

INNER CITY GENTRIFICATION: EAST PERTH. HAS IT PROVED SUSTAINABLE?

By

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Purpose of this workshop is:

- **Part 1 to give a very brief over view of a working definition of sustainability**
- **Part 2 to review a gentrification project** since its inception in 1992 looking at the historical perspective, and measured against the concept of sustainability.
- **Part 3 to examine briefly some fieldwork ideas and activities.**

Throughout there are links to the National Curriculum predominately Year 10.

Part 1 DEFINITION

To begin with gentrification of Inner City areas has been going on for the last 10 years or more in cities around the world, and it is the same for Perth. Place this process alongside ideas of sustainability and some interesting features and questions emerge. The Inner City area of East Perth was gentrified on the principles of sustainability so this is the opportunity to see if it has fulfilled its aims: something that is lacking in the analysis of sustainability. We build on these principles of sustainability but rarely return, to see and evaluate their success.

There is no one single definition of sustainable. The definition tends to have its own life and change over time.

A good starting point is this one taken from a paper by WM Adams Professor of Conservation and Development Dept of Geography University of Cambridge that sees sustainable having not the 3 pillars –economic growth, environmental protection and social progress, but the integration, via overlapping circles of economic, social and environmental perspectives. This image is from Wikipedia as you well know.

Another one which I liked because of the visual element (Slide Foot) were created by the Australian Schools Initiative WA or AuSSI-WA , which is a whole school planning framework that promotes and supports the use of Sustainability as a key concept for teaching, learning and school organization. What I like is the 2 aspects of ecology and social the first including water,

energy, transport, bio diversity, purchasing and waste, and the hand slide containing indigenous culture, cultural and social diversity, community partnerships, economics/built environment, student welfare. I think images are very powerful for our students.

From ACARA, the body responsible for the Australian National curriculum, "Revised Draft Foundation to Year 12 Australian Curriculum: for Geography" August 2012 are the following definitions and uses of sustainability:-not quite as clear as you might hope!

- Firstly the 7 main concepts for Geographical understanding (slide 1.3/1.4) states that reviewing decisions made in the past are in themselves being sustainable, which is exactly what we are aiming to do in this case study.
- Secondly it mentions the environmental sustainability as maintaining or restoring the environment
- Thirdly it mentions stewardship (an ethics based approach) about looking after the environment.

It is interesting to note that the environment has figured strongly so far.

- In the Cross Curricular priorities sustainable is given wider scope with the mention of environments, economies and societies, and taking action for more sustainable futures.
- In finally looking at the Year 10 what does sustainability mean? as a key inquiry question...yes all very well and good but under knowledge and understanding we clearly see the structure of economic viability, or economic resilience, environmental benefit and social justice when proposing sustainable solutions.

In summary then:

- Sustainability is best expressed in diagram form when presented to students
- Sustainable is a process of review which we are briefly to embark upon.
- Sustainable has the interlocking elements of :
environmental (biophysical) benefit

social justice(equitable)-equal life chances, social representation, cultural representation

economic viability, or economic resilience with production, distribution and consumption of goods and services

Part 2 FEATURES OF EAST PERTH

The project commenced in 1992 when the former EPRA was created as a result of the East Perth Redevelopment Act 1991, to undertake, promote and coordinate the redevelopment of Claisebrook Village. The EPRA won three urban development Institute of Australia (UDIA) Awards for the Claisebrook Village project.

These include:

- 1996 – East Perth Gasworks site for site rehabilitation
- and in 1997 and 1999 – for the urban Renewal project

In 2002, in conjunction with Western Australian contractor Marsh Civil, EPRA won a Case Earth Award for the environmental and geotechnical rehabilitation of Precinct 17 (next to the East Perth Power Station).

In 2012 the current objectives of the project are: to conserve both the natural and built environment through the creation of a “sustainable inner city community”

It is an example of a government sponsored renewal project. It was a major benefactor of the Federal Government’s Building Better Cities program (1991-96) of \$32 million and this enabled substantial infrastructure improvements. Government investment has been \$127 million attracting investment of \$ 685 million. The area is redeveloped into 15 precincts (slide) of which just a few remain now under the direction of the Metropolitan Regional Authority, since 90% is now complete As parts of the project area are completed planning control is returned to the local government, which for Claisebrook Village is the City of Perth. This process is called ‘normalisation’.

