We live in a period of rapid and significant economic, technological and social change, which affects many aspects of the built environment. The planning and design of the built environment have become increasingly complex tasks, derived by and from other activities, which are themselves subject to increased complexity. In this changing context, we wish to examine the role of architecture, planning, transport planning and urban design. Within research, education and practice of these disciplines Volume 2 of PROJECT explores incidences of response, interface and innovation.

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Preface

The greatest challenges for a department are to maintain quality in education, delivery and outcomes, to review and renew its activities and to continue to grow. Building reputation is important and the second volume of our journal, PROJECT, showcases the strengths and demonstrates the ambitions of the Department of Planning and Architecture at UWE, Bristol. The university is re-organising for an uncertain future which will guarantee it a place as one of the most vital and modern universities in the UK. Planning, architecture and transport have a big role to play in this through dynamic and contemporary approaches to teaching and research.

Over the past year, we have made more progress on our central aim of integrating subjects and confronting divisions between professional cultures. We remain committed to educating students who are able to face up to the challenges of rapidly changing economic, social and environmental conditions. The effects of climate change and economic restructuring on the built environment require a multidisciplinary response. We must not be complacent, and each year we aim to identify new areas for our work. During 2010, we have applied expertise in sustainability to new ways of thinking about climate change, transport, health and environmental engineering across a spectrum of scales from building to city-wide in architecture and planning.

The university has redefined departments, creating a network of large and independent units in which teaching, learning, research and knowledge exchange are integrated in a new home. The Department of Planning and Architecture continues to grow, and currently has more than seventy staff and over one thousand students on professionally accredited courses. Our programmes achieve success in recruitment at undergraduate and postgraduate levels in architecture, planning, urban design and transport and our first cohort of architect/environmental engineers will gain degrees in 2011. New programmes have been introduced in the past academic year including an architecture Part 3 course, meaning that a student can complete at UWE all the qualifications needed to become a fully-registered architect. We have validated a new degree in conservation of the historic environment, and introduced new specialisms in the undergraduate planning degrees in urban design, transport and spatial planning. During the year, students have visited Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Berlin, Istanbul, Madrid, Liverpool, Manchester and London as well as participating in an Erasmus project in Nijmegen in the Netherlands – the twentieth year of involvement in this European network.

In research, the faculty's objective is to promote inter-disciplinary working, and several new projects are testament to this success. These include projects to link research in technology and environment, as well as climate change adaptation in suburban neighbourhoods. Various projects in the field of transport relate it to the impact of new technologies, and researchers are gaining a considerable reputation for research into the ageing society and its needs and attitudes with regard to transport. An important field for the department is health and planning and its designation as a WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Cities and Urban Policy allows us to develop new progressive courses and research in this field. For two years, colleagues have led public health officials to Freiburg to witness the benefits of enlightened sustainable approaches to planning.

Several successful conferences have been held including the annual Planning Law Conference, and this, with a new series of training videos, maintains UWE’s position in providing continuing professional education for practitioners, including distance learning opportunities. UWE was well represented at the annual Universities’ Transport Study Group conference, as well as the Educating for Healthy Settlements Conference in London and the AESOP conference in Liverpool. Exhibitions are an important part of the department’s work, and students have presented their work at various venues.

Success has been recognised by the university which has invested in new studio buildings due to open for the academic year of 2010-11. The doubling in size of the current studio building, which was opened in 2001, indicates the achievements in attracting students to our programmes since then, and the new building offers more opportunities for state of the art teaching and learning.

The Department of Planning and Architecture has plenty to celebrate as another academic year draws to a close. Staff and students are committed to making UWE the best place to study planning, architecture, urban design and transport planning, and with its many friends and partners, we are confident that we can thrive and flourish in a competitive and challenging environment.

Janet Askew
Head of the Department of Planning and Architecture
June 2010
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Volume 2 of PROJECT has been created in a very different world to Volume 1. In the span of a year, the economy has been destabilised, a new kind of politics has taken hold, more information is communicated in increasingly different ways and climate change continues to be an imperative for policy making in response to natural disasters and other events beyond our control. From the perspective of our university, as from most others, the global context is in constant flux. In response to the demands put on our subjects, we have to constantly amend our thinking, shift our focus, refine our methods and tune our learning environment to find synergies and solutions to the problems facing us. The strength of the department is in its innovation and exploration as it strives to maintain relevance.

The Department of Planning and Architecture consists of undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral students, students from industry, academic researchers and lecturers, research and teaching practitioners and specialist support staff. We undertake architecture, planning, transport planning and urban design. This volume of PROJECT aims to explore incidences of response, integration and innovation within these disciplines and within our department to demonstrate what we do and how we do it. What is common to our work is a set of principles, concepts and concerns, four of which inform the sections that structure this publication.

Collaboration can be considered as the co-production of artefacts or ideas – a cross-disciplinary adventure in which people join forces to share expertise and discover something new. Collaboration can be made particularly powerful and productive when traditional dividing lines are crossed. Inclusive by nature, collaboration embodies a certain alchemy in that it advocates the blending of one ingredient with another in the search for something new and surprising. In this volume of PROJECT, we highlight the collapsing boundaries between disciplines, and the emergence of collaborative specialisms. Articles illustrate how collaboration between planners, designers and health professionals can deliver healthy urban developments, and how a fashion show stand was created between architect-planners and students of fashion design. These projects signal the blending not only of disciplines but of ideas and concerns. Elsewhere within this journal, members of the public are conceived as co-producers of built environments.

An exploration of the roles and relationships between people lies at the heart of the section on Community. The term community embraces notions which cross the physical and the virtual, addressing notions of identity. Applied to real settlements, as well as to fellowship networks and networks of like-minded people, communities can be found both in place and within less tangible environments where shared values and goals are the defining factor. Community is a word which is often heard but ill-defined. Here, we consider it in the broadest sense, to indicate a shared space, an intersection of common places, goals and aspirations; a network or even an idea; a social glue which informs people’s identity, their sense of belonging and rootedness. Writers examine the dynamics of both community action and notions of what makes a community able to adapt to the pressures of change. There is an exploration of the tactics that make cycling more effective and car-free development possible, while contributors also study the engagement of local, place-based (and even faith-based) communities in the planning process.

The section on Place unpicks the elements by which mere spaces come to be articulated as places. Place is a social construct, a locale or a state of mind that can be considered to be distinctive or unique. Embodied physical and cultural characteristics, places are there as spaces to be captured within the tools of the cartographer’s trade, and internalised as memories, attitudes and emotional territories. There is a politics to the space of ideas of place that constantly shifts; indeed, place is a notion which repays almost constant examination and reinterpretation. The articles within this section range from an examination of space as a container for people, measured in terms of density and land use, and as a trigger for memory and association.

