An aerial photograph of a city, likely Durham, showing a dense urban area with a river and a bridge. The image is in black and white, with a red vertical bar on the right side containing text.

urban design

**Urban Design
Quarterly**

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Urban Design Group

Issue **64** October 1997

Topic:

**The Future of Urban
Design Education**
• **Bridging the Gaps**

Case studies:

Durham
• **Millennium Project**

Newcastle upon Tyne
• **Cityscape**

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**Forum for:
architects • town planners •
engineers • landscape architects
and all those interested in the
quality of the built environment**

The Urban Design Group, founded nineteen years ago, has been established to provide high standards of performance and inter-professional cooperation in planning, architecture, urban design, and other related disciplines; and to educate the relevant professions and the public in matters relating to urban design. Membership is made up of architects, planners, landscape architects, engineers, surveyors, historians, lawyers, photographers, in fact anyone interested in the quality of our built environment. Local authorities, practices, and universities are also members. The U.D.G. runs a series of public lectures, workshops and other events which are valid for C.P.D. The Kevin Lynch Memorial Lecture has attracted such speakers as Leon Krier, Peter Hall, Sir Roy Strong, and Sir Philip Dowson. Annual study tours are also organised. The U.D.G. publishes a quarterly magazine dealing with urban design issues and an Urban Design Source Book which identifies urban design practices, courses and members. The U.D.G. is working closely with the R.T.P.I. to raise the profile of urban design. It has reciprocal membership with a number of complementary organisations including Vision for London, and the British Urban Regeneration Association (B.U.R.A.). The U.D.G. has set out an agenda aimed at explaining urban design and how, using urban design principles, the quality of the environment can be raised. The Urban Design Group continues to grow. Membership is national, and each region has its own convenor, who organises local events.

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Cover

View of Durham City

By courtesy of Durham City Council

News & Events

Leader **4**

News Items

Congress for New Urbanism **5**

French Promotion of Architecture

Kevin Lynch Lecture - Charles Jencks **6**

Annual UDG Lecture - Michael Cassidy **7**

International Symposium on Urban Form

Viewpoints

Haussmannisation of London **9**

Tom Young

Sustainable City **12**

Gordon Gibson

Review

Urban Design on the Internet **14**

Catherine Tranmer

Topic

The Future of Urban Design Education

Bridging the Gaps **16**

Georgia Butina Watson

Urban Design and Planning **18**

John Dean

Time for Change **21**

Jon Rowland

Practice Views **27**

Tony Lloyd-Jones

Planning for Sustainability **29**

David Evans

Case Studies

Durham - Millennium Project **36**

MacCormac Jamieson & Prichard

Newcastle upon Tyne - Cityscape **38**

Book Reviews

Reviews by Tim Catchpole, Peter Eley, Basil Fineberg, **40**

Bob Jarvis, Sebastian Loew, Marion Roberts and Jon Rowland

Practice and Education Index **44**

Endpiece **47**

Planning between the Lines

Bob Jarvis

Diary

Back Cover

Future issues

65 Urban Design and Landscape

Topic Editor Ian Thompson

66 Urban Design and Conservation

Topic Editor Steve Gould

The subscription charge for Practice and Education Index entries is £80 per year
covering an inclusion in four issues if paid within one month of the renewal date.

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statements made by individuals writing in this journal.

Disciplining Urban Design?

The topic for this issue is *The Future of Urban Design Education*. Should the UDG be concerned only about postgraduate courses or also look more intensively at the ways in which other related disciplines become aware of urban design issues? Should our concern alternatively be the introduction of undergraduate courses in urban design or foundation years which seek to expose far more disciplines at an early stage to broader issues?

Within the context of modular courses, urban design is becoming available to a wider variety of disciplines which is all to the good. But interdisciplinary projects, including urban design students, are still regrettably the exception and there are few, if any, proper foundation courses, using urban design or the environment as the base, in the UK.

Whatever our views, the limited information available on urban design courses and modules makes it difficult to form judgements or take a positive view outside our own experience. To obtain such information must be the first step if we want to improve the opportunity for students in all places to understand more about urban design issues.

John Billingham

New Initiatives

The Group will be focusing on the issue of movement in towns and cities over the coming months. Transport policy is an integral part of any urban design strategy and the UDG welcomes the integration of planning and transport in the reorganised Department of Environment and Transport. UDG members who would like to make their views known on transport issues are invited to send comments to me via Susie Turnbull or e-mail (urbandedesign@rogerevans.com). This will help shape our programme and other initiatives over the coming months. #

Roger Evans
Chairman

Annual Conference

An Annual Conference is being planned to be held on Friday 14 and Saturday 15 November 1997 in London. Its theme is 'Public Spaces - People Places'. The keynote talk will focus on the 'World Squares' project where the consultants are Norman Foster and Partners, supported by the City of Westminster and Halcrow Fox. The event will feature internationally acclaimed academics and practitioners who are concerned about the nature, use and detailed design of public spaces. Colin Davis will examine London's streetscape.

Further details can be obtained from the UDG office. #

Visit to Montpellier

Sebastian Loew is organising a further study visit to France from 17 to 20 October which will take in Nîmes and Montpellier; the cost is approximately £290/person including air fare. Anyone interested should immediately contact Susie Turnbull 01235 851415 or Sebastian Loew 0171 240 2659. #

Public Participation Programme

A number of events have occurred over the last quarter and a leaflet on the Wakefield two day workshop held on June 4/5 is now available. All the recommendations made in the workshop have been adopted for action.

The Oxpens Quarter in Oxford was the subject of a one day workshop in June at which the UDG was represented and an evaluation has been made of the event.

Emma Collier, who was acting as Project Evaluator, has resigned from this rôle as she has taken a full time post with Southwark Community Planning and Education Centre.

Two events were held in September, Ore Valley in Hastings, a four day workshop, and Mount Wise in Plymouth a week long event. Both of these were organised by local groups, assisted by the UDG, and both local people and visiting professionals including UDG members took part.

Two Community Design Forums have been arranged at the P.O.W.I.A. in October and November - see the diary for details. #

John Billingham

The Landscape of Urban Design

A conference is to be held on 20 October in the new Lincoln University Campus in London which will review Lincoln's experience and set this in a wider context, looking at examples from Dublin, Oxford, Manchester and elsewhere. This is the second in a series of Urban Design events in Lincoln which will contribute significantly to the national Urban Design debate in addition to making a direct contribution to the positive development of historic Lincoln.

Details available from Don Munro 0116 233823. #

Congress for New Urbanism

This year's meeting of the Congress for New Urbanism took place in Toronto between 29 May and 1 June. The quintessential American movement had shifted its focus and ventured into friendly territory across the 49th parallel. Toronto holds great fascination for the Americans. It combines the familiarity of forms of development with the frisson of European multi-cultural overlays. This useful juxtaposition defined the conference. Delegates could explore issues of suburban design together with questions about urbanism. The mix of congregants was evident. The Congress, co-sponsored by the UDG and Urban Villages Forum, had representatives from UK, Australia, South Africa and other countries, to whom much of this cosmopolitan urban life is commonplace. To the bulk of the delegates from the US, this was exciting stuff.

The Congress, which was brilliantly orchestrated by Peter Katz and whose book on New Urbanism proved to be a local best seller, started off on a very political level. The governance of Greater Toronto is being consolidated and this is creating major concerns within the urban environmental professions. New ideas on liberalising regulations, which have been so successful in regenerating parts of the city are in jeopardy. These changes involved reducing car parking standards, easing change of use, relaxing density and height regulations. Visit the 'King' area of Toronto and you can get an immediate glimpse of what could be done in UK cities if some recalcitrant local authorities were not so hidebound by their own self-imposed planning regulations. Governance also shifted the means of delivery, with city authorities becoming multi-disciplinary teams. Ken Greenberg, of Berridge, Lewinberg, Greenberg, Dark, Gabor Ltd, responsible for Hulme's Masterplan for regeneration, eloquently established the working perspective of the conference.

A successful city relied on a healthy core, a safe environment, good streets which nurtured urban street culture, and a multi-cultural approach to the urban environment which all help to establish a model for urbanism. Whether it is new or just being revisited remains to be seen; but as it was so delightfully put, "coming back is not such a leap".

There were plenty of presentations of different initiatives. These ranged from neighbourhoods marketing themselves, public transport, counselling first time buyers, 're-tooling' interdepartmental teams, to 'big box retail'. From this diaspora of concerns, the idea of urbanism creating heterogeneity became one of the key conference goals. The New Urbanists have helped shift the development paradigms. They consider there is a need for less intellectual introspection and more understanding of the constituency in which the development process and the key players work. Could this be leading to the idea of zoning and land use being replaced by coding? Such a townscape approach changes the idea of the city as suburban sprawl and puts in place a physically driven reform.

And what about the community? According to some academics New Urbanism leads to a loss of community. "The middle class rises and the community always disappears", goes the rose coloured lament. There is certainly an encouragement for citizens to take responsibility for their environment. Lack of public resources to manage our towns and cities reinforces ideas of self-management and separateness. Developers and their New Urbanist architects and planners are responding to these pressures. Suburban developers in particular have created well maintained and safe neighbourhoods with retail development that generates a level of service that local authorities cannot maintain. Communitarianism, the disaggregation of the American dream, and the changing

iconography of suburban lifestyle have all impacted on the New Urbanists. Community identity, a recognition of the finiteness of environmental resources and the establishment of new 'lifestyle developments' reflect the very reasons for the success of their products. Oakville and Markham in Toronto, Kentlands, Mashpee, Windsor and other New Urbanism developments in the US, show that the new return of recognisable forms (what might be called *Alteuland* development) sells well.

For many at the CNU it was the opportunity to understand the 'depth' of New Urbanism that provided the climax of the conference. Andres Duany, at his most charismatic, explained the key aspects of the 'Techniques of Town Planning' - the *Lexicon* - as an operating system for New Urbanism. 'The *Lexicon*' draws on ideas of development that are, or have been successful. "Whatever works is the '*Lexicon*'". The building blocks of the neighbourhood, Transit Oriented Development, are all set out in the draft document. The New Urbanism's foray into foreign parts now gives Duany the opportunity to test the relevance of these concepts to other countries, and to receive comments from environmental professionals, such as urban designers, and others. This is something the UDG should take up. If we are to continue to explore our own new agenda, then we need to take note of the important messages that the New Urbanists present. Encouraging the dialogue between the UDG and the Congress for New Urbanism can only be beneficial to both organisations. The conference next year is in Denver. Be there!

Members of the UDG who want copies of the 'Lexicon' can contact Susie Turnbull. A small charge will be made for photocopying. Comments can either be sent to Jon Rowland or direct to the CNU. #

Jon Rowland



French Promotion of Architecture

On 5 June, at the Institut Français in London, a debate had been arranged between Sebastian Loew, who has written a booklet on this topic, and Jonathan Glancey. In the event, Jonathan Glancey failed to appear, but Sebastian Loew more than made up for his absence, by giving an illuminating and succinct insight into contemporary French Architectural Patronage.

In 1977, after establishing a new law on architecture, the French government embarked on a constructive campaign to promote architecture. Since then, not only has there been a significant increase in the number of architectural commissions, but public interest and acceptance of modern architecture has increased considerably. This is a striking development in stark contrast to the rather sceptical view of modern architecture held by many British citizens.

Pinpointing differences between British and French promotion of architecture, Sebastian Loew mentioned specific French Government edicts and initiatives:

- The 1977 law on architecture instituted CAUE's (Conseils d'Architecture, d'Urbanisme, et de L'Environnement) with the aim of promoting high quality architecture through education, advice, information and increased public awareness. The CAUE's are relatively small, flexible, and non-bureaucratic services, independent of other administrative structures.

- Since the 1977 law there has been a strong movement to teach architecture, both to children and adults. CAUE's offer teaching packs to school teachers, and have also set up permanent structures which receive additional funding. CAUE Nord (based in Lille) in 1992 organised day seminars on 'public spaces'.
- In the Code des Marchés Publics of 1986 most public works and those private ones that receive public subsidies must be the subject of competitions if the architect's fee is equal to, or exceeds FF900,000. Competitions in general are strictly regulated by the Code.

Although Britain has an extensive adult education programme, Sebastian Loew mentioned that it very seldom includes courses on contemporary architecture. However what is fascinating about the French scene is that, after centuries of domination by the narrow and authoritarian Ecole des Beaux-Arts, the Beaux-Arts students took a leading rôle in that year's riots, which marked a turning point in the history of French Architecture. In turn this typically French event resulted in the legal removal of teaching responsibilities for architecture from the Ecole, and replaced it with autonomous units called Unités Pédagogiques. Subsequently, French Architects trained after 1968 were much more vocal and politicised than preceding generations. Wojciech Lesnikowski, author of *The New French Architecture* (1990, Rizzoli, New York) makes the same point. "The Beaux-Arts came to an abrupt end in 1968, when in the midst of a new anti-establishment student rebellion, the government of General de Gaulle dissolved the Beaux-Arts for good".

The great achievement of France during the last twenty years is that French Architecture, largely during the Mitterand era, gave architecture so much more

government support than in Britain where the public sector has built very little since 1979. Whereas in Britain there is a strong voluntary movement eg Civic Trust, TCPA, National Trust, Victorian, Georgian and Twentieth Century Societies and CPRE, these are mostly concerned with preserving 'Heritage' rather than promoting genuinely progressive modern architecture.

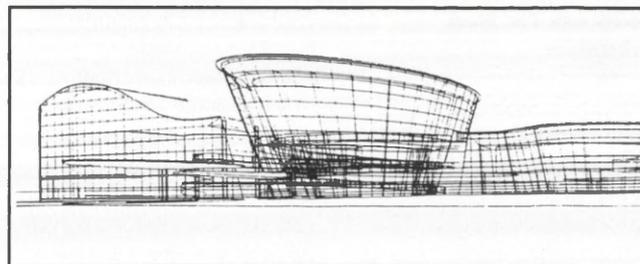
Moreover, France as a republic is not burdened by the false romanticism here that is epitomised by the undue reverence given to Prince Charles' eccentric views on modern architecture that have caused so much confusion in the minds of many British people. No wonder that French architects are so much more widely respected in their country than British architects here. Sebastian Loew, in the conclusion to his excellent booklet, states "The first lesson to be learned from France is that to raise public awareness of architecture in general and contemporary architecture in particular, the population has to be exposed to it".

Ironically, when Sebastian Loew approached the RIBA to propose the French scene, he was not well received, perhaps not surprising but unfortunate nevertheless. The French Government's commitment to good modern architecture is also evident in that to obtain a permit for any building over 170m², an architect has to be employed. Unlike Britain, in France professions and experts are widely respected and members of such a prestigious profession as architecture have once again become influential. Obviously the French respect for culture, intellectual rigour and public concern have all contributed to a lesson from which we can all learn. #

Derek Abbott

Reference

Sebastian Loew (1997) *The Promotion of Architecture - Some Lessons from France*, Papadakis Publishing, £7.95.



Kevin Lynch Lecture

Charles Jencks took as his subject *New Urban Design and the Fractal City* for this year's Kevin Lynch Lecture given in June.

He launched into the city with an enthusiastic rush. First came a set of pop-scientific parallels (city as un-theorizable brain, universe/city), then a brief polarised history of twentieth century urbanism in which the mechanistic paradigm of Corbusier and Hilbersheimer was displaced by the criticisms of Lynch and Jane Jacobs. These two perspectives overlapped in the shared theme of organised complexity, Jacobs' view of the city shifts into post-modernism and also as a parallel to the growing awareness of complexity in the life sciences. Jencks cited Prigogene's work on pulsing chemicals and the discovery of spontaneous organisation in slime-moulds. His gleeful analogy "City as slime-mould" he instantly undercut, asking how do you fund or administer spontaneous organisation? The question was to remain unanswered..

There were to be no answers, only questions, hints, impressions, metaphors, stories. It was an entertaining lecture.

Fractals, self-similarity, self-organisation and complexity seemed to blur and interchange rather a lot. Fractal geometry is concerned with self-similarity in forms undergoing transformation by growth and splitting, hence the slime-mould analogy, hence too its utter distinctiveness from machine form (the fern rather than the garden rake). Examples given of fractals in design were, however, few: some of Jencks' own furniture,

the space-filling Penrose tile, the cladding of Frank Gehry's Bilbao Guggenheim Museum; but despite our ability to simulate growth forms with the computer, cost constraints demanded the cladding remained 'self-same', not self-similar. Kipnis' city plan proposal overlaying fractal built form onto a strict rectilinear communications grid was seen as a pointer toward the "utopia of opportunity" which might be found in "the interstices of the fractal city". So far, the fractal city seemed to exist only, tentatively, in certain architectural details and as an analogy for complexity.

Jencks was clearly at ease with the growth of megalopolitan conurbations to the point where they cannot be administered. Edge City, Exopolis, a city out of control might, contrary to modernist fears, be beautiful. And yet, likening the Asian "fast cities" to a first-growth ecology, Jencks worried that they showed no sign of where the second growth might come from; sheer speed might resist central planning, but this was no fractally self-organising urbanism; these cities already showed signs of potential collapse.

A part of the talk was devoted to urban stories, a heterodox collection, mostly of success but with some ambiguities. The sheer self-belief and energy of Barcelona and its ability to re-invest on the back of its Olympic developments were praised; so too were the highly effective social and transport policies of Curitiba. An area of desert outside Ankara had been regenerated as wilderness by a complex programme of replanting (250 tree species) and recolonising by 150 animal species, but this was now under pressure from human recolonisation: success as a middle class resort.

Kisho Kurokawa's Museum of Art - 'smooth transitions and the suppleness of clouds' in Jencks' book *'The Architecture of the Jumping Universe'*.

Jencks talked of the extremely heterodox population of LA: not only human ethnicity but also of plant and animal species. He suggested this was more appreciated by designers than by ordinary residents.

Here Jencks had moved decisively away from the formal concerns of the term "fractal" and later seemed to confuse matters by destroying the term's status as an analogy for socio-economic complexity by speaking of "fractals of lifestyle, ethnicity, money". He suggested that planners should be responsive to differences in the close urban grain derived from the overlaying of such patterns, but, though this may be true (most might hope so), it didn't need the term "fractal": the force of the key word evaporated.

The void remaining seemed to be political. Yes, self-organisation is seductive to the urbanist and yes, he probably does mean something different, more "from the bottom up", than what the free marketeers mean by it; the self-organisation of the market becomes the playground of large corporate forces, a little careless of second growth ecologies perhaps. (Was it this that modernism feared in the city out of control?). And yes, there are areas of infrastructure needing 'top-down' direction. But unless terms are defined and used more keenly, entertainments such as this frustrate as much as console. #

Peter Luck

Annual UDG Lecture

Michael Cassidy gave the UDG lecture in July, speaking about *Making Cities Work - an International Comparison*.

He must be extremely impressive at selling London as a world capital to heathens the world over. His slick presentation supported by slides of the City in full swing and graphics showing the contribution of the financial sector to the GDP or similar is undoubtedly convincing for foreign investors. And indeed, even Londoners can find it exhilarating to hear that there are more Japanese banks in London than in Tokyo. Michael Cassidy explains the success of London as being partly the result of history and more recently of deregulation of financial services and telecommunications. He is very confident about the future of the city and sees a continuing expansion of job creation, particularly in culture, tourism and entertainment. The only possible cloud on the horizon is the transportation infrastructure: London needs to tame the private car and invest in public transport (rail that is, he does not believe in buses) or congestion will be detrimental to business and therefore harm the city. So Cassidy, like the anti-road protesters, though probably for different reasons, is in favour of road pricing and of making parking as difficult as possible.

His perspective is mainly based on the City's experience: ideally the whole of London should behave like the City, and boroughs that have not tried to do so are to be chastised. I wondered whether many Londoners would recognise the city (as opposed to the City) that he was talking about: the unemployed yooof with at most a chance to get a Mcjob, the homeless, the long suffering commuter on the Northern Line or the woman resident in Lambeth or Southwark. This buoyant international capital had none of the inconveniences that are encountered daily by millions of people who use the city. And yes, "even Camden" is now a

success and thousands enjoy its cafes and markets but is there not a cost to this patchy prosperity? Apparently not, in Michael Cassidy's vision. The boundary of Cassidy's London did not seem to encompass the 32 Boroughs and Corporation; it probably included only the City, the West End, bits of Camden and South Kensington and surprisingly Docklands (the Isle of Dogs only?). Showing slides of some under-invested and poorly managed East End council estate, some terrible school or the dossers underneath Waterloo Bridge would not do for selling London in the Far East and therefore they are blotted out. But can they be for ever? And should those problems not be mentioned - at least to a London audience - in order for them to be tackled and hopefully resolved?

To urban designers, Michael Cassidy had little to say. He surprised the audience by claiming that the Corporation has been successful at keeping the essential character of the City's environment; even his carefully selected slide was not entirely reassuring. But his views on transport were encouraging, including his faith in the feasibility of a river bus and his support of pedestrianisation. Equally welcome here were his enthusiasm for face to face contacts and the need for concentration, although he did not expand on how these goals could be translated in design terms to the whole metropolitan area.

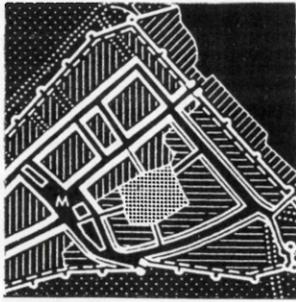
Michael Cassidy is a great supporter of a London authority and even more so of a Mayor. I was left wondering whether his lecture was a rehearsal for an interview for the job. #

Sebastian Loew

International Seminar on Urban Form

Some seventy papers were presented over four packed days from 18-21 July at the University of Birmingham, sometimes three papers delivered simultaneously in different rooms, showing how far the Urban Morphology movement has evolved. Its expansions has led to the appearance of sub-groups and factions, a fact reflected in the diversity of subjects discussed at the Seminar. The split origins of Urban Morphology are at the root of diversity which does not always make for an easy marriage between the various groups: geographers and architects, North and South Europeans, the descriptive and the prescriptive. Undoubtedly the numerous participants at the Seminar had also a variety of expectations and, at a guess, most would have gained something from the event.

The links between Urban Morphology (the study of urban form) and Urban Design seem obvious: one should inform the other. At a time when particularly in Britain but also in a number of other countries, planners, architects and urban designers are trying to find a rationale for their work - be it for designing or controlling design - the analytical methodology or urban morphology can provide objectivity and respectability, as long as the transition can be made between analysis and prescription. Some papers presented did not seem to be concerned with this transition: members of the Italian School seemed to be mostly interested in typological classification - "a bit like stamp collecting", as a member of the audience whispered - fascinating in itself but of no obvious application beyond museology. This approach has been adopted in varied environments from Turkey to Poland and from North America to Japan and it can only be hoped that it will evolve. An example of how it could evolve was mentioned by Ivor Samuels in his summing up on the Italian School: the energy efficiency of types of buildings or street/town layouts



can be measured in order to achieve the most sustainable kinds of development.

A number of papers attempted to use urban morphology to either understand and evaluate changes that have taken place or to help in decision making for future changes in the urban environment. An example of the latter which merits wider exposure was Kevin Gardiner's "Putting big-box development in its place": it used morphological analysis to show the design options available to integrate a large box development (a shopping centre) into a traditional finely scaled American town (Yakima, Wa), each option corresponding to a different degree of public intervention; it thus offered the decision makers not only design solutions but political and economic options. Money and politics seemed marginal to many presentations, even though they obviously were an essential part of the equation. Kiki Kafkoulas's paper on the changes in Greek cities over the past two centuries showed the importance of these two elements, although they emerged as central mostly in the discussions.

