Two fires and two landscapes – a tale of two cities

MICHAEL JONES

Jones, Michael (2010). Two fires and two landscapes – a tale of two cities. *Fennia* 188: 1, pp. 123–136. Helsinki. ISSN 0015-0010.

In December 2002, fires ravaged parts of the historic city centres of Trondheim, Norway, and Edinburgh, Scotland. Seven years later, the fire site in Trondheim had been redeveloped while a gaping hole remained in Edinburgh. In 2003, the events surrounding the fires, the affected historical landscapes, and the planning and redevelopment processes were studied. Through guided field visits and qualitative interviews with planners, architects and representatives of interest organizations, expectations concerning possible outcomes from redevelopment were gauged. The present article aims to assess the results of these studies in the light of the actual outcomes.

Preconditions governing building development include physical factors such as availability of vacant land and institutional factors such as property ownership and planning regulations. Catastrophic fires can result in occupied land becoming unexpectedly vacant. This gives developers, architects and planners scope to shape the new urban landscape on the fire site by implementing ideas that accord with prevailing planning ideologies. Present planning is characterized by tension between dialogic ideals of communicative planning theory and neo-liberal realities of new public management.

Debates in the two cities after the fires illustrated tension between expectations related to the desire to save or re-create features reflecting the historical landscape or to create something new. Cooperation among the site owners allowed rapid redevelopment in Trondheim, whereas lack of a common front among owners contributed to delay in redeveloping the Edinburgh site. Complexities of land tenure appear also to have caused delay in Edinburgh. In both cities the planning process showed more features of new public management than communicative planning theory, although the Edinburgh case indicates that new public management cannot always guarantee rapid and efficient redevelopment. In addition to the architect's role, development and commercial interests appear to have the greatest influence on the final outcome in both cities.

Keywords: Trondheim, Edinburgh, fires, planning, document analysis, interviews

Michael Jones, Department of Geography, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, NO-7491 Trondheim, Norway. E-mail: michael.jones@svt.ntnu.no

Introduction

On the same day – 7 December 2002 – fires ravaged parts of the historic city centres of respectively Trondheim in Norway and Edinburgh in Scotland. Fortunately there was no loss of human life, but the damage caused by the fires was considerable, although they were limited spatially. Seven years later, the fire site in Trondheim had been redeveloped while the fire site in Edinburgh remained a gaping hole. The present article[1] compares the processes of change in the urban landscape initiated by the fires in the two cities. The article is partly based on the work of two groups of master students from the Department of Geography, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, who in 2003 studied the events surrounding the fires. They also collected material illustrating the historical landscapes that were affected by the fires, and through field work, interviews and

URN:NBN:fi:tsv-oa2547

document analysis investigated the processes of planning and redevelopment that were initiated during the first year following the fires. The findings of these student reports (Jordet 2004; Ekker 2004) are here assessed in the light of the actual outcomes seven years later.

The article begins with some photographs showing the fire-ravaged sites in the two cities as they were during or immediately after the fires and as they were after an interval of several years. Reference is made to the simultaneous losses incurred and opportunities gained that catastrophic fires bring to landscapes. This is followed by a discussion of the tension between the dialogic ideals of communicative planning theory and the neo-liberal realities of new public management that planners are faced with when dealing with the outcomes of such fires. The methods used in the studies are presented, followed by two narratives concerning the fire sites in respectively Trondheim and Edinburgh – a tale of two cities (to borrow the title of the famous novel by Charles Dickens). Finally some conclusions that might explain the differences in the outcome in the two cities are suggested.

Catastrophic fires in the landscape – losses incurred and opportunities gained

Figs. 1–3 show the ravages of the fires in Trondheim and Edinburgh during or immediately after the respective conflagrations in 2002. Figs. 4–7 show the fire sites as they were a few years later, in 2008 in the case of Trondheim and in 2007 and 2009 in Edinburgh. The contrast between the redeveloped site in the former case and the gaping hole left by the fire in the latter case is striking.

Like other types of landscape change, changes caused by catastrophic fires in the landscape have both material and cognitive dimensions. Materially the physical landscape undergoes change both through the disappearance of the existing urban fabric on the site of the fire as well as through the creation of the new landscape that results from the redevelopment of the site – or not, as the case might be. The cognitive dimension includes the values attributed to the landscape before the fire and the feelings of loss that the fire entails, as well as various ideas concerning the future of the fire site. The result is often negotiation between different interests with differing value judgements regarding the potential uses of the area and the appearance of the new landscape that will arise.

Fig. 1. The fire in the centre of Trondheim on 7 December 2002. The fire spread to engulf the wooden building in the foreground at the southern end of the fire site. The buildings destroyed by the fire were built in the 1740s and were typical of the building style of the period, although the large shop windows were of later date. Photo: Rune Petter Ness, *Adresseavisen* 9.12.2002. Published with permission.

