

## UDG UPDATE

### Duncan Ecob, the UDG's new Chairman asks 'Are we there yet?'



This year will see the Urban Design Group celebrating thirty years since the inaugural meeting of 'Architects in Planning' that would segue into the Urban Design Group. At that time urban design was a phrase in its infancy. The various built environment professions were finding it hard to create a meaningful dialogue about how to collaborate, to ensure that there was consistent quality in our urban places and space. Now we appear to have a plethora of organisations urging us to place urban design at the centre of decision-making, from CABE through to the members of UDAL and even the Women's Institute (alongside English Heritage). Are we a victim of our own success in spreading

the word? The UDG survey undertaken earlier in the year via the email bulletin shows that there is still plenty for us to get our teeth into, with widespread dissatisfaction with the status quo and a will to bring about change.

There continues to be a huge challenge of nurturing and reinventing our common urban environment whether creating communities or sustaining them? In transport, arguments continue over inter-regional rapid transport systems, with the 'pro' lobby advocating growth in areas with significant capacity, and those against citing a loss of habitat and local amenity. The rise of technology, the internet and new forms of communications will alter place-making, as is already evident in the retail environment. Yet, we are still adapting places to the car and cannot agree whether lower speeds reduce accidents or increase pollution. As a consequence, parental fear of 'speedophiles' has brought an end to childhood freedom, and instead many children inhabit a virtual and lonely world of computer games, while piling on the pounds. Surveys highlight alarming levels of

depression in the young and a fear of use of the public realm among women. This is not the utopia that was envisioned thirty years ago.

Education, design quality, safety and collaboration between the professional bodies continue to challenge us all. Professional silos still exist and appear at times to get ever deeper, with the knowledge from which they draw life ever more complex and ever more contrived. Thankfully we have seen the awareness of evidence-based design spreading and this may help to bring an end to practices and standards sustained neither by logic nor evidence.

So, are we there yet? I don't think so. Only when all professionals understand that they have a role in urban design and that it is a stronger through collaboration, can we aim to convince the public of the importance of providing a fine setting for life in cities, towns and villages. I believe that our wide-ranging membership allows us to contribute significantly to this collaborative role, central to urban design and urbanism. We should be proud of this and continue to encourage and promote it.

### Director's report

October brings the UDG's 30th Anniversary conference and follows on from the success of last year's event in Edinburgh. This year's conference on Friday-Saturday October 10-11th in Liverpool has more delegate places available than previously and provides a perfect reason to visit the 2008 City of Culture. Its subject is Connectivity - exploring design and strategy, and will bring the many professions of the built environment together to explore and discuss the subject, and one that is at the heart of our manifesto set down thirty years ago.

We also hope that the conference will create an impetus for a wider series

of events spread through the UK. In London the programme of UDG events has now been mapped out for the next eight months, with the flexibility to accommodate the changing face of the built environment agenda as needs arise. In the North West the local UDG group will be developing additional events in 2009 and we are committed to supporting other regional events should the membership wish to get involved in this. As we are a group that relies on our membership's involvement, if there is an event that you believe should be organised in your area, please contact us and we will support you in its development to the best of our abilities.

Membership of the UDG stays constant but we wish to increase it and attract as wide an audience as possible. The Recognised Practitioner membership category is one way in which we hope to achieve this. This will be open to people who have practised regularly as an urban designer over the last five years (or three years if you have a relevant Master's degree), and we hope to have this initiative underway before the end of this year. Updates will appear in the journal and on the website.

Robert Huxford

URBAN  
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# DIARY OF EVENTS

Unless otherwise indicated, all LONDON events are held at The Gallery, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ at 6.30 pm. All tickets can be purchased at the door from 6.00pm: £5.00 non-members, £2.00 members, £1.00 students

## FRIDAY 10TH - SATURDAY 11TH OCTOBER 2008

### UDG ANNUAL CONFERENCE: URBAN CONNECTIVITY

How can towns, cities and sub-regions improve their connectivity to create thriving, successful places?

This year's conference will take place in Liverpool at the Empire Theatre. It will explore various aspects of connectivity and its importance in placemaking at both national and regional levels. Workshops will look at specific case studies within Liverpool and provide opportunities to meet key individuals making places in the city. Speakers include Prof. Franco Bianchini (Leeds Metropolitan University), Prof. Michael Parkinson (Liverpool John Moores University) and Tim Stonor (Managing Director, Space Syntax). To book, email conference2008@urban-design-group.org.uk or call 020 7250 0892.

## WEDNESDAY 15TH OCTOBER 2008

### DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENTS

Following the recent publication of the UDG's *Design and Access Statements Explained*, author and former UDG director Rob Cowan will discuss best practice with regard to design and access statements and how they should be approached in a practical context. Don't miss this opportunity to hear probably Britain's most experienced urban design trainer and author of some of the most influential urban design guidance.

## WEDNESDAY 19TH NOVEMBER 2008

### KEVIN LYNCH MEMORIAL LECTURE: WORLD SQUARES FOR ALL

It is now 10 years since the World Squares for All Steering Group and a consultant team led by Foster and Partners published the World Squares for All Masterplan, the objective of which was to redefine the heart of London - specifically Trafalgar Square, Parliament Square and the Whitehall conservation area. This year's Kevin Lynch Memorial Lecture will look back at the successes and failures of the last decade.

Key speakers who have been intimately involved with the project will reflect on how the Masterplan has altered the fabric of London, pushing the public realm to the top of the political agenda. How has Trafalgar Square fared since the closure of the North Terrace? What has been the impact of security measures on the delivery of Whitehall improvements? Will anything ever happen in Parliament Square?

## WEDNESDAY 3RD DECEMBER 2008

### UDG CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION

## WEDNESDAY 21ST JANUARY 2009

### DESIGNING FOR EDUCATION AND PLAY

In recent years, there has been much research into the impact of physical environment on the development of children, thus bringing design for children increasingly to the fore. Our speakers will discuss their experiences in this area. Peter Owens from Colour: Urban Design Ltd will present his research undertaken at Peases West Primary School, Wear Valley. Walter Jack, of Walter Jack Studio, will give an insight into his public realm projects which involve creating playable spaces and forms.

## Urban Design Group

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**COVER** Pylon, Victoria Square, Birmingham - Centrepiece of the Climate Change Festival, Photograph by Dennis Gilbert

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**CURRENT SUBSCRIPTIONS** *Urban Design* Is Free To Urban Design Group Members Who Also Receive Newsletters And The *Directory*

**ANNUAL RATES** Individuals £40 Students £20

**CORPORATE RATES** Practices, Including Listing In The *UD Practice Index* And Website £250

**LIBRARIES** £40

**LOCAL AUTHORITIES** £100 (Two Copies Of *Urban Design*)

**OVERSEAS MEMBERS** Pay A Supplement Of £3 For Europe And £8 For Other Locations

**INDIVIDUAL ISSUES** Of *Urban Design* Cost £5

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# DESIGNING THE LIFE OUT OF PLACES?



This issue features the beguiling topic of 'in-betweenness' and the ways in which unintended uses and spaces add considerable diversity and delight to where we live and work.

There is a tough question here about the role of the designer and the importance of leaving room for other people to come along and take over the places that they find. This is not about personalisation (which implies clutter on private property perhaps), but it is about the sense of freedom and room to use non-private places how we fancy. Is this an anti-design message - should we try to leave places slightly incomplete somehow? Are we being compelled by overzealous development control and urban design officers to account for every piece of earth within the red line boundary? After all this is what we have been calling for for several years in the pursuit of design quality – no SLOAP. All space must now have a designated use it seems, and furniture is often used to dictate that. Many spaces that we are currently building are so tightly defined, that once they have been kitted out if they are in the wrong place to begin with, they sit unwanted or partly vandalised, rather than being appropriated for something else or by someone else.

HomeZones started off with this ambiguity and in-betweenness ideal in mind, where railway sleepers, paved areas and new planting spots were used to control traffic, but were also capable of adaptation and occupation by anyone for a while. Is it the curse of the specifier's catalogue that has made us so dictatorial? Or is this a by-product of dense development, where every square metre has to be justified and maximised? Perhaps there is a cultural angle to in-betweenness, is it an urban or suburban, young or old issue? Or about perceptions of social vs. anti-social behaviour, managed vs. unclaimed spaces?

Another linked undercurrent in this issue is the need to be aware of the relationship between development finance, investment, risk and design - whether to understand the now slim developer profit margins, unrealistic land owners' expectations, the timing of planning decisions, or winning investor confidence. This is not to argue for relaxing design standards, but to be aware of where the sensitivities lie...

LOUISE THOMAS

Photograph by Quentin Stephens

## Urban Design

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## Transport Interchanges

### THE GALLERY, LONDON 18 JUNE 2008

Paul Reynolds introduced the event providing evidence of a renaissance in the last 10-15 years. Towns and cities across the world are waking up to importance of interchanges. A range of schemes was illustrated from station redevelopments that conserve and adapt the architecture of the buildings, through to iconic developments such as the new stations on the Jubilee line extension, plus Rotterdam and Berlin's Central stations.

John McNulty reported on Transport for London's programme of interchange renewal. Some were driven by land-use development such as Wembley, Victoria, Farringdon, and Elephant and Castle, with others due to transport needs such as Euston and Waterloo. He stressed that early collaboration between developer and planning authorities was needed to get the right outcomes, and that best practice guidelines had been developed to ensure requirements were being met.

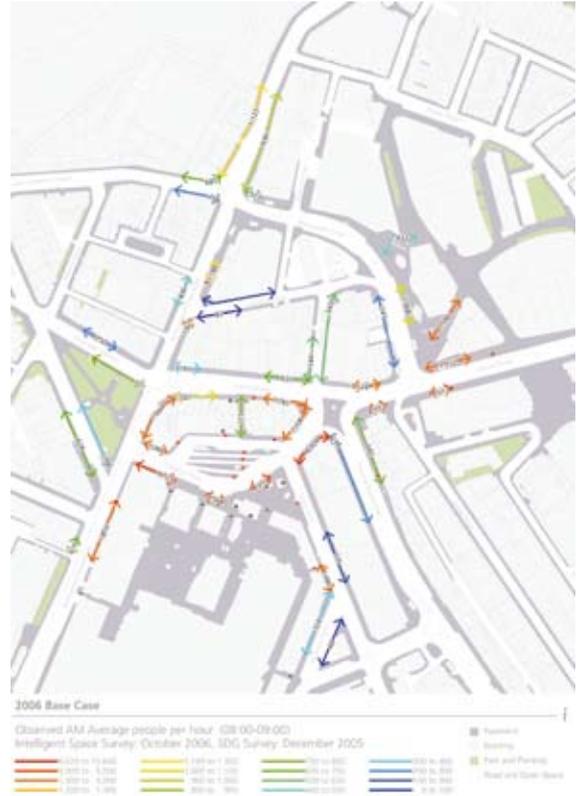
Jake Desyllas of Intelligent Space showed how a number of stations have highly fractured pedestrian routes, taking people away from desire lines and through hostile environments. Individuals should be able to recognise where to go, rather than rely on signage. There were opportunities to improve a number of stations: Euston for an example where pedestrian connections break down

within metres of the station, or Victoria where concentrated pedestrian movement swamps road crossings in the immediate vicinity. His computer simulation of a change to the pedestrian crossing at Oxford Circus where barriers currently block much of the footway, demonstrated the value of allowing diagonal pedestrian movement across the junction. This approach with its all-green pedestrian phase could be followed elsewhere.

In the discussion, the funding of interchange improvements was raised repeatedly, with some questioning whether it was right to rely on development gain for funds.

A suggestion was made for the provision of a civic space at every interchange, as even outlying stations see over one million people per year and who typically are welcomed on arrival by a grim mix of advertising and takeaways. The Department of Transport recently published estimated footfall data for interchanges, with eighty-eight million passengers per annum moving through Waterloo; compared to the M25 at Junction 10-11 – the busiest stretch of motorway – which sees sixty million vehicles per annum. This suggests that we should take transport interchanges very seriously indeed.

**Robert Huxford**



## Reinventing Seaside Towns

### THE GALLERY, LONDON 9 JULY 2008

The evening began with Colin McKee of RTKL giving a brief overview of the firm's proposals for Talbot Gateway, in Blackpool. The project hopes to make more of an area around Blackpool North railway station, to heal a breach in the grain of the town centre, create a new arrival experience and transport node, plus a vibrant new urban quarter.

Mike Haynes of Seaspace followed with a wider view of regeneration in the Hastings and Bexhill area. The regeneration partnership has developed a ten year business plan for coastal regeneration, which focuses on economic development through higher education, in preference to the usual coastal-related heritage, tourism and lifestyle services, which often perpetuate a low wage economy. A number of recent developments, including a new University Centre, illustrated the partnership's ambitions.

A more thought provoking lecture came from Chris Hall of GVA Grimley, who used his experience of regeneration in a variety of UK seaside towns to reflect on the common strategic challenges that they face, and the opportunities to be seized to secure a buoyant future. Seaside towns are often challenged by 180 degree catchment areas, the general decline of the tourism, maritime services and defence industries, and poor links to major conurbations. But a buoyant future might well lie in a mixed economy, that recognises the future importance of quality of life and place for either living or working relocations. Environmental quality is a key draw that seaside towns can offer, and could be the nugget of an integrated solution to attract students, businesses and residents to foster a more diverse and sustainable economy. Crucial to this is the quality of a town's transport links with its region.



Chris Hall launched the debate with the notion of the return of the UK seaside holiday. He tentatively foresees a backlash against overseas tourism on the basis of the growing interest in reducing carbon footprints. The idea captured the audience's imagination with ideas about a modern reinvention of the seaside pier and promenade.

**Alex Cochrane**

## Urban Design Group's Annual General Meeting

THE GALLERY, LONDON 19 JUNE 2008

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

If 2007 was a year of transition for the UDG, then 2008 has been a time of setting foundations for the future. Louise Ingledow, our administrator for almost a year now, has helped UDG business to run much with greater reliability. All have valued her enthusiasm, organisational skills and great performance, more than justifying our decision to take on a full-time administrator for the UDG.

We also bade a fond farewell to Rob Cowan, our Director for seven years, who can take much of the credit for setting the group on its current course; it is thanks to his efforts that the UDG has achieved its high profile today. This is now being continued and expanded by Robert Huxford, our new Director and his links with highways engineering and the public realm add a new dimension and are a true asset for us, as well as his weekly email newsletter giving us a quirky look at the world!

The 2007 conference in Edinburgh on Masterplanning was a tremendous success, thanks to the assistance of Devon de Celles of the IHBC. This year

should be equally exciting as we head to Liverpool in October to explore the theme of urban connectivity and take a look at culture in our cities. It will also mark thirty years of the UDG, and we anticipate a great turn out. April 2008 saw the publication of the UDG's Design and Access Statements Explained, edited by a team led by Rob Cowan. As I wrote in its foreword, this 'how to do better' guide is likely to be an invaluable and practical tool on a day-to-day basis. Indeed it has already proved popular and is helping the UDG to achieve wider exposure. Our journal, Urban Design, continues to have incredibly strong appeal and new initiatives, such as the Francis Tibbalds Award, are attracting many new subscribers. My thanks are due to the editorial team for the consistently high standard and topicality of each issue, as well as a column on my thoughts as Chairman. Added to this we have enjoyed a lively series of events ranging from street design to public lighting. I would like to express my gratitude to the many people who have spoken at these events and helped to organise them.

However, it is the UDG's membership which continues to be our greatest strength. Thanks to this support and commitment, we continue to promote the cause of urban design and have seen growing involvement from members this year, particularly the practices, attesting to the increasing number of companies practising urban design but also their recognition of the influence and importance of the UDG.

Finally, on a personal note, I would like to thank the Executive Committee for their support over my last two years as Chair. I hope that, drawing confidence from this solid back-up, the team will be able to make good progress with our new initiatives and continue to serve our members well in the future.

**Ben van Bruggen**

As Ben van Bruggen was standing down as Chair, he remains on the Executive Committee and is succeeded by Duncan Ecob as Chair. Marc Furnival and Bill Erickson also stood down from the Executive and thanks were given for their efforts during recent years. Hugo Frieszo will retain his position as Treasurer for a further year. Members elected to the Executive Committee are as follows and short profiles of each are

available on the UDG website: Ben van Bruggen, Philip Cave, Esther Kurland, Sebastian Loew, Amanda Reynolds, Paul Reynolds, Barry Sellers, Alan Stones, Louise Thomas and Jack Warshaw.

### UDG TREASURER'S REPORT 2008

The Independent Auditors Report for the year ending 29 February 2008 was provided for the UDG and Urban Design Services Limited (UDSL).

#### On Income:

For the UDG and UDSL combined, the net surplus for 2007/8 is £16,165, and this compares with last year's surplus of £10,648.

While subscriptions income is down 7.5% reflecting late and non-payments and lapsed memberships, practice membership take-up in 2008/9 is encouraging.

Publications income is also down as we did not publish an Urban Design Directory this year, but plans are in place for a revised edition next year.

UDSL made a surplus of £15,783 (compared with £11,269 for 2006/7) and this is thanks to those who obtained sponsorship for the conference (Rob Cowan and the Executive Committee) and the generosity of sponsors Savills, Atkins and Architecture&Design Scotland.

#### On Expenditure:

General housekeeping costs have increased, with rent, rates, light and heat up by 30%.

Administration costs have doubled but include advertising for the post of director, updating software and the provision of back-up facilities for the UDG.

Forecast opportunities and requirements are: a need for part-time administrative support to implement any new membership structure and assist in the run-up to the annual conference; and for a growth of income through increased membership numbers and enhanced membership profiles (i.e. Recognised Practitioner), further publications contributions, and mobilising and engaging the UDG Patrons.

**Hugo Frieszo**

#### Statement of Financial Activities For the year ended 29 February 2008

##### INCOME

Subscriptions	£74,943
Publications	£6,133
Training	£150
Donation from Urban Design Services Ltd	£15,783
UDSL Contribution to Office Costs	£5,391
Interest Received	£3,572
Inland Revenue: Gift Aid	£2,055
Miscellaneous Income	£639
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>£108,666</b>

##### EXPENDITURE

Publications	£25,295
Management & Administration	£64,938
Governance Costs	£2,268
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>£92,501</b>

##### NET INCOME

	£16,165
<b>BALANCES BROUGHT FORWARD</b>	<b>£62,136</b>
<b>BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD</b>	<b>£78,301</b>

#### BALANCE SHEET at 28 February 2007

Fixed Assets	£313
Current Assets:	
Cash at Bank NatWest Current Account	£13,241
COIF Account	£59,183
COIF Publications Account	£6,834
Cash Float	£50
Sundry Debtor	£24,312
Subtotal	£103,620

##### Current Liabilities

Sundry Creditors	£4,051
Items Received In Error	£9,321
Subtotal	£25,632

<b>NET CURRENT ASSETS</b>	<b>£77,988</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>£78,301</b>

## Francis Tibbalds Urban Design Project Awards 2008-9

Following its successful first Award scheme in 2007-8, *Urban Design* invited practice and local authority members to submit both proposed and completed schemes for the second year of the Award in Spring 2008.

