

156 URBAN DESIGN

Autumn 2020
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**CHILD-FRIENDLY
CITY**



**URBAN
DESIGN
GROUP**



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NEWS FROM THE UDG CHAIR

Welcome to the Autumn issue of the UDG Journal. This is my last column as UDG Chair; my two year stint has flown by. It has been an eventful tenure, in terms of global events as well as developments within the UDG, as the group evolves and moves with the times.

2020: A YEAR TO INSPIRE AN URBAN DESIGN REBOOT

The COVID-19 pandemic will cast a shadow over 2020 and for years to come. However, it is a great opportunity for urban designers to take the lead in rebooting the way that cities are designed at a variety of scales, and to push for better urban environments that can respond to COVID-19 and future challenges, notably climate change.

Another global event of 2020 has been the Black Lives Matter movement, which has prompted a vital discussion on diversity in urban design. As a member of an ethnic minority myself, this is a subject close to my heart. Unfortunately there is not enough diversity in the urban design profession in the UK, or in the related disciplines of architecture, planning and landscape architecture. We'd like to hear your views and the UDG will shortly be carrying out a survey on diversity among its members. Certainly we need to do more to inspire and train ethnic minority urban designers. We have been campaigning for urban design teaching in schools, and raising the profile of the urban design profession with the general public. Practices and clients need to do more to inspire and find the next generation of diverse urban designers. This needs to be proactive,

targeted and resourced.

There are some encouraging signs. For example, in Enfield the Meridian Water regeneration programme has announced that only designers who team up with a 50 per cent BAME-led practice, a 50 per cent women-led practice, and a local outfit from Edmonton will be eligible to bid for their latest commission. Furthermore, applicants have to commit to offer an architectural education scholarship with fees, a living allowance and a one-year paid work experience for at least one local young person. Given the highly diverse local community in Enfield, this is absolutely the right approach, and hopefully will inspire other clients.

The flip-side of the coin is that urban environments should also reflect the richness of today's diverse society. My practice is currently working in Tilbury where we have the opportunity, through a masterplan, to celebrate the diverse local history of this Essex settlement, now a major London container port. This includes the Empire Windrush docking at Tilbury in June 1948, an anchoring point in the history of British immigration.

A SNAPSHOT OF THE LAST THREE MONTHS AND THE YEAR AHEAD

As ever, things have been very busy at the Urban Design Group, with our first joint symposium with the Academy of Urbanism, online events, a new website, new briefing sheets and the preparation of the new *Urban Design Directory* well underway.

Some of the highlights have been: a conference on Towns and Cities for Children;

the launch of the new *Building for a Healthy Life* design toolkit to an online audience of almost 500 people; and, lessons on what we can learn from Middle Eastern cities. Our weekly webinar series #ideasSPACE has also been very successful as you learn on page 3, and the recordings are on our YouTube channel thanks to Urban Nous. We have upcoming UDG events on various issues in the *Planning for the Future* white paper, design codes, and urban environments and inclusion.

Over the summer we launched our new website. We have added abundant interesting urban design information, and will be adding more over the coming months, so do have a look. Our most recent briefing sheets covered the planning white paper and changes to street design standards; no doubt there will be more to come in the next few months. Finally, we are currently preparing a new and updated *Urban Design Directory* which will be launched at the start of 2021.

IT HAS BEEN A PLEASURE...

Finally, as the outgoing UDG Chair, it just remains for me to say thank you to the UDG team of Robert Huxford, Jacqueline Swanson and Esther Southey, alongside the UDG Executive Committee and Trustees. I would also like to thank all UDG members, as it has been a pleasure to serve you over the last two years. Hopefully the Group is a little closer to pushing urban design up the agenda. We continue to aim high. I look forward to continuing to be involved in the UDG going forward.

GET INVOLVED

I would like to remind members of our three objectives: to be relevant; to be cutting edge; and, to be fun. As ever, if you have an idea for an urban design event, or would like to get more involved, please do get in contact with us at administration@udg.co.uk ●

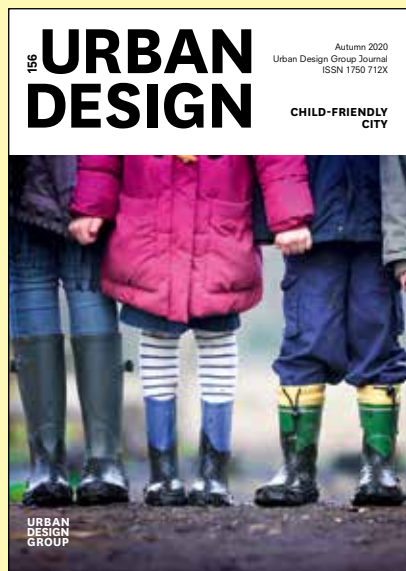
Leo Hammond, Chair of the Urban Design Group and Associate Director at Lambert Smith Hampton

1 Tilbury Docks, where the Empire Windrush docked in 1948.

DIARY OF EVENTS

Until further notice it will not be possible to run live events with an audience at The Gallery. There is however an online programme of events.

Please check the UDG website for details www.udg.org.uk



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It's Child's Play...



We refer to something being child's play in a demeaning way – it's very simple, it can't be that difficult, it's child's play – and yet over decades, designing for play has become very technical and perhaps overcomplicated, with prescriptions for local equipped areas for play (LEAPs) or multi-use games areas (MUGAs) installed for older children, and minimum design standards and specifications.

In this issue our contributors, led by Playful Planet's Adrian Voce, write about the importance of children being able to play in ways that are less structured than has become the norm. Any parent (particularly during the lockdown) will know the chaos that children can create in the name of den building, using sofa cushions, blankets, cardboard boxes and random household finds. All of these are far more appealing than the swing and climbing frame carefully installed. The closure of formal playgrounds during part of 2020 will probably have led to many more impromptu games and structures being invented at home, as children found fun where they could. Recently in the absence of space to play football, I've seen a new game develop locally, foot tennis, using the oversupply of tennis courts to devise a new and cheap team game.

However, as this issue explores, we shouldn't abandon the provision for play, as many neighbourhoods do not offer enough spaces and opportunities for play, and the sterile nature of what is provided needs to be challenged. Teenagers must be treated with more thought: is it any wonder that graffiti breaks out, when there is so little to do for this transition age group and they are viewed with suspicion wherever they gather? Yet the restrictions on children's play and the free exploration of where they go remain heavily influenced by traffic, and to a large extent by adult driver behaviour. As a result, walking along a pavement or trying to cross a road is not as simple as it sounds, with delivery vans and shared cycle lanes bringing unexpected and high speed encounters on the footway itself. As witnessed during the lockdown, streets are very different without HGVs and cars whizzing by, or idling along within arm's reach, and can be fun places to explore, wander and mess about. We need to use this insight and temporary state of peace to rethink the public realm for children's benefit too. ●

Louise Thomas, independent urban designer and joint editor

HOW TO JOIN

To join the Urban Design Group, visit www.udg.org.uk and see the benefits of taking out an annual membership.

Individual (UK and international) £55
UK student / concession £35
Recognised Practitioner in Urban Design £85
Small practice (<5 professional staff) £275
Large practice (>5 professional staff) £495
Education £275
Local Authority £100
UK Library £90
International Library £120

#ideasSPACE: Urban Design Webinars and UrbanNous YouTube recordings

March – July 2020

During the lockdown and social distancing, the Urban Design Group (UDG) has not stood still. It has migrated its events to online webinars which UrbanNous has recorded and made available on YouTube. UrbanNous has been a long-standing media partner of the UDG and has recorded numerous events over the years, which are available for view via the UDG and UrbanNous websites.

www.udg.org www.urbannous.org.uk/
www.youtube.com/user/UrbanDesignGroup/
 playlists.

A great series of presentations on webinars, convened once a week, has been produced under the title of ideasSPACE. The aim of the UDG has been to host expert discussions on how to act now to overcome the Coronavirus crisis, and prepare for both a next spike in cases, and other crises affecting cities and urban living. The purpose of the ideasSPACE series is to contribute to the debate on 'how we design our cities will save lives tomorrow'. The format is a series of online presentations to a group of viewers, chaired by a professional experienced in the specific topic.

The UDG believes that 'during the Coronavirus crisis we need space, and most

importantly space for ideas'. The topics ideasSPACE discussed correspond to the UDG's current priorities of how urban design can improve the quality of the environment and the quality of life.

By July 2020, thirty ideasSPACE videos have been recorded. They were framed as five sessions on 'Urban Design after Covid-19' and are grouped here into the following key urban design issues: housing, streets, environment, people, design and planning.

HOUSING

Housing, public realm and parks (3 sessions), Quality homes and density (2 sessions), New homes, new neighbourhoods, An action plan for good homes post-pandemic, Regeneration stories: Barreiro Portugal.

STREETS

Future High Streets (2 sessions), Street movement and transport (2 sessions), Life saving streets, street layout and design during and after pandemic (2 sessions), Decarbonising transport.

ENVIRONMENT

Nature at the heart of cities, Biodiversity, habitats and parks, Design through intelligent landscape management, Creating immersive landscapes.

PEOPLE

Diversity and inclusion in urban design education, Diversity and inclusion in urban design, Why child friendly planning matters, The multiple risks facing children when crossing roads.



DESIGN AND PLANNING

Design value vs. the value of design (2 sessions), Making better places to live through co-design, News from somewhere else, Urban planning futures explored (2 sessions).

While face-to-face events are missed as they also give UDG members and other professionals the opportunity to socialise with each other, the webinars have the advantage of reaching a wider audience. Perhaps a combination of these modes of communication and participation may be useful for the UDG to maintain. Many future events are planned and will be available as webinars as long as face-to-face events cannot take place in The Gallery, Cowcross Street, the habitual London venue for UDG London events. The UDG website provides up-to-date information. ●

Judith Ryser, researcher, journalist, writer and urban affairs consultant to Fundacion Metropoli, Madrid

Urban Design London Summer School

July 2020

During a summer like no other – with the lockdown, uncertain futures, budgets shot to bits, the sun shining continuously – we decided to run Urban Design London's (UDL) first ever Summer School. Why not, what else can go wrong this year?

It was a blast, and much better than expected. Three full days on Zoom from 8.30am till 6pm sounded like hell, but the delegates, speakers and mentors made it inspiring and magical.

The school offered an introduction to urban, street and housing design for people with an interest in place-making, but with little or no experience. Each day started with random breakout rooms: as they logged on, delegates, found themselves with two, three or four others and could have the kind of conversations normally found around the coffee table at the start of conferences.



Then, once everyone was present, we had a short key-note talk from speakers respected in the industry - Matthew Carmona, Nick Tyler and Amy Burbidge - as a kind of pep talk.

Three practical, information-packed lectures on the fundamentals of the day's design topic followed. A break, then questions, all rather similar to an in-the-room



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event. However, we knew that we couldn't do workshops or study groups, or have team assignments, and so the afternoon format became rather novel.

We pre-recorded a number of 'top tips' talks for each day. These were available for delegates to watch whenever they wanted, but they were also played in the main Zoom room during the afternoon, for those who wanted to watch communally and comment or question. The talks ranged from how to read plans, how to turn ideas into drawings, how to assess housing quality, how to consider inclusion, to how to think about parking design, and more.

Delegates were then asked to leave Zoom, go out into their neighbourhood and have a good hard look at what would be a familiar area. On the first day they were asked to focus on the tried-and-tested Placecheck questions: What do you like or dislike about the area, and what would you like to change about it? On the second day we asked them to look at how their streets worked and how much space was given to different movement modes? On the last day their task was to look at the different types of homes in their neighbourhood and assess how good they would be to live in.

Delegates had a PowerPoint template and instructions on how to record their observations. More importantly they also had experienced and dedicated mentors to talk through their findings. Over 30 fantastically helpful practitioners offered to be mentors, and as we had 80 delegates, each mentor was asked to help just two or three people in a small group.

This is where Zoom came into its own, popping people into either random or pre-specified breakout rooms where they could share screens to show and tell. As organisers we popped into the 30-odd rooms checking that it was working well. It felt a bit like holding Harry Potter's Portkey. The mentoring worked very well, with both delegates and mentors getting a lot from the experience. It had been a hard job trying to match people up, taking into account where they

were in the world, plus their interests, roles and focus.

After the mentoring sessions, we had virtual site visits looking at award-winning housing schemes, using drone footage and recorded interviews to bring the schemes to life. To end each day, we held our Sundown Social talks with recently retired top civil servants Steve Quartermaine and Wayne Duerden, and the inspiring architect Deborah Saunt, who has just been made visiting professor at Yale University in the US.

After the Summer School, we gave delegates a few days to finish their assignments and asked mentors to provide feedback. Everyone involved received a certificate of attendance if they wanted it and hopefully some new friendships and work connections were made.

Because the whole school was run remotely it really didn't matter where participants were based. We had delegates working in 6 different countries and mentors from around the globe too. People seemingly based in the UK according to their job location, turned out to be in France, Spain and all over. There had been worries about time differences with the delegates in California, India and Mauritius, but somehow it all worked out well.

The ability for speakers to either pre-record their presentations or just pop live onto Zoom for half an hour, meant that we could include over 30 excellent contributors. In the past we have had ten speakers at a full-day event, but it is much harder to get people to commit when they have to travel to a conference venue. Virtual events make it more likely that we can find the most relevant and interesting speakers possible. Delegates came from a variety of backgrounds: some were planners, others highway engineers, transport planners or public health specialists, and they represented 23 local authorities across the UK.

The School was very reasonably priced at just £150 plus VAT for all 3 days. This however can still be too much for some who would benefit, particularly younger people who

want to start a career in built environment design. To tackle this, we offered 10 free places or over 10 per cent of the delegates, for young people from BAME backgrounds.

The feedback was better than for some face-to-face events that we run. Scores out of 10 are one thing (the overall scores were just over 9 out of 10), but the anecdotal feedback was really supportive. Delegates appreciated the range of content on offer, from the more formal presentations to the practical tips, and from the mentoring to exploring their neighbourhoods with fresh eyes. Here are a few quotes:

'I just wanted to express my gratitude to my fantastic mentor and for giving his time to provide us his invaluable insight into our assignments. His experience in designing and delivering places was especially useful in helping us to understand our neighbourhoods and what we could do to implement change that can have a positive impact for our local communities and I will certainly take forward his guidance into my day-to-day work.'

'I just want to express how happy I am to have attended, and thinking about it always makes me want to dance a jig.'

'Despite it being held online, I appreciate how you managed to be very efficient and creative with technology. The environment was friendly, I loved everything that was discussed, and I forgot all insecurities (my lack of a formal UD education) when discussing the assignment with my mentor.'

Would we run a virtual school again? You bet we would. Although there are drawbacks to not being in a room together, the freedom that virtual training offers is immense. With a bit of imagination and a whole lot of hard work, we have found that we can continue to offer good quality training and support in this strange new world of 2020.

URBAN CHALLENGE

We are running a virtual Urban Challenge this autumn to find, discuss and promote good ideas for the built environment, which learn from the lockdown but look to meet longer term challenges of climate change, health and inequalities. If you have an idea on how to change the way we plan, design or manage our town centres, neighbourhoods, buildings or public spaces please get in touch. The Challenge starts in October 2020 and will run for 3 months. More information at www.urbandesignlondon.com ●

Esther Kurland, Head of Urban Design London

1 Previous page:
The participants networked via Zoom
2 An analysis of a local street by participant Yasir Elawad

Climate Change Global Digest

The implications of the current pandemic on the climate crisis continue to dominate debate and research, in particular, the degree to which the pandemic might allow more significant gains to be made with respect to climate change mitigation and adaptation. This article highlights some of the most interesting early findings and the projects leading the way.

EARTH OVERSHOOT DAY

Earth Overshoot Day happened on 22 August this year, more than three weeks later than it did in 2019. This is the day on which 'human consumption exceeds the amount nature can regenerate in a year'. COVID-19 has meant a 9.3 per cent reduction in the global population's ecological footprint. The Global Footprint Network, which calculates each country's footprint and is behind the initiative, has recently developed a new platform to share examples of projects on the ground. The Move the Date Solutions map platform allows anyone to upload information and photos of realised projects and programmes, with the aim of becoming an authoritative collation of action on the ground. It already includes a number of community projects in the UK. As the content grows, this could prove to be very useful information for urban designers.

<https://movethedate.overshootday.org/>
<https://www.footprintnetwork.org/>

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

The UK Committee for Climate Change published its annual report in June stressing that the Government 'must seize the opportunity to turn the COVID-19 crisis into a defining moment in the fight against climate change'. The report sets out a series of recommendations in order to achieve this, including the



Paris Expo Porte de Versailles urban farm. Photograph by Stephane Compont, Bureau233

retrofit of existing building stock, significant tree planting and re-wilding, as well as the public sector leading by example on positive behaviours for low carbon working patterns.

<https://www.theccc.org.uk/2020/06/25/covid-19-can-be-an-historic-turning-point-in-tackling-the-global-climate-crisis/>

The Amsterdam Doughnut Plan was launched earlier this year. This is the first time that the concept of doughnut economics has been applied at the city scale. The concept establishes a social foundation and an ecological ceiling as the boundaries within which change should happen in the city. The Amsterdam plan sets out to answer four key questions, which also provide a great starting point for many urban design visions of masterplan; they are: what would it mean for the people of Amsterdam to thrive? What would it mean for Amsterdam to respect the well-being of people worldwide? What would it mean for Amsterdam to respect the health of the whole planet? In answering these questions the plan flags a number of important practical changes to how we design cities, from embedding biomimicry into the structure of green infrastructure or creating habitats for species directly in the fabric of buildings, through to building solar energy schemes into the city's existing and new fabric to power 450,000 households.

<https://www.kateraworth.com/2020/04/08/amsterdam-city-doughnut/>

<https://www.kateraworth.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/20200416-AMS-portrait-EN-Spread-web-420x210mm.pdf>

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

New research into the role of green infrastructure in cities has shed new light on the importance of certain types of spaces for pollinators. The research has shown that urban gardens, community gardens and farms, and roadside verges are key to supporting bee populations, due to their diversity of plants and the absence of pesticides. In contrast, the research found that many large parks in urban areas had low visitation rates by pollinators. The messages from the research are that small scale unplanned (and unmanaged) areas need to be integrated into cities, and that the diversity of spaces in urban areas needs expanding.

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0235492>

An interesting project which will have great benefits for pollinators is the world's largest urban rooftop farm recently completed in Paris. On top of one of the pavilions of the Paris Expo Porte de Versailles, this 14,000sqm urban farm includes commercial growing space, allotments and a restaurant.