Preconditions for landscape change include both physical factors and institutional factors. Among preconditions governing building development in the city landscape are physical factors such as the availability of vacant land. Vacant land can include open land within the built-up area, or within convenient reach of the city in terms of communications and transport. It may also be land that has been made vacant through the demolition of buildings or other structures. Among institutional factors governing building development are property ownership and planning regulations,

Fig. 2. The north-western corner of the fire site in Trondheim a few days after the fire. The miniature statue of liberty marked the entrance to a night club. Frosty weather led the water used to extinguish the fire to freeze to icicles. Photo: Roger Midtstraum. Published with permission.

Fig. 3. The fire site in Edinburgh viewed from the Cowgate a few days after the fire. Demolition work was taking place to make the site safe. Part of the South Bridge is on the left, and the buildings in the background on the other side of the 18th-century urban viaduct are similar to those destroyed. Photo: Robin Adamson, City Development Department, City of Edinburgh Council. Published with permission.

Fig. 4. The south-western corner of the new building constructed on the fire site in Trondheim as it appeared in 2008. Photo: Michael Jones.

Fig. 5. The reconstructed line of the medieval street, Borkegata, forming an open backyard behind the new building constructed on the fire site (left) as it appeared in 2008. The buildings on the right and straight ahead are brick buildings that survived the fire. Photo: Michael Jones.

which can allow occupied land to become vacant and available for building. Such factors include instruments such as planning consent, building permits, compulsory purchase, agreements allowing private interests to develop or redevelop a site, or total redevelopment under the auspices of public authorities.

Among physical preconditions for change in the city landscape, fire is the most dramatic. A catastrophic fire can result in previously occupied land becoming suddenly and unexpectedly vacant. Buildings are lost, ruins need to be cleared, and less badly damaged buildings need to be secured and made safe. The sites may find new uses, such

Fig. 6. The Cowgate viewed from the South Bridge in 2007 with the boarded up fire site to the left. Photo: Michael Jones.

Fig. 7. The fire site in Edinburgh viewed from the South Bridge in 2009. The building in the centre is the back of Adam House, an A-listed building in 1950s architecture. Photo: Michael Jones.

as parking lots, new open spaces or redevelopment, or may simply remain empty. Fires destroy, but at the same time provide potential for something new. This potential may or may not be realized. Where realized, this provides wide scope for developers, architects and city planners to shape the new urban landscape on the fire site. An opportunity is provided for implementing ideas that accord with prevailing planning ideologies and fashions.

Urban landscapes change through interplay between broad societal processes and locally contingent historical and geographical conditions. In architectural or planning history, architectural styles and planning ideologies are often described in terms that associate particular prevailing ideas with particular periods, e.g. Medieval, Renaissance, Baroque, Neo-classical, Jugend, Functional, or Postmodern. These terms bring to the mind's eye certain images of urban landscapes with particular characteristics. While the provenance of such ideas relates to general societal trends in particular periods, their implementation in practice is dependent on historical and geographical contingency, e.g. periods of economic growth in particular towns, the distribution of wealth, investments by wealthy financiers, the planning apparatus, the pre-existing urban fabric, the availability of land, and the role of particular individual persons.

A catastrophic fire is a contingent event that provides an opportunity to apply general architectural and planning ideas in a concrete situation.

Communicative planning theory versus new public management

According to Tore Sager (2009), present-day planning is characterized by tension between the dialogic ideas of communicative planning theory (CPT) and the neo-liberal realities of new public management (NPM).

Sager makes a comparison between CPT and NPM from a planner's point of view. Derived from the ideas of Habermas (1990), CPT emphasizes the principles of discourse ethics, dialogue, commitment to mutual understanding and the force of the better argument. This is the ideal of deliberative democracy in which decisions should be reached through debate (Bohman & Rehg 1997). This requires open processes involving the public. In CPT, says Sager, the role of the planner is that of facilitator and mediator, and one of the planner's tasks is to help the empowerment of marginalized groups. CPT tends to be favoured by educators and professional planners, suggests Sager. On the other hand, NPM (Lane 2000) emphasizes market-orientation, competition, economic efficiency and accountability. NPM favours lenient control of developers. The role of the planner is as expert in legal-procedural matters, with the aim of finding solutions in harmony with the market. NPM, suggests Sager, tends to be favoured by politicians and administrators.

