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URBAN DESIGN

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DESIGN AND LANDSCAPE

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NEWS FROM THE UDG CHAIR

Levelling-up looks set to be the theme for 2022. The creation of a fairer, more equal country is long overdue. Those of us who frequently work or travel around the country are well aware of the disparities, not just in the quality of places, the availability of funding, resources and skills, but also in the level of expectations.

It saddens me to see councillors and officers accepting low quality design, because they believe that within their area – so-called low-value market areas – they cannot demand better. Of course, employment and housing delivery are important as is inward investment, but so is the quality of people's day-to-day lives. Communities everywhere deserve high quality homes, good public transport and environments that allow them to live healthy lives.

The Government's *Levelling Up* paper was published just days before I wrote this and by the time this issue reaches your doorstep, there will have been many discussions, talks and seminars exploring whether the strategy can lead to meaningful change. I hope it can, but I fear that the enormity of the challenge is underestimated.

I am reminded of living in Germany during reunification. The German government initiated something like the levelling-up programme to address differences between East and West Germany. There was an acknowledgement that it would take time and it would be costly. A solidarity surcharge on top of income tax was introduced. This raised more than €330bn over almost 30 years. Admittedly, the surcharge wasn't envisaged as being retained for this length of time, but substantial structural change takes time and strategic planning. I sincerely hope that in England we will see results faster.

For too long, the country has accepted that good design is a perk for higher value areas, predominantly London and the South East. London has benefited greatly from the GLA's Design Standards; this is guidance that I'd like to see rolled out across the country to ensure that every local authority has a policy basis to refuse mediocre design.

The UDG firmly believes that every community deserves and should demand people friendly places, not just places that look nice, but places that are inclusive, stimulate community interaction, and foster civic pride.

Within the UDG, we are good at sharing experiences and lessons around the country. However, there are stakeholders who hold power and with whom we don't often engage. For 2022, I'd like us to engage more actively with councillors, a broader range of developers and highway agencies. I'd like us to engage in constructive conversations focusing on the values that we share, rather than those that divide us. We may learn more about the objectives that drive decisions and therefore be better equipped to address the barriers to creating high-quality places.

Looking forward, here are some of the activities and initiatives planned for this year; as our membership is broad, and interests vary, and there will be activities taking place across a much wider range of topics too:

- Urban Design Awards – How to Make People Friendly Places – build on last year's success and roll out lessons learned through masterclasses and letters to councilors and developers.
- Supporting Design in Local Authorities: the Design Officers Network - continue to facilitate and support knowledge exchange between design officers across the country.
- Strategic Urban Design – continue to lobby government to ensure we build the right development in the right places.
- Developing common design mechanisms across planning, highways, green and blue infrastructure, seeking alignment of below and above ground policies and regulations across government departments and statutory bodies.
- Use health and wellbeing data to assess the quality of design: can there be a health label for developments?
- The popular Evolution of the City webinar series will continue.

GET IN TOUCH, GET INVOLVED

I would like to invite all our members to share ideas and proposals of how we can make it easier to deliver good places. If you have suggestions for an urban design event, research, collaboration opportunities or would like to get involved, please get in touch with us at: administration@udg.co.uk

I hope you enjoy the Journal. ●

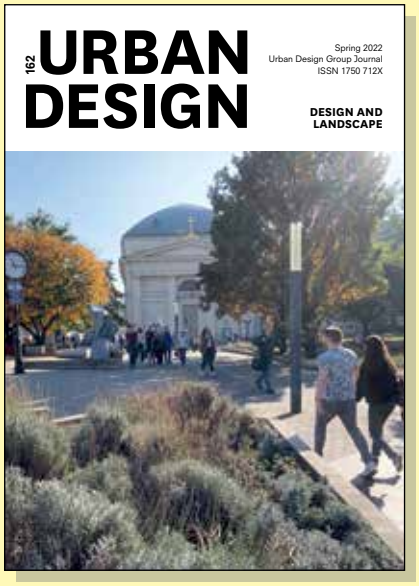
Katja Stille, Chair of the Urban Design Group and Director at Tibbalds Planning and Urban Design

1 Briannia Leisure Centre, Hackney, London

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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Deák Square, District V, Budapest.
Photograph by Philip Black

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FUTURE ISSUES
UD163 Design Coding
UD164 Circular Economy

Beauty and Belonging are in the Eye of the Beholder

Running through this issue of *Urban Design* is the golden thread of civic pride, local decision-making and place-making. It is increasingly important to ask and check who the creators of places really are. Is it the consultants appointed by developers or local planning authorities, and who may not have a good understanding of how a place ticks and works best for local people? Can we point to many development schemes where the local community has welcomed change because the proposals were such a good fit between the need for new development and the place's existing physical and social character?

Furthermore, who shapes places once they have been built? Is it the residents and members of the local community, such as civic societies and local volunteers, or are the main influences budgetary and regulatory? We have learned from experiences during the pandemic that (almost) all of us are far more capable of collaboration and of acting with integrity for the good of the community than previously thought, when the pace of life and the pursuit of economic growth were far more pressing concerns.

In this issue three articles explore this theme of pride, place-making and the importance of context in very different ways. MSc student Jessica Alvarez Cueva examines the difficulties in forging a relationship and sense of belonging between a city developed for a colonial-style economy based on the extraction of resources in Peru (i.e. oil, mass farming and animal products), and the local Amazonian people who were rooted to the land (p.12). Drawing parallels with Aboriginal-Australian design approaches, where indigenous recognition is already a given, she shows that designers need to recognise the inherent conflict between a colonial or top-down approach to places, building typologies and the public realm, and the relationship that local people have to their environment.

The issue's topic, Design and Landscape, explores the relationship between urban design and landscape. Helen Hoyle in particular discusses the different ways that design professionals, the public, but also migrants, can perceive the same landscape (p.28). For example, it has taken time for people to assimilate and accept unmown grass verges left to grow wild and flower chaotically, with popular perceptions moving from a sense of urban neglect and poor management, to understanding it as a positive step protecting nature and biodiversity. Beauty and perceptions of nature depend on personal expectations, on where an individual starts from, socially and economically, and even on gender. There is much to learn from this issue's topic as green infrastructure is not just landscape designers' territory.

Coincidentally, in one of the books reviewed in the issue, *Transect Urbanism* (p.49), Andres Duany and Brian Falk present transects as a way of identifying and responding to different place characteristics, which is inherent in how urban designers see the structure of places. The authors describe the ecology-based origins of the transect: taking a fixed path through nature and observing how its elements vary according to setting. This is about well-informed place-making based on context, setting and what happens where, the opposite of unstructured sprawl driven by growth.

As the pace of life picks up, it is easy to forget that urban design is about making interventions on behalf of local people, and so knowing who they are and what they value is a good start.

As we celebrate John Billingham's achievements (p4) – developing the journal and many other UDG initiatives and as a mentor to me and Sebastian Loew – his editorial influence will continue to be felt for many years yet. ●

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 £110

Evolution of the City: Isfahan

Webinar, 7 December 2021

Farnaz Arefian, founder of Silk Cities and guest topic editor of UD issue 124, co-chaired this concluding webinar series on lessons from the evolution of Middle Eastern cities. In the first event Husam AlWaer, who initiated the series, had illustrated human ingenuity in place-making in even the most constrained circumstances of a refugee camp. This was followed by the evolution of Aleppo (Husam AlWaer, Magda Sibley and Hala Asslan), a century of architecture and urbanism in the Arabian Peninsula (Ashraf M Salama), and finally the history of Isfahan. These events have attracted a broad audience beyond UK-based Urban Design Group members.

With up to three scholars presenting very rich material on a little-known area, this was challenging for the audiences; therefore the opportunity to revisit them on the UrbanNous website is invaluable. It is not possible to summarise here Zahra Ahari's explanation of Isfahan's resilience, Farshid Emami's description of a tetrapolis inhabiting a cosmopolis, or Eisa Esfanjary's panorama of contemporary Isfahan. Instead some highlights are offered from the unexpected, spontaneous and extensive discussion which followed.

What arose, surprisingly and positively, was the long-lasting multicultural population of Isfahan and its tolerance to co-habiting, congregating and contributing to its rich fabric, despite the millennium-old sequence of wars, destruction, constant decline and rebirth of the city; it was compared to Moorish Spain. All the varied societies left their mark on the city, some on the ground, but sometimes only in history books and ancient photographs. The influence of Sufism was of particular interest. A discussion followed about what constitutes memory, what parts of it are embedded in the physical fabric – often completely destroyed – and what lives in the hearts and minds of the city's inhabitants, or as a more abstract collective memory. It also revealed sadness about the continual destruction of historic remains – both monuments and civic architecture – and the fact that architects and urban designers have often actively supported such heritage eradication.

Other questions concerned economic viability and the golden ages of these ancient cities, well before industrialisation. A specific design issue was the use of mudbricks and their adaptation in contemporary Isfahan. Another was mobility during antiquity and the difference between the engineering of the Roman Empire and far more restricted animal-based movements on what were global trade routes such as the Silk Road

across deserts, as well as the impact of the bubonic plague.

There was great interest in continuing this series on cities in the Arab world, looking at smaller towns and villages, and including the work of the Aga Khan Foundation in the Middle East and elsewhere in the Islamic world. The participants were keen to include workshops and put some of their queries and proposals into practice. Not only did this reflect the will to learn more about this part of the world, but also to explore the role of urban designers in the evolution of cities in real projects. The catalytic effect of this kind of discussion should be considered a precious benefit of the Urban Design Group's work. ●

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

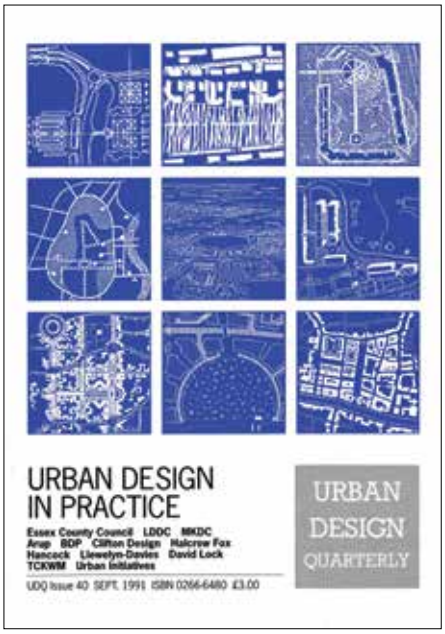
Recent UDG Visits: Chester and Tunbridge Wells

Chester, 13 November 2021: A Roman street layout, The Rows – a two-storey medieval shopping arcade, a Georgian Walk created on the city walls, a historic port and traditional economic centre for north Wales now seeking a new role, and helped by a very active Civic Society.

Tunbridge Wells, 4 December 2021: 17th century health spa for the rich, famous for the Pantiles, augmented by a 19th century new town with shops and villas, which together provide the quality of place that can sustain the economy of a 21st century town.

URBAN DESIGN GROUP
QUARTERLY

Chairman's Foreword



John Billingham (1935-2022)

With great sadness, we learned that John Billingham died in January 2022. This journal wouldn't exist without John's efforts and commitment, and the Urban Design Group owes him an enormous debt.

John's career was multi-faceted and exciting. After finishing his architecture studies at the University of Manchester in 1956, he won a Planning Scholarship to Toronto University, and then another to the University of Pennsylvania's School of Architecture in Philadelphia. His four-year stay in North America was highly formative, particularly the time spent in Pennsylvania where Louis Kahn was the Professor of Architecture. He worked with a very international group of people there and met some of the leading designers of the time. He also travelled throughout the US visiting renowned buildings and places. This period gave him a global perspective on the profession, which he never lost. Many years later he toured the US giving a series of lectures and reconnecting with his old contacts. Early on John also started to alternate between architecture and town planning, a combination that would endure throughout his career and identified him as an urban designer.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Back in the UK, John joined BDP's Manchester office where he met Brian Edwards who would later also be involved in this journal. He also met his future wife Pat and they married in 1962; she remained a huge support to John for the rest of his life. At that time John started lecturing part-time at Manchester University's School of Architecture before moving to the public sector in 1964 as Assistant City Planning Officer for Manchester City Council. Later he moved to Sheffield City Council as Assistant City Architect, and in 1973 he was appointed Chief Architect-Planner for Irvine Development Corporation in Scotland. There he took great pleasure in designing and building his own family house on a plot very near the Corporation's offices. In 1979 John joined Oxford City Council as City Architect and Planning Officer, a post he held for nearly ten years; he was there at the time of the Shark in the Roof controversy, which must have occupied and annoyed him for a while. His last career move was to Milton Keynes as Design and Development Director of the Development Corporation.

THE FOUNDING OF THE URBAN DESIGN GROUP

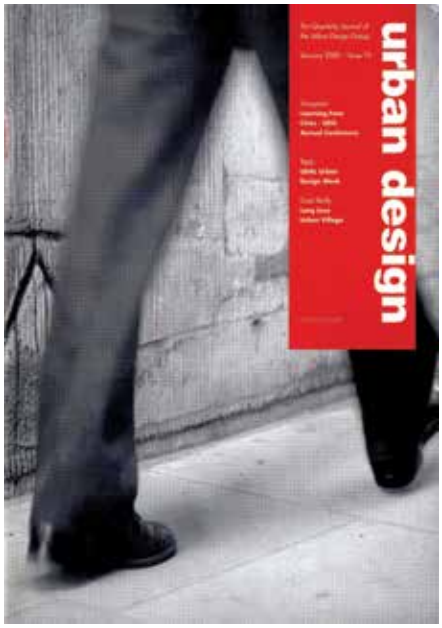
During his time in Oxford, John joined the small group then called Architects in Planning trying to reconcile the two professions that by then had drifted dangerously apart. The group included Francis Tibbalds, Keith Ingham, Percy Johnson Marshall, Kevin Eastham and others, and it soon changed its name to Urban Design Group – a Forum for Architects, Landscape Architects and Designers in Planning. They elected Francis as its first chairman, and as part of the Executive Committee, John took it upon himself to develop links outside London organising meetings in Bath, York and Liverpool.

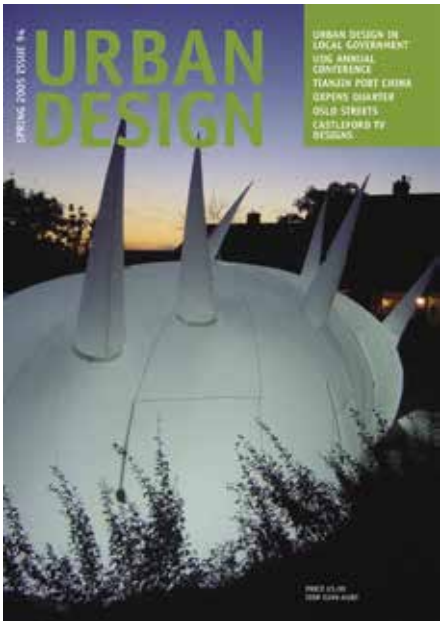
PRODUCING *URBAN DESIGN QUARTERLY*

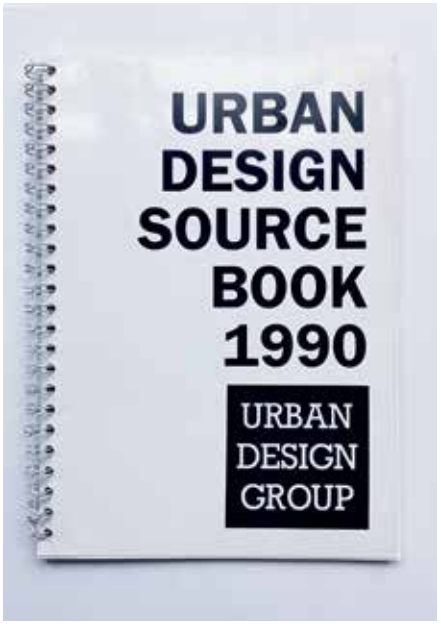
At first the group produced a newsletter reporting on the proceedings of its conferences, and this was mostly put together by Francis Tibbalds at the Polytechnic of Central London (now the University of Westminster). By 1984, it had evolved into a magazine, *Urban Design Quarterly* (UDQ), edited by Mike Galloway. Two years later, Mike moved to Glasgow and a new editor was needed. John was the obvious choice as he had experience editing *Architecture North West* and *Yorkshire Architect*; he took on the role and transformed the journal into the professional publication it is today. Younger generations will have little idea of how much work was involved in producing a magazine at the time, before home computers or the internet, when copy and paste meant scissors and glue (both painful and time-consuming), and a text correction meant retyping the whole article. John was undeterred and devoted a great deal of time and energy to not only commissioning and editing articles, but designing the journal's layout and establishing a professional ethos for it. To assist him he appointed an Editorial Board with members that he could trust to contribute to the publication. From issue 53 in 1995, a designer, Simon Head, was appointed and the appearance of the publication improved greatly.

BUILDING THE TEAM

While teaching at the Polytechnic of the South Bank, I joined the UDG as part of the Education Group and occasionally contributed articles to UDQ. In 1996 John asked me first to join the Editorial Board and soon after to become his joint editor. I could write but I knew nothing about editing or producing a journal, and I learned everything from John. He was an amazing and very supportive mentor, and to this day I am grateful for his trust and support during the many years we collaborated. In 2004, as John was planning his future retirement, Louise Thomas joined us and he gradually transferred the baton to the two of us whilst still keeping a vigilant eye on the production of the journal. At the same time, Claudia Schenk was chosen as the journal's designer, a role she has also performed ever since. Throughout this period, John liaised with the printers and kept an eye on the journal's budget. From issue 88, the back cover of the journal was offered to a sponsor, as a way to help finance an improved publication without having adverts inside the journal, something John was adamant we should avoid.







DEVELOPING THE UDG

John's contributions and achievements to the UDG went well beyond the journal. There wasn't an activity that he didn't get involved with. From 1990 onwards, he started producing the *Urban Design Source Book* with information about the group (the members, its history and constitution) and a very useful index of the journal itself. He produced the latter singlehanded and manually; the index has proved invaluable and hard to replicate, and the *Source Book* demonstrated the UDG's growing presence. In 2006, the *Source Book* morphed into the *Urban Design Directory*, again designed and edited by John at the outset, becoming an important source of income for the group and a way to showcase the work of urban design practices and urban design education courses.

Feeling that good urban design achievements in the UK were not sufficiently known beyond professional circles, John collaborated with Dick Cole to produce the *Good Place Guide* in 2002, an informative publication to carry when travelling around the country, with examples of good urban design in every region. John also set up the Publications Committee of the UDG responsible for the coordination of the group's publications and to ensure a consistent quality and recognisable house style. Included under this umbrella were the *Good Place Guide*, the *Urban Design Directory* and other occasional texts and books, such as Nick Wates' *Involving Communities in Urban Design* (1998).

THE BIRTH OF THE URBAN DESIGN AWARDS

John was also committed to reaching and encouraging a new generation of urban designers and after undertaking a survey of the country's urban design courses, he liaised with course leaders to promote students' work. With the support of the Francis Tibbalds Trust, the UDG organised annual student exhibitions.

Thinking further about the promotion of urban design practice, John discussed with the Editorial Board the possibility of creating an award for the best urban design scheme published in the journal. This would further promote the image of the UDG and also provide the journal – always at the core of John's thoughts – with a regular supply of good examples or case studies. Over the course of a year, the UDQ would publish schemes and the membership would vote for the winner. The first Francis Tibbalds Prize was awarded to Urban Initiatives in 2008. Later the awards were expanded to include other categories such as students, publishers and books, and local authorities. John put a huge amount of work and energy into ensuring that the awards system worked well, encouraging members and others to participate. In this, as in many other initiatives, he tried to steer the group to act realistically within its means and resources, and avoid embarking on over-ambitious initiatives that wouldn't come to fruition.

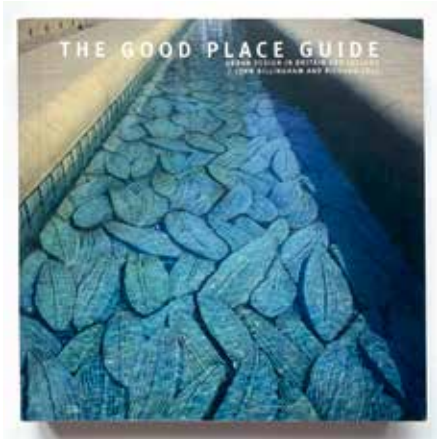
Following Alan Stones' tours to various parts of Europe lasting eight to ten days, John and I felt that there was a demand for shorter urban design visits to one city. Thus started a long list of study tours, some of which we organised together and others solely organised by John (Dublin and Copenhagen/Malmø), always assisted by the unflappable Susie Turnbull. With other members of the group, we were also involved in the amazing Urban Design Assistance Teams trip to Pereslavl in Russia at the time of Glasnost. During all of these tours, John was not just a good organiser but always good company, ensuring that the professional was mixed with the social.

All the work that John put into the UDG, he did out of enthusiasm and commitment, not for his own promotion; he was a modest man and did not publicise his own achievements. He strongly believed in the importance of urban design and was willing to invest his time promoting it and encouraging others. In his final article for the journal in 2013 (issue 125) he put forward advice for the UDG, including producing a timeline of UDG activities and achievements which would help in projecting future possibilities, convening a general meeting of the group's members to obtain views about future directions, forming an institute such as the IHBC without attempting to become a chartered professional institute, and taking a lead on urban design education.

John's legacy at the UDG is immense and probably little known by members who have joined the UDG in recent years. Those of us who had the privilege of working with him had our lives enhanced as a result. The UDG would probably no longer exist without John's extensive and diverse input and dedication.

John is survived by his wife Pat, three daughters and eight grandchildren. ●

Sebastian Loew, architect and planner, writer, consultant and joint editor



Urban Design Group's Annual General Meeting 2020-21

The following is a summary of the Trustees' Report for the year ending 28 February 2021, presented virtually to the AGM on 14 December 2021.

THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

UDG Chair Katja Stille gave an optimistic report about the year 2020-2021, the first year of the pandemic. Thanks to huge efforts by the membership, Executive Committee, Editorial Board and staff, the UDG increased its output substantially, maintaining the publication of the journal, switching to virtual meetings and hosting more frequent events. People from around the globe have attended and participated in discussions.

To support the membership, the UDG: offered free job adverts to registered practices during the lockdowns provided a membership payment holiday to members in financial difficulty, and surveyed practices on working arrangements, the use of government grants and furlough schemes.

MEMBERSHIP

The total number of UDG members across the different categories shows a slight increase this year from 1,142 to 1,198, due to more individual, Recognised Practitioner and concession memberships. The take-up of the free *Urban Update* email newsletter continues to grow (1,909 compared to 1,451 contacts in the previous year).