Vision, in terms of architecture and planning, embodies not just sight but imaginative insight. Vision takes in not just what lies before you in the moment, but the possibilities of what might, in a future time, lie ahead. It offers different ways of understanding the condition of the world, and having the ability to make inventive leaps to entertain competing futures. Writers imagine diverse climatic and spatial futures for Bristol, while other contributors make imaginative suggestions with regard to the UK planning system by drawing on an understanding of Dutch and Australian models. The breadth within this section concludes this volume of PROJECT, as it represents a range of interests within the department and provides an insight into the collective imagination of this academy. How will we respond to the inevitable changes of this coming year? The work that will form Volume 3 is already beginning to grow in the minds of students, researchers, lecturers and practitioners.
Film Factory. The factory is the act of transforming an empty shell into a place full of life, generosity and freedom, in offering free access to a structured living programme for the direct inter-relationship between people and space. Here, there is no place for spectators but only actors; the public, technicians, architecture and objects are on stage along with the official film makers, past and present, architecture and the city, actors and audience all intermingling.

The building is set within two infill sites on the Mile End Road in London, with the existing walls and the traces of the past prompting the narrative of the building. The existing facilities of the road provide an essential backbone to the area which supports its inhabitants, and as such the fabric of the existing narrative should become weaved into the structure.

In essence, the factory will offer a kit of parts, enabling enclosures, gangways, screens and services to be created for individual or social needs, with previous incarnations marked through the knocks, bangs and scrapes on each component of the new plan. The architectural proposal could at one point consist of workshop spaces, a bar/café, all-in-one units, editorial suites, stage sets, residential units, cinema screens and exhibition spaces. At another point in its life it may house all or none of the above.

Programmed from the formation of a series of rule books, the organisational necessities of each possible space were used to devise four conditions from which each possible use could be stripped to its barest requirements. At times the suggestion of use may be ambiguous while, at others, the marks of use from past occupational behavior will begin to programme the building to its present inhabitants’ use. Play is allowed a productive dimension here and if you ever need to run a wire from one room to the next you simply cut a hole in the wall.
The depersonalised space as a live project

Peter Spall and Elena Marco

Peter Spall is a graduate in Architecture and Planning at the University of the West of England. His final year project illustrates his particular interest in the ephemeral qualities of architecture and environmentally responsive development in a sensitive historical setting. Peter also incorporates his interest in photography, model making and history into his designs. Since completing the fashion show project described here, Peter has undertaken two other live projects including curating the graphic design of the Department of Planning and Architecture degree show 2009 and an extension to a house in Hotwells, Bristol. Peter.Spall@uwe.ac.uk

Elena Marco is an architect and programme leader of the architecture and planning course. She left Barcelona in 1999 as part of the Erasmus exchange programme with the University of Bath and worked with Feilden Clegg Bradley Studios prior to joining UWE in 2005. Her research interests range from the exploration of social housing solutions in relation to climate change to environmental impact on design. Elena.Marco@uwe.ac.uk

A team of architectural students from the Department of Planning and Architecture at the University of the West of England, Bristol, have designed and built a visually stimulating exhibition stand for the university’s fashion department to display their work at the Graduate Fashion Week (GFW) event in Earl’s Court, London, in 2008. This collaboration between disciplines represented a unique opportunity for students to work on a real project and their design was entered into a national design award.

This paper follows the staged competition approach to running the student-led project and explores the inter-disciplinary collaboration which took place. It goes on to describe the final design for the exhibition stand and documents the lessons learnt.

The competition followed a stage framework and provided a realistic simulation of how such a project might be carried out in practice. By being a real project, students were presented with the problems and constraints that the professional world faces every day. The process allowed the students to relate to the professional world from the design stage to the construction of the scheme. The project was carried out in teams of three to five students, and since there were a large number of students and the possibility of only building one stand, the project was run as a competition with only the winning scheme being built. The schemes were presented to an inter-disciplinary jury from both the planning and architecture and fashion departments.

The winning concept was designed by Peter Spall, Giuditta Martello and Melissa Patterson. Based on a series of three illuminated white boxes, each box created a contrast between the interior atmosphere and exterior visual imagery. The exterior faces had different designs of perforation, allowing light patterns to be created on the otherwise smooth white surface. The minimalist interiors were covered with white fabric, producing a soft illumination which complemented the work being displayed without being distracting. The overall white motif aimed to form a consistent and neutral background on which to display the fashion students’ work, whereby the architectural statement was only made through the play of light, pattern and surface manipulation. In the spaces between the boxes, vertical planes were provided for displaying two-dimensional work, and this separation between boxes created a contrast between the open and enclosed areas of the exhibition. The separation between the architectural and fashion world was marked by the structure of the boxes. On the outside of the boxes through light, patterns and surface manipulation gave the viewer an architectural experience, whilst the seamless glowing fabric of the interior of the boxes brought the visitor into contact with the fashion world.

The interdisciplinary nature of this project allowed for an exciting opportunity, working within the tight constraints of a live brief and the ability to exchange ideas with the clients. The project allowed the students of fashion and architecture to explore the common and intellectual principles that underline both disciplines. Both are preoccupied with the space, shelter, volume and protection of their common denominator the human body, whilst at the same time allowing the expression of an identity as well as specific stylistic preferences. They share the materials, design processes and fabrication that have lead to innovative developments in both disciplines. This combination of two closely related practices was not only central to the completed proposal, but was integrated from inception.
Before any physical ideas were developed, initial inspiration was influenced by communicating with the clients and exhibitors. This entailed observing how they worked, assessing what was being made and what message they - as graduating students and future practitioners - wanted to evoke, not only as a unit but as individuals with their own approaches to design. Discussing ideas with the fashion and textile students was an exciting and invaluable part of the design process as their opinions were taken into account throughout the design process.

The most important learning outcome for the students was the element of collaboration and communication with all involved and allowed for a different thread of creativity - without having to consider the environmental, contextual, societal and political implications usually associated with studio-based projects. Consequently, there was an emphasis on detailing for transportation and a consideration of time constraints. Since this was a live project, there was also considerable emphasis on balancing all aspect of the design and constructional elements including budget, client's preferences, practicalities of transportation, time constraints to construct and the sourcing and ordering of materials.