Location, Site, Purpose

For those not familiar to Perth, East Perth is within bicycle and walking distance of the CBD centre (taken as just outside the old treasury building near St Georges Cathedral along Adelaide Terrace.)

The site is an area of 137.5 hectares. Seddon describes the area:“ The aborigines had made the same choice before him (Capt James Stirling) The river was full of fish and a chain of fresh water lakes and swamps entered the Swan through Claisebrook, abounded in wildfowl.” It was the rural urban fringe for the colonists who caught ducks, gilgies and cobblers and market gardens and a mulberry plantation were next to appear. Between 1890 and 1900 East Perth industrialised and became the first major industrial area including the former East Perth Gasworks, scrap yards, brick works, stables, warehouses and railway yards, then furniture factories, clothing factories, glass works and so on, for the metropolitan region. This area

became part of a working class residential area of small, relatively cheap housing close to their work. In 1960 -1980 the population declined dramatically as residents moved out and factories closed....which is where the EPRA steps in to redevelop the area.

Environmental protection

Looking back from 2012 how sustainable is East Perth using our first concept of environmental protection.

Vegetation

Claisebrook clearly lined with trees became “an industrial drain” and then this is how you see it today. Rather sanitized but this art form preserves the *melaleuca raphiophylla* (swamp paper bark) or does it since they are specially planted but would no doubt have occurred here originally. Not the best environmental protection. Notice some bronze turtles in the brook and in the foreground flagstones to mark an Aboriginal crossing.

I feel the renewal has not been sustainable as exposed in water and fish qualities-to explain:

Water quality

The water quality in Claisebrook Lake is a problem because

- High water temperatures and prolific aquatic weed growth detracting from the lake’s amenity and aesthetic value
- Turbidity of the water in the lake, resulting in loss of visual appeal;

The fountains were to aerate the water. In September 2012 the City of Perth has engaged GHD, a leading environmental consulting group starting in July 2012, to analyse, investigate and propose an alternate treatment.

Fish quality

A study of fish and mussels in Claisebrook Cove has uncovered alarming rates of male fish with male and female sex organs in black bream, a popular target fish for recreational anglers. This was not common and only has occurred once in 10 years as studied by Curtin University. Although more than a year old, the study prepared for the Swan River Trust has yet to be released publicly. Could it be the result of heavy metals and chemicals leaching from the old gasworks site or be the result of a lack of monitoring in the catchment after cost cutting measures were taken in 2011?

Moving on to use the second concept of social sustainability I have used a number of ideas.

Social sustainability

Aboriginal usage

Cultural representation also has links to the cross curricular priorities of Aboriginal histories and cultures. The area was used by many Noongar families as a camping ground or meeting place as does an old river gum, Yoondoorup Boorna. This was used as a hiding place for goods and messages by those who once camped there. The trunk was treated and returned to the site, at the request of the Noongar people. Ngango Batta's Mooditcher, translated as 'Sunshine's Living Strength' - a place of hope and friendship for Aboriginal people was made along the Victoria gardens foreshore.

Residential features

From 2006-2011 the population continued to rise as a result of the varying new housing developments. There were to be 1,450 new dwellings to be home to 2,500 new residents. An analysis by id (see bibliography) on the 2011 census for East Perth (North) which is approximately the same area as the East Perth Redevelopment Authority reveals some basic facts:

- a population of 3,052 (more than predict)
- population density 28.27 persons per ha-(not that great as not large apartment blocks but on the density increase as more blocks go in.
- a total of 1,802 dwellings (more than predict)
- 87.9 % dwellings privately owned and the rest in non-private
- 0.5 % of aboriginal descent
- in 2011 33% range from 50-69 (the older retirees) and 28% aged 25-34 and these two age groups are on the increase:

Graph shows the changing age structure 2006-2011

- accounts for couples without children and lone person at 58%

These statistics pan out on the landscape in a huge variety of dwellings in every shape and size and design!! mostly with pocket sized gardens.