<https://www.themayor.eu/en/the-largest-rooftop-urban-farm-opens-in-july-in-paris>

BREAKTHROUGH PROJECT

A world first has been proposed in Scotland as a huge step forward to clean energy. The H100 Fife project will be the world's first green hydrogen heating network. In Phase 1 the network will heat up to 300 local homes using clean gas produced by an electrolysis plant powered by offshore wind energy. The project will be the first of its kind to employ a direct supply of clean power to produce hydrogen for domestic heating. In Phase 2 a further 1,000 homes will be linked to the network. This project is evidence that the cost of the required technology is starting to come down now, driven by developments in Asia.

<https://sgn.co.uk/H100Fife>

Jane Manning with Julie Fletcher, Joanna Wright and Mitch Cooke

Key sources of information and further reading. Simply hold your smartphone over the QR code whilst in camera mode and you will be taken to the relevant web page.



Move the Date



CCC Annual Report



Amsterdam City
Doughnut Tool



Doughnut Economics



A Plan Bee for Cities



Paris Urban Farm



H100 Fife project



Global Footprint
Network



Urban Design Library #35

Social Justice and the City, David Harvey, 1973, Arnold

When this book was published, it exerted several spheres of influence. One of them was to highlight the evolution of the built environment, how it was studied and explained, as well as how practitioners intervened in it. At that time, some post-NASA 'man on the moon' scientists found their way into planning, with the ambition to shift it from a vocational to a scientific subject, with the result that modelling and Systems Theory became its new credo. David Harvey belonged to another academic discipline, geography, which embraced quantitative revolution. However, while planning theory resorted to geospatial information science promoted by the geographer Brian Berry, geography also branched out to humanistic fields, encompassing cultural and urban geography. Harvey's intellectual trajectory formed part of these transformations. His first book *Explanation in Geography* (1969), in which he endeavoured to reconcile his geographic philosophy with quantification methodology, greatly impressed young planning and design professionals with an academic background.

Harvey's inquisitive and critical mind never stood still and in *Social Justice and the City*, he challenged his own approach by affirming that urban geography could not remain objective and disengage itself from socio-economic phenomena such as inequality or urban poverty. This book made a profound impression on my own understanding of the production of the built environment and how it is lived in, following Harvey's definition of urbanism as a

dichotomy between the city as a built form and urbanism as a way of life. More recently, Richard Sennett has returned to this theme by distinguishing 'ville' and 'cité' in *Building and Dwelling* (2020) based on his design experience and planning practice, as well as other theoretical considerations.

Henri Lefebvre whose books Harvey (and I) read in French when they were published, elaborated on this in *The Right to the City* (1968) a theme taken up by Harvey and incorporated in later editions. However, in his concluding reflections, Harvey's work positioned him closer to Lefebvre's *The Urban Revolution* (1970) and *Marxist Thought and the City* (1972), a Marxist approach that Harvey adopted and elaborated throughout his writings. Lefebvre's *The Production of Space* (1974) develops many themes evoked by Harvey for further study.

The themes in *Social Justice and the City*, presented in three parts - Liberal formulations, Socialist formulations and Synthesis - reflect Harvey's evolution at that time, connecting the spatial with the social. For urban designers and their physical-spatial background, how Harvey relates space to social and ultimately political dimensions of the city remains relevant. His understanding contrasted with social scientists, such as the urban sociologists who dealt with socio-economic and cultural aspects without spatialising them, even when they were focusing on cities.

Harvey's book contrasts even more with the simplistic, mechanistic and highly contestable links that urban designers tend to adopt between the built environment and how it is assumed to shape human behaviour. Perceived as causal links, these correlations continue to influence urban design thinking, and for that reason alone reading Harvey's work challenging this position is useful and thought-provoking.

In the first part, Liberal formulations, Harvey puts forward arguments on why planning seems unable to explain the city from its interface between spatial and social analysis. Discussing social processes and spatial form, Harvey critiques the conceptual problems of planning, and especially the dilemma between assumptions and their impact on design outcomes. When dealing with the issue of the redistribution of income in the city, he introduces growth and the speed of change, together with cost related to space and location, bringing him to the concept of social justice in space.

Part II, Socialist formulations, contains more theoretical arguments about revolution and counter-revolution, illustrated by ghetto formation, followed by a discussion of the use value and exchange value of urban land related to property and rent, which is as relevant now as then, for more equitable access to urban space. In 'urbanism and the city' he introduces the notion of surplus value related to the nature of urbanism, based on Marx's theory of labour. Some of those thoughts about urbanism may still

inspire reflection today. According to Harvey 'urbanism is a patterning of individual activity which, when aggregated, forms a mode of economic and social integration capable of mobilising, extracting and concentrating significant quantities of the socially designated surplus product'. And also 'urbanism may originate with the transformation from a mode of economic integration based on reciprocity to one based on redistribution'. He thus clearly links urbanity to urban economic processes, albeit considering this a necessary but not sufficient connection between them. This is explained as 'generative cities produce growth but parasitic cities do not'. The last section consists of a historic perspective on models of economic integration and the space economy of urbanism.

Adopting a dialectic method, Part III, Synthesis, is more theoretical in its conclusions and reflections, reviewing methods and theories applied in the preceding parts. It ends with an essay on the nature of urbanism. Refuting both Wilson's 'entropy formulation' and Doxiadis' 'design mysticism', Harvey considers 'optimising the city' as meaningless, despite attempting to examine the city as a totality. For him, partial analysis can only deal with problems *in* the city rather than *of* the city. When discussing his approach with Lefebvre's thesis, he finds that 'the distinctive role which space plays in both the organisation of production and patterning social relationships is consequently expressed in urban structure... and urban structure, once created affects the future development of social relationships and the organisation of production'. So clearly, he subscribed to a relation between urban form and living in cities, but not in a mechanistic mode. He sees new antagonisms arising with the changing scale and density of city organisation. Effective space is forever being turned into created space, affecting property rights and the spatial development process driven by fixed capital formation. Nowadays this is driven by financial capital rather than industrial capital as assumed at the time, creating increasing cultural heterogeneity and territorial differentiation in the urban system. Today as then, this is affecting both the role of government and civil society, individuals and communities. The question is where does this put the role and social responsibility of the urban designer? ●

Judith Ryser

READ ON

Henri Lefebvre (1991), *The Production of Space*, Blackwell
Edward W Soja (2010), *Seeking Spatial Justice*, University of Minnesota Press
David Harvey (2019), *Spaces of Global Capitalism: a theory of uneven geographical development*, Verso
Richard Sennett (2020), *Building and Dwelling*, Allen Lane



Brasília's masterplan
Source: Jonathan Koo,
2015, from Flickr

My Favourite Plan: Meredith Evans

Brasília master plan, Brazil by Lucio Costa 1957

WHY I LIKE IT...

I love the clarity, conviction and design symbolism behind Lucio Costa's 1957 master plan for Brasília, the new capital of Brazil. The simple concept behind the plan form was an aeroplane, paying homage to the incipient jet age (although some suggest it is based on a hummingbird).

Land uses are highly segregated and symmetrically distributed around specific elements of the plan. National and regional government buildings are located in the cockpit, symbolising their function as leading or navigating the country into the future, a brave hope indeed. The fuselage houses other administrative and key public buildings that front on to a linear park running along the Monumental Axis. Housing is allocated along the two wings, with dual carriageways running through the centre of each wing forming part of the main highway network serving the city. Each neighbourhood unit, called a *superquadra*, measures 300x300m and takes the form of perimeter blocks enclosing pedestrian courtyards. The blocks, varying in height up to seven storeys, sit on piloti, allowing public space to flow through from the street into the internal courtyard. Every block has local facilities and a

primary school within 800m of every home. A high degree of separation of pedestrians and vehicles is a key principle of the layout, with clear references to the ideas set out in Corbusier's *Ville Radieuse* and the pioneering housing layouts in Radburn, New Jersey, which were then being built.

A remarkable feature of Brasília's development was the speed at which it was built. The then president Juscelino Kubitschek announced that he would deliver '50 years of economic and social development in five years'. Amazingly, the city designed for 500,000 people was built from scratch in 40 months!

Costa worked in close collaboration with Oscar Niemeyer, ensuring that the symbolism inherent in the master plan was carried through to the design of key public buildings, such as the stunning cathedral and the iconic National Congress Palace. The fusion of Oscar Niemeyer's sculptural and modernist architecture with the clarity and symmetry of Costa's master plan has produced a unique new city that is internationally recognised and which gained UNESCO World Heritage Site status in 1987.

WHAT TO LEARN FROM IT...

The segregation of uses, and vehicles from pedestrians, and the focus on buildings within a landscape rather than the creation of streets, is now a discredited approach. Indeed, the capital today does have a somewhat soulless feel despite the sublime architecture. However, Costa's master plan deserves recognition because it set out a confident vision of a new future. We need more plans that try to do that. ●



Current Position

Town planner and urban designer
A long-term judge for the Housing Design Awards, and Built Environment Expert with the Design Council
Previously Assistant City Planning Officer at Leicester City Council, Director of Environment at Telford and Wrekin Council, and Chief Executive of MADE.

Education

B Arch, Dip UD, Dip TP, MRTPI
Qualified architect (no longer registered) and town planner
Diploma in Urban Design (Oxford Brookes University)

Specialisms

Urban Design with particular experience in city and town centre regeneration and development, as well as major urban expansions.

Ambitions

My ambition is to improve my sketching and painting skills.

Pétrusse Park, Luxembourg

In the lower part of Luxembourg city lies Pétrusse Park. The project aims to revitalise the valley's deteriorated ecosystems and redevelop the wider riverbed area for the enjoyment of the citizens and visitors



In each issue of Behind the Image, one of our contributors visits a contemporary public space from around the world. The photography tries to reveal an alternative perspective on a familiar precedent, famous space or place. These images illustrate how the

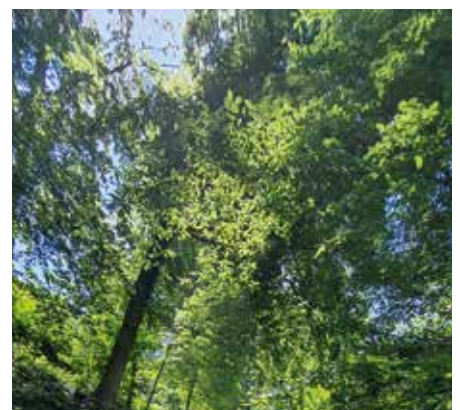
public space works in practice: exploring its features (designed and unintended), and the way it relates to the surrounding context. ●

Lionel Eid, George Garofalakis, Rosie Garvey and Alice Strang



© Ville de Luxembourg / Lindenkreuz Eggert – Vision 2023

Valuing nature: Pétrusse Park combines steep slopes, rock formations, ruins and varied open spaces to form a dramatic, harmonious landscape in the heart of the bustling city of Luxembourg. Initiated as an ecological restoration project, the park is now a vast natural landscape to be enjoyed by city residents and visitors alike.



An array of features: existing pathways, natural landscape features and infrastructure elements have been integrated, adding character to the park, creating a contrast between old and new, and embedding the project in its context.



Leisure: a key part of the project was to revamp play areas and sports facilities such as outdoor fitness equipment, a skate park and a mini-golf course near the park entrance. These elements animate spaces around the park and encourage people to come to it and be active in the city.



Active routes: a series of interconnected routes provide comfortable and accessible walking and cycle ways throughout the park. Six new bridges were built as part of the project, four of which are open to pedestrians only, providing frequent connections over the River Petrusse.



Rest and recreation: level changes and terracing create a range of open spaces to sit and relax – a peaceful contrast to the adjacent urban areas. Mature trees have been kept to enhance ecology and provide shading to visitors in the summer months.



Ecology: the concrete riverbed was demolished and the waterway channel widened in some places to enable the river to be more resistant to extreme stresses when the water level rises. A fish ladder was also constructed. Here allotments, beehives and a public garden make use of the natural slope of the riverbed, adding to the variety of spaces on offer.



Reflection: what could otherwise have been left as an under-utilised space or a purely functional design response to flood risk has instead been celebrated as an opportunity to bring social life, leisure activity and ecological diversity to the city.

Urban Design Review in Los Angeles

Brian Garcia reports on his experience of the city's design review



1 The Palace Theater, Broadway, Los Angeles. Photograph by Tony on Unsplash
2 Orpheum Theatre, Broadway
3 Wilshire Grand Center, Downtown Los Angeles

The Urban Design Studio of the City of Los Angeles Planning Department has built a design review process of expert collaboration in order to improve three characteristics of buildings in the city: the pedestrian should come first, buildings should be designed for 360 degrees, and buildings should have the latest advancements in climate-adapted design.

There are many different levels of design review in Los Angeles, including 'over-the-counter' permissions as part of a specific plan, part of an area planning commission, or Historic Preservation Overlay Zone. This article is about the planning department's Professional Volunteer Programme for design review.

Previous issues of *Urban Design* have presented a thorough discussion of urban design review in the UK, and the following insights are on design review from the city of Los Angeles that Peter Hall wrote about as the essence of the creative milieu and the dream factory.

The positive aspects of design review previously introduced in *Urban Design* have included that it can actually be a vindication of a design, and that it is better to hear bad news early. Of course, any designer or

architect could usefully integrate a professional second opinion into their work. Design review should be a sensible pause, and not design by committee, but many designers are under financial pressure to complete projects quickly. Overall, the main importance of design review is that poor building and place design have effects that are wide-reaching and long-standing. The fundamental challenge remains how to encourage creativity while protecting the quality of the urban environment.

THE LOS ANGELES REVIEW PROCESS

I have been involved in the review of six projects that took place at City Hall, in Downtown Los Angeles. They included a diversity of projects within a variety of planning policy overlays and built environments. This diversity may be an especially noticeable condition in Los Angeles due to the influence of a diverse population, and an urban form developed from population booms, and hence real estate booms over the last five decades.

Different mechanisms can trigger a design review, including a zone change or asking for a density bonus for a project; any project near public transit receives a

density bonus and reduced parking requirements, and must therefore also go through design review. The Urban Design Studio has partnered with the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Los Angeles chapter to solicit practitioner volunteers and disseminate guidance on the design review process, including referring to the many design guidance documents on the Urban Design Studio website. Four main resources are recommended for guidance: the City of Los Angeles *Urban Design Principles* and three checklist documents for residential, commercial and industrial projects.

The reviews involve approximately six professional volunteers: developers, architects and planners. A project planner from the City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning working with the developer on the project presents it to the design review panel, and the Urban Design Studio of the City Planning Department facilitates the meeting. The projects I have reviewed have ranged from three to five storey mixed use housing developments near the Pacific Ocean, to 30 or more storey residential and hotel towers in Downtown Los Angeles.

In 2019 there were 23 urban design review sessions, with around 46 new developments reviewed. Architects and practitioners are only allowed to serve on three sessions per year, conserving the professionals' time, but also allowing for a variety of opinions and more outside practitioners' involvement in the design review process. Some architects or planners may also feel that they do not want to give their design expertise for free. Participation in the voluntary design review process varies, falling during economic boom times when the development and construction industries are busy.

Currently there are approximately two meetings per month in Downtown Los Angeles and additional intermittent meetings in the San Fernando Valley, coordinated by the local San Fernando Valley AIA chapter. The review sessions are confidential, and no project documents can be transmitted beyond the session. The project planner keeps notes and reports back to the developer and architects on the advice of the panel and any necessary steps forward. Fundamentally, beyond any requirements the main benefit of these sessions is to have a pause in the project's development, a conversation on the quality, environment and the pedestrian



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experience, and a moment to take these qualitative factors seriously.

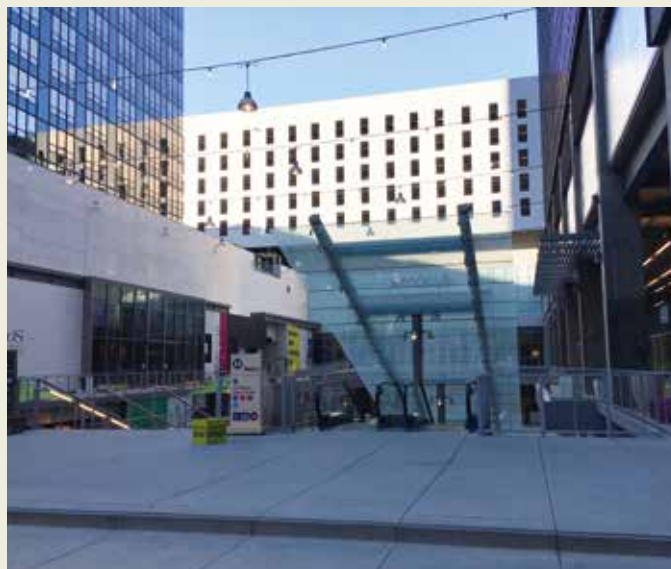
An architect or developer can also make an appointment to discuss their project through the website. Unlike many government agencies, staff contact information is clearly listed. The general approach is about problem-solving to improve the design according to its criteria. The studio staff can also advise on other design review processes, and help the architect or developer anticipate issues of contention to address.

The Urban Design Studio provides guidance but operates under the premise that not having set prescriptions is a design opportunity. There is an effort to keep the process precise and objective; too much prescription may kill creativity or bypass new or unknown design solutions.

BACKGROUND

The professional volunteer programme for urban design review has been practiced in this way for less than ten years, and was previously a less formal process of more individual connections and reviews with the Urban Design Studio of Los Angeles. The method developed personal relationships and was possibly more efficient and even positive for negotiating the quality of the built environment, but the new process applies more objectivity, consistency, greater public professional involvement and wider perspectives useful for improving projects. The newer panel method also reduces the temptation or slippery slopes of corruption, claims of favouritism, and myopic views of what a good project is or how the urban realm should look.

Other models of design review exist in Los Angeles, depending on the neighbourhood or conditions, including the Historic Preservation Overlay Zone process such as the consistently historic signage standards of the Broadway theatre district in Downtown Los Angeles. Many communities in Los Angeles County have their own local versions of design review or design guidelines. The Urban Design Studio does not undertake



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reviews where a Historic Preservation Overlay Zone has its own board review.

ISSUES IN LOS ANGELES

Los Angeles has a different context to that in the UK, with less powerful government action on building and design. A large part of city planning in Los Angeles depends on starting relationships with developers, and incentives for the private sector to build. The current and main advantage of design review is to have a qualified third party to assess and provide design recommendations for a project, rather than a top-down or adversarial relationship between the city and the developer.

