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MSc Dissertation

Exploring 'Sense of Place' through Public Spaces: A case study of the Regeneration of Port Talbot, Wales, United Kingdom

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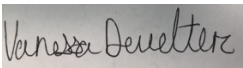Duncan Liefferink, Radboud University

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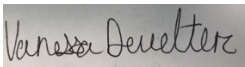| CANDIDATE'S ID NUMBER	C1674369, S4829204
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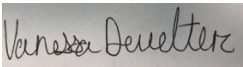
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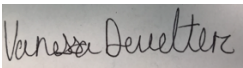Signed *Vanessa Develter*….(candidate)   Date June 14th, 2018

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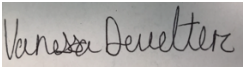
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Abstract

The study aims to analyse the relationship between sense of place and public space development in the regeneration of Port Talbot. Existing literature highlighted economic drivers of regeneration which focused on achieving economic growth and lacked a social or environmental approach. Additionally, public space literature contexualised the power of public space to encourage public interaction; however, the benefits are difficult to quantify and therefore undervalued during regeneration development and procurement. Through a case study of Port Talbot, this study conducted qualitative research which identified the strong relationship between high quality public spaces and strong, authentic sense of place; despite limited design expertise within Port Talbot Council. Additionally, practitioner evidence highlighted the dominant influence of politics and austerity as key drivers which have dictated the direction of regeneration in Port Talbot. The study conducted six practitioner interviews, and five walking interviews. Data uncovered the de-prioritsation of public space, and the requirements of practitioners to quantify benefits of projects to ensure the greatest value for money. The study recommended: a public space standard as part of the new NDF legislation, and the hiring of a Landscape Designer for Port Talbot Council to advocate for public realm schemes and promote balanced regeneration proposals.

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List of Abbreviations Used

DCFW- Design Commission for Wales

GVA- Gross Value Added

LA- Local Authority

LDP- Local Development Plan

NDF- National Development Framework

NIMBYism- Not In My Backyard

NPT- Neath Port Talbot

NPTCBC- Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council

RTPI- Royal Town Planning Institute

SDP- Strategic Development Plan

SLOIP- Space Left Over In Planning

TRI- Targeted Regeneration Investment

UK- United Kingdom

VVP- Vibrant and Viable Places

WAG- Welsh Assembly Government

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Definitions

Public Space: All open space of public value, including land and water areas like rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs and disused lock basins which offer opportunities for sport, recreation and tourism.

Sense of Place: A particular location that has acquired a sense of attachments, where meanings were invoked from emotion and feeling.

Sustainable Development: Development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Strong Sustainability: Giving priority to maintaining the significant value of environmental assets, and economically driven to maintain environmental capital for future generations.

Weak Sustainability: Process which favors economic growth and lacks priority to maintaining the significant value of environmental assets, and economically driven to maintain environmental capital for future generations.

Urban Regeneration: Urban Regeneration involves the process of remaking places. Through this process, regeneration initiatives plan to improve the physical conditions of places, increase economic growth and environmental sustainability, in order to facilitate a better social life for people.

1.0 Introduction

Since the late 19th century, urban transformations have rapidly developed, demolished, and redeveloped the physical landscape. Urban regeneration is the most recent approach to redevelopment, targeting the rehabilitation of post-industrial, derelict land. Ujang & Zakariya (2015) echo the argument made by Robert & Sykes (200) stating,

> "Urban regeneration involves the process of remaking places. In this process, regeneration initiatives plan to improve the physical conditions of places, increase economic growth and environmental sustainability, in order to facilitate a better social life for people" (p.711).

Our understanding of urban regeneration has been shaped by increasing pressure of cities to become globally competitive and the subsequent requirement for a rebirth of urban form. Over the last several decades, development practices have sprawled outwards, loosing the importance of public space as a vital component to urban life (Oktay, 2012: 17-19). Various scholars such as Sagnar (2007), Gehl (2010), and Oktay (2012) argue public spaces provide various benefits for individuals and collective communities. However, in the past several decades, a large portion of urban and suburban development has been relatively generic, with limited sense of place, history and cultural distinctiveness (Oktay, 2012:19). Through a case study analysis, this research will examine the regeneration approach of a post-industrial community in Wales, to investigate the role of public space in recent regeneration initiatives.

Within existing literature, there is a general understanding of sense of place construction, reasons for 'placelessness' and a rationale for urban regeneration. Previous studies have demonstrated a connection between green space and place attachment, but little attention has been given towards 'sense of place' and public spaces (Centre for Regional Economic and Social Research, 2014). To effectively understand the connection between public space and sense of place, this research has selected Port Talbot as a case study which lacks sense of place despite recent regeneration efforts. Through qualitative analysis, this study will apply relational concepts from scholars like Relph (1976) and Tuan (1977) to examine the power of public space to elicit sense of place and instill value for inhabitants. Through this approach, this study hopes to draw a connection between sense of place and public spaces, further validating their role as important components in regeneration schemes. Additionally, limited research exists on how public space is allocated; what decisions are made by Local Authorities and stakeholders, and how growth and regeneration occurs in communities. Therefore, through practitioner interviews, this study aims to explore regeneration drivers which have influenced the regeneration approach of the case study

community.

The rationale for this research stems from the multi-disciplinary concept of regeneration, coupled with the sensitive nature involving politics and decision-making. Place-based theoretical concepts can establish relationships themselves, however there is a lack of robust knowledge surrounding urban regeneration (Tallon, 2010:6). Governments and society have made the value judgment cities should be maintained as the focus of urban life (ibid). Despite this, scholars emphasise a predominantly economic approach as the preferred option to increase economic competitiveness, therefore reducing the role of social or environmental regeneration. With various discussions surrounding sustainable development and 'successful regeneration,' further research is required to understand the relationship between place attachment and public space allocation as key elements of successful regeneration initiatives.

This research strives to identify the power of public space in efforts to re-balance regeneration and uncover how regeneration drivers influence the economic approach to the redevelopment of our communities. This knowledge can contribute to educating Local Authorities (LA's) and provide future recommendations to re-balance urban policy.

1.1 Aim of the Study:

In light of the problem presented, this dissertation seeks to address a specific aim which will be explored through a case study example of a post-industrial city that has pursued targeted regeneration investment. To adequately address the research question, four objectives target the overall aim of the research and examine various aspects of regeneration and public space.

The overarching research question seeks to:

Explore the connection between 'sense of place' and public space development and its relationship to public space allocation in the planning context; in reference to the urban regeneration of Port Talbot.

The overarching research question has been sectioned into 4 main objectives that will contribute to answering the main question of this research. The following objectives are:

1. What is the relationship between the quality, quantity and benefits of public space to 'sense of place' in Port Talbot?

2. How is public space perceived in regeneration initiatives in Port Talbot, and do any other

sectors of development take precedence over public space?

3. What planning challenges are associated with public space development in Port Talbot, and has Welsh policy encouraged or hindered public space allocation in Port Talbot?

4. How can urban regeneration policy be modified to enhance the importance of public space development in regeneration schemes in Wales?

1.2 Structure of the Dissertation:

The study will first outline existing theoretical knowledge within the field of urban regeneration, public space and sense of place. This will provide background context for the study and convey what gaps currently exist within the field. Key points related to public space development and the relationship to sense of place will be discussed to demonstrate the gap between theory and practice. Secondly, the study will outline the chosen research strategy, highlighting the most appropriate epistemological approach to analyse sense of place and regeneration. The methodology will also justify methods selection, limitations and ethical considerations to demonstrate a sound approach to research. After the methodology has been established, the core of this study will focus on findings and data analysis. Findings will present key themes from empirical research to illustrate sense of place and benefits of public space. Data analysis will discuss coded categories, emphasising the relationship between sense of place, public space and urban regeneration in Port Talbot. In closing, the final chapter will present overall conclusions, including recommendations based on the research findings. The final chapter aims to outline potential new research opportunities and present suggestions for further urban policy change which better incorporate public space allocation in urban regeneration schemes.

2.0 Literature Review: Prelude

The following chapter will summarise existing literature related to urban regeneration, public space and sense of place. Topics will be introduced, followed by arguments presented by various scholars. This will provide foundational context of the research subject and demonstrate gaps in existing knowledge that warrant further investigation.

A variety of literature has been published surrounding the field of regeneration (Roberts & Sykes, 2000; Raco, 2003; Turok & Robson, 2004; Tallon, 2010; Jones & Evans, 2011; Jones & Evans, 2013; Tallon, 2013; Ujang & Zakariya, 2015). It is a unique discipline not easily grouped into existing disciplinary or sub-disciplinary categories. Therefore, research has been scattered across

various professions of urban planning, public policy, property development and engineering (Jones & Evans, 2013:11). Regeneration involves a variety of stakeholders from government agencies, community organisations, private sector firms and others, all of which have competing visions and agendas. With many actors and professional fields involved, this study will strive to contextualise the regeneration agenda and synthesise key issues within public space and sense of place research.

2.1 Introduction to Urban Regeneration

Throughout the Twentieth century, Western society has experienced a decline of traditional industry, directly impacting the economic profile of European and North American cities (Jones & Evans, 2013:3). Regardless of geography, towns and cities are not immune to external forces which dictate the need to adapt, or the internal pressures in urban areas that trigger growth or decline (Roberts & Sykes, 2000:9). Urban regeneration has developed in response to the opportunities and challenges presented by urban decay in a specific place at a particular point in time (ibid). The challenge with urban regeneration is that it is not an isolated process. Problems are not necessarily unique to a specific town, nor are the solutions which are proposed; but each urban challenge demands a unique procedure to create and implement a specific response (Roberts & Sykes, 2000:9).

Several definitions of urban regeneration exist; however, this study will follow the definition of Roberts & Sykes (2000) which outlines the purpose of successful urban regeneration initiatives. Ujang & Zakariya (2015) echo the argument made by Roberts & Sykes (2000) stating,

> "Urban Regeneration involves the process of remaking places. In this process, regeneration initiatives plan to improve the physical conditions of places, increase economic growth and environmental sustainability, in order to facilitate a better social life for people" (p.711).

The outcome of regeneration impacts the people who will live, work and play in the space. The importance of successful regeneration relates to the strong connection between urban issues and the direct impact on a variety of actors such as community organisations, local authorities and private firms (Roberts & Sykes, 2000; Tallon, 2010). Tallon (2010) further emphasises "government and society have made the value judgment that cities should be maintained as the focus of urban life in the UK" (p.6). Gehl (2010) takes the concept one step further referring to the direct correlation between the quality of the physical environment and the amount of time people spend participating in various activities (p.9). Urban life has been prioritised in society and requires a

certain standard of maintenance to promote civic life, attract investment and establish a welcoming environment for all.

2.2 Drivers of Urban Regeneration

Today, cities are increasingly viewed as engines of economic development, with aims of expanding the marketplace and increasing global competitiveness. Raco (2003) echoes Harvey's (2000), argument, claiming competition between actors has become the norm, as regeneration strategies strive to identify and fulfill requirements of potential investors, instead of local communities (p.1869). Regeneration has been driven by the wider urban policy agenda, focused on remaining economically competitive to attract investment, firms and knowledgeable individuals (Rogers, 2005; Deas, 2013; Jones & Evans, 2013). Couch & Dennemann (2000) state most urban regeneration policies have focused on economic, rather than environmental or social regeneration (cited in Tallon, 2010:163). Deas (2013) discusses the pervasive need for urban policy to promote economic activity in large industrial cities as a mechanism to balance the long term decline (p.76). He states area-based policies focus on fueling economic growth, and wider concerns related to socio-spatial equity have been viewed as less important (Deas, 2013:78). Regeneration policy has favoured approaches that produce economic outputs like increased number of businesses and number of individuals helped into employment, generating 'quick wins' (Tallon, 2010; Welsh Goverment, 2013; Clapham, 2014). The dominant economic focus has emphasised one element of what Roberts & Sykes (2000) deem 'successful urban regeneration'. Thus this research aims to explore the argument made by Deas (2013), through a case study to develop regeneration policy recommendations which can re-balance the focus to include social and environmental components.

There has been a variety of perspectives on the inclusion of social or environmental components of regeneration strategies. Some scholars argue that it is required to encourage economic regeneration to further attract firms and investment (Jones & Evans, 2013:72). Other scholars connect the success of environmental programs to the economic benefit required for such an intervention (Roberts & Sykes, 2000; Lombardi et al., 2011). In its basic form, there has become an increasing requirement to connect environmental improvement to the financial benefits of projects to warrant funding approval (Roberts & Sykes, 2000:101). A dominant economic focus leans towards a sector-based approach to regeneration, highlighting one critique acknowledged from existing literature.

2.3 Critiques of Urban Regeneration

In recent decades, scholars criticised urban regeneration for its uncanny ability to fail, ultimately intervening in a community and leaving the landscape scattered with 'ad hoc' redevelopment projects. Hausner (1993) emphasises regeneration approaches are often "short term, fragmented, ad hoc and project-based without an overall strategic framework for city-wide development" (p.526). Hausner's statement is echoed by Roberts & Sykes (2000) who believe that by it's very nature urban regeneration is an 'interventionist' activity; intruding on the current state of the environment to alter it in some capacity (p.20). The reputation of regeneration has often been peppered with the temptation to simplify the development process and ultimately destroy existing values and history through what Jones describes as a *tabula rasa* approach (Jones & Evans, 2012:2316). The 'clean slate' approach often stripes communities of value and meaning associated with places. While there can be justification for 'wiping the slate clean,' regeneration practitioners may risk imposing their perceptions onto the community and eliminate place associations deemed worthy of preservation (Jones & Evans, 2012:2327). Protecting community identity is essential because of the value and meaning attached to place for inhabitants. This study will strive to identify the connection with public space and the importance of public space allocation in regeneration. Additional critiques of urban regeneration relate to the challenges associated with urban policy.

2.4 Challenges of Urban Regeneration Policy

Urban practitioners have acknowledged urban regeneration is a long-term process, often requiring a 25-year strategic timeline. In practice, urban regeneration is short term, with funding structures adopting a 3-5 year project based approach (Carley, 2000:281). Regeneration policy lacks clarity and what Carley (2000) describes as *short-termism* and *compartmentalism* (p.274). *Short-termism:* the misassumption that deep-rooted issues can be solved by temporary funding schemes, and *compartmentalism*: the failure of physical, social and economic integration of regeneration (p.275). The short term, sector based approach to regeneration is not new; it has been identified in public administration literature and local authorities as an obstacle of regeneration that has been difficult to address (Baker, 1989:29). Carley (2000) presents arguments that allude to poor policy structure and inconsistent funding for urban regeneration. The concepts of short-termism and compartmentalism will be unpacked to identify the implications of short-term and sector-based approaches of regeneration policy.

Urban issues are not singular in nature, and require a multi-dimensional approach. Tallon (2013) argues policy responses have been too narrow and cautious (p.266). Successive policy periods have experienced property-based regeneration approaches with limited social programs or focus on business development. Fragmented and piecemeal projects have resulted in limited success in

cases where policy lacked coordination and strategy (Shaw and Robinson, 1998, cited in Tallon, 2010:266). Tallon (2010) further emphasises successful regeneration requires a distinct connection between the physical, economic and social dimensions of society (p.266). There is a general consensus on the importance and need for urban regeneration, with existing literature highlighting the dominant economic approach to regeneration. Further research has suggested urban policy and academia look to 'sustainable development' as a potential mechanism to encourage balance between the needs of economy, society and the environment.

2.5 Sustainable Development in Urban Regeneration

The release of documents like *Our Common Futures (1987)* has encouraged urban policy agendas to increasingly include sustainable development principles. For this study, sustainable development will refer to, "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (United Nations Commission on Sustainable Development, 2007). *Our Common Futures* expresses one of many existing definitions of sustainable development which have impacted regeneration approaches today.

As previously mentioned, urban issues requiring regeneration are unique and cannot simply be rubber-stamped with a mundane approach to address urban decay or economic decline. The Sustainable Development Commission established visions of sustainable regeneration in a report entitled "Mainstreaming Sustainable Regeneration: a call to Action" (2003). The first action point highlighted sustainable development principles should be at the forefront of regeneration policy and practice (Sustainable Development Commission, 2003:4). Other documents like the Egan (2004) Wheel, illustrate the 7 components required of Sustainable Communities (see Figure 1). The framework has been designed to develop strategic approaches to regeneration and used as a teaching tool for practitioners (Jepson, 2014; Dias, Curwell & Bichard, 2014).
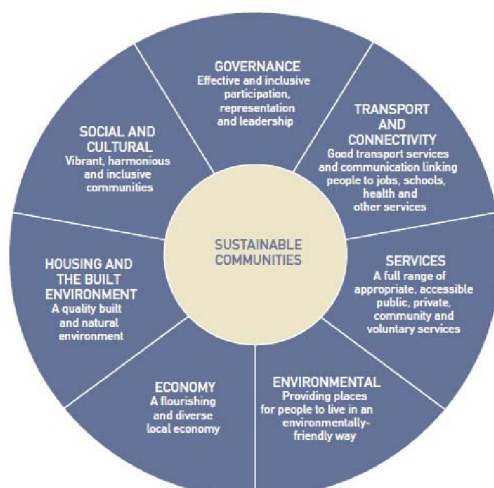
Figure 1: The Egan Wheel

The key message of Egan (2004) is that "sustainable communities do not come about by chance- they are something we must work to create" (p.18). The strong presence of sustainable development in existing urban policy provides an optimistic platform for regeneration, however others argue there is a gap between theory and practice. Sustainable development literature creates an ideal picture, balancing economic, environmental and societal demands. Despite the growing collection of government policies, Lombardi et

al. (2011) argues sustainability has yet to make a real impact on the approach to the redevelopment of land (p.274). He reiterates from scholars of Smith (1987 & 1996), Moulaert et al. (2003), Levine (2000), Dieleman & Roberts (2000) and Lees (2003) that cities have increasingly adopted the language of sustainability, however local governments advocate their own growth agendas and subsequently failed to deliver sustained social and environmental benefits (p.281). The disconnect can be elaborated through Cowells (2013) 'weak' and 'strong' forms of sustainability. Cowell (2013) emphasises 'weak sustainability' favours economic growth and lacks priority of social and environmental goals (p.2448). Strong sustainability is defined "as giving priority to maintaining the significant value of environmental assets, and economically driven to maintain environmental capital for future generations" (ibid). Poor consideration for social and environmental elements has been driven by the dominant focus to measure economic growth and success in urban areas.

