

theFutureoftheCity

newsletter



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NEWS

The price of congestion

In an attempt to solve the problem of traffic congestion, the British government has drawn up a plan whereby drivers will have to pay for the use of their vehicle based on the number of kilometres driven and as well, the areas they have travelled through, nationwide, including country areas. The United Kingdom would be sub-divided into zones and the amount paid would be calculated using a system of satellite, CCTV and computer coverage. To cover one kilometre would cost about 1.22 euros along an urban centre road and about 1.8 eurocents for a rural road. The government's proposal has been strongly criticised with 1.8 million people signing a petition demanding that the government not go ahead with the proposed plan as it would mean a hefty increase in taxes and a further threat to individual privacy. The government's position on the issue is becoming increasingly confused.

References:

- * Daily Telegraph articles
[2 March 2007](#) | [3 March 2007](#) | [5 March 2007](#)
- * [Web page on congestion and road pricing from the UK Department for Transport](#)

Large European Urban Projects – Liverpool Waters

The Liverpool waterfront will undergo a transformation into a tourist centre of international standards. The project, Liverpool Waters, promoted by Peel Holdings, has planned the construction of accommodation for 23,000, four hotels, shops, restaurants, a new terminal for cruise ships and a new marina, covering an area of 60 hectares. The total cost of the project is 5.5 billion pounds, approximately 8 billion euros. As well, fifty or so buildings, many rising to 50 floors, are planned, which would dramatically change the city skyline. The area will be connected to the city centre and airport by a monorail. The Liverpool Waters project has come under fire, critics claiming it is based purely on speculation, as it would take over part of the area that, in 2004, was declared a World Heritage site, and as well, it is held to be unfeasible, given the long period of time forecasted for its completion – several decades.

References:

- * [Web page of Peel Group on Liverpool Waters project](#)
- * [bdonline article on Liverpool Waters project](#)
- * [Web page of The Merseyside Partnership on Liverpool Waters project](#)

Large European Urban Projects - Hamburg HafenCity

HafenCity – The City Port of Hamburg is an important urban project presently underway in a docks area situated along the Elba River, near the centre of the city. It is forecasted to be completed by 2023-2025 with accommodation for 12,000, as well as offices, shops, culture and arts centres, a new science centre and university campus. The Town Council, owner of most of the area, will invest about 1.3 billion euros for infrastructure. The remainder of the capital will originate from private investment. The aspiration of HafenCity is to become a new city centre, focusing on functional use, as well as a quality public space area. For this reason, the planners have made a decidedly counter-trend choice in not including shopping malls in the project, but, instead, only street-front shops.

References:

- * [Article from Der Spiegel on HafenCity](#)
- * [HafenCity website](#)

EVENTS

Future of the City – Impacts, Indicators, Implementations

51st IFHP World Congress
23-26 September 2007 – Copenhagen, Denmark
<http://www.ifhp2007copenhagen.dk/>

Urban Dialogues - Co-productive ways to relate visioning and strategic urban projects

43rd ISoCaRP International Planning Congress
19-23 September 2007 – Antwerp, Belgium
<http://www.isocarp.org/pub/events/congress/2007/>

COMMENTS

Retailtainment and beyond: "asteroids" in Roman suburbs

By Ilaria Scarso

Several international chains have recently been dotting Roman suburbs with new giant magnets - mainly in retail and leisure sectors - locating them near the main road arteries - big boxes, factory outlets, multiplexes, power centres and self-contained malls with metropolitan or even regional catchment areas but with no morphological interaction with the surrounding urban fabric and lacking in a sense of identity. The result is an increasing resemblance to other European or North American cities in terms of aseptic morphology, introversion and placelessness.

In addition, this collision of magnets appears to be strongly related to the polycentric strategy of the Master Plan, where, at times, global magnets are overlapped, entangled, coincident or contiguous with the planned centralities. Whether this is a conscious choice or not, it is hard to say. I'm sure promoters are fully aware of their economic interests and advantages, but I wonder if the municipality has the same knowledge regarding where these magnets are drawing the city to in the future. The increase in the use of the car and in energy consumption, the continual waste of our natural resources, the changes in the quality of the environment, the difficulties of local economies, segregation and the privatization of space are only but a few of the effects of this magnetization. Issues that the municipality cannot afford to ignore in a short-term scenario of unrestrained proliferation. Even in a long-term perspective, magnets are far from the concept of sustainability. Sooner or later, a trend inversion will have to take place and Rome could be facing *greyfield* conditions, similar to those already occurring in other countries, where a great number of ghostboxes need to be dismantled or reused.

Or, on the other hand, in a more positive vision of a future *branching* city, if the magnets were conceived with *de-malled* fabric layouts instead of sprawling out from the local settlements, they could play the role of "new urban hubs", as land structuring cores, attracting mixed use development and providing different transport mode interconnections, as well as the *public realm*, they are now missing.

Whatever the scenario, short or long-term, sustainability has to be looked at now to achieve a magnetization governance. In order to decrease environmental, economic and social impacts, strategies should be carried out leading to mitigation, flexibility and core generation with the municipality returning to setting the rules for the negotiation of land transformation processes, instead of letting superstores play the lead role. Today's taxation benefits cannot no longer justify an unsustainable future.

Ilaria Scarso is a PhD student in Urban Planning at the University of Rome Sapienza