

# URBAN DESIGN IN THE DOCKLANDS

URBAN DESIGN EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM  
CITY VENTURES Kevin Lynch Memorial Lecture  
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 1990

UDQ Issue 36 OCTOBER 1990

£2.00

URBAN  
DESIGN  
QUARTERLY

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DESIGN  
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It is appropriate to dedicate an entire Quarterly to these proceedings, because the issues debated are fundamental to so much of our wider discussions.

As is often the case a key question for the day was about the nature of urban design itself. For once in such a discussion there seemed consensus that there are at least two complementary aspects. Firstly, the spatial and physical design of places requiring technical knowledge and skill but secondly the management and procurement of these places requiring personal tenacity and a broad knowledge of the urban development process.

There appears no doubt that urban design skills are in demand and that the product of education, the students have enhanced employment prospects over colleagues who have simply followed traditional professional routes in planning and architecture.

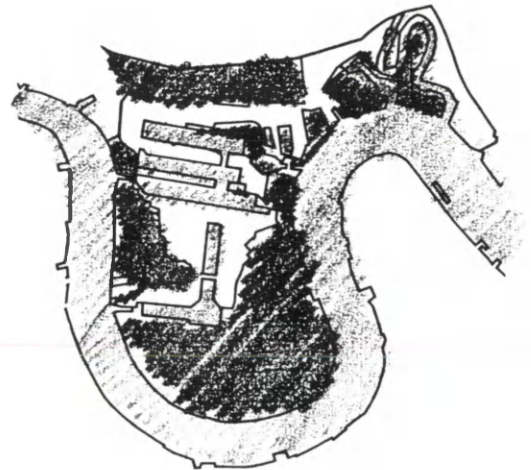
The outstanding question must be why urban design education remains at post-graduate level? Surely we must begin to address the issues raised in urban design earlier. Whether or not we distinguish between training, appropriate to the technical skills and education in the broader issues remains an open question. In some courses this has been the simple difference between post-graduate diplomas and masters level attainment.

The Urban Design Group has the potential to coordinate and sustain this debate. It is appropriate for it to do so as the open forum for our subject. At the same time the Group may have a role in helping the schools define the content of their courses.

A related issue remains however whether or not it is right for us to consider institutionalising the subject. Possibly it is inevitable that as the number of those with specific qualifications grow so the demand for us to become a defined profession will too. It can not be right however to exclude people from the debate and in this respect the Urban Design Group must continue to remain open even if some within the discipline choose to professionalise it.

**Stephen Gleave**

*Stephen Gleave was formerly Principal Urban Designer with London Docklands Development Corporation. He now heads the Urban Design subsidiary of John Brunton plc.*



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**PRINTING** Stuart Constable

**PUBLISHER** Urban Design Group

**DTP** DEG W

ISBN 0266-6480

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£2.00 or free to Urban Design Group Members (Subscription £14.00).

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COVER : Canary Wharf Masterplan

# URBAN DESIGN SOURCE BOOK 1990

URBAN  
DESIGN  
GROUP

## URBAN DESIGN SOURCE BOOK

The Source Book was eventually distributed to members in September. Its late publication was regrettably unavoidable.

Some practices have asked why they were not approached for inclusion but advance notice of its publication was included in earlier Quarterlies and this will be done prior to the next Source Book.

No decision has yet been taken about the frequency of publication. It would be desirable to print it each year, but it may be that every two years would at this stage be appropriate as it does depend on the financial support of practices. Any responses on this aspect or on its format would be welcomed by its editor, John Billingham.

The 1990 Source Book included

- a) a list of practices offering urban design or related skills as a specialism;
- b) details of courses on urban design or related topics;
- c) details of the Urban Design Group including its history, the agenda for Urban Design, ideas for a National Urban Design Centre and a list of members which now number over 800.

The Source Book has been provided free to members and the press and environmental organisations. Copies have been circulated to developers and major local authorities who may wish to consult it in deciding who to approach for Urban Design advice. Additional copies are available at a cost of £5 to members and £8 to non-members.

## SYMPOSIUM ON HOUSING RESEARCH & DESIGN EDUCATION LONDON, 24-28 JULY 1991 CALL FOR PAPERS

### Theme and Origin of the Symposium

The ideas for this conference grew out of the experience of the IAPS symposium in Gavle in the summer of 1989. Discussion of that experience gave rise to the idea that there should be an opportunity for some of those themes to be further developed and others newly identified and progressed, in particular the meaning of home seems to be an enduring interesting but undeveloped one which will continue as a focus for this symposium while the relation between housing research and design education is one which should be incorporated as a more explicit part of the programme. Given the cultural and discipline breadth of the participants in IAPS events it would be interesting to have some comparative studies of how different institutions attempt to deal with the historical split between research practice and education both at a theoretical and practical/organisational level. Also exploration of how professional practitioners seek to use research in their practice or to incorporate 'reflexive research' in their work.

### Symposium Structure

The symposium will be in the form of a number of workshops which will run in parallel. All participants will have to submit a written paper of up to 10 pages. Everyone will also have to prepare a discussion of another paper in their group. All participants will receive the papers of their group before the symposium and be encouraged to read them.

### The Symposium Invites Papers on the Following Themes

- changing experience, meaning and uses of home;
- innovative design theories and methods;
- housing and home in the broader local and national context;
- relationship of housing research and education; and
- reflexive education and professional practice.

### Key Dates

- October 14 1990** Closing date for notice of paper title and synopsis.
- February 14 1991** Closing date for submission of completed paper.
- April 14 1991** Notification of acceptance of paper sent out with symposium invoice.
- May 14 1991** Closing date for payment of fees.

### GENERAL INFORMATION

#### Cost

Approximately £300 to include accommodation, meals, summary booklet and symposium papers.

#### Venue

Surrey Lodge and South Bank Polytechnic, London.

#### Administration

Stuart Hogarth  
CPD Centre, South Bank Polytechnic  
Faculty of the Built Environment  
Wandsworth Road  
LONDON SW8 2JZ  
ENGLAND

#### The Organising Committee includes

**Marjorie Bulos**, BSc, MA, AcDIP,  
South Bank Polytechnic

**Necdet Teymur**, M.Arch, PhD,  
Kingston Polytechnic

**Bob Jarvis**, South Bank Polytechnic

**Roderick Lawrence**, MA, PhD,  
University of Geneva

**Giles Barbey**, PhD,  
University of Geneva

Please find enclosed details of a forthcoming conference on Housing Research and Design Education. We hope that you will find room for this in your diary or forthcoming events columns.

The event is being organised by the Housing and Education Networks of IAPS, the International Association for the Study of People and their Physical Surroundings.

The event is being coordinated by Marjorie Bulos of South Bank Polytechnic and the organising committee includes Gilles Barbey and Roderick Lawrence of the University of Geneva and Necdet Teymur of Kingston Polytechnic.

For further information contact Stuart Hogarth at CPD Centre, South Bank Polytechnic, Faculty of The Built Environment, Wandsworth Road, London SW8 2JZ.  
Telephone 071 928 8989 Ext. 3154/3240.

# URBAN DESIGN EDUCATION SYMPOSIUM

8th February 1990  
Isle of Dogs  
London Docklands

Bringing together more than twenty leading people from the world of urban design for a full day of discussion presented a marvellous opportunity. To take full advantage of the diverse range of ideas under debate a series of workshops were programmed ensuring that all current thinking on the subject was aired. The proceedings were recorded and individuals provided written summaries of their ideas. In order to direct the debate the programme was devised around three central themes:

- Understanding the market view of urban design
- A retrospective on the last fifteen years of urban design education
- Exploring the skills urban designers need.

Participants circulated draft papers in advance giving each other time for considered responses to the issues raised.



## FOREWORD

The last occasion the Urban Design Group visited Docklands was for a visit arranged as part of the conference A Vision for London. That was just over a year ago and I was then in the process of taking up the post of Head of Urban Design. I concluded my talk that time saying that Docklands was changing. New emphasis was being placed in gaining benefits for local people and much greater care was to be taken throughout Docklands to create a built environment that matched the needs and the aspirations of the whole community. Hosting this symposium was a part of that continuing policy of building carefully for the future.

Many of us involved in Urban Design are seeking what Kevin Lynch referred to as the "Good City", no matter how difficult that is to define. With this as our ambition one of our key problems has to be the development of the skills to achieve it. The symposium held in February 1990 was very much about addressing that particular issue: training and education has never been more important.

I am therefore pleased that London Docklands Development Corporation was able to sponsor the event and that representatives from Urban Design Practice, both public and private and from the Academic Sector were able to meet in a most productive way. This Urban Design Quarterly provides the opportunity for others to share in the ideas debated that day and for representative texts to be produced in full.

**Barry Shaw.**

*Head of Urban Design.*

*London Docklands Development Corporation*

## PROGRAMME

### The market view of urban design

Chairman	John Worthington
Reporter	David Lock
Speakers	Peter Studdert, Francis Tibbalds, Keith Jones, Kelvin Campbell

### 15 years of urban design education

Chairman	Ivor Samuels
Reporter	Arnold Linden
Speakers	Micha Bandini, Gerry Metcalfe, Joyce Lowman, Bob Jarvis, Joe Holyoak

### What skills do urban designers need?

Chairman	Barry Shaw
Reporter	Lawrence Revill
Speakers	Martin Symes, Roger Evans, Roger Simmonds, John Billingham

### Plenary Session

Chairman	Barry Shaw
Reporters	David Lock, Arnold Linden, Lawrence Revill



# WHAT DOES THE MARKET EXPECT?

Session 1



**"Certainly, as I see the pressures it is interesting to watch both companies and individuals becoming more global. I sense in fact at one level the environment is becoming more McDonalduesque, more Coca-Coloured but at any other level it is actually making us more and more concerned about identifiable places, places which are local, places which are memorable."**

John Worthington introduced the morning's first session, characteristically providing his own perspective on the markets expectations of urban design,

As he developed the morning theme he raised concern for urban designers to recognise that their's is a long term process. This despite many parts of the urban place becoming obsolete at an increasing rate. He continued that it was the whole process of education, not just in the design disciplines but in a wider understanding of places which was the key. Those responsible for providing the 'market demand' for urban design needed to be influenced by this process of understanding.

## AESTHETIC CONTROL OR VISION FOR THE PUBLIC REALM

Peter Studdert, Neighbourhood Planning Officer for Bethnal Green in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets, recalled that when he entered the planning profession as an architect in the mid-1970s he had rashly predicted that over the next ten years planners would have to choose between becoming either urban designers or computer analysts: all other aspects of town planning would have meanwhile become irrelevant.

However, things had not quite worked out like that, and in particular the legalistic framework of town planning had ensured that it was the people who knew their way around the Encyclopaedia of Planning Law who were often most in demand.

Why has urban design not yet fully established itself in the public sector?

"I think that one of the problems that urban designers had in the public sector over the last decade is that they have tended to get bogged down with sterile debate about aesthetic control which still gets architects steamed up in the letters pages of Building Design".

The main culprit in Peter's view, is the unsatisfactory and ambiguous DoE Circular 22/80 on aesthetic control which, instead of being consigned to the dustbin, has instead twice been re-issued.

Peter believed that market-led, laissez faire 1980s decade was now well and truly behind us and urban designers in the public sector should seize the opportunity and cast themselves in a central role. The key was a clear understanding of the importance of democratic processes in shaping the environment, with urban design acting as a catalyst for change.

Peter saw the Town Hall as a natural place for the committed urban designer controlling and influencing the shape of the public realm. He also saw the Town Hall as the key place of influence in terms of those such as engineers, highway planners, housing managers etc., all of whom have responsibility as stewards of public places.

**Peter's conclusion so far as the public sector market was concerned was that,**

**"There is a desperate need for urban designers who can rise to these challenges and in particular meet the rise in public expectations of what can be achieved in the environment. We need people who are good listeners as well as good communicators, people who can understand the essence of a place and work imaginatively with local communities to extend and sharpen those characteristics of the area that are valued the highest".**

## AN OPEN MARKET BUT AN UNCERTAIN PROFESSIONAL PRODUCT

Francis Tibbalds acknowledged that in this as with any debate on the subject of urban design he could wear a variety of different hats. He made it clear that in addressing the issue of the market's view of urban design he would be wearing the hat of Consultant, private practitioner and employer.

Francis provided an optimistic introduction, stating that there can be little doubt that there is an increasing and discernable market for urban design. The public sector role has been established longer, but the development industry has enormous potential;

"Developers who have got involved in some very large schemes in the last few years have found that at the very least, urban design has some sort of facilitating role in getting a difficult planning permission. It helps get you through the complexities of the planning process, but above that many are also exhibiting an interest in quality; quality in their buildings; quality in the spaces between them. These qualities and the developers' interest would have been unheard of 15 or 20 years ago. I think some of these people, not all of them, some of them, are finding that good urban design can pay, that it adds value and that if developments are well designed, they need not cost more. By contrast they are more likely to be popular, command good rents and maintain capital value."

Francis continued his theme by describing the enlightened developer, one who desperately sought the advice of imaginative professionals. The urban designer has the potential to fill the role. Francis described the work which his staff thrived on as,

"the complex urban sites, one-off messy situations that focus architecture and planning into context. Involving thought about the whole development process not simply the design solution".

To the Consultant however there is concern that such work is time intensive and the public sector who commission such tasks must recognise the need to have realistic budget provision. Too often local authorities feel that generating "robust, apolitical city centre visions for 30 years hence can be achieved in a matter of weeks for the price of several new park benches". This is not the case.

Francis then explored what was expected from his people.

"The least we want is town planners who have got some feel for three dimensional physical quality of what we are doing and as far as architects are concerned we want architects who can see beyond the edge of their drawing board and their particular site boundary. Now unfortunately, for the most part, those people are not being produced by the schools. Too often, planners are visually illiterate and we see most unbelievably arrogant architectural graduates. I think the blame for that must be laid at the doors of the academic institutions.

With many of the School's leading representatives around the table, it was good to see Francis as ever being prepared to set down the proverbial gauntlet. He provoked further by claiming that when schools of Architecture and Planning within the same faculties have difficulty communicating it is hardly surprising that the professions have little time for each other when they meet in later years.

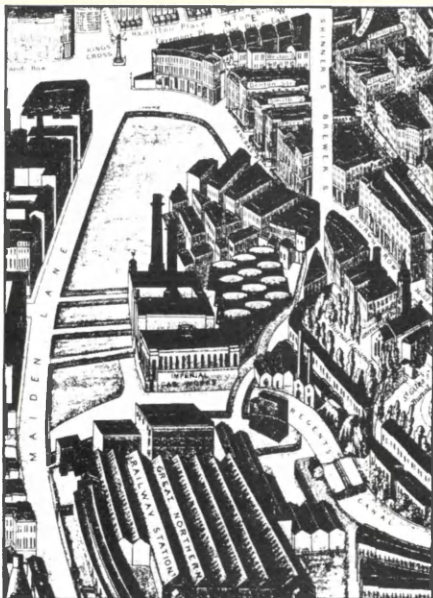
For Francis the market needs people with good rounded understanding. This means more joint training and shared foundation courses. Schools should spend more time on shared teaching, interdisciplinary projects and allow staff to move more easily between departments. And one might add between education and practice.

**In conclusion, Francis reinforced his claim that the market for urban design was wide open, but that the academic sector had still got to produce the people who could fulfil the demand. Too often they have to be retrained to think and work as urban designers once employment begins.**

## ANTI-URBAN DESIGN?

**Kelvin Campbell** works privately as a consultant urban designer. He is familiar with the demands of clients who in his words, "no doubt sees us planning business parks alongside the M6 or extending Oxfordshire villages".

In other words, with this simple example Kelvin was highlighting the danger of urban designers facilitating the demands of the commercial development sector. He was clear that this cannot be the objective of urban design.



"Kings Cross is a case in point with issues there that are too complex to be addressed solely by private developers. The ramifications of such a project should really be addressed by the city on a metropolitan scale. Unfortunately, at a point where the planning system is at its weakest."

Listening to Kelvin it seemed that the private market view of urban design is inevitably distorted by commercial pressure. The responsibility of the urban designer is to make sense of this together with the full range of other professionals involved in the process.

A particular concern which Kelvin has, is that urban designers are increasingly called upon to do things that are essentially anti-urban.

In fact, he has found it difficult to get involved in the distinctly urban, "With the Government's inner city initiatives floundering the combination with cut backs in local government funding urban problems are being compounded. The foolish lack of any metropolitan or city scale planning structure means that urban designers operating at the local scale have at little or no reference back to the wider contextual issues and urbanism therefore tends to be pegged at a fairly superficial level."

What is it then that the urban designer is selling? Possibly in Kelvin's terms "upside down thinking!". He expanded;

"We are so far from the reality of the situation and what is demanded is a total overhaul of the established thought process to ensure new direction. In a city of a thousand designers we all talk about the role of the urban designer as essentially about creating a robust structure, capable of responding to growth and accommodating future economic, social, political and technological change. Process then becomes the key to managing growth and change and it is here that urban design skills should be developed. We should not be concerned with determining function. If the structure is robust it will accommodate many functions. Success for me therefore depends on the introduction of more complex processes of design and management of the urban realm to ensure this timeless quality."