The objectives were to improve the quality of publishable case studies and recognise good urban design work. This year nineteen entries were submitted, four of which were completed projects. However despite simplifying entry requirements to encourage local authorities, only two took part and one of these was a consultant-led partnership. The submitted projects ranged from strategic guidance, frameworks, masterplans and codes, to housing,

mixed use, public realm, city centre and suburban schemes.

This year's jurors were Duncan Ecob, Alan Rowley, Barry Sellers, Les Sparks and chair Louise Thomas, assisted by John Billingham who had initiated the award scheme. The jurors met on 16th June and short listed just six case studies that had responded to the following questions:

- Does the project contribute to sound and explicit urban design thought and ideas – is it innovative?
- Are the above demonstrated in 3D?
- Can lessons be drawn from the project and the process it underwent?
- Is it a good, publishable and readable article?

Some submissions were rejected

because they did not respond directly to the questions set out, others failed to explain a scheme's strengths and features, particularly in terms of what was innovative, and the gap between the text and graphics was noticeable again. Only a few entrants reflected on the lessons that could be drawn from their work and which could be applied to other situations.

The short listed schemes will be published from January to July 2009, and UDG members will be able to vote for the case study that they judge best meets the criteria to win the Francis Tibbalds Prize 2008-9 worth £1,000 and donated by the Francis Tibbalds Trust.

Louise Thomas

## Talking Cities Lecture Series - Andrew Taylor: The Public City BIRMINGHAM TOWN HALL, 16 JUNE 2008

This third in a series of five lectures on urban design by leading practitioners sponsored by Atkins was staged in the grand setting of Birmingham's refurbished Town Hall. Philip Singleton, responsible for production and delivery of the Big City Plan within Birmingham City Council's Planning and Regeneration department began with an overview of the council's ambitious masterplan that will shape and revitalise the 800 hectare city centre over the next twenty years. He then introduced Andrew Taylor of Patel Taylor who described the design and vision for the new Eastside City Park, which his practice won in a competition judged by the third speaker Professor Kathryn Moore, Head of Landscape Architecture at Birmingham School of Architecture and Past President of the Landscape Institute.

Andrew Taylor explained how their concept is to embed the new park into the city through connections with the enclosing built context and street pattern to regenerate the area from the Bullring to the Digbeth canal basin. Water is to be the unifying theme with the canal extended throughout the park via a series of weirs marking the changes in level to delineate the separate thematic parks, event space and water garden. Being bold, maintaining the quality of detailing and ensuring long-term commitment to maintenance were Patel Taylor's key aims. These were well demonstrated by the designers in their earlier work at the Thames



Barrier Park and Parc Citroen in Paris, designed in association with French landscape architect Alain Provost. Andrew illustrated his very architectural approach to park design with images of 'the greatest space defining places in the world' that have influenced him; St Mark's Square in Venice, Siena's Piazza del Campo and les Jardins de Trocadero in Paris. These are the classic examples of manipulating space within the urban design canon and always worthy of further study. Kathryn Moore followed with her distinctive landscape agenda to put design at the centre of our relationship with nature and not let science and ecology claim exclusive rights to speak for the natural world. She called for spiritual, community

and cultural issues to inform landscape design, while also reminding us how parks raise aspirations and enhance land values in adjoining areas, as the Thames Barrier Park has clearly done.

Expressions like urban vision and creating a sea-change in design have become all too common statements by designers and politicians but, sitting under the vast imposing ceiling of that very grand building, I left believing that just as Birmingham of the 1830s showed its boldness to build a classical temple to celebrate the city's vision of itself, so the Birmingham of today could achieve its Big City Plan and produce equally confident urbanism.

Malcolm Moor

## Changing perceptions of climate change



**Above** Claystation  
Photograph by  
Michele Turriani

Only a handful of schemes built over the next 10 years will be driven by sustainability. How do we know this? Because at CABE we have a crystal ball; every year our design review panel assesses 350 of the most significant developments proposed across England. We are seeing plenty of green gadgetry, but not much evidence of the client or designer taking a long, hard look at what would make a building or place truly sustainable. We also know that urban design will not solve global warming on its own - it's just one of the biggest and best opportunities before us.

So CABE is engaged in a new two-pronged approach. Firstly through a studio - working with the professional community of the eight English Core Cities to build knowledge, influence and skills. Secondly, through public engagement to inspire an appetite for change, so that citizens will not only be more demanding of civic leadership, but also more responsive and more supportive.

We think the problem is partly caused by a climate change debate framed in profoundly unhelpful ways; instead of doom and scolding, the challenge has to be redefined in terms of positive core values, such as prosperity and well-being. No one broadcasts the promise from cutting carbon - how

cities will become more beautiful, more equitable, more competitive and more sociable. The kind of place where you might actually want to holiday at home. Bold, even counter-intuitive, measures are needed. So this summer we co-hosted the first Climate Change Festival with Birmingham City Council, for nine days in June. We wanted to inspire people with the idea of a well-designed, low carbon city, and create a positive platform for civic leadership.

So what are the main ingredients of a climate change festival? First of all, it needs a dramatic focal point. A twenty nine metre high electricity pylon was planted right outside Birmingham Town Hall, sitting in a small cornfield as though just lifted out of its usual home. As a piece of surreal art, this pylon reflected some basic truths about the delusional ways we live now - as though we can consume without limits and outwit nature, and providing we change the light bulbs and recycle more, market forces will do the rest.

Next, we curated the city itself, commissioning a series of oversized picture frames (with a bench attached) to frame key views. They were big and brightly coloured, inviting families to picnic on them. As 'furniture with a message', they prompted people to reflect on the connections between climate change and the city around them. One view, entitled 'Hot, not bothered', framed buildings supplied by a district heating system. Other views - 'When did you last see a people jam?' and 'Reinventing the wheel' - reflected on car dependency.

Central to the Festival was a programme of visits and talks led by architects and developers, from the massive canalside excavation from which The Cube is rising, to the newly refurbished Rotunda. Practitioners found that some complex urban issues can be framed very simply from the vantage point of a twentieth floor apartment. Helping further with that complex big picture was one of the simplest features, 'Claystation'. A giant map in a tent and half a tonne of plasticine brought thousands of people of all ages together for creative learning about city design. The final 'remodelled' city - the map transformed by new plasticine canals acting as elongated swimming pools between home and school; allotments; green walls and roofs; pocket parks and lumpy little fountains - spelled out

their dream city (fun and verdant, with splashing water). The Festival promised something for people aged 8 to 80 years old. So it launched with teenagers watching displays of parkour, turning the urban jungle into performance space. It ended with one hundred and sixty people taking part in a mass t'ai chi in a city centre square on Sunday morning, followed by free dancing lessons from the foxtrot to rock and roll.

A festival will never change public behaviour at a stroke (although 7,000 individuals pledging to reduce their carbon footprint is a good sign).

Transformation, which means irreversible change, has to start with a dream. If a festival is daring enough in its own right, it can in turn dare people to dream - about what a well-designed low carbon city would be like. The evidence so far, from individual evaluations, events, animateurs and stallholders, indicates that this happened.

The Festival also provided a platform to demonstrate political leadership: Birmingham City Council announced its intention to cut carbon emissions by sixty per cent in just eighteen years, which is twice as fast as the target set by national government.

Meanwhile, CABE is working together with the Core Cities to help decision-makers within the local authorities to prioritise spatial policies and actions, and create places that are socially and economically vibrant. We think that every age has its challenge, and ours is climate change. If you look at the statistics, it is clear that little is changing. But we believe the Festival's fundamental aim - to turn the debate about climate change on its head - started to tug the issue out of a niche occupied by green obsessives and into a space where sustainability becomes a logical, everyday choice for developers, designers, clients and consumers.

In 2009, the Climate Change Festival will become a multi-city event across the UK. When the Festival becomes part of the events calendar in every city, then not only will the appetite grow for the radical changes which are needed, but monitoring progress will be easier too. In 2010, this project will go international. If you would like your city to take part, just get in touch or go to: [www.climatechange festival.org.uk](http://www.climatechange festival.org.uk)

**Stella Bland**  
Head of communications, CABE

## The Urban Design Interview

### Charles Brocklehurst



#### What is your current job and how long have you been there?

Five years ago, I crossed over as poacher turned gamekeeper and joined my local Council to become Head of Property Services. Since the 1980s, I had been a property developer specialising in inner city regeneration – long before all development was seen as regeneration. Whilst this had involved me in many partnerships with local authorities, I had never previously considered working for one. Having given up a PLC existence in London in 2000 to be a sole practitioner – working from home putting together mixed-use developments – I came head-to-head with Wycombe District Council on a big scheme and decided, if you can't beat them, join them. Wycombe had languished during the property boom, it was my home town with family connections going back three generations and I thought 'here's an opportunity to make a difference'.

#### Can you describe the path that you followed to become an urban designer and what motivated you?

I cannot claim to be an urban designer but I am a prodigious place-maker (to use current urban design speak). I am fairly passionate about urban design and appreciate much of the theory – but I am just an out-and-out practitioner who makes things happen, with the close involvement of designers fit-for-purpose. By training, I am a valuation surveyor, taught at an early age that cost is not value! Very early in my career I was fortunate to gain exposure to a large-scale development in private

practice (with what is now DTZ) and soon recognised that creating buildings and their environs was where I wanted to be. Switching to commerce (with Shell UK), I was seconded to the first ever enterprise agency, where they (along with BP, Barclays and Midland Banks) backed me to set up a development company to create managed workspace in inner London. I was 'loaned' to Hackney Council for the first round of gap-funding for urban regeneration and then the Prudential asked me to help set up the urban regeneration company Inner City Enterprises (ICE), formed after Michael Heseltine's famous bus trip to Toxteth after the urban riots in the early 1980s. We operated nationally and were one of a few groups leading the way in areas which are now mega-trendy, e.g. the Jewellery Quarter, Birmingham and Castlefield, Manchester. Being able to prove to a backward-looking property market that new forms and quality of accommodation in untested locations could rekindle them, drove us on to 'deal with the parts, others wouldn't touch'. Hard to believe that's how these areas were twenty years ago.

#### What do you find exciting about your work?

I have been fortunate to be able to apply creativity to unlocking difficult-to-develop places. It was always challenging at the time, but fun to look back on and I suppose that, plus doing deals – an integral part of the development process, has kept the job exciting. The range of projects too has been immense.

#### What do you think are the most important skills of an urban designer?

I am a great believer in integrating an awareness of commercial awareness and funding with design and planning – call it multi-disciplinary experience, but I think it's more a case of understanding where cost adds value and hence becomes investment, and what's achievable relative to the funding markets that we're stuck with. On urban design study tours, I have been privileged to be amongst far purer urban designers than I claim to be, but I hope that I have managed to explain how for example Roman Law in Europe with its flying freeholds lies behind so much of what we covet in terms of mixed-use – and how difficult it is to replicate that here (albeit easy to draw!).

#### What would you like to be doing in ten years' time?

In ten years' time, I hope my work in Wycombe will be done – with a renewed town centre and a new M40 corridor (including a new stadium for London Wasps). Out of office hours, I am busy pioneering an eco-friendly roundpole gridshell form of constructing rural buildings and I would hope to establish this as a business (along with woodchip supply and a woodland activity centre). I am lucky to live in the Chilterns beechwoods and they need new custodians.

#### As an urban designer, do you have a role model?

I suppose it was Cy Paumier, who first triggered my interest in urban design in the late 1980s, with his experience of regenerating west coast of America cities – he created a spark.

#### If you were to recommend an urban design scheme or study (past or present) for an award, what would you chose?

I really rate St Pancras as a successful activity generator.

#### Where is your favourite town or city and why?

Turin – we visited it on the first Urban Design Group Study tour and it left a mark on me. The height restrictions, legibility and quality of public realm coupled with massive regeneration schemes burying the railways and converting the Fiat factory, looked good to me.

#### Where is your most hated place and why?

Despite the grid, Milton Keynes. It is a most disorientating place, and it siphoned-off investment that would have been better spent in South Bucks.

#### What advice would you give to UD readers?

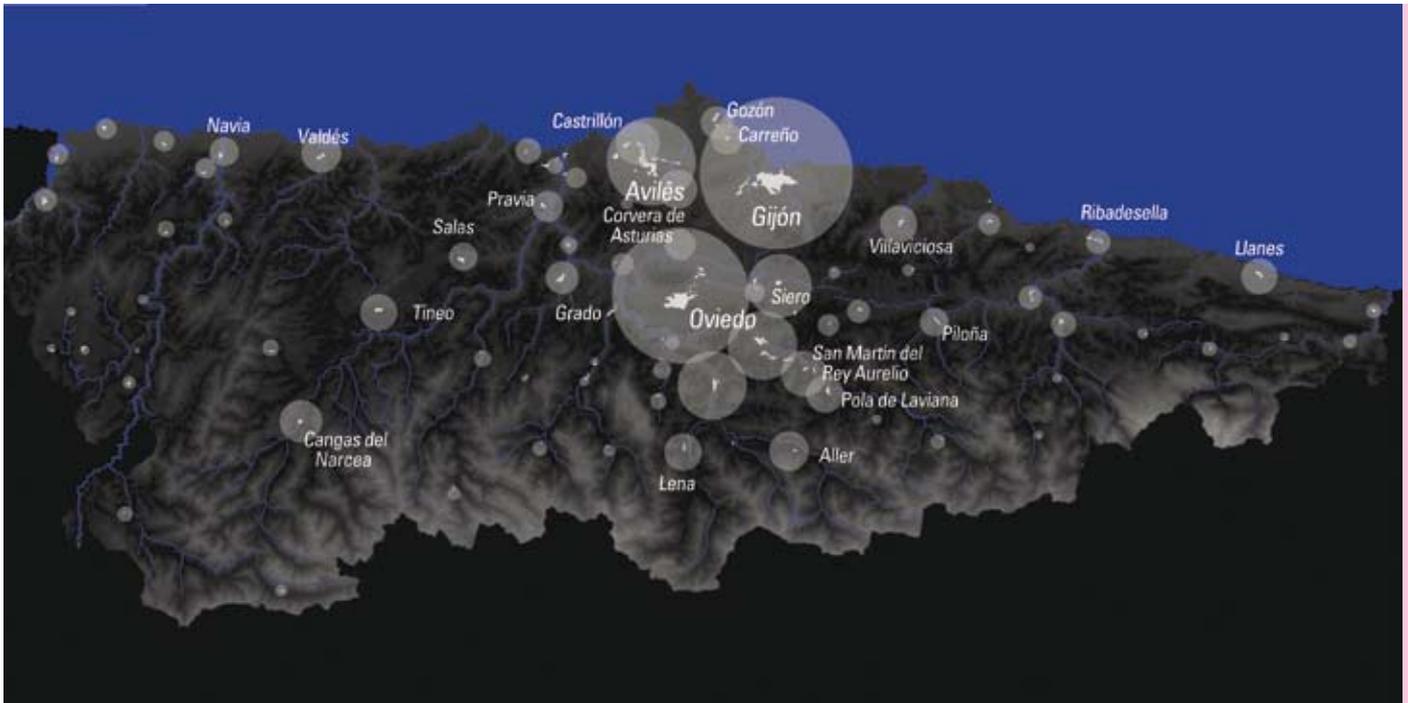
To make sure that Alan Stones does not give up organising his study tours – they are the most enjoyable learning experience.

#### What should the Urban Design Group be doing now or in the future?

Acting as more of a bridge between planners and developers – getting the former to understand that just because it's in their plan, it can't always be made to happen, and the latter to appreciate that the wider context is important to the success of their individual projects.

#### Finally, who would you like to see interviewed by UD?

Someone from the next generation of developers, like Candy Brothers.



# From Smokestacks to Artistry: the Transformation of Aviles

Judith Ryser describes plans for Spain's emerging cultural coast

## THE OSCAR NIEMEYER SCOOP

Aviles in Spain may well become a crucial test case of whether the 'Guggenheim effect' is replicable and whether urban design can be an effective driver of urban regeneration. A coal mining and steel town in Asturias, west of Bilbao with a port in the Bay of Biscay, Aviles has a lot in common with Bilbao, albeit on a much smaller scale. Can a cultural anchor turn this city round from a declining smokestack town into a haven of culture, advanced technology and nature-based recreation, through imaginative design and creative implementation tools? The autonomous Principality of Asturias and the city of Aviles, as well as various government agencies charged with economic restructuring are adamant that it can. Indeed, the city did not stand still when it lost three quarters of its jobs due to the closure of its coal mines and steel plants, when they were unable to compete in global markets.

Its reward has been to attract the design of an international cultural centre which Oscar Niemeyer - winner of the prestigious Prize of the Principality of Asturias - has donated to the region, together with the support of his international foundation to co-finance, build and run it. While the region attributed the project to Aviles, the capital of Asturias with itself 120,000 inhabitants, the other two major cities of Gijon and Oviedo have also obtained support to regenerate their archaeological assets and rebuild their railway infrastructure into a regional node respectively.

## REGIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Initially the city needed to find a worthy site for Niemeyer's prestigious gift. For the same reasons as Bilbao, Aviles has had to relocate its port to the estuary, thereby freeing up the riverfront and adjacent land abandoned by industry and the railways. Aviles has managed to persuade the state to decontaminate both the river and the land and to obtain it for redevelopment. Nevertheless, the site posed major problems as it is cut off from the historic centre by a railway line and surrounded by large derelict sites and remaining heavy industry. After the publication of its General Plan in 2002 and ensuing consultations,

the city commissioned the Fundación Metròpoli to undertake an in-depth feasibility study for this site, together with an innovative spatial vision and a masterplan. Using its explorative approach, the Fundación extended its task to a wider context, reaching out into the region and the city beyond the designated sites. This has led to proposals to create stronger links between the three main cities in Asturias: Aviles, Gijon and Oviedo by pooling their complementary assets. Thus, the three cities will constitute a genuine metropolitan area, able to generate sufficient critical economic mass to become a polycentric urban system and of significant rank among the systems of cities in Spain, and even in Europe.

## VISIONS FOR THE CITY

The city leaders' vision is one of a culture-led future. Building on the Niemeyer International Culture Centre they plan to add a 'Palace of the Americas', dedicated to Latin American culture and hosting the Spanish National Centre for Architecture and Design, yet to be created. Other museums are also envisaged to celebrate Aviles' industrial archaeology and maritime activities, together with modern open air performance spaces adjacent to the Niemeyer complex.

The development strategy proposed by the Fundación for Aviles rests on three key assets: the outstanding landscape surrounding the city; its unspoilt coastline to Bilbao, San Sebastian and France in one direction, and Galicia and Portugal in the other direction; and within the city, the reconfiguration of the riverfront with new connections to restructured surrounding areas.

