

UDG UPDATE

THE UDG'S CHAIRMAN DUNCAN ECOB REFLECTS ON URBAN DESIGNERS' FORTHCOMING TASKS

Between writing and publication, the Urban Design Group's conference in Cambridge 'Is Big Still Beautiful?' will have taken place. I am sure that it will have raised as many questions as it has attempted to answer, and introduced delegates to new ways of thinking and exploring opportunities that may be peripheral to their everyday experience.

With the government announcing the introduction of a superfast rail link between Glasgow and London, exploring the opportunities for large scale infrastructure projects seems apposite. The business benefits appear to be obvious and may easily be quantified, yet the regeneration opportunities should be explored more thoroughly. Many of our main transport terminals have had little investment over the past years, are poor city arrival points, lacking modern facilities, connectivity and with little quality (the few good examples point to this this paucity). The hinterland of many of these areas often has complex land ownerships, but this is what holds the key for a

broader opportunity to reinvigorate cities. Thought must be given to how investment in rail links can be a catalyst for city regeneration, with an approach to including all landowners to enable a broader success.

Some innovative smaller projects have also been announced, but may have drifted off the radar. The strategy for car speed restrictors with their HAPPY, GLUM, SAD faces that will flash up on your dashboard, to control your right foot, could lead on to more immediate and tangible benefits for communities. Slowing traffic in neighbourhoods could be a catalyst for people to feel safe and secure in their streets, but rather than controlling speed, why not make our streets SLOW through design? The shared space or 'naked street' approach advocates place-making where pedestrians and communities have priority. Drivers in their vehicles can move through these areas but need to respect the vulnerability of street users, and generally do so. Every urban designer's favourite traffic engineer,

Hans Monderman, advocated this approach, which has now been employed in over 400 locations in Germany and Holland. Each new development should advocate HomeZones and respond to the excellent 'Manual for the Streets' principles, but it is the existing urban fabric that we should be addressing (as we should for sustainability and green architecture in the Code for Sustainable Homes). At the moment our streets and roads appear to be in a perilous state – pot holes, inadequate drainage, tree roots pushing up paving, etc. A concerted effort to address this would introduce the opportunity for making community streets, and adopt the shared space concept. This could make a significant difference to the quality of people's lives - introducing more open space, helping to enhance physical opportunities and mental well being. Whether strategic or local, the challenge for urban designers is to consider how projects can benefit the broadest community, and promote a sustainable approach to our cities and towns.

THE UDG'S DIRECTOR ROBERT HUXFORD OFFERS A CHILLING REMINDER OF A PRINCIPAL INFLUENCE ON URBAN DESIGN FOR THE 2009 CHRISTMAS PARTY

Is it the motor car? Telecommunications, or even the welfare state? No, it's refrigeration! This year's Urban Design Group Christmas party on Wednesday 9th December is in a former ice store at the London Canal Museum, built to cater for the import of ice blocks from Norwegian glaciers to the burgeoning Italian ice cream industry, and growth of ice boxes in Victorian London. Ice stores meant that the city dweller, having been freed from loathsome and threatening micro-organisms by the plunging temperatures of refrigeration, was able to enjoy a wide range of food from great distances, irrespective of season. The changes that this brought to urban design are many: the Georgian town house appears a symbol of style and socio-economic status, but underneath, it was nothing more than a machine for the preparation and serving of food, and entertaining.

Now, with servants long gone and floors divided into flats local markets have been turned into fashionable areas for eating and dining, or meals are microwaved from packets, prepared by workers on a minimum wage probably in an area of economic deprivation. None of this would be possible without refrigeration.

In the post war period we have seen the domestic freezer and the car boot unite to provide us with a new and dominant pattern of residential development: the executive home in a cul-de-sac, with ersatz pub, community centre and superstore, yet linked to a global chain of refrigerated lorries and cold stores run by international corporations.

This is nothing compared to what will happen in the century to come, when the refrigerator fitted

with on-board computing will unite with the white van and a radio-frequency identity tag to bring a new model of urban development, based on internet shopping, home deliveries and distribution depots. Be warned and be prepared. The intelligent refrigerator is coming to take over our lives and wipe the retail park and the superstore off the face of the earth! And will we lament this change? The late J G Ballard once posed the question as to where people would congregate if they were told the world was to end in ten minutes. In the car park of the local superstore? In the local town square? Whether you think the world is due to end or not, there is only one place to be on the evening of 9th December, and that is the London Canal Museum for the UDG's Christmas party.

URBAN
DESIGN
GROUP

DIARY OF EVENTS

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

WEDNESDAY 21 OCTOBER 2009

URBAN DESIGN – BEHIND THE FAÇADE

Is our approach to urban design too superficial? This event tries to get closer to the life-force that drives towns and cities: the systems that inhabit the urban environment, the essence of the human animal, and the emotions and memories that shape our perception of place. Led by Dan Durant, UDG Eastern Region Convenor, and Inspire East.

WEDNESDAY 18 NOVEMBER 2009

KEVIN LYNCH MEMORIAL LECTURE: JOHN THORP MBE, LEEDS CIVIC ARCHITECT

John Thorp has worked at Leeds City Council for over 35 years. He became Civic Architect when this was a common role in local authorities. However, unlike in other cities where the position no longer exists, he has retained the role despite changes in system and structure reflecting his exceptionally hands-on approach to planning, architecture and placemaking.

Over the years, John has taken a leading role in much significant work including the Henry Moore projects at Leeds City Art gallery and the creation of Millennium Square. He has been instrumental in taking forward the programme of City Centre Squares, Buildings and Spaces and has worked on the development of major civic buildings like Leeds Town Hall, the City Library and Art Gallery and Victoria Gardens, as well as the renewal of green spaces including Park Square and Merrion Gardens.

For this year's prestigious Kevin Lynch Lecture, John will reflect upon his unique role as Civic Architect and how this has affected his approach to urban design. During the evening we will be encouraged to consider the influence a Civic Architect can bring to bear upon the character and identity of a city.

WEDNESDAY 9 DECEMBER 2009

UDG CHRISTMAS CELEBRATION AT THE CANAL MUSEUM

Join us for the UDG's festive celebration at the London Canal Museum. Housed in a former ice warehouse near King's Cross built in the early 1860s for famous ice-cream maker Carlo Gatti and overlooking both the Regent's Canal and the new King's Place development, the museum gives a fascinating insight into the history of London's canals. Learn more about the importance of inland waterways and their role in Britain's urban development and share some festive cheer in this unique and atmospheric venue.

Special rates apply (to be announced). Contact admin@udg.org.uk for further details.

WEDNESDAY 20 JANUARY 2010

INTERNATIONAL COMPARISONS: HOUSING AND URBAN FORM.

This evening's event will look at different patterns of housing and urban form across the globe, featuring the newly published Urban Housing Handbook which explores historic and modern models of housing from around world, looking at their relationship with urban grain and the influence on the form of public space. Led by Paris-based architect and urban designer Eric Firley.

Urban Design Group

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Photograph by Andy Stagg

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INDIVIDUAL ISSUES of Urban Design cost £5

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SACRED COWS

In addition to the central topic of Coastal Towns exploring the challenges and creativity to be found in seaside places, there is another common theme to many of the articles in this issue of *Urban Design*. This other theme is about urban designers recognising the reality of their role in the development process rather than community building, notably Eline Hansen's challenging ideas that urban design is about the common good, when it is really about benefitting only certain groups of desirable people; Peter Fletcher's role in Croydon's new Local Asset Backed Vehicle; and, Jonathan Kendall describing a process of integration rather than distant interventions. A recent and highly recommended book which also follows this theme is *Isolarion* by James Attlee (2007). Written about day-to-day urbanism by a non-professional, it is about making sense of how a place has evolved and is being managed by others, including the experience of being a consultee on Oxford's Cowley Road Mixed Priority Route scheme. *The Future of Community* (2008), reviewed on p41, explores ideas of control and heavy-handed government much further, deconstructing many of urban design's sacred cows and the backdrop to today's industry, to great effect.

A third thought-provoking book is Habraken's *Palladio's Children* (2005) (see Ivor Samuels' review on p41), which concludes with the following poem. This has been suggested as an 'anthem' for urban designers and the Urban Design Group, perhaps to the tune of *La Marseillaise*...

TOWARDS AN ARCHITECTURE OF THE FIELD*

(* the field is Habraken's term for urban fabric)

Study the field:

It will be there without you; you can contribute to it.

Study the field as a living organism.

It has no form, but it has structure. Find its structure and form will come.

The field has continuity:

Merge with it and others will join you.

Because the field has continuity:

No job is large or small: all that you do adds to the field.

No one builds alone:

When you do something large, leave the small to others.

When you do something small, enhance the large.

Respond to those before you:

When you find structure, inhabit it;

When you find type, play with it;

When you find patterns, seek to continue them.

Be hospitable to those after you:

Give structure as well as form.

The more you seek to continue what was done by others, the more you will be recognized for it:

The more others will continue what you did.

(Habraken, 2005, p181)

LOUISE THOMAS

Urban Design

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Essex Design Initiative

THE GALLERY, LONDON JUNE 17 2009

Barry Shaw's presentation on the Essex Design Guide reflected on the future purpose and direction of regional design guidance at a time when, in Shaw's view, planning is a system in crisis, overburdened by its own complexity.

He explained that the context within which the EDG emerged in the early 1970s presented strong parallels with the present need to address the challenge of setting a clear vision for housing development. At that time, the private sector was gradually replacing the public sector as the primary housing provider and Shaw acknowledged that, now as then, the guide needs good developers in order to achieve quality that matches the best of the county's traditional settlements. He cited Newhall, Harlow as an example of a largely successful contemporary application of the EDG which had shown how to 'lose the skin of history' – traditionalism and moderateness has been a common criticism of the guide, but can also be seen to underpin its successes.

In its original form, the EDG was recognised for its bold thinking and was a beautifully illustrated document

grounded in solid analysis and realised with a great clarity and confidence. These qualities allowed it to set a clear vision that carried all along with it. Now, Shaw is concerned that the guide has limited impact as a brief for development, but is instead used as 'back fill' in preparing planning applications.

The 2005 Update brought with it a shift back in emphasis to street planning and sustainable development and addressed the need for guidance on density. There remains a need for fresh thinking on the delivery of sustainable development and the closer integration of planning and highways. As key enablers of this, the skills of local authorities must be supported. For Shaw however, although the guide must work within local decision-making structures, its future rests on being able to maintain neutrality and clarity by freeing itself from the planning system so as to avoid being used simply as a means of explaining policy and regulation.

It was odd therefore that the discussion which followed focused on recent proposals by Essex County

Birmingham – Big City Plan

THE GALLERY, LONDON 8 JULY 2009

'To big plan or not to big plan', that was the question concerning Birmingham discussed by the two speakers at this UDG event. Joe Holyoak, head of the Masters in Urban Design at Birmingham City University (and *Urban Design* Endpiece auteur) started the evening by wondering why the city fathers have always been so keen on size; he ventured that being the second largest city in the country gave it an inferiority complex that had to be compensated by the 'big'. Unfortunately, though for a city to have ambitions is admirable, size is not always the same as quality, and Birmingham has had its share of large disasters. Joe gave an account of these, from the inner city ring road of the 1960s (sketch gives an impression of the design of the time), through the Bull Ring Centre and the Convention Centre. In recent years, and since the Highbury Initiative of 1988, matters have improved: the concrete collar of the ring road is being dismantled, Brindley Place is a big success and the Bull Ring has been redeveloped – though the replacement is

another 'big' object. The latest proposal is the 'Big City Plan' for the town centre: in view of the variety of neighbourhoods and the fine grain, complicated and messy character of some of these, Joe wondered whether it would not be better to have many 'small' city plans, each addressing a specific area.

This led easily to the next speaker, Jonathan Bore of Urban Initiatives (see also his article in *Urban Design* 111) who explained what the Big City Plan was trying to achieve. The city has a large percentage of young people and its population is growing; it needs to expand its city centre activities and the boundaries of the city centre. The "Big" is first of all a brand used to encompass a whole series of ideas: the liveable city, the connected city, the family city, etc. And for each of these there are suggestions for action: getting rid of the remaining parts of the ring road, creating new pedestrian links, improving the canals, attracting small independent shops. Each of these needs to be funded and implemented and it will take time. A



Council to relax parking standards in new development. This has been explained as a radical break from the failures of attempts to reduce car ownership by limiting off street parking and garage size, recognising that such policies are unworkable in the absence of alternative modes of transport. Time will tell if this bold move against the established orthodoxy encourages new thinking on how to better accommodate the car. The majority of the audience did not appear to think so but then, as Shaw, noted, in the beginning the Essex Design Guide was not greeted with universal acclaim either.

Frances Madders



scheme under way is the redevelopment of New Street Station which will open up the southern side of the city.

A lively discussion followed, aimed mostly at clarifying some of the points made and understanding better the motivation for the current plans. Both speakers gave the impression that they were confident in the strength of Birmingham's economy – even in the recession – resulting from a long tradition of small businesses and crafts. At the end the Big City Plan was compared to a large umbrella under which several projects would develop.

Sebastian Loew

Letter to the Editor

In his report on my talk to the UDG on Residential Design Assessment in March (UD 111 p3), Malcolm Moor ignored the conclusions of my study, instead seizing on my aside that house builders prefer a more traditional look for less high-density schemes. He inferred from this that they tend to continue with the standard house types evolved by their in-house designers.

My findings were quite the contrary, that mainstream house builders, at least in Essex, have sharpened up their act considerably, in many cases achieving attractive and functional living

environments by means of engaging outside architects or layout design firms. Far from continuing with their tried and trusted house types, they have devised new and more flexible ones that combine better into groups and successfully enclose spaces. I also found that the best schemes had the greatest urban design input in terms of masterplans, design briefs or specialist negotiation by planning authorities. This is a success story that does not deserve to be sidetracked into a sterile style debate.

Alan Stones

Obituary

Robert R. Meadows, who has recently died aged 95, was a member of the initiating meeting of Architects in the RIBA Jarvis Hall at the beginnings of the Urban Design Group. During a long academic and professional career - being both ARIBA and MTPI - he and others originated the Postgraduate Diploma in Urban Design at the Polytechnic of Central London (now the University of Westminster). He was deeply aware, living for most of his life in Notting Hill, of the multicultural religious and social levels that make up urban society. These elements were reflected in the first courses of the Diploma in which he was so influential.

Arnold Linden, UDG Trustee



Sick as a Parrot?

Are you incandescent? Are you gutted that a project you have been involved with has gone wrong? Has expediency ruled, have the marketing or highways people got their way and your project ended up a mediocrity? Was your hard work all for nothing? As urban designers we can learn as much from the experience of project failures as from good practice. If this is your experience, the UDG would like to hear from you, as we are planning an evening session on urban design failures next year.

Please e-mail Robert Huxford at robert.huxford@udg.org.uk or write to Robert at the UDG, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ.

The David Fryer Memorial Lecture: Dr Richard Simmons, CABE

5 NOVEMBER 2009, 6.30PM OXFORD BROOKES UNIVERSITY, OXFORD

Is design just bollards?

CABE often encounters decision makers at all levels in the planning system who think that design means the decoration you add to a building or place once you have done the serious work of planning it. The archetypal expression of this was by a planning committee member in a Midlands town who said: 'The biggest problem we have here is all this design. We'd be much better off without it'. So is design just about which bollards to choose or is there more to it? The pioneers of British town planning didn't see it that way. Somewhere between the great planning disasters of the 1960s

and 1970s and the abandonment of aesthetic control and freeing up of the market in the 1980s, did planning lose its confidence in design? If so, can we regain it? In particular, can we regain the confidence to design at scales larger than the neighbourhood? The talk will explore the latest thinking on urban design at these scales, the role which LDFs might play in shaping places and how we might use design to bring about better placemaking.

To book, please email Carol Dawson at carol.dawson@rtpi.org.uk or phone 01304 823494.

Call for entries from sustainable energy pioneers across the UK

The Ashden Awards for Sustainable Energy are seeking entries from inspirational sustainable energy schemes in the UK that use renewable energy, or reduce energy demand at a local level. Entry is free to businesses, local authorities, charities and schools that have made significant CO₂ savings through the use of renewable energy or energy efficiency measures, and that demonstrate real social and economic benefits to the local community. There are six Awards with a combined value

of £70,000 and the Awards will be presented in London in July 2010. All award-winning schemes must have been consistently successful for at least one year in saving carbon and delivering social benefits, and must have plans for future growth. Successful schemes will be highly replicable to ensure maximum impact in the battle against climate change. Cash prizes will be used to assist further expansion, and additional benefits include a prize of up to £20,000, support to take the scheme

further, a documentary film on the award-winning work, and opportunities to present your solutions to experts and policy makers.

Deadline for expressions of interest from UK businesses, charities, local authorities: 27 October 2009, and for UK schools: 26 November 2009. Application forms are online now at http://www.ashdenawards.org/uk_awards or contact Jane Howarth tel. 020 7410 7023. Email: info@ashdenawards.org

Urban Design Group's Annual General Meeting

THE GALLERY, LONDON 17 JUNE 2009

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This year has been overshadowed by the financial turmoil which hit private sector house-building hard. Sadly, some of us who were stretched at work just months ago now find ourselves struggling to find employment. Things will eventually turn round; with the population expanding and demanding better towns and cities, the need for professionals skilled in urban design is assured. While the objectives of urban design relate to the wellbeing of society; the commoditization of housing - where it is a speculative investment rather than a long-term investment in society - is something about which to think long and hard.

However, a number of key urban design projects have been successfully concluded, for example Liverpool One, visited by delegates at our 2008 Annual Conference. The Ashford's shared space has now joined Brighton's New Road as a significant public realm development, an inspiration to other local authorities to improve the quality of their roads.

At the UDG, we face two challenges: firstly, to advance urban design ideas, in which the *Urban Design* journal and our events programmes are key, and secondly to raise awareness of quality urban design among professionals, politicians and the public. We have great hopes for the Urban Design Awards currently being extended to raise the profile of the UDG and broaden urban design interest. *Urban Design* journal goes from strength-to-strength and the Urban Design Directory 2009/10 is a document of which we can be proud. The launch of our Recognised Practitioner in Urban Design initiative is an important milestone for the status of urban design skills, and we elected our first candidates in May, and look forward to receiving more applications. There have been major steps in the UDG regions and I would like to thank Alona Martinez-Perez and Laurie Mentiplay for their leadership in Scotland; the number of events organised there now exceeds the London programme. In the East Midlands Region, Laura Alvarez has made excellent progress developing a programme of activity, and I hope that

we will soon increase activity in other regions and in partnership with others.

Duncan Ecob

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The UDG email newsletter service has increased its circulation to over 1,200 individuals, along with improvements to the UDG's websites www.udg.org.uk and www.urban-design-group.org.uk. The 2008 Annual Conference in Liverpool on Urban Connectivity was a success, thanks to assistance from Annie Atkins and her team at Places Matter! We now have regional convenors throughout the UK and hope to roll out more events, with the Annual Conference in Cambridge on 18 September 2009.

The UDG regional representatives are each listed in the journal (see p42). Executive Committee member Alan Stones led another excellent events programme and a successful study trip to Moscow in May. Steve Lorimer and Louise Duggan have also continued to run UDG STREET gatherings. The UDG continues to support UDAL through the efforts of Barry Sellers, and Urban Design Week 2008 was staged with support from RUDI and the IHBC. Finally the UDG greatly values the contributions of our administrator Louise Ingledow, whose support, co-ordination and encouragement continue to be invaluable.

Robert Huxford

UDG TREASURER'S REPORT 2009

The Independent Auditors Report for the year ending 28 February 2009 was provided for the UDG and Urban Design Services Ltd (UDSL).

ON INCOME:

For the UDG and UDSL, the net surplus is £47,672, compared with £16,165 last year. Subscriptions income is up 19.6% due to consistent management by Louise Ingledow. Publications income is up eight-fold, due to the Urban Design Directory and Design and Access Statements Explained, thanks to John Billingham and Rob Cowan.