**In conclusion, after 15 years of urban design education Kelvin was of the view that we are too slowly making inroads into these problem areas. Without a clear philosophy from urban designers and a commitment to change there is no reason however why cities will not continue to be dominated by the car, pragmatic opportunism and dogma. Wider environmental issues have become our opportunity to force the hand of change. At least that debate is now on the agenda.**

## ITS MONEY THAT MATTERS

**Keith Jones** formerly Director of Development Planning at Hammersmith and Fulham and now a Partner with Chartered Surveyors, Bernard Thorpe, came to the debate with a wholly different perspective of the market and urban design.

Keith began by asking who makes the urban design decisions?

"... architects, local authority officers, engineers, planners? To a certain extent yes, of course, but lets move on. What

about the Quantity Surveyors, short and long term funders, Property Investors, Occupiers and their representatives who have no knowledge of the urban design implications of their decisions".

Keith was certain that this range of people was the market who's views on urban design had to be accounted for and influenced if any serious impact on the urban environment is to be made. What then influences this market;

"The questions that the market asks itself is what can I let or sell this building for at the end of the day and who can I let or sell this building to? If I make it "more attractive" will the increase in income exceed the cost in other words is it going to add to my profit? What are the ongoing running costs going to be. Adventurous buildings frighten property developers".

It is the occupiers and end users too. Keith did show some concern for the wider public view, but only so far as the 'market' would see a return on their building product. The ability to let or sell or simply attract users to the use would be the key.

**Keith's view was that good design should not cost money but unavoidably will. Developers therefore need to be convinced that in a simple formula this additional cost will promote an equal or greater return. The Urban Designer must therefore capture the imagination of the developer. In part, developers are already seeing the benefits of greater quality, and Keith's advice was to motivate and educate the end user to be more vocal about their increased expectations for urban design.**

## THE MARKET'S VIEW - OPEN DEBATE

The first view coming out in the discussion was that few local authorities have any staff who actually call themselves urban designers. Often the urban design process is guided by staff who may or may not have an empathy for the principles of good urban design.

The difficulty, described by **Margaret Brian** is that local authorities have the potential to coordinate, but rarely these days have a direct role in implementation. They should however be closer to the community than the private sector and thus ensure full representation of that 'markets' requirements from urban design. Overall there was modest support for Peter Studdert's commitment to the role of urban design as a public sector activity.

It was inevitable after Francis had laid blame for our shortage of urban design practitioners firmly at the door of the academics, that there would be a queue of respondents.

**Roger Simmonds** from Oxford Polytechnic felt that the narrow divide between architecture and planning is only one of the professional barriers and that the search to

deliver a single professional who fills that particular gap is not the answer. Rather we should be recognising that there are a lot of people with different backgrounds but who bring an attitude of mind and understanding of their role in the urban design process.

**David Higdon** from Newcastle University recognised the products of Architecture and Planning training which Francis had described. In his School they practiced the department exchange which disciplines he felt had different ways of thinking. In his experience however it was Architects who were doing most to adopt an urban design consciousness, planners still seemed, in education at least nervous of physical design issues.

**Sebastian Loew** from Southbank Polytechnic could not recall the exact period when planning and architecture did divide, but knew from his own experience that divisions between departments and methods of teaching did not assist the comprehensive view of the urban environment. He was also concerned that the end user, the ultimate client was getting left out of the debate. In responding to this, planning education had far outperformed architectural training.

**Bob Jarvis**, also from Southbank added to the theme by stating concern over the search for the urban designer. Why should we be concerned that few people actually call themselves urban designers?

"... I don't actually believe that that is going to produce anything better however we stick the conventional professions together. It seems to me that we have to take a much wider cultural view. If we think of urban design as being made up of bits and pieces that produce the environment then we are taking a very limited view. If we say that urban design is what happens when people use places then we actually enter a much wider academic professional view. I became a little worried listening to the people in practice saying 'just stick these bits of the professions together'. Take a simple recipe and I'm afraid you get a dull meal."

**Bill Tavernor** from Newcastle University also rejected the notion of the 'Architect Planner'. Invariably many of the key people involved in urban design thinking will hold combined qualifications, but this need not be a pre-requisite. He was also not the first to mention our differences compared to Europe where many countries do not distinguish between the professions as we do. The urban designer, by qualification at least, must not be seen as the panacea for resolving the conflicts between professions. It cannot simply be treated as an optional 'add on' qualification. The market must be able to find solid professionals in the principle disciplines, but with a thorough grasp of the role they are playing in the overall process. We really do have to be cautious of seeking the truly 'Renaissance Man'.



The first session was then complete. Peter Studdert having given a buoyant view of the 'town halls' commitment to be involved in urban design, although there remains doubt over various political wills to get involved. Certainly there is a demand in the community and the opportunity for multi-disciplinary working is strong within local government. Francis reinforced the view that good urban design was in demand, both in the public and private sector. The product however comes at a price, always the uneasy reality that 'missionaries' must be paid too. Kelvin promoted the notion that our education needs to be broader to take on the market's demands more ambitiously. At present the urban designer who simply responds to the private clients demands is unlikely to be achieving broader philosophical ambition. Keith Jones quite predictably left us with no doubt at all that our professions are in a minority when considering the urban development process overall. To influence this process, we must all strive to reach those others who have very diverse roles.

Barcelona ... "-a European City at the forefront of contemporary urban design practice with no distinction drawn between the environmental professions."



# FIFTEEN YEARS OF EDUCATION IN URBAN DESIGN

## Session 2

During the mornings first session, Peter Studdert had likened the whole debate about the nature of urban design as being rather like the bar of soap in your bath. You just think you have a grip on it and then off it goes again. Ivor Samuels from Oxford Polytechnic chairing this next session opened by asking us all to recognise the difficulty of educating people to "hold the soap".

All agreed that the process of urban design education had gone on considerably longer than 15 years however it was only since the mid-seventies that identifiable training in "urban design" had taken place, distinct from main stream education in Architecture, Landscape Architecture and Planning.

Ivor set the scene by charting the development of the training programme at the joint centre for Urban Design at Oxford Polytechnic. Since 1973 the postgraduate diplomas and Masters programmes have been reduced in length to ensure a greater range of students can benefit from this additional knowledge base. There is after all an education 'market' too. Given current priorities and reduced public subsidy for education particularly at the postgraduate level it has become essential for schools to recognise their markets and survive.

This raised the issue of schools competing in the market place yet retaining quality in the education offered. It may be a concern that by reducing the length of training there will be a devaluing of the qualification. In any case who should make the decisions about what to include/exclude in the curriculum?

Coming out of Ivor's introduction the concerns were simple:

1. How do you provide courses which attract students from the education market?
2. How do you validate the content of the training?
3. How do you reach those involved in the urban design process who could benefit from training?
4. How do you attract skilled staff into education.

Ivor then posed the question of Quality Control. Who should be responsible for validating urban design courses? Do the RIBA or RTPPI have a role in this or not?

There was general concern that urban design training should not be constrained by planning and architecture attitudes when the debate around the nature of urban design is so diverse. As various speakers were to point out this is far from the case in other European countries.

### BROADENING THE ACCESS OF EDUCATION

Gerry Metcalf came to the symposium as the new Head of Countryside and Landscape at Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education. He explained that their philosophy in developing training programmes was to provide an alternative to the predominantly metropolitan scale thinking which prevails within metropolitan based schools and elsewhere

"It seems to me, perhaps as a result of the media, perhaps as a result of the urban designers offices being in urban settings, that one can't get away from, the significance and importance of the large metropolitan schemes, but they nevertheless don't represent the commonplace for most people either in terms of the activity of creating environments or of their experiences".

He developed this theme expressing strong concern that urban design as a discipline should draw upon a broader base of concern. He felt it was too easy to claim a role for the urban designer within the metropolitan context.

"In large metropolitan schemes, it is actually possible to contemplate the role of the urban designer or the role at least of the urban design team in a way that it is not possible to contemplate so readily in the provinces. In the market towns or in village or rural settings one sees the more conventional relationship between the two professions of planner and architect as more predominant".

Gerry was therefore determined in Gloucester's resolve to provide a postgraduate diploma for Design in the Built Environment, rather than so called 'urban design'.

Gloucester is a provincial town, providing a training to meet provincial needs and fulfilling the educational requirements of those working in similar contexts.

"It is essentially, though not exclusively, a course in visual design awareness. It is about understanding, but also a skills-based course. It aims to make students aware of urban design without pretending that we are going to produce 'urban designers'".

Most of the students are practicing Town Planners, often in Development Control. To facilitate their availability for part-time training the course runs part-time over two years.

In conclusion, Gerry supported the notion of multi-disciplinary training, possibly in the form of modular courses in the early stages of undergraduate training. There was common consensus that such training was an attractive prospect, however the problems remain of securing teaching skills to provide such courses and securing the opportunities to provide joint courses through the schools.

### EUROPEAN REFLECTIONS

Micha Bandini provided an immediate contrast to much of that debated so far. She was concerned to move away from the emphasis on training and the needs of the market and move on to the more elusive question about the place of education in the development of urban places and society.

"The first question I would like to pose is whether education ought to aim, in urban planning as in any other discipline, towards producing people ready for the work market or to aim to educate more broadly".

Micha was aware that disagreement was common, between the professionals complaining to the academics that they do not form "usable" people and with the academics lamenting the conditions under which they are asked to do so.

Many of these questions will have deeper roots converging in one way or another, on the disciplinary boundary of urban design itself.

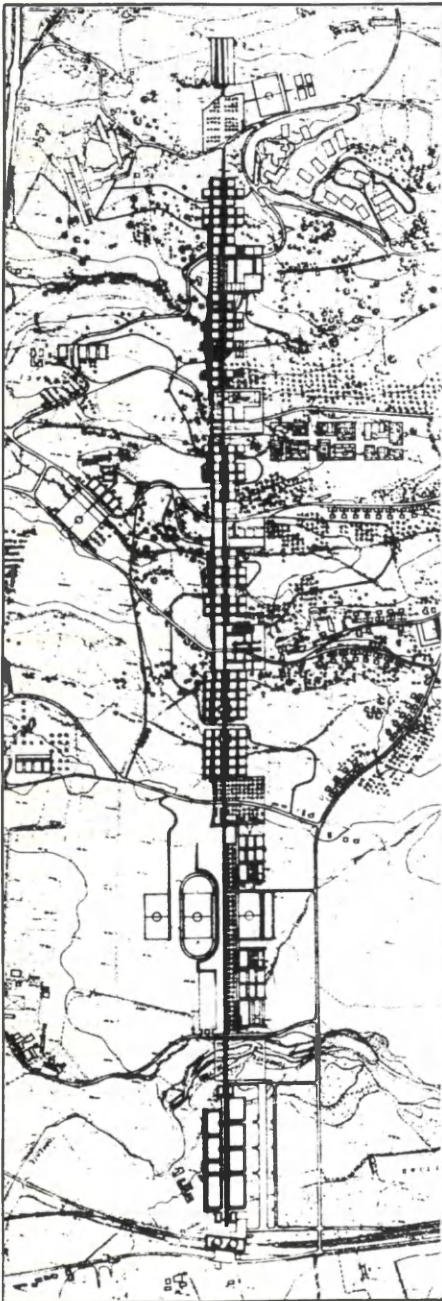
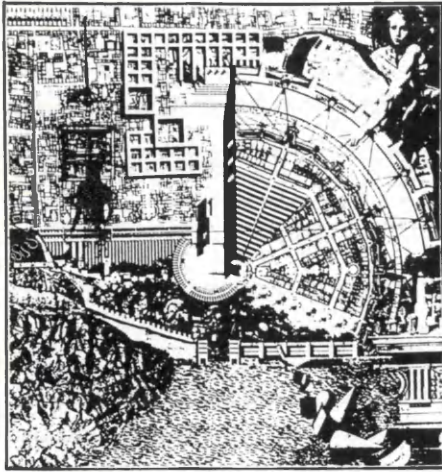
She posed the albeit familiar questions: "Does urban design belong to Planning or to Architecture? Should it produce forms or policies? Is the urban designer an enabler within a multi-disciplinary team or is he the leader of the team insofar as he is the one who provides the vision?"

In developing possible answers to these questions Micha then draw upon the different traditions of Urban Design and thus the education which supports it, from different cultures. She highlighted the characteristics and differences between the theoretical and empirical approaches.

These can be summarised as:

#### 1. Theoretical Approach

This approach (favoured in France, Spain, Italy and partly in Benelux, Austria and Germany) which sees urban design as the result of the vision of the designer. This vision is the product of both his/her position as a responsible citizen and as an intellectual professional. Education is seen as the forum in which visions are nurtured and shaped often under the powerful guidance of professors furthering their own, (see Sola' Morales in Barcelona, Culot in Bruxelles, Huet in Paris, Rob Krier in Vienna, Rossi, Gregotte, Aymonino in Venice). The problem with this tradition is that most of these theoreticians do not see a significant division of competence between architecture and



Top : Aldo Rossi "The Analogous City" 1976  
 Below : Vittorio Gregotti, University of Calabria

urban design but only a difference in the hierarchy of scale deployed. Thus they see the other disciplines only as aids with the complexity of the examined design to limit the number of factors to be examined but not as determinant in seeking their solution.

## 2. Empirical Approach

This approach (favoured in English speaking and in Scandinavian countries) which sees urban design as the result of the designers skill to resolve the world outside. Education is seen as the apprenticeship through which the student goes in order to gain competence. This attitude is the product of inductivism (ie. coming to conclusions from a fields of facts with no theory intervening) which leads to the pragmatic assumptions that if one assembles all factors and one brings in, as equal, other disciplines, such a geography, traffic engineering, sociology ... one is able to start resolving the posed problem. Most of these practitioners do not see urban design as a design discipline but as an enabling one, as a significant departure both from architect's stress on the built object and from planning's emphasis on strategic zoning.

Micha then produced a list of three key areas of study which in her opinion should be incorporated within initial training. These are:

1. Further the student's ability to find, within the tradition of making spaces (ie. architecture) his own position in front of the constraints of the present. This would require a broad humanist, general education on how forms have been made and what result they have had throughout time, cultures and societies.
2. Further the student capacity to see one's own contribution as part of others and equal to them. This requires the student to be able to structure his own thinking in a lateral way, to be able to bring in many views, constraints, points, without losing his direction which is that of achieving a certain "appropriate" urban space/place. This second aim could be achieved in realistically based design studios where students will learn to work in a team so to mock reality while allowing some experimental, and perhaps creatively utopian, thought.
3. Further the student's awareness that the making of spaces/places is a cultural, social and political activity and that it requires more a commitment to the public realm than the mere advancement of one's own brand of thought. Such awareness could be furthered in educational establishments by opening up to the real conflicting situation which the profession finds itself at times operating and, additionally by opening up to broad socio-economic-political issues.

Micha was convinced that only people who develop their specific skills in the broadest way can be useful in society and to the professions.

"It is too easy to teach for immediate gains, so that a student, with limited technical knowledge, can be employable, what is more difficult is to reach the balance, within the limited amount of time allocated, between giving a basis for questioning those issues which need to be explored so to enable a vision and those which are merely organisational or experimental.

I do not think I am calling for the education of an unrealistic Renaissance man or woman but for a realistic view of what education ought to discuss if this much needed professional, the urban designer, is going to be produced within the lines already successfully followed by many mass education European schools, without losing either their quality standards or their capacity to be serving the profession".

Micha was disappointed with the professions having claim on urban design for their failure to discuss the cultural needs which we have and for their reticence to seriously debate the education frameworks which support such culture.

The professions she felt remain too concerned with defining their own goals and recruiting an able work force.

Additionally she concluded that the so called 'theoretical' approach has been undervalued and unfavourably compared with the 'empirical' one in its ability to produce people for the work market.

"We must become aware that technical skills can be learned in a comparatively short time, but if the habit of inductivism is not eradicated, and a new relationship developed between the professions and academia then there will be no broader basis, and no vision for future urban spaces being produced or realised".

## DREAMS THAT MONEY CAN BUY?

Bob Jarvis came to full-time teaching only recently having worked in conservation, planning and urban design in the public sector. He is dismayed at the concept of urban design as a profession with a set of rules and was wary of any notion that claims urban design as a practical subject.

Urban Design should in his view open the door to emotion and expression. The education to support this must therefore have a broad base. In this he was in agreement with previous speakers. Bob further explained:

"There are two definitions of education worth exploring in this context. First that it is a systematic course of instruction, or that it is the development of character and mental agility".

Perhaps we should be recognising the difference between 'training' and 'education'. Urban Design education should be capable of fulfilling the characteristics of both definitions.

In Bob's view planning as an education and as a profession had moved too far away from its creative roots. Equally architecture had demonstrated a danger of becoming introverted and self motivated. Hence the arrogance which Francis Tibbalds had earlier referred to.