Raworth (2012) argues economic indicators focus solely on hard measurements of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) which are easier to quantify, but also fail to measure environmental integrity and social justice. Scholars note the required institutional change to address the imbalance between economic, environmental and social elements to shift development towards an inclusive path (Robinson, 2004; Meuleman & Niestroy, 2015). In theory, sustainable development provides an integrated strategy to address urban issues, however in practice, urban issues are complex, and driven by competition. The theoretical benefits of sustainable development have not always translated into practice, resulting in limited social and environmental interventions. This research will further unpack arguments by Lombardi et al. (2011) and Raworth (2012) focusing on the relationship between public space and regeneration initiatives. Therefore, analysing a case study that has recently undergone regeneration can provide relevant scope to identify planning challenges associated with urban regeneration.

2.6 The Social Context of Public Spaces

Various concepts of 'sense of place', 'public space', 'value' and 'local identity' have been used interchangeably in existing literature. For the purpose of this research, 'sense of place', 'meaning' and 'local/ community identity' will be referenced to demonstrate the essence of a location and analyse its connection to public spaces. Public space will be defined as "*all open space of public value, including land and water areas like rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs and disused lock basins which offer opportunities for sport, recreation and tourism*" (Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, 2014:3). Present day urban environments can be said to "lack spatial, environmental and social components which do not promote 'places for people" (Oktay, 2012:24). Within places and spaces, value is held between buildings that foster meaning and encourage public interaction.

Public spaces promote informal exchanges on the street, symbolise vital landmarks in communities, and inspire peoples sense of identity and belonging (Worpole & Knox, 2007; Ramlee, Omar, Yunus and Samadi, 2015; Gehl; 2010).

Community parks, public squares and farmer's markets have historically played a vital role in the culture and atmosphere of a community. The medieval city design encouraged the congregation of inhabitants in city squares and streets, influencing outdoor interaction and pedestrian footfall (Gehl, 2010:48). Regular public interaction between neighbors and merchants was a key component to civic life, further connecting inhabitants to their surroundings. Expanding on existing knowledge of public space and its influence on concepts like 'sense of place' can explain the importance of public space allocation and retaining 'sense of place' in communities undergoing regeneration.

The Twentieth century brought a new form of architectural design and urban planning which shifted away from the medieval city concept. *Functionalism*, an architectural-based design had little regard for public life with buildings constructed in isolation (Relph, 1976; Gehl, 2010). *Functionalism* was based on fulfilling human needs, and did not address the social elements of design or public spaces (Hall, 1991; Gehl, 2010). Attention given to individual buildings impacted the nature and experience of public spaces resulting in what Brett (1970:117) termed SLOIP- an appropriate yet negative acronym for Space Left Over In Planning (cited in Relph, 1976:23). The shift in attitude towards public space and land use design influenced the availability and prioritisation of public space in communities today. Further research is required to uncover new approaches to urban policy which recognise and acknowledge public space as a priority in urban life.

2.7 The Purpose and Value of Public Space

A considerable amount of existing literature acknowledges the benefits and value of public space development (Worpole & Knox, 2007, Maruani & Amit-Cohen, 2007; Gehl, 2010, Oktay, 2012; Ramlee et al.,2015;). Sangar (2007) highlights,

> "despite the changing nature of modern neighborhoods and communities, public spaces are still an essential part of life because they provide opportunities for different people-young, old etc. to experience a variety of human encounters" (p.10).

Other scholars emphasise benefits related to parks as "opportunities for physical activity, social interaction and 'an escape from urban living for people of all walks of life'" (Bagwell, Evans,

Witting & Worpole, 2012:55). Public space is viewed as symbolic 'glue' for a community, surrounding built form and borders (both natural and human-made). Other perspectives concluded there was a positive relationship between green space and community attachment. A study conducted by Arnberger and Eder (2012) determined a positive relationship between the value of green space and the connection between places and urban/suburban inhabitants (p.46). Several researchers (Stedman, 2003; Kim & Kaplan, 2004; Trentelman, 2009) concluded the natural environment was lacking in most place attachment literature (cited in Arnberger & Eder, 2012:41). Scholars noted the importance of public space; however, it is difficult to quantify the benefits of public space despite various approaches to public space planning. There will be clear differences between this study and that of Arnberger & Eder (2012); however, related topics to community attachment and its impact on inhabitants remains consistent between the two.

2.8 Public Space Planning Approaches

In urban planning, various approaches to public space have been adopted, however there is limited research related to urban regeneration and public space planning models. Maruani & Amit-Cohen (2007) explore several approaches: the Opportunistic model: where opportunities for public space development arose through a systematic planning process, the Space Standards model: suggested by Raymond Unwin who determined the amount of space required was based on user needs and population, and Ecological Determinism which emphasised public space planning should be determined by topography (p.5-8). Despite policy guidelines, approaches to public space planning vary; with little agreement on the required planning criteria (Maruani & Amit-Cohen, 2007:2). This study will strive to uncover existing or new public space planning models which align with Maruani & Amit-Cohen, and discuss the relationship to urban regeneration.

Despite the diverse approaches presented by Maruani & Amit-Cohen (2007), no single model could be applicable to all public space needs (p.11). A review of existing literature confirmed the benefits of public space and its importance to civic life. Despite this, little research has established the relationship between public space development and the allocation of public space in urban regeneration. Approaches to public space planning focus on public space in relation to land opportunities. The indirect benefits of public space are difficult to quantify, however this study aims to identify the benefits of public space and explain the relationship between public space and sense of place.

2.9 Public Space and Urban Regeneration

During regeneration, design and consideration of community values are important components to

retaining a sense of identity and place. Design alone cannot produce places that will become well used and liked (Worpole & Knox, 2007:12). The Urban Task Force report (2005) outlined key issues with urban regeneration in England's towns and cities. It echoes similar arguments made by Gehl (2010), stating that

> "well-designed and maintained public places should be at the heart of any
> community, they are the foundation for public interaction and social integration,
> and provide the sense of place essential to engender civic pride" (Urban Task Force,
> 2005:5).

The report recommends design be integrated and given priority "to connectivity, social inclusion and a high quality public realm strategy must be a pre-requisite for a sustainable community rather than an afterthought or planning add-on" (p.5). Recommendations show a connection between successful urban regeneration schemes and sustainable development principles. Other perspectives encourage future regeneration initiatives to examine the existing use of spaces and places; emphasising regeneration strategies which fail to consider local attachments to existing spaces could weaken communities long term (Worpole & Knox, 2007; Ujang & Zakariya, 2015). Various approaches to public space planning have been presented by Maurani &Amit-Cohen (2007), however limited knowledge is known about public space allocation and its relationship to urban regeneration. Through further research, this study aims to address the gap in public space allocation and explore the planning challenges associated with urban regeneration policy.

2.10 History and Theory of Place

The philosophy of place has been manifested from ancient Greek mythology, where scholars like Aristotle and Plato believed that place was the necessary starting point from which space was understood (Crestwell, 2009:1). This research acknowledges and adopts the 1970's conceptualization of Sense of Place for this research *as a particular location that had acquired a sense of attachments; where meanings were invoked from emotion and feeling* (ibid). Human geographers such as Heidegger (1889-1976), Relph (1976) and Tuan (1977) conducted research on place, stressing the need for geographers to become more aware of the ways we inhabit and experience the world (Crestwell, 2009:4).

Relph (1976) has become a highly referenced scholar, with his phenomenology of place (Crestwell, 2009; Jones & Evans, 2012; Ujang & Zakariya, 2015; Ugang & Zakariya, 2015b). Phenomenology of place argues there is a lack of formal knowledge surrounding 'place' (Relph, 1976:6). Relph further stresses

"if places are indeed a fundamental aspect…if they are sources of security and identity for individuals… then it is important that the means of experiencing, creating and maintaining significant places are not lost" (p.6).

Sense of place has been further conceptualised through Relphs (1976) concept of *placelessness*. Relph developed a toolkit to investigate 'sense of place' arguing people experience places in terms of their authenticity and inauthenticity; stressing modern landscapes are "eradicating the authentic experience of place in exchange for a sense of placelessness" (cited in Jones & Evans, 2012:2319). His theory of *Rescue Geography*, sought to give the social aspect (or public space) meaning and merit when spaces undergo regeneration (Jones & Evans, 2012:2327). *Rescue Geography* is one tool which can encourage controlled levels of place-sensitive development to better engage the policy rhetoric into practice (ibid). Worpole & Knox (2007) suggest future regeneration schemes should be based on a stronger understanding of people's use of existing spaces and places (p.13). Additional theorists such as Tuan (1977) expand on 'sense of place' through his construct of experience.

Yi Fu-Tuan (1977) believed spaces were places to be experienced, and felt through one's senses. Through experiencing places, one would learn about the space, transforming it into a place with attached value and meaning (Tuan, 1977:6). The construct of experience encapsulates a variety of modes in which a person can understand and construct their own reality, based on how they interpret a place. The learned experience for inhabitants or guests of a community post-regeneration, impacts their attached meaning of that place and influences their attitudes towards it. Tuan (1977) believed modern environments catered towards the physical, when more emphasis should be on how individuals experience and interpret a space (p.11). Sense of place has been linked to public spaces because of the unique interactions and meanings attached to various public spaces. The unique character of street markets, or outdoor cafes can create different experiences, generating unique realities for individuals. Sense of place has been grounded in social science theory, drawing parallels between sense of place and the meaning constructed out of lived experience (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015:710). Sense of Place has been linked to public space and urban regeneration, as physical places are impacted by place attachment and the process of redevelopment. Applying Tuan's (1977) concept of the lived experience can further our understanding of people's attitudes towards a space, gaining perspective on the power of public space to impact one's experience of a space.

2.11 Sense of Place and Urban Regeneration

Over the past several decades, urban and suburban development has been criticised for its monotonous design, with limited sense of place and cultural distinctiveness. Sense of place literature has argued regeneration has the capacity to develop places devoid of local identity, and highlighted regeneration fails to account for local attachments (Worpole & Knox, 2007; Jones & Evans, 2012; Ujang & Zakariya, 2015). Other perspectives note attachment to places are impacted by regeneration, and public spaces are not given adequate value and attention during development.

Public parks, squares, outdoor cafes and boardwalks add to the personality of a community and contribute to ones' experience of a particular place. Sense of place and public spaces are connected as multi-functional places that hold memories and meaning for inhabitants (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015:711). Scholars highlighted to understand place preservation, regeneration schemes must acknowledge the significance of community identity and attachment associated with places (Worpole & Knox, 2007; Jones & Evans, 2012; Ujang & Zakariya, 2015). Further examination linking place and people could encourage more accurate improvements to the quality and quantity of regeneration initiatives.

In urban regeneration, there is often a 'wholesale destruction of existing landscapes' with new developments targeted at attracting specific user groups. Jones & Evans (2012) reiterate, it should not come as a shock why so many UK regeneration initiatives can be labelled as bland and soulless; there is an obvious lack of attention towards community identity and the places that were there before (p.2321). This research acknowledges the argument by Jones & Evans (2012) and strives to identify new research which can inform the planning and regeneration process for practitioners.

2.12 Closing Remarks

Urban issues are complex, requiring a multi-dimensional approach to address urban regeneration. Successful regeneration is of the outmost importance to communities, impacting the economic, physical and social aspects of towns and cities. Public spaces have been labelled as crucial components to establishing sense of place in communities. It has been argued public spaces are 'the heart of any community', yet little attention has been given to public space in regeneration schemes. The dominant economic focus of regeneration threatens community identity and has contributed to the 'ad hoc' reputation associated with urban regeneration. Urban regeneration has developed since the Twentieth century, however the growing trend of sustainable development principles adds pressure to planning and regeneration practitioners to develop integrated and holistic regeneration strategies. Successful regeneration strives to improve the existing

community, attract new investment and stimulate vibrancy in communities.

Existing literature has demonstrated the gap in knowledge regarding public space allocation and urban regeneration. As a result, further research is required to orient regeneration and public space development in the planning process. Minimal research exists on the process of public space allocation, specifically the capacity of urban planning to connect sense of place and public space in urban regeneration initiatives. Existing literature acknowledges the importance of sense of place and community identity as contributors to the regeneration process and essential to maintaining vital community assets. However, the literature does not explain the role of public space and land allocation in the planning process. To succeed in urban regeneration, public spaces must return to the foundation of urban design and planning, encouraging built form which supports public interaction over economic gain and isolation. Sense of place, community identity and civic pride hold value for inhabitants and encourage them to live, work and play in specific places. If urban regeneration can re-focus its attention, communities can both restore their culture and add vibrancy back into society.

2.13 Conceptual Framework

The Conceptual Framework below (see Figure 2), outlines key literature related to sense of place, public space and urban regeneration. The figure operationalises the focus of such categories through an empirical study, which will draw on existing knowledge surrounding the subjects and further explore, identify and examine their relationship within a case study location of Port Talbot, Wales. After the study, theoretical reflection will discuss the findings and link back to existing literature to develop recommendations and highlight areas for further research. The framework will be embedded with *inductive* reasoning, examining a particular aspect of social life and developing theories from that data (May, 2011:30). The figure below will provide focus and clarity to the concepts being investigated (Hennick et al., 2012:40). Adopting an inductive framework will help develop inferences which will dig deeper into the issues of public space and urban regeneration, until a point of information saturation is reached (ibid). Baseline definitions of public space and sense of place will be defined, however the inductive approach to research is softer than the concept of hypothesises and a deductive approach to research (Hennick et al., 2012:42).

Existing Theoretical Knowledge

Sense of Place	Public Space	Urban Regeneration
Relph (1976) Place Attachment	Sagnar (2007) Civic Importance	Tallon (2010), Deas (2013) Economic Competition
Tuan (1977) The Lived Experience	Amit-Cohen (2007) Public Space Planning Models	Cowell (2013) Sustainable Development Imbalance
		Carley (2000) challenges with urban regeneration policy

Empirical Study Focus

Explore:	Identify:	Examine:
Sense of Place Definition	Public Space Benefits	Planning and Regeneration Decision-Making
Relationship between Individual and Public Space (via Walking Interviews)	Examine Public Space Planning Model in Port Talbot case study	Political or Financial challenges in Port Talbot and Wales

Theoretical Reflection:
     Recommendation for new approaches to increase Public Space Allocation for Regeneration Practice (Wales and the United Kingdom)

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

Empirical Chapter 3 - Methodology

This chapter will outline the research design used to conduct this study in order to answer the following research objectives:

1. To explore the relationship between quality of public space and 'sense of place' in Port Talbot.
2. To examine the influence of public space in regeneration schemes in Port Talbot.
3. To identify planning challenges associated with public space development in regeneration

initiatives of Port Talbot.

4. Explore the importance of public space in urban regeneration policy in Wales.

The methodology seeks to present and justify the selected research approach including the limitations of each method and its contribution to answering research objectives. To conclude, ethical considerations will be discussed to ensure research integrity.

3.1 Research Strategy

The examination of social research is framed through the purpose of the study and related paradigms are characterised by: epistemology, ontology and methodology (Guba, 1990:18). To determine logical inquiry, the methodological approach is the process of research validation whereby the researcher evaluates the evidence he/she believes exists. The research is then grounded in a theoretical framework which provides sound rationale for the purpose of the study, justified by established theory and empirical fact (Simon & Goes, 2011:1). Therefore, the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data are related to some research question which helps establish the foundation for the study (Crotty,1998:3). To ensure a relevant and applicable methodological approach, several qualitative and quantitative approaches were reviewed across various philosophical and sociological platforms. Bryman (2015) emphasises the importance of adopting appropriate methods and research strategies that align with the research question and topic under investigation (p.36).

Epistemology	Theoretical Perspective	Methodology	Methods
Objectivism	Positivism Post-Positivism	Experimental research Survey research etc.	Sampling Measurement and scaling Statistical analysis Questionnaire Focus Group Interview Etc.
Constructionism Social Constructionism	Interpretivism *Symbolic Interactionism * Phenomenology *Hermeneutics Critical Inquiry Feminism	Ethnography Grounded Theory Phenomenological research Heuristic inquiry Action research Discourse analysis Feminist standpoint research Etc.	Qualitative Interview Observation *Participant *Non-participant Case study Life history Narrative Theme identification Etc.
Subjectivism	Postmodernism Structuralism Post-structuralism	Discourse theory Archaeology Genealogy Deconstruction Etc.	Autoethnography Semiotics Literary analysis Pastiche Intertextuality Etc.

Figure 3: Examples within Crotty's Knowledge Framework (Crotty, 1998:5)

The most appropriate framework for this dissertation aligns with the *Social Constructionism* branch of epistemology, outlined in Crotty's knowledge framework seen above (see Figure 3). Social Constructionism 'emphasises the concept that society is actively and creatively produced by human beings', social worlds being 'interpretive nets woven by individuals and groups' (Marshall, 1994:484). Adopting this method challenges the notion that organisation and culture are pre-determined. It argues social actors play an active role in shaping external reality through interactions such as dialogue, negotiation or ritual (Gurney, 2017, cited in Gurney, 1999:1708-9). Adopting another approach would be inappropriate because the research is not value free, and therefore subjective according to the environment and the people within it (Crotty, 1998; Flick, 2009) To apply a purely objective science-based lens, would strip away value and meaning to people's lived experiences, contradicting the aim of this research.

In the modern world, social constructionism is relevant as this dissertation seeks to investigate the social implications of public space in urban regeneration. Crotty (1998) notes "different people may construct meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon" (p.9). For

example, the different perspectives of an urban planner and a land surveyor in regards to a building. Within social constructionism, different perceptions are often bound in the *interpretivist* approach which acknowledges the individual perspective and allows for multiple perceptions of reality (Hennick, Hutter & Bailey, 2011:15). This element is crucial to understand various perspectives of study participants, acknowledging their individual perception of public space and sense of place. Adopting this framework will create a robust collection of knowledge, and contribute to a thorough examination of 'sense of place'.