Statement of Financial Activities For the year ended 28 February 2009

INCOME	
Subscriptions	£89,655
Publications and Awards	£48,196
Training	£0
Donation from Urban Design Services Ltd	£4,044
UDSL Contribution to Office Costs	£5,000
Interest Received	£3,939
Inland Revenue: Gift Aid	£5,267
Miscellaneous Income	£497
TOTAL INCOME	£156,598
EXPENDITURE	
Publications and Awards	£37,888
Management and Administration	£70,118
Governance Costs	£920
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£108,926
NET INCOME	£47,672
BALANCES BROUGHT FORWARD	£78,301
FUND BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD	£125,973
TOTAL ASSETS	£127,893
TOTAL LIABILITIES	£1,920
NET ASSETS	£125,973

UDSL contributed £4,044 from last year's conference, with thanks to Savills and Elevate East Lancashire for their sponsorship, and URBED, RUDI, and RTPi Urban Design Network for their support. Urban Initiatives and Roger Evans Associates continue to sponsor the UDG's on-line lecture series by UrbanNous.

ON EXPENDITURE:

General costs have risen by 7.9%, with increased activity and the full-time office post. Publication costs have risen by 50%, reflecting the biennial publishing costs of the Directory.

Forecast opportunities and requirements for 2009-10 are: with a baseline budget approved by Trustees, up to 10% of the UDG's net assets will be allocated by the Executive Committee to initiatives which further the work of the UDG; plus digitisation and indexing articles in past issues of *Urban Design*; developing the Urban Design Awards; supporting regional activity; and developing the Group's operations. The Trustees, Executive and members wish the Group's assets to be put to profitable and promotional use, and welcome proposals.

Moscow And The Golden Ring

UDG STUDY TOUR 16-24 MAY 2009



Above Monastic panorama, Sergiev-Posad
Below Wooden churches, Suzdal

Twenty seven UDG members, spouses and friends travelled to Moscow to look at current development pressures in the capital, and learn about some of Russia's oldest towns nearby – the so-called Golden Ring.

After a day in Moscow, we met at the offices of development consultants Goltsblat BLP for a talk by Maksim Popov, their head of planning. He explained that since the end of the Soviet period, the City of Moscow had encouraged development, despite the lack of an effective planning system. Control was exerted by retaining land ownership and allowing development



on leases, and Goltsblat's own offices, part of a smaller equivalent of Canary Wharf on the Moscow River, was a good example of this. The development of the area was only partly complete, but was at a standstill due to the economic situation. Nevertheless it had new municipally-funded infrastructure including a specially built metro line and a footbridge over the river.

As Russia's planning system is new, the obligation for universal coverage of plans only started in 2005 and to be completed by 2010, although this is unlikely to be achieved, due to a shortage of professional staff at regional, city and district levels. Hardly any regional plans are currently in place, and the cities and districts are reliant for professional help on the centralised Planning Institutes, which used to produce plans during the Soviet period.

Despite its many attractive buildings and spaces, Moscow was remarkably un-pedestrian-friendly away from the Kremlin and Red Square. Rising car ownership has filled the wide nineteenth century ring and radial streets with a ceaseless tide of fast-moving traffic, with infrequent and poorly signposted

subways. There is little control of, or provision for, car parking. Policies to break down the barriers to pedestrian movement is overdue, though the superb, chandeliered metro system makes it easy to travel around the city.

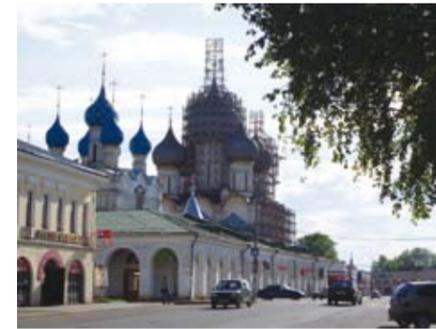
Moving on to the quieter Golden Ring towns, this region, of which Moscow is part, was the cradle of medieval Russian civilisation. The Russian population was originally centred on Kiev, but from 1050 shifted north to the fertile area between Rostov and Suzdal. In 1169 the Russian court moved to Vladimir in this region, and the Orthodox Church headquarters moved there in 1300. The thirteenth century saw a building frenzy in which imposing towers, palaces, fortified monasteries and elegant churches were built with each town playing its part in making the area the spiritual centre of Russian Orthodoxy. This ascendancy was short-lived, however, as the whole region was overrun by the Mongols in 1236, bringing wide-spread destruction. It was Moscow that finally drove away the Mongols in 1380, and since then Vladimir and Suzdal have played a subordinate role as monastic and trading

centres. Nevertheless their prosperity resulted in impressive building projects in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, coinciding with Peter the Great's town-building project at St. Petersburg, hundreds of miles to the west.

Kremlins, or fortified enclosures, are the most characteristic Russian urban form. Their outline usually dates back to the twelfth century, though today's built structures are usually of sixteenth or seventeenth century origin. They contain a collection of sumptuous churches, cathedrals or monasteries, with a ruler's palace and houses within the kremlin, but in most cases these have not survived.

Most of these towns were also trading centres, with trade taking place outside the kremlin, and there are arcades still used as shops. However, until the nineteenth century there were no streets with continuous built frontages, the domestic built form being rural-type wooden buildings with yards, often with ornately carved window and door details. The only stone was used in churches and fortifications.

The first town we visited, Sergiev-Posad (formerly Zagorsk), is dominated by the fortified monastery of St. Sergius, one of the holiest places in Russia, and still a busy monastery and centre of pilgrimage with two cathedrals and numerous onion-domed churches and bell towers. The rest of the town consists of nineteenth century shopping frontages and dilapidated, though attractive, wooden houses. Our second stop, Rostov, is even more low-key apart from its dramatic kremlin, which, in a lake-shore location, bristles with the onion domes of its cathedral and six churches and belfries, surrounded by battlemented walls with fourteen towers. Yaroslavl, our next town, by



contrast, has a small and relatively unimportant kremlin, but many fine seventeenth century town churches built by merchants, as befits a major trading centre on the Volga. With a population of 680,000, it is a substantial place whose main attraction is a pleasant tree-lined promenade fronted by villas.

A journey along pot-holed roads through birch forests brought us to Suzdal which still preserves its medieval layout and aspect. A contender for the capital of Russia in the twelfth century, its aspect is surprisingly rural, the townscape consisting mainly of detached wooden houses. However, it has six fortified complexes, the kremlin itself being the least impressive, containing the small cathedral and bishop's palace surrounded by earth ramparts. There is also a small open-air museum of wooden

architecture containing two fantastical 18th century wooden churches from nearby villages.

Our last port of call, Vladimir, despite being a large, modern town, offers an insight into a much earlier period, with two twelfth century cathedrals. They, and the exquisite Church of the Intercession on the Nerl, have miraculously escaped destruction, and display a Byzantine-inspired use of stone-carved detail. It is fascinating that, when large-scale building resumed, the same building forms were employed without the detail. Overall the tour was an eye-opener into a little-known type of urban landscape, whose most characteristic feature is its spiky, onion-domed skyline.

Alan Stones

Top left and right Trading arcades in Rostov and Suzdal
Bottom left Kremlin, Rostov
Bottom right Fortified convent, Suzdal

Call for case studies in Conservation Areas in seaside towns

The built heritage of towns and cities is intrinsic to the designation of Conservation Areas, and yet this process has often appeared to completely disregard the built heritage of England's seaside towns. In this context, I am undertaking a research study to explore whether the built heritage of seaside towns, with particular reference to Skegness in Lincolnshire, is worthy of Conservation Area designation, and whether such designations hold any value?

The key research objectives are:

- To examine whether there are any major differences or similarities between seaside towns that might affect the designation of Conservation Areas (location, scale, main period of growth, etc)
- To evaluate whether there is generally sufficient value in the built heritage of seaside towns for a case to be made for the designation of Conservation Area(s)
- To investigate whether the designation of Conservation Areas would assist in protecting the identity of

seaside towns

- To assess whether the designations would be of value to how areas were regenerated, land use designations, the local economy, maintenance and ownership etc.

I am interested to learn about examples or case studies where this has been explored before, successfully or not, and so please contact Paul Thompson, Senior Planning Officer, East Lindsey District Council, Email Paul.Thompson@e-lindsey.gov.uk

Ordinary Places



Top Liverpool One, Photograph by David Millington Photography Ltd
Above Adelaide Wharf, London Photograph by Olli Hellman

High profile, city centre revival projects have characterised the last ten years, but our lives are not defined by iconic buildings and tourist attractions. The architecture of the everyday is even more important in reflecting our collective identity.

CABE has always championed ordinary places, leading the way on the quality of homes, schools, health centres, hospitals, parks and streets. Yet despite investment in public building, it is the everyday neighbourhoods that have missed out on many of the improvements of the last decade, with investment drawn into town and city centres.

Ordinary places can be found everywhere, in the inner rings around city centres, in post-industrial cities, suburbs and residential neighbourhoods, satellite towns and market towns, and parts of rural Britain.

Most people live in ordinary places, with more than eighty per cent generally classified as living in suburbs. These are the buildings that everyone takes for granted - the places closest to home. Ordinary places need care and attention for three very important reasons: they

hold the key to defeating climate change; they are where the social capital which underpins our economic future can be generated; and in times of austerity, we must make best use of our existing assets. Ordinary places are untapped assets, with the potential to underpin a sustainable future.

IT CAN BE DONE

According to the Government's recent World Class Places report, people still feel alienated from the places around them. In CABE's experience, inspirational design is still the exception in most neighbourhoods. There is no reason for everyday architecture to be uninspired, and CABE sees many buildings and spaces that are of the highest quality. CABE's Building for Life awards recognise the best in new housing, while our experience of providing advice and support has shown us how good the best neighbourhood buildings and spaces can be. Over the last two years, the Stirling Prize shortlists have featured the Westminster Academy in Paddington, Accordia in Cambridge, the Kentish Town Health Centre in Camden and the Maggie's Centre in Hammersmith, all neighbourhood-scale buildings of the highest quality. Buildings this good should be the norm.

WHAT GOVERNMENT NEEDS TO DO

Quality of place lies at the heart of the culture change needed. This requires local leaders to understand how investment in ordinary places improves quality of life and contributes to public value. CABE believes that public bodies should promote high quality places as a matter of course, but it is much easier to value things that can be 'measured'. So amongst a range of new ideas, CABE is proposing that government at all levels agrees on how to measure place quality, and how to understand the potential of places that build sustainable jobs and growth.

Every authority investing in place improvements, from street upgrades to major redevelopment, could share an indicator that would help them to determine their own ambitions and measure their success. A Public Service Agreement for quality of place would send a message from national government that people deserve to live in well-designed and maintained places. Quality of place should feature in the national indicator set for local authorities and in Comprehensive Area Assessments.

INSPIRING DEMAND

At the other end of the scale, we believe that the importance of the built environment needs to be firmly embedded in our culture, if we are to change the way in which ordinary places are seen. Through extensive work with schools, on programmes such as Engaging Places and Green Day, CABE knows that not enough is done to teach young people about understanding the buildings and places around them and to take ownership of this legacy. Design is a problem-solving tool, and just as important to understanding how the world works as economics or sciences. Design literacy therefore deserves to rank alongside the three 'Rs'.

Learning through the built environment also helps young people to develop cultural and creative skills; to become active citizens within their community; and to understand their culture and identity. Learning about the built environment gives young people insight into our cultural history and status as the most cosmopolitan country in the world. Why not embed this as an integral part of our education system at both primary and secondary stages, with parents directly involved in the process? There should be a requirement for young people to learn about the most important places in Britain by the time they leave school, and this would begin to inject architecture and design into the bloodstream of the nation, creating a common understanding about our culture. It will also help to ensure that young people become confident, informed adults in a dynamic and changing society. CABE will launch a national debate about which places should be included in this, and we will offer suggestions based on the advice of young people, teachers, architects, and then the public will be invited to give their views.

Ten years ago, the Urban Task Force report laid the foundations for an urban design revival, and this summer World Class Places set out a revived agenda. CABE's proposals offer two directions in which World Class Places can be progressed, mapping the route to buildings and spaces of the quality that everyone deserves; places with sustainable economic futures; design that enhances lives and improves life chances. In anxious times, we should focus our efforts on the ordinary places to unlock extraordinary benefits.

Tom Bolton, Head of Research, CABE

The Urban Design interview

KEN BAKER



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

I am a Director at David Lock Associates, town planners and urban designers, located in Central Milton Keynes. The company was founded by David Lock twenty one years ago, I have been here for over twelve years. I have seen the company grow to some sixty five staff members in UK and a spin-off company in Melbourne, Australia. To celebrate twenty years of successful growth, we took the whole office to Gargonza in Italy, for a long weekend of training in a renovated hill village not far from Siena.

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

I am not sure that I ever chose to become an urban designer, it chose me. I am an architect by training, and after graduating from the Leicester School of Architecture in 1964, the first job I had was working for Alison and Peter Smithson, who were just finishing the Economist Building in London. I was to work on the British Embassy to be built in Brazilia, but not long after I started, the government cancelled the project on cost grounds. However we were soon engaged in the design of 214 flats at Robin Hood Lane, where the buildings explored the ideas of deck access or 'streets in the air'; founded on the work that sociologists had done in understanding how street relationships worked in the terraced streets in the early 1950s, which were to be demolished to make way for tower blocks.

But in the early 1970s we heard about something exciting that was starting 50 miles north of London, a new city. At the Milton Keynes

Development Corporation I joined a small team assembled to design the City Centre. I remember being asked to design the roads and parking, so we designed the city centre without designing the buildings, a difficult task but it helped being an architect. We drove the engineers to adopt our suggestions as we were making it up, and we invented a system of covered road crossings - the porte cocheres, perimeter parking, 10m wide underpasses you could see through, and an urban scene that was laid out over three and a half square kilometres of Buckinghamshire countryside. I feel gratified that in recent years Thomas Heatherwick paid it the ultimate compliment by describing it as a 'Total work of Art' (Thanks Tom).

What do you find exciting about your work?

Just being allowed to do it, it is privilege and a responsibility, and should not be taken lightly. My son tells me of a conversation with a friend at university, when he said his father designed cities, there was a sharp intake of breath and disbelief, 'no one does that' was the retort, which tells us a lot about the culture we live in.

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

The skill is to be able to draw, you can never write a plan without a drawing but you could draw a plan without writing about it.

What would you like to be doing in 10 years' time?

Who knows? It is surprising what turns up. Some would say I should be thinking of retiring but I like work too much. New challenges are always thrown to test you and call on your experience, and you owe it to the next generation to somehow hand it on.

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

None, except back in my early architectural career when I learnt the importance of scale and the human dimensions at which our world works. I learnt more in the years with Smithsons than all that full time studies had offered. It was about how to approach design, organise your thoughts, keep the alternatives open till the client has chosen the one he/ she wants.

If you were to recommend an urban design scheme or study (past or present) for an award, what would you choose? I honestly would not want to nominate



any scheme. I am not sure that we should have such a surplus of awards. It would appear to do little to improve the vast majority of developments. But I think anyone who can produce a simple piece of infrastructure that has not been dictated to by engineers and safety officers should get a medal for services to urbanism. How did engineers get to be in such a powerful position in the urban environment?

Where is your favourite town or city and why?

Without a doubt Lewes in East Sussex (as above). It has everything you could desire. My children grew up there and one of them thanked me for the privilege of being able to grow up in such a great town - it's a home town, not a clone town.

Where is your most hated place and why?

I'm not sure that I hate anywhere. I have not acquired a taste for some northern cities but being a southerner you could expect that - I think it's people raving about them that does for me. Sorry...

What advice would you give to UD readers?

Why are you reading this? You should get out more.

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

Educating highway and traffic engineers by whatever means possible. Not until the designer wrestles back leadership and takes over the controls, so that engineers become are our servants again, do I believe that we can repair the infrastructure of our cities.

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

A good highway and traffic engineer, if they exist!



Regenerating Croydon

Peter Fletcher describes the Council's Urban Regeneration Vehicle and sets out some of his aspirations for the metropolitan centre

INTRODUCTION

Image and feel are inherent to a city's success. If you visit a place and the people there are at ease with themselves, there's a good chance that you'll feel that way too. On a sunny day, even less beautiful places can become attractive, bringing smiles to local faces. North End in Croydon (one of the UK's best but also least well-known High Streets) comes to life on a summer's day. Unfortunately the town centre in Croydon is often criticised for being edgy, somewhat ill-at-ease with itself, perhaps a result of its stormy social position caught between the high pressure mass of the Borough's cosmopolitan north and the low pressure mass of the Borough's conservative south. This is a town and a Borough quickly coming to terms with this mix, and much to its benefit, as there has been underinvestment in the town centre for a long period of time. Whatever the underlying causes, London's Croydon Council, in partnership with private sector businesses, is determined to address the issues.

BACKGROUND

In 2006, responding to a Government White Paper urging local authorities to consider their assets as a tool to drive investment and regeneration, the Council considered a model of regeneration used by the regional development agencies known as Local Asset Backed Vehicles. Combining the assets of the Council (i.e. its land and buildings) with the equity and expertise of a private sector partner (PSP), regeneration gets a kick-start, complex projects have a greater chance of delivery, and investor confidence eventually grows. That is the theory, and with certain town centre projects stalling and others some way off, this approach is likely to set the pace for large-scale development in the centre of Croydon.

FINANCIAL MECHANISM

This complex tailor-made model of investment is called an Urban Regeneration Vehicle (URV) and Croydon is the first council in the country to sign up to such a deal. The financial instruments behind the deal have been finely tuned to compensate for bumps in the market, and perhaps more importantly for Croydon, it is a long-term deal with a

twenty-five year lifespan, committing the Council and the PSP to some longer term thinking and decision-making. These financial mechanisms will also require a long-term urban design plan. Spanning a quarter of a century, phasing will be the name of the game, releasing appropriate new development to the market when the time is right.

ASSESSMENT

In July 2007 eight companies were invited to enter into the first stage of the competitive dialogue process where they were given the opportunity to meet Council representatives and its advisers. At the end of August, outline proposals were submitted and the responses were assessed against pre-determined criteria, thirty per cent of which were allocated to the quality of the physical proposals. Project leaders were keen to see the importance of design integrated at an early stage.

The three strongest bidders were invited to participate in a further period of competitive dialogue, prior to submitting the final tenders, which were called for and submitted in February 2008. In June 2008, Cabinet approval was given and the preferred bidder was selected. Late 2008 saw the closure of the deal with Croydon Council signing a contract with John Laing plc as their private sector partner.

RESULT

In the first phase, the URV will yield a new public sector 'delivery hub' to replace the 1960s Taberner House, with the site added to the URV development pot for later phases. This new civic hub will provide facilities for the council and its partners such as the Primary Care Trust and Police. To pay for the Council's new building, the largely Council-owned site to the east, known locally as College Green will be developed. It is a complex site, comprising public open space, an arts teaching block owned by Croydon College, and two large car parks – one multi-storey and one underground.

As it stands, College Green is perceived by many as an unattractive, underused space in the heart of the town centre. Development here should be viewed favourably. The overarching vision for the site is to create an attractive residential environment offering quality and choice; better connections into and around the site, in particular the

main station; a renewed arts centre; an improved, legible and coherent public realm; and perhaps most importantly, sensitivity to the existing institutions which use the site, offering integration and flexibility for the College. The URV is a large-scale development plan and will significantly alter the southern half of the town centre. Aspirations for the College are already widely known; Will Alsop, in his Third City masterplan envisaged the College Green site developing into a university quarter, bringing with it significant cultural and economic benefits.

LEARNING AND CULTURAL QUARTER

In issue UD108, John Montgomery set out his necessary conditions for successful cultural quarters and without listing these factors here, the College Green site can be described as having some of these essential pre-requisites:

- The presence of cultural activity via existing venues (the Fairfield Halls complex and the College's Parfitt Gallery)
- The presence of workspaces for artists and community groups (Fairfield Halls)
- Links with education providers - arts and media training and follow-on opportunities for start-up businesses (Croydon Art College), and
- A well connected site within a few hundred metres of other active parts of the town

Where there are gaps, the potential exists for nurturing new conditions, such as a strong evening economy with a café/ restaurant culture; small-scale business activity including creative industries; and managed workspaces for office and studio users, artists or low-cost cultural producers.

