

need to stimulate us, Barrie points out. 'This is not about being nice, it's about the economic argument. Cities need to respond to us. Or we won't bother to go out for a walk. We'll go online instead. The rise of online social networking looks set to change the value we attach to physical place.'

We have an opportunity at this point in time for more people to get involved in placemaking in this looser, less structured way, says Barrie. Community action should be part of the toolkit. The community has a key voice and a role to play in design and development. And although we do have some very positive co-production and collaboration processes, far too often engagement is 'about public relations designed to get planning permission'.

ADDING VALUE WITH INTERIM USES

We need to explore ways of doing more with design and development on an interim basis. We need more ways of adding value to developments so that they can offer a particular advantage. We also need to enable communities to have a degree of control over budgets. People will often make surprising choices – but ones that work, he says. 'In the current context, we are looking at the capacity of culture, principally the visual arts and the excess capital that follows it, to re-purpose redundant urban environments.'

A new approach can work, he insists, as he makes a detailed case on his popular blog, <http://davidbarrie.typepad.com>. 'In the UK, a country with a powerful tradition of mutualism and state provision but a weak culture of philanthropy, we have witnessed an increase in value of the charities sector, and the rise of development trusts to support regeneration.'

Citizen-driven partnerships, he suggests, offer a serious alternative to the central design and delivery of governmental services. Both public institutions and government have been impressed by the participation of people in social sector initiatives such as community land and development trusts.

The rise of social enterprise prioritises human relationships and transactions of social, not just commercial value, says Barrie. 'It shifts the narrative of renewal from the provision of space to services, with sites acting as places that enable change, rather than dictating them via a masterplan.'

■ <http://davidbarrie.typepad.com>



(above, left) Working to create a truly shareable 'urban living room' in the streets of New York City, Balmori Associates embraced social media to begin a truly public discussion of public space. The intention was to reclaim the city's streets for pedestrian use in a way that was flexible, inexpensive and contextually appropriate to the site in question; (above) Conventionally, says David Barrie, tectonic (and titanic) plates of funding from central government have been manoeuvred in to position and a process of masterplanning has followed. Development frameworks, spatial, business, action, entry and exit plans have been drawn up. In next to no time, regeneration has tended to become a complex bureaucratic process, a closed system of proposal, appraisal, planning, revised planning and Cobra-style discussions and negotiations. This has been an approach that engenders caution and breeds 'analysis paralysis'. When people go back to basics and work together, good things happen, as in Holland's urban extensions; (left) Open source placemaking in action: a community group in Brixton, London, build a network and reclaim their estate to create a flourishing urban garden