URBAN DESIGN JOURNAL

Urban Design explored a number of highly topical issues this year: *Reflections on Urban Design*, *Child-Friendly City, Research in Practice*, and *Design for an Ageing Population*. The Editorial Board always encourages members to suggest topics and articles, and welcomes readers' letters at any time.

WEBSITE

Launched in September 2020, the website was rebuilt to be compatible with smartphones, laptops and desktops. It incorporates the *Urban Design Directory*, Recognised Practitioners listings, an events archive, and regular features from the journal.

URBAN UPDATE

The UDG's email newsletter *Urban Update* continues to be a valuable resource for urban designers, providing a monitoring service of government websites, and research in psychology, sociology, public health, technology and economics.

FINANCIAL REVIEW 2019–20	2021 Totals £	2020 Totals £
INCOMING RESOURCES		
Subscriptions	98,320	113,911
Publications and Awards	31,864	7,225
Conference Fees and Sponsorship	0	23,916
Events	6,523	3,488
Study Tours & Job Ads	2,750	23,557
Donation from Urban Design Services Ltd	0	0
UDSL Contribution to Office Costs	0	0
Activities to Generate Funds		
Interest Received	86	85
Inland Revenue: Gift Aid	0	0
Miscellaneous Income	750	0
Total Incoming Resources	**140,293**	**172,182**
RESOURCES EXPENDED		
Charitable Expenditure	**0**	**0**
Publications & Awards	41,717	42,425
Conference Expenditure	621	15,183
General	117,582	107,472
Study Tours Expenditure	0	0
Development Expenditure	0	0
Governance Costs (Accountancy)	1,630	1,740
Total Resources Expended	**161,550**	**166,820**
Net Income/(Expenditure) For The Year	**(21,257)**	**5,362**
Fund Balances Brought Forward	**247,699**	**242,337**
Fund Balances Carried Forward	**226,442**	**247,699**
Current Assets	**268,244**	**276,382**
Current Liabilities	**41,803**	**28,684**
TOTAL NET ASSETS	**226,442**	**247,699**

PUBLICATIONS

The 2021/22 edition of the *Urban Design Directory* was distributed to housebuilders, developers, local authorities and UDG members in January 2021. The Directory edited by Louise Thomas, has been redesigned to address the interests of decision-makers and clients, with articles such as What is Urban Design?, Strategic Urban Design, Street Design Standards, Circular Economies, and Inclusive Public Spaces.

The UDG also produced *Street Improvement Manual* to brief local authorities in response to the pandemic, including low traffic neighbourhoods (LTNs) and several briefing sheets:

- *Street Design Standards: Current and Withdrawn Practice* – summarising current government guidance and industry best practice.
- *The Planning White Paper 2020*
- *Gear Change – A bold vision for walking and cycling*
- *Home Comforts* – on how well the design of homes and neighbourhoods supported people during the lockdowns.

NATIONAL URBAN DESIGN AWARDS

Following a review of the first ten years of the Awards, a working group was set up to establish a new structure for the awards programme for next year. The following two awards were made:

Student Award: A Sustainable Vision for Wandle Valley, by Consuelo Morales, Bartlett School of Planning, UCL

Book Award: *Climax City,* by David Rudlin and Shruti Hemani, RIBA Publishing

NATIONAL CONFERENCE ON URBAN DESIGN

Plans for a major conference in 2020 were postponed. In July the UDG held a one-day conference on Towns and Cities for Children, and in September together with the Academy of Urbanism, a two-day online symposium on The Fifteen-Minute City.

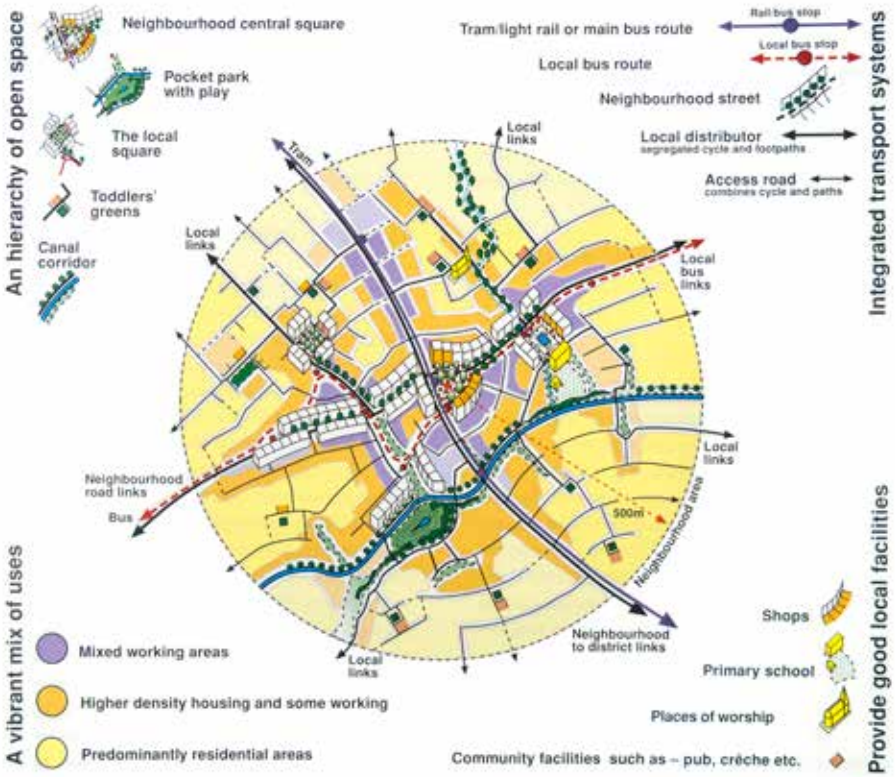
EVENTS

The UDG has continued to develop and expand its programme of events, where possible working in partnership with other organisations. This year the UDG had more speakers and reached a wider audience with its online events. Many events dealt specifically with the challenges created by the pandemic through weekly ideasSPACE sessions (March-July). Events were also held on the *Planning White Paper* and *National Model Design Code*.

URBANNOUS – VIDEO ON DEMAND

Thanks to Fergus Carnegie who continues his largely voluntary work, the UDG's Zoom events are available to a global audience through the Urbannous website and the Youtube channel. In September 2020, ideasSPACE was relaunched as a collaboration between the UDG, Urbannous and Urban Movement as a series of interviews with politicians, designers, advisors, academics and campaigners.

The full list of UDG Executive members and regional representatives can be found on the UDG website. ●



The key components of a mixed-use and integrated neighbourhood, Figure 2.8 in *Towards an Urban Renaissance – Final Report of the Urban Task Force,* 1999. Image by Andrew Wright Associates

My Favourite Plan: Richard Summers

The key components of a mixed-use and integrated neighbourhood, from *Towards an Urban Renaissance, Final Report of the Urban Task Force* (1999)

WHY I LIKE IT...

When I joined Terence O'Rourke from Westminster City Council in late 2000, Lord Rogers' report had been published a year earlier and had made a major contribution to maturing debates on creating sustainable new urban settlements. These were still the heady days of New Labour when CABE, Essex County Council and many others were researching, defining and designing a brave new future for us all. My new private sector role, and colleagues like Andy Ward, Gerald Brady and Richard Eastham, helped me to see the challenges inherent in creating plans and images like these, and the value to be gained by getting them right. The ideal plan or image was one that explained itself – as this one does. It also needed to appeal to non-specialists.

Coincidentally the plan was created by one of Gerald's former colleagues, Andrew Wright, and in my view has a beautiful balance between detail, clarity and charm. I would even describe it as pretty. I guess it would have first been drafted by hand, and I would love to see that first version. If the process was anything like our experience, it will have taken a lot of thought and many iterations before the final draft was arrived at. Graphically, the plan communicates a huge amount of information but with the fewest possible number of lines and colours. From a distance its shape and colouring draw you in. Zoom in and the sweeping routes and tiny public spaces reward closer examination. My only criticism is that the layout in the frame means that the keys somewhat crowd the principal image.

The plan summarises what urban designers are trying to do every day: mix uses to encourage street life, create structure and legibility through a hierarchy of spaces and integrate walkable facilities and a range of transport options. It could work as the only image used in a three-hour lecture on What is urban design?

WHAT TO LEARN FROM IT...

Rather like a well-chosen phrase, this plan exemplifies what can be achieved with careful thought on a single page. Graphic design is often of critical importance to the communication of urban design ideas, but I had not appreciated this early in my career. As great champions of jargon-free accessible documents, urban designers often rely on a limited number of images or plans to make key points. If one can create a plan as seminal as this, one should be able to dine out on it for life.

Through it, I have also learned to value the contributions of colleagues who have the ability to create plans and images that convey clear messages. I have enjoyed many hours identifying the critical messages in a project and heated debates over whether scribbled drafts should be pursued or binned in favour of yet another attempt. ●

Current position
Director, Boyle & Summers – architects and masterplanners. Previously Urban Designer at HLM, Westminster City Council, Terence O'Rourke and LHC.

Education
BA (Hons) Urban & Regional Planning, Coventry Polytechnic
MAUD Oxford Polytechnic

Specialisms
Drawing, writing and colouring in – I am a fairly decent generalist!

Ambitions
To see our team at Boyle & Summers develop even further; to walk around more places that I helped to create through drawings on a piece of paper; and to be part of the urban design community way into my dotage.

Urban Design Library #41

Planning for Play, Lady Allan of Hertwood, 1968, Thames and Hudson

This is a remarkable book written by a remarkable person in remarkable times, when thinking about landscape design was changing. Sylvia Crowe wrote *The Landscape of Power* in 1959 and Elizabeth Beazley *The Design and Detail of the Space Between Buildings* in 1960. Lady Allen of Hertwood wrote *Planning for Play* in 1968 and Nan Fairbrother *New Lives New Landscapes* in 1970 (see UD 147). Together they show how thinking about people and landscape was evolving.

Of the four books, *Planning for Play* is the most humane, dealing with the needs of children. Its modest title and the author's establishment background belie a revolutionary approach to providing for children's play and hide a very special person. Marjorie (Joan) Allen was both a landscape architect and a children's advocate. She had worked with the Labour politician Herbert Morrison during the Second World War and was involved with London's programme of children's evacuations. Later she was president of the World Organisation of Early Childhood, which has links with UNESCO.

Planning for Play was written at a time when Britain was still recovering from the impact of war. Massive rebuilding programmes were underway and reflected the mechanistic approach of *la Ville Radieuse*. It was also a time when bombed sites and construction sites offered endless exciting opportunities for children to explore and play. This desire for dangerous play was abhorred by public officials and most designers. Order, neatness and a tidy approach was the pattern for play. NO BALL GAMES and other such signs proliferated, much as they unfortunately do today. In the Netherlands and Scandinavia the value of informal play and exploration were being recognised. Lady Allen drew upon the contacts that she had made at UNESCO and in particular with Professor Carl Theodor Sorensen. His pioneering work in Copenhagen inspired much of the thinking behind her book.

Unique about the book is the notion of adventure play, the value of informality and the need to link play to the surroundings and to nature, so that a continuum of experience is created, providing what Katherine Whitehorn described as 'a richness of experience', and giving rise to the adventure playground movement.

The book is divided into eight chapters. It starts by making the case for play to be taken seriously and showing how important provision for play is when designing where people live. The next two parts look at the nature and needs of play: first as an incidental activity that is enjoyed close to and is almost an extension of the home. Next, play is seen as an activity that is separate from home and thus needs some form of supervision and control. This is followed by what is probably the most significant element of the book: a discussion of Sorensen's notions introducing the idea of anarchic and exploratory play and leading to the concept of adventure playgrounds. This is the point of departure from the neatness and order that we designers so often seek. It champions the concept of play by discovery and is balanced by a recognition of the need for enlightened management and leadership. Lady Allen does not duck the issue of cost and there is a full and thorough examination of the material and financial costs of adventure playgrounds. Today there may be a few such playground functioning in London but cost and safety concerns seem to have inhibited the continued use of adventure playgrounds in general.

The book's next section deals with what appears to be another lost cause, the idea of Play Parks. There are descriptions of these interesting areas in London, but it seems that the demise in 1965 of the Greater London Council, which was responsible for their provision, led to the apparent disappearance of this type of play resource. A further casualty of the rationalisation of play is the neighbourhood playground. The examples that Lady Allen shows are from the USA and the Netherlands, but one could now perhaps count the Princess Diana playground in Hyde Park as one of these. The key to this form of play provision is a variety of spatial experiences that can often be put to unexpected uses.

The last two sections of the book deal with children with special needs: those who are in hospital where play can be seen as part of a wider curative process, and those with disabilities, both physical and mental.

Throughout the book, a series of remarkable photographs illustrate the joy of informal, sometimes dangerous, play that was encouraged in adventure playgrounds. With today's sensitivities in relation to children, how many of these photographs could be used?

Many of Lady Allen's ideas were enthusiastically adopted by designers. Formal playgrounds were remodelled on adventure playground lines. Where I live, local mythology says that one play area had enjoyed this type of treatment and was duly recognised with an RIBA award, only to be closed and reformed to conform to perceptions of health and safety. It is now a place for team games, the encouragement of conformity through rules and the use of fixed equipment.

As with all of the books in the Urban Design Library, *Planning for Play* is a product of its time and the language used may surprise some, but at its heart the book is concerned with the greater good and is not afraid of killing a sacred cow or two. Looking more deeply at Lady Allen's approach than she would probably have expected, it seems that much of what she was aiming to do is summarised by an expression quoted in issue UD 156 by Ben Tawil and Mike Barclay from one of the children they surveyed: 'If there could be patches of randomness…'. In designing for children's play, we should aim to allow for discovery and the unexpected. Perhaps we should even create opportunities for positive uncertainty. It is surprising that from a book that is essentially a practical guide to an everyday concern, one can be led to very fundamental questions about the role of design overall. Should we aim to fit the brief exactly as given or should we be aiming to provide an opportunity for the user to discover things that were never expected?

If there is a danger in this book for an urban designer, it is the separation of the needs of one user group from those of others. Urban design is surely concerned with linking a spectrum of needs even when these needs are not wholly expected. This phenomenon is illustrated on p.108 of *Planning for Play*, where children are happily using features that the designer had specifically aimed at the elderly. ●

Richard Cole architect and planner, formerly Director of Planning and Architecture of the Commission for New Towns

READ ON

Urban Design Group (2020), *Urban Design* 156 'Child-Friendly City' guest edited by Adrian Voce
Voce, A (2015), *Policy for Play*, Policy Press
Perez de Arce, R (2018), City of Play, Bloomsbury
Serena, K L and Hauderowicz, D (2020), *Age-Inclusive Public Space* (p168-171), Hatje Cantz Verlag, Berlin
Welsh Government (2014), *Creating a Play Friendly Wales, Statutory Guidance to Local Authorities*
UNICEF (2019) *What is a Child-friendly city?*
Bonat D and Shaw B (2019) *Neighbourhood Design: Working with children towards a child friendly city*, ZCD Architects.

Climate Change Global Digest

This edition puts a spotlight on the UK's third *Climate Change Risk Assessment* published at the end of 2021. In addition, we include the recently adopted Building Regulations and other relevant research and guidance.

THIRD CLIMATE CHANGE RISK ASSESSMENT

The UK Government has published the third *Climate Change Risk Assessment* (CCRA). CCRA 3 sets out the risks and opportunities facing the UK. It is informed by the Climate Change Committee's (CCC) independent report of June 2021 and endorses its findings. It emphasises that 'we must do more to build climate change into any decisions that have long-term effects, such as in new housing or infrastructure, to avoid often costly remedial actions in the future.'

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-climate-change-risk-assessment-2022

The CCC has brought together all of the risk assessment outputs and briefings on a dedicated website, including sectoral briefings as well as key research.

https://www.ukclimaterisk.org/

In the sectoral briefings, the summary of impacts on housing is the most relevant to urban designers (there are also briefings on transport, IT, land use change and biodiversity). The housing paper clearly sets out the actions needed and the areas where greatest effort is required. One of the loudest messages is the need to combine decarbonisation strategies with adaptation measures to ensure greatest benefit in the built environment.

https://www.ukclimaterisk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/CCRA3-Briefing-Housing.pdf

NEW BUILDING REGULATIONS

In December 2021 new approved documents were added to Building Regulations, including the Approved Document O relating to overheating. This requires all new buildings to limit unwanted solar gains in summer and to provide a means to remove heat that avoids the use of mechanical cooling wherever possible. Urban designers will need to advocate responsive design strategies at the neighbourhood scale in advance of building design, in order to minimise the risk of overheating, and the need for technical fixes at the building or unit scale.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/overheating-approved-document-o

The documents also include Approved Document F on Ventilation, L on Conservation of Heat and Power, and S on Infrastructure for Charging Electric Vehicles.

https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/approved-documents

It is worth noting the proposed Part Z which many in the industry have promoted. This campaign emphasises the importance of requiring the assessment of whole life carbon emissions, and limiting embodied carbon emissions for all major building projects. The current draft includes embodied carbon limits for different typologies.

https://part-z.uk/proposal

On the subject of embodied carbon, a report commissioned by SAVE Britain's Heritage provides a very useful breakdown of why comprehensive retrofit is more carbon-efficient than new build, focusing on the controversial proposal to demolish the Marks and Spencer's building on London's Oxford Street. A key argument is that any proposal must compare demolition and new build against a more comprehensive retrofit option, rather than a light touch one, in order to make it a fair assessment and to properly inform these types of decisions.

https://www.savebritainsheritage.org/campaigns/item/766/PRESS-RELEASE-New-report-blasts-bulldoze-and-rebuild-plan-for-MS-Oxford-Street-HQ

URBAN GREENING

Natural England has launched its Green Infrastructure Framework. The Framework outlines standards and principles for green infrastructure across England.

https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Home.aspx

To support the framework, Natural England has also launched an interactive green infrastructure map which allows users to look at all assets in an area – from parks to back gardens – and to see how areas perform against the standards. This tool will be particularly valuable to urban designers wanting to understand the baseline performance of study areas.

https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/Map.aspx

The Environment Bill has gained royal ascent and now sets mandatory targets for nature recovery through the planning system. This will drive green infrastructure and climate-resilient measures in urban areas to deliver against these targets.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environment-bill-2020#full-publication-update-history

The Government has launched a new set of re-wilding funds. The Landscape Recovery Fund is for landowners who want to take a 'more radical and large-scale approach to producing environmental and climate goods on their land'. The first round will focus on habitat for threatened native species and on restoring streams and rivers. The aim is to create at least 10,000 hectares of restored habitat, equating to 25-50 kilotonnes carbon savings per year.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-recovery-more-information-on-how-the-scheme-will-work/landscape-recovery-more-information-on-how-the-scheme-will-work

A research study has highlighted the benefits of greening communal courtyards. The research by Katja Schmidt and Ariane Walz has shown that, 'despite relatively small differences in green structures, the residential courtyards with a higher green volume clearly generate more co-benefits than the residential yards with less green, particularly for thermal comfort'. The courtyard studies showed that adding one tree to a courtyard had a sizeable impact on cooling. The research suggests that neighbourhood-wide strategies to green courtyards could be powerful in supporting comfortable environments in the face of climate change.

https://oneecosystem.pensoft.net/article/65706/

Jane Manning with Julie Futcher, Mitch Cooke and Joanna Wright

CCC UK Climate Risk

CCC Housing briefing

Building Regs New Documents

Building Regs Doc Overheating

Part Z campain

NE Green Infra-structure Framework

For 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.

NE Interactive GI map

Environment Bill

Landscape Recovery Fund

Residential Courtyards research

Save Britain's Heritage report

Third Risk Assessment

The Scottish Parliament, Edinburgh

In 2004, the site of an old distillery in Holyrood became the new seat for Scottish government with a Parliamentary building complex and publicly accessible grounds designed by Miralles Tagliabue EMBT.

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. ●

Imogen Blaikie, Lionel Eid, George Garofalakis, Elizabeth Lancaster and Laura Dodds-Hebron

Location plan

Tranquillity: the site of the Parliament complex, with its walkways and cycle routes, offers an expansive and tranquil public space between city and nature with dramatic views of the Salisbury Crags beyond.

Stepped landscape: a series of radial walkways, interspersed by tiered mounds of grass emanate from the site, connecting the leaf-shaped buildings with the adjacent Holyrood parkland via a stepped landscape.

Welcoming: the entrance to the Parliament is modest in scale. It provides shelter to Horse Wynd, the nearby street, and opens itself up to Palace of Holyroodhouse with informal street furniture scattered along a pleasantly curved pond.

Sculptural forms: the design of the building and landscape draws inspiration from the Scottish landscape, using motifs from the flower paintings of Charles Rennie Mackintosh and of upturned boats from a nearby shoreline. This is expressed in a number of ways through the form of functional features (such as the bike racks) as well as aesthetic ones such as outdoor sculptures and concrete plinths that are softened with the introduction of lawns, wild flower meadows, ponds and trees.

Almost hidden: the new Scottish Parliament is modestly nestled into the hillside terrain, the lowest part of Arthur's Seat, providing a subtle, unobtrusive addition to the skyline.

Brutal: the concrete, pebble dash walkways and gabion walls (constructed using stones from some of the distillery buildings previously on the site) contrast with the soft landscaping from the building using a coarser palette of materials.

Re-Earthing Amazonian Cities

Jessica Isabel Alvarez Cueva reports on the challenges of recognising indigenous people's rights to places

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Santa María de Nieva is a small Amazonian city and this article considers the issues its communities face in the context of Arturo Escobar's concept of 're-earthing' (2019). Escobar is Professor of Anthropology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and has written about a new vision of design theory and practice that channels design's capacity towards ways of being and doing that are more attuned to justice and the Earth. Noting that most design, whether of goods, technology or built environments currently serves capitalist ends, Escobar argues for the development of an 'autonomous design', more collaborative and placed-based.

Since settler colonialism and 'extractivism' have produced a crisis of habitability, the aim here is to identify the challenges in reconnecting the city with the Amazon rainforest. The recognition of the indigenous population in re-earthing design projects is the core challenge in Santa María de Nieva, given the history of resistance by Awajún and Wampís people to defend their territory. In this, lessons can be learned from Aboriginal-Australian planning and design.

Extractivism, describes economic activities that remove large amounts of a nation's natural commons (minerals, metals or other high-value resources) for sale on the global commodities market with little or no processing. It is an economic development model that can be traced back more than 500 years to European colonial expansion.

Re-earthing is a concept inspired by indigenous people's knowledge and their ancestral ways of inhabiting land. Escobar (2019) proposes this concept as an alternative to the current capitalist and colonial way of life. Re-earthing is a twofold concept: firstly, it means reconnecting cities with their environment through a new fusion of the rural and urban. Secondly, it is a call to understand the many ways of 'being' (i.e. human, non-human and non-living) that coexist in radical interdependence in the world.

