some definitions of masterplanning, which include:

- *"Master planning is about setting out a vision for an area undergoing change and a strategy for implementing that vision. They are about taking the initiative in terms of design, layout, houses, jobs and services...Critically, they must show local people what an area might look like in the future."* [reference]
- *"Masterplanning is about making places. It is a process of resolving conflicts and pursuing shared interests creatively – discussing ideas, agreeing objectives and priorities, testing proposals".* CABE, 2011.

For Dr. Al Waer, one of the things preventing us from fully realising the long-term benefits of master planning solutions is the current short term focus on *installing* solutions, rather than a longer-term perspective that ensure their continued *performance* throughout their intended lifespan despite changing conditions.

In shaping the Symposium agenda, Dr. Al Waer suggests:

"This is the time for a new way of thinking. We need to create a shift in process and in thinking. Rather than seeing a master plan as a collecting of things (slopes, drainages, roads, spaces, and buildings, etc.), master-planning has to be approached as the process of harnessing dynamic processes that are continually structuring and restructuring. This view requires a shift from focussing on the product of the masterplan to the mind-set of purposeful systems thinking. This model asks stakeholders to be open and willing to change the way they have always done things. The quality of communication, listening, and learning that occurs during the process will be reflected in the final outcomes. It is an evolutionary process that ideally encourages participation, and inspires shared action."

1.2 Understanding the benefits and problems with the masterplanning process

Feedback from the participation exercise at the beginning of the Symposium, concerning the benefits and problems with the masterplanning process, was grouped into themes and is summarised as follows:

Benefits		Problems	
Issue	Comment	Issue	Comment
Futures	The masterplanning process is a useful method of inviting a diversity of audiences to engage in discussion about future change	Clarity	There were divergent understandings of what a masterplan is or is not, what the masterplanning process is or is not. There are issues of clarity and language
Analysis	A masterplanning process which integrates social, economic and physical thinking can help shape clarity and consensus on key issues driving change in an area	Conflicts and complexity	There was a perception that diversity of demands and stakeholders involved in the masterplanning process can generate conflicts, complex processes, lack of clarity and delays
Improvement	Linked to the clarity of analysis is the potential for the masterplanning process to allow discussions about the nature of improvements: what, for who, how	Confidence and communication	Given the complexity of the process, there was a perception of barriers to participation by communities and other stakeholders because people don't understand the process, lack confidence and suffer poor communication by people involved in the process
Delivery	An integrated masterplanning process allows clarity on delivery roles and responsibilities, speed and nature of change, and financing	Resources, finance and the economy	The masterplanning process was seen as resource intensive, expensive and vulnerable to shifts in economic circumstances
		Leadership	The issue of who leads complex processes, who owns outcomes and who is responsible for actions was identified as a key concern.

In broad terms, the feedback from the first session focused on some key issues around the potential and problems of the masterplanning process:

- Shaping shared visions
- Enabling clear pathway to implement change
- Confusion on intent, process and meaning
- Questions about the democratic process of how change in places is shaped, and by who

1.3 The masterplanning process: practitioner reflections

1.3.1 Presentation by Professor Brian Evans:

How can a sustainable master plan create value for local people?

Professor Brian Evans discussed the issue of change by focusing on ordinary towns and settlements that make up a lot of the urban landscape. What does change mean in these places and how do people enter the discussion around change to shape propositions that are recognisable, relevant and achievable. Professor Evans started from the perspective of understanding the history and contexts of the place, the stories that the people of that place understand and link to. The job of the professional is to understand these stories and bring new perspectives on the place, its opportunities and challenges. Central to this process is the act of engagement with the communities in that place.

Evans set out a narrative about how this process of engagement, learning and sharing between communities, professionals and investors can unfold. It included understanding how to look at the physical development of a place over time; using this to inform futures; shaping ambitions through active and ongoing dialogue; achieving change people want, starting by asking basic questions; rooting questions in things that are relevant and meaningful to people and scaling the complexity of processes outwards from this starting position; active looking, listening, exploring of the place you are in with the people there; and deriving principles for change through engagement and using these principles as a shared means between decisionmakers and communities to assess what has happened, what has worked and what needs to happen during the change process.

