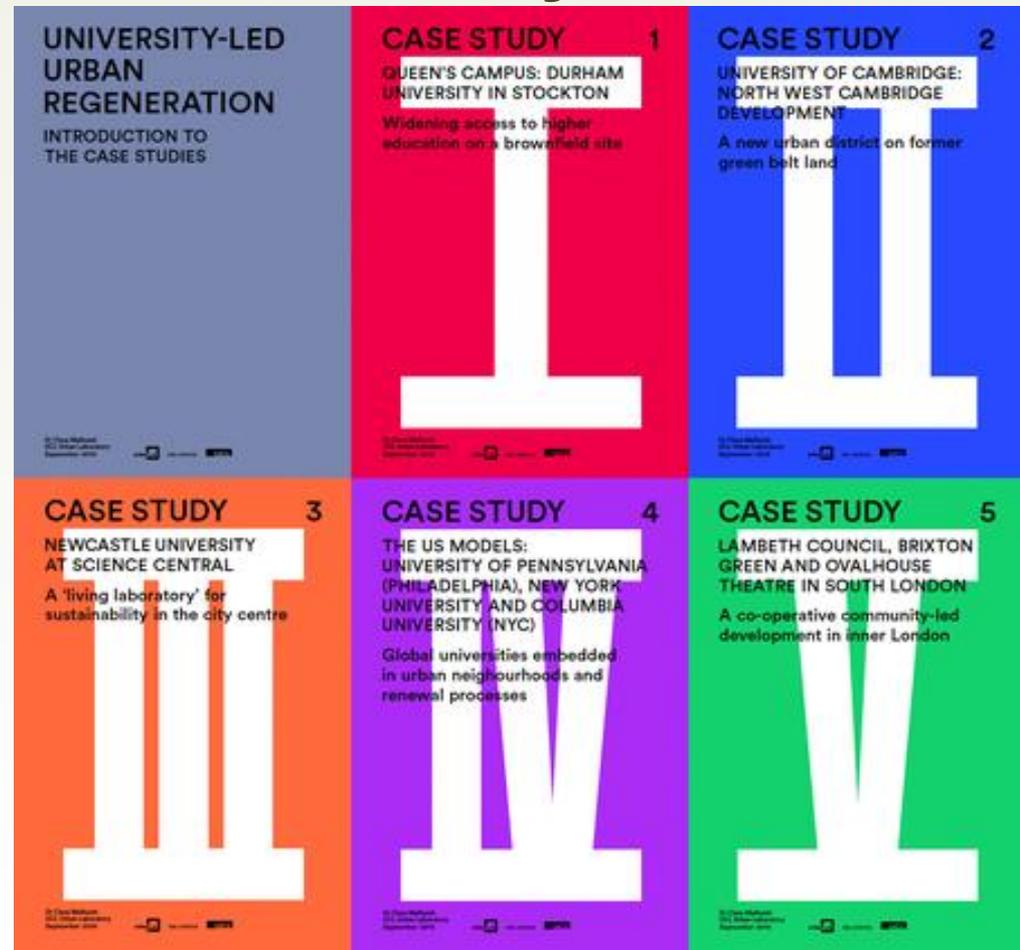


‘Beyond the red line’: university-led regeneration case study research



Dr Clare Melhuish
UCL Urban Laboratory
October 2015

A new model of a university for the 21st century?

- *what do we mean by this?*
- as ‘critical urbanists’, we mean not only models of pedagogy and research, but also the relationship between the university and the city, and its responsibilities in terms of promoting a more inclusive urbanism
- because cities ‘*are not all right*’ (Nawratek) – social and spatial inequality is universal
- we’re in a privileged position, as academics here at UCL, to be able to make a presentation to our own Estates department!

University as agent of inclusive urbanism?

- universities should be held to account more widely in terms of their urban responsibilities
- promote knowledge and ideas about urbanism through teaching and research – but also through estates development strategies and spatial development plans
- build and demonstrate knowledge from many different contexts

Universities can challenge planning norms

- university expansion within cities is an international phenomenon, reflecting the global production of cities as ‘policy assemblages’ from elsewhere (McCann Ward Roy 2013)
- planning operates everywhere under a cloak of neutrality – but is usually allied to, reflects powerful interests
- universities (globally) tend to be in a position of strength to challenge that and provide a voice for under-represented interests

Responsive masterplanning and design can foster new relationships ‘beyond the red line’

‘The plan of a university, like that of a city, should be a mechanism for enabling things to happen, for the enhancement of life’.

Sir Peter Shephard, architect and masterplanner
Shephard Epstein Hunter

So what does this mean for campus planning?