## KEY URBAN DESIGN FEATURES

The key feature of this urban transformation is a new canal which will turn reclaimed brownfield sites into an 'Island of Innovation' fit for twenty-first century challenges. A new marina and cruise terminal accessible from the estuary are designed as a foreground to the Oscar Niemeyer International Cultural Centre at one end of the island. A public green spine, partly sheltered against adverse weather



**Opposite page** The triangle of cities in Asturias on Spain's northern coast

**Left** As existing, the former port area in Avilés

**Above** The Island of Innovation Masterplan (Fundación Metropoli).

See also images in *UD 106 p17*

conditions, crosses the island to the opposite end, providing access to places for creative industries, as well as 'cubes of innovation' situated on the river. Lofts conceived along the canal are intended to shield the new mix of spaces for creative activities, culture and leisure from existing industries. These new spaces are designed to attract innovative industries and to act as incubators for emerging new businesses, driven by the very entrepreneurial local public full of optimism for its future.

Foot and road bridges are planned to overcome the railway barrier and connect the island to the historic city centre and major new uses along the river banks. A large boulevard will form the gateway to Avilés, running from the motorway connection in the south to the city centre, above or alongside the rail tracks to form a promenade along the river. It will expand into a large civic square in front of a new railway station located close to the historic centre and the Island of Innovation. From there it will continue towards the new ports and finally reach the coast. On the upstream side of the island a large new park is planned with sports facilities and spaces for recreation.

Together, these changes aim to create a much needed new image for the city. Indeed the city and the region have already started to help some of the traditional industries to convert themselves into modern concerns. Successfully regaining the three quarters of jobs lost during industrial decline confirms the viability of this strategy. These restructured industries are expected to require an increasing amount of business support services and research and development facilities. For this, the city has to build a high quality environment to attract and retain the necessary talent, not least from the extensive diaspora of Asturias, akin to Dublin's further north in the Atlantic arc.

#### PHASE ZERO AGENCY

Having prepared the ground for this ambitious urban project, the city and the region have set out to create what they conceive as a 'phase zero agency' - a prerequisite in their view to secure phased implementation and inward investment. This is a huge gamble as many cities in similar and perhaps better positions, with less remote locations

and more clement climates may well target the same investment and talent. This has not troubled Avilés which is intent on following the successful Ria 2000 model of Bilbao, together with its 'Asmoa' or phase zero agency currently carrying Bilbao's regeneration forward into a third decade.

Although it is its own master, Avilés has nevertheless learned from Bilbao's development strategy. As one of Spain's densest regional railway networks with a different gauge from European tracks, Asturias is remodelling its regional railway network and coordinating it with the regeneration of urban public transport in its three major cities. A new railway station is planned in Avilés to give access to both the historic city centre and the Island of Innovation, together with links to the expanding regional airport. Inter-modal facilities will provide an interchange with bus routes and connectivity with the port and other regional logistics nodes of national importance. As a cradle of Spanish public transport, part of Avilés' regeneration strategy is to establish an improved communication network, not only for the city itself, but for the Asturian polycentric city system as a whole. Moreover, it aims to revitalise links to Santiago de Compostella, provide better connections along the Cantabrian coast with France, and create inland connections with Madrid and the rest of Spain making use of high speed tracks to overcome its physical remoteness.

Together, these ambitious spatial strategies and infrastructure projects demand enormous investments. So far Spain has been very successful in lifting itself out of relative isolation by improving its transportation networks with EU support. Now that Europe's centre of gravity is moving eastwards, Spain and its remotest regions have to bet on the quality of their indigenous design capacity to attract inward investment, innovative businesses and tourism. This is a particular challenge for the regions of the north which do not have the advantage of the Mediterranean sun and easy-going lifestyles. Subjected to stringent economic conditions, they need to mobilise all of their ingenuity to revitalise the economy, capitalise on their natural environment and regenerate their urban culture.



## Creating public places

Mauricio Hernández-Bonilla describes urban design taking place in Mexico's low-income neighbourhoods

'Urban space is the consequence of a close interaction between individuals and groups and their surrounding environment... by which people shape places and places shape people'

Borden (2001)

It was the accelerated urban growth of cities in the developing world that spawned the emergence of low-income neighbourhoods during the twentieth century. Characterised by precarious urban surroundings located far from city centres, they have grown up around the traditional urban fabric. In Latin America, a great number of people live in these peripheral neighbourhoods, and most of them have been built as a result of informal development processes in which inhabitants construct their own urban environment in efforts to create a physical and social order and to integrate them into the city. These poor neighbourhoods have various names for example in Brazil these are known as favelas, in Colombia as barrios populares, in Venezuela as ranchos and in Mexico as colonias populares. Today, many of these neighbourhoods have been fully integrated into their cities and many others are on the way to urban consolidation and integration. Inhabitants have overcome economic and social limitations, and engaged with spaces in various ways, to configure their urban environment according to local knowledge, life experiences and everyday life.

Through research developed in various Mexican neighbourhoods, but especially in the city of Xalapa-Veracruz, we have studied how the inhabitants of these settlements undertake projects through urban design processes to transform both the physical and social aspects of their neighbourhoods. Inhabitants as urban designers, aspire to urban continuity rather than discontinuity, integration rather than fragmentation and spatial quality rather than merely satisfying basic necessities. In this context, the development of public facilities has played an important role in urban consolidation. This is demonstrated in the transformation of neighbourhood spaces in which inhabitants

have carried out different works to turn neighbourhood communal areas into public places. Inhabitants often initiate the long process of development that can last for many years, in order to get streets, neighbourhood parks, playing areas and sports courts fully built.

### CREATING PUBLIC PLACES

In Xalapa-Veracruz, residents started the development of parks through small-scale day-to-day and unplanned activities. Adults and children began the development of communal spaces by clearing space, planting trees, laying paths and making benches from stones and concrete. Residents used tyres, ropes, wood and trunks to build swings and other games so spaces begin to be made into playgrounds, and the spaces can then be used for recreational activities by everyone.

For streets, it has also been recorded how residents initiate the improvement of their streets by improving pedestrian paths, as a response to the need for good accessibility as well as security. Residents carried out cleaning activities; later, they built pedestrian paths with stones, so that their children could get to school more safely. In many other cases residents have gone much further by constructing pavements with permanent materials using their own resources and labour. For example, on a street in Xalapa each weekend residents built thirty five metres of pavements, so that within three months they had finished the pavements along an entire length of street.

Inhabitants also engage with open spaces by bringing their ideas and aspirations to life, using urban space not only as part of their identity but also physically making the kind of spaces that they want. People recognise the significance of public spaces in the neighbourhood environment and this is evident in their everyday actions and social appropriation. Collective work around public spaces has not only consolidated these fragile settlements physically, but it has also enhanced community life strengthening neighbourhoods. Furthermore, through their daily activities residents and non residents create places for social

interaction; celebrations and festivities take place outdoors, generating collective life in between the buildings. These activities transform the area physically and socially, creating strong bonds between residents, and contributing to the development of a sense of place.

Public spaces are also the setting for elements of memory and history. Inhabitants in low income neighbourhoods often create signs of identity and landmarks to enhance their urban experience; little shrines and monuments have been built in public spaces and this is how neighbourhood inhabitants communicate their social and cultural values and aspirations. In this respect one resident says 'We now want to improve our green area, we want to build an obelisk, we think that we need something to identify ourselves. Besides it would help us as a point of reference for visitors'.

### THE CITY PRODUCED BY INHABITANTS

Here inhabitants are both constructors and users, creating everyday urbanism in their neighbourhoods. In spite of adversity, the people are working hard to make places that fulfill their expectations. They are seeking to create permanent, long-term urban spaces which satisfy the community in terms of its needs and values, in physical, social, aesthetical, and cultural terms. They interact with the spaces and the spaces interact with them, continuously shaping and reshaping each other. The everyday acts of use, transformation and even commemoration reinforce people's connection to their physical environment. Public space undergoes a continuous process of transformation; it is flexible and open-ended, changing according to the inhabitants' needs.

Through this process, meaningful public places have been created; residents now identify with and become attached to their spaces while creating their own public environment, becoming everyday urban designers. This characteristic is hard to find in more affluent societies, where urban space producers and consumers are clearly differentiated, and users have little opportunity to intervene in public space development. Moreover, architects, planners, and urban designers, often develop neighbourhoods and public places in a way that is far from what other people may desire.

### AUTHENTIC PUBLIC PLACES

It can be argued that public spaces in low income neighbourhoods incorporate characteristics which professional designers of public spaces seek to achieve in practice such as multi-functionality, diversity, variety and vitality. They also embody the qualities which are described in urban design theory as genuine public spaces. We can regard the parks and playgrounds of these neighbourhoods as the forums of political action and communication, where conflicts and negotiations about public space transformation take place among residents. Communal places serve as a common ground for social interaction; furthermore they are a stage for social learning, personal development and information exchange where adults, youngsters and children communicate about social urban life.

At the present time, the affluent areas of many Mexican cities are following the trends of modernity and capital dominance. Shopping malls, gated neighbourhoods, motorways and corporate centres contrast sharply with the dynamic lower income urban areas. The spaces created by the powerless are the spaces which offer us real examples of social and political loci. We must not forget that the vitality, identity and character of public spaces are sustained by people's interactions, activities and participation in the transformation of cities. Unfortunately, this is something that urban managers and even designers often neglect.

**Dr Mauricio Hernández-Bonilla, Urban design lecturer and researcher, Universidad Veracruzana, México**

Borden, I. (2001), *The Unknown City: Contesting Architecture and Social Space: a Strangely Familiar Project*. Cambridge, Mass, MIT Press



**Opposite** Typical peripheral neighbourhoods

**Above top left** Residents building pavements

**Above top right** Residents often build and decorate shrines on the streets

**Above middle** An open space converted into a playground

**Above bottom** A playground built by residents



## Cultural Quarters: Why Large is Less

John Montgomery argues that many cities have cultural quarters or precincts but few are providing the right mix of activities

Most great cities have identifiable quarters to which artists and cultural entrepreneurs are attracted, whether it is Soho in London, New York's Lower East Side, or the Left Bank in Paris. Such places have a long history, and appear to have happened by accident or at least developed over time. More recently, some cultural quarters have deliberately been planned, to varying degrees of success.

Cultural precincts or quarters fall into four categories:

- museum cultural districts (e.g. South Kensington in London, Adelaide's North Terrace)
- institutional cultural districts - a cross-over of the above with major performing arts institutions (London South Bank, Melbourne South Bank)
- metropolitan cultural districts - where cultural venues in the main are part of a dynamic urban mix (Temple Bar in Dublin), and these include smaller and medium-sized elements
- industrial cultural districts - centres of production both for the plastic arts and the creative and design industries (Sheffield's Cultural Industries Quarter - CIQ, London's cultural clusters and Tilburg in Holland).

The first two of these are seen as a good thing, an expression of civilisation and of cultural consumption. The third is more closely related to urban place-making and mixed use city diversity. The fourth is directly linked to the notion of the new economy and mixed media, and therefore the generation of new work, businesses and employment. However, there are many other examples of planned cultural precincts that fail as urban destinations, remaining dismal, windswept and underused.

### ACTIVITIES

An essential pre-requisite for a cultural precinct is the presence of cultural activity, and this should include cultural production (making objects, goods, products and providing services) as well as cultural consumption (people going to shows, visiting venues and galleries). Of special significance is the presence of venues. These should be varied, including the small and medium scale where the objective is to encourage a more active street life. As well as performance venues, there should also be rehearsal and practice spaces, private galleries and performance venues, and open in the evenings as well as the day.

Second, successful cultural precincts tend to have a strong evening economy. The possibilities for more activity around the clock, with increasingly flexible work patterns and the new anthropology of consumption (lifestyles), are there to be exploited. Very often, there is a close correlation between cultural quarters and at least part of a city's evening economy. Indeed, much of the attraction of cultural quarters is that it is possible to merge the day into the night, and formal cultural activities with less formal pursuits such as meeting friends for a meal or a drink.

As a rule, the most lively and interesting cultural quarters tend to be places of complex variety, with a large representation of small-scale business activity which trades not only with consumers but with other businesses. Successful cultural economies are characterised by increasing volumes of trade, constant innovation and the building-up of new products and services, networks of suppliers and purchasers. Often now referred to as post-Fordism or the sub-contracting-out mode of production, this was always a feature of city economies before modern industrialisation. Thus, the successful cultural quarter economy will be

complex and intricate with myriad networks of firms - crucially a high proportion of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) - inter-trading and sub-contracting. This might well include activities such as print-shops, specialist retailing, photography labs, graphic design and so on, and artists studios.

### CULTURAL QUARTERS: NECESSARY CONDITIONS AND SUCCESS FACTORS

#### Activity

- Diversity of primary and secondary land uses
- Extent and variety of cultural venues
- Presence of an evening economy, including café culture
- Strength of small-firm economy, including creative businesses
- Access to education providers
- Presence of festivals and events
- Availability of workspaces for artists and low-cost cultural producers
- Small-firm economic development in the cultural sectors
- Managed workspaces for office and studio users
- Location of arts development agencies and companies
- Arts and media training and education
- Complementary day-time and evening uses

#### Built Form

- Fine grain urban morphology
- Variety and adaptability of building stock
- Permeability of streetscape
- Legibility
- Amount and quality of public space
- Active street frontages
- People attractors

#### Meaning

- Important meeting and gathering spaces
- Sense of history and progress
- Area identity and imagery
- Knowledgeability
- Environmental signifiers

### INDUSTRIES

Within a cultural quarter, it is also axiomatic that a good proportion of businesses will operate within the creative and cultural industries. The creative sector forms part of what is now widely regarded as a potential growth sector globally, notably in a series of growth clusters. The creative (previously the cultural) industries include: music, commercial photography, graphic design, publishing, fashion, pop videos, film and television. What they all have in common is the concept of creativity as a source of added value. Creativity generates new ideas, new ways of working and new products. The creative industries add to the stock of work that makes up a city's economy.

The creative industries are widely seen as quintessential knowledge age industries involved in the creation and communication of meaning and entertainment, hi-tech, and requiring a high skills base. They generate large turnover world-wide, create and sustain popular cultural icons, and they are shaped by and help to shape fashion, identity and sub-cultures. They require hardware (equipment, technology, studios) and software (creative people, image-makers, ideas, sounds). As the wealth of cities grows and rents increase, such activities can come under threat from rising land values and future development plans. As Sharon Zukin pointed out years ago, the danger is that they will be displaced altogether.

In turn, the creative industries do much to stimulate derived consumption in tourism, catering, retail and leisure, and hence café culture, specialist retailing and private galleries.

### START UPS, SETTINGS AND STIMULUS

However, it is not possible to conjure up new businesses - especially in knowledge and skill intensive activities such as the creative, design and cultural industries - out of thin air. There must be a ready supply or a potential supply of skilled, educated and creative people willing to set up in businesses for themselves. Quite often, a large percentage of current university graduates intend or would wish to set up their own business. These graduates are the best prospect for business creation in the creative industries. It is no surprise, then, that many cultural quarters have strong, sometimes formal links, with universities and other education providers.

The public realm and associated semi-public spaces provide the terrain for social interaction in successful urban places. If public spaces are well-designed, safe and comfortable, social activity can develop through varying degrees of contact, ranging from the polite greeting, to meeting your future partner for the first time, to renewing and maintaining established friendships. The upshot is that good spaces create their own dynamic of watching, being watched and meeting.

As well as being hi-tech, creative industries are hi-touch industries, in that people still need the stimulus of meeting other people. Cultural quarters, then, are a means of combining access to non-local markets (via technology) with the playing out of urban lifestyles in particular urban locations. Policymakers have also realised that artists and creative producers (and those they attract) pursue a particular lifestyle where work, ideas and friendships are pursued in coffee houses, bars, restaurants, clubs, venues, galleries and other semi-public meeting places.

This layering of mixed use is deemed to be an important aspect of urban living, and is part of the lifestyle on offer to new urban residents. The upshot is that cultural activity and imagery has helped to create demand for inner city living and urban lifestyles, although this brings with it attendant problems of rising values and gentrification. It is important against this backdrop to retain small and medium scale venues, arts facilities such as theatre workshops, artists' studios, local facilities for community art groups, and premises for small businesses.

And so, to remain successful, a cultural quarter will need to maintain what it is good at but also be adaptive and embrace new ideas, ways of doing things and work patterns. Failure to do so might mean that the cultural quarters disappear entirely, or become simply a collection of publicly-funded venues and facilities, or an emblem of former culture - heritage, or even get taken over by competing uses (offices, apartments). Success can have its dangers too where low value uses are driven out, so that small scale creative businesses and cultural organisations must leave the area. This brings us to a conundrum: a proportion of the activity found in cultural quarters might well require governmental support in order to survive in situ.

Finally, there is the question of scale. Some cultural quarters are simply too large and unwieldy to work well as social spaces, for example the Barbican in London or the new cultural centre in Hong Kong. Partly this is a question of heroic architecture being allowed to dominate and for the buildings themselves simply being too large. Large buildings take up large footprints, reducing permeability, plus the amount and quality of public space. Beyond this, cultural precincts can fail because they are too far away from other active places: the important point for designers is that people walking will rarely go beyond 600 metres, and will only do so if the route is safe and interesting, and if there are places of interest (or attractors) at either end. That is, if you can cross the road!

**John Montgomery, master city planner.** See UD 106 for a review of his new book *The New Wealth of Cities: City Dynamics and the Fifth Wave*.

**Opposite** Managed workspace in Sheffield's Cultural Industries Quarter



## Nature in the City

Barbara Goncalves explains that green roofs are here to stay

With the pressure of urban development and a scarcity of land, adding new green spaces to our towns and cities requires inventive solutions, and we can draw inspiration from the ancient tradition of creating green roofs and walls.

Against this backdrop of changing environmental climates and financial uncertainty, one thing is certain – extra green space is a positive asset in any city. Taking a closer look at any modern metropolis today, and the lack of green spaces or integration of nature is evident. Since the Industrial Revolution, the conquest of space by the built environment in our cities is clearly visible. Propelled by the exodus of people from the country into the cities seeking work and better life conditions, a hard bitumen landscape has taken over our cities fulfilling our demands. But in the last few decades, attitudes have changed and people's views on their surroundings and what they want from them have changed too. It has been proven that green spaces create a sense of wellbeing, and have a positive effect on people's health: a feel good sensation perhaps. After so many years detached from Mother Nature, it seems that we are now getting back to our roots, and increasing concerns about the environment have boosted the demand for green space and better connections with nature.

### AN HISTORICAL ROLE

You could be forgiven for thinking that the green roof is a fairly recent creation, but it is possible to trace the history of living walls and roofs back to the beginnings of recorded history. From the hanging gardens of Babylon to Bronze Age British roundhouses, from plant-draped Roman architecture to the traditional insulating turf roof found in Scandinavia, cultures around the world have long understood how soil and vegetation bring benefits to the built environment. The recent return of the green roof has been inspired partly by rediscovering traditional techniques and also by advances

in roofing technology which is helping to grow an entirely new industry.

