

133 **URBAN
DESIGN**

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GREENING THE CITY



**URBAN
DESIGN
GROUP**

VIEW FROM THE CHAIR: KATY NEAVES

2014 saw the centenary of Gordon Cullen's birth and a number of events have taken place to celebrate his life, work and influence on the development of urban design. The joy of being Chair of the Urban Design Group is attending such events and meeting new people whilst visiting new places. In October I had the pleasure of attending the second part of the Street NW Gordon Cullen Centenary Sketch Event coordinated by Mark Foster and Rebecca Newiss and hosted by Jaimie Ferguson.

At the event Simone Ridyard reflected on the community of Urban Sketchers, a non-profit organisation that organises on-location sketching events. Simone previously took Street NW on a sketchcrawl, as reported in this issue (see p.5). Robert Thompson from Sheffield City Council discussed Cullen's contribution in seeing the obvious in the layers

of townscape and their interaction with landscape, identifying and analysing these qualities through a series of photographs. Eamonn Canniffe from Manchester Metropolitan University rounded off the event with a look at Cullen's approach to serial vision, using the example of how Manchester looked in the 19th century, how it could have looked with the implementation of the 1945 *City of Manchester Plan*, and what the future holds with current proposals for the city.

This talk was an excellent homage to Cullen's theories, emphasising how the townscape can come together to provide visual pleasure and how thinking only in 2D can be dangerous. It further highlighted how the ability to sketch quickly in 3D is still an essential skill to convey legible ideas within the urban design profession. Cullen studied architecture at the former Regent Street Polytechnic, now University of Westminster. His family plans to bequeath his personal collection of papers and drawings to the University's archives for future generations to enjoy.

Through my role as an external examiner in Urban Design at Leeds Beckett University (formerly Leeds Metropolitan University) I

was pleased to see that the students still included sketching along with CAD skills in their final portfolio exhibition. The sketches were being used to demonstrate the serial vision of moving through existing townscapes and reflecting analytically on their good and bad qualities. I am the first to admit that I do not sketch enough, so I am off to find my sketch pad, dust off my pencil case and join @urbansketchers.

Due to pre-existing commitments I was unable to attend this year's conference in Nottingham, which went smoothly due to Laura Alvarez's amazing energy and organisation skills along with Nottingham Trent University's excellent facilities. Further spin-off events are planned early next year in the East Midlands with the MP Graham Allen (see below) and a proposed Urban Design Group flash mob. Follow us on Twitter @UDGUrban-Update to hear further news in the New Year.

● Katy Neaves

URBAN DESIGN GROUP

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Keep in touch - If we don't have your email address, you won't receive the fortnightly Urban Update, with its news of national and local events, new initiatives, jobs, and latest research.

USE YOUR URBANNOUS

The majority of London UDG events are recorded by Fergus Carnegie and uploaded onto the internet. An astonishing collection of over 200 presentations is available to you to view free, anywhere anytime.

NOTTINGHAM 20TH FEBRUARY

An invitation: Graham Allen MP, who spoke at the UDG Annual Dinner, invites all practitioners in urban design to come to Nottingham North on 20th February to help transform what has become the UK's capital of unemployment. The area comprises thousands of well-built suburban houses from the 1920s

and 1930s: it is classic corporation suburbia, with street patterns in the municipal geometric style. There are also estates built the 1970s and 1980s enveloping what is left of the small market town of Bulwell, which also has its own tram stop. The problem is that the economic system, of which the housing was part, has largely evaporated. What is to be done? Details will emerge as the date draws nearer. Please see the UDG website for details.

PLACE ALLIANCE

As a further follow up to the Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment, Matthew Carmona and Lucy Natarajan at University College London have held a series of Big Meets inviting all comers to develop a partnership to focus in the way place is designed and cared for. It is a huge challenge, given that there are groups who never come into contact with one another, and a history of recrimination between the highways and design sectors. There will be sceptics who expect their attempts to fail. But few people would deny the benefit of getting people right across the built environment, and in the health, business and environment sectors

too, to understand the importance of place, and to work together to improve it (see also p.7).

SIMPLE QUESTIONS

One of the UDG team took part in a lengthy radio interview earlier in the year, and was asked some disarmingly simple questions....

- Are towns designed or do they just happen?
- What makes people happy? Can you design happiness into an urban environment?
- Does pedestrianisation of high streets work?
- If someone is looking to move home, is there something - a feeling or vibe, or something that people should look out for - that shows that the place is well designed and will meet their needs.

Can you answer these questions concisely and convincingly? Join an online debate - see the UDG website for details.

● Robert Huxford

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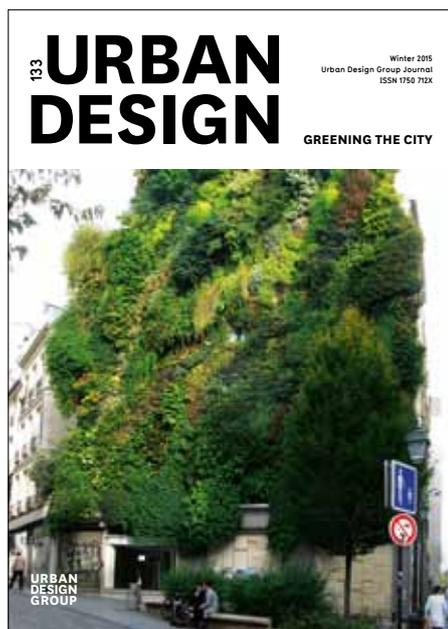
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Green wall, Rue d'Aboukir, Paris; ©S. Loew

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Note that there are many other events run
by UDG volunteers throughout the UK. For the
latest details and pricing, please check on
the UDG website www.udg.org.uk/events/

Always check the UDG website for final
details and late changes.

TUESDAY 13 JANUARY

Urban Design Film Night

A cinematic extravaganza curated by
Liz Reynolds

WEDNESDAY 18 FEBRUARY

Greening the City

Taking the theme of Edition 133 of *Urban
Design*, this event will explore the
benefits and the means of introducing
sustainable, attractive and affordable trees,
landscape and green space into streets,
neighbourhoods, towns and cities.

WEDNESDAY 11 MARCH

THE NATIONAL URBAN DESIGN AWARDS Victory Services Club, 63-79 Seymour St, London W2 2HF

An evening of celebration and networking,
featuring the best in urban design and
development. Advance booking essential –
please see the website for full details.

WEDNESDAY 18 MARCH

Dealing with Density

Is ever-increasing density the solution to
accommodating a rising population, or is
there an optimum range not only for health,
wellbeing and happiness, but also for
practical reasons and financial viability?

WEDNESDAY 22 APRIL

Urban Design & Health

Are our towns and cities making us sad, sick
and lonely? What design and management
options encourage people to be sociable,
active, and eat a better diet?

9-12 APRIL 2015

Hamburg Study Tour

Led by Sebastian Loew; details in Issue 132.
There may still be a few spaces on this tour.
Contact the UDG office as soon as possible.

6-14 JUNE 2015

Toulouse and the Bastides of Gascony
Led by Alan Stones. See details p. 9

GREEN SHOOTS

In spite of the recent and very belated agreement between the US and China regarding carbon emissions, the world cannot wait for governments to take the unpopular measures needed to limit the catastrophic effects of climate change. The British government to name just one, has been going back on its promised investment in renewal energies and is dragging its feet on most environmental policies. The statistics and the increasingly damaging natural disasters show that action is urgently needed.

Fortunately, as this issue's topic shows, small local initiatives to make neighbourhoods greener are multiplying, and greening the city is slowly developing into a global movement. We won't save the planet just with a few grassed roofs or live walls, but the combination of parklets, depaved areas, green verges and wider green infrastructures, will help not just through their physical contribution to the environment, but as a way of changing attitudes and as symbols of what can be done. A gradual change of culture which takes the natural environment into account in all development is an important step. Chris Martin has assembled a collection of articles showing the diverse ways in which citizens, associations of

committed volunteers and local governments are attempting to green their cities and in a small way, mitigate the effects of climate change. The Urban Design Group is fulfilling its campaigning role by giving these a wider readership, *pour encourager les autres*.

Also included in this issue are examples from far away places that show that the ambitions we have for cities in Britain, are replicated elsewhere, in Christchurch, NZ and in Vancouver.

Finally we publish this year's shortlisted entries for the Francis Tibbalds Public Sector Award and Book Award. The winners will be announced at the award ceremony that will take place in London on 11 March 2015, in which the group celebrates and encourages quality in urban design. At a time of increasing building activity and housing shortage, deregulation and speculation, the UDG needs to redouble its efforts and fight for higher standards and a public realm that responds to human requirements and desires. It is at least encouraging that events reported here show that activities concerning the urban environment are multiplying.

● Sebastian Loew

Urban Design Group

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Events at the Gallery

The following events have been organised by the UDG and held at The Gallery, Cowcross Street, London. Many are recorded by UrbanNous and are available to watch again on the UDG's website, thanks to the generous support of Fergus Carnegie.



Urban Design – Beyond Pseudo Science

The Gallery, 9 September 2014

Stephen Marshall is one of a very small number of academics who has managed to get their work noticed by popular media: *Scientific American* picked up his work on science, pseudo-science and urban design. At this event, Stephen described how urban design theory might develop to provide a more robust underpinning for professional practice.

‘Urban design theory is a bit rubbish...’ was Stephen plain language translation of an assertion in a 2007 academic paper that ‘urban design has no external standard of criticism that complements or addresses its internal fractures and inconsistencies’. His mission has been to take science as the external standard of criticism and to this end, he searched for testable hypotheses in publications by Kevin Lynch, Christopher Alexander, Gordon Cullen and Jane Jacobs. An example was Jane Jacob’s assertion that ‘To generate exuberant diversity in a city’s streets and districts, four conditions are indispensable... the district ... must serve more than one primary function; most blocks must be short...; the district must mingle buildings that vary in age and condition...; and there must be a sufficiently dense concentration of people...’

Stephen found little subsequent research that tested the hypothesis. Work in 1973 and 1977 refuted it and a 1987 paper offered some limited support. More generally, his inquiries have found little by way of scientific validation of urban design theories.

Stephen set out a simple specification for an integrated theory of urban design that would include:

- insights into how the world works
- a stance on how the world *ought* to be

- a view on how to get from here to there.

These must be more than normative, artistic or political manifestos, but should be underpinned by scientific knowledge. Valid theories should be used, and if a theory is shown not to be valid, it should be discarded.

The development of science-based urban design could provide researchers with secure and purposeful careers, practitioners with a clear professional identity and robust arguments to use in planning negotiations, and could offer to society as a whole, an urban environment that is far better suited to its needs. As an example of the importance of urban design, one sixth of deaths in Britain is due to lack of exercise, something that could be addressed in part by the way streets are designed and managed. Many such problems could be researched, and the findings translated into science-based practice.

In the discussion following the lecture, people got confused between *scientists* such as physicists or chemists, and *scientific method* which centres on the creation of a robust body of knowledge, founded on reality and the development of testable hypotheses.

- Robert Huxford

Street Design

The Gallery, 15 October 2014

This was very much an evening of reflection, to consider how far (or not) we have come in terms of street quality. The event started with two international critiques, one of the US and one of Germany: Joe Holyoak gave an overview of a recent design guide published in the US, NATCO’s *Urban Street Design Guide*. There are no ground breaking ideas, but a simple, well articulated and in particular, well illustrated, compendium setting out all that we should be aiming for.

Next was Graham Smith who held up Germany as a lesser-sung hero of street design success, both in policy and practice. The town of Hennef was an inspiring example of how simple techniques have created not just safe, but beautiful streets. Trees, for example, were beautifully used as a device for engineering street behaviour.

Lastly, Phil Jones presented an updated review of *Manual for Streets* and its impact since he helped prepare it. Seven years later, the guidance is still making its way into the minds of policy makers and practitioners. Visibility splays were an obsession before the guide was published, and unfortunately still are in many parts of the UK, despite the *Manual* dispelling the myth that they make safe streets. Phil Jones reflected on more recent schemes as well as older exemplary examples. Quality, he said, comes from the enclosure of the space, not by using high quality, expensive materials.

The discussion drew in practitioners from across Europe. One suggested that Germany had gone backwards since the good practice of the 1980s showcased by Graham Smith. Depressingly, but perhaps inevitably, the debate turned on the planning system as the root of current problems. ‘Justification has to be about more than capacity; unless you plan for connectivity, you’ll never get it’ concluded Phil Jones, arguing for a culture change. However, after much criticism of

planners, developers and Network Rail, the discussion ended on a positive note, citing the US’s willingness to innovate. The NATCO guide shows a pragmatic approach to achieve better street design for cyclists: claim the space, do it cheaply, and then come back and do it properly when you have more money. In many streets, this could achieve much in the short term, we just have to remember to come back and do it properly when things start to look up!

- Jane Manning





Data, Technology and Urban Design

The Gallery, 12 November 2014

The evening started with Polly Turton, topic editor of UD issue 132 offering a startling statistic: 90 per cent of the world's available data has been collected in the last 2 years. She also introduced a caution: if we are not careful how we use it, data can turn into a tangled web, a sobering challenge for the urban designer who is now faced with a myriad of information to use in urban analysis. The

three speakers gave insights into the very different scales of data availability and application, and some salient advice on how to avoid the pitfalls.

First was Ulrich Atz from the Open Data Institute who led the audience on a tour of the macro world of open data and its benefits. Example applications included the *City Mapper* app which supports better mobility around the city with real time advice on congestion and delays. The *Parisian Sun Therapy* app, and its British equivalent *Pints in the Sun*, maps cafes and drinking establishments which will have sunny outdoor seating areas at what times. One can imagine a predictive version of this being a useful test to proposed

active fronts in a masterplan.

David Janner-Klausner from Commonplace, a recent start-up specialising in digital consultation and engagement, went right down to the micro level of data technology and capture. Commonplace's consultation app has been used in locations such as West Hampstead and Newcastle as a way of engaging local people in urban design and planning issues. It has enabled traditional exhibitions and design proposals to reach and engage a much wider spectrum of local people. Its commenting function allows place specific comments to be made and visually represented in a very accessible manner. David suggested that engagement like this had the power to disrupt the status quo of the planning system and establish more meaningful inputs to policy making and design proposals.

Lastly, Ed Manley from UCL presented a range of maps and visual representations using the myriad of new data available. The imagery was most engaging and illustrated how the extent of data now available on movement, for example, can be condensed into fascinating maps showing how cities work in time-lapse.

The discussion raised some big issues for data technology management, and by implication, urban designers – not least the digital divide and privacy concerns. As designers we will need to get to grips with the data available, and be very careful when interpreting it, but the scope is endless.

● Jane Manning



The Kevin Lynch Memorial Lecture 2014

The Gallery 26th November 2014

John Punter's unsnappy but informative title was *English planning/housing reforms, unaffordable housing and socially exclusive urban design*. Currently Professor of Urban Design at Cardiff University, he described himself as a teacher of urban design for 40 years. He gave a robustly political and ideological analysis of what can be broadly described as the housing crisis, and threw down a challenge to the urban design profession – what can we do about it?

He referenced two starting points. Firstly Kevin Lynch's definition of social justice as a meta-criterion for urban design, in his book *Good City Form*. Secondly, an observation by Sebastian Loew in a recent issue of this journal that urban designers are on the margins of the big debates.

His focus was on current housing provision, or the absence of it, particularly in

London and the southeast. We were snowed under by an exhaustively-researched avalanche of graphs and statistics, many of them dealing with who spends how much money, where, and on what. I was reminded of Jonathan Barnett's statement in *Urban Design as Public Policy* that the medium of urban design is money. But despite our being given more detailed facts than we could fully absorb, the conclusions nevertheless came through clearly and unequivocally.

Punter was not afraid to name villains and villainous practices. Among them were the shortsighted sale of council houses, the abolition of regional planning and the lack of a national spatial plan, the diminution of CABE, the iniquitous bedroom tax, and the lies told about 'affordable' housing. He gave illustrations of how, in the name of 'regeneration', there has often been a loss of municipal rented housing which ordinary people can afford. One remarkable map showed the geographical diaspora of tenants forced out of the Heygate Estate in Southwark, in a redevelopment described by the New Statesman as 'social cleansing'.

He found some encouragement in the work of the recent Wolfson Economics Prize finalists, particularly Urbed's winning scheme

↑ Empire Square, Tabard Street, Southwark, Berkeley Homes/Rolfe Judd

and its understanding of the importance of reducing land value, allied to intelligent planning. He scorned the quick dismissal of it by the Housing Minister Brandon Lewis as 'pathetic'. He praised the 2014 KPMG-Shelter report *Building the Homes we Need* as the clearest analysis of the failure of the market-led approach. Similarly he admired Michael Lyons' 2014 *Housing Review* for the Labour Party, and could not understand why the party had not given it a higher profile and made it a major election issue for 2015.

He ended by proclaiming, with a little conscious irony, 'That is my sermon for tonight.....'. It certainly had been an impressive combination of academic marshalling of information with an uncompromisingly polemical analysis. He summarised his conclusions: at the head of them the need to reduce

raw land prices to pay for infrastructure and genuinely affordable housing. There was also the demand to stop sales of council housing now, and for local planning authorities to be more effective in their plans for growth. 'Strategic urban design' was also cited, although I think that is what is called town planning.

His bottom line addressed to the audience was 'Can the UDG find its voice and seek to influence policy, beginning perhaps with the Wolfson winners?', and discussion after the sermon concentrated on what urban designers can do. The discussion was lively, but I think the answers were inconclusive, other than promoting enlightened good practice like the Wolfson schemes of Urbed and the other finalists. Urban designers are the servants of economic policy, and are rarely in a position to be the makers of it. We can

identify good practice, as Punter did in his talk: Tabard (Southwark) Accordia (Cambridge), Barking Riverside, Great Kneighton (Cambridge) in this country, Ypenburg and IJburg in the Netherlands, for example. However we have little input into policy. Were we consulted on the demise of CAGE? I don't think so.

But Punter painted a grim picture of the future if present policies continue or are extended: a world of social exclusion and polarisation, alienated communities, and unsafe streets. It was not a cheering evening, but it was certainly a stimulating one, and a loud call to action.

● Joe Holyoak

A longer summary of John Punter's lecture will be published in the next issue



Sketching in Manchester

STREET NW, 20 August 2014

STREET NW hosted its third successful event, this time celebrating the centenary year of the renowned urbanist and townscape advocate Gordon Cullen, known most notably for his concept of 'serial vision'.

In true Gordon Cullen style, we wanted to sketch and record our own journey through a piece of Manchester. With an army of over 40 sketchers we started at St. Peters Square, with the Central Library recently reopened and the new 1 St. Peters Square building creating a new urban space within the city. Each of us picked a viewpoint and began sketching

the street scene, with varying degrees of success; it turns out that it is a lot harder than it looks!!

Our journey continued towards Piccadilly Gardens, stopping off at the Art Gallery and sketching the activity and views from our chosen vantage points. The mix of cars, trams, people and the Grade I listed Art Gallery certainly provided a challenging scene to record.

Our third and final stop was at the end of Mosley Street, where it breaks into Piccadilly Gardens, providing panoramic views of this well-known part of the city. The city wheel offered a contrast of geometry and scale against the straight and regular buildings behind. Again we picked our favourite vantage point and began sketching the closing chapter to our journey through Manchester.

As in true Mancunian style the weather began to turn, we retreated to the office to

↑ Examples of sketches
 ↑↑ Participants reviewing each other's work
 ↑↑↑ Sketching in action

display our favourite pieces over a much deserved drink. It was interesting to compare how people interpreted and chose to record their surroundings, using pens, pencils and even splashes of colour and water to convey their story.

Overall it was a very successful event to raise the profile of the UDG, but perhaps the most important achievement was getting people out and engaging with the city, considering its form and subtlety, and hopefully, in Gordon Cullen's memory, experiencing not only how the city looks, but how it feels.

● Mark Foster



Urban Design for All – Towards a Life Less Ordinary

The National Conference on Urban Design, Nottingham, 18-20 September 2014

Hosted by Nottingham Trent University, this year's very successful conference was organised by Stefan Kruczkowski and Laura Alvarez. It explored the crucial importance of multi-disciplinary working in the built environment and how the various players – urban designers, architects, planners, engineers, developers, politicians and communities – work together to create better places to live.

Chairing the conference Amanda Reynolds, past Chair of the UDG, began the day by introducing Nigel Turpin, Head of Urban Design at Nottingham City Council, who welcomed the group to the city and presented Nottingham's *Creating a Better City* initiative. He was followed by Max Farrell of Terry Farrell and Partners, describing *The Farrell Review of Architecture and the Built Environment* and its recommendations. These range from introducing positive planning through to involving citizens in urban rooms and town models, changing education in schools, and encouraging greater commonality in professional education. Farrell spoke about the number of organisations and individuals that want to see a change in the way things are done and are ready to act.

After these speakers, 18 pecha kucha style presentations offered delegates the chance to 'design their own conference' with a choice of speakers that they could follow to hear more. Six themes were developed during the day:

1. POSITIVE PLANNING

Chaired by Peter Dickinson of the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation's Urban Design Panel, this first pecha kucha presentation was Life after Planning by David Rudlin (URBED), talking about the

natural process of urban growth that can open the way for a better approach to planning. Following him was Daniel Black (*db+a*) on Towards Better Design and Appraisal of Large-scale Development, using the north Bristol urban extension as a case study to explore how to make developments healthier and more sustainable. Ian Lyne (Placedynamix) spoke about Values in PLACE – What's NEXT? on how the fear of the future must lead to a radical rethinking of how to plan future places, as well as repair and reuse existing ones.