‘the dynamics on that piece of land are going to be interesting...’

- universities are drawing on new languages and imagery to project visions of their future identity, abandoning the bounded, campus-based model of the past:

‘living laboratories’; ‘urban extensions’; ‘communiversities’

- embedded in urban contexts and communities

The case studies: what can we learn about current processes of university development?

- the processes of *visioning, communicating*, and *developing* urban spatial development plans by universities
- often *in partnership* with other urban and regional regeneration agencies
- and *as a stimulus and anchor for wider urban development*
- engaging with *local communities*

Comparative approach: finding a structure to compare different cases

- historical and policy contexts
- structures and processes
- visions and narratives
- translation into place
- key issues and learning points

Research on a case-by-case basis: every case is different

- universal truths can't be easily distilled
- but each case generates valuable learning points which can be extracted and applied to others
- the following universities were selected on the basis of comparability with UCL (major research universities with global reach)
- but each project is framed by different contexts, parameters and goals, viz:

Queen's campus: Durham University in Stockton
widening access
interdisciplinary teaching and research
brownfield site – 1992 post-industrial regeneration



University of Cambridge: Northwest Cambridge development

new urban district – local centre
former greenbelt land
staff and student accommodation



University of Newcastle at Science Central

‘living laboratory’ for sustainability

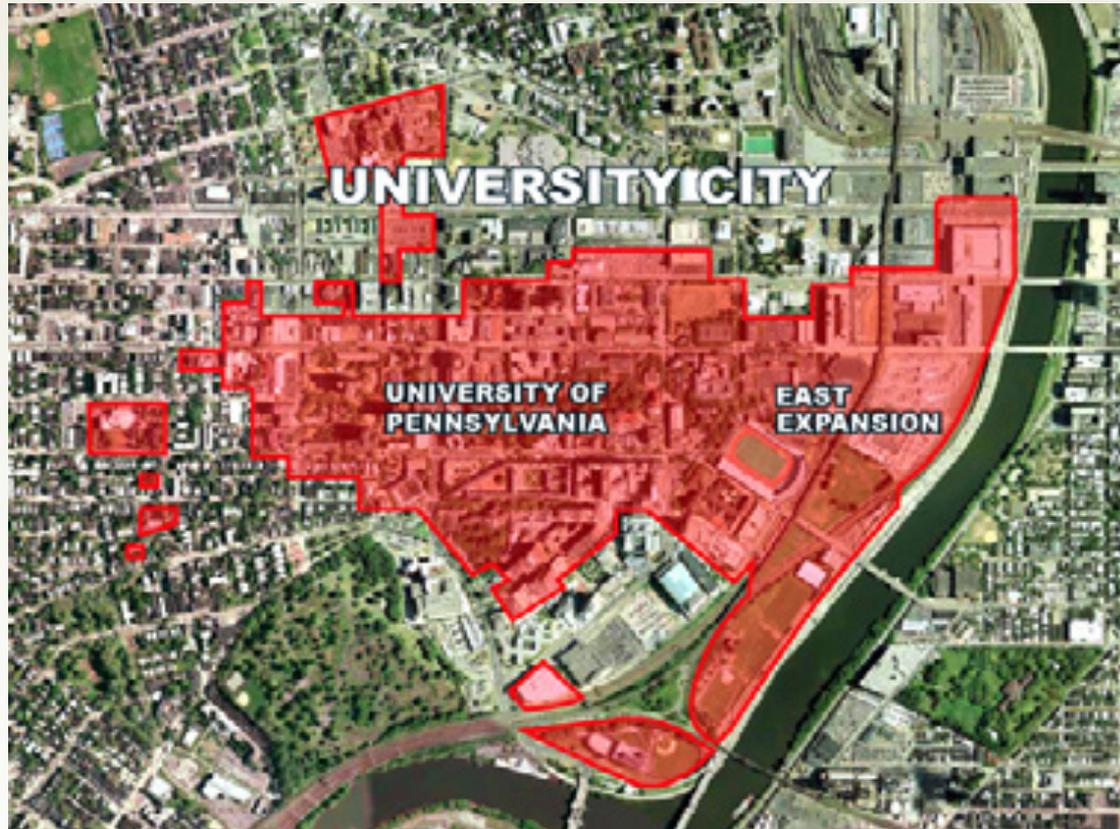
business start-ups

city centre location



The US models

University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia: east expansion



neighbourhood relations
innovation and translation
connection with city centre

New York University, NYC: core plan/ Jay Street space shortage global network university