R. Weber's paper on spatial form in architecture should have been fascinating for urban designers in that it concentrated on space, pointing out how to achieve certain spatial effects such as centrality and ambiguity. Several well known examples (Piazza Navona, St Mark's, St Peter's, the Campidoglio) were analysed in great detail to explain our perception of these spaces. What was not discussed was whether those spatial tricks were the reasons why we found the places successful and whether any lessons could be drawn from

the analysis, or whether this was one more scholarly historical analysis. Causality between form and users' satisfaction seems to be absent from most of the studies presented. It is therefore difficult to draw general principles which would enable the adaptation of analyses based on historic examples to be applied to the planning of cities or suburbs where the perception of space may, for instance, be obtained from a moving private car. Unless we can draw these general principles, how relevant is our understanding of Michaelangelo's tricks in designing the Campidoglio if what we have to deal with is a traffic roundabout, the balance sheet of a developer or the political shenanigans of a Council?

On the other hand, J. Pendlebury and T. Townsend attempted to analyse the public perception of historic areas in the English context. Their paper was far removed from morphological analyses and much more to do with elitism, participation, empowerment and the practice of observation (in England, it must be emphasised). Their research is just beginning and it would be interesting to see, as it develops, whether there is a relation between urban form and people's perceptions. A comparison between the British attitudes and those of other Europeans may also be illuminating, particularly if the causes of the differences can be understood. Samuels outlined some of the problems of urban morphology in the British context, the scenographic approach to townscape more concerned with façades than anything else, the excessive importance given to monuments, the lack of codified regulations (as in the Napoleonic code). Like other participants at the conference, he also worried about the vast resources needed to undertake morphological analyses (the Italians use armies of students!) and about how these analyses manage to involve the different participants in the design process.

The Seminar was entirely held in English, putting pressure on some of the contributors and not always helping communications. Even within English, participants risked getting involved in semantic debates (what *do* you mean by organic cities?) and an attempt by the Italians to produce a glossary was not very helpful. That such a glossary is needed, and a multilingual one at that, was exemplified by the fact that a Spanish speaker used the term 'modernism' when meaning 'art nouveau' ('movimiento moderno' is the Spanish expression for modernism), therefore leading to a complete misinterpretation of what he was saying. However, one of the outcomes of the conference is likely to be an attempt to put together just such a glossary as a way of moving forward.

Anne Vernez Moudon described the background to ISUF in her keynote paper to the conference. Ten years ago there were three main schools where Urban Morphology was being studied in particular depth - Birmingham within the Geography Department, the Italian School, led initially by architects Muratori and Cannigia, and a group of architect/urbanists within the Versailles School of Architecture. These were small groups of researchers having relatively little contact with each other.

These groups and other people met together initially in 1994 with a more formal agenda introduced at Lausanne in 1995 and the various strengths of the different centres have enabled a common theoretical basis to be established as follows:

- That urban form is defined by buildings, plots and streets.
- That it can be understood at the scales of the building, the street/block, the city and the region.
- That it can only be understood historically because of the continuous process of change.

The three schools have each developed a particular approach and each contribute ideas about the relevance of the subject to urban design and city planning.

- Studying urban form to produce a theory of city building.
- Studying urban form to develop a theory of city design.
- Studying urban form to assess the impact of past design theories on city building.

This review cannot hope to cover all the presentations and therefore may not do justice to the Seminar as a whole. Questioning some of the elements of the Urban Morphology movement is not rejecting it but on the contrary, recognising its importance and hoping that it can evolve into a tool to help designing better cities. Whilst some of the papers presented seemed to lead to a dead-end and others to stray far away from the subject, a sufficient number indicated the directions that could be followed. The next Seminar should start from there. #

Sebastian Loew and John Billingham

The International Seminar on Urban Form now publishes its own biannual journal and the first issue was published in April 1997.

Further details about Urban Morphology (subscription £15/year) can be obtained from Jeremy Whitehand, School of Geography, University of Birmingham, Birmingham B15 2TT.

Hausmannisation of London

Tom Young

Tom Young considers that 'Hausmannisation of London' is occurring through the activities of traffic engineers. How much better if main streets could become a focus for urban designers.

New streets have been created by successive generations of architects in London. Regent Street, Shaftesbury Avenue, Northumberland Avenue, Gower Street and a great many others besides are examples of the robust commitment of our forebears to making new places for a new era. Recent generations have done something else; without building any new streets in central London, we have brought the urban strategic network into existence. This is the system of urban A-roads made by linking up existing streets as through-routes, and operated so "traffic movement needs will predominate over other considerations".

What has been achieved is "Hausmannisation" on the cheap, with barely a single building being knocked down, by traffic engineers relying exclusively on the pragmatic device of routing or "channelisation of traffic movements". If new streets had been made, architects might well have been involved, but today's "Hausmannisation" is all done with traffic management which traffic engineers use to extract more and more "performance" and "capacity" from existing streets; architects are not needed.

Routing strategies in Central London seem easy to justify both in terms of practical need and conservation. More traffic movements are supported whilst keeping the old city basically intact. Traffic management answers the reasonable demands of the "road-lobby" and

conservationists. It is not pie-in-the-sky hoping about a carless future or alternatively, a new age of fast-moving freeways halving the time it takes to cross London in a car, but responsible administration of limited resources.

Edwin Lutyens and Jane Jacobs

The decline of street-building suggests our urban design values have changed significantly. Edwin Lutyens, who wrote fifty years ago about the "intolerable confusion which has arisen from the use by 20th century mechanical traffic of a plan devised, as far as it was devised, for the relatively primitive requirements of a smaller community", understood street-building as a significant accomplishment of urban culture. The "proposals to cut new routes" which he prepared with the engineer Sir Charles Bressey and submitted to the Department of Transport in 1937 were intended not only to rationalise movement but to civilise it. Lutyens remarks about roundabouts are typical - "Beyond the essential police & traffic considerations, roundabouts should be planned in relation to their gradients. To achieve well designed skylines, careful consideration should be given to the prosceniums of the streets that converge upon them. Wherever possible, it is advisable that the design of any one roundabout should be controlled by a single mind."

Lutyens' ideas are provocative because we have left them so far behind. Firstly, it seems unlikely today that the DoT would appoint a major architect to look at the overall problem of roads in London. An architect's involvement would be at a much lower level as a local authority appointee. Secondly, Lutyens understands new routes as architectural spaces; he takes it for granted that he is involved in a street-building or spatial exercise, and not a mere "road-building" plan. Thirdly, an intention to establish coherence between the mobilisation catered for by new routes and settings provided is

apparent. Lutyens does not bother to distinguish between people in cars and pedestrians; the spatial experience which he outlines is for everyone as his remarks about roundabouts demonstrate.

The indifference Lutyens shows to distinctions between interest groups recalls remarks made by Jane Jacobs in 1965. She wrote then about how "Solicitude for city pedestrians slips easily and naturally into preoccupation with the problems of traffic separation, the pedestrians, having somewhere along the line become metamorphosed from whole and various human beings into abstract "pedestrian traffic", become an excuse for a fake, inflexible and limited pretence at city environment." While Jacobs' attack was directed at 60s obsessions with town centre precincts arranged on platforms or decks with complete segregation of highway functions and pedestrian spaces, her fingering of "solicitude" remains apposite. Architects still draw on this well of emotion to justify proposals which are antagonistic to the streets functioning as an inclusive space - pedestrianisation schemes are typical.

London's Main Frontage

Lutyens' values are bound up with the possibilities of a rational city which street-building and street settings apparently offer. He thought the dignity of London and the general culture demanded new streets. Because he believed in the possibility of building a civilised solution to mass mobilisation on the roads, he was confident that his spatial understandings could help in substantial way. His convictions exude faith in urban life and optimism about the role of architects. Jacobs' comments are less assured, and refer to the deteriorating understanding of streets in cities caused by confusion about how to accommodate traffic pressures.

Today, we are clear about the costs of congestion and feel the necessity of keeping traffic moving very keenly. The issue is not perceived in the way Lutyens describes as a matter of general dignity or with the misgivings Jacobs alludes to, but just as a plain, boring chore handed over to traffic engineers to deal with. With car numbers around 24.5 million today and the general consensus that construction of new streets is impossible, traffic managers face great difficulties. The brief required by the traffic manager for London to maintain all existing road capacity, a measure preventing countless urban design initiatives across the capital, is evidence.

Below are observations on the variegated effects of traffic management on central London streets. These are set down as a way to get past merely pragmatic assumptions about traffic management. In effect, this is to take traffic management seriously as a form of urban design - more seriously, perhaps, than it asks to be taken.

Main roads and streets

There is a strategy of keeping as much traffic as possible on existing main roads - normally streets dating from the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries. Up to a point this strategy is implemented but since traffic engineers have a big say in deciding whether a street is a main road or not, the situation it is not that simple. It is very significant in this connection that one of the main devices for increasing road capacity - one-way working - increases the need for main roads. It becomes necessary to designate more streets as links in the strategic network, something noticeable in most town centre traffic systems across London. Smaller or lesser streets in these centres are invariably press-ganged into service to complete a one-way circuit. Acton and Swinton Streets are very good examples from Kings Cross, London (see diagram 1).

Traffic systems and town centres

It is noticeable how often one-way systems coincide with centres (diagram 3). The reason for this overlap is that wide streets converge on centres and sections of largish streets arranged close to each other are the best available raw material for one-way systems that the historic city can offer.

Diversion off main streets

Turning out of Chalk Farm Road into Castlehaven Road, traffic enters the Camden one-way system which behaves just like a diversion: it increases local travel distances and takes one away from the main frontage onto streets with no particular attraction or significance. This diversion off the main frontage onto lesser streets is typical of all one-way systems.

Sections of streets

The strategic network in Central London often makes use of just one section of a street. It might be that one section is operated conventionally and the rest incorporated into a one-way system. The southern end of Great Windmill Street next to Piccadilly Circus, and the north end of Goswell Road close to the Angel, are examples of this practice.

Between streets

Streamlining connections between streets - often at right-angles to each other - is a hallmark of priority routing. When it's done, sudden speeding-up tends to occur, accentuating a forced relationship that contradicts the historically intended interconnection of streets. Where, for example, traffic is funnelled off Southampton Row around Russell Square, one can see how the distinction between square and main thoroughfare is forced to yield to the modern idea of smooth and continuous movement.

Neighbourhoods of streets

One problem with road-systems in central London is that they create a "virtual" network of street-spaces sitting within the pattern intended when the original street-plan was laid out, usually in the 17th, 18th and 19th centuries.

Kings Cross provides a prime example of this. An early 19th century neighbourhood of orthogonal streets, squares and a circus, is diminished by having several of its streets locked into the one-way system. The experience of the whole area is dominated by the traffic system which supplants and renders quite secondary the original and extensive ordering of urban space.

Nodes

One aspect of the developing road system is "nodalisation". Parts of the city's expansive network of streets become pedestrian focuses, distinct from the rest of city. The obvious "nodes" are Covent Garden, Camden and Soho (see Diagram 3). The authorities respond to the phenomenon evidenced in these "centres" by giving consideration to pedestrianisation schemes as a way, it is assumed, of clinching their specialness. In the context provided by popular places, a mandate to make "nice" city places is accepted by the authorities leaving, of course, the far more testing issues of managing the whole city to one side. One discerns in all this an over-willingness to think about urban design values very locally, in very particular places, for the sake of being able to do something at all. Urban design seems rather to have accepted detachment from the very big problems of keeping faith with urban civilisation in a modern country.

Pedestrianisation or other such interventions in the street-scene, relate in no obvious way to the larger endeavour of establishing a main road system through intensive, technically informed, management of existing main streets.

Work

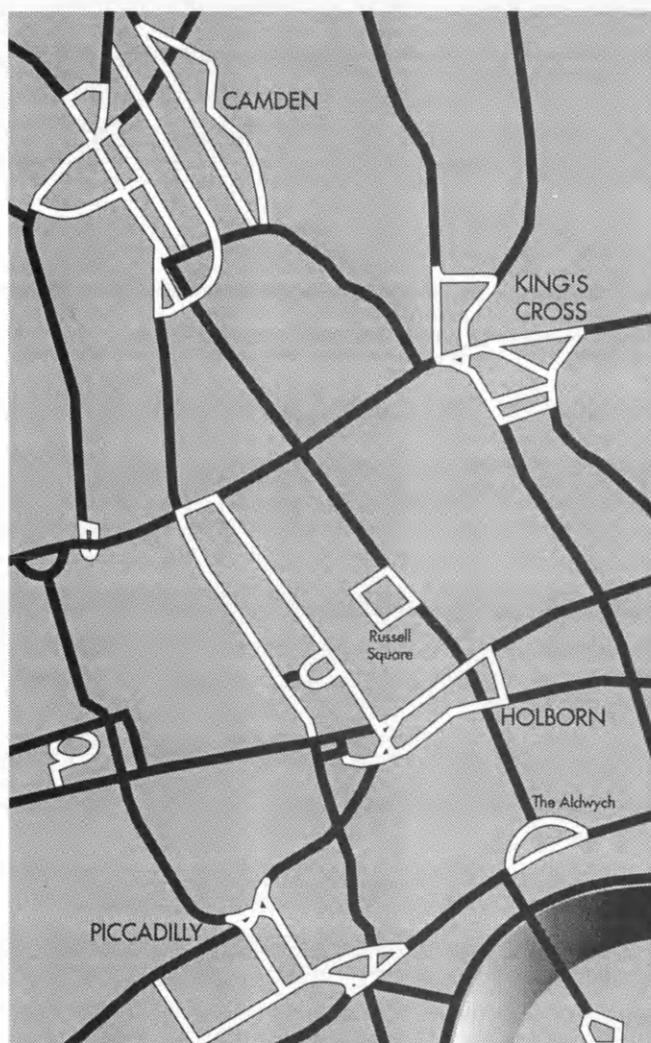
The future which now beckons in so many conversations is one without cars at all. Is this really the future which we are hanging on for? If we look at the city again, it must be

perfectly obvious that whilst there are certainly too many cars, streets are made to carry traffic in the carriageway. This has been the case for many hundreds of years. What the busyness in the carriageway is certainly about is work and business. Certainly, there is the suspicion that the carless future is just another dream about a work-free life, a mere leisure fantasy. Vehicles help different players to make a living and sustain a presence in very difficult circumstances. Organising vehicles away might well mean a radical curtailment of small business and over-dependance on very large-scale concerns capable of sustaining the charade of cities which are not taken up with matters of business and work. One cannot help thinking that all Disney's forays into urban design and place-making are suggestive in this regard, pointing to the replacement of urban and work values by tourist values.

New Streets

Is there any way back to Lutyens' project of not only accommodating "mechanical traffic" but civilising it, with all its promise of spatial renewal in the form of new streets? The answer is no, in the sense imagined by Lutyens, because the culture is no longer interested in the imperial themes which Lutyens' dealt with. However, the issue of "civilising" the city remains live.

What needs to be tackled is the whole complex of ideas that have seen the decline of main streets and their evolution into "simple pipes". The busyness of cities needs to be transformed so it is no longer pathological but what it intuitively ought to be, namely a sign of success and vigour. Current policies which destroy the relationship between passing traffic and the urban setting for the sake of throughput efficiencies need to be reassessed. The traditions of the settings affected by traffic need to be respected. This cannot be done through policies of exclusion. Those only lead to a denatured city



and slow subjugation by tourist values. In effect, the city becomes a collection of brand settings whilst the condition of the rest, the in-between, becomes steadily chronic. Avoiding this outcome - the default version of the city - means main streets must be rethought (see Diagram 2). Above all, participation through the car, whatever form it takes, needs to become far less problematic. Cars are the condition a great percentage of the population requires to be met before stepping out into the public realm. The public realm cannot afford to exclude cars.

So what about new streets? Without opportunities to create new streets and deal with main street space in a robustly creative way, urban design is certainly something of a lame profession. The presumption against new streets which is so strong today needs to be challenged so significant new urban spaces can be conceived. Such new streets should help restore the place of the main street in our urban culture.

It seems clear as well that new streets should, first and foremost, be evaluated spatially. New streets as a concept need to be separated from traffic management so the public understands them primarily as new spaces and not new roads. The urban idea which inspires 17th, 18th and 19th century street layouts could become more discernible through new streets which renew the whole adjacent street network and sense of the city's connectivity of places.

New main streets in cities ought to be strong links between existing and highly significant city destinations. As strong new places, the whole notion of "induced traffic" as negatively-valued busyness, could be replaced by an idea of a busyness simply connoting success. This much is to accept that the city is endemically busy, but that the busyness should be the city's internal traffic, its communing and interacting with itself, the very thing so well represented

by complex networks of streets.

Examples of possible "internal" streets might be a new main street link between the back of the new British Library and Regents Park, and a link between Kingsland basin in Hackney and the area of Islington around St Lukes. Both new streets would provide scope for new frontages and dwellings, and renew existing street networks.

Conclusions

- The decline of street-building needs to be investigated
- Management strategies which manage main streets as "pipes" are highly destructive
- The car is an essential form of participation and as such should be treated as much more than a necessary evil in cities
- Main streets should become a main focus of urban designers energies so they can sustain the overall integrity of large cities such as London
- Urban design will be massively strengthened if new main streets can be restored as a contribution to sustain modern urban life
- Solicitude for pedestrians should be real and not just a means of rendering respectable the separation of urban designers from the most significant problems facing urban culture today. #

Tom Young

Top:

1. Kings Cross area - more streets designated as links in the strategic network.

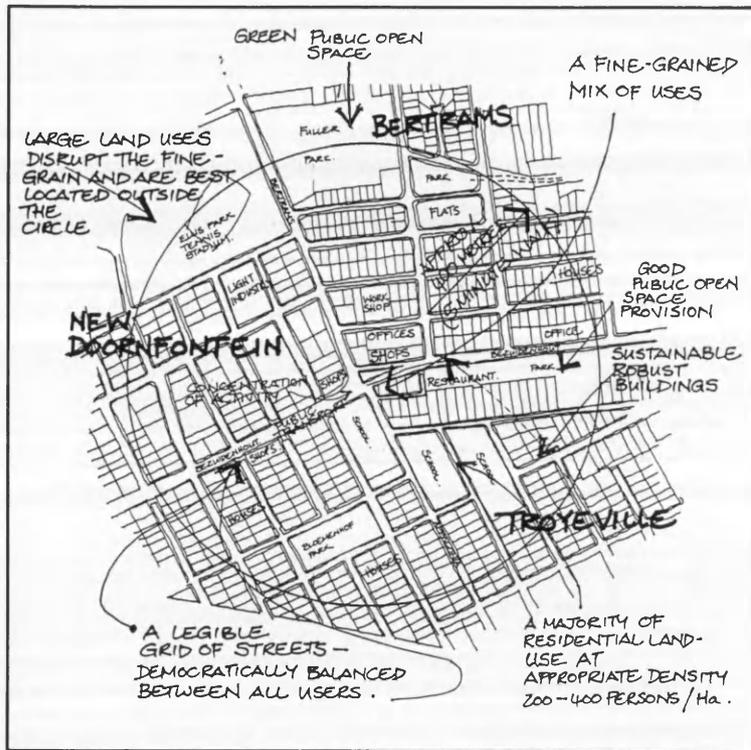
Middle:

2. Major street through area restored as spatial link - part of the interconnectivity of important spaces.

Below:

3. One-way systems shown in white applied to nodal points and commercial centres.

Sustainable City



Gordon Gibson argues that 'good mixed-use' is the essence of 'Sustainable City' and should be at the forefront of Local Agenda 21 policies for cities, towns and villages. The evidence is on our doorstep.

'Sustainable City' is a term that yearns for definition and commitment. Cities should sit four-square in the centre of sustainable urban policy-making. Paradoxically, the implementation of the high politics of the 1992 Rio Accords is placed in the hands of 'Local Agenda 21' Committees, often remote from the social and economic debates that dominate the concerns of our political institutions. What have become the accepted sustainability criteria - energy consumption, renewable resources and protection of the natural environment - rarely impact on the developers and highway engineers that have been to the forefront of post-war inner city renewal.

Successful settlements demonstrate elements of sustainability; the qualities of the urban fabric, its form and composition, have a direct bearing on the social and economic success of urban life. One measure of 'good' town is that it lasts; many of the best examples regularly cited are places of medieval origin. Urban Designers can complement the endeavours of the Habitat Conferences by giving richness to these criteria and qualities.

Examples of urban form in Johannesburg and in New South Wales demonstrate that contemporary theories for new settlements' can usefully be applied to the repair of the *existing* urban fabric. Design briefs need to embrace the *urban* qualities of sustainable settlements, and, research and practice that combine 'walkability' and access to public transport systems begin to construct useful defining characteristics of a 'good mixed-use town'. In many cases, the quality of local districts begins with a concentration of facilities at their centres.

Accessing basic daily needs

The concept of 'access to daily needs' provides measurable indicators of the extent to which settlements provide social and economic sustainability for urban residents.

What 'basic daily needs' should be accessible within a reasonable walking distance of the home? Local people should decide the finer detail, but local authorities are best placed to ensure the essential elements of sustainable settlements. The planning system can oversee an appropriate mix of shops, access to employment, schools, health services, public phones and toilets, recreation spaces and amenities for different age groups, access to the wider city and/or the rural environment.

An example of mixed-use town adapted from inner city Johannesburg can be compared with bustling inner city suburbs throughout the world. At the centre, there is a fine-grained mix of uses - shops, cafés, offices, homes: a self-defining centre of

local activity. At the edges are located larger land-users - in this case, public parks and large sports facilities; often these are commercial and industrial activities or large educational campuses. Closer to the centre, large land-users tend to disrupt permeability and access to amenities. The major ingredient, essential for success, is a relatively high density residential component providing market stability for social and economic activities.

A notional circle represents five minutes walking distance (about 400 metres) from the centre of activity of local districts. Insofar as access and mobility should imply some degree of affordability, dependence on a car can no longer be assumed to be an essential ingredient of daily life. At the edges of a district emerges a sufficient market to sustain the occasional corner shop, perhaps serving the needs of residents at the edges of two districts. Often, the edge of a new district begins to take form. In Johannesburg, perhaps subject to the worst excesses of the clearances that, even without apartheid, so changed the form of our inner cities, it is remarkable how these definable local districts consistently step through the city.

Residents and the local economy

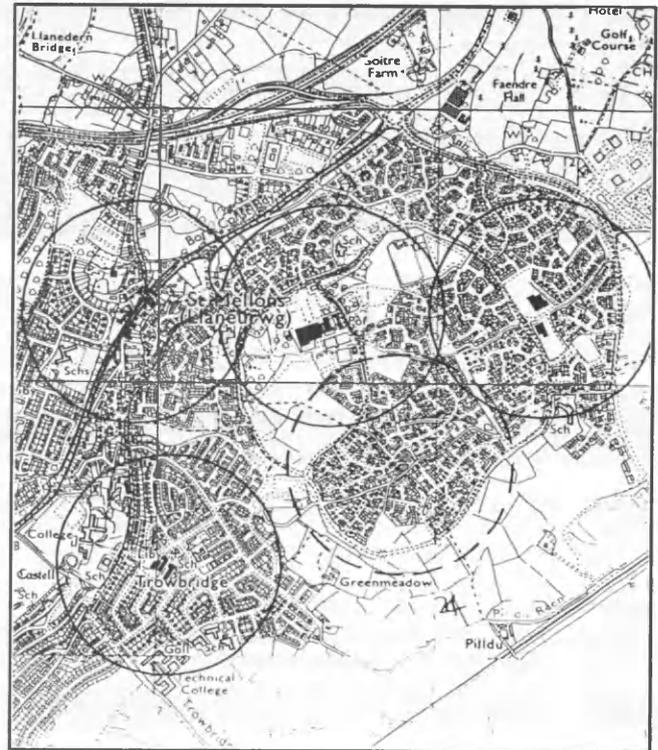
A study of urban morphology often explains why traditional inner city areas have broken down. In Newtown, just west of Johannesburg city centre, and in Jeppetown to the south east, overlapping circles indicate a breakdown in urban form. Communities wrestle with a legacy of clearance and a pre-eminence given to road systems. Districts have insufficient

Far left:
Typical mixed-use
district,
Johannesburg.²

Left:
Part of Johannesburg
showing local
districts, circles are
800m diameter.²

Right:
Urban Design
Scheme for Newtown,
Johannesburg. The
'Mandela Bridge'
creates a new north-
south movement line.