### BUILDING UP THE LAYERS

Modern green roofs comprise a sophisticated sandwich of components. Based on a waterproof layer, green roofs usually include a root barrier, drainage layers, silt barrier and growing medium and vegetation – often sedum. The cross-section shows their basic components. There are two main types of green roof - intensive and extensive. They are classified according to the amount and type of maintenance required and the depth of growing medium and the type of vegetation they support. Intensive green roofs include traditional roof gardens, where regular maintenance is required, the growing medium or soil tends to be deep, irrigation is normally necessary and they are usually accessible. Relatively expensive to install, their weight requires a substantial supporting structure.

Extensive green roofs offer a lightweight alternative. In wet climates they can be established on soils as shallow as 20mm and need minimal maintenance – just an annual check to remove tree seedlings and to unblock drains. The relatively low cost of installation means that this type of green roof has become the most popular in recent years. Its low weight makes it possible to retrofit to existing particularly commercial buildings.

Both types have advantages and disadvantages. For example, the depth of soil on an intensive roof allows for a wide variety of planting, which can be quite conventional and may even include trees, but running costs are high. On extensive roofs there is usually an opportunity to focus on providing wildlife habitat. An advantage of intensive green roofs is that they can also be used as amenity spaces. There is also currently much excitement around a new wave of living walls, which rely on irrigated soil-less (hydroponic) matting or modular substrate-based planters. These high-tech systems can be very



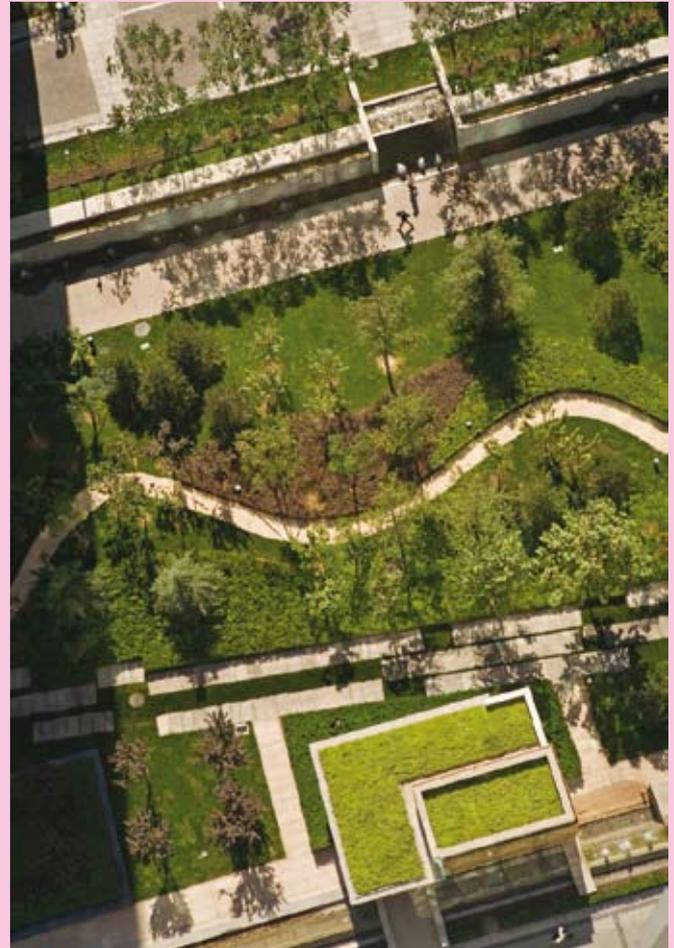
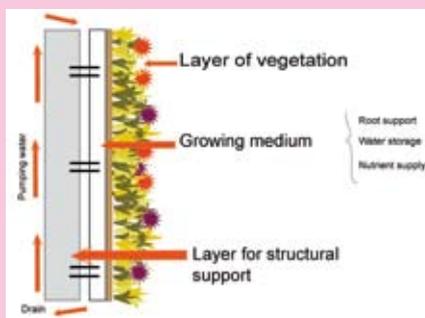
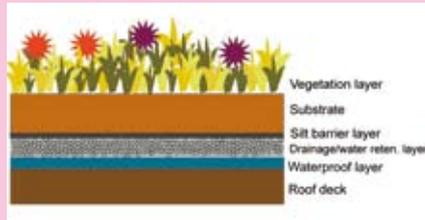
**Opposite page** Yarra's Edge, Melbourne, an attractive cityscape green roof made using a combination of native grasses, crushed recycled glass and pebbles

**Above** The Horniman Museum, London by ecologist Gary Grant

**Right top** A typical cross-section of an extensive green roof

**Right bottom** Typical living wall section

**Far right** Central Place Development, Beijing, where microclimates influenced the design and planting materials



expensive; however the unit cost is expected to fall as their popularity grows. If the budget is limited, the age-old method of growing climbing plants up a trellis still looks good.

#### WHY BUILD GREEN?

Faced with the growing demand for green spaces in our cities and the lack of room for traditional parks and gardens, urban designers may have found a way of providing more greenery in green roofs and walls. In addition to looking attractive, the green roof offers advantages over traditional materials with benefits in biodiversity, local environment, building running costs and more.

#### The economic benefits are that a green roof:

- insulates the building against hot and cold weather, reducing costs in heating and cooling
- extends the life expectancy of the roof membrane
- reduces the stress on drainage infrastructure and on-site water storage requirements
- may accelerate the process of gaining planning permission
- may add value to the property
- can score highly in environmental building rating schemes

#### The environmental benefits are:

- reduced run-off by retaining up to 90 per cent of rainfall
- filtering dust and pollution
- wildlife habitats
- dampened noise levels
- insulating the building and helping to reduce energy consumption as well as carbon emissions
- reducing the urban heat island effect (where buildings fabric warmed by the sun causes cities to heat up at night)

#### The social benefits are that it provides:

- a public amenity to local residents and visitors,
- an aesthetic green space or pleasant view
- environmental benefits that contribute towards improved quality of life.

#### POLICY AND PRACTICE

Despite the leading role played elsewhere in Europe by countries including Germany and Switzerland, the incorporation of green roofs and walls in the UK is still small scale. However 2008 will see a major step forward, with livingroofs.org, the London based UK green roof group hosting the World Green Roof Congress in association with CIRIA ([www.worldgreenroofcongress.com](http://www.worldgreenroofcongress.com)), including a safari tour around London's green roofs. The focus is on the contribution of green roofs to sustainable urban regeneration, climate change adaptation, sustainable storm water management as well as improvements to local biodiversity and quality of life within cities. Of course the policy context is already in place with The London Plan including a green roof policy *Living roofs and walls – Technical report: supporting London Plan policy* (February 2007), in which aspects of this industry are clarified.

At EDAW, we have been encouraging clients to consider green wall and roofs for projects in China, Australia and across the US. Recent UK proposals include integrating a green wall in a major commercial scheme to generate public interest and promote the development, and green roof housing as part of the wider public realm strategy for Kings Waterfront masterplan in Liverpool.

While there is growing public awareness and curiosity about green roofs, there is still much more to be done to dispel popular myths and encourage central government and local authorities to provide more incentives. However it now looks as if green roofs are here to stay.

Barbara Goncalves, ecologist at EDAW



## Urban Design and the British Urban Renaissance, part 3: Glasgow, Belfast, Liverpool and Edinburgh

Steve Tiesdell reports on the third seminar in the ESRC series

The series of four ESRC-funded seminars examining urban design and urban renaissance in major UK cities arrived in Glasgow in April 2008. Having started in Cardiff (see *UD* issue 106), the series had previously visited Manchester (see *UD* issue 107) and the fourth and final seminar took place in London in June 2008 (to follow in *UD* issue 109). In Glasgow, the focus was on one English, one Irish and two Scottish cities. Each city is discussed over a half-day session, with an opening presentation from the local authority followed by an overview from an urban design academic. These are followed by further short presentations from a range of perspectives. The floor is then open for further contributions from an invited audience. As the series has been completed, the academic critiques will be brought together in a book to be published by Routledge in 2009.

### FOUR CITIES

The four cities offered an intriguing mix. Belfast, Glasgow and Liverpool are effervescent, gregarious cities - unapologetically in your face. At the turn of the twentieth century, they were among the great industrial cities of the world, looking New York and Chicago in the eye as world cities. The twentieth century, however, saw deindustrialisation, private sector disinvestment and population loss. In 1936, Liverpool's population was 850,000 people; by the twenty-first century, it was 450,000. Glasgow's population in 1951 was over one million people; today it is less than 600,000. In 1961, Belfast had a population of

500,000; it is now 277,000. By contrast, Edinburgh, the fourth city, has never had these problems. With a population of 464,000, it has the strongest economy of any UK city outside London. Since the establishment of its New Town, it has had a tradition of gradual and incremental change - though now, on its northern waterfront, it too is experiencing rapid and large-scale change.

But the shrinking cities have stopped shrinking - last year Liverpool's population rose by seventy people; the 2011 census for Glasgow is expected to reveal an increase in population; while the Northern Ireland Peace Accord has helped to arrest Belfast's population haemorrhage. Each city has seen a renaissance and is riding a development boom in commercial, retail and especially residential development, fuelled by property speculation in the form of buy-to-let, with city centres and waterfronts being the favoured locations. Cranes have once again become notable features on the cities' skylines. In three cases, this has happened in cities that previously could not refuse development. But the achievements in each city also demonstrate how much remains to be done, and the impending market correction will mean that projects still on paper and in the pipeline will now not be built.

### CREATING GOOD PLACES?

The seminar heard critiques of individual buildings and developments, for example of plonk architecture, Dan Dare tower blocks, and 'icon' as



**Opposite** Belfast City Centre and Titanic Quarter. Source: Belfast City Council

**Top left** Outlands in Glasgow

**Bottom left** Glasgow city model. Source: Glasgow City Council

**Top and bottom right** Edinburgh, Extracts from 12 Challenges from the design champion, Sir Terry Farrell. Source: Edinburgh Design Initiative

'I con'. Concern was also expressed about too much focus on the project – often graced with the qualifier iconic – that might be a short-term symbol of a city's renaissance. But of more importance and value was the discussion and critique of the planning and urban design processes seeking to structure and manage development, and of the development industry's role in each location. What is open to question in each city is whether the development boom and the urban renaissance is actually producing good places. As Dorian Wiszniewski emphasized, we must be careful not to simplify or reduce the concept of place: real places are complex and messy, and the hard city of buildings and spaces should not detract attention from the soft city of activities, uses, experiences and people.

Steve Tiesdell referred to Vakkri George's discussion of first-order and second-order urban design. In first-order design, the urban designer is a direct designer of the built environment – a building, a public space, a floorscape, street furniture, etc. where, urban design is similar to architectural design. By contrast, in second-order the urban designer designs decision environments for other key development and design actors. This is the important public role of ensuring joined-up, functioning places and synergy among individual private developments and first-order urban design. Here, urban design is similar to that of planning, governance and public management generally.

Terry Levinthal discussed Charlotte Square in Edinburgh's New Town, where Robert Adam's design was a set of rules. Developers purchasing plots (feus) had to follow these, and each building was therefore an element in a larger design; the principle was that if you want a piece of the action, then you must obey the rules. Notably the authorities were sufficiently committed and resolute to turn away developers unwilling to follow the rules and the result can still be seen today.

First-order design has intrinsic limitations and does not, for example, cross site ownership boundaries. Large and small sites in single ownership can be designed and masterplanned, but what happens at the edges? It could therefore be hypothesized that it

is second-order urban design that has been neglected. Edinburgh Waterfront had an overall strategy by EDAW, but the masterplans for each of the three main land holdings fail to join-up coherently. Immediately prior to the seminar, Sir Terry Farrell, Edinburgh's Design Champion, had outlined twelve design challenges for the city. The first concerned the waterfront: would it be a string of separately planned development sites or Edinburgh's New New Town?

#### DISCUSSION THEMES

This report can only outline the richness and detail of the presentations and debates, many of which continued outside the seminar chamber. The renaissance narratives of each city contain as much difference as similarity, but a number of core themes are becoming evident.

#### THE PUBLIC SECTOR ROLE

The first overarching theme is the public sector role in terms of leadership, corporate vision and exercising control over private sector development. The general context has been retrenchment, the impoverishment of local authorities and a reliance on capital receipts; thus, lean local authorities must act smart and strategically.

Discussions of leadership followed two main themes and the first stressed the importance of political and civic leadership. Political leadership could mean having a strong person at the helm, but might also mean being resolute and strong enough to reject development and developers. Civic leadership and activism is typically more broadly based, and a key point of debate here was whether amenity societies acted simply as persistent and unremitting critics of the local authority – a thorn in their sides – or, more positively, as critical friends. The second and related theme was design leadership. Edinburgh has a high profile external Design Champion – Sir Terry Farrell – and an internal one, Riccardo Marini. But recent political changes have brought the council's commitment into question. In Glasgow, Gerry Grams stressed that he was a design advisor, rather than a design champion or design

leader, acting as a hands-on architect, who sought to improve the quality of development proposals coming forward through drawing and designing. Empirical research on effectiveness and outcomes would be very valuable here.

A positive co-coordinating vision seems to be desirable – especially one linking design and place-making with economic development. But simply having urban design visions and strategies is no guarantee of success especially when much of the investment is in the control of other big players (e.g. Edinburgh and Liverpool waterfronts) and where traditional development control procedures are a blunt instrument. Nonetheless, as shown in the Liverpool One project, undertaking prior design and thinking provides the basis for evolution and refinement, and possibly improvement over time. Liverpool One (see *UD* issue 107) is more than just a development project; it is a major restructuring of the city and plays an important role in extending the city centre street grid and connecting the waterfront.

### THE DEVELOPMENT INDUSTRY

A second overarching theme was the development industry response. While necessary, public sector planning and urban design will rarely be sufficient. As both an urban design community and more generally, we need to understand and engage with the land owning and development process and its motivations.

In terms of design and place-making sensitivities and commitments, there is a new generation of bespoke, design-led developers, who are sensitive to the intrinsic value and characteristics of place, actively working with the grain of a place and who see good design as a means of adding value. Such developers are often locally based, relatively small-scale and independent. The classic example here is Urban Splash. The fledgling Urban Splash was one of the chief beneficiaries and prime movers in the revitalisation of Liverpool's Ropewalks, beginning with the development of a space – Concert Square – to foster vitality and life, and which in turn led to the rehabilitation of buildings and then to new development (see *UD* issue 107). At the other extreme are unreconstructed developers producing relatively standard products. The key question here is how to influence their operating strategies, general culture and approach.

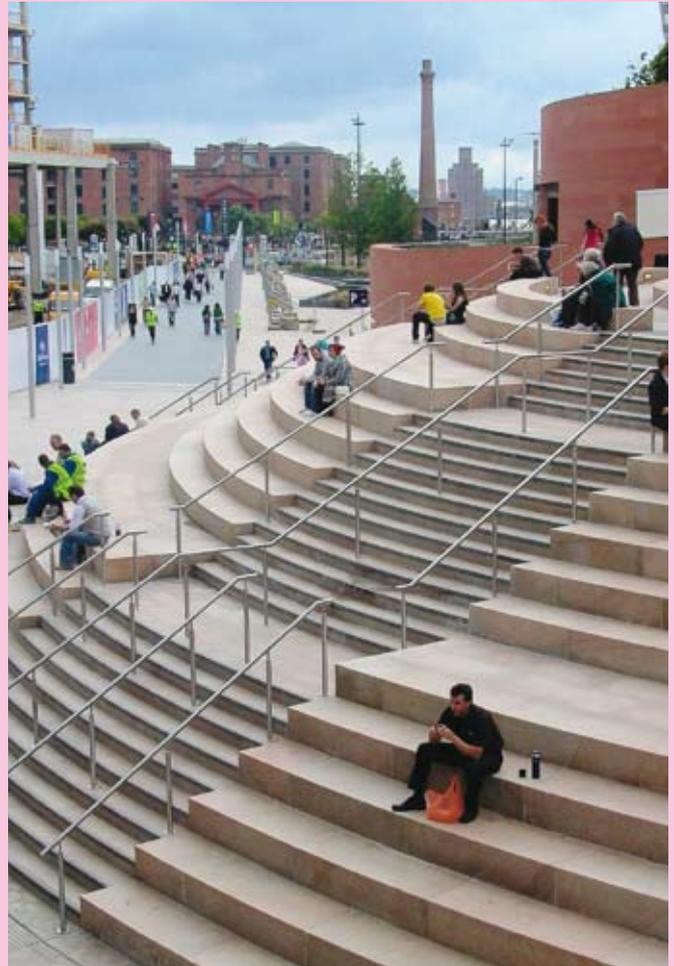
Another type of developer is the 'monopoly capitalist' – those who control enormous swathes of land and have the opportunity to appropriate large amounts of growth within the city. In Glasgow, Glasgow Harbour covers forty nine hectares with three kilometres of waterfront to the west of the city centre. In Belfast, Titanic Quarter covers a seventy five hectare site with two kilometres of waterfront in the east of the city. Extending northwards from the Pier Head, Liverpool Waters – referred to in the seminar as Shanghai-on-the-Mersey – is a proposed £5.5 billion investment, covering sixty one hectares with some two kilometres of waterfront. Edinburgh's equivalent is its waterfront, but at least here there are three main land holdings.

The scale of these developments is huge and the policy question is how cities are responding to them. The vision for Liverpool Waters is contrary to current regional and local policy, but it comes with the promise of lots and lots of money, so the likelihood is that policy will change. If so, has the civic dimension of development and regeneration simply been handed over?

In urban design terms, these developers can fund masterplans. While within their own terms and sites, the urban design might be satisfactory, the scale of development may simply be too large for the city and its infrastructure systems to absorb without detriment. The question in all cases is whether these developments will produce exclusive enclaves or become well-connected, integrated and functioning parts of the cities.

### URBAN DESIGN POLICY TOOLS

A third theme related to urban design policy tools. Many decisions with public consequences are made in the private sector, but the context



for that decision-making is mediated by public policy, regulatory frameworks and controls. As Paul Sheppard argued, the greatest successes seem to be where public sector regulatory institutions provide the framework for private sector investment and development. Terry Farrell's tenth challenge for Edinburgh advocated a radical rethink of the approach to city-making, highlighting consideration of resources, tools and new structures. As Jim Taylor phrased it, how do we put local authorities on the front foot when dealing with developers?

The urban design skills required by the public sector seem to be less about the design of individual buildings or larger sites, but instead about design and development briefing, establishing policy frameworks and masterplans (especially crossing land ownership boundaries), and skills in design-led land disposal and development procurement; as well as more general governance skills of initiation, orchestration and modulation (i.e. parsimony with the public resources – 'doing just enough'). These are all second-order design skills.

Some fifteen per cent of land in Glasgow is currently going through a procurement process - much of it is in some form of public or quasi-public ownership. Stronger briefs for land sales to ensure quality among bidders were advocated, as was the public sector retaining a direct and continuing interest in land development and pursuing high quality outcomes. This might be a procurement model similar to that of Crown Street and Queen Elizabeth Square in Glasgow's New Gorbals rather than Oatlands where the land has been sold to a single developer. The key points of debate here are whether the local authority can afford this ideal model on multiple sites throughout the city, given the need for immediate capital receipts and issues of risk transfer.

