URBAN DESIGN GROUP
QUARTERLY

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In the News?

It was encouraging to come across a mention of the Quarterly in a recent (10th September) edition of the Town and Country Planning Association's own weekly, 'Planning Bulletin'. Under its regular heading 'What to read', the paper drew the reader's attention to Jeff Bishop's piece in the June Quarterly entitled 'Urban Design and Environmental Education: a common law marriage?' adding that it appeared "in the rare but very good Urban Design Group publication".

Heartening indeed but, in a sense, a timely reminder that from its origins as something more akin to a broadsheet, the Quarterly is fast becoming a major forum for serious discussion of all facets of urban design in the UK.   Quite apart from distribution throughout the British Isles, the mailing list now embraces places as far afield as New York and MIT in the United States, Sweden, the Middle East and Australia whilst libraries too are asking to be sent copies.

Mindful of this important trend, the Committee has been giving some thought to ways of strengthening the Quarterly; this edition reflects some of these ideas by introducing, for example, book reviews.   We would also like to establish a regular 'practice review' feature and so would welcome articles on the processes, instruments and products of urban design.

Ultimately, however, the degree to which the Quarterly continues to promote the Group's aims depends on all of us as members, readers and potential contributors.   To quote from a report of some years ago, appropriately enough by Prof. Peter Dovell, a contributor to this Quarterly, on the conservation of Cork in the Irish Republic, "the standards we set and accept, are the standards we enjoy".

Alan Rowley

Not Just Failed Architects

- WHAT KIND OF URBAN DESIGNER WORKS IN A LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY?

What is Urban Design? This question has plagued urban designers for the past decade, yet is an answer really necessary?   According to Ian Bentley, Urban Design "...emerges from the urban fog as a collection of loosely related attitudes and techniques, responding to a range of inter-connected urban worries".*   As such, there are often as many definitions of Urban Design as there are arguments on whether the lack of an accepted definition is a positive advantage or a regressive handicap.

The very nature of Urban Design depends to a great extent on the background, character and skills of the people who practice it, and it has been argued that, Urban Design is therefore merely what urban designers do.   The major benefit of this hypothesis is that it concentrates our attention on the concept that Urban Design is essentially an 'action' or, rather a 'method of acting'.   That is to say, that Urban Design is basically a <u>role</u> and a <u>process</u> and not necessarily a profession.

The urban designer operating with a Local Authority Planning Department has a precarious, yet very challenging role.   For although at present, he has limited financial resources at his disposal, he often finds himself at the centre of a powerful public body which is slowly realising that it has evidently failed to effectively control urban change.   Nevertheless, as Bentley states "...if he wants to get things done in the short run, rather than waiting for the revolution, he will have to be prepared to work within the constraints of the planning framework existing at the time...".2 Moreover, his role within the framework is ever increasing, as he slowly begs, borrows, steals and inherits greater importance and responsibility in the local planning system.

Of course, not all urban designers have an Urban Design qualification (or its equivalent), in fact the majority have only one professional qualification, usually architecture, planning or landscape architecture. A few are not even aware that they are operating as urban designers. Some professionals work for years in a Local Authority trying their best to protect the urban environment by fighting road proposals, unsympathetic redevelopments etc. through the application of a good 'common sense' approach to decision making and policy formulation. Urban Design _is_ common sense! As such, an urban designer can be _any_ professional with the right attitude towards the built environment. As discussed previously, Urban Design is both a role and a process; some people are simply more effective in that role and understand the process more fully than others. Post-graduate courses in Urban Design may provide invaluable help towards that effectiveness and understanding, but they should not become a professional pre-requisite. Experience and natural skill can be equally helpful.

A local authority urban designer does, however, have a certain element of choice open to him when determining his role in the system. He can decide how he operates and, to a lesser extent, where he operates from. Insomuch as he can decide to work either:

- openly; or
- incognito
and he can either be based:
- in a centralised specialist team; or
- among the planners at the coal face.

Each of these basic 'modes of operation' has its advantages and disadvantages. In trying to decide which is most effective for the local authority he works in, the urban designer often has to deliberately ignore the professional ethos involved and concentrate on the purely operational aspects of each option.

It is probably obvious that an open manner is synonymous with working in a central specialist group, and a more under-cover manner with working among the planners in Local Plans and Development Control. In the final analysis, however, perhaps the most important considerations affecting the urban designer's choice of role are that he:-

1.   Remains fairly 'devious and cunning' such that his true motives are not always clear and that he is always well informed of the Department's activities (and inactivity) through the grapevine. This will make him difficult to control and censor and will widen his sphere of influence.

2.   Maintains good links with the coal face thus keeping him fully aware and in touch with reality, with the public, and with the results of his work as they appear on the ground (i.e. a design brief is not an end in itself).

3.   Involves himself in the wider aspects of the local authority's work, therefore ensuring that he is working within the 'correct' policy context and that he is able to influence the people who determine that policy.