It is believed that the successful outcome in terms of project delivery and practical learning was due to the participants' willingness and commitment to give their time and work as part of a team. The initial competition helped motivate the students and formed strong bonds between teams. The excitement of really building something and the prestige of attending GFW in London during the second phase helped the team to gel and work together towards a common goal. It is doubtful whether this same level of motivation and commitment could be generated in a more usual design studio project, and without it, it is unlikely that the project would be as successful. Nonetheless this project has undoubtedly enhanced the learning experience of the participants and boosted their confidence, enthusiasm and motivation.

It was noticeable from the start of the project that there was a sense of excitement between all of the groups as there was a chance of having a design project constructed. One of the most beneficial aspects of the project was that students from different year groups worked together as equals. By learning from each other and sharing skills, it gave them confidence to discuss designs and proposals, and assertively justify decisions. The project also gave an insight into the professions of exhibition and interior design.

The hyphenated architect

Richard Parnaby

Richard Parnaby RIBA FRSA is a professor of architecture at UWE. He studied architecture and planning in Liverpool and Oregon. Richard has practised in Canada and Wales and is a non-executive director of White Design Associates. In 1996 he joined UWE where he has played a key role in the development of unique joint undergraduate courses in architecture and planning and architecture and environmental engineering. He was the first chairman of the Design Commission. Richard is a member of the Trustees of Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and a nationally elected member of its council.

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In 2010, fifteen years after a pioneering group of students joined our undergraduate programme in architecture and planning, UWE welcomed the first group of candidates to its new post-graduate certificate in architectural practice and management, our Part 3 qualification in architecture. UWE now offers all the qualifications that are needed to become a registered architect. We have a complete school of architecture, but with a unique interdisciplinary ethos.

In 1996 there were 35 higher education institutions in the UK offering professionally accredited qualifications in architecture; there are now 45 and the number continues to grow. Architecture remains attractive to prospective students and there is evidently still unsatisfied demand – despite poor employment prospects and relatively low earnings in the profession (even in the boom years). Some of those institutions deliver education programmes within a school of architecture with a strong separate identity, often in its own building. In others, architecture courses are delivered in parallel with art and design. Or, as at UWE, courses are grouped with other built environment disciplines – construction, engineering, surveying, housing, transport and planning.

Interdisciplinary learning has been at the core of UWE’s approach to built environment education for two decades. Not only is there a great deal of module sharing between degree programmes but we also emphasise group working across disciplines and offer a number of jointly validated programmes. The truly unique feature of architecture at UWE is the inter-disciplinary nature of our undergraduate courses. Architecture is offered at first degree level only as a jointly validated programme with another professional discipline - either planning or environmental engineering. BA(Hons) Architecture and Planning is recognised by the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) as well as the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) and the Architects Registration Board (ARB). Similarly the BEng (Hons) Architecture and Environmental Engineering is jointly validated with the Chartered Institution of Building Services Engineers (CIBSE). There is a small number of jointly validated architecture programmes in other UK universities but all other institutions offer a first degree architecture as a three year single discipline award.

The process of development is often described as a co-operative activity that brings together the strategic perspective of the planner and urban designer, the conceptual skills of the architect, the technical understanding of the engineer, the logistical capacity of the project manager and the craft skills of the construction team - tempered by the financial discipline of cost consultant. In practice the process is often more competitive than cooperative, conditioned by opportunism, contingency, commercial muscle, political manoeuvring and the constantly changing technologies of construction and information processing.

In our approach to the education of future building professionals we seek to give students an understanding of the contested and shifting nature of the world of practice through shared teaching and project work. It is necessary to strike a balance between building the individual’s competence and confidence in her/his core professional skills and knowledge and developing respect for, and confidence in, the complementary abilities of others. In this context the notion of the hyphenated professional (the architect-planner, the engineer-architect) has special value, both personal and professional.

From the personal perspective graduates gain a wider range of opportunity upon graduation – two potential professional routes, or a combination of them. In a professional context an architect with a good understanding of planning concepts, attitudes and language is an invaluable member of the design team in the early strategic stages of a project. While an environmental engineer with a well-developed design sensibility can work effectively with an architect and a resources-conscious contractor to achieve an outcome that works for all.

These new courses raise real questions about the professional categories we have inherited, the subject areas of education and the institutional structures of professional institutes and regulators. What are the core skills of the architect, the planner and the engineer? Where are the boundaries of these disciplines? How do they overlap?

The closest thing we have to a definitive statement of the knowledge and skills of the architect are 208 words in the EU Qualifications Directive (written by an international committee nearly three decades ago) that seek to capture the knowledge and skills that all architects should acquire during academic education – or training in the language of the directive. These few words (the celebrated eleven points) now form the basis of the revised criteria for validation/prescription of qualifications in architecture that were formally agreed by the RIBA and the ARB in the spring of this year. The same words are incorporated in the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education’s forthcoming revision to the benchmark statement for architecture. Furthermore, they underlie, of course, the provision for architectural education within all 27 member states of the EU. Similar statements exist for other professional disciplines, although they are not always as inconveniently immutable as the directive.

I have often heard (in the context of validation visits for example) that the text of the directive and its UK derivatives limit the freedom of those designing and delivering programmes in architecture, leading to a progressive and insidious standardisation of provision. I am not convinced. The evident diversity of courses in architecture throughout the UK and the experience of designing courses that bring the requirements of pairs of professions together at UWE suggest that these bureaucratic formulations, although stilted, offer great flexibility for creative thinking in the design of academic programmes.

The real challenges lie in defining approaches to learning that provide graduates with both the professional skills and knowledge demanded by employers and the critical faculties that equip them to understand and give form to the needs and aspirations of society as a whole. It is not clear that professional education is always achieving those (conflicting) goals. UWE’s experiments in inter-professional learning, exemplified in our promotion of the hyphenated professional, suggest one promising direction for development.
Crossing the gulf: new cross-disciplinary collaborations for healthy urban development

Marcus Grant

Marcus Grant is deputy director of the WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Urban Environments and programme leader for MA spatial planning at UWE in the Department of Planning and Architecture. He crosses the divide between the built environment and health as both a chartered landscape architect and a member of the Faculty of Public Health. His research interest is sustainable development in the built environment in our neighbourhoods and communities. He specialises in multi-stakeholder working and in research that is embedded in real world action. Marcus.Grant@uwe.ac.uk

Since January 2008, the importance of the links between health and the built and natural environment has become an increasing focus in medical circles, such as the National Institute of Health and Clinical Excellence. This body, more usually associated with clinical trials of medical procedures, is turning its attention to the role of urban environments in contributing to poor health.