Delivery and institutional delivery structures were also the subject of discussion. In the current financial climate, public sector agencies cannot work alone and need the right kind and quality of partners. Significantly the urban regeneration companies (URCs), such as



**Opposite and above** Liverpool city centre. Photograph by Mike Biddulph

Liverpool Vision, have been able to commission masterplans, which local authorities seem unable or reluctant to do themselves. With no powers and a limited budget, URCs must work with national, regional and local organisations to draw activities together and their success depends on the quality of their relationships. Interestingly, there are some examples of public-led masterplans through joint venture partnerships, such as Glasgow's Canal Partnership – a partnership between the Glasgow City Council, British Waterways and Isis Waterside Regeneration.

Other discussion points related to the public sector controlling development through infrastructure provision and the sale of serviced sites and land parcels, and mechanisms for capturing land values.

#### COMMUNITY

A fourth theme was that of community. Keith Kintrea observed that city visions seemed to emerge from a debate among city insiders and questioned whether they could really be shared visions. Michael Biddulph referred to the unheard voices of the inner city and questioned whether they identified with their new city centres. In terms of agenda and tangible outcomes, urban renaissance seems to have focused primarily on the city centre and on prominent waterfront areas. It is not reaching the inner city, though highway severance often seems to inhibit physical connections. Deliberate or not, gentrification has again become a strategy in three cities at least – described as re-embourgeoisement - bringing back the middle classes. Gentrification is always a controversial topic, but perhaps the important question is whether public money should support gentrification.

#### SUSTAINABILITY, PUBLIC TRANSPORT AND THE SUBURBS

The final theme is a portmanteau for all that what was not discussed in sufficient depth. Sustainability, for example, was notable by its

absence. Discussion of tall buildings was ever present but rather under the surface. Tall buildings express market confidence and contribute to city image and skyline, but an intriguing and unanswered question was whether the city skyline should be seen as a part of the public realm?

Discussion of the suburbs was also limited - Raymond Young suggested that cities are yesterday's issue and that today's issue is the suburb. The challenge is meeting demands for suburban-type environments but with high-densities and public transport, and to persuade people that this is an acceptable alternative. Other voices highlighted the need to differentiate suburbs - Edwardian suburbs are now regarded as urban, while railway suburbs and public transport suburbs could be sustainable, and the real problem is car dependency. Ian Wall argued for putting public transport in first so people can build lifestyles around it. When this is not done, developments are car-dependent and it becomes very difficult to retrofit public transport and change adopted lifestyles.

#### CONCLUSIONS

What has this seminar series brought forward? Given that the physical environment is both the medium for and outcome of social and economic processes, there is an appreciation that social and economic renaissance must go hand-in-hand with good design. But it is also a nuanced appreciation of design and place-making generally, which must be understood in terms of wider public sector control and private sector development processes. As Ian Wall insisted, to actually do urban design, you must know political economy.

Steve Tiesdell, Department of Urban Studies, University of Glasgow, with special thanks to Kevin Murray, John Punter, Michael Hebbert, Gerry Grams, Michael Biddulph, Nigel Lee, Riccardo Marini, Alan Page and Alison Shaw.

# THE SPACES IN BETWEEN



Many urban spaces remain 'in-between' the boundaries, definitions, rules and management regimes that urban designers typically seek to produce and enforce in the public realm. The articles in this issue emphasise the virtues of messy 'betweenness', illustrating how it stimulates and sustains valued forms of social behaviour and identity. The contributors - sociologists, human

geographers, environmental psychologists, artists and architects - combine observations of places in the UK, US and Europe and theoretically-informed critiques with recommendations for policy and practice. They respond to three main aspects of the complex and challenging betweenness of the public realm:

## SPACES BETWEEN PLACES

Some areas are physically wedged between distinct, recognised and carefully-designed places. Whilst practitioners, public officials and property owners direct their efforts toward centrepiece public plazas, streets and building interiors, a great range of intermediate zones lie relatively neglected by policy and design - kerbsides, sidewalks, building thresholds, window ledges, loading bays, alleys, parking lots, railway reservations, bridge undercrofts. These leftover spaces between places are incredibly important to the vitality and richness of urban life. They provide distinctive opportunities for social uses because of their 'both-and' nature: at these margins, people, activities and perceptions get mixed together, creating possibilities for a wide range of new, unplanned activities. These are un-organised areas of continuous movement and change; their physical and legal boundaries are often uncertain and contested and they do not usually have an obvious client.

## BETWEEN PUBLIC AND PRIVATE AND INSTITUTIONAL

Urban space includes threshold or liminal spaces where different regimes of spatial control and access overlap. Institutional and private actors contribute to the vitality of public space. However, the freedom of public space is constantly threatened by both private-sector appropriations (pavement dining, corporate events) and zealous government regulation. Particular social groups seeking to pursue their own interests in public settings often restrict use, access or significance of these spaces for others. Responsibilities for design and management frequently intersect to become blurred and indeterminate. What makes a space public involves constant negotiation among all users between controls and freedoms.

## BETWEEN TENANCIES

The character and use of urban spaces changes during time periods when they are between occupants. In the short term, unusual, unplanned uses of spaces after hours reveal the additional possibilities that everyday settings can provide between the peak times when they are fully used for their planned uses. Between long cycles of planned property investment, urban sites, buildings and infrastructure lie abandoned or completely empty. Such wastelands become scenes of tactical in between temporary uses.

These three modes of betweenness - spatial, managerial and temporal - all suggest a shift away from the clarity and fixity of long-term, definite plans for urban spaces. Our contributors' observations of people's creative and determined appropriations of spaces present a challenge to the objectives and methods of urban design practice, suggesting a reconsideration of who structures the public realm, when, and for whom. Place-making continues in between meetings, masterplans and decrees, because new needs and uses are always evolving, opening up gaps. Thus urban design practice needs to be about challenging limits as well as setting them.

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# SIDEWALKS: NOT JUST FOR WALKING

Karen A. Franck describes the many ways of using one type of space



**Left** Sidewalk sale on a Brooklyn street, where residents take advantage of both sides of this public space frequented by passersby

The name given in the United States to the linear, hard-surfaced space stretching between roadway and building frontage suggests its major purpose: pedestrian movement. But because of its location and because it is an outdoor public space accessible to all, the sidewalk supports a greater variety of activities than just walking. In many cases citizens appropriate sidewalk space for their own purposes, for short or long periods of time, unexpectedly or on a regular basis. The sidewalk's social and physical features contribute significantly to it becoming a 'loose space': the presence of others, a paved surface, an open expanse, connectedness to other spaces and permeable boundaries to gutter and roadway and to building interiors (Franck and Stevens 2007).

It is on the sidewalk that residents and visitors experience a neighbourhood most directly and most corporeally. That is where we see, hear, feel and smell the city without the mediation of cars or through building windows. It is primarily from our experiences on the sidewalk that we come to know a city's neighbourhoods and sense local character. The distinctive social and spatial features of the sidewalk, its diversity of uses and significance in helping to create a certain kind of neighbourhood merit scrutinizing and designing sidewalks as discrete, public spaces rather than subsuming it under the category of 'street' or 'streetscape'.

## **DIVERSITY, SYNERGY, OVERLAP**

Sidewalks are most definitely places of pedestrian movement, both along their length and across their width. People may be walking, strolling, jogging, pushing a baby carriage, pulling a suitcase, walking a dog. They stand on the sidewalk, waiting to cross, waiting for a bus or taxi. Sidewalks are the location of

a variety of services: garbage and mail collection, bicycle storage, parking meters and pay telephones. Some of these services, as well as deliveries to stores and residences, make the sidewalk a place of temporary storage. Both as a discrete place and as an extension of adjacent shops and restaurants, sidewalks are also a place of commerce: vendors sell food and other items; shops extend their displays and restaurants create outdoor cafés.

Sidewalks are a place for socialising, as people move along, stand or sit on formal seating or perched on low walls, ledges or steps or on the sidewalk itself. They may also be consuming: buying, eating, drinking or smoking. Children and adults engage in various forms of play, as participants and onlookers. People communicate information through official and unofficial signs placed on walls, fences and lampposts or written on the surface of the sidewalk itself. Political communication takes place through leafleting, picketing, public speaking and demonstrating. Citizens may memorialize a sudden death by placing flowers, candles and other commemorative items on a sidewalk at the location of the death or adjacent to the victim's home.



**Above top** Church Street sidewalk next to the World Trade Center site on the 2006 anniversary of September 11, which attracted groups with a political message  
**Above bottom** A tilting, 27 feet long walkway was installed to enliven pedestrians' passage through a construction site in Lower Manhattan. Design by GRO Architects. Photograph by Fabian Birgfield/ photoTECHTONICS

Many sidewalk activities feed upon each other. Because the sidewalk can be lively, it is a good place to watch the passing scene. Because it is public, often occupied by people for other reasons, the sidewalk is a good place to reach citizens for conveying political messages or selling goods. For much the same reason, the sidewalk hosts socially less acceptable activities including drug dealing, prostitution and begging. Pedestrians are a 'captive audience.'

As the sidewalk is outdoors and has permeable boundaries, activities seep over from the two sides: the roadway and adjacent buildings. The very first department stores took advantage of this condition when they invented elaborate street level display windows. People in doorways or windows engage with those on the sidewalk, or at least observe them. Washing or repairing the car takes place right at the kerb. People parked in cars or sitting on motorcycles chat with others on the sidewalk. Day labourers waiting

for jobs may stand on certain corners to be picked up by those offering employment. Shops have outdoor displays of fruits, vegetables and flowers. Restaurants extend their domain onto the sidewalk with tables and chairs. Research by Vikas Mehta (2007) on several Boston sidewalks suggests that permeability of building fronts and availability of seating provided by adjacent business increase the liveliness of sidewalks.

### PASSING AND PAUSING

Two kinds of sidewalk activities, those of passage and pausing, are often seen in opposition to each other. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries efforts were undertaken in the U.S. to make cities cleaner and more orderly places reflecting middle class values. Municipal regulations were adopted based on the premise that the overriding purpose of the sidewalk is efficient pedestrian passage, and other uses that physically obstruct efficient passage have to be restricted or eliminated. This became a key argument for the removal of street vendors and peddlers and a rationale for restricting public speaking and meetings, which were often political in nature (Mitchell 2003).

Subsequently, the distinction between passing and pausing became more extreme and physically embodied. Starting in the late 1960s, skywalks were built above street level to connect downtown commercial buildings, solely for passage and providing no reason to pause. Here the objectives were not only convenience and efficiency of passage but physical comfort (for different climates) and safety from street crime. Indoor shopping malls achieved a different kind of separation of passing from pausing. Although both kinds of activities do, and are supposed to occur, in the mall, the reasons for pausing will only be those created by the mall owners and managers. Space in malls, unlike the sidewalk, cannot be appropriated by citizens. Therefore we do not encounter any of the diversity or unpredictability of the sidewalk, which is, indeed, one of the purposes of the mall: one can consume without interruptions or distractions. As a result of indoor malls and almost complete reliance on the car, sidewalk use in American suburbs is minimal, if sidewalks are provided at all. In fact, in order to distinguish themselves from the city, many suburbs omitted sidewalks altogether - passing was only to occur in cars.

More recently, changes in municipal regulations and citizen practices have substantially revitalized sidewalk life in the U.S., introducing more reasons to pause, even at the risk of 'obstructing' efficient passage. Municipalities allow and license sidewalk cafés, vendors of fresh and prepared foods and street performers. Other changes have occurred without official sanction, such as the creation of informal sidewalk memorials by citizens. Efficiency of pedestrian passage continues to be used as a reason to remove 'obstructions', for example, lunch vendors in midtown Manhattan. Other stationary obstructions however, such as enormous bollards and planters in front of commercial and governmental buildings, are justified as security measures.

Concern for the efficiency of passage is increasingly being replaced by wide-spread recognition, on the part of city officials and urban designers, of the importance of the pleasure of passage. This is demonstrated by many streetscape improvement programs across the U.S. where textured sidewalk paving, lighting, planting and benches are introduced to help bring shoppers back to languishing downtowns, and where traffic calming devices are installed to make pedestrians safer and more comfortable. A different pedestrian-oriented initiative is evident in recent funding from New York's Lower Manhattan Development Authority for art installations on and adjacent to sidewalks. The goal is to offset some of the discomfort of passing by the area's numerous construction sites. One project is a playful plywood walkway installed on a sidewalk below construction scaffolding. As more attention is being paid to

problems of obesity and other illnesses attributed to sedentary lifestyles, research and local planning initiatives consider how to make communities more 'walkable' and more pedestrian friendly. For many of these reasons, suburban communities originally built without sidewalks are now under pressure to install them.

## Developers and other 'would-be' gentrifiers... prefer a largely empty sidewalk

### WHAT KIND OF SIDEWALK AND NEIGHBOURHOOD?

If the sidewalk is no longer just for efficient but also pleasurable passage and occupying, what kinds of sidewalks do we want? How sidewalks look and how they are used creates a certain kind of place and projects a certain kind of neighbourhood image. The design of sidewalks, adjacent land uses and local regulations all become tools for creating and maintaining uses and, just as importantly, an image.

In New York City, regulations and their enforcement figure prominently in determining sidewalk use and neighbourhood image. The many Italian restaurants and cafés extending themselves onto the already narrow sidewalks create the ambience of Little Italy, just as the peddlers of fresh fruit and vegetables create the atmosphere of nearby Chinatown on its equally-crowded sidewalks. Sidewalks in residential neighbourhoods on Manhattan's Upper East Side have no such vendors. 42nd Street and the Times Square area turn out to be good places for rappers to sell their CDs, sometimes resulting in contracts for international live tours. Wide sidewalks in Midtown still sport a great variety of food vendors at lunchtime sought out by office workers. On 53rd Street, near the Museum of Modern Art, vendors have long displayed African masks for sale on the sidewalk. Vendors are forbidden on sidewalks immediately adjacent to the World Trade Center site. According to official signs, this is to maintain its status as 'a very special place'. Attempts by large scale commercial enterprises, such as Microsoft, to appropriate sidewalk surfaces in the centre of Manhattan for advertising purposes are immediately stopped; but despite regulations, residential neighbourhood sidewalks and street lamps in Park Slope, Brooklyn are intensively used for much smaller scale, informal, local advertising. On weekends sidewalk sales by residents abound.

In hot weather throughout poorer New York neighbourhoods, the sidewalk becomes a place to sit, barbecue, and run through the spray from a fire hydrant - all activities absent and shunned by the middle class who can retreat to air-conditioned apartments or summer homes. It is precisely this class-based difference about the sidewalk that has been seized by landscape architect Steve Rasmussen-Cancian as a tool to fight gentrification in neighbourhoods in Los Angeles and West Oakland, California. With the sponsorship and participation of the neighbourhood organizations, he designs, builds and installs movable plywood chairs and tables to create outdoor living rooms at locations where residents already tend to gather or where gathering would improve the pedestrian environment. Enjoyed by the Latino and African-American residents, the furniture is also intended to repel developers and other 'would-be' (mostly white) gentrifiers who, Rasmussen suggests, prefer a largely empty sidewalk. Originally, city regulations in West Oakland prohibited such furniture since they were encroachments without permits; permits which only adjacent property owners could obtain. But these regulations have now been revised, allowing for the legal creation of lively sidewalk life and a neighbourhood image that may indeed deter those gentrifiers who seek a different kind of place.



The willingness of Oakland city government to amend their regulations and to increase informal social uses of the sidewalk runs counter to efforts in other cities to create more orderly, homogeneous and apparently sanitary sidewalks. Design, urban redevelopment and regulations are used to restrict or eliminate sidewalk uses that traditionally helped to create a sense of community and provided a livelihood for vendors. If efforts to cleanse these spaces in-between are successful, sidewalks, and hence neighbourhoods will all become the same from one country to another. When sidewalk uses are lost, so are liveliness, community and character.

**Above top** The Outdoor Living Room project in Boyle Heights, Los Angeles, seeks to populate the sidewalk and slow traffic. Design by Union de Vecinos

**Above bottom** Outdoor Living Room in Venice, Los Angeles, where an historically African-American and Latino community faces extreme gentrification pressure. Design by Steven Rasmussen-Cancian for Venice Community Housing Corporation

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# TWO VIEWS OF OUTSIDE IN BRITISH CITY CENTRES

David Bell captures British attitudes to the urban outdoors



**Above** Outdoor corral for smoking pub patrons, Covent Garden, London. Photograph by Quentin Stevens

This article focuses on the boundary between outside and inside, public and private space, that separates the street (or more precisely the pavement) from the consumption space of the bar or café in British city centres. In particular, I want to examine what being outside means in this context. In UK cities today the practices and understanding of being outside have undergone contradictory transformations, and currently outside is subject to competing meanings. Starting in the 1990s, urban policies rose to prominence that sought solutions to the perceived problems of Britain's cities. As part of this, the image of an idealised public culture of continental Europe was imported to the UK and positive social value was attributed to the evening/night-time economy (E/NTE) and the urban outdoors, in terms of café culture.

#### **CAFÉ CULTURE OR BINGE BRITAIN?**

The use of the urban outdoors as a space to eat and drink, it was argued, bridges the divide between privatised consumer

experiences and broader civic and public engagement. By literally bringing diners and drinkers onto the pavement, city managers hoped not only to emulate 'continental' consumer cultures, but also inculcate a more continental urban culture marked by conviviality and sociability (Montgomery 1995). As key policy documents such as the 1999 Urban Task Force report highlighted, Britain's cities were found wanting – aesthetically, socially and economically - in regard to their public cultures, when compared with selected European neighbours, such as the Dutch or Spanish. Café culture was one key element of the attempt to address that deficit.

The call for a continental café culture was also an attempt to tackle a particular problem that the desire to stimulate the E/NTE has reputedly given rise to, i.e. binge-drinking (Tiesdell and Slater 2004). Here again, European ways of drinking – especially the apparent lack of anti-social drunkenness – were contrasted with those in the UK, characterised by excessive alcohol consumption and the attendant problems of anti-social behaviour, particularly at closing time.

#### **REGULATION OR PROMOTION OF THE EVENING/NIGHT-TIME ECONOMY?**

Concern over the health problems associated with binge-drinking, coupled with anti-social behaviour has prompted a review in the UK of the promotion and regulation of alcohol sales and drinking venues, including a relaxation of closing times

in an attempt to disperse crowds and cool down the hot spots of drink-related problems. This relaxation was once again argued to be more in the spirit of continental drinking cultures, and was moreover seen as corrective of certain forms of 'bingeing' and related anti-social behaviour (Jayne et al 2006).

The tensions between the desire to promote the E/NTE as the saviour of empty city centres and as a way to introduce a continental culture on the one hand, and the perceived need to police drinking behaviours on the other, casts doubt on the meaning and value of the urban outdoors and its inhabitants. Valued for their role in creating more a European urban ambience, and demonised for making city centres into 'alcoholic agoras' hostile to anyone not in the youth-oriented booze market, the new outdoors drinking (and to a lesser degree eating) places inserted a note of ambivalence over the role of public space in a hoped-for urban renaissance (Bianchini 2006).