It is inherent in these three conditions that the urban designer must have a good information network, a contact in every section and every department is a good objective. Many people would decry the 'cloak and dagger' attitude advocated above. They may think it best to claim that they are above such goings-on, and that they get their best results by keeping their heads down and working to the best of their abilities, but it is hardly realistic. In fact, it is very naive. If Urban Design is to succeed, rather than merely survive, then we must accept that office politics are inseparable from working life. The urban designer must seek out and befriend

contemporary colleagues who are sympathetic to Urban Design. These 'cup of coffee' contacts are the initial key to effectiveness. Even the most talented and inspired urban designer will be unable to make people listen and get things done, if he is ineffective in his role. The essence of strength is stealth.

It is evident that, as Bentley admits, "There is, it seems, a subversive element in Urban Design" in that it "emerges as an enterprise for articulating and channelling local power in the control and promotion of development".^ An urban designer working in any Local Authority Planning Department, if he is to be effective must be the type of person who can become involved in this process of 'articulating and channelling local power'.
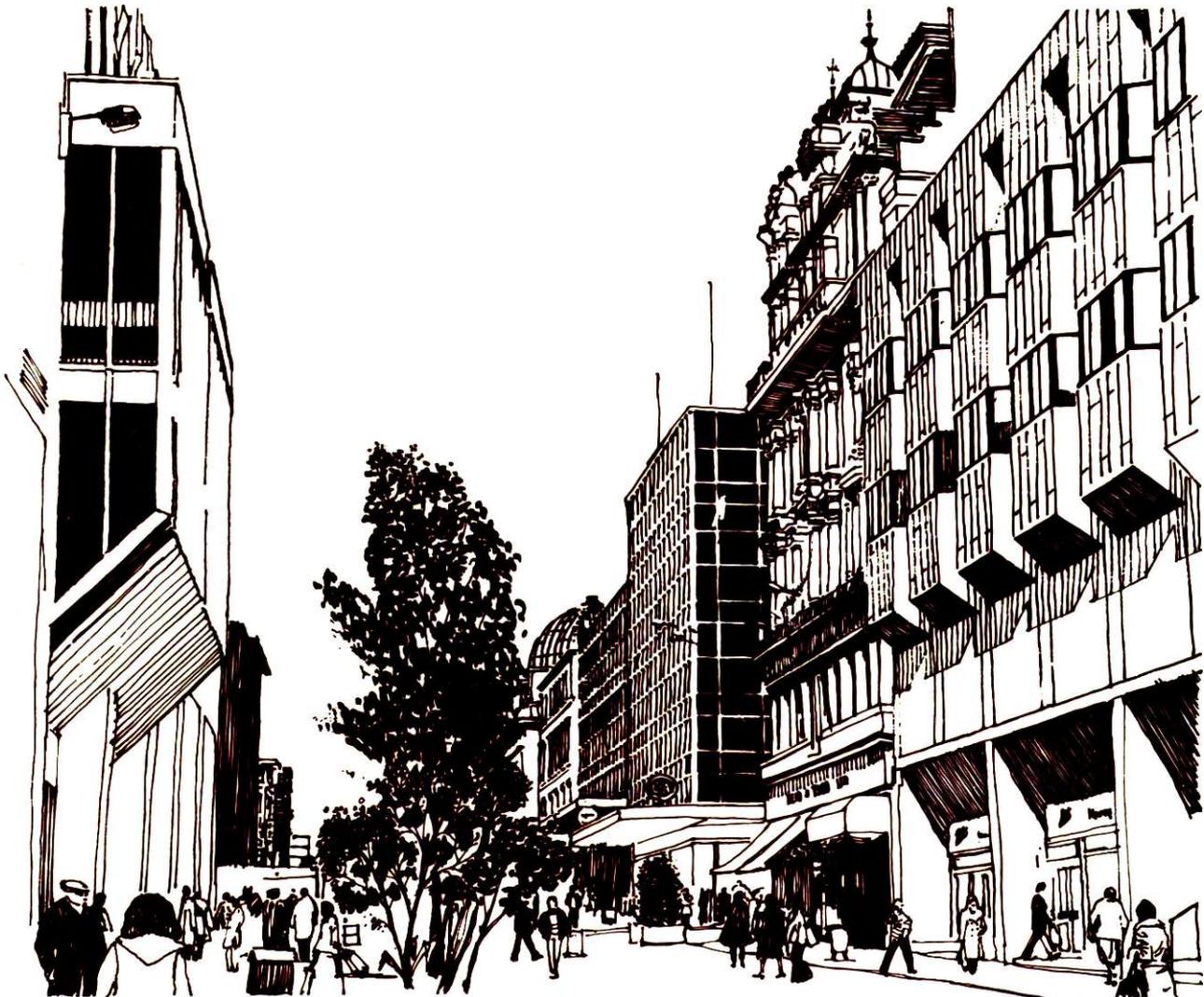
Mike Galloway
Urban Designer working in Glasgow District Planning Department.

The above is an excerpt from a recent thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the M.A. in Urban Design at Oxford Polytechnic.

References:

1   Bentley, Ian -   What is Urban Design; Urban Design Forum No. 1, 1980 -
                      Page 35.   2   ibid - Page 37.   3   ibid - Page 37.

The illustrations on the cover and this page were produced in Glasgow City Planning Department.

