

## REIMAGING SETTLEMENTS

### Reimaging

Urban reimaging may be defined as 'place promotion', where publicity and marketing is used to put forward selected images of a place or places to a target audience (Figure 1). In today's increasingly globalised world, with a high degree of movement of goods and people, and a need to be competitive, settlements have effectively become brands and products. They are marketed by their local authorities and developers to attract people and investment.

However, it depends on who is creating the 'brand' or image, and for whom: local authorities have a duty to represent their local people, but getting a balance may be difficult, especially in areas with diverse ethnic and economic groupings. Conversely, large business organisations, such as property developers, will have different, more profit-driven motives.

Image-building includes changes to the built environment and the perception of a place, often called 'rebranding'. It involves finding new ways and new technologies to enhance the local environment, and is often involved with the current need to create more sustainable settlements. You may be more familiar with the term 'regeneration', relating to the physical changes in the built environment designed to modernise and make them better places to live, work and visit. This may be part of current 'reimaging', but not all regeneration schemes involve a change of image.

Reimaging means identifying then using what is special about a place, whether existing, like historical buildings, or new, like a flagship shopping mall or sports catalyst, and creating a brand identity. Images and design can make or break a reimaging project. Marketing ethnoscaapes is increasing, i.e. using ethnic and cultural differences to attract interest and investment. Examples include temporary street markets or festivals, like the Notting Hill Carnival, and more permanent features, like the commodification of ethnic concentrations (enclaves) such as Chinatown in San Francisco.