Bob moved the debate on. For him being a "facilitator of other peoples dreams" was the role to be met by urban designers. His increasing concern was that this role was being removed from those with environmental training and appropriated by property developers, estate agents and the like. Urban design education and those practicing urban design need to be alert to this prospect and produce more enlightened and convincing dreams - as well as products.

## REACHING A WIDER AUDIENCE EARLIER

Joyce Lowman, Head of Design at Thames Polytechnic made no excuses for not being an urban designer. Sue was happy that her role was an educator. As with others she reiterated her task as in part making students look beyond the drawing board. She was also interested in the processes and those who manipulate education. The institutes, the planning managers, the politicians, the funding bodies and so forth.

Joyce went on to explore the wider interest in towns and the environment by people in general. Not just urban designers. She was unhappy that environmental education did not start earlier. Or for that matter continue later. In this respect primary, secondary and adult education, as well as professional training would be important.

She noted the dilemma in educational terms of a training in the 'arts' or the 'sciences' and the problem of both planning and architecture hanging vulnerably between the two notions.

"Anyone interested in the environment or in three dimensional thinking is too often regarded as someone good with their hands, a visualiser, an artist. Such people are encouraged to play but don't let them explore any intellectual thinking in that area otherwise they get in to science and become limited by analysis".

She continued,

"the image of the scientist is a bad image, but we are short of technologists, short of people who think logically in three dimensions".

She was critical of architects who have made good design an expensive and elusive product. Good design she claimed should not be expensive. Obviously the cost of quality materials adds cost, but good urban design in street form, massing, scale and respect for the public realm should not.

Her own teaching experience was based upon architecture and landscape. She was particularly concerned with the perception of ordinary people.

"We don't educate people to actually understand. People enjoy buildings and places. It is a growing tourist industry but I think we should be looking seriously at the urban environmental education which is offered".

In terms of professional education it seems to be a priority in what is being said to develop greater relationships between practice and academic training. Joyce accepted that there is a gap between her ability to educate and the students need to train. This appears to be a consistent theme; the difference between education and training; a product capable of producing or a product wanting to question; an artist or a scientist.

Joyce was anxious to offer the students a route from their design notions into the practical reality of implementation. In this the links with practice are essential. Students need to be influenced through the process by those who encourage broad thinking and those in pursuit of pragmatism. Inevitably students will pick and choose from the different forms of teaching offered, but this availability of choice is an integral part of their education.

There was a recurring commitment in Joyces presentation to environmental education at all stages in our development, not just those of us choosing it as a professional vocation. She favoured the acceptance of mature students into professional training. Those who draw upon wider 'life' skills and experience rather than purely academic qualifications.

In summary Joyce was convinced that education was about team work. It should not be limited to 'ivory towers' and elitist professional teaching.

"I think the joint team is vital. Learning how to get on with one another, bringing practice together with the academic sector and sitting down with the student to advance their education is one of the most exciting prospects for the future".

**The only dissenting view was that this may be seen as education for less money, by encouraging greater teaching by practice and reducing the full time teaching resource. This wasn't Joyces motivation but always lurking in the background are those institutions and bureaucrats who control the Education System which she mentioned at the outset. What Joyce did want to emphasise is that it costs to produce a good human being, in terms of time, effort, skill and money. It is only by investing in education that our many problems will be resolved.**



## URBAN DESIGN AS COMMON SENSE

Joe Holyoak was convinced that urban design education had been going at least twenty years referring to his Partner getting his diploma from Aberdeen in 1972. Nevertheless he acknowledged that as a mature postgraduate he spent a memorable 15 months at Oxford in the early 1980s and now believed it most unlikely that the same quality of education could be delivered in only 9 months; the latest Oxford proposal.

He noted that the divide between education and practice was always difficult to draw, indeed this was healthy and he himself splits the week between teaching at the School of Architecture of Birmingham Polytechnic and practicing as a consultant Urban Designer.

Recalling a research paper he wrote about urban design professionalism at Oxford he summarised:

"I was against the idea then, I still am, but there were a number of people for whom it was a big hope. Transforming a motly crew into something respectable".

This debate is one which we know continues 10 years later. The major point must be whether or not an urban design profession can clarify its purpose and objectives. In the absence of this 'new' profession however Joe has to remain disappointed that architects and planners have not necessarily come closer in the so called common ground.

It should be added that in education this common ground has been harder to explore jointly as the number of planning courses has reduced through financial constraint, and schools of architecture have become more self focussed for similar reasons.

The Urban Design Groups own Agenda has advanced the debate on establishing sensible urban design principles. But despite this all the while the debate is unresolved about the nature of the subject so the education for the subject will remain confused.

In Joe's view the principles are straightforward.

"I believe good urban design is a set of ordinary principles about issues such as space, use, sequence, management and so on which can be understood by most people. These are not novelties, not new inventions, rather a reversion to old principles, buried by the advent of professionalism largely this century".

The task for current urban designers and for our education is to rediscover, analyse, justify and restate these principles thus formalising our principles. To then link them to a professional peg whether architecture, planning or something new, possibly urban design would be far too simplistic. As with Joyce Lowman earlier Joe recognised that urban design education must extend beyond conventional institutionalised teaching. An awareness of the principles has to reach city councillors, developers, community groups and so on.

**In summary Joe welcomed the current debate in architecture but was joined by others around the table in condemning the narrowness of the issue on superficial styles and aesthetics. One lesson emphasised was that in Joes experience those furthest removed from a professional stance are the most likely to understand and appreciate good urban design principles.**

**"I find that the less professionally committed people are the more receptive they are to urban design principles as opposed to the ingrained orthodox professionals who are, dare I say as strong as they ever were".**

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## IS EDUCATION DELIVERING THE RIGHT PRODUCT

The debate was now wide open. The initial market bias stated in terms of needing professional renaissance men (and women) had been responded to by those working in urban design education who had outlined the difficulties of funding, the education market itself, the lack of a professional agenda and the huge responsibility of producing a trained 'operator' ready for the market within a small proportion of their overall period in education.

The notion that wider environmental education is necessary was endorsed however it was also felt that young people now are already more visually literate and demanding of the quality of their environment than they were ten years ago. Quality experience in urban and non urban settings is expected. Disappointment in the place can be directly correlated with the commercial success of the project, hence the property markets serious interest in urban design.

It was interesting that no one seriously mentioned a different term, Urbanism, during

the mornings debate. In many ways this provides a more sounded description of the total process than does urban design, and hence elsewhere in Europe is the favoured term. It could be for some that the notion of Design as an integral part of the task is too constraining and places too great an emphasis on the technical skills and of the professional continuum. For others it is the fact that the subject is about physical design that makes the activity of urban design and distinct professions.

Returning to the notion of who the product of urban design is for, there was certainly consensus that pressure for us to produce better urban places will come from those whos daily experiences are influenced by them. These people are increasingly articulate and we have to be closer to their aspirations. Here the dilemma is obvious. How do we balance the conservative aspiration against the ambitions of skilled professionals in environmental design. This is a philosophical, political and moral debate which no doubt will continue. For educationists the questions must be addressed as fundamental to the processes of urban design. For those working in the market the same questions must not be forgotten in pursuit of profit margins and clients ambition.

At this point reference was made to the changing face of the business establishment. Those in control of business and investment are increasingly of an age when their own education was particularly influenced by cultural and ideological change. These people many of whom are under 50 will influence the future of urban design over the next ten years. As **John Worthington** suggested:

"These are the people who grew up in the sixties, people of a special generation, who are green and environmentally aware".

Possibly our socially conscious developers? But, let us not be too hopeful. Business motivation of course remains unchanged over the decades. It is the business of urban designers to harness this motivation, combine it with the niche of sympathy for the urban environment and begin to produce greater quality.

**Judy Hillman** as an observer of the debate was sure that we were right in highlighting the greater public knowledge and awareness in 'our' subject. In this she maintained that national and local politicians will need to increase the priority of environmental affairs, a trend already underway. For her the notion of 'civic pride' should be encouraged, people are entitled to pleasant, functional and attractive places but equally they must be expected to care for those places.

**Martin Bradshaw** of the Civic Trust confirmed the markets desire for more urban designers. In his experience there is great demand, but what a shortfall there appears to be. Certainly of those graduating with a claim to hold a named qualification in 'urban design'. Perhaps however this is the error of placing emphasis on titles and 'letters' rather than showing concern for the individual or their education.

**Overall there was consensus that the general educations offered in architecture, planning and landscape as the principle environmental disciplines failed to produce graduates with a grasp of contextual design. In the case of planning courses there appears a distinct absence of serious physical design training whilst in architecture and landscape the emphasis on technical detail linked to 'original' thinking often ignores the context.**

# WHAT SKILLS DO URBAN DESIGNERS NEED?

## Session 3

**Having examined the nature of the market for urban design and then raised the temperature of debate by exploring the product which education produces, the Symposium now turned attention to the definition of so called, 'urban design skills'.**

Barry Shaw in Chairing the session began by airing his concern that based upon the morning discussion the gap between the academic product and the market demand was perhaps greater than we generally prefer to acknowledge.

Barry continued his introduction, referring to urban design as a re-emerging rather than emerging discipline. It also had to be seen in a much wider context,

"I think the question of the skills required by urban designers raised questions also about the state of planning and architecture together with the framework for decision-making as we go into the final decade of this century".

His argument continued,

"There is a changing culture of planning with a return to technical skills now in balance with social, economic and political policy formulation. Architecture too is changing. There is less overt consensus modernism, and now even post modernism is giving way to an "ism-less" style emerging in a pragmatic response to a broader and more complex view of the role of design".

Barry felt strongly that it was the architectural profession that needed to and was responding most positively to the needs of urban design,

"I am conscious of a new generation of architects much more aware of context and of the implications of their work".

At the same time the agencies administering the planning system are also changing. New agencies and pressure from central Government and the private sector have secured a response from the traditional base of Statutory planning and development control, which is of course Local Government. The argument developed based upon a public sector which is shrinking back to a core which deals only with those elements which it is essential for the public sector to deal with.

"At the core of these smaller, leaner organisations we need good managers. That is to say, urban designers, planners and architects must not only be good at doing what they do professionally, they must also be able to take responsibility for managing people, for managing projects and for managing money. Everyone at the core must understand the business of

development in social as well as physical terms. And everyone I think, I would broaden that beyond the environmental disciplines, the surveyors, the financiers. Everyone must be much more aware of the environmental impact of their decisions. Those working in these new, smaller organisations will carry more responsibility and be judged very much by results".

Barry was clear, initial qualifications, and the curriculum which produces them can therefore only be a start in providing the skills needed in this context. Continuing professional development was likely to hold equal if not greater importance. Certainly thought must be given within shrinking organisations of how they can accommodate structured 'thinking' time for their people. In parallel with this the academic sector must be pursuing mechanisms for providing training at the right level, at the right time.

There are then probably two clear urban design roles. Firstly, that of the enabler and manager. The person ensuring that others produce a built environment which fulfills our ambitions. But, secondly that of the specialist. The technically able and astute. The innovative designer capable of producing architectural engineering and landscape solutions which recognise their wider urban design context.

In describing these quite different roles Barry explained that,

"Design and management skills are not often combined at a high level and specialist designers are likely to be trained in pure design, possibly by being apprenticed to other designers, including architects".

There was acknowledgement that particularly in this latter capacity there is likely to be greater chance of heading down the 'inclusive' urban design professional route and avoid the danger of attempting to establish a new discipline. This was likened to the difficulties in creating a new political party. There was real danger of being left behind by changes within the other parties.

**In concluding, direct comparisons were drawn in Barry's paper to the training programmes expected and accepted within other quite separate professions, in particular medicine. Often it takes over 15 years to become a senior medical specialist, moving in and out of practice/education in a structured programme. It is part of hospital life and administration that training and work are closely linked. What a lot we have to learn in the environmental professions when training and research are too often seen as distinct activities and not to 'real' work.**

## A CHAOTIC DISCIPLINE?

Martin Symes, Chair of Urban Renewal at Manchester University confirmed the academic and professional view that there is an emerging discipline of urban designs. In his view no existing profession has a 'right' to this evolution, but from observation one can see a group of people becoming 'expert' in the discipline and hence in the process of 'professionalisation'.

Finding a place in the so called 'power struggle' would be the next task. In making a claim for a seat at the table we must be clear ourselves about the skills which we bring. This is why the Symposium debate is welcome.

Martin continued that he was committed to focussing on what he saw as independent and separate skills which urban designers bring. He was concerned that we get drawn to the overlapping skills of the other professions; architecture and planning in particular.

What then of the skills. Firstly an awareness of three dimensional form and an ability to express this orally and graphically. Secondly the more political managerial and administrative skill which allows the understanding and manipulation of information, facts, figures and negotiation.

In combination these are the intuitive and inspirational visionary skills together with the ability to learn, test and develop a robust rationale for our proposals and solutions.

Adding to these and based upon recent research about what urban designers do there has to be a firm grasp on both social and economic issues. This is especially the case where urban design is synonymous with urban renewal. Urban Designers must understand the aspirations of communities. These themselves are diverse and the task is immense. Urban Designers must also understand the economic processes of achievement, again a broadening of the role.

Finally the skill of communication across one of these fields should never be understated. If a place at the table is sought and if we are to remain seated the ability to debate and put across our urban design ambitions becomes a vital skill.

In summary Martin chose the phrase "a chaotic discipline" to describe what he saw at the present time. What was then debated and continues to be is how this chaos can be brought into order. For some it is not desirable to do so, for others it is essential. For the Urban Design Group it is probably our key purpose in the coming year or so.

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**2 + 2 = 5**

Roger Evans, working as an Urban Design Consultant is more than familiar with the skills required by the discipline, but also of the skills which potential clients are finding lacking within the more traditional environmental professions.

It was therefore heartening to hear a consensus developing about the nature of these skills. Roger identified three skill

areas; **Technical** skills, not only in urban design, but also an appreciation of other environmental design professions. Secondly, **design** skills, required to synthesize information and generate meaningful concepts. Third, the ability to **communicate** both the overall vision and also the policies and briefs which form the 'route-map' to that vision.

With regard to communication Roger usefully saw two key categories. Firstly oral and visual communication of possible solutions or as he saw them 'goals' but secondly communicating the process of achieving those goals. Again, as echoed in other parts of the debate quite distinct roles were being identified for the urban designer, hinting that it isn't a single individual with all around ability.

Roger acknowledged that he had focussed on the practical skills, but felt committed to add that there is a research and theoretical side to the discipline which is vital if we are to have either a product to offer and/or credibility in providing the service.

Roger saw our task as the ability to make the sum greater than the parts.

"A good design decision draws a line or states a simple policy, which will solve several different problems with economy: in simple terms what we do is join things up - for example, a new street which solves highway problems while generating income to support development and underpinning social structures is making  $2 + 2 = 5$ . That is what the urban designer has to achieve, and is something which a committee of experts representing all related interests is not good at doing; it is the reason we have urban design".

**In conclusion, Roger was pleased that our schools of Urban Design continue to concern themselves with urban structure, and resist turning into 'finishing schools for architects', content to sweep up after the highways engineers through the development of island sites. Defining the context for development is as much the urban designer's responsibility as responding to a context.**

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## REDUCING THE RULES

**Roger Simmonds**, Principal Lecturer within the Joint Centre for Urban Design at Oxford drew upon recent experience of the discipline within the United States. An extended copy of his paper is printed in full within this Quarterly.

It is always useful to reflect upon wider experience, certainly it seems that in urban design we have a recent history of turning to North America for much of our theory and research however inappropriate this may be.

The over-riding influence in recent years identified by Roger is the shift in influence from the public to the private sector as the structural determinant of urban design solutions. The notion of 'partnerships' has emerged as the acceptable face of this form

of development and in this mechanism the role of the urban designer is becoming firmly established. Firstly as a creator of visions and secondly as the conveyor of information and argument through the generally bureaucratic planning and development process.

For Roger the period of regulation and standards has declined and in this market the intuitive and pragmatic skills of the urban designer come to the fore. In balance, it should be said with the commercial ambition of many clients and the broader less definitive social objectives of local planning authorities.

In this latter respect there no doubt remains a critical role for urban designers to play within local authorities. They may well find themselves raising debate, bargaining and publishing ideas. Communicating the public ambition and managing the changes. This is increasingly the American experience and from current trends equally so here. It was timely for **John Billingham** to provide the next paper. Reflecting in particular on the skills required in the public sector. John is currently Director of Design and Development at Milton Keynes Development Corporation and formerly held a post with the same responsibilities at Oxford City Council.

In John's experience urban designers in the public sector mainly fill the following roles:

- As part of a project team preparing proposals,
- Preparing development briefs and design briefs to which designers respond,
- Carrying out design negotiation on submitted proposals,
- Design Management involving policy and strategies.

John analysed urban design projects in which he had been involved over a number of years to see what skills were required in those specific examples. Perhaps not surprisingly the skills appeared to be almost universally required by each role albeit with a greater emphasis on particular skills in each case.

There are it seems to John five groups of skills required in urban design, namely; design, process, communication, resources and personal skills. These correlate closely with what other speakers had identified. For John however it was the role of the urban designer as the potential team manager which was important.