D e s i g n   G a m e s

Henry Sanoff is an architect and a professor in the School of Design at North Carolina State University. For a decade or more he has been actively promoting the cause of community participation in environmental design - of involving people in the process of changing their own environment. This he has done both through his teaching and through active involvement in projects in addition to publishing extensively, his books including Seeing the Environment, Methods of Architectural Programming, Designing with Community Participation and Design Games. In his talk to the Urban Design Group in June, Professor Sanoff discussed the ideas underlying his approach and illustrated some of the practical methods or "games" he has evolved over the years to help make "concensus" design decisions.

The theme of the talk is a timely one given that in the context of inner city areas, for example, some planners and designers are now coming round to the view that what makes environmental improvements something other than purely cosmetic may well rest as much in the manner in which they are carried out as in the intrinsic substance of the schemes.

Professor Sanoff opened his talk with an analogy contrasting the medical and design professions. Years of medical research have resulted in a wide and readily available literature both in books and popular magazines (to say nothing of radio and television programmes) allowing the consumer to at least make a start at diagnosing and understanding his condition.

In marked contrast the paucity of a sustained research effort in the design field has, at best, discouraged the development of comparable consumer guidance and advice. The publication in the Sunday colour magazines, for example, of completed buildings is as much help to a lay person as a colour photograph of a liver, Professor Sanoff argued. What designers should aim to do is to begin to transfer some of their own knowledge so that those affected by design decisions can begin to diagnose problems for themselves, to begin to appreciate the complexity of issues and choices involved and to appreciate the compromises that may have to be made. In short, "to build a constituency of people who value what the design professions are about".

Professor Sanoff argued the need to look at how buildings and environments are currently produced and for designers to ask themselves whether this "delivery system" helps or hinders the production of "better" environments. In his view, an interest and concern for user needs or participation was not rooted in a romantic attitude to human involvement but rather in recognition that users have a particular expertise and knowledge that, whilst different from, is equally important to that of the designer. As such, we should seek a "coalition" of different experts. But if we are to relate to clients and users it is necessary to involve people in design decision making and for this a new language of design that is comprehensible and communicable to the lay person is needed. Sanoff drew a parallel with lawyers possessing the mystery and power of a highly specialised language which creates and serves as a "tool of repression", a somewhat emotive analogy perhaps.

Whilst designers and planners in particular have ostensibly embraced such participation in decision making, the more fundamental question of the designer's accessibility to the user or community goes largely unanswered. Decisions which affect the many are made by the few, serving only to reinforce and and not to challenge the delivery system.

All too often design skills are either unavailable or inaccessible or both, so situations warranting action remain untouched. (Note Prof. Sanoff's remarks were made in the context of U.S.A. which lacks a universal system of local government planning such as exists in the U.K.). Despite the inevitable controversy about what is "good design", Prof. Sanoff argues that there is an urgent need for the design equavalent to the readily available medical handbooks. Related to this is the need to distinguish between the "rightness" and "wrongness" of buildings quite apart from "good" and "bad" design. Whilst one might question this distinction in terms of semantics, his message was clear. The question is whose view should prevail; one might have a well designed building that was nevertheless wrong for an area or community. Again, such judgements and choices can only really be made with the active participation of those affected by the design decisions.
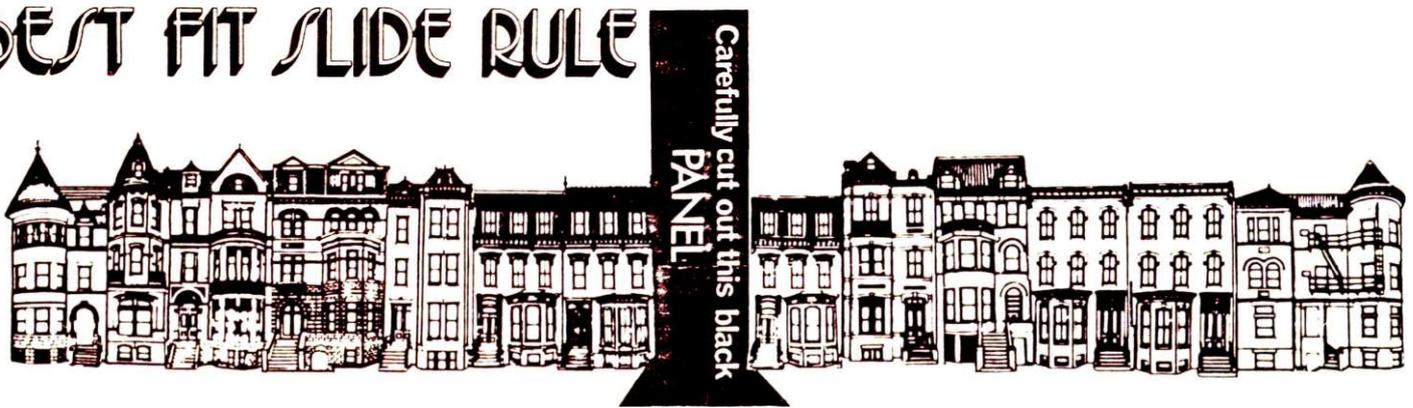