Nevertheless, it was argued, once binge-drinking was attenuated, the new café culture of relaxed, convivial outdoor eating and drinking could deliver that renaissance, and make city centres attractive and liveable again. However more recently, a new regime of value has been attached to outdoor spaces as a result of another major public health policy drive - the smoking ban.

## Smokers are banished outside, away from everyone else, and the outdoors is seen as doubly undesirable

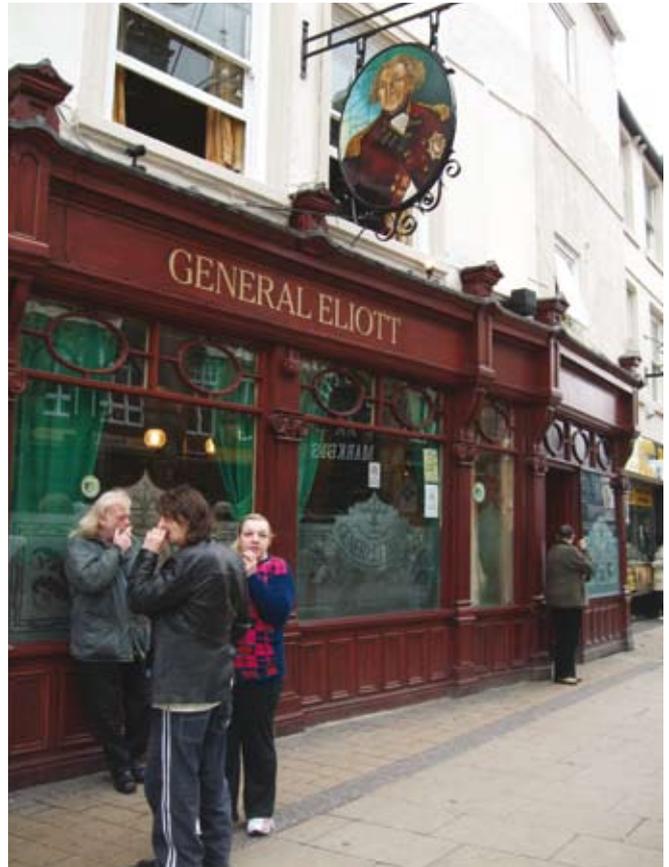
### URBAN SMOKING SPACES

The smoking ban is better labelled as a selective spatial criminalisation of smoking. In the UK, as in many countries, it means that smoking is prohibited in designated spaces, including all enclosed public spaces and workplaces, with a very small number of exceptions (Poland 2000). It extends to workplaces that are also major spaces of consumption, such as cafés, bars and restaurants. This regulation is designed to limit non-smokers' exposure to second hand smoke, but also physically marginalises smokers by shrinking the spaces in which it is permissible to smoke. People wishing to smoke while eating or drinking now have to go outside – in some cases to specially adapted semi-private smoking areas, such as patios and gardens, but often into makeshift spaces out on the street. The spatial politics of the smoking ban thus trade on the outsidership of the outside. Smokers are banished outside, away from everyone else, and the outdoors is seen as doubly undesirable – for smokers as it is cast as a form of exile and punishment, and for non-smokers as it becomes the space of smoking. Smoking now defines exteriority: 'one knows one is outside when smokers smoke' (McCarthy 2002).

What the outdoors means in an increasingly interior urban culture is part of a very complex cultural geography. On-street eating and drinking are heralded as civilising. Smokers and binge drinkers - groups banished to the outdoors - are demonised for their anti-social behaviour. This presents a picture of confused and contradictory logics in public policy; it also presents considerable urban design problems.

### DESIGN SOLUTIONS

At present in many UK cities a somewhat ad hoc set of design solutions has come about in response to the new outdoors smoking areas. The most obvious has been the use of existing semi-private outdoor areas as de facto smoking areas. But where such spaces are not available, as in many city centre venues, the main solution has been to create a kind of on-street smokers' corral. Seating previously provided to encourage continental eating and drinking practices has been largely given over to



Above top and bottom right Smoking outdoors, Leeds  
Above bottom left A makeshift outdoor smoker's corral, Leeds



**Above** Outdoor corral with heat lamps, Southbank Centre, London. Photograph by Quentin Stevens

**Right** Cigarette butt bin, Leeds

**Opposite** Hogging the pavement. Photograph by Quentin Stevens



smokers, and this space has come into use all year round. Many cafés and bars had recently invested in new outdoors infrastructure (furniture, walling, canopies) to make the pavement as an extension of their interior – and had benefited from relaxation of local planning regulations to permit this expansion – but these sites have become largely resignified as smoking space. In some cases the thermal comfort of the exiled smoker has been solved by the provision of patio heaters and canopies

providing shelter from the rain - although some bars simply provide umbrellas for smokers to take outside.

In other cases, no such luxury is offered, and mismatched chairs and tables are merely plonked on the pavement, separated off from passing pedestrian traffic by a variety of makeshift barriers. In the worst cases, no provision for smokers has been made whatsoever, other than wall-mounted bins for cigarette butts (so as not to contravene littering laws) and prominent signage reminding smokers that they are not allowed inside. Smokers are left to linger in doorways. Affluent smokers in the USA have addressed this situation by apparently hiring stretch limos to park outside bars and act as temporary smoking zones; such a practice would be illegal in the UK, as the stretch limo is classed as a workplace (for its driver) and therefore subject to the smoking ban.

These new on-street smoking areas generate their own problems for non-smokers too, for example by narrowing the pedestrian space available on the pavement, and by creating a continual fug of smoke around entrances. In a sense, outdoor smoking areas re-privatise the public space of the pavement – as on-street tables and chairs have also done. In the context of smoking, of course, this rezoning is ostensibly in the broader public interest since it creates smoke-free interiors, but the sacrificing of urban public space is largely overlooked by this rationale.

In summer months, the boundary between inside and outside becomes increasingly blurred, as many bars and cafés open up their frontages, but in so doing undermine the purifying strategy of banishing smokers outside. In workplaces, the proximity of smokers to doors and windows, and hence the possibility of smoke entering buildings, has been addressed by informal exclusion zones that push smokers out into marginal, designated smoking areas – a practice that would be difficult to replicate in the case of bars and cafés.



In a sense, the relocating of smoking has been more successful than parallel attempts to regulate binge-drinking, such as zero-tolerance policing of on-street consumption of alcohol – yet a parallel tension exists between this strategy and the café culture response of encouraging responsible, civilised public drinking. The current situation for smoking represents a non-solution. Admittedly it would be difficult in the current regime of health policy discourse and practice to present design solutions that actually attempted to accommodate smokers as welcome participants in urban public cultures. Yet bar owners know they must try to hold on to their smoking customers, while cajoling them into new, healthy practices. Paradoxically, the smoking ban has brought about new forms of smoking solidarity and sociality which undoubtedly contribute to the broader public culture of UK cities.

#### THE URBAN OUTDOORS

The changes to drinking laws and the smoking ban are thus illustrative of the contradictions at the heart of the meaning and value of the everyday, public outdoors in UK cities. As more and more of our lives are lived in climatically controlled indoor environments, so the outdoors becomes a strange, inclement and uninviting space – but the health benefits of the outdoors continue to be promoted. The desire to reproduce continental café culture, by blurring the distinction between inside and outside and repopulating public space, clashes with the idea of the outdoors as a place of exile. The smoking ban re-establishes this, making the outdoors socially marginal, as the only people who willingly go there are smokers. In terms of urban planning, policy and design, such a move will surely only add to demands for the safety of the indoors, and take us back to square one – to unpopulated, unwelcoming and unhealthy urban public spaces.

David Bell, Senior Lecturer, School of Geography, University of Leeds

Paradoxically, the smoking ban has brought about new forms of smoking solidarity and sociality which undoubtedly contribute to the broader public culture of UK cities

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# CYCLING BETWEEN THE TRAFFIC: MOBILITY, IDENTITY AND SPACE

Justin Spinney sets out why cycling and driving should be treated differently



Above Mixing with the vulnerable

Cycling in London is firmly back on the agenda in a drive to ease congestion and pollution, and encourage a healthier population. But this substantial recent increase in cycling is not without problems. Cyclists' uses of streets often contravene road traffic laws and ignore the spatial prescriptions of kerbs, lane markings, junction signalling, one-way systems, bike lanes and pedestrian areas. The spaces that planners and engineers have traditionally created for cyclists are very different to the spaces that cyclists are creating for themselves. After decades of urban design and highways engineering favouring the private car, the urban landscape has become polarised in its separation of cars and pedestrians; cycling currently inhabits a nuisance grey area in between. As a result the unique capacities of the cyclist have increasingly become conflated with those of cars, leading to inappropriate design.

Drawing upon ethnographic fieldwork with London cyclists and in-depth interviews with local planners, engineers, cycling officers and activists, this article moves beyond simplistic and sensationalist readings of undesirable cycling practices as the actions of pathological risk takers and criminals. Instead it calls for a more nuanced understanding of cyclists' uses of space arising from the experience of cycling. Much of cyclists' apparently inappropriate use of space can be explained by the significant differences between official conceptions of cyclists' needs and the many experiences created by cycling.

## Cyclists are often demonised in the media and by government officials

### THE STATE OF PLANNING FOR CYCLING

Morning commuter cycling in London increased by 50% in the period 2000-7. Alongside this is a renewed interest in designing for cycling with Transport for London committing to an annual investment of £75 million in cycling projects and the completion by 2010 of the London Cycle Network Plus (LCN+) - a 900km network of cycle routes spanning 33 boroughs. Recent efforts to reshape car-dominated urban environments to accommodate the movements of cyclists better, include Advanced Stop Lines (ASLs) - a junction treatment which provides a space for cyclists in front of vehicles, and a London-wide program to remove unpopular one-way gyratories.

### IN-BETWEEN IDENTITIES

Engineers and planners attempt to create spaces which keep traffic moving, but in doing so they standardise the movements of a range of vehicles with diverse capacities, including cars, lorries and bicycles. This standardisation results in assumptions about the way in which vehicles and drivers interact with other road users, experience time and use space. These assumptions become embedded in the design and layout of road space. Thus the design of the urban environment still favours vehicles, and many cyclists can be seen to use spaces in unintended and inappropriate ways; but which more accurately reflects their experiences and capacities. Whilst cyclists are often demonised in the media and by government officials, I suggest the rationale for these reinterpretations of space is part of an effort by cyclists to feel less vulnerable and allow them to conserve energy



through uninterrupted movement - taking advantage of the unique kinaesthetic and sensory nature of cycling.

**VULNERABILITY**

Cyclists, who are arguably as vulnerable to injury as pedestrians are expected to share street spaces with vehicles which pose a great threat to them. This design failure to account for the different vulnerability of cyclists vis-à-vis other vehicles often results in riders engaging in unlawful and seemingly risky practices, but which can enhance their own personal safety. One reason cyclists often give for disobeying traffic signals is that they deem this to be safer than obeying the signals; the pedestrian phase of a signal temporarily creates a safe space for the cyclist where they can cross a junction separated from cars. By pulling away whilst the light is still red, or crossing on a pedestrian phase, many riders argue they are aware of their own vulnerability by attempting to minimise conflict with other vehicles and injury to themselves. However, the current design of most junctions fails to recognise the different vulnerabilities of vehicles and cyclists and the ways cyclists might respond to these risks.

**HUMAN POWER**

Cyclists, like pedestrians, move through the city under their own power. As natural Pythagoreans, wherever possible they move across the hypotenuse of a space rather than around its two sides, ignoring red lights and using the wrong side of the road. Aiming to conserve both time and energy, cyclists will seek out the shortest and flattest route to their destination. Unfortunately, in an urban environment which has been planned and designed around mechanical locomotion, human energy expenditure is rarely considered. Different street and traffic planning is needed when human effort becomes a significant variable (Parkin et al 2007).

For example, rather than ride at full speed toward a stop signal and then halt, cyclists will often slow as they approach the stop signal in the hope that it turns green. This strategy often entails riding near the white line and between lanes of traffic. Here the white line is no longer a division for the cyclist but a space – a gap – that helps to save energy by accommodating their slow but continuous motion. Many design features such as one-way systems, junction signalisation and give-way signs on side roads and junctions actively disadvantage cycling because they fail to

acknowledge the human powered nature of the bicycle and the different uses of space that this entails. The number of times that a cyclist has to stop or slow down on a journey are important factors, which could be addressed through more appropriate policy and design (Bendixson 1974). Certainly there are signs that such deficiencies are being recognised and remedied, with one-way contra-flows for cyclists in one-way streets. However there remains little recognition that other aspects of the urban environment (such as the proliferation of signalised junctions) might also be deterrents to cycling because of the extra energy they require of the user.

**SENSORY DIMENSIONS**

Often misrepresented as a form of instrumental mobility, cycling has also been marginalised as a social and leisure activity in the urban landscape. The same reductionist logic that framed the bicycle as a vehicle has served to exclude it from public and pedestrian environments because it legally belongs on the road, and therefore must be too dangerous to safely mix with pedestrians. Despite such exclusions, many riders re-interpret the use of road and public spaces according to their experience, as unlike the car driver, the cyclist is anything but static in movement. In a car the sensory difference between driving up or downhill is neutral; on a bicycle it is only too obvious. Thus some London riders find kinaesthetic pleasure in the work of riding up inclines like Grosvenor Place, whilst others take great pleasure in coasting down Shooters Hill in Greenwich or heading south over Waterloo Bridge on the way home

Above Waiting between the traffic

Right  
Re-interpreting  
the bench



from work. The nature of cycling means that spaces otherwise rendered homogeneous when travelling by car have widely varying characteristics.

Urban leisure cycling such as BMX and trials riding in particular have capitalised upon the multi-sensory aspects of riding, particularly the kinaesthetic - the feeling of movement within the muscles and of the motion of the body through space. Such practices actively promote these pleasures as the central reasons to ride. Areas around South Bank's Shell Centre and Tate Modern are especially popular with riders who use ledges, verges, railings, benches and bollards to form an obstacle course to test their skill and balance. When ridden by a trials rider, the 4ft high plinth of a statue is no longer just part of the artwork, it now provides a physical and mental challenge. Similarly, the armrest of a bench no longer only facilitates relaxation; when engaged by a trials rider, it is a test of strength, balance and skill. Thus these design features take on a betweenness as their significance expands. At the same time as reinterpreting these elements of urban design on the micro scale, the performances of these riders fit well within the wider framing of the South Bank as a vibrant area of social interaction and street performances. Thus even though cycling may not be part of Mather's South Bank masterplan, unprogrammed activities can still proliferate and even enhance certain 'loose' spaces.

**IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING**

But how can we address these tensions between the allowed and unprogrammed uses of space? Importantly, many planners and highways engineers are aware of the shortcomings in the treatment of cyclists and are duly frustrated. Some wish to be more radical in their design for cycling but are constrained by the legal framing of the cyclist and an increasingly pervasive risk-averse culture. What is needed first and foremost is a thorough re-imagining of the cyclist, recognising that cyclists have particular spatial needs because they differ from pedestrians and motor vehicles in their experiences of vulnerability, energy and sensation.

One recent mantra in urban design and highway engineering is the delineation of roads as 'movement spaces' for vehicles, and streets and plazas as 'exchange spaces' for pedestrians. Such prescription does little to alter the simplistic polarisation of road users as vehicles or pedestrians. Urban design requires a more nuanced and flexible approach; not all styles of movement are the same, and spatial prescriptions should acknowledge these complexities rather than ignore them in favour of a dominant style of movement. Another step towards finding a place for cyclists would be design standards that recognise road users' varying levels of vulnerability and threat. Such an evidence-based index could group all forms and styles of mobility based upon the threat they pose to others and their susceptibility to harm, in order to provide design professionals with a more subtle tool to signalise junctions. Similarly, recognising human energy expenditure as a variable in design would be a huge step toward designing appropriate spaces for cycling. This includes recognising the sensory pleasure that particular spaces and environments could provide and using this as a way of encouraging non-motorised styles of mobility.

The current failure to understand cyclists' capacities and needs relegates them to an 'in-between' status and denying them legitimate and distinct identities in suitably designed spaces.

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# PRODUCTIVE POTENTIALITIES IN PUBLIC/PRIVATE AND PRIVATE/PUBLIC SPACE

Sophie Watson explores the private adoption of public spaces



This article provides evidence that the boundaries between public and private space are highly permeable, shifting across the dimensions of time, culture and subjectivity. One person's sense of a space as public may, for another, be highly private in a symbolic sense or in terms of the kinds of activities taking place there. Similarly, private spaces, such as the home, can become public when they are used for public purposes, such as the cooperative domestically-based classes of the University of the Third Age. At the same time these symbolic connections and practices are linked to and may also transgress physical demarcations, such as the threshold to a home or the screening of bathing areas.

This blurring of boundaries between public and private can be productive and exciting, allowing new kinds of spaces to emerge which have the potential for different people to find a place, and for connections to be made across a variety of socio-cultural, ethnic/racial and gender differences. In *City Publics: the (dis)enchantments of urban encounters* (2006) I explore a number of case studies that disrupt traditional public/private divisions, creating new possibilities for vibrant and unusual social encounters. Two examples explain this: the men's and women's bathing ponds at Hampstead Heath, North London, and a street market in East London. In both of these sites elements of what more typically might be associated with the private sphere are enacted in public.

## HAMPSTEAD PONDS, NORTH LONDON

In Hampstead Heath two ponds fed by an underground river, and barely visible except to the cognoscenti, have been revered and enjoyed by locals and visitors since the late nineteenth century, in the case of the men's pond, and since 1924 in the case of the

women's pond. There is also a mixed pond on the other side of the Heath nearer Hampstead village. The special quality of these sites has inspired fierce support for their preservation over the years and eulogies which possibly have no parallel for any other urban green space. They are variously referred to as 'a symbol of a little piece of paradise', 'a place of beauty' and an 'Arcadian heaven'. A diversity of people swim in the ponds, old and young, straight and gay, professional, students, unemployed and tourists. The most intrepid swim throughout the year, even in the depths of winter. In recent struggles over the use and management of the site it is this group who have expressed the strongest loyalty and affection for the ponds and their significance in daily lives. Both the men's and women's ponds have long-standing associations which organise a variety of social events: the Lifebuoys founded in 1883, and the Kenwood Ladies' Ponds Association.

The ponds are delineated as single sex by two notice boards outside, and no policing is necessary. Surrounded by trees and shrubs, it is hard to see in. Inside various rules are posted on a board, but more important are the cultural

**Above** The Women's pond, Hampstead Heath, North London

practices which have arisen over time and which are mutually acknowledged and accepted. In the men's and women's ponds differences of age and sexuality, or between those who seek silence or talk, or between long-time swimmers and newcomers, are accommodated and understood through simple signs and gestures. Different sections of the ponds' banks, separated by trees, are differently inhabited. There are spaces for sitting and watching, garden spaces, space for table tennis, and spaces for changing. Embodied practices such as washing oneself and others and naked sunbathing are performed in this public space according to unwritten codes and demarcated by simple structures and boundaries. Thus there are certain places which are more secluded, and in these sites more personal embodied practices, alone or with others, can be performed, while in the more visible sections of the bank people tend to be more careful and attentive to the possibility of offending others.