3.2 Research Design

The selected research design embraces qualitative research as the most appropriate approach to capture the attitudes, behaviours and experiences of the individual through interview methods (Dawson, 2009:15). This study combines a theory-led approach with elements of *grounded theory*, viewed through a constructionist lens. To explore sense of place and public space, empirical research will utilise an inductive approach to examine and record the individual experience of public spaces in Port Talbot. Through empirical evidence, this study will connect the social experience of public places and the personal perspective of sense of place to grounded theory, developing new knowledge which can improve public space allocation. Existing literature has identified the lack of public space allocation and the concrete gap in regeneration practice. Thus, the application of grounded theory can contribute to developing recommendations which will acknowledge public space in regeneration initiatives (Bryman, 2015:381). Therefore, the process of data collection, analysis and theory are inextricably linked and represent the foundation of this research (Strauss and Corbin, 1998:12). Coding will be applied as a tool of grounded theory, which will be discussed in selected methodological approaches. This approach provides a solid foundation to address beliefs about public space, sense of place and assess planning challenges in the urban policy context of Port Talbot. The following figure provides a roadmap of the research strategy, unpacking each research question and highlighting required information necessary to answer each research objective.
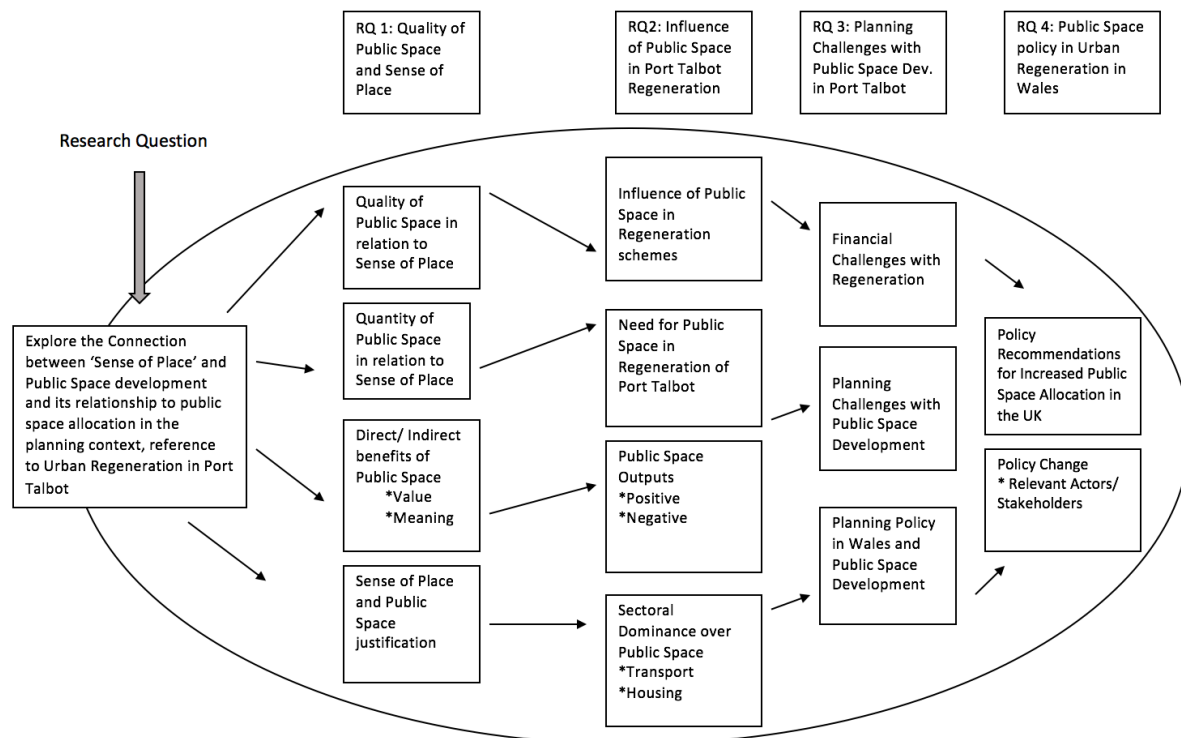
Figure 4: Research Strategy Roadmap, modified from Hennick et al., 2012:43

The framework organises key topics discussed in the literature review in a clear and methodical manner. The figure methodically begins with the overarching research question, and moves through each cluster of boxes to address one research objective and its attached components. The final section of the diagram aims to conclude the study with policy recommendations which may be useful within the context of similar communities with related characteristics.

3.3 A Single Case Study approach

This study selected the single case study approach to empirically examine public space and its relationship to sense of place. Robert Stake (1995), an advocate of the case study approach, argued a single case study allows for a concentrated focus on the complex nature associated with a particular location or community (cited in Bryman, 2015:60). Chosen research questions target a specific location, requiring an in-depth examination of that environment, compared to a general exploration of several cases (Yin, 2014; Bryman, 2015). Acknowledging the *interpretivist* perspective, a single case study is viewed as a strength, allowing for a critical focus on the issues and complexities of one example within certain circumstances (May, 2011:224).

Case studies have been respected for their emphasis on learning, construction, discovery and problem-solving and as 'quintessential social science' components (Van Wynsberghe and Khan, 2007:2). May (2011) reiterates from (Ruddin, 2006; Ragin, 2009) that case studies are highly useful in policy research or where evaluation is concerned with the practical applications of findings

(p.225). The chosen case study has been selected due to its relevant attributes, but also its unique features. On the surface, the community has several positive attractions: the seafront, new transport hub and two award winning parks, however it lacks the underlying sense of place that links all the landmarks together. Additionally, despite recent regeneration efforts, Port Talbot lacks adequate public space provision, which may contribute to the minimal sense of place within the community (Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, 2014:21). The literature review discussed the need for urban regeneration to increase public space allocation, and how further investigation into the planning process could encourage urban policy changes. Future changes to planning policy in Wales, coupled with the existing need for increased public space create a unique platform for further research. Findings from this study can support the importance of public space allocation and may uncover useful information to extend recommendations to areas of similar characteristics.

3.4 The Case Study Selection

Case study selection required a location which had recently participated in an urban regeneration scheme. A single case was a conscious decision (May, 2011:228), whereby participant access and resources were significant factors to selecting the study location. The chosen case study was Port Talbot, located in South West Wales. On the surface, the Town encompassed characteristics of a typical case, a post-industrial town with strong manufacturing heritage and a history of industrial success; therefore, it can respond as a city which has experienced post-industrial decline (Bryman, 2015:63). Port Talbot also embodied a relevant case as regeneration has become an applicable item on the Welsh political agenda, allowing the researcher to examine key social processes (Bryman, 2015:70). Findings can highlight the benefits of public space and policy recommendations required to re-balance regeneration schemes. Results may be relevant for research in towns of similar characteristics, providing a platform for other communities undergoing regeneration. The unique nature of planning history in Wales can "extend and illuminate the understanding of relationships between constructs" (Mitchell, 1983:26) such as issues with urban regeneration policy and barriers to integrated regeneration approaches. This study can contribute to the wider dialogue surrounding the importance of public space and its relationship to sense of place which may identify parallel information with other Welsh towns or UK cities.

3.5 Limitations

Several methodological limitations arise with a single case study approach, the first being concern over rigor. Yin (2014) emphasises researchers can become sloppy and stray away from

systematic procedures (p.20). Other limitations relate to the generalisation of case studies. In case study approaches, the study examines a particular location or organisation, and develops conclusions about a specific phenomenon which can only be applied to that case study area. However, the researcher runs of risk of over-generalising conclusions, which may not always be applicable to other examples (Flick, 2009:134). This study acknowledges empirical evidence relates specifically to this case study, however, areas of similar characteristics may be able to learn from this research and better understand the role of public spaces in urban regeneration schemes. When developing conclusions, this research will reiterate the case study approach, preventing over-generalisations of the study and targeting recommendations to the study location of Port Talbot.

3.6.0 Data Collection Methods

The following section outlines the chosen data collection methods, providing a brief overview of each method, including the rationale, data analysis and limitations of each method. Each qualitative approach will be numerically marked, representing the order in which each method will be collected during the study.

3.6.1 Preliminary Documentary research

Documentary research was firstly explored before conducting any interviews, as it "enhances the understanding of case studies through the ability to situate contemporary accounts within a historical context" (May, 2011:175). Secondary documents were collected and read to provide background information useful to support robust dialogue during interviews (Flick, 2009:261). Documents were selected according to Scott (1990) and his criteria for assessing evidence: authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning (May, 2011; Flick, 2009). The Open Space topic paper, and the Local Development Plan were selected to uncover challenges with public space planning and inform the researcher of current regeneration efforts in Wales.

3.6.2 Sampling

Secondary documents were selected based on availability and relevance to the research questions. Two documents were purposively selected to provide public space context in Port Talbot and better understand planning decisions and policy structures (Flick, 2009:258). While these documents were not analysed in the study, they were useful to orient the research providing supporting information and contributing to a stronger dialogue for the primary empirical focus of the study: interviews.

3.6.3 Limitations

Primary limitations associated with documentary research related to the availability of information and time constraints (Flick, 2009; May, 2011). Additionally, time constraints resulted in only a small number of documents be consulted, which could limit the scope of research. To address these limitations, this study utilised knowledgeable gatekeepers who were able to share documents with the researcher and validate the researcher's selection choice.

3.7.0- Qualitative Approach 1- Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews are one of the most widely adopted methods in qualitative research, (Bryman, 2015:466) yielding robust insight into the opinions, values and experiences of others (May, 2011:120). Semi-structured interviews provided necessary scope for the interviewer to seek clarification and elaboration on answers with each interviewee (May, 2011:123). Other methods such as questionnaires do not allow for the probing of individuals and are often limited to predominantly close-ended questions (Bryman, 2015:224). Freestone & Liu (2016) argue 'place' is very personal and can represent several meanings, therefore conducting individual interviews allocated adequate time and attention to capture the individual perspective (p.1). Interviews often result in fewer participants, however this was viewed as a strength because it created an environment to encourage detailed, personal opinions from participants in a private manner (Dawson, 2009:15). Interviews were conducted after documentary research had ended, providing the researcher with useful background information which eliminated unnecessary questions. The approach could uncover challenges associated with public space planning and urban regeneration schemes.

3.7.1 Sampling Strategy and Qualitative Analysis

Prior to entering the field, a pilot interview was conducted with a third party participant, streamlining interview questions and verifying interview content (Jupp & Sapsford 1996; Crestwell, 2014). After the pilot test, six face to face interviews were conducted, averaging 45 minutes in length, based on snowball sampling. Participants were purposefully selected due to their professional knowledge and insight related to public space, planning and policy, therefore a non-random recruitment approach was adopted (Hennick et al., 2012:84). Welsh Government officials and Neath Port Talbot Council members were selected because of their knowledge and capacity to contribute to the study. To access participants, Community Gatekeepers were utilised, streamlining access for the researcher and introducing them to individuals likely to help with the study (Bryman, 2015:432). This included: the Regeneration department of Neath Port Talbot

County Borough Council and additional practitioners who participated in the *Vibrant and Viable Places* Programme.

Qualitative Analysis began through manual transcription of interviews with the assistance of a software program called *T5,* which slowed the speech of interviewees. After the transcription process, open coding began, breaking down data into parts (partial sentences, phrases or words), analysing similarities and differences of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998:102). The procedure was done by hand, attaching several categories to the data, each representing a concept of interest related to a research question(s) (Yin, 2014:138). Open coding was used to generate new ideas related to public space and validate existing literature (Bryman, 2015:575). Categories were linked back to research questions related to perceptions of public space, planning challenges and others. From the coding process, findings were organised based on research questions and related to existing theories outlined in the literature review. Further analysis occurred in the discussion chapter, unpacking findings and the relationship to the wider debate of urban regeneration.

3.7.2 Limitations of Semi-structured interviews

When conducting interviews, the process itself, along with transcribing and hand coding took time (May, 2011; Crestwell, 2014). Additionally, the researcher was heavily reliant on the accuracy of the interviewees to provide a true account of their knowledge (May, 2011:44). At times, interviews did not produce useful information, therefore additional interviewees were required; requiring on additional resources and time. Limitations can be managed through rigorous background research to determine qualified interviewees and allocate sufficient time to transcribe and code data.

3.8.0 Qualitative Approach 2- Walking Interviews

Walking interviews have been used in social research as an innovative technique to examine the connection between individuals and the physical environment (Jones & Evans, 2011:858). The technique was adopted from work conducted by Relph (1976) on *Place and Placelessness*, which argued walking interviews directly linked place association to the geographic location of a space (Evans & Jones, 2012:2323). Conducting walking interviews in public spaces can establish a connection between spatial location and the sense of place attached to the physical landscape (ibid). Walking during the interview encouraged participants to share stories and details about their experiences that otherwise might go undiscussed in a structured sit down format. Jones & Evans (2011) argued walking interviews generated more robust data as participants are less likely

to provide a calculated answer (p.85). The action of walking has also been considered an intimate method to connect with the environment and provide privileged insight into both place and self (Solnit, 2001:13). This method has been used before to examine sense of place and meaning attached to the physical environment of recently regenerated areas of Birmingham, United Kingdom (UK) (Jones et al., 2008:4).

3.8.1 Sampling Strategy and Qualitative Analysis

Prior to entering the field, a pilot walking interview was conducted in Cardiff Bay, an area recently undergone regeneration in the last decade. The piloting process clarified the order and number of questions which simplified the interview structure (Sapsford & Jupp, 1996:101-105). Once in the field, 5 participants were interviewed through snowball sampling, and engaged in dialogue while walking around Port Talbot. Each interview averaged 40 minutes, with participants describing personal stories and memories of Port Talbot. The walking route locations were pre-determined, with some flexibility during the walk. Pre-determined routes focused the interview to specific areas relevant to the goals of the research project (Jones et al., 2008:850). The routes selected were the Port Talbot Town Centre, Aberavon Seafront and the Port Talbot Memorial Park. Locations were chosen based on practitioner interviews, whereby participants emphasised the importance of various locations. It is important to note that one walking interview encompassed a brief stop at a park which then required the interviewer and the interviewee to drive to the main walking site where the majority of the interview was conducted (See Appendix A for both maps).

After interviews, audio recordings were transcribed and the recorded walking route was downloaded from the walking app, *Walkmeter*, to the researcher's personal computer. The same process was used for transcribing the walking interviews as face to face interviews. Due to time constraints and varied responses, walking interviews were recorded as individual examples and mapped separately from other walking routes. Data was coded in two phases. The interview transcription was coded using the open coding process to label categories discussed during the walk (Yin, 2014:138). Secondly, questions asked by the interviewer were thematically color coded and mapped to show the relationship between public spaces in Port Talbot and which locations elicited a strong sense of place or personal attachments for participants. The combination of the audio and visual mapping, applies Tuan's (1977) concept of the lived experience, further understandings the connection between the emotional and the physical, allowing for a detailed examination of place (p.6).

3.8.2 Limitations of Walking Interviews

The location of walking interviews was limited by the researcher's capacity to access various public space locations in and around Port Talbot. This was a time and resource constraint and made scheduling walking interviews difficult because the researcher relied on public transportation to travel to and within Port Talbot. Pre-determined walking routes may have excluded points of interest to the participant that while personally relevant, did not contribute to the objectives of the study (Jones et al., 2008:850). Due to limited technological resources, the researcher had to manually record the location of specific comments during the interview and then add it the location of the map after the interview. This manual process required some note taking during the interview which may have disrupted the conversation between the participant and the researcher. Finally, the researcher was also reliant on finding participants willing to partake in this portion of the study. While it was an innovative approach, it required extensive use of community gatekeepers to find willing participants to obtain a sufficient sample size.

3.9 Triangulation

The study aimed to address several components: the individual's perception of sense of place, the value of public spaces and public space allocation within the context of urban regeneration in Port Talbot. To strengthen the research, producing what Geertz (1973) calls 'thick description' through the process of triangulation, can enrich data collection and produce a healthy analysis (Bryman, 2004:392). To address all aspects of the study, a multi-method approach was adopted to obtain necessary data related to the research objectives. Triangulation is often rooted in qualitative data, allowing for the cross-checking of data validity when conducting qualitative research, such as interviews (Bryman, 2004:392).

Triangulating between several methods can increase the quality of data and allow for a clearer understanding of an individual's perspective on public space allocation and sense of place (Flick, 2009:405). Different methodological viewpoints complemented each other and compensated for the weakness of a single method (Flick, 2009: 26-27). Therefore, what one method lacked, another approach addressed. Additional mechanisms were utilised to ensure research validity; such as member checking and presenting discrepant information counter to the theme (Crestwell, 2014:201-202). Triangulating between several methods provided different platforms to gather information on public space development (See Figure 3.0). It also allowed participants to share their opinions in varying degrees of depth. This approach provided a solid foundation to address the attitudes and beliefs about public space and its relationship to sense of place.

Research Questions	Method 1: In-depth Semi-Structured Interviews	Method 2: Walking Interviews with *WalkMeter* Mapping
Question (i) Quality of Public Space and SoP in PT		X
Question (ii) Influence of Public Space in Regen.	X	X
Question (iii) Planning Challenges with Public Space Dev.	X	X
Question (iv) Public Space and Urban Regen. Policy in Wales	X	

Figure 5: Table of Triangulation

3.10 Ethical Considerations

This research involved the direct interaction with a variety of participants such as practitioners, community organisations or residents and therefore required ethical consideration. Prior to data collection, participants were given an informed consent form along with an explanation of the purpose of the study (Dawson, 2009:153). The form outlined participants were voluntarily partaking in the study, sharing thoughts/ opinions for the purpose of the completion of an MSc dissertation (Neuman & Robson, 2012:49). It further ensured the confidential identity of all participants and outlined the process of raw data storage. The process of raw data storage ensured original data would be collected via Dictaphone and stored on a password protected laptop and memory stick for storage. Raw data would be stored on a private memory stick which would be locked in a cabinet. As per University policy, raw data will be shared between the researcher, Cardiff and Radboud University of which information would be stored on coded servers for a minimum of 10 years. The researcher, and both Cardiff and Radboud University are the only parties who would have access to the raw data. Sharing information on Welsh Government programming can be highly sensitive, particularly from those employed by central government, therefore additional care was required to ensure participants were protected.