2. HOUSING AND NEW DEVELOPMENT

In the second parallel session, Paul Seddon of Nottingham City Council chaired three further presentations. Clare San Martin (John Thompson & Partners) talked about Collaborative Approaches to Master Planning, Learning from Chilmington Green, in the context of the *Government's Prospectus for Garden Cities*. John Croxen (CPRE London) spoke about Liveable Housing: from Inner Cities to Suburbs, on how to measure liveability and growing levels of density. Reflecting on The next Poundbury, Hugh Petter (ADAM Urbanism), showed how by using principles to define the vision and delivering a project through a consortium, a more sustainable development could be achieved.

3. HEALTH, INCLUSION AND ENVIRONMENT

Chaired by Sue Illman (Illman Young Landscape Design Ltd) past President of the Landscape Institute, the third session started with Chris Melsom (HASSELL) talking about Healthy Active By Design, a tool to enable the community to design locally inspired healthy active neighbourhoods, with a checklist of strategies. Dianne Theakstone (University of Stirling) followed with Building Inclusion, on evidence from Scotland and Norway that disabled people are in effect second class citizens. Lastly, Marin Gammie (Consulting with Trees Ltd and Trees and Design Action Group) spoke about recent publications *Trees in the Townscape – A guide for decision-makers* and *Trees in Hard Landscape*.

4. THE FUTURE SHAPE OF CITIES

Chaired by Sue McGlynn, this session opened with Jeff Nottage (Broadway Malyan) talking about IT and the Design of Towns and Cities, drawing on global professional views to look at the impact that IT has had and will have on planning and design. David Green (Perkins + Will) spoke about Urban Research Districts and the role of the city in innovation and economic growth, and the contribution made by urban design's analytical tools. Lastly, the team from University of Nottingham, Amy Tang, Dr Yan Zhu and Professor Tim Heath, looked at Technology or Tradition, investigating the use of traditional Chinese urban and architectural design in regeneration and public realm schemes.

5. HOUSING AND REGENERATION

With David Birkbeck (Design for Homes) in the chair, the first two speakers Professor Julian Marsh (Marsh Grochowski Architects) and Nick Ebbs (Blueprint/ Igloo Regeneration) looked at Exploring eco-housing in the UK: Green Street and Trent Basin. Conference leader Stefan Kruczkowski (Nottingham Trent University) then reflected on Building the Basics with Building for Life – or Putting Lipstick on a Pig? Two years after the re-launch of BfL12, he debated its success in helping discussions on design quality between developers, designers and local authorities.

6. COMMUNITY

Chaired by Andrew Warrington (Highways Nottinghamshire County Council and Institution of Civil Engineers), this session began with Catherine Hammant (University of Westminster) talking about Stamford Gateway: Community-driven or Riven? examining the impact that community engagement has had on the quality of the works delivered in the area. Community Catalysts – A new Model for Urban Regeneration Strategy? followed, with Lydia Schilbach (Red Hen Projects) reflecting on how urban interventions can act as catalysts for widespread change within a community, and the gap between the Big Society and its implementation. Lastly, Places Change Minds: Design Matters! Pro-social Place Programme was presented by Professor Graham Marshall and Rhiannon Corcoran (University of Liverpool) reported on research findings of how urban design and management can create environments that enable people to thrive, encourage social contact, friendships and cooperation, which all make for civilised and happy societies.

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

The afternoon key note speakers were Louise Thomas talking about early conclusions from the Urban Design Group's latest research study on *Understanding the Value of Urban Design to House Builders*, and Phil Jones on *Manual for Streets* stories: failures, challenges, and successes.

Commissioned by the UDG, Louise described the research that she and collaborators Richard Hayward and Ivor Samuels

(as urbanenablers) have been undertaking into house builders' understanding of urban design. The study has involved talking to 14 house builders about whether urban design adds value to their operations and schemes, where it sits within their organisations, the impact of local authority skills and inputs, the role of key guidance and planning processes, and how their customers see urban design. The study is expected to help the UDG to engage with the development industry.

Phil Jones played an important part in getting the Department for Transport to abandon its old rules-based approach to street design, in favour of a more professional, and flexible approach brought in through *Manual for Streets I* and *II*. Here he looked at how successful the change had been in introducing place-making led street design, and the challenges remaining to change attitudes to road safety and allow bespoke designs to address risk in particular local conditions.

Following the afternoon presentations, Bill Chandler, Director of Chandler Urban Planning and Design, Australia, assessed the social, political and economic changes that are affecting cities the world over, the

impact these are having on urban design, and in turn, the role that urban design needs to play.

A number of fringe events took place on either side of the main conference day, in addition to the UDG annual dinner, held in the Nottingham City Council House. These events included the annual UDG Education Symposium and a wide range of tours which visited the Creative Energy Homes and Jubilee Campus, looking at seven state-of-the-art energy efficient homes on the University Park Campus; the Creative Virtual Modelling Laboratory; Nottingham's protected heritage

Lace Market quarter; the prestigious Park Estate; the city centre's renovation sites and caves, looking at the radical interventions that the local authority has carried out; and two sustainable development sites, Green Street and Trent Basin.

The conference was sponsored by Broadway Malyan, JTP, Mouchel and Tibbalds, with the support of Nottingham Trent University, Nottingham University, Nottingham City Council and Blueprint. We are hoping to feature some of the pecha kucha talks in more detail in the journal over the coming year.

● Louise Thomas



← Opening reception at the Newton Arkwright building Nottingham Trent University
→ Visit to the Green Street development by Blueprint/ igloo

The Place Alliance

The quality of many local environments and much recent development in England represents a serious and on-going challenge for the sector at large, whilst the necessity to focus on quality of place needs to be consistently and repeatedly reasserted. The Place Alliance is a fledgling cross-sector collaborative alliance that aims to do just that.

The idea for an alliance followed findings of recent Arts and Humanities Research Council funded research exploring issues of design governance in England and the confluence of that with publication of the Farrell Review. Both concluded that a place leadership gap exists in England and there is need for concerted action to fill it. The Place Alliance was subsequently established following two cross-sector 'Big Meets' hosted

by The Bartlett, UCL, at which over eighty organisations from across the built environment sector – big and small – came together to discuss what to do and concluded that a new alliance was required.

The collaborative events ran against typical silos and were extremely well received. They sparked new ideas and instigated new connections between organisations which are now leading towards a fully fledged movement.

VOICES ON THE PLACE ALLIANCE (FROM BIG MEET 2)

'It involves everyone who has a focus on place and really reaches out and has an aim to improve life chances in the round.'

'Individually, there are a whole host of connected champions within their different remit, so they maybe conservation area advisory committees, amenities society, wherever they be, we want to be able to link with the alliance as a stronger voice, politically.'

'Our first plea is perhaps a Place alliance could help to join up all the thinking, so that people know of all the different case studies, the projects, the on the ground work going on, of all these organisations.'

'I think government gets lots of voices and that doesn't necessarily get traction but a Place Alliance to which everybody's subscribed would be that single voice.'

The Place Alliance aims to:

- Enable the sector to regularly meet and discuss matters which cut across our different interests in a constructive, collaborative, yet challenging manner
- Facilitate ongoing national debate about place quality
- Establish a powerful collective national voice on questions of place quality
- Ensure that throughout England the value and importance of place quality is consistently and repeatedly asserted
- Accept a greater collective responsibility for place leadership, alongside national government.

Initially the Place Alliance is being hosted by UCL and will rely on voluntary inputs from supporters to drive its agenda forward. You can read more about the evolution of The Place Alliance, our network of supporters and our planned work programme here: <http://bit.ly/1ohMFae>.

And if you would like to volunteer to get involved, either individually or on behalf of your organisation we would love to hear from you. Just e-mail: placealliance@ucl.ac.uk

● Matthew Carmona, Bartlett School of Planning, UCL





Designing the 21st Century Garden City

Springhead Park, Ebbsfleet, Kent, 24 October 2014

This half-day conference organised by Kent Design was dedicated to Peter Hall who would have been the key-note speaker, had he still been alive. The event was fittingly located in Eastgate, a community building in the midst of the no-man's land that for now is the future Ebbsfleet Garden City. A panel of expert speakers and elected members on the frontline presented a kaleidoscope of views on what has become a hot subject, professionally and politically.

Cllr Paul Carter leader of Kent County Council set the scene by emphasising the unrealised potential of North Kent and welcoming the future development corporation, recently announced by the government, which should – if it does its job properly – achieve expansion without sprawl or loss of green fields. But he warned that the future UDC would have to ensure investment in infrastructure, and referring to recently completed housing in the area, impose quality on the developers and not allow more of the same.

Nicholas Falk started by referring back to Ebenezer Howard in order to explain why URBED had won the Wolfson competition. Their proposal, based on an existing historic city, put forward clusters of development along the main existing axes. Connections between settlements, reducing car dependency, using schools as community hubs, ensuring

views out to the countryside, were some of the ideas incorporated in the proposal. Falk warned that finding land available to build where people wanted to live was a major challenge and suggested that extending existing cities would be the cheapest way of increasing housing supply.

Terry Farrell contrasted the industrial cities that Howard reacted against to today's relatively attractive and healthy cities. The Garden City movement advocated low-density new settlements, much criticized by Jane Jacobs and unlikely to be the solution for current problems. Like other speakers he asserted that brownfield land would not be sufficient to solve the country's housing problem. Farrell suggested looking again at the Green Belt, considering expanding market towns and increasing densities. The garden cities of the 21st century must start from existing places that are well connected and Ebbsfleet is a good example, particularly as it will have a major employer: a leisure resort (Paramount) is due to be developed there.

Sue Riddleston of Bioregional used examples of her work at Bedzed and Brighton to suggest that it is possible to design for more sustainable living. The first session of the conference ended with a panel discussion, during which some of the speakers' comments were challenged.

David Lock brought the second session down to earth and asked: how do we get planning consent for a garden city, and how do we avoid rubbish being badged as a garden city? He pointed out that land ownership and cooperative living were at the core of Ebenezer Howard's idea of what a garden city should be, two very challenging

requirements. He suggested that a master-plan for a garden city should set the public realm and green frames around which the rest would develop (the trellis and the rose plants was the image he cited) and gave Milton Keynes as a successful example. He thought that after 30 years of Kent Thameside (an area from Dartford to Gravesend) visions and no action, the recently created Urban Development Corporation should get on with the job right away and deliver development, without calling it a garden city. During the panel discussion that followed, Lock's last comment was endorsed by the local councillors, Jeremy Kite of Dartford BC and John Burden of Gravesham BC, who wanted action rather than endless consultation, as long as development was sensitively done: 'Nobody is saying NO!'

The third session was concerned with beauty, a term rarely used in professional circles but of concern to those that live in urban settlements. How to achieve design quality is not obvious, but the main speaker, Glen Richardson of Cambridge City Council and panel members during the following discussion, put forward approaches that could contribute to it. Landscape and greenery seem to be a recurring theme.

In the last part of the conference, Cathel Rock outlined the government's (DCLG) motivation for the launch of the *Locally-led garden cities: prospectus*, together with the creation of the Ebbsfleet UDC with £200 million funding for infrastructure. This organism would have planning decision powers but no plan making powers, a point that David Lock questioned earlier.

During the various Q&A parts of the event, numerous additional issues were raised. In the final session, Yolanda Barnes challenged the current method of delivery of development, suggesting that on current trends, it would take 130 years to complete Ebbsfleet and that the economic model cannot guarantee to produce quality. Other approaches such as self-build and prefabrication, and allowing for messiness should at least be tried. Other participants also questioned whether the models used at present could deliver what everybody seems to be after, and the need for a return to strategic planning was repeatedly mentioned.

It is difficult to summarise all that was said during these packed four hours but some points recurred:

- Action rather than words
- Higher densities and connected places
- Work with what is already there
- Places rather than housing numbers
- Return to regional policies
- Framework (green) first, buildings after
- Design quality
- New forms of funding.

The next issue of *Urban Design* will be dedicated to Garden Cities and the subject will be explored further from different points of view, including from other countries.

● Sebastian Loew



↑ Panel discussion. Photo © Laura Lean and Design South East
← Milton Keynes, green infrastructure. © David Lock Associates

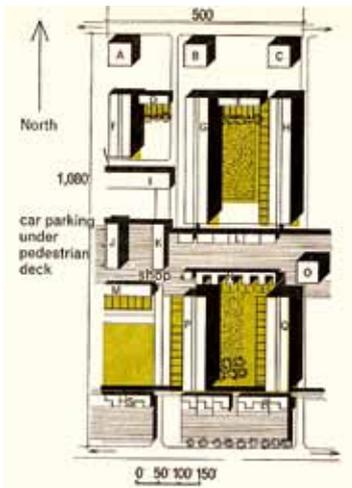


Fig. 29 100 p.p.a. residential layout showing links with central area and 70 p.p.a.

Density Matters – A Response

John Billingham gives a heartfelt reaction to an article published in our last issue

In his article on p.9 of issue 132 of *Urban Design*, Christopher Boyko, Senior Research Associate of Lancaster University defended the importance of density but criticised the way it was dealt with. He raised a number of important and relevant points but he failed to define some of the essential aspects of density which all professionals should seek to learn and understand: nowhere in his article does he mention gross and net densities and yet the distinction between the two is an essential requirement to understanding what density is concerned with. On its own density is only a number and what is being measured and for what purpose always needs to be clarified (though it rarely is!).

Net residential density is usually defined as the number of persons, bed spaces, habitable rooms or dwellings related to the site area, including half the width of any adjacent road space (except for major roads). For gross residential density, the total neighbourhood area is taken into account, including

public and private open space, public amenities such as schools, churches, health centres, hospitals and shopping facilities. Other measures such as the floor space index or plot ratio, which are more often used in relation to commercial developments could also be included in a full list.

An additional and related issue is the number of people per bed space or per dwelling, a way of measuring overcrowding, an important issue in the 60s but one that has been traditionally reduced over the years. Overcrowding was considered to be in excess of one person per habitable room, but as children below a certain age were counted as half a person this became a debatable form of control and was eventually abandoned.

We can all stand on the sidelines and guess what is happening in for example, the New Territories in Hong Kong (the image in issue 132 article), and yet if we fail to understand the essential differences in assessing densities, we will knock our heads against the brick walls of a proper physical assessment.

As many of us in planning do, or should realise, net density fails to include the place of a development in a properly planned environment, that is one that takes into account the essential requirements of a community such as open space (the biggest omission of most alternative approaches), educational and health facilities, shopping and other social facilities that normally cannot be contained within a multi storey, mainly residential, structure. This deficiency is often overlooked in density debates; if this was properly explained, people would realise the shortcomings of such an approach. Perhaps a re-jigged view of housing densities is needed, set within an overall density that professionals can agree. A fresh look at the *Parker Morris Report* would show how today's housing standards need to be improved.

I accept reluctantly, that the counter argument against my own is that many of these other uses can in fact be contained within a multi storey structure, but that cannot be the case for all of them; open space in particular could not be considered – except in rare circumstances – something that can be placed

within a physical structure (though see some of the articles in this issue, Ed.).

If readers want to know more about density, I suggest that a good reference on the subject is *Cities Are Good for Us* by the late Harley Sherlock. Pages 214 to 217 contain a mine of information with comparative studies of London and Paris, and references to Milton Keynes and Ebenezer Howard's ideas. In my view, it could be more comprehensive as his arguments rely almost entirely on London and Paris which are hardly typical cities, but it is still a valuable introduction to the subject.

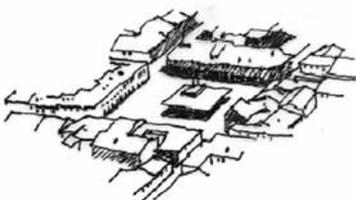
As a way to better deal with densities, Boyko suggests the creation of 'a team involved through the lifetime of a development project'. This idea, which I support, has been in existence for over 50 years, particularly in the new town development corporations where departmental boundaries were seen as a hindrance; as a result, professional barriers were cast aside in favour of corporate working. Unfortunately, local authorities were much slower to change their attitudes and even development companies lagged behind the new town corporations which, because they were new structures with wide powers and generous resources, could quickly and effectively innovate and introduce new ways of working. It is to be hoped that the lessons suggested and/or learned from the new towns, can be taken on board by organisations that even today continue to use outdated methods. I suspect that in fact, those lessons were learned by most organisations some time ago, but that they may find it difficult to implement the required changes.

In conclusion, Boyko's article has rightly highlighted some of the issues which density brings to the fore, and commented on the subject's importance. It is an emotive subject which architects, planners, urban designers and other professionals regularly address, but too often in a muddled way, perhaps because they find it inconvenient. As a result, it can be swept under the carpet, even though it is a very significant matter with implications that shouldn't be ignored. The Urban Design Group needs to further promote the debate.

● John Billingham

Toulouse and the Bastides of Gascony

Urban Design Group study tour
6–14 June 2015



Thirty years ago the Urban Design Group visited the bastides of the Dordogne and the Lot. We are now returning to look at examples in the neighbouring region of Gascony. Bastides are planned towns dating from the 13th century, most of which never reached any great size.

Toulouse, on the other hand, is the metropolis of the Languedoc. In the thirteenth century the glittering court of the Counts of Toulouse rivalled that of the Kings of France, and its red-brick old town repays exploration. More recently the city became the home of France's aerospace industry, and has

developed into a technology hub, with two metro lines and a new tram system.

The price of £910 (£860 for UDG members) includes rail travel from London, travel around the bastides by coach, and eight nights' accommodation in tourist class hotels. Further information is available from Alan Stones, Fullerthorne, Church Street, Kelvedon, Essex CO5 9AH, tel 01376 571351, or email a.stones907@btinternet.com

The last booking date is Friday 6th March. ●

Urban Design Interview: What does Urban Design mean to me?

Hannah Elborn

Current Position and work

Senior Urban Designer at Turley

Education

MA Urban Design, Oxford Brookes University,
BArch (Hons) Architecture, University of Nottingham

Past Experience

Senior Urban Designer, Planit-ie LLP
Urban Designer, DPDS Consulting Group
Ambitions: To visit every great city of the world.

Specialisms

Residential masterplanning
Town and City Centre masterplans
Strategic Design Frameworks



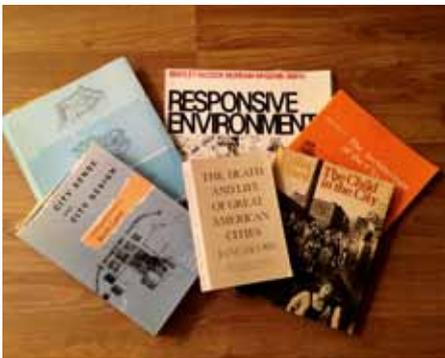
↑ New ways of promoting cycling and sustainable travel through innovative urban design. Bike snake, Copenhagen. (Image: Dissing and Weitting)



↑ Pet hate: prolific over-use of unnecessary street furniture and signage, cluttering streets and creating obstacles to street life. (Image: English Heritage)



↑ Innovative design: low-speed and shared space significantly enhance safety. Poynton, Cheshire. (Image: Planit-ie LLP)



↑ Early influences and Inspiration: from Jane Jacobs clear observations of American city life, to practical advice of Ian Bentley and co.



↑ Making the most of high streets, as places for interaction and commerce in a changing retail environment. (Image: Thatcham Town Centre, Turley).



↑ I've always been fascinated by studying old plans and maps, keen to learn how they changed and developed. (Image: Ordnance survey 1843)



↑ 7. Telling stories through the public realm. The Ancoats Peeps, teach the history of this former industrial area. (Image: NW Development Agency).

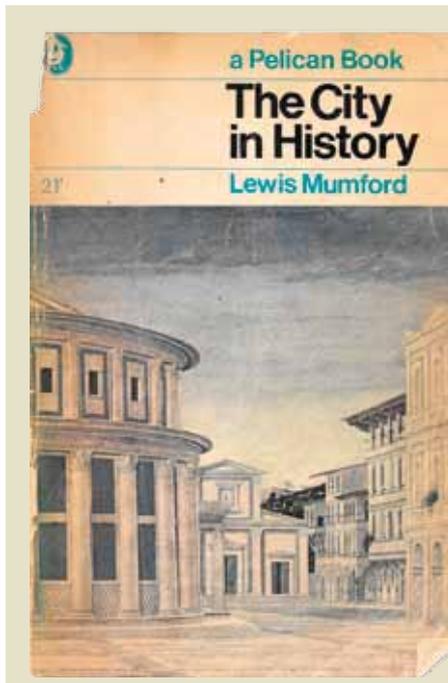


↑ Festivals of light, celebrating spaces and buildings which make cities great. Fêtes des lumières, Lyon. (Image: Lyon - Muriel Chaulet)



↑ Private Public spaces: are corporately controlled public spaces, the future of our cities? (Image: www.kingscross.co.uk)

The Urban Design Library #14



LEWIS MUMFORD: *THE CITY IN HISTORY*

Its origins, its transformations and its prospects.

Harcourt, Brace and Co (New York), 1961 and Secker and Warburg with Penguin Books (London), 1966

READ ON

Hall and Falk (2014) *Good Cities Better Lives*, (Routledge, London)
Geddes (1915) *Cities in Evolution* (Williams & Norgate, London)
Glaeser (2011) *The Triumph of the City* (Pan Macmillan, New York)

The City in History is a magnum opus, a veritable bouillabaisse of a book. Long, slow but for all that, a good and interesting read. With a modesty that contrasts with his writing style, Mumford apologises for having to limit his story to the cities of what he calls Western civilisation.

My first introduction to this heavyweight was not in its 656 page form but in the flickering black and white of film projected in our lecture room. This was our introduction to urban design. Why film? In 1963 the National Film Board of Canada took Mumford's book and made it into six documentaries; their motivation is believed to have been to promote a greater appreciation of the value of Canada's built heritage. The early sixties were a time of comprehensive development and there was a fear that much of Canada's historic urban fabric would be lost.