Re-earthing also introduces politics and three principles that can be applied as strategic axes for any project:

- Autonomy, supporting the defence of people and territories threatened by extractive operations
- The communal, developed 'in contrast with the individual autonomy imagined by liberalism' and,
- The pluriverse, 'a world where many worlds fit' (Escobar 2018).

The crisis of habitability in Santa María de Nieva can therefore be seen as the loss of land, autonomy and communality as a result of land dispossession and the use of land for extraction.

AWAJÚN AND WAMPÍS PEOPLE

Traditionally, the Alto Amazonas was Jíbaro territory where Awajún and Wampís people came from. The Awajúns people believe in the existence of other worlds. They inhabit the rainforest in an ethos of reciprocity and complementarity. Their territory is alive and has memory. They value family and the elderly solve conflicts with the advice of non-human beings.

Santa María de Nieva is in the same area in the district of Nieva, home to 18,626 inhabitants, around 80 per cent of which identifies as Awajún or Wampís people. It is a strategic service hub along the Northern Peruvian Oil pipeline on which 240 native communities depend for trade and accessibility. The city's urban character does not respond to its rainforest geography and weather, and the urban blocks were laid out as in many Spanish settlements, with public spaces replicating coastal urban design and not typically used by the indigenous majority.

LAND DISPOSSESSION

The process of land dispossession started with the city's foundation in 1949 as a Jesuit missionary settlement to assimilate Awajún-Wampís people into Western culture. They were displaced from the heads of tributary streams to the river banks, in settlements where their houses were threatened by frequent floods, radically transforming their lives, previously connected to the rainforest. With the introduction of The Marginal Road – a North-South highway between the Andes and the Amazon rainforest connecting Peru with Ecuador, Colombia and Bolivia – incentives were given to migrants from the coast and the Andes to occupy and work 'abandoned' land. As a result, the settlers' intensive logging of the rainforest and harvesting of species with medicinal value, reduced the quality of the hunting and fishing stock. This led some indigenous communities to turn tp monoculture and intensive livestock farming, while others searched for resources further into the rainforest. Although the 1979 Native Communities Law gave indigenous people the right to register the land that they traditionally used, the process has led to conflicts between settlers and native communities.

In 1993, the Peruvian Constitution gave legal support to the process of 'production of land for extraction' weakening rights to indigenous territory. In Santa María de Nieva the results are evident as infrastructure projects (roads and the oil pipeline) are prioritised over social benefits and create severe environmental problems. A recent study showed how roads in Santa María de Nieva, paved to accelerate the movement of agricultural products, provided few benefits for vulnerable populations in terms of affordability and livelihood, and instead benefitted business owners in the region. Local mobility was also completely ignored, as 90 per cent of passenger and cargo transportation in the Amazon region depends on its rivers. Furthermore between 2000 and 2019, the Northern Peruvian oil pipeline, built in 1979, caused 92 oil spills.

1 The location of Santa María de Nieva
2 Santa María de Nieva, the native communities and major infrastructure
3–4 Changes in architectural typologies: the traditional house far from the river, and the loretana style house built on wooden piles. Images from Peña M and Bedoya M (2017), in Canziani J et al, *Transversal: acciones de integración en el territorio peruano*, Pontificia Universidad Catolica del Peru, Fondo Editorial, Lima

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The lack of prior consultation – a right that the government endorsed in the International Labour Organisation Convention 169 in 2014 – is another factor that creates social conflicts in the region and leads to fatalities, as in Bagua in 2009 when the government passed a bill allowing oil exploration in Awajún-Wampís territory without consultation.

RECOGNITION

In the context of marginalisation and violence, re-earthing and the idea of a pluriverse point to the political question of who is going to design the alternative. Understanding the role and agency of indigenous organisations in their struggle to be recognised might shed light on the challenges for re-earthing cities. A major goal of indigenous people is to achieve self-determination: the autonomy to define their destiny, as well as their idea of development in the territory that they traditionally inhabit. This was established in the UN's *Declaration* on *the Rights of Indigenous* Peoples (UNDRIP), endorsed in a non-binding agreement by the Peruvian government.

Following the 1974 Native Communities law, some institutions helped indigenous people to unite as a political organisation. to advance their agenda of self-determination. The Interethnic Association for the Development of the Forest (AIDESEP in Spanish) is the most successful and long-lasting organisation. In recent years, AIDESEP has sought the expansion of Life Plans, a planning instrument validated by the Ministry of Culture, as a means of negotiating policies related to the environment or education. For example, they proposed a carbon sequestration and forest conservation model linked to Life Plans that must include retribution for the climate contributions of indigenous people, opening a dialogue with the Ministry of Environment. Awajún-Wampís people have worked with the municipality to promote the study of medicinal plants and intercultural education in partnership with international universities. However, more holistic initiatives are far from being recognised, such as the creation of the Wampís Nation as the first autonomous territorial government in Peru, and the protection of the rainforest, which was recently defended in the courts against a private company.

The scale of indigenous people's organisational capabilities and achievements demonstrates that they are dynamic actors in their world-making process and have a clear agenda. Based on the three principles of re-earthing design and supported by experiences of Aboriginal-Australian designers, where indigenous recognition is a prior condition – three main challenges can be seen:

- **Advocating and allowing the recognition of people as the first step***:* to find an alternative to the current crisis, it is essential to recognise indigenous people's right to the land and their autonomy to decide on it. Aboriginal-Australian designers posed very problematic but inspiring questions while designing an Indigenous Cultural Centre in Melbourne: 'How do we decolonize the settler-colonial city? How does the settler-colonial city relinquish its control? Decolonisation can only be complete when it involves both the coloniser and the colonized'. The Awajún and Wampís' resistance demonstrates that recognition and self-determination is their ultimate goal and is therefore, the biggest challenge for all.
- **Unravelling indigenous knowledge of the rainforest to address urban forms:** For the challenge of co-designing a new built environment, Puketapu-Dentice *et al* (2017) propose the use of concepts and traditional knowledge from a cultural environment. In their experience 'taking indigeneity seriously in planning/urban design will not only result in a different physical environment. It will result in changes in how that environment is understood and used'. Recognition implies allowing indigenous people to show the extent of their inherent interdependence with the rainforest, seeing them as experts of their environment and recovering the idea of communality,
- **Creating spaces for reconciliation through indigenous planning:** After centuries of violence, the continuing process of dispossession and the socio-environmental crisis in Santa María de Nieva, moving forward will be impossible without clear plans for reconciliation. For this, indigenous planning is proposed as a political and institutional 'third space' (Porter *et al* 2011) where it integrates with state-based planning. This is a space for partnership and collective action between two legitimate planning systems. The challenge is to make room for true dialogue, addressing re-earthing projects where different ways of living coexist.

CONCLUSION

The challenges for re-earthing design are rooted in its underlying politics: autonomy, communality and the pluriverse respectively, and recognition is the anchor for all three. The Awajún and Wampís people are not submissive; they are transforming themselves and their environment, albeit at a slow pace. Their fight for recognition should prompt urban designers and planners to check their willingness to make room for indigenous leadership in shaping their own worlds. ●

Jessica Isabel Alvarez Cueva, Research Associate, Conurb and Centro Tierra, Pontifical Catholic University of Peru (PUCP). Undertaken as part of MSc in Building and Urban Design in Development, UCL

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Escobar A (2019), Habitability and design: Radical interdependence and the re-earthing of cities. *Geoforum, 101*, 132–140

Escobar A (2018), *Designs for the Pluriverse: Radical Interdependence, Autonomy, and the Making of Worlds*. Duke University Press

Puketapu-Dentice K, Connelly S & Thompson-Fawcett M (2017). *Towards integrating Indigenous culture in urban form.*

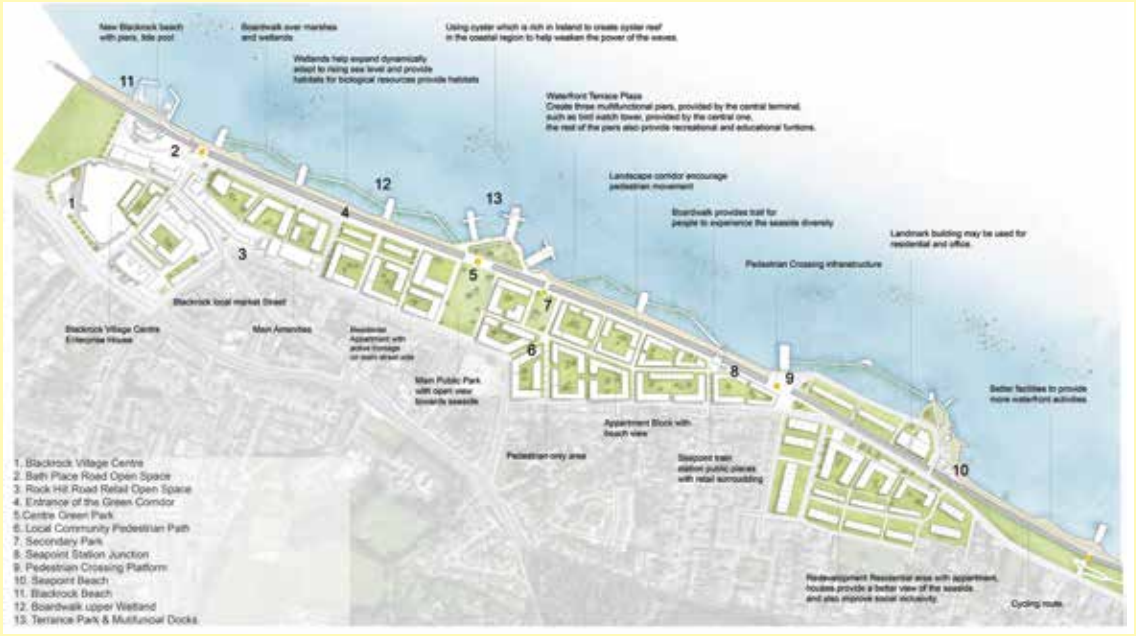
Porter L, Matunga H, Viswanathan L, Patrick L, Walker R, Sandercock L, Moraes D, Frantz J, Thompson-Fawcett M, Riddle C & Jojola T (2017), Indigenous Planning: from Principles to Practice, *Planning Theory & Practice, 18(4)*, 639-666

5

5 The main square in the community of Huampami, Condorcanqui Province

Cities at Risk: Coastal responses for Dublin

Zhuotong Shen tests the role of resilient infrastructure in urban design



1

As the planet deals with climate change, flood events are becoming a more regular occurrence and coastal cities in particular are ever more vulnerable to the impacts of flooding. Research and studies provide evidence of the potential consequences of a sea level rise as well as extreme weather events. The need to consider responses to climate change in coastal cities is at a critical juncture to safeguard communities and ensure that they have a long-term future.

In the face of the challenges posed by a sea level rise, climate resilience-based solutions are becoming the most effective strategies. As a long-term strategy for coastal flood control, resilient solutions must integrate natural and mixed infrastructure into coastal policies, and be cost-effective and sufficiently adaptable for an uncertain future. They must also provide high-quality placemaking and good urban design to ensure that future environments provide liveable high-quality spaces for people, and respond not only to climatic shifts but also to local contexts and identities. This is a complex mix of demands from a range of stakeholders.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this design study, undertaken at the Manchester Urban Design Lab (MUDLab) at the University of Manchester, was to explore the potential contribution of urban design and planning to coastal responses for cities at risk, including the introduction of resilient green infrastructure, and the provision of walkable, safe public spaces for local communities. These all need to enhance the resilience, sustainability and quality of neighbourhoods.

To address the research objectives, the design study focused on the coastline of Blackrock-Seapoint Beach in the Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown area, southeast of Dublin. The aim of the proposed masterplan was to combine rich natural resources with flood control infrastructure and high-quality urban design and placemaking, to ultimately create multiple benefits for the local coastal community, and secure the future of this beautiful stretch of the Irish coast.

METHODOLOGY

The research used both quantitative and qualitative analysis and evaluations of the site to develop a comprehensive urban design framework and a masterplan shaped by three critical resilience-based strategies: Nature-based Infrastructure, Place-making and Connections.

PRIMARY ANALYSIS

Using the *Coastal Resilience Tool* by the US-based Nature Conservancy (2020), devised for government agencies and universities to consider the methods and decision-making tools for coastal adaptation and resilience planning, this assessed:

- the current coastal disaster risk and vulnerability in the study area based on a predictive model of sea level rise, residential and commercial land and their associated improvable values within study area; and
- the ecosystem services of the study area and the feasibility of nature-based coastal infrastructure.

The finding of the predictive toolkit model illustrated that the sea level in Dublin Bay is rising faster than initially forecast and has doubled in the past two decades compared to the global average. The average sea level in Dublin Bay has risen by 120mm, or 7mm per year, since 2000. Sea levels in the bay are expected to rise by 500mm over the next 50 years.

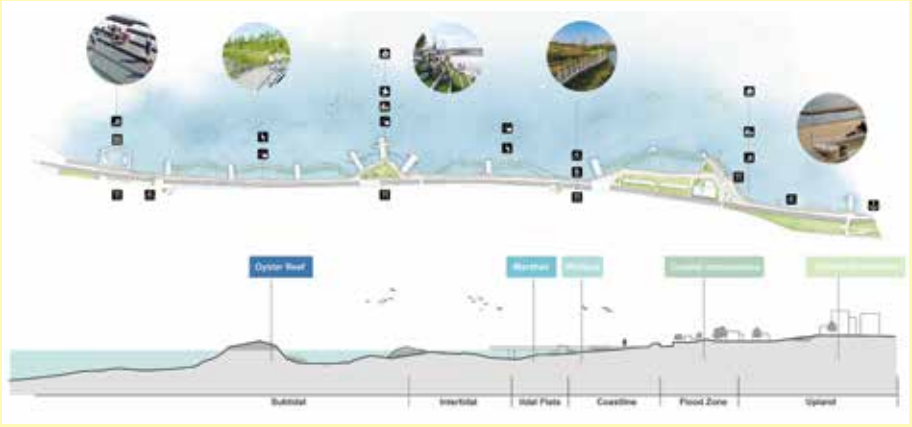
DATA COLLECTION

Following public health advice during the COVID-19 pandemic, interviews with local businesses, residents and tourists were conducted to gather perceptions on a wide range of issues including legibility and accessibility, environmental satisfaction, design improvement advice and future aspirations for Blackrock-Seapoint. Further ethnographic approaches included directly observing the activities and behaviour of tourists and pedestrians in four locations and under different weather conditions.

The interviews highlighted that:

- Most people thought the coastline lacked a continuous, easy-to-walk pedestrian path.
- The entrance to the beach is too narrow and insecure, leading to a lack of legibility,

1 Dublin: Masterplan for the coastal area of Blackrock-Seapoint Beach
2 Section and design interventions to increase use of the area and improve its environmental resilience



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and inconsistent use of the beach's key facilities and amenities.

● A small number of people suggested that Seapoint Beach needed additional amenities such as seats and lighting.

The observations showed that the beach was vibrant on sunny days and there were plenty of water activities; on rainy weather the vitality of public spaces was very different, with only occasional pedestrians and dog walkers, and a sharp drop in the number of people doing activities on the beach.

URBAN ANALYSIS

The site has a good road network and public transport links to two important urban centres: Dublin and Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown. Traffic nodes and gateways are concentrated on the retail and commercially active streets. Yet despite good vehicular access, cycling and pedestrian continuity and connections along the coast itself are poor due to the railway line running along it, and the fragmentation of the road network. Pedestrian movement is concentrated in the commercial streets of the Blackrock area. Pedestrian access also lacks physical quality and attractions, and offers poor walkability. The connection to the sea itself in the middle of the site is weak, due to the location of a few houses and the topography itself.

DESIGN CONCEPT

Using a landscape-first approach to combine place-making and resilient green infrastructure, the masterplan was developed to promote ecological and social value for the local community. An enhanced and extended public realm was provided to better support year-round activities, aiming to create a more viable increase in footfall beyond the traditional summer season. A permeable pedestrian priority pathway allowed for more inclusive access between different attractions allowing people to move more easily and sustainably to the waterfront.

NATURE-BASED INFRASTRUCTURE

Traditionally, grey infrastructure such as breakwaters, levees and ripraps (rock armour) are used to defend against potential tidal surges. However, these rigid infrastructures do not always effectively adapt to changing conditions and can deprive coastal ecosystems of their core functions. The proposed masterplan was based on the premise that green infrastructure has high potential value for resilience and can help the environment, economy and society. The design used traditional physical infrastructure and a breakwater approach to weaken the power of the waves, while breakwater oyster reefs would be created to enhance the coastal resilience and support ecological systems.

Based on this landscape, the waterfront will adapt further to a changing state with a wide range of environments, including continuous wetlands, and the tidal area will perform a buffer role. The increased wetlands area would also protect existing habitats and effectively extend the life of the coast. There is ample evidence that coastal wetland (salt marshes and mangroves) vegetation can reduce wave energy, reduce storm surges and protect the stability of coastlines by increasing sedimentation.

PLACE-MAKING

Boardwalks, docks and other infrastructure are often used to extend coastlines, forming a buffer zone and introducing different functions. Based on emerging urban resiliency theories, placemaking has become central to resilient planning, with the emphasis on the local spatial scale and daily activities. Placemaking as an urban design tool to encourage community participation needs to celebrate both the assets and the potential of the surrounding local communities. The proposals will transform spaces into attractive and vibrant public places to create a sense of place and reconnect people with the environment.

Public space needs to be designed to integrate green and blue infrastructure and the daily lives of local communities. While evaluating resilience strategies, a balance needs to be found between functionality and socio-economic revitalisation.

Eco-coastlines can provide placemaking for human activity, and continuous boardwalks will encourage children and adults to explore the ecological diversity of the wetlands tidal zone in Dublin Bay. Resilient design allows the coastline to support placemaking, the expansion of natural habitat and the growth of oyster reefs while providing an effective buffer. More water sports can also take place here, reinventing the harbour culture. Piers offer different leisure activities such as fishing and boating, and the installation of bird-watching stations at a central pier will allow visitors to fully experience the rich local bird population.

CONNECTIONS

The masterplan also seeks to ensure that the residential areas are better integrated by increasing the horizontal and vertical movement networks for living in a seaside area. The design provides routes and movement corridors to encourage a more direct connection, visually and emotionally, with the waterfront and the natural resources that the coastline offers.

REFLECTION

This design dissertation sought to identify the Blackrock-Seapoint area's future challenges in relation to rising sea levels and climate change, to ultimately propose a scheme that would be both resilient and adaptable to these issues whilst simultaneously delivering high-quality urban design for the local community. The project tested the idea that climate-resilient design approaches could also offer positive urban design futures for such neighbourhoods.

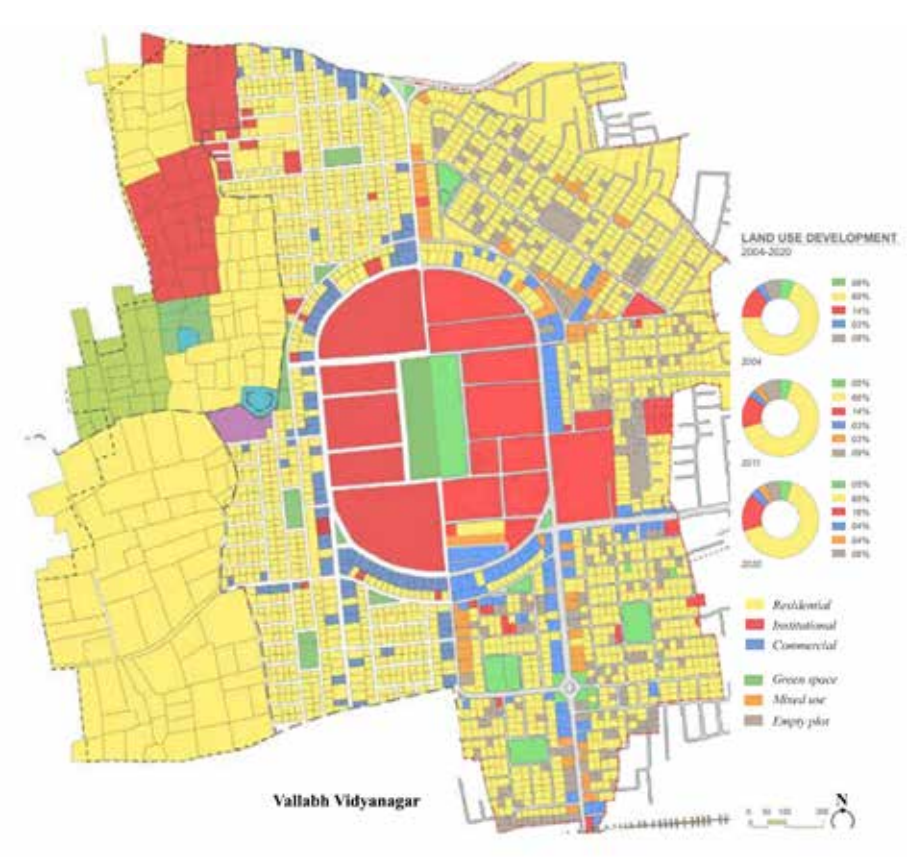
The final masterplan combined a range of adaptation tools to demonstrate how new social and ecological plans can emerge in the area over time. The design attempts to show how adaptation to sea level rise can be combined with new urban development, the creation of public spaces and ecological protection.

If urban design is to deliver contextually responsive, people-centred quality places, it must also respond to climate issues and rising sea levels to secure the future of coastal areas. It is only through testing approaches and exploring resilience that we can start to unpack and illustrate the power of masterplanning and retrofitting for this emerging reality for cities at risk. ●

Zhuotong Shen, MSc Urban Design Graduate, University of Manchester. Based on a submitted design dissertation supervised by Dr Philip Black and Mark Graham, LDA Design

Vallabh Vidyanagar: An Education-oriented Ped-shed Neighbourhood

Priyanshu Shrivastava describes a modern Gujarati town which epitomises New Urbanism principles



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It is thought-provoking to consider how an efficient and effective human settlement could also have a communally-shared value system. The creation of any liveable, human-centric and utopian existence depends upon three principles – science, democracy and community. Each of them can be looked at in more detail, and each plays a pivotal role in co-creating a city and its neighbourhoods. Science expands the horizon into technology, democracy allows us to express ourselves, and community can create a heterogeneous system for citizens to live, work, play and communicate in a convivial and altruistic environment. A vital city and its neighbourhoods depend on mixed uses, mixed ages and a mixed economy. The goal is to retain a basic level of harmony while allowing mixtures to flourish (Jencks 1999).