In this the whole question of whether or not urban design is a separate discipline and profession again raises itself. Should we simply be training planners and architects to perform their roles more appropriately? This debate will continue, but what is rare in John's experience is that a single individual will have complete urban design responsibility.

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## TOWARD A SEPARATE DISCIPLINE

Of the three debates of the day this was the one upon which there was greatest agreement. Barry Shaw however, chairing the open discussion began by asking whether or not we were placing too great an emphasis on personal, communication and negotiation skills to the detriment of technical, three dimensional and spatial skills through which urban design is physically judged. All agreed that these have to be in balance, indeed again it may be that there are two distinct roles, not necessarily undertaken by the same person at the same time.

The contribution made by Martin Symes was welcomed as exactly that which the academic sector should bring. Standing at the edge of the processes and reflecting. John Worthington stressed the acknowledgement of a group of people creating a discipline as most significant, he continued;

"I think at our peril we forget that because the danger always is that when you are young you move forward, never seeing where you are going, quite rightly or you would never go, an that is exactly where the Urban Design Group is now, it is wonderful, it is where all the early, embryo, infant organisations are. We need the academic, we need the type of person who can stand outside us to say precedent shows you where you might arrive".

Of course this inclination towards an institutionalised stance for the UDG remains a contentious debating point and as stated previously will be the focus of much of our attention during the coming years. For many it seems inevitable but it must be in balance with an educational system which develops intelligent, questioning and confident people capable of handling urban design issues without standard solutions.

The discussion then moved on. Essentially urban design is about people and building. The skills discussed reflect these and a prescription of the subject as the 'politics of space' seemed an appropriate concept upon which to focus.

There was then agreement about the role of the academic sector. Providing information, checking and balancing theory and pursuing new theory and challenging old. There remained concern however about the status of this role within urban design in the UK. Other countries legitimise their entire development activity by encouraging the presence of the academic sector in development and design debates, here, as highlighted by Barry Shaw there is too often disrespect between the practicing and academic sectors of the same disciplines.

Finally and appropriately in terms of future debate the discussion moved again to that of the single discipline or not. Contrasting with earlier views David Lock referred to the Urban Design Group as a 'college', a forum for people with a range of interests that can come together and encourage debate. The symposium itself was classic as such an event. Many of those around the table saw no need for a separate profession although did recognise the need based on this discussion to target the identified skills through the process of education. Some of these skills will be technical and will require specialist knowledge and training. Equally there will be those involved in the decision making aspects of urban design who will have no technical skill. Surely it is a backward step to exclude these people from the urban design debate through some form of professional exclusivity? And so the discussion continued.

## LIST OF DELEGATES

### LOCAL GOVERNMENT / URBAN DEVELOPMENT CORPORATIONS / PUBLIC AGENCIES

BARRY SHAW - LDDC  
STEPHEN GLEAVE - LDDC  
WILL COUSIN - LDDC  
JOHN BILLINGHAM - MILTON KEYNES  
PETER STUDDERT - TOWER HAMLETS  
MARGARET BRIAN - HOVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

### PRIVATE PRACTICE

DAVID LOCK - DAVID LOCK ASSOCIATES  
MICHA BANDINI - CONSULTANT  
EDUCATIONALIST  
JOHN WORTHINGTON - DEG W CONSULTANT  
FRANCIS TIBBALDS - TIBBALDS COLBOURNE  
ARNOLD LINDEN - A. LINDEN ASSOCIATES  
KEITH JONES - BERNARD THORPE  
ROGER EVANS - CONSULTANT  
KELVIN CAMPBELL - URBAN INITIATIVES  
LAWRENCE REVILL - DEG W CONSULTANT

### EDUCATION

IVOR SAMUELS - OXFORD POLYTECHNIC  
ROGER SIMMONDS - OXFORD POLYTECHNIC  
ALAN BOOKER - LIVERPOOL UNIVERSITY  
MARTIN SYMES - MANCHESTER UNIVERSITY  
JOE HOLYOAK - BIRMINGHAM  
POLYTECHNIC  
BOB JARVIS - SOUTHBANK POLYTECHNIC  
MARION ROBERTS - POLYTECHNIC CENTRAL  
LONDON  
SEBASTIEN LOEWE - SOUTHBANK POLYTECHNIC  
JOYCE LOWMAN - THAMES POLYTECHNIC  
BILL TAVENOR - NEWCASTLE UNIVERSITY  
HILDEBRAND FREY - STRATHCLYDE UNIVERSITY  
GERRY METCALFE - GLOUCESTERSHIRE  
COLLEGE OF ART &  
TECHNOLOGY

### INVITED OBSERVERS

RFAC RICHARD COLEMAN  
CIVIC TRUST MARTIN BRADSHAW  
ENGLISH HERITAGE JOHN FIDDLER  
DoE JOHN ZETTER  
PRESS JUDY HILLMAN

## THE FUTURE DIRECTION FOR URBAN DESIGN EDUCATION A Synopsis

In closing the debate a number of key issues remain as future items for the agenda. John Fiddler from English Heritage turned our attention to the funding and politics of Education. John Zetter from the Department of Environment echoed this in suggesting that our next debate must include the Department of Education and Science. The major point being made was that the politics of education, and the support in terms of funding have rarely had such a difficult time as the present. In this climate there has to be doubt over the Schools themselves validating their courses and possibly there is a role here for the Urban Design Group. John Fiddler raised a further issue hardly touched on during the day and that was the relationship between Building Conservation and Urban Design. In the early days of architects in planning, heritage was often their prime function. This has changed and urban design, certainly in media terms has become synonymous with major city and urban restructuring. John was anxious for urban design education to sustain links with heritage issues and for closer ties between those in building conservation and those in the increasingly wider field of urban design. John also urged greater consideration of Continuing Professional training albeit concentrating on the technical skills required, rather than attempting the broader philosophical, theoretical and substantial education issues which most felt are best, addressed in full time education.

In a separate conclusion, John Zetter summarised his position succinctly as concern for three factors; cost, contact and choice. In terms of cost, those involved in the politics of education and the environment have to be convinced that urban design provides value for money. He felt the Urban Design Group and those involved in Urban Design Education needed to do more to establish this point. He felt the cost effectiveness of good design to be an emanantly researchable subject.

With regard to 'contact', others had used the term communications. In John's view we have to contact a much wider audience with our message that good urban design is invaluable. His suggestion for a competition was supported around the table.

Finally what did we mean by choice. It had already been stated during the day that our population is increasingly aware of environmental and design issues. For politicians this means that they will need to give equally greater attention to the subject and for the growing discipline of urban design this must be seen as an opportunity. So far as the DoE is concerned urban design has, to date, had a low profile, but we can anticipate this changing during the coming decade.

The closing remark of the day came from Kelvin Campbell, who summarised the position of many,

"In my view, there is nothing wrong with urban design education as taught at the present post-graduate level. The problem arises once trained, coming out and trying to exercise the skills we have talked about today. It is the many other professionals, administrators and decision makers who become the stumbling blocks to achieving our principles".

Perhaps then we must consider how we can change institutionalised thinking and possibly the level at which urban design principles are taught across the other environmental disciplines, rather than urban design matters just being the prerogative of a few with a specialist range of skills. Surely we must endeavour to educate more widely.

**In the weeks after the symposium the following articles were received which it is appropriate to incorporate in this Quarterly. Hopefully they progress the debate and will promote further discussion. It is our ambition within the Urban Design Group that we can focus the debate not just about the nature of the subject but also about the way that people are educated within it. Future contributions will be welcome and should be sent through the Chairman of the Group.**

# URBAN DESIGN TRENDS IN BRITAIN AND THE USA.

Roger Simmonds

**This is the right time to be discussing the way our society manages the evolution of its built environment, because we seem to be at a moment of paradigm shift from one set of values and practices to another. I want to try to characterise the nature of this shift as it relates to public sector practices in Britain and the USA, to speculate about its strengths and weaknesses and about the urban design skills implied by it. I will talk of the "old regulation paradigm", which prevailed in various forms from the 19th Century until today, and the "new paradigm", which has emerged to replace it.**

## THE OLD REGULATION PARADIGM:

This was dominated in the USA and Britain by the idea that successful environment, in functional and visual terms, could best be achieved through government regulation. The government officials, who made the rules, saw themselves as outside the development process but in control of it. The public sector "intervened" in the market to correct its imperfections. It defined the "rules of the game" and acted as referee to make sure the private sector played it correctly. Regulations tended to focus on both broad and detailed aspects of development and most local government agencies, not just Planning Departments, seemed to think it was their duty to be as clear (ie. as rigid and uncompromising) about as many of these details as possible. This attitude related to general area wide regulations and to site specific requirements, often articulated in local authority "briefs". In its most extreme manifestation the "good" environment was, thus, tacitly defined as an aggregation of many strictly regulated responses, ranging from land uses to detailed site layout and building design. The quality of the whole was assumed to be a sum of these regulated parts. Most of the rules related to functional objectives but this had a considerable and often unrecognised impact on visual/spatial quality. Sometimes rules related directly to spatial concerns.

While they may not have liked this approach in principle, the development sector recognised some substantial advantages in it for their own practices. It provided an important guarantee for the future of their investment; it meant that no rival developments were likely to spring up next door with new ideas to challenge their own products; and, most crucially, it reduced the time spent on negotiation to a minimum. It was also vastly superior to the perceived alternative to regulation by rules; the dreaded procedure of "design review", in which local committees of laymen or professionals sat in judgement over a proposed development. There are many explanations for why the decisions of such committees have often been flawed but what the development sector dislikes most about this process is the time lost from continual requests for redesign, with vague and often contradictory explanations about

why this is necessary.

Sometimes the development sector appeared to agree with architectural critics that the regulatory approach created a monotonous and depressing visual/spatial environment but, as they did not believe that the profitability of a scheme was affected by the quality of its design or public context, they did not often oppose it. They were, as always, preoccupied with removing the causes of delay and gaining some predictability for the future of the area in which they wanted to invest. This usually meant lobbying for more co-ordination between the different regulatory bodies and, in many cases, for more rigidly defined rules to curb the mercurial tendencies of local planning committees.

## EXPERIMENT WITH NEW MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES:

It was thus left to local government to initiate the first real experiments in a new approach to managing the built environment. I will look briefly at three key initiatives: **The Urban Design Section of the San Francisco Plan '71: The Design Guide For Residential Areas by Essex County Council '73: The Housing Quality Zoning Plan for New York City '75.** The strongest critique of the regulatory approach came from the Essex Design Guide, which blamed the poor quality of post war housing environments on the "standards mentality" of local officials and their tendency to use unexamined and crudely generalised "rules of thumb" to control the layout of these areas. The effect was a monotonous spatial environment.

In many ways the Urban Design Section of the San Francisco Plan and the Essex Design Guide were attempting similar approaches. They sought to focus on the desired visual and functional quality of the end product, the "whole" environment, leaving individual developers and designers the scope to decide about the detail and, at the same time, the flexibility to respond to the special conditions of the site and the needs of the individual client. The aim was to develop "environmental indices", which attempted to indicate the desired quality of the visual/spatial "whole" through illustrations and diagrams, and "performance specifications", which tried to unpack the old rules of thumb into their constituent functional objectives and give specifications for each objective against which the end product could be assessed. For example, the Essex Design Guide "unpacked" the old rule which required an 80 foot space between the backs of suburban houses. Within this rule they discovered several hidden objectives; the protection of privacy, and the guarantee of sufficient open space, fresh air and daylight. The guide then attempted to give a required performance specification which a scheme should achieve for each of these qualities, leaving it up to the designer how this was done.

The New York HQ Zoning Plan, never implemented, took a somewhat different approach to regulation. It defined a large

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number of qualities which housing developments in high density areas should seek to achieve. A proposed scheme scored points for each of these qualities if they were included. Any scheme which gained the required percentage of the maximum possible score automatically received planning permission. The scheme would give flexibility to the designer and developer to respond to the particular site conditions and achieve their own objectives as well as those of the city. As people chose to respond to different aspects of the city's criteria list, so the environment would escape the monotony of contemporary housing developments.

"Enveloping" is an approach to regulation at the site level which is similar in spirit to the above approaches. It is most clearly articulated in another '70s document, **Design Briefing in Towns** by Percy Johnson Marshall and Partners. Here the aim is to regulate to a minimum and to provide the designer and developer maximum scope to achieve their own ends and respond to the site and its special qualities. The idea of enveloping was that the public sector should map out the widest limits of acceptable action, rather than attempt to impose one ideal option. Thus, if building height was a genuine concern, it should be expressed in terms of a range between the highest and lowest acceptable limit.

While the Essex Design Guide experimented with the above "new" approach to environmental regulation, it also explored the use of "non-regulatory" instruments to achieve its policy objectives. In an important sense, it really was trying to be a design "guide", drumming up support for a particular approach, giving the evidence and using the power of argument to convince developers, local groups and designers to follow its "advice". In another sense it tried to be a negotiation document, saying to developers and designers . . . "each site has its own special needs but, in many cases, you will find us coming from this kind of direction at the negotiating table". On yet another level, however, the fact that developers would have to get planning permission from local authorities gave the guide the sense of being neo-regulatory and the development industry, in its overarching desire to cut out ambiguity, certainly treated it as such.

Other agencies began to experiment with other "non-regulatory" instruments in the mid '70s. The Midtown Manhattan Office of the New York City Plan used the concept of "incentive zoning", which can be traced back at least to 11th Century London, in its attempts to get more street level space and to persuade developers to build theatres in the city.

Several agencies in the USA also began to use the instrument of "transferred development rights" to enable historic buildings or valued farmland or wilderness areas to be preserved and yet the owner to achieve the full value of the land by selling the rights to develop it to the developer of another site. He would then be able to add the acquired rights to those rights already associated with his site.

At the same time as these "new" and "non" regulatory experiments were taking place, there was, especially in the USA, a growing involvement of local groups in the process of decision making about development. Negotiations about the quality of the built environment tended to become at least tripartite affairs and environmental quality issues became one of the important bargaining chips in "planning gain" negotiations. As the built environment became more and more a negotiated product this also began to undermine the old regulatory approach to managing the built environment.

Most of the experiments in "new" or "non" regulatory forms of management floundered or never got off the ground for a number of operational reasons, not least that "performance specifications" and "environmental indices" were more difficult to operationalise than anticipated. Their demise was compounded by the recurrent recessions of the '70s when many cities found themselves in the role of supplicant; begging developers to invest on any terms they chose. This also affected the degree to which neighbourhood groups could have any serious influence on events.

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#### THE "NEW" PARADIGM:

These conditions were prevailing when I left the USA in '75 and came back to Britain. I returned to work there again in '85 and found some fundamental changes in attitude. Public interest in the environment had never been higher and this was translating itself into greater political support for and interest in environmental quality issues and the increasing involvement of local neighbourhood groups in decisions about development projects. At the same time, a whole new architectural philosophy had now virtually replaced Modernism. It provided all kinds of critical perspectives on the regulatory approach to managing the built environment while Modernism had seemed to provide evidence in support of it.

The economy had been strong in many areas for ten years and high profits and the competition for development sites was enabling cities once again to obtain various kinds of planning gain from developers. Negotiations over this could take years to resolve. As plans and zoning ordinances were largely outdated and unused since the recessions of the early '70s, negotiation with the city and various neighbourhood groups over the viability of proposed development had to begin from scratch and could also take years. As a result, the development industry in many prosperous areas of the USA began to lobby for the creation of new plans. Plans would at least ensure that all negotiations about development did not have to begin at zero and they would provide some guarantee for the future context of an investment.

It is probable that the representatives of the development industry had in mind a return to the regulatory type of plans and zoning of the earlier period. There seem to have been two closely linked reasons why they have been willing to agree to a different approach.

First, the industry was beginning to believe that a high quality building and public setting could have considerable impact on the profitability of a given development. Previous experience seems to have convinced local governments and the development industry that a successful built environment, at least in contemporary visual/spatial terms could not be achieved by the old regulatory approach.

Second, cities and towns were beginning to recognise that an improved physical environment could give them an edge over others in the attempt to attract outside investment, which was increasingly international in character and able to locate in whatever city, region, or country it chose. Competition for this investment had never been fiercer and the quality of the environment had become a new instrument for attracting it. It is a theme we can expect to see much more of in the European Freemarket of the future. Developers and investors naturally wanted to contribute to this initiative as it would strengthen their own investment. Accordingly developers and investors have been willing to collaborate in city and town government initiatives for environmental management.

They have accepted that some form of regulation is required but that too much or the wrong kind will stifle the kind of product which citizens and investors want to see. There is, thus, a greater interest than ever before in using the repertoire of "new" and "non" regulatory instruments, which I described as emerging in the '70s in response to the perceived failure of the old regulatory approach. In some bigger cities, like San Francisco and Boston, there is even a return to mechanisms of design review; usually conducted by a committee of citizen experts and, this time, with some orderly management of this process within a framework of published design objectives.