Whether the films saved historic Canada I can't say, but in an attempt to discover what impact these films and ultimately the book had on my fellow students, I emailed a very small but international group of them and asked 'Did they remember the book? Had they read the book? Had the book influenced them during their professional lives?' The French Canadian said that while he remembered a big heavy book, he couldn't remember reading it and it had had little influence on his working life. Our Japanese fellow student remembered it well, he had read it in English but not in the Japanese version he bought for his institute's library. The Swiss student remembered it well and was sure he still had it somewhere. He was concerned that Mumford had not looked long enough at the 'prospects'. My German friend however,

was much more impressed. He had read it in German before starting the course, and had found Mumford's focus on the social aspects of the city a useful contrast to the mechanistic approach to planning that he was forced to employ in the office. The book had such an effect on my German friend that it made him seek out a planning course in Edinburgh. It is interesting that the Scottish influence shines through the book. Mumford himself was strongly influenced by Patrick Geddes. Disappointingly, my English contact said he had read the book but it had had little impact on his life or work.

What do I recollect? My copy is well thumbed, covered with marginalia. Its influence was not obvious. It's not that sort of book. Mumford's scope is wide and his writing discursive, sometimes repetitive. It displays enormous scholarship and a great breadth of reading. It is a book in which to immerse oneself, to settle in a leather chair in an Ivy League common room, and let the quiet voice of academic discussion wash over you. Unlike current writers, Mumford slips occasionally into purple prose. Talking of the contribution Roman engineers made to the hygiene of the city Mumford writes; '...To investigate thisone must fortify oneself for an ordeal; to enjoy it, one must keep one's eyes open, but learn to close one's nose to the stench, one's ears to the screams of anguish and terror, one's gullet to the retching of one's own stomach.'

Do not let style distract from Mumford's achievement. He traces the human, with an emphasis on the human city, from an organic shelter to end with a fear that totalitarian forces are emerging that will destroy the

humane and organic character that he perceives has characterised the city of the past.

There are 18 chapters; the first eight examine the prehistoric city and its evolution into the classic city. Rereading these first chapters Mumford's view of the city as an organic community linked to place becomes clear. His regret at the loss of status of women as the focus of the community, following the change from an agrarian village to a defensive centre, is notable when the date of publication is considered. It is perhaps not surprising that he emphasises the importance of community and location as defining characteristics of a city: Mumford was after all a social scientist not an architect or town planner.

His social scientist interest pervades the second next six chapters. These focus largely on the European city of the 14th to 18th centuries. Mumford seems most at home with this period, as it fits his Geddesian 'folk, place, work' image of the world.

The last four chapters begin to show what Jane Jacobs described as Mumford's 'morbid and factious manner'. He worried about the dispersal of the city, its loss of focus and the growth of totalitarian control. He saw the damage caused by the Second World War as a great opportunity for recreating the city and considered the new towns programme as a positive step in this direction. Its success was, he felt, marred by a return to 'pyramid-building'. Mumford may have helped create the word and defined the concept of Megalopolis, but in *The City in History*, he does not welcome its emergence. He fears for a world where mankind fails to escape its 'blind commitment to a lopsided power-orientated, anti-organic technology'.

The origins and transformations of the city in the book's subtitle are extensively covered, but Mumford's view of the city's 'prospects' are examined with regret and even a degree of fear. He claims that 'no profit-orientated, pleasure-dominated economy can cope with' demands of growing populations. It is Mumford's perception that impresses in this last section of the book. He saw the emergence of the global city and, although it did not exist in the 60s, he predicted the emergence of electronic communications and understood that man could 'think global act local'.

Does the book have relevance today? As a means of understanding our clients, urban dwellers, it cannot be bettered; as a source of subliminal inspiration, it may be quite effective. I found much that rang familiar bells when rereading the book.

● Richard Cole

Do you have a 'classic' urban design book that you would like to review? If so, contact the editors.

THE AVON RIVER/ PAPA OTAKARO PRECINCT, CHRISTCHURCH NEW ZEALAND

Andrew Tinsley updates the story of the city's post-earthquake development



In summer 2012 *Urban Design* featured an article reflecting on the process of recovery planning for Christchurch, following the 2011 earthquake. Shortly after, consultants were sought to prepare detailed proposals for the rejuvenation of the Avon River Precinct, the first of the city's regeneration projects highlighted in The Blueprint masterplan shaped by thoughts from the Share an Idea initiative. Opus, the New Zealand based engineering and environmental consultancy, led a successful bid for this work in association with urban designers and landscape architects from BDP, ecologists from EOS and landscape architects from the New Zealand consultancies of Boffa Miskell and Land Lab.

The 2011 earthquake damaged over half the buildings in the city's central business district (CBD), destroyed thousands of residential properties and wrecked huge amounts of infrastructure. The New Zealand government established the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery Authority (CERA) to oversee the process of regeneration in partnership with Christchurch City Council and Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu which represents the Maori community. Three years after the earthquake, CERA and its partners have overseen the removal of the majority of damaged buildings and the commencement of new development.

The Share an Idea initiative was a huge success and it was evident that

the community of Christchurch wished to see a city that was greener, easier to move around, with a compact centre and stronger built identity. The Blueprint set out a strategy for development and proposed a number of anchor regeneration projects.

It was evident from the outset that the design and engineering team should be co-located in close proximity to the city centre. As much of the building stock had been lost or damaged, a vacant office space above a second hand car dealership was turned into a vibrant design studio, in a location appropriate for the task and a place in which practices came together to create a successful design and engineering collective.

THE PROJECT

The Avon River Precinct was the city's first anchor regeneration project to move forward; it covers a 3.2 km stretch of the river corridor as it passes through the city centre. The Precinct also draws in the East Frame, a series of largely vacant urban blocks that previously formed the eastern edge of the CBD. The scope of the project is extensive and draws upon the collective skills of a wide range of professionals. The team is working to a tight programme. Concept and developed design stages were largely finished in 2013 and detailed design packages are now nearing completion. Construction will shortly commence and early 'in-river' works are already underway.

UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

Despite significant damage to buildings, the river corridor came through the earthquake relatively unscathed and remains one of the city's enduring features. It therefore seems appropriate that it should be at the heart of the renewal strategy. The Avon River Precinct project will help define the character and qualities of the city's external environment and create attractive settings for new buildings, acting as a catalyst for further development.

The work also has a strong environmental and social dimension. A fundamental design principle promotes a 'healthy river, healthy place': if the river is in a good condition, the land and people around it will be. To achieve this, the river corridor is to be re-established as a natural habitat with additional native planting.

Christchurch is frequently referred to as the most English of cities but it is also home to Ngai Tuahuariri, the first inhabitants of this part of New Zealand. The land now occupied by the central city had traditionally been their food-gathering place. Over the last 150 years much of their culture has been lost or hidden by the development of European settlers. The post-earthquake rebuild provides the opportunity to celebrate both cultures and weave their futures more closely together.

DESIGN APPROACH

The design principles build on the objectives of The Blueprint and seek to create a place that will be healthier, more distinctive, accessible and prosperous. Alongside these is the desire to enhance the ecology of the river, strengthen the expression of culture and heritage, reconnect people with the water and establish the Precinct as Christchurch's prime landscape experience and destination.

The design began considering the potential for a network of pedestrian and cycle journeys along the river corridor, linked with a comprehensive approach to destinations, activities, heritage, vegetation and materials. At the same time technical studies considered vehicular movement, the treatment of storm water, paving, furniture, lighting, signing, ecology and vegetation to ensure that a consistent approach is taken throughout the area.

↙ Avon River precinct
 masterplan by BDP
 → Amazing Place Family Park
 ↘ The City Promenade
 All images © Opus, BDP, Boffa
 Miskell, Land Lab and EOS

The Avon Precinct naturally divides into a sequence of seven related spaces. Detailed design proposals have been prepared for each of these, all linked by similar themes and connected by a new urban promenade. This will have a distinctive character and will be the focus for pedestrian movement whilst integrating differing uses. Largely constructed of natural stone, the materiality of the promenade will provide it with a consistent character whilst connecting places that will each have their own distinct flavour.

The new promenade begins to the west of the city centre where lines of on-street car parking will be replaced with a new shared space; rain-gardens will help define the space as well as collecting and cleaning storm water. Whilst rain-gardens are not a new element in the Christchurch environment they are being designed to reflect conditions specific to the city. Native plants will strengthen the local ecology and exotic species, Christchurch's character as a garden city.

The next major feature will be the Terraces: their proximity to the leisure and retail quarters will see them become the prime location for outdoor eating, drinking and recreation. The new promenade will be at its most expansive here, accommodating a historic tram route as well as outdoor cafes and restaurants. Terraces and steps will provide access to the river edge, ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to get close to the river.

Heading east, new waterside stops for punts, historic sculptures and contemporary art will add further interest to the promenade. As it passes the proposed convention centre, it will have the opportunity to become the outdoor waterside space for this new international venue. Next, Victoria Square, originally a market place for Ngai Tahu, is currently a well-used space with lawns and trees. It has the potential to play an even greater role and will be remodelled to create a location representative of both the Maori and European communities.

The North Frame is a sensitive location in which the former PGC building collapsed during the earthquake resulting in a significant loss of life. Walkways and cycle paths will pass through the area alongside simple beds of planting of species that will strengthen the concept of Mahinga Kai. Across the river, another



potentially sun filled location, will create Christchurch's own South Bank, providing an attractive environment for commercial buildings, cafes and restaurants.

One of the major attractions of the Precinct will be Margaret Mahy's Amazing Place, a family park with the ambition of being the best in New Zealand. A school student competition has been held to give young people the opportunity to help design a special place they will then get to enjoy. Text, graphics and sculptural elements will reflect the culture and heritage of Ngai Tahu. The most easterly section of the journey is the Avon Loop, where the river banks suffered more significant earthquake damage. The design intent is less urban and the team is working to create substantial areas of native waterside planting.

The final element of the project is the East Frame. Identified in The Blueprint as a predominantly green space forming a soft edge to the CBD, this is now planned to become a new residential quarter. A series of incremental changes has seen the masterplan develop to accommodate a variety of residential typologies set around a linear park. The nature of this development is relatively new to a city which for years has cherished its quarter-acre residential plots.

Whilst car access will be accommodated on lower speed roads, attractive

alternatives will be provided through designated cycleways and footpaths. Residents and visitors will also have direct access to Manchester Street, the main north-south route along the edge of the CBD transformed into a boulevard with a bus priority route.

Public art is an integral element of the concept design and its inclusion is being developed through a specialist Art Trail commission. Early work includes a literary trail with text and graphics relevant to both Ngai Tahu and European cultures introduced into areas of paving and seating.

CONCLUSION

The remodelling of the Avon River Precinct was always going to be a complex undertaking and 18 months of design development proved this to be the case. The work requires engagement with a broad spectrum of public and private sector agencies and like all emerging city centre projects, it is never far from the public eye. When construction begins, scrutiny will be intense. However, there is every reason to think that the client's ambition to make Christchurch one of the world's great small cities will be achieved.

● Andrew Tindsley, chair of landscape architecture at BDP

CELEBRATING THE CULT OF THE VIEW

Michael Short considers the success of Vancouver's tall buildings policies



Vancouver is, in many ways, one of the best-planned cities in North America and a 'poster-child of urbanism'. It has won innumerable awards for its particular style of urbanism, what Punter (2003) describes as 'the particular juxtaposition of its high-rise dominated downtown peninsula and dark forests of Stanley Park against a backdrop of the heavily rain-forested and often snow-capped Coast Range'. This undeniable achievement is, in no great measure, down to the engagement of the city's planners and urban designers with the tall building typology: ways of promoting them in appropriate locations, limiting them where views of the surrounding mountains and water might be affected, and increasing urban densities to attract particular forms of living.

In 1997, the city of Vancouver adopted the General Policy for Higher Buildings that sought to frame discussions about tall buildings in the downtown area that might exceed the height limits allowed by the *Downtown District Official Development Plan* of 1975. This policy document emerged from a comprehensive piece of work, the *Downtown Vancouver Skyline Study* of 1997 that sought to define a preferred profile for the downtown Vancouver skyline. This new policy framework has been instrumental in promoting a positive engagement with the tall building typology, and in using building height to protect and enhance key views of, and through the townscape, promote design quality and create a townscape of interest that enhances the natural environment, what has been

named Vancouverism.

Vancouverism emerged from the 1980s onwards and has a number of distinct elements which, when given the particular natural and physical context, has resulted in the city as we now see it. It incorporates '...tall, but widely separated, slender towers interspersed with low-rise buildings, public spaces, small parks and pedestrian-friendly streetscapes and facades to minimize the impact of a high-density population' (Chamberlain, L. 2005. 'Trying to build the grand central of the west.' *The New York Times*). In addition, it incorporates mixed-use development that seeks to create and retain a lively street-scene through commercial uses at the ground floors of the towers.

The 1997 *Downtown Vancouver Skyline Study* recommended a skyline that incorporated a number of principles: firstly, that the backdrop of the mountains to the north of the city remain the predominant element in the skyline; secondly, that any new tall buildings do not block 'the Lions' from most vantage points south of False Creek; thirdly, that buildings which might significantly exceed current height limits are limited to the Central Business District, to minimise blockage of the mountains from locations south of False Creek; fourthly, that building heights should step down as they approach the water; and finally, that there should be a sufficient number of sites for taller buildings to ensure that a small number of landowners will not have a monopoly on the opportunity to develop

buildings exceeding current height limits. The recommended skyline involves allowing buildings in the current 137 meter high zone to go up to 183 meters, and the study indicated that there were probably only five or so opportunities in the entire downtown for buildings to exceed this limit. In addition, the city's *Higher Building Advisory Panel* is a body appointed by the City Council to consider each tall building that is proposed and give impartial, professional advice to the Director of Planning, City Council and Development Permit Board. This panel is often chaired by architects of note including, for the example cited below, Ken Yeang. It supplements the more general review undertaken by the Urban Design Panel.

The Living Shangri-La tower for example – a mixed-use, 57 storey tower, designed to be the tallest in the city – was submitted for zoning approval in 2003. The site was identified in the General Policy for Higher Buildings as a site for the development of a higher building, to a height of 183m but the western part of the site was limited by the protection of a view from Heather Bay to the Lions. The negotiations of the zoning application centred around the proposed building height, and its relationship to this view corridor. The protection of the view remained sacrosanct throughout the discussions for the new tower's design, height and form, resulting in an axial slash across the site.

The city recognised early on that there were, in fact, very few possibilities in the downtown area for a tall building to punch above the general building height and thereby create a skyline of interest. As Berelowitz (2005) has noted, 'both Vancouver's urban form and its public spaces have been profoundly informed by the view imperative'. It is the views out of the city towards its natural setting however, that are promoted through the zoning and planning regulations. The view cones and the consensus around their protection and management, are a defining feature of the city's planning system. Indeed this has been part of the discussions for the Trump Vancouver tower (under construction, 63 storeys) and the Burrard Gateway tower (proposed, 54 storeys). In Vancouver these restrictions are not contested, rather they are accepted as a frame from which innovative design

✓ The Vancouver skyline with the Shangri-La tower centre-left ©Dreamstime.com

↓ Aerial view of Downtown looking south
 ©Mark Tewdwr-Jones
 ↓↓ Shangri-La tower, West Georgia Street looking south east ©Author's own image
 ↓↓ Shangri-La tower, West Georgia Street looking north west ©Author's own image
 ↓↓↓ False Creek towers, Downtown ©Author's own image

solutions might emerge.

The tower at 1120 West Georgia Street assists us in reflecting on the success of the planning regime in Vancouver; indeed, it can be suggested that this regime encourages a positive engagement with design outcomes in the city, irrespective of whether the building in question is viewed positively, encouraged by the autonomy that the city is able to practise (uniquely in British Columbia). In other words, the city's 'urbanism behaviour' is such that it encourages a particular type of planning culture in which there is positive engagement with zoning and the issuing of development permits. In terms of the *Higher Buildings Advisory Panel*, it appears to have become '...a matter of professional pride for many developers/designers to seek a unanimous endorsement of their proposals when only a majority (of the panel members) in favour is actually required'.

This is not, of course, to say that there are no conflicts about particular development proposals on particular sites, but there is a feeling that there is some element of the system that encourages peer review. In other words, it is precisely Vancouver's particular 'urbanism behaviour' that means that developers strive for excellence in their designs.

Finally it is interesting to reflect upon the significance of the 'cult of the view' exhibited by the processes of planning in the city. As Berelowitz notes, 'both Vancouver's urban form and its public spaces have been profoundly informed by the view imperative'. It is the views out of the city towards its natural setting however, that is promoted through the city's zoning and planning regulations. The view cones and the consensus around their protection and management, are a defining feature of the local planning system. In Vancouver these are not contested, rather they are accepted as a frame from which innovative design solutions might emerge.

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GREENING THE CITY

'The smallest patch of green to arrest the monotony of asphalt and concrete is as important to the value of real estate as streets, sewers and convenient shopping'.

JAMES FELT, former Chairman of the NYC Planning Commission, 1960.

Cities are facing a certain change: by the middle of 2009, the number of people living in urban areas surpassed the number living in rural ones, and ever since the world has become more urban than rural. Moreover, according to the UN report on urban and rural areas, the world urban population is predicted to increase by 84 per cent by 2050. We need to address the way we shape cities if they are to become sustainable, but also pleasant, healthy places to live, work and play.

The health benefits, both mental and physical, of living in a green city, one that offers green spaces, parks, trees, etc., are well researched and documented. Air quality is improved, surface water run-off is eased, and people can enjoy a healthier lifestyle with parks to exercise or relax in (to name but a very few reasons). Unfortunately, the fact remains that cities only have a set amount of space with which to play. Much needs to change if we are to accommodate additional green space. In this issue, we explore ways in which we can make cities greener, both now through urban interventions that inspire people to see space differently and accept that sometimes change is good, but also in the future, through planning, strategy and attitude shift. The articles that are presented here look at a variety of ways and scales to do so, at how we can inspire people to change the way they use space, and how to think about space.

An article from Depave, an American organisation, seeks to inspire readers in the way they see space. Specifically they aim to literally dig up hard-paved areas that either do not need to be paved, or that people no longer want paved. In their place, through community involvement, they create soft, green spaces for the community to use, to play in or to grow food. They are

making us think twice about how to create such spaces in the future, and hopefully to question whether some spaces need to be hard-paved at all. Cycle Hoop, a UK based organisation looks for inspiration overseas and brings back solutions that inspire a change in the way that certain spaces in London are perceived. Their article's subject is Parklets, and how these can dramatically alter the way we see often underused spaces, to inspire us to transform temporary changes into permanent ones.

Helga Fassbinder discusses the concept of a Biotope City, highlighting how cities are, and should be seen as inseparable from nature, and how an attitude shift can help creating and shaping greener. Matthew Pencharz, advisor for environment and energy to London's Mayor highlights what the Greater London Authority is doing to green the city, and outlines future plans to ensure that London continues to be a green.

Fenella Griffin and Murray Smith argue for a 'landscape integration' in order to respond to climate change and to the fact that human health is interdependent with that of other species. Ian Hingley's article looks at streets and asks why, without much reason, they are paved from building to building. He suggests that we should instead reconsider verges, and describes in detail, ways in which they can become a useful and integrated element of the street.

All in all, greening the city is a subject we cannot shy away from. So often, soft elements get kicked to the curb because they are seen as being difficult to make money from (which is increasingly being identified as a misguided assumption) or a maintenance liability. The status of soft or green urban elements needs to be raised and they need to be considered from the early stages of design, together with other elements, whether in the design of a building, a street, an urban square, or a city quarter's masterplan.

● Christopher Martin, Urban Designer and Planner at Urban Movement Ltd.

← Amsterdam, Jordaan
©Helga Fassbinder

TOWARDS A LANDSCAPE INTEGRATION

Fenella Griffin and Murray Smith advocate the inclusion of green infrastructure to combat climate change



The call of our times is towards integration. Clearly a big and urgent work for humanity, for both the individual and the collective, but within the more physical sphere of spatial planning and design, integration suggests inclusion and consciously allowing the inevitable acts of de and re-integration to unravel, clarify and re-qualify the environmental framework. Implicit in this, is preparing for the impacts of climate change with decisive strategies that respond to the fact that our own human health and resilience is interdependent with the survival of other species, or more specifically, the systems that sustain them, even in densely populated metropolitan areas.

Ecological and landscape urbanism perspectives are well embedded within the cultural frame and noticeably, the language of landscape has shifted towards persuasive terms selected to convey quantifiable assets, with economic and other yields, such as green and blue infrastructures, community health and well-being benefits and the delivery of ecological services. The language emphasises what we already know, and helps to demonstrate the contribution that streets, squares, parks, river corridors and other green and wild spaces can make in facing up to some of the specific challenges of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, improving air and water quality, encouraging better public health and preparing for the impacts associated with flooding.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The term green infrastructure (GI) first emerged in a report to the governor of Florida on land conservation strategies in 1994 to convey the idea that natural systems are equal to, and sometimes of greater importance than traditional forms of infrastructure. As a strategic approach to open space conservation, development and management, GI operates first at a landscape scale enabling regional and national objectives to be defined, for example

the protection and restoration of landscape types for habitat benefits, water management, recreational provision, and sustainable economic activity. Working through region, city, district, neighbourhood and the localised site scales, GI thinking offers us effective planning tools, expanding on the corridor conservation concepts of the greenways movement pioneered in the US as a means of establishing critical habitat connections, but offers a more expansive concept by including larger habitat types such as forest, fen, marsh and grassland, in recognition of the services they provide as carbon sinks, storm surge protection, their role in air, soil and water quality management, and for human health. As a positive driver for change, green and blue infrastructure techniques must inevitably underpin new forms of urbanism that are relational, integrative and able to respond to the activation of tipping points.