ESSENTIAL DESIGN PRINCIPLES

From the outset there has been a need to establish a vision to strengthen the strategic objectives of the URV, particularly on the College Green site. A continual balance has been required between articulating the aspirations and requirements for the site, with the

Far left and Above College Green and Taberner House
Indicative Boundaries
Centre group Areas today within the URV's sites

necessary requirements for flexibility and inevitable future change, along with levels of finance and infrastructure required to deliver wider benefits.

The work of the Council's urban design team is to guide this process. Our aim has been to ensure design quality remains a priority throughout and it is a long-term commitment. We review work at important stages, continually testing designs against important design criteria, for example compatibility with Space Syntax; transport assessments; assumptions as to the likely microclimatic effects of building massing, etc.

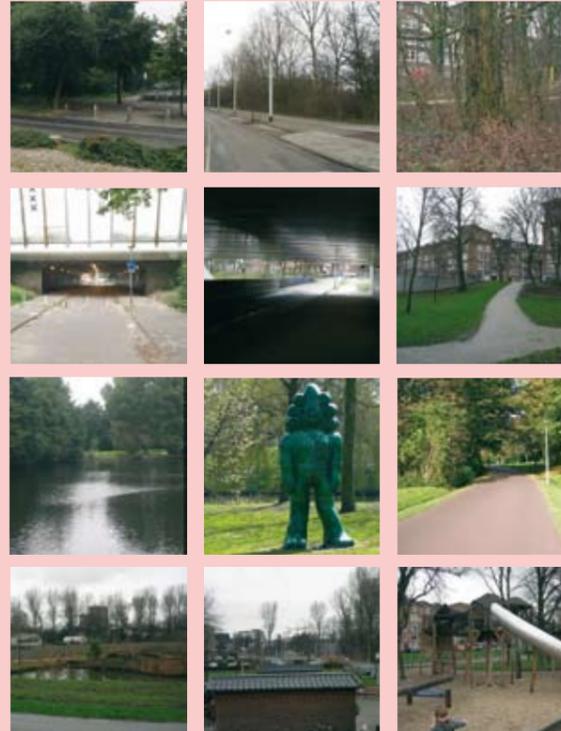
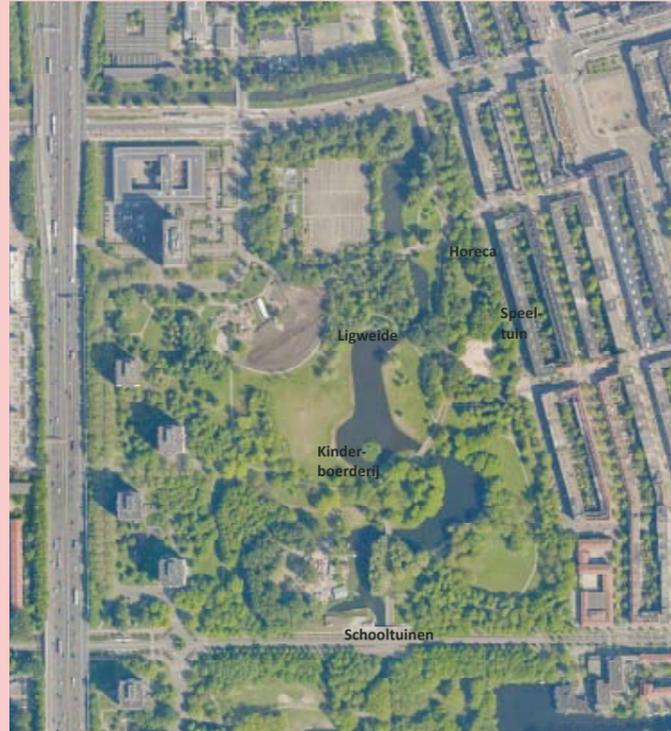
CONCLUSIONS

A quite general aspiration for the town is the enhancement of the centre as a compact, walkable place with quality new housing set within a green and pleasant urban environment. The College Green site must overcome more specific issues for it to be successful:

New development will require high levels of natural surveillance over the public realm. This is to overcome one of the town's biggest problems – poor perceptions of pedestrian safety. Development must be considered and integrated as a major part of the town centre, and not a self-contained development which turns its back on its surroundings. Microclimate, specifically the wind effects from large buildings, is another big issue for the future design of the town centre. Urban design studies have started to look at the intelligent placement and form of tall buildings with the aim of creating favourable pedestrian microclimates. Along with good levels of natural surveillance, this will nurture a more active street life.

Finally, new development must achieve an acceptable character and appearance. What will be required is an architecture that responds to the nature of the site. This can only come from a deep understanding of the site's complexities and intricacies, and through a process of continuous development and evaluation. An understanding of the site's history, its culture, the physical characteristics and the people involved in College Green must be the starting point.

Peter Fletcher, Urban Designer, Croydon Council supplying design advice to the URV



Greater involvement of the state in the planning of neighbourhoods in the Netherlands as well as universal access to social housing helps reduce uneven urban development. The example shows a proposal for mixed use development in conjunction with the refurbishment of one of Amsterdam's largest urban parks in a relatively deprived part of the city and so contributing to the wider urban infrastructure.

The Rise of the Urban Designer

Eline Hansen challenges the forces behind its increasing role

While working as an urban designer I always suspected that there were greater forces determining sustainable and equitable urban environments than those listed in *By Design* or the *Urban Design Compendium*. When working on master plans for the regeneration of disenfranchised urban communities, I wondered who would really benefit from our design interventions and whether mixed housing types would really be capable of generating new cohesive communities?

In order to find out what these greater forces that shape patterns of urbanisation are, I left the profession to return to university and undertook an MSc in Urban Studies; there the literature made me ask fundamental questions about the role of the urban designer and its contribution in creating sustainable urban developments for the future.

Since many British cities started to suffer the social fall-out of structural unemployment following de-industrialisation, markets have gradually been deregulated allowing the private sector to play a progressively important role in the provision of local state services, boosting competition and innovation. Local urban governments in the UK have become increasingly involved in economic development, adopting ever-more entrepreneurial strategies to attract funding. This has led to what academics define as the 'institutionalising of inter-urban competition' (Ward and Jones 2002) - the need for urban governments to compete nationally, and sometimes internationally, for capitalist development and central government funding. To do this they have moved away from comprehensive managerial urban planning, towards targeting specific areas or sites through urban regeneration projects, and focusing on particular opportunities by investing efforts in attractive waterfront locations, good transport links or distinctive local 'culture'.

It is my view that the move away from managerial towards entrepreneurial forms of urban governance has seen the rise of the urban designer. However, interested to find out what others saw as the reasons for the rise in its profile, I compiled a questionnaire that members of the UDG may have completed, and for which I am

grateful. Questioning the 'sustainability' of the current form of urban governance in the UK, I was interested to explore what others felt that their role was and how it contributed to delivering sustainable urban environments (I apologise here for my deceit!).

When asked what the key reason for the rise in importance of the urban designer was over the last twenty to thirty years, seventy per cent pointed to the absence of a profession responsible for the overall design and management of urban areas. This begs the questions: why, how did we manage before, and why hasn't the town planner filled this role? The drastic cuts in funding for local authorities in the 1970s and 1980s meant that key roles in many departments had to be outsourced to the private sector, including architects' and landscape architects' departments, which had worked alongside town planners within an authority. The role of the town planner too has moved away from the managerial provision of resources for its citizens, to entrepreneurial strategies to secure resources, jobs and capital for the city.

Examples of these strategies are the Pathfinder Projects, rolled out across the North of England and the Midlands, promising to deliver new economic strategies for failing old industrial cities. Changing the social and economic mix of the population should in theory reinvigorate local property markets and boost city centre economies. Victorian terraced housing close to city centres is to be cleared to make way for new housing of mixed tenure and type.

Meanwhile Richard Florida's work on the creative class has encouraged local authorities from Baltimore to Singapore to adopt 'creative strategies' - creating the right urban environment through investment in culture, arts, public realm improvements and the regeneration of architectural heritage. It is envisaged that cities can attract the creative classes, which until very recently have been second only to the financial industry in terms of fiscal growth. Florida explains that this way it is possible to generate more equitable urban environments, that are "open, diverse and cool" (Peck 2005) as the creative classes are apparently populated by thinkers, innovators, the

young and the gay.

These examples represent two extremes and many others lie somewhere in between. However, while the strategies are different, they both target places rather than people - that is, the investment is in place rather than existing social problems. In doing so, both strategies aim to replace existing communities with new ones, either directly through clearance and new-build or indirectly through gentrification. So, which parts of the city benefit from targeted regeneration strategies and for whom?

Fifty percent of the earlier respondents also felt that the loss of community was why urban designers have gained importance. However, we must question whether the place-targeting approach to urban restructuring really delivers cohesive equitable communities. In the 1970s Britain's inner cities suffered from urban decay and poverty, while the affluent fled to the suburbs; now it could be said that the reverse is true. Place-targeted strategies have led to uneven urban development. With cities needing to compete for public and private investment, we have seen the development of central locations with proximity to transport hubs, urban waterfronts or green spaces. The middle class has returned to Britain's city centres while the poor have become suburbanised within poorly connected estates. Very few British cities do not have disconnected neighbourhoods that display stigmatisation, a loss of identification, the loss of social networks and community, and a growing gap between a new underclass and the rest of society.

The counter-argument to adopting these strategies is the 'trickle down effect'. Deregulation has encouraged the markets to have a greater influence on the value of place in order to stimulate economic growth. This growth is seen as a common good for all citizens as it will create jobs, and expand the tax base that can be for re-invested into public services. The large-scale urban development or regeneration project has become an instrument to reshape the image of the city, in its competition for investment from developers, big business and moneyed tourists.

However, in their book *Urban Fortunes* Molotch and Logan question the ideological prop that local growth creates jobs. In their studies on the relationship between the growth of places and rates of unemployment, they state that many new jobs created through urban restructuring will be filled by people migrating from other areas, where they hold similar jobs, and very few jobs will be generated for the indigenous working class (Molotch and Logan 1987). In Florida's concepts and the Creative Strategies that have already been adopted, it is only creative types migrating from one city to the next who will benefit from city restructuring. Jamie Peck questions who really benefits from Richard Florida's rather vague attempt at addressing social inequality through the Creative Strategy; "...elite-focused creativity strategies leave only supporting roles for the two-thirds of

the population languishing in the working and service classes who get nothing apart from occasional tickets to the circus." (Peck 2005).

In the questionnaire, social equality and the empowerment of the citizen were two of four most cited objectives needed for sustainable urban communities. However, our role as overseer and manager to the design of the built environment is questioned by social scientists as actually reducing empowerment and equality. They argue that urban regeneration projects create coalitions of interest bringing together economic, political and cultural elites (planners, policy makers, investors, architects and urban designers). New forms of urban governance are created - public-private partnerships, development co-operations, administrative structures and new political forums and institutions - re-shaping urban environments and rights to housing, access to services, and access to land, and determining who is included or excluded from outside capital investment. This questions the theory that investment benefits all citizens.

Often re-visioning the city reflects a particular set of aspirations, and shaping an urban future is carried out in line with the aspirations of the most powerful segments among the participants. Those who are instrumental in developing economic growth and its distribution are not necessarily democratically elected, but are actors creating new institutional frameworks with specific interests. Their underlying motive is to extract value through urban restructuring, and urban regeneration projects are aimed at attracting particular social groups to stimulate economic growth. These projects, therefore, benefit specific individuals or subgroups and - income re-distribution of this growth is therefore questionable.

The aim of this article is not to launch a tirade on the role of the urban designer but rather to encourage debate on the greater political and economic forces that we find ourselves working with. How is it possible for us to achieve sustainable, equitable urban environments while local authorities are locked into inter-urban competition for capital, jobs and resources? When we discuss the delivery of sustainable urban communities, we focus on environmental issues, and yet these are comparatively easier to deliver, as the discourse over climate change has moved from the professional to public domains. Delivering socially cohesive, equitable communities remains more illusive.

Eline Hansen, MSc Urban Studies University of Amsterdam

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Post Industrial Regeneration in Psiri, Athens – Gentrification and Conflict

Georgia Giannopoulou writes about a quarter in transition

INTRODUCTION

The inner city centre of Athens is a place of conflict: a number of major regeneration initiatives have been and are still taking place under the umbrella of the 'impending' Olympic Games, such as the unification of the archaeological sites across Athens and a number of large scale entertainment complexes and international shopping centres. Policies to bring back residential uses into the city centre (Regulatory Plan 1985) seem to remain rather disjointed and a lack of commitment can be implied. The city centre is becoming a ghetto for immigrant residents living in poverty, featuring extremes between upmarket commercial thoroughfares and trendy nightlife quarters and abandoned or deprived residential neighbourhoods. Regeneration in Athens has been led either by the unfettered private sector or by a public sector focus on the cosmetic and physical, rather than its social context. Refurbishment, pedestrianisation and public realm schemes have only raised land values, driving out existing industries and residents and in many cases leading to gentrification and further conflict. The antithesis between the abandoned centre and the booming and ever expanding suburbs is increasingly obvious.

SETTING THE SCENE

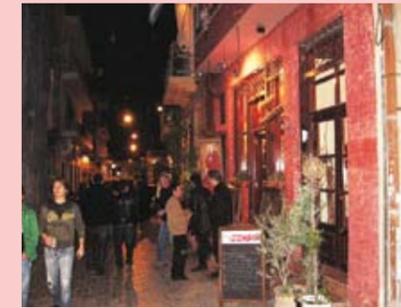
Psiri along with its neighbours Gazi and Metaxourgeio are known today as the Athens Soho: bohemian up-and-coming night-time quarters with a cultural flavour. Psiri itself is a distinct neighbourhood in the historic core of Athens, readily recognisable by its dense urban pattern, which remains unchanged since historic times. The area is made up of a web of narrow winding streets that converge onto Heroes Square, now the meeting place of the night time economy. The neighbourhood edges are formed by a number of clearly identified boulevards and key movement corridors as well as Keramikos, an archaeological site, to the southwest corner. These physical boundaries distinguish Psiri as a village in the heart of the city.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Psiri was once an affluent neighbourhood inhabited by Athenians, and during the Turkish rule it was a place of resistance and revolutionaries: their hub was Heroes Square. The local vernacular architecture consisted of low single-storey structures with small communal courtyards often incorporating communal kitchens and bathrooms in every perimeter block. The blocks themselves were, and still remain, small, compact and almost entirely built up.

The wars that have followed since the 1821 Revolution have repeatedly destroyed the building stock and displaced the communities. The area of Psiri is a palimpsest of communities and buildings, all inscribed on the same pattern of streets and spaces. Today's building stock reflects the remnants of many eras: from vernacular to neoclassical and modern, with several layers of immigration from the provinces and abroad over the years. Various communities have played a part in creating and sustaining the genius loci of the place, which is one of a lively working class area with a strong sense of identity and civic pride. This well-established sense of place is now changing, it is ambiguous in what it is becoming and even more questionable whether Psiri is even going to feel comfortable in its new skin.

During the twentieth century, Psiri was an area of bars and tavernas where you would hear the vernacular music 'rembetica'. Psiri never had the glamour of Plaka, as a poorer neighbourhood of Athens, but still had a sympathetic and characterful appearance. In the post war era, the need for rapid reconstruction and changes in planning laws allowing for higher densities, resulted in mediocre architecture and cheap construction in concrete and aluminium. New concentrations of manufacturing and light industrial uses (mainly leather and glass) drove residents out of the area in search of better living conditions, contributing to its subsequent and continuing decline.



Opposite Urban Structure of Psiri
Top far left Heroes Square, an awkward cluttered space
Top middle Lighting masks deprivation as a bohemian neighbourhood
Top right Graffiti is typical
Bottom left The conflict in scale between historic and modern
Bottom middle The congested night time economy

CONFLICT OF LAND USE TODAY

The land use pattern in the area today presents fragmentation and a number of conflicts. Some manufacturing and retailing businesses still remain pepper-potted on the ground floors of mainly post-war buildings. The majority of upper floors remain unoccupied. Many ground floors in neoclassical and interwar buildings have been colonised by leisure establishments: bespoke trendy bars, cafes and tavernas creating its atmosphere at night. It is believed that many of these establishments operate illegally and others violate the laws on operating hours set by the council. This concentration of entertainment venues discourages residential use in the area and conflicts with the apparent aspirations to make this a mixed use neighbourhood.

A number of buildings remain totally vacant and in many cases in a state of disrepair. These are mainly interwar neoclassical buildings where the ownership is ambivalent and the cost of restoration high. The existing uses do not coexist happily. In the daytime, the image of Psiri is as a working class neighbourhood with some low grade retail. Graffiti is spreading which suggests a lack of social cohesion and care in the place. There are a number of clearance plots used as commercial surface car parks, and the city council wishes to eliminate these spaces as they fragment the urban fabric and can become spaces for antisocial behaviour, graffiti, drug usage etc. Urban Void, a group of city activists consisting of architects and artists, have already organised two events in these spaces in an attempt to draw the public's attention to them and reclaim them for the community.

Loading and servicing for existing businesses happens off the street, which given the tightness of the urban fabric, causes conflict in the public realm, as vans perch on footpaths and constrain space for pedestrians and vehicles.

At night, the area presents an entirely different image: there is a high concentration of night-time businesses on particular streets which are tastefully lit and draw attention away from the dark derelict ones. The streets and squares heave with pedestrians lingering or trying to navigate from bar to bar, having to battle with cars trying to squeeze into the narrow streets to find convenient free parking spaces.

The footpaths are predominantly the realm of chairs and tables illegally spilling out from the restaurants and bars. The battle for the public domain is pertinent at this time. Psiri becomes congested with nightlife that cannot be supported by the current infrastructure in terms of parking and movement to and from the area. So where is this heading?

REGENERATION OR GENTRIFICATION?

There are a number of proposals and half-hearted attempts by the government to sanitise the area and give it back to the people: using policy designations to gradually remove uses that could deter potential residents, removing the homeless and drug addicts from streets; and containing the illegal occupation of the footpaths and squares by tables, chairs and parking in the evenings to facilitate movement; but rumours suggest that there are certain tolerances and verbal agreements between policing and illegally operating businesses...

To ease congestion in the area, the city is currently implementing a new initiative to pedestrianise the core of the area after 9pm on Fridays and Saturdays on a trial basis; this is in conjunction with the extension of Metro operating hours to 2am at weekends, to promote public transport use instead of the car.

Given that Psiri is now one of the projects under the umbrella of the Unification of the Archaeological Sites in Athens (EAXXA), the vision is said to be the preservation and improvement of the historic character of the area. However, disjointed cosmetic operations such as new paving and lighting schemes are most likely to result in an increase in land values, no doubt ostracising traditional low grade uses such as light industry and manufacturing and the low rent residents such as artists' live work studios that have recently moved into the area.

There is concern that these uses will soon be pressurised into giving way to bigger players such as new and bigger trendy bars and chains, and potentially in the future pseudo-bohemian nouveau-rich young professionals wanting to experience the hustle and bustle of living in the trendy city centre. This trend has already been observed in Metaxourgeio.

There is talk in the local media by artists and architects about disjointed thinking and the concern as to who this regeneration is beneficial for. It certainly benefits tourism, night-time users, the marketability of the city as a whole, which will have a trendy popular mainstream, generic European capital city night-time quarter, but not the existing communities and a sense of place. Certainly it is unlikely that it will attract new communities to live, work and play there given the lack of infrastructure and control over the use of land and operating times, as well as poor policing and implementation of existing policies.