Through a series of case studies ranging from small town redevelopment schemes and conservation and renewal programmes to the design of a Girl Guide Camp and of a new community school, Prof. Sanoff then illustrated the nature and variety of design games using a range of methods and techniques all aimed at involving users in making design decisions, helping them to group the often complex issues and relationships and enabling them to evolve solutions that were responsive to their personal and community needs and values. A key feature of the games, said Prof. Sanoff, was the concept of "collaborative planning". Most familiar games involve winners and losers making for at least some disgruntled participants and creating a sense of antagonism and perhaps alienation which undermines effective community action. So Sanoff advocates group discussions which are collaborative in nature and which require concensus decisions. The more complex are the issues, the more interconnected the solution needs to be in order to satisfy the full community of interests and the more inappropriate bargaining and voting becomes tending, as they do, to force people to adopt extremes of position in order to sway a vote. The examples discussed by Prof. Sanoff provided a useful insight into his approach. The games are intended to be developed and modified to suit particular situations. "Evocative" games seek to generate ideas and evoke a reaction to problems. The "Wish Poem" encourages participants to fantasise about what they would like to happen in an ideal, constraint free, world. "I wish my school to be a nice place to go to instead of a torture chamber" or, more prosaically, "I wish my school to have bright colours" indicates a game designed to evoke the free expression of views and feelings. Sometimes such approaches can identify latent conflicts between the immediate users and those in authority as was the case when designing a Guides camp when the responses included a desire for flushing toilets and for Boy Scouts to be able to visit the camp, both ideas apparently being totally contrary to convention and tradition.

Similarly, the "Environmental Education" games which include groups of residents following a pre-selected route through an area, being asked to describe what they see and how they feel about different places along the route and to say what they would like to happen on particular sites. A game entitled "Descriptive Words" helps provide individual participants with a vocabulary to describe the environment.

Then there are games requiring individuals to make specific design choices including, for example, "Best Fit Slide Rule" intended to help generate discussions about what is valued in any particular street scene and to allow possible new building proposals to be carefully evaluated. Likewise, SIDE (Strategies for Improving Downtown Environments) which stimulates design alternatives as well as indicating the possible consequences of each option.

Other games are designed to help people work towards concensus decisions, as in the case of the Guide camp, where a final agreed site layout was eventually prepared.
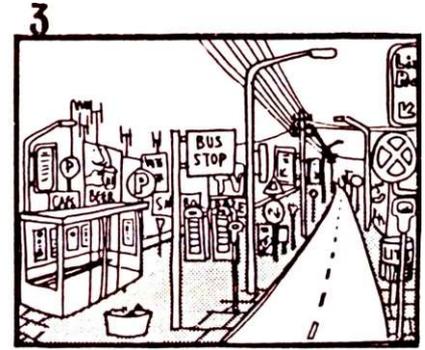
The drawings above: characterize a sequence of changes that have occured in a town not unlike your own. For the purpose of this exercise you ran assume thay your present lown is at stage two in the process of change, rapidly moving towards stage three if no action is taken. As a community planning group you are interested in preserving certain qualities that were lost as well as maintaining or improving characteristics that would make yonr town more humane.

To begin, each individual in your workgroup (from three to five players) should briefly list important environmental qualities. Then, as a group, discuss each persons views about the town until agreement is achieved. Next, proceed to the goal selection phase.

environmental qualities

RECORD SHEET

1

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One can, of course, question Prof. Sanoff's ideas and methods on a number of levels. For some the notion of encouraging people to respect the role and work of professionals is suspect. For others, the games themselves may be too value-ladened, tending perhaps to channel people to seeing environments too much in the designer's own terms. Similarly Prof. Sanoff's seemingly glib suggestion that once design ideas have been formulated and agreed, the community should "go out and get the money to fund proposals"; differences in administrative and instutional structures and practices may be significant here. But when all this has been said, Prof. Sanoff provided the session with a stimulating and illuminating introduction into a facet of design of relevance to urban design, particularly if greater emphasis is placed on a community based view of local planning with less stress on the more traditional public interest ideology. For those who want to pursue the subject further, Prof. Sanoff recommended his book, 'Designing with Community Participation' in the Community Development Series (McGraw Hill 1978) whilst 'Design Games', William Kauffman Inc. 1979, at £3.50 provides a cheap introduction to many of the games themselves (and from which the illustrations have been reproduced with the kind permission of the publishers).

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URBAN DESIGN COURSE REVIEW

A 12 month full-time post-graduate post-experience course leading to the degree of Master of Arts in Urban Design has been available at the University of Manchester since 1971, subsequent to the appointment of Peter Dovell as Professor of Urban Design in 1968.   By this action,' the University gave recognition to the long-established final year architectural option in urban design, and strengthened the modest link that existed between architecture and town planning.