Figure 1: A summary of key terms

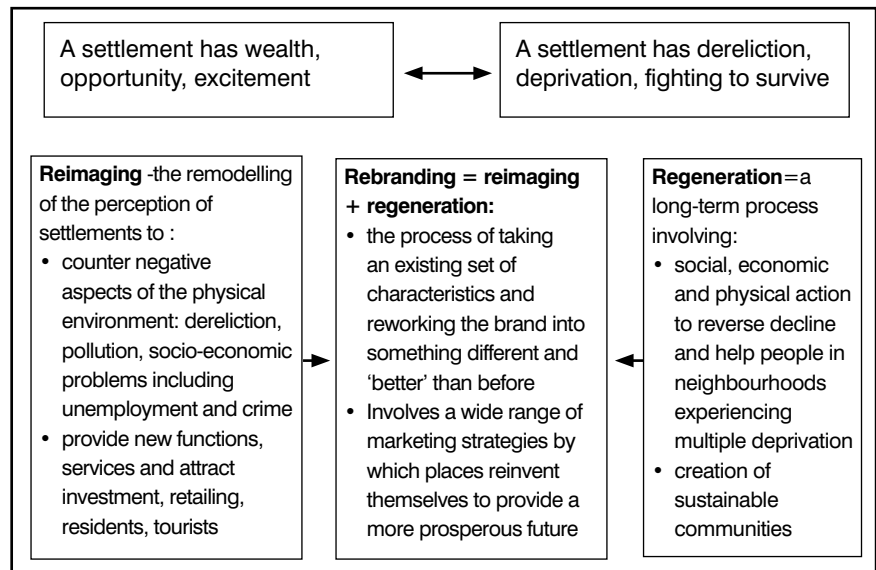


Figure 2: The reimaging cycle

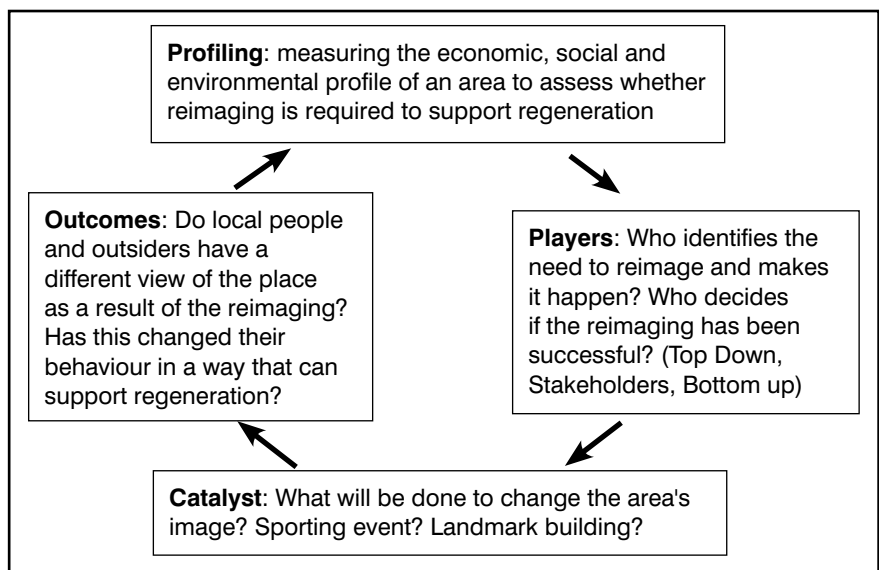


Figure 3: The sustainability quadrant

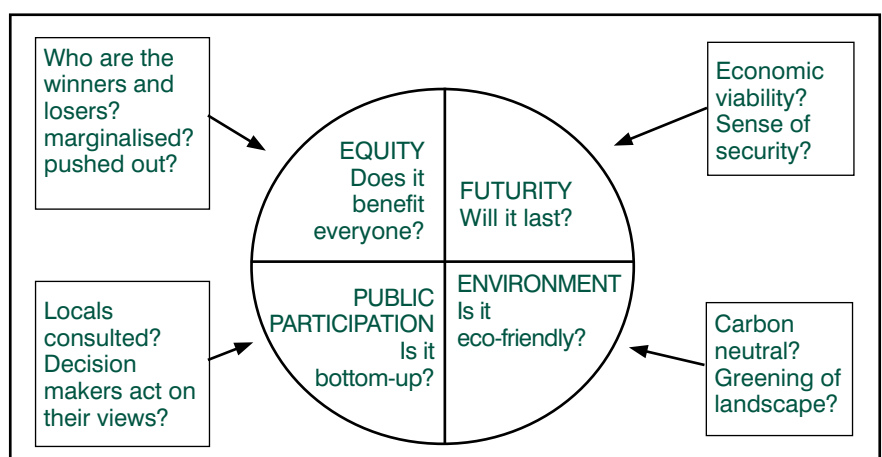


Figure 4: Testing the success of reimaging

	Primary fieldwork	Secondary data collection
Qualitative techniques	Place check <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of built environment?</li> <li>Perception of new image?</li> </ul> Photographic/video evidence <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Attractive and successful neighbourhoods?</li> </ul> Blog sites Egan wheel of sustainability	Local newspapers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence of poor health?</li> <li>Evidence of crime?</li> <li>Prestige cultural &amp; sporting events?</li> </ul> Developers' websites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have the aims been met?</li> <li>Does the reality match the hype?</li> </ul>
Quantitative techniques generating statistical data	Land use surveys Environmental quality surveys Crime and design surveys Interviews and questionnaires <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sense of pride?</li> <li>Fear of crime?</li> </ul> Pedestrian footfalls and traffic flows <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Popular or deserted?</li> </ul>	Census data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More and better jobs?</li> <li>A growing population?</li> </ul> School league tables <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Better educated population?</li> </ul> Shop occupancy figures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increasing retail function (flagship stores?)</li> </ul> GIS(geographical information systems) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify services and their distribution</li> <li>Digitised health and crime maps</li> </ul>

### How can the success of reimaging be measured?

Measuring the success of reimaging can be seen as a cycle (Figure 2).

Often it is not exciting new architecture or large-scale developments which are important longer term, but the basics of mixed land uses, ease of movement, more opportunities, a clean environment, and safety day and night to work, live and relax (Figure 3).

Some popular, well-tested research methods of testing this model are shown in Figure 4.

