

High-Rises and Urban Design: The Reasons for Unsuccessful Placemaking with Residential High-Rises in England

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Abstract : High-rises and placemaking is an understudied combination which receives more and more interest with the proliferation of this typology in many British cities. The reason for studying three major cities in England: London, Birmingham and Manchester, is to learn from the latest advances in urban design in well-developed and prominent urban environment. The analysis of several high-rise sites reveals the weaknesses in urban design of contemporary British cities and presents an opportunity to study from the implemented examples. Therefore, the purpose of this research is to analyze design approaches towards creating a sustainable and varied urban environment when high-rises are involved. The research questions raised by the study are: what is the quality of high-rises and their surroundings; what facilities and features are deployed in the research area; what is the role of the high-rise buildings in the placemaking process; what urban design principles are applicable in this context. The methodology utilizes observation of the researched area by structured questions, developed by the author to evaluate the outdoor qualities of the high-rise surroundings. In this context, the paper argues that the quality of the public realm around the high-rises is quite low, missing basic but vital elements such as plazas, public art, and seating, along with landscaping and pocket parks. There is lack of coherence, the rhythm of the streets is often disrupted, and even though the high-rises are very aesthetically appealing, they fail to create a sense of place on their own. The implications of the study are that future planning can take into consideration the critique in this article and provide more opportunities for urban design interventions around high-rise buildings in the British cities.

Keywords : high-rises, placemaking, urban design, townscape

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