(The ethics form for this study can be found at the end of the dissertation).

Empirical Chapter 4.0 Policy Context

The following chapter provides necessary background context on regeneration in Wales to orient the research questions within the chosen case study of Port Talbot, Wales.

4.1 Policy Context: Wales

In Wales, several documents reference urban regeneration and sense of place in a passive manner. The Wales Spatial Plan (2004, 2008), briefly addresses regeneration through a key objective under '*Building Sustainable Communities*', referring to regeneration to co-ordinate proposals with appropriate investment streams (Welsh Government, 2008:22). Sense of Place is referenced by the Welsh Assembly Government (WAG) through a 'sense of place' toolkit, however the focus is related to business tourism and creating a stronger sense of place within businesses (Stewart, 2010:29). The document by the Wales Tourist Board emphasises the toolkit as a mechanism to promote economic profitability, increase competitiveness and enhance Wales on the global stage (Wales Tourist Board, 2005). It states Sense of Place "can be a thousand and one things…" reiterating that it is a subjective perception (Welsh Government, 2005 :8). The toolkit encourages businesses to incorporate the Welsh Language, local resources and other components to boost sense of place in Welsh businesses (ibid). It lists ways to implement sense of place through 'the sensory technique' (Wales Tourist Board, 2005). Despite the relevance for businesses, the toolkit strongly highlights economic benefits to sense of place, lacking a limited social or environmental perspective. The last noteworthy policy relates to the new Well-Being and Future Generations Act (2015) legislation. It requires all Local Authorities to ensure development meets the 7 well-being goals, such as P*rosperous Wales*, or a *Wales of cohesive communities* (p.4). The objective of the legislation is to balance the social, economic, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, and strives to encourage a more balanced approach to regeneration (Welsh Government, 2015:1). Therefore, through empirical research, this study will strive to examine the role of sense of place in public spaces in Port Talbot.

4.2 Regeneration Program Evolution

Regeneration programming originally developed from the Welsh Governments 'Regeneration areas'. Regeneration targeted 7 communities with specific visions that delivered a collection of projects in partnership with local authorities, private and third sectors (Welsh Government, 2013:9). It's predecessor *Vibrant and Viable Places (VVP)* was established by the Welsh Government (2013) as the active national regeneration framework. The program supported initiatives which prioritised key areas:

→ Town Centres

→ Coastal Communities and

→ Communities First Clusters

One initiative influenced by the recent regeneration in Port Talbot was the *Communities First* program established in 2001 by the WAG, aimed at improving "opportunities and quality of life for people living and working in the most disadvantages communities in Wales" (Assembly Wales, 2007:1). The objective of *Communities First* was to build capacity through small scale projects and partnerships, with the intention that programs like VVP would target *Community First* areas; providing deprived areas with additional funding (Assembly Wales, 2007). In Port Talbot, there are 4 Communities First clusters, of which funding from VVP contributed to those areas (Port Talbot CVS, 2017). Projects such as the Employability Centre and Green Park increased training and employment services and added affordable housing units to meet the need for inhabitants in the Aberavon Communities First cluster (Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, 2013:5). Communities First was a national program which had local impact due to VVP.

The *Vibrant and Viable Places* framework launched in 2013 by the Welsh Assembly Government, aimed at improving town centres with an acute focus on economic growth and housing supply (Gov.Wales, 2013). It outlined a similar format to the *City Challenge*, an English regeneration scheme presented in the 1990's whereby local authorities bid for regeneration funding (Roberts & Sykes, 2001:32). The VVP Framework encompassed key performance targets related to investment leveraged in, additional jobs created and others, demonstrating an economic focus of the program (Clapham, 2014:4). The framework has been dominated by economic drivers, however, at the national level, there are no government indicators in Wales that measure 'place' (Stewart, 2010: 52). 'Place' has yet to be defined, despite the vague definition from the Wales Tourist Board toolkit, presenting an opportunity to fill the knowledge gap on 'sense of place' and develop policy recommendations that contribute to defining 'place' in the Welsh context.

On a broader scale, Wales is currently undergoing a shift in strategic land use planning. The Planning (Wales) Act of 2015 will introduce two new tiers of development planning which will sit above existing local development plans (LDPs): The National Development Framework (NDF) and Strategic Development Plans (SDPs) (Henderson, 2017). The NDF will hold development plan status, requiring all local authorities to ensure their LDPs are in accordance (ibid). The NDF will likely be enacted in 2020, with the preferred draft being put out for consultation end of May, June 2018 (Morris, 2018). Additionally, by April 2018, the new regeneration framework will be released

by the Welsh Government. Findings from this study may provide insightful knowledge on public space allocation useful during the drafting stage of the NDF.

4.3 Port Talbot Context

The chosen case study for this research is Port Talbot, a post-industrial town located in South West Wales. With a population of approximately 140,992 persons, the small community has deep industrial heritage of steelworks and iron mills (Statistics Wales, 2016). The long history of manufacturing has altered the landscape requiring regeneration efforts to improve the environmental, physical and social appeal of the area (Parry, 2011:13). Public space in Port Talbot is limited, with a high deficiency in nearly all public space categories outlined by the local authority (Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, 2014:21). The LDP for Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, henceforth will be referred as Port Talbot Council, emphasised the lack of public space, underlining the need for additional provision (Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council, 2016:58). Despite the recent regeneration investment in Port Talbot (2013-2017), public space schemes were only included as a supplementary component of projects. Further examination can uncover the process of public space allocation in Port Talbot and identify why public space provisions are difficult to secure.

In April 2018, the Welsh Government once again released the next regeneration framework, of which Port Talbot will have the opportunity to apply for funding. This study comes at a time when new research can contribute to improving the future regeneration approach adopted in Port Talbot. Exploring the connection between public space and sense of place in Port Talbot can identify the power of public space and close the gap between policy and practice.

Chapter 5:0 Empirical Evidence

The following chapter strives to present findings collected from face to face and walking interviews in an objective and descriptive manner. The first section outlines influential factors which have impacted the value and success of public space allocation in regeneration schemes. Headings were selected according to themes collected from practitioner interviews, emphasising the relevance of chosen themes and their direct impact on public space development in Port Talbot. The second section will present the subjective perspective of sense of place and relational attachment from walking interview participants. This will begin to connect sense of place to public space, with further discussion in the subsequent chapter.

5.1 Changing approaches to Regeneration

The Welsh Government historically adopted a physical approach to regeneration. Public space schemes were utilised to improve the physical landscape, increase footfall to Town Centres and add beautification projects to enhance the physical environment to attract investment to an area. As one interviewee noted,

> *"If you go back a decade or so ago, there was a big focus on investing in an area so public space was seen as important...there were some downsides...if you don't invest in the people in an area then just making the area look nicer doesn't really give you more income... that's why there's been this more of a move towards a holistic approach"* *(Interviewee F, Port Talbot, April 17th,2018).*

The approach produced limited results, triggering a new approach by the Welsh Government towards an integrated delivery. The approach focussed on increasing employability and capacity building through the *Communities First* Program. The program aimed to uplift people through partnership, establishing the importance of local involvement in the regeneration of a community. The shift away from public space targeted projects which produced measurable outputs and increased opportunities for economic growth through housing or economically driven regeneration schemes. Therefore, the new regeneration approach has demonstrated the vulnerability of public space and the ease in which schemes can be cast aside if they do not produce measurable outputs. Current schemes have been shown to acknowledge political priorities during program procurement.

The current regeneration approach has been influenced by the Welsh political agenda, whereby housing is a large priority for current government. One Welsh Government official noted,

> *"one of the policy objectives of our government is to create 20,000 affordable housing within the term of government. Therefore, there's a target that has to be achieved... when they have an allocation of funding they (Welsh Government) naturally will look to try and use it to* achieve the *target that they have set"* *(Interviewee D, Port Talbot, April 6, 2018).*

The *Vibrant and Viable Places* scheme, the 2013 Welsh regeneration platform, reinforced the current housing agenda when Port Talbot incorporated housing in 5 out of 11 capital projects. The political steer towards achieving housing objectives has impacted what forms of development take precedence over others. The Welsh Government has steered regeneration towards projects

which meet existing policy objectives, provide measurable outputs and community impact. Several regeneration practitioners noted Local Authorities (LAs) are required to demonstrate need and justify how regeneration projects meet specific outcomes such as job creation or increased training opportunities. Public space schemes were noted as difficult to measure in terms of immediate impact and therefore not viewed as one of the largest values for money over other projects. A Welsh Government official noted,

> "… assessing the public realm, it's more difficult to quantify and therefore when your making the comparison of what's the value for money for this, and what's the benefits that were getting if we spend it on this, this or this, I'm guessing public realm doesn't necessarily feature highly in that assessment" (Interviewee D, Port Talbot, April 6, 2018).

The value placed on forms of development has been further scrutinised by limited funding at the central and local government level. Limited funding opportunities have increased pressure on local authorities to push procurement and bidding to secure funding first and align projects with strategies second. Additionally, funding is often short term, resulting in what Carley (2000) argues as a short-termism, a major critique of urban regeneration efforts (p.275). The limited time window has resulted in the Port Talbot Council "chasing the money", later identifying how projects fit within the wider development strategy; approaching regeneration from a financial perspective, prioritising funding over strategy. One Council employee noted, *"We sometimes find the project to fit the fund and not a strategy of what is needed and then find the money to do the project. So we do it backwards sometimes" (Interviewee B, Port Talbot, March 28th, 2018).* The empirical evidence echoes the saying "putting the cart before the horse", highlighting the lack of planning and reinforcing scholars' critiques of urban regeneration approaches.

The ad hoc approach to securing funding parallels Hauser's (1993) critique of regeneration approaches as "short term and fragmented", lacking a strategic framework for development (p.526). The unorthodox approach to funding has limited the capacity of LA's to implement an integrated approach to regeneration. The political steer has demonstrated weak sustainability and jeopardised the Council's capacity to integrate public space development into regeneration schemes (Cowell, 2013:2448). Additionally, limited funding for LA's has impacted public space allocation and the planning process.

5.2 Funding Obstacles

The majority of interviewed practitioners connected the current austerity regime and limited Council staff as a barrier to adequate regeneration services. Other services like education and

social services continue to increase, with planning and development viewed as services that can be cut. There has been a 50% reduction in planning and development staff since 2009/2010 (Interviewee F, Cardiff, April 16, 2018). Participants noted limited staff focus on applying and delivering regeneration programs without additional attention given to creating a regeneration strategy that could guide regeneration in Port Talbot. As one Environment and Heritage officer noted,

> *"… its more of that we need. And not trying to fit projects into funds that are available. So we ought to have a regeneration strategy for Port Talbot, the VVP became it…"*
> *(Interviewee B, Port Talbot, March 28th, 2018).*

External evaluation reports conducted during the VVP program, highlighted limited resources and staff as a potential obstacle to success of the program (Government Commerce, 2014:9). Contradictory to that report, several interviewees noted the high degree of success by Neath Port Talbot Council members to be effective in securing funding for projects despite limited resources.

Reduced staff has resulted in no landscape designers working in house for the Council, demonstrating a lack in design expertise. As one Council employee noted, *"… its an essential part to the design process and we don't have that expertise at all in this authority which is very unusual"* (Interviewee B, Port Talbot, March 28th, 2018). The lack of in house knowledge may influence the design calibre of projects and limit the advocacy for high quality public space schemes. One interviewee referenced the design process of public space conducted by unqualified in house Council employees. They referenced when designing a school, a Council employee's idea of adding in a netball court or children's play structure would be to use left over pieces of land, with minimal consideration of the landscape (Interviewee B, Port Talbot, March 28th, 2018). The lack of design expertise showcases the limited attention given to public space planning and its limited importance as a land use.

Over half of interviewed practitioners and Welsh Government officials spoke about the financial burden associated with maintaining public space. Regeneration programmes provide capital funds to finance projects, however maintenance requirements of public space demand consistent funds to cut grass, trim trees etc. The costs associated with maintenance has influenced the local authority's decision making, whereby they have opted out of building public space specifically for the regular maintenance that it would require. As one Port Talbot planner stated, *"Councils generally speaking can no longer take on further facilities because they haven't got the necessary budgets, the necessary staff to take them on" (Interviewee E, Port Talbot, April 6, 2018).* Limited funding has narrowed the capacity of practitioners to provide regeneration strategies, with the

main focus on securing funding. Limited resources have become a regeneration challenge, with inadequate design expertise and reduced advocacy for public space development during the planning and procurement process.

5.3. Planning Challenges

Aside from funding challenges, regeneration practitioners and planners repeatedly stated land availability posed a challenge for regeneration. The natural landscape of Port Talbot has influenced planning capacity through what Amit-Cohen (2007) describe as *Ecological Determinism*; whereby planning is decided according to the natural topography of an area (p.5-8). The topography of the valleys and the seafront has reduced developable land, and increased development pressure on the local authority. The city centre and surrounding areas are highly developed, resulting in limited to no land availability for public space development. One regeneration practitioner stated, *"I think that the opportunities are a bit limited, because it's a really built up area... it has to compete with all the other types of uses" (Interviewee C, Port Talbot, March 28th, 2018).* Available land is in high demand, forcing competing priorities to compete for space. As land uses struggle for space, ensuring adequate land viability is of great concern for developers seeking new opportunities.

During the development process, developers must meet a range of section 106 obligations (on-site open space provision, affordable housing, welsh language requirements etc.). Meeting the appropriate range of obligations reduces the profitability margin of the development. As one planner noted, *"… there are a number of cases whereby developments have gone ahead and have been proven unviable to provide open space" (Interviewee E, Port Talbot, April 6th 2018).* Several projects have been deemed financially unviable to provide on-site public space because of the reduction in profitability. The capacity of projects to meet viability standards and include public space has, over time, become a contributing factor to the lack of public space provision in Port Talbot. Practitioners identified the weakened relationship between public space and the planning process due to funding and land availability challenges. Various development priorities have pushed public space to the bottom of the list and focused development on areas which address other needs like education or housing.

5.4 Influence of Public Space in Regeneration

Several regeneration practitioners noted the positive influence public space projects have had on Port Talbot. Referenced impacts include: increased connectivity, encouraging people outdoors, self-policing, lovely views and promoting activities such as walking the dogs, space for children to play and space for relaxation and well-being. The sunken garden project at the Aberavon Seafront

was referenced as a positive example of public space regeneration that has enhanced the seafront atmosphere and become a destination for families and dog owners. A regeneration practitioner commented, *"it's been a huge success because no matter what the weather if you go down there is always people there picnicking in the informal areas, people walking there…"* *(Interviewee A, Port Talbot, March 28th, 2018).* The majority of comments from interviewees were positive, however vandalism and anti-social behaviour were two negative impacts of public space noted by regeneration practitioners.

Participants advocated the importance of public spaces and particularly parks to provide a service to the community as versatile and multi-purpose spaces. The service a park provides was referenced in relation to the Green Flag Program, a conservation program which recognises the Local Authorities preservation of significant green spaces. Two of Port Talbot's green spaces have the green flag designation: Margam Park and Port Talbot Memorial Park. Both spaces have different purposes, however hold significant historical and tourism amenities providing positive outputs for public space.

Several participants felt parks should provide diverse amenities for individuals of all ages to ensure the space is consistently used and engaging for people. One environment and heritage officer commented,

> *"I know people would say you've got a seafront, which is absolutely fantastic, so you can't get much more open space that that. But you could have smaller parks… you have to target each age group as well" (Interviewee B, Port Talbot, March 28th, 2018).*

The push for quality public space confirms Sagnar's (2007) argument which claimed public spaces are an essential aspect of life because they provide opportunities for individuals both young and old to experience a variety of activities (p.12). Public spaces provide positive opportunities, which can shape sense of place and meaning for inhabitants out of their lived experience (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015: 710).

Several practitioners referenced the quantity of public space in Port Talbot in relation to the limited public space in the town centre. As one interviewee noted, *"yes… there does seem to be a lack of public space for leisure, recreation, social interaction, that kind of thing in the centre of Port Talbot"* (Interviewee C, Port Talbot, March 28th, 2018). A Welsh Government official referenced town centres can be quite cold generally due to the built up nature of the environment, and that Port Talbot could benefit from additional green space to soften the edges of the town centre (Interviewee D, Port Talbot, April 06th, 2018). Projects like the sunken gardens provide benefits for

inhabitants and add value to the community. Establishing the connection between high quality public space and sense of place can further justify the benefits of public space provision and its ability to create place attachment for individuals.

5.5 Recommendations for Change

During data collection, interviewees were asked to suggest potential recommendations they felt could influence public space allocation in Port Talbot. Understanding the local professional perspective could better orient the researcher towards proposing realistic recommendations that would be accepted and achievable in the local context.

Several practitioners agreed that stronger public space legislation is required to ensure public space becomes a priority. As one planner noted,

> *"… until there is a national requirement that it must be delivered, I think generally speaking, open space and other obligations will come lower down on the pecking order…" (Interviewee E, Port Talbot, April 6,2018).*

To shift the current attitude, new legislation was suggested as the best mechanism for local authorities to address public space in future regeneration proposals and in regular land use development plans. Influential actors would include the local authority as the delivery vehicle and national stakeholders such as the Welsh Government and the National Assembly of Wales to procure and implement new policy to hold mandatory conformity. Policy documents such as the Local Development Plan (LDP), a statutory land use plan for Port Talbot, and the Well-being and Future Generations Act (2015), a national statutory document focussed on long term impacts of development and change on society, have guided development and supported regeneration project selection. Therefore, strengthening policy through increasing national legislation would give priority to public space development and help re-balance regeneration efforts.

Additional recommendations included other forms of public space recognition in future regeneration schemes. One participant proposed the creation of a financial benchmark to ensure public space targets are met in regeneration schemes. Another individual suggested searching and applying for grant schemes targeted at green spaces to incentivise the local authority to develop green spaces. Another participant recommended the integration of public space with active transportation. As one Local government official noted, *"…you could look at a position where they become central points where different bike routes meet up" (Interviewee F, Cardiff, April 17th, 2018).* Public space would serve as an active travel hub, providing both a recreation

and well-being service, connecting individuals to cycling or walking travel routes. Locating the hub near public transportation could encourage tourism, recreation and mobility, further connecting people to different places. This recommendation integrates public space and transportation, increasing the chance of the scheme receiving Welsh Government support. The final recommendation, related to the current statuary land use plan under review, the National Development Framework (NDF).