Some unusual research sources may indicate the importance of image to a city, for instance celebrity Jeremy Clarkson's one-word associations:

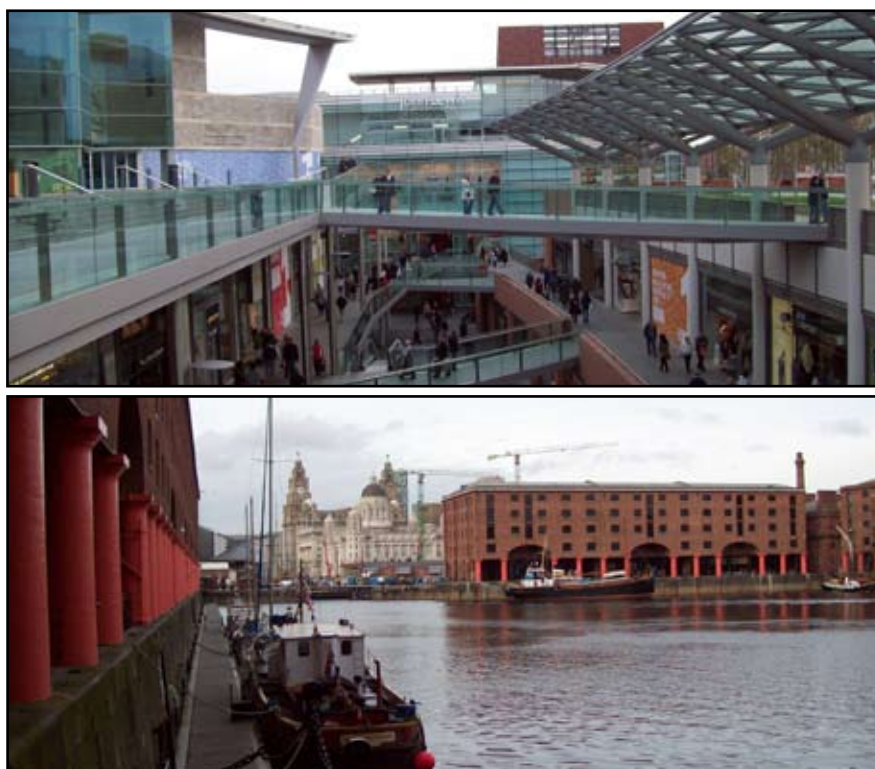
- Paris-love
- New York-shopping
- London-the Queen
- Sydney-the Bridge
- Venice-canal
- Johannesburg-crime

The following case studies show a range of urban areas trying to reimage using a variety of catalysts.

### Case study 1: Liverpool – reimaging cataly

Liverpool's image in the early 1980s was dominated by the decline of its 19th century industrial base. Unemployment had doubled between 1971 and 1981 to 20.4%. Between 1971 and 2001 its population fell by 27.9%; by 1991, 40% lived in poverty and

Figure 5: Liverpool's new image: high quality retail alongside the refurbished docks, home to cultural and heritage attractions building on the Liverpool story



Photographs by Rob Morris, Shrewsbury School

15% in intense poverty, twice the national levels. Derelict, often vacant and functionally obsolete industrial buildings characterised much of the inner city. These were interspersed with standard traditional terraced housing and the controversial 1960s social experiments of high-rise estates.

Key players, including Liverpool City Council, the North West Development Agency and the European Regional Development Fund, set out to reimage and

support regeneration in the city through the Liverpool Vision Urban Regeneration Company.

Over £2 billion from the public and private sectors has been invested in revitalising the city centre. Flagships include: Liverpool One retail and office development (Figure 5), a £15 million new Cruise Liner Terminal, the £150 million Echo Arena, Kings Waterfront, the Museum of Liverpool, major residential renewal and refurbishment in Kensington,

Anfield and Breckfield, improved road access from the M62 to the city centre, and an expansion of John Lennon International Airport (attracting low-cost airlines).

The culture-led regeneration approach commodified the city's past: maritime heritage, slavery, Empire, the Beatles. This allowed the city to sell its past, helping it to stand out from the crowd of other European city destinations. It was marketed as European Capital of Culture from 2003. The main theme was 'World in one city' and each year up to 2010 was given its own sub-theme: 2003 Year of Learning; 2004 Faith in One City; 2005 Sea Liverpool; 2006 Liverpool Performs (Arts, Business and Sport); 2007 Year of Heritage (800th birthday); 2008 Capital of Culture; 2009 Environment; 2010 Innovation.