Georgia Giannopoulou, Lecturer in Urban Design at Newcastle University



Far left Connections to medieval core and UNESCO World Heritage site
Far right and Bottom The vision for the area
Top View from the site to the historic city centre

Ten Lessons from Riga

Having won an international design competition in Latvia, Jonathan Kendall describes working in a young and rapidly changing country

In the summer of 2007, Fletcher Priest entered an open international design competition for the masterplan of a new urban centre in Riga, organised by the City Council, hosting various government functions, with a jury of city architects and planners from the Baltic States and Scandinavia. Taking part in the competition was a 'bottom-up' initiative from our urban design team, rather than a decision from above. In the midst of our ongoing involvement on big UK projects, it was an opportunity to investigate issues of strategic design in one of Europe's most historic cities, and starting from first principles, without our normal day-to-day constraints. None of us had prior knowledge of Latvia's capital, and so it was a chance to learn, speculate and transfer experiences.

As with any open competition, we entered the process on the basis of exploration, and potentially publication of the proposals, rather than with any expectation of winning. It is never certain whether an apparently open competition actually masks local political decisions in which the winning designer or strategy is pre-determined. But our experience in Riga, both at the competition stage and afterwards, has been refreshingly transparent.

There are ten key lessons that we learned from this process:

1. WIN THE COMPETITION

Pleased with our submission and intrigued to see our competitors' work, for the cost of a budget flight, one member of the team flew out for the day of the jury announcement to see what the outcome had been. To his surprise – and that of the competition organisers, who we later discovered had thought our anonymous entry to be the work of some cool Danes – we were awarded first prize. We won because our proposal was seen as aware of its context, robust and flexible.

2. UNDERSTAND THE CITY'S STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE

Our lessons of work in Riga started at this point. We had to quickly understand the local process of planning, design development and procurement. We soon recognised the strategic geographical advantages of the city and established a strategy for working there beyond the implementation of the project. Riga's urban splendour is closely related to its strategic role as a Hanseatic trading post. Its current geopolitical advantage reflects its new status as a young country, independent from the USSR since 1992, now inside the EU and NATO, on the borders of Scandinavia and the newly resurgent Russia. We were intrigued by the combination of an economy that had been growing by more than ten per cent a year, depopulating as its skilled young sought better paid work elsewhere and seeking strategic advantage as the emerging capital of the Baltic States, alongside neighbouring Tallinn and Vilnius.

3. UNDERSTAND AND ENGAGE WITH LOCAL LEGAL PROCESSES

Our main lessons related to contracts with the City Council and the nature of masterplanning within the local legal framework. Signing a contract was somewhat bureaucratic, made easier by the City Council who helped us through each step of their internal systems. We simplified the procedure by including the two local practices placed second and third as our sub-consultants alongside the international expertise of Arup and Davis Langdon with whom we often work at the urban scale. Critically for the project, our urban design process defines red lines, creating legal boundaries between state and future private development plots. Unlike major UK projects, where private developers may retain and maintain a larger estate, such concepts (like public-private partnerships) do not yet exist in law in Latvia.

4. ESTABLISH A PRESENCE IN THE CITY

We had no formal requirement to open an office in Riga, but we wanted to demonstrate our commitment to the city, establishing a presence and building local relationships. We had no desire to parachute in and exit quickly. In credibility terms, the value of adding '+Riga' to our logo was substantial. Our clients proudly point this out to third parties when we are introduced for the first time. It is a carefully flexible strategy, not a huge expense, and we are working with local planners and project managers who give us 'eyes and ears' on the ground.

5. IMMEDIATELY START BUILDING LONG-TERM RELATIONSHIPS

Building long-term relationships is central to our work in the UK, and we were determined to apply the same approach in Riga. Within a fortnight of our competition win, we were fortunate to have the newly appointed British Ambassador to Latvia visit our London offices. His team has been helpful, organising presentations and events on our behalf through the Embassy and UKTI. We have had a strong sense that the diplomatic team are 'on our side' and are seeking to promote British best practice internationally. Commercial relationships with other organisations trading between the two countries have been developed through the Chambers of Commerce in London and Riga. We quickly found that the network in a relatively tight-knit city is small. Making friends makes sense.

6. OFFER THE CLIENT MORE THAN JUST A PLANNING PROCESS

In our early meetings with the City Council, we were keen to explain our work in the UK, discussing our experiences with some of the UK's largest developers, contractors and funders, as well as multinational organisations such as Sony, Vodafone and IBM. For a young and ambitious city, seeking to implement best practice as they grow, we were able to demonstrate that a project as strategic as ours should be undertaken as more than a planning process. The Council separately commissioned economic modelling by Ernst and Young in parallel with our design work, in which flexibility, robustness and the potential demands for a new centre of the city were evaluated over a twenty-year period.

7. EXPLOIT (AND OVERCOME) INFRASTRUCTURE

Major infrastructure systems, both road and rail, define the site and represent its greatest challenge. The classic conundrum of infrastructure as connector and potential division was present from the outset. We have sought to overcome strategic highways alignments that threatened to bisect the site and inhibit connections to its surroundings. Through our design process we have held heated discussions with local highways engineers who have sought to prioritise vehicle mobility over the social values of streets. We have succeeded in realigning roads to create simpler, stronger connections that will also transform the surrounding areas. Though the pressures for vehicle priorities remain, we are supported by the progressive forces in the city who regard our project as anchored and enabled by new public transport systems as central to its sustainability ambitions.

8. RESPOND TO HERITAGE

A UNESCO World Heritage Site, bordering our site, protects the historic Old City in recognition of its medieval core and Art Nouveau districts. Critical to this are views of the skyline along the river and concern about the emergence of tall buildings. Our design creates contemporary streets and squares, defined by continuous built form, taking lessons from the Old City and connecting to its public realm. These principles are central to our proposal. Our attitude that medium-rise development was more appropriate than freestanding tall buildings has resonated particularly in the current economic uncertainties.

9. BUILD MOMENTUM

We have sought to build momentum, both in relation to our main project and for further work in the region. Since establishing a presence in Riga, we have undertaken further projects in the city and elsewhere in Latvia, with future projects in the pipeline in Tallinn. This summer we were placed second in a prestigious competition for Riga's Castle Square. Inside the heart of the UNESCO World Heritage Site, it forms the main space for ceremonial and other social activities outside the presidential residence.

10. STAY FOR THE LONG TERM

When we started the competition, Latvia's economy was booming at an alarming rate. Double digit GDP growth was combined with a similar inflation level. It wasn't hard to foresee imminent economic trauma. We wanted to create a proposal that could cope with change, avoiding unaffordable infrastructure – lessons learned from hardened UK developers. The collapse in the last few months has been dramatic: only Iceland's economy has fared worse. IMF support has been achieved at severe cost to public spending. This brings a greater need to define our scheme as a long-term investment in the city's infrastructure. We have made it clear that we are staying for the long term.

WAY FORWARD

The election of a new Mayor and Deputy Mayor in mid-2009 could have proven a difficult stage in the life of the project, particularly in the current climate. In fact we are told that they are overt supporters of the scheme, recognising its strategic importance for the city. Such political champions are invaluable. It is a real pleasure to travel to Riga and work there. We have a strong sense that what we are doing is important and useful and very much informing our work elsewhere. It is a young country. It is still early days in what will be a long process. We are enjoying the journey.

Jonathan Kendall, Partner and Director of Urban Design at Fletcher Priest Architects
 (An abridged version of this article will appear in the RIBA Journal)

COASTAL TOWNS



This topic, which arose from the UDG event at The Gallery in July 2008, is both timely and increasingly relevant to many places in the UK. After a summer when 'staycations' have been widely promoted in the current recession, many UK holiday spots may well have experienced more demand than they have seen for some time. As an island nation with many coastal settlements, it is impossible to address all of the challenges being faced by these cities,

towns and villages in one issue of *Urban Design*; however the articles that follow represent a sample of these unique places' historic trends, decline and renaissance.

The scale of the initiatives, partnerships and community-supported proposals varies considerably, from the bid for the Longest Bench in the World in Littlehampton, to the European Commission's Enterprise Awards won by Scarborough.

Already benefiting from Thomas Heatherwick's iconic East Beach Café design, Littlehampton has started to examine its waterfront with a new strategy for linking key public realm areas. Well advanced in developing its vision, Blackpool is creating new destinations within a strong public realm and partnership framework. Eastbourne, the home of artist Eric Ravilious' work, is repositioning itself for a new younger quality and culture-seeking market with its Towner Gallery. Brighton, Portsmouth and Southampton have all witnessed a series of temporary installations this summer looking at underused spaces in different ways, to encourage fresh approaches to them in collaborative projects by the local councils and universities.

Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth, twinned by economy and geography, have been reconnecting their waterfronts to their towns, with major investment projects and winning young people's attention in the process. Scarborough has taken its mandate from local community interests, with a sustained dialogue creating projects and initiatives on various strategic themes throughout the town. Leading with its public realm, Weston-super-Mare has been improving and linking its destinations to set quality standards for further developments. Lastly Chris Hall provides a valuable review of the main challenges facing coastal towns, and the solutions being tested around the country to overcome these, and to give coastal towns greater vitality and viability for current and future generations to enjoy.

LITTLEHAMPTON WATERFRONT STRATEGY

From unusual origins, Honoré van Rijswijk sets out this town's approach



Regeneration sometimes starts with a single great building, even sometimes with great food, but not often both. Littlehampton, a seaside town between Brighton and Chichester on the South coast of England, kick-started its recent regeneration with Thomas Heatherwick's East Beach Café serving good food. This impetus is now being continued with a formal waterfront strategy for the complete town, encompassing new thoughts for the town and even including proposals for the World's Longest Bench.

The strategy is jointly funded by Arun District Council and CABI through the 'Sea Change' government funded programme, which places culture at the heart of regenerating England's seaside resorts by funding inspiring, creative and innovative projects. The architects for this scheme and shapers of today's space-making agenda elsewhere have undertaken several significant water-based strategies, ranging in size from the Thames Gateway through to the Isle of Dogs and Margate, and have now turned their attention to Littlehampton.

Through our work, we can discern an interesting recent pattern of regeneration in seafront resorts in the UK, resulting directly from climate change and holiday-makers thinking sustainably about the need for international travel, as well as the impact of the current economic downturn. People are responding to the resurgent culture of our coastal towns and once again recognising the value of our own coastline as a place to live, work and play. Terry Farrell, who has been closely involved with the development of the strategy has commented that 'there is a real opportunity in Littlehampton as it already has a strong identity. Real regeneration and change begins by evolving a commonly-held and inclusive vision, but the energy and commitment to make this a reality must come from and involve everyone there'. Making these sentiments real has involved a series of workshops and public exhibitions, where participants were actively encouraged to give their ideas, views and concerns on any aspect of the design.

Combined the design exploration and public participation showed the potential for Littlehampton to become one of the finest seaside towns along the South Coast. The town centre is positioned close to the harbour and seafront, and is characterised by a fine urban grain and characteristic historical buildings. It is a town already imbued with a rich history and unique landscape but, the town is composed of three distinct, yet disconnected, elements - the town centre, the Green (seafront) and the harbour.

In order to rationalize the town centre's distinctive elements, the design strategy is based on the following future ambitions:

- Improving direct pedestrian connections to the waterfront
- Reducing car traffic within the town centre
- Completing the retail centre as a place
- Creating more space for pedestrians
- Putting trees back into the streets
- Building on the spirit of the existing fine urban grain

The Green (seafront) is one of the most important public spaces within Littlehampton located between the harbour, the beach and the town centre, but over the years, the Green has lost its identity and spatial definition. The key focus within the strategy is to repair the Green and define it as a prestigious central public space for the community and visitors by:

- Removing the clutter (i.e. parking) on the Green
- Creating strong links from the town centre to the seafront
- Celebrating the Promenade, this includes the World's Longest Bench, designed by Studio Weave and local school children
- Connecting the East and West Beaches
- Re-planning Harbour Park
- Re-activating the Oyster Pond

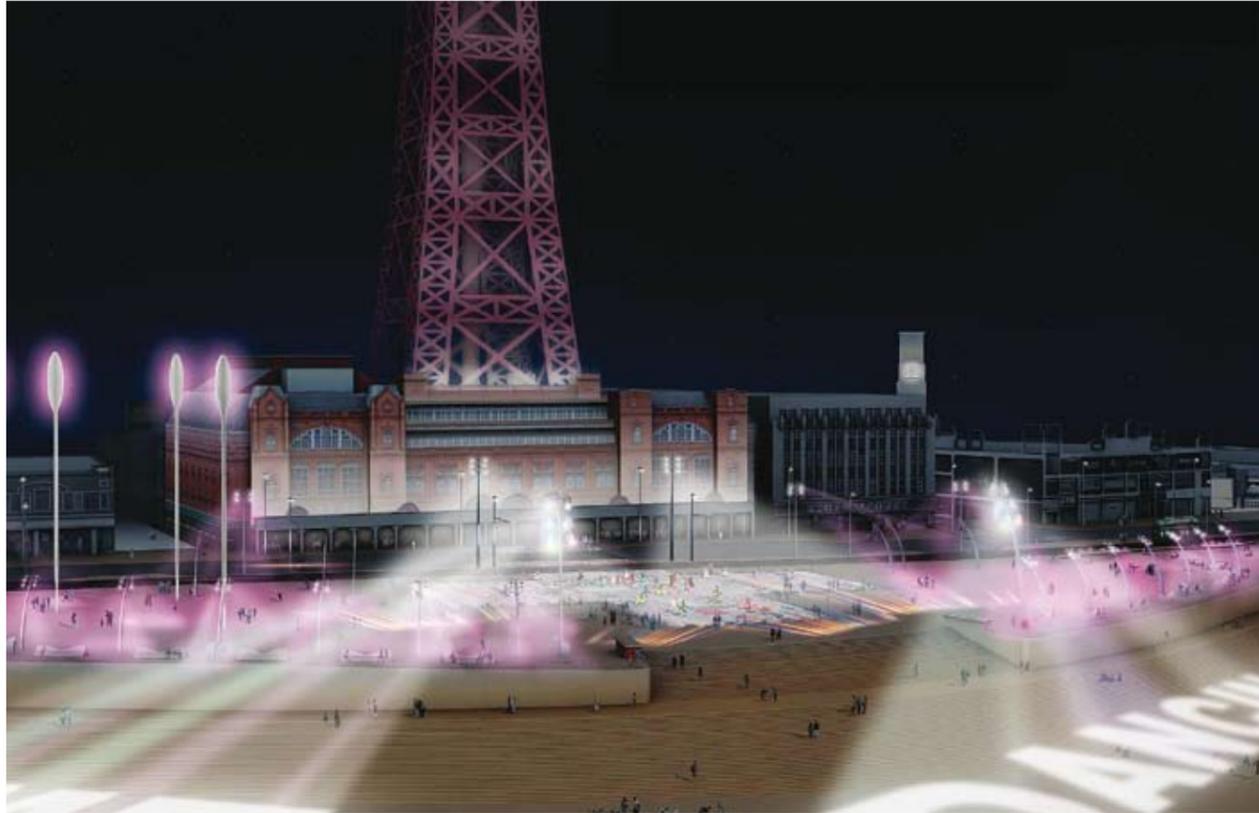
In the last few decade, parts of the East Bank have been transformed into a residential public waterfront. However, there still remains a great regeneration opportunity for the harbour (West Bank) and these are explored in design principles to transform this area into a vibrant waterfront, namely to build on the unique existing natural landscapes, complete the pedestrian connections towards the river, and with continuous public walkways and spaces along the river, make flood defences an integral part of future development, and activate the riverfront with further maritime activities. Each principle is conceived as a project in its own right, to be implemented in incremental stages and as a 'stand alone' initiative. This incremental, step by step approach will provide the flexibility that is necessary in an area of this size and complexity.

This waterfront strategy presents a unique opportunity for Littlehampton to bring the town centre, the Green and the harbour together to create a robust identity, which reaffirms Littlehampton's history and gives it a sense of place for the future.

Honoré van Rijswijk, Associate, Terry Farrell and Partners

THE TOWER FESTIVAL HEADLAND, BLACKPOOL

Rob Allen describes Blackpool's bold seafront plans



The face of Britain's favourite seaside resort is changing as ReBlackpool has set about delivering a masterplan aimed at ensuring long term economic and social prosperity for the town. ReBlackpool, Blackpool's urban regeneration company, is tasked with delivering the vision of Blackpool Resort Masterplan, which aims to transform the resort into a twenty-first century visitor destination giving a sustainable year-round economy. Launched in March 2003, the Masterplan is a fifteen year regeneration plan that focuses on the resort's core – an area 5km long and 1km wide encompassing the famous Golden Mile and Blackpool Tower, the town centre, major public transport arrival points, and the surrounding dense neighbourhoods of holiday accommodation.

YEAR ROUND TRADE

ReBlackpool is also working hard to create commercial and civic development opportunities, enhancing year-round trade and employment opportunities, whilst recognising that the visitor experience remains as important to Blackpool today as it was during its tourism heyday over several generations.

This commitment to holiday-makers and day trippers enjoying Fylde's unique coastline can clearly be seen in the seafront projects developing in the shadow of the town's world famous attractions. Tower Festival Headland is a £14.3 million development taking shape at the foot of the iconic 158 metre Blackpool Tower, and is a prime example of the projects which are part of the overhaul of Blackpool's sea defences. Along with other radical changes along the ageing promenade, this project was kick-started by funding from the Sea Change Programme, and the wider seafront project will deliver five new headlands created from land reclaimed from the sea and replacing inaccessible, sheer drop, sea walls with gently descending 'Spanish Steps'. The first modernised section of the seafront at the town's Southern Gateway, close to Blackpool Pleasure Beach, was completed in 2004 and received a positive reaction from residents, visitors and neighbouring businesses.

A NEW DESTINATION

In partnership with CABE, the North West Regional Development Agency (NWDA), European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and Blackpool Council began work early in 2008 on the Tower Festival Headland, developing the design concept produced for the People's Playground submission to the national Big Lottery Fund's Living Landmarks Programme a year earlier. The 18,600 metre site incorporates the headland itself and stretches north along the promenade to neighbour both the Tower entertainments complex and the historic North Pier. The Tower Festival Headland is designed to provide Blackpool with its only purpose-built, outdoor entertainment venue with a capacity of 20,000 people, allowing the resort to compete with



other towns both in the North West and around the UK for major events. The multi-use space is set to host live music, theatre, sporting events and open-air cinema screenings.

As the Irish Sea delivers westerly winds that blow across Blackpool at average speeds of 11 mph, any area designed for popular outdoor use requires robust, protective elements. In the case of Tower Festival Headland, a windbreak system has been incorporated into the design of new public artworks. A system of permanent and temporary masts made of durable Duplex alloy will allow event organisers to give protection from these winds by stretching high tensile, Teflon-coated fabric between them, creating an effective, temporary barrier. When not in use, the fabric will be removed and the temporary masts relocated within the headland to feature as an attraction in their own right and used as outdoor advertising space.

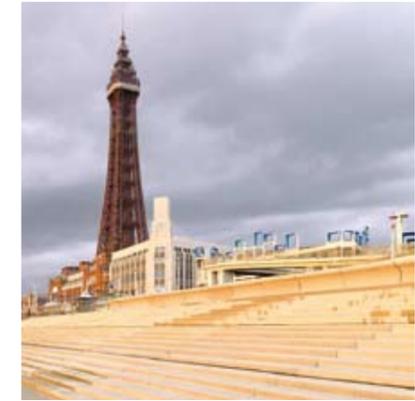
BUILT TO LAST

The maritime context also means that Duplex, a stainless steel that can resist the corrosive effects of salt-laden winds and sand blasting, is being used for all outdoor metal work such as railings to prevent rust or tarnishing. With protective as well as decorative responsibilities, the Spanish Steps to the beach have been manufactured to provide an effective barrier to coastal erosion in the same way as their unforgiving predecessors. The careful selection of materials and management of their remarkable design and construction means that ReBlackpool estimate that the new defences will have a design life of at least 100 years.