A key element of the presentation related to 'slippery language'. A form of practice in the use of language is to use words and assume people know what they mean. This can lead to loss of meaning, ambiguity and doubt, particularly when words are repeatedly used. What does a masterplan mean? What does sustainable mean? What does value mean? What does local mean? What does the phrase sustainable masterplanning to create value for local people really mean? For Evans, specificity and simplicity are important so that everyone knows what is meant, to enable open and honest engagement about how to move forward. In this context, he offered the following definitions:

- *sustainable*: capable of enduring. We need to de-couple economic growth from materials use in the way we talk about sustainability in place terms.
- *masterplan*: Concept framework through to a plan, vision through to a process, a consensual direction of travel
- *value*: hard value measured in terms of money, soft value measured in terms of benefit
- *local people*: people who live and work in a place, and who care about a place. This is not a neutral idea.

Evans distinguished between the necessary and sufficient conditions for successful change. It is necessary to have methods and processes about how change is discussed and implemented, but this is not sufficient. Sufficient principles are about hard investment in the soft infrastructure of the people in the change process. Five conditions were identified: capability [which may and does exist in communities, and in professionals], engagement, leadership, trust, staying power.

Recurring themes were evident throughout the presentation: understanding the environment you are in; listening to others' understanding of the same place; deriving principles for change informed by these understandings; open processes of engagement and commitment to people. These themes cut across different scales of change, from regional spatial planning and investment, to city planning, district and neighbourhood design and public space design. The issue at each scale was less about the masterplanning process, and more about how the process of discussing change was initiated, and used to shape which processes and methods are best to guide how change might be implemented.

1.3.2 Presentation by Professor Kevin Murray:

Masterplanning as medium term placemaking

Professor Kevin Murray gave an overview of the process of masterplan as a medium term placemaking process. For him, masterplanning is not an end; it is a means, with the emphasis on the process. The end that

masterplanning can help shape better places for people, public goods with social infrastructure, and the ability for prosperity and wellbeing; within which sit buildings, homes and work places. Professor Murray passionately believes that masterplanning is relevant as a means of creating better places for people because it necessitates clear thinking about change:

- Strategic intent: what are we trying to do and why?
- Status: how will this change map across legal and statutory structures to implementation?
- Components: what elements make up the place we want to create?
- Controls: what needs to be controlled to get the place we want and why?

In addressing these issues, Murray emphasises masterplanning as process, and particularly, as both a tool for engagement, and a product of engagement.

Engagement

Murray emphasised the importance of the starting point: clarity of purpose on what we are doing, why we are doing it, who is doing it and how these decisions get communicated and implemented. Achieving clarity of purpose is a fundamental part of masterplanning, which is necessarily about engaging with a wide constituency of people. The starting point for the process of building better places is collaborative engagement.

The masterplan sets a context for decisions for the next 5, 10, 15 or 20 years. It sets a frame for generations. This is a key reason for productive engagement: the 'client' or beneficiary of the masterplan process is not just the paying client, not just the people who occupy the early phases of the masterplan, or the people who come after them. The end user will be many and different. Active engagement at the early stage of the masterplan ensures that the product being created is informed by as much consideration from as wide a range of people as possible about what a liveable place for people is and how it works.

Effective engagement requires a range of skills, and a commitment to understand that there are different stakeholders with different experiences. This requires development, at an early stage, of a shared language to allow clear and honest discussion of what is important, what matters to people, and effective two way communication about changes proposed in the masterplanning process. Working out how to engage, and who to engage, is important. In every place there are sensitivities, local issues and contexts. Key skills are listening and honest synthesis.

Key proposition: Masterplan as contingency frame

Change is complex. There are many variables, stakeholders and interests. These variables come into tension within the urban area and experience pressure from outside. Change in these contexts happens frequently. A masterplan is a way of dealing with change.