One of the objectives of this study was to explore possible recommendations to influence the new NDF. Various interviewees noted different perspectives regarding the capacity of the NDF to influence public space planning. One government officer noted it could include national guidance on good practice, however it would be difficult to be too prescriptive at the national level because local conditions play a large role. One planner stated,

> *"a new thing that's been introduced is the need for a green infrastructure assessment, that's completely new… obviously the open space assessment we've done to date will feed into that, and inform a lot of it, but the open space assessment would have to be expanded to cover all the requirements that are there now" (Interviewee E, Port Talbot, April 6, 2018).*

The capacity of the NDF to have a major influence on public space planning was speculative based on the background of the interviewee, however there was a degree of uncertainty as to how the new document would influence regeneration, only that it would in some capacity. Practitioner recommendations outlined change could come in the form of sector-based integration or stronger legislation. Either approach would require active stakeholders to justify public space prioritisation and address existing institutional obstacles of political steering and limited funding.

5.6 Walking Interviews

Walking interviews represent the second qualitative method used in this study. Each walk was viewed as unique, therefore key findings from each walk will be presented separately. Data collected focussed on the first research question which explored the relationship between quality and quantity of public space and its relationship to sense of place. Walking maps illustrate key themes connected to the research questions and outline type of themes prevalent on the walk.

5.7 Walking Interview AA: Port Talbot Memorial Park
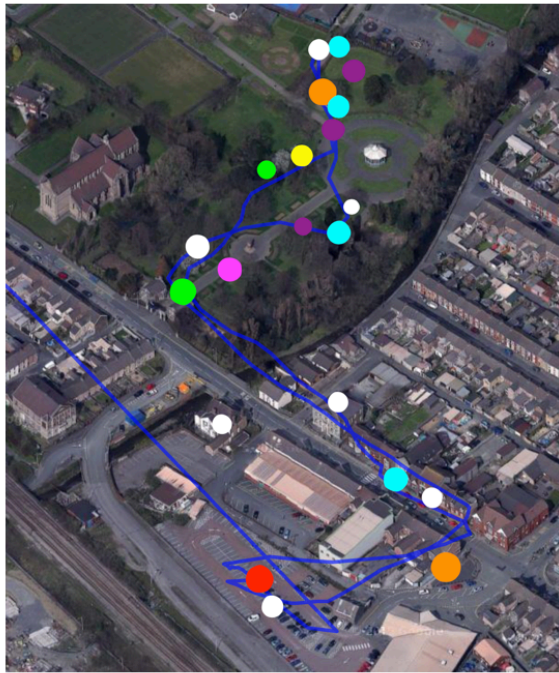
W.I. Main walking route, Port Talbot Memorial Park

Legend

🟥	Start and End of Walk
🟩	Discussion of Favourite Spaces
🟪	Discussion of Benefits and Need of Public Space
🟫	Critiques to Public Space
🟦	Personal History & Personal Memories
🟧	Sense of Place Comments
🟨	Suggestions for further Regeneration
⬜	Town History Comments

Figure 6: Walking Route 1

The Port Talbot Memorial Park, located in the neighbourhood of Tiabach used to be viewed as a destination, an oasis from the industrial skyline of the steelworks. Participant AA spoke about childhood memories spent in Memorial park (see blue dots). They recalled the high quality of the park when the steelworks were in its prime (see green dots). The Memorial Park was a vibrant and active destination with a bandstand, people picnicking, and an aviary (petting zoo); creating a positive community atmosphere (see white and orange dots). Currently, the parks reputation has shifted away from what it once was. It now serves as an underutilised historic environment, and a location of anti-social behaviour (see maroon dots). Participant AA noted, *"Nobody would ever dream of spending more than half an hour here now… Oh ya, Margam Park is a destination. People come to Margam park from far and wide. But you'd never get in a car and come here now. Why would you?"* (Interviewee AA, Port Talbot, April 6th, 2018). The collection of maroon dots referenced on the map could suggest the park has resulted in negative externalities related to anti-social behaviour.

Participant AA felt there was a lack of public space due to limited land availability (see pink dot). The geographic location of Port Talbot was viewed as a challenge for future regeneration opportunities; with the sea and the mountains bordering the town. Participant AA argued projects which have the potential to include green space, such as the Glan Afan school site, often focus on prioritising housing over public space provision (see maroon and yellow dots). During the interview they stated,

> *"When some people look at Burrows Yard they don't think 'oh, there's an opportunity to do something really nice and green and create public space, they just don't'. They think 'how much development, can we get it developed, can we sell it, can we put housing on there' … public space it at the bottom of their list"* (Interviewee AA, Port Talbot, April 6, 2018).

The interest level in developing public space on underutilised sites sparked a conversation about the imbalance of development in favour of schemes which generate quick money. Public perception of development priorities showcases housing and growth as a dominant focus for Port Talbot, with minimal attention given to public space development. Existing literature supports this approach, as regeneration policy often pushes for increased investment to attract firms and individuals over increasing existing public facilities for residents (Tallon, 2010:163).

When potential sites become available, such as Burrows Yard, the public displays characteristics of NIMBYism (Not In My Backyard) (see maroon dots) because of the potential for anti-social behaviour. The participant shared, *"they'd say, oh well you know its just another place for people to hang out, it will just attract the wrong sort, we'll get anti-social behaviour" (Interviewee AA Port Talbot, April 6th, 2018).* The underutilisation of Memorial Park has created a negative perception of public spaces as an area which facilitates anti-social behaviour. While Memorial Park may attract anti-social behaviour, residents have assumed other public places will attract the same activity, influencing their perception and perhaps level of advocacy for additional public spaces.

When asked about sense of place, Participant AA felt it was something that would distinguish a space from anywhere else (see orange dots). They felt they knew they were in Tiabach because of the smell of sulphur and the pollution associated from the close proximity to the steelworks. In the 50's and 60's they recalled,

> *"… it was like a tropical rainforest… it was covered in a permanent smog, an orange and dusty… it was a filthy place, at least then the Memorial Park offered refuge if you like, for people to come somewhere they weren't looking directly at industry or people's houses" (Interviewee AA, Port Talbot, April 6th, 2018).*

The smell associated with the location connected the participant to their time spent at the park, transforming their experience. This process confirms the argument by Tuan (1977) which claimed spaces could be experienced through one's senses (p.6). The experience of Memorial park changed the space into a place of attached value and meaning for the participant.

5.8 Walking Interview BB: Port Talbot Town Centre
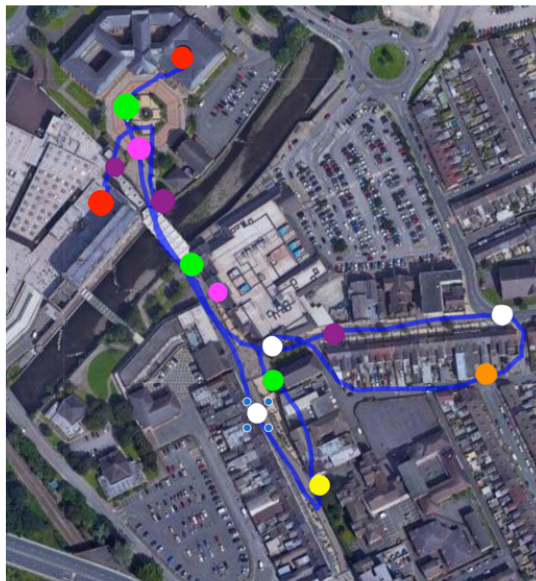
Legend

	Start and End of Walk
	Discussion of Favourite Spaces
	Discussion of Benefits and Need of Public Space
	Critiques to Public Space
	Personal History & Personal Memories
	Sense of Place Comments
	Suggestions for further Regeneration
	Town History Comments

Figure 7: Walking Route 2

During the walk, participant BB spoke about their favourite spaces in Port Talbot and made a connection between the mood they felt from a specific place (see green dots). They spoke about the Seafront and the Afan Valley as two areas which were vibrant, busy with people, and could brighten up one's day just from looking at the scenery. In contrast, they also referenced the town centre as a depressing space (see maroon dots). Participant BB commented, *"You keep chucking money into the town centre constantly, its like chucking money into a black hole, People don't come here…" (Interviewee BB, Port Talbot, April 12th, 2018).* The perspective of the town centre parallels the concept of *placelessness* developed by Relph (1976). The Town centre has been portrayed as a space devoid of character, footfall and significance. While it has not been subject to recent regeneration, the negative perception of the space suggests individuals have an inauthentic experience which should be remembered for future regeneration schemes (Jones & Evans, 2012:2319).

When asked about sense of place, the participant felt it was any space which elicited a feeling of a "safe haven". This interpretation aligns with partial comments made by Relph (1976) which argued spaces which provide a feeling of security for people are spaces which should be experienced, created and maintained (p.6). The individual did not feel a particular connection to one space over another, however referenced the seafront and Margam Park as high quality spaces they enjoyed (see orange dot). The sense of place for this individual and popular public spaces suggests a connection between the quality of a space and the capacity of the place to elicit sense of place for individuals.

As the walk progressed, it was evident the interview with Participant BB was different from other interviews. The dialogue adopted an objective rather than personal approach, despite the casual nature of the walking interview. Comments related to the history of the town were shared (see white dots), however they did not share personal memories during the walk, evidenced by the

lack of blue dots. This walk was the only walking interview which did not stimulate dialogue related to personal stories or memories.

5.9 Walking Interview CC, Aberavon Seafront

Legend

(red)	Start and End of Walk
(green)	Discussion of Favourite Spaces
(magenta)	Discussion of Benefits and Need of Public Space
(dark red)	Critiques to Public Space
(cyan)	Personal History & Personal Memories
(orange)	Sense of Place Comments
(yellow)	Suggestions for further Regeneration
(white)	Town History

Figure 8: Walking Route 3

The walk along Aberavon Seafront emphasised many stories from the participant's childhood and the strong sense of place they felt towards the seafront (see blue and orange dots). When asked about areas for future regeneration, the participant referenced a historic bridge, recently closed which served as a key connection for individuals to walk or cycle between the seafront and the town centre. Participant CC argued the difficulty in justifying the regeneration of the bridge because it is hard to measure the value and quantify the investment (see cluster blue, yellow and orange dots). They stated,

 "… *and that's where you struggle because you can't really say it facilitates a lot of the outcomes that people are looking for, perhaps on the well-being grounds maybe… it's a looser thing to put value on. I find it very difficult to convince people that it's important*" (Interviewee CC, Port Talbot, April 12th, 2018).

Justifying public space development requires measurable outputs, not always available or easy to measure. The struggle stems from the policy requirement of outlining economic outputs such as increased number of businesses or increasing employment; measurements which generate hard indicators and tick boxes (Tallon, 2010; Welsh Government, 2013; Clapham, 2014). Additionally, Raworth (2012) comments on the difficulty associated with quantifying environmental and social benefits that do not align with traditional economic indicators (p.6). Environmental and social benefits can be subjective and therefore not generalisable to standardised measurements. The participant displayed strong passion for the bridge and communicated a positive the atmosphere created at the seafront with little reference to negative aspects about public space (see dark purple dots).

Public space literature highlights various benefits, of which participant CC elaborated on several of their favourite activities. Eating along the promenade, reading a newspaper while parked in their car, and cycling along the cycle route were activities they referenced (see pink dots). The influence of the seafront for this participant confirms Sagnar's (2007) emphasis on the significance of public spaces to create diverse opportunities to experience activities and events (p.10). Participant CC spoke about the sense of well-being, childhood memories and the smell from Franco's chip shop as memorable events experienced at the seafront. Over time, they felt their experience had not changed, despite the regeneration along the seafront. (see blue and orange dots). They stated, *"You've still got the seagulls circling overhead, you've still go that smell of fish and chips, you've still got people sitting on the wall eating them, so all of that is still there"* *(Interviewee CC, Port Talbot, April 12th, 2018).* For this individual, the seafront presented many opportunities to enjoy the environment and it remains a powerful public space in their life.

5.10 Walking Interview DD, Port Talbot Town Centre
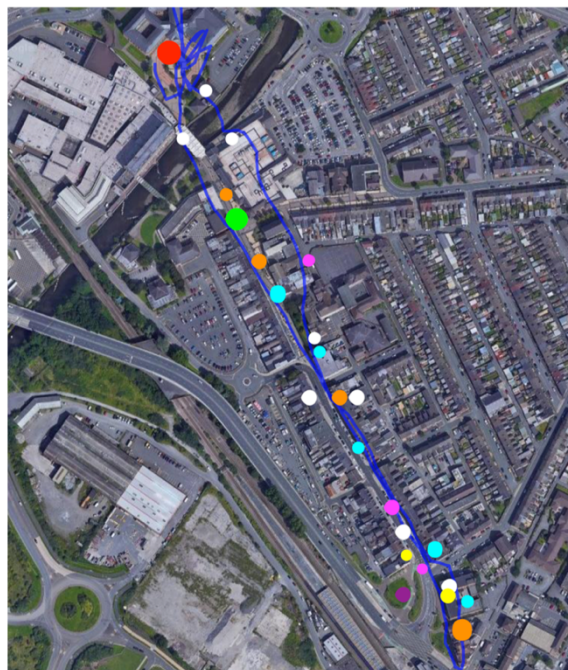
Legend

(red)	Start and End of Walk
(green)	Discussion of Favourite Spaces
(magenta)	Discussion of Benefits and Need of Public Space
(dark red)	Critiques to Public Space
(cyan)	Personal History & Personal Memories
(orange)	Sense of Place Comments
(yellow)	Suggestions for further Regeneration
(white)	Town History Comments

Figure 9: Walking Route 4

The second town centre interview established a strong relationship between the history of the town and the participant's personal memories (see white and blue dots). They referenced Margam Abbey, the coal pits in the Afan Valley, and also a Hotel where they had their Bachelor party. Personal celebrations and historic references confirmed the multi-functional purpose of public spaces to hold memories and meaning for individuals, referenced by the multiple blue and white dots (Ujang & Zakariya, 2015:711).

When speaking about sense of place, the participant felt the people contributed to their perspective on sense of place. They stated, "It's a sense of place just being here, just living here. I find them the most friendly, the most affable people you will ever meet" (Interviewee DD, Port Talbot, April 16th, 2018). During the walk, the participant stopped several times to speak to individuals and noted how the small town

atmosphere allows for personal connections and stronger relationships (see orange dots) which were referenced along the main strip of Station road.

When asked about public spaces in general, participant DD referenced their favourite public spaces as Margam Park, the old Abbey itself and the Afan Valley where they spent time as a child playing football (see green dot). They referenced the quality of public space as good, however noted the town centre lacked public space due to a poor layout (see pink and maroon dots). In contrast, they felt the previous regeneration scheme, *Vibrant and Viable Places* had a positive impact on Port Talbot. Participant DD argued the Green Park development increased connectivity between the town centre and the Aberavon seafront, and created a positive atmosphere for individuals living in Green Park.

The interviewee had a positive perception of public space and felt that "you can never get enough public space for recreation". They referenced their own childhood experience noting, *"… things have changed today, children have to be entertained, they can't entertain themselves" (Interviewee DD, Port Talbot, April16 [th], 2018).* The shift away from public space as a primary source of entertainment has been influenced by the increasing demand of technology to draw children and teens to indoor activities (Lieberg, 1995: 720). Despite this shift, participant DD strongly felt public spaces provided the required environment to facilitate outdoor play and should be viewed as useful infrastructure.

5.11 Walking Interview EE, Port Talbot Town Centre
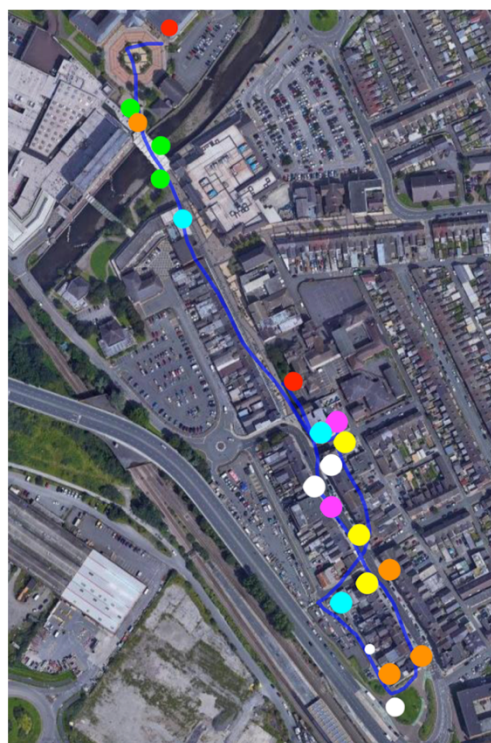
Legend

Colour	Description
Red	Start and End of Walk
Green	Discussion of Favourite Spaces
Magenta	Discussion of Benefits and Need of Public Space
Dark Red	Critiques to Public Space
Cyan	Personal History & Personal Memories
Orange	Sense of Place Comments
Yellow	Suggestions for further Regeneration
White	Town History

Figure 10: Walking Route 5

The participant established a strong connection between sense of place and history, referencing Margam Park and the old Abbey (see orange and white dots). Participant EE referenced their experience along Station road and stated, *"I think it's about looking back as well, whenever I walk down here, there used to be an Italian café here... the one thing I always smell was the coffee" (Interviewee EE, Port Talbot, April 16th, 2018).* In contrast, the transport hub also elicited sense of place because it made the individual feel the space was safe and comforting. Their experience of that particular environment was influenced by their personal experience of the space, aligning with Tuan's (1977) argument; where environments should emphasise the individuals experience over the physical space itself (p.11). Participant EE's sensory experience was connected to the café shop and transformed Lower Station road, combining the distinct memory of the café to their attachment of the space (Tuan, 1977:6).