The ingenuity of the Dutch Room for the River programme provides a striking example of how these tipping points can be addressed. Launched in 2006, the programme responds to the widespread flood risks of 1993/1995 by re-thinking the historic strategy of building ever-higher dikes. This method of holding water back was putting four million people at risk and proving prohibitively expensive. In pursuit of delta-proofing, and with more than 30 projects underway, most due for completion in 2015/16, Room for the River does not seek to claim land back from rising waters, but sacrifices it instead to natural and ecological uses to protect high risk areas, underlining the 'valuable services that nature provides the human environment'. The project for the city of Nijmegen demonstrates the opportunity of a crisis where the relationship between urban form and the River Waal's physiology created a high level of flood risk. By moving dikes away from the river and excavating a 4km long ancillary channel, a new urban island is being created as a park/nature reserve and new

↑ Tottenham Green Link street swales and rain gardens collecting surface water

urban focal point, while lowering the ambient river level and providing an escape route for high waters.

DESIGNING WITH NATURE

Creative humility underpinned by an ecological imperative, as evidenced in the problem solving for the Rhine delta, feels closely connected to the approaches advocated in Ian McHarg's seminal *Design with Nature* which involves the reading of a whole system to formulate a set of design prescriptions. Similar layered, inclusive analysis and resulting rhizomatic frameworks guide the principles established by the GLA's *All London Green Grid* and also Natural England's *London's Natural Signatures*.

The phenomenon of GI is not new. Freiburg's success and liveability as a city is multi-factored. Its *Charter for Sustainable Urbanism* coalesces more than four decades of integrative policy, innovation and design guided by a commitment to people, environment and economic development with consistent but evolving values and vision. The early commitment to a mass transportation system, resulting in a city of short distances and radical reduction in car use, the principle of densification and the wide reaching green space strategy and green fingers, set limits on development areas, conserving green space corridors connecting city/people/region, while providing a natural structure for ecological and recreational space and drawing cool air down from the mountains to offset the summer heat. These ideas continue to be seeded around the world. Freiburg has also highlighted the importance of social justice, education and economic parity in working towards the foundation of an ecologically balanced city.

THE UNDERLYING LANDSCAPE

In our own work at Untitled Practice we are exploring the current state of GI by integrating its environmental objectives along a human/systems approach to retrofit parts of the city's traditional grey and green infrastructure in response to climate change adaptation techniques informed by the specific qualities of place. We look for the sense of underlying landscape as something pre-existing and structural – a frame of reference informing a way forward.

At Tottenham, our proposals for a Green Link for Design for London and the London Borough of Haringey in collaboration with Landolt + Brown Architects, sought to recover the sense of connection between the life of the High Street and the physically close but perceptually distant Lea Valley Regional Park with its wetlands and waterways. This led us to explore the identity of the 1.5km route as a meeting of city and marshland enabling access to the wider resources of the valley. By threading a surface water collection system of linear street swales along the route to convey and re-charge rainfall, the presence of a temporal wetland and its associated species could be extended into the High Street environs while reducing the risk of flash flooding. A 'river' of flowers and importantly, nectar sources are integrated into a re-configured street surfaced with light reflecting materials and planted with shade trees to limit heat absorption and mitigate the urban heat island effect. We imagined that as species moved up from the marshes, they might



put on headphones, go to the library and check out the local stores, and that as people inhabited the marshes more, they might grow wings, antennae and forage a little.

At Thamesmead, for Peabody and GLA/ London Borough of Bexley, we are exploring similar issues of inter-connectivity and the communication of a landscape's significance in forming urban development over generations, where many qualities have been lost to the reading. Our proposals link the heritage assets of Lesnes Abbey Woods and Crossness Pumping Station along 2.5km of public space, related to housing and infrastructure. We are working to improve the ecological function of the land by promoting species diversity within a more joined-up public realm to create a place that meets social, recreational and biodiversity needs. The conversion of approximately nine hectares of amenity grassland to species rich meadow at Abbey Way and Southmere Park will unify proposals to extend and renew the tree canopy and register the identity of the former marshes with swales and wetland planting while amplifying the natural frame for a series of new social spaces to cultivate stronger sense of place, time and continuity for local people.

PULLING THREADS

The expression of what is, what has been lost, and what could be, drives the strategy at Valley Gardens, Brighton, where we are working with Urban Movement for Brighton & Hove City Council. Despite the project's name, both valley and the gardens were hard to recognise due to incremental urban expansion, which has led to severance of the city, with the gardens serving as a chain of traffic islands along the A23 London Road, past the Royal Pavilion to Brighton Pier.

In searching for the valley, we found the entire watershed, and the significant potential for flooding from both surface and ground water sources. We traced chalk streams barefoot to their source along the spring line at the foot of the South Downs, and speculated about daylighting the Wellesbourne, a winterbourne stream, now subsumed within the enormous Victorian sewer network. Whilst in reality there is no longer a watercourse through the valley, we are re-imagining

↑ Thamesmead networks of inter-linked green spaces between Lesnes and Crossness



↑ Brighton Valley Gardens cross-sectional layering structured in relation to National Elm Collection

the valley floor with a created chalk stream as part of the re-structuring of streets and green spaces, to receive surface water run-off via vegetated street swales and rain gardens. By including later flowering plants, Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) species like the white letter hairstreak moth can be provided with late season food sources to promote its survival. Brighton and Lewes Downs is the UK's first UNESCO Urban Biosphere Reserve and Valley Gardens lies strategically between the marine and downland environments which it recognises.

Like pulling threads, we hope that the work will expand beyond the fabric of Valley Gardens itself, to eventually stitch together the seafront with the Downs. The parallel work of civilising the terrain involves reducing the area given to roads, claiming land back for the public realm, de-cluttering and removing barriers to movement, creating a legible cycle route and more direct walking routes to connect across and along the valley floor and make space for Brighton's strong cultural life, by providing flexible and robust spaces capable of multiple uses for human play, from slack-lining to food and other festivals. Based on VURT (Valuing Urban Realm Toolkit), the business case estimates an economic impact of over £85 million and more than £3.5 million in terms of the social benefits from an improved quality of life and environment over a 15 year evaluation period.

The role of trees at Valley Gardens is important: from the conservation of the National Elm Collection to thinking about the site as part of an expanding urban forest and resilient arboretum. Alongside psychological and behavioural benefits, and improving land values, trees produce oxygen, intercept airborne particulates, reduce smog and enhance respiratory health. Trees remove greenhouse gases, store carbon and lower the ambient temperature through evapo-transpiration, all significant in terms of air quality and meeting regulatory clean air requirements, therefore reducing deaths from respiratory disease and heat stress. Trees improve water quality and reduce storm water management costs by capturing and slowing rainfall and providing erosion control.

MANAGEMENT AS A DESIGN TOOL

Paying for 'green goods' is an issue of growing

concern. Management is a design tool in itself and we have explored dialogues regarding future management and maintenance. At Tottenham we were inspired by a thriving local community project, Living Under One Sun, where multiple strategies including a time bank and NHS referrals have improved access to health services and healthy living initiatives, building social capital in a community with a high deprivation index. In Brighton we are exploring a similar partnership approach with local groups including the probation service, schools and a Green Gym type initiative. These blended models may suggest a way forward. Despite their multiple benefits green spaces are not a statutory service and frequently miss out on funding to other revenue generating spaces and services. NESTA's 2013 report, *Rethinking Parks – Exploring New Business Models for Parks in the 21st century* was published in tandem with a funding programme to support interested groups to develop innovation beyond the eight existing management models. Reflecting on the business case figures for Valley Gardens, part of the solution may lie in the substantial economic gains and potential for savings against energy and health care, the re-routing of funds towards establishing inclusive management frameworks in acknowledgement of the long term economic and other benefits of GI.

A LIVING SYSTEM

Land is a living system and inclusive by its nature. Like our bodies, it provides a form of physical containment for our lived experiences, and like our bodies bears the marks of its lived-ness, the cycles of occupation, and change. As a body, land too has some ability to signal dysfunction or disease, a certain resilience and mechanism for recovery given the right tolerances and a deep process of geophysical and ecological becoming. Given these processes, interactions and underlying principles, it seems natural to join in or synchronise with them in addressing the collective work of urban renewal towards better ecological, physical and emotional health as well as the functional, economic and social success of our communities.

It is two generations since the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, for which she was accused of being 'a fanatic defender of the cult of the balance of nature'. A paradigm shift has occurred in the intervening years. Renewed interest in psycho-geographic wanderings, re-wilding, and a plethora of nature writing, by authors like Robert Macfarlane, are just some examples of how these concerns are becoming more embedded in the collective consciousness.

The way towards GI as an essential basis for urban design in the context of climate change adaptation and mitigation, is clearly set out in excellent position statements by the Landscape Institute, the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, and especially the American Society of Landscape Architects, offering techniques for consideration and deployment by us all. It seems to us a critical pathway along which to effect change within the urban environment to develop genuine systemic functionality and generous, authentic place-making which also values the aesthetic function as being an integral limb of sustainability and as a key point of connection for human interaction. ●

● Murray Smith and Fenella Griffin are partners at Untitled Practice, architects and landscape architects, Fenella also leads a design studio at Kingston University

DEPAVING: DIFFICULT BY DESIGN

Walt Lockley promotes a small but effective method for transforming urban areas



Despite the reputation of its cool, green, wet Cascadian location, the summers in Portland Oregon can be sunny and hot, with long dry stretches between rains, particularly in August. August somehow arrived five weeks early this year.

For the small Portland non-governmental organisation called Depave, summer and autumn are when its work becomes most visible. The whole season of projects is tightly scheduled into a few available Saturdays when volunteers can be called out and marshalled for work. The year 2014 was the seventh year of hot, hard, manual labour of digging-up pavement and planting gardens.

As an organisation, Depave is small, flexible, but tenacious. It runs solely on volunteer labour with the exception of one permanent staffer, the self-described 'creative greenspace geek', Eric Rosewall. Depave continues to show strength and promise - partly because its primary goals are obvious, simple, explainable to small children, and have the emotional resonance of a fairy tale. Removing pavement from urban environments is a good idea. Of course it is!

While running another full calendar of projects this seventh summer, Depave has faced some fundamental issues. The first is a paradox that's unlikely to change but requires perennial explanation: why does Depave insist on using volunteer muscle? There is the question of what are the practical benefits, and then there is the question of whether or not this particular greening model is viable and exportable to places that are not Portland, Oregon.

HOW TO REMOVE PAVEMENT

In 2014, with increasing success and notoriety, Depave has more applicant clients for depaving than it has resources, staff, or summer weekends to execute. These days it selects candidates with the highest benefit, highest visibility, and an engaged natural constituency of involved community members. Most often these are schools and churches. Once a site is chosen, Depave works with project partners and volunteers to develop an achievable vision, design the project, secure grant funds and permits, and organise events to depave and recreate the space.

When the scheduled summer weekend comes, on Friday a subset of trained volunteers slice the pavement into a grid of manageable pieces with a concrete saw, a loud, dirty, slow process. Then on Saturday morning, that natural constituency arrives. They're encouraged to stretch, asked to sign releases, and armed with heavy pry bars, gloves, and wheelbarrows. Under these low-tech supervised conditions, up to 100 community members work safely side by side to begin the transformation.

There is little or no art to it. A volunteer wedges a pry bar under a piece of asphalt, edges it upward, and tilts it backwards, so that it breaks under its own weight. Chunks are carted off in the wheelbarrows or on hand trucks, and delivered to drop-boxes, which are then hauled to the nearest recycling yard. Surprisingly, reclaimed asphalt pavement (RAP) is the most recycled product in the United States, approaching 100 per cent reuse.

↑ Depave project 2013: volunteers removed 2400 sq ft of St. Mary's Ethiopian Church, Portland. All photographs ©Eric Rosewall



Intellectual mastery of the process takes thirty seconds or less. One's mind is left to wander. One enjoys the exercise and the company of the other volunteers, gets to know them a bit, and gets hot and sweaty in short order.

BEGINNINGS

Depave started in 2000 with two friends, Kasandra Griffin and Arif Khan, who had both worked on local bicycle and watershed issues. Together they removed areas of concrete and asphalt from their own back yards. The benefits of those two experiments suggested to Arif that depaving had larger promise.

After several years of research and preparation, the first major official Depave project took place on June 16, 2008. Property owner Angela Goldsmith owned a multi-use building on a busy neighbourhood street, with two apartments, a small store and a cafe. Goldsmith agreed to let Depave transform the small adjacent parking area, a 3,000-square-foot corner lot, under two wise conditions: Depave would design the resulting green space, and that space would help feed the neighbourhood.

The project and organisation took on a life of its own. From the very beginning it had the momentum of a good, simple, self-explanatory, immediately appealing idea. The first event saw lots of people wanting to come to the next one. Since there was no

next event planned, a group of motivated volunteer leaders came together to create one... and after that successful event, the next and the next... and in the process, they've created a loose but resilient organisation.

Seven years later that first site now stands as the Fargo Forest Garden, one component of the Oregon Sustainable Agricultural Land Trust, with 15 productive fruit and nut trees.

DIFFICULT BY DESIGN

Removing pavement is more politically complicated and more physically demanding than it might sound. Moreover, the organisation is committed to an old-fashioned model of removing pavement by manual work with volunteers and neighbours.

You could depave one of these sites with three jackhammers or one rented backhoe in an afternoon. That would certainly be easier than organising and supervising 100 volunteers for a full day. It would arguably be more cost-effective, depending on which costs you're willing to account for. So why use manual labour? Because a depaving action creates a venue for community sweat equity. Depave co-founder Griffin describes it as a 'barn raising in reverse', a phrase that elegantly packs in connotations of neighbours and volunteers working side by side, sharing expertise, learning the project goals and benefits, getting to recognise each other, investing personal energy in a common cause, and experiencing the pleasure and wonder of many hands making light work, all while creating a local asset with shared ownership.

The event becomes a narrative, a local memory, a favourite landmark. As Griffin has said, 'We don't have very many opportunities in this culture to get together with people and actually accomplish something tangible, visible. It used to be that communities would come together, and at the end of the day there would be a barn. Some other day, you would come back to the barn and you would know 'I helped build this'. There's something magical about shared sweat, and the scrapes and bruises you get from doing something as part of a team with a vision. And there's an investment. Years can go by and that volunteer still feels engaged.'

Also, at the intersection of physical effort and placemaking, there's no substitute for handling asphalt, preferably with gloves. It's dirty, and it can get sharp. The cab of a backhoe protects you from such unpleasantness. Removing asphalt by hand makes the heavy black sealant horribly, sensually real. It has a real physical relationship to the ground. Underneath the sealant and a bed of gravel, the soil has been crushed, sealed off from rain and insects, dehydrated, sterilised, deadened. Depaving gives this pale prisoner sunlight and rain again so the healing can start.

IDENTIFYING BENEFITS

Depave's work in the last seven years has focused on replacing under-utilised asphalt lots with gardens brimming with life. The personal histories of the founders have led Depave to describe its benefits mostly in terms of storm water recapture and infiltration.

If those were the only benefits, it would be well worth the effort. Portland gets about 37 inches of rain a year. Every thousand square feet of pavement channels roughly 23,000 gallons of runoff per year

↑ Portland Oregon: removal of two acres of asphalt at Baltimore Woods along the Willamette, to restore an ecologically significant oak savannah (Eric Rosewall)
 ↑↑ Capitol Hill Elementary School, Portland 2011: volunteer 'prybar scientists' about to let a heavy asphalt slab smash itself into pieces, (Eric Rosewall)

into the city's elderly combined sewer system. Until recently that system delivered septic overflow into the Willamette and Columbia Rivers after every heavy rain. After a \$1.44 billion, 20-year municipal Big Pipe project completed at the end of 2011, overflow incidents went from as many as 50 a year down to a goal of four.

Depave's first project, the Fargo Forest Garden, once funnelled an annual average of 67,500 gallons of storm water runoff. That number is now zero. To date, Depave's 35 completed projects quietly, invisibly, without further expense or moving parts, deliver four and a half million gallons of rainwater back into the ground every year.

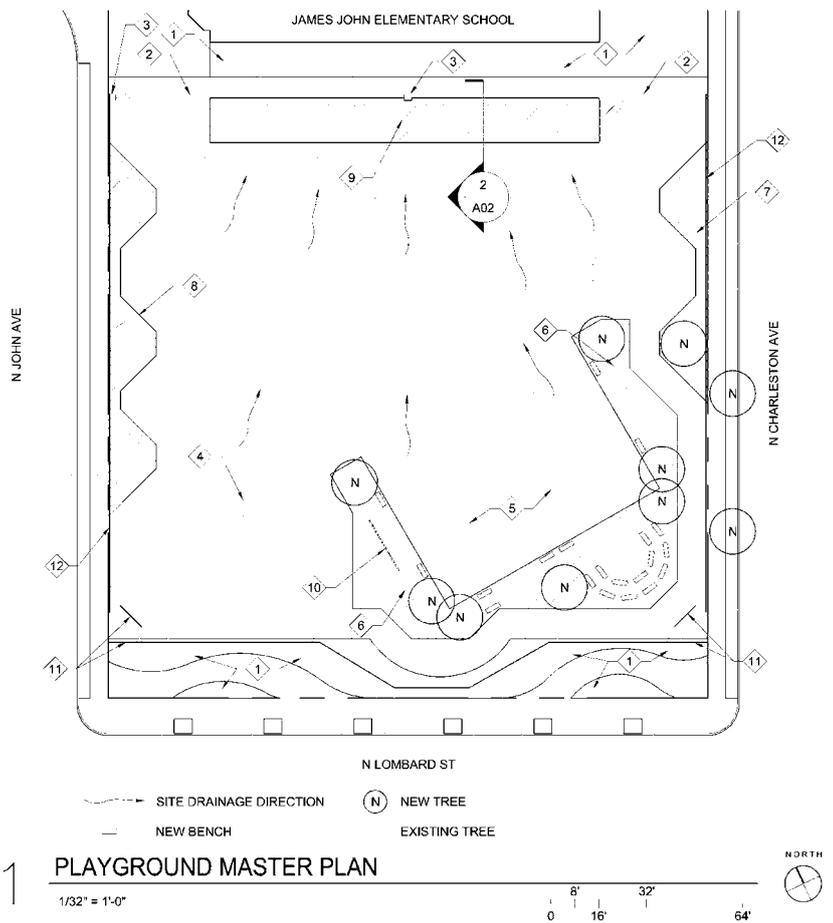
But there's more to it. Beyond storm water management there's a constellation of practical benefits of turning a parking lot into a garden or bio-swale. The list of benefits is both somewhat subjective and likely familiar to any re-greening advocates who have struggled with bored boards and aggravating cynics. The long-term advantages include promoting sustainable local food production, improving air quality, providing food security for urban wildlife and insects, creating attractive humanising sensory effects in the public street, promoting urban habitat and agriculture education for all ages, enhancing property values and neighbourhood identity, and promoting eyes-on-the-street security and cohesive community involvement.

There's still an opportunity for these benefits to be explored, teased out, articulated and quantified more thoroughly. Happily, in Portland, you don't have to argue too much. The neighbours are already hip. The city's Bureau of Planning and Sustainability has been there, done that, smiles wisely at the effort, and strongly supports projects with 'community development impacts, including building social capital by promoting interaction among diverse community members and encouraging neighbour collaboration' as a matter of documented public policy (Portland Plan, Food Systems, Autumn 2009.)

There's another benefit more specific to depaving, probably the most dramatic, powerful, visible effect. Depaving transforms a space from the physical car-space of a parking lot down to the human scale of gardens. It is a well-known and predictable effect but somehow freshly amazing each time, a vivid demonstration of the vast amount of territory devoured by automobiles. A safely parked standing human occupies only about 2.5 per cent of a parking space. One single space can be converted, if you like, into comfortable cafe-style seating for about 18 people. Full-size automobiles require about 1000 square feet for a turning circle where humans can turn around quite nicely where they are, thanks. The amount of human-scale space carved back out, reclaimed and liberated in this process is fantastic.

NEXT DIRECTIONS

On a national and international scale, Depave aims to inspire and educate activists and potential depavers everywhere. First, last and always, there's nothing secret about the technique. Anybody can do the technical process whenever and wherever they like. The website depave.org holds a treasure trove of documentation and information on the topic, from downloadable How to Depave manuals,



1 PLAYGROUND MASTER PLAN

1/32" = 1'-0"

Long-term advantages include promoting sustainable local food production, improving air quality, providing food security for urban wildlife and insects, creating attractive humanising sensory effects in the public street

to a video series about do-it-yourself driveway depaving, along with photographs, addresses and descriptions of every one of the 35 projects they've completed so far.

That said, depaving is still a developing technique. The organisation has found itself, somewhat accidentally, at its cutting edge. In the spring of 2013 Depave partnered with the NGO River Network and the Russell Family Foundation to train local partners and conduct demonstration depaving projects in the nearby Puget Sound area of Washington, with the goal of building an affiliate program to serve the region. So far so good; the effort is becoming contagious. Depave is also formally training other organisations in how to do what they do, with a continued insistence on direct cooperative action and muscle power. In 2012 Green Communities Canada, a coalition of groups in Ontario, hired Depave to help develop Depave Paradise, which has spread depaving projects across the province and beyond.

On a regional scale, Depave engages in policy conversations ranging from Portland's parking

↑ Never a vacant lot: site plan for the James John Elementary School project in Portland, Oregon (courtesy architect Joseph Purkey, Convergence Architecture)

requirements, to supporting a Metro Parks and Greenspaces bond measure, to reviewing storm water management manuals for local agencies, to celebrating the virtues of Portland's still-unpaved streets. Depave's goal is for the region to adopt new guidelines that will protect watersheds and communities up front, so that less rehabilitation work will be needed later.

Portland is undeniably a special place, though: one key moment of the city's history and self-image is its rejection of the Mount Hood Freeway interstate project back in 1970, turning away from Robert Moses and his urban thinking, and several resulting decades of planning and land-use decisions consistent with that decision. Large portions of the city already reject and resist the pressure of automotive scale in a dozen different ways. Portland was the home of beat poet Gary Snyder in his formative years as a young logger, when he formulated his Cascadian slogan that still resonates: 'I want to create wilderness out of empire'.

