

Use of Multi-Media in the Design of a Community Media Centre

This paper describes the innovative use of a range of multi-media information technologies:

- a) to analyse the economic, social, cultural and political factors which relate to the proposed site for a new Media Centre in a deprived area of Glasgow.;*
- b) to model the physical characteristics of the site and its vicinity;*
- c) to explain to, and encourage participation of the community in the evaluation of design ideas for the Media Centre and thereby create a "media culture"*

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1. Introduction

The project, set for a group of fifteen students in years 3 and 4 of the BSc (Architectural Studies) course, was focused on a study of the area of Glasgow south of the river Clyde. This part of Glasgow, where contrasts of affluence, social deprivation and industrial waste-lands co-exist but do not mix, presented students with the possibility to introduce a Community Media Centre and a School for Film and Television which could invigorate the area and bring together communities from north and south of the city.

As a group, students were asked to produce a cultural and historical map together with a visual account of the area between Queen's Park and the south banks of the river Clyde. The cultural map took account of the current use of the area, where people work, live and play, and it looked at social focuses such as churches, dance halls, schools, social services, restaurants, cafes, pubs and betting shops. The historical map presented some major historical changes to the urban fabric in the south side of Glasgow between 1800 and 2000.

Students who carried out this research formed a mixed group mainly from EC countries including Greece, Belgium, Ireland and the UK. Their backgrounds were varied and their knowledge of the south side of Glasgow very limited at the beginning of the project. They all made a remarkable contribution when working as a team, and at the end of four weeks they were not only knowledgeable in the urban, social and historical intricacies of the area, but also became experienced users of information technology which enabled them to capture, present and analyse various aspects of this study. Additionally, they and the multi-media material which they created became a focus and a force for change in the community.

Students' presentation is divided into four parts which deal with the following:

- historical analysis
- socio/cultural analysis
- physical analysis
- conclusions.

2. Historical Analysis

Whereas Edinburgh, since the 17th century has been recognised as the un-easy capital of what was then a turbulent clan-based society in Scotland, Glasgow has, unquestionably, been the city which exhibited the dynamism which was the powerhouse for the Industrial Revolution which had the most far-reaching impact - for good and for bad - across the globe. Fuelled by the burgeoning trade with the new world, Glasgow prospered, became a city of major design output, of sustainable architectural quality and, perhaps most importantly, of restored cultural richness unique to the islandic periphery of north-west Europe.

The toll of two world wars and the loss of empire caused the most traumatic change in Glasgow. Heavy industries declined and unemployment soared. Currently, students from some 16 schools of Architecture throughout Europe are enjoying, through the Erasmus scheme, witness of, and participation in, an extraordinary regeneration of the city of Glasgow.

The challenge for these students, from Europe, was to understand, through best use of the Information Technologies, the historical context, the common problems and the possible ways forward for a critically damaged area of Glasgow - just to the south-side of its important river artery.

Historical research of the south side of Glasgow covered the period from 1795 to 1996 and was focused around historical maps of the area. These were supplemented by 3D computer models, representing the existing urban fabric, and annotated so that districts with different patterns of historical development could be analysed separately.

The south side of Glasgow was very late in its development and remained largely untouched while the new city grew. The first records exist of the land-ownership by Maxwells, whose name has been associated with the area for many centuries. It was not until the late 18th century that the area to the south of the river Clyde really began to flourish. The widening of the Clyde in 1770's brought increased trade and prosperity to Glasgow. At this point the larger extent of the south side population was concentrated in the village of the Gorbals, with surrounding areas still used for farming.

The Industrial Revolution brought great change to the South side. The grid iron plan of the city was extended across the river into Kingston and Tradestone. In 1849 a plan for Pollokshields was produced in the style of a garden city, and which had previously been used to develop Glasgow's West End; it contained curvilinear streets with gardens and villas as well as terraced housing. The full extent of this plan was never realised, but the street pattern of the scheme can still be seen.

By the 1880's, the industrial trades had taken over the area. The parks have disappeared in favour of brick fields, foundries and larger coal depots. The increase in rail communications divided the areas creating clearly defined edges to the self-forming districts. Divides were set between the housing tenements and the heavy industries of gas, coal and iron. The influx of people, attracted to the flourishing industries, brought with it intense social and environmental problems such as overcrowding and disease. Meanwhile, the affluent suburb of Pollokshields was almost fully developed with villas and terraced housing well spaced and with clear cut division from the squalor further north.

Tram routes linked the southern suburbs along Eglinton Street to the city and in 1896 the Glasgow subway opened connecting all main districts of the city. The area changed little between the wars, but a few small developments were made including more housing and a further loss of recreational ground. The post-war years saw a decline in industry in the city and the reduction in the number of industries operating in the south side. The last tram ran in 1962. By 1979 the block pattern of the area was still dense and congested and the resident population had moved out, leaving the area of the industrial waste-land. In the 1990's some steps were taken to revive the area next to the

Kingston Bridge.

The challenge for the involved group of students was

- a) to understand, themselves, the complex temporal dynamics of the city's south-side
- b) to explain it to themselves and to community, using multi-media technologies, and
- c) to recruit participation, with the help of multi-media technologies, of the community in regeneration strategies.