The participant spoke about the benefits of public space and felt generationally there had been a shift away from informal play to the indoor play options offered by technology. They argued that,

> *"It should be healthier for people but you have a culture difficulty...I grew up in a different era from children now, they've got computers, their ipads, Xboxes... my mother would throw me out the door and right get out and play and we'd explore everywhere. They don't do it these days" (Interviewee EE, Port Talbot, April 16th,2018).*

Participant EE made a similar comment to participant DD. He compared his childhood experience of finding a bathtub on the mountainside and sliding down in it, to children today who are fixated on the technology of computers, ipads etc. (see blue dots). For this participant, outdoor play required imagination and spending time outdoors, compared to the sedentary form of entertainment given by technology.

Chapter 6.0 Discussion

The following chapter will examine key social processes related to the relationship between sense of place, public space and urban regeneration. Recognising the *social constructionism* approach, this study aims to explore the connection between sense of place and public space and what that relationship means for urban regeneration. Limited research exists on the process of public space allocation, specifically the capacity of planning to connect sense of place and public space in urban regeneration schemes. Therefore, findings from this study can support new approaches to prioritising public space development in regeneration initiatives. This study accepts Crotty's (1998) claim, that people "may construct meaning in different ways", (p.9) and aims to examine the data through an *interpretivist* approach; acknowledging multiple perceptions of reality from which participants view public space and sense of place (Hennick et al., 2011:15). Each theme discussed was selected based on empirical evidence to provide insight into public space land allocation, informing how urban regeneration approaches and polices can be improved.

In chapter 3, the methodology presented a 'Research Strategy Roadmap' (see Figure 4) which outlined the research objectives and subsequent elements required to answer the research aim of this study. After collecting empirical data, the initial diagram was re-visited to incorporate new information collected from practitioner and walking interviews. The new figure below uncovers initial answers to research questions, which will serve as a template for this discussion chapter.
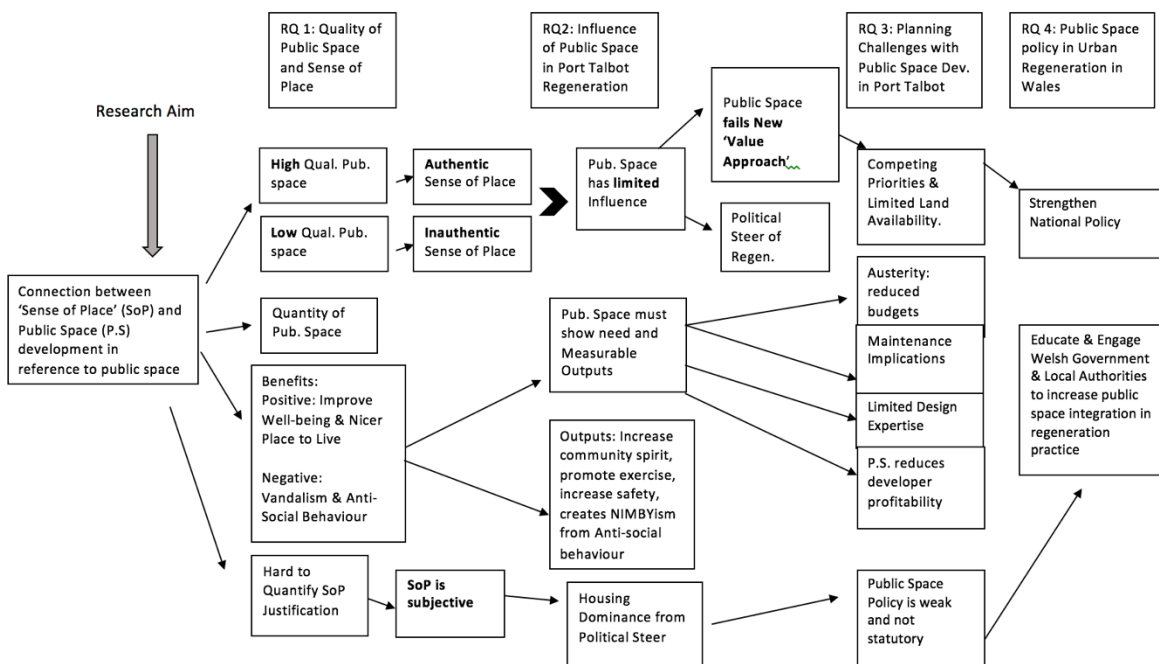

Figure 11: Empirical Evidence Summary Framework

This chapter will draw on existing knowledge from Relph (1976) and Tuan (1977) and empirical evidence to discuss the relationship between sense of place and public space. This study used the inductive coding process to establish themes and categories to better understand the driving forces impacting public space development and sense of place in Port Talbot. Several categories were established, however only the categories essential to addressing the overall research questions will be discussed. Categories such as: *politics* reference the drivers of urban regeneration discussed in the literature review, *value* addresses the social context of public spaces and *finances* reference planning related issues uncovered during data collection. Other challenges such as limited land availability or viability for developers has been left out of this discussion chapter to allow for a robust and streamlined discussion of the most interesting findings. Through selected categories, this chapter will present and reflect on the gap between existing literature and empirical evidence from this study. Critical academic and personal reflection will discuss the implications of the study's findings in relation to Welsh and UK regeneration approaches.

6.1 Sense of place & Public Space

Existing literature acknowledges the individual perspective on sense of place, reinforcing the concept as a powerful tool which influences the experience of each individual (Relph, 1976; Tuan, 1977). Empirical evidence confirmed the individual perspective on sense of place, as walking interviewees defined sense of place differently. While one participant referenced personal attachments to public spaces, another defined it as *"your relationship to the environment"*, further referencing the Seafront as central to their memories (Interviewee CC, Port Talbot, April 12th, 2018). Participants definitions and explanations on sense of place embody what Relph (1976) refers to as an 'authentic' experience of place (Jones & Evans, 2012: 2319). Another participant described the town centre as depressing and one dimensional, emphasising Relphs (1976) concept of 'placelessness', claiming the space lacked meaning and quality (Jones & Evans, 2012:2319). Walking interview participants confirmed the clear influence between public spaces and sense of place. Public spaces stimulate meaning and sit at the centre of valuable experiences for individuals; emphasising the positive sense of place and clear place attachment. At the same time, public spaces can also instil a 'placeless' experience, where built form is devoid of character and value.

Other empirical evidence confirmed the influence of sensory experience on an individuals' sense of place. One participant connected their sense of place to the smell of sulphur from the steelworks, and another to the smell of coffee from a café in the town centre. Tuan (1977) emphasised the power of senses to transform a place into a space with attached value and

meaning (p.6). The smell of sulphur and orange mist in the Park contributed to one participant's experience of the space, fostering strong personal attachments. They stated, "*it has a sense of place for me, but those are mostly memories of what it was like*" (Interviewee AA, Port Talbot, April 6th, 2018). The strong connection participants made between their senses and their individual experience verifies the relationship between 'sensory technique' and sense of place, as referenced in the toolkit from the Wales Tourist Board (2005). The toolkit frames sense of place through an economic lens, encouraging economic profitability instead of viewing sense of place from a social or well-being perspective. The difference in approach suggests different values and perceptions between policy makers and inhabitants, further validating the need for this study and conducting research which identifies these gaps in practice.

When analysing the quantity of public space, little data was gathered, with participants providing simple responses, limiting depth of analysis. During practitioner interviews, one planner noted the quality of public space was internally assessed on a quantitative basis only; analysing the number and type of public spaces within the community (Interviewee E, Port Talbot, April 6th, 2018). Therefore, this study interprets the quality of public space according to Relphs (1976) authenticity argument. Places which invoke a strong sense of place for individuals provide an authentic experience, compared to spaces which provide a weak, or inauthentic experience. For example, the seafront symbolised a higher quality space because of the strong positive attachment it created for participant CC, compared to the negative or inauthentic experience of the town centre for participant BB. Therefore, this study determined quality of public space had a stronger effect on the individual sense of place over the quantity of public spaces. Existing research reinforces the need for public spaces to be well-designed, stressing the power of public spaces to promote sense of place and encourage public interaction (Urban Task Force, 2005: 5). Secondary documents support walking interview data, however practitioner evidence shows little effort to assess the benefits of public space or the relationship between public space and sense of place. The Council's quantitative approach neglects the individual experience and suggests practitioners care more about 'the bottom line' than quality of life.

6.2 Politics

In Port Talbot land use decisions have been heavily influenced by the Welsh Government political agenda. Both practitioners and walking interview participants highlighted the steer to promote projects which contribute to meeting the existing housing target over other policy objectives, therefore influencing which forms of development take precedence over others. As one Welsh Government official stated, "*a lot of our money is focussed on social housing and affordable housing… a lot of the money we've got and have had in the past few years has been very much*

trying to push that agenda" (Interviewee D, Port Talbot, April 6th, 2018). One walking interviewee emphasised the missed opportunity to include green space in the Glan Afan school site, a VVP project from the last regeneration framework. The interviewee noted, "*we had a chance to create some green space in the town but we just… lets get as much housing in there as we can*" (Interviewee AA, Port Talbot, April 6th, 2018). The political intervention reinforced a disproportionate amount of regeneration funding targeted at housing, fuelling economic growth, and as Deas (2013) argues, viewing socio-spatial concerns as an after thought (p.78). The housing agenda emphasises Cowells (2013) 'weak sustainability' principle whereby the economic focus dominates over social or environmental regeneration. This approach further confirmed the critique of Lombardi et al. (2011), emphasising Port Talbot has focussed on achieving its own housing targets and therefore overlooked social and environmental projects (p.274). From the researcher's perspective, walking participants and practitioners acknowledged the housing focus, however rarely advocated for public space or higher quality regeneration. Therefore, one might question if there was some compliancy within the Council, to merely accept regeneration funding as it comes, instead of pushing for the best quality possible.

Policy agendas are often focussed on remaining or becoming economically competitive. As a result, agendas cater towards economic over social or environmental regeneration policies, and this case study is no different (Tallon, 2010:163). Empirical research uncovered the interesting finding, proving the dominant political impact in regeneration decision-making. The political steer has de-prioritised projects like public space which do not contribute to the current agenda and therefore draw funding away from achieving housing or other economic development objectives. The rationale and funding approval process for projects which do not align with central governments agenda are therefore difficult to justify. The economic approach to regeneration suggests that without a 'gross value added' (GVA), practitioners struggle to understand and encourage schemes which provide a social or public value. Without supporting a variety of schemes, the benefits will continue to be one dimensional and regeneration will fail to create spaces of value and of interest to future residents.

6.3 Value

Regeneration funding has adopted a 'value approach', demanding proposals demonstrate the largest value for money and overall community benefit. The 'value' approach strives to maximise the economic capacity of projects to provide job creation or increased traineeships; generating 'quick wins' for Local Authorities (Tallon, 2010; Welsh Government, 2013; Clapham, 2014). A Welsh Government official noted, "when you create social housing, it's very immediate. Your outputs are created as soon as the building is finished" (Interviewee D, Port Talbot, April 6th,

2018). Practitioners identified the difficulty in quantifying the immediate impact of public space and the value for money. When compared against economic schemes, public space projects were viewed as unable to 'tick enough boxes'. The inability of public space to demonstrate adequate value, has reduced its chance of being accepted as a stand alone project. One Welsh Government official noted,

> "*if you've got a housing scheme and you want to create a bit of green space with that, that can be put through as an overall scheme, but a stand alone, public realm schemes like we used to do is not the way we go*" (Interviewee D, Port Talbot, April 6th, 2018).

One could argue the practitioner approach to development and regeneration takes a fiscal stance, re-enforcing Harvey's (2000) argument which believes priority is given to needs of investors over needs of the community (cited in Raco, 2003: 1869). From the researcher's perspective, the consistent requirement to quantify the value of projects, may have altered practitioner's perspective to view regeneration in terms of a tangible number or pound amount. Projects which directly connect to a policy benchmark and can be measured quantitatively receive more attention and focus from practitioners than projects, like public space, which produce outputs and outcomes that measure value in a subjective manner. Documents like the Open Space Topic Paper (2014) or the LDP identified the lack of public space provision in Port Talbot, emphasising unmet community needs. Despite these documents, public space fails the 'value' test, arguably ranking politics above principles of planning and development. This study has outlined the social and indirect benefits derived from public spaces and sense of place, which is not accounted for within the current assessment by Port Talbot Council.

Empirical evidence on the value and benefits of public space were strongly positive. Participants referenced benefits such as: increased connectivity, beautification of spaces, increased safety, encouraging people outdoors and fostering well-being. Despite the benefits, justifying public space regeneration was difficult, with varying perspectives on 'what is valuable and what is not'. Practitioners and Welsh Government value economic benefits and residents value social and environmental benefits. Walking interviewee CC, noted the difficulty when justifying the regeneration of a closed historic bridge. He noted, "…*it's a looser thing to put value on. I find it very difficult to convince people that it's important*" (Interviewee CC, Port Talbot April 12th, 2018). The default measurement of space adopts a quantitative perspective, relying on hard measurements which do not include 'meaning', 'sense of place', or 'place attachment' (Raworth, 2012:6). The hard, economic approach analyses the regeneration of spaces according to its economic capacity over its social potential. The continuous quantitative evaluation by practitioners showcases different values within the field of regeneration. Practitioners and

Government officials appear to stress and value projects which further GVA, while inhabitants value projects which contribute to quality of life. While some of those projects will be economic based, public spaces address social and public benefits which enrich the lives of others, making places more exciting and liveable.

6.4 Finances

The current austerity regime in Wales and the UK has presented a challenge for the urban regeneration process. Welsh Government has operated on a short-term, 3-year funding window for the previous and new regeneration platform, the Targeted Regeneration Investment Program (TRI). The short-term nature of regeneration funding has directly impacted the regeneration strategy adopted by the Neath Port Talbot Council. One practitioner noted, "*I think we just target where the money is… when a piece of land comes up, were just doing it, there is no strategy*" (Interviewee B, Port Talbot, March 28th, 2018). Scholars like Carley (2000) argue the short-term approach only aims to achieve quick, measurable wins (p.281). While that argument may be true, the lack of strategic direction for regeneration has increasingly emphasised wider implications of what Fuller & West (2017) would describe as a 'pre-austerity' period (p.2098). A case study analysis on the regeneration of Birmingham, Fuller & West (2017) uncovered that, like Port Talbot, Birmingham practitioners targeted economic development schemes with limited direction (p.2098). The fiscal reality has pushed practitioners to function as 'market brokers' over civic leaders, promoting "increased networks over place and scalar governance" (Fuller & West, 2017:2099). While Birmingham and Port Talbot represent two different cities, reduced funding may have steered the regeneration approach of both authorities. Limited funding has resulted in short-term opportunities, and lacked long term investment and strategy Tallon (2010) argues is required to improve the physical, social and environmental landscape of Port Talbot (p.266). Empirical evidence highlighted the frustration of regeneration practitioners, and the high pressure placed on them to deliver programs within a tight timeline. From the researcher's perspective, one could argue practitioners are doing the best they can, given the fiscal reality. However, it appears the status quo is accepted, instead of challenged to advocate for proactive regeneration strategies and realistic timelines for project delivery.

On a micro scale, limited funding has impacted the skillset of practitioners at Neath Port Talbot Council. During data collection, a Council practitioner noted the lack of in house design expertise, specifically a landscape designer as unusual for a Local Authority. The skillset of a landscape designer can heavily influence the calibre of design work, therefore one might assume Councils would have one practitioner on staff. On a larger scale, the austerity regime has resulted in limitations over public funds, with limited resources influencing what Hall (2015) notes as

'architectural endurance' of practitioners (p.235). Hall (2015) argues the 2008 recession has influenced the ability of architects to commit to the sometimes extensive creative process required to design innovative public spaces (p.235). Public space projects require additional funding, leadership and organisation, compared to the reality of increased cuts to funding and expertise (ibid). This argument further supports the reality in Port Talbot, where poor design expertise has left public space development in disarray. Limited attention given to landscape design dismisses the study conducted by Arnberger & Eder (2012) which concluded a clear link between the value of green space and the connection with inhabitants (p.46). Walking interview participants consistently argued their favourite spaces in the community were public spaces. Both existing literature and empirical evidence highlight the importance of public spaces to contribute to quality of life. However, the fiscal reality does not consider these qualitative measurements, with Councils arguing funding has been the largest influence on design.

The lack of qualified staff also limits landscape advocacy within the Council, as landscape designers are trained to understand the benefits of high quality design, and create spaces which partner the natural and built environment. The lack of design expertise begs the question, does the Council see the need for a landscape designer? One practitioner noted, "*we did have one in the engineers but he retired 6 years ago and has never been replaced*" (Interviewee B, Port Talbot, March 28th, 2018). With limited budgets, public space is viewed as a financial burden. One planner noted, "*In days gone by Councils had the resources to take maintenance and management on board, but unfortunately this is no longer the case*" (Interviewee E, Port Talbot, April 6th, 2018). Without sufficient budgets, Councils are opting out of public space because they cannot afford to maintain additional space. Practitioners have viewed maintenance implications as a major barrier to regular public space development. From the researcher's perspective, without an in house landscape designer, public spaces may continue to be viewed as a financial burden instead of a social or public benefit. Practitioners who lack the knowledge of what constitutes good design, will continue to overlook the power of public space as a tool to balance regeneration and add character to communities. Public spaces can provide great benefits, but also pose several challenges. As a result, practitioners may not fully see past the obstacles and the long term benefits of promoting land use integration, and therefore do not advocate for increased provision.

6.5 Summary

Public space is a powerful platform where place attachment and sense of place develop. High quality spaces strengthen an individual's relationship with a space, fostering meaning and value out of the lived experience. In contrast, lower quality spaces embody a 'placeless' persona, devoid of character or meaning. Port Talbot has demonstrated a strong relationship between

sense of place and specific public spaces, showcasing the well-being and social benefits that enhance quality of life in Port Talbot. Despite empirical evidence, wider political and financial realities have encouraged land use decisions which promote the political agenda. Regeneration has been steered towards projects which contribute to political commitments, producing 'quick wins'. Regeneration strategies are encouraged to adopt the fiscal conservative approach, rejecting regeneration schemes which do not demonstrate GVA or quantifiable outputs. The development imbalance reinforces the de-prioritisation of public space, labelling public realm as a low priority and a financial maintenance burden. Empirical evidence highlighted public space lacks the immediate outputs and financial gain required to justify additional development in Port Talbot. Therefore, public space allocation in urban regeneration schemes has been weakened by the political and financial reality in Port Talbot and Wales. Difficult financial conditions have encouraged Local Authorities to direct regeneration towards economic investment over social or environmental integrity. The lack of design expertise has limited practitioner advocacy, as practitioners arguably accept the status quo and work within the austerity regime parameters. It is important to acknowledge the austerity regime has greatly influenced the capacity of Neath Port Talbot Council, however empirical research did not find any evidence to suggest practitioners are taking steps to improve the imbalance of regeneration. The imbalance goes beyond the micro scale of Port Talbot, to wider national drivers. The following chapter will suggest potential recommendations which can promote the re-alignment of regeneration, towards a more integrated approach.