The very informality of these places renders them sites of mutual encounters across differences, and tensions are rare. But there is also another story to tell and that is of the encounter between the local users and the risk-management practices of the Corporation of London who are responsible for the site. A study commissioned to investigate the risks of winter swimming - a long-standing practice here and throughout Europe - deemed it to be dangerous and sought to curtail it. Many saw this action as motivated by fear of litigation in the unlikely event of something going wrong and the growing prevalence of a risk culture inspired 'nanny state'. The swimmers organised a massive campaign to defend the practice, which was finally won with some concessions.

What lessons are there here for preserving the positive in-betweenness of sites such as these? First, there is an inevitable tension between formal planning processes which attempt to manage risk, and users who feel they should be free to make choices in their lives which may involve some level of risk. There seems to be only one way out of such a dilemma: for concerned parties to meet and negotiate settlement; to allow the knowledge and experience of local citizens to be taken seriously. This relates to the issue of informal customs and the conventions of enacting embodied private practices in public which may typically be performed elsewhere. If individuals desire to behave in certain ways in public which have the potential to offend others, it is only through discussion and the sharing of views that mutual agreements can be reached as to what is deemed

appropriate in any one place. Here I suggest that where spaces have developed organically and work harmoniously, formal intervention should be minimal - such places should instead be enhanced and protected. Such settings offer lessons as to how similar informal places could be constructed and designed elsewhere.

#### **RIDLEY ROAD MARKET, HACKNEY, LONDON**

The second site of private publicness and encounters across differences is a long established market in the East London borough of Hackney at Ridley Road. This was once a market of predominantly Jewish traders, but it has shifted in composition as the area's population has changed. This is a very ethnically diverse area where 60% of the population is white, 9% British Asian, and 25% Black African or Afro-Caribbean. The borough is one of the poorest in Britain with a high proportion of lone parent families. The street market takes place every day except Sunday and is one of the most vibrant in London selling every imaginable fruit, vegetable, meat and food from all over the world. The street is bordered by small run-down shops which also sell a striking diversity of products. The market is packed every day, especially on Saturdays, with shoppers coming from as far away as Birmingham to buy something that is only available there or to meet up with friends and family - you could easily imagine yourself in a large city in Africa or India.

## These social practices are performed in serendipitous, unplanned spaces

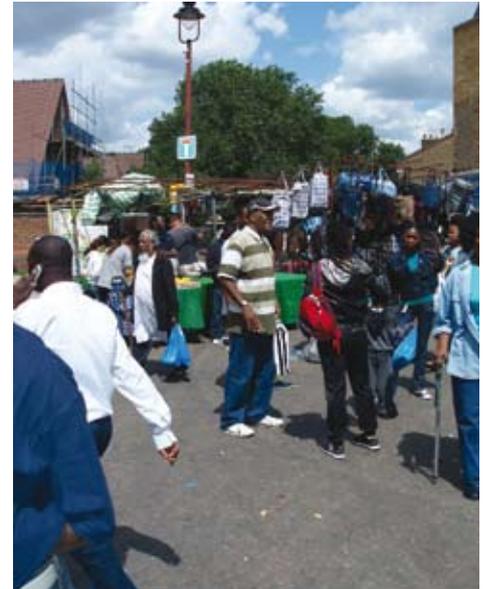
Over the years the market has retained its strong sense of community where inter-cultural connection and mixing is typical. According to this trader: 'You get a lot of Jamaicans, Africans, Nigerians. They all live in the area. It's the old famous Ridley Road. This is like a meeting point for a lot of them. There are people down here who haven't seen each other for twenty years, and they have met in Ridley Road. You know, no other market but Ridley. It must say something, you know.'

And the woman who owns the egg stall: 'There are lots of South American people down here now. Spanish, Brazilian, Cuban... there's a big community of South Americans coming up now. Chinese, you get a lot of Chinese people now... and Polish, lots of Russians....lots of different people shop here.'

The shoppers interviewed in my research reported visiting the market regularly with the specific intention of bumping into acquaintances and long lost friends, even to the extent of looking out for people last seen in their country of origin: 'Yeah, I do bump into people...You meet people you have not seen for years...from abroad! People from Nigeria come here, they are looking for me, they don't know my address... I tell them everything because they have been looking for me for long. And eventually they found me here.' (Nigerian woman, late fifties)

A view confirmed by an Afro-Caribbean woman in her thirties: 'Sociable? Yeah!!! I come down here on a Saturday because I know if I'm going to bump into someone you can bump into them here on a Saturday. That used to be a big pub ... and on a Saturday, I'll tell you what... they'd all be there and you could have a laugh and you used to meet your uncle there, your brother.'

These accounts confirm a narrative of intercultural mixing and connection which appears to have existed for many years in Ridley Road. As at the Hampstead ponds, the way people inhabit this space blurs public/private boundaries, with people



Above Ridley Road Market, Hackney, London

sitting around, chatting and eating often for hours with the sense that they are in their sitting room or kitchen at home. What is interesting is that these social practices are performed in serendipitous, unplanned spaces of the market - sitting together on walls, packing cases, containers and stalls, as well as by the side of the food vans in the market.

At the level of urban design and planning, what is evident is that it is successful almost by default. Hackney Council intervene very little in the market; there are no signs of innovative planning or design initiatives, and none were reported by the respondents in the research. There is a lack of formal street furniture or meeting places. If markets are to play a role as a place of sociality and interconnection, what this site suggests is the importance of casual meeting spaces; places to sit and watch the world pass by and the absence of traffic. It is also clearly significant that as the market street is relatively narrow, there are no places for cars, and so this is very much a walking street where people can easily bump into one another.

Are the implications of these observations that urban planners and designers should resign and go home? I think not. Instead I am arguing for the creation and preservation of informal, hidden, marginal, secret, serendipitous spaces which

are not clearly delineated with formal boundaries. Such spaces are crucial to sociality and intercultural connections and mixing in the city. Rather than destroying these places through intervention and regulation, enhancing their viability represents the way forward to avoid the increasing fragmentation and demarcation of public space in the city.

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The Open University**

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# POSSIBILITIES OF RECONFIGURATION: SUSTAINING CREATIVE USE IN URBAN SPACE

Can Altay presents two examples for opening design to unintended uses



**Above** The Cube at Granville New Housing, South Kilburn, courtesy of public works

This article explores the urban reconfiguration of spaces between buildings through their use, drawing on a case study from Ankara, Turkey. It discusses why such reconfigurations matter in the life-cycle of the urban built environment, examining the qualities of spaces that allow creative use, and the challenges that this brings. Through the illustration of a public art and architecture project in South Kilburn, London, a design methodology is proposed which allows users to engage with urban space as an unfinished product, and which promotes possibilities of user-generated solutions.

Even the most tailor-made design solution faces challenges when it is handed over to its users. The presumption that there can be a finalised project for a particular client or end-user (whether an individual, community, or government agency) is often false, because the built environment usually outlives its original inhabitants, and because urban communities are no longer easily defined. In urban centres, communities constantly change, and should not be conceived as robust, unquestioned social groups whose tendencies and habits are the result of a commonality that can be statistically

or ethnographically defined. It is the duty of urban designers, planners and policy-makers to remain open to shifts and changes and to understand that their work will either need to change or be responsive to a variety of creative and unpredictable uses. The urban professional should also acknowledge that there will always be conflict over urban space, and that no space can be neutral while being used.

## MINIBAR AS AN EXAMPLE OF URBAN RECONFIGURATION

'Minibar' is the name given in Ankara, Turkey, to the temporary use by young people of existing urban areas around and between buildings for night-life and socialising. Minibar is a product of two conditions:

Firstly the phase in the lives of neighbourhood youths when it became unaffordable and undesirable to continue their nightlife habits in bars and clubs, and

Secondly the existence of certain physical settings that can easily be appropriated as places to sit, set drinks out, and hang out. These settings include pavement areas, low masonry walls on property boundaries, and the spaces and pavements between buildings. The buildings in question seldom have commercial uses on the ground floor and so the sidewalk area is also available.

Minibar is not a radical taking over of space, but a negotiation that subtly opens space up through use, and which transforms the intended use (or rather non-use) given to these already in-between public and private spaces. With minibar, space is produced without building anything or without a commercial operator. No service is provided, people gather, bring their own drinks, and spend the evening together. The existing buildings unwittingly provide a setting, and the intentions behind their

## With 'minibar', space is produced without building anything or without a commercial operator

planning, design, construction, and tenancy are quite contrary to this informal use, and the changes were not envisaged in advance by professionals and policy-makers. At minibar, young people (mostly students and recent graduates aged 16-27 of both sexes) create a nightlife where the service sector has been spatially eliminated. Rather than visiting bars, bottles are bought locally, and the space is whatever the buildings and the street provide. It is a deliberate act of creative use, where the users decide what the urban space will become. The minibar idea is significant as a display of the possibilities of unclaimed in-between spaces, and of the creativity of the users in attributing new functions; it is also a reflection of the socio-economic conditions of urban space, and of how urban communities can transform themselves and their environment through social interaction; or as Deniz Altay (2007) suggests how 'daily practices of users re-define urban space'.

### THE PROBLEM WITH 'FILLING IN' THE SPACE BETWEEN

Because minibar involves no acts of building, the spaces between that provide the grounds for it are only temporarily occupied, leaving empty, undefined, unrecognisable spaces during the daytime. However, due to local residents' discontent with young people gathering in front of their houses, new building features were subsequently introduced, with the aim of preventing minibars. As with any anti-urban design feature, these new or raised fences, gates and walls installed by residents were quite obviously additions to the existing character. This was the first phase of filling in the places that had generated minibars. This first layer however only worked building by building, and as the minibar is in flux, new spaces were soon appropriated as there were still plenty of spaces around.

The second phase of infilling brought a more drastic change to the whole area, not only on the minibar gatherings. After several years of crowded minibars and conflict with residents, one by one the corners and the gaps that helped minibar exist became commodified. A new generation of entrepreneurs started to rent ground floor apartments and former shop units to set up cafés and bars opening onto the pavements and in-between spaces, extending and demarcating their boundaries by building furniture, placing flowerbeds, and repaving their areas. This commercial take-over not only narrowed the room available for more open uses, but also changed the whole character of the area so that it is now an evening economy destination based on food and drink. This shift seems to have ended the unregulated production of new uses for these spaces.

### PROCESS VERSUS CLOSURE IN URBAN DESIGN

If we understand the lifecycle of urban built environments as a chain of policy-making/planning and design/construction/use, it is important to see that this is a cyclical process. The use phase of this cycle remains the most unpredictable, and it is the aim of this article to encourage designers to embrace this unpredictability, rather than dispute or eliminate it. When users have room for different activities, this phase can produce an array of spaces within a single context. Instead of aiming for a type of closure which will inevitably fall short in predicting and controlling use and users, planners and urban designers should re-visit ideas about open-endedness and a process-based approach.



**Top two** Minibar: young people gathering and making use of under-defined elements on the street

**Middle** Built intervention, as new fences and walls are introduced by residents

**Bottom** Commercial take-over - the cafés and the bars that replace the minibar scene repeat a global generic character



Left Bird's eye view of masterplan: Phase 1 (completed, left and centre) and next Phase 2 (at top of image).



## Newhall, Harlow

### Roger Evans reflects on how the new neighbourhood is unfolding

Newhall is a new neighbourhood within Harlow New Town, originally planned by Sir Frederick Gibberd, and its masterplanners are REAL who have had a continuing involvement in the delivery of the project (see UD issue 86, p31-35). The design and delivery of the new neighbourhood is, however, very different to the rest of this first generation New Town. The masterplan for Newhall precedes PPG3, current sustainability standards and introduced design codes at a time when they were not common. The ambition for the project has been to think through every aspect of a new neighbourhood from first principles and to persuade others to raise expectations and change the 'rules'. With around twenty percent of the neighbourhood now complete, it is an opportune time to reflect on what has worked or not.

There are key decisions required at different stages in delivering such a project and these highlight ten essential requirements for a successful new neighbourhood (in bold):

#### LOCATION

As the basic building block of settlements is the neighbourhood, this is the area within which everyday needs are catered for and within convenient walking distances. Site selection should therefore be informed by three considerations:

- **identity** – whether the development creates or completes a neighbourhood and which facilities to be provided at local, district or town centre level
- **connectivity** – whether the site is located on principal lines of movement, which will be essential if mixed uses and retail are required
- **topography** – where watersheds are important delineators of urban form, rather than ownership boundaries.

#### DESIGN

Many key decisions are implicit in the site selection. If the site is not well connected it will form a large cul-de-sac however permeable internally. Different land-uses will need to be located according to movement routes. **Mixed uses** may be ruled out if there are no connecting movement corridors to other neighbourhoods. **Higher densities** will be required along the busiest routes and where the commercial and mixed uses need to be located. The **natural environment** will need to link with the external landscape to create a green infrastructure which is meaningful and multi-functional. The sustainability of a scheme is largely a function of **efficiency** - of the masterplan and its architecture.

#### DELIVERY

Urban design is not just the art of designing towns but also about making things happen, and **design quality** depends on how a scheme will be delivered. The means of **management and maintenance** will determine what is viable, and the **level of commitment** from the scheme promoter, design team and local authority will dictate whether aspirations are translated into reality, or remain as warm words in a design statement.

So how has Newhall fared in this ten point process and what lessons can be learnt?

#### 1 Identity

Newhall is planned to be self-sufficient meeting the everyday needs of its 6,000 residents with primary schools, community facilities, employment, convenience shops and services, sports and leisure spaces. While the ambition has been to build so that the development feels complete at any stage, achieving this has proved difficult. The completion of the North Chase local centre in late 2008, with its shops, restaurant and apartments around a small square will at last give a focus to The Chase - the main avenue into the Phase 1 area. Phase 2 will provide a second focus to the neighbourhood with district centre facilities including a wider range of shops and purpose built offices.

#### 2 Connectivity

Harlow follows the first generation New Town pattern of neighbourhoods separated by primary movement routes and green spaces. Neighbourhoods remain introverted unless new movement corridors can be established to connect into the movement structure of the town. Planned new development around Newhall will provide opportunities to restructure movement routes within Phase 2 to site mixed uses better.

Within Phase 1, street intersections are special locations as this is where pedestrians want to cross and so most have been designed as pedestrian priority areas. Some form small informal squares with trees planted in their centres, requiring changes to highway adoption standards, new materials tested and new management regimes put in place.

#### 3 Topography

Newhall is contained within a bowl through which runs a valley; this spine and associated woodland is key to the landscape structure, with



the rim of the bowl containing the neighbourhood. Development edges overlook the green spaces and as valuable frontages contain higher densities. One of the difficulties in delivering SUDs schemes in the UK is the insistence that rainwater falling on private and adopted public areas has to be separated. Here it has been agreed to combine flows and much of the water attenuation in Phase 2 will be within street corridors.

#### 4 Mix of uses

The ambition is to ensure that the neighbourhood is populated throughout the day and so working from home has been encouraged from the start. Rather than designate live-work units with the risk that the work space remains unused, the design code calls for ground floors of dwellings on streets around the local centre to be designed so that businesses could be accommodated. This is supported by the planning authority and it is left to market forces. The expectation is that as the local and district centres develop, the approach streets will change. There is also a requirement to accommodate two hectares of employment land. However, rather than creating a small business campus, it has been agreed that the equivalent number of jobs will be created through finer-grained mixed uses (in plan and section) around the centres. The local centre at North Chase is in the heart of the neighbourhood and as such locations attract little passing custom, in the short term they need to be cross-funded by housing through devices such as turnover rents. The establishment of a café/ coffee shop and newsagent is expected to raise values in the wider area, and once there is a greater critical mass of development, these will be self-financing.

#### 5 Density

Measuring densities as dwellings/ hectare is not a meaningful way of setting built-form character. Here densities are measured as square

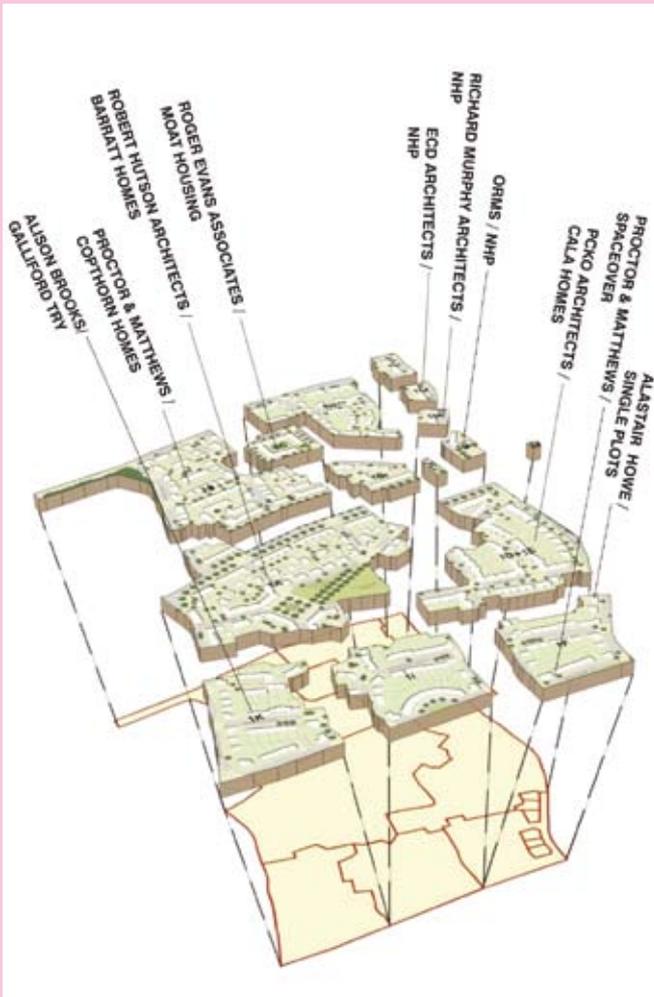
metres/ ha and are between 3,900 and 5,400 sqm/ ha in Phase 1. The masterplan sets no limits on the density of each parcel; instead it is left to each architect to maximise the efficiency of the design by solving problems such as overlooking. There is, however, a natural limit to density approaching 5,000 sqm/ ha assuming surface car parking, and conventional forms of construction and refuse servicing. In Phase 2, densities will be raised to 7,500 sqm/ ha along principal corridors and around special locations, by using split-level parking, a piped underground refuse collection system and construction techniques more commonly used by commercial developers.

#### 6 Natural environment

The masterplan was developed before the requirement to prepare an environmental statement. However extensive habitat surveys were undertaken and having identified natural habitats including species-rich grassland, it was decided that forty percent of the site would not be developed. This area now forms the green infrastructure for the project and accommodates a balancing lake, reed beds, additional woodland planting and new habitat areas. Every dwelling is within 60 metres of this green network, and most visitors find the scale of the development relaxed, despite the significantly higher densities. No spoil has been removed from the site to-date, but has instead been used in earth modelling and sculpture projects.