THEORIES AND MOVEMENTS

Planners, architects and engineers have long been critical of the social, cultural, economic and vital components of the neighbourhood model in different urban areas and their public realm. From the Garden City movement, the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM) to New Urbanism, different movements have attempted to programme and reform urban and architectural patterns. More recently, the 15-minute city initiative has been politicised around the world without always realising its relevance to the urban fabric. The grain of a neighbourhood determines the geographical range that can be explored by various modes of transport, ranging from walking and cycling to driving.

Neighbourhoods, as compact urban patterns with a balanced range of living, working, shopping, recreational and educational activities, have been explored, studied and designed in the creation of Vallabh Vidyanagar, a green town in Gujarat, India, and as part of an urban design area at the Aravindbhai Patel Institute of Environmental Design (APIED).

DECODING VALLABH VIDYANAGAR

An interdisciplinary and multi-authored approach should play a pivotal role in designing a settlement at the city and neighbourhood levels in order for it to be inclusive and sustainable, and have a sense of belonging. Vallabh Vidyanagar is a town and a municipality in the Anand District in Gujarat. During our urban design studies of it, previous shared sustainable ideologies and principles for a humanist neighbourhood, incorporating climate change and the local context, were explored.

Known as a very green town, Vallabh Vidyanagar was examined for its morphogenesis, and tangible and intangible character, which revealed a city based on a concentric hierarchical zoning system. It has a communal open space in the centre with an educational zone surrounding it as a circle of institutions, followed by an outer circle of residential development. The name itself is based on an ideology of creating a cohesive settlement around education – *vidya nagar* meaning knowledge town. The history of the land and its assembly by its founder Shri Bhaikaka led to an education-oriented development which brought about a tremendous shift in the region, from an agrarian society to a well-educated population, increasing the employability of individuals and growing the neighbourhood. The vision was to educate local people and enhance the literacy of its inhabitants. Such an education-based approach can speed up the progress of a nation significantly.

Vallabh Vidyanagar's central oval-shaped district is around 300 *bighas* in size (around 120 acres) and includes a large open space at the centre, with institutions, staff quarters, a hostel and the university within it. The public green space is used for formal university ceremonies and a playground for children with paths for pedestrians and leisure facilities. Lined with large deciduous trees around its periphery, the open green space creates a healthy ecosystem of birds, trees, people and their physical environments. Beyond this lies a predominantly residential area dotted with green commons acting as social spaces. Commercial uses border the oval's peripheral roads encircling and forming a buffer to the quieter and more walkable residential streets. The peripheral

1 Vallabh Vidyanagar: land use plan
2 Five minutes' walk (400m) and five minutes' cycle ride (1km) from the centre centre of Vallabh Vidyanagar
3 Typical roads flanked by rows of trees
4 The public common areas as drawn by APIED students

area is divided into plots of two sizes: 500 square yards and 1,000 square yards, located along the main roads.

The road network is divided into three categories:

- primary roads connecting all of the significant junctions of the town. These carry large volumes of traffic, and are about 18m wide
- secondary roads, around 12m wide, branch off the primary roads to the residential zones and have mixed use commercial buildings along them, and
- tertiary roads, whose purpose is to reach homes. At around 7m wide, they carry less vehicular traffic and more pedestrians.

When it was established in 1947, the education town had 573 registered students, and it now has grown to around 30,000 students, demonstrating how effective the strategy of establishing an education-based town has been. The town of Vallabh Vidyanagar has witnessed a population increase at a moderate pace, as students live in hostels for fixed periods of time, and there is a substantial amount of daily commuting by academics and support staff to the institutions and offices. The commercial zone has seen more mixed uses as demand for student accommodation has increased further.

UNCOVERING A PED-SHED

The planning of Vallabh Vidyanagar exhibits many of the characteristics of a pedestrian-shed – a five-minute walking distance neighbourhood – much like the principles laid out by Duany Plater-Zyberk (1999). The central area has a 400m radius from the centre to the edge of the educational zone which is a five-minute walk. Explored by bicycle, a 5 minute cycle ride covers 1km, and encompasses the whole of Vidyanagar, including the railway station.

In this way, the whole town gives its residents and visitors routes across its length and breadth either on foot or by bicycle within five minutes, and promotes a more pedestrian-friendly neighbourhood with less vehicular traffic congestion. The orthogonal grid pattern increases its permeability and accessibility, and knits together a legible and interconnected street network.

Lower carbon emissions mean a healthier and more breathable place, and this is increased by the planting of indigenous trees with thick foliage along all the roads. The trees originally planted to give plenty of shade around Shastri Maidan, the Oval and the roads leading to Vadtal and Karamsad, have since matured. Today, around 80 different species of trees can be found there. Major roads flanked with trees give the town a domestic scale, thereby encouraging social interaction and creating attractive spaces. Parrots, mynah birds, hornbills, barn owls, monkeys and other arboreal birds and animals roost in the deciduous trees and enjoy a rich ecosystem, which promotes a strong sense of interdependency.

More recently, several underused public parks have been developed, such as Bhaikaka Bal Kridagan as a children's park, a senior citizens' park, Nagarpalika public park and Ambe Mata Temple park, meeting the social and cultural needs of urban life, and promoting healthy lifestyles with good microclimates for this hot and humid place.

Vallabh Vidyanagar has a peacefulness, walkability and cohesiveness inherent in its design. Having institutions at its core though means that at night, the central zone is dead as it lacks human activities. But the periphery lined with commercial eateries and shops is active and brimming with students. The work, play and live model of the urban settlement has been brought together on a holistic way.

Each block comprises plots of around 500 sqm, which help to support proportionate and regulated mixed use development. The small block sizes along with a grid-iron street pattern enhance the walkability and connectivity, as all of the neighbourhoods are interconnected. Students from diverse backgrounds thrive in the town, making it a more heterogeneous place to live. The town's vitality reduces when the students are away and footfalls drop considerably. This has a ripple effect on the economic life of the town as its prime users, whether students or locals, are elsewhere. This duality begs solutions to create more predictable patterns of demand and supply.

In the future, the planning of Vallabh Vidyanagar should continue to promote the benefits of walkability and liveability balanced with its local social, cultural and economic context, and respecting its climate-oriented features. The town should be for all, including the unskilled workforce, and encourage a shared value-based development. Multi-authorship at the planning level should be promoted and a piecemeal growth pattern needs to be implemented to reshape existing, less hospitable neighbourhoods, so that changes can be observed and measured. ●

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Budapest's District V. Photograph by Philip Black

Design and Landscape: A Complex Past, A Contested Present, A Critical Future

Guest topic editor Philip Black sets the scene in this long-running relationship

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Landscape, nature, environment, green infrastructure – however you label it – has always been an integral part of the world we live in, designed or otherwise. Nature and design have been inextricably entwined from the earliest human settlements through to modern day city development and masterplanning.

However this relationship has rarely been smooth and could never be accused of being a happy union; it could more accurately be described as a complex discourse or a marriage, which like most, has had its ups and downs, yet resolutely continues in its pursuit of balance and harmony. This pursuit has spawned many successes that we rightly laud and promote as best practice, but equally we can unpack the follies that have set cities and neighbourhoods back by decades as they failed to deliver places that communities desperately seek and require.

With such a complex past, it should be of little surprise to witness the contested present that urban design and landscape find themselves in. Balancing out much of the good work being done today are budgetary cuts that reduce the role of green infrastructure to little more than green-washing and marketing, and a lack of education amongst the wider public as to the indisputable benefits that they miss out on when local authorities, developers, and designers deprive them of access to green spaces and natural environments. Here we will explore some of this complex past and contested present, but with a clear warning: the future demands that this pursuit yields feasible solutions and fast. As the planet is on the precipice of a climate disaster, urban places and how they are often designed and delivered are assisting its acceleration towards an uncertain future. Design and landscape need to come together in new ways to respond to these challenges and ensure that the places of tomorrow are more resilient, sustainable, adaptable and high quality.

1 Brasilia, planned according to CIAM principles

A COMPLEX PAST

To avoid a lengthy thesis on the history of design and landscape, let us begin with the birth of modern-day urban design and why this 'new' design discipline was deemed necessary. From the first cities, urban design has existed in some form, yet its contemporary genesis can be traced to the Harvard Conference of 1956 and the development of a new vision for thinking about cities led by Josep Lluis Sert, Dean of the Harvard Graduate School of Design. The conference was convened to tackle changes in cities in the USA that prompted prominent thinkers, leaders, and designers to call for immediate action. These changes included matters of scale, morphology, quality, environment and health, and had partly been the result of the failure of urban philosophies that prevailed from the late 1800s to the early 1900s. Often fundamentally opposed in their agendas and ideologies, these approaches to city design tackled the integration of design and landscape in very different ways and with each failing to deliver consistently.

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The City Beautiful movement, embodied by Daniel Burnham's Plan for Cleveland, based on his original protype city from the 1893 Chicago's World Fair, promoted the introduction of large-scale green and open spaces into civic cores. This movement, which unashamedly promoted beautification and monumental grandeur, was a reaction to the poor quality of life prevalent in cities such as Washington DC, Cleveland, Detroit and Chicago. The aim was to enhance residents' moral and civic pride through harmonious social order and formal centralised landscaping features.

The approach was criticised as overly cosmetic and aesthetic, an 'architectural design cult' according to Jane Jacobs. Whilst the remnants of this movement in Cleveland and Washington DC remain popular in terms of identity and tourism, the philosophy proved expensive to deliver and did little to provide quality of life for locals, embrace organic beauty in nature or tap into its full arsenal of potential benefits to society.

The turn of the century bore witness to two new and very different influential design approaches for the planning and delivery of cities, in particular how landscape was to be considered and prioritised. Both of these movements championed the role of landscape as critical to design, yet both failed to fully realise their ambitions. The first of these by Ebenezer Howard in 1898 was the Garden City or Social City. The Garden City ideal dealt with landscape very differently to the City Beautiful, surrounding areas with greenbelts and aiming to address issues of overcrowding and pollution resulting from the Industrial Revolution, with a landscape-first agenda. Raymond Unwin won the first competition to deliver a Garden City in Letchworth in 1904, and the ideals spread across the Atlantic to influence the United States. The Garden City ideal faced criticism however for its relationship with green infrastructure delivery, in particular that it failed to embrace the organic nature of landscape, and that it was inconvenient to access and use. In recent years, we have witnessed positive efforts to revisit Garden City principles with some success, and New Urbanism can be traced back to the thinking developed by Howard and his contemporaries.

The second philosophy sought to focus attention on people and integrate landscape in a more organic manner, ensuring that integration would benefit those living and using these settings and avoiding the criticism of prior design approaches. This philosophy is most closely aligned to the works of the *Congres Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne* (CIAM). Founded in 1928, a group of 28 European architects led by Le Corbusier and including Alvar Aalto, Walter Gropius and Josep Lluis Sert sought to spread the principles of Modernism beyond architecture into wider masterplanning. Perhaps the best example of the principles laid out by CIAM in their manifesto, *The Athens Charter* (1933), is the city of Brasilia, planned by Lucio Costa in the 1950s with renowned Brazilian architect and urbanist Oscar Niemeyer. The subsequent failure of this Modernist agenda and how it dealt with design's relationship to landscaping and nature was due to the lack of attention to community and amenity, and the inclusion of large open spaces and green

2 The City Beautiful movement: McMillan Commission Plan for Washington DC 1902
3 Letchworth, the original Garden City
4 Le Corbusier's *Plan Voisin* for Paris
5 Vienna: Alt-Erla housing estate planned in the 1960s

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provision without consideration for how people might use them. This was similar to the earlier criticisms aimed at the City Beautiful movement. Le Corbusier's *Plan Voisin* for Paris is widely recognised as a symbol of these failures and timing did not help this radical new way of thinking. The approach became highly influential in the need for rapid rebuilding at the end of World War II due to its rigid rules and emphasis on tall housing blocks that were relatively simple to deliver quickly and affordably. This led to a loss of diversity and choice, and a lack of attention paid to the spaces between buildings where the public realm and green infrastructure should thrive. Many of these failed projects have since been demolished, others are undergoing successful rehabilitation such as Park Hill in Sheffield. There are other schemes such as Alt-Erlaa, Vienna, designed by Harry Gluck, that better showcase the potential of the Modernist approach, where the spaces received equal attention and priority to create a neighbourhood that demonstrates what the happy marriage of design and landscape can look like when supported and funded in equal measure.

In the wake of these failures, Sert, one of the original CIAM members sought out a new conduit for producing better places, and urban design was established as the fourth design discipline within the Harvard Graduate School for Design alongside architecture, landscape, and planning. This new disciplinary field was heralded as being the ideal facilitator for bringing the design disciplines together more effectively, and critically to ensure that the provision of open space and landscape was prioritised and promoted as integral to the success of placemaking. At this point it is arguable that urban design was less a professional vocation and more a field of activity, but it quickly developed its own territory and has been recognised since with many theorists, thinkers and designers shaping the role of this fresh upstart. Urban design has huge potential to bring design and landscape together in a more consistent way, but it remains somewhat broad and undefined; it has yet to fully convince or establish itself alongside its more established older disciplines like architecture, landscape and planning. This is in part why the present remains contested with regards to design and landscape delivery.

6–9 Scenes from Budapest's District V, which is in the heart of the city and has an array of green spaces

A CONTESTED PRESENT

The design disciplines have historically not played well together, sabre-rattling as to who does what best and how effectively. Of course, this is a sweeping generalisation, but it nevertheless rings true when we consider how we define the specific roles of each in the production of the built environment. Education plays a key role here, with a lack of integration among the four traditional disciplines. Architecture and planning are normally in different departments, and urban design is claimed by both as a sub-set or specialism. Landscape can be found within either or as a stand-alone department with little engagement or cooperation in teaching and project work. While this is not true in all universities, the lack of consistency across higher education is clear, and the Harvard GSD model is only replicated in a small number of institutions. As a result two issues arise:

● The lack of understanding and cooperation between these related fields can naturally filter into practice, with each profession viewing the other with suspicion.
● Urban design remains under-appreciated and recognised, with too few dedicated programmes and a lack of clear mandate for its role in practice.

If urban design is to be the facilitator for design and landscape to deliver consistently and harmoniously, it needs to establish its credentials to do so, and for practitioners within these fields to come together and appreciate the power of genuine collaboration, as Ian Mell describes in the following article. He argues that green infrastructure can be a bridge for aligning urban design and landscape more effectively.

There are a significant number of projects that showcase the ability of urban design to work with landscape and produce high quality liveable environments for both people and nature. This issue introduces some of these best practice cases over the past 20-30 years with Bob Phillips revisiting Upton, Hammarby Sjöstad and Aspern Seestadt. Major new green infrastructure-led masterplans that put landscape at the front of the quality agenda include the wonderful Parc des Hauteurs in the Paris region, described by Paul Lecroart. Landscape-led approaches are also championed by local authorities who recognise that new development should first respect the natural world within which it exists, and Mark Waller-Gutierrez discusses how the South Downs National Park Authority is working with developers on this issue. There are practices working today with design and landscape as their central aim to ensure that communities have equitable access to high quality open and green space and their associated benefits. Mark Graham describes LDA Design's philosophy through a series of recent town and city centre projects. These articles reflect a wealth of good work that is being produced across Europe. However, these examples are not necessarily representative of the majority of design today.

Austerity and budget cuts often lead to projects looking nothing like their original vision. In seeking planning permission and community approval, the public realm, landscaping and green infrastructure marketed as central to a masterplan are later cut back, with the final result looking nothing like the early winsome renderings. This illustrates the lack of priority given to and appreciation for green infrastructure. Even projects that are advertised as landscape-led can suffer from this malaise, as the Marble Arch Mound in London illustrates.

Demand for high quality must be backed by policy and better standards as Gemma Jerome explains, so that innovation in urban design and landscape can be supported. Quality is a complex issue in landscape provision, and green infrastructure is too important to be reduced to a tick-box exercise. Helen Hoyle describes the myriad benefits of designing more healthy environments and the importance of people's perceptions.

A CRITICAL FUTURE

The role of urban design and landscape has never been more critical to the future of the planet. With the Earth in the midst of a climate emergency, new ways of adapting to our changing world are required. Rising sea levels threaten coastal locations and low-lying lands, air pollution from carbon emissions choke residents in major cities, and rising temperatures threaten our way of life. The built environment and how it is designed, constructed and used is part of the problem, but must also be part of the solution. Urban design can influence change and play its part by targeting more sustainable and efficient carbon performance.

There is a danger that we go too far down the ecological systems route, neglecting society and how people live. However it is vitally important that solutions are crafted which people can support and demand. Solutions benefitting both the planet and quality of life are explored by Agnes Sandström.

Budapest's District V and its incredible hierarchy of green spaces and infrastructure is a fine place to explore and appreciate how neighbourhoods can be both for people and for nature.

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The role of urban design and landscape has never been more critical to the future of the planet... new ways of adapting to our changing world are required

Design and landscape need to move past this rocky phase in their relationship in order to find common ground. Ian Mell and I issue a call to action, highlighting the role that education, policy, practice and community can play in moving forwards. Time is no longer on our side, and we need to put urban design and landscape at the top of the agenda. ●

Dr Philip Black, guest topic editor and Director, Manchester Urban Design LAB, University of Manchester

10–11 Scenes from Budapest's District V spaces

Aligning Landscape and Urban Design

Ian Mell discusses disciplinary challenges and the role of green infrastructure in overcoming them

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Urban design, landscape planning and landscape architecture are contemporary disciplines or bed fellows, and the natural alternative to architecture. However, a divergence remains between the teaching and practice of urban design and landscape which means that students, academics and practitioners focus predominately on one discipline or the other. Although there is growing discussion of how best to align alternative approaches to the design and management of space, a form of disciplinary reluctance remains, hindering this process.

In part this is due to academic preferences for specific types of design, the skill set needed to practice urban or landscape design, and the environment in which academic teaching finds itself. It is a reflection of established boundaries developed over an extended period of time by practitioners to protect their disciplines, and reinforced by practices which seek graduates with specific skill sets within landscape and urban planning. However, if we consider the value of high-quality placemaking and management, and in the context of COVID-19 specifically, this intransigence seems incongruous. As a consequence, there is a need to challenge the divergence of teaching and the use of isolationist language and terminology, to shape practice so that it can be applied across the natural and built environment.

This requires give and take and for those charged with developing liveable and functional places to engage with nature and discover how it can be best aligned with urban design practice. It also calls for an openness from landscape practitioners to potentially integrate less but better placed nature in developments if it creates a wider set of benefits. Balance is needed to ensure that ecological designs are meaningful but do not overpower the legibility or permeability of a place.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE AS A BRIDGE

The growing use of green infrastructure (GI) could be seen as one approach to landscape and urban development that transcends these discussions, and bridges disciplinary differences. The promotion of multi-functional, connected and accessible places – inherent in GI thinking – can be mapped onto the ideas of urban design being people-focussed, appropriately scaled, and offering a curated public realm which promotes interactivity, and presented as the core principles of urban design.

To support these discussions, GI should be considered as 'a network of multi-functional green space and other green features, urban and rural, which can deliver quality of life and environmental benefits for communities' (Town & Country Planning Association 2012). The promotion of multi-functionality acts as a key bridging concept between natural and built environment disciplines, as it fosters an understanding of the socio-economic enhancement of place whilst simultaneously supporting ecological systems (Mell 2021).

In addition, GI has been used extensively to address issues of flooding, climate change and biodiversity loss, as well as supporting efforts to improve mental and physical health via access to nature (Natural England & Land Use Consultants 2009). These are objectives common to urban and landscape design practice. One of the key benefits of a GI approach to development is its ability to be adaptive to the spatial, design and financial context of a site. This flexibility is crucial in allowing GI advocates from across the landscape, engineering and planning professions to shape investment in a more responsive way. It is in this reflective and adaptive space that GI can be best linked to urban design.

Good urban and landscape design is functional, diverse, interactive and immediate. It allows people of all ages and backgrounds to engage with nature within their neighbourhoods, and provides links between the local and wider landscape.

EXAMPLES TO LEARN FROM

In practice there are numerous examples of high-quality GI thinking within urban design practice. The redevelopment and subsequently daylighting of the Cheonggyecheon stream in central Seoul, South Korea, illustrates the value of investing in connective landscape features that are

1 Beijing, China: Pocket Park under 4th Ringroad

interactive, layered and multi-level spaces in dense urban areas. Comparable benefits have been associated with the High Line in New York, the Atlanta BeltLine, and the Promenade Plantée in Paris, all of which have reimagined transport infrastructure into multi-functional urban parks (Mell, 2016). Each was designed around notions of access, mobility and design quality to attract investment initially, and patrons following completion.

Moreover, there is the added value of investing in variations of place to promote interactivity between urban and landscape designers. The Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in London is a public space, a location of tranquillity, and a place constantly in motion due to its personal and communal transport links; it is a park that changes with the seasons due to its innovative planting and water management design. The park could be categorised as promoting permeability and legibility due to its grouping of pathways, landmark buildings, and a distinctive sector creating a recognisable design motif. The use of GI to maximise the quality and value of linear spaces can therefore link urban and landscape design.

A further area where GI may be effective in aligning ecological and urban design is its integration into planning policy. The 2021 Environment Bill, Defra's *25-Year Environment Plan* (2018) and the Planning White Paper *Planning for the Future* (2020) all call for the development of more beautiful places that are accessible and integrate nature. Planning with, and for GI provides opportunities to meet these calls and influence the creation of the next generation of liveable places. We should not though be fooled into thinking that there is a magic bullet, specific quantum or type of GI that can meet these needs. All sites still require locally specific contextualisation to ensure that a design works and GI can be a critical aspect of this debate.

THE ADDED VALUE OF GREENING

Linking GI with urban design is not as simple as an alignment of core principles. There is a need to consider the added value that greening can provide to the urban design process. How does GI help to maximise the aesthetic, interactive and functional quality of a space? How can GI be used to move beyond simple tree planting to screen noise? At what point does the inclusion of GI have a negative influence on the costs of a project? Does GI enhance a design's functionality or simply 'green' the renderings?

Opportunities exist for these questions to be discussed and innovative answers found to support designs. Unfortunately, in some instances the need to work across departments, disciplines or organisations to incorporate expertise does not work. Where it does, we can identify forward-thinking problem-solving and design. We see the integration of engineered water solutions with contemporary thinking on nature-based sustainable drainage. We see ecologically diverse planting used to both support aesthetic quality and promote new habitats. We also see GI being used as a first principle of mobility, and as a promoter of permeability between homes, work and places of interest. In these instances, GI is proposed as a framework of principles and investment options, linking people with the environment to support long-term sustainability goals.