Today Portland's 95 neighbourhoods are full of people who have chosen to root themselves and return their time and money and personal attention back into their surroundings, back into

shared gardens and impromptu parks and focused participation in public meetings. Those small-scale choices require a certain enlightened self-interest and some humility. Those small-scale choices produce, among other things, a sense of locally common values, a network of local connections, and ranks of seasoned and well-informed volunteers.

Depave's particular model of re-greening developed into a lasting success in special conditions in an unusual place. With their pilot expansions, they've seen that its model requires some tailoring to other regions. The basic principles of making better urban spaces are readily transferable, but it may take more customisation to grow similar successes elsewhere, say in Dallas, Texas, Chelmsford or Newark. Thoughtful feedback on this score from potential depavers in other cities is always welcome.

In the meantime Depave will continue to physically take up pavement at several Portland sites per year, returning as much soil as possible to the self-healing, self-correcting, self-balancing, self-sustaining cycles of nature. Even as a small step of environmental remediation across a daunting frontier, as the retail repair of a wholesale disaster, without question it's worth the effort. ●

● Depave volunteer Walt Lockley was born in Texas, educated from the back seat of a 1972 Buick Riviera criss-crossing North America, and lives in Portland, Oregon

PARKLETS ARE COMING TO A STREET NEAR YOU

Habib Khan explains how a small intervention can transform the street environment



→ Parklet in Adelaide, Australia

Cyclehoop first encountered 'parklets' in Adelaide in June of this year. We were exhibiting at VeloCity Global, the world's largest Business to Business cycling conference. During the presentations about Adelaide itself, much was being made of the city's cycle lanes and other cycle related amenities. However, my abiding memory of Adelaide remains the many Parklets we saw throughout the city centre.

These are an amazingly simple answer to making the city centres more attractive places to visit. Parklets are often located outside bars and restaurants which sponsor them in return of extra seating for their customers. However, they are supposed to be public spaces and not all are exclusive to the adjacent business. They transform car parking spaces and are an extension of the pavement area into the highway, often used in busy urban areas to add greenery to an otherwise grey dull street.

The concept of a Parklet is relatively new in the UK. The world's first ever formal public Parklets were initially conceived and installed in San Francisco in 2010. As of February 2013, 38 Parklets had been installed throughout that city. Several other US states followed suit as well as other cities across the world including Adelaide and Vancouver. Proposals to implement them in the UK prove



that they are perceived to be a leading innovative method of greening our cities.

Designed to fit the surrounding area, Parklets can be customised in a wide variety of styles with many different features including cycle parking, planters, seating and play areas. Though no two are alike in terms of aesthetics, they all have one common aim, creating greener, cleaner, quieter streets and a healthier more active city. The cost of designing, manufacturing and installing them vary depending on the size and specification.

Vancouver's pricing model for any business wanting one outside their premises is:

- £200 review fee upon submitting preliminary application
- £900 admin cost
- £100 for site inspection before and after installation
- £100 to remove each parking meter
- £300 annual renewal fee.

Adelaide has a more simple pricing model: Parklets operate under a Parklet permit, currently charged at A\$39 per m² (consistent with current charges for an outdoor dining permit). Providing that the Parklet is operating in an acceptable manner, the permit may be renewed for a further 12 months subject to continued good management and maintenance by the operator. Two of the Parklets in Adelaide also have a license to sell alcohol.

THE LOSS OF CAR PARKING SPACES

Over the next few decades, urban areas across the world are expected to experience exponential population growth. London alone is forecast to be a city of 10 million people by the early 2030s. This growth and that of economic activity are intensifying the pressures on the road networks, consequently increasing pollution and traffic congestion.



On the other hand, recent data from several central London boroughs based on the number of residents car parking permits applied for, point to the fact that fewer people own cars: applications have come down approximately 16 per cent in the past ten years. More and more people moving to London do not see car ownership as a necessity, especially since public transport is so good, cycling is very popular and car sharing clubs are so accessible. This decline in car ownership, coupled with the attempts to reduce pollution and improve air quality make the need to save all road space for car usage a rather dated argument.

Recent research from Australia shows up to 30 per cent increase in turnover when a Parklet is placed outside a restaurant, coffee shop or bar; business owners would therefore be happy to lose the car space. After all, streets are public places as well as being a focus for economic, environmental, cultural and social activities.

↑ Parklet in San Francisco: a café extending its service onto a suspended parking bay
 ↑↑ Parklet in Adelaide, Australia



interaction and community engagement. Specific Parklet designs can reduce barriers to accessibility for disabled people and provide spaces for children to play in. In turn, this can encourage community cohesion.

LONDON INITIATIVES

Much like San Francisco, London is also pledging to radically improve roads, streets and under-used public spaces across the capital. The Roads Task Force (RTF) was set up by the Mayor of London in 2012 to tackle the challenges facing London's streets. The RTF highlighted the importance of thinking innovatively in order to tackle the challenges on our roads and deliver the world-class streets crucial to London's economic success and quality of life. 'As the Mayor of London has recognised, one of the marks of a truly world-class city is having iconic, safe, attractive public spaces for people to enjoy, to rest, to gather, to relax and to soak up the city'. Bold action is required to make London fit for the future by improving movement and the quality and quantity of public spaces.

The transformation of London's roads will be funded by the £1.8m Future Streets Incubator Fund scheduled to be implemented over the next three years. These funds will collaboratively nurture and trial innovative ideas that will advance and develop the aims previously mentioned.

Transport for London invited proposals for small-scale projects that can be delivered in the short term. With this in mind, Cyclehoop has made several proposals to implement Parklets within London, with the help of the Incubator Fund, emphasising the importance of including cycle parking within each design. Not only do they tie in with the Mayor's vision to increase provision for cyclists, they also allow businesses to increase company turnover.

In partnership with several London boroughs, Cyclehoop has finalised designs and is currently identifying suitable locations for Parklets. Specific projects in the pipeline include utilising a redundant access road outside the Hammersmith Apollo, to transform an awkward, underused space, into an area fit for the public. Adding greenery, planters and cycle parking gives the area an urban park feel. Also, Cyclehoop in partnership with Sustrans and the London Borough of Hackney, propose to install three or four San Francisco style Parklets to cater for the needs of Hackney's cyclists and pedestrians.

These are to be installed over two parking spaces, which combined form an on-street segmented park, increasing street functionality and bringing a sense of place and traffic calming to local spaces. They will offer respite and a gathering place for pedestrians and cyclists to sit, park a bicycle, pump up bike tyres or charge a phone.

Initially, they are to be semi-permanent installations for the summer months; they arrive in a flat packed modular design and take one day to assemble. When the winter months draw in they can be removed from site and stored at our warehouse for the following year (unless requested otherwise).

CYCLEHOOP SELECTED AS THE PREFERRED PARTNER

Although Parklets are new to the UK, the concept of changing road usage from car to other forms of usage isn't. In the last three years, we have

Benefits of including Parklets in a city centre are that they:

- Are low cost and quick to implement
- Improve the environment by reducing car parking bays
- Promote community engagement and foot traffic
- Re-energise the look of the urban environment by adding greenery and soft seating.
- Improve space for cyclists as they may have cycle parking within the design
- Increase sales for nearby businesses.

Making streets feel more welcoming and inclusive can support the independence of vulnerable groups such as the elderly, helping increase their social

↑ Underused public space in Hammersmith, London
 ↑↑ The same space in Hammersmith with a potential parklet incorporated
 ↑↑↑ Visualisation of a parklet suggested for the London Borough of Hackney



← Tour De France themed Car Bike Port sponsored by Le Coq Sportif in Seven Dials, London
 ↙ Bikehangar in Lambeth, London, safe bicycle storage
 ↘ Parklet in Adelaide, Australia

Making streets feel more welcoming and inclusive can support the independence of vulnerable groups such as the elderly, helping increase their social interaction and community engagement



designed, manufactured and installed over 250 on-street communal bikehangars and car bike ports; both of these unique products remain on street. This is the first time that public highway has been given over to non-car usage, namely to park cycles instead of cars. In a recent installation, our car bike port will be a permanent feature in Seven Dials, in Covent Garden. The units were requested by the local traders in an acknowledgement that they would attract more business to the area than if the space was used to park a car. One car parking space = ten cycle parking spaces: that's ten thirsty, hungry cyclists who want to shop, eat and drink as opposed to one car. The message can also be applied to a Parklet and now the same traders association wish to commission the design and build of a Parklet to be installed in the same Seven Dials area.

IS IT THE FUTURE OF URBAN ROAD USE?

The European Commission is launching legal proceedings against the UK for failing to deal with carbon emissions, leading potentially to fines of up to £300m. It is likely to be 2025 before London can meet the required standards, which is an appalling and shameful indictment. Are Parklets the answer? Certainly not on their own. However, they do send out a powerful message that the road, once the exclusive preserve of the mighty car, is now being handed back to the people, one car space at a time. So, Parklets are definitely green shoots. ●



● Habib Khan has been at Cyclehoop, a firm specialising in producing innovative indoor and outdoor cycle parking infrastructure, since 2010.

WHERE HAVE ALL THE FLOWERS GONE?

Ian Hingley puts forward a new ecological aesthetic for the public realm



Liveable cities occur when people and wildlife coexist and prosper amidst clean air, clean water, robust urban forests and thriving local agriculture'

Depave, Portland Oregon

By default, almost all streets in the United Kingdom are paved over in their entirety. An impermeable layer of concrete, stone or asphalt extends between the building facades, breaking the natural connection between the atmosphere and the soils, creating a static and lifeless seal. Often, the only deliberate fractures in this impermeable seal, are the small openings to allow street trees to grow and water to escape.

The Depave movement, in Portland, Oregon, expresses the problem very succinctly: 'Paved surfaces contribute to storm-water pollution, whereby rainwater carries toxic urban pollutants to local streams and rivers, greatly degrading water quality and riparian habitats'. It goes on to offer a simple solution: 'The removal of impervious pavements will reduce storm-water pollution and increase the amount of land available for habitat restoration, urban farming, trees, native vegetation, and beauty, thus providing us with greater connections to the natural world'.

The movement, in Portland at least, has tended to focus on schools, car parks, domestic driveways, parks, institutional public spaces, etc. These can be regarded as easy (but important) wins but more challenging and complex public spaces, such as the footways and carriageways that make up the public highway, have largely been passed over especially in the intensively used urban centres.

This paper advocates that soft verges, in whatever form, (grassed, planted, treed, gravelled

and/or permeably paved), should be considered necessary components of the public highway (particularly footways but also carriageways), including urban high streets and civic spaces. Depaving should be actively encouraged to minimise the extent of hard impermeable surfaces and maximise areas of soft permeable surfaces.

THE BENEFITS OF DEPAVING

Impermeable surfaces, such as stone, concrete and asphalt, can be useful for providing access for pedestrians, cyclists, wheelchair users and motor vehicles. The thoughtless almost instinctive paving over city streets, however, has contributed to numerous economic and environmental problems. While hard paved surfaces may be useful on busiest parts of footways and carriageways, the extent of these can be minimised to allow the space for restoration of the atmosphere. Impermeable surfaces prevent rainwater from entering the soil. The rainwater carries pollutants such as oil, antifreeze, plastics, pesticides, and heavy metals from the roads into local streams and rivers, via gullies and pipes, devastating riparian habitat and polluting local waterways. In places which use combined sewers, the high volume of storm-water runoff also forces untreated sewage into the rivers.

Hard paved surfaces also increase the summertime temperatures in cities and suburbs. This heat island effect often creates temperature differentials of up to 100°F which in turn increases the need for artificial cooling and the consequent energy demand.

Depaving, already described in Walt Lockley's article on p. 21, allows for the re-vegetation of land with trees and plants and has additional benefits, including: cooling buildings by shading; reduction in wind tunnel effects; ambient cooling (from evapo-transpiration of rain on the leaves); enhanced air quality (by removing particulate pollutants and carbon dioxide); oxygen production; noise absorption; habitat for fauna and food for city dwellers, as well as aesthetic enhancement and the psychosocial benefits associated with living close to flora and fauna.

WHERE HAVE ALL THE VERGES GONE?

The soft grassed or planted footway verge was once a common feature of urban residential districts. They also occurred, albeit less frequently, in town centres and high streets until they were paved over to accommodate other footway/carriageway edge activities such as parking, walking and servicing. Along with a perceived maintenance burden, (principally mowing), these pressures were the key drivers in the systematic removal of soft verges in UK residential streets since the 1950s. The increase in car ownership and the corresponding need for parking, both off and on-street, put further

↑ Wilton Street, Glasgow: stone sets on the parking verge allow water penetration

pressure on local authorities to pave over footway verges. Many did resist however, principally in residential districts, demonstrating that the perceived maintenance burdens were not so great after all.

SURVIVAL AND RENAISSANCE

Planted or grassed verges are slowly making a reappearance in urban centres, often as a result of the action of guerrilla gardeners and urban farmers. A footway has been depaved in front of the Arcola Theatre in Ashwin Street, Hackney to allow a planted verge to be established. Pedestrian access is provided through the planting with a cast iron grille bridge.

Footways throughout Paris, including the grand civic boulevards, are frequently detailed with a soft verge, sometimes grassed or planted, but most often finished in a loose, self-binding gravel. This is the material the French play boules on, and is sufficiently permeable to allow water and air ingress into the sub-soils. The verges function predominantly as the tree planting and furniture zone but also provide access to on-street parking bays. Locating all the street furniture in the zone (litter bins, cycle stands, street lighting, road signs, etc) avoids the awkward cutting of slabs around posts and fixings, typically seen on UK streets. This loose, self-binding gravel, is also commonly used in as footpaths in parks and increasingly as a verge treatment, as the recently completed public realm refurbishment in Stockwell, Lambeth demonstrates.

Often the edge of the carriageway is given over to parking, loading and in some instances, cycle lanes. These activities do not have the same structural or surface finish requirements as the movement lanes located in the centre of the carriageway. In Glasgow's residential Wilton Street, an asphalt wearing course has been added to the running lanes only, to create a smoother ride, whilst allowing the traditional stone setts to function as the parking verge. The setts tend to be jointed with stone dust allowing some water penetration and vegetation growth. There is no reason why the carriageway verge, when released from the constraints imposed by fast moving and/or frequent traffic, cannot be surfaced with permeable joints.

Where footways are wide, the 'floating' or 'island' verge is common, as this allows easy access to both the building frontage and kerb side bus stops, parking and loading bays. On Lauriston Road, Hackney the island verge is grassed, planted with trees and raised, creating an informal seat serving the bus stop.

Where basements are not present, or are sufficiently deep, forecourt verges offer a further opportunity. Small groves of birch trees, underplanted with ivy, have been established on the forecourt of an office in Leonard Street, Hackney.

RESISTANCE TO DEPAVING

A significant obstacle to depaving the public highway is the perceived additional maintenance burden. Paved and impermeable surfaces are considered low maintenance as they are stable and static and tend to deter unplanned vegetation (weeds) from growing. When weeds do establish, they tend to be eradicated to preserve the long-term integrity of the impermeable surface, and



on aesthetic grounds, to prevent a neglected appearance.

Planned vegetation (grass, shrubs, trees, food crops, etc) needs to be maintained in some way (cut, trimmed, pruned, coppiced, harvested and/or watered) to either promote growth or inhibit it. Impermeable or hard paved surfaces also require maintenance but on a much less intensive cycle. Town centre carriageways, for example, may be resurfaced on a ten-year cycle, and footways every twenty years, whereas a tree may need an annual prune and a grass verge ten cuts per year, making vegetation appear to be high maintenance. The high and the low in these instances refer to frequency, not cost, as the relative costs of these operations are dramatically different. Resurfacing a footway in pre-cast concrete slabs costs can cost over £40/m² but cutting grass can be as little as £0.01/m². When measured over the long term, the increased financial burden of soft and planted verges over hard paved surfaces is a myth.

The Depave projects in North America tend to be community led with little or no requirement of state intervention on maintenance. This model of community maintenance is common in guerrilla gardening projects but is also being encouraged by local authorities, particularly in relation to trees, with signs inviting their watering in the summer months.

↑ Ashwin St, Dalston, Hackney, planted verge in front of Arcola theatre
 ↑↑ Halliford St, Islington, former grass verge concreted over but the trees have survived
 ↑↑↑ Lauriston Rd, Hackney, raised island grass verge with trees



↑ New George St Plaza, Manchester, a carpet of hard paving can be sterile
 ↗ Binfield Road, Stockwell, loose bound gravel permeable verge
 All images in this article ©Ian Hingley



Laying carpets of stone paving, building to building, is naively promoted as elegant, robust and low maintenance, when in fact the results are often sterile, expensive and unsustainable

MINIMALISM AND DE-CLUTTERING

A number of recent factors have conspired to make paving over the entire street an attractive solution in both new and refurbishment projects. Cheap imported stone means that many local authorities now have the option of paving their footways, and often carriageways, in high quality stone. This, coupled with relentless moves to de-clutter the public realm and deliver naked streets, has misguidedly led to a new minimalism of sterile and empty streets and public spaces. De-cluttering was originally intended to rid the public realm of unnecessary or redundant street furniture, traffic signs and road markings but the strict adherence to a 'less is more' ideology has also led to a reluctance to put even the necessary components into the streetscape (seats, trees, verges, drinking fountains, etc). Laying carpets of stone paving, building to building, is naively promoted as elegant, robust and low maintenance, when in fact the results are often sterile, expensive and unsustainable.

TOWARDS AN ECOLOGICAL AESTHETIC

A new aesthetic, to accompany a new set of performance requirements, needs to be established for city streets, in direct opposition to the minimal, de-cluttered, sterile, empty and lifeless, essentially corporate aesthetic that has become the norm. The streets and public spaces of the 21st century will be easily identified by the ubiquity of imported granite and an absence of vegetation, beyond the occasional clear-stemmed tree. This new ecological aesthetic will be more inclusive and inviting, and

necessarily a little more cluttered. The furniture zone should not be paved in slabs, concrete or asphalt and should contain essential furniture such as seats, cycle stands, trees and drinking fountains; it should be given over to planting or grassed, when it is not needed for these other features. The ecological aesthetic does not demand that edges be sharply defined, if defined at all, or that cracks be filled in, or that weeds be eradicated, or that the same material be used everywhere. The ecological aesthetic does demand that water can follow a more natural route, that flora and fauna can be allowed to flourish, that materials are re-used and repaired, that free clean drinking water is easily accessible, that there are frequent comfortable places to sit and rest, and that variety and complexity are not perceived negatively.

Although soft verges allow rainfall and surface water runoff to penetrate the surface and move into the subsoil, they should not be regarded as sustainable drainage (SUDs) features, as they alone cannot manage high-intensity rainfall. Sustainable drainage features such as swales, soakaways and rain gardens, which are more able to attenuate and process large volumes of water can, however, be easily introduced into soft verges with the necessary additional infrastructure.

In Surrey Street, Brighton, Urban Movement Ltd have been redesigning the streets to the south of the railway station as the first phase of a bigger station quarter project. In the less intensively trafficked areas, soft verges, in loose, self binding gravel, have been designed in to decrease the amount of impermeable concrete surface and to create a richer and softer streetscape character. These verges will also be planted with trees, feature and ground cover shrubs, and reinforced where necessary. ●

● Ian Hingley is a landscape architect and urban designer at Urban Movement

CITY AS NATURE

Helga Fassbinder advocates an alternative approach to the relation between cities and nature



Green spaces in dense cities are lovely, aren't they? Avenues lined with big old trees, parks (even small pocket parks) and small spaces filled with shrubbery – all this we regard as beautiful, relaxing for body and soul, as it creates a more relaxing atmosphere. This 'green luxury' is not only food for a hungry eye; it has positive physical effects too. Chlorophyll enhances air quality, bonding carbon dioxide and lowering the concentration of particulate matter in the atmosphere. Moreover, it slows down the run of rainwater, which is of great importance in heavy rainfall.

For a long time, we have known that parks and trees are important, for the above reasons. We have now begun to realise that green roofs and a green skin on the facade of buildings can have the same positive effects and contribute one other advantage: the regulation of temperature in the building itself, insulation in winter and cooling in the summer. As a result, these greening systems have attracted the attention of a growing number of scientists concerned with climate change, who have discovered some impressive

results from their research. For example, in 2011 at the Delft University of Technology, a doctoral candidate was awarded a PhD for researching all the environmental merits of greening buildings, and in 2012 the BBC announced that the creation of green walls in urban areas could cut pollution by up to 30 per cent. Finally, in Germany in 2014, a team from different research institutions supported by the government, published guidelines for greening buildings, with an overview of all known research results about the energy potential of greening buildings.

IS THIS THE WHOLE STORY?

Greening means more. We enjoy trees and plants but trees and plants cannot live without insects and birds. Bees love cities, because flowers in cities offer them ten times more nourishment than in the countryside; hence, the looming bee extinction is not noticeable in urban areas. As well as insects, mammals come into town to go hunting at night: we all know about urban foxes, but in Berlin even wild boar can be found. During the day, urban

↑ Alt Erlaa, large multi-storey social housing complex, Vienna – architect Harry Glück



↑ 1980s flats built in the context of the International Building Exhibition (IBA) Berlin, photo ©Helga Fassbinder

↑↑ L'Oasis d'Aboukir, Paris, neighbourhood project by Patrick Blanc, photo ©Helga Fassbinder

↑↑↑ Maison Cartier, Paris, photo ©Henze Boekhout

pigeons clean away everything edible, leaving almost nothing for nocturnal mice and rats. In other words, a dense city is the same thing to animals as to us; a possible habitat. Botanists have discovered that biodiversity in cities can be higher than in the countryside: the variety of animal and plant species is greater than in the surrounding, undeveloped land. A sad explanation is that the highly mono-cultural agrarian management, with its intensive use of chemical weapons against insects, has led to a loss of flora and fauna in the countryside. Another reason is certainly the variety of buildings, the relative safety and the richness of food.

Having realised that the city is part of nature, we need to revise our self-perception as citizens. The city should not be seen in contrast to the countryside or to nature; we are not outside of nature, we are part of it!