Far right:
Trowbridge and St
Mellons in Cardiff,
South Wales. The
broken line circle
denotes south St
Mellons which has no
local centre.



residential density to sustain a local social and commercial economy. The distortion of evolved urban form also dramatically increases motor-vehicle dependence and further disenfranchises those without access to cars. Johannesburg's ongoing combi-taxi wars reflect the demand of millions of black Africans for an integrated public transport system.

Another fundamental characteristic of sustainable local districts is that they have evolved with a direct relationship to the 'global' urban system. Villages tend to form at 'events' on major regional movement routes; urban centres focus on city-wide routes. Social and commercial activity, given stability by local residents, is made more viable by access to through-movement and the wider market. The centres of districts become nodal points for transport systems that permit access to the city, to employment, to recreation, to friends, all from within five minutes walk of home. Settlements that follow these principles have been shown to engender a dramatic reduction in car dependence.

In Newtown, the city authorities seek to establish an 'African cultural quarter'. Such aspirations are not achieved by force of will, they depend on a rich mix of urban ingredients beginning with a relatively high residential density. Urban design analysis of Johannesburg demonstrates how traditional form can provide the framework both for the establishment of renewed districts and to inform regeneration proposals for the city centre. The proposed 'Mandela' bridge over the rail artery would strengthen the north-south form of the city centre and underpin the rationale for reconstitution of a residential base.

This approach also applies to suburban centres: in the east of Cardiff, Trowbridge is a self-contained community where people live within reasonable walking distance of the local shops. Despite many evident weaknesses, the centre of Trowbridge is a popular gathering place for the local community. But Trowbridge is disconnected from the city arteries (Newport Road). Local people cannot rely on through traffic to reinforce their neighbourhood facilities; neither can they readily access the global system. The viability of district amenities is largely dependent on local people.

In neighbouring St Mellons, this problem has been countered by the provision of large retail centres, designed for car access. Being located on the edges of local communities and out of reasonable walking distance of many homes, the 'centres' are hardly convenient for pedestrians. Typical of many housing estates, it is often low-income households that find themselves remote from their local centres and other problems ensue. Tempting comparable retail development in the gap between south St Mellons and Trowbridge would disrupt the delicate balance in the Trowbridge community.

Seeking a Sustainable City

In seeking to locate the debate about 'Sustainable City' on the terrain of people and how we live, urban design can offer a rationale for the structure and composition of local communities and their relation to the global system. Settlements evolve as an aggregation of local communities and, fortunately, there remains sufficient evidence for us to judge the good and bad

around us. A reassessment of the facilities and opportunities that should be accessible to local communities, of the residential densities of successful settlements and of the provision for affordable mobility between them, puts the definition of 'good' mixed-use town at the heart of the implementation of Local Agenda 21. #

Gordon Gibson

References

1. For example, Transit oriented Developments (TODs) as espoused by Duany and Plater-Zyberk and Peter Calthorpe in the USA and Newman and Kenworthy in Australia. There is an excellent review of this theory and practice in Paul Murrain's 'Urban Exposition: Look Back and Learn', in Hayward and McGlynn (1993), *Making Better Places*, Butterworth.
2. From Thorne and Gibson (1994) *Urban Design: Johannesburg Inner City Strategy*, Johannesburg City Council.

Urban Design on the Internet

Catherine Trammer

UDQ mentioned RUDI (Resource for Urban Design Information) in UDQ 58 and UDQ 62, and the Urban Design Group has been an active supporter of the project since its debut in January 1996. RUDI's three year task is to build a high quality world wide web (WWW) resource for the academic sector (teaching, learning and research) and for professionals, and its aims include the promotion of good practice in urban design. It is funded until December 1998 by the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC), of the UK Higher Education Funding Councils and the British Library Research and Innovation Centre, with computer equipment supplied by Sun Microsystems. Twenty months into the project RUDI has made considerable progress, and this article describes some of its achievements and current services.

RUDI and the Urban Design Group

The enthusiasm of the UDG for the project from its early stages led firstly to the digitisation of back issues of UDQ, from issue 53 onwards, and these went live on the web in July 1996. Issues continue to be added, but usually about six months after publication. The journal was shortly followed by the UDG Source Book, all of which was included except the personal membership list and constitution. UDG events are now notified to RUDI and included in its Diary of Events. Effectively then, RUDI acts as a 'homepage' website for the Urban Design Group, and hopes to do more to promote the Group through its pages.

Quality in Town & Country

We were fortunate to secure the Department of the Environment's Quality in Town and Country and its Urban Design Campaign documents, including an electronic version of the catalogue of the DoE's Urban Design Exhibition held at the RIBA in September 1996. By putting this on the web, we gave access to a fuller version than the paper catalogue, and have subsequently acquired additional materials relating to two of the 21 exhibited schemes. One criticism voiced by some exhibitors was that materials selected for display by the DoE did not always represent projects as fully as they would have liked. RUDI offered them the opportunity to display more information and to a wider audience.

Original contributions

RUDI was always conceived as a site which would welcome original and previously unpublished materials, and allow them to reach a wider audience - rather like a journal. At present these appear in two areas of the resource. The first requires a standard format for short illustrated pieces, detailing the issues relevant to particular 'Case Studies' which demonstrate urban issues, problems or solutions. Existing case studies include Angell Town and EDAW's proposals for rebuilding the centre of Manchester. RUDI has also embarked on a programme of researching and writing up 'classic' case studies, such as Broadgate, Birmingham centre and some of the 'Grands Projets' in Paris. The second, *Rudiments*, provides a location for longer, more academic or theoretical articles, and requires a reviewing process to ensure quality, which is currently provided by members of the RUDI Steering Group and staff from the Joint Centre for Urban Design at Oxford Brookes University. Rudiments at present includes papers on mathematics and urban design, deconstruction, and urban forms in the USA.

Educational matters

Since RUDI is funded by the Higher Education Funding Councils through JISC, materials which are suitable for teaching and learning are seen as a priority. The relevance of urban design practice to professional education means that case study materials as described above form a ready source of material for use in student projects. The extensive Barcelona case study was prepared as a teaching resource specifically for de Montfort University students, but is now used by several other courses which take students to Barcelona for field courses and project work. Bibliographies on topics such as the Congress for New Urbanism, Edge City and other aspects of urban design are proving valuable to student users, and those considering studying urban design can easily get the UDG's information about college courses in the UK, which RUDI updates between editions of the Source Book.

Community matters

As the number of households accessing the WWW grows through technological advances in digital broadcasting, so will the potential for using websites as part of the democratic process. Enabling community participation in urban design at a local level could be a regular feature of internet provision.

Right:
The Urban Design
Group page
<http://rudi.herts.ac.uk/ppo/udg/udg.html>

Right:
DoE Urban Design Campaign
Exhibition - case study location
map: the map is 'clickable'
http://rudi.herts.ac.uk/ukgi/qitc/ude/ude_map.html

Right:
Case Study: Rebuilding
Manchester (EDAW)
<http://rudi.herts.ac.uk/cs/manchester/maned1.html>

Netscape - [The Urban Design Group: Resources on RUDI]

File Edit View Go Bookmarks Options Directory Window Help

Back Forward Home Edit Reload Images Open Print Find Stop

NetSite: <http://rudi.heits.ac.uk/ppp/udg/udg.html>

URBAN DESIGN GROUP

The Urban Design Group: Resources on RUDI

- [Urban Design Source Book, 1996.](#)
Contains full details of the Urban Design Group, its history, constitution and aims, as well as details of courses in the UK in the subject, practices and has a comprehensive index of articles published in the Groups journal.
- [Urban Design Quarterly.](#)
Contains the current and recent editions of the Urban Design Group's journal. You can view the index or search the contents.
- [Urban Design Group Events](#)
- [The Second UDG Student Exhibition](#)

RUDI gratefully acknowledges the support, advice and co-operation of the Urban Design Group: in particular for allowing publication of the *Source Book* and the *Urban Design Quarterly*.

To join the group, print out the [membership form](#) and send to:

The Secretary, UDG Office, 6 Ashbrook Courtyard, Westbrook St, Blewbury, Oxon OX11 9QH

Document Done

Netscape - [Urban Design Exhibition: Case Study Location Map]

File Edit View Go Bookmarks Options Directory Window Help

Back Forward Home Edit Reload Images Open Print Find Stop

NetSite: http://rudi.heits.ac.uk/ukg/qtc/ude_map.html

Urban Design Exhibition

Case Study Location Map

Click on a bullet or a place name to see its case study

Document Done

Netscape - [Rebuilding Manchester: Contents and Background]

File Edit View Go Bookmarks Options Directory Window Help

Back Forward Home Edit Reload Images Open Print Find Stop

NetSite: <http://rudi.heits.ac.uk/cs/manchester/maned1.htm>

Case Study Rebuilding Manchester: the Competition Winning Proposal by EDAW

- [Background facts](#)
- [Main economic and environmental elements of the scheme](#)
- [The masterplan description](#)
- [Development projects](#)
- [The public realm](#)
- [Transport strategy](#)
- [The masterplan team](#)
- [Images](#)

Document Done

RUDI is at present running an experimental service for the Oxpens Quarter Initiative in Oxford (an action planning day held in June) which summarises the issues involved and allows anyone interested to forward from the web page comments to the design consultants.

Links to other relevant Internet sites

RUDI staff regularly investigate other websites to assess their relevance to urban design, and make electronic links to those which we feel have value to our users. There is considerable variety in the size, scope and content of the sites to which we link, ranging from that of one Paisley housing estate, through the Congress for the New Urbanism, to PAIRC, a huge 'gateway' site which links to 4582 other sites connected with architecture or urbanism. In the course of creating pages anywhere in the RUDI resource, links are made where appropriate - to mailboxes as well as webpages, thus creating a vast global network of potential contacts for the user.

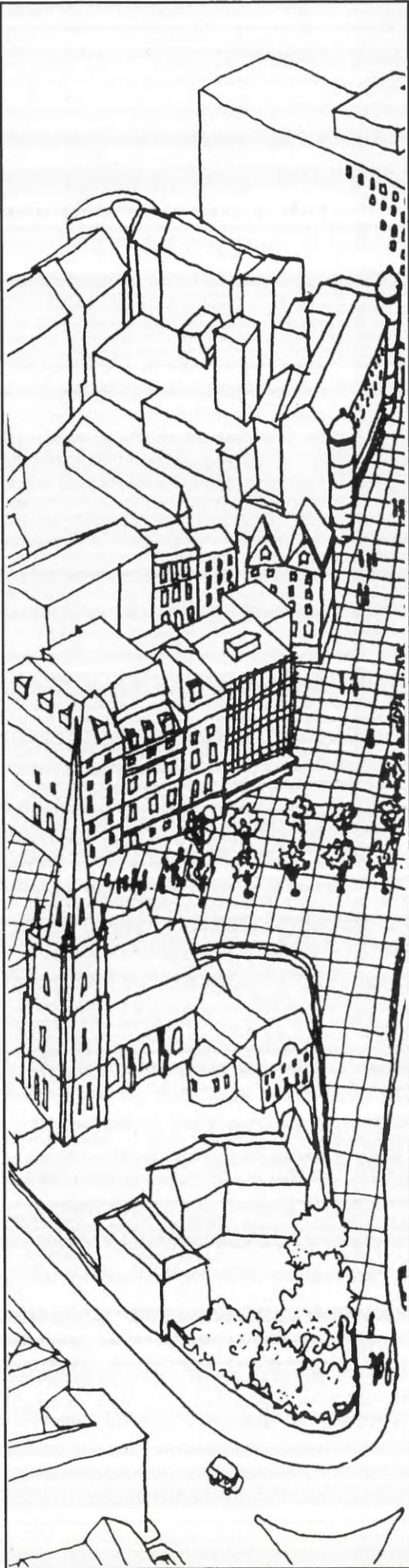
Searching RUDI

A powerful search engine on the RUDI site enables users to trawl through the site for relevant information, which searches every 'document' and lists hits. There may be more than one hit from a single document, so the hit list can be extensive. Another search engine is in development which will work with a keyword system of labelling the documents, thus facilitating more precise searching for particular subjects. A vocabulary of urban design keywords is being created alongside the searching mechanism.

Future developments

Funding for the project ceases in December 1998, and its future depends on finding alternative sources of finance. In addition to making applications to a range of possible funding bodies, we are planning to earn some of our keep by becoming an internet bureau for urban design practices and other organisations - creating and displaying high quality webpages for those who do not have the expertise or time to create their own. Some practices have already indicated their interest and we would be glad to hear from others. #

*Prepared by Catherine Tranmer in conjunction with the RUDI Project Team
Alan Reeve, Rowena Rouse, Bill Worthington.*



The Future of Urban Design Education

Georgia Butina Watson

Topic

The conference held in April this year on 'The Future of Urban Design Education: Bridging the Gaps', organised jointly by the Joint Centre for Urban Design at Oxford Brookes University and the Urban Design Group, was initiated to address a number of the gaps that exist in making better places:

- between those involved in the production of the public realm
- between those involved in the consumption of the public realm
- between producers and consumers
- between education and practice
- between the various professions
- between humans and other biological systems.

This issue of UDQ contains four papers given at the conference, three of which directly relate to the ways in which urban design can be developed as a stand-alone discipline or as an element within existing courses. The fourth paper considers ways in which sustainability issues can be integrated positively into the planning process. Georgia Butina Watson provides an overview of the ways in which urban design education can bridge the gaps which currently exist.

Bridging the Gaps

There has been much debate recently about the future role of urban design in 'making better places'. This debate was initially steered by a relatively small group of academics, researchers, critics and practitioners largely concerned with the quality of the public realm. The numbers have increased over the past several years including now a much wider audience consisting of central government ministers and their advisors, journalists and a variety of local community and amenity groups. The current popularity of urban design also owes much to the 'Quality in Town and Country' initiative (1994-1996) which was the first time that urban design matters were being discussed at the national level covering a broad spectrum of issues and case study examples. The initial analysis of the responses to the 'Quality' document (JCUD, 1995) generated the first national Urban Design Campaign which produced a variety of practical examples in partnership with a broad range of actors: local authorities, developers, landowners, communities and others. Both of these initiatives also generated revised Planning Policy Guidelines (PPGs), notably PPG1, which for the first time mentions urban design matters.

We should not overlook various local government initiatives either. There is much evidence of British cities undergoing dramatic change. Birmingham and Glasgow can be seen to lead the way but equally important are many local neighbourhoods such as Hulme in Manchester that demonstrate radical shifts in attitude and in urban design principles employed today to make our cities safer and more enjoyable places to work and live in. The practices of urban design briefing and guidance have also helped in developing clearer ideas about which urban design qualities matter to everyday users and how best to integrate existing and newly built areas.

A large number of private practices have also contributed significantly to reshaping of our cities. Broadgate in London, Gloucester Green in Oxford and many other examples provide sufficient evidence to note the changing pattern in development processes mainly in the ways that open space provision and its management have been created and maintained. But probably the most influential have been many local communities that have forged their own development agenda and have voiced their concerns. Communities in Angell Town, Brixton, Birmingham and Nottingham led the way and many other local communities followed their examples.

Equally significant is the number of urban design courses; national and international conferences; research and practice based consultancy projects; the number of refereed journals; books and other forms of publications; as well as the first WWW urban design resource database known as RUDI.

Urban Design Courses

Urban design initially evolved at the end of 1960s as a critique of the built environment produced by traditionally trained architects/planners/landscape architects and the host of other professionals involved in the production of the public realm. Whilst architects were generally concerned with the design of individual buildings, planners focused primarily on social, political and managerial aspects of the built environment. Much fell through this architecture/planning/landscape architecture gap and other professional gaps and each profession blamed the other for declining urban quality. There was an apparent need for a new discipline to fill this gap. As a response to this need a small number of post-graduate courses were set up in Europe and in America in the early 1970s including also our own course at the Joint Centre for Urban Design (JCUD) at Oxford Brookes University, which was established in 1972 in order to develop theoretical concepts and practical skills with a view to produce better and more pleasant places to live in. Urban design therefore initially developed as an attempt to build bridges between different design and planning professions and to focus on the issues that had been ignored in the past, ie. the quality of the public realm.

In the 1970s urban design was defined by SSRC to be 'located at the interface between architecture, landscape architecture and town planning, drawing on the design traditions of architecture and landscape architecture, and the environmental management and social science tradition of contemporary planning' (SSRC). Equally so it was, and essentially still is, three-dimensional design at both the local and city wide scales and it is concerned with human and perceptual aspects of the urban form (RIBA, 1970).

Despite the existence of various courses, some urban designers still feel that the traditional professional disciplines largely fail to address the issues involved in designing the public realm and only a few focus their attention on the overall effects of the particular interventions in the urban scene: the whole place, which is what forms the real, concrete setting of its users' lives.

The key reason for existence of most urban design courses today is to address the problems of urban quality which arise from the professional fragmentation. By its nature, urban design is therefore an interdisciplinary activity; and urban design education reflects this by attracting students from many different backgrounds, and by embodying an integrative philosophy, bringing together theory and practice from many different fields.

Individual schools and programmes have developed their unique educational foci largely depending upon the expertise and interests of staff they employ; the profile of students they attract; and more recently by institutional, professional and research councils' guidelines (ESRC, EPSRC, RTP, RIBA) generated to ultimately endorse the professional recognition of courses or to provide funding. Although there is a variety of approaches to teaching urban design, there are signs that certain themes and methods have reached a degree of consensus across different schools and programmes of study.

Over the past twenty five years the educational focus of many courses in Great Britain has been ultimately a practical one: we invariably seek to equip students to intervene effectively in the production of an improved public realm. A variety of conceptual frameworks and analytical tools have been developed and employed by a number of schools over the years. Some most commonly shared are those of townscape, imageability, space syntax and responsive environments approaches. Another key aspect of the current urban design training programmes is that we teach students to become reflective practitioners enabling them to value what our forefathers have created for us and to use this knowledge in creating other places that would ultimately fulfil a variety of users' needs.

In order to communicate urban design ideas we also teach our graduates a variety of practical skills -from graphic and design skills to verbal and computer skills. The range and nature of such skills presently employed by urban designers need to take into consideration the variety of actors concerned: government officers, local politicians, other professionals, but above all a great diversity of local community groups.

Because urban design students come from a variety of backgrounds we have to teach them a range of complementary skills so that they can work together and work more efficiently in multi-professional and quite often in multi-cultural team situations. Since the urban design educational market depends largely on funding provision that shifts from one world region to another we constantly need to remind ourselves of the changing needs of graduates. International students bring their own wealth of experience enriching values and perceptions and we have to bear this in mind when teaching 'good urban design principles' that might be totally inappropriate in their own cultural milieu.

Today, we can identify about twenty UK based urban design courses. This is still a relatively small number in comparison to the numbers of the mainstream professional courses in the fields of architecture, planning and landscape architecture. One should not overlook either a significant number of urban design courses being set up internationally; from Western and Eastern Europe to North, Central and Latin Americas and South-East Asia. This is not surprising since the international development market moves freely from one world region to another employing multi-national teams and producing similar patterns of urban form. In order to counteract international anonymity where parts of Hong Kong look the same as parts of Kuala Lumpur or Toronto, some of these new locally based urban design courses aim to provide unique local and culturally specific solutions. As urban design educators and practitioners we are faced with a complex task of redefining our own values and positions in such culturally diverse international markets.

Bridging the Gaps

Despite the fact that urban design was initially set up to make bridges between various professional disciplines over the past two decades we have witnessed further specialisations and demarcation of professional territories. This is also endorsed by the professional institutes who guide the content and control quality of the mainstream professional courses. On the other hand highly skilled professionals defend their own territories and often fail to work collaboratively with other built environment professionals or the users. Important issues are still falling through the gaps between specialist areas. Because the urban public realm affects everyone it is important that we overcome not only the existing inter and intra professional barriers but also overcome other barriers that exist between different actors.

The key questions that still need answering are the issues of the nature and role of future urban design education. Further in-depth discussions are needed between various actors concerned with the production and consumption of the built environment - developers, politicians, funding organisations, the central and local government, practice based professionals, educators and not forgetting the users.

As well as fuelling the intellectual development, I see this process of continual cultural and educational renewal as the only feasible strategy for survival in an increasingly global market for urban design education, within the tightening context of UK educational resources. There is a synergy here between what we feel we ought to do, and what in any case we have to do in order to survive. From both perspectives, we see ourselves as building bridges: bridges between users and producers, and bridges between fragmented professional worlds. What we have to construct is urban design as a bridge between cultures. #

Georgia Butina Watson

Urban Design and Planning

John Dean

John Dean presents a view of urban design from the point of view of one engaged in town and country planning. He sees a lamentable gap in the practice and theory of town and country planning and it is there because the place of urban design is not fully developed, perhaps not even fully recognised. This gap needs to be made good.

John Dean emphasised that his presentation is a personal view and should not be interpreted as representing the policies or the outlook of the Royal Town Planning Institute. It is also a view shaped by many years' experience in planning practice in local government.

The topic of the conference is timely because of the prominence given to urban design in the second review of the Planning Policy Guidance Notes No. 1 published in February this year. In this, many must feel that every credit must be given to John Gummer for the efforts he has made to stimulate a greater interest in design and ensure that it is more fully recognised within the context of town and country planning.

50 Years of Planning

While the importance of the legislation of 1932 and 1943 can be too readily overlooked, we are this year witnessing the 50th anniversary of a most remarkable piece of legislation, the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947. Its code for land use control and the preparation of development plans has proved remarkably durable, for although the complementary idea of the recoupment of development values embodied in the Act was soon abandoned when a Conservative government came to power - and resurrected twice and then abandoned with later political changes - the planning code, with its powerful control of development, has not only survived but has been praised as having "served the country well" by Mrs Thatcher's government.

It might be helpful to touch upon the strengths and weaknesses of the planning system in this anniversary year, although space here permits only a few comments. Whilst delays in both the provision of up to date policies and in the determination of planning applications remain severe problems, the achievements made possible by the system deserve note.

Foremost among these must be the benefits which stem from the way in which the potential excesses of a free market in development are curbed. This comes not only from the refusal of permission for development which can affect people adversely but also from the way in which the imposition of planning conditions tempers otherwise adverse effects. Anyone who has experience of managing the planning system is aware of this moderating effect and they will also be aware of how the system suppresses market excesses. It is also a system which protects the less well off. The rich will always be able to buy 'amenity' but the planning system goes a long way to ensure some protection for everyone.

There have also been notable successes in 'strategic' planning. At its most modest it has allowed the programming of infrastructure investment, for example, at a relatively modest level, in the renewal or extension of a village school, or, on a grander scale, in the provision and laying of a multi million pound trunk sewer.

Both in the control of development and in its strategic policy making and implementation, the successes of the planning system tend to be 'silent' or unremarked; they go without praise and are taken for granted, perhaps rightly so. Mistakes are a different matter and these, we may be certain, will be the subject of much publicity.

Any planning officer, with ultimate responsibility for recommendations in the control of development, will be conscious that, over the years, among thousands of judgements there will be some to be viewed with regret. Some incidence of error and bad judgement in the operation of a complex system is unavoidable. But outright perverse recommendations and decisions are another matter and these cannot be excused. As we have seen in certain notorious cases, they do occur and many might argue that the system needs a formalised method of quality control.