#### 7 Efficiency

Standards for sustainability have consistently been in excess of building regulation requirements at Newhall. As national standards have been raised incrementally, so standards at Newhall have been raised to be more demanding. The sustainability standards are delivered through the design code, attached to land sales by covenant. The initial building construction was a SAP rating, replaced by Eco-homes standards ('very



**Opposite left** Main approach into Phase 1 The Chase.  
**Opposite top right** Mixed development and new square will complete Phase 1. Building design by ORMS.  
**Opposite bottom right** Surface water movement is expressed at ground level. Run-off is cleaned by reed beds and feeds a new lake.  
**Left** Phase 1 development is broken down into land parcels ranging from single plots to 100 dwellings for detailed design and development  
**Right** Densities increase around new central areas.

good') and now the Code for Sustainable Homes. The planning consent for Phase 2 will require Code level 3 but it is hoped to achieve level 4 on much of the development, with some level 5 parcels. We do not believe Code level 6 to be achievable in this location given current technology. The first aspect to be developed was part of the SUDs system comprising reed beds and a balancing lake. Improvements to the water quality of exposed water courses were made along with advance planting, so that later development could sit amongst a maturing landscape. Perhaps predictably, wildlife moved in first and new development is now constricted by newly resident crested newts and other species absent before the advance habitat creation schemes were implemented.

### 8 Design quality

The intentions of the masterplan are delivered through a design code, and this is viewed as the masterplan's working drawings rather than an architectural guide. The key concern of the masterplan is in delivering a legible, safe and stimulating public realm. The code therefore controls building height and massing rather than architectural style. Talented architects have been attracted to Newhall and have created contemporary designs which respond well to the masterplan. The subdivision of the masterplan into development parcels has been a critical design component, with the 'seams' running along rear boundaries, except for in the more important public spaces where the joins are in the public realm. This achieves greater architectural diversity around public spaces but demands greater coordination and dialogue between architects. Achieving design and construction quality for the public realm has proved more difficult because of the connected streets, despite the Section 38 Agreement with the highways authority. To solve this, the design team, comprising urban designers, engineers and utility planners, are seconded to each developer team and this has worked well.

### 9 Management and community governance

It is essential to plan how a neighbourhood will be managed and maintained before starting design. Precedents such as New Ash Green pointed to all streets and sewers being adopted. A Residents' Association was formed to adopt and maintain green spaces and street trees, which the local authorities would not adopt, leading to greater use being made of planting. This will be extended to the landscape aspects of the Phase 2 SUDs scheme as well as the major part of the balancing lake. Resident Association fees are approximately £200 per year for all tenures and this includes broadband and cable TV. Puzzlingly, some residents still install satellite dishes, possibly for reasons of display!

### 10 Commitment

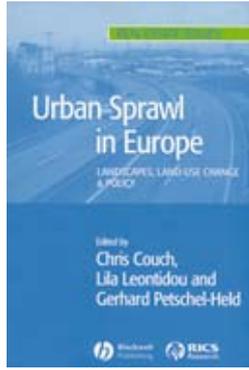
There are three major considerations when building a new neighbourhood – speed, quality and cost. It is fairly easy to deliver on any two, achieving all three is harder. At Newhall it is the speed of development that has suffered in trying to achieve quality and with financial viability a pre-requisite. This has required huge commitment from the promoters of the project (who are also the landowners), the design team, individual developers and investors, and the local authorities.

With Phase 2 about to commence on site, the imperative now is to gain speed while continuing to work on quality. For visitors to Newhall, the new café/ restaurant designed by ORMS on the square overlooking the park will be open for 2009 and should provide an excuse to linger.

Roger Evans, Roger Evans Associates Limited (REAL)

## URBAN SPRAWL IN EUROPE: LANDSCAPES, LAND-USE CHANGE AND POLICY

CHRIS COUCH, LILA LEONTIDOU, GERHARD PETSCHEL-HELD (EDS), BLACKWELL/ RICS, 2007 £55



ISBN 978 1 40513 917 5

This informative book draws on a research project undertaken by several universities and research institutes. The objective was to study urban sprawl and whether it takes universal forms or if differences occur studying forty-five northern, central and southern European locations for comparisons.

Empirical research on seven study areas was carried out on the permutations and degrees of sprawl in order to derive archetypical perspectives. Cities included Liverpool, Stockholm and Vienna for 'northern' Europe; Athens and Attica for southern Europe; and Leipzig, Warsaw and Ljubljana for the post socialist city in Europe. Sprawl was examined in relation to infrastructure and real estate

capital investment in Athens, using the example of the Olympic Games. Lifestyles and especially second homes guided the study of sprawl in Sweden, Austria and Greece. Perhaps the compact city is not as sustainable as anticipated, with people fleeing the high densities of Vienna, Athens and even Stockholm to the countryside over which they have more control. The heritage of strong state regulation was still felt in central European cities where post-socialist sprawl was short-lived and cities remained relatively compact.

Theoretical reflections capture the combined effect of individual location decision-making processes. Some correlations indicate that a strong building industry and planning powers result in physical concentration, while weak planning and undercapitalised building processes lead to low-rise, self-built sprawl. Lifestyles, customs and greater personal mobility influence the urban development process just as much as wealth resulting from industrialisation. This was evident in the Anglo-Saxon preference for low density suburbia, low-rise housing in urban peripheries and the poorer south such as Greece, with more compact urban living based on historical defensible walled settlements,

or convivial southern lifestyles attracting long-distance sprawl from the north for holidays and retirement.

What influence can urban design have on adverse effects of sprawl? The chapter on planning controls shows that sustainable design principles should predominate, with soft policy options to which designers could contribute. A wide diversity of peri-urban landscapes and lifestyles lead the research team to conclude that sprawl may not be unsustainable, when counterbalanced by inner city revitalisation, a shift of southern lifestyles to the north, and hybrid, transient landscapes.

Cities as competitive forces of globalisation have modified the north-south sprawl divide. Known as 'glocalised' cityscapes, they consist of re-urbanisation, gentrification and heritage protection along with innovative design. Contrary to the expected spread of northern suburbanisation, the mediterraneanisation of street life in compact spaces has captured the north and is offering the urban periphery opportunities for creative design. Thus sprawl is not putting urban designers out of business yet.

Judith Ryser

## COLLECTIVE SPACES

A + T ISSUES 25 TO 28, SPRING 2005-AUTUMN 2006



ISSN 1132 6409

Urban Design does not normally review magazines, but this series of four issues of a+t dedicated to collective spaces should be of interest. Each of the four issues specialises in a particular aspect and starts with an introductory article (in both English and Spanish) followed by recent examples.

The essay in the first volume by Martin Musiatowicz discusses how space design has moved beyond a single professional discipline to encompass architecture, landscape and art. This will not be surprising to urban designers, but it is expressed here in fairly theoretical

terms – occasionally in post-modern jargon – and proved with examples where a project becomes 'a hybrid of building, infrastructure and public open space as an extension of the city', or where buildings become part of the landscape and public space part of the architecture.

The essay in the second volume by Carlos García-Vazquez is dedicated to Lubbock, Texas, a prototype of a city with no 'public space, no centre, no citizens'. The design of the city is dictated by the needs of mobility and so there is no destination, just passageway; in addition nowhere in the city is different from anywhere else and public space seems irrelevant. There are no pedestrians, no places to meet and a vicious circle of fear of each other. That European cities are not entirely exempt of these problems is shown by the transformation of Berlin since 1990 where accessibility, security and private finance have been crucial in the choices made, resulting in spaces that are very different from the traditional European

public ones. Berlin is also cited in the third volume's essay by Xavier González dealing with the occupation and appropriation of public spaces by alternative groups in a marginal or unusual manner, sometimes ephemerally, and more permanently at others. The urban gaps, places in-between or without function, are frequently the chosen venues for these new uses.

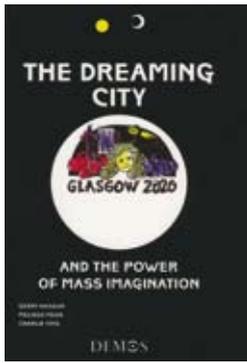
The short essay in the fourth volume by Auroral Fernandez Per concludes the series lamenting the fact that although since the 1970s cities have gained large tracts of surplus land as a result of industrial decline, only a very small part of these have become public.

This short outline of these four issues by necessity omits the wealth of examples presented with excellent photographs, good graphics and short introductory notes. They are a rich source of references for any urban designer curious to find out what new public spaces are being designed in the world.

Sebastian Loew

## THE DREAMING CITY, GLASGOW 2020 AND THE POWER OF MASS IMAGINATION

GERRY HASSAN, MELISSA MEAN, CHARLES TIMS (EDS), DEMOS, 2007, £10



ISBN 978 1 84180 186 5

The Dreaming City is a refreshing departure from the usual books on cities with both its content and design accessible to all. The thinktank Demos has used poetry and narratives to capture what those who live in Glasgow want, fear or hope for their urban future. Convinced of the importance of story when they produced Scotland 2020, Demos engaged locals from all walks of life in this unique attempt at re-imagining the city through the idea of story. They involved schools, the media and various institutions around Glasgow in story competitions, asking people to make a wish for Glasgow and getting children to draw their image of the Glasgow of the future. Eleven stories are reproduced in the centre of the book,

many of them dark, others inspired by science fiction, and others imagining the physical environment, all of them an eye-opener for urban designers. It is very difficult to illustrate process, and the only plan in the book is one made up of writing about areas and hopes for them, put together at workshops on various estates.

Perhaps the most inspiring part is the “design code for mass imagination” which relies on trusted relationships, disruptive spaces, starting with people, creating scenarios for the future, story creation, and which works on the path from storytelling to action. A lot of emphasis is laid on a symmetry of access to information as well as to design tools to encourage all parts of local society to share their knowledge and experience – using imagination, not consultation. Differences between people and the way they approach their future was acknowledged in the discussions which took place in the ‘new public domain’ - at the hairdressers, in pubs and supermarkets. From there a city of imagination emerged. The collective consciousness of Glasgow identified six giants that its inhabitants wanted to slay: poverty, bad housing, inequality, poor health, poor education and unemployment, plus crime, neglect and

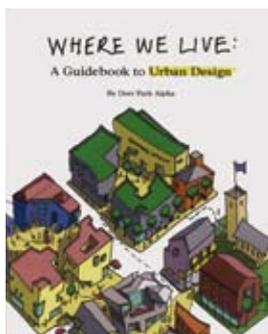
vandalism of the built environment. Their wish-list identified local values such as cosmopolitanism, mental aptitude, civic pride and a well maintained public realm. As to the means of achieving the dreaming city, there was much scepticism about public interventions and in workshops which identified likely and unlikely, desirable and undesirable outcomes, not all were optimistic. Yet they showed confidence in large urban projects, with more care at the local scale and a focus on maintenance with more sustainable tools.

Possible city futures invoked two speed or slow, hard or soft, ‘dear green’ or lonely, or a kaleidoscope of all these aspects. The open city that all wanted would only materialise by progressing from mass imagination to mass collaboration. The Demos experiment identified ten places of hope which can contribute to the transformation of Glasgow. These rely on turning privatised spaces back into the public realm, raising the commons by putting the roof tops into shared use, and shifting the share between public and personal power in the way spaces are designed and used. Surely, there is a role for designers in all that but they have to seek and merit it.

Judith Ryser

## WHERE WE LIVE, A GUIDEBOOK TO URBAN DESIGN

DEER PARK ALPHA, SOLENT CENTRE FOR ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN, 2008, FREE\*



ISBN 978 0 9559042 0 2

How do you introduce urban design to lay people who know little of the issues involved, do not necessarily understand the language, or realise how the subject affects them? The answer is with difficulty. This small book makes a valiant attempt by presenting urban design in very simple terms and using eye catching illustrations.

After an introduction setting the context, the book has three main parts

covering respectively Place, Making Good Spaces, and Bringing it to Life. While the rationale of these could be discussed, the way each one is dealt with is practical and would be easily understood by a child. The relationships between elements in the urban environment and daily life are clearly described; so, although the term ‘legibility’ is used, this happens only after the concept is explained in other terms: ‘A simple but interesting layout of streets enables people to easily orientate themselves and navigate to their destination’ (p.16). In addition each chapter has a Dictionary where words highlighted in the preceding paragraphs are defined, and on each page illustrations reinforce the text.

Case studies, one for each section attempt, not entirely successfully, to bring together the issues described. This is perhaps the weakest part of the book; the examples need to be explained more to see the connections with the preceding

text. An additional caveat is that by simplifying so much, the complexities of urban design are ignored. Costs for instance are never mentioned; or the fact that sometimes choices need to be made between conflicting objectives. Some of the statements made in the text would not be agreed by everybody, but appear here as absolutes. To a certain extent the authors acknowledge that this ‘is only the tip of the iceberg’ and they offer a list of further reading but whether their readers will follow this advice is not certain.

The big question is whether the book will succeed in its objective. Will it be read by those who don’t know that they should read it? And will it move them to act? Only time will tell. The authors certainly tried.

Sebastian Loew

\* The book is free to residents in the South East, but will be available for purchase elsewhere later. See [www.solentcentre.org.uk](http://www.solentcentre.org.uk)

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Directory of practices, corporate organisations and urban design courses subscribing to this index. The following pages provide a service to potential clients when they are looking for specialist urban design advice, and to those considering taking an urban design course.

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Website www.townscapesolutions.co.uk

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Contacts Simon Gray/ Simon Green

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k.campbell@urbaninitiatives.co.uk

Website www.urbaninitiatives.co.uk

Contact Kelvin Campbell

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Email ui@urbaninnovations.co.uk

Contacts Tony Stevens/ Agnes Brown

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Website www.urbed.co.uk

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Email [joe.holyoak@uce.ac.uk](mailto:joe.holyoak@uce.ac.uk)

Website [www.bcu.ac.uk](http://www.bcu.ac.uk)

Contact Joe Holyoak

MA Urban Design. This course enhances the creative and practical skills needed to deal with the diverse activities of urban design. Modes of attendance are flexible: full-time, part-time or individual modules as CPD short courses. The course attracts students from a wide range of backgrounds.

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Welsh School of Architecture and School of City & Regional Planning, Glamorgan Building, King Edward V11 Avenue, Cardiff CF10 3WA

Tel 029 2087 5972/029 2087 5961

Email [dutoit@Cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:dutoit@Cardiff.ac.uk)

[bauzamm@cf.ac.uk](mailto:bauzamm@cf.ac.uk)

[www.cardiff.ac.uk/cplan/ma\\_urban\\_design](http://www.cardiff.ac.uk/cplan/ma_urban_design)

Contact Allison Dutoit/Marga Munar Bauza

One year full-time and two year part-time MA in Urban Design.

**EDINBURGH COLLEGE OF ART SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE**

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Contact Leslie Forsyth

[www.eca.ac.uk/index.php?id=523](http://www.eca.ac.uk/index.php?id=523)

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Website [www.leedsmet.ac.uk/courses/la](http://www.leedsmet.ac.uk/courses/la)

Contact Edwin Knighton

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Contact Dr Bob Jarvis

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Contact Georgina Butina-Watson/  
Alan Reeve

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Development & Planning Unit, The Bartlett 34 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9EZ

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Contact Sara Feys

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Contact Richard Hayward

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**UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE**

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Department of Architecture, Urban Design Studies Unit, 131 Rottenrow, Glasgow G4 0NG

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Email [ombretta.r.romice@strath.ac.uk](mailto:ombretta.r.romice@strath.ac.uk)

Contact Ombretta Romice

The Postgraduate Course in Urban Design is offered in CPD, Diploma and MSc modes. The course is design centred and includes input from a variety of related disciplines.

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35 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5LS

Tel 020 7911 5000 x3341

Email [w.n.erickson@westminster.ac.uk](mailto:w.n.erickson@westminster.ac.uk)

Contact Bill Erickson

MA or Diploma Course in Urban Design for postgraduate architects, town planners, landscape architects and related disciplines. One year full time or two years part time.

## THE SWEET SUCCESS OF SMELL

After considering the contribution of food to local distinctiveness in UD105, my thoughts have strayed towards the related matter of smell. The characteristic smell that a neighbourhood may possess, usually derived from a particular work-related component of the place – the fishdocks, the chocolate factory, the brewery or whatever – is a key element that makes that place distinguishable from others. Many towns and districts are characterised by a brewery smell – that distinctively sour mixture of hops and malted barley. Maybe a blindfolded CAMRA expert could detect whether he – and it would be he – was standing in Edinburgh, Burton or Masham, smelling McEwans, Bass or Black Sheep – I couldn't.

But one of the strongest and strangest place-smell memories from my childhood is of the unique hybrid of smells of Aston Cross in Birmingham. I used to take the number 64 bus to and from school, passing through what was a densely populated inner city district. On adjacent corners of the nodal space of Aston Cross stood Ansell's brewery and the HP Sauce factory. Pace my imaginary CAMRA member, all breweries smell pretty similar, but a blindfolded triallist smelling that astringent combination of vinegar, fruit, malt and hops would have known he could be in only one place on the earth's surface. Its distinctiveness has now disappeared, a casualty of deindustrialisation and redevelopment. Ansell's went long ago, transferred to Allied Breweries, and production of HP Sauce sadly migrated to the Netherlands last year. Unlike conventional Lynchian landmarks and edges, the geography of local smell changes with wind direction and strength. With your head in a school book, you would always know when you were approaching Aston Cross as the smell infiltrated your nostrils, but sometimes you would be taken by surprise by how far, and in which direction, the olfactory boundary had shifted.

These smell characteristics of places, though powerful, are of course accidental and unintended by-products. I wonder whether the place-branding consultants (yes, they do exist – I met one at the Academy for Urbanism recently) might steal a trick from Asda and others, who deviously pipe smells of bread and coffee through ducts to induce the desire of consumption in their customers. An ecotown that smells permanently of mown grass and honeysuckle? I hope not, but I wouldn't be too sure.

The values of local distinctiveness can of course cause ambivalence; not every local peculiarity is seen as positive by all. I am sure that some people, particularly those living nearby, hated the Aston Cross smell. Another (non-smelly) example which I sometimes muse upon is the floor numbering system in Birmingham's Millennium Point building, designed by Grimshaw Architects. This large unattractive building has five floors, three of which, because of the sloping site, connect with the ground. Someone, and I wish I knew who, numbered these floors reading from the bottom to the top: G2, G1, G0, L1 and L2. Whenever I travelled in the lifts, I would listen to visitors trying to make some logical sense of this code, and to work out whether they needed to go up or down, and how far. The system was locally distinctive, certainly, but also very irritating. I used to comment frequently to friends and colleagues on the stupidity of it. This year the management of the building has clearly lost patience and has renumbered the floors 0, 1, 2, 3 and 4, just like any other five-storey building. But do you know what? I perversely miss those old numbers. The world now has one peculiar thing fewer than before.

Joe Holyoak