These questions are now being taken seriously by design and landscape advocates in consultancy and local government, although the extent to which this questioning is effective remains debatable. Larger institutions have the capacity in terms of people, their portfolios and their finance, to bring these disparate aspects of development together. It may not always be entirely effective, but the context exists to collectively discuss GI and urban design within development debates.

To help to address this ongoing gap, the University of Manchester has developed innovative teaching programmes that provide opportunities for students to integrate GI thinking within urban design practice. The multi-disciplinary nature of the Department of Planning and Environmental Management (PEM), and specifically the Manchester Urban Design Lab and its MSc in Urban Design & International Planning (UDIP) provide the conceptual basis and a practical structure to embrace the skills needed to deliver effective urban design. This is complemented with modules in GI that use theory-practice perspectives to illustrate how GI can complement urban design. The aim is to illustrate examples of best practice, drawing links between landscape, urban planning and design principles. In doing so, the reluctance to consider landscape aspects in urban design, and vice versa, can be challenged and development thinking can become more integrative, innovative and meaningful. GI may not be the solution to ongoing differences in the disciplinary approaches of landscape, urban design and planning, but it does provide a lens through which the complementarity of nature-centric approaches can be aligned with future-thinking urban design. ●

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2 University of Washington, Tacoma campus
3 Singapore: Horticultural Park

Dr Ian Mell, Reader in Landscape Planning, University of Manchester

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Revisiting Classic Case Studies

Bob Phillips draws lessons from three high-profile development schemes

Since my time as an undergraduate town planning student studying urban design some 20 years ago, there has been a constant infatuation and preoccupation with the way that professionals respond to design's relationship with blue and green infrastructure. The terms blue and green infrastructure were not fashionable until about 10 years ago, and more recently the climate change emergency has pushed this matter up the agenda, but these ideas have always been important to me. As an urban designer in practice and academia, I explore how experimental and conceptual approaches delivered in certain high-profile development schemes have impacted my views.

The built environment professions have been exploring how best to develop a design response to integrate townscape, landscape and natural processes for the last 150 years. Ebenezer Howard and his Garden City concept applied to Letchworth explored these matters in the early 20th century, while Leon Krier and HRH Prince Charles revisited them some 80 years later at Poundbury. In the 21st century, the exploration by Rudlin *et al* of the garden town concept – a worthy winner of the 2014 Wolfson Prize – also grappled with this issue. However, despite this long history of best practice and theoretical exploration, integrating green and blue infrastructure still appears to be a dark art, and in the UK at least, it has failed to gather traction and move from being experimental or conceptual into the mainstream and in urban design projects.

1 Upton, Northamptonshire: swales in the major and side streets

This article focuses on three schemes delivered over the last 20 years: Upton in Northampton, Hammarby Sjöstad in Stockholm, and Aspern Seestadt in Vienna. Readers of this journal may already be familiar with all three, but I find myself using images, strategies and concepts from them to support my professional and academic endeavours. Notwithstanding matters of taste, no urban designer could disagree that these projects are worthy of study and attention, and revisiting them will reward us with fresh insights. Studying them for this article, I was struck by how a sensible approach to managing water and landscape within masterplanning and design can help to accommodate higher densities.

UPTON – A STORY OF URBAN BLOCKS AND SWALES

My first visit to Upton was at the urging of my urban design lecturer and contributor to this journal, Joe Holyoak. On a cold winter morning my student colleagues and I travelled to visit Phase 1 of the new settlement to study its urban block form, measuring blocks and street ratios by pacing out the distances. I recall being struck then, as I have on subsequent visits, at how this rigid and dense block form was broken up by a series of softer routes and spaces accommodating swales and a strong hierarchy of green infrastructure. In fact, the legibility of the place was defined more by the green and blue

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2 Upton, Northamptonshire: The swales form a large part of the public realm
3–5 Hammarby Sjostad's extensive green infrastructure. Image no.4 from Flickr by Design for Health

infrastructure than by the built form, and in some cases this was disconcerting and disorientating for me as a young urban designer who had typically relied on built form for legibility.

The swales are very much part of the character of Upton, forming a dominant element in the identity of the streets and spaces which link the buildings together. The sheer scale of these features within the townscape is staggering – almost half the width of the major streets is taken up with swales which provide both green infrastructure and rainwater attenuation. With no public body wishing to take responsibility for such complicated and multi-faceted assets, they are the subject of a management company surcharge. From an urban design perspective the swales are the design driver, at the heart of what would otherwise be a dense and hard urban development. They allow for a density which would only be found in more urban settings, and not at the edge of a settlement where there would typically be a requirement for a soft landscape character. Here, the landscape features allow the density to be more easily accommodated within the scale of the place.

Having visited many regeneration projects, urban extensions and housing estates, I am not aware of any other scheme that has given over so much space to a design feature out of the swale, and to the retention of water and runoff. Water attenuation, within the UK context, appears to be best left out of sight and out of mind, never front and centre as it is in Upton, where it creates a clear design layer. To some extent, the work in the Millennium Communities at Allerton Bywater and Telford also focused on water-sensitive design – much of this as a result of their locations – but these are nothing compared to the ambition of Upton. The idea of water attenuation coupled with landscape features and integrated with the route and space network was, and remains, ground-breaking.

HAMMARBY SJÖSTAD – A NEW GENERATION

A decade ago, every student on a Master's in Urban Design course referred to Hammarby in their dissertations and project inspirations. It was the dream destination of all design students (along with projects such as Vauban in Freiburg) and there are very good reasons for this. Hammarby takes the idea of layers to a new level and it was rightly lauded as a new generation in masterplanning and placemaking. A student could easily break the masterplan into a series of interconnected layers almost like an exploded cross section akin to Stephen Biesty's excellent book *Incredible Cross-Sections* (1992).

Breaking the Hammarby Masterplan down into layers is a valuable learning exercise for any urban designer, and the

beauty of the blue and green infrastructure layers is something worthy of study. The carefully constructed hierarchy of spaces, parks and open areas, the transitional areas along the waterfront, the views and vistas to green and blue features all add to the distinctiveness of the place. Where Hammarby takes this further is how these landscape layers sensibly connect with ideas around rainwater harvesting, runoff collection and attenuation. Each space is designed to fulfil all of these roles – perhaps not all to the same extent – but each space is asked to contribute to each. Collectively this enhances the quality of life for those living and working in the neighbourhood. I remain impressed by how these layers overlay, clearly having been designed side-by-side.

The surface drainage and green infrastructure were deemed as integral to the design as more common infrastructure such as public transport or the highly innovative waste collection vacuum system. It is only through this strategic and comprehensive design process, where landscape, water, movement and built form come together that the density of an urban neighbourhood can be accommodated. Some 17,000 people will live in the area when it becomes an established neighbourhood, but in any published image, the green and blue infrastructure takes centre-stage as part of the public realm. This is by design and Hammarby remains one of the most successful examples of the integration of landscape and water management.

ASPERN SEESTADT – TOO MUCH OF A GOOD THING?

Aspern Seestadt, a new town on a former airport on the outskirts of Vienna, has a distinctive Viennese twist. The masterplan has been designed to deliver high density living with the majority of the scheme reflecting the 5–6 storey Viennese urban block form. It is based around its own mini-*Ringstrasse* (circular road) accommodating public transport, shops, services and community buildings.

Green space plays a vitally important role in the masterplan, focused as it is on a central park and a huge body of water suitable for a range of ecological and recreational purposes, right in the centre of the scheme. The masterplan is designed to allow maximum access to green space for the residents, with a hierarchy ranging from semi-private shared courtyards, right up to the central park. Hard spaces are not exempt from green treatment with street trees forming an integral part of the overall character and public realm palette. The design includes and makes provision for a range of water-sensitive design features including permeable paving, swales and attenuation ponds. These concepts were integral to the masterplan layers and they can be seen as part of the masterplan document available online.

Interestingly and as opposed to the two previous examples, Aspern Seestadt is unashamedly urban in character. Certainly Upton was a vague attempt to create a village (much of it reflective of Garden City design), and Hammarby very much an eco-suburb, but Aspern is a new mini-town, designed to be high density, vibrant and busy. The way that green infrastructure and water management are considered is not showy. The design team and all involved in the plan's implementation simply accept that a public realm to manage water, integrate green infrastructure, and have a function as a thoroughfare is normal and expected. In that way, from the smallest of spaces, right up to the central park and lake, these elements are considered and fully integrated.

WHAT TO LEARN

Some have lauded the importance of the integrated green infrastructure and water management systems, others the hierarchies of green and blue spaces, and many the importance of latticed networks of urban design layers. These are not new concepts and each of the three case studies has something to teach us. However, looking again at these projects I was aware that they signpost the way to create high density liveable neighbourhoods, and the importance of these elements being integral in helping urban designers to make the most effective and efficient use of land.

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Integrating water management and green infrastructure into developments, and giving generous land to create networks, simply allows higher densities to be delivered effectively

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Integrating water management and green infrastructure into developments, and giving generous land to create networks, simply allows higher densities to be delivered effectively. This may seem counterintuitive, but a study of these projects shows how effective it is. The generous green and blue infrastructure provision within each of these projects is a vital component in creating attractive and useable human-scaled places, whilst offering high density living. We can study them to learn about how green infrastructure is part of higher density, human-scaled urban design, particularly as we explore the 15-minute city and the challenges of climate change. By studying some of the more experimental schemes, we can encourage these ideas to become mainstream. ●

Bob Phillips, Director, Urban Imprint

6–7 Vienna, Aspern Seestadt's multi-purpose greenspaces in courtyards

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Perceptions of Colour, Form and Amenity in Green Spaces

Helen Hoyle makes the case for healthy resilient places adapted to the local population

Designing healthy resilient places for people does not need to be challenging or complicated. We should remember that a landscape-led approach works best, where the landscape comes first and provides the framework within which the built environment is nurtured. We should also be aware that human reactions to places depend both on the aesthetics of the designed landscape and the people themselves. Because people's responses and perceptions are driven by values which vary at the individual and community level, working with local stakeholders including residents, site users, local schools and land managers provides a positive way forward.

COLOUR AND FORM

Landscape aesthetics drive human responses in different ways. Colour and form are two key characteristics which can be manipulated to provoke specific reactions. Colourful flowering planting in urban spaces precipitates the 'wow factor' which lifts the human spirit, excites and produces instant joy – an adrenaline high. Research has shown that across a range of designed urban woodland and shrub and herbaceous landscapes, people consider that planting with 27 per cent flower cover or more is particularly attractive (Hoyle *et al* 2017a). This provides useful information to the designer fashioning a planting palate to support instant human happiness. Seasonality is another factor to bear in mind. Since creating year-round interest is desirable, the overall landscape picture should contain colour throughout the seasons. Some people live in anticipation of fresh greens and pale daffodils in spring, whereas others enjoy the rich mellowing browns and golds of an autumnal landscape. Evidence also suggests that subtle green landscapes are conducive to relaxation and mental restoration.

Form has a similar effect. Recent work in collaboration with Matthew Pottage, curator at RHS Wisley (Hoyle 2021) showed that a 'climate-ready' Exotic Garden incorporating species such as dramatic cannas with large vibrant orange flowers, and Chinese dwarf bananas, elicited excitement and wonder; whereas visitors found the English cottage garden style, with a wilder aesthetic incorporating familiar native species such as foxgloves, geraniums and roses, relaxing and mentally restorative to walk through. That the public are supportive of the introduction of non-native, exotic species with an unfamiliar aesthetic provides policymakers and land managers with the confidence to introduce these species, providing greater resilience to future climates than present day planting.

People also react in different ways to the degree of control that a land manager can exert over the landscape in terms of maintenance to deliver a clipped, manicured aesthetic or otherwise. Practice in different international contexts has historically indicated that people like to see 'cues to care' in the landscape, signalling human intervention and deliberate management. These include bright colourful flowers, neatly trimmed edges and mown desire lines, which frame wilder areas of grassland, meadow or shrub, and provide a pathway for site users and their dogs. Landscape thinking in the UK and throughout Europe suggests that people are increasingly prepared to accept urban vegetation with a wilder aesthetic, particularly if they know it provides wildlife benefits.

1 Dramatic exotic planting can be visually providing a 'wow-factor' and be climate-ready.

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WORKING WITH HUMAN RESPONSES

Many local land managers already understand these relationships and use landscape aesthetics to provoke particular responses. This helps when targeting scarce financial resources to deliver maximum human enjoyment, as well as environmental co-benefits such as climate resilience and wildlife habitat. This applies in the UK where local planning authorities (LPAs) have been experiencing drastic cuts to green space budgets since 2010, when austerity measures were introduced and quality green space provision started to be considered an optional extra. LPAs have embraced meadow-style vegetation in different urban contexts, partly because there is the perception that this style of vegetation needs less management and is therefore cheaper to maintain.

Yet context matters too, and experiences with local residents have taught greenspace managers that many urban residents will not accept tall native perennial meadows directly outside their homes, particularly after flowering, when stems and seed heads are brown, may be trampled by neighbourhood dogs, and may harbour drug paraphernalia or animal excrement (Hoyle *et al* 2017b). Sowing shorter meadow species, mowing more frequently, and using colourful annual meadows including vibrant non-native species such as the Californian poppy or late flowering plains coreopsis in high-profile central or residential areas, provide the cues to care some residents seek.

In Lyon, France, green space managers classify spaces as flowering, recreational or nature. The flowering spaces need the most financial investment in terms of initial planting and maintenance. They are high-profile central city locations such as the Place Bellecour, where fountains and showy white blooms provide a magnet for residents and visitors. Recreational spaces include the banks of the river Rhône and are designed for walking, cycling and relaxation. The nature spaces provide refuge for wildlife: whilst high footfall is discouraged and signage highlights the value of these sites as biodiversity hotspots, explaining the ecosystem services that they provide.

PERCEPTIONS AND VALUES

The way that people perceive, react and behave in the landscape is also related to their beliefs, deep-seated underlying values and socio-cultural characteristics. People who are highly nature-connected, with a great affinity with the natural world, have repeatedly been shown to enjoy the aesthetics of natural landscapes and find being in nature mentally restorative. They are also likely to be familiar with the concept of biodiversity and support a wilder, less manicured aesthetic in urban areas. In addition, public acceptance of dramatic, exotic planting in the UK landscape has been shown to depend on people's values in relation to climate change and how aware they are of the impact it is having on public parks and greenspaces. Those who understand that many of today's plant species such as the traditional oak, are becoming less resilient to future climates, are more prepared to accept climate-ready exotic planting, seeing this as evolution in action (Hoyle *et al* 2017c). Climate change awareness has also been shown to be directly related to people's educational qualifications, which highlights the need for novel ways of communicating with communities of people with diverse backgrounds.

Women also perceive and value natural landscapes differently to men. UK research highlights that when walking through the same areas of designed urban woodland, shrub and herbaceous vegetation, women perceived higher levels of naturalness and found the experience significantly more restorative than men (Hoyle *et al* 2017a). The same pattern was identified in multi-cultural cities in Europe, where women valued all park scenes and medium and high forest plant species richness more highly than men, and were more supportive of the conversion of neat, short-mown lawns to tall meadows, to ensure biodiversity conservation. This is particularly interesting because historically higher levels of fear have been reported amongst women in woodland and woodland edge environments.

DIFFERING CULTURAL VALUES

Planners, designers and managers of urban green infrastructure who strive to prioritise human wellbeing in the context of a multi-cultural city should be mindful that their own perceptions and values diverge from those of the urban public. This has been shown repeatedly with landscape and environmental professionals demonstrating aesthetic preferences for wilder, less colourful planting than the public. People with a personal migrant background or a history of migration in their family often perceive and experience urban nature differently to native populations.

Native European or North American populations may hold a wilderness view of nature, seeing it as a recreation ground, whereas people who have moved to these regions from elsewhere (or their parents or grandparents) may perceive it more functionally, associating it with rural landscapes and food production. The designer needs to tap into the values and socio-cultural drivers of local communities to co-create healthy resilient places compatible with local need.

HIGH TOWN, LUTON

A process of 'iterative co-creation' is happening now in Luton, Bedfordshire. Researchers are working closely with the local Parks Service and a primary school to co-produce an educational arboretum-meadow on a former mini-golf site in Wardown Park. The primary school is

2 Luton: Wardown Park Arboretum-meadow: colourful flowers and neat edges frame an area of tall meadows providing cues to its care

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100m from the park in the High Town ward of Luton. The ward has significant BAME communities: 17.9 per cent of residents are Asian/Asian British and 12.2 per cent Black/African/Caribbean/Black British. In 17.8 per cent of the households no one uses English as their main language; 18.6 per cent of residents over 16 have no qualifications; and, 30.8 per cent of women are economically inactive.

This public engagement project aims to connect local children with nature whilst providing an educational resource for the wider community, focusing on climate change, the causes of pollution, the value of trees and meadows particularly in relation to air quality, health and wellbeing, wildlife and biodiversity. Activities on-site with the children have involved tree planting, sowing meadows, measuring tree growth, and identifying flower species. The process is described as iterative co-creation as additional partners, such as the Landscape Institute and a landscape contractor, have been engaged as it has developed. Additional funding via the local authority has provided signage indicating the carbon capture of each tree species, a favourite with the primary school children, as well as outdoor classroom furniture. Local land managers have already incorporated learning from this project into wider practice, and landscape professionals are championing it worldwide as a pilot project. Although ongoing, the project presents a transferable case study that connects local children with nature, and insights into the potential for public engagement initiatives within communities, to contribute to future-proofing towns and cities by building climate resilience. ●

Dr Helen Hoyle, Senior Lecturer in Healthy Built Environments, University of the West of England, Bristol

3 Lyon: Place Bellecour, a flowering space. Photograph by Daniel Boulens

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Building with Nature: Quality Standards Driving Innovation

Gemma Jerome explains how the next generation of place design is evolving

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Green infrastructure is about putting nature at the heart of development in a way that is good for people and wildlife. As we face an increasingly uncertain future – the global effects of anthropogenic climate change, catastrophic collapses of ecosystems worldwide, and the far-reaching economic and societal impacts of the pandemic – it is easy to see why humans are focused on imagining and implementing interventions that can mitigate, adapt to, and enhance what is yet to come. Green infrastructure offers built environment professionals both hope and agency, as well as practical solutions and targeted benefits to meet the needs of all future urban spaces.

As a result, industry is starting to provide innovative built environment and nature-based solutions in response to emerging regulatory, financial, and policy-based incentives. Whether we consider the implications of Biodiversity Net Gain or Net Zero-Carbon, the answer is often the same: the more we value nature as a first principle of all design decisions, the less energy we waste correcting mistakes later. Whether we consider the potential for sustainable drainage systems to meet the challenges of both flooding and drought, or prioritise investment in multi-functional green infrastructure such as green roofs which slow runoff or create new habitats in cities, we empower existing and future communities to better meet the challenges of urban living.

QUALITY STANDARDS AND INNOVATION

To ensure green infrastructure is a viable approach for all development, irrespective of the type, scale, location, and includes greenfield, brownfield, infill and retrofit schemes, we need to mainstream knowledge, skills and investment, from the early stages of design through to construction and beyond, encompassing long-term management and stewardship. Clearly, this is a wide scope for any one organisation to define and direct, particularly when we consider the range of disciplines involved in each stage of the development process. Alongside the challenges of navigating the planning and design process to deliver sustainable development, we should also ask how we support new forms of practice, whilst recognising the limitations of the UK planning system to encourage innovation, and the increasingly contentious issue of resourcing and maintaining high quality features.

The role of Building with Nature (BwN) is to support new practices by distilling essential actions, and interpreting strategic policy goals and targets into practical knowledge for the wide range of specialists tasked with designing, implementing, maintaining and monitoring green infrastructure in urban settings. The BwN Standards have been designed by and for industry to ensure that all development proactively tackles the climate, ecological and public health emergencies. By clearly defining what good practice looks like, supporting professionals through training and offering external verification of both physical development and strategic policy documentation through accreditation, BwN is enabling exemplary practice to become the mainstream.

APPLYING BUILDING WITH NATURE IN PRACTICE

By demonstrating exemplary practice through a series of case studies, we can illuminate the importance of context in the design process. Each project has been accredited with a Building with Nature Award and offers practitioners insight into how qualitative and expert-led scoring mechanisms, underpinned by professional judgement, can result in holistic, sustainable and equitable design solutions that in turn add value to metric-based systems. Used alone metric-based systems can be limited by their rigid or reductive approach to decision-making. The challenges that we face require a

1 London, Thamesmead: ecological enhancements in a parkland setting

mixed methods design approach which puts the user at the heart of the process.

KNIGHTS PARK, CAMBRIDGE

Knights Park in Eddington, North West Cambridge, built by developer Hill, is an exemplar of sustainable architecture and urban design for the 2020s and beyond. This zero-carbon neighbourhood is a thoughtfully planned, low-rise, high density urban extension of 184 homes, ranging from studio flats to four-bed family dwellings, set within a network of sociable tree-lined streets. The fine-grained urban grid is anchored by a car-free landscaped avenue that connects to cycle and pedestrian routes and nearby local amenities.

Residents look across trees and greenery, and most homes have street level front doors, while the gardens, upper floor terraces and streets have been designed with people in mind, creating a layered sense of sociability throughout the townscape. Every home optimises its plot, orientation, and location, and is *Code for Sustainable Homes* level 5 compliant, benefitting from site-wide infrastructure including the UK's largest water recycling system, a district heating network and an underground waste and recycling system. These characteristics – larger homes, social streets, complementary architecture and a rational approach to sustainable design – work in concert at Knights Park to create a strong sense of place that seamlessly blends with Cambridge's built and natural environment.

BARNE BARTON, PLYMOUTH

Built by developer Clarion Housing, the masterplan for Barne Barton has been shaped by its green infrastructure and the key driver of the scheme: to make a strong connection with the Tamar Estuary Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Currently the streets and spaces are enclosed by a series of repetitive three storey blocks with little or no sense of place. The proposed site layout is arranged around a new green street that orientates the site towards the Tamar, creating attractive views and bringing quality into the heart of the site.

The green street extends from the bottom of the site up to the northern-most point and will form a multi-functional space with opportunities for informal and formal play, social interaction and improved biodiversity. It has been designed so that in the future it can be extended southwest into the adjacent area, onwards to the Tamar Estuary AONB and beyond to encircle the whole of Barne Barton, forming the focus for the wider community.

A further green connection extends south to Savage Road and the neighbouring Blackies Wood, encouraging this route as a wildlife connection. Along it, opportunities for food production will be developed with the residents. The rest of the streets and spaces have been designed to improve permeability in and around the site; the introduction of trees and under-storey planting will encourage wildlife to use the site.