Importance of Urban Design

But I suggest there is a serious error of omission in the operation of the planning system and we are all culpable in this. It lies in the professional neglect of urban design and the opportunities which better urban design policies offer to enhance our efforts in shaping the environment. How many development plans can be said to include fully worked out policies on urban design? Have the professions given to this subject the weight it deserves in promotion, research and development?

It is now some ten years or more since 'Responsive Environments' was published (Bentley and Others (1985) *Responsive Environments*, Oxford, Butterworth Architecture) yet how far have its ideas and theories been assimilated, or examined and tested, within the professions? The neglect of urban design is not necessarily perceived as a weakness of the planning system by the public, our customers, because its potential has rarely been properly demonstrated. Yet it is essential, in promoting a more satisfactory environment, that we should work to see its role in local planning enhanced.

It should also be an important consideration in strategic planning. So often we have seen, over the years, structure plan proposals for the location of growth being made without regard to the potential of a particular area satisfactorily to absorb growth and at the same time allow it to be accommodated within an overall design concept.

This absence of the design factor can be noted in much suburban expansion, where the strategic process can easily lead to one more 'housing area' stuck on to an area of existing development without first testing the effects of change within a local design framework. The strategic allocation of ground should take place within a relatively refined iterative process in which local capacity is tested by, among other things, the prospects of producing good urban design. It is also a matter of scale as well as location.

The planning process does, and must, enable 'the market' to operate but does this mean being invariably led by it in terms of design? That is what has been happening so often and the results cannot be said to result in the best we are capable of achieving. It is, of course, difficult to persuade many that results could be better when, for example, the products of the volume house builders sell without difficulty, when a market demand is being demonstrably met. Equally, in the absence of a recognised body of urban design principles, it is difficult to dissuade councillors and planners from agreeing to a reduction in the 'public realm' if they see in such a loss a means of attracting investment in a town centre. But with a wider commitment within the professions to the value of urban design, it is likely that the case for a more sensitive response to development proposals would rapidly gain ground. A joint commitment on the part of architects, planners, landscape architects and, one hopes, engineers, combined with the official backing provided by PPG1 could start to shape a better environment. For the planners, a starting point should be development plans.

Urban design neglected

My comments that follow are based on personal impressions and it must be acknowledged that no objective research has been used to check these.

Up to about the mid 1960s proportionally many had come into town planning from the construction professions, mainly from architecture, surveying and municipal engineering. Urban design was then relatively prominent in town and country planning. There were some notable achievements and skilled practitioners but ideas were often at best naive, at worst the product of unthinking egocentricity. The garden city/suburb concept was very much in use - it still is, yet further modified - and in the urban areas experiments were tried which owed much to the ideas of Le Corbusier. In their application these ideas were often debased, both by market interpretation and through official application. In the use of the planning

system, much of the application of design ideas was pursued without any regard to social and economic consequences. The result was that among planners there was a strong reaction against any design imperative. The urban designer became suspect.

In planning education an emphasis on socio-economic considerations gained ground and the numbers entering the profession without a dual qualification grew as first degree courses in planning became more widely available. As old concepts became discredited, ideas and research in urban design were neglected rather than given the inter-disciplinary emphasis and progressive interpretation they needed. The growth in the use of the private car and the ready acceptance of its environmental dominance was accepted leading to a preoccupation with Design Bulletin No 32. This, coupled with a 'market led' approach in much new development largely represents planning orthodoxy, such as it is, today. Some of us believe that this could be changed for the better not by the intervention of planners in design proposals on an ad hoc basis, although this will probably remain necessary for a long time, but by the establishment of firm urban design principles in development plans.

Planning education

The planning education built up over the past three decades or so has been sound and successful. Shaped by the RTP's requirements for accreditation, it now provides a basic core together with access to specialisms to promote research led and more intensive elements within courses. Practitioners and graduates tend to point to inadequacies, for there is always a case for adding to the curriculum; then you must decide what should be left out. Some of us would claim that practice has improved, that there is now a great deal more sensitivity in social and economic considerations and that this outlook stems from the changes in planning education since the 1960s. But increasingly, in relation to the demands of practice, an accredited first degree course provides only general skills and education. In addition to a demand for experience in diverse subject areas to be absorbed into planning, such as ecology and the economics of development, the best practice indicates a need for a higher development of the skills and knowledge ordinarily falling within the functions of a planning department. Conservation and urban design stand out in this last connection; in a planning department of any significant size, the functions are often fulfilled by the same people.

Annual statistics produced by the Chartered Institute of Public Accountancy (CIPFA, 1997, Planning and Development Statistics, London, the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and accountancy) enables us to gain some impression of the relative deployment of local government staff. There are marked variations within their returns, usually dependent upon the size of the authority, but national totals for England and Wales show the importance of 'environmental improvement and conservation' as a planning activity. Total deployment, that is both professional and administrative staff, is highest, as you would expect, in development control, with in excess of 4,000 people; second comes planning policy which requires about 2,500 people, and environmental improvement and conservation work accounts for about 1,700 staff. It is difficult to see that a conventional planning education can adequately fulfil this last 'demand' and, of course, there is always scope within other major functions for urban design skills.

Therefore we need to recognise the need for increased specialist expertise within planning, not least in urban design. Whether this is best achieved through post-graduate courses or by a shift in emphasis within first degree courses is a matter for debate. Some of us would argue that there is room for both. At Nottingham, a 3+1 course is now firmly established, and recognised by the RTPI, in which about half of all credits in both first and second years are directly design related, any emphasis in the third and final years being dependent upon the choice of specialised study. The Nottingham course reveals a remarkable direction in planning education, one which should be welcomed. Tribute should also be paid to the specialised courses established at Oxford Brookes, not least the MA in Urban design.

Challenge within planning

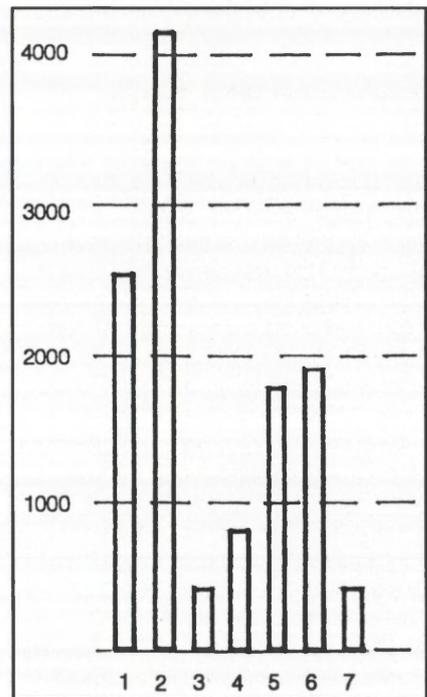
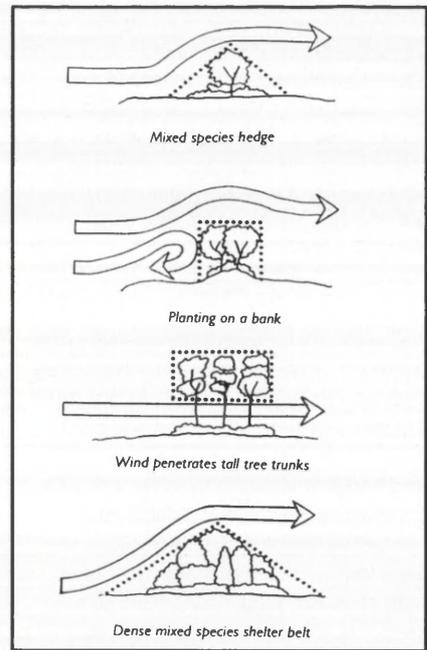
An increasing need to specialise, combined with a tendency for new groups to form outside the RTPI, for example in transport planning and conservation, raises issues surrounding the definition of contemporary professional planning practice. Does the RTPI, need a divisional structure to recognise these trends, and, of course, more fully to promote specialised research and educational standards? This could soon be a key issue. At the same time the planning profession needs to consider the case for embracing a wider view of what constitutes the appropriate skills needed fully to undertake the role now expected of those engaged in town and country planning. The case for a more 'holistic' approach is heightened by the importance now attached to environmental considerations. A good development plan

today should express priorities which reflect a concern for, among other things, energy efficiency and biodiversity. For the future, the conventional development plan as it has been known since 1968 might become an instrument which will form part of a wider environmental policy formulated primarily within a science based environmentalism.

There should be nothing to fear in this. Planning for amenity, for a fair distribution of resources, to meet acknowledged demands for development and for rational land use relationships would remain, but they would be formulated within a wider context. These prospects are very challenging but they should be faced. A narrowly based professional conservatism should not stand in their way. Once it is accepted that land use and urban design should be planned to fulfil and complement the aims of environmental improvement, the sheer breadth of the factors involved in policy making suggest that expertise and skills must be combined and that the respective professions should work together. No single discipline has, or can have, all the requisite skills. Whilst much is clear in what the respective professions have to offer in any complementary endeavours, it is also clear that any notion of precisely defined boundaries or territories, is out of date. Therefore the question which must be addressed is how the professions work together. The sooner a start is made the better; there is so much to explore. The obvious subject for examination on which a start could be made is urban design and the signs are that both the RIBA and the RTPI could move quickly on this. We must hope that the Landscape Institute, the surveyors and the engineers would also see the importance of their potential role in any such move.

Responsive employers

While there is everything to be gained by closer links between the professions and the establishment of common environmental aims, enlightened practices could only be realised if those responsible for the employment of professional skills establish a complementary role and sense of duty. An obvious example is in urban design and also in conservation and another lies in landscape design/ecology. If employers recognised the importance of special skills in these subjects, and the indicators already quoted from the CIPFA figures should encourage them to do so, then their support for a common approach by the professional institutes would provide an invaluable stimulus to the promotion of higher standards.



Above: Comparative statistics showing the deployment of local government planning staff in the following areas:

1. Policy
 2. Devt. Control
 3. Appeals
 4. Enforcement
 5. Environmental Improvement & Conservation
 6. Economic Development
 7. Land Reclamation
- Source: CIPFA 1996/97

Top: Extract from Cardiff County Planning Department guidance on energy efficient design.

Time for Change

Jon Rowland

Although there are notable exceptions, the outlook in this cannot be optimistic as far as local government is concerned. The private sector probably has a better record - in facing a particular project consultancies tend to buy in appropriate skills and readily accept a multi-disciplinary approach. Some of us with a local government background might also point to the preoccupation in many places with 'management', and how this can be potentially damaging to the idea of technical excellence.

Sustainable principles

It would be disastrous if in seeking design principles which reflect the values of 'sustainable development', we were to neglect the opportunities to promote a more 'holistic' approach. For example there is now a great deal of interest in passive solar design and, to their credit, Cardiff County Council have adopted supplementary planning guidance setting out the design principles they would wish to see incorporated in new housing development. (Evans, E. (1995) Supplementary Planning Guidance: Energy Efficient Design for New Residential Development. Cardiff County Planning Department.)

Interest in energy efficiency in building design and in town planning is increasing and appropriate development policies are being encouraged by the government. Newark and Sherwood District Council are promoting developments in their areas which could be exemplars of energy efficient design and development, a fine example being the proposed Sherwood Energy Village at Ollerton. There will be other examples of such initiatives and more are likely in the near future. At Leicester, a comprehensive open space policy based on ecological principles has been part of planning policy for more than ten years and has been successfully operated.

We should not lose the opportunity in such enterprises and in the promotion and development of environmental improvement in its widest sense to ensure that the best urban design principles and skills figure in all that we do. #

John Dean

Jon Rowland, at the time Chairman of the UDG, gives his views on the state of urban design education and ways in which standards could be improved and puts forward a ten point agenda for change.

Two years ago, as part of a Know-How-Fund project to provide strategic advice to the Ministry of Economy in Prague, I was asked my views on professional institutes. Emerging from the command economy of the communist period, the issue of the role of the professional in the new market had arisen. This was reinforced by the sudden advent of bewildering display boards that started appearing on buildings with un-Czech names, such as Jones Lang Wootton; and by the influx of foreign companies who called themselves planners, or urbanists, depending on whether they were Anglo-American or European. All very confusing. I returned the question by asking about what already existed in the Czech Republic.

"We have two institutes; the Institute of Engineers, which deals with all engineering where practitioners are involved in projects from dams to highways to structures, and the Institute of Architects, which deals with everything else. That means planning, urban design, architecture, landscape architecture, and so on are all under the same umbrella."

My response was, "Don't change. At least you have a chance of a more integrated approach to your urban environment."

I mention this because I think that much of the questioning about the quality of our cities and towns comes down to the role of the professional institutes. Urban design is said to be about resolving the gaps between buildings. Urban design is also about bridging the gaps between the professions. This is the starting point of this polemic paper.

It seems to me that institutes are interested in intellectual and professional territory. Some would say the fragmentation of our cities and towns is in part due to the jealousies of the different institutes involved. And when it comes to survival, what better way of preserving the separateness of an institution, than by creating an educational system geared to satisfying the narrow intellectual parameters set by that institute. The club replicating itself by rites of passage to ensure the self-preservation of the two-dimensional planner species; or the highway testosterone breed; or the architectus myopias. I think, to use a well known political catch phrase, 'enough is enough'. I believe it is time for a change. It is time to bring urban design to the fore.

Let us just consider what has happened in the last few years. The outgoing Conservative government has helped to contribute to a sea-change in planning policy, placing urban design at its centre. Following the DoE's Quality in Town and Country, and Urban Design Campaigns, a PPG1 has been issued that indicates the importance now attached to urban design, and directs developers and others towards an urban design approach to development. From nowhere, urban design has thus become a key element in policy.

Adverts for urban designers to work in local authorities or private practices are everywhere to be seen. Urban design courses are being set up left, right and centre. Moribund diplomas are being dusted down. Urban design is becoming a battleground for the institutes. Urban design is hot!

A Complex Environment

The survival of the fittest has always relied on two aspects; the amount of specialisation (a short term benefit) and the amount of adaptability (a long term benefit). Too much specialisation and extinction can occur. The more flexible a species, the greater the chances of survival. How is that flexibility attained? By that species learning to adapt to its changing circumstances. For the two dimensional planner species, and the architectus myopias, this means education to respond to a more demanding environment.

That environment is complex. It reflects the increasingly vocal concerns of producers, users and controllers of our cities. It comprises the different layers of the city which need to be uncovered and explored. The resources that are required to respond to these new demands are different from the more simplistic view of life we have had until very recently. Whilst there may be some heroes, such as Patrick Geddes, or Jane Jacobs, Christopher Alexander or Kevin Lynch, Richard Sennet or Peter Hall, who have looked to define more all-encompassing paradigms to guide our views of the city, the reality on the ground seems to be numbing inertia and a lack of skills.

At a recent DoE/RICS conference launching a report on developers' attitudes to urban design, it was painfully obvious that many local authorities did not have the skills or resources to carry out an urban design strategy or framework. More and more people now accept the need for an urban design approach to local plans. The vocabulary is there, but the content is confused. Local authorities see urban design as somewhere between bollards and development control. Many consultancies see urban design as an opportunity to revisit fin-de-siecle Beaux Arts experiences; namely architecture writ large. If we are going to address the complex issues of our urban environment, then maybe we have to rethink the way we organise our urban design education. Perhaps, instead of urban design being seen as a post-graduate add-on to architecture or planning, it should be considered as an emerging discipline in its own right.

Urban Design and the market

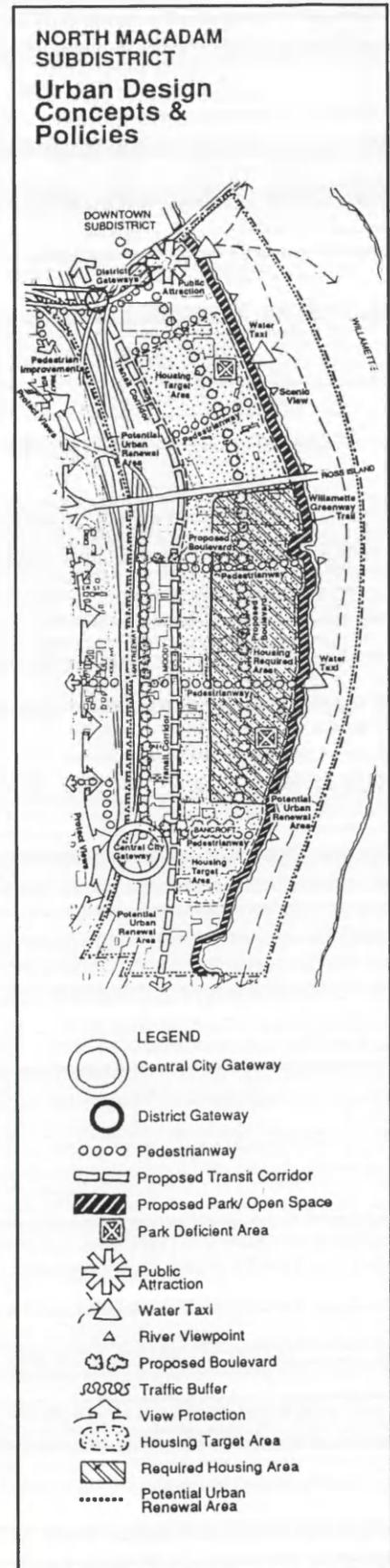
Now why do I say that? Let us look at what is going on in urban design courses at the moment. Urban design courses are seen as modular extensions to existing professional courses. Architects are educated in urban design. Planners are educated in urban design. Other disciplines, such as surveyors and

landscape architects, are educated in urban design. Rarely are engineers. Urban design is still a marginal element, not a central theme that runs through the education of our environmental professionals. In recent years, I have been involved with a number of courses. What strikes me is the different skills that students bring to the courses, and the quality of the 'output' - i.e. the 'marketability' of these skills to local authorities and consultancies.

There is no doubt that architects have to unlearn many attitudes. Planners have an enormous skill-gap to overcome if they are not to remain 'urban interpreters' rather than become designers. As for landscape architects - I have to say that I am coming to the conclusion that once they rid themselves of the historical baggage of Capability Brown and the Garden City Movement, they might be well placed to provide many of the skills needed for urban change. Interestingly, the two best urban designers with whom I have worked, have been landscape architects by training.

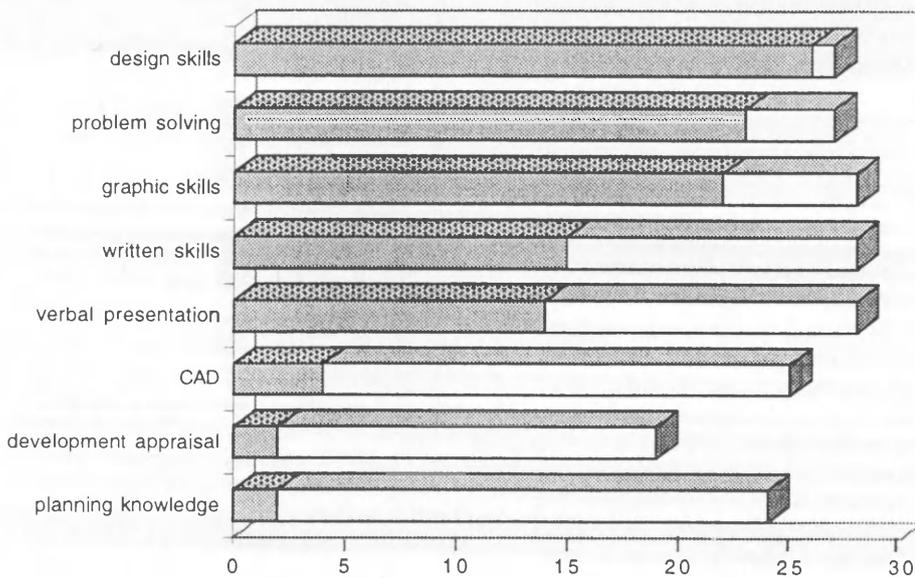
This continued marginality of urban design within the professional curricula established by the institutes has led to the different sorts of 'outputs'. Some graduating students will end up as 'interpreters', able to appreciate, organise, package, but to carry out only limited design exercises. Others will emerge just as 'designers'. This discrepancy in the different forms of creativity that make up urban design has created a split level market for graduates.

Much of the urban design work currently around relates to planning studies and briefs, regeneration, and masterplans. In a recent survey by the University of Westminster on employers of urban designers, it was apparent that a large number of private firms were involved with urban design strategies and masterplans, whilst most local authorities recorded design and development control and conservation as areas where urban design was regularly required. This perhaps reflects a difference in attitude to urban design as a pro-active tool for urban improvement, and urban design as a more reactive element of the planning process. In addition, most private practices employed urban designers at a senior level, while in local authorities they tended to be employed at an intermediate stage. Whilst most practices and local authorities recorded design skills as the most important requirement from urban designers, consultancies looked for design backgrounds, and local authorities for planning backgrounds.

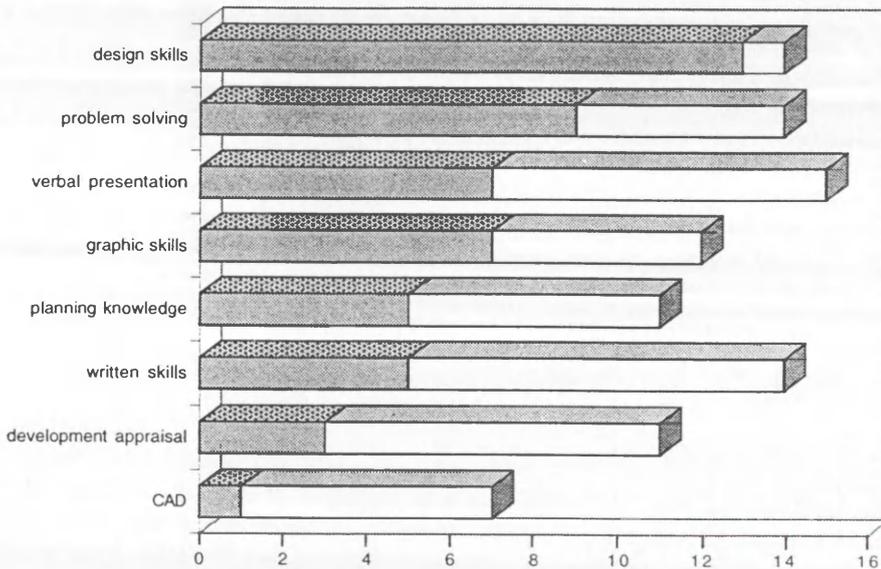


'Many local authorities (do) not have the skills to carry out an urban design strategy or framework.' Above is shown an extract from the Portland Oregon City Centre guide.

Private practice: importance of skills and knowledge



Local Authorities: importance of skills and knowledge



Employment criteria for core skills as seen by private practice, top, and local authorities, below. University of Westminster Survey 1996.

Criteria seen as very important are shown tinted. Quite important shown white. Overall length combines both opinions.

Urban Design education today

What does that tell us about urban design education as it currently stands? Are we just reinforcing the status quo? The survey points to five questions:

- What should the core skills be?
- How can those people who lack basic training in design achieve the necessary level of expertise in this critical area of the discipline?
- How can urban design training of all disciplines involved with the planning and design of the built environment be increased and enhanced?
- What are the short term changes we can make to improve current education - the pragmatic way forward?
- How, with the range of courses currently on offer, do we establish some common standards?

I'd like to try to address these. Let us look at the first aspect, the issues of design expertise.

Core skills

Looking at the survey, it seems that the core skills required are: the ability to design; to have an understanding of the urban process; and to be able to work in a multi-disciplinary manner (see diagram). If that is an agreed basis, we need to refine our education accordingly.

