

# PREFACE

The making of London's urban fabric is an increasingly intricate process; recent years have been witness to a pronounced proliferation of players involved in the city's design and development. The following is an attempt to map this complexity, situating Bankside 123 as a centre point from which our analysis may revolve.

Six central elements have been chosen for consideration: working capital, the developer, public policy, organizational structures, environment and civil society. The internal dynamics of each have been examined, as well as their respective roles in the production of space. By presenting these multiple actors and processes in tandem, we hope to elucidate unexplored interactions and causalities between them.

Throughout the study, fewer conclusions are drawn than questions raised. A primary consideration is Bankside 1's place in the long term. Both the developer and the architects involved in this development have read the current political and economic situation with great accuracy; commercially, the project is a highly successful one. Yet the building's very suitability to the current context challenges its feasibility in the future. For instance, there is a distinct trend towards greater environmental sustainability apparent at the policy level; if improved efficiency becomes required of all buildings, it is doubtful whether the structure of Bankside 1 could be adapted accordingly. The potential for shifts in the market pose an equal challenge to the project; the design of the building is such that it could be put to few alternate uses should the demand for office space decrease. Although the financial risks of such a contingency have been safeguarded, there is little evidence to suggest that the implications of such a scenario for the surrounding cityspace have been adequately addressed.

Our research has also highlighted particular issues surrounding the authorship of Bankside 1. Though thousands will be directly affected by its construction, considerably fewer have played an active role in shaping its final form. The design of Bankside 1, while arguably an improvement from their previous tenancy, does not reflect the desires of those who will work within it; there is a distinct disparity between employee ideals and the space to be delivered. The degree to which the desires of local residents were recognized in the development is also questionable. It remains to be seen whether the new public space connected to Bankside 1 will provide a viable public realm for individuals in the area.

As a hierarchy of influence over the Bankside development became apparent, so too did considerable constraints faced by the major actors themselves. Though instigators of the project, the developers' decisions were framed largely by their responsibility to shareholders, a condition requiring responsiveness to both the global and local business climates. Architectural choices were similarly mediated by these considerations. The role of both letting and brokerage agencies in informing these actors of market demand emerged as a significant one, and highlighted the need for a more comprehensive understanding of their influence in London's development process.

The course of Bankside 1's development reflects a design process that is both diffuse and constrained; it remains ambiguous whose vision the reality matches. Yet if one conclusion can be drawn, it is that Bankside 1 is paradigmatic of the prevailing development model in London. The particular questions raised in this study can therefore serve as a starting point from which to assess current practices. It is hoped that through a more nuanced understanding of the process, the production of space in London will become increasingly adept at serving those who live within it.