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#### THE CONSEQUENCES FOR URBAN DESIGN PRACTICE IN THE USA:

The more non-regulatory instruments that are used to achieve functional and visual objectives, the more the public authority, the private sector, and neighbourhood groups have to rely on skills of negotiation to achieve speedy agreements about the quality of a given product. This is also true of what I called the "new" regulatory instruments, like "performance specifications" and "environmental indices". While these can often appear quite specific, they are usually pitched at a more general level and need skillful interpretation of each case. This leads to negotiation about what is appropriate.

These negotiation practices are not often thought of as central in urban design education yet they represent a high percentage of the kind of work "urban designers" are being hired to do in the public and private sectors. It calls for an ability to articulate design and development proposals and particularly, if successful agreements are to be reached, the capacity to focus on the

principles which lie behind them. These skills are not common in any of the present design professions and the need for them is one reason why large building companies are hiring planners and designers with local authority development control experience to argue their case with the planning system and local interests. While such people often know little about how to articulate design objectives and principles, at least they have been involved in negotiations about the environment and they understand how the other sides think.

Negotiation has always been necessary in the professions of the built environment but it usually seems to have been thought of as an unfortunate necessity; something which is needed to make an imperfect system work rather than as a structural part of it. In most aspects of the new approach to managing the built environment, however, negotiation becomes a key structural feature of practice and must be treated as such. There is now an extensive literature on mediation and negotiating techniques in professional practice and these techniques are now central features of planning courses, if not yet design courses, in the USA. As these skills become ever more fundamental aspects of professional practice in the built environment, however, it is worth recognising how they can easily become yet another mechanism for excluding local groups from effective participation.

#### **THE RELATIVE SUCCESS OF NEW MANAGEMENT PRACTICES:**

In broader terms, the jury is still out on whether the environment produced by these new practices in the USA is any better than the environment of the old regulation paradigm. What some commentators call the "postmodern environment" is certainly a very different kind of product, in which the overarching search for certainty and order has been replaced by a determination to celebrate the essentially diverse and complex at almost any cost. While, conventionally, this is seen as a product of changed architectural values, there is no doubt that the paradigm shift in urban management, has had a substantial impact on its emergence.

There is evidence in a city like Boston that the development industry, while it strongly supports the role of the city in managing the built environment, is getting tired of the long negotiation periods which are a natural consequence of the "new" approach I have been discussing. These delays represent a considerable risk to the investor and developer in a sector that is notoriously volatile and unpredictable. While the market is good they tolerate the delays. Once it begins to weaken, the industry will be pressing for change. Evidence seems to suggest that they will ask, as always, for greater predictability. They will not seek to return to the old regulatory programmes of the past but will push for clearer "environmental indices" and "performance specifications", clear ground rules for instruments like the transfer of

development rights, clearly stated incentives, and ground rules for planning gain negotiations, etc. This will limit the scope of negotiations with local authorities and local neighbourhoods. At the same time it is likely that the industry will try to have programmes of design review and non statutory design guidance dropped, even though they might agree that these can have an important impact on the eventual quality of the environment.

#### **CHANGING PRACTICES IN BRITAIN:**

On returning to Britain in 1988 I found signs of a similar desire for new management directions, but driven by some different experiences. The economy had finally turned around (10 years after the USA), producing greater competition for development sites and the opportunity for local authorities and neighbourhood groups to achieve benefits through negotiation. There is the same public preoccupation with the quality of the built environment and a similar shift by the development sector to a belief that a "good quality" building and public realm will increase the profitability of a scheme. Local governments also increasingly see themselves in competition for international investment, especially as the European Freemarket approaches. They have largely replaced their previous concern for managing land uses in order to promote a fairer physical access to scarce resources with one of managing the quality of the built environment in order to attract outside investment.

The British situation is different from the USA in that many local authorities have been operating a form of management of the built environment for a long time, which has some resemblance to what I called the "new management practices" above. For example:

The strong discretionary powers which are built into the British system have always allowed planning committees to circumvent, if they chose to, the worst consequences of the old regulatory approach. Some chose to use these powers, many chose not to.

Most local authorities operate a form of design review procedure through the planning committee's role in considering planning applications. Matters of visual and spatial quality have become established aspects of this process through the "any other material considerations" clause. Many local authorities tried to follow the lead of the Essex Design Guide and produced "guides" which sought to persuade the development and design professions to take a more informed attitude to development in their area.

Yet, despite these potential "advantages" of British practice, there is wide dissatisfaction with the way the built environment is managed and with the quality of the outcome in Britain. "How is it that our supposedly superior system produces such frustration for the actors concerned and such a depressing

built product?" Two kinds of answer are common.

The first argues that, while the system may have the potential for effective management, the major actors conspire to thwart it. Planning committees, their professional advisers, and development companies choose to operate in the spirit of the old regulatory paradigm. They have a "rule book" mentality, which turns all objectives into rigid requirements. Sometimes this may not be the aim of the policy section of a given authority, but is more a product of the way the development control section and/or the planning committee interpret policy statements. More often, perhaps, it is a product of the rigid instruments of the policy section restraining the development control section and planning committee from effective management. Sometimes it is more the product of the development industry's desire to cut out time consuming negotiation... "if we copy the guide we are bound to get planning permission...if we try to work within the spirit of the guide, we will get tangled up in endless and confusing negotiations".

The second explanation for the failure of British management practices and their built results focusses on those local authorities which have genuinely tried to embrace the spirit of, what I called, the "new" approach. In Britain this has usually meant using a wide variety of non-statutory guidance documents to indicate to the development sector the negotiating stance which the local authority is likely to take. Here the focus of criticism is on the inadequate skills of the actors. In the first place, concerns for visual/spatial quality have only recently come to the fore so that development control officers and policy planners have not had much experience of dealing with them as central features of practice. They have tended to be "secondary" considerations, after the "primary" decisions about land uses have been made. These actors will certainly not have had any training for thinking about environmental quality in their planning courses. This is also true for most members of the planning committee, most neighbourhood representatives and, until recently, most teams.

The professional staff in any of the teams will have had no training in negotiation practices and all of them will have had an education which actively discredited the idea that the "good" environment could be achieved through it. The natural antipathy of the design and planning professionals to the idea of the negotiated environment as a viable product prevents any attempt to look for a set of principles through which all parties can achieve their broader objectives. The inability of the actors to focus on the broader principles of what they are trying to achieve means that negotiation degenerates into win-loose games over details... "I'll give in on this detail if you give in on that one". The final design task is to stick together this set of negotiated details which are, as often as not, incompatible. The resultant built form is often no better than the result of aggregated standards in the past.

## CONCLUSION:

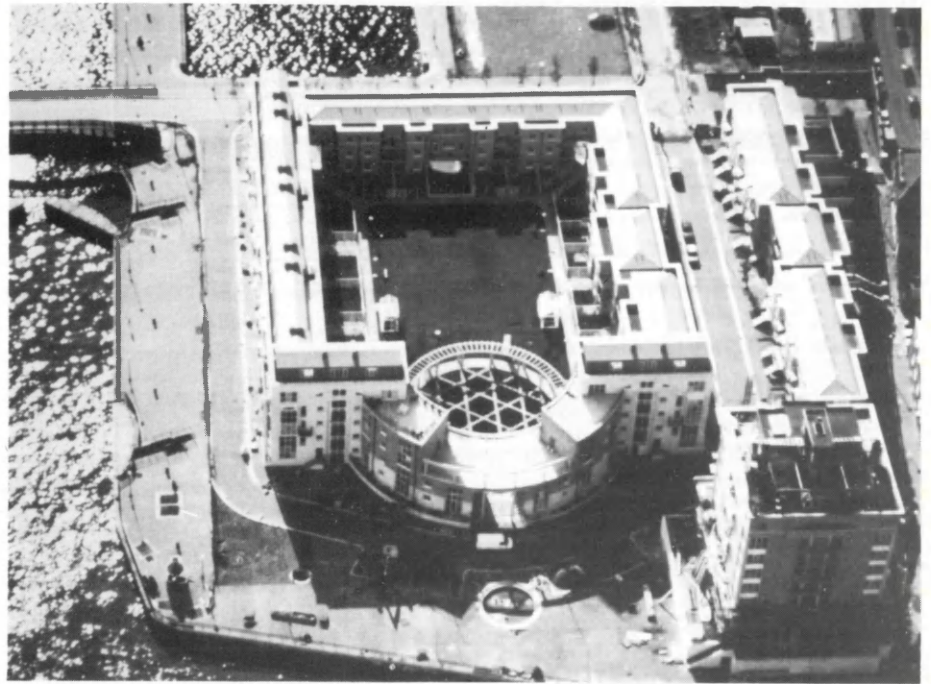
Before moving on to suggest that urban design courses should be restructured simply around the skills of articulation of design principles and objectives within an environment of negotiation, it is worth speculating about how management might work if all the actors had all these skills. What more would be required? In the first place, obviously, there is still the need for somebody to put the layout together. Someone has to urban design it in the more conventional sense of that term.

In the second place the local authority is pledged to provide the public with some framework of certainty about the future which it will stand by. All sections of society seem to want to play this role, most of all the developers and investors. This seems to call, then, for some kind of regulatory framework within which people can negotiate the eventual product. If there was a successful regulatory framework, then, perhaps the lack of design knowledge and the poor negotiating skills of the major actors would not be so disastrous. This might have the added advantage that local neighbourhood groups would be able to participate with professional groups on an equal footing, they would not have to be trained or hire professional mediators to help them decide and speak for them.

**Perhaps, then, the ideal urban design course must concern itself with regulation and negotiation. It must look at the history of programmes of promotion and control in the built environment, which goes back as far as the history of settlements themselves. It must develop the capacity to design regulatory instruments, like "performance specifications" and "environmental indices", which are specific enough to provide the level of certainty required and which, at the same time, allow the actors the flexibility to respond to their own needs and to reconcile these with those of other legitimate actors. It seems likely that these will become the basis of future town plans, made up of zones within which particular performance specifications and environmental indices operate. If we are serious about this flexibility to respond and about the involvement of a range of neighbourhood actors, then, perhaps, we should be as concerned with the development of these skills in urban design courses as with those of negotiation.**

## RESPONSIBILITIES AND ROLES

Dr Hildebrand Frey



### THE 'URBAN DEVELOPMENT TEAM' AND CO-OPERATION OF ITS MEMBERS

In order to establish what skills an urban designer should have and what accordingly urban design education should look like it is essential to define the position and responsibilities of an urban designer in relationship to all others involved in urban development.

Urban development is first and foremost generated through individual, disjointed investment and development projects, designed by architects, in collaboration with landscape architects and engineers, controlled by local authority departments (planners and architects) who's role is basically to make sure that no disadvantages are generated through these projects for the public. Schemes are. As these projects are mostly disjointed, ie. not in any specific way related to each other, it cannot be expected that they generate a co-ordinated urban environment.

All urban development schemes have the objective to satisfy first and foremost the needs of private clients and users and to allow investors and developers to realise such schemes. There is no self-imposed obligation of all those involved in this process to improve through such development schemes the public realm and the city as a whole. Development is therefore usually not geared towards the improvement of the quality of the public realm. As Lynch formulates in his 'Good City Form', the leading development agencies are all single-purpose actors, whose aim it is to increase their profit margin, complete an office block, finish a ring road etc, and not one of them takes anything like a

comprehensive view of the evolving spatial structure, except perhaps the local planning agencies, but they are one of the weaker actors (quite apart from the fact that they are often not trained to control spatial and visual-formal aspects of the public realm).

Becoming increasingly aware of this dilemma, the leading and therefore also 'form-giving' agencies in urban development call upon the urban designer and make him, in co-operation with the planner, responsible for the public realm at large and the control individual development projects through the design of urban development frameworks. But not only does the urban designer have no professional status, he has also no power of control over urban development other than persuasion through design concerned with issues of the urban environment the other agencies (except the planning authorities) show no particular interest in and certainly do not feel responsible for. He also speaks a language which is not easily understood by the leading agents of urban development (because they have not learned this language). And he knows often little if anything about socio-economic and political feasibility of urban design schemes.

**It is not astonishing, therefore, that many think the urban designer is basically arrogant, even 'dictatorial', when it comes to his spatial and formal 'visions' of the city, and too ignorant to cope with economic and political aspects of urban development. In other words, he is either a pain in the neck or useless.**

No wonder that co-operation with the urban designer leads, if attempted at all, more often than not to poor results. Understandable therefore, that the other actors in urban development call for a new type of urban designer with improved skills (and therefore also for a new type of urban design education), not realising or ignoring the fact that they themselves lack some basic knowledge and skills which are essential to make co-operation successful and that only concerted actions with shared goals and visions of all agencies involved in urban schemes achieve good urban environment.

### **THE NEED TO RECONSIDER THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF ALL AGENCIES OF URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

Of course, the most essential question in this context is whether all urban development agencies have a common understanding of what good urban environment and good urban form is.

If one studies contemporary theories of the function of the city it becomes clear that each individual agency has generated its own theory which reflects what it sees to be the major function of the city. And on the basis of this theory each agency pursues its own goals and tries to achieve them in development projects. For some the city is an economic machine which can be exploited to increase one's profit margin; for others the city is a place for production and distribution of goods; for yet others the city is a communication network; for some historians the city is a unique historical process; for again others the city is an area of conflict; and so on. Understandable as all these partial theories may be, none of them really describes the city and all its functions comprehensively.

**In other words, each individual agency that is active in the city wants the city to develop in a specific way that makes its involvement in the process more effective or more profitable.**

No single agency sees itself responsible for the quality of the city as a whole and in particular for the quality of the public realm. And this is the reason why the overall quality of our cities is not only not enhanced but continuously diminished, despite all the development and investment efforts, because these efforts do not have the common purpose to improve the quality of the city.

### **THE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE DUAL RESPONSIBILITY OF EACH DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY IN THE CITY.**

In order to achieve good urban form, the concerted action of all those is required who are involved in the process of urban development, planners, urban designers, architects and landscape architects, but also investors, developers, clients and users; and this concerted action must be based on a common

understanding of what good urban form is and that each agency is equally responsible for it. From this follows that each individual development activity within the urban environment must not only satisfy the needs and aspirations of those behind it (client, private user, investor, developer and their designers) but must, in addition to that, enhance the quality of the public realm of which it is a part.

Good historical cities were developed on the basis of this understanding: developers and investors generated profit making systems and buildings, but by doing so they also enhanced the quality of the city as a whole. In Glasgow, for instance, the investors and developers of the 19th Century were also the city fathers and civic administrators with a pride in, and a responsibility for, their city and a clear understanding of urban quality. The result of their efforts has still today, or specifically today, undeniable quality and coherence.

As has been indicated already above, many of today's investments and developments are carried out by companies without personal relationship to the place of their activities and without sense of response for the quality of this city as a whole. The city is reduced in their view to a convenient place of investment with the aim to generate a profit. The result of this approach is self-centered development which does not enhance the quality of the city's public realm, but often reduces it.

Who or what is to blame? Architects with more interest in 'prima donna' buildings than urban environment and space? Investors and developers without sense of responsibility for the city? Urban designers without sense for reality? Public development controllers without vision of the city of tomorrow? Maybe all of them, but most of all the fact that there is no common agreement that any development activity in the city should enhance the quality of public urban space for the benefit of the city as a whole and its public users. And most of all the fact that many of those involved in urban development have no clear idea or vision of the quality of the public realm.

### **ROLE OF URBAN DESIGN EDUCATION**

Urban design education can help considerably to improve this situation if it is based on the understanding that it has two major tasks. The first of these tasks is to help all those involved in urban development to acquire an awareness of the quality of the city as a whole and of the impact of good and bad development projects on the city and its public spaces. This will enhance their ability as 'non-designers' to cope with the responsibility towards the city as a whole, to evaluate the positive or negative effect of development proposals on the public realm. In this part urban design education needs to teach what good city form is and how the development process needs to be controlled to achieve it.

The other task is to educate designers who are able to develop visionary three and four dimensional models and who can, through their models, demonstrate to the other agencies in urban development the impact of urban projects on the public realm of the city. In this part urban design education will produce a small number of good urban designers (and maybe a larger number of people with technical and managerial skills). But it must be clearly understood that this education process cannot be squeezed into a twelve month full time course as annex to any other education process but requires the length of a professional design education and is therefore most effectively linked to the education of architects.

The postgraduate courses offered by the Urban Design Studies Unit at the Department of Architecture and Building Science of Strathclyde University, though very much in their infancy and requiring review, are geared to do this. They have two major objectives:

- a) general education to all, covering:
  - urban form and their development
  - urban design theory
  - good city form (what it is and how it is achieved)
  - the practice or urban design (solutions to specific problems)

This part of the course is geared to help non-designers to develop an understanding of visual-formal and spatial concepts which will help them in their professional responsibilities to assess the impact of project proposals and to direct such proposals in such a way that they enhance the public urban realm.

- b) design education
  - graphic and modelling skills
  - other communication skills
  - control (management) of the process
  - design skills (from overall vision to details)

This part of the course is geared to help designers to become good urban designers. Non-designers are invited to participate in projects and exercises not to develop them into designers (this is not possible in such short time) but to enhance their understanding and appreciation of spatial and formal urban structures and make them a little more literate in communication skills.