- such as Belvidere , 200 lots of compact size, the same height, around art work pieces.
- Regency terrace facing the Greenway the course of Claisebrook.
- Single housing facing the Swan foreshore
- Apartments with penthouses (**slide from brochure**) for \$1.5-2 million with views
- Former warehouses Boans made into flats.
- Dwellings surrounding Claisebrook Cove.

And these are just a short selection.

So I think that on the grounds of social justice or social equality the low income are barely represented in this group. Here we have the retirees downsizing and the young professional with no children buying into a good address near the Perth CBD.

But a second look does reveal a more sustainable approach which was not part of the earlier stages. A minimum 12% needs to be “affordable housing” in this second implementation stage.

- There are 19 social housing units in Haig Park run by Foundation Housing where to be considered for a tenancy you must be on the Dept of Housing waitlist.
- St Bartholemews House in Lime Street opened a new block August 2012 which has 148 units for people experiencing homelessness. This is much needed accommodation and builds upon St Barts reputation for helping the needy. The project received \$23 million from state funding, \$7.3 million from federal funding, \$2.84 million from LotteryWest, \$1 million from St Bartholomew’s House Foundation, and an additional \$750,000 Jobs Fund Grant for energy saving initiatives including solar panels, wind pods, storm water collection initiatives, window treatments and water saving. What an added bonus to have such sustainable features.

Another aspect of social consideration is safety and I just what to touch on this and suggest more could be done in this perspective as it is highly relevant to residents. One incident of a death in Jewell Street was recorded on the ABC news. (see bibliography)

Parks, Open Space, and the Perth City Farm

2.22 hectares of recreational parks, open spaces and other public areas were created for which I have selected 3.

- Victoria Gardens was one of the first main parks to be gazetted for Perth, even before King’s Park. In these Victorian times it was a fashionable area for a Sunday picnic. This tree the Hoop Pine was one of the first trees planted.
- Mardalup Park looks like any other park with barbeques, a children’s playground and free parking for visitors but this is how it looked in 1933. The area was the East Perth Gas works site. Extensive environmental remediation work was undertaken to make the site suitable for use as public open space. At the time it was the largest project of its type.
 - 200,000 cubic meters of soil was dug up and categorized according to its toxicity.
 - Naphthalene was one of the contaminants

-some soil was removed to other land fill sites
 a layer of saponite was placed below the infill, to further stop any possible leaching of chemicals into the ground water.

- The Perth City Farmers Market has a weekly Saturday vegetable market but this project caught my eye. Growing oyster mushrooms from coffee bean waste. As stated in their goals and mission statement they aim to showcase innovative urban farming, nourish community wellbeing and demonstrate sustainability showing solar panels on the roof. The social education is designed to debate and raise awareness of local, national and global food issues....reminiscent of Year 9 unit Food supply and Food security. On a social, community perspective there is definite success. The City Farm is a project of PAN Planetary Action Network. Rent is peppercorn for 40 years a lease granted by the WA government in 1994 when it was established.

My question to the students would be how long this will last given this is the last precinct for development

Heritage

Heritage is what we inherit and pass on to our future generations. It shapes our present identity and provides insight into the past and as such I see as a valuable feature of social sustainability.

Here I want to bring to your attention just 2 of the 10 valuable heritage sites and each is so different:

- East Perth Cemetery was the first cemetery for Perth and graves date back to 1830. Most people between 1830-1899 were buried here: an estimated 10,000 pioneers. Notable graves include those of Sir John Septimus Roe first Surveyor General-he surveyed it and was later buried there! and Peter Broun Colonial Secretary. There are sections across the road that included Chinese graves and Jewish burials, some not preserved when the police Dept was developed. It took a local campaign to stop development on the eastern site-social heritage values over the economic!
- The Power Station as seen in 1936 was a most imposing building, and is equally so today. It is a long and sad tale of on-off-on off redevelopment. The last state government spent \$14 million restoring the building's exterior and was all set to move the new WA museum. It is now in moth balls costing \$2 million to maintain each year.