You might say that this is a nice idea but what further consequences are there for urban planners, architects or city administrators? In fact there are none! There is no additional available space for greening, all urban ground is densely occupied with lucrative uses, and there is seemingly no chance for a nature invasion of the city!

But re-thinking about the city as nature, also demands a re-thinking about design principles: no structural division between inside and outside the city, but considering the city as an underlayer of green. In many ways this requires a fundamentally revised approach to the urban habitat, compared to the ideas of modernist architecture and town planning. The green approach of sustainability and energy saving was an important first step in this direction but it was not enough. We have to go further: we have to integrate nature in our cities, to re-integrate ourselves in the context of nature, and this is not a question of making more space available; we must re-think design and discover a new visual expression in architecture and town planning.

The concept of Biotope City, the city as nature, is such an approach as it abandons the division between nature and city. First and foremost, it asks for the realisation that cities are not in opposition to nature, but are no more than one of the many alternative forms to be found in nature, just like heath, forest, savannah or rocky landscape.

This conceptual U-turn is not just a nice idea, it is a necessity: nature has reached the limits of resilience as demonstrated by such phenomena as climate change and the rapid loss of biodiversity, with their ever more dramatic consequences. Simultaneously, we are approaching the final depletion of our traditional sources of energy. We face huge problems for which we need to find solutions very quickly.

Organic life, animals and plants are our fellows and allies in the battle for global survival. We need to recognise the advantage of a 'together' instead of an 'against'. Trees and plants help us, without recourse to energy, to clean our city air, reduce carbon dioxide emissions, slow down and restrain rainwater runoff, cool down temperatures in summer, and reduce the cooling effect of winter winds.

The solution is not a lower density city. We need to change our approach. The organic world must be integrated into the design of buildings as

a self-evident element. The rationale of the modern city will then achieve a new, additional dimension: green as an equal element of design alongside stone, steel, wood and concrete.

But cooperation with nature offers more than just tangible advantages: there is also the beauty of togetherness. We look at green leaves and vines on facades, and we know about the enchanted gardens on the rooftops. Psychologists have shown that the sight of greenery helps to heal body and soul. Hospital patients demonstrably recover more quickly if their window opens onto green spaces. Biotope City, city as nature, is a place of new beauty filled with deep emotional experiences: the turning of the seasons in the vegetation, the nesting of the birds in niches offered by buildings, the manifold plants on roofs, the enlivenment of bare walls and bleak façades by Virginia creeper and ivy, or the marvellous vertical horticultural artworks as designed, for example, by the French botanist Patrick Blanc.

COUNTER ARGUMENTS

Despite this, there is some reluctance against this approach. First, the green component is alive and dynamic, unlike all the static construction components that show only small and calculable change over time under the influence of use, sun, heat, cold, rain. Living green is changing all the time.

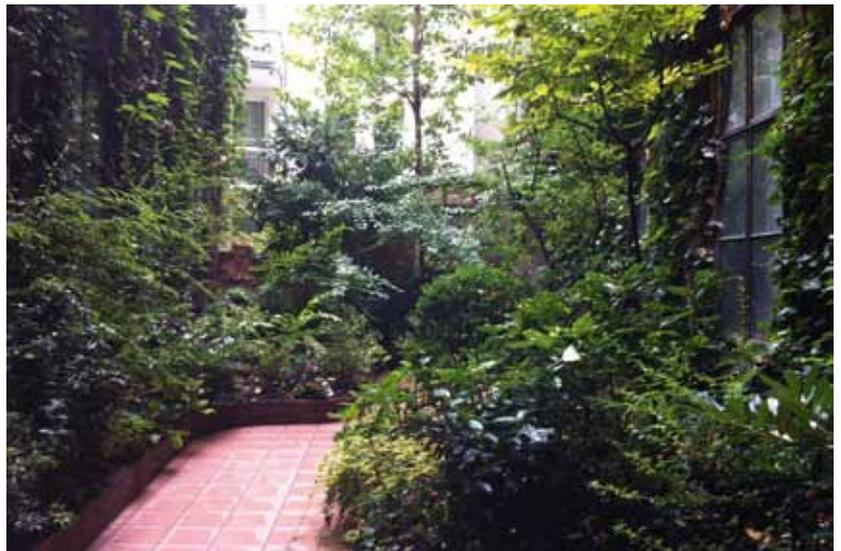
Secondly, living green requires maintenance and even though it is not very expensive, it has to be taken in account. In addition to this, green is always linked to flora and fauna: no green without insects and birds, and even wild animals. In Berlin about 3,000 wild boars enjoy life. Most architects and urban designers are not trained to deal with these, and need the support of ecologists and botanists.

A further problem is that a greened building may be technically complete and even occupied, but the plants need time to grow and cannot be fully appreciated until later. Finally, there is a short term economic argument, which can play a decisive role: greening is often more expensive to start with, even if it proves to be cheaper in the long run, as green roofs have clearly shown.

On the matter of green roofs which are widely used, and despite huge progress made during the last decade, there are still doubts concerning the waterproofing thermoplastic foils, as their durability is not known.

Finally, it is worth mentioning an additional cause for doubts amongst professionals: the different views on aesthetics. Since the triumph of modernity about a century ago, we became used to plain aesthetics with no ornaments. 'Ornament is Crime', declared the influential architect Adolf Loos, defining the attitude of generations of architects.

We find it hard to imagine that the 19th century's sense of beauty based on a general enthusiasm for decoration, could not only be considered as a historical phenomenon, but as the basis for a new kind of decoration in the wrapping of buildings with living plants. In fact, living covers for buildings have been used for centuries, for aesthetic as well as climatic reasons, green walls being a way of beautifying unsightly or tedious walls, and evergreen ivy used to protect walls against the weather.



↑ Amsterdam: 1920s social housing complex, photo ©Helga Fassbinder

↑↑ Vienna: 1960s social housing complex conquered by Virginia creeper, photo ©Helga Fassbinder

↑↑↑ Vienna: small courtyard of 19th century six-storey buildings, photo ©Helga Fassbinder



Living covers for buildings have been used for centuries, for aesthetic as well as climatic reasons



OVERCOMING THE OBJECTIONS

What can we do to overcome the reluctance borne out of these objections? The answer has to be based on each individual project. Generally, we have to work to change attitudes over time; this is possible and it has already started. There is already strong support by plant experts and gardening companies, since they have recognised the existence of a market for greening. As they can make money with green roofs and vertical greening, they have shown an interest. There are fantastic green roof gardens, even parks extended over several buildings, or along former rail tracks, such as the marvellous High Line garden by Piet Oudolf in New York. Wonderful examples of green covered buildings have been realised all over the world. Examples of precious vertical gardens, are the well known green wall of the museum Quai Branly in Paris, the use of green walls for air conditioning in a high-rise building by Ken Yeang, but also simple and cheap earthbound green walls on ordinary housing projects. In Vienna meanwhile, the planning for a whole dense green covered neighbourhood has been started: in a couple of years, Vienna will have a dense Biotope City, with water, green roofs and vertical greenery for about 4,000 residents, following the principles of the city as nature.

I don't belong to the league of royalists, but I appreciate the position of the former Dutch queen, when she said: 'Care is not just about individual welfare but about the welfare of all, and about the stewardship of the earth. When our precious planet is handled carelessly and what it gives us is poorly distributed, selfishness and the desire to create abundance, blind us to the damage to our natural environment and undermine community. View the finiteness of what the earth can give.' In this sense, regarding the city as nature and attempting to live, as human beings, in cohabitation with other forms of life, of flora and fauna, will bring us back to a renewed respectful relationship with nature. ●

● Helga Fassbinder is Emeritus Professor at the University of Technology Hamburg and the University of Technology Eindhoven, as well as President of Biotope City

The Foundation Biotope City was set up in Amsterdam in 2014, editing a multilingual online journal with the same title www.biotope-city.net

↑ Amsterdam's Sportplaza Mercator, a leisure centre covered in plants in Rembrandtpark, architect Ton Venhoeven, photo ©Helga Fassbinder
 ↑↑ Treehouse Darmstadt, architect Ot Hoffmann, photo ©Helga Fassbinder

THE GREENING OF LONDON

Matthew Pencharz describes the Mayor's policies concerning green spaces



'If you were to look down at London from the stratosphere, you would be struck by how green it is, with a plethora of green and open spaces, formal and informal, large and small, helping to define and shape the form of the city. Down here on the ground, we look to these spaces for all that they add to the quality of the particular places we live in, work in or visit.

What we aim to do is look at them in a joined up way, making sure the contribution they make to the quality of life, to the environment and to the economy are maximised.'

Boris Johnson Mayor of London, Foreword,
All London Green Grid SPG

London is known the world over as a green city, a metropolis studded with parks and green spaces, and with neighbourhoods stitched together with street trees and suburban gardens. This is partly a result of happenstance. During early modern and modern periods, London, unlike many of its European counterparts, did not have to withstand attack and siege from marauding armies. As it did not have to develop as a compact, defensive citadel, extensive green and open spaces could be embraced by the evolving city.

Some, like the Royal Parks – former hunting grounds – were created by Royal decree; but as the city began its major urban expansion in the 19th century, the protection of green space became an underlying tenet of the newly emerging discipline of town planning. The Victorians began to set aside

large areas of open space to act as lungs for the city, to counteract the miasmas which were thought to harbour pestilence and disease. Subsequently, Edwardian city planners developed the idea that parks should be social spaces providing facilities for sport and culture and more local, municipal parks were created in new neighbourhoods. Post-war approaches to town planning and architecture continued to acknowledge the fundamental importance of green spaces, whether communal areas set amidst modernist tower blocks and tenements, or private gardens for the suburban semi-detached aesthetic.

London's spatial planning frameworks, in various manifestations from the 1943 *County of London Plan*, which envisioned a network of metropolitan parks connected by greenways, to the current *London Plan* advocating green infrastructure in the *All London Green Grid*, have continued to put the protection and management of London's green spaces at the heart of spatial planning policy, despite an ever increasing demand for land as London continues to grow.

TAKING ACTION

The current Mayor is committed to continuing this tradition of protecting and conserving the green amidst the grey, not just because of the intrinsic value of parks and green spaces and the contact with the natural environment they provide, but because London's abundance of green is one of the reasons people want to live, work and invest in the

↑ All London Green Grid Framework Plan, ©Greater London Authority



city. Maintaining and improving London's green spaces have a significant part to play in ensuring the city's long-term resilience, and therefore its economic competitiveness, an increasingly important objective in a global market place for talent and inward investment.

When first elected, the Mayor announced a programme – London's Great Outdoors – aimed at accelerating the transformation of the city's high streets, civic spaces, parks, riversides and natural green spaces. It was an acknowledgement that although successive policies and programmes had been relatively effective in protecting and conserving London's public realm and open spaces, more needed to be done to renew, animate, activate, and maximise their value as more than just the spaces between the buildings.

Since the programme began in 2009, over £400 million has been invested in streets, squares and parks, and almost 100 major projects have been delivered across the city: from bold interventions, like the transformation of Exhibition Road into a shared space, which has changed the relationship between pedestrians and cars in the heart of London's museum quarter, to more subtle but important initiatives, such as turning the corners of Green Lanes linear high street in Haringey into eight new 'micro-squares' to encourage

increased footfall and dwell time in local shops and businesses.

The greening strand of the Mayor's London's Great Outdoors programme included the Help a London Park initiative which saw a £10 million investment in some of London's most degraded parks. The sites were selected by public vote to encourage greater public awareness of, and participation in, the planned changes to these spaces. Amongst the highlights of this initiative were the 'daylighting' of hidden or culverted rivers in Mayesbrook Park in Barking, Lordship Recreation Ground in Tottenham and Wandle Park in Croydon. These river restorations have transformed the look and feel of local parks, making them more interesting and attractive places to visit, whilst also creating more sustainable flood storage opportunities and improving the ecology of the newly created, naturalised channels. The centre-piece of the programme was the complete renewal of Burgess Park in Southwark; a park which had been gradually stitched together between the 1950s and 1980s from land that had been badly bombed during World War II, and had never been a fully a coherent, unified space. The renewed Burgess Park opened in 2012, finally realising an ambition set out in the 1943 *Greater London Plan*.

The Mayor is currently investing a further £6 million in creating 100 pocket parks, further parks improvement projects and an additional 10,000 street trees, doubling the number he planted in his first term. The Pocket Parks initiative aims to support local communities to create spaces that help make the city friendlier, greener and more resilient. They are about encouraging local communities to think anew about the role and purpose of the small amenity spaces across London, and empowering them to 're-purpose' underused or unloved spaces. Some notable new spaces have already been created, including the much lauded Edible Bus Stop; Derbyshire Street Pocket Park with its innovative sustainable drainage system; and the Breaker's Yard, a contemporary 'garden of imagination' set adjacent to the splendid Sutton House, a Tudor manor in Hackney managed by the National Trust. This sits alongside ongoing and future investments in cycling infrastructure such as the recently announced 'mini-Holland' pilot projects and changes to the way we design and manage streets as places, rather than transport routes, which will provide opportunities for further greening of the city's public realm.

A NEW APPROACH

Our commitment and ambition go further than what we can deliver through our direct investment. The majority of London's public realm, parks and green spaces are managed by London boroughs or other land-managers such as housing associations or companies such as Thames Water whose reservoirs in London are not an insignificant component of London's open space. We now know that this green space network could provide a much more significant and diverse range of benefits than the Edwardian notion of parks being pleasant places for sport and relaxation. As a series of connected greenways they can provide attractive links and connections between places, encouraging walking and cycling. We know too that the health benefits of accessible green and

↑ Roof garden Cannon Street, London
 ↑↑ Biodiverse green roof, PWC More London
 ©Dusty Gedge

open spaces are much more far-reaching than their ability to disperse miasmas. Both physical and mental health is dramatically improved in a greener city. And rethinking the way we plan, design and manage the city's parks and green spaces can also help to absorb floodwater, keep the city cool, clean the air, encourage healthy lifestyles, and enhance biodiversity and ecological resilience.

The greening of the built environment is also an objective. Despite London's comparatively high proportion of open space relative to built development, parts of the city have limited green space, and as densely populated areas continue to develop, innovative approaches are needed to increase greenery, such as roof gardens and green walls.

This is why in the updated *London Plan* published in 2011, the Mayor included policies on green infrastructure and urban greening and established targets of a 10 per cent increase in London's tree cover, and a 10 per cent increase in green cover (e.g. green roofs) in central London by 2050 – from a 2008 baseline. The intent of these policies was further elucidated in the subsequent *All London Green Grid Supplementary Planning Guidance*.

This suite of land-use policies provides a strong steer to planning authorities, developers and land-managers to consider how best to green London through the ongoing process of regeneration, renewal and redevelopment in the city. And it is clear that these policies are taking root.

The new neighbourhood quarters being created in and around the Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park illustrate how the services and benefits of green infrastructure can be provided through good planning and design of urban regeneration. Installing sustainable drainage, encouraging active lifestyles, enhancing ecology, and blurring the distinction between parkland and urban form, were principles that informed the design and construction of the parklands and which are now being transposed into the development of new housing and social infrastructure.

At Barking Riverside, one of London's most extensive brownfield development sites, which aims to accommodate over 10,000 new homes, 40 per cent of the site will be dedicated to open space designed to flood and drain sustainably. A green roof research programme has been established to determine the best design to provide habitat for some of the rare riverside fauna whilst contributing to the overall sustainable drainage strategy.

TOWARDS 2050

The term 'green infrastructure' may sound odd, but given the scale and range of benefits these spaces give our city and its neighbourhoods, it is vital we see them as being as integral to the capital's metabolism as its roads, rail lines and water pipes.

Boris Johnson Mayor of London

London's infrastructure is under pressure, and its population continues to grow with current projections suggesting it will hit 10 million by the early 2030s and over 11 million by 2050. Consequently, the Mayor is publishing the *London Infrastructure Plan 2050* to prepare for this growth over the long term and to address the challenges the city will face in the coming decades. Importantly,



it recognises green infrastructure as integral to ensuring the city's economic viability and assuring a liveable London in the future. But it also acknowledges that a lack of a strategic, London-wide approach which encourages investment decisions and considers the whole range of benefits green infrastructure brings, has resulted in below optimal investment.

↑ Derbyshire Street, Bethnal Green. London: pocket park ©Greysmith Associates

The plan recognises that a number of key challenges must be addressed in the medium and long term:

- The existing asset is underutilised and underfunded because it is not properly understood in terms of the functions and benefits it already provides and the additional services it could provide.
- It needs to be upgraded and repurposed to improve its performance in the delivery of these additional benefits.
- New institutional and governance arrangements are needed to instigate a shift from an approach based on the provision of amenity and recreation to one which can help deliver the full range of green infrastructure benefits and services.

In order to address these barriers, the Mayor is establishing a Green Infrastructure Task Force to advise on the future design and management of London's green infrastructure and the options for governance and funding.

We are incredibly fortunate to have inherited in London the world's greenest major city. As London continues to grow the pressure on all of our infrastructure – including green – is increasing. This development must be sustainable and continue to improve the enviable quality of life our capital provides. We are beginning to understand our system of parks, trees and watercourses to be as integral to the city's functioning as its utility pipes and cables, railway lines and roads. It is notable that unlike previous fiscal consolidations, we have not seen the degeneration of our public spaces but an increasingly better understanding of their multiplicity of benefits. We, at City Hall are working hard on this new understanding, building on our inheritance to make London a more green and resilient city. ●

● Matthew Pencharz is the Mayor's advisor for environment and energy

TIME TO GREEN OUR CITIES?



A range of ideas about how cities can be greener have been expressed in this issue. A number of projects should make us think again about how urban space is used and how, by changing our default response of ubiquitous paving, much greener cities could be created. Compelling stories also point out to the need for a culture and attitude shift before we can fully succeed in greening cities. Finally, examples show what professionals are already doing to make cities greener and outlining in particular the Mayor's plans for London's green future.

However, the biggest stumbling block to making cities greener is that urban land is hard to come by, and therefore expensive. The way the market works means that if someone spends money, a return on the investment is expected. As a result new green spaces are considered late in the process: nature is stuck in the gaps left after the 'important' economic elements have been taken care of. This approach has created cities with few truly natural areas but with scrappy bits of grass and degraded so-called public spaces being commonplace. In fact as space is expensive, we should use it more respectfully: why fence it off for nobody to use, why create blank space that nobody can reach? Why treat space so cheaply? In so many new developments, examples can be found of leftover space that is fenced off or left

fallow. Maybe this is what we should first address as a viable means of creating new green spaces.

LEFTOVER SPACE ON STREET

One typology that can easily be put to better use and contribute to greening our cities is that of the gaps between buildings and the public highway that have been allowed to simply fall off the edge of the plan. London has many of these: they range in size and contribute neither to the building or the public realm. Although these spaces are often complicated in terms of ownership, no space in London should be allowed to contribute nothing at all. We should ensure that this typology is eradicated from future developments, and where such spaces exist, every effort should be made to use them in a way that benefits the city as a whole.

Many temporary interventions utilise spaces that historically have been ignored or considered to be unusable; traditionally these have been hard-paved and/or fenced-in, in order to ensure that they use no resources but as a result they also contribute nothing. These temporary interventions show that these forgotten spaces can be celebrated and that something interesting, beautiful or fun can be made of them. An excellent example is Folly for a Flyover.

The temporary, spontaneous, tactical or quick-win interventions are a powerful way of inspiring people and convincing them that change can be

↑ Edible Bus Stop's RHS Hampton Court show garden 2012; ©Chris Martin

good and the forgotten spaces worth utilising. Parklets for instance may prove to shopkeepers that a parking space outside their premises might not generate as much income as a small green space with seats. Other interventions can show to a developer that a garden around a building may be more lucrative than concrete and bollards. They can inspire us all to see places differently and to value once forgotten and leftover spaces.

In London, such spaces should be mapped and identified as quick-win opportunities for local authorities and building owners to improve the public realm. The work of Depave offers an example of what can be done, actively depaving these spaces and turning them into areas for planting, food growth or indeed into swales to help ease surface water run-off. Even privately owned spaces where landowners do not wish to permit access to them, can still benefit the city aesthetically, as well as environmentally.

ROOFTOP SPACE

In many countries rooftops are considered valuable assets for urban areas. In London however, rooftop space is grossly under-utilised, and constitutes a worryingly large area of hard-paved, unreachable surface. Although London is relatively green and blessed with many wonderful parks and historic green squares, a satellite image of the capital shows a sea of grey inaccessible roof space. Green rooftops can be private (exclusive to residents and workers of the building) or public (accessible to anyone, even if only part of a membership agreement or community group) but in either case, they could relieve the pressure on existing open spaces.

We need to make these spaces work harder for the city by insisting that the higher (rooftop) planes be turned into soft and green public spaces. Developers are likely to use the whole of their land to maximise their profit, and we cannot expect them to do otherwise. On the other hand, the roof space often gets used as a dumping ground for air conditioning units or bits of kit the architect doesn't want people to see. Instead of fighting with developers to release fractions of their plot for – often substandard – pocket parks, they should perhaps be asked to provide green, accessible, roof space.

A good example, and one that may be a model for London, is High Square Magasin. Following a nearby redevelopment, Copenhagen received a new public space, a 3000m² square on top of Magasin du Nord department store. It takes the form of a sequence of spaces that are orchestrated as a cascade of squares that run down the building, all the way onto the pavements and neighbouring area, via streets direct to rooftop staircases and (importantly) escalators. Frequently, accessible rooftop space is argued against and dismissed on the grounds of security; the way this scheme addresses the problem is by not requiring access into the building in order to reach the roof, and by not allowing access into the building from the roof. Therefore the arguments against the wider use of rooftops need to be countered with an increasing number of examples showing rooftop spaces that have been successfully integrated with street level.