The stakes are particularly high due to climate change and inequality. The timetable for projects is also different to those in the UK, as Los Angeles' buildings qualify for historic preservation after fifty years. Other issues include the promotion of better design as a means to catalyse economic intensity in the building's surrounding area. The City Planning Department has also had to deal with a brain-drain after the 2008 financial crisis and conversely losing planners to the private sector during economic boom times. Los Angeles, as a bastion of public participation requirements and community groups, also sees NIMBY opposition to many projects. The public has to be ready for new development, otherwise it concentrates in certain forward-thinking areas such as Downtown Los Angeles.

FUTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

During discussions with design review experts, a few points can be clarified. The City of Los Angeles does not keep a public catalogue of projects that it has deemed successful. A best practice list of local projects would be informative to builders and designers, and would also promote the important work that the City Planning Department does for the quality of Los Angeles.

Another idea that has been circulated is the development of a standardised streetscape aesthetic. Johnson Fain, a local

architecture firm, created a design plan for LA Metro's transit stations and LA Metro has implemented standard canopies across several rail stations. The buses are iconic, in bright orange livery for local buses and red for express buses. There was also a recent design competition for Los Angeles' street lights. Los Angeles is a place of constant creative change, and there are rich historical aesthetics that can be drawn upon for streetscape elements, including the historic theatre architecture and signage of Broadway in Downtown Los Angeles.

THE FUTURE OF DESIGN REVIEW IN LOS ANGELES

The City Planning Department of Los Angeles has recently hired 45 new planners. This was approximately five weeks prior to the Coronavirus 'stay at home' order, and associated economic decline and historic unemployment levels in the United States. The future is extremely uncertain, but plans are in place to furlough workers in a cooperative strategy, such as one day a week off, rather than lay off large numbers of planners. The department currently has many projects to review in the pipeline, coming from a time of economic expenditure, and construction work has continued. With networked computers, there is even a suggestion that work is more productive now with fewer office distractions. So far, the department has been able to continue working largely as usual during the quarantine.

While developers must abide by many health and safety laws, Los Angeles' urban design review process shows how collaboration and peer review can improve the urban design quality of this creative and diverse city. ●

Dr Brian Garcia, Assistant Professor, Urban and Regional Planning, Cal Poly Pomona.

Thanks to former Senior City Planner Claire Bowen, Assistant Planner Holly Harper, Gwynne Pugh FAIA and Will Wright Director of Government Affairs AIA Los Angeles for their time, guidance and insights for this article.

Deserving a Great Park

Simon Ward advocates a better use of council land to provide green spaces



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Towns and cities around the UK are busy reimagining their spaces and thinking hard about how they could be reshaped after the effects of COVID-19, where there might be fewer cars on the roads, fewer car parks, and an increased need for high quality outdoor green space.

In central Manchester there are around 50 sites of varying sizes that are currently used for car parking or remain vacant, which vastly outnumber the quantity of green spaces that the city has on offer. These spaces are often located in the heart of the city's burgeoning quarters or close to landmark buildings, and would make ideal sites for idiosyncratic city squares, mini parks or informal play or recreational space. As a society we must redress the balance between man and nature, and one of the few silver linings of the COVID-19 pandemic is that it has provided the impetus to radically rethink how our cities work and how they might best serve a changing society, which is crying out for more urban green space.

A LACK OF LARGE-SCALE GREEN SPACE

The crisis has revealed a serious lack of large-scale high quality green space in Manchester; this is not unusual in the UK but with the rapid expansion of the city's residential offer, it needs to change and quickly. A city of Manchester's international standing and ambition deserves a ring of parks around its core and much more green space in its centre. After all, it was Friedrich Engels' observations of Manchester's most

notorious slums during the period of rampant urbanisation in the 1840s that helped to inspire the English parks movement as an antidote to such places.

A team of Atkins landscape architects and urban designers has generated some speculative ideas for several of Manchester's car parks, in terms of how they could look and feel, and the value that they could bring to the city. Manchester City Council is already actively promoting more active travel by expanding its walking and cycling offer, and promoting the use of its public transport system by increasing its tram and bus networks.

Public transport use may take some time to return to its pre COVID-19 patronage levels, but the overall aim of many cities is to reduce the number of cars coming into their core spaces and to radically improve their air quality. As in many UK cities, nitrogen dioxide levels remain high and every year over 100 people in Manchester die because of its toxic air conditions. One exciting opportunity could involve transforming car park sites occupying key positions in the city. Too many end up filled with ubiquitous office developments which, like the need for the car, are under serious examination regarding their futures. One option, which could greatly improve the quality of city life, is to transform these sites into much-needed green space.

MAKING ROOM FOR PARKS

Many of these sites are owned by the Council or the operator NCP and generate considerable income as car parks; they

would undoubtedly also generate handsome development profits, but as Lewis Mumford observed 'Profit too often takes precedent over public interest' and 'City authorities must make room for civic squares, gardens and public spaces'.

One much larger site lies on the fringe of the city, close to Manchester's trendy Ancoats district, recently voted as one of the World's 50 Coolest Neighbourhoods (*Time Out* 2019). The design for this site was inspired by local residents who wanted to make much more of a 4ha space recently cleared for a mixed use development, as a place with an emphasis on green space for the community.

The result shows what a site like this, which could be found in every UK city, is capable of delivering. A dynamic city centre park could contain a feast of amenity space, expansive lawns laced with bee and rain gardens, a water cascade, adventure and mixed age play areas, allotments, growing places and community events spaces, plus a range of facilities promoting healthy pursuits, with wide boulevards for COVID-19 safe walking and cycling. A park here would also be overlooked by thousands of local residents including those in the multi-storey Oxygen Tower, close to the corner of the site, providing natural surveillance over an area of green wilderness with open lawns, large spreading trees and varied plant life, everything that the surrounding grid of high brick buildings and streets are not.

An urban park here could help to transform the area, linking to the adjacent and popular Cotton Field Park and Islington Marina, and bringing nature into the heart of the city. It could create an oasis of well-being with modern, multifarious facilities aimed at all sectors of the local community, helping people to relax, play, exercise and enjoy peaceful spaces and gardens up close or via the numerous longer range window and balcony views.

ADDING VALUE

Part of the site could be given over to residential development and a park café to help to fund its creation and generate long-term income for the park's upkeep. However cities like Manchester have to be more ambitious and generous in their green space provision, and there is a wealth of evidence now emerging, through natural capital studies, suggesting that these kind of places will pay for themselves many times over in the

1 The masterplan for Great Ancoats Park, Manchester
 2, 4 before; 3, 5 after views
 6–9 Scenes from three car park sites reimagined:
 7 Sackler Street – a village green for Manchester's gay village
 8 A court adjacent to Minshull Street court
 9 A Chinese garden – a focus for Chinatown

benefits that they bring to people's health and well-being. For every £1 invested in public parks around £27 is returned in value, according to the publication *Natural capital accounts for Green space in London 2017* by the Greater London Authority, National Trust and Heritage Lottery Fund.

Green spaces are simply the natural antidote to daily life. Fields in Trust calculated that the UK's green spaces provide £34bn of value in terms of mental and physical well-being and parks in particular save the NHS £111m alone in preventing GP appointments, the equivalent of 3,500 nurses. With many doctors now actively prescribing a course of walks or allotment time over a course of pills, a third of UK children between 2 and 15 years old being overweight, and 75 per cent of them spending less time outdoors than the UK's prison population, there has surely never been a better time to create more green space.

Comparisons with cost rates to erect new buildings are also staggering, with the cost of a square metre to create a public park being a fraction of its building counterparts. This also has to be viewed in light of the benefits that green spaces will bring to a far larger section of society, as the most democratic of urban spaces. The evidence around green space installation costs and investment value proves that they are worth every penny spent on them. The multiple benefits that a carefully designed public park can bring, if they reflect local communities' needs, is also indisputable. Parks can also bring a range of other important benefits such as reducing the urban heat island effect, releasing oxygen, absorbing carbon, contributing to more sustainable drainage systems, improving biodiversity, increasing property values and cleaning the air of harmful particles. In short these spaces work very hard for their communities and their true value is inestimable. ●

Simon Ward, CMLI, Principal, Atkins Landscape and Urban Design, and Recognised Practitioner in urban design



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Photograph by Dave Clubb from Unsplash

Child-Friendly Cities

In her enduring classic *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), Jane Jacobs identifies the presence of young people in public space as a vital and integral part of the diversity of urban culture. 'Children in cities need a variety of places in which to play and to learn... an unspecified, outdoor home base... to hang around in and to help form their notions of the world'. She believed such places were being increasingly denied to children by 'the dishonest mask of pretended order' that had come to typify urban planning. In the UK, the pioneering British landscape architect Lady Allen of Hurtwood echoed this 'plea to planners, to bring more sensitive awareness into places where people live and where they bring up families'. Like Jacobs, Allen had a vision for child-friendly urban development, engendering 'intimate' communities, central to which is a recognition of the importance of space and the opportunity to play, which 'involves the design of the whole neighbourhood... for children do not play only in playgrounds – they play whenever they move'.

More than half a century later, these principles are more important than ever. The pandemic and its impact on children has highlighted their deep need for freedom to play, meet their friends and enjoy the spaces and places of their neighbourhoods. The Covid-19 lockdown may have focused attention on this need (although very little of it from policymakers) but the steady retreat of children and young people from a public realm remorselessly colonised by traffic – and generally planned only according to the most reductive concepts of what play space looks like and where it should be – has been a failure of urban development for many decades.

For all their hallowed status among students and practitioners, Jacobs and Allen have remained voices in a planning wilderness, where the immediate needs of consumer economies and adult culture have perennially overridden the needs of the youngest, un-moneyed, citizens. Researchers have described the progress of the child-friendly city agenda as glacial. Tim Gill's assertion that 'most neighbourhoods are designed and modified without a second thought for children's health and wellbeing, their needs or views' is consistent with the findings of last year's RTPI report *Child Friendly Planning in the UK: A Review*, which found children to be notable by their absence from UK planning policy.

This may be changing however. Alongside a framing article by Tim Gill, and another, by Jenny Wood and Dinah Bornat, two of the authors of the RTPI report, this issue highlights some of the policy initiatives and practice developments that suggest children and young people's particular needs from the built environment, while still scarcely acknowledged within UK planning policy, are increasingly taken seriously at a regional and local level, and also by the devolved national governments.

The new revision of the London Plan includes a revised policy for play and recreation that recognises the need for neighbourhood designs to enable children and young people to play and socialise in public space, and not merely in discrete playgrounds. The Mayor has substantiated this with the publication of new design guidance, *Making London Child Friendly*, with a strong emphasis

on the importance of planning and design that builds in access and oversight to playable community space, and conceives the streets where children live as not simply roads to cross (at their peril), but as the first threads in the webs of connectivity for the independent mobility that is so important to their access to space and opportunity. Anna Mansfield's article summarises this report, offering thumbnail case studies that illustrate its principles and their practicability. A separate article by Dinah Bornat, a design advocate for the Mayor, develops the themes of the report with an elegant model for their realisation. Katja Stille shows how play can become an integral part of neighbourhood design for all ages.

In Wales, the innovative Play Sufficiency legislation, which requires local authorities to assess the conditions and opportunities for children to play, and make plans for these to be sufficient for their needs, continues to cultivate a relationship between planners, researchers and children, wherein the lived experiences of the latter and their own concepts of play and space, are increasingly informing local planning policy and influencing the shape of their neighbourhoods. Play specialists Ben Tawil and Mike Barclay, who are among those in the vanguard of this work, write about the lessons for planning and design that can be drawn from simply listening to children.

Elsewhere, there is a lovely piece of action research from the Dublin-based academic Jackie Bourke, which turns on its head the all too widely held prejudice that teenagers are the scourge of neighbourliness. Her article highlights the care, creativity and wit of young people, and their relationship with their environments, if they are only given a chance to express it.

Ultimately, how much of the child-friendly city agenda becomes adopted at a policy level is a question of politics. An article by Wendy Russell reminds us that the idea of the 'right to the city' was first conceived by the French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre, contending that the production of space must address the tensions of everyday life arising from exclusive aspects of the neo-liberal hegemony. She proposes that Ash Amin's four registers of the good city provide a pragmatic model for urban design advocates and practitioners to think about children's play and its relationship to spatial justice in an optimistic way, whatever the prevailing policy context.

Although largely drawn from last November's international conference, Towards the Child Friendly City, when to most of us, a global pandemic was still just a vague threat, the issues addressed by these articles are now more vital than ever. As we emerge from the Coronavirus crisis, I hope they will contribute to a renewed discourse about children and young people, and their profound need for space within the urban landscape we expect them to call home. ●

Adrian Voce OBE, writer, director of Playful Planet and advocate for children's play. His book, *Policy for Play, responding to children's forgotten right*, was published in 2015. He is president of the European Network for Child Friendly Cities.

Children's Right to the Good City

Wendy Russell explores the concept of children's right to play as a matter of spatial justice



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At the United Nations (UN) organized World Urban Forum in Rio in March 2010, the UN and the World Bank both adopted the right to the city in its charter for addressing the global urban poverty trap. Across the street in Rio, at the Urban Social Forum, a people's popular alternative was being staged. Activists there were appalled by the ruling class's re-appropriation of a hallowed grassroots ideal.'

(Merrifield, 2011)

The 'right to the city' has been adopted as a clarion call, but Henri Lefebvre's original intention was very different to its contemporary articulations of rights to urban services and goods, in pronouncements by powerful transnational elites (albeit made with the best of intentions). My aim here is to encourage those of us working as advocates on behalf of children to pause and think a little, to disturb our perhaps comfortable and habitual assumptions about policy and planning for child-friendly cities, to think differently, and to consider children's everyday material and embodied relationships with space and time as a form of political participation in everyday life. I am not setting these up as binary opposites, but as a tension with which we need to work. In doing this, I draw on two conceptual tools offered by Henri Lefebvre (1969-96) and Ash Amin (2006). These are ultimately very practical tools, and have been used in our research on the

Welsh Government's Play Sufficiency Duty.

LEFEBVRE'S RIGHT TO THE CITY

Lefebvre's vision is about the right to everyday social participation, webs of connection, making the city in ways that are not driven purely by the forces of capital, and shared moments that transcend daily drudgery. This is not a binary either/or situation and, despite Lefebvre's anti-state stance, those who advocate for children need to be pragmatic about their engagements in the systems, procedures and policies that order everyday lives. Nonetheless, we should pay attention to how increasingly market-led practice is creating a growing gulf between the super-rich and the dispossessed.

Amin recognises this tension when he suggests that rather than looking for utopian ideals of the Aristotelean 'good' city, we can work with 'a pragmatism of the possible, based on the continual effort

1 Snake hopscotch in the street. Photograph by Sergey Novikov

to spin webs of social justice and human well-being and emancipation out of prevailing circumstances' (Amin, 2006 p.1010)

DIFFERENCE

Central to this argument is the idea of difference. City dwellers live and work alongside others who are different in many ways. However, Lefebvre looks beyond the induced difference of fixed groups, arguing for less alienation. For children, this is the right to participate as citizens in their own cultures of playing. The way that we separate children from adults is a form of induced difference. The categorisation of 'child' fixes children as immature, developing through predetermined stages towards the end point of a producing and consuming citizen.

Play is bound up in this future-focused understanding of childhood, valued for its perceived contribution to creating the next generation of citizens onto which we pin our hopes and anxieties for the future. Play is also infused with contradictory romantic ideals of the innocence of childhood and desires to control the worst excesses of unruly behaviour. These rationalising and homogenising ideas create a linear connection between play and development. The provision for children's play is both a recognition of children's right to play and also a site for separating children from everyday life, for organising, structuring and controlling their play experiences in order to support the right kind of development. This vignette gives a different picture.

A VIGNETTE: CHILDREN'S STREET CHOREOGRAPHY

Looking out of my window I see two adults and two children walking up the street. I am struck, as always since I have been paying attention to such things, by the difference in how the adults and children move through the space. The adults are walking slowly, even absentmindedly, in a straight line, chatting and occasionally checking on the children. The children display an energetic and embodied choreography which entails jumping, spinning round, running, hopping. They go forwards and backwards, round and round, and occasionally run to catch up with the adults. They stop to examine interesting aspects of the landscape: flowering weeds growing between the pavement and the garden walls, an empty drink can. They jump in a puddle.

This is a mundane everyday picture of children's different relationship with space, mostly overlooked by adults, sometimes a source of frustration when there is a need to be somewhere by a specific time. Alert to what the environment has to offer, children use it in their own ways, often not as intended by the adults who design, build and manage it. In this way, children disrupt not only the dominant neoliberal construct of childhood and play, but also the functions of urban space. They produce a difference of their own that is more vibrant, moments where life feels better.

PLAY AS PARTICIPATION

The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) is a powerful tool for children's advocacy. At the same time, it tends to perpetuate a quasi-legal understanding of rights, couched in a minority world perspective of individual rights holders, and a universal assumption of the ideal child (i.e. Lefebvre's induced difference).

Within the CRC, participation rights are given less attention than rights of provision and protection. Generally, the right to participation is channelled through article 12, understood as engagement in formal political processes, controlled and interpreted by adults. However, in line with article 15, the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly, children's play can be understood as a primary form of participation in everyday life. It is an appropriation of space and time, interwoven into everyday life, erupting in the cracks of adult orderings whenever conditions allow. This is Lefebvre's right to the city as the right to produced difference.

Understood in this way, adult roles in urban design and



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advocacy for children's right to play can take on an additional dimension, alongside and in tension with attempts to influence policy makers, planners, developers and other adult managers of time and space. To consider this, we turn to Amin's four registers of the good city: repair, relatedness, rights and re-enchantment, a framework we used in our research on the Welsh Government's Play Sufficiency Duty.