Professor Kevin Murray's key point is that a masterplan is a 'contingency frame'. This means the masterplan is a holding position in time, which stabilises some key issues in response to a process of collaborative decisionmaking about what is important. This 'contingency frame' works on different levels, [social, economic, environmental] and has different fixes [perhaps an aspect of the physical street structure, or land uses, or heights for example].

Murray's view recognises that things will change, but the masterplan as a set of contexts provides a framework to negotiate how to respond to change. If there is clarity about what is important to all stakeholders, then instead of some change (e.g. economics) meaning start again, the plan can adjust appropriately. This is about design beyond buildings.

Place and purpose

As a process of medium term placemaking, masterplanning can help clarify the purpose of places. This includes consideration of role: what is this place for and how does it sustain itself?; what are the uses and activities, in new and regenerated places?; what is the economy of the place and its relationship with the wider economy?; what are the social and community structures and what do they need to sustain themselves?; how does this place enable participation and involvement?; how does the physical appearance and design of the place take shape?; what is the role of sustainability?; and on the basis of all of the above, what are the fixed and variable

components of the structure of the place? Getting clarity on these issues requires engagement to scope out what is important, and a range of professional skill and partnerships to deliver change that meets the scope of the brief.

Process

Professor Murray set out some definitions of what a masterplanning process can be: a visioning process; a synthesis of economic and social issues; a blueprint in some instances [for example, Edinburgh new town]; a spatial diagram to guide key infrastructure investments and public policy; a tool for mediation between parties; a means to create and redistribute wealth; a way to assess outcomes and do things better. In other words, a masterplan can be many things. It is a flexible tool that takes meaning in a place relative to the contexts operating in that place, i.e. the scope of the masterplan is not generic; it is particular.

Broadly, Professor Murray suggested that a masterplan is the integration of three ideas:

- *Spatial masterplanning*: focus on spatial organisation at a range of scales, the synthesis of different social, economic and environmental issues in a spatial context
- *Master programming*: focus on activities and actions in time and space, sequencing activities over time, from decisionmaking to phasing
- *Institutional co-ordination*: focus on establishing a framework for institutions, landowners, agencies and communities with different remits and cultures to come together on a set of shared agendas

Within these approaches, there are a variety of tools, which enable focus and proportionality at different scales. These tools include:

- *Spatial strategy*: these are broad brush spatial concepts [blob-o-grams]
- *Development framework*: these start to establish a more formal spatial structure identifying key infrastructure, land use and density parameters, accessibility, major spaces and streets. This often builds on inherited spatial structures, like the grain of streets in a settlement, or the mapping across of structures from historic maps
- *Detailed masterplan*: this develops the principles of the development framework through feedback from engagement and technical testing, addressing issues such as detailed uses, heights, massing, materials, street types, public spaces. For Murray, the masterplan is a series of layers, not a single plan.
- *Design briefs/design codes*: these formalise the conditions for implementation at a fine grain and often inform statutory processes and approvals over time or land deals and finance

Delivery

Well organised implementation is key to translating masterplanning concepts into reality, and is also essential to maintaining trust between the various interests, stakeholders and communities that have been part of the masterplanning process.

Delivery is a process. It takes years. Within this period, things change. Ongoing engagement with communities, stakeholders, decisionmakers and clients is essential to ensure that the strategic intent established at the outset is maintained throughout the entire course of the project. This ensures that the place delivered is the place desired.

1.3.3 Presentation by Rob Cowan:

Ninety-four per cent of masterplans fail. What can we learn from that, and how can we make the most of what is still one of the most powerful concepts in urban design?

For Rob Cowan, the basis of all masterplanning to guide change is to start with experiencing and getting to know the place you are considering changing. Second, ask simple questions, and build simple ideas about change that can be expressed clearly and accurately. Third, focus on a few important priorities to achieve. Fourth, accept that change happens as an absolute principle; we don't know at the outset what the change will be, but we need to allow for it to happen. Finally, commit interest and passion, because the sum of these efforts results in places to live and work - don't allow plans to be 'small and dreary, made so drudgingly' as expressed by Sharpe in the 1950's.