Level playing field

I was very interested to see a draft curriculum of a new course being set up from scratch at the LSE. The postgraduate course called City Policy, Architecture and Engineering, directed by Ricky Burdett, brings together many elements that some urban design courses lack. The course revolves around a series of core studies which include urbanism, morphology, infrastructure design, and 'integrating studies'. In addition two intensive foundation courses are established outside the main academic period, namely:

- Design Foundation, for those of non-design backgrounds; and
- Social Science Foundation, for those with design backgrounds.

Within the constraints of a one year programme based on interdisciplinary working this is an interesting approach. Currently the shuffling around that takes place at the beginning of most postgraduate courses eats into valuable time, whilst a level playing field is established between the disciplines. As far as I understand it, these LSE intensive courses are only one month long. I'm not sure whether that is sufficient, especially for non-designers. Perhaps a semester is the minimum we should be looking for.

Input

If we take the government's view of the centrality of urban design in the qualitative aspects of our urban environment as symptomatic of a recognition that the previous way that our environment is being created is unsatisfactory, then perhaps we need to step back and ask ourselves how, with a blank sheet, we would organise the education of our environmental professionals. It seems to me that there are several ways forward, namely:

- To establish some common ground for engineers, architects, landscape architects, planners and so on, preferably *at an undergraduate level*, at worst at postgraduate level. However, it may be too late at a postgraduate level if we think of the unlearning that has to be done. But we need to try. A foundation course on urban issues, processes, interdependencies for all environmental professionals becomes increasingly attractive as a way forward. The Prince of Wales Institute of Architecture is one of the few colleges to have a foundation course - though its focus is different. Such foundation coursework could be a key element of core curricula and spread throughout the first year of an architect's or planner's education, or concentrated within the first semester. That would set the context for the more specialised training that will come along afterwards.
- To establish cross-over, or interdisciplinary projects that different disciplines can collaborate on as part of their coursework. Such integrative projects, for instance, could allow embryonic highway engineers the opportunity to understand the context, implications, and different ways of designing for the movement of people within places and spaces, rather than concentrating on a more traditional and blinkered ethos of road visibility splays and design speeds. Such projects could also encourage a greater awareness of the complexities of our urban environment and the ecology of decision making that exists but is rarely acknowledged.
- To loosen up the modularisation of the coursework of the environmental professionals to actively encourage students to cross the boundaries of their own disciplines. This can only enrich them. However I recognise that academic institutions are as territorial as professional institutes. It seems that we need to change that if we are to be successful in promoting urban design as a central element to environmental education. Intellectually I know that is appealing, but scratch an academic and he or she will bare their teeth and

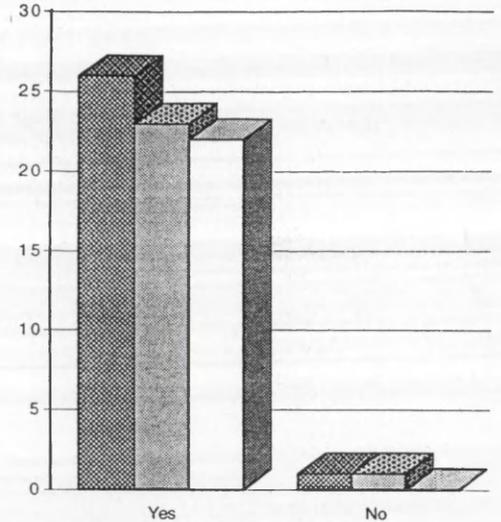
defend their lair by retreating to what are practical difficulties. I remember at a similar previous conference, one academic presented a Venn diagram of encapsulated disciplines, such as architecture, planning etc. in a circle. In explaining the new urban design course of that university he put up another diagram. I thought that the empty centre of the professional circle would be filled by a hub of urban design, strengthened by, and strengthening, its links to all other disciplines. But the diagram showed urban design as another encapsulated area of academic achievement. That may be a good short term answer and one I would endorse as one way forward, but it is an easier answer than going for the hub or core.

- If we are to go for centrality, and urban design is to be seen as a core discipline, and the urban designer as a combination of urban navigator and 3D map-maker helping to create the groundwork and working with other disciplines to generate an integrated response to our changing cities, then perhaps in the longer term, we need to look at creating an urban design course that could be the underpinning of a more general professional course. Thus urban design would be the basis, with students majoring in landscape design, architectural design, planning, socio-economic studies, surveying or urban design itself. Such an undergraduate course could encompass plan making and design, understanding the urban development process, ecology, engaging the community, and the range and skills required to work in multi-disciplinary teams.

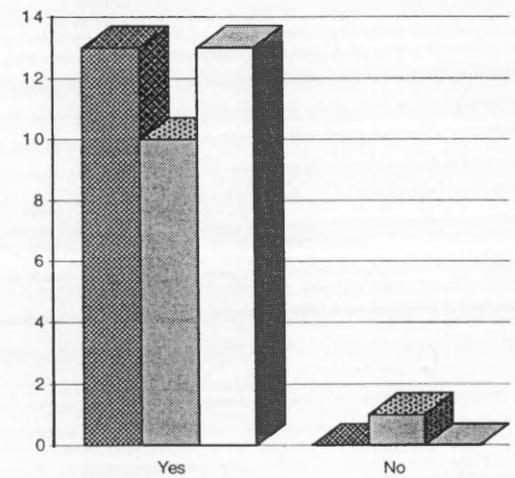
Short Term Changes

In the short term, however, we need to see development in the present multi-route to urban design, that addresses the weaknesses of the present essentially postgraduate set-up.

- For planners coming into urban design, this may mean a more design oriented course (perhaps building on a more focussed undergraduate planning degree) as well as an additional intensive conversion course. In this context we at the UDG would like to work closely with the RTP1.
- For architects this means introducing urbanism and an understanding of the development process into architectural education. In this context we would welcome working with the RIBA.
- For landscape architects a similar intervention is needed that addresses 3D, urban landscape and urban development. We need to talk to the LI.



**Private practices
More urban design input?**



**Local Authorities
More urban design input?**

One question in the 1996 University of Westminster survey asked whether there should be more urban design input into existing professional disciplines. Those who responded 'yes' and 'no' are shown above with private practices, top, and local authorities below. Cross hatch is architecture, tint is landscape white is planning.



Two examples from the 1997 exhibition of students' urban design work. Top is shown a project for a sustainable community at Upper Heyford by JCUD students at Oxford Brookes University. Below is a redevelopment proposal for Southgate, Bath by students from the Prince of Wales Institute of Architecture.

- For others, the richness of many urban design courses depends on drawing in students from different disciplines. Here the issues of intensive conversion courses for postgraduates, and design orientation for undergraduates, needs discussions with organisations like the RICS, and to a lesser extent the ICE.

Common Standards

The last question that arose from Westminster University's survey relates to common standards. At the moment there are none. Not only are urban design courses unaccredited, with universities setting their own standards, but a series of marginal courses have sprung up, whether dealing with interdisciplinary design or design guidance etc. Only two urban design courses are accredited by the RIBA to enable architects completing the courses to use the qualifications Dip UD (RIBA). As I have said, urban design is becoming a battleground. Without some overall view of acceptable standards we might soon witness the potential hijacking of the urban design education agenda by the existing professional bodies. And then how will we relate a Dip UD (RIBA) and a Dip UD (RTPI)? I suppose that is one route for acknowledging the current differences in undergraduate training. But it would be confusing and is not a way forward if urban design is to be the calm centre of a multi-professional discipline. If that is the goal, then perhaps we need to establish overarching standards of acceptability.

In this context the biennial UDG student exhibition is proving a very useful barometer of these levels. In 1995, for the first time it was possible for students, tutors and professionals to see work from other schools, to engage with different groups from different courses, and to establish new networks. This year that positive aspect continued. About 15 universities offer degrees or diplomas in urban design. With the help of these universities I think the UDG could play a very important role helping to mould a consensus on the core curriculum. In addition the UDG could add to the marketability of those courses in the increasingly open urban design market.

The exhibitions have shown us that we need a more cohesive and recognised form of accreditation, because:

- urban design is an expanding discipline with some 200 students completing courses each year - and the number is growing;
- the discipline involves a wide range of professional issues. Because it crosses disciplinary boundaries it should not be left to one of the existing institutes to apply accreditation, nor to the different institutes to devise separate

accreditations based on different criteria, therefore

- it is important to agree some overall criteria which courses would be expected to meet.

Accreditation and Mechanisms

The idea of the UDG providing a 'seal of good housekeeping' form of approval is one relatively easy way forward. But that seal of approval, if it is not just for marketing, has to be widened, and other institutes brought in. After all the UDG is a forum for other disciplines. So on behalf of the UDG, I propose the establishment of an **Urban Design Board** which would enable the appropriate professional bodies to be represented on accreditation teams. These teams would involve representatives from the RIBA, RTPI, LI, RICS and the UDG. The UDG would initiate and co-ordinate the various inputs and look for a regular pattern of visits to the different universities.

To do this we need two things:

- To follow up this conference with a dialogue with the professional institutes so that we can sit around a table together to find a way forward to establish an Urban Design Board with an agreed educational manifesto, a set of criteria, and funds.
- In parallel to this, and informing the debate on standards, to get more information on urban design education by carrying out a survey of the existing provision. Perhaps some pooling of university monies or a kind sponsor will enable this to take place.

I believe such accreditation is good for the universities, providing them with a benchmark of acceptability. It is good for the professions, providing them with a standard that gives them comfort and recognises the interdisciplinary nature of the subject. It is good for the UDG because it strengthens the importance of urban design and the recognition that urban design does not 'belong' to one professional institute, but involves the objectives of a number of them.

It would also be good for the institutes because I would like to think that in the long term, such a Board would help change the education of the environmental professions by feeding back to the different institutes the strengths of urban design as a central element in the education of undergraduate and postgraduate students. If the Urban Design Board could succeed in changing the currently entrenched positions on education it will have achieved a lot.

Conclusion

So in conclusion I'd like to put forward a ten point agenda for action.

1. Urban design is being recognised as central to the issues of quality of our built environment. That demands a re-assessment of urban design education as it stands today.
2. Urban design should therefore move from the wings to centre stage. It should be a common focus for all environmental professions. In fact, if I can be provocative as well as polemical, I believe it should be recognised as a separate discipline at the hub of the other environmental professions.
3. In the short term greater emphasis needs to be placed on creating a more equitable base for the education of different disciplines coming into the field - by the use of special intensive conversion courses of significant content and timescale; different forms for undergraduates and postgraduates.
4. Again in the short term, interdisciplinary projects need to become the norm in the education of all environmental professionals, rather than a rarity. That means working with other academic departments.
5. In the long run, as urban design becomes a central focus, a foundation course would be the best introduction to education in architecture, planning, urban design, landscape architecture, engineering and estate surveying, after which students would specialise in their individual disciplines. Urban design should no longer be just a postgraduate add-on.
6. We need to carry out a survey of the mainstream and associated courses to find out what different universities are providing; to relate these outputs to the demands of the market, in order to establish an acceptable core curriculum.
7. Establish a UDG seal of approval for acceptable courses that recognise the multi-disciplinary routes urban design education takes.
8. In addition, urban design must become more accepted as a vital input into the education of other disciplines. That means discussions and negotiations within universities and between the professional institutes.
9. We should aim to set up an 'Urban Design Board', comprising representatives of the different professional institutes, to oversee a new and equitable accreditation system, and to help liaise in the development of their own courses.
10. In visionary mode now, (and reflecting on a debate within the UDG some six years ago) in the very long run to establish an umbrella organisation - an 'Environmental Association' or 'Urban Institute' perhaps - which, like the Czechs, has under its wings, the different professional institutes (a sort of Rainbow Alliance of environmental professionals) so that instead of the dysfunctional fragmentation that currently characterises much of our urban environment, a more integrative, some would say holistic, approach can be taken to ensure a better urban quality in the next millennium. #

Jon Rowland

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of John Billingham and Tony Lloyd-Jones in preparing this paper.

Practice Views

Tony Lloyd-Jones

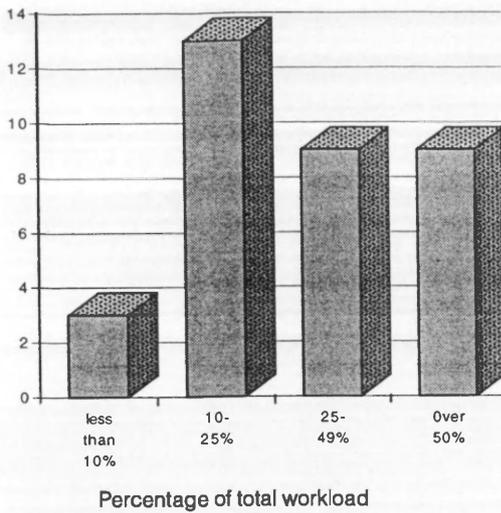
Tony Lloyd-Jones comments on a survey of Urban Design employers carried out in April and August 1996, carried out by the Urban Design Unit at the University of Westminster. The results are analysed within the context of a discussion about current urban design higher education provision in Britain and current initiatives to improve standards and expand the scope of urban design education. It is argued that a way forward is to approach the issues pragmatically, focusing in particular on provision at the undergraduate level.

Urban Design Education

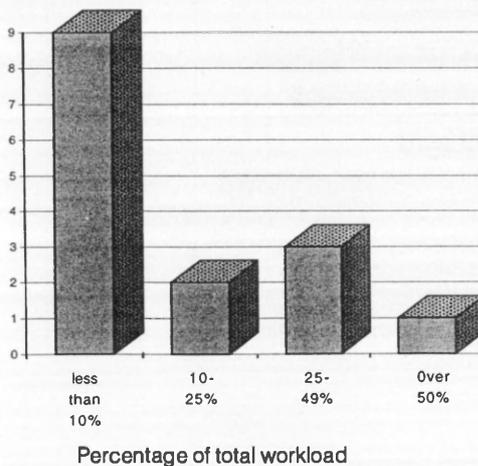
Currently, there are postgraduate provisions at Greenwich, Manchester, Liverpool John Moores (*MSc/Diploma in Urban Renewal, Urban Design and Regeneration*), University of Liverpool, Leeds Metropolitan (*MSc in Urban Environmental Design*), Newcastle, Nottingham, Oxford Brookes, Strathclyde, Heriot-Watt, Westminster (formerly PLC) and West of England (formerly Bristol Polytechnic). The dozen or so, more or less active postgraduate provisions in urban design thus represent substantial progress since the early 1970s.

Alongside the established mainstream postgraduate provision, there have been a number of other initiatives. A new, high profile urban design related *MA in Architecture, Urban Policy & Engineering* is due to start at the LSE in 1998. The University of Central England (formerly Birmingham Polytechnic) has an *MA European Urban Design* which has not run so far and Westminster is offering a similar provision which has yet to run. South Bank run a postgraduate *Certificate in Design and Physical Planning* (a postgraduate urban design specialisation in architecture no longer running). More specialist postgraduate provisions are the *Diploma in Building and Urban Design in Development* at the Development Planning Unit (UCL) and the *Diploma in Urbanism and Housing* at the Architectural Association.

Private practices - Urban Design



Local Authorities - Urban Design



Above is shown percentage of total workload spent on urban design work.

Top: private practices.

Below: local authorities.

University of Westminster Survey 1996.

In addition to the postgraduate provision, aimed mainly at providing those with an existing professional qualification with an urban design specialism, there are courses such as that at the foundation and graduate courses at the Prince of Wales Institute and other architecture and landscape design courses at the undergraduate level with strong urban design components. In planning, there is the RTPI-recognised design-based planning course at Nottingham, while a number of planning courses offer an urban design specialism route (on top of the RTPI core requirement for urban design). A new BA in Urban Design at Westminster is now recruiting its second year of entry and a similar course is on offer at the University of Central England. The West of England is running a hybrid four year architecture and planning course at undergraduate level. Some other institutions, such as Sheffield, offer this type of joint provision at the postgraduate level.

This brief overview is synoptic and almost certainly not up-to-date. It says nothing about variations in the syllabus that occur within this wide range of provision. While it is clear from course prospectuses and exhibitions of student work that there is overlapping and common ground in the approach to urban design education as well as local specialisation, proper research is certainly needed in this area.

Employer Survey

The Urban Design Unit at the University of Westminster surveyed a number of employers of urban designers in April and August 1996. A postal questionnaire was sent to :

- private practices (predominantly larger and better known architects practices operating in and around the South East, but including surveyors, planners and landscape architects). This included 40 practices registered in the Practice Index of Urban Design Quarterly (UDQ).
- local authority planning departments in London and larger provincial city authorities.

Completed forms were received from 34 private practices (14% of sample), the majority of whom were registered in the UDQ Practice Index. 72% of firms registered in the index at the time the questionnaire was compiled replied. The analysis by private practice may be regarded as a good indication of opinion within that sector of practice that considers itself actively involved in the field of urban design. Completed forms were also received from 15 planning authorities (39% of sample).

Disciplinary Background

The breakdown of private practices was as follows: Architects, and multi-disciplinary practices (including planning) where architecture is the leading discipline, comprised 34% of respondents. Respondents shown as Urban Designers (24%) are those practices which record urban design as representing more than 50% of their workload. Planners (24%) and landscape designers (15%) are also well represented. Including the local authority returns, planners comprised just under 50% of all respondents.

Urban design workload

Given the preponderance of UDQ Practice Index-registered firms and the object of the survey, it is understandable that 85% of private practice respondents were involved in urban design work, regularly or occasionally. For over half of the private firms responding, urban design represented a substantial part of their workload and most private practices expected urban design work to increase or stay the same in the future. Local authorities anticipated an increase, reflecting perhaps the recent increasing emphasis on this aspect of planning policy and practice by the Department of the Environment.

Type of urban design work

Urban landscape work and inputs in planning studies and briefs figured highly in the type of urban design work carried out regularly by both private practices and local planning authorities. While a large number of private firms were also regularly involved with urban design strategies and master plans, most local planners recorded design and development control and conservation as areas where urban design was regularly required.

Types of employment

Most private practices employed urban designers at a senior level, while in local authorities they tended to be employed at an intermediate level. The future pattern of employment was expected to reverse this emphasis.

In employing urban designers, both private practices and local authorities recorded the type of experience as being more important than qualification, grade of degree and professional status, but all were recorded as quite important.

Most practices and local planners recorded design skills as the most important requirement for urban design employment in terms of skill and knowledge. General problem solving, verbal presentation, written and graphic skills were also regarded as very important or quite important. CAD was regarded as quite important in private practice. Knowledge of the planning and development process was very important for most local authority planners. For most private practices, it was only quite important. Development appraisal skills were also regarded as quite important by a number of practices and planners.

Qualifications and training

A postgraduate degree in urban design was regarded as the most important criterion in terms of qualifications by both practices and local authorities, particularly at the senior level. Many practices favoured a combination of this with qualifications in architecture or landscape architecture, while local authorities favoured a planning qualification.

84% of private practice respondents and 100% of local authorities were in favour of specialist education in urban design and there was very strong support for increased urban design input into training for architects, planners and landscape designers. There was also general support for specialist undergraduate education in urban design, and most respondents would consider employing a graduate of such a course.

Issues

The number of organisations taking part in this survey is relatively small compared to those who could be generally categorised as involved in this area of work, or even those who are actively engaged in urban design without defining it as such. However, the survey does demonstrate the broad, cross-disciplinary character of urban design practice and the growing number of public and private organisations that are recognising urban design as a specialised and important area of their practice. The fact that this group involves architects, planners, landscape architects and those that regard urban design as their leading discipline suggests that no single profession or professional body can lay claim to urban design as their exclusive preserve.

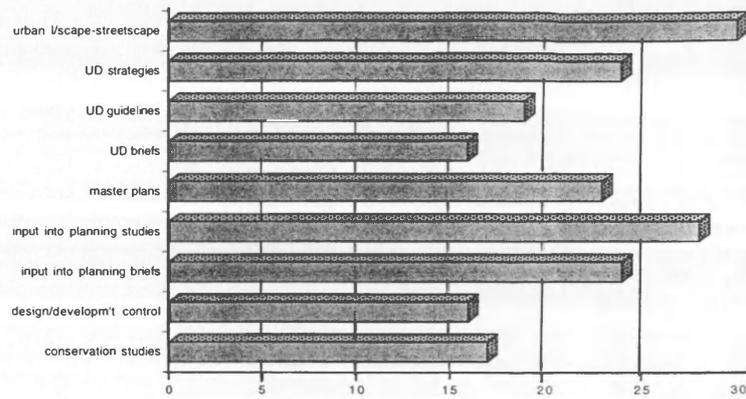
At the same time, the findings of the survey indicate that specialist training in urban design is increasingly a pre-requisite of practice in this field and that urban designers are expected to be equipped with appropriate skills in design, as well as with a range of more general transferable skills and knowledge of the urban development process.

For those involved in organising design courses and teaching urban design, the survey highlights two major challenges to be addressed:

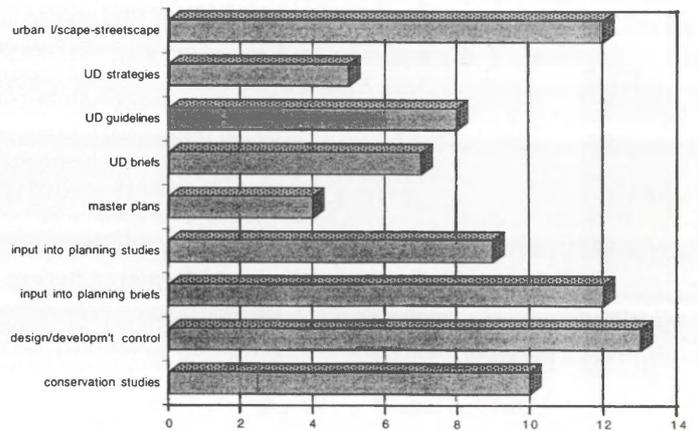
1. How can those people who lack basic training in design achieve the necessary level of expertise in this critical area of the discipline, given that design is something that is largely learned through practical exercises over an extended period?
2. How, in the longer term, can the level of urban design input into training of all the disciplines involved with the planning and design of the built environment be increased and enhanced?

These issues can only be really effectively addressed through co-operation between the urban design educational establishment, urban design practitioners and representatives of all the professional institutions with an interest in the discipline.

Private practices - type of urban design work



Local Authorities - type of urban design work



Above is shown the type of urban design work carried out by private practices, top, and local authorities, below.

University of Westminster Survey 1996.

Planning for Sustainability

David Evans

Educating Urban Designers: Ways Forward

Urban design cuts across existing disciplinary boundaries. This is its main source of strength - providing the necessary basis for an integrated and holistic perspective on cities and urban development. The main difficulty, however, is that a one year full-time or two year part-time course does not allow students with a non-design background sufficient time to develop their design skills to the standard expected in practice. Practitioners may expect more developed skills than the graduate can provide or the graduate may simply end up not using and wasting the skills they have learned.

At the same time, there is a growing recognition in practice of the limits of postgraduate education and of the fact that urban designers with different first disciplines offer different sets of advantages. We have seen the emergence of distinct urban design streams, i.e. architect-urban designers, planner-urban designers and landscape-urban designers. Starting from this position, the future would be a development of the present multi-route urban design education but one which addresses the weaknesses of the present set-up and produces an urban design qualification to a common standard.

This would mean that each of the different specialisms, including surveyors and highway engineers, should be exposed considerably more to urban design issues than is the case at present - whether or not a postgraduate degree was also taken.

One of the few but important benefits of the increasing market orientation of higher education, certainly for a cross-disciplinary subject area like urban design, is modularisation.