Inherent in the appointment was a requirement to define what urban design could consider its specific academic territory, to some extent, accepting that lecture courses already existed in both departments covering common inter-disciplinary spheres of interest. To define urban design and establish a course structure without challenge to already established preserves, proved far from simple; although whether or not a 'gap' or an 'overlap' existed between academic and professional interests seemed, in the end, of little or no real importance. Specialist concentration upon the physical outcome of the planning process could clearly offer useful rewards to all concerned, and to quote without change, from the opening statement of a formal report made to the University in 1969,

> "There is an increasingly recognised need for cross disciplinary educational patterns to study joint peripheral interests in depth, and the interdependence and relationship between allied professions.
>
> Urban design would consider the interacting environmental interests of the architectural, planning, engineering, and landscape professions, and their common ultimately indivisible concern for the physical structure and articulation of the city.
>
> It would be particularly related to architecture and planning, but concerned with architecture and its detail only to ensure that it aggregates into environmental effectiveness; and with planning and its wider implications only to ensure that a sound operational framework exists for environmental action. If architecture may be considered to concern itself primarily with the design, organisation and structure of building; and planning with the structure of settlement; urban design is concerned with the structure of urban composition.
>
> It would explore the interrelationship of form, space and movement; and the perception, experience and creation of building and spatial groups   It would also study the objects and activities that create or condition the attainment of environmental quality throughout the total urban scene."

It was, however, one activity to suggest a framework, but another to turn words into reality, especially within a university structure geared to a notional staff/student ratio of 1:10. So, with a course of up to 10 students, the 12 calendar-month course without vacations, was run for 5 years almost entirely unaided. Funds were, however, specifically requested and thankfully provided for specialist lectures, from private architects and town planning consultants, senior government officials, academics from other universities, social workers, commercial developers and managers of large scale projects. In addition, a programme of one-day study visits was also established, to projects and towns of special urban design interest.

The course was, in fact, even more demanding than it might appear, for it was mounted in the conviction - one totally shared by an academic colleague, Mr. R.C. Stones, appointed as Special Lecturer in 1976 - that 'design' should be central to any study of urban design: so a series of design projects were set almost continuously throughout the year supported by the belief that a sound and sensitive architectural training possibly provided the best basis for the discipline. This was sadly not always forthcoming, and candidates on occasion came for interview from 'recognised' Schools of Architecture without drawings and with background design training over a 5 year period that had only been concerned with design methodology and little or no associated experience of personal design commitment.

We were additionally interested in town planners joining our course provided they had good academic records at an undergraduate or post-graduate conversion course level, and could offer evidence of interest and general aptitude for design. This might have been given little opportunity for expression by the nature and content of many town planning courses in the '70's, but over the past 12 years we have been pleased to have a number of planners join us. The course was richer for their participation, and most achieved highly commendable academic results.

It could be argued that a concern for product rather than process was idealistic rather than practical and led to the architectural role being stressed too vigorously. Clearly development embraces both product and process but the planner/urban designer role is normally an implementing, regulating, controlling operation rather than at an inventive creative level; something akin to the role and experience of the midwife rather than the mother. This is, however, subject to exception, for a professional label is not necessarily a critical measure of assessment, and the inventive environmental design talents of a number of planners are a clear match of many architects at the urban design scale, readily confirmed by anyone who has worked in a District Council Planning Office and seen schemes for development proposed by members of the architectural profession, giving little evidence of any real concern for environmental quality. However, improved standards are better attained by professional talent being developed gradually though a strongly design-based educational framework - and this is what architectural training ought to be at its best - than on the basis of guidelines and conventional wisdom as a form of intervention to prevent the worst rather than create the best. Difficult by control: better by example!

Our educational efforts therefore tended to concentrate upon considerations of urban form and three-dimensional design, closely related to design projects and a design research study submitted prior to completion of the course for the award of the degree, controlled by university regulations modelled on a traditional Master of Arts pattern. These permit the submission of a written thesis by itself, but we never needed to consider a written thesis alone, as no student - accepting our expressed bias - has ever wished to do so. All submissions therefore followed an alternative pattern, providing a written dissertation, with a major design content and associated drawings and models. Nor have we given lectures on urban management theory, esoteric planning issues, or related subjects, unless their relevance to design and physical development could be clearly substantiated.

The stress upon urban design as an essentially practical consideration has, however, not blinded us to the inevitable moulding of the environment that derives from the existing political, economic social framework which varies from time to time and country to country. Consequently, we have attempted to show, in particular, though an extended series of lectures on urban form, how the development brief for any project is modified over time: how the development process itself creates its own demands for change: how the development might have been different to satisfy a

private developer or a public authority: how the development might need to be
modified to satisfy a Tory or a Labour council: how different it might have been had
it been established a few years earlier or a few years later: how it might have been
handled by a different designer: and what were the strengths and weaknesses of the
development as it was finally produced.

Gradually the course became established, and up to 200-250 enquiries were received
each session, followed by between 100-150 formal applications, from which we chose
a student intake for the first year of 6, rising to 12, and later to a peak in 1976/77
of 20.   The aim was not to have a large intake, and to maintain the values of close
personal and tutorial contact, with teaching as a 2-way professional exchange,
especially with mature professionals who came from a wide international net, mostly
over 30 years of age.

Modest but invaluable grant support was given by S.S.R.C. and other organizations,
and we attracted good British students, but for reasons mostly related to government
cuts in post-graduate funding, our grant support slowly declined, and finally became
non-existent, resulting in a drastic fall in British student involvement and interest.
The S.S.R.C. possibly did as much as it could within its corporate structure to help
urban design establish itself, and certainly we were most grateful for its initial
support, but when funds became less available, it not unnaturally tended to support
its social science base rather than academic newcomers. In any case those involved in
urban design were in general too concerned with their own local difficulties to
establish a powerful lobby for their joint and total survival, and with disparate
viewpoints, pressure - even assuming pressure might have been useful - was minimal.
Recently with only 3 studentship grants on offer to urban design for the whole of the
country, the struggle for grants was discouraging.

