

**NODE AND PLACE,
A study on the spatial process of railway terminus area
redevelopment in central London**

Thesis submitted for the degree
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ABSTRACT

Bertolini and Spit (1998) have argued that any significant transport node should ideally also be a significant place in the city. However, this rarely seems to be the case, and the resolution of this disparity, which they refer to as the 'node-place' problem, in practice means redesigning what are currently regional-to-local transport nodes to also function as local pedestrian nodes. This is a complex design task, made more difficult by the fact that termini, although often located in strategic inner urban areas, are also frequently scarred by railway structures and adjacent to large wastelands or blighted neighbourhoods. Not surprisingly, there are as yet few success stories, and conversely many cases where attempts to address this problem through design have fallen below expectations. This problem, of converting railway termini and their surrounding areas into urban places, is the subject of this thesis.

The argument proposes that the 'node-place' problem is fundamentally a spatial one. Using the methodology of space syntax, together with Hillier's compound theories of how vibrant urban places are progressively formed by the influence of the urban grid on natural movement (Hillier et al 1993), and the subsequent influence this has on land use patterns (Hillier 1996) and centre formation (Hillier 2000), the thesis investigates the spatial structure and functioning of eleven mainline railway terminus areas in central London. This is undertaken through a series of studies of increasing precision: historical figure-ground analyses of station areas; syntactic analysis of station contexts and the influence of the station on that context; detailed observation of movement patterns and rates in station contexts; and finally the synthesis of all data types into a single picture.

On the basis of the results of these studies, it is argued that the key to the successful creation of an urban place out of a transport node is the same as that which prevails in cities in general; namely that spatial configuration is critical, and that the spaces inside and outside railway termini have to become an 'integrated part' of the local system of pedestrian movement. In order to achieve this, space has to be re-engineered to overcome the current tendency of stations to work as urban 'negative attractors' through the effect of the large blockages they impose on the development of local patterns of natural movement, in spite of the station being in itself a 'point attractor'. A node can become a place when it also becomes a 'configurational attractor' in the local network.

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