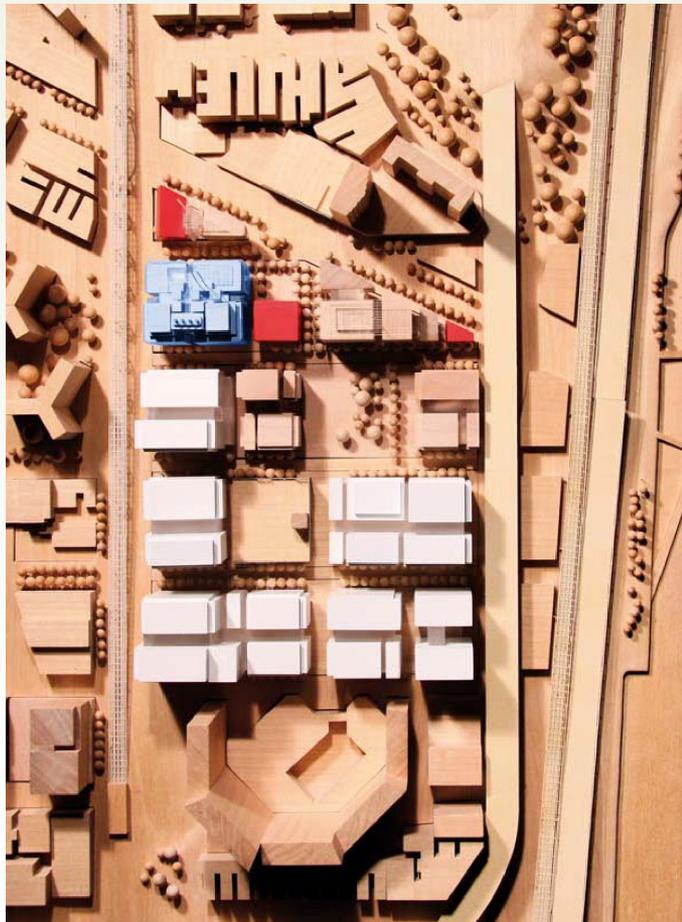


Columbia University NYC: Manhattanville campus

space shortage

connect two campus sites

no commercial research



Lambeth Council, Brixton Green and Ovalhouse Theatre in south London: Somerleyton Road

co-operative council
 community-led and managed development
 council-owned land
 housing for rent



Key issues and learning points

1. key drivers for development
2. funding
3. governance
4. location
5. masterplanning and design
6. academic programming
7. non-academic engagement
8. specific assets

1. Key drivers

- government-led area-based regeneration policy – expectations of universities, seen as desirable partners
- HE funding cuts linked to requirements for restructuring/ generation of alternative income streams
- ‘race for space’ – diminishing supplies of affordable land in cities
- campus rationalisation – through consolidation/ connection/ extension

(Key drivers contd...)

- campus security – environmental improvements
- improved relations with neighbouring communities – provision of community access to facilities
- academic interest in new models of pedagogy/ research – interdisciplinary, applied – demanding new types of facility
- widening access agenda – courses/facilities to attract more diverse student body (linking to above)

(Key drivers contd...)

- international competition for staff and students – demand for better facilities and also residential accommodation
- global (re-)imaging – university branding/ city imaging
- development of facilities for research translation, innovation and business spin-offs

2. Location

- university-owned land
- brownfield sites often key to regeneration projects, but may require expensive decontamination and remediation
- greenfield/greenbelt sites likely to involve lengthy planning negotiations
- both may generate significant local opposition for different reasons
- many examples take advantage of waterfront locations

(Location contd...)

- good transport and pedestrian connectivity to other university sites and/or city centres seen as vital
- remote, poorly connected sites unattractive both to students and staff, and may prevent university academic and social life from flourishing
- sites demand different types of response and management strategy in relation to existing neighbours

3. Funding

- universities can often capitalise on existing land holdings
- university capital borrowing (bonds) facilitated by good credit ratings – seen as reliable
- access to investment capital is influenced by university governance and management structures
- avoidance of borrowing – risk-averse universities raise funds from a variety of external sources through partnerships (city, regional, European, and commercial developers eg on market housing components)

(Funding contd..)

- fund-raising/philanthropy can supplement investment through borrowing/surpluses, but also impose conditions (eg in appointment of architects)
- cohesive capital underpinning, as opposed to piecemeal borrowing, produces better outcomes in terms of planning and design, overall control
- finance should ideally be ring-fenced within a separate development vehicle (eg syndicate) – to protect other university funding streams

4. Governance

- strong leadership vision invested in a project champion is key to success
- university as ‘effective client’: keep dedicated management/executive groups small and consolidated, incorporating professional expertise
- turnover of personnel leads to discontinuity and instability
- academic input key to ‘getting the buildings you want’ – through consultative process *and* representation at management level
- translate into management structure for new site

5. Masterplan and design

- to masterplan or not to masterplan..? The first option generates an integrated and *communicable* approach; but incremental development avoids future disappointment over unfulfilled promises
- lack of masterplanning can lead to problems in public realm and relationships between buildings, and future issues relating to management and plans for growth
- implementation of a design code allows for coordinated approach to sustainability (technical and aesthetic)

(Masterplanning and design contd...)