This seems to me to be a sound approach and it is echoed by the response of the market: the course attracts developers, investors, planners, engineers, people in education as well as architects (only a few) and landscape architects. The fact that so many non-designers join the courses seems to indicate that they share my worry about the lack of understanding of the overall responsibility of any urban development activity for the public realm of the city and thus the city as a whole.

**Dr H W Frey, Director is the Director of the Urban Design Studies Unit, University of Strathclyde**

Kevin Lynch  
Memorial Lecture  
21st June 1990

# CITY VENTURES

Tony Coombes

**Tony Coombes, an Australian architect, studied urban design at Columbia University. In the early 1970s, he was Chief Planner in Central Toronto. Subsequently, he was a partner in Coombes/Kirkland/Berridge, a Toronto urban development and design firm. He is now Senior Vice President with Olympia & York, managing the design of Canary Wharf.**

**Top: Aerial View of Toronto**



When John Worthington asked me to do this talk and to provide him with some biographical notes, it provoked two reflections that had not occurred to me before with clarity.

The first thought was that, although I had spent all of my working life in architecture, I have not personally designed and produced a building for 25 years. I have spent all of that time in urban design.

When I came briefly to London in the mid-sixties as a young architect, I found it a jarring experience. It was not so much the long-forgotten cold of the winter or my personal state of poverty that affected me. Architecturally, it was the huge gap between intention and reality.

Like everyone else, I went to look at the Thamesmeads and Robin Hood Gardens and the various other celebrated efforts at social reconstruction in concrete. Vast and heroic, to be sure, in their intention and aggregate scale. But somehow, inadequately conceived and realised as comfortable, familiar habitation and alien to human complexity and ambitions, as well as the need for a sense of place.

Something was wrong. But what? More positively, what might be the proper elements of urban place and accommodation and by what processes can they be made? The pursuit of those questions has absorbed me since then in urban design and it is, of course, most interesting to be living and working here now.

The second reflection was that my work in urban design has been almost equally divided

in thirds between work in government, the private practise of urban design and work as a developer. Those three roles are simply three aspects of a single activity - the pursuit of excellent urban environments.

It may be useful, therefore, if I can first draw some brief observations or convictions about urban design that I have gathered over the years. Then I propose to illustrate three working situations from my experience in Toronto and New York and London in order to shed some light on the matter.

These personal observations, I would note, are of a general nature. They address the process and operation of urban design in any modern democracy with its associated ideas of purposeful but limited government intervention on one hand and of personal liberty of thought and action on the other. However, they may have some currency.

Urban design is often interpreted as the public face of architecture or 'ordinary' building. In a broader respect, though, it is the attempt to give sense and meaning to the disparate initiatives of private and public development activities. In this regard, it is a co-ordinative enterprise. It seeks to provide, in Fred Koetter's words "That the City might become (or remain) a reasonable and salubrious place for human endeavours - a celebration, as it were, of both public commitment and private opportunity".

In this interpretation, urban design is, or should be, a necessary and integral element of strategic planning and regulation, not an optional adjunct or retrospective applique. It implies that all districts and areas be pro-

vided, as a matter of public policy and regulation, with compelling and publicly adopted or notions about their historic qualities and roles. These ideas would also address the ways in which future development will contribute to the sense of place. This indicates a proactive, rather than a reactive role for urban design.

I think the challenge that is of interest here is to define structured, central and institutional roles for urban design. In a liberal democracy, public and private activities are inextricably linked in complex ways. All civic development is a public/private partnership to a greater or lesser degree. Hence, it is useless to postulate extremes of total public control and intervention or lack thereof. More relevant and useful is the effort to clarify the nature and limits of roles in this public/private partnership.

With respect to Government, particularly Local Government, one of its (the) essential roles and obligations is to provide strategic development plans, including integral design plans, for districts and areas.

Now, it is often believed that it is in the private developers' interest to have complete, unbridled latitude. Wearing a developer's hat, I would say that this notion is absolutely not correct. It is essential to know that one's enterprise are part of a co-ordinated effort that is imbued with a compelling notion of what the place is and will be; that the efforts of others will also contribute, for example, to the making of memorable streets and places; that the whole will be more than the sum of the parts.

Further, it is reasonable to assume that the owner of land should be able to know, in advance, the uses to which land may be put and to what degree, and also the essential architectural responses that will be required of him.

It seems to me that if Local Government has a right and an obligation to establish urban design plans as part of its strategic planning, it also has an obligation to make them known with absolute clarity. This applies both to policies and to regulations. I think that plans and policies, once fully adopted, ought to be implemented by design regulations that apply at the level of land parcels, and they should be objective and measurable. By the same token, any owner should have a right to proceed to build, provided he fulfils completely his obligations to conform to established proscriptions and prescriptions for building design, be they height, form, street relationship or other defined matters. I find it difficult to see a justifiable place for the subjective, retrospective or capricious judgement of buildings on a case-by-case basis.

Now, associated with this is the idea that public regulation of building design should limit itself to those, and only those, elements that are necessary to implement essential and publicly agreed urban design policies. Aspects that are beyond the ambit of those agreed essential public objectives should, I believe, devolve upon developers and their architects. Apart from the clear exception of changes to conservation structures, I cannot

see architectural style, for example, as an appropriate or productive topic for public policy and regulation.

This sentiment is not perhaps a new one. It is interesting to note that, in Britain, the Department of the Environment, under three successive Secretaries of State, has issued circulars to Local Authorities to the effect that aesthetic considerations should play no part in the granting or refusal of planning applications. Perhaps "aesthetics" is not quite the word since the making of place is partly an "aesthetic" issue. But, I believe that what these directives are indicating is that Local Government should have clear, explicit, but limited plans and policies, and regulations in order to anticipate and assess development proposals objectively. If architectural style is not an appropriate matter for Government regulation, order definitely is; order based on supportable and adopted urban design notions.

The proactive enterprise of putting in place appropriate public plans and regulations is obviously a large task. It requires the fostering of a profession of people who are based in architecture and history but have particular understanding of both development processes and Government processes. It is a tall order. But I believe that it is essential if urban design is to be a central activity and fact, rather than reactive commentary or, worse, a kind of urban millinery.

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## TORONTO

I would like to look briefly at three cities, Toronto, New York and London in relation to these observations. Each of them is very different. I show them not in order to present blueprints or benchmarks for making judgements, but to illustrate attitudes and processes.

Toronto is, I believe, widely admired as one North American city that is livable in at the same time. It is extremely varied and local, with National office and Government functions in close walking proximity to traditional Victorian house neighbourhoods; it has a grid of main shopping streets that are both local and regional and a revitalised lakefront.

There was a time, in the early 1970's, when this strong and particular character was in danger of being dissipated. The city was changing to the more familiar model (at least in North America) of Detroit, encouraged by policies put in place with good intentions a decade earlier. The downtown core was being surrounded by a widening ring of parking lots where owners were effectively encouraged to demolish existing buildings in anticipation of future high density office development, as envisaged in The Official Plan and its Regulations.

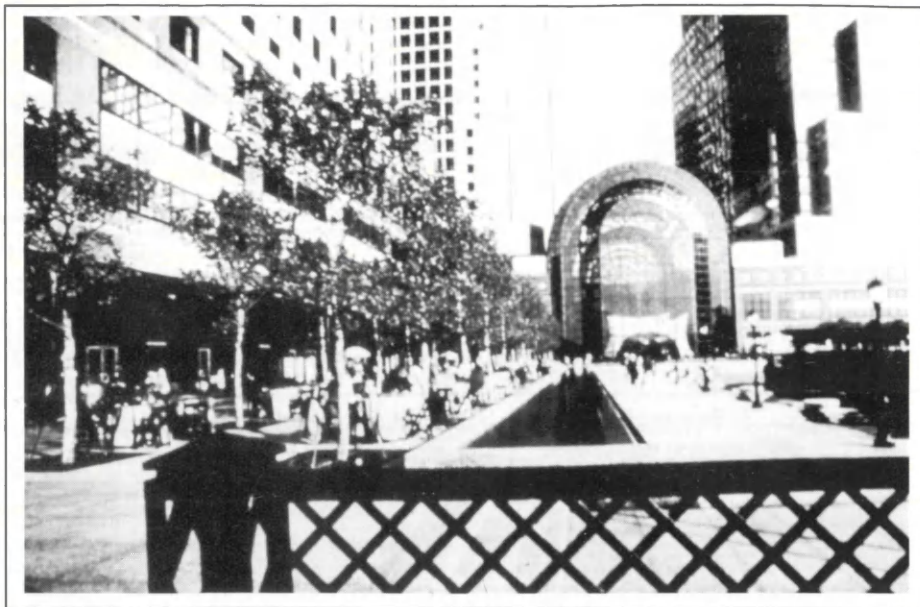
At the same time, the operative policies and regulations encouraged the replacement of the existing housing stock with apartment towers in parking lots that were in fact less familiar, less flexible and less dense. In the mid-1970's these controls were revised by

the City Government. They were adjusted substantially to encourage the infilling of vacant areas with moderately dense mixed-use residential and office development in areas surrounding the downtown core. A great deal of attraction in new buildings was given to the relationships of buildings to streets, and also to the institution of small parks. This released a great deal of development energy and reinforced the varied and habitable quality of the city's core. At the same time, the traditional house neighbourhoods were effectively preserved through the removal of incentives to do otherwise. But new provisions encouraged the construction of compatible residential development and areas of railway and lakefront land were opened up through specific public/private ventures. By and large these actions have managed to build upon, rather than degrade, the city's assets.

It may be worth looking briefly at the regulatory framework behind this activity. In some respects I think it is superior to those in some other parts of North America and elsewhere. The basic notions are set out in a governing document called the City's Official Plan. It contains clear and concise policies on the city form, on the deployment of office, residential and other sectors. It incorporates sub-plans for local areas. The policies are actually implemented by zoning by-laws that all apply to all parcels. They establish use, height, street relationships for all parcels, and any other building design controls considered necessary to implement the City's adopted policies. These by-laws are absolutely objective and quantifiable and must be conformed to. Both the policies and regulations are formulated by the City Planning Agency. But once they are adopted formally by the City Government, conformance with them is regulated by The Commissioner of Buildings (who also ensures, for example, that applications are structurally sound according to buildings codes). If a developer conforms to these design requirements and is not issued a permit, he can obtain a mandamus from the courts to force its issuance.

In the 1970's and since, the city has undertaken numerous public/private ventures for mixed development. One of these was the St. Lawrence neighbourhood.

St. Lawrence was a large area of disused railway land immediately adjacent to the Canadian financial office core. The land was bought by the City of Toronto. The City streets were extended into the area to form a basic network of streets, parks and parcels. The streets were carefully landscaped in a traditional Toronto pattern, and a major lineal park constructed around these, the parcels were leased to a mixture of housing developers, both public and private. A specific and wide range of social and cultural facilities, including schools, was incorporated. In principle, the land, the public street and parkland and the rest of the public infrastructure was paid for through land leases. In general, it has the quality and feel of a mixed and settled neighbourhood, knitted into the city. The St. Lawrence neighbourhood



**Left: Battery Park City Pedestrian Areas**

project was produced, and it happens, by Michael Dennis, who was then Housing Commissioner in Toronto and now here in London with Olympia & York and its construction was managed by Richard Griffiths who is now also with us in London. The Lakefront was also assumed by a public body, The Harbourfront Corporation. Gradually, residential, office and shopping development was introduced to the long-neglected waterfront. One of the Corporation's early actions was to seek, by competition, the conversion of Queens Quay Terminal, a very large but disused warehouse. It was awarded to Olympia & York.

Shops and theatres were created in the ground floors with offices and flats above. Through the patient and, I must emphasise, long term, by competition, nurturing of the shops by means of turnover rents, the areas has now become a regional focus and has attracted office and apartment users to the Lakefront once again. At one and the same time these initiatives have provided breathing space for the city and exploited an under-utilised natural attraction for its residents and workforce.

## NEW YORK

Turning now to New York, the development of the World Financial Center at Battery Park City was certainly different from Toronto in its scale and situation. But there are similarities in its nature as a public/private venture.

Until the 1970's, New York's lower Manhattan had been edged on its Hudson River Front with piers, but these had fallen into disuse and decay with the demise of shipping.

When the World Trade Center was constructed in about 1975, the excavated earth was used as fill in the Hudson River behind a new edge wall. This resulted in a further expansion of lower Manhattan extending from Chambers Street to Battery Park. This was not a "fashionable" area with obvious commercial attraction.

The New York State Government in the early 1970's established a special purpose public corporation - the Battery Park City Authority - to make a strategic plan of development of this newly available 90-acre area and to stimulate and guide it. The original plan was one of these "future visions of the recent past", with parking garages at ground level and towers above, connected by tubes; not the sort of idea that developers or anyone else could relate to. It did not in itself attract development and the recession in 1979 brought the development process to a halt.

In response, the Authority decided to obtain a new plan by Alex Cooper and Stan Eckstut. The plan was traditional New York, but imaginatively conceived; a straight-forward extension of the lower-Manhattan street grids, but thence incorporating parks, public spaces of particular character, and a complete water-edge esplanade.

In 1980, the Authority once again sought developers for a commercial office centre in the middle of the lands. It did so in a very clear-cut, effective manner. It provided a basic street and parcel plan for the local area and a set of "Design Guidelines" that were in face mandatory regulations for any development. They addressed building heights and street frontages and set-back lines. They further required the formation of a river-front plaza. Their purpose was to ensure the happy fit of new development into the lower Manhattan landscape. Beyond this fixed design framework, the call for developers was a straight-forward business competition.

Olympia & York's response was to welcome the design rules. It agreed with them. Further, its view was that to succeed, the development could not happen on a phased or piecemeal basis. The idea of building a single building out on a sandbar made no sense commercially or socially. It would be necessary to undertake the whole of the commercial centre simultaneously in order to establish a complete urban environment of quality. I suspect that this was a perception with which John Nash might have sympathised.

O&Y were designated as developers in 1980 and undertook to build the whole of the Centre in one Phase, including the streets and plaza and esplanade, and to do so in five, rather than ten years the Authority had contemplated.

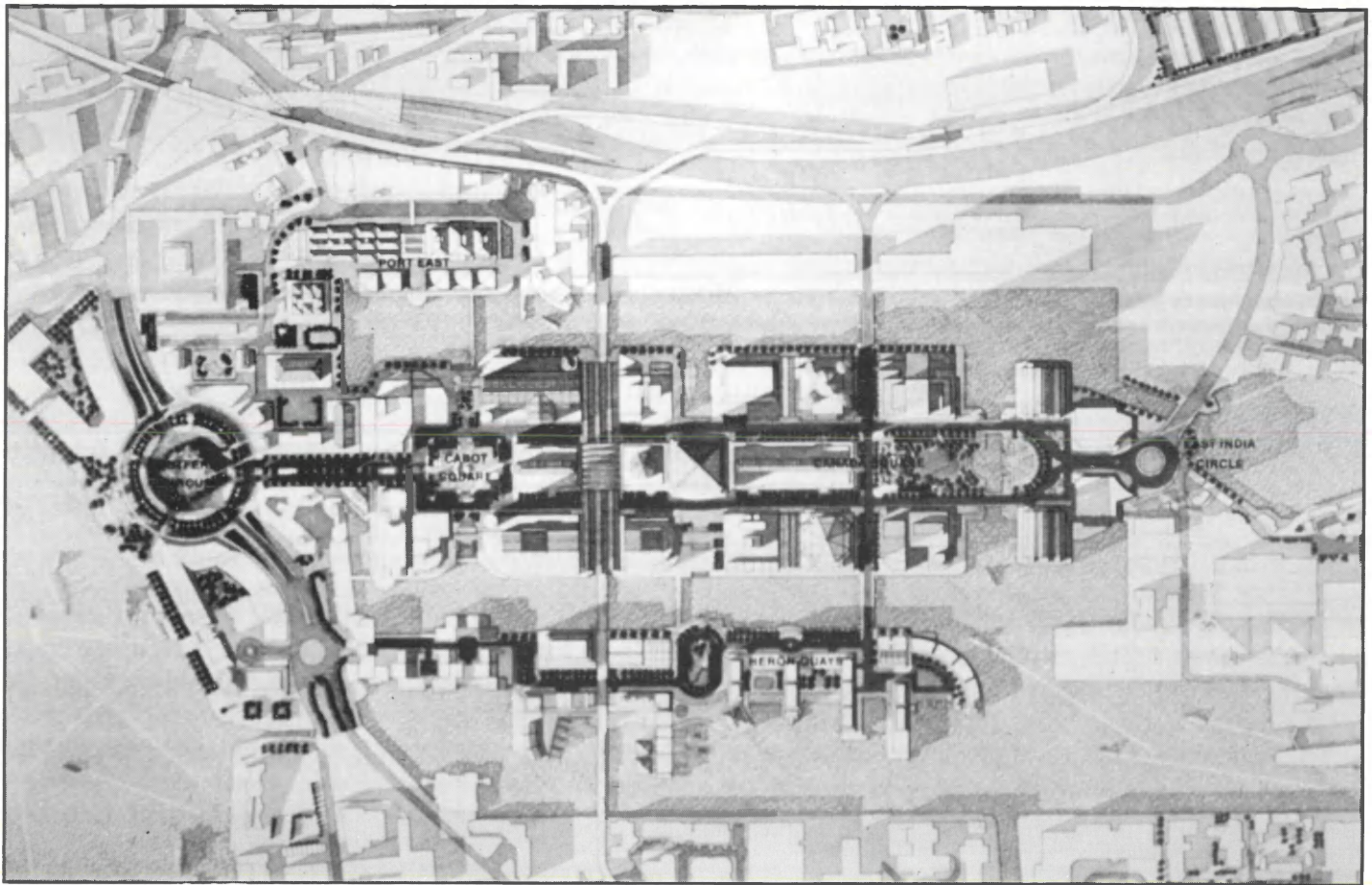
Then it remained to develop the plan in detail within the demands of the Authority's prescriptions. It was actually my first role with O&Y, as a consultant, to define the basis of a concise, limited architectural competition among eight selected American architects including Cesar Pelli, Aldo Girogola and Kevin Roche.