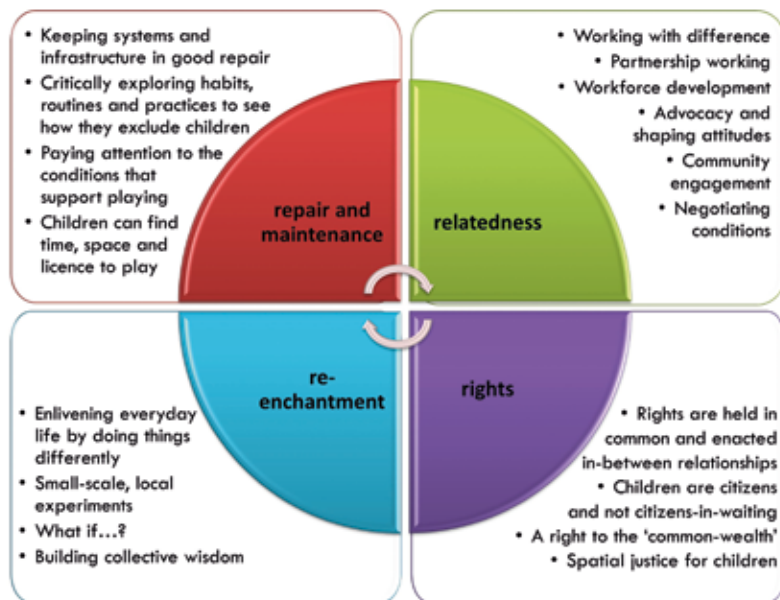
REPAIR: THE POLITICS OF SPACE

At the heart of this endeavour is the need to recognise the politics of space. Urban planning segments space, locating and designating functions largely in the service of the flows of capital. This space operates in what Amin terms a 'machinic order':

'composed of a bewildering array of objects-in-relation whose silent rhythm instantiates and regulates all aspects of urban life... It includes many mundane objects, such as road signals, post-codes, pipes and overhead cables, satellites, office design and furniture, clocks, commuting patterns, computers and telephones, automobiles, software, schedules and databases. These are aligned in different ways to structure all manner of urban rhythms including goods delivery or traffic flow systems, Internet protocols, rituals and codes of civic and public conduct, family routines and cultures of workplace and neighbourhood'

(Amin, 2002 p 1013).

2 An everyday picture of children's different relationship with space. Photograph by Daryl Wilkerson Jr from Pexels



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Such order is necessary for cities to function. Yet it has exclusionary effects, situating specific people in specific places and times, and targeting those 'out of place' with direct and indirect sanctions and prohibitions. This is continually contested and negotiated through small and often mundane disruptions: for example, through children's playful uses of space (avoiding cracks on pavements, climbing on low walls, playing football in supermarket car parks when they are closed) which often go unnoticed.

However, if these infractions become too much of a threat, spaces are re-appropriated. For example my own city of Nottingham's Old Market Square, an iconic skateboarding spot from the 1970s until the early 2000s, where first a byelaw and then a redesign removed the skaters. The landscape architects' website has this quotation from the East Midlands Development Agency on their redevelopment of the square: 'This is a wonderful example of design and regeneration. [The landscape architects] have taken a chaotic area that was a skateboarder's paradise and turned it into a wonderful democratic space thronging with people.'

In terms of urban design and advocacy for children's right to the good city, our role as adults is to critically explore the habits and routines embedded in the machinic order, and work to change them where they unnecessarily prevent children from playing. Alongside this, it is important to keep systems and infrastructure in good repair in ways that support children's ability to find time and space for playing.

RELATEDNESS AND RIGHTS

These two points are linked here in order to stress the approach taken to rights: rather than something held by individual rights-holders, rights are seen as held in common. This helps to move beyond conflictual calculations about whose rights are more important (the rights of those children to play football in the street and this man not to have his car window smashed). It allows a focus on the urban commons, the public goods that should be available to all, highlighting also the nature of space itself. Despite the constraints of hostile architecture, the increasing privatisation of public space, and exclusionary machinic assemblages, a participatory approach to rights is still possible. From this perspective, playing is a political act of making the city, producing something different and better.

This is where cross-professional working becomes important, building a collective wisdom of different ways of knowing, through professional development and working together to pay attention to how children actually use time and space. This

should include those involved in spatial and urban planning, highways, housing, green infrastructure, health, education, justice, recreation, playwork, youth work and many more. It is also where inviting children to share their expert knowledge comes into play. What we have learned from our research in Wales is that using ethical, creative and space-based methods with children (e.g. map-making, photography, walkabouts) yields specific information about *that* space at *that* time for *those* children, allowing particular responses.

RE-ENCHANTMENT

Amin's final point concerns the right to the city in order to share in creating something of joy. Play itself is an enchantment with the world, creating moments when life is worth living. For urban designers and play advocates, paying attention to children's skill and ability to co-create such moments, and working towards supporting this, is also an act of re-enchantment with life. Small, what if...? experiments that playfully disturb the habitual order of things have the potential to be acts of re-enchantment for adults as well as children.

IN CONCLUSION

Reading children's right to play through Lefebvre and Amin produces a different way of thinking about play, urban design, and advocacy. Whilst acknowledging the need to engage with existing systems, we can develop an optimistic and ethical pragmatism to work toward spatial justice for children, facilitating the means for them to participate in making a better city.

'Being enchanted does not deny there are intolerable cruelties and injustices woven into everyday life... but an attachment to wonder enables an ethical, generous response and holds off an overwhelming cynicism that is so prevalent'.

(Lester, 2016) ●

Dr Wendy Russell, Visiting Research Fellow at the University of Gloucestershire, co-founder of the Philosophy at Play conferences, and editorial board member of the *International Journal of Play*

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3 Ash Amin's four registers adapted to research on the Welsh Government's Play Sufficiency Duty.



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Play Sufficiency and Neighbourhood Design

Mike Barclay and Ben Tawil reveal research from Wales where local authorities must provide a sufficiency of play opportunities for children

RESEARCH

Play sufficiency is concerned with cultivating more favourable conditions for play: in particular, the ease with which children can meet their friends and play 'out-and-about' in their local neighbourhoods. Essential to the play sufficiency assessment process required of local authorities under the legislation, is research with children and their carers to explore localised conditions for play, and children's individual lived experiences of playing. This includes identifying where, how, why and for whom things are working well, and where they are not.

The intensive nature of examples gathered through our research allows for the identification of interventions specifically relevant to individual children, groups and communities. Furthermore, the extensive nature of examples means that patterns emerge across different people's experiences, helping to discern the ways in which organisational systems and approaches can be developed to better respond to children's right to play (Russell *et al*, 2019).

Children are experts in their own lived experiences, which are different to those of adults. Here we share some of our favourite insights from play sufficiency assessments in the form of direct quotes from children, illustrating some of the concerns and priorities that adult approaches to providing for play should address. While these are described here as generalised issues, research with children in their communities can provide the granularity of detail needed to identify

Although widely neglected by national policymakers, children's rights to play and recreation are protected in international law under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989). In 2013, because of the generally poor recognition and implementation of these rights, the UN produced a General Comment (GC17) recommending that countries should adopt a range of measures. These include the introduction of legislation to 'address the principle of (play) sufficiency', urging national governments that 'all children should be given sufficient time and space to exercise these rights'.

This landmark UN publication was a tacit endorsement of the pioneering approach taken in Wales, which in 2011 became the first country to legislate specifically on children's right to play, when it introduced the Welsh Play Sufficiency Duty. This requires local authorities to secure 'a sufficiency' of play opportunities based on the findings of three-yearly assessments.

The concept of play sufficiency represents a significant shift in thinking about children's play within public policy, which, in the minority world, has historically tended to consign it to defined segregated playgrounds. While designated play provision may be important, GC17 describes many more variables that influence children's ability to access the time, space and permission they need to play within the public realm.

1 A street space being used for play

specific geographic assets that must be protected, maintained and improved, as well as informing the design and location of other interventions.

‘Everyone expects us to play in the park’

While sometimes important to children and their carers, it is clear that designated spaces alone are not sufficient to meet all children’s play needs. The emphasis that adults often place on fixed-equipment play areas, when providing for play, is out of balance with children’s actual experiences of playing. Any strategic approach to providing for play should include support for adults to recognise the value of other types of play space, and identify ways of increasing children’s access to opportunities for playing in the wider public realm.

‘We play different things in different places’

Children value having access to a variety of spaces for different types of play experiences. The range of places that children can access for their play also appears to have a significant influence on their overall satisfaction with opportunities for play. Children who report lower levels of satisfaction are likely to have access to fewer places, and therefore less varied experiences of playing. Satisfaction is a combination of both the available range of resources and children’s ability to access them.

‘If you had a little space, everyone would be crammed together and there wouldn’t be much room for play’

The communities where children report the highest levels of satisfaction in terms of other people’s attitudes towards their play, tend to be those where children also report having access to many different spaces for playing. Where there are more spaces to play, children are able to negotiate who they share space with, helping to reduce tensions between different aged children, and with other community residents.

‘If there could be patches of randomness ...’

This brilliant quote illustrates two vital points. Firstly, children are very good at making do, if they have something to make do with. Secondly, whilst children consistently say they want to be able to access a greater range and variety of spaces for play, what they are often asking for in terms of the design of those spaces is both reasonable and relatively inexpensive. As Lester and Russell (2014) said ‘a key message, in terms of planning, is the importance of pockets of indeterminate space that may have some landscaping, but are not overly-prescribed’.

‘Boring spaces, you can’t roll down flat fields’

Informal, flat and grassed spaces are important for children to run around and play kick-about games; but, equally, other types of landscaping are advantageous for other forms of play. High play value is present in spaces with the potential for some adaptation, where children can manipulate the environment to extend their own play. As a consequence, places with a high degree of naturalness tend to be good places for playing.

In addition, children often avoid playing in the middle of big, flat and open, spaces, because they don’t like the feeling of being exposed, but prefer to play at the periphery of sites like this, or nearer to homes. This suggests that design interventions in tune with children’s use of space are a key aspect of play sufficiency; for example, introducing features around the edges of sites and developing defensible spaces within the landscape of larger sites – spaces that engender both a sense of security and a perception of privacy, where children feel secure but can also avoid being supervised directly if they choose.

‘Like, round my street, me and all my friends play hide-and-seek; if we don’t know what to play we just make up our own games’

This quote highlights the importance of children having easy access to friends to play with. This is their top priority for play-



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ing. Furthermore, it illustrates that where environments are conducive to children meeting up and hanging out together, they can provide for themselves by making up games. Children consistently identify their local residential streets as important places to play, primarily because they are close to their homes and those of their friends. This importance is rarely recognised in formal assessments, with children’s play needs scarcely ever considered equivalent to the needs of other road users.

‘Cause there’s very little cars. There’s lots of them but there’s, like, little gaps so you can, like, miss the cars’

In the UK, the amount and speed of traffic on roads is perhaps the most constraining factor on children’s ability to access time, space and permission to play within the public realm. However, there are neighbourhoods where the layout of roads, footpaths and public spaces is such that children are able to navigate their way around whilst avoiding the need to cross major roads. As a consequence, these children tend to be afforded more permission to play out and more often.

‘In the streets, there’s a lot of things that are just plain. Like, add stuff into them, so, like, we can play’

For many children, the distance that

2 Handrails polished to a shine where children reported hanging and spinning on them
3 Evidence of play in a ‘river’ where children talked about playing

they are allowed from home without an adult is confined to one or two neighbouring streets. Therefore, it is this environment where they will have a significant proportion of their childhood play experiences. Here then, as children often identify, is an opportunity to incorporate simple and low-cost environmental modifications to open up possibilities for playing, and encourage more moments of playfulness to emerge close to their homes.

‘Streetlights let us play a little longer’

Children consistently report less time for playing out in the winter in the UK, because it gets dark much earlier, and so it is perhaps unsurprising that children often identify street lighting as one of the things that would improve their opportunities for play throughout the year. The proximity of spaces for play also becomes even more important during the winter months because children’s roaming distances then tend to be reduced.

‘Please play at our lovely park of joy – put up signs like this instead’

It is likely that ‘no ball games’ signs, and others that aim to restrict play, have contributed to generally negative attitudes, which are often identified by children and adults alike. Consideration must be given to whether these restrictions are justified and whether there might be more positive approaches to managing concerns associated with children’s play. For example, large flat spaces inevitably attract ball games, while slopes, mounds, rocks, trees, and benches would make this less attractive and may encourage other forms of play.

Unsurprisingly, children would also prefer that they and their playful behaviour were welcomed rather than discouraged. Explicit and positive signage would help but equally useful would be design interventions that encourage children to use the space playfully; for example, hanging a rope swing in a tree or using alternately coloured paving slabs on a path.

‘There’s nowhere really to go, where I live. So, it’s, like, there is stuff to do but not a lot, like, nobody to play with or anything’

Children who live in isolated rural locations often report difficulty accessing friends outside school. Calling on friends may not be an option if they live beyond the distance that children are allowed to walk or ride on their own. This is often compounded, both by a lack of public open space (much of the natural space in rural areas is privately owned), and the presence of fast-moving traffic on rural roads. As a consequence, these children are often heavily reliant on parents to facilitate meeting up with friends. When asked what would improve their opportunities for play, children in these circumstances identified things like wider pavements, cat’s eyes road markings, street lighting and ‘lollipop lady’ crossings – not the kind of interventions typically associated with improving play opportunities.

‘Make it more adventurous, and a safer community’

Degrees of permission to play outside evidently (and unsurprisingly) influence how children rate their satisfaction with their opportunities to play in general. It is expected that parents and carers will have ultimate responsibility for the level of independence that their children enjoy, and so it is important that they feel confident their community is a safe enough place for their children to play outside.

The issue of permission is largely dependent on spatial design. Where there are more – and more diverse – playable spaces, space is less contested, associated community tensions are lower, and parental confidence increases. Children are then often afforded more freedom to explore, and to avail themselves of otherwise inaccessible environmental resources for playing within their neighbourhoods.

Conversely, poor environmental design can result in increased restrictions being imposed on children. Limited spaces for playing can reduce opportunities for exploration, potentially



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increasing associated competition for space. As a result, community tensions can arise – leading to a heightened fear of others.

CONCLUSION

Play sufficiency is about reimagining spaces and places that might currently preclude or discourage playing, and re-enchancing the public realm by creating networks of playable spaces which combine to form playable neighbourhoods.

Localised play sufficiency assessments can generate detailed evidence to inform strategic approaches to play within urban planning at a neighbourhood level. This must include research with children to establish their actual access to, and use of, space beyond (but also including) formally recognised public open spaces and designated play areas. Researching play engages with children on their terms and reveals the rich and situated knowledge that they have about where they live, and their experiences living there. This information reveals valuable insights that can be used to inform both the design and the evaluation of built environment interventions, where children are among the intended users of space. ●

Ben Tawil and Mike Barclay, play practitioners, researchers and consultants working together as Ludicology

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4 A ‘patch of randomness’ where children said they played. All photographs by Ludicology

Making Child-Friendly Cities through Urban Design and Engagement

Dinah Bornat suggests that priorities for public space should place children and young people first



The COVID-19 pandemic is having a big impact on our thinking about cities. We are imagining different futures, safer streets and more active travel. We are also thinking about the disproportionate impact it has had on those disadvantaged by poor housing and limited access to open space, and vulnerable. For many children and young people, lockdown has been especially tough. New approaches must consider their needs in particular.

At the beginning of March, just before the UK government-imposed lockdown, the Greater London Authority (GLA) hosted a public event, *Designing a City* for all Londoners. It was used to launch two documents: the *Draft Housing Design Guidance* and the *Public London Charter*; and to celebrate the Good Growth by Design programme, with which I have been involved as one of the Mayor's Design Advocates. Two years of focused work had yielded a vision for the capital that focused on people, not the economy, and child-friendliness was a recurrent theme with real weight.

The launch of these documents felt like an important moment, described at the time by Patricia Brown, formerly a commissioner on Centre for London's Commission on the Future of London's Roads and Streets, as 'the end of the beginning'. She was right to mark the moment and had we known what was to come, we may have all called louder for a new beginning – as we do now. But while none of us foresaw the pandemic, this work remains highly relevant, and is now more urgent as we seek to build a way out of the crisis, this time without leaving people behind. It is significant that child-friendliness is such an explicit part of the vision.

SUPPLEMENTARY PLANNING

Although national planning policy remains largely absent on matters that affect children, activity at the London level and in various boroughs has been gathering pace in recent years. For example, the boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets have been developing Supplementary Planning Documents: Tower Hamlet's *High-Density Housing* has much about children and their needs, while Hackney is developing one entirely focused on child-friendly design. Both mark a step change in thinking about planning policy and have drawn on research and good practice.

At the London level, although not a planning document, the *Making London Child-Friendly* report provides a comprehensive investigation and understanding around the issues of play and independent mobility, the first step for other boroughs to start understanding and adopting good practice. It has a clear approach covering policy, design, engagement and management. No project or place has yet to work well across all four of these elements, but it is a bold aspiration and a strong beginning on which we can build. As I wrote in the foreword to the report, 'Most people in the planning and development industry are unlikely to encounter children in their professional lives'. This hinders our ability to design well for them, or to carry out effective engagement with them.

Planning and design for children must prioritise space for play, but how is it to be secured? In planning, play is considered as with other provision from a 'place-based' perspective, in other words, it is expected to happen in designated areas, typically a series of play areas or playgrounds. Not only do children not naturally play in just one space, they enjoy playing with different age groups and are often expected to look after younger siblings. This type of segregation can divide age groups, friendships and communities, as was shockingly revealed by the residents of the Baylis Old School development in Lambeth, where the children of social housing residents were initially not allowed to play in the

1 Hackney Youth Parliament analysing their own local areas

communal play areas. Place-based provision, whilst important for securing space for play, is a restrictive approach and should be overhauled. In that respect, the GLA's emphasis on play and independent mobility as mutually dependent activities is helpful.

SPACE FOR PLAY

At ZCD Architects we seek to address these issues, advising on public realm and urban design with development teams working on major regeneration projects. We advocate for all the public realm to be playable and to consider children's movement first. We feel that it is important for children and young people to participate, and we engage them in this work too. We are delighted that developers and local authorities are increasingly keen to prioritise these issues, to see them as valuable and to fill the gap in community consultation.

TALKING AND LISTENING

When we talk – and listen – to children and young people, we find they have plenty to say about their local neighbourhoods; they are insightful, knowledgeable, empathetic and can think strategically. This is powerful, and means that when we are working with them they are able to have a meaningful impact on the way we conceive, plan and change local neighbourhoods.

Our journey to this point is not typical; we are a design practice working at different scales, from single houses to larger scale residential projects, as well as commercial, mixed use and other building types. We have become experts in child-friendly design through research, much of it observational, and a motivation to understand where and how people use space, particularly children. We believe their needs and behaviours challenge urban design principles and offer a new way of thinking about place. Child-friendly design brings with it intergenerational opportunities and is a robust way of applying place-making and people-first concepts.

As well as aiming for more frequent and meaningful engagement with children and young people, we believe our industry has a duty to shift away from describing them as hard-to-reach, or worse still, seeing them as a potential source of anti-social behaviour. This and their association with civil offences prevents us from supporting young people and makes their right to play and to assemble difficult, or even impossible, to achieve.

