

## SAUL FINAL ADDRESS

*Tracy Metz*

**Tracy, we have all been very fortunate today to have you as our guide and mentor**, to lead us so skilfully and with such clarity of direction, through the issues that we have called New Urban Landscapes. You have helped us to follow the golden thread that runs throughout the story of SAUL, and have brought it to life for us in ways we shall now remember. We are grateful to you.

*Transnational partnership*

**As we have seen, the central point about the SAUL project is that it has been a very effective transnational partnership.** We have sustained it together over a long period of time, and it has achieved impressive results. In such a partnership, large numbers of people are all crucial to its success. Everyone who played a part – whether as the Steering Group, on the Joint Planning Groups, as project leaders or project participants – all should take credit for it. SAUL has demanded hard work from you all, and you should be proud of what you have achieved together.

*This Conference*

**So if I now mention just a few people out of many**, it is only because we cannot let this Conference end without recognising the enormous amount of effort and skill required to organise it so effectively, and to produce its key elements, including the Final Report, the SAUL video and all the other project information.

### *Amsterdam and partners*

**Our partner, the City of Amsterdam, together with their own partners** in this greater region of Amsterdam, has been our host for this Final Conference. Yesterday's site tours were impressive. We saw what has already been achieved, in the context of other partners' projects from other regions. They also showed us their vision for the future. I hope that our Amsterdam colleagues will convey to Mayor Job Cohen and all concerned our appreciation of their warm welcome and hospitality.

### *Staatsbosbeheer*

**Amsterdam's partner Staatsbosbeheer**, the Netherlands national forestry and countryside agency, has been responsible for the organisation of the Conference within Amsterdam. We began this task together in earnest more than a year ago. Since then, I have been able to be a mainly passive spectator of the daily traffic of emails and innumerable planning meetings, but I can tell you that the meticulous care, thoroughness and attention to detail applied to this task have been a great credit to Staatsbosbeheer. It has been a real pleasure to work with Michiel Firet and Femke Vergeest on this final transnational SAUL project. But above all, we want to thank Suus Boerma and her team for achieving such a successful conference.

### *Groundwork team*

**I have been very fortunate** to have such a skilled and dedicated Groundwork team working from London on every aspect of SAUL. It now seems a long time since Jayne Engle-Warnick and I first began to plan this project. When it began, we were joined by Helen Rawlins, who was responsible for the Launch Conference in London. I am delighted they have been able to come back from Canada and Ireland for this Final Conference. Jayne's successor, Anita Konrad, has played an absolutely pivotal role in this, as in so many other areas of our London work. But the central task of managing SAUL in all its huge complexity has fallen to Martin Jones, our European Programmes Manager, together with Rhiannon Lewis. They have been supported by Steve Turner. John Zetter joined the team to lead

on the evaluation project. I have been grateful to them all for their loyalty and commitment.

### *Some personal reflections*

**The many distinguished speakers who have contributed to today's discussions** have already set out clearly the SAUL case for the importance of New Urban Landscapes. I cannot add to that; but if you want to know my personal views on the issues raised today, you can read them in the Final Report. We are already working on plans for future programmes, and the Report's last chapter sets out the context for that. So I hope you will allow me to conclude the Conference with some entirely personal reflections. I want to look forward now, but to do so, I must first look back.

### *An essential question*

**You have kindly allowed Julia, my wife, to attend as a guest today.** She has been obliged to take a close interest in SAUL over the years. When I first told her that she was included on the invitation list, her immediate reaction was to ask an essential question – “but what shall I wear?” Now, this is such a familiar question in our home that I probably never give it the attention it expects; because my standard answer, “anything you like - you always look lovely whatever you wear”, somehow never quite seems to be acceptable. But her question was then followed by another – “and what will you wear?”

### *Another question*

**Now, this is not really a question I would ever consider, except, perhaps,** about 2 minutes before leaving home, when I would probably open the door to the clothes closet, stare blankly at the contents for a moment, and then reach for the suit of clothes I was wearing yesterday. On this occasion, however, I knew the answer. I said, “I shall wear this suit”.

### *My suit*

**“You can't wear that” was the response.** “Why not”, I said. “I like it, and anyway, it has had very little wear – almost new in fact”. “Well”

she said, “I have been married to you for 20 years, and you certainly didn’t buy it during my time”. On reflection, I have to concede that it must be nearer 30 years old – although, no doubt carbon dating technology could give a more accurate date.

### *The Union Jack*

**There is a particular reason why I know this suit of clothes was made in the 1970s.** Sewn into the lining of the jacket is a little image of our national flag – we call it the Union Jack. Now before anyone jumps to the conclusion that this means I am really some sort of secret nationalist (or a football supporter), let me explain.

### *I’m backing Britain*

**If you had bought any jacket around that time – or indeed any household goods** – say, a washing machine, or a vacuum cleaner – they would probably have had the same image stuck on them. They would also have had a slogan saying, “I’m backing Britain”. This was the idea of our Prime Minister at the time, Harold Wilson – or more probably of some marketing whiz kid in his office at Number 10 Downing Street – who hoped that if they appealed to our patriotism, we would buy British-made goods instead of the less expensive imports from abroad.