The evidence implicating the built environment as a contributor to many non-communicable diseases in the developed world is mounting. Epidemics of obesity are talked about, as if it were a catchable aliment; the causation of strokes and cardiovascular diseases is linked to urban environments; some mental health issues are caught in this spotlight; even several common cancers are associated with a lack of exercise; and importantly, some urban environments have been shown to exacerbate health inequalities. So what are these unhealthy environments like? Are we talking about desolate jobless northern towns? Is the concern about sink estates in otherwise prosperous cities?

Certainly, the problem can be found in these examples, but it is widespread and attributed to trends dominating urban development for last 50 years. Developments that planners and architects are designing even now are often unfit for human health. Concerns raised by the public health profession are gradually reaching an audience of built environment professionals. A leading medical journal, the Lancet, talks about ‘urgent need to establish greater and more routine collaboration between planners and health professionals’.

The WHO Collaborating Centre for Healthy Urban Environments is at the forefront of this debate and has been instrumental, through over a decade of work, in actually preparing the ground for this debate. The planning and architecture centre is unique in actually hosting such a prestigious WHO collaborating centre, not focusing on health, not through the eyes of planners, urban designers, architects, landscape architects and transport planners. In addition to preparing guidance for built environment professionals on how to build health into their practice; the collaborating centre has been helping the great institutional silos of public health and built environment reconnect with the shared meanings they once held. A number of tools have been developed to support and accelerate understanding between these disciplines during workshops at regional level.

A key date for directors of public health and their senior teams in the South West, is the annual residential school at Dartington, Devon. In 2007, requested by the SW Regional Director of Public Health, the author ran a workshop ‘Built Environment and Public Health Professionals - Bringing the gap’. Twenty-one public health participants were joined by built environment professionals including five staff from the department and the Director of the Bristol Architecture Centre. The goal was:
to identify what divides the two professions
• to develop a basis for better communication.

The first activity was for the public health participants to explore their own profession’s silo mentality. This was conceptualised through the use of images of castles and the concept of defended professional territory. They explored their professional interests and finally their core values.

Next, with the help of the visitors, they did the same for the built environment professions, often confronting completely erroneous assumptions about what, say, planners actually do! Having built both professional castles, the next stage was to break through the walls to reach common ground. The results were a realisation and acknowledgement of shared values, shared agendas and even shared approaches, including whole population working, a focus on the long term and working with complex systems.

In Autumn 2009, the author ran a second workshop titled ‘Building health into urban development processes’. Having established the common ground at the first workshop, now the goal was to raise capacity, in terms of skills and confidence, for public health professionals negotiating with development teams. A mixed use scheme was the design scenario, with five teams of six people. One participant in each team played the role of a director of public health whose objective was to lever more health into the development through interaction with the other participants – the developer, the designer, a council planning officer, a transport officer, a user and local residents.

Being immersed in a design scenario was very challenging for the public health professionals. The idea that health concerns should and could influence the very layout of a proposed scheme was a very empowering experience. Using the health map as a conceptual underscore, they were able to identify problems with proposed layouts. Their sensitivity to inequalities gave them an edge, assessing the proposal from the angle of different users and in terms of the surrounding demographics. In expressing their concerns they saw the value of the health map as a common framework.

Participants learnt how important it was to enter the design and planning process at a point of maximum leverage. As such forming close links with planning officers was vital, as was having a basic understanding of the planning and development process. Overall though, the shared learning was that there was potential to change the direction of a design team or even transform fundamental assumptions underpinning the design, if directors of public health know how to articulate their concerns in a way that the development team can hear.
New research challenges government climate change commitments

Hugh Barton

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Recently completed research into future urban form and transport at the city region and the neighbourhood levels throws uncomfortable light on the government’s much trumpeted plans to tackle climate change. It demonstrates the need for much more radical policies.

The programme of action unveiled in 2009 by the Department of Energy and Climate Change, claims that greenhouse gas emissions will be reduced by 20% by 2020 as part of the overall plan to cut UK carbon by 80% by 2050. The aspiration is admirable (unless you are a climate change sceptic). But new research funded by ESRC, called SOLUTIONS (Sustainability Of Land Use and Transport In Outer Neighbourhoods) shows this will remain simply an aspiration unless there is a much more fundamental change in values and behaviour than any thus far contemplated.

The £1.5 million SOLUTIONS project, which spanned five years and combined the expertise of five universities: Cambridge, Leeds, Newcastle, West of England and University College London, was led by Professor Marcial Echenique of Cambridge University (focussing on city region development) and Professor Hugh Barton of UWE (examining the neighbourhood scale). The strategic research found that far from cutting transport carbon emissions, current government policies will lead almost inevitably to a significant increase.

SOLUTIONS strategic-level research involved modelling land use and transport futures up to 2031 in London and the greater South East, Tyne and Wear and the Cambridge region. Current RSS, LDF and Strategic Master Plans all show the urban fabric to be unsustainable. The studies showed that most recent developments, far from being an improvement on older localities, showed the most carbon-intensive behaviour. The level of car dependence for local trips was 80% in some neighbourhoods, while others, older but socially quite similar, were only 40% car dependent. This has implications for emissions: recent developments have been building unsustainability into their fabric. The implications for the level of physical activity are huge. Many people get most of their activity from regular daily walking or cycling, yet in some places the majority walk/cycle very little. We are creating obesogenic environments.

It might be supposed that the variations in behaviour are due to social and cultural differences. These are indeed important in particular contexts. For example the two Cambridge communities surveyed had similar age profiles and car ownership, but car dependence was 80% in the one and 40% in the other. The implication is that current planning practice has a key role in determining levels of physical activity and transport choices. The second major conclusion concerned housing supply and demand. In the London and greater South East region at least (accounting for over a third of the UK population), the research strongly backs the Kate Barker Treasury review (2004) that strict containment of our cities is curtailing housing supply, at a significant economic, social and environmental cost. The over-reliance on brownfield development, often in the form of flats, together with greenbelts that constrict urban growth and squeeze development into inappropriate locations, forces up housing prices, exacerbates social exclusion, increases travel distance and reduces competitiveness. The strong recommendation from SOLUTIONS is to find ways (even in the current recession) to open up new options for housing supply.

Marcial Echenique argues that letting cities expand is essential if middle and low income families are to achieve their dreams of houses with gardens and firms are not to be burdened by unnecessary wage costs. But this is not a plea for sprawl. It is an argument for planned expansion and for new 21st century suburbs that are well located and well-designed.