Although there exist what Sager (2009: 67) calls "patches of common ground" between CPT and NPM, in that both show concern for user influence, he nonetheless shows that the two approaches emphasize different things. Both paradigms are responsive to users' needs, involvement and satisfaction, but in different ways. CPT emphasizes discursive practice in a liberal, pluralistic society. It advocates an open participatory process involving a broad range of affected groups, and by this means aims to be socially oriented, fairness-seeking, inclusive and consensus-seeking. NPM emphasizes communication with stakeholders and information to the public. It advocates entrepreneurism and the provision of services and facilities through competition. It stresses the benefits of development and employment growth, decentralization and coordination, market and business rationality, efficiency in the public interest, management orientation with attention to results, and tendering, privatization and outsourcing.

Summing up Sager, then, CPT argues that democracy is enhanced through broad participation; NPM, although not anti-democratic, finds it sufficient to ascertain consumer interests through consultation. In CPT, users are citizens, including all affected groups and interests and the wider community; in NPM, users are customers, whose influence depends on willingness to pay. CPT puts weight on common goods, collective action, social movements, neighbourhood groups and community activities, while NPM stresses individual preferences and rights. CPT favours the empowerment of lay people, whereas NPM gives priority to improved public sector performance through consultation and cost-effectiveness. For CPT, participation is a value in itself, whereas NPM stresses the market logic of output performance and customer satisfaction. CPT opens up the planning process, while NPM narrows the public debate. CPT emphasizes dialogue with local interests, but NPM is more interested in flexible planning. While CPT shows respect for local knowledge, NPM gives a strong position to developers. CPT politicizes the planning process by bringing in a wide range of interests, whereas NPM depoliticizes planning by maintaining a distance to political decision-making.

It could be said that on a modernity–postmodernity scale, CPT can be regarded as closer to postmodernity and NPM as closer to modernity.

Studies of the fire-ravaged sites in Trondheim and Edinburgh – questions and methods

To facilitate comparison of the planning processes related to the fires in Trondheim and Edinburgh, the approach and methods of study in each case were similar. The same questions were addressed by the two groups of students – one in each city. In each case, the investigation contained three parts with each their set of questions:

1. The fire and its immediate consequences. Questions addressed were: what happened and why; what damage was incurred; what were the consequences of the fire for people, businesses and cultural activities; how did the city council re-

Fig. 8. Map of Central Trondheim, showing the location of the fire site.

act; and what were the reactions of non-governmental organizations and the public.

2. Historical background. Of interest here were: what buildings existed before the fire, and what were their functions and appearance; what were the property rights and user interests pertaining to the site; what was its planning status; and what values were associated with the site by different groups in the area.

3. Planning process after the fire and future uses of the site. Questions here concerned: how did the planning process proceed; what debates ensued between proponents of respectively conservation and modernization; what visions were provided by architects; what were the views of owners, economic and cultural interests, and the community; how were different interest groups involved in the process; what conflicts arose; and which actors were ultimately heard.

The study began in each case with guided field visits involving inspection of the fire-ravaged sites. General information was provided through lectures given by academics and public officials with knowledge of the sites, and through meetings with key informants. The students undertook document analysis of newspaper articles, internet sources, official reports from the fire investigations, local plans, information from public enquiries, maps and drawings, and articles in periodicals and other publications. Qualitative interviews were undertaken with representatives of the city council, owners and tenants, representatives of planning and conservation bodies, architects, representatives of non-governmental organizations, affected stakeholders, and community organizations.

The fire site in Trondheim

The quarter that burnt down in Trondheim (Fig. 8) consisted for the most part of 2½-storey wooden houses of the type that give their distinctive char-

acter to a large part of central Trondheim. These particular houses were built between 1841 and 1845 after a fire destroyed part of the town in 1841. They were the last wooden houses to be built in the traditional style before building in wood was prohibited in the centre of Trondheim in 1845 after another fire nearby the year before. Gradual changes to the facades occurred over the years as the area was transformed from dwellings into a mixed commercial and residential area (Håpnes 2003). Today it lies on a pedestrian precinct, which is the main shopping street of Trondheim. The fire-ravaged buildings included both old-established businesses (shops) as well as restaurants, cafes and night clubs which began appearing in the area in the 1970s. This area is one of the main arenas for Saturday shopping and for night life in the city. Above the commercial premises were small rented apartments.

The fire started in a restaurant chip pan. It got out of control and spread to a ventilation shaft that was not built of fire-resistant material. The fire quickly spread to the adjoining wooden buildings. By the time the fire was extinguished, the premises of twelve businesses located in the wooden buildings were totally destroyed; two other businesses in wooden buildings suffered extensive smoke and water damage, as did two businesses and the offices of the Trondheim Business Association (Næringsforeningen i Trondheim) located in an adjoining brick building.

The fire site had a complex pattern of ownership and tenancy. Parts of the site belonged to three limited companies *(aksjeselskap)* owned by some of Trondheim's largest property investors, renting out to shops, hairdressers, cafes and restaurants, with small rented apartments above. Another part of the site was in the joint ownership *(sameie)* of five shop owners who ran their own businesses and also rented out premises. The brick-built House of Commerce (Handelsstandens hus) was owned by Trondheim Business Association and was partly used as offices and partly rented out to restaurants. The other property owners on the site were all members of the Business Association.