GOOD YOUTH PARTICIPATION

We draw on lived experience and explore local neighbourhoods with young people, gaining an understanding of what it is like for them to grow up there. We pair this with spatial analysis, piecing together what works and what doesn't work, time and again recognising that overlooking, connectivity, accessibility and car-free shared spaces are the key to successful urban design for children and young people. Through a series of workshops, our objective is to develop a manifesto with young people, which they then use to test the emerging design as it is presented to them.

We will soon be launching a toolkit that designers and playworkers can use on development projects themselves. The work is funded by Sport England and is being developed with Matt Bell, his team from Grosvenor Estates and the TCPA (Town and Country Planning Association). The project has grown from our own work with Grosvenor and our desire to test and promote good quality youth engagement. The toolkit will be open source and available online, it will be structured and detailed, and through a series of five workshops it will be easy to deliver, but specific in its aims and outcomes. It will be designed for use on regeneration projects but could be tailored to suit other applications such as policy and guidance development at a local authority level. The toolkit has these broad aims:

- To involve young people in the early stages of the design process
- To allow them to have a strategic influence on the brief and design



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- To ensure that this influence is relevant and appropriate to the needs of young people
- To demonstrate to young people that they have had a meaningful impact on the development, and
- To convey this to the development team and the wider audience.

In running the sessions, we advise that the client, design team, and local politicians join in giving them the chance to hear young people's voices first-hand. We have found this to be a rewarding and enriching experience for adults, and one which can change hearts and minds. It fosters a more caring attitude towards young people and their daily lives and freedoms, creating a vision for new neighbourhoods where young people are welcome and can enjoy being outside, on their bicycles, meeting up with friends, playing sport and getting on with their lives and their culture.

2 Analysing a local play area with Queensbridge School.
3 Children's hierarchy of need.

AN INCLUSIVE VISION

This vision of child and youth-friendly neighbourhoods also relies on the support and permission from adults, which means that maintenance and stewardship is critical. Having the client team in the room allows conversations to start early, management issues can be anticipated, and a culture surrounding the positive aspects of play can be promoted from the outset.

As well as aiming to work with a representative group of local young people, we recognise that we should better understand the needs of girls, who are less likely to be allowed outside to play and be with friends, of young people with learning difficulties or other impairments, and of other vulnerable groups. Digging into these details is vital. For example, providing a single multi-use games area (MUGA) or ball court is a lazy solution for young people's recreational and play needs. Instead, we should be thinking more inclusively, and gather good built examples. MUF architecture/art's social MUGA shows us how to provide other activities around ball parks, so that people can socialise and hang out together in a more informal setting. Another example is Fitzrovia Youth in Action, which draws in the local community and give time and opportunity for different groups to use the space.

To conclude, I was asked recently to provide some simple principles for planning officers to use when they are assessing

new schemes. I settled on a shortlist and realised that by far the simplest and most powerful way to start is to put children first. Our hierarchy pyramid reminds us to think and work differently. I would urge built environment professionals to consider children first when consulting on policy, writing a brief, drawing up a street layout and embarking on an engagement programme. It is a powerful way to upend the way we work, to challenge our thinking, and to imagine a different, brighter, future. ●

Dinah Bornat, founding co-director of ZCD Architects, and a design advocate for the Mayor of London.

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Since at least the 1970s, children and young people have too often been excluded from public spaces, and this has resulted in a drastic reduction in their movements (Shaw *et al*, 2015). This may be under the auspices of child protection, or because children playing or gathering on the streets have come to be perceived as a public nuisance. However, both national and local planning policies have some part to play in the problem, and the solution.

There are complex and historic reasons behind the exclusion of children from the planning system: most notable is its increasing economic focus in the last 50 years, with children excluded by default for their lack of direct participation in the labour market. It is therefore vital that national planning policy now sets out a framework for reversing trends that limit children's independence, and for bringing their views to the forefront of decision-making.

In this article, we reflect on our recently published research report that reviewed the child-friendliness of national planning policy in each UK nation. *Child friendly planning in the UK* (Wood *et al*, 2019) examines the national level planning policies in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and provides a basis to understand what planning does and does not currently provide for children.

Using the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as our basis, we drew on the term child-friendly planning from UNICEF's Child Friendly City model, in which all of children's human rights are met across the full range of a city's responsibilities and governance

Bringing Children into National Planning policy

Jenny Wood and Dinah Bornat look at how the four British nations deal with children's rights

(UNICEF, 2019). We also looked at how planning policy appears to interact (or not) with child-focused policy at the national level in each nation.

We played close attention to three rights in particular:

- Article 12 – A right to be heard and taken seriously in all matters affecting the child;
- Article 15 – A right to gather and use public space, providing no laws are broken; and,
- Article 31 – A right to play, rest, leisure and access cultural life.

Combined, we used these articles to see children's use of space, and their participation in its planning, as a matter of both social and spatial justice.

COMPARISONS OF THE FOUR NATIONS

Each nation of the UK has a different planning system and a slightly different focus, but in general children are most notable across all of them by their absence. Economic matters are generally given most prominence by national governments, except in Wales where well-being and human rights are increasingly central, an approach also beginning to take hold in Scotland.

Unfortunately, in most cases, social issues relevant to planning are relegated to guidance rather than to key national planning policies and frameworks. Equality legislation would ideally give weight to the needs of children but tends to focus on adults and negate responsibilities to children. We also found that police-issued design guidance *Secured by Design*, which carries weight across the UK, frames children's play and social gathering in a negative light.

There is room for more child-friendly planning policy in each UK nation's system, and although beyond the scope of our review, it is also vital to understand how policy is implemented. Some local planning practices move beyond minimum requirements set at the national level to innovate and put children more central to their planning approach.

ENGLAND

Nearly all national guidance on planning in England comes from the *National Planning Policy Framework* which says little of children as a distinct group, or their rights. The nature of the English planning system is that discretion is left mostly to local authorities to articulate their own policies through local plans and related documents. Children are also poorly covered under equality legislation, despite age being a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010.

Design guidance in *Manual for Streets* and *Manual for Streets 2* goes further in responding to children's play needs. However, we suggest that the recommendations and mechanisms are weak, and could do more to present children's play, and their use of public space in a more positive light. There is no specific guidance for planners on involving children in decision-making.

Government reforms in 2010 led to a loss of many child-focused policy initiatives, and this makes it hard for advocates in England to progress a children's rights agenda. Nevertheless local developments, such as the new *London Plan* and a small but growing number of child-friendly city and community schemes across the country, give hope for a step-change in at least some areas. The City of Newcastle and the London Boroughs of Barnet and Redbridge, within the UNICEF initiative, and Bristol, Leeds and the London Borough of Hackney independently of it, should be particularly commended for progressing child-friendly principles, in spite of the absence of a national strategic impetus.

SCOTLAND

Planning in Scotland is governed at the national level by the *National Planning Framework 3* and *Scottish Planning Policy*. The latter provides most guidance relevant to the day-to-day planning by local authorities and it is supplemented by design guidance and Planning Advice Notes. Collectively, these go some



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way to recognising children as a distinct group, but they tend to focus on specific facilities for children's play, or relate to children through language such as 'people with children'. Play and social gathering is generally approached only through the lens of providing specific facilities. Meanwhile, children's participation in the process is given only passing mention with no further guidance.

Child-focused policy and legislation are relatively strong in Scotland, with a focus on human rights and well-being. Yet, the cross-over between these and planning seems limited. Importantly, the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 now gives statutory rights for children's participation in planning decisions, and stipulates that local authorities produce Play Sufficiency Assessments. Secondary legislation in the form of the *National Planning Framework 4*, is now in preparation stages, and children's rights organisations, including A Place in Childhood, are involved in providing evidence to the process (Wood, 2020).

The Scottish Government is also seeking to incorporate the UNCRC into Scottish law. Alongside the participation of Aberdeen in UNICEF's Child Friendly City and Community Initiative, this gives rise to optimism about the future potential for more child-friendly planning in Scotland.

WALES

Planning in Wales is governed at the national level by *Planning Policy Wales* and the *National Development Framework* (NDF), which at the time of writing our report (September 2019) was in draft form, out for consultation. The former provides most guidance relevant to the day-to-day planning by local authorities. Additionally, the Welsh Government has released a Young People's Summary of the NDF, and other resources to inform young people about planning. They are supplemented by design guidance and Technical Advice Notes.

Unlike other UK countries, Welsh local authorities have a statutory duty to assess the sufficiency of play opportunities for

1 Children have the right and capabilities to be involved in decision-making in planning. Image source: Kingston Council
2 Our urban environments often exclude children's play, but they find opportunities when adults don't get in the way. Photograph by Madeleine Waller

The rights to gather, play & participate

1. Play, recreation, leisure and assembling in public space should be at the heart of what national planning policy promotes for children.
2. Children's needs for movement and independence should be given central prominence in national planning policy.

Recognising children as a distinct group

4. Governments across the UK should give appropriate training and weight to Equalities Impact Assessments (and equivalents) that include the specific needs of children as part of the 'age' protected characteristic.
5. National planning policies should explicitly acknowledge the differences amongst children and young people.

Focusing planning towards child-friendly outcomes

6. National planning policies should endorse the design of new developments and of local and regional planning policy that aims for desirable social outcomes. Secured by Design guidance should be reviewed in light of child friendly principles to ensure alignment.
7. 'Play Sufficiency', as first adopted in Wales and now moving to Scotland, is a concept that can be adopted across UK jurisdictions, with Play Sufficiency Assessments and Action Plans a robust and child-centric tool for understanding children's human rights.

Learning and collaboration

8. Governments should set up clear links and mechanisms for collaboration between the policy spheres of planning, early years and childcare, play, education, housing and transport.
9. Policymakers and professionals in planning should have networking opportunities with childhood and youth professionals to encourage collaboration, learn engagement skills, and to help them advocate for the rights of children.

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children and to take action to secure better play opportunities. This is called the Play Sufficiency Duty and planning authorities should be involved in these processes. Children's human rights are also enshrined in Welsh legislation and policy under *The Rights of Children and Young Persons* (Wales) Measure, 2011.

We identify ways to further children's human rights through the Welsh planning system, but the setup and content of policies is broadly supportive of child-friendly aims. This is particularly aided by national planning policies having been revised recently to account for The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, and the climate emergency. This places children more firmly as stakeholders in the planning system, both in the present and into the future. Cardiff is also seeking to become a Child Friendly City under the UNICEF initiative. Our analysis suggests that the future effectiveness of child-friendly approaches in Welsh planning will depend both on implementation within traditional child policy domains, and the degree to which these are connected with policy areas where children are less commonly considered.

NORTHERN IRELAND

Planning in Northern Ireland is governed at the national level by the *Spatial Planning Policy Statement for Northern Ireland*, and the *Regional Development Strategy, 2035. Living Places*, a piece of supplementary planning guidance, is also relevant, and community planning is currently more linked to spatial planning than in other UK nations. Children are not represented as a distinct group within national planning policy, though shared space is given particular prominence as it relates to the healing of physical and social divisions that exist in Northern Ireland as a legacy of the troubles.

Children's rights are given more prominence outside planning policy, with specific guidance on children's inclusion, which refers directly to the UNCRC (Equality Commission for

Northern Ireland, 2008). If implemented effectively, this would give children a say in planning matters. There is also the suggestion of further work being done to look at child-friendliness at the national level. However, the lack of decision-making capacity in Northern Ireland, and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, have made it difficult to further this agenda.

In recognition that Northern Ireland is a small nation, we give prominence to the two child-friendly city schemes currently in operation. These cover both Belfast (as part of a WHO Healthy City Initiative) and Derry/Londonderry (UNICEF), with Belfast having the longest running scheme of any UK city. We commend this work, which appears to increasingly highlight the need for built environment approaches.

CONCLUSION

Within planning policies across the UK, there is a historic and ongoing under-appreciation of children and their specific needs from the built environment. However, Wales, Scotland, and London are increasingly leading the way towards more child-friendly planning. Indeed, the fact that so many child-friendly city schemes are now in progress suggests that we are in a paradigm-shifting time for this agenda. Writing this during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is noticeable that different nations have taken differing paths out of lockdown and we may see increasing policy divergence in the future. Children's need to socialise and play in public space has never been more acute. Child-friendly planning is a clear route to help us all 'build back better'. ●

Jenny Wood, trustee and co-founder of A Place in Childhood (APiC) and a research associate at Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh
Dinah Bornat
Child Friendly Planning in the UK - A Review can be downloaded here:
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Teenagers' Experiences of their Urban Neighbourhoods

Jackie Bourke discusses the results of her research with young people in Dublin



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Eerily empty urban spaces were a striking feature of lockdown measures to arrest the spread of the COVID-19 infection. Across the globe the impact of the pandemic on urban life has been significant, with recent research suggesting teenagers have been particularly adversely affected. Young people have expressed increased feelings of loneliness and anxiety, partly due to the fact that they have not been able to spend time hanging out with their friends.

In fact, urban public space is a key site in their everyday lives. This is where they meet up, where they socialise and where they foster a sense of collective and individual identity. Through their familiarity with their daily routes, they develop an expertise in their urban environments of potential value to all public space users.

However, urban public space has long been a contested space. Despite its importance to their everyday lives, teenagers do not always feel welcome. In a project that I recently worked on called 'Spatial Stories: An exploration of young people's everyday experience of public space' funded by The Arts Council of Ireland, one teenage participant commented: 'When you are on your own, you feel vulnerable, when you are with your friends, you are treated as suspicious'. This comment encapsulates the experience of many young people. As we move forward and rethink our cities as child-friendly spaces, we need to give consideration to the urban environment from the perspective of teenagers, and explore ways to incorporate their needs into urban design.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PUBLIC SPACE FOR TEENAGERS

Academic research shows that during this stage of their lives young people are gaining independent spatial mobility and accessing public space to socialize with each other, thereby fostering individual and collective identities. They regularly use the public realm to walk to and from school, shops or cafes, and as a space to meet their friends. Furthermore, being regular public space users, teenagers develop a unique expertise on how that

space functions, an expertise which could support sustainable urban development.

But cities are governed by economic priorities, political ideologies and social mores where teenagers are often viewed with suspicion and excluded. In this complex context, designing urban spaces that meet the needs of young people is challenging. A useful starting point is to understand public space and how it is experienced from the perspective of these key users.

UNDERSTANDING YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCE OF PUBLIC SPACE

Through my work with teenagers it is clear that empowering them to share their experience affords compelling insights into how cities work. The comment quoted above was made by a 16 year-old boy who participated in the project as we explored teenagers' ordinary everyday encounters in public space, and queried typical assumptions that are made about them.

Using photography, drawing, creative writing and walking fieldwork, the young people mapped out their experiences. In their work they conveyed an everyday interaction with the urban public realm that lends a fresh perspective on the urban environment. They showed an acute awareness of architectural detail and urban landscaping, of nature, of environmental neglect, and of how they

1–2 Posters playfully challenging how teenagers feel others see them



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are themselves often perceived in public space.

As part of the project, they created an intervention in public space by mounting A1 posters on lampposts, with slogans like *Teenagers Welcome* and *You are not Suspicious* playfully challenging how they feel they were viewed. Through this art project, the young people described public space as simultaneously welcoming and alienating, as a space where they feel a strong sense of belonging, while at the same time being wary of how they are perceived.

INVOLVE YOUNG PEOPLE IN URBAN PLANNING AND DESIGN

Among the principles underpinning a child-friendly city is the need to incorporate children and young people's views in decisions that affect them. Decisions on urban planning and design have a significant impact on the everyday lives of teenagers and their use of public space. As such, my recent study brought together teenagers, political representatives and community leaders in Dublin to discuss the urban environment. The aim of the study was to use art-based methods to communicate teenagers' experiences of urban public space to city policy-makers. Nineteen young people – ten girls and nine boys, aged 15 and 16 – participated in the study. The focus was their local school neighbourhood, Cabra, a 1930s inner Dublin suburb, originally developed by Dublin Corporation to house working class families. It is primarily a residential area with terraced two-bedroom houses with small front and back gardens. The school that the participants attend is within walking distance of a row of shops catering to local needs, and a sports centre within a small park. There is a steady flow of traffic through the area, calmed by a number of roundabouts with poor pedestrian crossing points.

Using creative mapping methods and child-led walks, the participants captured their experience of the routes that they walk regularly in the neighbourhood on their way to school, shops and the local sports centre. Through their artwork they identified places and objects of significance, which either enhance or impair their experience, as well as conveying a sense of the social significance of their walks. They also participated in group discussions during which they described what they liked about the area, and ways in which it might be improved.

TEENAGE VIEWS

In essence, the group involved in the project described the neighbourhood as vibrant but physically unattractive. They



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highlighted the facilities that they use such as the shops, park and sports centre. The participants remarked on the presence of the other people they see, out and about, contributing to a sense of community in the area that they enjoy.

While the walkability of this urban neighbourhood lends itself to those friendly encounters, the built environment is considered grey, dull, lacking in colour and prone to rubbish-dumping. It is also seen as unsafe in places, particularly with regard to traffic management. Cars are frequently parked on the footways, and there are inadequate pedestrian crossing facilities.

In their artwork they identified the difficulties and proposed solutions. As the project came to a close, the participants invited political representatives and community leaders, who shape local urban policy, to see their work and hear their views on the neighbourhood. During this meeting the participants spoke individually to the policymakers, using their art as a basis to share teenagers' perspectives on the urban environment.

The group then spoke collectively, identifying issues of concern to them and presenting suggestions for change. The changes that they proposed were simple but imaginative. The focus was on changes to the built environment, including better street furniture, such as more bins; adding more colour, such as flowers throughout the space; and painting façades in bright colours. They suggested increasing the number of pedestrian crossings, which they indicated could brighten up the area by being painted in unusual, bold colours. Other ideas focused on biodiversity and designing unusual bird feeders to hang in trees around the area. Finally, they made suggestions for facilities

3 – 6 Young people's views of Cabra, Dublin – road safety problems, the need for colourful buildings, rubbish hotspots, and more bins and neon zebra crossings. All photographs by Jackie Bourke

specifically aimed at teenagers, such as colourful seating, with charging points for their electronic devices.

BENEFITS FOR ALL

Despite the importance of public space in their everyday lives, young people are often overlooked in urban planning and design. However, it is clear from the findings of this study that they have valuable expertise on urban neighbourhoods, and can share useful insights into how urban spaces work. As regular users of public space, they highlight the importance of designing walkable urban spaces with access to local amenities. This in turn supports socialising with friends and fostering a wider sense of community. The problems that they identify, such as poor traffic management and unkempt urban environments, are common to all age groups, but the solutions that they propose are striking, creative, and colourful.