Perhaps we might have promoted ourselves more forcefully with advertising and
brochures to suggest we could transform architects into planners, and planners at
least into near-architects, and provide everyone with the necessary qualification for
an appointment as City Manager: but we felt this to be unrealistic, with urban design
as an essentially tactical rather than a strategic professional concern.

We were additionally unwilling to support the premise that urban design was
synonymous with urban planning, and that an urban design course should train
architects to formulate planning policies and enable them to take command at any
stage of the planning process.   This we felt to be educationally impossible, and in a
university middleman context, poised between architecture and planning, the idea
would have been personally and administratively untenable, and totally unacceptable to
the planning department.

The encouragement of urban design and the establishment of an Urban Design
Diploma award by the R.I.B.A. could have been an excellent professional activity but
the University of Manchester did not apply for its Urban Design course to be
recognised.   This was primarily on matters of principle, but for all students from all
Schools of Urban Design who were eligible to apply, only about a dozen have
bothered to do so since its inception about 8 years ago.   The R.I.B.A. has recently
given new professional attention to these issues, but our own students, asked on a
number of occasions whether a request should be made for Diploma recognition on
their behalf, were sadly for the most part not only uninterested in the R.I.B.A. Urban
Design Diploma, but in some cases even uninterested in R.I.B.A. membership itself.

This in outline, records some of our actions and thoughts since 1968, but the 12 months Master's programme in Urban Design at the University of Manchester may, however, possibly be at an end, for the course will certainly not be available for the 1982-83 session, and may be difficult to resurrect for subsequent sessions. Enough students could have been accepted to operate an effective course, but good applications have fallen dramatically. The course fees in 1971 were £72 per session; they are now over £2,600. Costs of accommodation and general living expenses in the United Kingdom are high, and a married student from overseas with two children needs to find approximately £10,000 for a 12 month stay, and whatever the education, at this cost Manchester and the grittiness of the North-West might seem less than attractive. Few architects now apply except from South America, and the best at times of recession seem understandably to move more directly from graduation to employment. For town planners we have had more applications than ever before, with many from Africa, all seeking an extra qualification in design, but with little evidence of adequate preparatory training for our course as it is presently structured. British students would be interested, but can find little or no financial support, and although some funds are available within the University, competition is understandably keen from all departments for the few grants available. Canadians, South Africans and Australians either seem now to say in their own country for post-graduate education, or are going to the U.S.A., and Malaysians and Iranians, who often have good undergraduate backgrounds and are keenly motivated to learn, are now unable to come. University economies have also played some part in our present difficulties.

Nevertheless, the future for Urban Design as a significant environmental force is clear, and although a peak may have passed, a continuing need will always exist for its study, either as a strengthened involvement in urban planning at the local action area planning level, or as an extension to the architectural framework and a broadening of design interest and understanding beyond the building unit.

This may be a modest aim, but it could prove more fruitful than seeking mutual RIBA/RTPI reciprocity agreements that may diminish rather than strengthen professional substance. It might be better to create a more effective educational process possibly at an undergraduate rather than post-graduate level. Indeed, possibly more effectively, for post-graduate education in professional courses is unlikely to survive unless supported by undergradute staff/student ratios and teaching resources. But at undergraduate or post-graduate levels only good can come from involvement in urban design education, and in this context it may be better to concentrate on undergraduates and influence many rather than few.

To have been involved so fully has certainly been a stimulating experience, and there will undoubtedly be new fields to conquer. We continue to hear encouraging news from old students, and it would appear that an M.A. in Urban Design from Manchester, has been a useful academic and professional venture of benefit to students, the University, and we would hope, in some small measure, society as a whole.

<div style="text-align: right">

Peter Dovell
Professor of Urban Design
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Kevin Lynch:
A Theory of Good City Form
M.I.T. Press, 1981, 514 pp., £16.
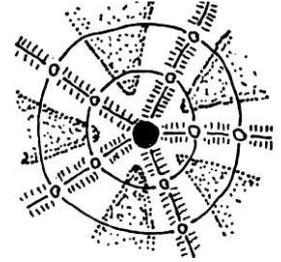
In 'A Theory of Good City Form', Kevin Lynch returns to the endeavour with which he launched his career in the fifties. He seeks to develop a normative theory of urban form - that is a theory that would describe, evaluate, and prescribe the relationships between urban form, human activity and social goals. At its simplest level he is seeking a set of rules for urban design at the macro level. To this end he re-works his early conceptual frameworks in the light of the experience of thirty years of research incorporating large sections of all four of his major books in a typically unassuming way. In this new book there is more of an historical perspective in his writing and he goes to great lengths to relate his approach to other theoretical perspectives on urban form, and to assess its relevance to other cultures. He meticulously examines his concepts and qualifies his arguments invariably anticipating the reader's objections and criticisms. It is a masterly synthesis of a lifetime's work in the field and is worth reading for this reason alone, for it is easy to forget how much conventional wisdom on urban perception, the analysis of urban spaces, conservation ethics and environmental management originated from or was most clearly expressed by Kevin Lynch.