The fire site was in the middle of an area of high conservation interest. A detailed plan for Central Trondheim *(Midtbyplanen)*, approved in 1981, had as a specific aim the maintenance of Trondheim's character as a city of wooden houses. A building conservation classification undertaken in 1978 and revised in 1991 listed buildings worthy of conservation into three categories: A for buildings worthy of total protection; B for buildings of high antiquarian value; and C for buildings of general antiquarian value. The buildings destroyed by the fire were all of catgories B or C. Adjoining the site was the A-listed Post Office building in Jugend style, built in stone in 1909-11, but this escaped damage.

Apart from individual buildings, archaeological traces of the medieval city underground are subject to automatic protection under the Cultural Heritage Act of 1978. All excavation work, whether for archaeological purposes or for development, requires the approval of the historical conservation authorities. Archaeological excavations after the fire uncovered the remains of a medieval street (Borkegata) and a vaulted cellar from before 1708.

Immediately after the fire there ensued a debate in the media between those who wanted to rebuild the site in the same style as before the fire and those who wanted to build in an architectural style that reflected the present. The former group expressed strong feelings of loss of cherished landscape elements (wooden buildings) and claimed that new glass and concrete buildings would be out of keeping with the character of the city centre. The latter group argued that the city centre already contained a mix of old and new buildings in different styles, and wanted the fire site to be rebuilt in a way that reflected modern development. There was tension between, on the one hand, expectations related to the desire to re-create a copy of the historical landscape, and on the other hand, expectations related to the desire to create something new and modern. The City Conservation Officer and most architects were against building a replica of the lost buildings, but were concerned with keeping the character of the area as a social arena.

The city planning authorities prepared a planning brief for redevelopment, which was approved in April 2003. The principal guidelines were that the area should maintain the small-scale character of the 'city of wooden houses' (including height restrictions), renewal should be in keeping with the surrounding buildings and combine new thinking with respect for the past, the historical features uncovered by the archaeological excavations should be treated as a resource, and the area should serve as a social arena with a multiplicity of functions.

The owners of the site established a common steering group to deal with the aftermath of the fire

and invited an architectural competition (with encouragement from the City Council Building Committee). An agreement was signed by all the owners and this common front allowed the competition to be held without delay.

The architectural competition took place in 2003. There were four invited participants selected by the steering group. The entries were judged by a jury consisting of three architects and two members of the steering group. The winning design was by Team 3, a group of three architectural offices (see Team 3 2003). The aim of the proposal was to provide "interesting and attractive wooden buildings" (interview with one of the architects involved, 5.11.2003). The property plot boundaries were respected, giving functionally separate buildings but with a uniform design. The construction was to consist of inner concrete cores with outer massive wood facades. It was designed principally for commercial uses (including a proposal for a hotel).

The inner part of the fire site was to be opened up through the establishment of new passages between the buildings, in keeping with the narrow alleys and passages that are otherwise characteristic of central Trondheim. These would give access to a backyard, also a feature typical of the historical buildings of central Trondheim – instead of the alternative of an enclosed shopping mall. The historical heritage was to be respected by allowing the main passage to follow the line of the medieval street uncovered by the archaeological excavation, and by incorporating the vaulted cellar into the building. With a few modifications, this proposal received planning consent in 2004 and the first of the new complex of buildings opened in December 2005.

On the basis of the document analysis and interviews undertaken in the study, a number of conclusions can be drawn concerning the redevelopment of the fire site in Trondheim:

First, the wishes of the owners were paramount in the renewal of the site. Economic considerations were primary, although subject to planning restrictions on the volume and height of the new construction, stipulations regarding the protection of historical elements, and the proviso that the new construction should be in keeping with surroundings through use of wood.

Second, all the site's owners from the beginning worked together instead of individually, thus avoiding conflicts that might have delayed the process.

Third, modern architectural ideas were strongly represented in the winning design, and these were realized by the architects working in close cooperation with the owners and the city authorities. There was general agreement among the owners, the involved architects and the city authorities that a replica should not be built, despite the initial public debate that tended to favour this.

Fourth, there was little direct consultation with the general public. Although the views of the public, as expressed in the mass media and public meetings, generally favoured reconstruction in the old style, this was rejected by most architects and planners, who feared historical falsification. The general public had initially a largely negative reaction to the architectural proposals, although opinion has changed somewhat after the construction was completed.

It can be concluded that the planning process conformed more to NPM than to CPT.