The type, quality and function of the green infrastructure have been created by the requirements of the local residents and the context. Currently local residents experience high levels of crime and anti-social behaviour, and the site doesn't maximise its connection to the Tamar AONB. Therefore, the green infrastructure network has been designed around its connection to the Tamar and the creation of a publicly accessible open space that responds to local needs. These spaces have been developed for best practice in terms of Secure by Design principles.

THAMESMEAD, LONDON

Peabody's regeneration of the Thamesmead estate includes a Green Infrastructure Strategy guiding the redevelopment of this iconic town in collaboration with the London Borough of Bexley, the Royal Borough of Greenwich, the Greater London Authority and Transport for London. The site encompasses 80 hectares of developable land and existing green infrastructure, including a network of vast green open spaces, formal parkland and mature trees, riverbanks, lakes and canals, and nature reserves.

Peabody has created a new landscape-led masterplan for the site, and development has begun with new dwellings as well as retrofitting high quality green infrastructure into the existing neighbourhoods. The vision for Thamesmead is underpinned by a long-term plan to properly resource the maintenance of green infrastructure enhancements, fully recognising the role that natural assets will play in the long-term sustainable quality of this town. By optimising the use and enjoyment of green infrastructure, Peabody is committed to supporting a

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2 Cambridge Knights Park: multi-functional green infrastructure in streets. Photograph by James Kriszyk
3 Plymouth, Barne Barton: the landscape context with views over Tamar Estuary AONB
4 London, Thamesmead: retrofitted green infrastructure with SuDS and diverse planting

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wide range of health and wellbeing benefits for people, now and in the future. Extensive thought has also been given to setting up creative collaborations with organisations that can support engagement and stewardship, such as the environmental charity Thames 21 which runs waterway clean-ups and community projects.

OAKFIELD, SWINDON

Led by developer Nationwide Building Society with Igloo Regeneration, the masterplan for Oakfield has been designed with the local community's insight, to provide a neighbourhood that reflects its needs. These includes quiet tertiary streets as shared spaces with a focus on cycling and walking. The neighbourhood is arranged as a grid of streets and lanes that respond to its local context by linking surrounding neighbourhoods together, connecting people to new and existing local amenities including existing shops, walking and separate cycling routes, allotments, public and private green spaces, a community forest, a new park, associated play spaces and a new community space.

The arrangement of homes as terraces around communal courts is designed to foster community spirit, and enable a higher proportion of the site to be devoted to soft landscape. Habitable rooms overlook the streets to create a well-surveilled public realm. Front doors are arranged in pairs to promote neighbourliness and a mix of traditional back gardens, and communal courtyard gardens are proposed to ensure that people have a variety of amenity spaces. Little pocket parks and regular 'moments' are scattered around the site, where streets and paths meet. At the heart of the neighbourhood, a new park is proposed to attract people to enjoy the native species planted there and the natural materials play area for children. With the 15-minute city neighbourhood concept in mind, the masterplan has been developed to try to provide the basic amenities that residents need close by, without dependency on car usage.

By offering these examples of award-winning developments, Building with Nature adds to the ongoing conversation about the role of exemplars in mainstreaming good design. Whilst each offers practicable and transferable learning opportunities for other projects, it is essential to recognise the particularities of each – site constraints driving innovation, local policy drivers supporting best practice, financial drivers balancing investment with viability – and to reflect on whether exemplars limit or grow the edges of practice.

CONCLUSION

Looking across this sample, it is clear that there is no winning formula to achieving high-quality development. The common themes of integrating nature-based solutions with the built environment include SuDS, active travel (or multi-user highways), green infrastructure-led public realm improvements, integral green infrastructure features, interactive and therapeutic landscapes. Yet the merits of each scheme stand alone and should reassure the sector that defining good practice through a combination of qualitative (e.g. Building with Nature) and quantitative methods (e.g. Biodiversity Net Gain) should grow, and not limit the importance and scope of urban design to sit at the heart of placemaking that maximises the benefits for both citizens and the natural world.

We are witnessing the emergence of developments which, whilst diverse in character, type, scale, and budget, share a commitment to ambitious but achievable levels of design quality

By setting a benchmark for high-quality design, quality standards like the Building with Nature Standards raise the baseline for all development. The range of case studies show how actual and perceived barriers to innovation can be overcome when stakeholders sign up to a shared framework of design principles which identify what good looks like for each site. As a result, we are witnessing the emergence of developments which, whilst diverse in character, type, scale, and budget, share a commitment to ambitious but achievable levels of design quality. Excellence is defined from the outset by an extensive team that includes built and natural environment professionals, local planners and community members, as well as by species – protected or otherwise – and by the site itself. ●

Dr Gemma Jerome FLI, Director, Building with Nature

5 Oakfield, Swindon: a courtyard of communal and private spaces. Image courtesy of Nationwide Building Society and Igloo Regeneration Ltd
6 New York: the High Line, a recent addition to the city's open spaces

Natural Cities: Fixing Nature at the Heart of Development

Mark Graham suggests a way to bring green space into urban centres

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The last couple of years have had a seismic impact on the already evolving nature of towns and cities, shaping a new era in urban design where landscape has crept further up the agenda. LDA Design's ethos is focussed on connecting people and place through landscape, and we challenge ourselves to deliver healthy, engaged and connected places with landscape at their heart. Through our quest to deliver places of quality and inclusivity, our focus is on understanding what people need from their environment and what role we can play in delivering sustainable places where nature can flourish.

The pandemic lockdowns made our worlds shrink, suddenly everything needed to be on the doorstep. It made us find out more about our neighbours and neighbourhoods, the healing power of nature and shared spaces. Many had time to pause and appreciate the environment around them as senses were heightened to focus on the important things in life: the sound of traffic was replaced by birds, the smell of flowers and plants permeated from outdoor spaces, and the many shades of green made our daily walks all the more valuable. The outdoors and the landscape evolved from places of apathy to places of necessity, an unnegotiable human right.

We have not demanded so much from our public spaces before, challenging them to address much of the social, health and spatial inequalities that exist within urban areas, and were amplified by the pandemic. Indeed, there were clear differences in the way that people could access and engage with nature. A report by Natural England (2020) showed how getting out to enjoy nature is intrinsically linked to family income. Almost three-quarters of children from households with an annual income below £17,000 have spent less time outdoors since the pandemic began. This compared with 57 per cent of children from households with an annual income above £17,000.

The health and wellbeing benefits of nature and landscape are well known: 80 per cent of children interviewed in the study agreed that nature made them happy. By working with nature and embedding landscape into our plans, the opportunity exists for us to make healthy and engaged places for everyone. Whilst creating landscape-led solutions in the urban environment and providing improved access to nature is not a silver bullet to improved wellbeing and happiness, they are a key component and within our gift to influence.

1 Shrewsbury: Smithfield Riverside Masterplan

BIG GAINS

The dynamic of the built environment and nature was given specific impetus last year as the Environment Act received Royal Assent in November 2021. The Act includes the provision of mandatory biodiversity gain for developments in England, once it is embedded within the Planning Act. This move has fixed nature

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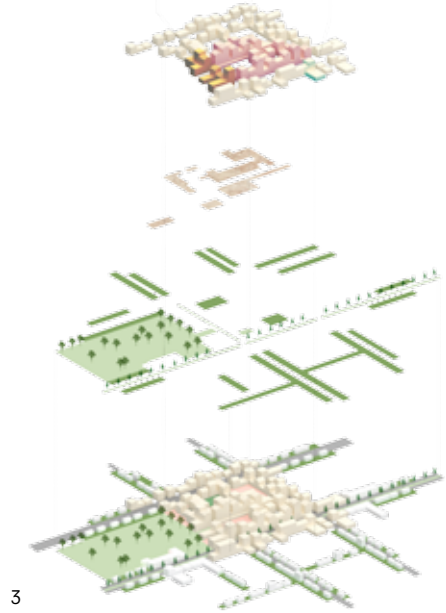

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at the heart of all development and marked a watershed moment in how to approach development and nature in cities.

The key question is how to drive forward biodiversity to enact increased exposure to nature alongside high quality placemaking. I believe there are three key areas to focus on:

- Working with nature and protecting what is there
- Creating opportunities for nature to thrive through new landscape
- Looking strategically to make connections from which nature and people can benefit.

To illustrate how this can work in practice the following three projects have nature at their heart.

NATURAL PROSPERITY: SMITHFIELD RIVERSIDE, SHREWSBURY

Similar to the many years of proving the economic value of the public realm, the emerging challenge will be the prosperity that can come from enhanced opportunities for nature. The benefits to wellbeing and quality of life have already been highlighted, as have the opportunities to deliver attractive and liveable places through natural landscape solutions. Providing essential access to nature from the outset can be a distinctive and unique way to define that rare sense of place.

In Shrewsbury, LDA Design has been working with Shropshire Council to shape a new town centre. The Big Town Plan outlines a vision for a characterful town centre that embraces placemaking at all levels and delivers a greener and less car-centric core, allowing the town to reach out to its wider context through enhanced sustainable movement corridors and landscape connections.

The loop of the River Severn, a dramatic natural meander of the river, creates a unique island for the town centre. Despite this attractive context, the river is somehow lost from sight and people are disconnected from its many benefits.

Smithfield Riverside is a major regeneration site currently home to a largely derelict shopping centre and endless car-based infrastructure, the antithesis of a natural space. The masterplan makes a simple move to naturalise the riverfront setting of the site by rerouting Smithfield Road and creating a destination riverside park for Shrewsbury. Importantly, the park will be connected directly into the town centre via green pedestrian corridors.

As the site is at risk of flooding, our natural approach means that it is ready to work with water and be resilient to future events. The riverfront park will be an active destination with the River Severn creating a setting where people can connect with the river, its landscape and its wildlife.

2–3 The Natural Network in wider Liverpool and the city centre

CREATING NATURAL NETWORKS: LIVERPOOL CITY CENTRE

Critically, biodiversity should not just be considered on a site-by-site basis. As we shape cities, we must establish opportunities for nature to move, flourish and engage, as we do for people. In Liverpool, LDA Design has been working with Liverpool City Council to develop a public realm strategy. The city-wide strategy delivers a vision for a People-First City that creates a series of interconnected networks of public realm to drive forward a greener, safer and more welcoming city for all. A key outcome of our research and engagement undertaken during lockdown in 2020, outlined the desire for a more natural city centre. People wanted a city which was greener, where parks and gardens were linked, and where nature had a home within the city's public realm.

The strategy proposes a Natural Network for Liverpool that connects all of Liverpool's green and natural spaces, establishing active travel and biodiversity corridors throughout the city. This will be spearheaded by the Council's UrbanGreenUP initiative. This city-wide approach creates opportunities for movement, providing clear and legible routes for everyone to access green spaces and provides unobstructed biodiversity corridors for wildlife. It is planned to deliver an equitable public realm, ensuring that everyone is within 5 minutes' walk of a green space or corridor.

NATURAL HIGH STREETS: NEWCASTLE CITY CENTRE TRANSFORMATION

In May 2020, Northumbria Police posted online a video of a deer walking through Newcastle's Bigg Market, a sign of how one of the UK's most sociable cities had been hushed during lockdown. This was in stark contrast to a city which,

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whilst incomparable in its fantastic historic built heritage, is severely lacking in public green space. Newcastle City Centre Transformation Programme is an ambitious plan to reimagine Newcastle's retail core. The project will deliver a new landscape, offering an alternative to the traditional retail high street and instead creating a diverse and active destination within the city centre.

From the outset, the focus of our vision has been to bring nature into the city centre. Newcastle is campaigning to be the UK's next National Park City and, whilst the wider city is blessed with a wealth of historic parks, denes and woodlands, the city centre needs more to be able contribute. The vision for the whole city centre will deliver increased greening and climate resilience; two streets stand out: Grey Street and Blackett Street.

During the pandemic, the wonderfully historic Grey Street already started to change from being car dominated: instead of being flanked by parked cars, a temporary cycle lane has provided relief from the relentless number of vehicles. The vision for the street will be implemented in two phases, the second of which will deliver a car-free green corridor reaching from the city centre down towards the famous Quayside. The design will be low-impact in its planting approach, bringing a multi-sensory experience to the street as people enjoy its historic character.

Blackett Street is currently an unwelcoming busy bus corridor at the heart of the city centre. The street has a rich heritage, being a medieval wall and fosse (ditch) connected to the elegance of Grainger Town. The vision draws on this history to reimagine the fosse as an inviting linear park which reconnects disparate parts of the city centre and provides a bold green gateway into Newcastle's retail centre.

A series of lush, ecologically-rich rain gardens enhanced with public artworks will provide a unique city centre experience, spilling into the adjacent Old Eldon Square. A mix of trees and planting will help to clean the air, provide attenuation for storm water, increase biodiversity and habitat, and re-establish a physical and mental connection to nature.

Future extensions to the fosse will connect it with strategic green infrastructure corridors in the east and west of the city to form a 'green halo' around the retail core, as well as linking key public assets such as the ancient town walls and Laing Art Gallery. The aim is to create a new type of canvas for city life, a greener and more natural place to be. It is close to becoming a reality and the first phases of delivery are starting to create a more natural high street for Newcastle.

4 Newcastle: Artist's impression of Grey Street with planting

THE NATURE CONTACT CONTINUUM

Much has been said in recent years about the 15-minute city concept. The creation of connected, mixed use neighbourhoods delivering sustainable and healthy places offering everything within 15 minutes of the home. Building on a similar idea, LDA Design, working alongside BSG Ecology, believes that the same principles should be applied to people's contact with nature. It is people's right to have free access to nature and developments should afford this opportunity.

The Nature Contact Continuum is a concept which allows natural systems and networks to permeate through every layer of urban life. Embedding opportunities for nature within all urban transects, from urban to countryside, ensures that even the most intimate spaces have an important role in allowing nature to thrive. As with the Natural Network in Liverpool, it ensures that everyone can benefit from the value that contact with nature brings. As designers we need the confidence to do less with landscape, allowing nature to grasp all types of spaces. This provides the opportunity to create dynamic and resilient ecosystems.

CONCLUSION

The Environment Act has provided the momentum for all built environment professionals to find creative and sustainable ways to increase biodiversity within development proposals. The diverse opportunities for regeneration throughout the north of England in particular, offer significant ways of delivering considerable positive cumulative improvement to biodiversity in towns and cities.

Often the role of urban designers and built environment professionals is a question of balancing the needs of nature and the built form to deliver a place that can work in harmony and evolve. It is only by doing this that we can deliver a legacy of healthy and sustainable places.

Development of all scales can increase our daily contact with nature through sensitive landscape responses bringing diversity and resilience to streets and spaces. The common theme in the three case studies above is a contextual, landscape-led approach, which reaches beyond boundaries to create enriched natural networks. It is through these small, often brave steps, that we can increase opportunities for nature to thrive in urban environments. ●

Mark Graham, Director, LDA Design, Manchester, and produced in collaboration with BSG Ecology

REFERENCE

The People and Nature Survey for England: Children's Survey (2021), Natural England

South Downs National Park: A Landscape-led Approach to Design

Mark Waller-Gutierrez describes a unique place-based strategy

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As defined by the government, the main purpose for a National Park is 'to conserve and enhance the natural beauty, wildlife and cultural heritage of the area'. Contrary to popular belief, South Downs National Park has a sizeable population (110,000) and has a very busy planning authority with constant development pressures which, if left unmanaged, threaten the essential landscape character that is so attractive to its visitors.

The South Downs National Park Authority (SDNPA) Local Plan is unusual in two respects. It requires that all development demonstrates positive ecosystem services impacts, and it emphasises that all new development should follow a landscape-led approach to design.

To help planners to ensure that development follows this approach, SDNPA specialists in urban design, landscape and built heritage work closely together with planning colleagues assessing and trying to improve planning applications. For developers, applicants and their consultants who are used to business as usual outside the National Park, where the political pressure for housing can collide with design quality objectives, this landscape-led approach to design demands a steep learning curve.

DEFINITIONS OF LANDSCAPE

For some, the first hurdle is to understand that the European Convention definition of landscape is what is important, and not just green bits around and between buildings. Landscape is defined as 'An area perceived by people whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors' (2009). As the draft SDNPA Design Guide says: 'Landscape is much wider in scope than simply the green elements. It consists of everything, including buildings and townscape in settlements, which comes together to produce the distinctive sense of place the South Downs National Park was designated to conserve and enhance.'

With this in mind, it becomes easier to see that the lines between urban design and landscape design are blurred. The villages or farmsteads looked down from the top of the South Downs Way are an essential part of the landscape, just as much as the field patterns, rivers and hills, and the four towns of Petersfield, Lewes, Petworth and Midhurst. The visual, historic, cultural and physical connections (for both people and wildlife) back into the open farmed and forested landscape from the streets in the centres and edges of these towns and villages, root them in the landscape and help to inform urban design objectives for new development.

This landscape-led approach to design can also translate as the more familiar concept for urban designers of good contextual design, but with the added dimension that the wider context is the nationally designated landscape, of which every site in the South Downs National Park forms a part. There should be a logical process drawn from the evidence gleaned about the site and its landscape which informs the design evolution. Central to this is the landscape strategy.

1 A CGI looking along the east-west coppice woodland green link. Image by PLUS Architecture

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LANDSCAPE-LED DESIGN PROCESS FOR LARGE DEVELOPMENTS

Materiality, scale, form, settlement pattern and how native vegetation blurs urban edges with the countryside, all contribute to the landscape character of South Downs settlements. For new development to conserve and enhance and make positive new contributions to this protected landscape, urban design, architecture and landscape design need to work together.

This does not mean that traditional architectural styles are always the best way to get planning permission. The emphasis is on quality rather than style, and the 2019 South Downs Design Award winners can attest to a pleasing mix of traditional and contemporary architecture. One good recent example of a design outcome which demonstrates the landscape-led approach is an as yet unbuilt development of 210 new homes, with a café, small commercial unit and community hub, promoted by Comer Homes on a brownfield, mostly redundant commercial Syngenta site about a mile outside the West Sussex village of Fernhurst.

Had this site been located on the edge of Fernhurst, a very different emphasis would have resulted from applying the landscape-led approach. A greater focus on the unique character of Fernhurst informing the design of the development, the need for new development to knit well physically and psychologically with the existing settlement would have been likely. The gravitational pull of tradition would quite understandably have been difficult to resist for both the developer and the authority, probably resulting in a scale and massing of buildings and settlement pattern following parameters and patterns already established in the village. A more traditional architectural style may also have been a safer option in such a location.

But the site is physically separate from the village. It is also largely enclosed by the surrounding topography, mature trees and woodland. Part of the landscape character of the site is therefore its relative isolation and self-contained nature. A very large commercial building is also being retained in its current use. All of these factors have led to greater freedom in what a landscape-led approach might mean in this case. The distinctiveness of the site's landscape character has outweighed the more common characteristics of this part of the South Downs landscape, including a more organic settlement pattern with a large proportion of detached properties on generous plots.

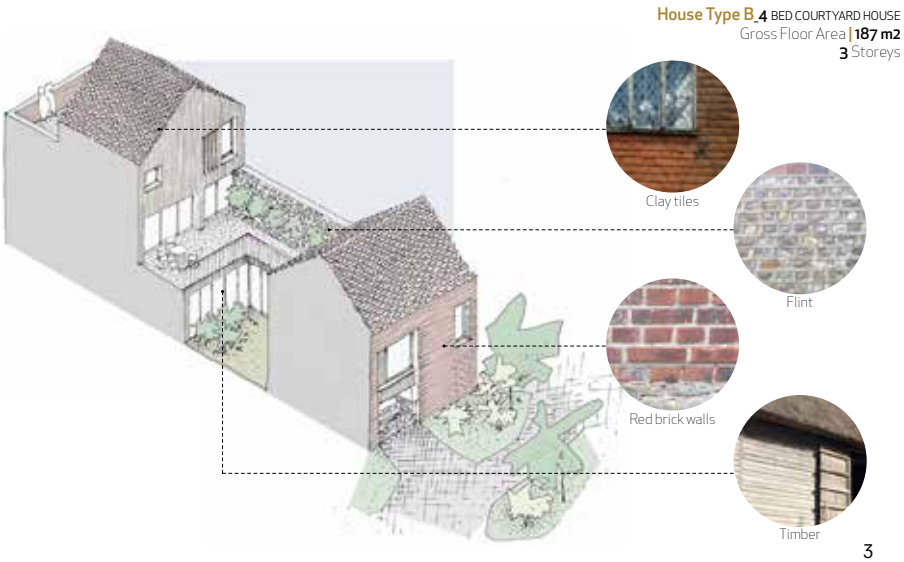
The freedom to experiment with more efficient building forms and layout has allowed the proposed scheme to create more generous green and blue infrastructure, and a greater emphasis on communally experienced open space. The achievement of the latter has helped to justify a greater building density, usually found in more urban contexts, and the reliance on more creative private outdoor spaces, such as internal courtyards, balconies and roof terraces instead of traditional rear gardens.

The landscape–led approach considered the historical and retained landscape patterns that relate to the site. Historic mapping showed thickly wooded field boundaries (shaws) running east-west and north-south which connected to ancient woodland, typical of the Low Weald; the course of the small river culverted in the last century; and, the course of the ancient turnpike road, now superseded. The direction from the authority and the dedicated South Downs Design Review Panel was that a successful scheme would need to incorporate and celebrate these local landscape characteristics. In addition, the development should work with the significant level changes (with steep drops in places and around 15m level difference from west to east) to inform the sustainable drainage strategy and find ways of reducing the visual impact of car parking areas.

The landscape strategy recreates north-south green links connecting the existing mature trees on the northern boundary across the site, with the ancient woodland to the south. The main character of these green links will be analogous to the shaws identified as historically characteristic, the conservation of which is important as they harbour many ancient woodland species and provide connectivity and resilience for people

2 Masterplan showing north-south green links, east-west coppice link, the turnpike road footpath, village green and reinstated river, all leading the development layout. Image by Terra Firma

The distinctiveness of the site's landscape character has outweighed the more common characteristics of this part of the South Downs landscape



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and wildlife. These links also contain swales as part of the SuDS approach.

An east-west green link will be established consisting of rotation coppice with standards, so that some trees are grown as mature trees or standards over a longer rotation period, with the coppice species beneath cropped at more frequent intervals. The functional benefits of this are:

- it helps to anchor the development into its landscape context
- it provides distinctiveness to the main east-west street
- it creates a powerful invitation for wildlife to cross and inhabit the heart of the new residential neighbourhood
- it provides space for sustainable drainage from the surrounding hard surfaces
- it could potentially serve as a community project, as each coupe (or part of the coppice) is coppiced each year, as part of its management.