Results drawn from SOLUTIONS local level research, involving empirical analysis of local facilities and household travel in twelve suburban and exurban neighbourhoods in four city regions, were also salutary. The studies showed that most recent developments, far from being an improvement on older localities, showed the most carbon-intensive behaviour. The level of car dependence for local trips was 80% in some neighbourhoods, while others, older but socially quite similar, were only 40% car dependent. This has implications for emissions: recent developments have been building unsustainability into their fabric. The implications for the level of physical activity are huge. Many people get most of their activity from regular daily walking or cycling, yet in some places the majority walk/cycle very little. We are creating obesogenic environments.

You can respond to these findings positively as well as negatively. It means that if we can successfully design new urban extensions and settlements, and retrofit older neighbourhoods, so that there are viable local facilities within walking distance, then active travel will increase, physical activity levels will be improved, and there is the chance to reduce carbon emissions. According to another strand of the research, when people do walk locally in this way, there is an increased likelihood of social networks and a sense of mental well-being.

Retrofitting existing places is critical. But it was also clear from the research that the nature of intensification in suburbs – which could in theory help support more local facilities - is unpredictable. High density brownfield development is occurring not only close to local centres and good public transport but also in less accessible, sporadic locations, poorly connected, forcing high car ownership and use. The signals
given by government to local authorities and house builders are often resulting, despite good intentions, in unsustainable development.

The research tested the feasibility and potential of alternative neighbourhood designs in areas of urban development. The most successful forms – often based on local high streets and graded densities - gave the opportunity for very high levels of active travel and commensurately low innate car dependence for local trips. The range of variation was startling. In one study area the best design achieved 80% walking access to local shopping centres by comparison with 20% in the current plans. The results suggest walkable and viable places can be created and that people will take the opportunity to walk these spaces.

While there are clear differences in behaviour between different groups in the population, the dominant factor determining whether people walk or not, is distance. If we can build and evolve places that really create attractive, accessible, safe environments, then people will walk and will contribute to reducing carbon emissions from transport.

Nevertheless, the overall message from SOLUTIONS holds little comfort. Strategic and local trends are moving in the wrong direction, despite government policy and recent promises. Extra compaction does not solve the problem, though more dispersal would certainly make it worse. But on the positive side, if we can adapt neighbourhoods, where there is development pressure, to be progressively more efficient and much less carbon hungry, then significant improvements can be achieved.

Looking at the issue of climate change mitigation and urban form more broadly, dynamic action needs to be taken on many fronts. First, bolder and more consistent policies are needed in relation to land use and transport, neighbourhood design and the provision of public and market facilities. But there will also need to be a technological revolution in transport, much firmer fiscal signals to businesses and households and crucially a huge shift in public values. Only by choosing to lead lower carbon lifestyles can we hope to reduce carbon emissions.

Towards an urban renaissance?
Ten years of change in Liverpool’s city centre

Nick Smith

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In 1999 the government appointed Lord Rogers of Riverside, and a task force of experts, to investigate the causes of urban decline across England. Their diagnosis made for grim reading, with their final report1 referring to how too many places were failing across a range of quality of life indicators. Some of the largest cities were shown to be haemorrhaging population and jobs at alarming rates, largely due to sustained disinvestment and the effects of past deindustrialisation. Rogers and his team explained how this out-pouring of life was leading to growing levels of redundant and derelict land and to depressed and inactive town and city centres. Worse still, many public authorities were either unsure, or at odds, with respect to how a turnaround in fortunes could be forged.

Under a general promise to deliver an urban renaissance, over a hundred recommendations were put forward by Lord Rogers to help inspire a new vision for urban regeneration. These centred on the need to deliver design excellence, economic strength, environmental responsibility, good governance and social well-being.

It is fair to say that Liverpool was experiencing the kind of malaise that the team’s final report spoke about. Specifically, despite some notable achievements, such as the regeneration of Albert Dock (figure 1) by the Merseyside Development Corporation through the 1980s, and the various projects that were helped with the introduction of European structural funding, Liverpool was suffering from severe physical and socio-economic decline. The city had shrunk in size from 900,000 residents in 1901 to just 440,000 in 20012, while rates of economic activity were depressingly low with unacceptable levels of employment and poverty.

1. The regeneration of Albert Dock was completed in 1989. The new Museum of Liverpool building (centre) is due to open in 2011.

Image credit: Nick Smith
Against this backdrop, the city has clearly performed well over the last decade. For example, the desired aim for re-populating the city has been achieved through a renaissance in city living, with the number of residents in the city centre having increased from 2,300 in 1991 to 13,500 in 2006. This figure is also expected to grow, despite the current economic slowdown, with many more areas of the city centre likely to be restored and regenerated as a result. Employment prospects have also improved, with the number of people working in the city centre having increased by 12% in the period 2000-2006.

This additional activity has inevitably encouraged other developments to come forward, thereby enabling a broader range of uses and facilities to be introduced and improving the overall quality of the centre’s public realm. The most significant of these investments is undoubtedly Liverpool One, a £1 billion plus scheme by Grosvenor that immediately enabled the city to jump ten positions in the national ‘retail charts’ to 5th place overall.

Tourism is also becoming increasingly important for Liverpool with the sector being instrumental in generating increased wealth and employment. The success of the city in being the 2008 European Capital of Culture has certainly played its part in this, as has the new arena and convention centre (figure 4) that opened in the same year to the south of Albert Dock. Visitors continue to appreciate the city’s architectural splendour and rich cultural heritage which, today, is positively promoted through parts of Liverpool’s centre and the Echo Arena.

Across this wider area the challenges remain daunting; Liverpool is the second and third most disadvantaged local authority in the UK in terms of income levels and employment opportunities. Significant tracts of redundant land also remain (figure 3). The city also has the lowest female life expectancy, and the third lowest male life expectancy in England. Consequently, with these statistics in mind, the challenge that Lord Rogers spoke about a decade ago is still very much alive. Achieving an urban renaissance therefore continues to be both a desirable and necessary objective.

2. LCC. 2010 Core strategy revised preferred options. Liverpool: Liverpool City Council.
Governance, knowledge and sustainability: the implementation of EU directives on air quality

Laurence Carmichael and Christine Lambert

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This article is based on research carried out as part of the Governance for Sustainability (GFORS) research project, a three-year project financed by the European Union's Sixth Research Programme. The objective of GFORS was to develop an innovative analytical model for the study of governance for sustainability with a particular emphasis on how knowledge was drawn upon and utilised in practice. The point of reference from which our research began is what might be referred to as an ‘epistemological deficit’ or ‘the problem of ignorance’ created by situations in which decisions are taken against a background of risk or in conditions of uncertainty about current knowledge and future conditions. These issues are particularly important for policies addressing the environment and sustainability where levels of uncertainty and disagreements over how to formulate and implement policy are particularly high. Starting from this position we sought to systematically investigate the interaction of governance arrangements and knowledge and analyse the problem solving capacities of specific arrangements/arenas with reference to sustainability. Our hypothesis was that network forms of governance, being more open and inclusive than hierarchical forms of governance, would also be more open to new participants and new forms of knowledge. This is important because, it is argued, the capacity for problem solving and learning is enhanced through more open deliberative policy processes.