Attention to the durability of materials and construction is also evident in the creation of the Comedy Carpet, another work of public art to be incorporated into the Tower Festival Headland site, designed by Gordon Young. The pavement design will feature famous catchphrases delivered by the comedy performers that have helped to make Blackpool famous. Each catchphrase will be cut from granite and set into concrete, produced in such a way that a thin top layer can be removed by grinding once every ten years and leave the surface looking as new. The Carpet, along with a new building featuring public services and a restaurant, has been aligned to the architecture of Blackpool Tower to complement the most famous of the town's existing attractions.

PARTNERSHIPS

It is the attention to Blackpool's requirements in a wider context, the cultural events offer, and close working between partners which project manager Dean Blackhurst sees as the key principles when working on a public realm project of this nature. Leisure Parcs, the owners of the neighbouring North Pier and Blackpool Tower complex, have been consulted throughout to make sure that their visitors get benefit from the new offer



Opposite and above The vision for the Headland space
Left The Spanish Steps as sea defence measures

and the area becomes packed with attractions. The project is also linked to a wider regeneration strategy, which is to further improve the cultural offering in Blackpool for the benefit of both residents and businesses. Large-scale, outdoor events should increase footfall in the area, directly benefiting surrounding businesses, and the public realm artworks will become attractions in their own right.

ReBlackpool is working to create development opportunities, enhancing year-round trade and employment

Regeneration companies must also look at the long term management of projects and in the case of the Tower Festival Headland, Blackpool Council will take ownership of the management of the space and secure revenue income from kiosks and the restaurant to maintain the new arena. The Tower Festival Headland is due for completion in time to host the first open air events during the 2010 season (see www.reblackpool.com).

Rob Allen, Amaze Public Relations

THE TOWNER ART GALLERY – EASTBOURNE

Jefferson Collard describes how an icon is changing places and perceptions



Eastbourne has a new art gallery: The Towner is a white and black curvaceous cube, set in the delightful Devonshire Park, a block back from the seafront, and it was designed by award-winning Rick Mather Architects.

The Victorians made the best of the location when they laid out the town of Eastbourne. Set at the end of the South Downs, which act as natural protection against the south-westerly winds, the wide boulevards of the town splay out across a natural plain that leads into the famous Pevensey Levels, which the Romans thought it essential to protect with a magnificent castle. It was inevitable with such an enviable setting that the coastal town would become a destination for over four million visitors each year spending a massive £270 million to boost the local economy.

Devonshire Park was originally laid out by the 7th Duke of Devonshire in the early 1870s as the town's new cricket pitch. It quickly became established as the town's cultural and entertainment playground with Victorian delights designed by the Duke's architect, Henry Currey, namely The Winter Garden (1875-6) and The Devonshire Park Theatre (1884). These have been added to with Bryan and Norman Westwood & Partners' Congress Theatre, in 1963, and the Lawn Tennis Associations Stand of 1995. Across the road is the Eastbourne Heritage Centre (1886), in which Currey may also have had a hand. Four of the buildings are such good examples of their periods that they are protected with listed status. The Towner is the latest addition in the continuing tradition of adding cultural icons to the setting of Devonshire Park.

THE SITE

When the decision was taken that The Towner's superb art collection needed a modern state-of-the-art building, the obvious choice was to locate it in the town's cultural quarter. The original building was a wonderful eighteenth century former Manor House, set in extensive grounds in the Old Town next to the Parish Church. But the building was not suitable for such a prized and valuable collection, or the Towner's ambitious temporary visual art exhibitions and award-winning learning and outreach programmes, so it was sold by the Council for residential development.

The new site was to be Devonshire Park, a pebble's throw from the town centre and the seafront. The now rare prospect of building a new civic centre was seen by Eastbourne Borough Council as an opportunity to solve other issues at the same time. This led to a proposed site squeezed between the Congress Theatre and Winter Garden, which already contained a single-storey restaurant and kitchen. The new building could potentially enable the existing theatre kitchen to be upgraded and link the two large spaces in the adjoining buildings to become a multi-purpose volume. But too much was expected of this constrained position and of one building.

Rick Mather Architects, who won the design competition beating eighty entries, selected an existing car park on the west side of The Congress Theatre as their site; a deceptively tiny area of 770m². It was courageous of the Council to accept an alternative site, but the strength of Rick Mather's concept made it an overwhelming favourite. This significant decision allowed the outstanding design that we can see today. With planning consent given in 2004 and funding secured, the project began on site in 2006 and opened in April 2009.

THE FUNDING

There can be little dispute about the quality of Eastbourne's existing art collection, containing the world's most exceptional collection of Eric Ravilious' work, who was a local teacher and lived in the town. The new art gallery, which would retain and extend its regional/national status, attracted the attention of major funders. With a total build cost of £8.5 million, it was funded by grants from the Arts Council England's Capital Programme 2, the Heritage Lottery Fund, South East England Development Agency and Eastbourne Borough Council in equal proportions.

The Towner also became one of five recipients across the UK of £1m from Art Fund International to purchase major examples of international contemporary art for its collection, thereby cementing its status as the best contemporary art museum for the region. It also receives funding towards its running costs from Arts Council England South East as one of the region's major visual art organisations.

THE BUILDING

Light is the enemy of art, and yet viewers want an inviting space in which to enjoy their visit. Rick Mather Architects have solved this with a clever layout of the rooms in this three-story building. This is a building of two halves separated by a glazed circulation space, giving views over Devonshire Park to the north and glimpses of the seafront to the south. The eastern half contains two principal art spaces on top of each other on the first and second floors, behind a stark zinc clad façade. Adjoining the Congress Theatre, the new art gallery has connections at each level to knit the buildings together.

The western half houses the supporting rooms that required windows - work spaces, lecture rooms and café. The café has a west-facing sun terrace looking out over the roof tops to the South Downs - the next National Park. The western side of the building responds to its site with a curvilinear wave of sheer vertical chalk white render, reminiscent of its bigger brother the cliff face at Beachy Head, and which appears so frequently in much of the art that it accommodates. The Council planners were careful to insist on a respectful relationship with its grade II* listed neighbour, so that the façade of the Congress Theatre could still be read in the streetscape with its defining piloti. Key sight lines were continued to the new art gallery, uniting two very different buildings; one an older neighbour, the other overtly contemporary and of our time. As The Council has always been keen to bring art to all, its innovative Towner on The Town project bringing the visual arts to the less advantaged won the Authority Beacon Status in Culture and Sport for Hard to Reach Groups in 2006.

THE IMAGE

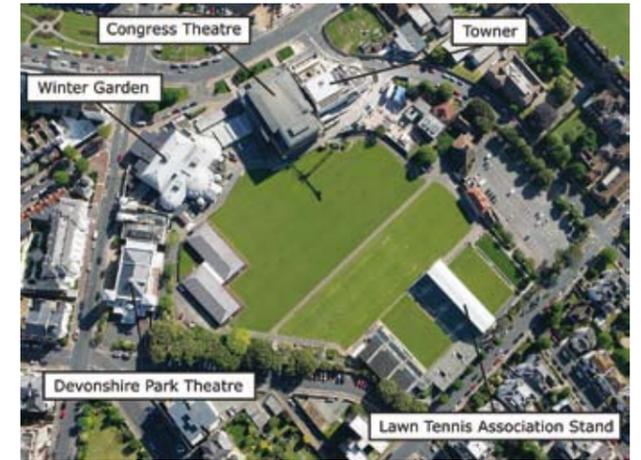
Some who have heard of Eastbourne, yet never visited, have an image of a place with a significant older population, stuck in the past and awash with facilities for the elderly. However successive surveys of visitors have shown that they are impressed with the quality of the seafront and the town's open spaces and broad streets. This is a legacy of the 7th Duke of Devonshire's vision for a planned town that still continues today. The Duke did not allow the over-commercialisation of the seafront, so it retains its promenading elegance but with refined refreshment stops.

The large number of late nineteenth century villas have been attracting professional families who see bargain properties compared to expensive and neighbouring Brighton & Hove. The major increases in the town's population since 2001 have been the 16 to 29 year olds and the 45 to 64 year old age groups. Both groups showing increases more than twice the average for the town, and over six times the equivalent percentage increase of those of pensionable age, showing that the town's population is changing.

As the traditional coach tour market wanes, so the town is repositioning itself to capture the rise of the year-round higher quality short break holiday. Becoming immersed in local culture is popular with these short break visitors and The Towner is easily able to capitalise upon that trend, revealing a new and different story about where Eastbourne is heading. With 7,500 bed spaces - the second largest number in the southeast outside London - the town can accommodate a significant influx of people.

THE LESSONS

- 1 An architectural competition is more likely to turn a good building into a great building. There is no doubt that having a quality team like Rick Mather Architects has produced a magnificent and long term iconic addition to the town's outstanding buildings - a listed building of the future.
- 2 Early consultation with the key players and opinion formers is essential. Here English Heritage, the Twentieth Century Society, Theatres Trust as well as over forty local community groups



including the Eastbourne Society, were involved in developing the brief for the site. The result was that when the planning application was submitted, the proposals received overwhelming support.

3 A building of quality takes time to design and build, and sufficient time must be allowed for the design of a building

Opposite Front elevation of the Towner Gallery, Photograph by Daniel Clements

Top The Towner in Devonshire Park
Above Eric Ravilious' The Westbury Horse

The town is repositioning itself to capture the rise of the year-round higher quality short break holiday... immersed in local culture

to gestate and find good solutions. Time allows the call for understandable changes to be assimilated into the building while preserving the design concept. When considered properly, such changes do not dilute the original concept, but help to embrace those who have suggested the improvements.

Jefferson Collard, Development Planning Manager, Eastbourne Borough Council

A NEW APPROACH TO PUBLIC SPACE DESIGN

Miranda Pearce describes innovative ways of bringing design to life for three coastal communities



During the 'Places from Spaces' (PFS) project which reached its climax this summer, Councillor Liz Mizon, Mayor of Southampton, was quite open when she explained that many councillors and members of the public do not know much about design and do not understand how it can unlock the imagination, when it comes to creating interesting public places.

LOCAL SPACES MATTER

The South East England Development Agency's (SEEDA) Places from Spaces programme tried to find the key to counter this reservation about design and the places it could create. We were particularly interested in the spaces that people forget about and overlook, such as strategic routes and streets, as well as formal parks or civic squares.

Despite reams of guidance, for many reasons, the regeneration of public spaces can be low on the local government agenda and all too often, plans tend to be presented in the form of a generic aspiration vividly illustrated with stock pictures of a Barcelona-

style café culture, rather than drawn from an understanding of what already makes the place distinctive. Public space should be the part of a cityscape which adds to a city's vibrancy as well as contributing to community pride, which both become the catalyst for visitor engagement and can become an attractor of inward investment. The Places from Spaces project was to stimulate a possible new approach to design thinking among those responsible for our public spaces.

The project's aim was to support the client's commissioning role, working with the councils in Brighton and Hove, Portsmouth and Southampton, giving them the critical skills, confidence and the language to commission and manage design projects. At the same time, it helped them to access knowledge in their local universities. The beauty of the scheme was that it also developed the concept of temporary transformations to take participants beyond just drawings and words in visualising places: it physically tested out ideas.

DEVELOPING A PROGRAMME

The Solent Centre for Architecture + Design and the Kent Architecture Centre were appointed to manage the process, approaching the City Councils and Universities of Brighton, Portsmouth and Southampton to take part in the project. All agreed and the first stage included a series of seminars and workshops to discuss what urban design could contribute to the public realm. For councillors in particular the knowledge that they gained through this was invaluable; Councillor Lynne Stagge, Cabinet Member for Traffic and Transportation at Portsmouth City Council reported that, although she only attended one event, it helped her to suggest changes to new projects now being proposed locally. The seminars included presentations on solutions from the US, as well as study trips to Europe – in each case both academics and local councillors participated to share their experiences in delivering design-led outcomes. From the initial workshops, the three Universities collaborated to develop a single training programme for the councillors.

PLACE-BASED EXPERIMENTS

The next stage was to develop practical student design experiments in each of the cities. Sites were chosen by the councils which were currently underused, but where regeneration was planned in the future. Briefs were then developed by the councils for each using the knowledge gained at the workshops, and the students – mostly from fourth and fifth year architecture or civil engineering degree courses and mentored by practitioners from local architectural practices – were invited to propose solutions.

In Southampton, Queens Park was once a magnet for people passing through the town to join a ship in the docks and for businesses serving the local economy. But now it is primarily a through-route for commuters, more of a 'green roundabout' than a park to be enjoyed. The City Council would like to see the park regenerated and become a better link between different parts of the city. The PFS experiment in June tested how the community might use the space if there were to be some permanent features there. A unique sound experiment, conducted as a joint venture between the University's School of Engineering and the Environment and the Institute for Sound and Vibration Research,

set up 'sound zones' in different areas of the park to reproduce the sounds of activities which could be based there - for example football games, a water feature, a café, street theatre, birdsong and children's playground, to help to inform the best design for the future Queens Park.

Valley Gardens, in the centre of Brighton, is an underused public space in the middle of a busy traffic gyratory system. The City Council wanted ideas for the next incarnation of the 200 year old park, setting a brief for a student competition, which included making a memorable space at the heart of the city, welcoming visitors and encouraging the community itself to use it all year round. The winning temporary scheme was the 'Forest of Valley Gardens' (which ran for a week in June) where seven hundred trees, varying in height and density, set out in nature trails and environments, brought a green landscape to a usually intensive urban environment. After the week, the trees were planted in another Brighton park to give the city a sustainable legacy from Places from Spaces, through their carbon locking and re-use. Project Leader, Ian McKay, was pleased with the outcome, explaining that, with over eight hundred responses they certainly succeeded in engaging with the community, and with four other student designs for possible permanent transitions, also on display, there was some very useful feedback for the City Council.

This process of using temporary transformations will allow councils to test imaginative non-traditional uses for urban space

At the end of July, University of Portsmouth students temporarily transformed 'The Hard', a major transport interchange in the city, erecting beach huts and marking out three routes from Portsmouth Harbour Station to the city centre's Guildhall Square, through the centre of the Portsea, to the Historic Dockyard and to St Georges Square opposite Gunwharf Quays. They created dramas to animate the routes and places, as well as using lighting, texture and a 'memory bank' for collecting local reminiscences and future aspirations, which can be used to inform contexts for future regeneration. A student-designed beach hut became the focal point amongst twenty smaller huts placed along the routes and this provided a community engagement space. The ideas, and the reaction to them, will feed into the City Council's master plan for regenerating the area.

NEXT STEPS

SEEDA will be carrying out a full assessment of the project but the verdicts so far are encouraging. Firstly, we have delivered the 'design matters' message. Nick Murphy, Executive Director for Neighbourhoods at Southampton City Council explained that many of his staff involved with the project had no prior design experience, so PFS encouraged them to lift their ambitions (and their eyes) off the ground, to see what urban spaces could be used for and look like in the future.

Secondly, we have built a bridge between universities and their local councils, and the outcomes look promising with two universities already engaged in further projects. Councillor Lynne Stagge was convinced that their links with Portsmouth University has huge potential for the community, as it gives not only the expertise of academics, but fresh vision from the students.

Thirdly, we have demonstrated the potential for temporary transformations to encourage community ownership of public spaces and to test new ideas going beyond the conventional. The 'what if' nature of these experiments, and the fact that they are



Opposite The Hard, Portsmouth
Top Forest of Valley Gardens, Brighton
Above Queens Park, Southampton

only temporary, helps to engage a wider section of the community than the usual vocal minorities who oppose change.

For the future, it seems as though this process of using temporary transformations will allow councils to test imaginative non-traditional uses for urban space. My view of this is supported by Brighton's Green Party Councillor, Ian Davey, who felt that the project gave students the freedom to express their vision, but that if a local authority had made such a transformation, it would have been pilloried in the local media – making this kind of partnership so vital. Temporary transformations should have their place in developing permanent solutions.

Miranda Pearce, Urban Renaissance Manager, South East Excellence, SEEDA.

LOWESTOFT AND GREAT YARMOUTH ARE FIGHTING BACK

Philip Watkins explains how two towns are dealing with shifting opportunities



If someone mentions Lowestoft or Great Yarmouth, what springs to mind? Run-down faded towns, seaside holidays, fishing perhaps, or even – where are they? Located in East Anglia, Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth are the two most easterly towns in the UK. They also share a rich history, initially based on the herring industry, then tourism in the Victorian and Edwardian eras, and latterly by the opportunities brought by the discovery of gas reserves in the Southern North Sea. This is a common theme in the development of the two towns – making the most of opportunities and geography to generate economic prosperity. History has shown, however, that industries come and go, and the towns that prosper are those that are able to grasp new opportunities. That is exactly what has been happening in Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth.

THE URC

Recognising that the regeneration of Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth was not going to be easy, key political and business organisations approached central Government about setting up an Urban Regeneration Company (URC) to drive change and attract development and investment. The URC is a public/private sector company with a majority of private sector directors, but public sector backing from Norfolk County Council, Suffolk County Council, Great Yarmouth Borough Council, the East of England Development Agency and the national Homes and Communities Agency. As a result, 1st East was formed in 2005 with the remit to bring the run-down waterfront brownfield sites within the two towns back into economic use.

Initially, the challenge was how the problems of economic and social deprivation resulting from the decline in traditional industries could be addressed. What was realistic in terms of attracting developers and investors to an area which had suffered from a lack of private sector investment for many years? It was evident that a clear plan was needed that would send a confident message to developers and investors. As most of the land identified for development was brownfield but had inappropriate land use designations, a new statutory plan was needed. The regeneration areas were therefore designated as locations for Area Action Plans and 1st East undertook extensive consultations. As a result, key themes emerged and one was to re-connect the towns to their historic waterfronts, creating vibrant new areas where people could choose to live, work, study and visit.

In Great Yarmouth, these were Bure Harbour Quay, North Quay and Ice House Quay (areas adjacent to the confluence of the Rivers Yare and Bure), and in Lowestoft, the areas were around Lake Lothing (the large man-made lake that separates north and south), around the outer harbour and Britain's most easterly landmass, Ness Point.

However the future of the two towns lies not only in bringing forward appropriate development, but also in the aspirations and attitudes of its young people. A key question during consultations was: what do young people in the two towns think about the regeneration plans, and what would they like to see happen in the future? 1st East, along with EnterpriseGY and Enterprise Lowestoft, ran a three-month project to engage the high schools and sixth form colleges to look at exactly those questions.

COLLABORATION

Since the formation of the URC, 1st East had also been working with Duncan Berntsen from the University of Greenwich's School of Architecture and Construction, where his post-graduate students had been using Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth as part of their case study course work and assignments on urban design. It was therefore agreed that students would act as mentors for the school and college groups, meaning that students at all tiers of education were involved, from Year 9 high school students to post-graduates.

During the project, the local students also visited the University of Greenwich and the O2, looking at the regeneration of Greenwich Peninsula, providing valuable ideas about what

was possible in a formerly run-down industrial area.

The project culminated in an event at Great Yarmouth Town Hall where the groups presented their research and ideas to an expert panel, comprising 1st East directors, councillors, and members of 1st East's own Design Panel. The school and college students came up with a wide variety of innovative ideas, and the groups that focused specifically on Great Yarmouth also had the opportunity to present their ideas to Urban Initiatives, the urban design consultants commissioned to develop the concept masterplans for the priority intervention areas.

Approximately six hundred students from the two towns were engaged in the project, and so not only did it succeed in engaging young people to contribute to the regeneration plans, but it also challenged them to think about their own futures, higher education and the opportunities that the towns should look at to create jobs for their future lives.

INVESTMENTS

Both towns have successfully bid for public sector investment in recent years; following £18 million investment by the public sector (from the EU, EEDA, Norfolk County and the Borough Council) to create a new outer harbour for Great Yarmouth, the private sector invested a further £75 million in EastPort UK - enabling vessels six times the tonnage that the river port can currently handle to be accommodated. This investment will act as a catalyst for the regeneration of key 1st East areas. The town's seafront has also seen considerable investment with £17 million spent on creating a high quality public realm, as well as the £3 million renovation of St George's Park in the town centre, making a first class environment that people now enjoy rather than wanting to dash through. Most recently Great Yarmouth Borough Council has successfully bid for the Government's Sea Change funding to regenerate the Grade 1 listed St George's Church and the surrounding King Street area of the town.