The fire site in Edinburgh

The fire in Edinburgh occurred in the Edinburgh Old Town (Fig. 9). Edinburgh Old and New Towns (along with Dean Village) were inscribed on the World Heritage List in 1995 on the grounds that their architecture and landscape illustrate an important era in human history. The organically developed medieval Old Town was juxtaposed with the late 18th and early 19th century formalized planning and architecture of the New Town, which represented the optimism of the Scottish Enlightenment. Edinburgh is characterized by stone tenement buildings. The fire site was towards the southern edge of the World Heritage Site where the South Bridge crosses the Cowgate. The South Bridge is an extension of the North Bridge, which was constructed to provide access to the New Town, while the Cowgate is a street belonging to the Old Town. This arrangement led to a vertically segregated townscape, involving physical and social segregation between the wealthy who moved to the New Town and the poor who were left in the Old Town (Fraser 1989; McKean 1992).

By the late 20th century, the Cowgate had become an area of pubs and clubs, and one of the main venues for Edinburgh Festival Fringe activities. Two alternative narratives were identified concerning the Cowgate. The first narrative was that it was a noisy, dirty and troublesome place, characterized by drinking; this was the narrative of

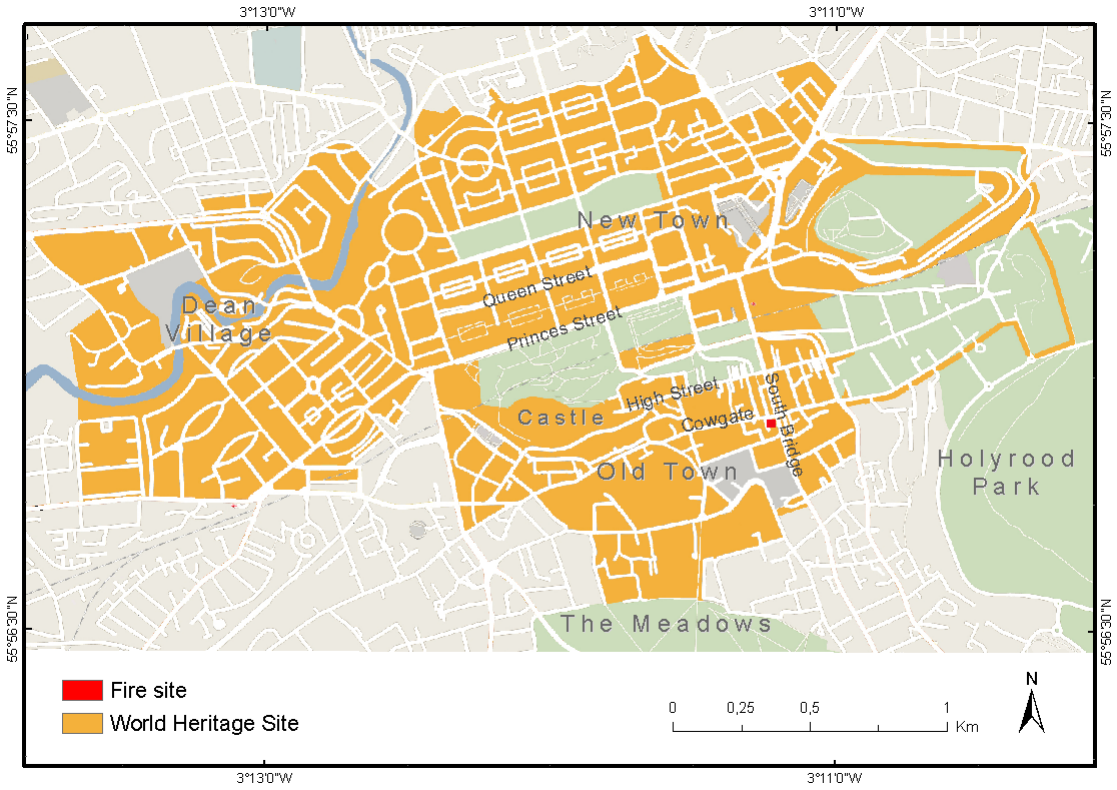

Fig. 9. Map of Edinburgh World Heritage Site, showing the location of the fire site.

complaining local residents. The second narrative was that it was a place of vitality and cultural activities, and a social meeting place; this was the narrative of outsiders who came to enjoy the area's social facilities. Above, the South Bridge had once been a prominent place but had degenerated and become neglected. Along the bridge were cafes and bargain stores. Close by lies Edinburgh University, and hence for much of the year the area is characterized by a transient population of students.

The fire started in a disused lift shaft due to an electrical fault. The fire was able to spread because fire walls had been knocked through when several adjoining buildings had become a department store. The buildings had no concrete or steel girders to support the walls, and, once the wooden roof beams and floors burnt out, the walls of the 7-8 storey buildings collapsed. After the fire had been extinguished, it was considered necessary to demolish most of what remained standing for safety reasons.