Academics from nine countries participated in the project and each national team carried out local case studies that examined the implementation of EU directives relating to air quality, strategic environmental assessment and emissions trading. The research began from two interrelated sets of questions:

1. Forms of governance: Which governance forms and their arrangements facilitate exchanges and flows of knowledge? Which governance forms encourage mutual learning between individuals as well as within and between organizations? Which forms of governance seem, in this respect, to be most appropriate for policy learning that supports sustainable development?

2. Forms of knowledge: Which knowledge forms are essential to governance for sustainability? Which forms of knowledge are dominant and which forms are missing within successful or unsuccessful governance arrangements for sustainability? What different forms of knowledge need to be combined for the development of successful governance and institutional arrangements and what is the relative influence of each?

This article describes one of the UK case studies, the implementation of the local air quality management regime in the city of Southampton. The Environment Act, 1995 establishes the duty of each local authority to review and assess air quality in their locality in relation to seven regulated pollutants, against specific national objectives. Where objectives are unlikely to be achieved and public exposure exists an air quality management area (AQMA) must be designated. Subsequently, an air quality action plan is required setting out the measures that are necessary to improve air quality to acceptable levels. Where road traffic is the main cause of problems of poor air quality, as it is in most areas, local authorities are advised to integrate the action plan with the local transport plan, and also to take account of air quality issues in their land-use (spatial) plans and decision-making.

The governance arrangements for air quality management in the UK can be characterised as hierarchical. National government sets air quality objectives, and measurement and assessment procedures through national legislation and associated technical guidance. Each local authority is required by law to follow the process described earlier. Within these hierarchical arrangements environmental scientists, and to a lesser extent, transport planners are the key actors, though other local actors, from health and spatial planning and local residents are consulted at key points in the process. In terms of knowledge, expert and scientific knowledge dominates the process. This includes the health-related objectives, indicating acceptable and unacceptable levels of air pollution, set by a national expert panel, the expertise of environmental health officers who conduct assessments, with technical assistance from consultants and the centre, and the professional expertise of local transport planners whose remit covers action planning to remedy problems of air pollution. Wider engagement with the process is limited by the technical nature of air quality measurement and modelling, and also by the invisibility of problems of pollution to the wider public.

Our starting point suggested a rather negative view of hierarchy as a governance mode, as traditionally bureaucratic in the worst sense of the word. What the research has shown is a more nuanced picture. There are strengths and weaknesses associated with the top-down, hierarchical, expert dominated system of air quality management.

The UK has established a strong framework for assessing problems of poor air quality. The system is clear about the objectives which should be achieved, and these are based on expert deliberation at a national level. Local authorities are required by statute to assess and monitor air quality in their area, with clear procedures and support for doing this, and to designate areas which fail short of the standards. In this way the invisible problem of air pollution is made visible and sources of pollution can be identified. In Southampton six AQMAs were designated on traffic routes heavily used by freight and other traffic travelling to the port.

The system is much weaker when it comes to delivering solutions that can improve air quality. The origins of problems, and therefore solutions, lie within the remit of national and regional policy in the fields of transport, spatial planning and economic development, and require coordination of actions across levels of government and policy sectors. Despite some moves in the direction of better horizontal integration through the alignment with local transport planning, there was little evidence that issues of air quality have much of an influence on spatial planning decisions. There was also little evidence of coordination across levels of government in terms of decisions on spatial development and infrastructure investment. In the case of Southampton improvements in air quality depended on major infrastructure investment to shift freight from the roads to rail. Linked to this is the absence of sanctions at either national or international level for failing to achieve the air quality objectives.
Creating normality by seeking diversity: a field trip to Nesselande

Nick Croft

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Local planning authorities in England are charged with making a transition from controlling development to managing it. National guidance on development management identifies the “spirit of partnership and inclusiveness” as being key issues – the government believes this approach will “enable local planning authorities, with their local communities and stakeholders, to promote and achieve the vision and objectives...[which] will assist them in shaping sustainable, prosperous, attractive and safe places where people want to live, work and relax”1. In the Netherlands, changes to the spatial planning system in 2008 have similarly sought to move from “imposing restrictions to promoting developments”2. This has given far greater freedom to Dutch municipal authorities3 to provide local approaches to national objectives when planning their environment.

Students are briefed on the planning of Nesselande by a local planner. Image credit: Laurence Carmichael

Construction began in 2000 comprised of three distinct neighbourhoods: Tuinstad is homely and family orientated (Image 2); Badplaats has a Mediterranean ‘holiday’ atmosphere (figure 3); and Waterwijk (the ‘Water City’) is aimed at prosperous individuals emphasising ‘freedom and independence’11 (figure 4). Diversity is encouraged in the latter by providing freedom for individuals to design their own homes on low density plots (between 7 to 15 homes per hectare). This deliberate move contrasts with the traditional Dutch ‘compact city’ approach of high density living12 where new-build is volume orientated with the focus on the collective13.

The Waterwijk scheme came about partly in response to the uniformity criticisms of VINEX and also due to a change in consumer behaviour, fuelled by increased wealth and greater personal expression, creating a demand for home ownership. Whilst some individualistic architectural projects are evident the potential for this to predominate has not come to pass. What is surprising is that Nesselande has become largely an area of catalogue dwellings with 60% of properties having regular floor layouts to standard measurements - it seems that the traditional aspirations of individual buyers has not matched the potential that freedom of architectural expression presented4. The image below illustrates this, with dormers and porches providing limited exterior variety. The generally restrained architecture and limited pallet is compounded by the homogeneity of landform - each few plots being surrounded by water, which can visually bind contrasting architectural styles. The Waterwijk area of Nesselande has brought water into residential areas akin to the Garden City movement in the UK marrying town and country by bringing the countryside into the city. This move was for both functional and aesthetic reasons. The low lying land in the area requires constant drainage and so building plots are surrounded by water-filled navigable channels that allow residents recreational access to the area’s main attractor - the Zevenhuizerplas (a man-made lake). Therefore, rather than water being a constraint to development, in Nesselande the area’s hydrology has been used as a positive asset to define the urban extension. The commonality of water reflects a functional relationship between inhabitants and their environment (see figure 5).
The Dutch Government's unbureaucratic approach to VINEX, essentially providing money without stringent conditions, has yielded results in terms of both the quality and quantity of housing being built\textsuperscript{15}. Added to this, the local authority vision and leadership has been crucial to delivery. In order to realise the development the municipality purchased land from private owners in exchange for the latter having greater influence over development plan preparation and ultimately a right to build. This partnership approach has historically been uncommon for such developments as the municipal authority usually retains complete control.