- masterplanning can over-emphasise circulation and provision of under-used public space which demands future curation
- masterplanning can also ‘fix’ the development of a site too early in the process and stops at ‘red line’
- multiple design architects can generate range of design solutions and raise bar on quality
- but conflicts may arise around co-ordination/ coherence and multiple levels of university/ planning authority review

(Masterplanning and design contd...)

- university briefing can over-emphasise ‘vision’ at expense of clearly allocating (undefined) activities and space requirements
- but academics may also be disappointed by lack of imagination/ambition in architects’ proposals
- academics ‘challenge, think and probe.. they are good to work with as clients go’ (architect)
- but procurement through competition processes may veer towards appointment of high-profile architects for landmark buildings, instead of weighting towards brief development and stakeholder engagement

6. Academic programming

- spatial development projects often driven more strongly by non-academic drivers
- academic programming and physical planning tend to be disconnected – the first often following on from the second – and could benefit from greater integration
- conflicts can arise between academic planning at departmental & central administration level
- academic programming can generate tensions between academics around space ownership and preferred working practices which can be mediated through customisable space solutions

(Academic programming contd..)

- academic viability often needs to be tested over a period of years, and physical planning needs to allow for change and evolution
- programming for interdisciplinary activities tends to generate large, flexible, but generic and over-scaled buildings lacking detail and intimate spaces
- facilities often tend to science and technology labs but also performance and multimedia spaces
- community outreach priorities shape academic buildings which incorporate public access in different forms, but also raise security issues

7. Non-academic engagement

- university developers may be seen equally as benevolent altruists, and as predators on existing neighbourhoods
- they therefore have to work hard to communicate their intentions clearly and in the best light
- most universities have dedicated public engagement teams to deliver research impact but not necessarily linked to spatial development projects
- public art initiatives are popular but may be viewed as superficial and expensive

(Non-academic engagement contd...)

- *other options include:*
 - regular communication through local forums/ reps
 - welcome/ info centre on campus
 - access to research/making facilities for local businesses and community groups, and business advice
 - life-long learning opportunities (eg IT)
 - community partnerships around health and wellbeing
 - construction of new school/facilities for community (eg childcare, elderly, sports, health)

(Non-academic engagement contd...)

- community benefits agreement – long-term investment & jobs guarantee for locals
- purchasing and procurement arrangements with local enterprises
- housing regeneration for affordable community rental and mortgage/rent schemes for staff
- public safety initiatives – lighting, university police
- hosting arts events, markets etc.
- Interim/meanwhile uses during construction (eg community gardens, pop-up facilities, activities)
- wider city-based business/enterprise alliances

Specific assets

- Queen's Durham:
- no capital costs at outset, low running costs
- flexible, modern teaching and research space with space to expand
- high quality sports facilities
- waterfront location
- explicit contribution to N-E regeneration



- North West Cambridge:
 - much-needed affordable (‘keyworker’) housing for postdoc staff (750 units) and graduate students (2000)
 - local centre with supermarket, community and health centres, hotel, primary school
 - public open/recreation space
 - market housing (750)



- Newcastle at Science Central:
 - cutting-edge facilities for sustainability research
 - space for start-ups and public engagement
 - re-engagement with city
 - academic-led



- Penn:
 - improvements in neighbourhood economy of West Philadelphia and Keystone Innovation Zones
 - Biotech research and entrepreneurship (14 acres) on riverside site to east
 - new innovation centre (23 acres) on river to south
- Columbia:
 - innovative research buildings for applied science and neuroscience, publicly accessible spaces for art, culture and community
 - community interfaces

- NYU:
 - new faculty housing, academic and sports facilities with emphasis on performance space, public space
 - Center for Urban Science and Progress and incubators at Jay Street

- Somerleyton:
 - land remains a council-owned asset
 - rental housing with significant affordable and social rented proportion
 - community-managed by stewardship body

... and UCL East

- what are the key drivers for the project?
- what is the vision behind it?
- how will it be implemented and materialised?
- how will it embody university-city relations ‘beyond the red line’?

- *what will UCL East’s specific assets be for the university and urban communities over the next 20, 50, 200 years..?*

Thank you



clare.melhuish@ucl.ac.uk