The foundation for the competition was the Authority's design requirements. On top of this was added our own set of requirements for the massing of the space in four or five towers with particular floor plate dimensions. Further, we specified general requirements for the orientation of buildings and their possession of separate identities, and street relationships. The whole should have a strong collective identity, and should be focused on a year-round water-edge plaza and garden.

It was left to the architects to establish the urban design plan. We were particularly interested to see and assess different approaches. They could be disparate buildings in a common streetscape or they could be a cohesive group with a common architectural vocabulary, in the manner of Rockefeller Center. The competition was very successful. The eight were reduced to three and a further refinement called for over a three week period.

Cesar Pelli's design, shown here in the competition model, was chosen. The materials, form and fenestration are common to all four towers. Their architecture is carefully designed to provide modern office towers that fit comfortably into the lower Manhattan landscape. The scheme was built virtually as designed in the competition. At the ground levels, the bases of the buildings are carefully related to the streets and the central plaza on the Hudson River. Between the towers are glass covered public spaces, the largest of which, the Wintergarden, has become the principal public room in lower Manhattan. It is both a living room with a bay window on the Hudson and a flexible space for theatre, dance and music. The plaza is the focus and includes both active and quiet public areas.

It is worth noting that the same development and regulatory process has been pursued with great success by the Battery Park City Authority in developing the residential precincts. Again, the plan of streets, parcels and public spaces is provided for each parcel and each has a limited but firm set of regulations for heights, frontages and other characteristics. There is an insistence, for example, on stone at the ground levels in the traditional manner of New York apartment buildings. It is remarkable how established and comfortable and familiar these areas look at their first completion.



Top: Canary Wharf Master Plan

## LONDON

The final venture I would like to discuss is Canary Wharf in London.

Olympia & York's interest in assuming the project in 1987 was, as in New York, a long-term and far-reaching one. Looking ahead to the end of this century and beyond, we saw the need for a large volume of office space of a particular kind - for the accommodation in large technologically advanced structures of amalgamated organisations each of which may now be spread around 20 or 30 or 50 locations.

London, of course, has two functioning, pre-eminent business districts, the West End and the City. These historical districts are tight-knit and absolutely established in their grain and built form. It is clear that they cannot accommodate the volume and scale of the structures required without causing great harm and dislocation to the existing places. Further, building the large volumes of new transportation capacity into the City and West End that would be required by expansion would invite even more wholesale demolition and rebuilding. Equally, the need for central office space of this kind cannot be accommodated in peripheral or suburban locations.

The northern Isle of Dogs seemed an ideal location for the creation of a new central London district to accommodate London's need. Canary Wharf and the West End are equidistant from the City. With the departure of shipping, the area was essentially vacant and development would not involve destruction. Further, it was an Enterprise Zone.

This was a most important matter because it gave us to believe that we could proceed to make the vast investment required with reasonable assurance of obtaining the required planning permissions. Docklands was managed by an energetic agency, the London Docklands Development Corporation, established specially for the purpose of regeneration.

On the other side of the coin, two vital requirements presented themselves. The first was the need for proper rail and road transportation infrastructure. The second was the need to establish a positive sense of place, a congenial and structured urban environment.

With respect to transportation, Docklands has large-scale commitments to new infrastructure, including the present construction of the Docklands Highway and the general upgrading of the Docklands Light Railway. Now, of course, there is a bill in Parliament to extend the Jubilee Line from Green Park to Waterloo, across the south bank to Canary Wharf and on to Stratford, firmly integrating Docklands into the regional transit system. Interestingly, a similar proposal for underground extension of the Jubilee Line to Docklands was first put forward in 1976, but funding was not available to implement it.

With regard to the urbanity and environment, the entire area clearly required structuring. The LDDC had been remarkably successful in attracting the first regeneration wave to other parts of the Isle of Dogs. But it could not be said that the new structures collectively produced an urban sense of place. The Enterprise Zone may give



assurance, through permissions, for investment, but concerted direction was required to produce a structured and diverse environment.

We considered it absolutely essential to have such a structure at Canary Wharf and this had two consequences. The first was that we could not simply build a single new building to test the waters. This would not effect an established city sense. As in New York, we knew we had to build a complete urban environment as a first phase. This would consist of a dozen or so buildings and a critical mass of commercial and retail provisions, carefully deployed to contain and define memorable streets and places as the core of a new district.

So we entered into a venture in 1987 with the London Docklands Development Corporation to establish such an urban design plan. The purpose was to set out the civic ideas and to define their essential properties.

To diverge for a moment, it may be of interest to look at some antecedents for this city-making activity - not in a formal, but in a procedural sense. It is in many ways analogous, for example, to the mechanisms used in the development of the London Estates. There, as we know, in new districts such as the Bedford Estates adjacent to the established centres, streets, squares, blocks and parcels were set out and buildings constructed according to carefully established and valued built-form regimes. The squares were usually the first elements established, and were most carefully made. Again, I refer here to the essential procedure, not to the specific scale of urban structures which are different because they are made for a different building typology to that of Canary Wharf. But, essentially, this process is what is occurring now, by stages, in Docklands.

On the other hand, it is notable that Canary Wharf is in no way analogous to the mid 19th Century activities in Paris, where efforts were mainly devoted to radical transformation of the existing fabric by the imposition of new boulevards and places.

More pertinent as a procedural antecedent, perhaps, is Vienna in the middle and late 19th Century. There the central city and its gain were retained, and the adjacent ring of open defence grounds, no longer needed for their historic purpose, was developed between the old city and the suburbs. The new infill was built to a different, larger grain. The method for doing this was to lay out a plan of streets, blocks and parcels, to build the public realm and buildings and to lease parcels for the private developments of apartments and work spaces. This development was regulated by concise but firm prescriptions. The private development thus served to make the new public realm of the streets in a predictable, intentional way.

The structuring pattern is not dissimilar at Canary Wharf. While the District Plan has Enterprise Zone approval, its basic ideas are set out in a binding agreement between the London Docklands Development Corporation and Olympia & York.

First, there is a detailed plan of streets and squares and esplanades that establishes the structure of the District and acts as the basic framework for both the public spaces and for the development parcels. Along the axis of the Wharf is a series of squares that form the public cores of development phases. The basic notion is that all buildings play a public role in forming the streets and squares. Towers are placed in positions that have meaning both to the public spaces and to the axes of the Plan.

To implement the basic ideas, each parcel has a set of "Design Guidelines" that regulate the use, height, massing, relationships of walls to public spaces, street level arcades and other matters. If the buildings entirely conform, the LDDC is required to give consent. If, in the normal course of events, adjustments to aspects of form are required, LDDC's approval, within a timely framework, must be sought. Such adjustments are a matter of professional discussion with the Corporation, in the context of the basic District intentions.

Below: Founders Court, Canary Wharf



The basic premise of the District Plan is actually a simple but timeless and universal one - a principle of deploying built form so that it makes public space.

The pedestrian or inhabitant is made to feel comfortable. The principal streets are consistently arcaded and the streets support a normal network of shops, restaurants and pubs along their footpaths.

Again, in a manner analogous to the 18th Century London Estates, public squares are being constructed at the outset. The purpose is to have, at the opening of Phase I, a completed, mature urban landscape that is comfortable and familiar. A great deal of attention is being given to the artifacts of the public realm that can signify normality and provide a sense of public well-being.

**The projects I have shown have a number of elements in common. They are all manifestations of conditions at a particular time and place. They are designed and made to fit particular perceived physical, social and economic needs and to fit a specific local context. They all rely on traditional modes of urbanism (including the purposeful construction of streets and a sense of place) as universal, timeless elements of cities, rather than rootless postulations of new city form. All of them place great emphasis and care on the detailed design and construction of public space. All were, or are being, executed within clear notional and regulatory frameworks. Finally, they all exemplify constructive design partnerships of public and private interests.**

## HOW DREAMS END

**Its a strange feeling, but one not uncommon to designers, to go back to something they sketched but others built, to see their dreams realised by others. Paying for a ticket to experience a place you have lived on paper, in another time, needing a map to walk around a site you've drawn so many times, in another place, are strange sensations. We know who owns the copyright of drawings, of the designs contractors construct, but dreams, first words, ideas, image drawn from the air . . . are stranger stuff. So often it is those first dreams that get written out of the authorised history, yet they resonate in every telling.**

Standing in line for my ticket to the Gateshead National Garden Festival I was aware of the echoes of that wild dream time, that mad carnival fit for a king, whence its design ideas came (see UDQ 16). But the official Souvenir Programme starts at Chapter 2 or even 3. A bundle of ideograms, a clutch of poems, scraps of the *Situationiste Internationale* make a strange frame to criticise £37m. of investment. But when their postcards promise 'A day out of this world' and PR-men sell (again) "the most spectacular event" then dealers in dreams awake.

There are six years of the compromises of daylight history, six years of the realism of getting things done, six years of others imagination and pragmatism overlaid on Gateshead's successful, second stage, bid. But its seven principles remain a benchmark in garden festival theory (if such a thing exists). How does the present realisation match them?

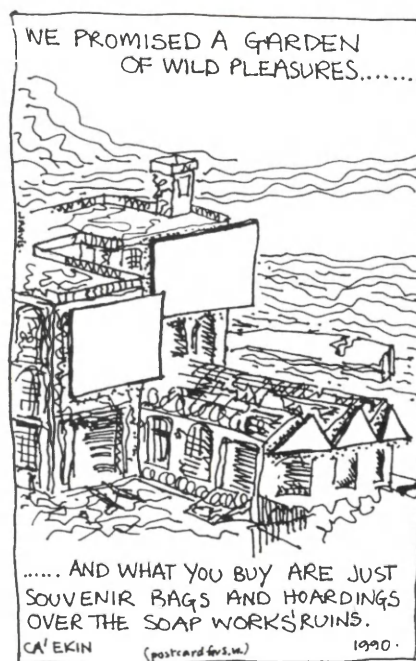
At NGF '90 there is no question of **free access**. Elegant fabric roofs span the turnstiles, high fences are concealed (from the inside) by lush planting and high mounds: a private spectacle rather than public place. However discrete the control, the gates still close at 8pm. The three large parking lots are more a response to the sites' topology than the principle of **dispersed parking**, which envisaged if not a drive-in festival at least a short walk to the car, parked. **Building Restoration** stops dead at the fence. Mending Dunston Staiths - one of the generators of the bid - may be the festival's most worthwhile project, but W Ekins' riverside palazzo in ferro-concrete, the CWS Soap Works, remains a wreck, screened by art-hoardings, when it should have been gallery spaces. The principles of **sequence and variety of space and experience and focus of activity** show up the much vaunted absence of a master plan. The festival landscape is a jumble of competing, often kitsch, fragments, ill-matched and intervisible. The 'Times on the Tyne' theme gardens turn their backs to the river itself, hiding behind bunkers of 'landscape'. The banal spectacle over-

whelms. Notions of **festival zone**, extending the sites into the locality, are more fictions of tourism than tangible realities, the packaging of art catalogues and resort brochures. The 'Festival Landmarks' are too small, too private in their language - and too many - to be memorable. The major **public landmark** is a temporary ferris wheel - an appropriate symbol perhaps, endlessly recycling brief thrills.

The design success of the Festival are the simplest gardens. Spaces that attempt little, are self contained, visually enclosed yet rich in evocation. GMBC's Saltmarsh garden, Fulcher, Tate and Carter's *Northern landscape*, BTCV's woodlands, Durham CC's reconstructions and even Veronica Ryan's *Sieves in the Ground* do more with less than all the blooming technicolour around them.

The Festival's failure is in urban design. From the start it was claimed that NGF '90 would not be 'design led' - and it shows. Beneath strategic planning, after-use, marketing, sponsorship lies the muddle of experience. The undoubted achievements of reclamation, civil engineering and investment are not matched in the quality of the physical structuring of the event's space. Coherent organisation of space and sequence, views and moments, those old lessons from Pope and Cullen and Lynch, of Hidcote, Rousham and the Villa d'Este, even Vauxhall Gardens and the Festival of Britain seem to have been overlooked along the way. But I guess you can't take risks with £37m. British Garden Festivals seem locked into a single model, still, in Pete Duff's potent words, 'a circus with plants'.

**BOB JARVIS**



(Acknowledgement: Bill Tavernor at Newcastle University invited me back to look at Gateshead and tell a true story).

**A NEW THEORY OF URBAN DESIGN**

Author; Alexander C. £25.00  
Oxford University Press, New York 1987.

An unkind review of this book would start by asking who would want to pay twenty-five quid for a slim volume about a student project twelve years ago that makes, in its title even, grandiose claims. And who needs a 'new theory' anyhow. What we need, bombast these men of clay, men of concrete, is better practice. 'Theory' is for wimps.

But the concrete and clay beneath our feet begin to tremble, if I recall the song, with ideas, with hopes, with emotion. And there is nothing so practical as a good theory.

'A New Theory' . . . 'unlike Alexander's other recent books is not about buildings, projects that (however small) happened (**The Linz Café, The Production of Houses**), it is the storey of a simulation, carried out by means of a large scale model, of a piece of urban development undertaken by twenty faculty and students at UC Berkeley. The simulation was played out rather like a chess game, step by step, on an unmarked board, each player making up the pieces (building/spaces) as they went along. If the result looks rather like Genoa, rather like Vienna, rather like Delhi then reflect a little on the names and origins of the students. But then urban designers always learn from their roots - look at Sitte, look at Krier.

And for that we need a 'new theory'? So it seems to Alexander and his colleagues. A new theory that is a set of rules. Set out simply and logically they are just that, common sense procedures that would help people make pleasant places to live and die in. Set out against the legalistic jargon, the property centred systems of western 'planning' they are little less than a call for revolution. What would a planning consultant to a developer make at a public inquiry of the phrase "every new act of construction has just one basic obligation: it must create a continuous structure of articles around itself"? Alexander's first basic rule probably would not get far, though he is a licenced building contractor in the State of California.

Throughout his work and writing Christopher Alexander has pursued a course of self-discovery, of psycho-analytical as well as social discovery and revelation. Stephen Grabow has likened it to the great European literary concept of the 'bildungsroman', the novel of the voyage of learning. Alexander constantly opens up views of the other side of our urban life and design, the creative, the responsive, the emotive, the anima against the animus of our constructor/developer machismo. In the words of another song, **Back door man**, 'the men don't know, but the little girls understand'. In **'A New Theory . . .'** he argues for the value of the vision, the unrealisable dream that guides us onwards, like Faust to reclaim and make new our land.

**BOB JARVIS**



**TRAVEL IN TOWNS**

Author: Martin Mogridge  
(Published by MacMillan, 308 pages)

Question: What do Martin Mogridge and that most celebrated urban designer, Sir Christopher Wren, have in common?

Answer: They both started their careers as qualified astronomers.

Sir Christopher Wren's schooling in astronomy is apparent in the design of his cathedral on Ludgate Hill which is but a mega version of his Royal Observatory at Greenwich. But is there any evidence in Martin Mogridge's 'Travel in Towns' to suggest that the author's PhD was in astrophysics?

Well, possibly. Just as it is every astronomer's aim to make some sense of the chaos of our night sky, so Dr Mogridge's purpose in writing this book is to offer a better explanation for - and put some order into - the chaos of our traffic.

The book is subtitled 'Jam yesterday, jam today and jam tomorrow?' (a quote corrupted from 'Alice in Wonderland'). Yesterday was in fact a long time ago. There were traffic jams when the author started his career back in the '50s but his research goes further back to Professor Pigou's theories about route selection for 'carts' in 1920.

What is evident is that traffic speeds in towns have barely changed over these many years. The author is not content to let this pass as inevitable. He is determined that traffic can move faster and that increased road capacity is not the answer.

Dr Mogridge was a Principal Planner at the GLC during the 1970s when the motorway box was ditched in favour of public transport investment. He was Head of the Economics Section of the Transportation Branch and was involved in assessing the relative values of fares subsidy against

capital investment. But, he admits, "there was something basically wrong with the process used in the transportation model to assess future traffic demands" and he "could not put his finger on it". Something was missing.