In Lowestoft, public sector partners had the vision to recognise the opportunities that the renewable energy industry presents, and a new £9 million state-of-the-art incubator for renewable energy businesses – OrbisEnergy – opened last year. Designed to attract start-up companies as well as established operators, OrbisEnergy already has become the base for Greater Gabbard Wind Farms Limited, the company building a 140 wind turbine farm (generating 504 MW) off the Suffolk coast. This involves using the outer harbour in Lowestoft as its operational base for helicopters and vessels to service the wind farm for the next twenty five years. The company stated that it was attracted by the positive attitudes from the port operators ABP, Waveney District Council and 1st East in obtaining planning permissions. Now 1st East is leading a public/private sector partnership to promote the concept of a PowerPark centred on OrbisEnergy, creating a physical cluster of energy-related businesses in one location, capitalising on the skills developed in servicing the off-shore oil and gas industry over the last forty years.

But for the regeneration of the two towns, it is not all just about new jobs – it is also about protecting existing jobs, and 1st East has also been promoting a major public sector project – the Waveney Campus. Cefas (the Centre for Environment, Fisheries & Aquaculture Science), which employs around six hundred people, will be located in the new Waveney Campus building, together with staff from the District and County Councils. Situated on Kirkley Waterfront (on the south side of Lake Lothing), this £50 million development will not only protect jobs, but will also stimulate further regeneration in the surrounding area.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Naturally, with new development there is also the need for better infrastructure, and transport in particular. Both towns, coincidentally, have only two river crossings, and so with its



Opposite The Edge, a proposed large casino development at Great Yarmouth

Top Waveney Campus in Lowestoft including Cefas (international fisheries research centre) laboratories and office

Middle Proposed Bure Harbour Quay area, Great Yarmouth, Photograph by www.zippix.co.uk

Bottom OrbisEnergy, a renewable energy incubator built at Britain's most easterly point, Photograph by www.chpv.co.uk

partners, 1st East is bringing forward plans for a third crossing in each. As major projects such as bridges are expensive and the Government has competing priorities, 1st East will need to make a comprehensive business case for funding such projects.

Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth are used to hard times and at the moment are proving resilient - lagging behind for once rather than leading the current recession. With a large casino licence granted for Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft's recent win as the 'Most Enterprising Place' in the East of England, the two towns, although on the edge, are fighting back.

Philip Watkins, Chief Executive, 1st East

SCARBOROUGH'S RENAISSANCE

Nick Taylor shows how renaissance is transforming a community's culture



Winning the Grand Jury Prize at the European Commission's European Enterprise Awards for the most enterprising place in Europe will go down in Scarborough's history; especially as the North Yorkshire town beat the cities of Helsinki, Valencia and Liège to the title, having been named as the most enterprising place in Britain. It might not seem of immediate relevance with the credit crunch upon us, but for the rest of this year and, more importantly, further into the future, this will have a very positive impact on the town.

YORKSHIRE FORWARD'S RENAISSANCE

Scarborough was appointed as one of the first wave of 'renaissance towns' under Yorkshire Forward's Renaissance Towns and Cities Programme launched in 2001, because it was struggling. With three wards in the top ten percent on the National Index of Multiple Deprivation, there were significant problems with the town's image, and business yields were far behind other towns and cities in Yorkshire and the rest of the country.

Scarborough Borough Council's Leader at the time, Eileen Bosomworth and the Chief Executive, John Trebble took a bold step in allowing a new type of democracy to begin with the community

to be involved in the decision-making process through public participation. Also with the insistence of Yorkshire Forward, the Regional Development Agency, the funding would only be available if the public was fully involved. The document that initiated all of this activity and attitude was Richard Rogers' White Paper in 2000, 'Our Towns and Cities, Delivering an Urban Renaissance'.

Yorkshire Forward has a team of architects and urbanists who work with all the projects in the region that it is investing in, helping to achieve the best quality architecture and urban design. This is done through involvement at various stages: brief preparation, competition management and judging, bid preparation, precedent studies, design review and enabling, best practice studies, advice on design implications at value engineering stage, etc. The aim is to be involved at an early stage and run with the project to provide co-ordination with other projects in the same towns and cities. This approach is unique for an RDA - having a team and by putting great places at the heart of the regional economic strategy; the objective is to improve the economy of the region via the establishment of quality architecture and design and sustainable communities.

THE PUBLIC MANDATE

As a result of the Council's decision, there was a Planning Weekend in April 2002, where over a thousand people attended an event at the Scarborough Spa Complex to give their thoughts and aspirations for the future of the town. From this there was a clear and compelling public mandate - to deliver a renaissance of the town. With their help and the support of Yorkshire Forward and Scarborough Borough Council, many changes have taken place.

Two particular documents have come from the process - the Strategic Development Framework called *Kissing Sleeping Beauty*, of which Adriaan Geuze of West 8 in Rotterdam said "some people expect Disney-like investments, new motorways and a miraculous change in international tourism patterns as the necessary first step for the Renaissance. But many towns have proven that Urban Renaissance is the result of a well defined local and collective ambition and a mental change". The second document is the Town Charter with a commitment to quality, public involvement and sustainability. This was formed from the thoughts and aspirations of those present at the Planning Weekend, and is still the backbone of the Town Team's work.

It was the mental change described above that has had the most remarkable effect in Scarborough. Through public participation and open involvement in the design and quality of the projects, the community have responded accordingly. The Town Team was established under the leadership of a local and international businessman Tom Pindar. His guidance in the early years enabled Scarborough Renaissance Partnership to work well and comprehensively. Latterly the chairmanship has been passed to Tony Peers, a national figure in theatrical productions, who has continued the process with new vigour.

THE DELIVERY TEAM

Underpinning the Town Team are eight Action Groups; sometimes referred to as the engine room of the activity, they cover subject areas such as Urban Space, Tourism, Business, Arts & Culture, the Creative Industries, Transport and the Harbour area. All of these groups meet monthly and are open to any member of the general public to attend. There is also a decision-

making and constituted Executive which is part of the funding process and the agreement of this group is needed before any investment can take place.

We have seen several projects delivered already such as the Harbour and Sandside area, with designs by LDA and Rob Aspland as the principal designer. This particular project demonstrated community involvement in the design, whereby over a period of several months, three sessions were held with the stakeholders who informed the design process. Consequently new seating in the area was designed to look like a cross between a piece of public art and a practical bench. The lighting was designed to be able to illuminate the carriageway in white light and the pavement in a blue wash of light. Hard surfaces are in diamond-cut York stone and the curbs are Whinstone, giving a high quality finish and encouraging the private sector investment into the area to be of a similarly high standard. To slow traffic without impeding flows, pavements have been widened and the carriageway narrowed, eliminating the nuisance of 'boy racers' in the evening, and encouraging more foot fall. The unique Rotunda Geological Museum, with its significant history has been refurbished and is now a national treasure offering educational opportunities, outreach work and is an excellent way to spend an hour.

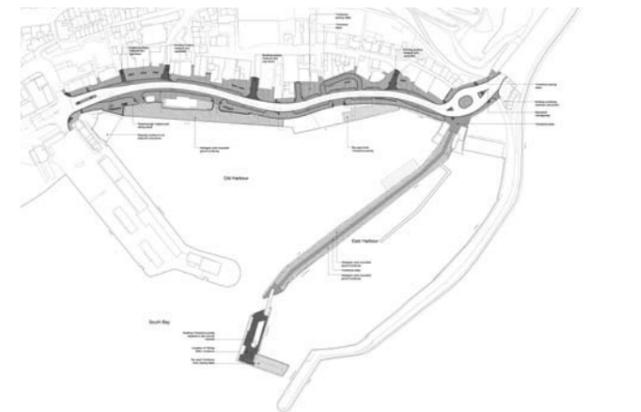
ADDED BENEFITS AND ATTRACTIONS

As a result of the Renaissance programme, other activities have also sprung up, such as the Annual Tourism Awards intended to encourage better quality visitor services throughout the town by celebrating good practice. The introduction of free wi-fi around the Harbour is another example, along with Digital Scarborough - an event celebrating and exploring digital culture and innovative approaches to music, visuals, website design and development. Other events include over thirty dinners where the business community has come together with educationalists and senior public sector people to work towards bringing inward investment to the town. The business group called the Scarborough Business Association held 'Question Time' events at Hull University, Scarborough Campus and also at the Stephen Joseph Theatre for local students to quiz senior business leaders from the area on the subject of enterprise and entrepreneurialism. They also organised an International Business Forum in 2008 and this September. The Forum for Tourism has been involved in shaping the tourism strategy for the area and with high-profile speakers talking to local people from the industry to improve the quality of the offer in the town, as well as help on a wide variety of subjects. Groups such as Creative Coast, who are part of the Renaissance Town Team, were instrumental in making the Woodend Creative Workspace a success in its first year, with the outstanding designs for this historically sensitive building by Allen Tod architects.

The fortunes of the residents of Scarborough's Trafalgar Square have also changed, where they have taken place-making to their hearts; in dramatically improving the appearance of the Square, their intention is that if the area looks good, the anti-social behaviour of some of the transient tenants of the houses of multiple occupancy might improve. This has all been done by the residents, with help and support from the Renaissance project, and they are making good progress.

AN ENLIGHTENED PLACE

John Thompson of JTP Ltd who was commissioned via Yorkshire Forward's Panel to lead the community masterplanning work with West 8, and establishing the town team, described Scarborough as a true example of renaissance. As in the original Italian Renaissance, it is about people and how they have been at the heart of the plans from the very beginning with a vision, harnessed with good leadership.



Opposite Key Projects from the Scarborough Strategic Development Framework, West 8
Top The Harbour, Photograph by Simon Miles
Middle Public Realm Strategy, LDA Design
Bottom The town centre public realm, Photograph by Simon Miles

There has therefore been a dramatic effect on Scarborough's fortunes and appearance. The drive for quality in design has brought a response that has overflowed into the life of the community, encouraging groups who now look after the parks, residents who care for those less well off, and businesses that help and encourage enterprise. Urbanism and the art of place-making have genuinely driven this culture of enterprise and the striving for a better place to live and work.

Nick Taylor, Renaissance Manager, Scarborough's Renaissance

WESTON-SUPER-MARE – PROSPEROUS AND WELCOMING

Marian Barber describes the town's places



What should a twenty-first century seaside town offer? Sea is essential, but what else? The donkeys, sand, deck chairs, theatre, funfair, casino, marina, market, shopping mall – are any of these essential? Brighton has The Lanes, a specialist shopping experience, Lynmouth has a funicular and a distinctive Victorian flavour, and Scarborough may not be well-known yet for its entrepreneurs, but it won the Grand Jury prize in the European Enterprise Awards this year.

The look and the feel of a place are as important as the activities there. The architecture, built environment and public spaces each conspire to give a town its character, ambience and identity. Many buildings in Weston-super-Mare were designed by the celebrated Victorian architect Hans Price and remain highly recognisable, including the toll house and pier-head buildings at Birnbeck Pier. This Grade II* listed pier is unique, and designed by Eugenius Birch, it is the only pier in the country that links the mainland to an island.

Weston's fortunes have broadly followed the same pattern as many other British seaside towns growing up in the Victorian demand for healthy sea air, thriving in the 1940s and 1950s post-war years, and declining following the rise of cheap package holidays. Weston had its High Street 'makeover' in the late 1980s, but struggled when nearby RAF Locking camp and the aircraft industry closed down, resulting in the loss of skilled and high-value jobs. These circumstances have inevitably impacted upon the quality of the built environment with low levels of investment, maintenance and refurbishment of historic buildings, leading to an erosion of Weston's townscape. The deteriorating condition of many buildings further perpetuated the downward spiral of decay by discouraging inward investment, whilst also adversely impacting on the living conditions of occupiers and users.

PHASED GROWTH

The ongoing regeneration strategy for Weston-super-Mare is to stimulate retail, leisure and residential development in the town centre with 3,000 homes, and to ensure that the town's urban extension of 9,000 homes in the Weston Regeneration Area (focused on the former Weston Airfield and RAF Locking sites) is high-quality, sustainable and employment-led. North Somerset Council is committed to driving the phased growth in Weston, ensuring that it progresses and provides social, environmental and economic infrastructure and benefits at every stage.

In 2004 the Council matched its capital budget to Heritage Lottery Funding in order to deliver a three-year Townscape Heritage Initiative (THI). The THI delivered a £2 million scheme to restore and renovate historic buildings of architectural interest in parts of Weston-super-Mare. Over fifty properties were improved, with owners receiving up to seventy per cent of the cost of approved works.

PUBLIC REALM

The South West of England Regional Development Agency (SWERDA) granted £5 million to the Weston Civic Pride Initiative (WCPI). This was a five-year programme of projects with a total value of around £11 million, whose purpose was to stimulate economic regeneration by upgrading the public realm. The WCPI was based on 'connecting spaces, places and people' - in other words, the urban design framework for Weston-super-Mare.

The first project to be completed was Big Lamp Corner. The first phase created a high-quality, distinct public space at a key pedestrian and public transport interchange, linking the town centre and seafront. For the second phase, a stakeholder panel ran a competition to secure public art for the space. The brief was for an artwork that would be iconic, draw people from the promenade into the town centre, add to the legibility of the town by day and night, and symbolise the reinvigoration of the town. 'Silica' was chosen, the brainchild of the landscape architects and designers Wolfgang and Heron, and is a unique and iconic multi-purpose artwork, and as with all great works of art, it is controversial. Its surface material recalls the texture and form of the sandy beach that is a short distance away; its many glass bulbs glint in the sun or reflect the grey of the clouds, mimicking the shimmer of the sea and the pools left by the retreating tide.

Weston has a stunning sandy beach that is long and wide enough for separate areas for donkey rides, dog walking, wind-

powered craft, ballgames, joggers, walkers, picnickers and sunbathers. The huge tidal range of the Severn Estuary means that the sea disappears from sight at low tide (although you can still hear it roaring around Brean Down rocks) and races in to the top of the old sea wall at spring high tides. In the past, it has also raced over that sea wall and flooded parts of the town, but a brand new sea defence is being constructed to protect the town against the climate change predictions for storms and rises in sea levels.

Weston Seafront Enhancements is a £30 million scheme that provides more than just a sea defence. A simple defence would be rock armour – the huge pieces of concrete shaped like jacks from the children's game – but that would not be an attractive option for Weston's fabulous beach. As DEFRA are contributing the majority of the funding, it recognised the importance of the amenity value of the promenade and the beach, and agreed to considerably upgrade the design and finishes. Weston's sea defence will be a robust engineering solution to be built by Birse Coastal, but public art has been incorporated into every aspect of engineers Royal Haskoning's design, most notably by the artist John Maine RA.

STIMULATING DEVELOPMENT

As the regeneration strategy for Weston-super-Mare is to stimulate development in the town centre and its urban extension, the aim is to create a vital and vibrant town that is thriving, interesting and attractive. Private sector involvement and investment is therefore crucial to Weston's success. Urban Splash now own Birnbeck Pier and Island; Levitate were the architects chosen to work up plans for a hotel and leisure experience, although the timetable for this project is uncertain. The owners of the closed Royal Pier Hotel close to Birnbeck are currently working through the challenge of designing a new hotel/apartment scheme in a Conservation Area and on a restricted site in front of an important viewpoint. The most visible scheme at present is the rebirth of the Grand Pier, whose 1930s listed superstructure burned to twisted metal in 2008. Within weeks of the fire, the owners had held a competition and chosen the design outlined by Angus Meek Architects. In essence the outline echoes the old pavilion, with towers to the front, but the structure is larger and will encompass a wider range of pier-related activities, as well as conference and restaurant facilities. Exciting rides are planned to stimulate the sense of seaside adventure.

Pier Square, the last of the Weston Civic Pride Initiative schemes, is currently two traffic islands and a fountain. Originally the project was to realign the traffic in order to create a pedestrian space as a blank canvas for future inspirational design. However, the closure of the Grand Pier in July 2008 caused a rethink and the project is now much more focused upon ensuring enhanced activity in the space. The project area is huge and the £4 million budget will be thinly stretched.

In its regeneration activities, North Somerset Council makes good use of the South West Urban Design Panel taking its own schemes through this scrutiny process, and encourages other major developers to do the same. The Panel's comments and advice have been very useful to all parties and have helped us to articulate the vision for Weston-super-Mare more distinctly.

Marian Barber, Head of Economy and Regeneration, North Somerset Council

Opposite Silica, at Big Lamp Corner by artists Wolfgang & Heron
Top Wave curve seats designed by John Maine RA, as part of Weston's seafront enhancements, Photograph by Luck Associates
Middle Weston Seafront Enhancements, grille designed by John Maine, Photograph by Birse Coastal
Bottom Concept Plan for Pier Square, by Halcrow



COASTAL TOWNS: ISSUES, SOLUTIONS AND LESSONS

Chris Hall reviews the challenges facing many places and communities



Top and Above Scenes from Eastbourne's seafront and town centre

The United Kingdom's coastal towns are as varied as its coastline, and their origins lie in ancient fishing villages, medieval harbours, ports of the Industrial Revolution and the almost unique desire of among generations of the modern era to sit by the sea on sand or pebbles, sunshine optional. Among the challenges that these communities now face, there are some common themes and lessons to share.

COMMON ISSUES

180 DEGREES

Coastal towns have a 180 degree catchment area, and this is challenging as these towns have half the area to draw a business customer, retail consumer base and labour market from, when compared to their in-land cousins. While port communities have the unique benefits of

potentially global links, these immediate service areas are more constrained. A worst case scenario can be the loss of businesses moving closer to national markets elsewhere, a declining shopping offer, a weakened ability to attract skilled workers and a narrowing housing market.

DISTANCE FROM CITY REGIONS

Many coastal communities face significant travel times to city-regions - the drivers of the UK economy - placing communities outside mainstream regional economic trends. The high-speed rail link from Ashford in Kent to London St. Pancras has only recently made rail times from Dover and Folkestone to London faster than those from York. This can limit residential investment in communities beyond the commuter halo of their nearest big cities.

DECLINE OF UK SEASIDE TOURISM

Despite the recession fashion for UK 'staycations', the long-term trends for the UK seaside holiday have been downwards since the 1970s, and many of our seaside resorts have struggled since, particularly those that were already the budget option before then. The result is a smaller local employment base, lower wages, declining hotel stock and ailing visitor facilities.

MARITIME, DEFENCE AND MANUFACTURING DECLINE

Many coastal communities have also often relied on maritime and related defence industries and their skilled employment. Over the last generation these industries have shrunk, been consolidated and reorganised. This has left vacant facilities, under-used land and a weakened local economic base.

Many coastal communities have also had a strong manufacturing role, which declined along with the overall decline of manufacturing in the UK, effecting communities in the South East as much as the North East and North West regions, and lowering the skill base among long-term residents.

A DEPENDENT POPULATION

Coastal communities are popular retirement destinations, with populations of higher average ages and lower economic activity rates. Combined with lower skills among younger residents, this can lead to high levels of dependency, and the use of hotel stock as temporary housing for vulnerable people can pose additional symbolic, perceptual and real problems. Concentrations of deprivation are a common feature in coastal communities across all regions.

INTEGRATING THE HISTORIC AND THE CONTEMPORARY

Heritage assets are great advantages, with grand hotels, ballrooms, townhouses, piers, promenades or gardens signifying a by-gone age or exemplifying a style. However, these may be concentrated along the seafront, while one block back is where the towns are often most challenged. Incorporating contemporary architecture and urban design into historic environments is a challenge. Local indecision, a cautious approach, and a lack of funding can be barriers to changing buildings and facilities that do not meet contemporary needs. A combination of older populations, newly retired migrants, who chose the town for how it is today, a commitment to preservation, and political leadership reflecting these concerns can stymie progress and forward movement.