Messages that students take back to England are that whilst Nesselande is undoubtedly a popular place to live, the municipal authority's vision for diversity has not altogether been matched by their residents. It was assumed that individual built housing would automatically lead to diversity through expression of personal identity. Whilst local authority leadership working alongside private partners was important to provide this opportunity, assumptions were made about what people would want to build. This message is particularly pertinent to England given local authority's role, through partnership, to ‘facilitate, advocate, arbitrate and influence rather than dominate’\textsuperscript{16}. Crucially this needs to be with direct input from those that form the local community.

\textsuperscript{1} Communities and Local Government. 2009. Development Management: Proactive Planning from Pre-Application to Delivery – Consultation. 21st December 2009. Available on-line only.
\textsuperscript{3} Dutch governmental hierarchy comprises: Central Government; Provincial Authorities; Municipal Authorities.
\textsuperscript{4} The annual Rotterdam field trip is part of the first year planning students’ Healthy Sustainable Communities module at UWE.
\textsuperscript{5} An area designated by the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment in connection with the Fourth Memorandum on Spatial Planning; VINEX is its Dutch acronym.
\textsuperscript{6} Initially designated to protect agricultural land the ‘green heart’ is now used more as an ecological and recreational resource. It also has a similar objective to green belt land in the UK: essentially preventing coalescence by respecting the openness between towns/cities.
\textsuperscript{7} Galema, W. in Nestling in Nesselande: Portrait of a Rotterdam VINEX district. 2007. Architecture Institute Rotterdam, pg. 10.
\textsuperscript{8} ibid.
\textsuperscript{11} Musch, M. in Nestling in Nesselande: Portrait of a Rotterdam VINEX district. 2007. Architecture Institute Rotterdam, pg. 46.
\textsuperscript{14} ibid.
Play Works. Play is a primary need that is often forgotten because of perceived inefficiencies that do not conform to a predominantly commercial way of thinking about the function of society. Reintroducing play into the fabric of social practice will help escape the over-regulation in which we find ourselves today. Architecture must play a pivotal role in the rethinking that is required for play to co-exist in our daily lives. Play works sets out to explore the application of play-theory in design and to define a system that generates play-embodied architecture.

The site of Play Works in Bristol is a multi-storey car park that forms a barrier to Castle Park while feeding Broadmead - a hard-edged commercial zone prohibiting diversity in culture. Castle Park, formerly a thriving gateway through the city, was devastated by heavy bombing in the Blitz of November 1940. It still finds itself in a strong strategic position today but it is undervalued and under-used, blocked from the city that surrounds it as a result of restrictive urban planning and political indecision.

The aim of Play Works is to act as a catalyst to regenerate Castle Park by stitching it back into the fabric of the city, and by fusing play into building and landscape. Simultaneously, Bristol’s sustainability agenda is pushed; rather than demolishing the car park, the structure is recycled.

Play works is a series of working studios for play, contrasting with conventional uses and building types adjacent to the site. Its parallel function is to connect with the park, challenging the sterile uniformity of Broadmead. The existing structure of the car park enables these programmes to co-exist. At the major intersections where these contradictory elements are forced together, opportunity is at play. Halls are formed - un-programmed zones defined by the disjunction of the elements themselves.
Site Plan 1:500

PLAYWORKS NEWGATE ELEVATION 1:200

SITE SECTION 1:500
Play Works: retrofitting the studio units
Lost in translation?
Communities, consultation and policymaking in planning

Katie McClymont

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This piece discusses reflections on a student project which aimed to create a policy toolkit Easton Desires to guide development and other interventions in Easton, Bristol, based on the wishes of the community. Although the need to involve the local community in planning decisions has been well established for the last forty years, recent government policy and legislative changes have further emphasised this. Community involvement, neighbourhood empowerment and active citizens are at the forefront, at least in rhetoric, of current government policy agendas. With this in mind, Easton Desires should serve as an exemplar of this agenda. However, the process of translating community aspirations into tangible policy raises further questions about the definition, boundaries and reification of a community. These questions do not undermine documents and projects such as Easton Desires, but do question some of the assumptions, and unvoiced contradictions in policy.

To give some context, Easton is an inner city area of Bristol, to the north east (as the name suggests) of the city centre. It is one of the most deprived wards in Bristol, with areas within it being in the top 10% of deprivation in the country. During October and November 2009 the Love Easton Urban Design Task Force, with the assistance of architecture students from the University of Sheffield, undertook extensive and innovative community consultation. Their aim was to provide a shared vision for the future of the area which could then be used to link into city wide strategic opportunities, merging top down and bottom up forms of policy making. The end result being the production of ‘I want to live here’- community led regeneration document for Easton. This document is a collection of photographs, maps and sketches showing the Sheffield architecture students’ interpretation of the consultation. The results document a range of issues, including lighting, greenspace, identity, pedestrian access, art and leisure and from these five big visions emerge (see fig. 1).

The Easton Desires project aimed to use the consultation document as a basis for the next step in the top-down/bottom-up synergy, to make the ideas and desires into tangible, timed projects which considered issues of where, when and who would undertake them. The inspiration for this came from the Distinctive Sharrow toolkit, a document aimed to co-ordinate and steer regeneration and development initiatives in Sharrow, Sheffield, an area sharing many similar features to Easton (inner city, multicultural, deprived, artistic/creative/bohemian). Both in the Sharrow document and the aim behind the next step for Easton can be seen as aligning with government policy on community involvement in local planning.

The exercise of getting from the ‘I want to live here’ document to a more policy-focused one, moving from aspiration to action is one of translation. The students had to interpret the wishes of the community, already mediated into the first document, and base suggestions for interventions on this. Initially, this was not easy to convey, as students were used to coming up with their own ideas and interpretations of a place, and tutors used to helping them do just this! After discussions and more time spent with the material gathered from the consultation, we saw translation as something different, and students were excited that this may be of use to the local community in planning their future, and have an impact on policy making.
The potential for car free development in the UK

Steve Melia

Steve Melia is a senior lecturer at the University of the West of England. A longer version of this article, summarising his PhD into the potential for car-free development in the UK, was presented at the 2010 Universities Transport Study Group Conference, where he was awarded the Smeed Prize for the best student/recent student presentation. Steve is coordinator of Carfree UK, an organisation he founded in 2005. He was a parliamentary candidate in 1997 and has also written as a freelance journalist over several years. During the course of his PhD he cycled over 5,000 miles across Europe, visiting cities with car free areas and sustainable transport practices, from which he has written several articles in Local Transport Today, Cycle magazine and others (see: www.stevemelia.co.uk - Steve.Melia@uwe.ac.uk).