It was not until 1983 (after he had left the GLC) that Dr Mogridge found the missing link in the works of Professor Pigou. The essence of his theory about route selection for carts was that it should be possible to reduce congestion on one road by imposing some measure of taxation to enable some carts to shift to an alternative road.

Thus 'road pricing' had its origins in 1920, and we are now beginning to think seriously about it in 1990.

But, whereas Professor Pigou had visualised the 'alternative' to the congested road being another road, the alternative since his time has come to be public transport; and while users of a road where costs increase with increasing flow should have a tax levied on them, so users of public transport where costs decrease with increasing flow should be given a subsidy.

The solution to our problem of traffic chaos is thus a simple one: a policy of road pricing, the proceeds of which could help to subsidise the operating costs of public transport.

The content of Dr Mogridge's book is already familiar to UDG members since the last quarterly included the text of his address to the Group in June on the subject of the London Assessment Studies. Road pricing was the keynote of his address; it was a concept that the Department of Transport was evidently not prepared to consider when it commissioned the Assessment Studies.

Dr Mogridge seems to have gained a national reputation as the guru of road pricing. This is an important work. The title is an ambitious one; it clearly echoes the title of another important book which appeared in 1963 and is probably the only book about transport planning to have become an all-time classic.

Question: Will this book become a classic in 25 years' time? Answer: Possibly, but you will have to ask a qualified astrologer

# URBAN DESIGN COURSES

The following courses are being offered involving Urban Design and related issues; fuller descriptions are provided on the succeeding pages.

Dept of Architecture, <b>Edinburgh College of Art, Heriot-Watt University</b> , Lauriston Place, EDINBURGH EH3 9DF Robert Smart 031 229 9311	<b>Diploma in Urban Design</b> 3 years part time <b>MSc in Urban Design</b> 12 months full time or 4 years part time
Urban Design Studies Unit. Dept. of Architecture & Building Science <b>University of Strathclyde</b> GLASGOW G4 0NG Hildebrand Frey 041 552 4400 X 3011	<b>Diploma in Urban Design</b> 9 months full time or 18 months part time <b>MSc in Urban Design</b> 12 months full time or 24 months part time
Dept. of Countryside & Landscape. <b>Cheltenham &amp; Gloucester College of Higher Education</b> (formerly Gloscat), Oxtalls Lane, GLOUCESTER GL2 9HW Jerry Metcalf or Colin Young 0452 426801	<b>Diploma in Design in the Built Environment</b> 18 months (5 terms) part time
School of the Built Environment. <b>Liverpool Polytechnic</b> , 98 Mount Pleasant, LIVERPOOL L3 8UZ Chris Couch or Rob MacDonald 051 709 0172	<b>MSc in Urban Renewal</b> (Regeneration & Design) 1 year full time or 2 years part time
School of Urban Development and Planning. Faculty of the Environment <b>Polytechnic of Central London</b> , 35 Marylebone Road, LONDON NW1 5LS Robin Crompton 01 486 5811 X 309	<b>MA in Urban Design</b> 2 years part time
School of Architecture. <b>University of Manchester</b> , MANCHESTER M13 9PL Martin Symes 061 273 3333	<b>B Arch option in Urban Renewal.</b> Option in final year of B Arch course. MA degree proposed
Dept. of Architecture & Planning. <b>University of Nottingham</b> . University Park, NOTTINGHAM NG7 2RD Ernest Scoffham 0602 484848 X 2591	<b>MA in Urban Design</b> 1 year full time or available on a part time basis.
Joint Centre for Urban Design, Town Planning School of Architecture, <b>Oxford Polytechnic</b> . Headington, OXFORD OX3 0BP Ivor Samuels or Roger Simmonds 0865 819442	<b>Diploma in Urban Design</b> 6 months full time or 18 months part time <b>MA in Urban Design</b> 12 months full time or 24 months part time
Dept. of Civic Design. <b>University of Liverpool</b> Abercromby Square, PO Box 147, LIVERPOOL L69 3BX Alan Simpson 051 794 3111	<b>Diploma in Civic Design</b> 21 months full time or 33 months part time <b>Master in Civic Design</b> 2 years full time or 3 years part time

## Urban Design Degrees are also awarded at the following places

The Mackintosh School Dept. of Architecture, Glasgow University & Glasgow School of Art, 177 Renfrew Street, GLASGOW G3 6RQ. Contact Andy MacMillan.	2 years full time. MA in Urban Design.
Dept. of Architecture, University of Sheffield, SHEFFIELD, S10 2TN. Contact Head of Department.	1 year full time or 3 years part time. M.Phil. in Urban Design.

# AGM 1990

## Chairman's Report

### PROCEEDINGS

John Worthington began the proceedings by introducing Arnold Linden, the Chairman of the Executive Committee who was ending his second term of office this year and followed it by introducing Andy Farrall, the Honorary Secretary and Ann Dunton the Honorary Treasurer.

The Executive Committee Chairman was again pleased to report the continued progress of the urban Design Group in almost every aspect of its activities.

It must be said however that of the 3 Annual Events - Annual Conference, Annual Lecture and Week-End Forum, only the latter took place. The Executive Committee of the Group asked Simon Rendel to look into why the Annual Conference did not take place. His excellent and rapid response concluded that the topic 'Traffic Chaos' was wrongly timed, there were several similar conferences being held at around the same time, the negative nature of the title and the word Traffic was not attractive, and finally the publicity was wrongly directed. His paper should be used as a reference for all future conference organisers.

The Annual Lecture for 1990 has not yet taken place, but has now been arranged for 21 June 1990. A failure to book one's speaker early is the object lesson here and the elusive lecturer has at last been found.

The Week-End Forum: Glasgow 1990 'Where Urban Design Meets Culture' was held on site so to speak during Friday 06 April and Saturday 07 April 1990. This event is traditionally held outside London and the South East. This was the first time it was held in Scotland. Mike Galloway brilliantly organised a splendid occasion which was over subscribed. The support from the local membership was considerable, as were the contributions from the speakers. The Forum dinner held in Hutchinson Hall was addressed by Professor Isi Metzstein whose paper continued the 'Philosophy of Urban Design with Humour', a tradition started by David Lock at last year's Annual Conference.

Other events which did take place were often held to standing room only. Of these two events in the past year, were first for the Urban Design Group. John Worthington, the Group's third President who has settled into the post most effectively gave its first Presidential Address to a large attentive, but very vocal audience. The Group's other first, was to organise from a standing start an exhibition of the Spitalfields Market Development in about 10 days. With the generous support of the exhibitors - MacCormac Pritchard Jamieson, Derek Tregellas, Allies & Morrison, Quinlan Terry and Leon Krier, and the co-operation of the Building Centre. At the opening of the exhibition a valuable discussion was able to take place with quantities of food and drink helping to temper some of the passions that were strongly expressed. Philip Cave's liaison work being vital to the effectiveness of the occasion.

Two unique activities are currently taking place.

John Billingham our Honorary Editor (for the considerable honours he gives to the Group, much thanks) has been developing, writing, designing and organising the printing of the first edition of the Urban Design Group Sourcebook. The other unique event is the Car Park Design Award initiated by David Chapman at Birmingham Polytechnic, Department of Planning & Landscape and supported by Planning Magazine. Entries for this award close at the end of June 1990.

The Group's continued involvement with Local Authorities such as Croydon, Hertfordshire and Birmingham Urban Design Workshop has been extended with the Urban Design Action Team (UDAT) initiative in Wood Green, held in conjunction with the London Borough of Haringey. Our President organised a panel of 15 Group Members to work with Council Officers over the 20 and 21 April 1990. The 2 exciting days wound up with a high speed presentation in the Civic Centre to a sometimes bemused audience.

But the backbone work of the Group is the publication of the Urban Design Quarterly and the seasonal programme of lecturJohn Billingham and his clutch of Guest Editors are creating an increasingly attractive and valuable publication. The back-up provided by DEGW and Kelvin Campbell in preparation of the artwork and the printing by Stuart Constable are all reinforcing the substance of the Quarterly.

This year's programme of lectures arranged by Elizabeth Young, Tim Catchpole and Philip Cave consisted of a set of lectures on Traffic. The first by John Adams on 'How Much Prosperity can London Take' followed by Tim Pharoah explaining 'Traffic Calming' and rounded off by John Roberts - re-describing 'The Use of our Streets'. This set was followed by a joint lecture with the SE Chapter of the Landscape Institute on the Midland Forest. The presentation of Wandsworth Borough Council Riverside Proposals by David Clark and Martin White completed this year's lecture series.

Membership continues to rise. There have

been merely a handful of positive resignations, perhaps rather more by default. New members are joining and do not seem to be put off by the 40% increase in subscription that we will all face starting 01 June 1990.

The 1989 Annual Lecture that took place after the last year's AGM was 'A View from Paternoster Square' by Sir Philip Dowson. Sir Philip took the occasion to set out his practice's (Arup Associates) practice's philosophy towards Urban Design and explained the painstaking attention to detail that their work is subjected to in order to achieve their fine and elegant solutions.

As a representative of the Group, the Chair was invited to attend the TRPI 75 Anniversary London Conference on 06 November 1989 - 'What do we want from Planning'. He was invited to Strasbourg to contribute to the 3rd Colleague (entitled Urban Design in Europe; Diversity and Creativity) of the International Centre for the Study of Urban Architecture. The substance of the presentation was the Group's intentions, purposes and its organisation. They were described and illustrated to a very large European-wide audience. The International Centre had been formed 3 years ago and at Strasbourg its members were asking those self same questions that the UDG were asking at its early formative stages such as what is urban design? who are urban designers?, if we know who are the designers, what do they do? Without doubt an energetic and well-connected organisation. They have the support of the Council of Europe and the City of Florence. We have given them the opportunity to use a column of the Urban Design Quarterly to promote their cause as they are without their own publication.

The Media has noted the Group's existence on several occasions. Individual members have featured on the Channel 4 "Signals" programme. A report of the Haringey UDAT appeared in the Guardian. The Architect's Journal in particular has taken the activities of the Group very seriously. The Group frequently appears in print in the form of news items, diary entries and articles throughout the professional press, it has featured in Building Design, Planning, The Planner, and in the RIBA Journal. A certain degree of satisfaction can be derived from this recognition of the Group's news-worthiness.

In hindsight what may be the most influential activity of the Group in the passed year is the work of the Education Sub Group within the Executive Committee. The valuable, possibly essential one day Urban Design Education/Practice Symposium organised by Stephen Gleave and magnificently supported by London Docklands Development Corporation held on 08 February 1990 may prove to be the generator of much of the future work and direction of the Group. The publication of the proceedings of the Symposium with that of the Sourcebook may become seminal reading in Urban Design in the UK over the next 10 years.

The first names in any list of sponsors who have given financial support to the Group must include the members themselves. For those not within reach of meetings or events have had to settle for 4 copies of the Quarterly for the whole of their subscription.

The sponsorship we have received for individual events are not forgotten, but the generosity of the London Docklands Development Corporation, Glasgow City Planning Department and the London Borough of Haringey require special mention.

The possibility and the success of all the activities so briefly sketched in above is entirely due to the efforts and unpaid endeavours of a vast number of people.

Besides recognising the guest editors of the Quarterly, the speakers and delegates at the events that have been arranged, and the Building Centre and DEGW for having provided accommodation, the work and commitment of the outgoing Executive Committee Members must be underlined and applauded. They have by their unstinted efforts helped in the past year to get Urban Design to places it failed to reach before.

My personal deeply felt thanks go to members of my office who have supported me unreservedly, especially Maureen Birch who during the excitement of the internationalisation of the office of the Chair has been just as willing to catch yet another posting deadline for yet another handful of papers to be mailed to the Executive Committee or to the Membership at large.

That is an outline of the past breathless year. The future is no less full. I recommend it to you.

**Arnold Linden**  
May 1990

## TREASURER'S REPORT FOR PERIOD MARCH 1st 1989 - 28th FEBRUARY 1990

This year's financial report takes account of a 12 month period from 1st March 1989 to 28th February 1990. It should be remembered that the previous year's accounts covered an 11 month period and direct comparisons cannot be made therefore between the two sets of accounts. Areas of growth and change should however become evident from the following comparison of account elements with those of the previous year.

**The main receipts into the account** were from Member's Subscriptions which amounted to £6,076 an increase of £782 on those of the previous year. This indicates a significant growth in membership revenue sustained over several years. The figure would certainly have been exceeded however had all standing order subscriptions been equal to the rate set. In a significant number of cases they were less. This is a problem which continues to beset the Group's finances, especially when setting budget forecasts. I would urge all members to personally check standing orders, as the new rate of £14 comes into effect this year.

Further deposits followed from sales of the Quarterly amounting to £36, interest on deposits which brought in £489 (an increase of £259 from last year) and receipts from the 1989 AGM/Annual Lecture of £105.

Another significant source of income to the Group has been profits gained from UDG conferences and weekend forums. These profits are vital if the Group is to finance growth in its scope of activities while maintaining a reasonable rate for subscriptions. The profit from the Portsmouth/Southampton weekend forum amounted to a much needed £424 while the Annual conference resulted in a net profit of £1,880. Expenditure on programmes for this event was defrayed by the sponsorship of Woodscare Ltd.

**The main payments out of the account** relate to the printing and distribution of the Quarterly and reprinting of the membership list and brochure, which amounted to some £5,829.

During the year the annual programme of lectures resulted in nett costs of £832; a decrease of £173 from expenditure on events previously. Much of this decrease is due to the fact that costs have been offset by sponsorship from the Rayne Foundation.

In summary, total receipts for the 1989-1990 accounting period amounted to £13,740 and total payments to £9,340 resulting in an overall credit of £4,400. It should be noted however that income from the Urban Design Source Book is included in this balance but expenditure for publication has yet to be set against this.

From the information to hand it is apparent that various trends emerge clearly. Over the 12 month period of this year's accounts turnover has increased by 35%. Even allowing for the slightly shorter accounting period of the previous year this

information gives a graphic indication of the rate of growth in the Group's activities this year.

Should the present rate of growth in the Group's UK and overseas activities be maintained, with a similar growth in membership over the next year it is clear that considerable strain will be placed on the administrative resources of its executive committee. The present administration of the Group's publications, events and membership is achieved largely by the voluntary efforts of its committee members. While in the future there will still be a need for heavy reliance on this support, the increasing size and complexity of the Group and its activities inevitably mean that consideration will need to be given to the introduction of the part-time administrative assistant. Such a proposition may involve some changes in the committee structure however provided the financial implications can be met it is unlikely to be dependent on any fundamental changes in direction of the Urban Design Group. However the establishment of a strong financial base for the Group with good administrative back-up will be essential if the promotion of its aims and objectives are to reach a wider public more effectively in the future.

**Ann Dunton**  
23rd May 1990

## MEMBERSHIP REPORT 1989/1990

5 May 1990	UDG Members	848
	Overseas	74

The UDG membership consists of:		
National memberships		731
Overseas		74
Professional Bodies		25
Press		18
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>848</b>

Increase in membership since November 1989:

November 1989	37
December 1989	6
January 1990	21
February 1990	7
March 1990	13
April 1990	13

<b>TOTAL New Members</b>	<b>97</b>
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**URBAN DESIGN GROUP ANNUAL ACCOUNTS  
1ST MARCH 1989 - 28TH FEBRUARY 1990**

**RECEIPTS**

**PAYMENTS**

<b>OPENING BALANCE AT 1 MARCH 1989</b>	<b>3737.44</b>		
Subscriptions	6076.39	Charges and Refunds	465.00
Portsmouth / Southampton Regional Forum	1706.50	Regional Forums:	
Eastern Region Tour Balance	336.09	- Portsmouth	1282.69
		- Glasgow	500.00
Annual Conference	2054.35	Annual Conference	174.34
Annual General Meeting	105.00	Annual Programme:	
Annual Programme	256.00	-Printing	412.64
Quarterly Sales	36.00	-Hire of Building Centre	564.48
U.D. Sourcebook	2454.00	-Speakers Expenses	69.64
Refunds & Misc.	227.19	-Sponsorship Expenses	41.80
CDF Interest	489.16	Quarterly:	
		- Typing / Printing	3730.00
		-Production	403.42
		-Postage, Typing, etc.	1420.45
		Reprinting:	
		-Brochure	61.50
		-Membership List	213.07
<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	<b>13740.68</b>	<b>TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>	<b>9340.41</b>

**SUMMARY ACCOUNT:**

Receipts	13740.68
Payments	9340.41
	4400.27
Balance brought forward	3737.44

**Final Balance: 01.03.90** **8137.71**

**Note:**

**On the 16.11.89 a transfer of £2000.000 was made from the Charities Deposit Fund to the current account.**

**Further UDG Assets at 01.03.90**

Represented by:	
Funds invested in CDF Account	2511.21
CDF Reserve held in Current Account	1000.00

**TOTAL FURTHER ASSETS** **3511.21**



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