COMPLEX LAND OWNERSHIP AND ASSEMBLY

Many coastal towns have evolved over a long period of time, with complex and fragmented land ownerships, making assembling significant packages of land for redevelopment a challenge. Whether re-establishing infrastructure, taking sites to the market or dealing with environmental issues, this fragmentation is an obstacle to progress.

COMMON SOLUTIONS

DIVERSIFYING ECONOMIES

For our part, we advocate a diversification of economies; re-establishing or strengthening manufacturing lost in recent years, and finding hidden clusters - Eastbourne as the capital of the pumping industry is one such example. This is a high-tech advanced manufacturing cluster of multiple firms, built on a history of manufacturing specialisation with an international export market. Although focused on cities, the growth of business and financial service sectors can also stabilise town centres and populate business and office parks. Many coastal communities look to the creative industries sector, mirroring Richard Florida's concepts of a creative community being the driver of economic growth. This work draws on case studies of cities with a strong university sector, cultural institutions, a local high-tech cluster and financial services as a foundation for the creative sector, and Brighton's success in this area has been inspiring. The coastal town as a retreat for metropolitans, bohemians and now increasingly for remote-working professionals has also boosted this concept, leading to many seeking a creative quarter in their master plans.

REGIONAL DESTINATIONS AND MAINSTREAM TOWN CENTRES

There is a strong emphasis on retail and leisure as a component of coastal town regeneration. This overlaps with a general desire to upgrade town centres, revamp retail and add higher density housing. A number of communities are looking at repositioning their town centres to be more mainstream, acting as destinations and competing with other regional centres. Clacton's recent revamp of its public realm and new retail shop-fronts is an example of this.

TOURISM OFFER

Tourism will continue to have a role for many communities as part of a more diverse offer. People are growing tired of the flying abroad for the weekend - just because they can - and there is a marked resurgence in staycations, particularly for families with children. While this may be recession-driven, a package trip to Malaga is often cheaper than a week at a British seaside resort, and so their choices are about convenience and quality.

NEW RESIDENTIAL ROLE

Residential development can play a key role in meeting housing targets set by Regional Spatial Strategies - particularly where there are brownfield land or employment growth centres locally or regionally. Some towns see this as an opportunity to move beyond Victoriana and the New Town era overspill estate to offer a new generation of housing and a contemporary architecture, of which Hastings Millennium Community is a good example. Forward-looking architecture can be married to a need for more balanced family and mid-market housing (rather than weekend flats and the retirement bungalow market). This can raise their appeal for aspirational younger households who already look to coastal communities for a higher quality of life and place.

VALUING THE QUALITY OF PLACE

Many of our coastal communities sit on stunning coastlines with beautiful countryside hinterlands. A strong interest in quality of

life and place attracts residents and investors, seeking a more benign environment to raise children or a place to step off the treadmill. The appeal of place can attract a more diverse residential population, and become the basis for inward investment or organic growth. Many traditional seaside towns originally invested in the public realm with promenades, gardens, squares and shopping and entertainment streets; many have now invested in refurbishments of the traditional stock or boldly invested in new elements, and Ryde on the Isle of Wight, Clacton Town Centre, and Blackpool are leading with this approach.

Taking the long view means an emphasis on quality... whether in the public realm, buildings, employment or housing development

PROMOTING HIGHER EDUCATION

Investment in higher education is an important theme. Raising local skills, adding to employment, supporting high tech and creative sectors, this is often an opportunity to create a new landmark building, as Southend-on-Sea has done over recent years. Investment in high quality public buildings can also act as a catalyst for transformation, particularly where there are market failures and the private sector is unwilling to take the first step. The public sector can use its commissioning of a significant new civic building to establish a base for design quality, to be extended elsewhere.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

Whatever specific approach is adopted, the most important lessons that coastal towns must address are to take a long view on change, as well as seeking short-term wins. In today's economic environment, there is tremendous uncertainty and insecurity, and a perception that both private and public investment will be constrained for three to five years. In that time, places must keep planning, designing, consulting and assembling land. Establishing a direction and assembling the political will to deliver it means that communities will be ready when the economy strengthens. Taking the long view also means an emphasis on quality, so that whatever investment is made, whether in the public realm, buildings, new developments, employment or housing development, a focus on quality is the best long-term investment.

Chris Hall, Director, GVA Grimley



Ashford revisited

Sebastian Loew visits the town centre's new shared spaces

It used to be said about Brazil that it was a country that always had a great future. Revisiting Ashford, a town which has been much in the news recently, brings a similar thought to mind. But whilst in the case of Brazil, the future seems to have arrived, Ashford may have to wait a bit longer.

First impressions count: the sight facing the visitor emerging from the station is not the most welcoming, although some work is taking place at the moment and there may be improvements when these are finished. Designers note: it is not the station building that you see when you arrive but the space in front of it! One positive aspect is the large number of bicycles parked in the forecourt of the station, a huge increase since the last visit and a possible indication of locals moving away from total car dependency. While the location of the station is not something that the Borough Council can easily change, it is possible to improve its public realm and give an indication of where the town centre is from it.

About 100m up a steep road, the visitor arrives at the edge of the town centre where the ring road used to be. And that is the first surprise: Station Road was an example of what not to do. For years, I have shown a slide to students of a forlorn pedestrian there, trapped between a brick wall and railings, next to fast moving traffic - but no longer. The railings have gone and the one-way ring road is now a two-way road, far from perfect but a definite improvement. The junction where Elwick Road meets Station Road is better, but is still not pedestrian-friendly; there is an alternative way of getting to the town centre via an underpass, but more needs to be done to make the arrival experience a pleasant one.

Ashford hit the news so much recently because of its new shared space scheme designed by Whitelaw Turkington, leading to and around Elwick Square, so that is the main place to check out. Elwick Road was part of the one-way ring road, the equivalent at a smaller scale, to Birmingham's concrete collar. It totally isolated Ashford town centre from its surroundings, made it difficult for locals to visit it on foot, but very easy for motorists to bypass it without bothering to stop there. As a result the shopping experience in Ashford was

not what it could have been, particularly in view of the charm that can still be found in the town centre. Now the one-way system has gone, if not the physical road, but this has been tamed at least. It no longer seems impossible to cross it; psychologically the experience is different.

As you walk along Elwick Road from the station, the changes are gradual: you first notice a 20 mile per hour speed limit, wide footpaths, changes in road surfaces and the lighting system. New lamp posts and trees emphasise the vertical aspect of the space, and the elimination of double yellow lines reduce its linearity (although grey granite bands still follow the line of the kerb). The atmosphere is that of a good road in a leafy suburb. Sadly, to the left, the feeling changes and the heart sinks! The whole of the western side of the road is a series of vacant lots, beyond which are the railway tracks, there is nothing there. Elwick Road only has frontages on its eastern side and unfortunately many of these are set back, and the space between buildings and the road is occupied by car parks.

A bit further north, we reach Elwick Square, the main shared space of the scheme. A new change in the road surface and the white bands of a zebra crossing (which in theory should not be needed) announce the status of the space. The quality of the design and detailing are obviously high and the area can compete well with similar places on the Continent. The bike stands, bins, lamp posts, road surfaces are all remarkable, and accessibility-for-all has obviously been taken into account in the design of surfaces. The engineers have even had the foresight to provide trenches under the road for the future provision of high speed broadband cabling; no need therefore to break up the surface every time a new service is needed. Some fairly subtle artwork, including sound, refers to the cattle market that used to be on the vacant lots.

So far, so very good. But mid-morning in mid-July, with decent weather, where were the people? Unfortunately there were very few sharing the space; to capture a view with pedestrians I had to wait a while; but then there were few cars too although the speed limit was being respected by most, if not all drivers. It would be interesting



Opposite Ashford's Elwick Square
Top row The new ring road, Elwick Road, Elwick Square
Bottom row West Street, Forge Street, Elwick Road

to see the space on a Saturday or during the rush hour. The lack of pedestrians in the space can be easily explained - the lack of frontages on the western side, and Elwick Square's relationship to the entrance of the new County Square with Debenhams on the front. This is a traditional shopping mall, which at the other end joins the High Street. The people are inside walking along the mall, and while they do have to get there somehow, it also has underground parking, so they may not have walked there at all. Therefore even though Elwick Square is at the junction of the former ring road and a pedestrian bridge that links over the railway lines to the south western districts of Ashford, it needs far more active frontages to become a real place. It is to be regretted that the County Square development is not a real square and that the shops are not around and facing the square, instead of being inside the mall. No doubt the developers would not have considered it, even if Ashford's planners had requested it.

A little further along Elwick Road, a slight drop in standards give the false impression that the scheme ends here. There is obviously a design problem at this point (as revealed by temporary diversion blocks) that needs to be resolved. Fortunately the tamed Elwick Road then continues as a somewhat complicated divided road to end up at the intersection with West Street, in a roundabout with an intriguing sculpture at its fulcrum. Whether this is a shared space is not entirely clear to either pedestrians or drivers, but this may become clearer with time. A new housing development is being built here and should make it more meaningful.

The next section of the former ring road along West and Forge Streets has been transformed into a kind of boulevard with one-way carriageways on either side of a central landscaped reservation. Once again the detailing and landscape are of a very high standard, but I wonder whether, in spite of its attractive street furniture, the public will use this island 'pocket park' with traffic passing on both sides. Might it not have been better to widen the footway on one side of the road and leave a two-way carriageway on the other side? Furthermore, as on Elwick Street more active uses are needed to animate the space.

Finally at the end of Forge Street, a much better junction has replaced what used to be a terrible spot; the pedestrianised High Street can be joined at this point.

So back to the future: in spite of certain misgivings, Ashford Borough Council and Kent County Council should be congratulated for having had the foresight and the courage (against some vicious opposition) to implement this scheme. Their approach is similar to that of public authorities on the Continent where the public space and infrastructure are provided first, without waiting for the adjacent developments but knowing that it will attract them. What needs to happen now is that developers see the advantages of building along the road and around Elwick Square. With the projected growth of the town - the population of 55,000 is supposed to double in the next 25 years with 31,000 new jobs created by 2031, this should be feasible. The councils should then be able to recover their investment, but unfortunately this is unlikely to happen during the recession, and therefore it will be sometime in the future.

The high speed link to St. Pancras which is to start a regular service this summer could provide another stimulus to Ashford's success in attracting investment. But this should not be taken for granted and the abundance of parking in the town should be a cause of concern: will people from the surrounding areas just drive into Ashford, leave their car and take the train to London, or will they stop and spend money in the town? Will the train bring people to Ashford or draw them away?

Of course Ashford's plans are not just about the town centre. A number of schemes in the surroundings are under way: the notorious 1960s Stanhope Estate is being transformed; developments along Victoria Road; a number of new housing schemes; a new park and ride scheme and new schools are all on the cards and quite a few have planning permission, but they are not here yet. The aptly named local development vehicle Ashford's Future, now presided over by Judith Armitt, still has a lot of work to do before it becomes Ashford's Present.

Sebastian Loew



The Isle of Dogs Revisited

Matthew Carmona catches up with the regeneration story

NOT THE WHOLE STORY

The tale of London's Docklands from the 1970s to the property crash of the early 1990s is a tale told and retold many times. Despite this, surprisingly little has been written about the area since, and how it has fared in the New Labour era. This article brings the story of the Isle of Dogs up-to-date, and derives from a detailed review of the twelve key plans that sought to guide change over the thirty five years and four development waves of the area's regeneration. To help to interpret the diversity of planning models used in this small part of London, each development wave is viewed through a framework constituting two separate but related continua - from Market-led to State-led, and Plan-based to Opportunity-based modes of planning.

PRELUDE 1973-1981

Serious attempts at regenerating Docklands began in 1971 when the Conservative government commissioned private consultants to develop options for the then largely redundant post-industrial landscape. Reacting strongly to what was seen as an attempt to impose national and private sector solutions on local and public problems (a foretaste of what was to come), the subsequent Labour administration placed control in the hands of a public / community partnership - the Docklands Joint Committee (DJC). Despite the successful completion of the London Docklands Strategic Plan in 1976 (the only pan-Docklands plan ever formally adopted), the period was marked by inaction and failure, with the general economic climate restricting both public sector funds and private sector interest. The latter was also limited by the plan's innate opposition to private investment, and support (almost exclusively) for new public housing and industrial regeneration. The failure of the DJC was in part a failure to understand that times were changing, and that local government would no longer have the same powerful role (or resources) that it had in the past. Using the analytical framework, the period can be classified as plan-based and state-led.

WAVE ONE - 1981-1985

From 1981-1985, a dogmatic preference for public sector solutions gave way to private solutions, spearheaded by the designation of the Enterprise Zone on the Isle of Dogs and the establishment of the London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) to take control of the wider Docklands regeneration. This first wave of development was characterised by a design and development free-for-all, with the LDDC largely unaware of the area's potential and almost entirely

devoid of vision. The only attempt to impose order came through the commissioning of the townscape-inspired Isle of Dogs Development and Design Guide from (amongst others) Gordon Cullen. The result was quickly dismissed as 'preposterously aesthetic', whilst the exercise was undermined by an absence of belief in the plan, which, as a result, was sidelined. Nevertheless the state (in the guise of the LDDC) was active, using marketing guides, hype, direct public realm investment, and fiscal incentives to drive the development agenda. This period can therefore be characterised as state-led but opportunity-based, but the results were fragmentedly suburban and roundly criticised as 'an architectural zoo'.

WAVE TWO - 1985-1991

With the arrival of Canary Wharf (10 million sq ft of commercial offices and ancillary uses) everything changed. Design was seen for the first time not as a barrier to innovation and a cost, but as a means to establish a marketable sense of place. The urban yet starkly private vision that resulted was fixed within a detailed masterplan and series of design codes designed to contrast dramatically with the surroundings - economically, physically and socially. Yet the area remained marginal, not least because of its almost non-existent public transport infrastructure. History shows how Olympia & York over-stretched themselves and when faced with a major economic downturn, were unable to let enough space to service their spiralling debts, going under in 1992. If the scheme marked a continuation of the lack of interest shown by the LDDC for social and community concerns, it demonstrated the importance of the certainly that goes with a robust plan. Without such a plan in place, the market sought to create one, and so the period can be characterised as plan-based, market-led; a new and important departure for the UK development industry.

WAVE THREE - 1991-2002

At this time the public sector stepped in with increasing amounts of cash to belatedly put in place the infrastructure required to give the area a viable long-term future. This had been envisaged since the various 1970s plans, but was still largely absent. The extension of the Docklands Light Railway to Bank and later the building of the Jubilee Line extension (opened in 1999) were catalytic and this, as much as the recovering fortunes of the markets, led to the gradual re-emergence from the mid-1990s onwards of Canary Wharf under new owners, Canary Wharf Group.

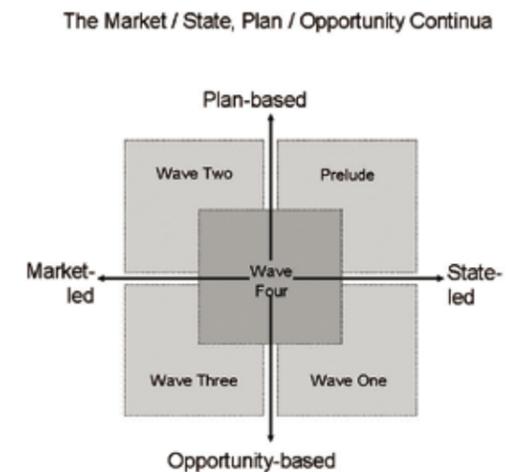
Critics who had rashly written off the Isle of Dogs were proven incorrect as the original masterplan (with some revisions) was completed

alongside a second phase on Heron Quays. During this period both the urban design and the architecture matured, becoming less introverted and formal, and more international and corporate. A real place began to emerge, albeit still largely disconnected from its immediate hinterland. But although the LDDC began to apply the design-led lessons from Canary Wharf to other parts of the Docklands, they continued to pursue a hands-off marketing-led strategy in the remainder of the Isle of Dogs, with sites marketed as isolated enclave development opportunities.

By 1998 when the LDDC was wound up, the regeneration had delivered 849 hectares of developable land, 75,485 jobs, 24,300 new homes, including 6,000 for social housing with a further 8,000 council units refurbished. £8.7 billion of private investment had been levered in by £2 billion from the LDDC and £2 billion in transport infrastructure. But research commissioned by the Isle of Dogs Community Foundation (IDCF) concluded that the Island remained an island of two halves, with advantage, wealth and great liveability sitting side-by-side with exclusion, alienation and squalor. Despite this, when the London Borough of Tower Hamlets (LBTH) took over from the LDDC, they initially continued the same incrementalist approach to development. This third wave can be categorised as a market-led process guided by opportunity rather than plan-making. Thus the Canary Wharf masterplan was rapidly re-cast in the light of the new market context, whilst LBTH's 1998 adopted plan represented little more than a borough-wide development control manual.

WAVE FOUR - 2002 ONWARDS

The fourth wave saw urban renaissance ideas beginning to influence the area through the new London Plan where intensification and the pursuit of better design were significant themes. The permissive approach to commercial and residential development that this ushered in, alongside sustained economic growth from the mid-1990s onwards, marked a period of major development proposals spreading beyond the Canary Wharf estate, to areas in the centre of the Island (the Millennium Quarter). In time these developments look set to gradually sweep away the Wave One suburban business park developments there. A sequence of plans from LBTH latterly attempted to give some structure to this area and the Island as a whole. These included the Millennium Quarter Masterplan that has been partially successful. However, the Isle of Dogs Area Action Plan looks likely to fail, having been thrown out by the Government Office



Above The different waves of development related to market-led, state-led, plan-based and opportunity-based models of planning

for London alongside the Local Development Framework Core Strategy for lacking any meaningful spatial vision.

Yet this has been a period of huge development on the Island, during which a better mix of uses has been achieved as high-rise residential mega-schemes appear in the Millennium Quarter. Permissions for these and equally massive commercial developments in and around Canary Wharf are being delivered with major planning gain packages attached. Through the auspices of the IDCF, these are supplementing further direct public sector funding (e.g. £3.1 million SRB funding) to deliver a range of social regeneration benefits.

With a huge pipeline of projects on the horizon, the potential to overcome the still obvious physical fragmentation of the Island is also finally here, although with the danger of perpetuating a network of private or pseudo-private landscapes. The period nevertheless demonstrates a pragmatic planning that is balancing state and market agendas, informed by plan and opportunity combined.

TOO SOON TO JUDGE

In essence this has been a regeneration story born of private initiative and public subsidy, that once established has only gradually incorporated a more proactive, if still hesitant, public sector contribution to planning its future. Thus the public sector plans that have been produced have largely been ineffective as the means to establish a clear vision, and have only become effective when the lessons of the private sector have been learnt. These lessons are that in England today for planning to succeed, it requires: a clear physical vision to guide economic and social objectives; sustained commitment to its delivery; and, private sector buy-in and resources.

We may yet have a well-shaped and cohesive part of the city with a part to play beyond the obvious economic role that it currently performs. The high cost of office space in London, the massive planned expansions still on site or on the drawing board (despite the recession), and the new determination of the public sector to shape this development more positively, all bode well.

But planning of this type needs one more thing to succeed - a buoyant economy. In a more uncertain global economic climate, one in which commentators such as George Soros have argued that the super-boom of the last sixty years is at an end, all future plans are in doubt. In regeneration of this scale, thirty five years is just too soon to judge.

For a detailed review, see <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.progress.2008.10.001>.

THE PUBLIC CHANCE

AURORA FERNÁNDEZ PER AND JAVIER ARPA, A+T EDICIONES, 2008 £69



ISBN 078 84 612 4488 1

This super-size and bi-lingual (Spanish-English) book is a collection of 36 public spaces realised in the past few years, almost entirely on brown field sites. They are grouped thematically depending on their location: Peripheral voids, Waterfronts, Industrial areas and Infrastructures.