Cowan, author of 'The Dictionary of Urbanism', provided an amusing and critical insight into the use of language in the practice of making places, and calls for consistency in meaning in the use of words, and simplicity in how

words are framed to communicate purpose. In short, he calls for accuracy, the basis of which are clear thoughts about what is important and what will happen to deliver change. This is important describing change is about taking care in structuring ideas which are described simply, accurately and consistently; and which away from jargon, fashion and 'fuzzy thinking'.

Experiential learning is central To understand what change is appropriate, a place needs to be experienced. The planning officer should walk his territory and get to know its structure and character. Tools like *'Placecheck'* are available for communities to engage in a process of analysis about what they like and don't like, and what they want to work. It enables reflection and questioning about the necessary structures and organisational frameworks that need to be put in place to lead change, or to influence the path of masterplans.

Interestingly Cowan, who has written Government policy, lexicons and urban design toolkits, has avoided the term 'masterplan' and instead describes places, their qualities and structures. For instance, *'By Design: towards better practice in the planning system'* (initially written for the Department of Environment Transport and the Regions [DETR] and subsequently updated by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment [CABE]) does not mention the term 'masterplanning'. The Masterplanning PAN in Scotland explains why masterplans are important to drive the quality of what will be delivered, and move away from standardised design outcomes. However, again, the term masterplan is not explicitly defined. Cowan suggests the nature of change needs to be expressed in a strategic way, which informs processes and engages multi disciplinary approaches through clear design principles to effect social, economic and environmental change which can be expressed in three dimensions and implemented. Cowan recognises master planning is a complex process built from simple steps, that perhaps now needs clarity of definition.

In addition to clarity of language, Cowan is concerned about the clarity of representation. Using UK case studies he illustrated where the masterplanning concept (e.g. active street life) is not delivered because what appear as urban blocks on 2D plans have no street frontage in reality. This is at variance with arguments made through the masterplanning process to justify schemes. There is a mismatch of rhetoric, and the outcome of this kind of approach is mediocre and unfair.

The crux of Cowan's argument is that change happens and, within this certainty, there is a need to be certain about what must remain fixed over time to achieve outcomes, and what can change. Too often, masterplans in the same location start from scratch. The waste of resources in each iteration undermines the masterplanning process and raises doubts as to its validity, and evidence base for spatial decisions. If things start from scratch everytime it suggests there is never anything in any plan that makes sense from one masterplanning generation to the next. If this is true, then there are some key questions about the way in which we engage with long term contexts, like the streets and spaces that already exist in places. The basis of a masterplanning process is being clear about simple ideas for change, with three or so key components, which are easy to grasp, easy to communicate, and easy to engage with.

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contexts, clarity, client, collaboration,
change

Section 2: Emerging themes from the Symposium

2.1 Overview

Several themes emerged throughout the Symposium around the who, how and why of the masterplanning process. These themes are summarised as follows:

- Contexts
- Clarity
- Client
- Collaboration
- Change

2.2 Context

The idea of deliberate propositional change by design is part of Scotland's placemaking heritage. Professor Brian Evans identified the motives and process of King David I and the legacy of these processes in Scotland's Burgh towns. Although the idea that there are different drivers of change over time is understood, the form this takes is highly influenced by the values and technologies at any point in time. In this respect, different places will have different contexts of form, community, culture. A clear understanding of these and how they work is essential to drive place specific responses which people recognise, value and maintain.

Two other contexts were discussed: the recession and impacts.

'Is masterplanning relevant in a recession?' was a provocative question from the audience. The masterplan is often framed in terms of certainty. Because the process of producing the masterplan has sought to engage with people and issues and multiple variables around change, the idea is that the masterplan provides certainty about what is likely to happen - how, where and when. However, the economic downturn has challenged the certainty principle underpinning masterplans, such as finance, policy stability and stakeholder behaviours. How certain is the masterplan in these times?