The applicant's design team needed to be persuaded that the coppice woodland was appropriate in the centre of a street and that an absolute minimum width of 20m (uninterrupted by roads and with private garden space not part of the calculation) was necessary to qualify for the Forestry Commission's definition of woodland. The proposals also showed a reinstated river which feeds a new pond as part of the site's SuDS and blue infrastructure strategy. Only once the landscape strategy had been agreed could the masterplan start to define the developable areas of the site and the roads that served them.

The South Downs National Park has established an International Dark Skies Reserve with clear views of the Milky Way possible, which is rare in the south of England. The development respects this through the use of minimal outside lighting, the avoidance of sky lights and the retention of a large undeveloped area at the eastern end of the site.

Some shared communal gardens are proposed between terraced streets, and the applicants successfully applied the landscape-led approach to find local precedents of village greens for a new village green space as part of the green open space network.

The developable areas were squeezed by the generous green infrastructure and shared communal spaces. As a consequence, the housing numbers have been maintained by increasing the density of development. It is characterised by a series of terraced streets with some pavilion blocks of four-storey flats in the southwest part of the site, adjacent to the large retained commercial building.

The architectural style is contemporary which is easier to justify given the site's self-contained character. The local character of gabled roofs is reflected in the design. To help make the contemporary architecture feel more like a natural evolution of the local character, the palette used reflects traditional materials such as clay roof tiles, red brick, flint and timber cladding.

A potential blight on the quality of the residential environment was the visual impact of cars serving over 200 dwellings in relatively densely built areas. The solution was to put all cars serving the flats underground, taking advantage of the existing level differences across the site and tucking most cars serving the houses between or behind the buildings.

Another important piece of evidence about this site and this part of West Sussex is its relative tranquillity. To retain this character it was important that the masterplan allowed for a completely undeveloped part of the site at its eastern end, adjacent to ancient woodland outside the planning application's red line boundary. The first and last aspect of the landscape-led approach is the need to respond to the climate change emergency. The scheme will achieve operational zero-carbon status through a combination of *Passivhaus* certification for eleven of the homes, good levels of fabric efficiency for the remainder, biomass heating systems for houses and, extensive rooftop solar panels.

3 Numerous roof terraces, internal courtyard gardens and balconies provide private amenity space. Image by PLUS Architecture

COLLABORATION

A landscape-led approach is much more likely to be successful if the applicant's consultants are given the freedom to collaborate in a silo-busting manner and where possible, the planning authority can also engage with them across the professions. In this case the landscape team and the authority's landscape specialist, along with the urban designers on both sides, had key roles in developing the landscape strategy. This determined the development parcels and street pattern before the architecture was even considered. Designing blue infrastructure also required collaboration with ecologists, engineers and landscape designers, to maximise the opportunities for multi-functional sustainable drainage systems and the restoration of the culverted river.

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A watershed moment was when a resistant architect was persuaded by the authority that a street could indeed have a linear woodland running along the middle of it and this would bring aesthetic, amenity and ecological benefits, and provide not only an enhanced distinctiveness to the street, but also the potential for a community focus.

There were local objections to the scheme and initial misgivings from some planning committee members who questioned the high density, the contemporary nature of the architecture and its alien urban nature, in contrast to the traditional rural character found in the nearby village of Fernhurst. These objections were overcome by reference to the scheme's acres of communal green space which reduced the gross density to fairly modest levels. Had the conventional approach of detached and semi-detached houses in fairly generous plots been followed to achieve the site's allocation, it would have meant practically no green infrastructure and a much less distinctive suburban outcome.

At times there are choices to be made where the landscape evidence is conflicting. This is quite legitimate as long as the process is transparent. In this case, the importance of the design cue from the locally characteristic settlement pattern of small-scale dispersed, was not as strong as the evidence from the site. This led to a decision that the slightly remote and self-contained nature of the site lent itself to a greater freedom in designing a settlement characterised by more urban densities and forms; development parcels dictated by green infrastructure, and a wholesale contemporary approach to the architecture.

DESIGN OUTCOMES

The following design outcomes have been the result of the landscape-led approach in this case:

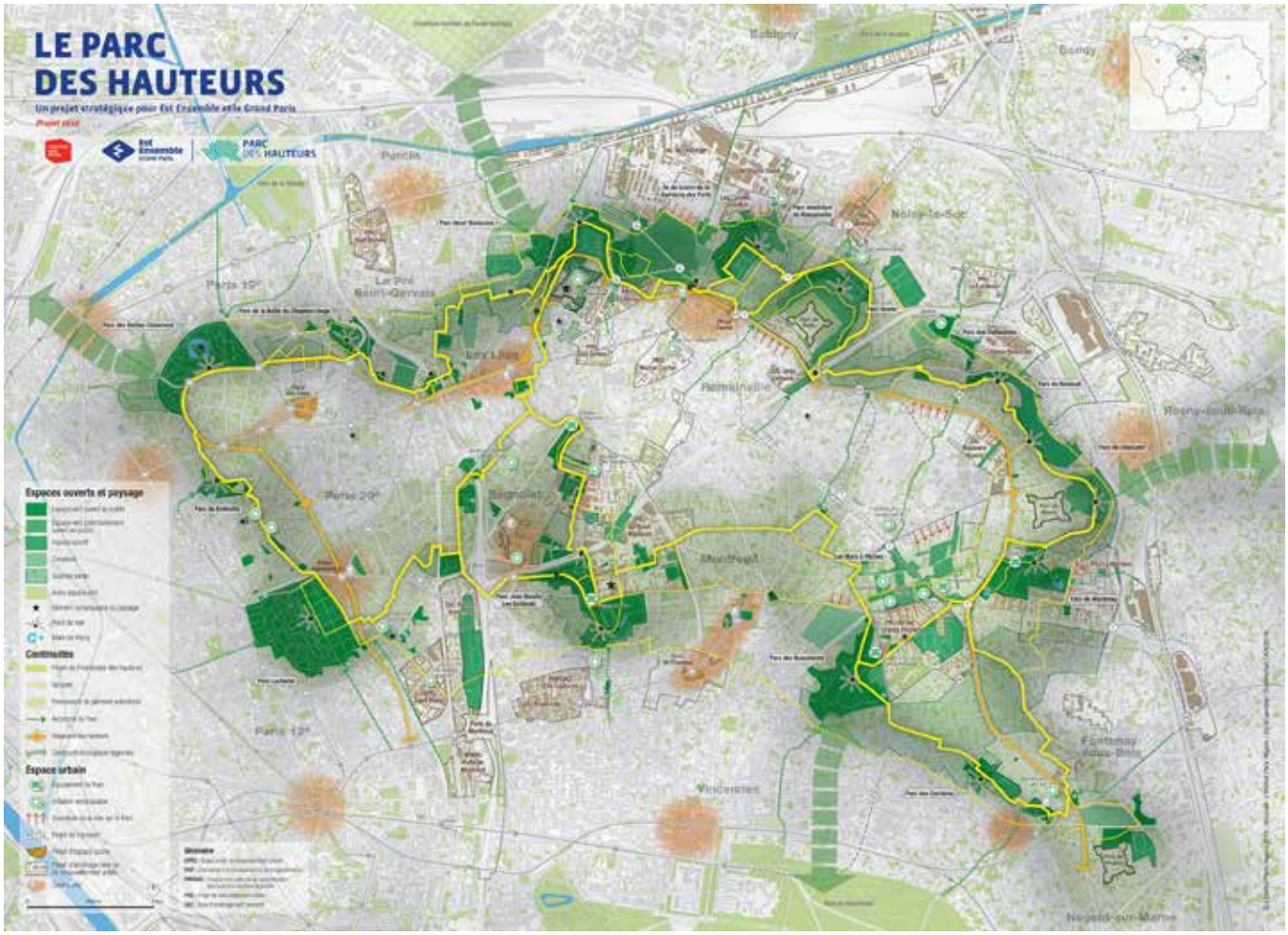
- a layout determined by topography, hydrology and ecology, with the aim of maximising green and blue infrastructure
- a green infrastructure (here locally native woodland) determined by what is locally characteristic
- a layout reflecting the site's history, both man-made (the route of the old toll road and the village green inspired by local precedents), natural (the resurrected river) and semi-natural (the tradition of shaws connecting woodland along field boundaries)
- an architectural style determined partly by the distinctive, separate nature of the site and the building materials selected by the evidence of what was traditional to the area.

This last point, together with the use of locally characteristic roof pitches and repeated gables, ensured that the modern architectural language was more acceptable to the traditionally minded, as the materials related to this part of West Sussex. The recognition of the local importance of tranquillity and dark night skies was important, as was the more universal need to reduce the impacts of development on the climate.

Construction has not started on site yet and as with any permission, there is always the potential for a change of circumstances for the applicant or a transfer of ownership, both of which could lead to requests to vary the permission details or to a wholesale resubmission. In that case the authority could still point to its Local Plan policies which include the need for design of the site to follow a landscape-led approach. ●

Mark Waller-Gutierrez, Lead Specialist, South Downs National Park Authority

4 A CGI without trees showing the strong gable forms. Images by PLUS Architecture
5 Changes in level accommodate parking and create outdoor spaces
6 One of the north-south green links, communal space and swales



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The Parc des Hauteurs Project, Paris

Paul Lecroart describes an ambitious new park system planned for Eastern Paris

Providing people with access to high-quality green spaces and natural environments is critical to the success of places and the promotion and realisation of quality of life. Design and landscape should work together more effectively, yet this happens all too rarely. Space is precious in and around major cities and urban centres, and the notion that we can allocate space to recreation and conservation is problematic to those who seek to maximise economic potential. However, the wider benefits of such an approach for people, and the growth, prosperity and success of a place, must be championed. In eastern Paris this is not only being championed, but is now being delivered. The Parc des Hauteurs is an ambitious project that seeks to prioritise the infrastructure part of green infrastructure, leading the way in highlighting how parks and green spaces can be interconnected to deliver more effectively, socially and ecologically.

WEAVING SPACES INTO A PARK

The Parc des Hauteurs project is about revealing the unique landscape potential of the slopes of a limestone plateau by weaving together currently fragmented open spaces. Over time, the idea is to create a single 320 hectare public park system by knitting together existing open spaces (woodlands, parks, sports grounds, allotments, disused quarries, military wastelands and other brownfield sites) with an extensive ring-shaped belvedere promenade. The whole project is envisioned as a 'park of parks', multi-use green infrastructure supporting social and ecological functions, as well as a driver for urban transformation. It draws inspiration from creative urban park strategies, such as the Emscher Park in the Ruhr, the Ridge Park in Singapore, and the Parc des Coteaux in Bordeaux.

Initiated by the Institut Paris Region in 2016, the project is steered by Est Ensemble, an inter-municipal local authority with planning powers, about the size of the London Borough of Newham (38 km²) and with a population of 420,000. However, the park project goes beyond its administrative borders, involving ten municipalities including Paris and two municipalities in other

1 The masterplan for Parc des Hauters showing the Promenade des Hauters in yellow. Image by L'Institut Paris Region

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2 Jean Moulin Park, Bagnolet. Photograph by Jean-Christophe Dollet, Dcomodrone for Est Ensemble

3 Parc des Hauteurs at Romainville, where six new stations on the M11 rail line extension will serve five towns. Photograph by Paul Lecroart, L'Institut Paris Region

4 Montreuil: the Murs à Peches (Peach Walls) built for fruit growing in the 17th century. Photograph by Paul Lecroart, L'Institut Paris Region

inter-municipal authorities. Altogether about 920,000 people live in the larger catchment area of the future park system, many of whom at present have no access to a green space within walking distance from their home.

The urban transformation of the area is being stimulated by the delivery of new transport infrastructure: the M11 metro expansion due in 2023, the T1 tramway expansion in 2026, and the metropolitan ring metro M15 planned for just after 2030. Simulations based on outline planning permissions suggest that these could add 60,000 people to the existing population by 2030, and yet without the supply of new green space growing at the same rate. The park system project plans therefore to increase the amount of accessible open space by 40 per cent, from 230 hectares to 320 hectares by around 2030.

The project includes a number of characteristics:

- The Promenade des Hauteurs is to be a green pedestrian and bike park connector covering 30km and giving a 360° panoramic view over the city;
- Cool Nature is about preserving natural habitats and enhancing biodiversity;
- The Living Park is about how the park could become a destination, stimulate a new way of living and a greener economy on the plateau; and
- Local Networks looks at improving access to the different components of the park by improving the greening and walkability of local streets and squares.

DESIGN AND GOVERNANCE

The design process of the Parc des Hauteurs has been incremental. The idea was initially put forward by the author as part of the *1995 Regional Green Plan*, but at the time it drew no support from the public authorities. Since 2016, the Est Ensemble local authority together with the Institut Paris Region as strategic advisor, has been consolidating the project's vision, objectives, priorities and governance, bringing together elected officials, technical experts and potential partners around the table within a so-called Park Lab (*Labos du Parc*). Est Ensemble has also developed community outreach and cultural events in which over 800 people from different perspectives have taken part.

The main priority today is the design and implementation of the park connector, the Promenade des Hauteurs. In 2019, the French landscape consultancy, Agence Ter, was commissioned by Est Ensemble to lead a multi-disciplinary team to draw outline designs for the 30 km promenade ring (plus two 12km green links) and involving the transformation and greening of many existing streets. The political and technical framework for the future detail design competition, financing, phasing and delivery process for the promenade is currently being prepared. A €15M budget has

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Altogether about 920,000 people live in the larger catchment area of the future park system, many of whom at present have no access to a green space within walking distance from their home

been set aside to deliver a first significant stretch by 2026, with the complete implementation expected in the early 2030s. Short stretches of the promenade may be delivered with a temporary design for the Paris Olympics in 2024.

Since 2020, the Parc des Hauteurs project's principles have been embedded in the 2020 Est Ensemble Development Masterplan (*Plan local d'urbanisme intercommunal* - PLUi) and the overall strategy is now supported by the Paris Region, the Grand Paris Metropolitan Council and other partners. The transformative capacity of the project has also brought together several levels of government. It is increasingly viewed as a transitional pilot project. However, the sheer number of stakeholders and mostly public land owners, each with a different political agenda, slows down decisions. There are conflicting interests over the future use of former quarries and military sites that need to be clarified through an informed dialogue, i.e. whether they should become nature reserves or open to the public for recreation.

Another sensitive question is how to reduce on-street parking in order to make room for pedestrians, bikes and greening along the Promenade. Additional funding will also be crucial for the project to be delivered in its different components as, for instance, consolidating former gypsum quarries is very costly. An efficient governance structure called Natural Urban Park (*Parc naturel urbain*) could help to bring together all of the stakeholders to agree a shared funding and delivery agenda.

5–6 Les Lilas: Improvements proposed for more active travel. Photograph courtesy of Agence Ter
7 Cross sections showing the opportunity to use the terrain for green infrastructure. Photograph Paris Region
8 Landscape workshop in Jean-Moulin Park–Les Guilands, which joins Montreuil and Bagnolet. Photograph by Virginie Boursette

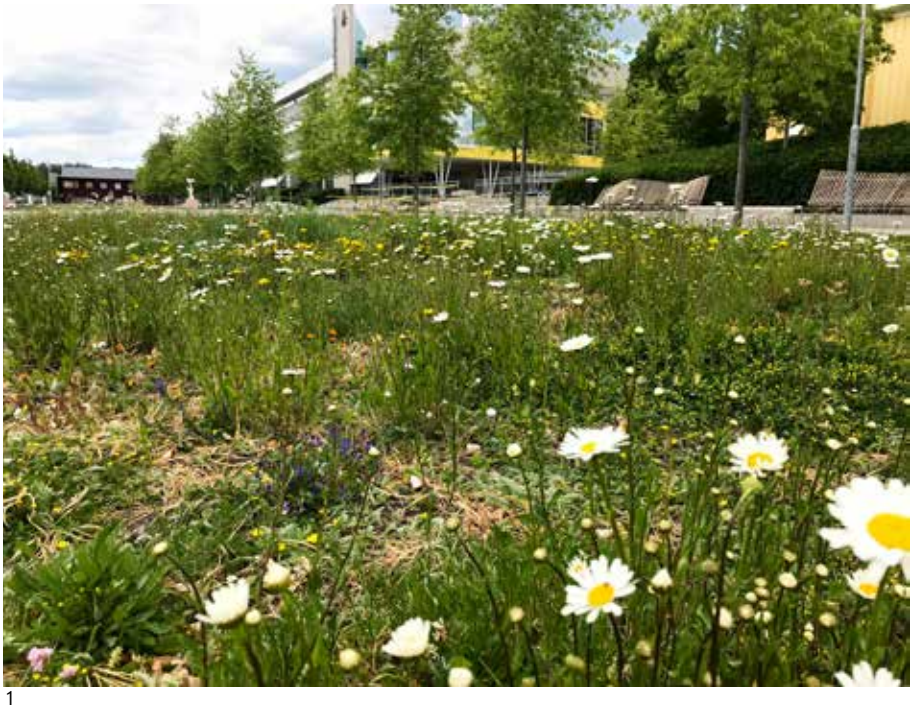
CONCLUSION

With open and natural spaces becoming increasingly valued in large city regions like Paris, it is essential to achieve new compromises if we are to promote a high intensity and diversity of uses. The Parc des Hauteurs project is about this: opening up a magical place of open skies, seasons, wind, trees and animal life in the dense core of the city region. It is about building a healthier urban environment for everyone's benefit. It is certainly worthy of attention for those seeking to deliver well-connected and networked green infrastructure.

Paul Lecroart, Senior Urbanist, L'Institut Paris Region (Planning Agency for Paris Metropolitan Region)

Biodiversity in Urban Spaces

Agnes Sandström argues that open spaces are important for both social reasons and biodiversity



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The land in cities is valuable. Due to population increases and urbanisation, there is high demand for housing and the infrastructure of everyday life. New developments are constantly being added to the urban landscape, often at the expanse of public spaces, making cities denser. Roads, public transportation, parking spaces, shops and restaurants are all functions considered vital to a city.

However, built elements such as housing, roads, and shops are not the only things that make a city or create a city's image. Public spaces play an important role as social places where people can meet and spend time, without having to buy anything or be of a certain age. They are crucial for the social life of a city. We put a lot of trust in public spaces, and often feel strongly about them. However, as a result of urban density, these urban spaces need to provide more services than purely social space.

BIODIVERSITY AND ECOSYSTEM SERVICES

In recent years, increasingly alarming reports have emerged regarding climate change and biodiversity collapse. In the 2022 *Global Risk Report* from the World Economic Forum, over 180 global leaders in politics and business identify the climate and the loss of biodiversity as the top two global risks.

In addition, WWF reports in their 2020 *Global Living Planet Index* that 50 per cent of the vertebrate population on Earth has become extinct in the past 50 years. Insects are disappearing due to pesticides and a lack of food and places to live, and native vegetation is overwhelmed by more invasive species introduced by humans. WWF claims that the most common cause of declining populations on the planet is the loss and degradation of habitats. As cities grow, spread and become denser, they claim space from nature. There is no place for animals and plants to live, and this is a major threat to biodiversity: 'Biodiversity or biological diversity is the variability among living organisms from all sources, including, *inter alia*, terrestrial, marine, and other aquatic ecosystems and the ecological complexes of which they are part: this includes diversity within species, between species and of ecosystems.' *(UNEP 1992 Convention on Biological Diversity)*.

A diversity of species creates resilient ecosystems that are resistant to change which is inevitable, due to the climate crisis. Biodiversity is closely linked to climate change and climate adaptation. In many ways, they are each other's solution.

Biodiversity is also a prerequisite for many ecosystem services, which are the services that humans gain from nature. In essence, ecosystem services provide important functions such as pollination, shade, water purification, temperature control, improved air quality, noise reduction and more. Furthermore, there are also numerous economic benefits, saving money in mitigating flooding, droughts, heatwaves, storm water management and so on.

PUBLIC SPACES: MORE THAN SOCIAL ENVIRONMENTS

As crucial as public spaces are as social environments, they are similarly crucial as green spaces. Urban greenery helps cities to cope with climate change and the loss of biodiversity. Different design measures can mitigate and help to slow these processes. Nevertheless, land in cities is valuable and many different interests have to co-exist in the same space. One could argue that there are many other places for nature to thrive and animals and plants to live. However flying over Europe at night, one can quickly see that there are not many places left in complete darkness. Moreover, the dark spots are often farmland or land used for forestry. Human interference is everywhere.

Cities are sensitive systems that cope poorly with external change. Bringing more green space and nature into the urban landscape will help numerous ecosystem services that are crucial for everyday life.

THE SENSITIVE CITY

Infrastructure such as transport systems, power lines, mobile phone networks and

1 Meadow land, with native grass and flowers, enhances biodiversity and is low maintenance

water pipelines are fragile and can be easily damaged in extreme weather events. With a high percentage of impervious surfaces, a high density of buildings and a low percentage of green space, cities tend to cope poorly with external change, for example climate change. At the same time as cities are built densely and lack green spaces, they are highly dependent on ecosystem services and biodiversity. We cannot trust the surrounding rural landscape to provide these services; we need to integrate nature with developed land and save existing green spaces. Fundamentally, cities are not islands: they are a part of the overall green infrastructure in the landscape.

Although over centuries innovative solutions have been found in cities, nature has spent billions of years adapting, developing and becoming resilient and sustainable. Subsequently, by protecting and improving green infrastructure and enhancing biodiversity, we can use nature's solutions and its ecosystems to provide benefits, reduce the effects of climate change, and help to stop the decrease of biodiversity.

ACTION

Making space for nature and creating structures for biodiversity and ecosystem services in urban spaces is not simple. It takes time and strategic work, and needs to include intersectional stakeholders on all levels. These five steps are a start to what needs to be done to create responsible urban spaces that take nature into account:

1. Save existing green space

Preserving existing green space, trees and vegetation is one of the best things that can be done to benefit biodiversity. Trees take many years to grow and it takes time for ecological values associated with trees to develop. Other habitats, such as meadowland, can also take a long time to develop ecological values. Therefore, a piece of land with a long continuity of trees, grass or pasture is an important habitat to preserve in order to enhance biodiversity. Before redevelopment, there should be site investigations into which vegetation, trees and other habitats can be saved and which functions could be further developed.

2. Enhance connectivity and avoid fragmentation of the green landscape

The fragmentation of landscapes and habitats is a threat to animals and plants. It is crucial that species are able to move and spread around the landscape and through urban environments for foraging, finding habitats, reproductive sites and more. Some species are even linked to certain host species, and it is therefore important that areas where the species thrive are connected to each other. To do so, green areas and ecological distribution links running between them are needed.

If one of those links is lost, or the distance between the spaces becomes too large, the species will be isolated or have problems finding new mates and suitable habitats. Fragmentation can happen slowly and in steps as new developments are added. A small piece of a green space that is developed and used for a road or housing, rarely happens alone. Often more developments follow in the same area resulting in the loss of more green space, and subsequently part of the green infrastructure is lost.