The fire site had a complex pattern of ownership and tenancy both horizontally and vertically. It consisted in part of long narrow burgage plots separated by narrow closes. These were built with tenements, which were buildings of several storeys that could have different owners on different storeys. On the site were eight properties, including one owned by the University of Edinburgh. Thirteen buildings with a multitude of tenants at different levels were destroyed or affected.

As part of the World Heritage Area, the site had certain conservation interests. The original neoclassical design proposed for the area by the architect John Adam in 1785 had been rejected in favour of a simpler and cheaper design by Robert Kay in 1786. Nonetheless, the buildings constructed on an urban viaduct traversing the Cowgate, and with a uniform facade that integrated shops

and dwellings were an architectural innovation. At the southern end of the South Bridge, an early example of a department store was built in 1873. The site contained some C-listed buildings and facades (i.e. of local significance), which were almost completely destroyed by the fire. Part of the former department store, which suffered smoke and water damage, was B-listed (i.e. of regional significance). Adam House, an adjoining building completed in 1954 to the design of the architect William Kininmonth, who was known for mixing modern and traditional impulses, was A-listed (i.e. of national significance) but escaped damage. At ground level there was a layer of deposits that was of potential archaeological interest but remained unexcavated. Photographic documentation and building-archaeological investigations were undertaken during the demolition of the ruins immediately after the fire. There was broad agreement among several of the principal historical and conservation interests that most of the buildings were not of significant conservation value and they were not considered a great loss.

In the debate immediately after the fire, heritage groups wanted to conserve as much as possible of the historic fabric and expressed concern over the demolition work. Community and residents' organizations feared that nothing would be built on the site for a long time, and wanted a mixture of flats and businesses and restrictions on the number of drinking permits. They saw an opportunity for upgrading the area. The opinion of the city and world heritage authorities was that the fire site was a small and relatively insignificant part of the World Heritage Site, that many of the buildings had suffered detrimental alteration over the years, and several were in poor condition with uses that were in part undesirable; their main concern was for a good and functional rebuilding of the site.

After a round of consultations on the draft, the City Council Planning Brief was approved in October 2003 and presented some urban design principles for the redevelopment of the site. Among the recommendations were that the original building line and roof heights were to be reinstated, and an end gable and the symmetry of the Georgian facades of the South Bridge were to be kept. Natural stone facing and slate roofing should be used. A new landmark building was considered inappropriate. The redevelopment should be in keeping with the surrounding townscape. Remaining fragments of the historic walls and structures on the site should be kept to ensure continuity of history in the redevelopment.

The site owners were interested in maximum floor use for economic reasons since the costs of rebuilding were expected to be greater than what they would receive from their insurance claims. A conservation architect (James Simpson) and a modern architect (Malcolm Fraser) were engaged to prepare a plan for the site that would integrate conservation interests into a modern building, including a square and a pedestrian link from the South Bridge down to the Cowgate. Problems arose, however, because of disagreements among the owners. The owners had twelve months in which to agree, after which the City Council could issue a Compulsory Purchase Order for the site. However, at the end of this period, the Council decided not to do this as it was feared that legal proceedings would drag out. A mediation firm was engaged by the architects, but failed to obtain agreement, and the plans for a modern development respecting conservation interests was shelved.

No official architectural competition was held. However, a web design firm (Indigo Media) and the editor of an architectural website (Adrian Welch) organized an unofficial open competition. Seven architects and 25 students submitted designs, which were judged by a jury of seven architects, writers and academics. The winning design (by Ron Galloway Associates) incorporated a 12-storey tower and three 7-storey buildings in stone and glass with new closes and wynds. The scheme envisaged a variety of uses including offices, nightclubs and residential space. A lower-level more traditional design (by Thomas Hamilton) won second prize. Alongside architects, the general public was invited to send in their ideas and comments about the future of the site. One quarter of the 80 who responded wanted the site to be rebuilt as it had been before the fire.

On the basis of the document analysis and interviews undertaken in the immediate aftermath of the fire, some tentative conclusions can be drawn concerning the lack of redevelopment on the Edinburgh fire site:

First, economic considerations meant that the owners aimed at maximum utilization to cover among other thing a shortfall in insurance compensation.

Second, disagreements among the owners contributed to delays. Further, it took time to settle insurance claims and draw up legal documents, in-

cluding updating titles. The complexities of land tenure and Scottish property law were further causes of delay.

Third, the initial attempts to combine modern architecture with respect for heritage interests failed due to the lack of agreement among the owners, despite the views of heritage groups and city planners.

Fourth, public consultation in the initial phase after the fire took the form of responses to the draft Planning Brief. There was some public involvement in the unofficial architectural competition, and heritage and community groups expressed their views in the media debate.