FINAL THOUGHTS

We are approaching a time when we urban designers will need to make big decisions concerning cities. The number of people wanting to live in cities is increasing, and even with advances in technology this is unlikely to stop. Improved communication technologies have not, as first predicted, increased the desirability of working from satellite offices outside of cities and only coming together online. Whilst this appeared to forecast a new way of working, in reality people want to be in cities, and the internet cannot replace corporeal working, or indeed socialising. Therefore cities to must be adapted to cope with a steady increase in people.

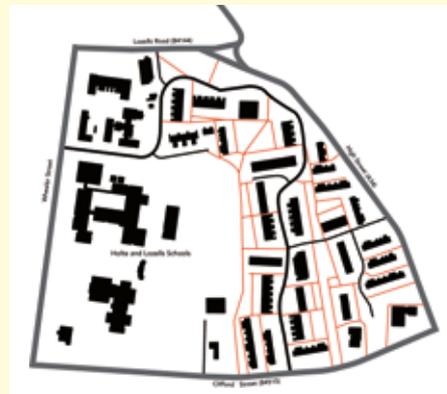
We should be more respectful of space in cities, mapping unused spaces and ensuring that they are put to good use. This would benefit us all. ●

↑ Copenhagen
 ↑↑ Folly for a Flyover,
 Hackney Wick by Assemble.
 © Martin Deutsch

● Christopher Martin is an
 Urban Designer + Planner at
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BIRMINGHAM MUNICIPAL HOUSING TRUST

Birmingham City Council is changing the perception of public housing



Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust was established in 2009 with a remit to build new council houses on council owned land for the first time in the city for 30 years. The initial aim was to build new high quality homes for rent, applying good urban design principles to regenerate poor areas of municipal housing, kick start stalled major regeneration schemes, add value and change perceptions of council housing generally and poor housing estates in particular. As the project has grown over the last five years, it has been expanded to build market homes for sale. To ensure successful delivery, pioneering contracts with developers were put in place so that upfront costs for building are minimised whilst cross-subsidy from homes for sale is maximised. To date 977 homes have been built on 35 sites with 1531 more homes under construction or in the pipeline.

BUILDING ON DESIGN QUALITY

From the outset BMHT was designed through a small multi-disciplinary internal team of a planner, urban designer, landscape architect, arboriculturist and housing development manager; as the project grew, a highways officer was included. Proposed development sites go through a rigorous preliminary

assessment process via the internal team, after which regular pre-application design team meetings guide the design process. There is a presumption in favour of retaining trees, protecting the amenity of neighbours, working positively with difficult topography, and a commitment to building in secure-by-design principles, providing usable public open space (where there is a need or planning requirement), integrating development into the neighbourhood, both physically and through the architecture, and providing high quality external works in both public and private areas. There are also several major housing regeneration schemes that will be delivered through BMHT (200+ homes) where masterplans include sites for retail as well as public open space, focusing on place making, access to local facilities and public transport, in addition to the detailed housing design and delivery requirements.

REGENERATION THROUGH DESIGN

The initial focus of BMHT schemes was to make 'failed' housing blocks and estates work, by creating well designed homes and neighbourhoods. Developments are carefully designed to integrate within communities, to complement the overall housing need and tenure mix of the wider

community. Many development sites had poor quality, overgrown, unsightly land formerly occupied by obsolete council properties, causing blight and detriment to neighbouring properties and residents. By delivering new homes on these sites, local communities are being revitalised and reconnected rather than split or separated by wasteland.

In several instances, the layouts of whole estates have been revisited to overcome the problems created by Radburn layouts in association with poor quality housing. This has involved wholesale clearance, road closures and the creation of new development layouts that are integrated, connected development blocks where the public and private realms are clearly defined.

NEWTOWN

Newtown in north Birmingham, about two miles from the city centre was one of the first large scale regeneration areas delivered by BMHT. The existing housing was system-built and poorly laid out along Radburn principles. There were a limited number of roads and an extensive network of segregated footpaths. Many houses were only accessible from footpaths. The area was beset by associated anti-social behaviour, safety and security issues.

✓ After – Newtown Master Plan
 ← Before – Newtown 'Radburn Layout'
 ←← Community Involvement

Alongside new housing, the project included the redevelopment of a primary, secondary and special school and the creation of a new public square and community hub, The Lighthouse. These are fully integrated within the new housing.

The layout, as with all BMHT schemes, follows good urban design principles such as active frontages, properties backing on to each other, clear demarcation between public and private space, well connected permeable road layouts overlooked by the front of properties that avoid creating left over or dead space which could become a magnet for anti-social behaviour. Property types and sizes are mixed together and are tenure blind, and great care is taken to deliver well considered, context appropriate, distinctive and innovative architecture that is generally contemporary in character. Place-making principles are embedded from start to finish, with clear outcomes shown in the high quality finished schemes.

A key facet of the multi-disciplinary approach is to ensure space and quality standards were prioritised. All BMHT sites are within existing communities in the urban area, and projects take inspiration from and are integrated with their surroundings; they also address the fundamental issues as to why the original built form did not create a desirable living environment.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

BMHT projects place community involvement and feedback at the heart of each development. All sites developed involve detailed public engagement and consultation, with larger sites, such as Newtown, providing training to residents on the principles of good urban design, so that they can make an informed assessment of the layout and appearance of new schemes. Local school children in Newtown benefited from a 12 month Young Design champions bespoke training initiative, helping to shape proposals for new open space and public realm.

LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

There is a constant review of the process and measures put in place to address any identified gaps or weaknesses in the process that could potentially diminish design quality. Notably a BMHT external works design guide and a guide setting

out best practice in design, construction and marketing of BMHT homes for sale have been prepared, a house types catalogue establishing house footprints and space standards is in preparation, and modifications are being made to tender documents to clarify design requirements and ensure delivery of consistent high-quality design in all aspects of development. A framework of pre-approved contractors is in place with key performance indicators set to monitor schemes and design quality.

The integrated design, planning application and delivery process – a BMHT innovation – means that any local authority can be in the driving seat to take responsibility for new homes in their area. They can control standards for new house building, defying the image of council homes of the past as uninspiring, bland and easily identifiable. ●



→ New housing in Newtown
 ↓ New square, housing and community building in Newtown



KINGS CRESCENT COMMUNITY ORCHARD

Hackney Borough Council promotes a community-led pocket park



The Kings Crescent Community Orchard has transformed a left-over space on the perimeter of the Kings Crescent housing estate into a communal pocket park and 'front garden' to the estate. An early pilot project in advance of the implementation of extensive regeneration proposals, it was developed and implemented in close co-operation with residents. The design comprises simple elements that are sensitive to the garden's setting – the multi-storey housing blocks, the Victorian terraced housing, and the green corridor leading towards Clissold Park. The scheme won a bid for part-funding from the Greater London Authority's Pocket Park Programme, and the remainder was funded by Hackney Council's Estate Regeneration Programme.

BACKGROUND

Creating a high quality built environment is at the heart of the regeneration of Kings Crescent Estate. Proposals for the transformation of the estate include refurbishment of the existing 275 properties, 490 new build properties and the complete re-organisation of the public realm. Critical to the transformation is the comprehensive restructuring of the existing estate into an integrated piece of city. Proposals seek to generate a clearly

defined hierarchy of routes and open spaces that connect into the surrounding streets. Proposals also include a range of play spaces, including a multi-user games area, communal gardens, food growing areas within courtyards and along the central street, and soft landscaping including over 80 new trees to create a high quality living environment.

THE SITE

The Community Orchard site is located on Queen's Drive on the edge of the existing Kings Crescent housing estate. The modernist layout departs from the traditional road layout surrounding it, resulting in poorly defined and under-used open spaces along its boundary. The estate has been further affected for over ten years by the loss of usable green space due to the demolition of part of the original housing stock. Two meaningful open spaces were created by the gardening clubs on the estate. Residents, with the support of London Wildlife Trust had a desire to continue food growing and include opportunities for wildlife in this unused grass area. In recognition of this desire, with the support of Hackney Council, applied for match funding through the Mayor's Pocket Park scheme to deliver the project.

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

The design aims to create a friendly boundary to Kings Crescent estate that supports the wider community by providing opportunities for planting, play and repose. It will:

- help build a sense of ownership
- transform what is currently perceived as a leftover space with an inert frontage into an activated 'front garden' and welcoming way into the estate
- initiate the transformation from an inward looking to an outward looking and connected estate
- benefit the existing and future residents of the estate, the residents of the housing opposite, and passers-by of all ages
- encourage the residents of the ground floor flats to actively use this new garden and so increase access to green spaces, and
- augment what is classified as a green corridor, creating a destination, a stepping stone on the route to Clissold Park.

The publicly accessible street side orchard and garden comprise tree planting, soft landscaping, a boundary treatment to create informal seating and the addition of lighting and paths. The orchard makes a way-in from the street facing side of the estate and complements two existing growing spaces. It is prototyping elements of the forthcoming wider estate regeneration.

THE PROCESS

A community orchard is always as much defined by its use and users as by its form. The Kings Crescent Community Orchard was initiated by a group of residents keen to be involved in the delivery of changes to their environment, to combine social benefits of cohesion and community capital with physical improvements. The group is already operating two gardening clubs within the estate, and is currently supported by Growing Concerns community gardeners. Residents are actively involved in the creation of the garden, throughout design and delivery, and through planting, maintenance and enjoyment of the park. Steps were taken to invite residents to join in and shape the proposals. These included:

- Communal planting of fruit trees in advance of finalising the proposals for

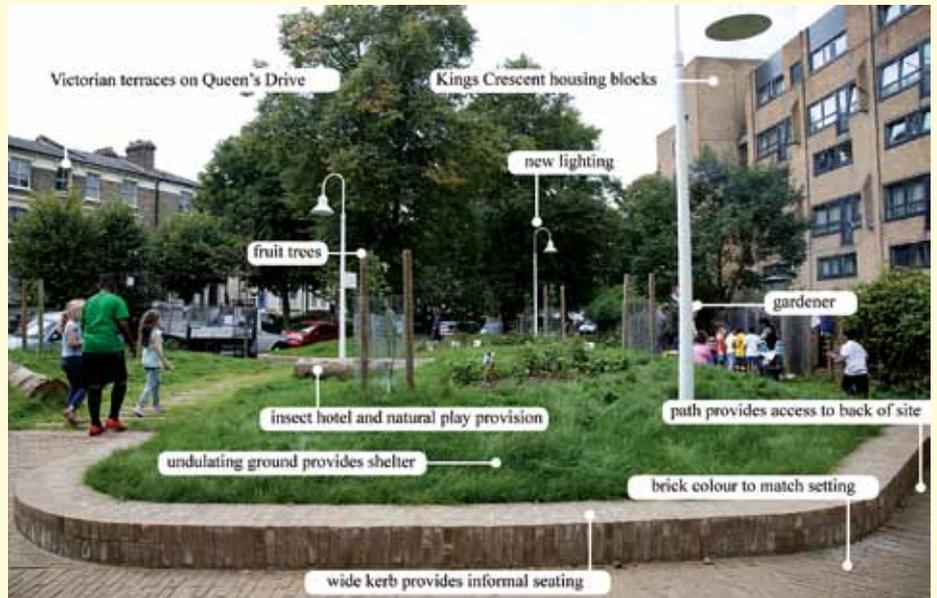
- ✓ The orchard as a prototype for the forthcoming masterplan.
- ✗ The community orchard as a growing space, a wildlife garden, and a front garden for the estate.

the hard landscaping. This was done to enable future users to mentally picture the site's potential and to help shape the emerging designs;

- Marking out the design in chalk. This was done so that residents could picture the emerging design, and have a say in the detailed design. For example, residents decided that informal seating should be provided throughout, with formal seating arriving later; and
- Regular planting workshops with a community gardener to provide gardening skills, and to establish a varied group of users and residents to take on the long-term maintenance of the garden.

The Community Orchard includes a variety of fruit trees and edible plants offering education for children on growing food. The planting and insect hotels increase the biodiversity along Queen's Drive. The design encourages greater use and includes informal seating providing an overlooked area for informal play. The Orchard is overlooked by residents whilst its edge is raised to give a sense of enclosure and provide seating, with sloped access from the pavement. The paths and boundary wall harmonise with the adjoining estate and the Victorian terraces. Lighting columns juxtapose the utilitarian feel of street lighting and appear more domestic in shape and height.

The community orchard is visited by residents from the Kings Crescent and from the terraced housing opposite and acts as a shared front garden open to the passer-by. On-going engagement with users means that the site is well used, and that vandalism has been kept to a minimum. The garden is used by all generations: toddlers climb the insect hotel on the way to the park, young children use the site for role play and attend gardening sessions, and a handful of parents and seniors look after the plants and the garden. The garden has become a prototype not only of the material palette and formal language for the wider estate regeneration, but also for ways to enable the potential of residents and users to contribute to the wellbeing of Kings Crescent Estate and its wider setting. ●



- ↑ A community BBQ allows for play, gardening, and socialising.
- ↗ Knitting the estate into the wider context using a shared material language.
- ↑↑ A planting workshop held with residents.
- ↗↗ A gardening session planting edible fruit bushes. (All photos courtesy of Grant Smith)
- The plan showing a modest space with rich possibilities.



SOUTHWATER, TELFORD

Telford & Wrekin Council promotes quality through a town centre regeneration scheme



Telford is a second generation new town built in the 1960s and 1970s on former industrial and agricultural land. The town comprises a number of existing smaller settlements, such as Wellington, Oakengates, Madley and Dawley, but its centre was purpose built and is dominated by a retail shopping centre. For many years the shopping centre has been separated from the surrounding commercial development by a series of car parks and a net of highways,

with pedestrian bridges linking it to the residential development beyond. The separation of the centre together with the poor leisure and cultural offer has meant the town centre has lacked vibrancy and a sense of place as well as a night-time economy. These issues were recognised by the Council and its partners as a significant barrier to the growth and sustainability of the town.

In March 2011, the Central Telford Area Action Plan (CTAAP) was adopted and

set out the vision, policies and objectives within which proposals could be brought forward to transform the town centre into a vibrant and successful place for all by 2016. At the heart of this plan was a vision to regenerate an area known as Southwater, as well as a wider intention to transform the one-way system of roads that separated the centre from its surroundings.

Southwater was first developed in the 1980s and became the focus for cultural and leisure activities in the town, featuring a library, ice rink, bingo hall and the International Convention Centre, as well as being close to the Town Park, a green space covering 170 hectares and enjoyed by 750,000 visitors per year. However in spite of all these activities, Southwater reflected a microcosm of issues that Telford as a whole was experiencing. The architecture was generally bland, overbearing and anonymous, with the built form doing little to enliven the space. The public realm was of poor quality and lacked definition with existing spaces not having a clearly defined function. In spite of attempts to define gateways, these typically lacked presence and were divorced from adjacent buildings, leaving weak relationships and linkages to other parts of the town. The Southwater area is the main connection from the town centre to the Town Park, but its location had never been exploited.

The Southwater Regeneration Programme has been the single largest investment in Telford, intended to enhance the convention quarter and wider town centre. The total investment for the project is £250m with £41m from the public sector and £40m from the private sector for Phase 1. Southwater has secured existing employment of circa 400 jobs and will create more than 300 new jobs. Subsequent phases will deliver over 100 new residential units within this area.

In order to deliver Phase 1, the Council worked in partnership with the Southwater Event Group, the former Advantage West Midlands and the Homes & Communities Agency and set out a vision which aimed to create:

- A vibrant and sustainable heart for Telford Town Centre – including a night time economy
- High quality buildings and public space that will transform the image of Telford

✓ Aerial photo as work was starting
 ✓✓ Aerial shot post completion
 → Two night views of Southwater post completion
 ▾ The redeveloped Southwater
 ▾ Revised masterplan of Phase 1 in context

- Improved cultural, leisure, retail, and event facilities as well as new homes and offices
- A greatly enhanced convention quarter
- New jobs, new opportunities and inward investment
- A place in which people will want to work, live, visit and enjoy, and
- A place to be proud of.

Southwater Square was intended to form the vibrant heart of the new Southwater and was conceived to have a role that extended beyond the boundary of the site to provide a truly urban space for Telford. The size of the square was to be large enough to create a bold new place, but sufficiently compact to promote a lively and populated street scene. The space was to be framed by a series of civic and commercial buildings carefully designed to maximise the number of building entrances and active frontages to reinforce its lively urban character.

In spite of changes to the original plan, Telford & Wrekin Council commissioned a number of the buildings and all of the main infrastructure and public realm works. An enabling works contract was completed in 2012 and includes a central energy centre. Sites were marketed and partnerships formed between the Council and Citygrove Developments. Building contracts were started in 2012 to construct the facilities that form two of the three sides of the new Southwater Square.

Phase 1 of Southwater comprises a leisure hub featuring an 11 screen cinema, an 85 bedroom hotel and seven restaurants delivered by the private sector, with the public sector delivering a remodelled and refurbished ice rink, a new building for 'first point' for customer services including a new public library, retail space and café facilities, a multi-storey car park and new public realm works including a new lake and four public art projects developed with over 700 people involved, and a new visitor centre in the Town Park.

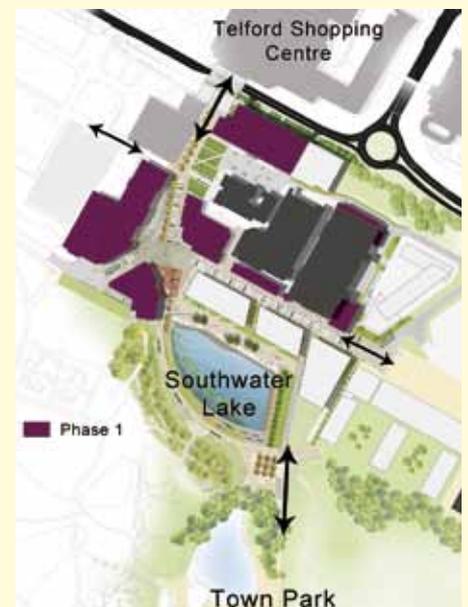
Whilst subsequent phases of Southwater will deliver new residential as well as further commercial and leisure activities, these have yet to be commenced on site. However Phase 1 has transformed this side of the town centre, creating an attractive place where people are now able to linger by the new lake or sit in one of the new cafes and restaurants which line



the public realm. The public art created by two arts organisations, in consultation with the public and local community groups, has created a more distinctive look and feel to the public realm. In order to safeguard its investment, the Council has set up a new management company to run Southwater in the longer term.

LESSONS LEARNED

The regeneration of Southwater was a highly ambitious initiative in a very challenging climate. Whilst the Council never lost sight of its overall vision to deliver a high quality environment, it learnt to develop a more flexible approach to respond to the market demand, which it did in close partnership with Citygrove who advised on the type, size and mix of uses. ●



FRANCIS TIBBALDS AWARD SHORTLISTED BOOKS 2015

For the fifth year, the UDG Awards programme includes a Book Award. Publishers were invited to nominate one of their recently published books. In the following pages, eight finalists are reviewed by a panel chaired by Louie Sieh. It will choose the winner, which will be announced at the Awards event in March 2015.

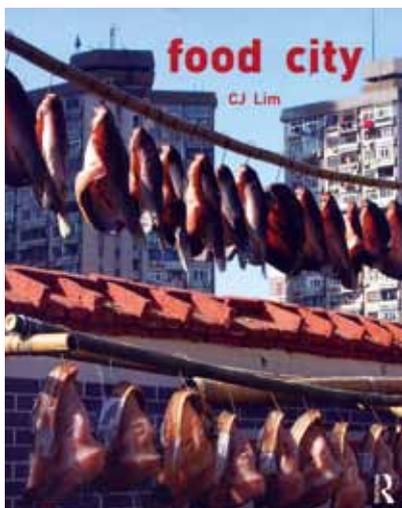
Food City

CJ Lim, Routledge,
ISBN 978-0-415-53926-5

Urbanism and agriculture are inextricably linked, developments in agriculture enabled cities to form and grow. Today the agricultural processes that sustain cities are often far removed and the equitable supply of food and its synergy with the natural environment is becoming increasingly strained. The story of food and the city set out by CJ Lim expands upon Carolyn Steel's (2008) *Hungry City*, making visible the pivotal role of food in cities and offering a Manifesto for a modern city ordered around a re-localised food economy.

The first nine chapters give an account of food in relation to other drivers such as business, community, energy and health, each chapter taking an international tour through current initiatives and projects, building towards an argument for the Manifesto. *Food City* can at times read like a compilation of hipster trends, including transition towns, slow food, street food, urban agriculture, cupcakes and city bees. But buried here and there are interesting examples such as the People's Restaurants in Brazil designed to end hunger and malnutrition, the Makati Vendors Program in the Philippines regulating and sustaining street traders, or Law 42 in Havana that gave citizens urban rights reconnecting the city with food production.

The second part of *Food City* is an annotated and illustrated, 'improbable but not illogical' Manifesto for London, where a Food Parliament hovers over the city controlling food as the core economy of the city. This has grown out of Lim's architecture studio at the Bartlett, UCL. In this fictional and necessarily ironic vision for London, all citizens are conscripted into an agro-ecological system and given the 'freedom' to exercise a new green religion. The vision is artfully depicted in comic strip explanations and elegant but surreal drawings populated with animals; humans appear as faceless drones. The components of the city vision such as vertical



farms, ponds on roofs, and pies in the sky have been chosen for their visual potential. The narrative is infused with homely references to London's venerable institutions: the City, the Queen, Parliament.

As drawings in their own right they express joyfulness in how things work but the accompanying narrative seems out of sync with earlier observations. Even if it is at times tongue in cheek, the vision tips into a dystopia, and it is a shame not to see the civic qualities identified in projects in the first part of the book take shape more meaningfully in the Manifesto.

At the core of *Food City* is the idea that dependency on 'the global vending machine' (e.g. only 2 per cent of New York's food is produced within the city) makes cities extremely vulnerable and that planning should do more to regulate food security. Ideally such a shift in policy could open up opportunities for civic engagement and shared land ownership and new city infrastructures such as can be tangentially seen in *Food City*.