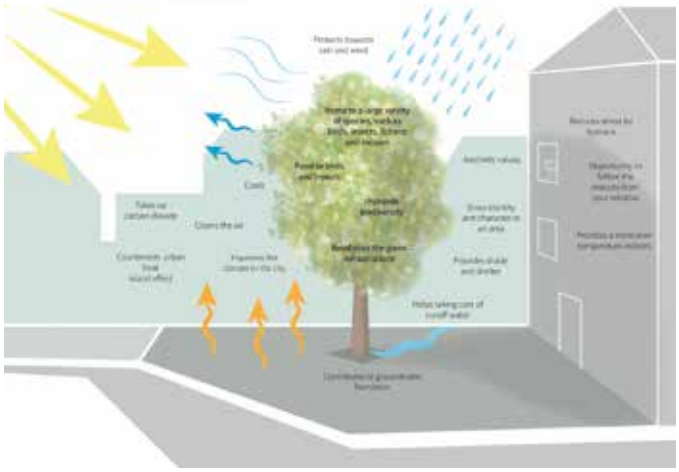
3. Re-think vegetation

Avoiding monocultures and invasive plants is important alongside the use of a diversity of species and plants in order to let biodiversity thrive. This includes grasses consisting of a variety of species: not all grass surfaces are used for picnics, and so areas should be set aside where meadow vegetation can grow instead of perfectly manicured lawns. The use of native plants avoids foreign pests and invasive species from spreading, and retains the native flora. Sterile plants and trees should be avoided as they do not contribute to biodiversity, and a seasonal dynamic should be considered to contribute to a long season of shading.

4. Create a variation of habitats

Nature consists of a variety of landscapes, and a diversity of landscapes and habitats means a diversity of species. A good step forward is to increase variety in green spaces and avoid monocultures.

2



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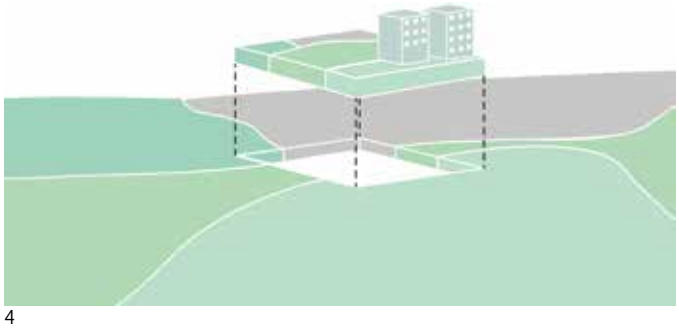

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5. Educate and communicate

One of the most important things that we can do for biodiversity is to educate ourselves and communicate the measures that are needed and are being taken. For example, sharing why a grass surface has been turned into a meadow and therefore does not look as we are used to seeing it, creates an understanding and acceptance of the measure.

2 Urban spaces can be designed to enhance biodiversity in the city
3 The ecosystem services that a single tree can provide in an urban space
4 Animals and plants need to be able to move and spread through sites

It is in our minds where the biggest change needs to be made and how we think about urban spaces and the surrounding landscape makes the biggest impact. Questions about these issues should be at the top of city planning and developers' agendas. The CEO, management team and all employees should be included in the conversation.

5

5 Green spaces have positive effects on humans

SYNERGIES

The dilemma between social and ecological values in urban space and economic aspects is not really a dilemma. Instead it is a source of endless possible synergies. Green spaces are proved to be important for health and wellbeing. Parks and green oases relieve stress for humans and can support recovery. Developers, municipalities, city planners and urban designers have a responsibility to ensure that urban environments live up to current and future needs, including climate change. New and existing developments need to be designed not only from a social perspective; they need to be multi-functional to meet social demands, climate demands and enable viable ecosystems which are crucial for us and for cities. Let's share urban space with nature. ●

Agnes Sandström, Landscape Architect, EcoGain, Stockholm, Sweden

Beauty and the Bees

Philip Black and Ian Mell issue a call for action

1

Urban design, landscape architecture and planning are companion disciplines that help to bridge the differences in how we conceptualise, design, and implement development. Although complementary in focus, the complex framing of design within these fields often leads to competing interests being brought to the fore. The skills needed to deliver high quality and inclusive places are common across design-led disciplines, although their terminology and the articulation of these skills remain varied in both teaching and practice. The climate crisis and a growing awareness of social inequality call for a more integrated approach to design, leading us into a new, more complementary space.

The teaching of landscape and urban design thus needs to prioritise our understanding of who should lead on this process – designers, politicians or developers – whilst practice needs to listen to communities calling for greener, more liveable and sustainable places. This requires us all to consider how we deliver both everyday places and those with a wow factor, as both are necessary to create places that are meaningful and long-standing.

What we have seen in this issue of *Urban Design* is common ground, a language palette, blurring the boundaries of landscape and urban planning, to illustrate how and where we can identify consensus. We now need to maximise our efforts to prioritise high quality design and delivery that complement all built and natural environment disciplines

in order to position urban design, landscape architecture and planning as drivers of positive urban change. This requires us all to challenge our own potentially siloed disciplinary mentalities and to expand and exchange knowledge of best practice. If we can achieve this, we can be flexible and adaptable to urban needs whilst promoting innovative and responsive solutions to the ever-changing demands of urban areas now and in the future.

A CALL TO ACTION

We issue a call to action that requires all members of the built, environmental and design community to take responsibility for the creation and delivery of high quality, sustainable and resilient design. Where possible, we need to set aside our prejudices and work more collaboratively, not as specialists within a project focussing on urban or landscape design, but as collaborative and equal members of a wider design team. This can be achieved in teaching and practice by enabling students and practitioners to learn from each other at all stages of their training and careers. Educational specialists need to lead this charge and find innovative solutions to the integration of planning, urban design, landscape and environmental planning and architecture.

Moreover, practitioners need to put their faith in multi-disciplinary teams and loosen the disciplinary constraints often seen in practice. We propose not bringing in design expertise to refine a project, but embedding urban and landscape design principles at the centre of all work.

Such a shift in emphasis towards a disciplinary co-production of urban places will not be easy. It requires additional support from policymakers, regulators and key users of urban and landscape design services to ensure that development is quality-led. This goes beyond integrating digital skills or beauty into planning, and calls for a more nuanced process of knowledge exchange, collaborative teaching and consensual practice that embraces the opportunities inherent in aligning the breadth of design, development and management disciplines.

In conjunction with this is the need to lead the wider community of developers, consultants and planners on a new journey, one that looks to combine alternative approaches, embracing new collaborative thinking in teaching and practice that is appropriate for design in the 21st century. The promotion of this change is relatively simple, but requires support from across the building and design fields to celebrate best practice within practice, academic and teaching forums. This is the challenge for us all: how do we make this happen? What can we do as designers, planners, and landscape specialists? How can we make these changes a reality? There is no simple solution, but clear pathways to more effective teaching and practice are coming to the fore and are attainable if there is a collective push to enhance what we do and how we do it.

HOPE FOR THE FUTURE

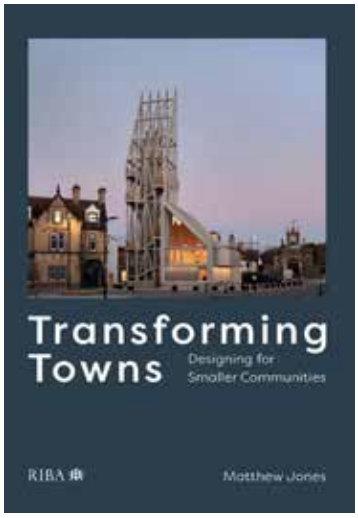
This call to action is framed by the knowledge that today many endeavour to deliver and promote quality design and landscape. Much has already been accomplished, and we must acclaim this work, but also recognise the shortcomings and look to establish a higher standard universally. Hope that such a future can be realised comes from the engaged practitioners, policymakers and regulators who understand the perils to the planet and the critical role that placemaking must play in its redemption. Hope comes from the exemplar projects, both past and present, that point the way for others to learn from. Hope is visible in the myriad of studies that supply ample evidence of problems and solutions, and arm communities with the science to demand change and the courage to no longer accept indifference from those who make and manage their local places and spaces. Hope can be found in the clear appetite for a more sustainable and resilient future promoted by professional bodies and organisations such as the Urban Design Group. Hope can be as dangerous as it is uplifting – unfulfilled hopes are nothing more than empty promises. The recent COP26 in Glasgow delivered many critical promises from governments around the world to tackle the climate crisis, now it is time to act.

2

At the University of Manchester, we are striving to put our words into action. Leading the way on design and landscape is the recently established Manchester Urban Design LAB, created to try to tackle some of these issues directly through a range of outputs and approaches. Our dedicated podcast series *The Design and Landscape Tapes* looks across UK cities and how they are tackling the core issues raised in this issue. We have also sought to deliver a wide array of publications, from books on how urban design can facilitate better relationships across the design disciplines through process, through technical toolkits to promote the required skills that designers need to deliver better places, to articles and journals to promote design and landscape integration to as broad an audience as possible. The Master's programmes in Urban Design, in International Planning, and in Green Infrastructure seek to work together to shape the next generation of practitioners and professionals to collaborate more effectively and comprehend the needs of today's built world. Training for non-student groups also seeks to enhance skills outside academia, and arm communities with better information to demand more from development. We are also working closely with local and national design practices, authorities and organisations to build networks and exchange knowledge and ideas. It is only the start for MUD-Lab and we have grand plans for the future; we are not alone in our goals as many share our passion and drive. It is this that brings us the most optimism that design and landscape can rise to the challenge. Let us work together to enforce a new and brighter tomorrow. ●

1 Beijing: Jingshan Park
2 Singapore: Zhangshan Park

Dr Philip Black, Director, Manchester Urban Design Lab, and Senior Lecturer in Urban Design, and Dr Ian Mell, Reader in Landscape Planning, University of Manchester
www.manchester.ac.uk/mudlab



Transforming Towns – Designing for Smaller Communities

Matthew Jones, 2020, RIBA Publishing £35.00, ISBN 978 1859469064

This timely book explores how contemporary architecture can transform small communities with a focus on context-sensitive design in historic market towns, rural towns and villages.

Transforming Towns uses case studies of towns (fewer than 50,000 people) and smaller communities, where urban and rural challenges collide, and their scale can leave them in an awkward in-between position. The introductory chapters provide useful context on the contemporary challenges facing smaller communities, particularly peripheral growth, and the importance for the life of these places of creating opportunities for social exchange. The book is structured in four parts: Homes, Towns, Public Spaces and Long-term Strategies. There are 19 case studies mostly in England and Ireland, plus Scotland, Wales, Belgium and Germany.

One of its best features is the well-illustrated case studies and the identification of the key lessons drawn from each. In the Towns chapter, the Auckland Tower project in County Durham stands out as a catalyst for change within the historic core of Bishop Auckland. In Homes, Cinque Ports Street provides a striking addition to Rye's townscape with a contemporary mixed use infill development drawing on the coastal architecture of Sussex. At Tibby's Triangle, the density, human scale and palette of materials reflects the maritime heritage of Southwold. At Steepleton Retirement Community in Tetbury, courtyard clusters draw on agricultural forms and alms houses to create different domestic-scaled spaces to encourage sociability and a sense of community. In Public Places, the heritage-led regeneration of County Cork (Clonakilty 400) celebrating 400 years of the town's charter, includes the creation of mini-squares, shared spaces and pocket parks to improve legibility and create new areas for social interaction. Bridge Street in Callan, Ireland is a community-led scheme to revitalise the town, with the high street being a collective civic space, using the street and historic buildings as a stage.

The book underlines the importance of characterisation in design, the role of multi-functional and connected public spaces, and community-focussed town centres. Community-led change is a recurring theme from the town hall complex at Hebden Bridge, West Yorkshire, to the innovative collaboration in Callan between theatre-makers, artists, architects, residents and local organisations, to reclaim the street and reimagine civic spaces. *Transforming Towns* is a welcome addition to guidance on designing in historic and rural settings, providing a wealth of information on the revitalisation of towns and villages, and key lessons for the post-pandemic resurgence of town centres. ●

Colin Dunigan, Senior Urban Design Officer, West Suffolk Council

Why Face-To-Face Still Matters, The Persistent Power of Cities in the Post-Pandemic Era

Jonathan Reades and Martin Crookston, 2021, Bristol University Press £19.99, ISBN 978 1529216004

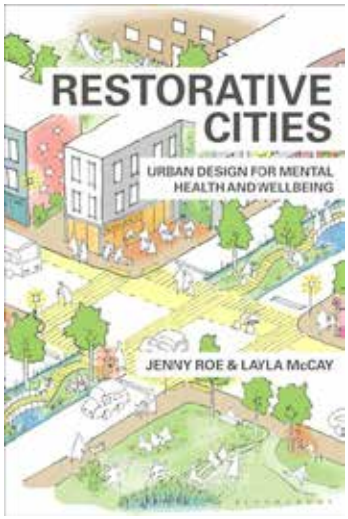
This is an uplifting read and makes a convincing case that cities are here to stay, and large world cities will remain the economic engines of prosperity. The pandemic has enabled the authors to verify their findings, which they had developed before COVID-19. The pandemic has highlighted how much face-to-face contact matters for human relations overall, but whether large cities will remain the most conducive environments for people, remains to be seen.

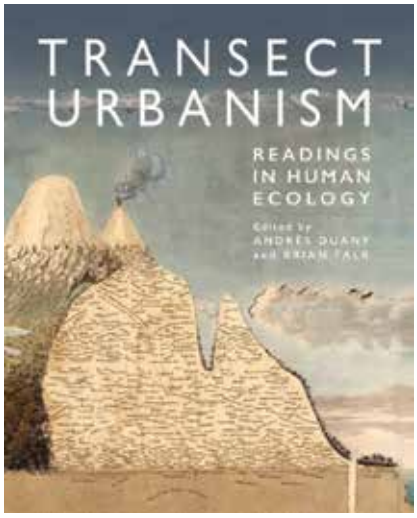
Within the world of work, the book concentrates on the knowledge-based economy and therein, higher order service sectors like finance, insurance, business services, the property industry and professional consultancies, which include planning, urban design and architecture. The evidence underpinning the authors' arguments about the value of face-to-face interaction in making markets, doing deals and talking shop, is based on extensive interviews with protagonists in these sectors, before and during COVID.

The authors say that cities are here to stay due to their size, extensive infrastructure networks, complex cluster effects, and the density and dynamic of their flows. They evoke how cities like London, New York, Tokyo and Paris have survived almost terminal decline. Surprisingly, for London their arguments concentrate on the City Corporation without referring to Canary Wharf and Mayfair, despite their important share of finance and higher order services.

Throughout the book the authors document change and the continuity of face-to-face interaction, and imagine how these will play out during the 21st century with the growing importance of IT and accessibility in the post-industrial economy. Nevertheless, their long view plays down the influence of technological innovation and examines what actions policy-makers, developers, investors and their designers can take to preserve the privileged position of large cities, which in their view will continue to foster the face-to-face contact required to build trust when making deals. It could be argued that cities are more than places for financial transactions and economic growth and that other, non-material criteria also influence urban life and lifestyles. Future authors could focus on these issues and devise a complement of city resilience measure to this treatise on large cities, their economic primacy and the long shadow that they cast over their surrounding regions. ●

Judith Ryser





Restorative Cities, Urban Design for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Jenny Roe and Layla McCay, 2021,
Bloomsbury Visual Arts, £24.99
ISBN 978 1350112889

Written by two social scientists, this book makes a useful contribution to the interdisciplinary nature of urban design. Why restorative and not also preventative, or simply cities conducive to mental health remains an open question, especially as, by the authors' own admission, the empirical studies on the effects of cities on mental health remain small and scarce. The pandemic has highlighted the adverse effects of highly constrained urban living on mental health, and makes this guide to mental health-conscious urban design timely, although some may consider it too environmentally deterministic.

In the introduction the authors argue for the need for a new urban paradigm for mental health. From their mental and psychosocial health perspective, they support their premise in terms of a systems approach to mental health, based on two selected psychological and behavioural science theories: Kaplan's ART (attention restoration theory) and Ulrich's SRT (stress reduction theory).

In the authors' view, restorative urbanism unites seven *salutogenic* (health improving) properties in a restorative city: green, blue, sensory, neighbourly, active, playable and inclusive (or *equigenic*). These properties are discussed in separate chapters using the same systematic analytical framework for each of them. The chapters start with highlights, give definitions of key concepts, as well as of the specific property in discussion, include an annotated theoretical diagram on the effects of each particular property on mental health, highlight the benefits for mental health and wellbeing of each property in some detail, and identify the modifiers of impacts. They propose design approaches for each property separately, as well as how the property can be prescribed medically, give a few examples, and conclude with design principles for each property. While providing a lot of relevant information within each chapter, this fragmented approach makes it difficult to combine the specific analytical findings and proposals for each property into an integrated design concept. Nevertheless, this is attempted in a concluding chapter entitled The Restorative City.

Roe and McCay discussed their book at a recent UDG webinar, where three respondents contributed supplementary views on how theories and scientific knowledge can be translated into processes and reality. The urban design audience had many queries about how they could incorporate this knowledge on mental health into their designs, while it is not sufficiently prioritised by their public or private clients. The event can be viewed on the UDG's website as useful complementary information. ●

Judith Ryser

Transect Urbanism, Readings in Human Ecology

Andres Duany and Brian Falk, 2020,
ORO Editions £16.99
ISBN 978 1951541019

As the godfather of New Urbanism, Andres Duany, of Duany and Plater-Zyberk (DPZ), has promoted the idea of the urban-rural transect since the early 1990s. A way of identifying and responding to different place characteristics, transects are inherent in how urban designers see the structure of places. However this relative order and character is not often recognised as a fundamental part of what is observed in the places that we value, and in how places should be structured.

Like design codes, also promulgated by DPZ well before it was fashionable in the UK, the transect brings together a combination of setting, location, professional discipline and relative positions to set out rules for design, from infrastructure scale and types, through buildings, landscape and types of open spaces, to materials and more. This has been characterised as choosing the right clothes to wear in different places.

The book is divided into two parts: part one illustrates different types of transects with examples from other New Urbanists - regional-scaled transects in a hierarchy of settlements, travel distances, character and even types of food production, and local character transects. With six transect levels, T1 to T6, commonly observed or designed, the method can show a gradually changing character from rural to central civic areas, as well as juxtapositions of city centres right next to a rural setting. The key is intentional place-making, not unstructured sprawl.

Part two is a collection of texts exploring the need for post-suburban planning, speed limit transects, and nine steps for community involvement in identifying local transects (but too academic to use). Galina Tachieva writes about using transects to repair sprawl, which is applicable practically everywhere; and Sidney Brower identifies the 36 most sought-after neighbourhood qualities, and which to expect in each part of a transect.

Given the current focus on design codes, this book is essential to understand how transects work, so that a hierarchy and place-based design approach becomes integral, avoiding a return to randomly-located high density developments, or development islands with applied architectural styles. ●

Louise Thomas

Practice Index

The following practices and urban design courses are members of the Urban Design Group. Please see the UDG's website www.udg.org.uk for more details.

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Engaging Reverse Gear

1

Herbert Manzoni now has a largely negative reputation in Birmingham. He had the roles of City Engineer, Surveyor and Planning Officer from 1935 to 1963, and his vision effectively determined the shape of the postwar city. That vision was based on the universal use of the motor car, probably not unconnected to the important role played in Birmingham's industrial economy by the vast Austin motor works in Longbridge. It is extraordinary to think now that Manzoni and others in authority believed that a city in which everyone travelled by motor car could be a civilised and habitable place. A simple mathematical calculation of the space that would be required for roads and car parks tells us otherwise. It's impossible. Many hundreds of millions of pounds have been spent since the revisionist Highbury Conference of 1988 on dismantling Manzoni's impractical and alienating vision, chunk by chunk, rebar by rebar. His reputation has been correspondingly dismantled too. He has even become a character in fiction, appearing in Honor Gavin's 2014 novel *Midland* disguised, not very well, as the municipal bureaucrat Humphrey Manzino.

A huge modal shift away from Manzoni's vision is signalled by the *Birmingham Transport Plan*, which was launched in October 2021. Its introduction states that 'The latest evidence shows that a rapid shift is needed away from single occupancy private car use'. This prosaic understatement is hardly a radical idea in 2022, but for Birmingham it represents a U-turn in policy, although I am unsure how much of it is founded on aspirations to what a reader of this magazine would describe as urban design quality. The main motivations are public health and social equity, both of which are further strengthened by the existential threat of the climate crisis. The Clean Air Zone, implemented last year, is a major plank of the Transport Plan. This requires the drivers of certain vehicles, particularly those with diesel engines, to pay a fee to enter the city centre. Combined with the coincidental effects of the pandemic, this has already reduced the quantity of particulate matter in the air. At the same time, Birmingham has very high levels of social deprivation, with 42 per cent of its children growing up in poverty. Many of those will be in families without a car, and many others in families who do have a car, but one which consumes a disproportionate amount of the limited family income. They need a more equitable transport system, which prioritises other modes of transport ahead of the car.

One place where a significant increase in urban design quality is going to occur as a result of the Transport Plan is in Digbeth, specifically the route of High Street Deritend, leading from the Bull Ring towards the Custard Factory, which I wrote about in UD155. The previous hostile six-lane dual carriageway is now a construction site, the ground surface being torn up and underground services revealed. Vehicles crawl in a slow-moving queue along one temporary lane in each direction. The street is being redesigned, with the construction of the Digbeth extension of the Metro tram route being the catalyst for its transformation. Some years ago I observed that High Street Deritend was the same width as Barcelona's Las Ramblas, about 32 metres, and floated the idea that it could become a version of Las Ramblas, plus trams. This is now happening. Space is being taken away from motor vehicles, and re-allocated to pedestrians: although the pedestrian promenade is not going to be in the middle, as in Barcelona, but on the northern side, in order to maximise the sunshine that falls on pedestrians.

I don't suppose that in fact it is going to resemble Las Ramblas very much, but it will be a great improvement on the unpleasant space, alternately a racetrack and a jam of polluting stationary vehicles, that was there before. I imagine that there are many regular car drivers who haven't been keeping up, and don't yet know what is coming. I forecast that there will be much dismay. It won't any longer be possible to drive the length of High Street from one end to the other. Only short stretches will be accessible to private motor vehicles, in order to get access to frontage properties. The only vehicles able to travel through the street will be trams, buses and bicycles. Some people will be upset: for others it will be a great liberation from the dominance of the motor car. It's over, Herbert. ●

Joe Holyoak, architect and urban designer

1–2 High Street, Deritend, Birmingham currently a construction site

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