Chapter 7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The final chapter will utilise empirical research to answer this study's research questions. This section will discuss wider implications of public space allocation and present recommendations which consider areas for future research in urban regeneration along with limitations of this research.

7.1 The relationship between quality of public space and 'sense of place' in Port Talbot

Existing literature conceptualises 'sense of place' as a specific location with attached meaning; a place where value is given to spaces (Crestwell, 2009:1). Empirical research uncovered the subjective relationship between sense of place and public space. When analysing the quality of public space, the study utilised the 'authentic/inauthentic' concept from Relph (1976) to examine strong or weak sense of place. Findings revealed popular, 'go-to' public spaces like the Aberavon Seafront or Margam Park embodied authenticity and meaning for inhabitants in Port Talbot. Such

spaces contributed to community spirit, encouraged people outdoors and increased well-being. In contrast, the Town Centre was viewed as devoid of character, held limited value and stimulated negative attitudes towards the space. The subjective and sensory experience of sense of place aligned with the basic premise of the Sense of Place toolkit designed by the Wales Tourist Board (2005). When compared to this study, the toolkit failed to target the individual or social platform, over improving business tourism. The difference in approach emphasises the gap between policy makers and inhabitants, whereby sense of place is valued differently. The influence of the Well-Being Act (2015) was prevalent in popular public spaces which clearly provided a well-being service for inhabitants and contributed to goals of *cohesiveness* and promoting *a Healthier Wales*. However, spaces like the Town Centre did not promote well-being, suggesting further regeneration is required to meet new legislative standards.

When analysing the quality and quantity of public space, the quality was discussed frequently, with limited evidence related to the quantity of public space. Therefore, this study concluded a direct relationship between high quality public spaces and strong sense of place, and subsequently, lower quality public space and weak sense of place. Limited information related to quantity of public space suggests high quality spaces have a stronger capacity to encourage sense of place and therefore design should be carefully considered during regeneration projects. Furthermore, identifying elements of sense of place that justify regeneration was challenging. What walking interviewees referenced as important, was not referenced by practitioners, highlighting the subjective value and varied perspective on public space benefits. The difference in values reiterates the personal perspective of public space, creating a weak basis for developing generalisations which would justify public space regeneration. Therefore, this research has highlighted the power of public space as an influential tool to contribute to sense of place and influence how people interact with the environment. The high quality of a park, or the diverse activities at the seafront influence how and where people choose to spend their time. Therefore, acknowledging the strong individual impact of public spaces can better account for the individual experience and should be factored into decision-making by the Council, beyond purely financial or political concerns of public space.

7.2 The influence of Public Space in Regeneration Schemes

In Port Talbot, public space, has played a minor role in the previous regeneration program, VVP. Regeneration schemes have included public space as a secondary use, with minimal new stand alone projects. Despite this, existing policy highlighted the need for increased public space provision in Port Talbot. The Open Space topic paper (2014) emphasised categories such as 'informal open space' and 'pitch sport' required additional provision (Neath Port Talbot County

Borough Council, 2014:21). Various participants referenced positive outputs of public space as exercise and increased safety, viewing public space as an escape from urban living (Bagwell et al., 2012:55). Walking interviewees regularly referenced the diverse activities available at Margam Park or the Seafront, confirming Sagnar's (2007) argument which believes public spaces are essential to civic life (p.10). Theoretically, Port Talbot requires additional public space provision, however practically, wider forces have dictated development and regeneration decisions.

Political promises by Welsh Government coupled with the fiscal reality in the UK has resulted in an active steer of regeneration efforts. The pervasive need to achieve the housing benchmark has encouraged a pro-housing attitude within the Neath Port Talbot Authority. The prioritisation of central government targets over other schemes highlights excessive central government control and suggests the power of politics over planning (Tallon, 2013:271). The austerity regime has shifted how regeneration funding is allocated. Projects which present the largest value for money, and demonstrate GVA are viewed as more desirable over others. When compared to economic development projects, public space schemes provide social or public value, difficult to label with a financial figure. The gap between what practitioners are proposing and promoting and what inhabitants value are two different measurements. Similarly, Roberts & Sykes (2000) argue the value of regeneration must not over-emphasise the contribution of directly measurable outputs, but also recognise quality of life that results from regeneration efforts, which is likely to represent the long-term value of a regeneration scheme (p.303).

Furthermore, limited resources have reduced adequate design expertise and limited the Councils' ability to pay for maintenance costs associated with public space. Despite the connection between sense of place and high quality public spaces; the political and financial influence outweighs the individual perspective associated with sense of place. Consequently, public space schemes do not 'tick enough boxes' according to wider political and financial implications, therefore they are de-prioritised within regeneration schemes. This approach confirms Cowells (2013) weak sustainability principle (p.2448), which long term may contribute to creating 'placeless' spaces, lacking sense of place and value for inhabitants. Over time, this approach may influence deteriorating quality of life in Port Talbot, requiring further regeneration and investment.

7.3 Planning challenges and public space development in Port Talbot

Aside from the financial and political challenges associated with regeneration, this study determined Port Talbot was also impacted by limited land availability and the viability of public space. The topography of Port Talbot has shaped development opportunities; as various land uses compete for space. With stiff competition, empirical evidence emphasised affordable

housing as a top priority. When compared against other needs, public space is viewed as optional rather than obligatory. The viability of public space was also referenced as an issue for developers as they tried to include public space provision through Section 106, a planning policy requirement. Several cases proved developments financially unfeasible to include public space; further contributing to the chronic lack of provision in Port Talbot. The regeneration approach of Port Talbot has not accounted for the vision of the Sustainable Development Commission (2003), with the current strategy unable to fulfil the definition of sustainable development from *the Bruntland Report* (1987). Despite political and financial drivers, a balanced regeneration approach is still required to achieve the social, economic and environmental components of successful regeneration.

The relationship between sense of place, public space allocation and regeneration have been discussed in relation to Port Talbot. Although sense of place was linked to public space, wider drivers have influenced public space allocation and regeneration efforts in Port Talbot. Empirical evidence stressed the disproportionate focus on housing and measurable regeneration projects, reiterating the economic focus over social or environmental regeneration (Tallon, 2010: 163) The power of high quality public spaces to elicit sense of place can further validate the need for increased public space allocation in regeneration projects in Port Talbot, from which this research can contribute to further analysis.

7.4 Recommendations

Through this study, empirical evidence has highlighted the gap between regeneration theory and practice. This study acknowledges the current political and financial reality, however presents recommendations that are realistic given the current development of the NDF and practical based on the results from this study. Recommendations focus on: increasing public space requirements through the NDF and increasing design expertise at Neath Port Talbot Council. The following macro and micro recommendations will work together to increase public space provision in Port Talbot, and encourage land use balance within Wales.

Currently the NDF is being drafted and put out for review. Empirical evidence noted the green infrastructure assessment will be a new assessment given legislative authority in the NDF. Therefore, the first recommendation aims to utilise the development of the green infrastructure assessment and add a mandatory public space standard as a new component to the legislation not currently presented by Welsh Government. The standard would place a funding requirement on regeneration programs, where LA's would be legislatively responsible to include public space provision in future regeneration proposals. The new standard can contribute to meeting goals

from the Well-being and Future Generations Act (2015), such as: *A Healthier Wales, A Wales of Cohesive Communities and A Resilient Wales* (Welsh Government, 2016 pp.7-23). Through increased provision, this recommendation can contribute to addressing national indicators of physical and mental health and helping boost ecosystems services to combat climate change (ibid). To address site viability concerns, the standard incorporates public space as either a primary or secondary use; such as the development of green space as part of an existing housing or transport scheme. This can reduce the potential for projects to be considered financially unviable, while encouraging increased public space provision in regeneration schemes. Giving legislative authority to public space can facilitate a more equitable regeneration strategy; encouraging practitioners to develop social and environmental regeneration schemes.

The second recommendation addresses the lack of local design expertise within Neath Port Talbot Council. The Council currently lacks a landscape designer, a qualified professional trained to design and integrate the natural environment with built form. The austerity regime has de-prioritised public spaces, further requiring other professionals to design public realm projects. It has come to the attention of the researcher through a volunteer experience at a Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) event; that the Design Commission for Wales (DCFW) has worked with Neath Port Talbot Council previously. DCFW offer a 'Design Review Service' for Local Authorities to receive expert multi-disciplinary advice which can improve internal practitioner knowledge and reinforce the importance of good design (DCWF.org, 2018). Port Talbot Council utilised that service and received advice on VVP projects like the Transport Hub and the Glan Afan School site (Design Commission for Wales, 2015). DCFW recommended Port Talbot Council involve a landscape designer to ensure public realm benefits were maximised through design before project delivery (Design Commission for Wales, 2015:3). Despite the current austerity regime, empirical evidence has demonstrated Port Talbot Council requires the expertise of a Landscape Designer. Therefore, this study suggests that the Council continue to work with DCFW when possible, and look to hire a Landscape Designer to provide consistent design advocacy, and deliver innovative and integrative public space design. Without equal representation, public space will continue to lack support during regeneration procurement and development. As the Egan Wheel (2004) highlights, "sustainable communities do not come about by chance- they are something we must work to create" (p.18). Therefore, practitioners, planners and officials from Neath Port Talbot Council must advocate and take action to re-balance regeneration efforts in spite of current political and financial challenges. Change requires action, commitment and time. This study has proposed recommendations which align with empirical evidence and seek to further strengthen the power of public space to enrich the culture, atmosphere and well-being for inhabitants in Port Talbot.

Through empirical research, the study determined a larger conflict as practitioners and policy makers valued public space differently compared to inhabitants. The different value systems have created a divide, favouring economic or financial consideration over social or well-being. While the Well-Being and Future Generations Act (2015) encourages a balanced approach to development, further collaboration and education is required for practitioners to widen their perspective and acknowledge the qualitative value beyond the quantitative measures of economic growth. This study recommends Port Talbot create a multi-disciplinary stakeholder team involving both practitioners and residents. This would give equal voice to all members, and encourage all stakeholders to share information and comment on regeneration proposals. Combining practitioners and residents can educate practitioners on the qualitative value of public spaces for residents. A stakeholder team may lengthen the regeneration process; however, it will widen the perspective of practitioners to see beyond political or financial constraints. The stakeholder team can encourage planners and practitioners to advocate for projects which are more than 'good enough to accept', and increase the quality of regeneration initiatives. Through better collaboration, Wales can work together to define 'place' within the Welsh context. Before the concept can be defined, practitioners require further education and collaboration on the qualitative benefits of sense of place and public spaces.

7.5 Limitations of the Research

This study experienced various limitations related to outreach capacity and resources. The study utilised community gatekeepers from Neath Port Talbot Council to connect with potential participants for face to face and walking interviews. The majority of interviewees worked for or were affiliated with the Council in some capacity. This may have created a research bias as participants may have communicated the corporate message over a personal and professional opinion. Regarding resources, the researcher was constricted by public transport to access spaces in and around Port Talbot. During walking interviews, routes had to be accessible via public transport to be included in the study. This may have disregarded spaces inaccessible to the researcher, but valuable to the overall study. Additionally, the case study approach to this research means it cannot be directly replicated in any other context. However, wider implications of this research may be possible in other case locations of similar characteristics.

7.6 Areas of Future Research

Proposed recommendations suggested institutional mechanisms to re-prioritise public space allocation in Port Talbot. Empirical research determined public spaces take time to produce measurable outputs. Therefore, further research could adopt a longitudinal study to analyse the

benefits of public space in communities that have recently experienced regeneration. Longitudinal studies could provide quantitative evidence necessary to justify additional public space projects in regeneration schemes. Additionally, Neath Port Talbot Council has measured projects through a strict quantitative approach. Further research could validate public space as a powerful tool to promote sense of place within communities like Port Talbot. Moreover, exploring "place-keeping" can be a useful follow-up measure after public space gains further priority in Port Talbot. Place-keeping encompasses long-term management of social, environmental and economic quality of space to ensure places are enjoyed by future generations (Dempsey & Burton, 2012:13). Further research on place-keeping could legitimise long-term use of public spaces and justify the development and maintenance required to provide the community service.

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Appendix A: Ethics Form

CARDIFF SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY AND PLANNING

Ethical Approval Form

Student Projects (Undergraduate & Taught Masters)

In the case of dissertations it is the responsibility of the student to complete the form, duly signed by their supervisor, and secure ethical approval prior to any fieldwork commencing. A copy of the form should be included with their final dissertation.

Title of Project: Exploring Sense of Place in Public Spaces: A case study of Port Talbot.

Name of Student(s): Vanessa Develter

Name of Supervisor/Module Leader: Dr Brian Webb

Degree Programme and Level: MSc European Spatial Planning and Environmental Policy- PLANET Europe Programme

Date: March 23rd, 2018

Recruitment Procedures:

		Yes	No	N/A
1	Does your project include children under 16 years of age?		√	
2	Does your project include people with learning or communication difficulties?		√	
3	Does your project include people in custody?		√	
4	Is your project likely to include people involved in illegal activities?		√	
5	Does project involve people belonging to a vulnerable group, other than those listed above?		√	
6	Does your project include people who are, or are likely to become your		√	

		Yes	No	N/A
	clients or clients of the department in which you work?			
7	Does your project include people for whom English / Welsh is not their first language?		√	

Consent Procedures:

		Yes	No	N/A
8	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	√		
9	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	√		
10	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?			√
11	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reasons?	√		
12	Will you give potential participants a significant period of time to consider participation?	√		

Possible Harm to Participants:

		Yes	No	N/A
13	Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort?		√	
14	Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing a detriment to their interests as a result of participation?		√	

If there are any risks to the participants you must explain in the box on page 4 how you intend to minimise these risks

Data Protection:

		Yes	No	N/A
15	Will any non-anonymised and/or personalised data be generated and/or stored?		√	
16	Will you have access to documents containing sensitive[1] data about living individuals? If "Yes" will you gain the consent of the individuals concerned?		√	

If there are any other potential ethical issues that you think the Committee should consider please explain them in the box on page 4. It is your obligation to bring to the attention of the Committee any ethical issues not covered on this form.

<u>Supervisor's declaration</u>

As the supervisor for this student project, I confirm that I believe that all research ethical issues have been dealt with in accordance with University policy and the research ethics guidelines of the relevant professional organisation.

Date 23 March 2018   Name Brian Webb   Signature

If any of the shaded boxes have been ticked the supervisor/module leader must explain in the box on page 4 of this form how the potential ethical issue will be handled

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[1] Sensitive data are *inter alia* data that relates to racial or ethnic origin, political opinions, religious beliefs, trade union membership, physical or mental health, sexual life, actual and alleged offences.
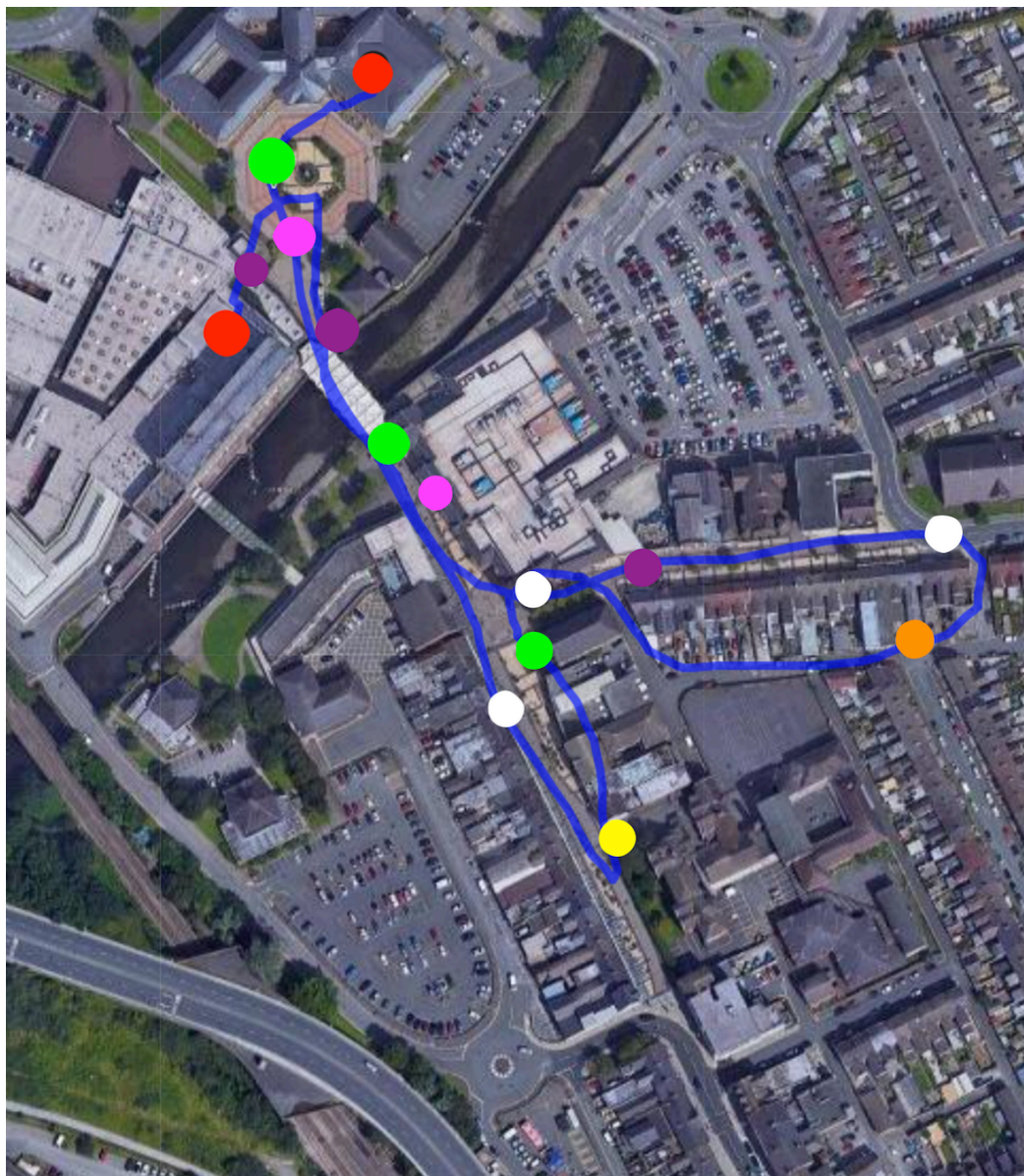
Appendix B: Walking Interview Map AA (1 & 2)