Whilst some of these developments might have happened anyway, the scale of the city's success is a direct result of the success of the city's reimagining.

- Liverpool has moved from 17th to fifth in the UK's retail hierarchy.
- The city had attracted over £3 billion of inward investment by 2008.
- Unemployment fell to 4% in 2008, its lowest level for 20 years.
- 1.7m extra visitors came to the city during 2008, spending an estimated £250m.
- The population of the city centre is increasing: from 10,000 in 2002 to a predicted 24,000 in 2010.

Liverpool's success in reimagining itself as European Capital of Culture in 2008 has raised interest in reimagining amongst cities in the UK. Due to the EU's expanding borders, the next opportunity for a UK city to be the European Capital of Culture will not be until 2032. To meet demand for reimagining opportunities, in 2009 the UK government created a UK four-yearly 'Capital of Culture' competition. The winning city will host a string of high-profile events, including the Turner Prize, BBC Sports Personality of the Year, The Brits and the Stirling Prize. Front runners include Birmingham, Oxford, Manchester, and a joint bid by Southampton and Portsmouth.

## Case Study 2: Oldham – social catalyst

Oldham's image in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was that of 'King Cotton', the hub of a global textile industry and a part of the booming manufacturing area which eventually developed into Greater Manchester. Similarly to Liverpool, decades of deindustrialisation and lack of investment left a town with a high proportion of run-down cityscape. Infamous for a fragmented 1960s-style retail centre, and for being the largest town in the UK without a Marks and Spencer's, it has suffered from lack of investment. It has a high youthful population, a high proportion of ethnic minorities and 8% unemployment.

There have been many attempts to regenerate sections of the town, such as the 2004 Masterplan called 'Oldham Beyond'. However, currently Oldham is better-known for the efforts being made to curb the negative effects of being a teenage binge-drinking town centre. The 6,000 or so people attracted to Yorkshire Street on weekend evenings generate an important income, but also deter many other groups of people, and a more mixed night economy is preferable for long-term viability. The reimagining is presently focused on reducing the high crime figures associated with drinking, by a controversial mixture of social manipulation policies and regeneration schemes:

- Alcohol unit pricing: ending of 'happy hours'!
- Queuing systems in the pubs and bars, to deter underage drinkers.
- Policing funded by the leisure outlets rather than the council.
- Oldham City Council and Greater Manchester Police use geographical information system mapping of the drinking clientele's movements as well as control over pub licenses to manage the problem.
- This social manipulation is supported by regeneration schemes for the various quarters of the town centre's built environment, such as pedestrianisation, using the heritage of the town by reusing the old mill buildings, encouraging more residential units into the town centre and trying to diversify its cultural assets, such as a new cinema.

- Education is seen as a critical catalyst for longer-term rebranding too, so investment has been targeted into revamping the West End University quarter. Modern town centres need to have more than retail functions to survive and serve local people.

## Case Study 3: Johannesburg – reimagining catalyst: sport

Since 1994 and the end of apartheid, Johannesburg, the commercial heart of South Africa with 2.5 million people, has entered a radical new phase in its development. National and city authorities have long been attempting to make Johannesburg a world-class city which dominates the African continent, through major injections of public funds into large-scale regeneration and economic development projects.

Interestingly, Johannesburg has jumped the industrialisation phase which most older cities have experienced, and is trying to capitalise on being a 'place of consumption rather than production' by using culture and heritage tourism, hence projects to publicise Constitution Hill, Newtown, and Kliptown and also change the image of the enormous shanty town of Soweto. A major catalyst was the winning of the main hosting of the football World Cup in 2010. However, the perception of Johannesburg as being a lawless frontier settlement has created a major uphill task. President Zuma sees the World Cup as 'not only about the football', but also about 'a proud legacy'. The focus of the Ellis Park development is already having ripple effects across the city, based on

- emphasis on local 'buy-in' of all materials
- encouraging community surveillance to reduce crime
- new infrastructure: citywide bus rapid transport (BRT)
- environmental 'greening' of Soweto
- a new theatre
- upgrading of low-cost accommodation.