Most urban design and urban design-related courses are now modularised. Modules provide a starting point for defining measurable yardsticks for comparing the content of different postgraduate provisions. More than this, however, they provide the means of implementing the strategy outlined above.

The greatest problem that all designers of postgraduate courses in urban design face is *content overload*. Far too much is expected of postgraduate urban design courses in terms of meeting practical, vocational needs as well as developing areas of specialisation. In addition, masters courses should provide a grounding in analytical and research methods if the universities are to fulfil their other vital rôle as centres of research.

There are only two ways around this. One is to extend the length, and cost, of postgraduate courses, something the fragile and cost/time sensitive market in this area is unlikely to bear. Alternatively, the problem has to be addressed at the undergraduate level. Ideally, this should be through common inter-disciplinary provision across the different professionally-based courses. Some universities have already gone a long way down the road of using modularisation to offer flexible pathways to the different professions but this is an issue which has much wider implications. For the professional institutes, it means making urban design a formal requirement of validation, with a minimum requirement for the appreciation of urban design appropriate to the discipline and an additional requirement for any route that leads to a postgraduate specialisation in the field. #

Tony Lloyd-Jones

David Evans carried out research at Oxford Brookes University into urban design qualities in the design of small new settlements and this paper is based on the work he covered.

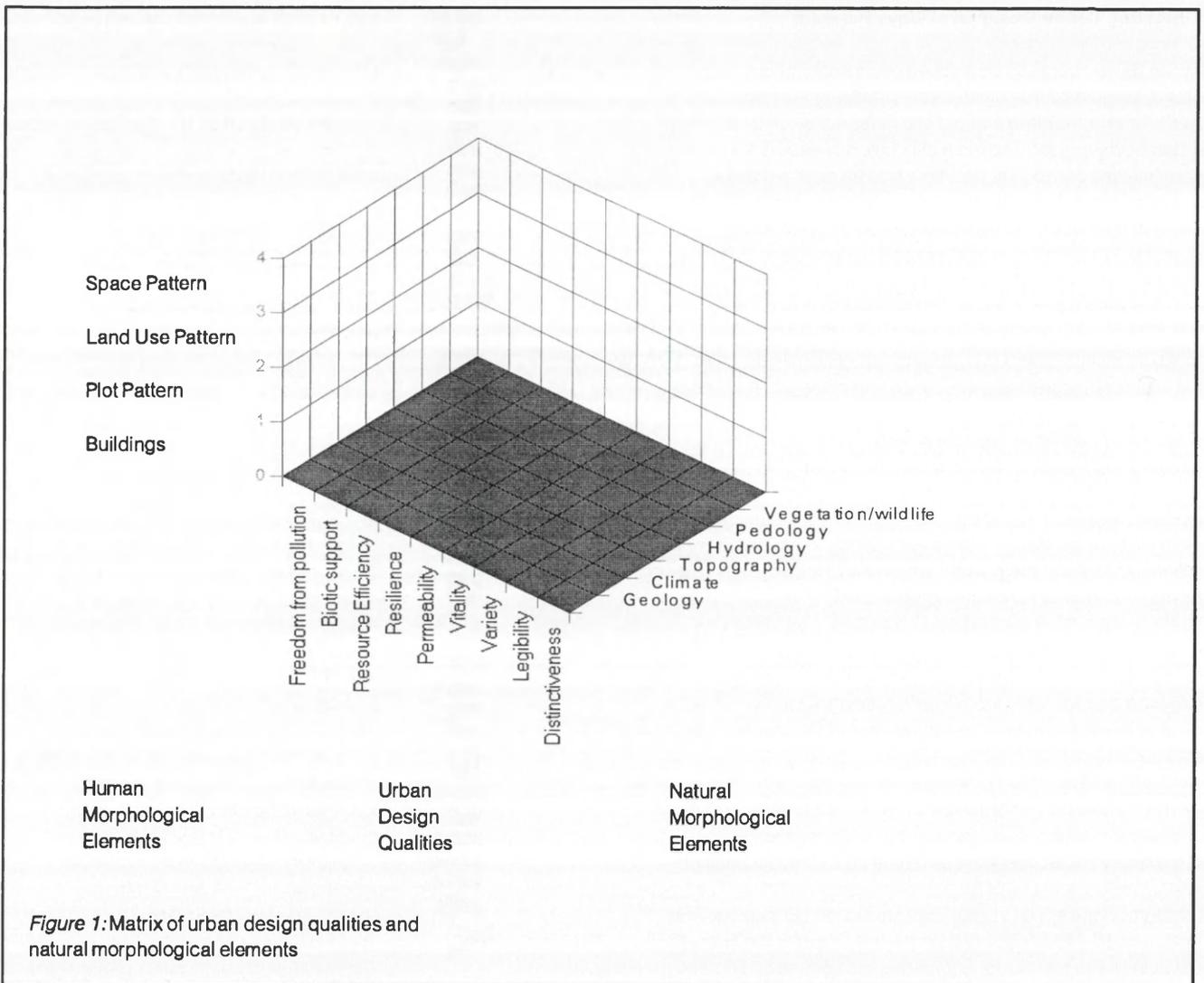
Sustainable development and quality of design are key themes which underpin the UK Government's new approach to the planning system. A debate is developing on how to achieve these aims in practice and how to bridge the human/nature divide in local planning. This paper aims to contribute towards this debate by identifying the key urban design qualities which are important in the achievement of sustainable and responsive small new settlements, to outline a methodology to evaluate how different morphological patterns affect the achievement of the identified design qualities, and to develop and test practical urban design guidance which facilitates the optimum trade-off between the design qualities from the points of view of the different actors involved in the planning and design process.

Urban Design Qualities

The first question which this paper seeks to address is what are the key design qualities that urban designers should seek to achieve in the planning and design of small new settlements and what are the key indicators of the degree of attainment of these qualities? An explicit statement of design qualities is important if a rational and open public debate is to take place about planning and design options and actors in the process of environmental change are to be able to choose the optimum points for trade-offs. This paper aims to set out the agenda of urban design qualities and indicators, and to ensure that the implications of trade-offs between options are made explicit. This should assist in making the planning and design process more open and transparent, and enhances the democratic approach to planning.

Based on a literature search focused by public concerns over the contemporary environment four basic human/natural 'needs' may be identified: environmental sustainability, physical health, autonomy and community.

Environmental sustainability has been defined as "improving the quality of human life while living within the carrying capacity of supporting ecosystems" (WCU, 1991). Four key principles underpin this definition



	Overall Morphological Elements	Morphological Elements at each Scale:		
		Regional Scale (Structure Plan)	Local Scale (Local Plan)	Site Scale (Design Brief)
Human Morphological Elements	Space pattern	Landscape & route pattern	Open space and route pattern	Street / block pattern
	Land use pattern	Settlement pattern	Land use pattern	Land uses
	Plot pattern	Ownership pattern	Plot pattern	Plot pattern
	Buildings and features	Cultural landscapes	Townscapes and landscapes	Buildings and features
Natural Morphological Elements	Geology	Geology	Geology	Geology
	Climate	Climate	Microclimate	Microclimate
	Topography	Landform	Landform	Slope
	Hydrology	River basins	Aquifers and watercourses	Water courses
	Soils	Soils	Soils	Topsoils
	Vegetation / wildlife	Vegetation	Habitats and rare species	Plants and wildlife

Table 1: Morphological elements at different scales of planning and design

of sustainability. Firstly, sustainable development involves an increased emphasis on the value of natural, built and cultural environments. It reflects a duty of care for the community of life. Secondly, it extends the traditional five or so year time horizon of governments and businesses so that long term needs and impacts must be considered. Thirdly, it places an emphasis on equity; on fairly sharing the costs and benefits of resource use between all peoples and between current and future generations. Finally, it involves participation by individuals in the process of decision-making and development.

Physical health involves more than just basic survival. Individuals have the right to fully fulfil their chosen lifestyle and to be able to do this they need to avoid serious harm. In this context serious harm is defined as "the significantly impaired pursuit of goals which are deemed of value by individuals. To be seriously harmed is thus to be fundamentally disabled in pursuit of one's vision of the good" (Doyal and Gough, p50).

Autonomy is "ability to make informed choices about what should be done and how to go about doing it" (Doyal and Gough, 1991). The ability to choose, and to achieve not just a minimum but high levels of satisfaction is an essential value in its own right in the modern world.

Finally, community has become an increasingly important concept which is now at the heart of the political agenda of the main political parties in the UK. Although there are differences of opinion on its definition (Bauman, 1992; Giddens, 1991, Etzioni, 1995) there is widespread recognition of its importance.

Considering each of these needs in turn, a focused literature review enabled a set of nine design qualities to be identified which supported these needs.

These are:

- Freedom from pollution - minimising waste generated in excess of that which can be assimilated by natural processes without disrupting them;
- Biotic support - maintaining biodiversity through conserving habitats, preserving species and supporting wildlife;
- Resource conservation - conserving environmental media (air, water, topsoils) and non renewable resources (energy and minerals);
- Resilience - freedom from natural hazards and ensuring a long life for development;
- Permeability - providing a choice of routes between places;
- Vitality - making places as safe as possible;

- Variety - providing a choice of uses and experiences;
- Legibility - enabling people to understand the layout and activities of a place; and
- Distinctiveness - the quality of local landscape and culture which makes places different.

Morphological elements

This leads to the second key question which this paper seeks to address: what patterns of physical elements support these design qualities?

Morphologies are the product of the complex interaction of natural and human processes through time. For example, natural processes result in the creation and maintenance of distinctive landscapes and habitats such as the Dorset coast and heathlands. Human processes (social, economic and political) result in the creation and adaptation of buildings and spaces to meet human needs such as new and expanded settlements. The interaction of natural and human processes may result in the creation of distinctive settlements, such as Corfe Castle, a defensive settlement sited in a natural gap in the Purbeck Hills. The interaction also gives rise to the gradual decay of buildings and places. The operation of these natural and human processes creates change in the physical environment. Urban design is concerned with the initiation and management of change and therefore an understanding of the operation of these processes is essential if urban design interventions are to be effective in supporting more sustainable places which maximise human life chances.

Looking first at human processes of environmental change, an analysis of the agency and event based models of the development process leads to the identification of the key control mechanisms which planners and urban designers may use and the morphological elements that can be manipulated. The control mechanisms include development plans, design briefs, highway design guidelines, conservation and listed building controls. The morphological elements include space pattern, land use pattern, plots, buildings and features, although the precise nature of the elements vary according to the scale under consideration (Table 1).

Natural elements, for the purposes of this research, are taken to mean the 'constituent parts' of the biosphere. They are thus more than the traditional substances of air, water, earth and fire, the elements formerly believed to compose the physical universe. Whilst air, water and soils (including minerals) are the basic environmental

media used for assessing the natural world (European Environment Agency, 1995), the examination of natural cycles results, in addition, in the identification of more integrated functional units including hydrology, climate, vegetation and wildlife. These units form important influences on human activity and are important in their own right for the part they play in the grand cycles of nature. Although not 'natural elements' within the common usage of the term, they are convenient and useful subdivisions of the natural world for planning and urban design purposes.

The human, social, economic and political forces influence the human process of environmental change described above and lead to the identification of a set of natural morphological 'elements' which may be manipulated to maximise natural and human life chances. All these elements are interrelated by the natural cycles, but for the purpose of this research they have been separately identified. Table 1 summarises the key morphological elements identified.

These interact in a complex way and may best be appreciated as axes in a three dimensional matrix. (See Fig 1). Use of such a matrix enables the relationships between the patterns of elements and design qualities to be recognised. For example, at the local scale in a settlement high levels of the quality of distinctiveness may be achieved by patterns comprising topography (eg a hilltop) geology (eg exposed rockface), vegetation (woodland on the slopes), space (a close network of streets in the settlement) and buildings (sited closely together and with a landmark building). Likewise, high levels of biotic support might be achieved by a pattern comprising land use (natural areas within the settlement), plot patterns (large enough to include indigenous tree planting), buildings (eaves and roofs to encourage nesting birds and bats), vegetation (natural habitats retained) and hydrology (natural watercourses retained and protected). Not all actors will place the same value on a particular interaction. Different actors will value different patterns of human and natural morphological elements according to the degree to which they meet their own needs and/or interests. Other dimensions can also be added to the matrix. These could include economic and social factors and time.

Urban Design Evaluation Framework

By analysing each theoretical interaction of elements and design qualities in the matrix it is possible to identify indicators of the degree of attainment of the design quality. Taking each human morphological element in turn (space, land use, plots and

Indicator Levels

Morphological Element	Indicator	Indicator Criteria	1	2	3	4	5
Geology	Areas prone to 'natural' pollution discharge (e.g. methane, radon)	Incidence Max. - min	No measurable discharge	1 -100 becquerels / m3	100 - 200 becquerels / m3	200 - 400 becquerels / m3	More than 400 becquerels/m3
	Foundation conditions	Compressive strength max. - min	Solid rock	Shale, Gravel	Cretaceous sediments	Filled marsh, tipped land	Marsh and swamp: unstable land
	Features of unique scientific & educational value	Scarcity	No geological features present	Geology exposed on site	Sites of local geological importance	Geological SSSI's	UNESCO World Heritage Sites
	Minerals	Scarcity	No minerals of value	No minerals of value	Minerals of local importance	Minerals of regional importance	Minerals of national importance
Climate / air	Exposure to high winds	Wind speeds and frequency low - high	Less than 2 m/sec	2-4 m/sec 20% time	4 - 10 m/sec 20% time	10 - 15 m/sec 20% time	15 m / sec +
	Exposure to cold air drainage	incidence min - max.	high land	gently sloping land	flat land	cold air channels	frost pockets
	Exposure to solar gain	Gradient and orientation of slope	1:5 S,SW,SE 1:10 S	1:5 E,W 1:10 E,W,SW,SE	flat	1:5 NW,NE 1:10 NW,NE	1:5 N 1:10 N
	Air circulation	Topography and settlement pattern	Near sea or large lake generating good air circulation	Inland sloping site with good air circulation	Inland flat site with reasonable air circulation	Flat land with large city creating urban heat island	Natural bowl accommodating large city with urban heat island
	Air quality and circulation	Vegetation cover, area of sealed surface, air circulation, building density	Open grassed areas and trees producing cold filtered air	air circulation pathways between open and built up areas	small green areas reducing bioclimatic stress	mostly sealed surfaces with good air circulation	dense buildings, poor air circulation, little vegetation
Topography	Slope	Gradient high - low	1:100 - 1:40	1:40 - 1:25	1:25 - 1:10; less than 1:100	1:10 - 1:2	Steeper than 1:2
	Land features of scenic value	scarcity low - high	No areas or features of scenic value	Local landscape features	Areas of regional landscape value	Heritage Coasts; Areas of Landscape Value	National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
Hydrology	Groundwater resources	Source protection zones	outside zones	Non-aquifer resource protection zones	Zone III (source catchment); major & minor aquifers	Zone II (outer zones)	Zone I (inner zones)
	Fresh Water Quality	Water quality classification	1A (good)	1B (good)	2 (fair)	3 (poor)	4 (bad)
Hydrology (cont)	Liability to flood	Frequency least - most	never	Less than 1 in 100 year risk	1 in 100 - 1 in 50 year risk	More than 1 in 50 year risk	Land below 5m AOD
	Coastal erosion	Risk assessment				Long term erosion areas	Managed Retreat areas
	Scenic value	Distinctive least - most	Least			e.g. Heritage coast	Most e.g. AONB
Pedology	Quality	Agricultural value worst - best	Grade V	Grade IV	Grade III	Grade II	Grade I

Table 2: Wareham Evaluation Framework. Matrix of morphological elements shown above and continued on right hand page.

buildings), the nature of the relationships between the urban design qualities and human and natural morphological elements may be considered. At each key interaction an 'indicator' or criterion of the degree of attainment of the urban design qualities concerned may be identified. Bringing all the indicators together and listing them by morphological element produces a useful outline evaluation framework. Under each morphological element the relevant indicators of greatest importance have been selected. For example, under the element of climate/air, exposure to high wind speeds was deemed important. This affects the risk of damage to property and human safety (the design quality of resilience), the use of outdoor space (the quality of vitality) and the loss of energy from buildings (the quality of energy efficiency). The criteria of wind speed and frequency are identified and a gradient of five levels set out, together with the source for the indicator levels selected. This approach has been developed from earlier work by McHarg (1969, p108). The application of this matrix to Wareham in Dorset is illustrated in Table 2.

Opportunities in the Planning System

This paper concerns guidelines for use within existing control mechanisms available to local authorities. Therefore, before guidelines can be developed, it is necessary to briefly review the operation of the planning system, identify the scope within the system for developing guidelines and identify changes in its operation that are necessary to support the creation of places which are more sustainable and support human life chances.

An analysis of development plans has been undertaken which identifies failings in their methodology and contents. A survey of principal planners responsible for preparing local plans in each district in Dorset reveals that generally no systematic process to plan preparation was followed and that plan preparation was largely dependent upon past proposals, local problems, intuition and the outcome of statutory consultations. There was, however, a clear recognition amongst those surveyed that the existing methods were far from perfect and that there was a major lack of practical advice on how to accommodate sustainability and quality of design issues within the planning process at a local level.

Comparing the policies within current local plans in Dorset with the urban design qualities identified above identifies a number of important gaps (see Table 3). Notwithstanding the current failings of structure and local plans, the development planning system in the UK presents great

potential for achieving more sustainable and responsive places.

Firstly, there is an established legal process of development planning and control already in place, organised on an area basis and professionally staffed. The resources in planning departments are substantial. For example, in Dorset there are some 276 planning staff employed by County and District Councils with an overall budget of some £7.8m (CIPFA returns, 1992/3). This represents a valuable resource which, it is argued, could be utilised to implement the proposals set out below and, with proper feedback, refine and develop the indicators and their application in the planning and control processes.

Secondly, one of the features of the UK planning system is the high degree of discretion available to officers and councillors in the precise way they go about the process. Provided that certain basic regulations and tests are followed, there is substantial scope for individual initiative. There would appear to be no legal impediment to the principle of incorporating policies on sustainability and responsiveness within development plans. Indeed, current government advice in Planning Policy Guidance Notes 1, 12 and 13 encourages policies on sustainable development.

Thirdly, the survey of Dorset planners shows that they are well aware of shortcomings of current plans and are receptive to further advice on sustainability and responsiveness. Capitalising on this awareness means that new advice and guidance should be well received.

Fourthly, with the introduction of s54A to the Town and Country Planning Act, 1990, development control decisions are required to accord with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This is a reversal of policy of the mid 1980s and has recreated a plan-led planning system.

Fifthly, the widespread introduction of computer based Geographical Information Systems and development control systems opens up new opportunities to manipulate large amounts of complex data and produce easy-to-use aids to decision making.

Finally, there is a developing political consensus that sustainability issues are important and these are now on the agenda of all the main political parties. The UK government now recognises the importance of sustainability and quality in the environment in their policies (DoE, 1994d and the 'Quality in Town and Country' initiative of the Secretary of State

Indicator Levels

Morphological Element	Indicator	Indicator Criteria	1	2	3	4	5
Vegetation / Wildlife	Existing Habitats	Quality poorest - best	Little interest	other semi nat habitats	SNCI's	SSSI's	NNR's; SPA's; RAMSAR
	Tree cover	% of site area	less than 5 %	5 - 10 %	10 - 20 %	20 - 30%	Greater than 30%
	vegetation corridors	links between habitats	none	semi natural	SNCI's	SSSI's	NNR's, SPA's
	Rare species	Scarcity least - most		local interest	Red data book	Wildlife & C Act	EU Directive
Land use	Density of housing development	Persons per hectare	More than 40 ppha	30 - 40 ppha	20 - 30 ppha	10 - 20 ppha	Less than 10 ppha
	Local services and facilities	Settlement population size	more than 10,000	5,000 - 10,000	3,000 - 5,000	700 - 3,000	less than 700
	Pedestrian accessibility	Distance between homes and community facilities / employment	less than 400m	400 - 800m	800 - 1200m	1.2 - 1.6 km	greater than 1.6 km
	Degree of self-containment of movement	Index of commuting independence (ratio of local to sum of crossing trips)	2 or greater	1.5 - 2	1 - 1.5	0.5 - 1	less than 0.5
	Availability of affordable business accommodation	Age / size of accommodation and mix of uses	Wide range of mixed uses Good stock of older premises	Opportunities for uses in older cheaper accommodation	Opportunities for shops and employment uses in area	Single use area on through route	Single use area not on through route
Space / routes	Mode of travel	% foot & cycle					
		% public transport	more than 22	19 - 22	15 - 18	10-14	less than 10
		% private car	less than 35	35 - 40	40 - 45	45 - 55	more than 55
	Access to public transport (& frequency of service)	distance to interchange	less than 200 m	200 - 400 m	400 - 600 m	600 - 800 m	greater than 800 m
	Pedestrian flow in main streets	pedestrians per hour	greater than 200	100 - 200	50 - 100	25 - 50	less than 25
	Axial organisation of public space	axial steps from edge to centre of settlement	2	3	4	5_7	8 +
	Legibility	% users able to cognitive map local area	More than 90%	60 - 90%	30 - 60%	10 - 30%	less than 10%
Choice of routes between places	No. of choices of routes between places	greater than 8 routes	4 - 8 routes	2 - 4 routes	1 route only	inaccessible	
Plots	Size of block	perimeter distance	350 - 450	450 - 500 300 - 350	500 - 550 250 - 300	550 - 600 200 - 250	More than 600; less than 200
Buildings / features	Buildings reused (where present)	% age of total development floorspace	Total rehabilitation	Major part rehab	About half reused	Small part reused	Total redevelopment
	Building materials	Distance travelled	Materials from site	Outside site up to 5km	6 - 20km	21 - 100km	more than 100km
	Suitability for alternative uses	Floor - ceiling height	2.5 - 3 m				less than 2m
		Building depth	less than 9m	9 - 15m	16 - 25m	26 - 35m	more than 35m
Buildings / features	Surveillance of public space	Street access - entrance spacing	less than 10m apart	11 - 15m	16 - 25m	more than 26m	none
		windows and doorways overlooking public space	Mixed land uses - plenty of doors and windows overlooking streets	Mixed land uses - some overlooking of streets	Single land uses - plenty of overlooking of streets	Single land uses - some overlooking of streets	Single land uses - no overlooking of streets
	Energy efficiency	Building form	Intermediate floor flat	Centre terraced house	Top floor flat	Semi-detached house	Detached house

Urban Design Qualities	Dorset Structure Plan (1996)	Bournemouth Local Plan	Poole Local Plan	North East Purbeck Local Plan (1994)	East Dorset District Plan	North Dorset District Plan	West Dorset District Plan	Weymouth & Portland Local Plan
Freedom from pollution	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Biotic Support	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Resource conservation	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Resilience	✓		✓					
Permeability								
Vitality			✓					
Variety								
Legibility			✓	✓				
Distinctiveness	✓		✓	✓				

Table 3: Comparison between the design qualities approach and policies covered in existing plans.

for the Environment, 1994d). Following the Rio Summit in 1992 most local authorities in the UK are preparing Agenda 21 policies for their areas (LGMB, 1996), and many businesses are embarking on Eco-audits and sponsoring environmental initiatives (UK Govt., 1994a). Many interest groups are now beginning to recognise the key role that planning can play in moving towards sustainable and responsive environments (eg CPRE, 1993).

Clearly the Town and Country Planning system alone cannot achieve all the qualities outlined earlier. Many authorities recognise that there needs to be a comprehensive programme of regulatory measures, inducements and education to achieve more sustainable places (eg Pearce, 1991; Blowers, 1993). However, the Town and Country Planning system has an important part to play as part of such a programme. In particular, the traditional trend planning view of trading off environmental impacts against economic growth or other objectives has to change to one of respecting environmental constraints. Sustainability means that certain environmental capital is immutable. This fundamental change makes it all the more important that environmental factors are considered throughout the planning and design processes and not just at the end when adverse impacts are identified.