Legend

🟥	Start and End of Walk
🟩	Discussion of Favourite Spaces
🟪	Discussion of Benefits and Need of Public Space
🟥	Critiques to Public Space
🟦	Personal History & Personal Memories
🟧	Sense of Place Comments
🟨	Suggestions for further Regeneration
⬜	Town History Comments
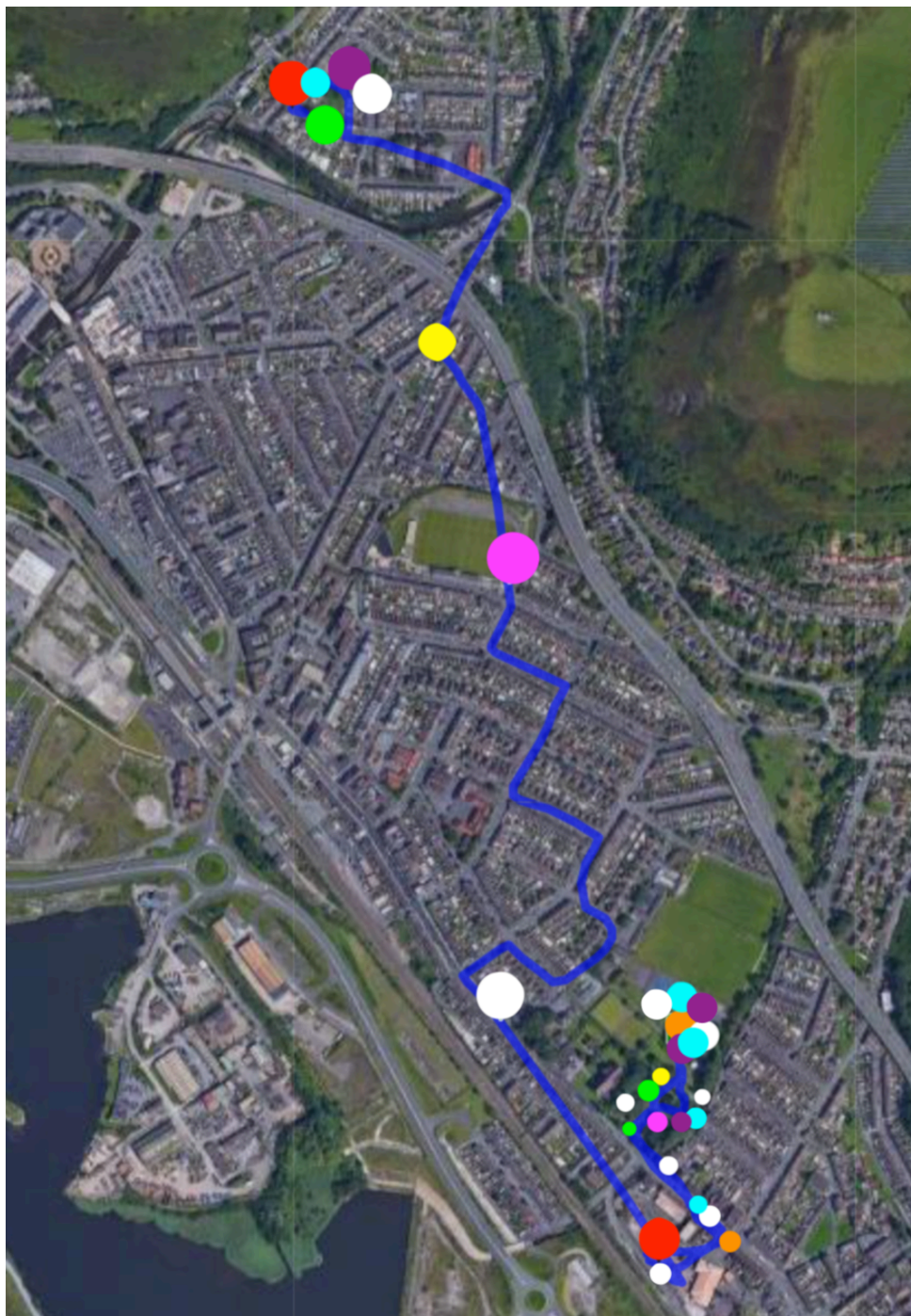
* Disclaimer: Only the first Map was walked according to the Methodology, however the participant did note things during the interview which were recorded and thematically coded which are represented in the full map above.

Appendix C: Walking Interview Map BB

Legend

🔴	Start and End of Walk
🟢	Discussion of Favourite Spaces
🟣	Discussion of Benefits and Need of Public Space
🟥	Critiques to Public Space
🟦	Personal History & Personal Memories
🟧	Sense of Place Comments
🟡	Suggestions for further Regeneration
⬜	Town History Comments

Appendix D: Walking Interview Map CC

Legend

🟥	Start and End of Walk
🟩	Discussion of Favourite Spaces
🟪	Discussion of Benefits and Need of Public Space
🟫	Critiques to Public Space
🟦	Personal History, Personal Memories
🟧	Sense of Place Comments
🟨	Suggestions for further Regeneration
⬜	Town History

Appendix E: Walking Interview Map DD
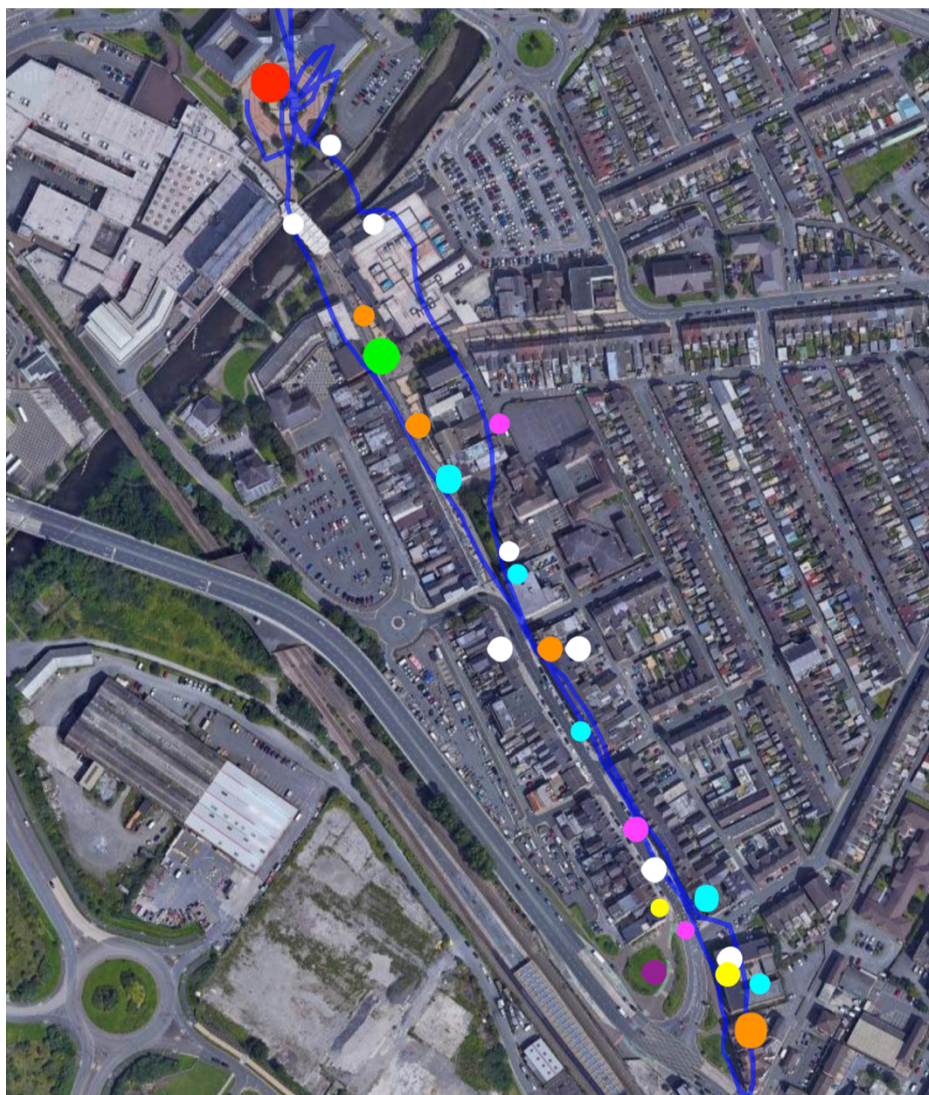
Legend

	Start and End of Walk
	Discussion of Favourite Spaces
	Discussion of Benefits and Need of Public Space
	Critiques to Public Space
	Personal History, Personal Memories
	Sense of Place Comments
	Suggestions for further Regeneration
	Town History Comments

Appendix F: Walking Interview Map EE
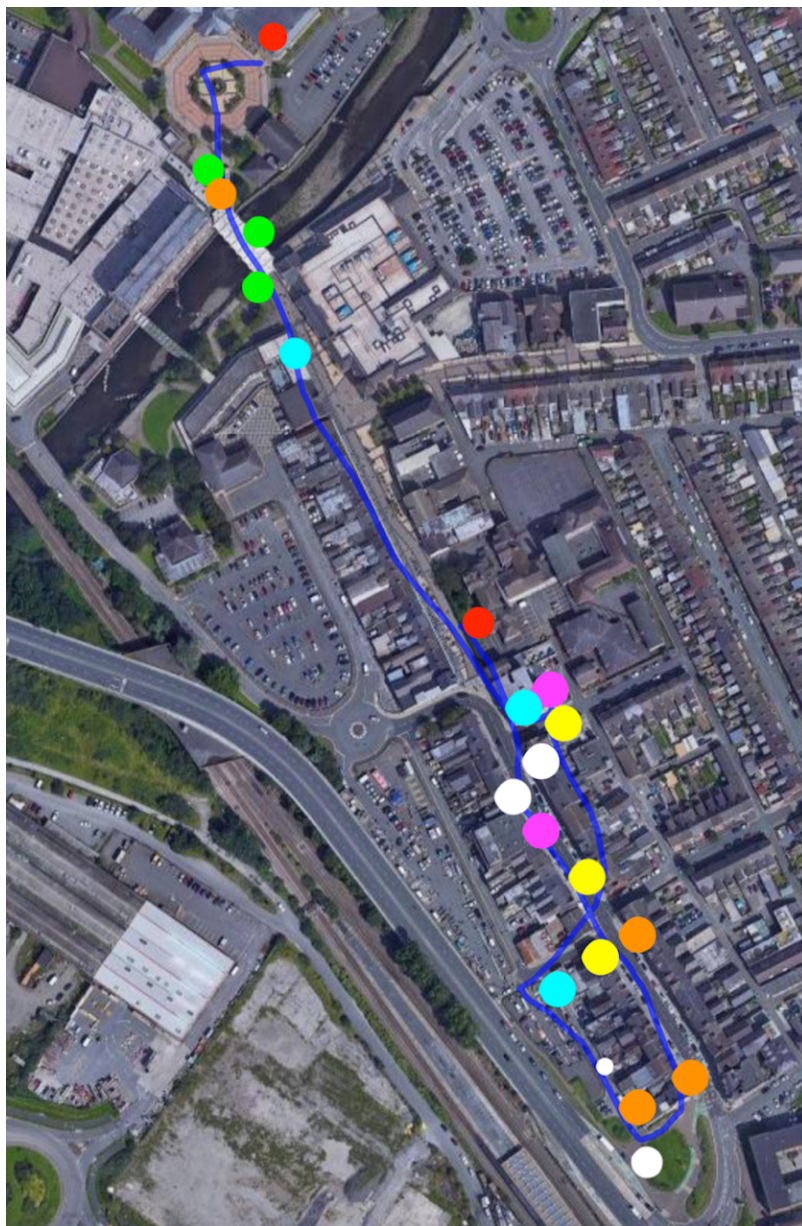
Legend

🟥	Start and End of Walk
🟩	Discussion of Favourite Spaces
🟪	Discussion of Benefits and Need of Public Space
🟥	Critiques to Public Space
🟦	Personal History & Personal Memories
🟧	Sense of Place Comments
🟨	Suggestions for further Regeneration
⬜	Town History

Appendix G: Participant Statistical Information

Type of Interview	Date	Location	Time	Interview Length	Participant Gender	Participant Age	Code Letter
Practitioner Interview- Regeneration Practitioner	March 28th, 2018	Port Talbot Council HQ	9am	25 minutes	Female	40-45	A
Practitioner Interview- Heritage and Environment Officer	March 28th, 2018	Port Talbot Council HQ	10am	60 minutes	Female	50-55	B
Practitioner Interview- Regeneration Practitioner	March 28th, 2018	Port Talbot Council HQ	11am	30 minutes	Male	40-45	C
Practitioner Interview- Welsh Government Official	April 6th, 2018	Port Talbot Council HQ	9 am	60 minutes	Female	55-60	D
Practitioner Interview- Planner	April 6th, 2018	Port Talbot Council HQ	11am	60 minutes	Male	40-55	E
Practitioner Interview- Welsh Local Gov. Association Planner	April 17th, 2018	Cardiff, Welsh Local Government Association	2pm	60 minutes	Male	50-60	F
Walking Interview- Previous Resident & Regeneration Manager	April 6th,2018	Port Talbot Memorial Park	12:30pm	53 minutes	Male	55-60	AA
Walking Interview- Ward Councillor & Resident	April 12th, 2018	Port Talbot Town Centre	11:30am	35 minutes	Female	50-60	BB
Walking Interview- Ward Councillor & Resident	April 12th, 2018	Aberavon Seafront	12:30am	40 minutes	Male	20-25	CC
Walking Interview- Mayor & Resident	April 16th,2018	Town Centre, Port Talbot	10:30am	45 minutes	Male	60-70	DD
Walking Interview- Resident	April 16th,2018	Town Centre, Port Talbot	11:30 am	40 minutes	Male	60-70	EE

Appendix H: Interview Guide for Practitioner Questions

Section 1:

Q 1: Can you briefly describe your position at the Council.

Q2: I understand that you have worked on the seafront regeneration and the VVP Program. Can you talk about the seafront regeneration program? What was involved and why did the project take place?

Q3: What benefits came from the seafront project?

Q4: In general, could Port Talbot benefit from more public space?

Q5: What forms of public space would engage residents with their community?
 (to communicate with each other & interact)

Q6: Are there challenges with allocating public space in Port Talbot? (LDP highlighted need for more open space provision)

Q 7: Are those challenges planning and development related? and would they be enough to prevent future public space development?

Section 2:

Q 8: What was your role in the VVP Program?

Q 9: The linkages project and the transport hub incorporated some public space. What are some impacts (positive or negative) of indirect public space that was created in VVP? Are there any impacts for future regeneration schemes?

Q 10: When developing a regeneration scheme/ proposal, are there specific sectors (transport, environment) that are viewed by the Council as more important over other areas? If yes, can you explain please.

Q 11: What evidence does the local authority have to provide to support project proposals? Does it rely on direct/ indirect benefits? Finances? etc.

Q12: What factors influenced Neath Port Talbot during project selection of VVP?

Q13: I noticed that Vibrant and Viable Places had a dominant economic and housing focus, are there any areas of the community which you think should have received funding but did not?

Q14: What role does policy play in project selection? Such as the LDP, or other guiding documents in Wales? (Future Generations Act (2015), Spatial Plan for Wales (2008) etc.)

Q15: Are there any specific planning/ development documents which have encouraged or hindered public space allocation in Wales?

Q 16: What policy recommendations could encourage more public space in regeneration schemes?

Q 17: What actors would be responsible for encouraging this change to policy?

Section 3: Best for a Planner in NPT

Q 18: If so, what is the power of those guidance documents? (mandatory versus guiding).

Q 19: How influential is the LDP or other planning policy in developing regeneration proposals?

Section 4: Best for a Planner in NPT

Q 20: There has been various attempts at regeneration policy in the UK, however most of the programs have been time dependent, just like VVP. What influence will the new National Development Framework have on regeneration, if at all?

Q 21: Is there anything else you think I should add?

Q 22: Is there anyone else you think I should speak to?

Appendix I: Interview Guide for Walking Interviews

1. What are some of your favorite places in Port Talbot?

2. Why are those places your favorite? What details about them do you like?

3. What public spaces do you enjoy visiting, and when would you go there? (weekday, weekend, evening, daytime)

4. Do you think there is enough public space in Port Talbot?

5. What areas of Port Talbot could benefit from more public space? (example, in the city centre, parks in between housing complexes)

6. What are some good impacts from increasing public space? What are some negative things?

7. How would you describe 'sense of place'?

I would describe it as a space that has meaning or value for me. It would also be an area that I could identify in a community and use that place to tell you stories or memories. Sometimes 'sense of place' is associated with senses, like smells or specific landmarks like buildings or shops that make them enjoy the space more.

8. Are there places in Port Talbot that have 'sense of place' for you? What is it about the space that creates 'SoP' for you?

9. Some research believes that public spaces are important for our health and providing the opportunity to create a sense of community. Do you agree or disagree with this argument, and why?

10. There has been a recent regeneration scheme in Port Talbot, called VVP. What do you know about the program?

11. What areas of Port Talbot would you like to see regenerated?

12. From the VVP Program, minimal public space was created. Indirect space was created through the linkages project connecting the transport hub to the industrial park, or the space in front of the transport hub. What is your reaction to this?

Q 13: Is there anything else you think I should add?