## Case Study 4: Ecotowns – reimagining catalyst: sustainability and environment

In 2009 the go-ahead was given by the UK Government for four pioneer 'ecotowns' housing 30,000 dwellings by 2015:

- Rackheath, Norfolk;
- Whitehill Bordon, East Hampshire;
- North West Bicester, Oxfordshire
- Imerys China Clay Community, Cornwall.

These differ from traditional style new towns because of their focus on ecological footprint. However, some opponents say that the very concept of large-scale new housing in greenfield sites is more of an 'eco-con'!

They will be expected to have:

- zero carbon shops, restaurants and public buildings, including a school
- a minimum of 50% of all journeys made by foot, cycle or public transport
- 30% affordable housing, with one member of each working couple expected to work locally
- state-of-the-art building technology: for energy and water efficiency
- 40% of area to be parks, playgrounds and gardens.

This concept is not new: existing settlements are also trying to reimage themselves, such as the Cheshire village of Ashton Hayes, population 100, which hopes to become the first small community in England to achieve carbon neutral status.

Further afield, eco-villages are also being planned as socially, economically and ecologically sustainable communities, such as Katewadi village in India. This is to be developed by the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board, with a focus on sanitation and health, state-of-the-art wireless internet connection and energy conservation. A biogas power generation and solar street lighting system are planned.

On a much larger scale, China is currently building a showcase carbon neutral settlement, the Ecopolis Dongtan, Shanghai, projected population: 500,000.

## Conclusion

Reimagining is not a new process, and is closely linked with rebranding and regeneration. However the scale of its take up by planning and government organisations is new. Reimagining by one organisation may not be understood or appreciated by the people it is designed to help leading to conflicts. Reimagining may be both forced on a place by economic change, but also may be a spontaneous response to migration or the cloning of retailing or service functions. Past reimagining may be deliberately erased as trends change. Even 'New Towns' may require imaging, in order to create an identity. Flagships were and are central to the concept of rebranding, but the extent to which their success trickles down to a wider area is variable. A wide range of strategies are used, from diversification of employment, landscape/cityscape improvement, to leisure, culture and sport focus. The catalysts vary, from events of global significance such as the Olympics, through events with regional significance, such as Cities of Culture, to locally significant landmark buildings. Many players or stakeholders from the public

and private sectors are involved. There is more public transparency and consultancy than in the past, partly due to better standards of governance, but also recognising the need to draw the community into reimagining to provide the best chance of success. New technology is critical in reimagining – whether hard, such as buildings, or soft, such as internet community support.

## Key web references

Oldham town council rebranding policies: [http://www.oldham.gov.uk/a\\_brand\\_for\\_oldham.pdf](http://www.oldham.gov.uk/a_brand_for_oldham.pdf)  
 Liverpool: [http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/The\\_City/Regeneration\\_and\\_development/index.asp](http://www.liverpool.gov.uk/The_City/Regeneration_and_development/index.asp)  
 Johannesburg: <http://www.joburg.org.za>  
 Eco-settlements: <http://www.bbchistorymagazine.com/feature/eco-towns-what-can-we-learn-history>  
 Placecheck sponsored by UK Government to record locals perceptions: <http://www.placecheck.info/>

## FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. With reference to named examples, outline the reasons why reimagining is needed in urban areas.

- Help points**
- Remember to define what reimagining is,
  - Split your answer up into categories e.g.: environmental, economic and social reasons.
  - Don't forget age of the area, i.e.: legacy, and globalisation as factors

2. How would you plan a fieldwork and research programme to 'profile' a named area in need of reimagining?

- Help points**
- Define 'profiling' i.e. the physical and perceptual image of an area
  - Make sure you name an area, give it boundaries
  - Split your techniques into primary and secondary, and if possible qualitative and quantitative

3. Use the sustainability model, Figure 3, to measure the success of the reimagining of a settlement.

- Help points**
- Add statistics /facts into the four quadrants.
  - Look at extension websites
  - Research into reimagining at the Olympic site in East London

4. Think of one-word associations of the other urban areas in this article, and your own settlement. Split these into original/existing and future.

- Help points**
- For example with London's East End:
    - Original association pre 1980s docks and even the series EastEnders!
    - Future association: Olympic city!