'Views grim but splendid’ - the urban image of North-West English industrial towns

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Abstract

The thesis explores the urban images of north-western industrial towns and their relationship to the built environment. Currently the towns seek to reposition themselves in relation to their persistent cultural images through urban regeneration. The thesis analyses this development through three types of urban image focusing on graphic depictions, visual urban planning and the built environment. The research question asks 'What is the urban image of the north-western post-industrial town?' followed by the secondary questions 'How has the urban image shifted throughout time?' And ‘How has urban image influenced the urban development of the towns?’. The research first compares and evaluates the current condition and historic urban development of eight similar towns in the region, Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, St Helens, Stockport, Warrington and Wigan to evaluate their homogeneity in reference to the Northern cultural image. The study then moves on to interrogate the specific development of the urban image of Stockport as an exemplary case study. The study examines tensions apparent in the repositioning of the towns in relation to their pasts, highlighting issues of history and heritage, identity, scale and ambition. The results of the study show the complex relationship between image and environment, identifying the ways in which the urban images have been constructed, problematized and disseminated. The thesis argues for a more comprehensive and informed approach linking image and urban regeneration in the towns in order to limit the impact of current reactionary practices of urban design.

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Important towns and cities The largest urban areas are in the east. Newcastle-upon-Tyne is the biggest city; others include historic Berwick-upon-Tweed and the cathedral city of Durham. Important towns include Sunderland, Tynemouth, Gateshead and Stockton-on-Tees. National Park - The Lake District Cumbria is England's second largest county, covering 6810 square kilometres (2629 miles). It is known as the Lake District because it contains 15 large lakes, the biggest...
of which is Windermere. The county has England's biggest mountains - Scafell Pike is the highest Peak. The area of the C