For Kevin Murray, recession is part of the context of masterplanning. Given his proposition that masterplanning is medium term placemaking, a longer term view of effects and implementation is a central idea. For him, the purpose of placemaking is about creating opportunity, wealth and fairness, constructing frameworks for participation and democratic processes in how places are built. Achieving these conditions requires us to develop learning gained from over 20 years of placemaking, to communicate the value, now and for the long term of building better places. In a context where there are job and housing pressures, the risk is default urbanism: 'anywhere building' that fails to deliver the right conditions for lives to prosper. The masterplanning process can provide a framework to navigate through these challenges.

Recessions are potentially good times to implement masterplan proposals based on a longer term vision, due to the stimulus to invest in a recession, the need to stimulate the construction sector, and the opportunity of political support to leverage investments.

2.3 Clarity

The theme of clarity cut across a range of issues, from language and intent, to acceptance of the dynamics of how places work. Places are messy, people processes are messy. However, messy language, with slippery meanings and terminologies (specifically identified by Rob Cowan) fail to establish appropriate platforms for

meaningful decisionmaking. Sloppy language makes it easy to conceal a lack of clarity, which in turn may result in poor quality outcomes, and poor urbanism.

The question posed by Professor Evans 'why is it the places we love are so different to the places we build?' invited reflection on the complexity of decisions, conflicts and layering that form the environments we experience now. They are rarely the product of singular, linear, 'clean' processes, but are more likely to have resulted from 'messy complexity'. The importance of accepting 'mess' is important when engaging with change.

For Murray, the issue of 'clarity' brings in two key issues: leadership and control. On the issue of leadership, who is the client? Is it the person who commissions and pays fees, or is it the ultimate end user? What are the behaviours, roles and responsibilities of these different forms of client and how are they engaged? In terms of control, being clear about purpose should help focus on what really matters to make the plan work. This may mean being very firm about a few variables that matter. The guidance for these may be prescriptive with flexible rules for other variables. Issues of control can scale to different spatial elements, from the plot to the block, street or neighbourhood, so that the way in which 'rules for change' are specified and communicated may be more fine grain and detailed, or more broad and performance based.

Clarity and simplicity were emphasised both speakers and delegates attending the Symposium. Addressing these issues is central to enable confidence and encourage greater participation in the process of masterplanning by communities and stakeholders.

2.4 Client

Kevin Murray's comments regarding the client role equally applied to the need to lead change through visioning. Establishing the vision or purpose of a masterplanning process by consensus and in collaboration was seen as crucial in shaping change. Without this clear understanding of what the masterplan seeks to achieve it becomes difficult to galvanise people along the journey of change. This is of particular significance where there is a need to lead discussions within the process when tensions emerge and understand what success looks like so everyone can measure the worth of their investment in the process.

Kevin Murray also raised the issue of clients and clientship in a number of other ways. First, in seeing change as a multi generational phenomenon, Murray shows that the interests in making places happen and sustaining them changes over time. Clients who pay are involved at a point in the masterplanning process; early occupiers establish their own amenity, and future occupants change the character again. Each of these interests invests in the place at different stages; creating social investment or in the stewardship of the place. In the later stewardship phases, there is usually no individual client, but multiple and varied interests.

Contained within the issue of clients (and commissions) is the issue of skills. Making the masterplan happen and maintaining the quality of place over time requires a range of skills, from facilitation, to finance, design, contracts and law. Investing in multidisciplinary thinking and practice is key to better masterplanning processes.

2.5 Collaboration

All of the speakers spoke of a masterplanning process which spans both time and interests. This requires collaboration. The nature of collaboration varies, but the starting point for effective collaboration is a shared, deep understanding of the place, and trust between the parties.