For all that, there is less development or extension of his earlier work than might be anticipated, and what extensions there are tend to be on the context of the theory (historical forms, Utopian writing, and other functional theories) rather than within the theory itself. It is a rehearsal of arguments rather than a collection of new insights. In this respect it would be an especially useful book to people new to Lynch's work, or to students trying to make sense of urban history, environmental design, and spatial theory simultaneously. It may well disappoint those looking for more practical direction.

The book is divided into three roughly equal sections. Section I begins with a rather uneven run through urban history in the search for the keys to the interpretation of the relationship between urban form and human values. Lynch distills a set of dimensions - (symbolic) order, access, efficiency, control - that are to loom large in the next section. The second chapter critically examines three branches of theory - decision-making, functional, normative - which endeavour to explain the city as a spatial phenomenon, and normative theory becomes the focus in the search for generalisable connections between human values and settlement form. These connections are pursued in an analysis of the values behind conventional spatial planning policies and those underlying Utopian writing on the city. Lynch then dissects three comprehensive metaphors for urban form - cosmic theory (mandalas etc.), city as machine, and city as organism - exploring their weaknesses but envying their holism. The section concludes with a typically thorough rehearsal of the arguments for and against normative theory and its rules - in this case a set of performance characteristics.

It was only in retrospect that I could make sense of the drift of the argument in Section I and it is worth pointing out that there are also three appendices of supporting argument as long as the section itself. Perhaps this fact conveys the author's search for comprehensiveness and his meticulous qualification of the argument. But while the section contains some excellent summaries of the classic arguments of morphology and design, it tends to lose its sense of direction and become rather disjointed.

Section II, and especially its opening and closing chapters, is by contrast concise and pertinent. The section opens with the definition of a set of criteria with which to define a set of useful performance characteristics for evaluating urban forms. Five are identified and discussed in separate chapters. They consist of <u>vitality</u> - the degree to which the form supports the vital biological functions; <u>sense</u> - the extent to which a settlement can be perceived and understood; fit - the adequacy and adaptability of the behaviour settings; <u>access</u> - the availability and accessibility of facilities and resources; and <u>control</u> - the extent to which users control the spaces they use. Each dimension is clearly and concisely explained and their principal features described, but much of the material is a summary of Lynch's earlier work (especially the sense and fit chapters). Lynch argues that these five factors comprise all the principal dimensions of settlement quality subject to two meta-criteria - <u>efficiency</u> (relative costs) and <u>justice</u> (equity). Having examined how these latter considerations might affect the application of the performance dimensions he goes on to suggest how variation from society to society will also qualify the relevance of the dimensions and their contribution to overall quality of form.

In Section III, Lynch turns to apply the framework to some of the great controversies in the analysis of urban form. Much depends on whether one regards these 'old chestnuts' - optimal size, optimal density, segregated land uses, the neighbourhood ideal, historic preservation ethics, alternative travel modes - as burning questions or dying academic embers. The same comment applies to the chapter on city models and city designs which examines possible alternative morphologies and is bolstered by a full appendix, four times the length of the chapter, on the classic form models (shapes, nuclei, textures, dwelling form, circulation, open space disposition, etc.).

Save for a short epilogue, which provides yet another examination of the potential deficiencies of the central argument, the book concludes with an Utopian sketch, a personal statement on the good environment, clearly embodying the five performance dimensions. Typically, Lynch reiterates the shortcomings of Utopian conceptions and then attempts to answer them. But then he plunges ahead with a fantasy reminiscent of one of H.G. Wells' essays in 'Anticipations', a fusion of Gothman, Whyte, Wright, Webber and McHarg, set in the regenerating wildscape of North American exurbia but without the property ethic, materialism, division of labour and individualism that that implies. Although a typically humanistic vision, there is a tension between Lynch's reformism and the essential escapism of exurbia - a reflection of the unresolved duality of the conservation ethic itself.

As one who first turned to Lynch's work as an antidote to a sixties force feeding of the "stupefying dullness of much functional theory" (Lynch's words) I found much to savour in a book which is studded with profound and elegantly expressed insights. But two main shortcomings are evident, one of content, the other of the scale of the enquiry. The very brief discussion of environmental meanings (a serious flaw in 'The Image of the City') and the general avoidance of questions of visual quality of streetscape or townscape are my main quarrels with the content. While I have always admired Lynch's refusal to fall into the same traps as the 'Townscape School' (despite the obligatory year-long Italian study tour in the fifties!) there is a sense of disappointment that he has never pursued questions of experiential quality in the everyday use of towns. His 'A Walk around the Block' (1959) and 'Sensuous Form' (1972) writings show that he has much to say on the subject.

Instead the scale of enquiry tends to remain at the macro-level as is so evident from his applications of the theory in Section III. And here, if unfairly, comparison with Christopher Alexander's 'Pattern Language' trilogy arises (there are one or two uncomfortable points of conjuncture in the book itself, notably p. 285). While Lynch's dimensions and sub-dimensions remain a useful checklist, a set of criteria for evaluating and comparing the satisfaction of forms at all scales, they do not leap off

the page as observational truths in the way in which many of Alexander's patterns do. One cannot see, interpret, design, modify or renew urban space with Lynch's ideas as one can with Alexander's. Although one can 'test' places with his dimensions they remain too generalised to be of real practical use.