This study shows that teenagers have a particular understanding of the complex dynamics of public space. Furthermore, engaging with them in a collaborative process can enhance the aesthetic appeal and safety of public spaces for other users too. As such, capturing their knowledge facilitates the design of urban spaces that meet the needs of all age groups. Meanwhile, responding to the everyday needs of young people by, for example, installing teen-friendly seating areas, would encourage

As regular users of public space, they highlight the importance of designing walkable urban spaces with access to local amenities. This in turn supports socialising with friends and fostering a wider sense of community

a youthful presence and lend vibrancy to the public realm of towns and cities.

Rethinking public space from the perspective of young people presents an ideal opportunity to knit their views and needs into how the urban environment is designed, and to ensure that child-friendly cities include teenagers. ●

Jackie Bourke, researcher and lecturer in urban geography at University College, Dublin

Urban planning has its roots in creating better places for children and families. Yet today, very few neighbourhoods work well for children. Most neighbourhoods are designed and modified without a second thought for children's health and well-being, their needs or views.

While they are rarely the focus of planners, children, particularly those in low income contexts, arguably suffer the most from poor planning. The environmental threats that children face include traffic danger, air and noise pollution, and poor mental and physical health. Their bodies are more vulnerable to pollutants of all kinds, and less well equipped to cope with weather extremes.

Historically, children's participation has been the touchstone of improving cities for children, as advocated by the global child-friendly city movement, largely supported through UNICEF since the 1990s. But while this movement has engaged academics, advocates and municipalities, it has had little influence on planning and design. On the one hand, the vast majority of schemes do not involve children at all. On the other, even when they do, they are highly constrained, if not tokenistic exercises, which all too often leave the most important questions off the table, such as the relative needs of children versus motor vehicles and their drivers.

A NEW APPROACH

In response, some leading advocates for child-friendly cities have called for a shift in focus and a new approach encapsulated in the idea of children's everyday freedoms. In spatial terms, these

Child-Friendly Planning and Design

Tim Gill explains what it is and why it matters



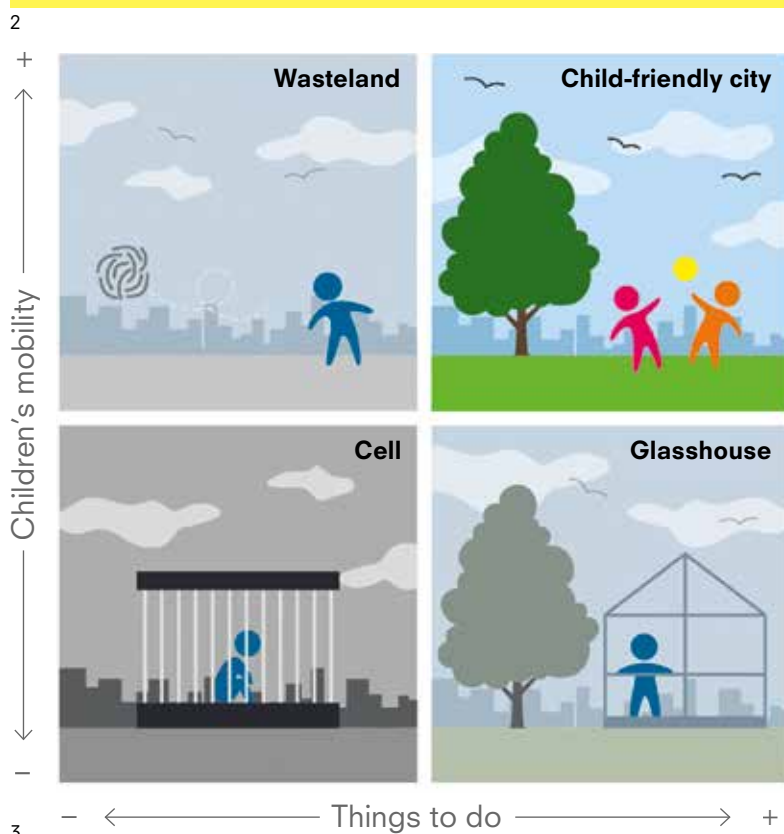
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1 Redesigned street, London EC1. Photograph by Tim Gill

TEN STRATEGIC INDICATORS FOR A CHILD-FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD

- 1 I walk to school/local shops without an adult (from age X*).
- 2 I cycle to school/local shops without an adult (from age X*).
- 3 I go outside and play within sight of my home (up to age X*).
- 4 I feel welcome and safe outside, during the day and after dark.
- 5 I have access to natural green space in my neighbourhood.
- 6 I have access to an outdoor place in my neighbourhood that is peaceful and quiet.
- 7 My neighbourhood has lots of trees.
- 8 I have access to a choice of outdoor places in my neighbourhood where I can meet and spend time with friends and there are fun things for us to do, including places where I can test myself and take some risks.
- 9 I have access to an outdoor place in my neighbourhood where my extended family and friends can have a picnic.
- 10 I travel from my own neighbourhood to downtown areas on foot, by bike or by public transport (from age X*).

*age may differ in different cultural/national contexts



freedoms can be seen as having two dimensions, in a framework first devised by the environmental geographer and spatial planning academic Marketta Kyttä, and taken up in the 2017 Arup report *Cities Alive: Designing for Urban Childhoods*.

The first dimension of child-friendly planning is the number and type of spaces and facilities on offer in a neighbourhood or city. The second dimension focuses on children's ability to access these spaces and facilities, with their independent mobility (i.e. independent of parents or other adult carers) being of particular importance.

As the diagram shows, neighbourhoods may fail to be child-friendly in two main ways. They may be effectively wastelands, devoid of engaging spaces and facilities. In such neighbourhoods, even if children are free to walk, cycle or use public transport, their travels 'reveal only the dullness of the environment'. Conversely to adult eyes, neighbourhoods may be full of places to go and things to do, yet be as restrictive as glasshouses if they are difficult to get around. Only neighbourhoods that both promote children's mobility and offer them a rich menu of spaces and opportunities can be called truly child-friendly.

This framework closely corresponds to children's own views about the built environment. Thanks to the efforts of children's rights and participation advocates around the world, we have a

good idea of what children think about neighbourhoods and cities. Wherever they come from, and whatever their cultural or economic backgrounds, children say they value green spaces, places to meet their friends, safety, and ease of movement. They dislike litter, heavy traffic, and a lack of choice of places to go. In physical terms, their ideal neighbourhood lies squarely in the top right quadrant of the child-friendly framework. The framework itself unpacks into a set of ten strategic indicators, in the form of short, clear, testable statements made from the point of view of a child.

CHILDREN'S PARTICIPATION

Adopting this framework does not mean ignoring children's rights and participation. Children are citizens in their own right, who experience cities and neighbourhoods differently from adults. The insights gained from meaningful, effective engagement with children are valuable and undervalued, both in their own terms and as catalysts for change. If heard and responded to, their voices will both help to make the basic case for sustainable cities, and lead to better designed streets, parks, public spaces and neighbourhoods. The key debate is about whether, why, when and how their views are sought, and what happens as a result. Ultimately, good participation is participation that expands children's everyday freedoms: that helps to increase their mobility, and the choice and accessibility of the opportunities and experiences that are open to them.

However, participation alone will never be enough to secure the key physical features of child-friendliness: streets free from car domination, green, playful public space, or compact, well-connected neighbourhoods. Moreover, we cannot expect children to provide all of the expertise needed to create child-friendly places. We also need a shared vision, and some foundational urban planning and design principles (Bornat, 2019).

THE ULTIMATE CHILD-FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURHOOD

One neighbourhood that comes close to realizing the vision of child-friendly planning is Vauban, the acclaimed masterplanned eco-suburb in the German city of Freiburg. A compact, mixed use neighbourhood with a population of around 5,500, built on a former military site in the 1990s and 2000s, Vauban features:

- well designed and overlooked, accessible, green public space
- good walking and cycling networks
- a direct tram service to the city centre.

The masterplanning was influenced by a large academic study into children's play and independent mobility. Car ownership is particularly low; most roads have no on-street parking and limited access for

2 Ten strategic indicators for a child-friendly neighbourhood
3 The two dimensions of child-friendly urban planning. Image by Arup/ Samuel Williams, based on the work of Marketta Kyttä

cars, which are required to be parked in one of three peripheral multi-storey car parks.

Vauban is medium-high density, with almost all housing in the form of four to five storey apartment buildings. All dwellings offer direct, car-free access to public space (either green space or restricted access roads). There are few dedicated play spaces; for the most part, play structures and features are integrated into the wider landscape.

Freiburg and Vauban set a high benchmark for child-friendliness. But other cities have also taken forward significant initiatives. These include Rotterdam (which has arguably invested more in child-friendly initiatives than any other), Ghent, Tirana and Recife. In the UK, the public space strand of the EC1 New Deal for Communities programme, which transformed dozens of streets, parks, public spaces and housing amenity areas in a disadvantaged part of London, stands out as an exceptional case study (although sadly it has never been robustly evaluated).

CHILD-FRIENDLINESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

As Vauban shows, child-friendly neighbourhoods look and feel a lot like sustainable neighbourhoods. They are light in traffic. They have plenty of trees for shade. They also have easily accessible, green, public open spaces for play, recreation and contact with nature. They are free from harmful pollutants in the air, on land, and in water. The services, shops and facilities that families need every day are close at hand, and easy to get to on foot or by bicycle, with good public transport connections to those destinations that are further away and less essential.

The connections between child-friendliness and sustainability are reinforced when a long-term view is taken. Tackling climate change needs people to walk, cycle and use public transport more, and to change our consumption of food and natural resources. Supporting active travel modes from an early age helps to form sustainable transport choices that are more likely to be carried through into adulthood. Weaving contact with nature into the everyday lives of children sows the seeds for a more responsible relationship with the biosphere. Furthermore, the presence in a city of significant numbers of children and care-givers is an expression of that city's long-term prospects for employment and economic viability.

THE STRATEGIC AND MORAL CASE

The climate crisis, environmental degradation, poor health, economic precarity and rapid unplanned urbanization – not to mention responding to the 2020 Coronavirus pandemic – are creating huge challenges for cities and their leaders. Telling city leaders that on top of the other challenges they face, they have to separately address children's perspectives, has not worked in the past and there is little sign it will do so in future. But there is another way: to show how adopting a child's lens helps to tackle those other challenges.

Child-oriented urban planning and design helps in two ways. It builds the basic case for cities to be more human-scale, equitable and sustainable. It also improves plans and designs by shining a light on what makes places enjoyable, walkable and playful. As former mayor of Bogotá Enrique Peñalosa puts it, children are 'an indicator species' for cities, 'a city that works well for children, works well for everyone'.

The child-friendly approach to planning and design joins the dots between progressive planning and transportation policies, positive health, environmental, and community outcomes, and long-term economic prospects. It also strengthens the arguments for them and makes abstract urban policy debates more concrete, meaningful and engaging for ordinary people. It can help to counter vocal interests that have disproportionate influence, reveal the flaws in quick fixes, and foster consensus, long-term solutions.

Professor Rebecca Henderson, a global leader in business ethics at Harvard Business School, has said that capitalism is 'radically unbalanced' in that it 'focuses only on me and now,



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and not on us and later'. The twin failings of narrow, vested interests and short-termism also bedevil urban planning. What is more, planning is perhaps a uniquely challenging system process. Cities are paradigmatic complex systems. It is often hard to predict the outcomes of initiatives. There is a bewildering range of stakeholders. Different groups have differing interests, and hold diverse, often conflicting, value systems. There are many possible points of intervention and a diverse set of actors who often operate at different levels. These challenges are arguably made more difficult by distrust of experts.

The Swedish teenager Greta Thunberg shows how children can act as a powerful lens through which we can reframe social, economic and environmental challenges and injustices. Her school climate strike protest has added a compelling voice to the call to tackle the global climate crisis. Her clarity and intensity gave her the ear of global leaders, and her youth added authenticity and moral authority to her message. Looking at planning and design through children's eyes does not just offer fresh perspectives and a compelling new urban vision. It reveals the best way to set cities on a firm course away from ecological, economic and social decay. ●

Tim Gill, independent researcher and writer
This paper is adapted from his forthcoming book *Urban Playground: How child-friendly planning and design can save cities* (reproduced by permission of RIBA Publications)

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4 Well overlooked, playful, green public space in Vauban. Photograph by Ciaran Cuffe

Making London Child-Friendly

Anna Mansfield and Charlie Couve report on how research is informing policy and practice



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Almost 25 per cent of London's residents are under 18. Globally, 60 per cent of urban citizens will be under the age of 18 by 2030. Forward-thinking cities can improve the lives of all their inhabitants by focusing on the needs of children and young people in fundamentally new ways. The rapid growth, intensification and densification of cities make space more valuable and more contested, and children are often overlooked in both planning policy and the competition for space. Designing our cities better for children, and protecting space for those that currently have no say in how it is allocated or developed, is amongst our most urgent and critical urban issues.

In 2019, Publica and Erect Architecture were commissioned by the Greater London Authority (GLA) to conduct research and develop principles and recommendations, investigating how built environment and policy interventions can contribute towards improving the child-friendliness of London's streets, spaces, and housing, with a particular focus on independent mobility. The study *Making London Child-Friendly* is part of the Mayor's Good Growth by Design programme, which seeks to ensure that development, growth and change is inclusive, and benefits everyone who lives in the city.

It is a fundamental right of children and young people to have access to safe play and social spaces, and to be able to move safely between them. The UN Declaration on the Rights of the Child defines children's rights in three parts: the right to be safe and protected, the right to a high quality and sustainable environment, and the right to involvement in the decisions that

affect them. Our study approaches the development of a child-friendly city as fulfilling these rights. Whilst seeking positive outcomes and measuring change is crucial, placing the fulfilment of rights in policy is critical and leads to more diverse and long-term benefits.

CHALLENGES

We have some clear challenges. The study defines independent mobility as 'the freedom of children and young people to occupy and move around the public realm – either alone or with other children – without adult supervision'. This freedom is in decline: in less than 30 years, the percentage of primary school parents allowing their children to walk to school alone fell from 86 per cent to just 25 per cent (Shaw et al, 2015). Childhood obesity is increasing rapidly, with 28 per cent of children in the UK overweight or obese. In London this average is 40 per cent, and is significantly higher in some boroughs. According to Public Health England, there are also more than 110,000 children in the capital suffering

1 Paris: the ambitious Berges de Seine project pedestrianised 7km of riverside thoroughfare, creating a new playful promenade and safe route through the city

from significant mental health issues. Furthermore a study in 2017 found that 802 of London's education facilities were in areas where the NO2 air pollution breached EU legal limits, and 92 per cent of primary schools were in areas that exceeded the legal limits. A further study in 2019 found that children travelling to school are exposed to air pollution five times worse than at any other time of the day.

Although these challenges are stark and urgent, they are not insurmountable and now is the time to seize the opportunity to effect positive and long lasting change. We are seeing initiatives across the city to challenge the dominance of vehicles, creating more space for pedestrians and cyclists (even before COVID-19 made this an urgent imperative). Our collective understanding of the impacts of poor air quality, particularly on children, has advanced rapidly, and the segregated play spaces built in new developments have powerfully captured attention about what kind of city we are building, and for whom.

TEN THEMES

We started the research with an extensive literature review, which highlighted ten key intersecting socio-cultural and built environment characteristics that impact the independent mobility of children and young people. These include risk, health, supervision, the importance of third places, and gender. Girls, especially teenage girls, are more likely to have restrictions placed on their freedoms. Research in different housing typologies in London found that boys are more likely to play out, visit a park and ride a bicycle alone, and have fewer concerns over safety in public spaces.

White Arkitekter studied this issue in Stockholm and found that younger children use public facilities and playgrounds equally, but from the age of eight, everything changes. From this age onwards, 80 per cent of public space users are boys, while girls feel ten times more insecure in the same places.

From here, we developed four lenses, which are fundamental components: policy, participation, design and management. To create child-friendly urban environments, we must address them holistically. The study outlines principles and recommendations for each, and includes precedents and case studies highlighting London, UK and international best practice.

How and what we measure is important, as it defines the data that we gather, which ultimately defines outcomes. Design eventually becomes tailored to meet planning criteria and measuring areas is not enough. Certain facets of mobility, such as mobility license (the rules of mobility granted to children) and territorial range (the distance that can be travelled) can be measured through methods such as soft-GIS and interviews, to provide a detailed understanding of what exists to restrict and enable independent mobility. Children's play and independent mobility is complex and it requires both qualitative and quantitative measurement. Setting the right brief for a space is crucial: looking closely with children and young people at how an area works at the moment, beyond the red line of the site boundary.

POLICY

Policy at both the city and borough scale is crucial in facilitating and setting standards for child-friendly design and planning, to improve the health, development, and well-being of children and young people. Child-friendly policies are those that provide guidance on interventions to realise the rights of children.

Starting from a Mayoral pledge, London Borough of Hackney Council has pursued an inter-departmental agenda of child-friendliness through initiatives across multiple departments. Over 250,000 car journeys are created in London by the school run in London every day. The School Streets initiative pedestrianises the roads around primary schools during pick-up and drop-off times, removing the danger of cars, helping to increase physical activity, reducing air pollution, and improving connectivity with the surrounding area. The scheme was initially trialed in five pilot projects, and its success prompted the

	Public Realm	Leisure, Libraries and Green Spaces	Strategy, Policy and Economic Development	Public Health	Regeneration
Parklets					
Smarter Travel					
Bikeability					
Bike around the borough					
Quietways					
Cycle to School					
School Clean Air Zones					
Play Streets					
School Streets					
Safe Transport Teams					
Junior Road Safety Officers					
Children's Centres					
Learning Outside the Classroom					
School Grounds Habitat Action Plan					
Air Quality Focus Areas					
Air Quality Impact Assessment					
Travel Plans					
HENRY					
Greenways					
CFC Reports					

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council to publish a detailed step-by-step toolkit for implementation, which was distributed to local authorities across the UK. School Streets will now be extended to forty Hackney primary schools as they re-open after lockdown.

PARTICIPATION

The processes of planning and design are key points at which children and young people can engage with projects and changes in their neighbourhood. Meaningful engagement should focus on lived experience and start from the earliest possible stages, including pre-design consultation. Participation needs to be understood as a long-term process; ensuring post-intervention feedback and analysis means that co-creation will not be limited to the design of a space, but also its management and iterative changes.