Kevin Murray set out key thoughts about engagement, and discussed the need for different approaches in different contexts. Listening is essential, along with honest, authentic capturing of what people said and mean. In each project, the nature of the engagement processes will vary, but a constant is the need to engage well, honestly, and often. This need not be complex. Often, it is about making time for simple things, as Rob Cowan

suggests, maybe using simple methods like *Placecheck*, walking, talking and asking what matters to people about their place.

Within the broad theme of engagement and collaboration, the issue of charettes was explored. The charettes discussion broadly divided into three parts. The first was a questioning of the open-ness of the process: is it an act of theatre hiding decisions already made or is it a genuine open process, where the proposals are derived with and by participants? The second was a discussion about the nature of how and who facilitates charettes, and the skills necessary to enable discussions about change to happen in a forum where there are rules to allow sufficient respect in social interactions but not so much as to inhibit ideas or challenge. Finally, there were discussions about the 'charette hangover', and the reality post charette. What happens next and how does the output of the charette fit with the statutory processes? What are the time windows to enable this interface; who takes on the responsibility for linking everything together?

There was both robust criticism of the practice of charettes and a recognition that it is a method. How the method is organised, and the principles upon which the people involved in delivering the charette engage with communities and stakeholders matters significantly.

The delegate discussion brought issues of democracy and accountability around change in the built environment into focus. In this, the issues under consideration were less about design and methods, and more about principles, values, and the practice of these principles by the people involved in the processes. In other words, the discussion was less about structures and more about culture.

2.6 Change

If change processes are predicated on cleaning things up, tidying complexity and ambiguity, then the opportunities for the emergent behaviours and responses that form the social capital and public life of places is challenged. In this there is a key dilemma around control; to achieve the dynamic and lively outcomes that we often describe as successful places, there needs to be clarity on what and how to control, and clarity on what and how to let go to permit emergent behaviours. In other words, not all variables need to be controlled. The challenge at the outset of the process of change is to identify which variables are key.

An emerging theme was dissatisfaction or lack of confidence in some of the places resulting from over a decade or so of masterplanning and strategic change. This raised the question as to whether the recession might have an impact on how the process of change itself could change, and whether better approaches might develop: might we achieve better consideration of people, places and impacts, and better design? A similar theme was developed around doing simple things well, doing things that matter. A form of practice might emerge which is smaller scaled, more craft based in its emphasis and more about slow incremental change.

A second audience participation session following the presentations developed some thoughts around the processes of change, and how they work. There was a questioning of the effects of historic decisions: not all the effects of previous masterplanning are positive. The memory of the processes of change, and the reality of living with these effects, form a lived context for the people in that place. Understanding this is essential to inform any new conversation about future change – what, why, how, and with who. It is also necessary to use this learning to reflect on the quality and form of decisions: what is the best way to guide change? Is the masterplan the best route? Are there others? Could change be done better? What might this look like? Is this an issue of design, planning or masterplanning?