The book is lavishly illustrated and the amount of text is limited, but it is there for a specific purpose and cleverly utilised. So for instance on a spread of two pages there are ten 'opportunities' for the sites and ten for the public; this is presented in a simple and attractive manner and makes the points effectively. Equally the twenty strategies that the authors have distilled from the schemes are summarised in few words and many illustrations.

All of the necessary information for each of the schemes is given. In addition a page of 'layers' introduces each project and these are: activities, rooms, routes, buildings, vegetation and where appropriate, water. These are accompanied by diagrams at the same scale to show how these layers interrelate. There are always layout plans, frequently an aerial photograph and several images that give a good idea of what the scheme is about and how it relates to its surroundings. The

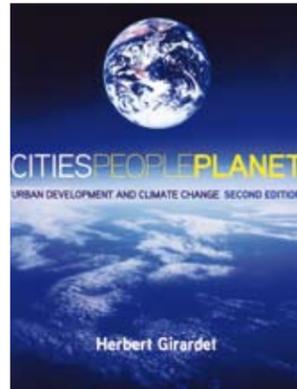
geographical coverage of the book is wide though not universal, with schemes from Australia to Turkey, many from Spain and the US, but none from the UK. Some are of a very large scale and a reminder, in these suddenly austere times, of what grand vision and public investment can do to a city. These public spaces will outlive most of the current decision-makers and the financial crisis, and will be a legacy for future generations.

This is not a cheap book but it could be a very useful reference for potential clients and practitioners looking for inspiration and reassurance of what is possible. The title seems carefully chosen: these new urban landscapes give the public a chance. Finally the book allows us to evaluate what good urban design has achieved in the recent past and as such gives a seal of approval to the professions involved.

Sebastian Loew

CITIES PEOPLE PLANET

HERBERT GIRARDET, WILEY 2008, £19.99



ISBN 978 0 470 77270 6

In this second and expanded edition of his earlier 2004 book, Herbert Girardet writes about the interdependence between globalisation, ecological issues and urban development, with a new chapter on cities in the age of climate change. Other chapters are: creating liveable cities, cities as eco-technical systems and solar cities. His reflections on zero-waste and transport are useful and he advocates better 'future-proofing' for existing cities by mimicking natural zero-waste ecosystems.

The Clinton Foundation's Large Cities Climate Leadership Group, which

includes London, has pledged an energy efficiency building retrofit programme as cities can mobilise construction companies and building specialists to invest in retrofitting their own stock, with incentives for local initiatives, and sharing successful results. The European Climate Alliance includes 1,400 cities which have pledged to cut CO2 emissions by 10% every five years, and twenty European countries participate in the 'Energie-Cities' network promoting local action and policies using environmental budgeting.

In Germany, local energy generation such as CHP, solar and photovoltaic panels is widespread. Heidelberg, for example, has reduced its CO2 emissions by 30% since 1993, and other greenhouse gases, waste and use of drinking water. Woking reduced its energy consumption by 49% in 2002-4, and its CO2 emissions by 18%. Girardet shows how these measures impact on architecture and urban design, including contradictions between broad strategies like compact cities, their possible adverse effect of creating heat islands, and the need for more daylight and sunlight for ecological buildings.

Measures to reduce CO2 emissions

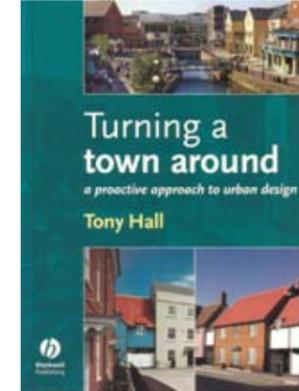
are of particular importance in fast urbanising and industrialising countries. Girardet mentions Dongtan in Shanghai for which he was a consultant. However, Dongtan has raised much criticism, with perceptions of it as a privileged suburb on an ecological island crossed by a motorway to link settlements on the other side of the Yangtze Delta. Nevertheless, Arup's masterplan incorporates all known ecological technologies to create a zero-emission ecocity, including urban farming which is widely practised in China.

Girardet makes a pertinent argument that designing for reducing energy, waste and water consumption will make cities and villages more liveable, the latter possibly benefiting from ecotourism. He shows the unsustainable ecological footprint of London - 293 times its own footprint - and cites historic examples of cities which were prosperous, convivial and environmentally sustainable confirming the benefits of limiting urban growth. He is convinced that converging economic and environmental sustainability with increased public participation will improve urban life overall.

Judith Ryser

TURNING A TOWN AROUND, A PROACTIVE APPROACH TO URBAN DESIGN

TONY HALL, 2007, BLACKWELL PUBLISHING LTD, OXFORD, £47.50



ISBN 978 1 4051 7023 9

In writing this practical book, Tony Hall has put many professionals to shame. Unlike many who see critical changes in how the quality of the built environment is secured, he has conscientiously charted and explained both the context and processes for how Chelmsford has been 'turned around' in the period from 1996 to 2003, leading to Chelmsford Borough Council's achieving

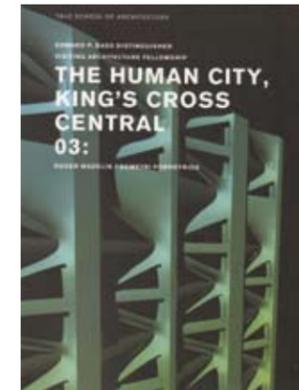
its Beacon Status for the Quality of the Built Environment. The book is a useful exemplar for those in local government, practice and education, setting out how to deliver better quality places, based on direct and shared experiences. As Hall states, Chelmsford is not, or at least, was not an unusual place, and the lessons learned could be applied anywhere. The excellent introduction, capturing the problems of standardised housing, should be on reading lists for all in the development industry. Hall follows this with a clear structure outlining a two strand approach: a physically based spatial strategy, and then detailed prescriptive guidance for sites, to set out expectations and transform proposals through proactive negotiation. He also tackles the organisational changes needed to make this process work between departments and within a hierarchy, and gives eleven proactive attitudes and tools that need to be adopted (p12). This is a primer in local authority best practice, whereby the

need for strategic political support is explained, along with worked examples for urban designers, whether to guide a lone inexperienced resource, or to influence others. These examples show existing sites, urban design analyses, frameworks, master plans and photographs of schemes. While the aesthetic of some of the housing may not be cutting-edge, it is evident that these places will be successful for many generations of residents. Perhaps Chelmsford's fundamental distinguishing feature that Hall undersells is its professional planner who became an enlightened councillor and champion, backing a team of five urban design officers, when many authorities had none. However this book should provide great encouragement for anyone in local government to effect change, as it is easy to judge its authenticity and adopt a similar strategy for the pursuit of quality.

Louise Thomas

THE HUMAN CITY, KINGS CROSS CENTRAL 03

ED N RAPPAPORT, G KNIGHT, A TAYLOR, YALE SCHOOL OF ARCHITECTURE 2008, \$30



ISBN 978 0 393 73247 4

This book outlines Yale University's architectural students design studio as they interpret the possibilities of the masterplan for Kings Cross Central - the 67 acre development adjacent to St Pancras Station and the Channel Tunnel Rail Link - reputedly the largest development in London for 150 years. The book begins conversationally as Roger Madelin of the developer Argent, and the architect Demetri Porphyrios discuss their aspirations for urban design and architecture, and highlight the value of a good working partnership.

Porphyrios' vision of human cities - to encourage conviviality, a sense of scale and proportion and are marked by a sense of place - contrasts with inhuman cities which are 'calculated on efficiency and profit' and with no interest in the common good. However the book does not reveal much about the Kings Cross masterplan, its content, evolution, the uses of the retained historic buildings and how it proposes to meet the challenge of integrating such a huge project with the wider city. The book is also not impartial and celebrates Kings Cross Central for the anticipated pedestrian priority, public realm, meaning, life and activity; certainly the quality of the public spaces along Regent's Canal, new squares, green park, and the leisure destination of the Coal Drop Yards promise a remarkable new quarter for London. However it does leave one wondering if the international city scale of parts of Kings Cross Central will actually feel quite so human. The majority of the book outlines the students' design studio, firstly as they worked individually - a process which almost inevitably leads to an architectural zoo with many ideas and

no common language or structure (can every site really be a gateway?). As one project reviewer asked of a student, were you designing a building or were you designing a street? The second phase of the studio included students working in small teams on neighbourhood areas to bring greater coherence. The results are mixed, revealing a transatlantic divergence on the merits of a larger proportion of quieter buildings and a discussion of how design codes can be used within masterplanning. The book is not written to be accessible to a wide audience e.g. the Kings Cross masterplan strategy 'fostered a paradigmatic approach to collaborative design based on specific theoretical aspirations', and this is not a book to explain the whole Kings Cross Central development. Nonetheless, I found it an enjoyable read and a beautifully illustrated book, which revealed an encouraging awareness of urban design principles in such an important project and emphasised the need for team-working and masterplans to provide clear design direction.

Tim Hagyard

EMPOWERING METROPOLITAN REGIONS THROUGH NEW FORMS OF COOPERATION

ALEXANDER OTGAAR, LEO VAN DEN BERG, JAN VAN DER MEER, CAROLIEN SPELLER
EURICUR SERIES, ASHGATE 2008, £60

DECODING NEW REGIONALISM SHIFTING SOCIO-POLITICAL CONTEXTS IN CENTRAL EUROPE AND LATIN AMERICA

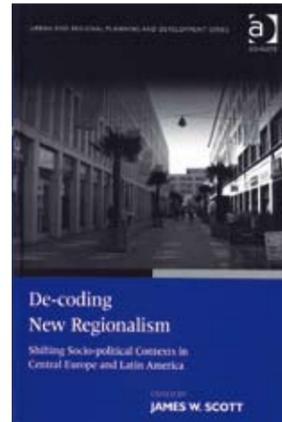
JAMES W. SCOTT (ED), URBAN AND REGIONAL PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT SERIES, ASHGATE 2009, £60



ISBN 978 0 7546 7241 8

Regionalism seems to be gaining in importance, not only among spatial planners and designers, but also among political scientists who explore better forms of governance in the light of public disillusionment with the democratic process. These two pieces of research are a good example of current preoccupation with managing spatial development and the politics of scale. Both reflect how economic boom and bust cycles impede long-term spatial strategies. Their assumption is that better forms of cooperation between public administrations and other key stakeholders would improve spatial development chances, while reducing unproductive competition, conflicts, stalemates, and duplication of efforts and expenses.

How does this impact on urban design? Many examples of masterplanning for large sites, especially across boundaries, suffer from fragmented decision-making and a lack of public participation. By their nature, many large-scale projects, both on brown and green field sites, are planned for new users not involved in participation



ISBN 978 0 7546 7098 8

processes, thus complicating the problem of interactive governance. Improving decision-making and participation processes is of interest to urban designers whose projects often fall at these administrative hurdles.

Work by the European Institute for Comparative Urban Research (Euricur) on 'Empowering Metropolitan Regions' is driven by the EU ambition to increase greater spatial, economic and socio-cultural integration through cross-border cooperation. Its case studies include different scales: Centropo, a central European cross-border region encompassing parts of the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Austria with Vienna as its epicentre (to contribute to EU integration); the Wonderful Copenhagen networks (to enhance tourism) which include Southern Sweden; regions within nation states, around Helsinki (to improve competitiveness in advanced technology), Munich (revisiting the powers of the two regional planning bodies), Rotterdam (studying the structural constraints of cooperation between local authorities), and Budapest

(seeking to improve cooperation between national and regional railway agencies); at district level in the poor east of Barcelona (cooperation between neighbourhoods); and at local scale in Porto (use of an arts foundation as development trigger).

'Decoding New Regionalism' compares the situation in Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Romania and East Germany) with Latin America (Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Bolivia) where states are undergoing complex and systemic institutional change from a centralised protectionist situation to liberal market principles, against the backdrop of supra-national market integration. The research assumed that these structural changes leave opportunities for innovative decentralised regional governance, albeit with very inconclusive and contradictory findings.

The case studies in both books are used to test their hypotheses: Euricur uses a common analytical framework to assess case studies in terms of output and outcome, while Scott reviews current political institutional theory, against which he assesses the evolution of territorialities of states and in particular new regionalism, in terms of their governance capacity dealing with large-scale, long-term development tasks.

The books are written by a local research team and a single editor respectively, avoiding the fragmentation of several articles. Nevertheless, the clear analytical framework of Euricur manages to reach more concrete conclusions than the ambitious comparisons between Latin America and new EU member states. Both books show that much spatial decision-making will continue to occur at local levels where urban designers have a clear role to play.

Judith Ryser

PALLADIO'S CHILDREN

NJ HABRAKEN, EDITED BY J TEICHER, TAYLOR AND FRANCIS 2005 £23.99



ISBN 978 0 415 35791 3

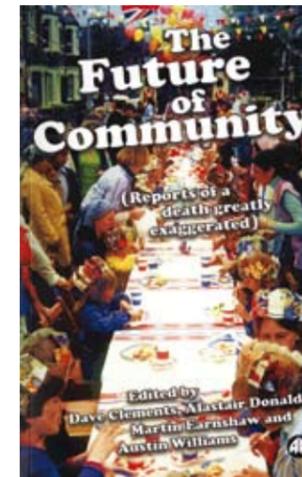
This tardy review of a book published several years ago is important for two reasons: firstly, it has only received two reviews, and secondly the Palladio quincentenary exhibition held earlier this year in London, added new evidence to the main argument of this book. Habraken, Emeritus Professor at the Department of Architecture at MIT, has been preoccupied with the themes of this book for four decades and these essays are an easily accessible summary of this work. The intriguing title comes from his observation that 'we recognise

in Palladio's work a familiar attitude to making architecture that we share. We still view ourselves much in the way he may have seen himself' (p6). Palladio was the first architect to publish his own works in his own lifetime although, of course, from Vitruvius via Alberti to Serlio there had been publications showing examples of architecture. But he was publishing as a practising architect showing his own work as well as ancient buildings he had measured himself, and the Palladio Exhibition showed how the author 'sexed up' his work for publication - the illustrations in *The four books of architecture* do not always match the realised buildings. Habraken points out how this tradition of defining architecture has endured, and 'reinforced a popular view of architecture as the story of gifted and successful individuals and having ones work published ...became the defining mark of arrival; of admission to the inner circle of those who define architecture' (p7). Both Palladio and Le Corbusier made wonderful buildings, but the experience of buildings through books is very different from visiting them. For urban design this is important, as visitors

experience the context of a building, where readers do not. Furthermore, the ordinary buildings and urban fabric 'has remained obscure or self evident and this has led to the emancipation and the isolation of an entire professional culture from the integrated field of form and people' (p28). Habraken emphasises that a place is inhabited and subject to a continuous reshaping by the interventions of the people and the institutions who occupy it. Amsterdam, Venice, Mexico City, Cairo, Chicago and Austin are used to demonstrate the enduring nature of this issue over time. The built environment was 'to become a matter of a brilliant all encompassing vision rather than patient cultivation' - the issue of control is central. Habraken ends on the hopeful note that thematic design is resurfacing in new ways. While readers of Urban Design will probably agree, (and architects will point out that autonomy is a myth and their activity is circumscribed by regulation and economics), the ideal still exists and a glance at the architectural press shows just how far we still have to go, to show buildings and places inhabited.

Ivor Samuels

THE FUTURE OF COMMUNITY (REPORTS OF A DEATH GREATLY EXAGGERATED) ED D CLEMENTS, A DONALD, A EARNSHAW AND A WILLIAMS, 2008, PLUTO PRESS LONDON £12.99



ISBN 978 0 7453 2817 1 HB
ISBN 978 0 7453 2816 4 PB

Launched with a series of debates in cities around Britain, this book is a teasing read; it will provoke readers to check their beliefs, and is a wake-up call for urban designers engaged in delivering the sustainable communities

agenda - is this a credible outcome? However many outrageous statements remain unchallenged as the silent reader is unable to engage in the debate that it calls for. Within fifteen chapters by twelve authors, the nature of community and the messages that have been developed to try to engender it are intensively scrutinised and critiqued. Many of the articles are directed at New Labour's interventions on crime, social order, and enabling others. The rebellious tone of the articles however makes for a great read, bringing a smile at descriptions of 'policy wonks', those who are politically powerful and yet ignorant about how most people live.

The book's emergent message urges us to realise that communities need to be based on genuine relationships, rather than traditional notions of proximity, homogeneity or multiculturalism, shared fears or judgements e.g. on crime or environmental issues. The most interesting and enjoyable chapters are towards the start of the book (chapters

1-5) tackling issues closest to the built environment perhaps, and others span broader subjects, preoccupied with toppling today's elite and policy makers, and the manipulation of the working classes in history. Chapters 10 and 11 on Little Italy and Rio on Galway are interesting stories about interculturalism, not multiculturalism. Yet it is frustrating that while several sacred concepts are systematically deconstructed - the environmental lobby, Transition Towns, the provision of public spaces, suburbs, Jane Jacobs, New Urbanism, etc - the book does not offer many alternative ideas, other than the importance of freedom in how people form relevant relationships. Rejecting the current culture of formalising relationships, and media messages of Britain on the verge of a breakdown, seem to be the recommended ways of creating genuine sociability and cooperation.

Louise Thomas

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www.tribalgroup.co.uk/urbanstudioteam
Contacts Simon Gray/ Simon Green
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Website www.bcu.ac.uk
Contact Joe Holyoak
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www.eca.ac.uk/index.php?id=523
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Email landscape@leedsmet.ac.uk
Website www.leedsmet.ac.uk/courses/la
Contact Edwin Knighton
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Tel 0141 548 4219
Email ombretta.r.romice@strath.ac.uk
Contact Ombretta Romice
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Contact Bill Erickson
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URBAN DESIGN IN THE DOCK

With this issue's topic I am reminded that in 2007, CABE and English Heritage addressed *Seaside Towns* in their 2008 Urban Panel visits. CABE asked each of its Regional Representatives to nominate one seaside town in their region that the Panel should visit. Having looked at a map of the West Midlands, I was unable to find any seaside towns, and in fact there seemed to be an absence of seaside itself.

To find the nearest sea to Birmingham, you have to head southwest towards the River Severn, and that is what we did this year when we ran the CABE Urban Design Summer School in Bristol. Bristol is not exactly a coastal town, but looking across the Floating Harbour from Canon's Marsh you certainly are aware that you are in a maritime city, with a strong sense that the sea is just around a bend in the river. This was the third and last of the Summer Schools that my university, together with other colleagues, have run for CABE. It is an intense and exhausting four-day experience, but highly satisfying.

One of my jobs at the Summer School was helping to facilitate one of the three divisions tackling the 'Big Project'. We had chosen a wonderful and historic regeneration site at the back of Temple Meads Station known as Totterdown Basin, cut off by the railway viaduct, and divided by a minor arm of the Floating Harbour. We must like the back-of-the-railway-station context, because for last year's Summer School we chose a similar site in Newcastle. Right on the edge of the city centre, ripe for redevelopment, yet cut off and inaccessible - a classic urban design challenge. The problem at Totterdown Basin was exacerbated by the presence of several high, impermeable masonry perimeter walls which used to enclose warehouses and the gas works, some of them statutorily listed. What can you do – retain them, remove them, or transform them by knocking lots of holes in them? I liked the solution of one of our groups who put car parking within the walls, and a public garden on top of the cars, with users looking out at the town over the tops of the walls; a bit like being on the ramparts in York or Berwick-on-Tweed.

I admit to feeling sentimental about the intense camaraderie generated by being part of the Summer School team for three years, in Birmingham, Gateshead/Newcastle and Bristol, and sorry in a way that it is over and we shan't be getting together to do it again. It is very pleasing to know that over 350 people have gone through the mill and come out with some new urban design knowledge and skills (and maybe a little passion) to take back home.

...

The Ondonym Mystery (UD111) is solved, thanks to UD-reader and amateur etymologist Sam Appleby. Disappointing - it was merely a misprint for odonym, from the Greek *odos*, street. However, it is a fairly rare French word, and seems not to exist in English. So let's import it anyway, and make it an English word that you can casually drop into the conversation with other urban designers in the pub.

Joe Holyoak