Design Guidelines

To assist planners and the other actors involved in the planning process, a preliminary set of local plan guidelines has been developed based on the morphological elements which urban designers can manipulate, and the evaluation framework developed in this research. It must be stressed that these guidelines are preliminary and are not finalised in detail. Their role is to act as a catalyst in introducing new ideas into the planning and urban design process. It is intended that they will evolve and be refined as part of an iterative process in their practical application and as new research on the various topics becomes available. The guidelines have been developed as an agenda which may be used in the planning process. The most appropriate solution will depend on the given situation, and the views of the various actors in the locality. The aim is to make the planning process more transparent and explicit, aiding participation, reducing the apparent arbitrariness of the system and potentially making decision-making quicker.

The guidelines are intended to be used in sequence, moving through from the broader guidelines which aid the selection

Natural factors	1. good ground bearing capacity	Street / space pattern	25. permeable street pattern
	2. stable ground		26. hierarchy of streets
	3. gentle slopes		27. small block size
	4. pollution free ground		28. smooth alignment of streets
	5. natural air circulation		29. shallow axial depth
	6. protection from winds		30. street alignment for good air circulation
	7. freedom from cold air drainage		31. continuity of enclosure
	8. south facing slopes		32. network of open spaces
	9. water resource protection		33. local foci
	10. conservation of topsoil and good agricultural land		34. recreation spaces
	11. protection of ground based carbon sinks		35. commons and greens
	12. conservation of mineral resources		36. new woodlands
	13. conservation of habitats and rare species		37. new viable habitats
	14. conservation of cultural landscapes		38. indigenous planting
Overall settlement structure	15. public transport links	Block / plot pattern	39. minimum sealed surfaces
	16. medium size settlements		40. open watercourses
	17. stock of existing buildings		41. adaptable plot layouts
	18. higher building densities		42. multiple use gardens
	19. sociologically mixed developments	43. privacy within blocks	
	20. mixed uses	44. convenient and discrete parking	
	21. legible settlements	Buildings	45. active building frontages
	22. edges and gateways		46. entrances onto all convex spaces
	23. walkable local neighbourhoods		47. local landmarks
	24. local centres		48. existing buildings reused
	49. compact building forms		
	50. good solar orientation		
	51. minimising overshadowing		
	52. local building styles & materials		
	53. adaptable buildings		
	54. nesting and roosting places		

Table 4: Summary of preliminary design guidelines

Chapter	First Draft Local Plan (1995)	Revised Draft Local Plan (1996)
1	Introduction	Introduction and General Strategy
2	Countryside and Coast	Conserving Natural and Cultural Assets
3	Built Environment	Avoiding Hazards
4	Housing	Improving the Quality of Life
5	Industry and Employment	Meeting Social and Economic Needs
6	Shopping	Development Proposals (for specific sites)
7	Recreation	Putting the Plan into Effect
8	Tourism	
9	Transport	
10	Environmental Appraisal	

Table 5: Chapter structure of the local plan before and after testing.

of settlement sites, through to those patterns of elements which create the structure of the settlement and those which guide the design of individual plots and buildings. The guidelines are summarised in Table 4.

Testing the Guidelines

The guidelines have been tested in the preparation of the Purbeck District Local Plan in 1996. A draft Plan had already been prepared but not published and a change of staff enabled a fresh approach to be considered. The guidelines provided an agenda for the discussion of relevant parts of the new Plan, and were used by the officers in the drafting of the text of the new Plan. The old Plan provided a useful 'control' allowing comparison with the new emerging Local Plan to identify changes which had been stimulated as a result of the guidelines and subsequent discussions. Notes were taken of each officer progress meeting to identify the reaction of the planners to the guidelines, deficiencies and ideas on new guidelines and changes to the Plan that were agreed.

Drafting of the plan continued to July 1996 when a draft copy of the revised Local Plan was circulated to all members of the District Council. This was discussed at an all day Member Working Party held on 23rd July. At this meeting the overall structure and detailed policies of the Plan were discussed and debated. The member of staff responsible for drafting each chapter presented a summary of the chapter and highlighted new urban design concepts and policies. These were discussed in turn by the Working Party and changes to the Plan recommended. Half of the 22 members of the Council attended the meetings comprising a cross-section of parties present on the Council. Five Liberal Democrat, two Labour and four Independent councillors were present.

Notes were taken during the meeting to identify members' attitudes to policies and at the end of the working party meeting a number of members made general comments on the Plan. The working party meeting and general comments provided a useful evaluation of the application of the design guidelines. Following the Working Party meeting the planners who drafted the Plan were asked to complete a questionnaire which probed their views on the design guidelines and the resultant changes to the structure and contents of the Local Plan. A round table discussion was also held with the three planning staff concerned to gain their feedback on the guidelines and to identify those guidelines requiring improvement, or missing, and their overall views on the approach. An analysis of the comments of the planners

and councillors has been used to prepare conclusions on the testing of the guidelines.

The conclusions of the testing phase fell into two areas: structure and content.

The 'old' Plan had been based on the traditional land use topic structure used by most planning authorities. However, such a structure fails to recognise the linkages between the natural and built environment. It also leads to environmental appraisals being often 'bolt-ons' at the end of the plan rather than environment and quality of design being themes running throughout the Plan.

The team therefore decided to adopt a different approach based on a sustainability theme where policies are grouped under Assets, Hazards, Quality of Life, Economic Needs and Developed Proposals (see Table 5).

In terms of contents, the plan included a completely new chapter entitled 'Quality of Life' which encompassed a number of key sustainability and urban design themes.

The three officers considered that the issue of sustainability had been well addressed, but that the quality of design policies needed fine tuning. All found the guidelines helpful in plan preparation by providing an agenda of factors for consideration and introducing new topics which they would otherwise not have been aware of, or probably ignored. Some guidelines introduced ideas which the officers were unaware of, including carbon sinks, cold air drainage channels, convex spaces, and axial lines. Council members were surprisingly receptive to the new approach, and many found it more refreshing with its emphasis on environmental matters and sustainable development. The Government Office for the South West considered the Plan "well researched and clearly laid out. The approach you have followed in taking forward the issue of sustainable development is interesting and innovative" (letter dated 8th October 1996). Although there were a number of policy areas on which they were concerned, they suggested helpful improvements to those on permeable road layouts.

Conclusions

This research has sought to contribute to the debate over three current concerns in planning and urban design: how to support sustainability, quality of design and community. In the context of the UK planning system it is concluded that there is considerable potential, and a widespread desire in practitioners, to tackle these concerns. An agenda in the

form of preliminary design guidelines to assist planners, developers and community groups in preparing Local Plans and facilitating meaningful participation in the process has been set out. It is considered that the guidelines form a useful platform for development to help create more sustainable and responsive places. The first stage in this process is already underway with their application in the preparation of the Purbeck District Local Plan. It will be interesting to see how the approach passes the tests of public participation, and examination by an inspector at a public local inquiry. All the time statute, policy, and practice are evolving, and if this research helps enliven that wider debate it will have achieved its purpose. #

David Evans

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Durham - Millennium Project

This case study describes the Millennium project designed by MacCormac, Jamieson and Prichard for a site adjacent to Durham City Centre. Unlike many Millennium projects this is not one building, it is several and about urban mending. The whole scheme is a complex assembly of different sites and buildings and there are exciting opportunities to create new urban spaces in this beautiful city.

The site is a prominent sector of Durham beside the main approach road (A690) and had become more derelict over recent decades. This project will fulfil the City of Durham's ambition to rejuvenate the area with a mix of uses that will add to the City's vitality. The Millennium Commission funded buildings are the catalyst for the regeneration of this sector of the city.

The cathedral and castle sit on the ridge of the rocky peninsula formed by the loop in the River Wear and overlook the wooded gorge. The defensible medieval city was approached by the river crossings, first ferries and fords, then bridges, and one road, Claypath, along the ridge.

The medieval pattern of streets and vennels converge on Market Place and were intact until the 1960s when the new A690 road bridge and cutting through the neck of the peninsula were built to save the peninsula from traffic congestion. However, it was this road cutting that severed Claypath and it is the discontinuity of its street frontage and vacant sites that is the origin of this project.

As urban designers we know the spaces between the buildings are as important as the buildings - here the new byways are the bridge link, Millennium Place, the new steps to the new Park, the river walkway and new footbridge - and these will endure beyond their containing buildings.

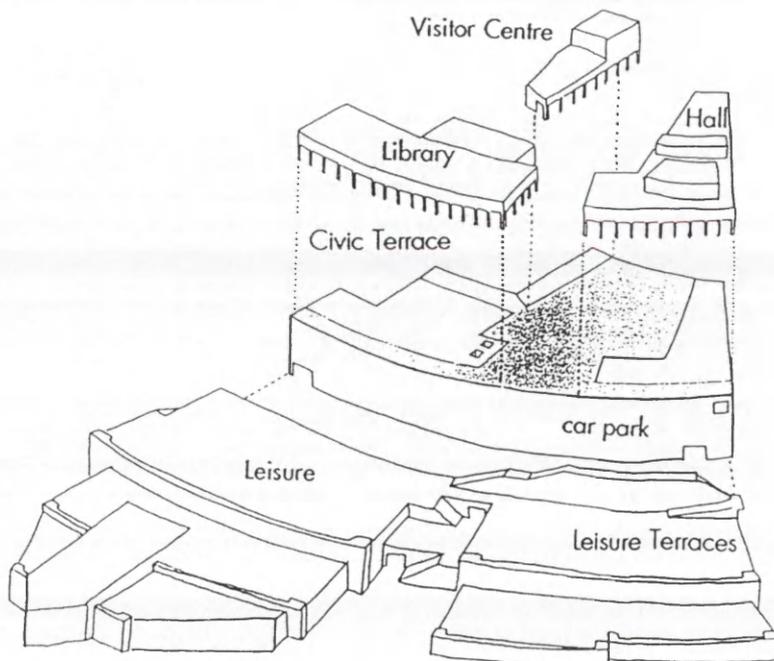
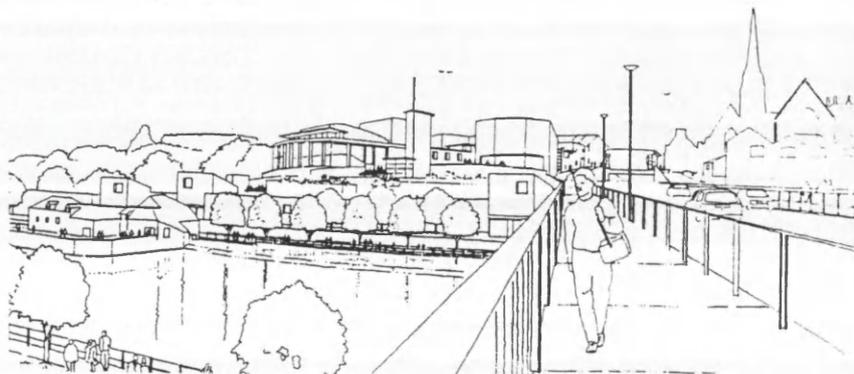
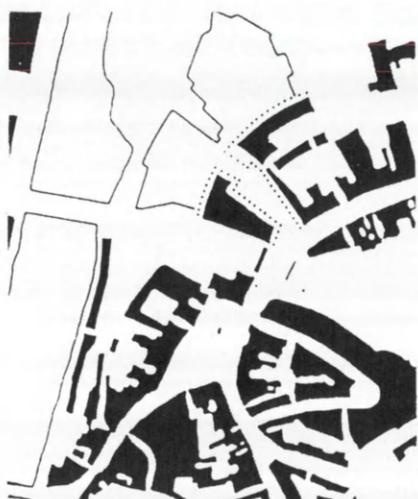
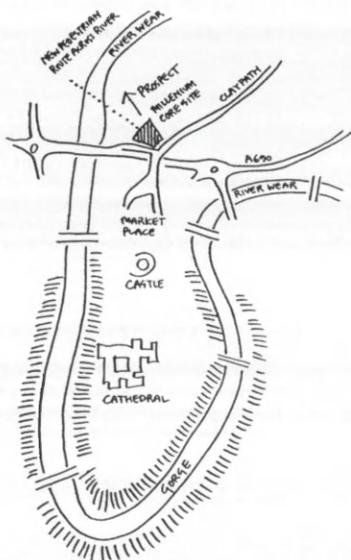
Urban Design Intentions

The key objectives are to heal the severance of the A690, create a civic terrace on the ridge, with new routes down to the riverfront and new park beside the River Wear. This sector of the peninsula must be reconnected to the historic centre

Below left: Location plan showing Millennium site at the top, north of the 1980s A690 road and to the south of the Cathedral and Castle on the ridge of the peninsular formed by the River Wear. Figure ground plan showing the Market Place and to the north proposals for the Millennium site.

Below right: Site arrangement and perspective showing the proposed civic terrace which overlooks the new park and riverfront.

Right hand page: Proposed view over Claypath Bridge where traffic calming and new kiosks edit out the traffic canyon below.



with safe, convenient and explorable pedestrian routes.

With the city's recent land assembly it will now be possible for the first time in 200 years to link Claypath to the riverfront, some 13m below.

It is technically and commercially impossible to rebuild Claypath's frontage over the road cutting, but the pedestrian experience will be much improved with traffic calming and new kiosks and balustrades that will edit out the traffic canyon below. The Millennium buildings are civic functions - a hall, a centre for lifelong learning, a library and a community resource centre - which create a new destination and are set around a new place comparable in size to Market Place, but without traffic.

The brief for these buildings coincided with the urban design strategy to create a civic terrace, in pride of place, on the ridge commanding views down to the River Wear.

The hall is the major new building and its fly tower will be a major element on the skyline. The proposed location will mitigate the fly tower's impact and the hall's orientation offers its foyers the prospect of the Park and riverfront.

Landscape

The topography and landscape of the peninsula create the magical setting for the cathedral and castle. From vantage points on numerous thoroughfares in the city there are views directly to the Wear Valley and

surrounding hills.

The approach into the city along the A690 over Milburngate Bridge has a depressing view northwards of redundant buildings and a crude post war shed, once the ice rink. The new park will create a further green wedge bringing the countryside into the heart of the city. This landscape strategy was devised with Colvin & Moggridge and subsequently by RPS Clouston.

Access and Parking

Many tourists arrive by coach, but often for only a brief halt, so by improving coach parking, pedestrian links and providing new attractions it is hoped to lengthen visitors' stays. Car parking provision is expensive because all spaces must be covered and extensive studies have been done to establish the quantum and best location for convenient and economical new car parks. Radical alterations to the A690 have been considered, but could not be negotiated within the constraints of the current highway design policies, so the scheme accepts the current geometry.

Masterplan

The potential impact of the project has been investigated in the masterplan which looked at over twenty associated sites. The challenge is to find an overall framework for development within which different sites may come free at different times and for uses not originally intended. As always the timing and sequence of developments is

crucial for success. This work is ongoing with help from English Partnerships. City Planning Departments are often in a reactive mode when major redevelopments are driven by external forces. Here, working closely with the City's Chief Executive and Economic Development Unit, the Planning Department has been an active participant in the briefing and development of design ideas and are able to champion desired solutions - the role that town planning ought to have.

Consultation

The City Council has organised displays and exhibitions at key stages in the process. With the involvement of several community organisations, local businesses and residents there has been city-wide support for the Project. Unlike many redevelopments, this is driven by the needs of the community rather than commercial gain alone. As the Masterplan and Millennium scheme have evolved the ideas have been presented to the RFAC and English Heritage. #

Client: The City of Durham

Project Partners: The City of Durham, The County of Durham, The Millennium Commission and English Partnerships.

Consultants:

MacCormac Jamieson & Prichard.



Newcastle upon Tyne - Cityscape

Background

Cityscape is an Initiative of the Northumbria branch of the Northern Region of the RIBA. It involves a 'Streets for People' strategy which identified nine public spaces or places within the City Centre and makes general suggestions for their improvement. The overall intention is to develop a new 'street design' structure, enhance the environment and develop a positive facility for the provision of public places and streets for people.

Newcastle upon Tyne is a great and lively city. Neither whimsical nor fanciful, it possesses a robustness that speaks of assurance: from the astonishing sight of the Tyne Bridge 'flying' over the mercantile buildings of the quayside to the 'bravura' dash of the eastern motorway. Ideal as a setting which enhances the imaginary drama of film and television, it plays host to the whole spectrum of real life and leaves a vivid trace in the memory of all who know it. At the centre of that memory are the people of Newcastle themselves, the 'Geordies'.

Newcastle has a rich history, where each age has etched its ideas into the fabric of the city we know today. There is a proud tradition of debating and contending the future of the City. 'Cityscape' is part of this process. It addresses the present state of the city against an understanding of the formative past, in an attempt to avoid the destructive, the unsavoury and the uninspiring, in the future.

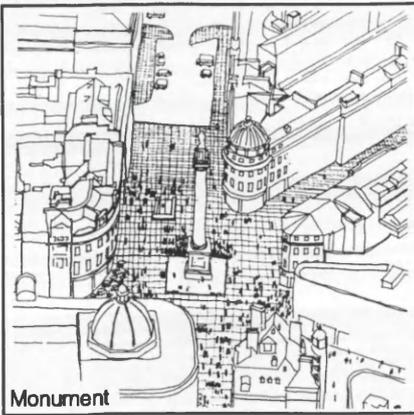
Problems and solutions

Whilst the focus of the study is Newcastle, the city does not stand alone. Many of its problems are common to most cities. The oppressiveness of traffic; its physical dominance, noise and pollution, the blank windows which tell of a city that is home to very few and the insidious, relentless decay of property deemed 'not commercially viable', are not peculiar to Newcastle.

The links between involvement, responsibility, physical quality and social success are complex. However, there does seem to be direct correlation between coordinated urban design and management on the one hand and economic and social success on the other. Enlightened cities including Grenoble, Nantes, Strasbourg and, closer to home, Dublin, Leeds and Glasgow, all bear witness to this theory.



Bigg Market



Monument



Central Station



Quayside

Above left:
The Streets for People
strategy identified
nine public places for
which ideas were
prepared.

- 1 Haymarket
- 2 St James' Park
- 3 Eldon Square
- 4 Monument
- 5 Portland Place
- 6 Pilgrim Square
- 7 Bigg Market
- 8 Central Station
- 9 Quayside

What can be learned from other cities is that partial solutions, for example, an attempt to re-structure a traffic strategy here, to try and re-ignite a desire for inner-city living there, or to add random elements of street paving, furniture or signage, is not the answer. Something must be done about the whole; about the overall decision-making processes; about the methods of achieving a positive change for the benefit of all citizens and about caring for the character and appearance of the City.

Those who plan, develop and care for the City must be concerned with far more than the mere economics of urban development and management. The confusion of public and private sector transport strategies must be resolved; the piecemeal approach to streetscape design and the general management of the public realm must all be dealt with collectively. If we are to conserve and enhance the existing visual and sensual qualities of the city and to restore those which have been lost, there must be a determined, inter-disciplinary effort to resolve the problems. The strategy must also include meaningful and constructive public participation.

Attributes

There is no doubt that Newcastle upon Tyne already possesses many of the attributes associated with some of the finest cities in Europe: a great river with river crossings; an architectural infrastructure, the envy of many cities and, notably, one of the finest streets in Britain, Grey Street. There can be no dispute that the raw ingredients are there to enable the City to be led into the millennium in a positive and inspiring manner. To conserve and enhance its unique characteristics, as well as its social, commercial and industrial well-being, the city must be 'quality-led' as opposed to being simply 'cost-led'. Only a combination of 'quality' of design, construction and management will ensure continued success. This does not necessarily mean expense. A simple idea, well executed, is so much better than expensive 'frippery'.

The particular characteristics that make Newcastle upon Tyne - the dramatic topography and extraordinary juxtapositions between the polite, the grandiose and the uncompromisingly utilitarian - have survived some remarkably insensitive and alienating interventions. By analysing streets and spaces and by making suggestions for their future, 'Cityscape' seeks to open eyes and minds to wasted potential.

It deliberately looks at the city from 'eye-level', from the viewpoint of people in the street. It aims to bring this way of thinking into the re-shaping of the city and to formulate a strategy which will result in safe, healthy, vibrant and attractive places for those working, shopping, living and playing within its boundaries.

The way forward

We must strive to retain a city where 'streets for the people' are conserved, cherished and enhanced, in order to ensure that there remain 'people for the streets'.

'Cityscape' has started the process: all who are concerned with the future planning, development, management and use of the city must now work together to:

- **reduce traffic in the city centre;**
- **review the integration of public transport;**
- **introduce a street car link from Monument to Quayside;**
- **provide strategic car parking adjacent to the motorways;**
- **form landscaped parks for cars and people;**
- **provide green links between the parks and the city centre;**
- **respond positively to the city's urbanism;**
- **design a new street culture: street furniture, lighting and landscape;**
- **provide co-ordinated city management functions.**

The following were involved in the production of Cityscape: Cyril Winskell, Alan Simpson, Diana Leitch, Tony Wharton, Rob Cowan, George Mulvagh and Bill Tavernor with contributions from many others.

Improving Design in the High Street

A Royal Fine Arts Commission Guide

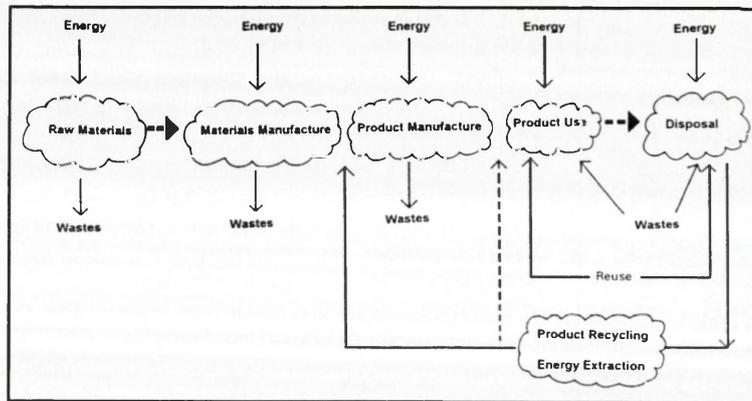
Colin J Davis

Architectural Press £9.95

This booklet follows on from a line of guidelines that reflect the townscape ethic set by the Civic Trust. It promotes a form of sanitised environment that is both admirable and dispiriting. In a way this is no bad thing; but it reflects the common view of urban design as an extension of environmental improvement. Ten years ago the RFAC published *Design in the High Street*. It helped reinforce the role of town centre management. Since then we have seen many of the messages put forward accepted. Within the urban design profession they have become common parlance.

So who is this publication for? Its layout, easy language, understandable diagrams and photographs, point to it being a very useful primer that should go in every starter pack for every new member of a local authority transport and planning committee. The section headings illustrate the local problems to be found in all cities; tidying up car park entrances, signage, eliminating fly posters, specifying materials, reducing the impact of vacant shop fronts, planting trees and so on. No great statements, just simple messages that still need to be got across to local authorities, community groups, investors and developers. Checklists that identify quality objectives and actions that can be taken to achieve them, case studies that locate examples in their context with sketches, quotes, and contacts, all make the booklet accessible. It would have been helpful to have a reading list for those people wanting to know more, and a directory of organisations involved in urban design issues, and town centre management. Colin Davis, who recently produced the design guide for Brixton, has again provided us with a similarly useful product. #

Jon Rowland



Left:
From *Sustainable Architecture* - Life cycle of building products.

Right:
From *Design of Urban Space*. Built fabric of Newcastle upon Tyne.