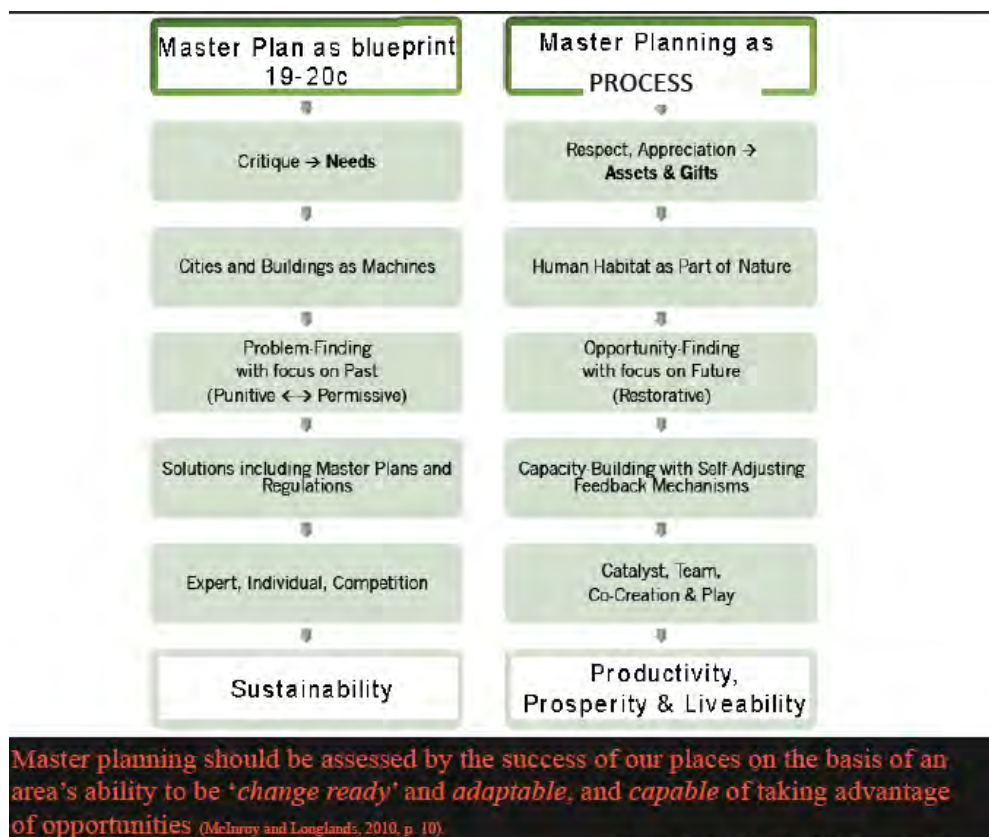
managing change, together

Section 3: Final reflections

Masterplanning is a process of guiding place-based change. The key issue is not masterplanning; it is about the nature of change, understanding what is driving it, how it relates to the specific contexts of a place and how people get involved in influencing it. In human settlements, urban places, the focus of this change is about people.

In discussing the masterplanning process, Dr. Husam Al Waer quotes the DCLG in England which suggests that “*Master planning is about setting out a vision for an area undergoing change and a strategy for implementing that vision*”. This idea of masterplanning as a process shifts away from the idea of the masterplan as a blueprint, effected by institutions or individuals with control over what, when and how it will happen. Our modern world is more complex and diverse in terms of who is responsible for making change happen.

The final diagram in the Symposium discussed by Dr. Al Waer compares the shift in understanding of the masterplanning process. It compares the different values and steps in the processes. For example, where as the masterplan as blueprint took an empirical view of statistical evidence to drive change, the contemporary masterplanning process is more about respecting place based contexts, appreciating peoples’ interests and values in a place, re-thinking place assets. In the blueprint model, settlements were part of the ‘machine for living’ mantra; modern society sees settlements as habitats.



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The blueprint focuses on solutions, specific answers for specific problems. Modern masterplanning processes aim to build capacities, with mechanisms for the place to adjust in response to change. The conclusion of this diagram, created by Sarah Longlands and Neil McInroy suggests that the outcome of these masterplanning processes represents a shift in emphasis from sustainability as a generic idea to a set of specific people based ideas around productivity, prosperity and livability.

The Dundee Symposium on 'The Master Planning Process in Current Conditions' shows that both ideas of the masterplan, and the masterplanning process still exist and are used as frameworks for guiding change in a number of ways. Placemaking and the masterplanning process still retain value, and this value is important to clearly articulate in the recession, to avoid a retreat to default urbanism: 'anywhere and nowhere places'.

The Symposium illustrates the complexity of the change processes but emphasises starting with a clear shared understanding of how places work, and a clear build up of stories about complex change through incremental, simple steps, with clear ideas developed with a wide range of interests through engagement. Design plays a central role in all this complexity. It is a vehicle to translate a complex of conflicting and challenging demands into places that people want to be in.

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*The report of the Symposium is also
available on the Geddes Institute website:-*

*[http://www.dundee.ac.uk/geddesinstitute/
index.htm](http://www.dundee.ac.uk/geddesinstitute/index.htm)*



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