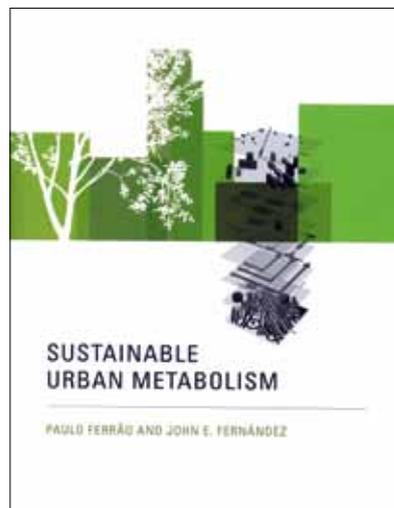
● Juliet Bidgood

Sustainable Urban Metabolism

Paulo Ferrão and John E. Fernandez, The MIT Press,
ISBN 978-0-262-01936-1

A manual for cities in the Anthropocene era, this book begins to map out an expanded horizon for readers wishing to plot the future of sustainable urban design, pertinent especially since in recent times the policy hooks for promoting sustainability have proved so slippery. Rather than defining a city by a singular quality such as its carbon emissions or its economic performance, *Sustainable Urban Metabolism* aims to build the arguments and identify the tools for creating integrated models of cities.

The authors, working in the context of the MIT Portugal Program focused on research into engineering systems, bring a systems approach to the field of industrial ecology; it



is interesting to see the rigors of the scientific method deployed in ecology generally, brought into a discussion about the city.

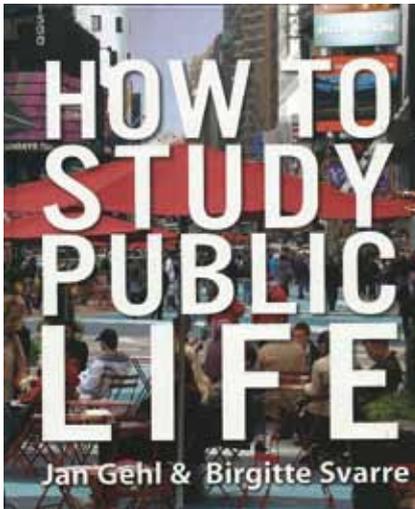
A contemporary idea of cities develops through the book. Globalisation and intensifying urbanisation are seen as interdependent and each city is part of a global network depending on 'multiple linkages between.... communicating hubs of urban systems'. Cities are described as distinct metabolisms with their own characteristics, each generating flows of water, material, energy and nutrients.

The book proceeds in four parts: firstly industrial ecology is introduced as a means of more rigorously defining sustainable development. Then the tools and methods available to assess the resource intensity of cities are explained, and a new model is proposed integrating the different dynamics of urban areas to describe an urban metabolism. The book concludes by identifying case studies from developing countries.

The purpose of understanding the city as a metabolism is identify and manage material and resource flows, and become more efficient. The authors give an account of studies in Vienna, Hamburg, London and Lisbon that have modelled the stocks and flows of materials through the city. In Lisbon researchers tracked biomass, fossil fuel, metals and non-metallic minerals: 80 per cent of the 11 million tons of material used in one year were non-renewable, and 64 per cent of these were in construction. Already this demonstrates that the current focus in sustainable development on fuel, water, food and transport obscures the impact of the material of the city itself.

In their opening chapter, the authors note that 'there is an indisputable link between information, comprehensibility and democracy'. To be able to understand the systems in which we participate, we need to foresee the consequences of our actions well enough to take responsibility for them. The rethinking and modelling of the city as a metabolic system could be used to identify other long-term drivers for sustainability that could be widely owned and perhaps withstand hard times.

● Juliet Bidgood



How to study public life

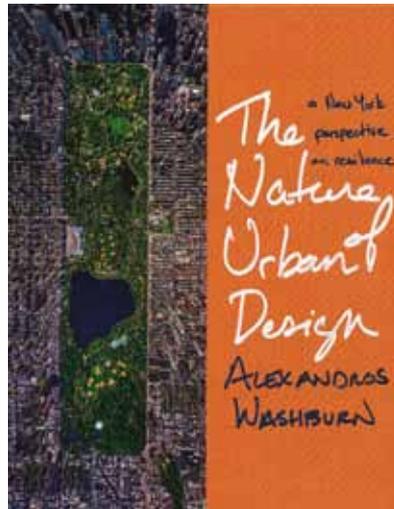
Jan Gehl and Birgitte Svarre,
Island Press,
ISBN 978-1-61091-423-9

One of the difficulties of urban design is that some of its most fundamental aspects are so intangible. In *How to study public life*, Jan Gehl and Birgitte Svarre have firmly grasped the nettle that is public life, drawing on Gehl's work across 50 years, to give us a practical guide for understanding the 'interaction between public life and public space', to help us improve how people live from day to day. It highlights the 'influence of physical conditions on the extent and character of life in individual streets'; 'much more than aesthetic qualities determine whether a public space is valued and used'. This gives direction to better integrate the disparate elements involved.

The book is essentially a summary of public life studies. Chapter topics are: scope and methods of observation; review of historical studies; series of themed studies; array of public space-public life studies; a focus on Copenhagen across 50 years of public life policies. All of these are presented with extensive notes and bibliography, and diagrams and photos throughout.

Reflecting the practical nature of these types of studies, the book is very readable, though the text could have been snappier, each chapter with a short overview and broken down into clear parts, with extended descriptions of photos and diagrams. Specific examples are used throughout, although at times, incisive comments and wider relevance are lacking.

Breaking down individual aspects that constitute behaviour in public space achieves a way to understand the qualitative quantifiably. This renders individual aspects of public life comparable and therefore useful as part of a design process. The authors stress the importance of manual observation rather than relying solely on for example, video and vehicle counters, although these can be useful too.



Public life studies are not detail-design focused, but it is stressed that 'their focus is public life in interaction with design rather than design itself'. This offers general principles rather than design guidelines: assemble rather than disperse, integrate rather than separate, invite rather than repel, and open up rather than close in.

From the tail end of the 20th century, the acknowledgement of the effects of car dominance and a rise in inter-city competition, have resulted in an increased profile for public life. This highlights shifts in political agendas that require cities to be more attractive as places where people want to live, work and visit, and in social agendas that demand healthier, safer and more sustainable cities. This book is very relevant to this ongoing work.

● Marc Furnival

The Nature Of Urban Design: A New York perspective on resilience

Alexandros Washburn, Island Press, ISBN 978-1-61091-380-5

This is a book about cities, predominantly New York. Against the complexities of achieving built-out schemes, the former chief city urban designer enthusiastically sets out to show how all of us can help make the 'individual actions of proposed buildings better for the neighbourhood, more profitable for the developers and more resilient for the city', balancing political, financial and design interests.

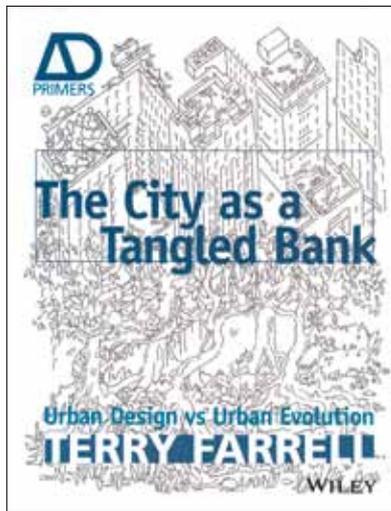
The book's stated brief is to convince non-urban designers of the benefits of good design. Chapters cover: why we should care about cities, urban design process, the products of urban design, the case study of New York's High Line park, and strategies for making cities more sustainable and resilient, with flooding being an underlying theme. The book is well illustrated throughout with snapshot style photos and some diagrams.

The case study of the High Line linear park, the abandoned elevated train line running down the west side of mid-town Manhattan, is a good example of process; politics, finance and design coming together to achieve a successful intervention to transform an entire neighbourhood. The zoning solutions employed unlocked the scheme by reversing intractable conflicts of desired outcomes between stakeholders, securing funding and providing much needed residential accommodation, including 20 per cent affordable housing. The clearly stated goals included not only retaining the burgeoning art district, but also augmenting it to maintain and enhance the genuine mixed-use nature of the area.

The final chapter on resilience highlights the increasingly relevant links between scales of intervention and their implications. These range from cleverly simple solutions such as raising street grates to make seats and bicycle parking whilst augmenting the city's flood defences, to calculating the five-fold benefit of a dense city office tower over its suburban equivalent when including the transit energy of its users.

Whilst the case of greater sustainability for cities has been well made, the connections with the wider environmental agenda need further consideration. It has become a platitude that more than half the world's population lives in cities. The remaining three thousand million or so people should not be forgotten, nor the importance of those rural areas, for their cumulative effects on the environment or large-scale food production. Doing so would belie important links between rural and urban. The urban of urban design increasingly looks too narrow a term, at least when discussing sustainability in all its breadth.

● Marc Furnival



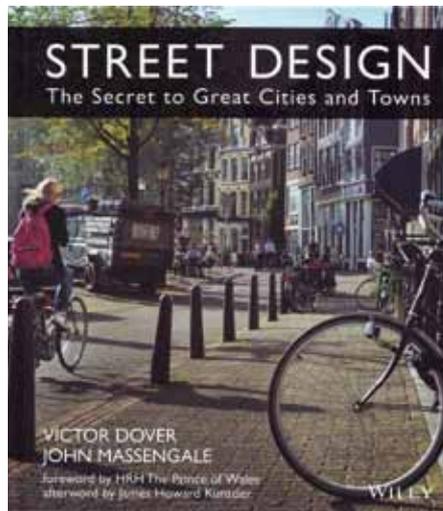
The City as a Tangled Bank: Urban Design vs Urban Evolution

Terry Farrell, 2014, John Wiley and Sons, ISBN 978-1-118-48734-1

In this book, Terry Farrell argues that because cities evolve in response to complex influences, architects and designers who seek fixed answers in built forms and impose them on the city, would do well to revisit their ways of thinking and working. The book is a call to arms for this change in professional attitudes, albeit illustrated with insightful anecdotes, illuminating diagrams and some evidence, many drawn from his own projects.

The book has nine chapters plus an introduction and conclusion, but their signposting capacity is limited, being only milestones in the narrative. The narrative is better presented through themes set out in the conclusion, which may be seen as advice towards a 'more developed understanding of planning'. Farrell calls for designers to immerse themselves in the city, to draw inspiration from nature and its forms of organisation, to develop an understanding of urbanisation and the role of designers in it, to recognise that the principal role of the urbanist is connecting and communicating in order to 'master the chain reactions' from invention to application of urban innovations, to pay attention to what he calls 'the DNA of habitat', patterns of human occupation that may explain physical form, and to be alert to how identity is built over time. He sets out a 'call to advocacy' for designers to act as if the place was their client.

Built environment designers are magpies, gathering a range of ideas, precedents and stories, selectively adapted to construct, or 'post-construct', their design proposals. The best designers fashion a coherent, rich, enjoyable and often surprising case for their design. Farrell writes this book as he might weave a case for a design proposal, so that the 'evolution' of the title is merely the main one of many motifs that he collects to argue, exhort, advise and share insights and



knowledge from a successful. Clear definitions of concepts are not always present, and language is used more to sweep the reader along towards conclusions, than to incisively clarify how ideas such as 'emergence' or 'complexity' can help designers design. The reader chances upon a story here and a diagram there, as if there were delicious little snacks hidden in the pages, which quite successfully distract from the lack of concise argument.

This is a book to be dipped into, rather than to be used as a foundation of a theory of urban design. I think it succeeds because it continues to raise some of the issues all architects, planners and urban designers need to be reminded of. While it does not say anything truly groundbreaking, experienced urban designers are likely to identify with Farrell's points, and those new to urban design might gain an insight into the practice of urban design.

● Louie Sieh

Street Design: The Secret to Great Cities and Towns

Victor Dover and John Massengale, 2014, John Wiley and Sons, Inc., ISBN 978-1-118-06670-6

In the past few years, books about elements of the cityscape have been a popular publishing theme: boulevards, squares and streets themselves, have all been covered recently. This trend is extended by this book on streets by two American practitioners and leading members of the Congress for New Urbanism.

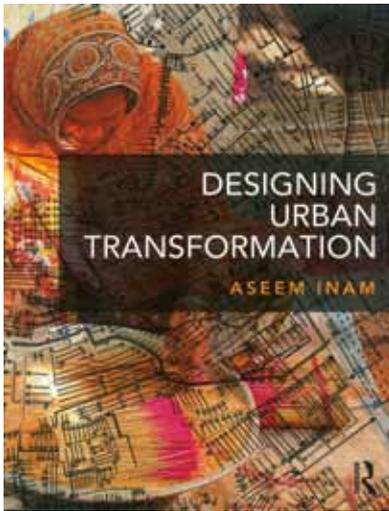
Drawing on their own personal and professional experience of streets, as well as a widely, if not rigorously scoped search for examples of 'good streets', the authors have produced a readable book about this most ubiquitous element of the urban landscape. The book is packed with examples dealing almost exclusively with the Western canon of street design and street design issues, touching on as diverse subjects as the design of

rural roads or how to design 'bumpouts', and covering scales from city-wide grid to details of paving materials. The sensitive descriptive analysis of streets experienced and the ability to comfortably discuss the range of design issues tell of an intimate knowledge of the process of designing, the designing of streets, and a great love for their favourite streets. Indeed, if it is possible to run out of things to say about streets, then this book is exhaustive of their design approaches and issues, at least in western cities.

What lets the book down is the weak signposting. This 400 page tome is divided into only six chapters. Apart from the introduction and conclusion, chapters are about Historic streets, Street systems and networks, Retrofitted streets and New streets. The bulk of content within each of these four chapters are good examples organised around eleven types of streets, such as Boulevard and Avenue, Main Street, Neighbourhood Street and Pedestrian Passage and Step Street. These cut across the four chapters. Each example is thoroughly described in terms of what design and designable features make them successful, and each is presented with photographs and drawings, and especially, street sections, each clearly presented within itself. However, not all the sections on the eleven street types are described in the same systematic fashion, and not all types are even defined, with some sections launching straight into examples. The book is further interspersed with asides into various aspects of street design (for example LEED for Neighbourhood Development or how they measure walkability), mini-essays about the favourite streets of various colleagues and pithy proverbs about street design. While these are interesting and often helpful, they do add to the jumble of threads running through the book.

Illustrations are a mix of proposal drawings, aerial photographs, contemporary and often historic photographs including before and after illustrations. Colour plates clumped into one section in the middle of the book are a rather old-fashioned approach to presentation.

● Louie Sieh



Designing Urban Transformation

Aseem Inam, 2014, Routledge, ISBN 978-0-414-83770-5

Many practitioners who combine professional experience with an academic role seek to reconcile the two, drawing lessons from one to apply to the other. Aseem Inam is in this territory, having undertaken projects in diverse locations, from deprived Karachi to the affluent fringes of Los Angeles, and taught at institutions including Parsons and MIT.

Designing Urban Transformation seeks to draw threads between these direct experiences and a range of interventions in cities around the world. The thesis underpinning these references is that existing design methodologies lack a suitably holistic view of the conditions shaping the city, and tend to prioritise the aesthetic and spatial over other characteristics.

Inam advocates an approach that he terms Pragmatism, building on a philosophical model developed in the United States from the last quarter of the 19th century onwards. Its proponents argue, in place of a dogmatic and ideological outlook, for an attitude of knowledge applied to practical problem solving. In pursuit of his argument, Inam draws on a wide range of seemingly disparate reference projects, which he assesses not in visual terms but in the context of the wider urban forces they have shaped or help exemplify. These projects include the 1992 Barcelona Olympic Village, Boston's 'big dig' and the Centre Pompidou in Paris. Each of them is discussed in some detail both in terms of their physical form and location in time; the broader trajectories of the cities in which they are located and their social and economic characteristics, are also covered. The book is organised according to a series of thematic chapters building towards 'urbanism as a creative political act'.

Designing Urban Transformation declares it is aimed at practising urbanists, including but not limited to those classifying their practice as urban design, architecture



or landscape, with a broader sweep including urban policy and development. Inam's sincerity is not in question, but the text is so broad and the loci of intervention so varied and seemingly random, that it is hard to draw coherent or practical threads that most readers would find useful. Inam's urbanism is close to New Urbanism but distinct from it. His text includes many truths and truisms, but its call to arms is cast so widely that it lacks the incisive and radical edge that one might have hoped for. His studio at MIT proposed comedic improvisation as a design methodology; it is a shame that the book as a whole did not carry this wit and lateral approach all the way through.

● Jonathan Kendall

Smart Cities: Big data, civic hackers, and the quest for a new utopia

Anthony M. Townsend, 2013, W. W. Norton & Company, ISBN 978-0-393-08287-6

Smart Cities is a thorough and fascinating exploration of the interrelationships between cities and technology, particularly the transformative impacts of digital technologies. This is a big book, addressing big ideas. Its author knows his subject intimately, writing directly from first-hand experience, supporting the sweep of his argument with reference to personal experiences and professional relationships.

Smart Cities is written for an audience interested in the intersections between urban design, city planning, telecommunications and computing. Townsend's book is the product of more than a decade of research and consulting activity. Its temporal sweep takes us from 19th century engineering industrialisation and urban expansion, through to contemporary challenges to the city raised by the possibilities of emergent hacks and the mining of so-called Big Data. In all these cases, Townsend is an advocate and

ambassador for the opportunities that technological progress makes possible, but he is not a blind zealot. Far from it, his eyes are wide open to the risks and challenges that allow technological power, as with all other forms of power, to exacerbate disadvantages within and beyond the city.

The range of his enquiry is both impressive and somewhat daunting to the reader. Many of the sources quoted will be familiar to built environment academics and professionals with an interest in the city (Cerde, Geddes, Christopher Alexander and Jane Jacobs are all cited) but the sweep of the text brings in far wider issues. These include the power relationships in society between the affluent and the marginalised, between the individual and the state and between the individual and the body corporate. Townsend's horizons are global, and the reader is transported between downtown Manhattan, the *favelas* of Rio and the markets of Moldova to name but three.

The journey is fascinating, if dizzying, requiring high levels of concentration. This is not a book to skim through, but to read carefully, not least when the particularities of wireless technologies and protocols for communication are discussed in some detail. This is not to say that the work requires a level of prior computational knowledge, and Townsend writes well and clearly. The book would be more accessible if the reader could navigate more easily using subheadings and illustrations (it has neither), or with a structure that was chronological rather than thematic, but is worth the effort for those who want to immerse themselves in one of the most profound subjects that affects us all.

● Jonathan Kendall

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- Louie Sieh, architect and urbanist
- Louise Thomas, independent urban designer

Neither the Urban Design Group nor the editors are responsible for views expressed or statements made by individuals writing in *Urban Design*

We welcome articles from our readers. If you wish to contribute to future issues, please contact the editors.

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

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Going to Coventry

In UD130 I wrote about Albion, the proposal for a garden city in the Black Country which a team from MADE, the West Midlands centre for placemaking, submitted for the Wolfson Prize. It started as a subversive gesture, and we got more serious as we progressed. We were delighted to be included in the awards, albeit down at the bottom, one of two classified as 'Other interesting entries'. Some credit, but no prize money. Ours was the only completely brownfield proposal to be included in the awards.

I thought that Urbed's entry was a very worthy winner, and that the criticism of it in the *Guardian* by Richard Rogers was unjustified. Rogers was condemning the idea of building outside the city on greenfield land. He was perhaps justified in criticising the premise of the Wolfson competition (and by extension the government's garden city proposals), but I am certain that David Rudlin would endorse the principle of brownfield first. His Wolfson proposal included the densification of the existing settlement as well as its extension.

In October I was hoping to see Rudlin in Coventry, where he was working with a group of architecture students on a project called *City Arcadia*, organised by a local enterprise called Artspace. On the floor of an empty shop unit in City Arcade, a part of the comprehensive redevelopment of Coventry's centre after the 1940 Blitz, they built in four days a 1:1000 scale model of the city centre in plasticine. But David was elsewhere on the day I dropped in, engaged on other important business – becoming a grandfather.

The idea of the project was to model the enormous changes that Coventry has undergone in the last century. They started by building the 1906 city, with its extensive mediaeval street plan, in terracotta-coloured plasticine, and then modelling successive changes to the fabric in different colours. Each change was recorded in stop-frame photography, which will be edited into a film. The devastation of the Blitz was reproduced by lifting off large areas of plasticine buildings, which were then dumped around the edges of the model. Donald Gibson's pioneering post-war city centre precinct redevelopment was built in their place.

I don't know whether Artspace were conscious of this, but the project was reproducing Gibson's working method. In describing his plan (which was actually designed before the war started), Gibson later explained 'We worked unofficially on a plan for the central area; our wives joined in and it was more or less done on the carpet at home in the evening'.

I was in Coventry to look at a new development in one of the few surviving bits of mediaeval street pattern, Far Gosford Street, just outside the ring road. It's a place called



Fargo Village, where a 1904 car components factory has been converted into shops and studios, occupied mostly by designer-makers of different kinds. The enterprising developer is Ian Harrabin, and his architects are the Birmingham practice Bryant Priest Newman. They have worked together previously in Coventry on Electric Wharf, the conversion of the city's first power station into flats and workspaces.

Fargo Village is grassroots urban regeneration. The old industrial fabric is left raw and shabby. The new parts are done mostly in oriented strand board (OSB), a utilitarian material more usually seen boarding up the windows of empty buildings. But it is done with style, and it has become a popular new place in Coventry in the few weeks of its existence. Unglamorous architecture like this does not usually win awards, but it's a

kind of development that makes sense in our economically strained times, and I find its rawness and directness quite stimulating.

● Joe Holyoak

↑ The City Arcadia model under construction
 ↑↑ The events space at Fargo Village

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