2 Hackney's child-friendly interventions across public realm, leisure, economic development, public health and regeneration departments

3 The BuildUp Hackney Site, creating a new public space with young people



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Children and young people are not passive and are able to negotiate various boundaries: the mobility license granted by their parents, or through imaginative play, the boundary of possibility in seemingly mundane urban landscapes. Children are therefore active citizens who use and negotiate the city, with a set of rights and responsibilities that can be achieved through engagement and participation. When approaching the planning or design of space, it is important to acknowledge that children are key knowledge holders and stakeholders in their local area.

In 2019, the BuildUp Hackney project engaged young people from Hackney Wick in the creation of a pocket park, from initial mapping, concept development and stakeholder conversations, to the design and construction of the space. The project was developed following findings from a 2017 report by Hackney Quest that reported children and young people's concerns of being excluded from the decision-making processes and becoming separated from the rapid changes happening in the area.

In Norway, the Planning and Building Act states that children and young people must be included in planning and design processes. This is articulated in Oslo through the use of the Kids' Tracks consultation platform app, where children geotag and evaluate locations they, and the aggregated data is fed back to the municipality. For instance, certain roads are identified as having heavy traffic, and users express that they want more provision to improve crossing safety. In conjunction with the Heart Zones scheme (similar to School Streets) and other interventions, the Kids' Tracks platform contributes towards Norway's Vision Zero commitment. Improving the safety of children and young people, whilst creating a culture and education of collaboration

and participation, has resulted in zero pedestrian or cyclist deaths in 2019 in Oslo, and no child road deaths across the whole country.

DESIGN

One of the principal aims of the study is to investigate how the spatial conditions and material features of the built environment can contribute towards improving the child-friendliness of London's streets, spaces, and housing.

The way in which housing and residential developments are designed impacts on the ability of children and young people to move between domestic, playable and social spaces. A good physical housing environment will incorporate and consider children's activities and play spaces as necessary elements from the outset, creating formal and informal provision for multiple ages, and safe routes to amenities in the wider area. Designing-in multiple uses encourages social activities and social interactions, enabling overlooking and passive supervision. It is critical that children and young people feel both safe and welcome, and able to play and socialise in public and communal spaces.

Play, social spaces and independent mobility should be considered from the beginning of a project, at the vision stage, including mapping the wider area, enabling a holistic view of existing provision. It is never too early in a design process to ask people about their experiences of where they live, particularly young people, who are not often included in setting project briefs. Places that young people use must be protected and given status in masterplans and design briefs. We need alternative mechanisms to measure value, in both new developments and in existing places, and to learn through post-occupancy analysis how designs have been adapted, whether they worked, and what should be done next.

The Kings Crescent Estate in Hackney demonstrates how this kind of holistic design process can be integrated from brief to delivery. The estate is undergoing a two-phase development process, with 492 new homes and 101 renovated homes. Phase 1 included the introduction of a largely pedestrianised play street, providing opportunities for different age groups to play and socialise. It connects the estate west to Blackstock Road and east to Clissold Park, enabling access to a high street and a park. Expansive play opportunities are designed into every courtyard. Engagement with young residents was conducted in early stages through on-site workshops and the creation of a garden. Following the completion of Phase 1, post-occupancy evaluation gathered feedback from residents about the process of consultation, construction, and the design features, to inform improvements to the

4 Barcelona: a simple intervention can reclaim street space for safe mobility and play
5 Waltham Forest's Mini Holland scheme created a new shared space on Orford Road, with planters, trees and bike stands, and timed road closures

Play should not and cannot be separated from mobility, as both contain independence and self-direction, and children do not move through the city in the same way as adults

Phase 2 brief and modifications to the existing development work. Phase 2 will include a large open courtyard with extensive play and recreation provision for children and young people.

Fulfilling children and young people's right to mobility means creating a safe and accessible urban environment with many places to go and options of things to do. Streets and spaces are key parts of children's infrastructure. They provide a means for children and young people to move around their neighbourhood and the wider city, and are the places of interaction with friends and other members of the community. In terms of safety, design interventions should aim to remove danger from the environment rather than remove children from a dangerous environment. However, play should not and cannot be separated from mobility, as both contain independence and self-direction, and children do not move through the city in the same way as adults.

A joined-up approach is being delivered in Waltham Forest through the Mini Hollands programme, which includes a range of transport and mobility provisions to create a safe environment for walking and cycling. Over 22km of cycle lanes, 40 modal filters, two street closures, and 15 pocket parks have been installed so far across the borough, following the Healthy Streets and active design principles adopted by Transport for London. The borough scale is an important one – it covers a small enough spatial area that a dense network of safe and integrated streets and spaces can be created.

MANAGEMENT

Without consideration of long-term management and maintenance, even the best designed spaces will fail. It is crucial to create a management regime, or consider that spaces may have to be adapted and respond to changes over time. This management flexibility is not limited to built features, but includes temporary interventions such as programming and governance.

The Alexandra and Ainsworth Estate was part of a large public housing masterplan designed by Neave Brown, with landscape by Janet Jack, built by Camden Council between 1972 and 1978. The key organising element of the scheme was two parallel pedestrian streets, separated by a park and play spaces. The original park was completed in 1979, and was designed as a playable landscape consisting of five linked sunken play areas. Over time the landscape and open spaces of the estate deteriorated, with underuse due to a sense of danger, and lack of maintenance; a number of the landscape features were damaged and play equipment had been removed.

In 2015, the residents won Heritage Lottery funding, so that Erect Architecture and JL Gibbons landscape architects worked on a design to repair, conserve and restore the estate as an integrated Modernist-designed playable landscape, to improve the management of trees and planting, to replace lost features, and to revitalise the park as the focus of community activity. The scheme crucially improved accessibility, permeability and legibility within the park and restored key sightlines across the play spaces and to adjacent homes. A ten-year management and maintenance plan was also developed to ensure the ongoing preservation of the landscape, including a ring-fenced budget for maintaining landscape features.



6



7

The *Making London Child-Friendly* study is intended to be a catalyst for further action that promotes the rights of children and young people in London, across policy and built environment decision making and interventions. The new *London Plan* is setting strategic policy for provision, and a new child-friendly SPG is currently being developed, based on the report. Several boroughs are now also developing child-friendly SPDs with young local residents, and the School Streets programme is being expedited across the city. Tactical and temporary measures are showing how we can seize the opportunity to work towards establishing a critical mass of high-quality, child friendly interventions, which will lead to long-term change. ●

Anna Mansfield, Director of Strategy and Research, and Charlie Couve, Research Assistant, Publica

REFERENCE

Shaw, B., Bickett, M., Elliot, B., Fagan-Watson, B., and Mocca, E., 2015. *Children's Independent Mobility: an international comparison and recommendations for action*. London: Policy Studies Institute.

6 The redesigned play space on the Alexandra and Ainsworth Estate improved sightlines between the play spaces and homes, improving local connectivity
7 Examples from Scandinavia show how innovative approaches can encourage use of both play spaces and routes after school when darkness sets in



1

Designing Neighbourhoods For Play

Katja Stille considers the urban design opportunities

In July 2020, the Urban Design Group ran a series of webinars to explore how to deliver a better future for children. I had the privilege of chairing these events, and I will highlight here two key concerns, as well as two related projects, which may provide inspiration to others.

FREEDOM AND MIXING

One of the most memorable and sad points to arise has been the realisation of how much children's freedom to roam has been curbed. Neither intentionally nor by design, children's independent mobility has been eroded over several generations. This will have happened slowly, with good intentions and as a reaction to changes in streets that do not support a child-friendly environment. We have heard numerous times about the need to create safer streets through a reduction in traffic speeds and the limitation of vehicles in residential environments. Nobody will argue with this, and yet with few exceptions, we don't deliver safer streets, possibly because children's interests are not high enough on the political agenda.

The speakers highlighted the need to remember our childhoods. Do we not remember those times when we were relying

on our parents to take us places? Didn't they often arrive to take us home too early, and just at that moment when we were playing? Didn't we all argue for greater independence?

Another issue is the need to encourage opportunities for intergenerational engagement. Too often we erect barriers (and not always physical) that segregate different age groups. High fences surround our schools, playgrounds are clearly demarcated, and at worst design features discourage teenagers from occupying certain spaces. Yet children have been described as social glue.

'Studies of mixed income communities show that most mixing across social groups takes place between children. It is these contacts – in nurseries, playgroups, schools and in public spaces – that provide opportunities for adults to meet and form relationships. Children provide a common ground and shared interest between people in different tenures. People with children have a high stake in the success of a neighbourhood and the quality of its services.'

Joseph Rowntree Foundation (2006),
Mixed Communities: Success & Sustainability

TWO EXAMPLES

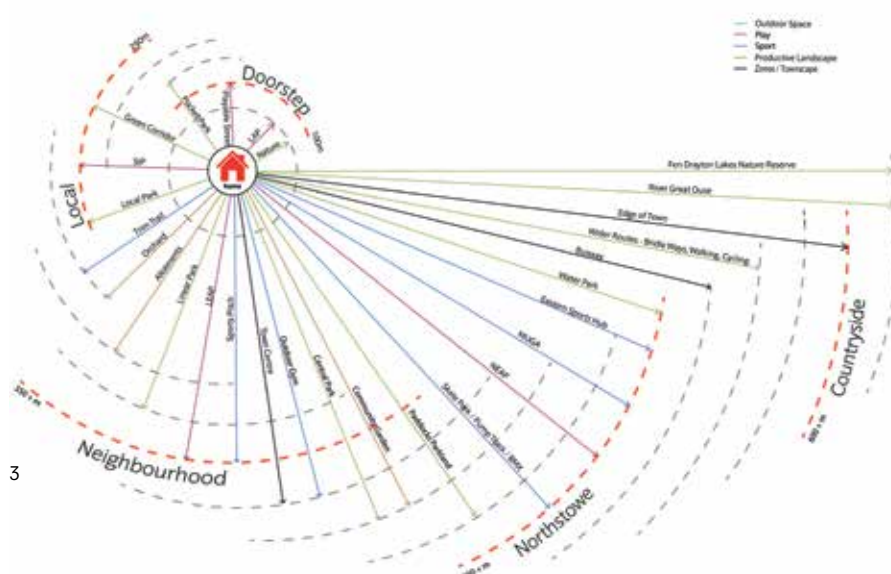
The following projects illustrate how we may be able to encourage independent mobility as well as intergenerational engagement.

1 Play Street, Kings
Crescent, Hackney



2

Children provide a common ground and shared interest between people in different tenures. People with children have a high stake in the success of a neighbourhood and the quality of its services



3

by Chris Blandford Associates with support from Catherine Max Consulting (health advice) and Rethinking Childhood (play advice) considers how play can be embedded to encourage all future residents, whatever their ages to lead active and healthy lifestyles.

The document brings together a wealth of research and translates this into a practical, implementable and enforceable strategy. Here, I have drawn out the objectives that relate to the aspects above:

- To ensure that outdoor play, recreation and contact with nature are part of everyday life through the seasons.
 - To provide comprehensive opportunities for unsupervised play and independent mobility within circulation routes and low traffic environments.
 - To provide Play on the Way routes incorporating sequential and incidental play elements from residential areas to key destinations such as schools, shops, parks, leisure facilities and other places of social interaction.
 - To provide, alongside the formal play facilities, a Playable Landscape which is intrinsic to the proposed thoroughfares and open spaces.
- To ensure that play and recreation meet the needs of a diverse range of age groups and abilities.
- To ensure that play and recreation provision promotes opportunities for intergenerational cohesion and relationship building.
 - To ensure that play provision caters for the needs of Northstowe residents as well as for people from surrounding neighbourhoods, and includes opportunities for wider community integration.

This strategy has been put into practice and is currently being implemented in the first residential neighbourhood delivered in Phase 2. Urban Splash, Proctor&Matthews and Grant Associates

Kings Crescent is an estate renewal project led by the London Borough of Hackney. It has a long history of failed regeneration attempts, part demolitions and delays to much needed improvement works. Within the last couple years the first two phases have been implemented, and the streets and residential blocks embrace play for all ages.

A play street, designed by muf Architecture, forms the central spine for the new residential community and creates a direct, and mostly car free, link to the adjacent public park. It is a freely accessible space attracting residents as well as people passing by of all ages to pause, sit, meet and play. From my own experience as a visitor, it appears to be a playable space encouraging children and adults to use the space.

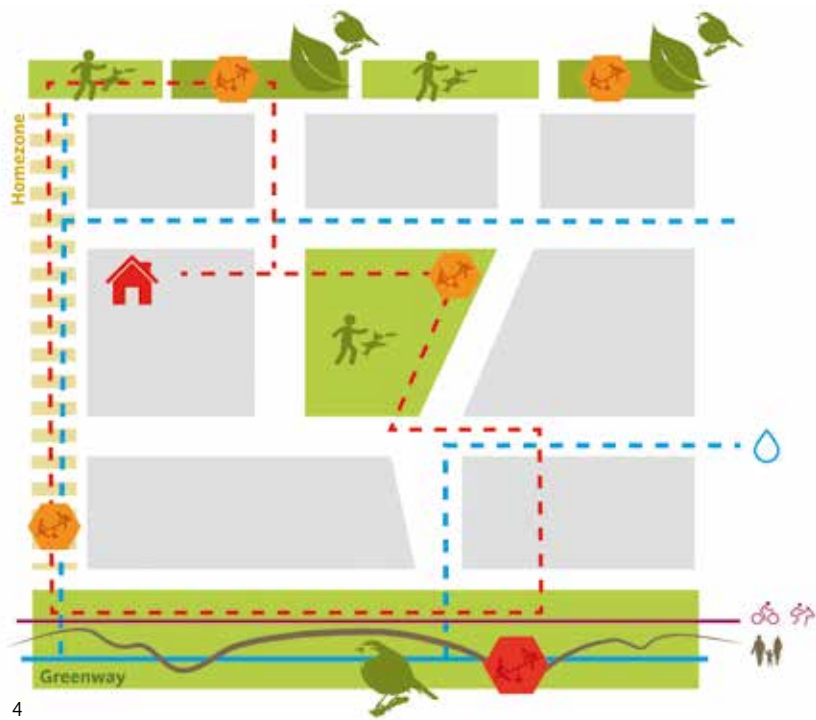
‘Social and more active play is located in the centre of scheme, reinforcing the value of the play street. Play in the central square consolidates the role of the play street, layering play as a series of carefully composed and intentionally theatrical structures. Play in the courtyards is more informal and incidental, embedded into the landscape treatment, creating small slides and bridges amidst generous planting.’

Design and Access Statement for Kings Crescent Phases

In Phase 2 of Northstowe in Cambridgeshire, Homes England, seeks to go beyond the usual approach of delivering play in new residential neighbourhoods and puts into practice the latest thinking. The *Health, Youth and Play Strategy* (HYPS), prepared

2 Kings Crescent Play Street is a natural link to the park.

3 The Northstowe Home and Away diagram illustrates the opportunities for play and healthy living within the local area



- Local Opportunities
- Home
 - Neighbourhood Walk
Approx 880m
 - LAP
 - LEAP
 - Park
 - Orchard
 - Nature
 - Trail
 - Cycle Route
 - Bridleway
 - Swale
 - Wet Swale
 - Dry Swale



4 A Neighbourhood Amble, highlighting the potential opportunities available on the doorstep
5-6 Opportunities for play and healthy living within the local area in Northstowe and its surroundings, from HYPs Strategy: Woodland Garden and Lime Tree Bosque

have applied the strategy in the first parcel of Northstowe Phase 2, and are delivering play as an integral element of the new neighbourhood. The elements include:

- An emphasis on productive plants through the Linear Urban Park to create a Playful and Productive trail
- Incidental Play on the Way features along the main route to the school
- A community lawn within the park to allow for gatherings, fitness and relaxation
- An immersive woodland walk through an existing tree belt, linking to a wider ecological trail
- Local areas of play to encourage safe play each one with a different theme or focus
- A series of pocket parks across the scheme that provide immersive green pockets for play and relaxation
- A variety of cycling, walking and jogging routes that link to the wider circulation networks.

CONCLUSIONS

Both of the above examples demonstrate how play can be integrated and layered to encourage independent mobility, as well as a variety of opportunities for intergenerational engagement by providing an open invitation for play to everyone and a choice of activities. With an unspecific public realm and street furniture, people are invited to consider if this is play equipment or a seating opportunity. The best spaces are owned by everyone, are inclusive and not designed specifically for one age group. ●

Katja Stille, Director, Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design, and incoming UDG Chair



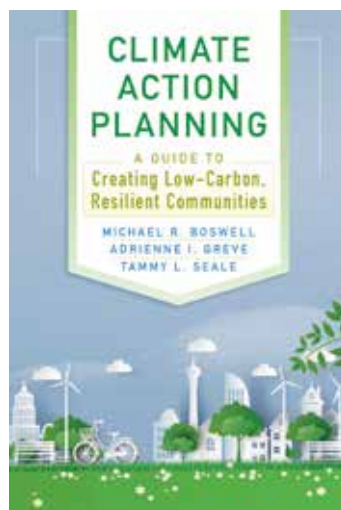
Retrofitting for Flood Resilience, A Guide to Building and Community Design

Edward Barsley, 2020, RIBA, £40.00, ISBN 978 1859467343

This very well illustrated book is exactly what urban designers and architects need to get to grips with the many different causes of flooding, the likely impacts, and how to retrofit places to deal positively with those risks. As the founder of The Environmental Design Studio (TEDS), Edward Barsley has brought together a range of perspectives and case studies to represent the issues and those most affected by them, and to show how best to adapt places to flooding.

Divided into six sections, the guide explains flood risk contexts and consequences; types of floods; tools to understand flood risk; managing risk; strategies for buildings; and, planning for the future. Seen through the eyes of nine different people, each representing a different profession or members of the community, the book's aim is not only to show how to reduce the impacts of flooding, but how to 'move from a state of surviving to thriving', given the watery places that we inhabit today.

The detailed illustrations and vignettes show the impacts on the built environment and a community, during and immediately after a flood, using a fictitious place, but with photos from real situations. They include a timeline from the first alerts being received to flooding, recovery and back to eventually inhabiting buildings again. Yet we know that with climate change, each cycle of flooding is likely to be worse and will require longer recovery times. The examination of different types of floods is useful, as it deals with the much-discussed risk of sea level rises, storm surges, tidal, tsunami and river flooding, as well as surface water (pluvial), ground water and sewer flooding, which affect inland communities in ways that are not often acknowledged as significant



risks and threats to healthy and happy lives. For each of these conditions recommended adaptation strategies are suggested. Moving on, the tools to understand the nature of flood risk include a valuable summary of the flood impacts on buildings, from buoyancy to capillary rise and erosion, which can each fundamentally undermine buildings' integrity, especially given the toxic mix of material loosely described as 'flood water'.