And so, in the end, for this reviewer at least, contemporary realism begins to gnaw at the idealism and optimism that pervades Lynch's writing. Little is said in the book about the fragmentation within the environmental professions and the way this is enshrined in legislation, regulation and control, and paramountly in the promotion and execution of development itself. (Try recommending this book to surveying students!). Little is also said about the fragmentation and emasculation of local government with the consequent loss of confidence and vision of political and professional leaders. Nothing is said about a disenchanted public dislocated by the pace and quality of environmental change, seeing it as a cause not symptom of their <u>woes</u>, and worse still, seeing environmental designers as the anti-human conspirators par excellence.

But, of course, being deprived of <u>control</u> and <u>access</u>, seeing <u>vitality</u> and fit ruthlessly sacrificed to private ('wealth-creating'), <u>efficiency</u> and <u>sense</u> dismissed as purely subjective and peripheral, breeds a feeling of <u>injustice</u> and disillusionment - this is precisely Lynch's point.

The book may seem rather Utopian and sadly out of its time but it is not Lynch's fault that it should be launched in a period of retrenchment in planning and design circles and increasing political conservatism. One cannot quarrel with the central message of the book and perhaps an essentially academic philosophical text like this should not be judged in terms of its contemporary practical relevance.

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John Punter
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News

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UDG IS NOW A REGISTERED CHARITY

Charity status was granted to the Group on 7th June, 1982. This is an important step forward as we can now seek finance from Trust funds and the Executive Committee will be drawing-up a 'shopping list' of projects for which to seek support.

The charitable aims of the UDG are those in the constitution approved last year and are:

i)   To promote, for the public benefit, high standards of performance and interprofessional co-operation in planning, urban design, architecture, landscape design and other related disciplines in Great Britain.

ii)   To educate, for the public benefit, the relevant professions and the public in matters relating to Urban Design.

The constitution also empowers the Executive Committee to appoint three trustees, which they are now proceeding to do.

A copy of the full text of the constitution should accompany this edition of the Quarterly, as an insert.

AESTHETIC CONTROL

A major, two-year, SSRC funded research project is to start shortly under the direction of Dr. John Punter in the Joint Centre for Land Development Studies in the University of Reading.

In brief, the study will seek to

(i)   describe the way aesthetic control is operated and identify its limits in terms of negotiation and appeal decisions

(ii)   analyse the respective roles played by the various actors in the process and the value premises upon which they operate

(iii)   assess the validity of the criticisms made in DoE Circular 22/80

(iv)   assess the effects of aesthetic control upon built form, and evaluate the resulting environmental quality as perceived by the general public

(v)   analyse the terminology and concepts employed by the actors in the control process.

The study will focus, in particular, on 30 case studies split evenly between Reading and Bristol as two, broadly comparable, locations. Anyone interested in contributing to the work should contact Dr. Punter.

RTPI ELECTIONS TO COUNCIL 1983-84

Five members of the UDG are standing for election this November: Walter Bor, Anne Goring, Terence O'Rourke, David Pike and Lawrence Revill.

TRANSPORT PLANNING

David Pike, Group Officer (Transportation) at the London Borough of Camden, and UDG member, is to chair the RTPI's revived Transport Working Party.

DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT

The P.T.R.C. organisation, perhaps best known to members for their annual summer seminars in the field of town planning, has just restructured its programme to reflect recent changes and trends both in the U.K. and overseas. A new seminar is being introduced next summer, entitled "Design and Development" which should prove to be of particular interest to Group members.

Francis Tibbalds is Chairman of the programme committee which is currently preparing a note inviting the submission of papers to the 1983 Annual Meeting, to be held in Brighton from July 4-7. It is hoped that this may be printed in time for inclusion in this copy of the Quarterly and members are urged to seriously consider whether they are in a position to submit papers on urban design practice or theory, here or abroad.

U.D.G. POSTER

Our new poster is enclosed. Please display this on your office noticeboard. Additional copies are available if required.

Diary

Arrangements are in hand for the following meetings to be held in the 1982-83 session. The meetings will be at 6.00 p.m. at the Polytechnic of Central London, 35 Marylebone Road, London N.W.I., unless otherwise indicated. Details and reminders will as usual be published in future issues of the UDG Quarterly and the professional press.

November 16, 1982	John Parker and Walter Bor on Urban Design in London.
January 18, 1983	Landscape Design: case studies
March 8, 1983	Terence Bendixson and others on Walking in the City.
April 16/17, 1983	Weekend Conference in, it is hoped, York, on Education for Urban Design.
May 10, 1983	Annual General Meeting and Seminar on Financing Quality in Urban Design.
June/July, 1983	Summer Conference (details to be announced).
June 14, 1983	Managing the Urban Fabric.

In addition, Regional Convenors are asked to arrange local meetings, details of which will be advertised in the Quarterly as they become known.

A one-day, joint conference organised by the R.T.P.I. and R.I.A.S. entitled "Creativity and the Development Process", to be held November 25th at the Golden Lion Hotel, Stirling. For details, telephone 031-229-7205.