Towards Sustainable Architecture

Brian Edwards

Butterworth Architectural Legal Series 1996 £29.95

What's your vision of sustainable architecture? Buildings buried under the earth? Saving energy and the polluter paying? Making less environmental impact, made from recyclable materials? How green is our architect and planner?

It depends from which basic environmental/cultural discipline you come: visual or process, large or small design scope, inside and outside, traffic and/or urban planner, a wide variety. Whether we specify materials, plan new roads or add to the waste mountains, and change ecology for ever, the responsibility for sustainable environmental policy does however affect us all.

"The absence of an effective environmental policy across the European Union will cost us dearly", as the MEP Ken Collins points out in the foreword. There is a need to adopt a new model of development, one that is environmentally friendly (with directives on air, water, waste and noise pollution etc) which creates and sustains more jobs, and takes more account of the quality of life.

How near are we to an environmental audit for every project? Integration of building and human systems, less over-specification - simplicity, avoiding unnecessary complexity, and capable of responding to change. This applies to large and small projects, which need to be

judged by these objectives. There also has to be an ethical shift - much harder to achieve. Environmental objectives can be formulated, are always more difficult in practice, where cost, time, availability and politics are key variables.

What this useful book does do, is to bring some of our visions of proposed projects in one book. It sets out some of the latest situations and raises issues on the above, and is full of good common sense. Much of the information is continuously published in our technical magazines, often without being heeded. It is very helpful to see all of this set down, relatively free from impenetrable legalese, and here in the Butterworth legal series. The difficult medicine goes down well with some useful tables and choice of illustrations, although some of the photographs are a bit grey.

The subtitle is European Directives and Building Design. The implications of a Maastricht Treaty on design, a layman's guide to EC law, and information on the Construction products directive, and the mutual recognition of qualifications, are also covered. European legislation is tightening its grip on important measures and standards, new laws and responsibilities, that we all as individuals, and as European countries, can and should work to. These are sensible anyway, whether 'joining Europe' is politically questioned.

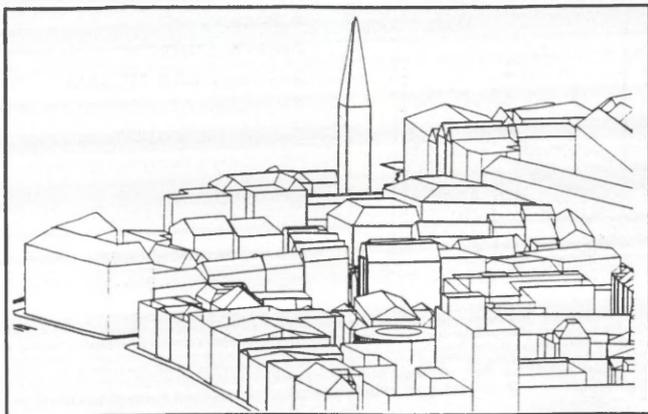
This fat paperback book, nearly A4 in size (publishers, why do you slightly diverge?), 220 pages long, summarises the new legislation, starting as

early as the 1950s through to the 90s. A useful comparison of two contrasting decades can be made. The confident 50s post war building and city expansion, system building, new towns et al (some of it 'disastrous' as we now realise, and as some of us would admit) with the more introspective 90s, where far more, too much is questioned (the over concern for conservation and participation, before engaging a project, for example). But the 1950s did have a broader vision, supported by more group working in interdisciplinary teams. Thatcherism has tended to make special areas into cost centres with competitive connections, which aren't always helpful to achieve the objectives set out here.

Brian Edwards is the principal author, with contributors from academic backgrounds, and drawing on articles by Barrie Evans, Technical Editor of the *Architects Journal*. Such is the speed of the unfolding European regulation that it is to journals rather than books that the authors have turned for information or case law. There is a useful glossary and the bibliography which lists additional papers and books of the 80s to early 90s.

Altogether a good and essential overview to update concerned citizens and a practical aid for professionals. #

Peter Eley



Design of Urban Space An Inquiry into a Social-Spatial Process

Ali Madanipour 1996
John Wiley & Sons
£45 hardback
£17.99 paperback

Reviewing books can be a frustrating activity: so many books appear on the market that it is almost impossible to select the enlightening ones before reading them; a title and a cover, even an author, may be enticing, but the contents disappointing. Fortunately on occasions, the book landing on the doormat demands and deserves all our attention and makes the reviewing job rewarding though difficult. Ali Madanipour's is such a book and its title and subtitle perfectly reflect its subject.

The aim of the book is deceptively simple: Madanipour asks what is urban space and how is it produced? In order to answer these questions he needs to consider a number of additional ones, such as how is urban space perceived and explained according to different paradigms, what is urban design, what are the forces involved in the production and modification of urban space and many more. Around each of these issues he makes an enquiry, he looks at the multiple points of view indicating that there is no unique answer but an accumulation of incomplete ones adding up to an approximation. Some chapters read like a series of Russian dolls where one explanation after the other is shown to be wanting and corrected by the next one. This is the case for instance of the enquiry into urban design (Chapter 4): not

just a product, not just a process, concerned not only with visual but also spatial and social issues, with the macro and micro scales; neither just the technocratic concern nor just an artistic creation, both a public and a private matter and not the responsibility of just one particular discipline (the UDG Source Book is quoted in this context). By taking this approach Madanipour exposes the narrowness of others: "The compartmentalised specialists feel at ease within the precincts of their won territories, protected from outside intrusions by the walls of jargon, exclusive academic circles and protective professional institutions" (p28).

The book's emphasis on a holistic view of urban space which includes the social, the physical and the symbolic, implies inter alia a criticism of a major part of British practice of urban design so solidly linked to the Picturesque and the Townscape traditions. Chapter 6, which deals with the control of design, discusses the tensions resulting from too great an emphasis on aesthetics but also offers alternative approaches

Central to the author's argument is the relationship between urban design and economic, political, social and cultural processes and therefore the importance of the role of the agencies involved in the production of the built environment: Chapter 5 for instance includes an interesting analysis of the Metro Centre in Gateshead in relation to its ambiguous private-public status. The chapter also discusses the gap between the two types of values attached to

land, use value and exchange value, and the impact this gap has on the design of urban space (mainly standardisation and privatisation).

The wealth and complexity of the material in the book, and the way it is analysed makes it difficult to do it justice. Preceding the chapters described above, the first part of the book considers urban space from several perspectives, starting with the dilemmas of definition (space vs. mass, social vs. spatial, etc) and looking at it first from a physical/environmental angle, and then from the people's angle (including a section on women in urban space).

There are a few minor quibbles: the last chapter (Design of Urban Space) recapitulates the various strands of the book without taking them any further. It does not offer a new method to design urban space; it repeats that "we should see urban design as the multidisciplinary activity with which we shape and manage urban environments" (p220). Perhaps that is all that Madanipour feels he can say, and since he has subtitled his book "an inquiry", he has not misled us, but his own selection of good practice would have been more satisfactory. In its format, the text suffers from a problem common to academic books, for which editors are probably more responsible than authors: every chapter ends up summarising what has just been read and announcing what is to come; the next chapter starts reiterating what is included in it and how it relates to what came before. This repetition lengthens the text unnecessarily. Finally a very minor point: the attempt to offer a model of the development process in Chapter 5 seems more confusing than helpful.

The book does not reinvent the wheel: it attempts a major literary review on how the wheel was invented, modified and perfected; it does not impose a point of view but shows the advantages and limitations of a whole range of

views. Madanipour has scoured the literature of a great variety of disciplines and schools within these disciplines: he quotes Einstein, Kant or Lefebvre when dealing with definitions of space; Billingham, Vernez Moudon and Derrida when discussing the urban design process; Lynch, Gottdiener and Habermas when considering images, and many many more. As opposed to authors who select only those texts that confirm their own thesis and are therefore partial and limited, he excludes nothing that might throw light on the subject of urban space. The bibliography in itself would make the book a standard reference text. It should be an immediate addition to the reading lists of all urban design courses and will fascinate enquiring practitioners. #

Sebastian Loew

The New Waterfront - A Worldwide Urban Success Story

Ann Breen and Dick Rigby
Thames & Hudson 1996 £35

This book provides a catalogue of urban waterfront regeneration success stories worldwide. It is a sequel to a previous publication by the same authors, namely *Waterfronts: Cities reclaim their Edge* which focused on North American cities and was reviewed in UDQ 51 (July 1994).

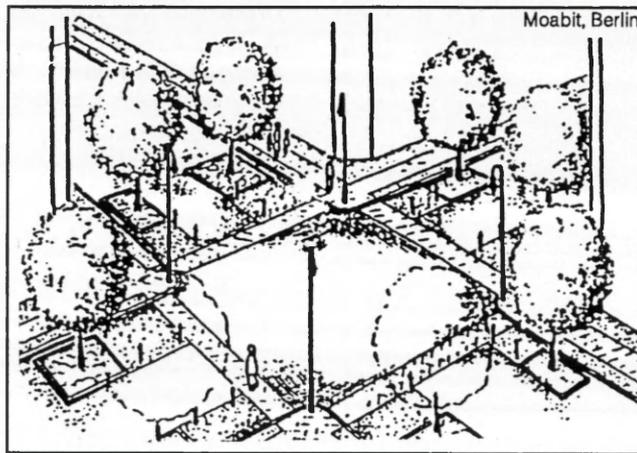
The book features 130 success stories including 20 in the UK. The problem about compiling such a book is deciding what to include and what to omit. The authors are well placed to handle such a task since they are the co-directors of the Waterfront Center based in Washington DC, whose annual conferences on waterfront regeneration have attracted delegates from all over the world. It is through these delegates that the authors have established a list of worldwide contacts who have assisted them in the choice of success stories to be included.

The catalogue is varied and includes major waterfront transformations in Baltimore, Oslo and Cape Town; commercial waterfront developments in Boston, Antwerp and Melbourne, cultural and eco- waterfronts in Mexico, Sydney and Osaka; historic waterfronts in Marseilles, Buenos Aires and Singapore; recreational waterfronts in Paris, Tokyo and Kuching; residential waterfronts in Amsterdam, Helsinki and Kobe; and industrial waterfronts in Hamburg, Rotterdam and Nagoya.

And what of the UK examples? These were compiled with advice given by two members of the UDG (one of whom was Nicholas Falk). They include the Newcastle Quayside, Birmingham Canalside, Bristol Docks, Exeter Riverside, the Merseyside Maritime Museum, Gloucester Docks and - in London - Camden Lock, Camley Street Nature Reserve, Coin Street Community Development, Hay's Galleria and the Isle of Dogs Stormwater Pumping Station. Canary Wharf is not included but is referred to in the text as a failure while its sister development, namely Battery Park City in New York, is hailed a success.

I have no problems with the selection of the 130 projects, but 39 of them get a two to six page coverage while the rest - including many of the above UK examples - are given only one third of a page in a 'gazetteer' which is like an appendix. I was personally concerned about six pages being allocated to a new waterfront development in Yokohama (plus the front cover photo) while my favourite scheme - namely Granville Island, Vancouver - was relegated to the gazetteer. It would, of course, be nigh impossible for the authors to please everyone in their selection of the 39 schemes given main coverage and the selection would appear, on the whole, to be reasonably fair. #

Tim Catchpole



Putting London Back on its Feet - A Strategy for Walking in London

Metropolitan Transport Research Unit and Tim Pharoah
LPAC Publication 1997 £60

The authors of this research study undertaken for LPAC are Keith Buchan of the Metropolitan Transport Research Unit and Tim Pharoah, known to many in the UDG as the author of the traffic calming bible (Traffic Calming Guidelines, Devon County Council, 1991). Others involved in the sponsorship of this study were London Transport and the Transport 2000 Trust.

The study has been prompted by the concern that more and more Londoners are using their car rather than their feet for relatively short journeys - to the shops, schools, leisure centres, etc. - thereby contributing to increased traffic congestion and pollution. As a result, walking (for those who continue to use their feet) has become more dangerous. Efforts at improving conditions for walking have included pedestrianisation schemes; these have quality but are usually islands surrounded by traffic. They have also included subways, footbridges, guard-rails and lengthy multi-stage crossings; these have sacrificed quality in the name of safety.

What the study identifies as necessary to put London back on its feet is a walking strategy. There must be "total journey quality"; walking must be "connected, continuous, convivial, comfortable and convenient". Crossings need to

be redesigned to give more favour to pedestrians. This requires a fundamental change in culture; I was gladdened to read that "transport professionals will need to take on board some of the work undertaken in urban design".

Another element in the walking strategy is the relationship with land use and sustainability. "The walking catchment distance should be the central measure of all development; the framework must be to encourage a mix of local activities at a density which can support them and which is well suited to walking".

The study contains good rhetoric which is only to be expected of a strategic level study. But how easy will it be to translate this rhetoric to the local level and see improvements occur on the ground and the local corner shop brought back into use? This is a major challenge; the authors admit that the problem is far more serious in outer London than in inner London. I would go further and say that the problem is far more serious outside London and that the whole nation must be put back on its feet. #

Tim Catchpole

A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals

Spiro Kostof
Oxford University Press 1995
(2nd edition) £45 hardback
£25 paperback

For those practitioners, students and academics who are looking for a history of architecture which goes beyond the conventional concentration on the work of the 'great masters' - an approach which treats architecture as a series of sculptural objects devoid of context and culture - this book provides a wide-ranging and erudite alternative. In his preface Kostof talks of his desire to include architecture and building, culture and urbanism, in his account of the development of architecture in the western hemisphere.

There are chapters on stone age architecture, the rise of the city in western Asia, the urbanisation of Europe, Spain and the New World, as well as more conventional chapters on Rome, Athens and the Renaissance. The story has been taken up until the late 1980s with the same scrupulous approach applied throughout. Islamic culture is incorporated into the historical view, so that, for example, one chapter compares Istanbul and Venice, rather than regarding non-Christian countries as 'other'.

Regrettably, Spiro Kostof died before the second edition of this work was produced and it was finished by his research assistant Greg Castillio. The book is a monumental achievement, scholarly, entertaining and beautifully illustrated. My only concern is that the author did not live long enough to include more discussion of the Eastern bloc countries into this authoritative work; it seems odd to read a discussion of the Carolinian legacy and not to include Prague. With this reservation, it is a book which can wholeheartedly be recommended to a wide audience. #

Marion Roberts

The British Building Industry Since 1800 - An Economic History

Christopher Powell
E & F Spon London 1996
(2nd edition) £19.99

These days we hardly need the real world, the solid, smelly, tactile stuff that surrounds us. It's commonplace to work from sketch to design and specification through to bills, to visualisations, with every possible viewpoint simulated to drive through without ever leaving the keyboard.

But this Masterplanning, these policies, this guidance is out there somewhere, even if there is rather different, as Powell, almost nostalgically notes, "digging, hewing and smoothing have given way to steering, bolting and sealing" (p232). The old ways are kept alive in reservations - "listed buildings", and by amateurs and enthusiasts - members of SPAB and the like. But "urban designers", whoever they are, still have to deal with all this, even if via development control.

So once in a while a book like this is a salutary reminder. There are times when its rather neutral, economic historical stance, its continual listing of prices and day rates, the rising and falling of trades and professions and the underemphasis of the urban and spatial consequences of it all, point to another abstract world of academic history than the misty past of the sites and scenes in the few illustrations. They are where the book really lives - from the top hatted and cravatted mason, the first glimpses of the modern building industry in the frameworks and formworks of cinemas, to the bare panels and service ducts of Broadgate. And the result is the loss of the Building Inspector's nightmare but the townscape elysium of "interlocking plans, varied storey heights, short floor spans and tangled roof planes" (p20). But this is a history, not an elegy, alas. #

Bob Jarvis

Areas for Community Regeneration:

Local Area Definition

LPAC publication 1995 £46

The issues raised in this LPAC report are, like the poor, always with us. The context of this study is a search for better geographical frameworks within which to address the issues of poverty and disadvantage in London.

The report pursues the quest for a more coherent balance between the needs and interests of local populations and the wider processes of development and change affecting them. It seeks a better framework for local action in response to economic or political forces beyond local knowledge or control. The goal of LPAC is to enable the direction of investment and initiative through local partnerships into housing, social infrastructure, employment and culture, enhancing local environments and reinforcing a sense of identity. The search is to foster the breath of local community life, the genesis of its own community development, renewal and regeneration.

The research context is, however, mindful of past difficulties in coming to grips with multiple aspects of social deprivation arising from highly diverse socio-geographic groups. Generalised assumptions and deductive inferences over a whole range of social factors have been blunt instruments without detailed focus. The historic search for a system of social indicators has been found wanting.

This report subtitled *Local Area Definition* promises therefore a more focused sensitivity to the infinite diversity of social need. The new approach is supported by leading academics in a study commissioned by the Department of the Environment, *Assessing the Impact of Urban Policy*, and by LPAC's earlier research report, *Place and Local Identity* (reviewed in UDQ 55). The former study highlighted the need for more

effective local targeting of programmes and resources, in partnership with local populations. The latter found evidence that local communities define themselves through local neighbourhoods more than through administrative boundaries such as wards or boroughs. The LPAC advice on more localised area definition seeks therefore a finer tuning for those administrative and political mechanisms which, acting mainly from above, are difficult to effect or are ephemeral in their outcomes for local populations.

A more systematic approach to local community definition is therefore paramount if the factual basis for local action is to be demonstrably equitable, consistent and authoritative. In its search for some standard unit of account which is responsive to local diversity as well as to its overall references, LPAC examined data frameworks at the ward level and at the lesser scale of the enumeration district. Neither were intended as a prescription for community definition, but were determined instead by the conventions of census enumeration and collection.

The report in its concern for comparability between different areas considers how they may be characterised so as to reflect variations in social and economic conditions across London. It considers too the statistical techniques bringing together the data describing the areas. The resulting complexity is imaginable from a data analysis involving 37 variables in each of London's 758 wards. Analysis of those variables was made not only at ward levels but also at whole borough levels to enable wider consultation. A significant conclusion in the report however was the finding that the distribution of local disadvantage might be obscured by the artificiality of boundaries drawn at both borough and ward levels. This, the report notes, reinforces the need for yet greater co-ordination between and within those boundaries if service needs are to be properly

addressed. The problems encountered in this approach were many, including the risk of double counting, as well as a poor response to ethnic or cultural diversity.

Another approach to defining the social characteristics of local areas was tested using the DoE's Index of Local Conditions, economic, social and environmental. These are produced at descending spatial scales, at local authority, ward and census enumeration district levels (ED). The possible benefit of a more fine-grained approach is tested by reference to indicators at ED levels. These have average populations of almost 500, against population of about 6000 at ward levels. This analysis was found to be more sensitive to the presence of smaller, isolated pockets of deprivation, often particular housing estates, some of them in close proximity to prosperous areas. Its greater focus highlighted successful local economies which had failed to assist signally disadvantaged local populations, or wider regeneration initiatives which had passed them by. These findings must be significant, confirming as they do the report's assumptions in favour of a more finely tuned basis for targeting economic and social initiatives at local community levels.

The report's final conclusions recognise however that the ED framework remains seriously limited in its capacity to indicate the causes of local deprivation or its remedies. It points instead to a more comprehensive focus on local communities within actual neighbourhood boundaries instead of boundaries which only serve administrative convenience. It looks to methods enabling local populations themselves to engage in the development of local policies, creating a sense of common purpose underpinning their own regenerative potential. #

Basil Fineberg

**Directory of
practices and
urban design
courses
subscribing to
this index**

This directory provides a service to potential clients when they are looking for specialist professional advice on projects involving urban design and related matters, and to students and professionals considering taking an urban design course. Those wishing to be included in future issues should contact 01235 851415.

W S Atkins Planning Consultants

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Fax: 01372 743006
Contact: Joanna Chambers BA BTP
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Fax: 0171 250 3022
Contact: Alan Baxter FStructE MICE
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Fax: 0181 399 7903
Contact: Gordon Bell DipLA ALI

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Passingworth Craft Workshops
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Fax: 01435 864381
Contact: Chris Blandford/Philip
Russell-Vick/ Geoff Smith

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Trevor Bridge Associates

7-9 St Michaels Square
Ashton-under-Lyne
Lancashire OL6 6LF
Tel: 0161 308 3765
Fax: 0161 343 3513
Contact: Trevor Bridge Dip LA DA
FFB MI Hort ALI

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Contact: Neil Parkyn MA DipArch
DipTP (Dist) RIBA MRTPI

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Building Design Partnership

PO Box 4WD
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London W1A 4WD
Tel: 0171 631 4733
Fax: 0171 631 0393
Contact: Richard Saxon BArch
(Hons)(L'pool) MCD MBIM RIBA

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Contact: John Burrell MA AADip RIBA
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Contact: Peter J. Heath Architect and
Town Planner

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London N1 7RU
Tel: 0171 704 1975
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of public spaces.

At first glance the point of contact between the two books is slight. They both arrived about the same time. One direct from the publishers, an unsolicited review copy, the primary colour galaxy of intersecting lines flowing against the black void of its wrapper. The other bought, cash only, at the book stand on the way out from the reading, in the interval before another smoke-filled session of sub-Blake pseudo-dub, its cover a dull grid/collage of clouds, old maps, a labelled skyline. They both carry with them their socio-intellectual baggage whether international symposia with crystal sharp projections or poetry readings with grainy ambiguous slides; both are a chance to hear the word, shake the hand.

But the genesis of both lies in a reading of London through mystical geometries. The first is already widely reported, its academic credentials well established, its approach setting out another paradigm for urban design. The author of the second comes as an ex-student of the London School of Film Technique and Trinity College, Dublin, reader of the *London Psychogeographical Association Newsletter* and occasional columnist in *The London Review of Books*, a poet and novelist.

One uses this linear geometry to evoke an empty and unpeopled city where mathematical abstractions quickly replace human activity and perception, and aesthetic and symbolic intentions are erased into an ever more complex plotting of the fundamentals of space and time, and cities described in strange and unfamiliar language in order to make their true nature apparent. From time to time more direct and clearly recognisable images are evoked from antique maps, of the "strange towns" of Westminster, Versailles and Teotihuacan. Streets and spaces are collapsed to the barest of lines that serve to project their essence, and familiar conventions are inverted - "in its raw state space already contains all spatial structure that could ever exist in that space . . . space has all possible properties . . . a dance sketches out a possible structure of space within an infinite set of possibilities".

The other is rooted in the historical and contemporary patterns and events, its streets and pages peopled with peripheral characters who, combined, give the huge and profound **V** with which it opens, a vivid, but always slightly seedy and suspect life. Conceptual artists, pamphleteers, security police, the criminal underworld, film-makers, peers, promoters and poets combine to offer a reading of the city that is held together by a deeper geometric sense, made visible only to those who watch and wait for the signs, who can read the skies and stand outside of time and space. Its geometrical charting of the City runs from TS Eliot, through micro-climatic studies and the rings and lines of security devices to the sacrificial sites that today are rendered harmless under the corporate hum of flickering fortunes. This is no abstract place, no scholarly paper, these streets are unsafe, filled with crazies and memories. This city is real, with misfits, out-takes from unseen movies and planning disasters.

The first has a Le Corbusier quote, albeit refuted, as its frontispiece; the second quotes Mark Twain. We hire the authors of the first to straighten out our New (post-modernist, or deconstructed) Jerusalems, but the author of the second is closer to the spirit of William Blake. #

References

The two books discussed here are Bill Hillier, *Space is the Machine*, Cambridge University Press, 1996, 464pp, hardback, ISBN 0 521 56039 X, £45.00 (\$US 75) and Iain Sinclair *Lights Out for the Territory*, Granta Books, London, 1997, 386pp, paperback, ISBN 1 86207 009 1, £12.99.

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