The chapter on flood risk management begins the positive story about how to design and actively plan our way to less flooding, from sub-regional landscape and settlement management through to the building scale, so that adaptation strategies can be devised and adopted in different contexts; the case studies are a valuable demonstration of what is being carried out elsewhere in Europe and the US. Looking at the building scale, there is a fascinating examination of the many ways in which flood water can enter buildings, and hence how to build in flood resilience; solutions include repositioning habitable rooms, elevating buildings, allowing water entry, excluding water, and more. Overall this book provides a great array of detailed advice and technical solutions for different communities and contexts, presented in a very engaging format. ●

Louise Thomas

Climate Action Planning, A Guide to Creating Low-Carbon Resilient Communities

Michael R Boswell, Adrienne I Greve, and Tammy L Seale, 2019, Island Press, £26.00, ISBN 978 1610919647

This is a well-researched and written handbook useful for all involved in curbing greenhouse gas emissions and adaptation measures against global warming at the local level. The authors, who are academics and

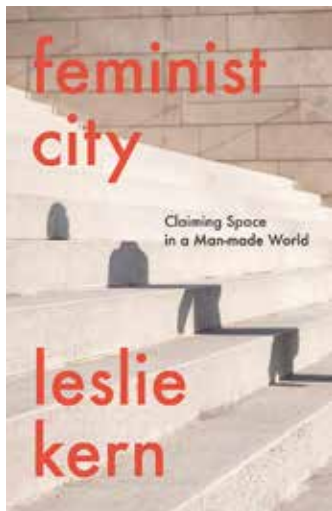
practitioners, were actively involved over several years in the development and implementation of climate action plans, as well as sectoral goals for climate change mitigation and adaptation.

The book consists of ten chapters and two very useful appendices, one describing the main points of climate science, the other giving details of a public participation programme.

Although focused on action at the local level, the authors include the wider national and international context of greenhouse gas emission reduction targets and other state or regional objectives in different parts of the USA, not least to demonstrate the limits of local action. They give a precise definition of what they understand by climate action planning and make clear that its success depends on community involvement, approval and cooperation from conception of a climate action plan to its formal adoption, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and adjustment. For that reason they emphasise what they call co-benefits which accompany actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and identify where adaptation may be necessary for coastal erosion and rising sea levels. The book includes numerous boxes with examples of how municipalities have adopted and implemented targets and climate action plans.

The authors emphasise the importance of instruments to quantify targets in two rather technical chapters on 'Greenhouse gas emission accounting' and on 'Climate change vulnerability assessment'. The chapter on 'Pathways to successful implementation' emphasises the need for a budget and its support by municipal leaders across parties and election cycles.

They attribute the greatest chances of success to a consistent method of engaging the local community, acknowledging the efforts and sometimes restrictions that the community and individuals need to endorse in order to turn climate action plans into reality. They are also pragmatic about how much can be demanded from the general public and what advantages need to be in it for them.



The concluding chapter, 'Time to act', brings together the methodological, political and technical aspects of climate action planning which they see in the longer term as an inherent part of statutory local planning, in the way energy efficiency has been included in mainstream planning.

The book's key messages are: active community involvement throughout; participation by key stakeholders from the public, private and voluntary sectors; budgets secured for implementation for the short and the longer term; and, high-level political support for those responsible for climate action planning, implementation, monitoring and adjustment. ●

Judith Ryser

Feminist City: Claiming Space in a Man-made World

Leslie Kern, 2020, Verso, £12.99, ISBN 978 1788739818

'When I teach this material... my geography students get really discouraged or really annoyed. They were so hopeful thinking about environmental and design solutions. And then they realize that no amount of lighting is going to abolish the patriarchy. "So, what are the answers?" they sulk...'

I have to admit to sulking. I began this book seeking design inspiration, but ended disappointed. Kern is a feminist geographer and this is a geography text, so I was under no illusion that it was a design sourcebook. Nevertheless, I hoped it may offer design insights. In fact, despite Kern's assertion about her students, she does fleetingly touch on some interesting real world examples that, if not design solutions per se, certainly have design implications. Some of these sounded very intriguing and left me wanting to know more (such as the gender equal snow ploughing strategy in Stockholm).

Sulking aside, what I enjoyed was the mix of personal experience interspersed with



references to other studies and academic work on urban geographies. Kern places herself at the centre of the book as 'the geography closest in', reflecting on her lived experiences in London, Toronto and other cities, and framing issues faced by women via a series of themes (city of men, moms, friendship, being alone, protest, fear). Sometimes she is a little too discursive (notably the chapter on protest), but overall these chapters provide a good introduction to reading the city from a feminist perspective.

The final chapter, City of Possibility, concludes that we need to recognise that cities of the Global North are planned and designed to maintain a white, straight, cis-gendered, male way of social organisation. Kern rightly asserts that to truly deliver a city that works for women, women must be more present and involved in city design and decision-making (I say bring on the matriarchy!). She also references various movements (Black Lives Matter, Fight for \$15 campaign, Focus E15 Campaign) that are in some way enabling the feminist city by challenging patriarchal social organisations. Nevertheless, this chapter felt like a missed opportunity to present a call to arms for a truly feminist urbanism. It would have been great to hear her thoughts, even if formative, for positive change, maybe not the design solutions that I was (wrongly) seeking, but some steps towards the city of possibility. ●

Richard Crappsley, Associate, Steer

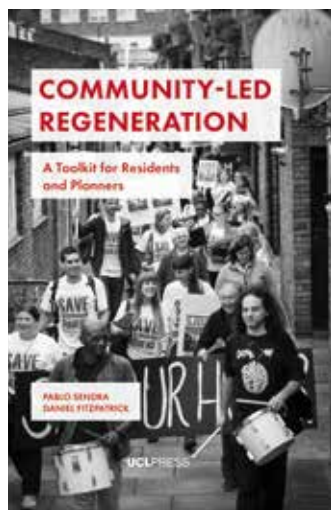
Designing Disorder: Experiments and Disruptions in the City

Pablo Sendra and Richard Sennett, 2020, Verso, £14.99, ISBN 978 1788737807

This book can be seen as an ongoing and open-ended conversation rather than a static presentation of the authors' points of view. In the first of its three parts, Sennett revisits

his first book, *Uses of Disorder, Personal Identity and City Life* (1970), and its ideas on designing disorder. He discusses the merits of the open city and its main principles: porosity of territory, incomplete form, and non-linear development, which enable cities to become democratic in terms of a tactile experience. Sennett's *Uses of Disorder* was the inspiration for Sendra's work with local community activists and local authorities, which constitutes the second and main part of the book. The third part is a conversation between the two authors moderated by the publisher Leo Hollis. This makes for a very lively and engaging read.

When it was published *Uses of Disorder* soon became an inspiration for the social movements of that time, and especially for activists to whom the notion of anarchy, diversity and the unruliness of cities appealed to their pursuit of alternative lifestyles. In the second part, *Infrastructures for disorder*, Sendra shows through his work with activists in West London, how social movements have evolved since, and how these have influenced mayors in Barcelona, Madrid, Bogota and more, who have promoted greater citizen involvement in planning and more horizontal forms of governance. In agreement with Sennett on the creative tension between those inside and outside local institutions, Sendra illustrates with many practical examples, the interaction between grassroots networks and what he calls municipalism. He rightly highlights the contradiction in how to design disorder while design tends to introduce order in urban space. His way out is to combine the design of technical, social and cultural infrastructures below and above ground, as well as in longitudinal and cross sections. This type of design is based on continuous negotiations, including arguments and possible conflicts about shared space and living together. He illustrates his approach with imaginary scenarios in which such infrastructure could grow, evolve and respond to continuous feedback. These design techniques enable him to open up closed developments and create conditions for the unplanned. Most importantly, he co-designs with the local



population for interaction and uncertainty.

The third part addresses Unmaking and Making, Sennett emphasises the importance of globalisation and its neo-liberal context, whereby capital seeks to turn a city into a saleable product, whereas in the 1960s, urban renewal was more about planners wanting to impose order. The authors' approach is about experimentation in cooperation with inhabitants. They prefer chance gatherings to surveillance and design that permits unpredictable interaction, helping people to overcome their fear of the unknown. They believe that it is possible to design the relationships between the formal (planned) and the informal (lived) city, while people become competent in dealing with indeterminacy.

A key question remains unresolved: how to prevent communities from being exclusive in these processes? For Sennett, people belong to a multitude of communities. However, scale matters for people's identity, and also relates to an intimate and a bigger exposed scale. Nevertheless, the question remains whether alternative co-design is able to deliver the promoted 'unfinishable' without planning law-enabling things to evolve. ●

Judith Ryser

Community Led Regeneration, A Toolkit for Residents and Planners

Pablo Sendra and Daniel Fitzpatrick,
2020, UCL Press, £20.00,
ISBN 978 1787356061

This book emanates from cooperation between academics and community organisations and can be seen as a companion to *Designing Disorder* by Sennett and Sendra (see above). It is based on research carried out at UCL's Bartlett School of Planning entitled Community-led housing regeneration: between the formal and the informal. It

documents how social housing residents in London are defending their homes and communities against demolition, and emphasises their positive contribution to the care and regeneration of their areas by self-organising, proposing alternative plans and gaining decision-making powers.

Part I, analysing the tools, strategies and actors of seven case studies, includes formal planning tools as well as community campaigning and direct action. The outcome is a toolkit for communities and planners engaged in developing community-led regeneration plans and actions to take control of their estates. This includes the formal rights to transfer to and to manage community land trusts, register assets of community value, judicial reviews, as well as informal designs of people's plans, unpaid labour, building in-house expertise, and networking between communities and blogs.

The systematic presentation of the seven case studies describing the tools used - highlighting current and future challenges and proposing key lessons - makes them easily comparable. The cases also show how communities have learned from each other during their efforts to gain greater control over their estates. The abstract diagrams, which aim to synthesise the various strategies, may not necessarily appeal to all readers.

Part II presents the formal and informal tools for community-led regeneration. The twelve chapters are structured as descriptions, usefulness, difficulties, technical and financial support, recommendations for their appropriate use, with cross-references to the case studies. Formal tools include gaining residents' control, the Localism Act 2011, policies for community participation in regeneration, using the law and challenging redevelopment through the courts. Key informal tools include the widely applicable people's plan, together with other essential campaigning strategies, mobilising people, applying pressure, online presence and direct action.

Part III elaborates on key challenges to community-led regeneration focusing on fuel poverty, financing, knowledge exchange and

organising community, set against failures to prevent demolition and the loss of social housing. The ideas have been developed during workshops which brought together residents, community activists, professionals and academics.

The book concludes that people's plans are an effective tool to progress toward more formal success, such as approved neighbourhood plans, the right to transfer management, and ultimately estate ownership. The combined use of these formal and informal tools have prevented the demolition of the case study estates, or at least led to delays. Campaigning needs to be an ongoing and long-term effort to achieve community-led regeneration. Many accounts exist on the struggles of community-led regeneration, but this book has the merit to bring the key issues together in a clear form for residents wishing to preserve their homes and communities, by gaining more control over their future and urban designers assisting them. ●

Judith Ryser

Practice Index

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W www.ed.ac.uk/studying/postgraduate/degrees

Jointly run with Heriot Watt University, this M.Sc in Urban Strategies and Design focuses on urban design practice and theory from a cultural, and socio-economic, case-study perspective. Engaging students in 'live' urban projects, as part of the programme's 'action research' pedagogy, it also offers research expertise in African and Latin American urban design and planning processes.

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T 0207 815 5877
C Manuela Madeddu
E madeddum@lsbu.ac.uk
W www.lsbu.ac.uk/courses/course-finder/urban-design-planning-ma

The MA Urban Design and Planning (FT or PT) provides an inter-disciplinary approach to urban design and equips students with a comprehensive understanding of urban design, planning and development issues. Through working at different scales of the city and engaging with theoretical debates, students will learn to think about the characteristics of good places and will be equipped to make a critical contribution to shaping those places in the decades ahead. The programme is fully accredited by the RTPI and includes a field trip to a European country.

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C Georgia Giannopoulou
E georgia.giannopoulou@ncl.ac.uk
W www.ncl.ac.uk/apl/study/postgraduate/taught/urban-design/index.htm

The MA in Urban Design brings together cross-disciplinary expertise striking a balance between methods and approaches in environmental design and the social sciences in the creation of the built environment.
To view the course blog: www.nclurban-design.org

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E c.boano@ucl.ac.uk
catalina.ortiz@ucl.ac.uk
W <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/bartlett/development/programmes/postgraduate/msc-building-urban-design-development>

The DPU programme has a unique focus on Urban Design as a transdisciplinary and critical practice. Students are encouraged to rethink the role of urban design through processes of collective and radical endeavours to design and build resilient strategic responses to conflicting urban agendas, emphasising outcomes of environmental and social-spatial justice.

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T 020 7679 4797
C Filipa Wunderlich
E f.wunderlich@ucl.ac.uk
W www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/planning/programmes

The MSc/Dipl Urban Design & City Planning has a unique focus on the interface between urban design & city planning. Students learn to think in critical, creative and analytical ways across the different scales of the city – from strategic to local and across urban design, planning, real estate and sustainability.

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T 020 7679 4797
C Matthew Carmona
E m.carmona@ucl.ac.uk
W www.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/planning/programmes/postgraduate/mresinter-disciplinary-urban-design

The MRes Inter-disciplinary Urban Design cuts across urban design programmes at The Bartlett, allowing students to construct their study in a flexible manner and explore urban design as a critical arena for advanced research and practice. The course operates as a stand-alone high level masters or as preparation for a PhD.

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E m.radfar@dundee.ac.uk
D.Gopinath@dundee.ac.uk
W www.dundee.ac.uk/postgraduate/courses/advanced_sustainable_urban_design_msc.htm

The MSc Advanced Sustainable Urban Design (RTPI accredited) is a unique multidisciplinary practice-led programme set in an international context (EU study visit) and engaging with such themes as landscape urbanism, placemaking across cultures and sustainability evaluation as integrated knowledge spheres in the creation of sustainable places.

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The MA in Urban Design aims to provide students with the essential knowledge and skills required to effectively intervene in the urban design process; develop academic research skills, including critical problem-solving and reflective practice; facilitate design responses to the range of cultural, political, socio-economic, historical, environmental and spatial factors. It also aims to promote responsibility within urban design to consider the wider impact of urban development and regeneration.

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C Dr. Philip Black
E philip.black@manchester.ac.uk
W www.seed.manchester.ac.uk/study/taught-masters/courses/list/urban-design-and-international-planning-msc/

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UNIVERSITY OF NOTTINGHAM
Department of Architecture and Built Environment, University Park
Nottingham NG7 2RD
T 0115 9513110
C Dr Amy Tang
E yue.tang@nottingham.ac.uk
W www.nottingham.ac.uk/pgstudy/courses/architecture-and-built-environment/sustainable-urban-design-march.aspx

Master of Architecture (MArch) in Sustainable Urban Design is a research and project-based programme which aims to assist the enhancement of the quality of our cities by bringing innovative design with research in sustainability.

UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD
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C Ombretta Romice
E ombretta.r.romice@strath.ac.uk
W www.udsu-strath.com

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

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An Ill Wind

(This was written in June. Circumstances may have changed by the time you read it).

As many others have observed, even the appalling event of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has killed over 40,000 people in the UK and inflicted huge damage on the economy, has brought about some beneficial consequences. With a big reduction in vehicular traffic, towns and cities are quieter, birdsong can be heard, and the air is cleaner. While other retail businesses are suffering, bike shops have never been busier. Many have been speculating on whether these benefits are likely to survive in the longer term, or whether we shall eventually return to 'normal', however dreadful in many ways that normal was.

One aspect of normality, whose return will however be welcomed, will be to no longer have to keep our distance from other people: so-called 'social distancing', which I obstinately insist on calling physical distancing, requires physical space. But it seems that physical distancing may have to continue for some time yet, even while shops, pubs and other places reopen. Another collateral benefit of the pandemic is in response to this, and to the decline in usage of public transport and the increase in cycling. It was the publication in May of statutory guidance from the Department of Transport to local authorities, on the reallocation of road space to pedestrians and cyclists.

The Secretary of State describes this reallocation as a 'once in a generation opportunity to deliver a lasting transformational change'. The widening of pavements and the insertion of cycling lanes is not a temporary measure just for the duration of the pandemic: while catalysed by the crisis, it is intended to be a permanent and radical shift in the distribution of urban space.

The new policy has appeared as an unexpected intervention in an argument that has been running in Balsall Heath since last October, and which I mentioned in the last Endpiece. The metropolitan transport authority, Transport for West Midlands (TfWM), in conjunction with Birmingham City Council proposed changes to 3km of the A435 radial road, to enable the better operation of the No.50 bus, one of the most frequent and heavily-used bus routes in the region. The biggest physical change was proposed for Moseley Road in the neighbourhood centre of Balsall Heath. Here a northbound bus lane was proposed, necessitating the widening of the road, therefore the narrowing of the pavements on either side. This in turn necessitated the felling of 100-year-old trees which stand at the edge of the pavement.



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TfWM claimed that these works would implement policy BH10 of the Neighbourhood Plan, which proposes the improvement of the public realm and street scene in this neighbourhood centre. But it was met by considerable local opposition, which argued that a reduction in the amount of pedestrian space and the removal of mature trees cannot be described as improvement. A revised scheme sought to mollify the critics by adding other measures, including a better quality of pavement surface, and new street trees planted elsewhere. But the intention to proceed with the proposal seemed not to be deflected. It appeared to be heading towards a recommendation to the cabinet member for transport and environment for his approval; we assumed that he would give it and then, due to opposition by local ward councillors, it would proceed to a review by the scrutiny committee.

Then Coronavirus appeared over the horizon, and with it the new government rules about physical distancing, and then Grant Shapps' statutory guidance. In this

changed context, the TfWM scheme suddenly appeared to be heading in the wrong direction: we need wider pavements, not narrower pavements. We have argued all along that the main impediment to buses' efficient movement during rush hours is the number of illegally parked cars. It has been noted that during the lockdown, the decrease in car usage has enabled buses to save more minutes of journey time than the bus lane scheme was intended to achieve. Anyway, I recently had an email from the metropolitan mayor, in reply to one about the statutory guidance, telling me that the TfWM scheme has now been paused, and that it will be subject to a review. I suspect, and hope, that we shan't be seeing it again. It's an ill wind etc... ●

Joe Holyoak, architect and urban designer

1, 2 Moseley Road, Birmingham with the 100-year-old trees at the edge of the pavement



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