But as you can see, not all are in agreement as to the quality of parts of the heritage preservation. Professor of History Jenny Gregory, doubts interpretation, particularly through public art, can adequately represent the history of the site. To quote "This approach was used

widely at the East Perth Claisebrook development, but presents a sanitized version of the history of the area,”

Community events

These are a part of the sustainable living ‘village concept’. In December 2012, \$20,000 has been allocated by the City of Perth for the East Perth Twilight Christmas Picnic and Concert at Victoria Gardens.

Transport

One of the main aims was to promote the benefits of Transit Oriented Development (TOD) to residents and workers in the area to increase the use of public transport. The variety ranges from rail at Claisebrook station not the best so already there is 140 million on the table to upgrade the station, free Cat bus which ends at the City farm, pedestrian and cycle links providing easy access to the CBD and the River and plans to build a new pedestrian bridge across the Swan opposite Nile Street, to access the new stadium in Burswood. Not sure if NextBike a bike sharing scheme in Perth, based on those in Europe, will get off the ground at 20 stations one of which is Claisebrook, costing the State Government or the City of Perth \$400,000 to establish.

Economic viability

Costs

Already we have seen some of the costs involved, via state and federal grants, and the Perth City allocation of resources. Well the funds seem available for development so may be it is an ethical decision! The City of Perth has only recently allocated funds for the lighting of Trafalgar Bridge the pedestrian bridge over the Cove, but they are the lower cost LED lighting.

Employment

6,000 new workers in Dept of health, Dept of education and media employees, many of whom work within the ‘Silver City’ buildings on Royal Street, and 1,500 Central campus TAFE students and the ABC’s state headquarters on Royal Street.

Employment in the private sector is mainly the service sector whether it be retail along Royal Street and around the south side of Claisebrook Cove or light industries along Brown Street. What is more interesting is how permanent and viable are they? Here both the Gym and the

printers have been around since 1997, as has the photographers along Royal street. Such a survey is hard to achieve because of the change over time, but one worth considering anyway.

Part 3 Fieldwork ideas in brief

These are particularly relevant given that the Year 10 course asks students to design an inquiry plan to investigate an environmental issue or process. The skills could range from the standard field sketch to surveys, interviews, etc

But to quote Professor WM Adams:

“There is no agreed way of defining the extent to which sustainability is being achieved in any policy program. Sustainability and sustainable development are effectively ethical concepts, expressing desirable outcomes from economic and social decisions.”

So this makes it perfect for an inquiry base since it is an ethical justification that the students can produce. There are hundreds of inquiry based sustainable projects to choose from and these are just a few ideas:

- Examining the Victoria Gardens foreshore which has become seriously eroded by wave impact and the absence of vegetation. Under the jurisdiction of the City of Perth they have started some remedial work that includes log brush mattrassing, planting over 6000 native sedges. And the date for this 2009 over 2 years for the plants to become fully established....and yes in 2012 the sign is still up.
- Water and lighting use
- An examination of census data
- East Perth cemetery and the future
- Water quality-an ongoing concern in Claisebrook Cove.
- Big picture ideas like the advantages of inner city consolidation versus urban sprawl
- Sustainability and public Art
- “Urban Village concept” sustainable?
- “Transit Orientated Development” sustainable?
- Finally they could be the planner and design Royal Street West under sustainable principles, since it is one of the last precincts to be redeveloped.

The field work activity I ran had the usual observations case on the land use features and processes of the inner mixed zone of East Perth such as urban blight, urban renewal, gentrification and urban consolidation. This excursion lasted 3 periods equivalent that ran

between recess and lunch. A structured excursion booklet was used to ensure all students received a working knowledge of the area. This was followed by an inquiry, (based on the same area using only some of the observations from the excursion and researching the other information required via electronic sources or survey work in their own time).

By way of a conclusion:

- sustainability is a very wide topic in an inquiry and the students would need to carefully define what they understand by sustainability to ensure they remain focused.
- selection of the project area is significant since East Perth covered many different dimensions as I have explored here today.
- finally an end product of the inquiry project could be a photostory.

Thank you.