3. Socio-Cultural Analysis

As important, or more important, to the historical context of the area, is the existing socio-cultural environment.

The students found dramatic differences in the social, economic and cultural characteristics of the five districts which made up the area of investigation. The analysis of these districts was summarised as following:

KINGSTON	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 59% professional- skilled labour- 41% car ownership- 56% of housing has 3-4 rooms- lowest percentage of OAPs in the area.
POLLOKSHIELDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 30% professional labour- highest percentage of car ownership- high percentage of 5-25 year old- 40% of housing has over 5 rooms.
STRATHBUNGO	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 59% professional- skilled labour- 41% car ownership- low percentage of 0-14 year old- high percentage of 1 bedroom flats.
GOVANHILL	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- average employment figures- 69% have no car- average spread of age groups- 43% of housing has 3 rooms.
OATLANDS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- 31% inactive labour- 83% have no car- high percentage of OAPs- 69% of housing has 2-3 rooms
HUTCHESONTOWN	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- high percentage of retired people- 90% have no car- low percentage of 0-14 year old- 67% of housing has 3-4 rooms.

The importance of communicating and comparing these statistical outcomes - not only for the benefit of the student investigation but also for the members of the community - is paramount; the student group deployed the widest possible range of information technologies to this end - video, conventional graphics (including posters, large-scale drawings) screen-based multi-media presentations, etc. Central to the presentation was a cleverly constructed colour representation of the statistics overlaid on the detailed 3D computer model of the entire area of study - supplemented by photographic and screen-grabbed images of all the buildings in the area of architectural, historical, cultural or functional significance.

4 Physical Analysis

Students managed, in the short time which was allocated to this project, to capture the geometry of the landform and of the urban blocks which show the uneven distribution of solid to void, housing to industrial wasteland and good quality urban fabric to one that lost its definition with time.

In their multi-media presentation students included simple comparisons of the accuracy of the computer model, through a series of perspectives, with actual photographs of selected sites in this part of Glasgow. There is a clear sense of joy in the graphics that students used to liven-up city blocks. Given the limited time to research, analyse and present their findings, and also having to use the IT tools which they were not previously familiar with, students have shown the best of their ability to work as a team.

It was clear to staff and students alike - and to the community representatives in the exercise - that the information embodied in the 3D model of a community provides a wholly new and helpful focus for the discussion of interventions in the environment.

5 Conclusions

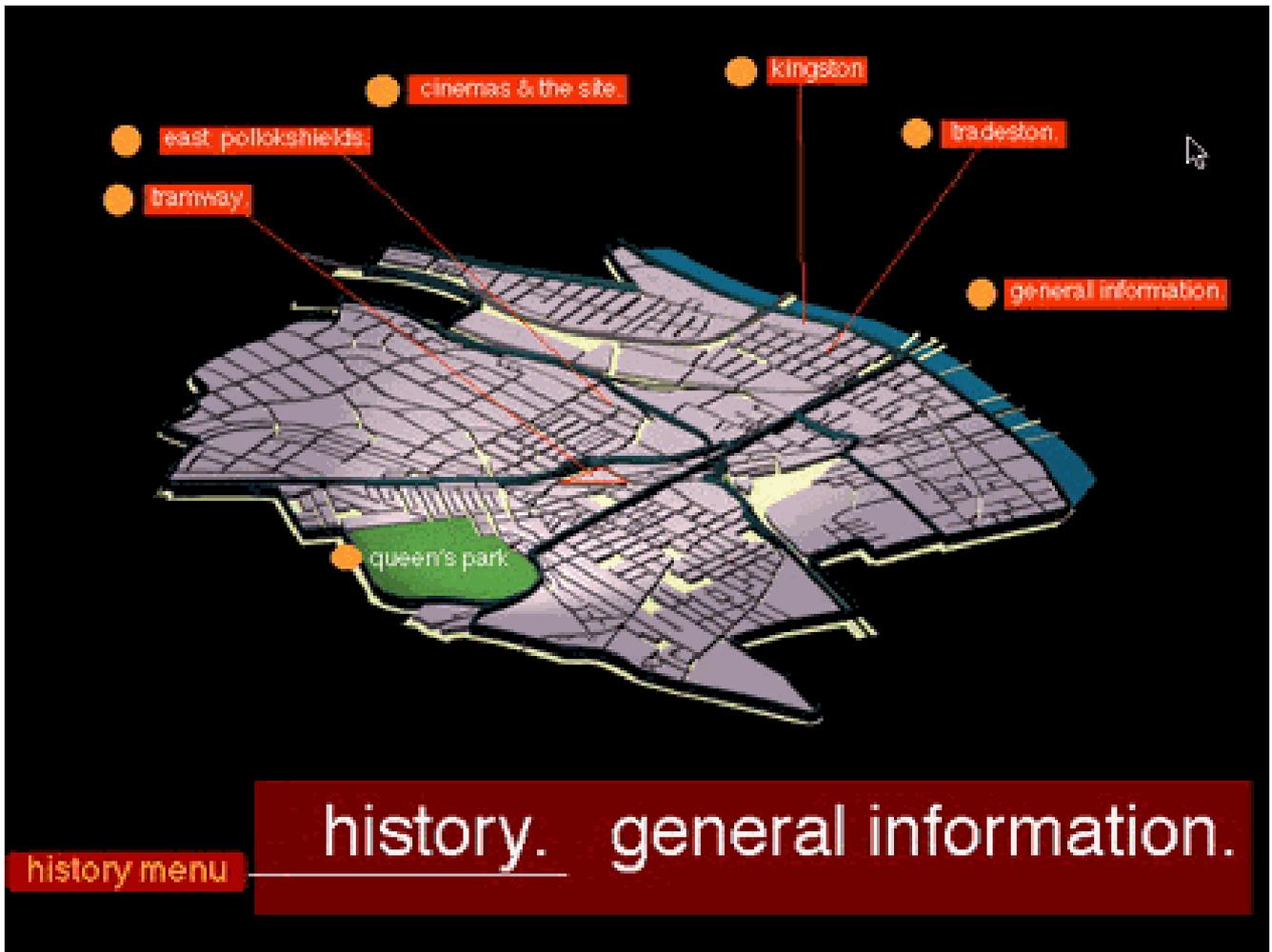
Conclusions from this project - part of the conventional studio culture in a vigorous design-oriented school of Architecture - take two forms. Those that are specific to the project itself, are presented as follows:

- a) The river Clyde acts as a physical barrier to movement of people and inhibits community links with city centre and west end of Glasgow.
- b) A media centre development on the South-side would create a new source of gravity to draw people across the river. The media park and associated developments would allow people to live and work in the same community.
- c) The South-side of Glasgow is historically a product of the industrial revolution. Closing the shipyards and associated industries created high unemployment, and demoralised local communities. The media park would put Glasgow to the forefront of the new information revolution, creating physical connections between communities, and electronic links from Glasgow to Scotland and to the rest of the world.
- d) Running through the South-side is a very important rail and road artery, with access to two airports. The potential of this has not yet been realised and could be further utilised to bring more people into this part of Glasgow. The South-side is made up of an eclectic mix of ethnic origins, economic backgrounds and building functions. It may be possible to create from these a "montage" - a model where merging together varied functions can produce an exciting sum effect and provide an activity focus.

Few of these important project-specific outcomes could have been effectively articulated without the use, by the students, of multi-media technology. The benefits of the technology are important to

- i) the students' own comprehension of the geometry, socio-economic and socio-cultural context of the community
- ii) the students' ability to communicate the context to the community

iii) the prospect for students, in collaboration with the community, to bring forward ideas which have consensus for the regeneration of the area.



Historical Analysis



● perspective views

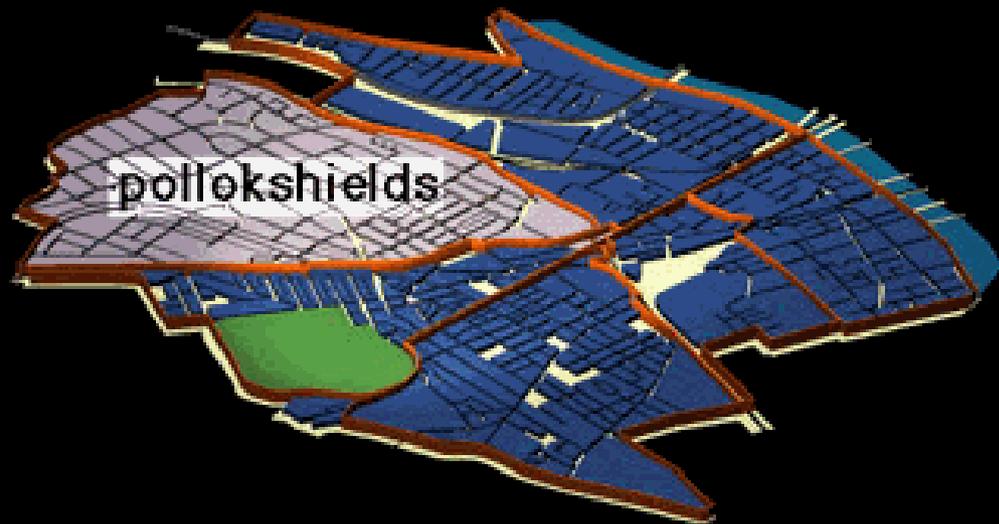
physical info-analysis

● important buildings

main menu

Physical Analysis

- 30% professional labour
- highest percentage of car ownership



- high percentage of 5-24 years old
- 40% of housing has over 5 rooms

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Socio-cultural Analysis (summary by district)

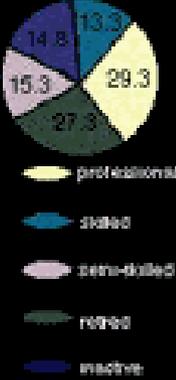
pollokshields



car ownership %



labour %



ethnic %



age %



residential %



menu

Socio-cultural Analysis (summary by subject area)