### *British industrial decline*

**The reason British goods were more expensive was not that they were of better quality** or better designed. British industry was hopelessly uncompetitive, suffering from many decades of under-investment in plant and technology, and with such outdated labour relations that many British workers spent more time on strike than at work. The reality was that Great Britain was nearly bankrupt - on the brink of insolvency. Our Chancellor of the Exchequer (our finance minister) had to go cap-in-hand to the International Monetary Fund to ask for a big loan.

### *Consequences*

**So my jacket is a memory of that era. It was not a happy one.**

Sticking the Union Jack on things didn't work. It took us more than 20 years to recover, and the medicine we had to swallow along the way was unpleasant. There were severe consequences. Swathes of old manufacturing industry were swept away. Unemployment followed, with some violent social unrest. Social attitudes changed – sometimes, but not always, for the better.

### *Changing landscapes*

**But our landscape also changed, and so did our quality of life.** If you visit London today as a tourist, you will probably look with envy on our many famous parks. But I could take you to many other parks and open spaces – and their local communities - that still bear the scars of that period and the years of neglect that followed. We are still grappling with those problems today – which is why SAUL is important to us.

### *Ghosts from the past*

**Well, it seems part of history now, something we would rather forget.** And perhaps we had forgotten - until quite recently - when the memories of that era have started to come back to haunt us like ghosts from the past. Only this time, it is not a problem with the British economy - which is fundamentally strong. It comes from the realisation that we are not an island. What happens to Europe, happens to us. And what happens in Europe reflects the rapidly changing global world.

### *A shrinking world*

**I guess we had not fully understood in the 1970s just how fast the world was shrinking** – or that it would change so rapidly in the years ahead. I remember the first time I ever travelled beyond the UK. I must have been 20 at the time. And then it was only on an organised study visit to Paris, by boat and train, there to worship at the shrines of modern art (which, at the time, we thought had ended around 1930). I did not foresee that before my future sons would be that age, they would expect to have spent a gap year backpacking round India, or discovering their inner selves on a beach in Thailand –

having been seasoned international travellers themselves from an early age.

### *International travel*

**Julia and I like to spend our holidays on remote Greek Islands,** recovering from the stresses of city living in the peace and quiet of a gentler way of life. But these days, we seem to return feeling that the benefits of the holiday have been rather undermined by the stressful journey back. And we ask ourselves how we had the misfortune to book airline seats on a flying crèche.

### *Getting younger*

**There are always more infants travelling than adults** – which presumably explains why there are no adults troubling to look after them. Some seem to have been born only a few days earlier. No doubt if we live long enough, it will be standard practice for all charter flights to provide a fully-equipped maternity unit, so as not to waste any holiday time.

### *Experiencing other cultures*

**In just a few decades, international travel has transformed many people's global perceptions.** Even for those less fortunate and excluded from opportunities to travel, the television screen and magazines have opened a window on the world. So while our shrinking planet creates very real economic challenges and severe ecological dangers, it also offers opportunities to experience other cultures for an ever-growing number of people.

### *Adapting to change*

**Tourism may be a limited form of learning. But whether abroad, or at home** in our own regions, enquiring minds help to break down barriers, overcome suspicion and widen our perspectives. And as the cultural character of Europe changes with astonishing speed, citizen's ability - and their willingness - to adapt to living in that new world, will,

I suggest, be the real test of whether Europe can rise to the global challenge, and prosper.

### *Europe's environment*

**One thing is certain. Europe's citizens will be living in an increasingly pressurised and frenetic environment.** In our major city regions especially, those pressures will become acute. Increasingly, people will look for an environment that compensates for the stresses of daily life. That is why the work that you are doing is so important.

### *Europe's citizens*

**The Lisbon Strategy and more recent E U policy statements** implicitly recognise that without the support and commitment of our citizens, Europe as a whole cannot expect to compete in the world. But those commitments will only come from our greater understanding of what matters to citizens, and from people's growing satisfaction with their own quality of life.

### *Europe's future*

**And if I may conclude with a personal view – it is that Europe's future** will not depend on any grand political agreements, or on getting the right words into a Constitution that nobody will read. It will depend on citizens being comfortable with their own identities, enjoying the richness of their diversity, and, above all, seeing the practical benefits of living, working and relaxing together.

### *Transnational partnerships*

**I am convinced this change can only be effectively led by partnerships** of local and regional politicians and professional practitioners, who have discovered together the value of working transnationally across the natural divides of States, cultures and language – however difficult that may seem at times.

*Tomorrow's Europe*

**So you, and others like you, hold the key to the future of Europe.**

**Tomorrow's Europe will be what you are prepared to invest in it.**  
*Bring down the curtain*

**And now it is time to bring down the curtain on our Final Conference.** I want to thank you all for the part you have played in it, and for helping us to make this a fitting conclusion to the work of the SAUL Partnership in recent years.

**We intend and expect that work to continue into the future.** So rather than say "farewell" today, let us just say, "until we meet again".

**Clive Fox**

29 June 2006