In 2004 developers were invited to submit bids. In competition with 25 other developers and after 18 months of negotiation, the development company Whiteburn Projects bought out the owners and commissioned Allan Murray Architects to produce a new design. Their plan provided for a hotel, with restaurant, bar, retail businesses, art gallery, cafes, and nightclub. Open courtyards and terraces at different levels were to be connected with walkways and steps linking the South Bridge to the Cowgate. The main building was to be topped by a glass dome (see architecturescotland 2006; 2008; 2009; Allan Murray Architects 2010).

Whiteburn Projects commissioned a heritage report, which presented a history of the site and concluded that, in view of "its convoluted history of major change", it would be better to encourage a new development rather than rebuilding the original 18th-century facades (Wright 2008: 87). According to information from Allan Murray, a series of public meetings and consultations with heritage bodies took place before the plan was finalized. A discussion in the press arose when a strong protest against this scheme was made by writers and artists criticizing it as an example of international modernism out of place in Edinburgh's Old Town. Heritage groups were critical of the hotel fronting onto the South Bridge on the grounds that it broke the uniformity and symmetry of the original South Bridge project. The World Heritage Trust criticized the new scheme as "lacking empathy" with the surroundings. Against this, it was argued that the criticisms were based on a faulty understanding of the site's complex history. Business interests supported the project, and the City Council's Head of Planning found the scheme "an appropriate response to a difficult site."

With the site in single ownership, the redevelopment plan was submitted to the City Council and approved, subject to some conditions concerning lowering the height of the tallest building and choosing facade materials that were in keeping with the Old Town. Planning consent was given in January 2009, subject to the negotiation of modifications. The developers, who dubbed the project SoCo [South Bridge–Cowgate], aimed to start construction in 2009 with completion expected in 2011, but in early 2010 re-development had still not commenced.

The scheme as it was finally approved reflects strong developer interests, and conforms more to NPM than to CPT.

Conclusions

The case studies in Trondheim and Edinburgh show in opposite ways the importance of co-operation among owners for the outcome of planning on complex urban sites. An innovative form of co-operation in Trondheim led to rapid redevelopment of the fire site, while the lack of a common front among the owners appears to have been an important cause of delay in redeveloping the fire site in Edinburgh. Another contributing factor to the delay appears to have been the particular complexities of land tenure in Edinburgh. While the planning process in both cities showed more features of new public management than of communicative planning theory, the Edinburgh case indicates that new public management cannot always guarantee rapid and efficient redevelopment. Another difference may be that the fire site in Trondheim was in the heart of the city's commercial area – the main shopping street – with great pressure to repair the damage without delay, whereas the site in Edinburgh was more marginal. In both cases, the general public and local community interests have been kept at bay – airing their views in the media and public meetings but not having a strong influence on the outcome. Architectural competitions gave a certain transparency to the issues debated, but ultimately the physical form of the new urban landscape is to a large extent determined by the successful architect. The role of the city planning authorities has been more or less limited to issuing planning guidelines and giving planning consent. In both cases development and commercial interests appear to have the greatest influence on the final outcome.

NOTES

[1] The article is based on a paper presented at the 3rd Nordic Geographers' Meeting held in Turku, Finland, 8–11 June 2009, in the session on "Landscape, modernity and postmodernity".

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The case studies presented in this article are based on reports (Jordet 2004; Ekker 2004) prepared by two groups of master's students at the Department of Geography, Norwegian University of Science and Technology, presenting the results of field courses undertaken in respectively Trondheim and Edinburgh during autumn 2002. The students participating in the course in Trondheim were Kristin Eik-Nes, Lars Ekker, Anna Ekrem, Erik Fjellheim, Erlend Balgaard Havdal, Rita Merete Kjølsøy, Sigurd Nielsen, Steinar Onarheim, Reidun Onsøien, Markus Steen, Olav A. Thorsberg, Anders Strand Vestjordet, Berit Wolden, and Jorunn Øye . The students participating in the course in Edinburgh were Stian Aune, Aslaug Bjørke, Gaute Dahl, Jørn Fenstad, Torgeir Haavik, Håkon Jordet, Wenche Larsen, Steinar Lillefloth, Jørn Michaelsen, Hilde Nymoen, and Ingvill Stensheim. The students were advised in their work by the present author and Heidi Grete Betten. Anne Sofie Lægran proposed the topic of study and assisted with drawing up the programme for the courses. Radmil Popovic provided technical assistance with the maps (Figs. 8 and 9).

In Trondheim, we would like to thank Eirik Einum (Prosjekt- og teknologiledelse AS) for conducting a visit to the fire site, and the following persons for their willingness to provide the students with information: Olaf Arnstad (Senrumseiendom Trondheim AS), Bente Haugrønning (Trondheim City Building Permits Office), Arne Henriksen (Team 3), Gunnar Houen (City Conservation Office), Nils Kristian Nakstad (Næringsforeningen i Trondheim), Arild Nordberg (Simon Engen Foto), Idar Støwe (Trondheim City Planning Office), Liv Svare (Prosjekt- og teknologiledelse AS), Ingrid Sætherø (architect and jury member), Christian Sørensen (Sørensens Tobakk), Anne Isabel Udbye (Tante Isabel) and Magnus Westerberg (City Director, Trondheim Municipality).

In Edinburgh, we would like to thank especially Robin Adamson (Property Conservation Officer, City of Edinburgh) for arranging and chairing a full-day seminar at the City Chambers Business Centre, when presentations were given by representatives of various public bodies involved with the consequences of the fire. Thanks are due to architects James Simpson and Malcolm Fraser for conducting a visit to the fire site, and John Gerrard for a guided tour of Edinburgh Old Town. We would like to thank the following persons for their willingness to provide the students with information: Norma Aldred (National Monuments Record of Scotland, Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS)), Senga Bate (Royal Fine Art Commission for Scotland), David Connolly (Addyman Associates), Bill Cunningham (Edinburgh City Council), Tony Davey (The Gilded Balloon), Malcolm Fraser (Malcolm Fraser Architects), Veronica Fraser (National Monuments Record of Scotland, RCAHMS), Dan Frydman (Indigo Media Ltd.), Anna Grant (City of Edinburgh Planning Department), Richard Griffith (Edinburgh World Heritage Trust), Sharon Haire (Historic Scotland), John Lawson (City Archaeologist), Ranald MacInnes (Historic Scotland), Rosemary Mann (Edinburgh Old Town Association), Sean O'Reilly (Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland), Jo Scott (Southside Community Council), James Simpson (Simpson and Brown Architects) and Diane Watters (National Monuments Record of Scotland, RCAHMS). We also thank Margaret Mackay (School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh) for assistance with practical arrangements. Among sources of information on developments in Edinburgh from 2004 onwards have been articles in *architecturescotland* (http://www.architecturescotland.co.uk/news/) and the *Edinburgh Evening News*. (http://edinburghnews.scotsman.com/), and e-mail correspondence with Allan Murray Architects.

REFERENCES

Allan Murray Architects 2010. SoCo – Edinburgh. <*http://www.ama-ltd.co.uk/AMA/SoCo.html*> 21.6.2010.

architecturescotland 2006. Cowgate fire site plans to be submitted. 6 Jul 2006. <*http://www.architecturescotland.co.uk/news/*> 26.5.2009.

architecturescotland 2008. SoCo phoenix rises from Cowgate ashes. 25 Sep 2008. <*http://www.architecturescotland.co.uk/news/*> 26.5.2009.

architecturescotland 2009. SoCo on time. 23 Jan 2009. <*http://www.architecturescotland.co.uk/news/*> 26.5.2009.

Bohman J & Rehg W (eds). 1997. *Deliberative democracy: essays on reason and politics.* MIT Press, Cambridge MA.

Ekker L (ed). 2004. *Midtbybrannen: øving i landskap og planlegging (GEOG 3505), høsten 2003.* Acta Geographica – Trondheim, Serie D, nr. 13: Feltkursrapporter. Geografisk institutt, NTNU, Trondheim.

Fraser AG 1989. *The building of Old College: Adam, Playfair & the University of Edinburgh.* University Press, Edinburgh.

Habermas J 1990. *Moral consciousness and communicative action.* Polity Press, Cambridge.

Håpnes RÅ 2003. Brannkvartalet, to bygninger, seks historier. In Sandvik PT (ed). *Trondhjemske samlinger 2003*, 7–23. Wennbergs Trykkeri AS, Trondheim.

Jordet H (ed). 2004. *The Edinburgh Old Town fire: history and redevelopment: report from master's field course in geography, September 2003.* Acta Geographica – Trondheim, Series D, no. 11: Field course reports. Department of Geography, NTNU, Trondheim.

Lane, J-E 2000. *New public management*. Routledge, London.

McKean C 1992. *Edinburgh: an illustrated architectural guide*. Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland, Edinburgh.

Sager T 2009. Planners' role: torn between dialogical ideals and neo-liberal realities. *European Planning Studies* 17: 1, 65–84.

Team 3 2003. *Byplanmessige betraktninger: Brantomta i Trondheim*. Arne Henriksen Arkitektkontor, Jenssen & Skodvin og CV Hølmebakk Arkitektkontor, Oslo.

Wright APK 2008. *South Bridge/Cowgate development site Edinburgh: heritage report*. Whiteburn Projects [Edinburgh].