Imagine living in an urban neighbourhood without cars or traffic. If this sounds utopian here in the UK, several other European countries have been building such neighbourhoods since the mid 1990s. For its proponents, carfree development represents a potential solution to problems caused by the growth in car use and car ownership in urban areas. It brings benefits for residents, surrounding areas and the global environment. This recently-completed PhD study aimed to propose a definition and typology of carfree development, to assess the benefits and problems associated with it, to assess the potential demand for European style carfree housing in the UK and the circumstances under which it might be feasible in the UK.

To provide context to the research, study visits were undertaken to five carfree developments (in Freiburg, Amsterdam, Cologne and two in Hamburg) and two city centres from which through traffic has been removed (Freiburg and Groningen). From these and a review of the literature three types of carfree development were identified across northwest Europe:

- The Vauban model, where parking is separated and vehicles are allowed to move at walking pace to pick up and deliver
- The limited access model, where vehicles are physically excluded
- Pedestrianised city centres with substantial residential populations

Amongst the limited body of existing literature, previous writers have struggled with definitions. In the UK, car free housing is used to mean housing with no allocated parking, usually on conventional streets open to traffic. European carfree developments usually incorporate some parking on the periphery of a residential area free...
The primary research for this project began with a hypothesis that two target groups would be favourable towards living in carfree developments:

- Carfree Choosers – people who live without cars by choice
- Carfree Possibles – people willing to give up car ownership, and who have done this in the past

Two surveys were targeted at populations hypothesised to contain high proportions of the target groups:

- An online national survey aimed at members of environmental and cycling groups.
- A randomised postal survey across the Bloomsbury and Kings Cross wards of Camden

These two wards were chosen for their low levels of car ownership, relatively high incomes and high levels of home owners without cars.

The two questionnaires explored the (present and some past) demographic, housing location and transport attributes, past car ownership, preferences on moving house (if applicable) and attitudes towards the prospect of living in a new carfree development.

A subset of 29 people across the two surveys was selected for qualitative telephone interviews, to probe their answers to the hypothetical questions. 932 people responded to the online survey and 199 to the Camden survey. The online survey revealed 24% carfree choosers and 27% carfree possibles. 52% of the Camden respondents were carfree possibles. The questionnaires indicated high levels of interest in carfree developments amongst both groups. The telephone interviews largely confirmed the responses of the carfree choosers but revealed personal factors which would constrain the ability of the carfree possibles to give up their cars. The two groups are not static, however: life changes had been associated with decisions to acquire and give up cars by both groups. Thus it was found that most of the potential demand for carfree housing can be found amongst carfree choosers in the short-term. Over the longer-term, carfree developments may help to create their own market by attracting carfree possibles.

91% of the carfree choosers live in urban areas, particularly in larger cities. Most of them displayed pro-urban attitudes, favouring higher density living in flats and terraced houses. Their views on access to public transport and services suggest the potential demand for carfree living can be most easily satisfied in the inner areas of larger cities. Some potential may also exist in suburban or exurban centres, where these are well served by multiple public transport connections. In these circumstances the proximity and frequency of rail services are likely to be more important than in inner cities. A significant minority of the carfree choosers indicate preferences for small town, rural and/or lower density housing. This study suggests these aspirations would be difficult to satisfy under current conditions.

This study focused mainly on questions of potential demand. More research is needed on questions relating to supply and particularly effects on property values in different contexts. This study did establish, however, that carfree developments bring significant benefits particularly in denser urban areas, where the effects of traffic and parking concentration are most negative. These places are also where most of the potential demand is concentrated. Thus carfree development is a win-win policy: most feasible in those places where it is most needed.

The literature review revealed no previous systematic research into the potential market for housing in carfree developments in the UK. Carfree developments can be defined as developments which:

- normally provide a traffic free immediate environment
- are designed to facilitate movement by non-car means
- offer no parking or limited parking separated from the residences.

Previous studies of European carfree areas suggest that they reduce car ownership and use both by attracting residents predisposed to carfree living and also by changing behaviour: many residents surveyed had given up their cars on or following their move there.1

The study visits supported the claims that carfree developments help to reduce problems created by concentrations of traffic in urban areas. They particularly facilitate active travel and independent play amongst children.

Their main problems relate to the management of parking, although increasing controls in surrounding areas were helping to address this.

The literature review revealed no previous systematic research into the potential market for housing in carfree developments in the UK. The European evidence suggests residents of carfree areas tend to be very different from the majority who do not own cars, including high proportions of service sector professionals with young children and pro-environmental attitudes, particularly relating to cycling.

Enhancing grass-roots knowledge: online information sharing among cyclists in North Bristol

Caroline Bartle, Erel Avineri and Kiron Chatterjee

Caroline Bartle is in the final year of her PhD in the Centre for Transport and Society. Her thesis explores word-of-mouth influences on travel behaviour, informal information, and applications in the field of advanced traveller information systems. Her wider research interests concern social psychological perspectives on sustainable travel behaviour.

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Cyclists seeking route information might typically reach for a traditional (paper) cycle map, or perhaps turn to the internet to consult one of a growing range of cycle journey-planners, such as www.cyclestrokes.net. However, cycle route information can comprise more than just lines on a map and functional directions from A to B. Exploratory interviews, carried out in 2008 as part of a PhD study, had revealed that both existing and prospective cycle commuters also value social information about the actual experience of cycling a particular route. Informal advice of this nature, obtained by word-of-mouth from other cyclists, is regarded as highly complementary to more conventional map-based information, and may be considered more reliable because it is provided by a local, trusted source.

However, one limitation of face-to-face word-of-mouth is that information is not always widely diffused. A potential solution to this could be the greater use of web-based, interactive maps allowing cyclists to share their local knowledge more widely through electronic word-of-mouth. An innovative methodology was therefore designed to test this idea and allow a qualitative study of the social interactions occurring in a controlled, online environment. The study entitled Cycology, involved the design of a website called www.bristolstreets.co.uk, a map-based website providing local community information in Bristol.

In summer 2009, 23 research participants working at five neighbouring organisations in North Bristol (including UWE’s Frenchay Campus), marked their preferred cycle routes on the map, annotated them with descriptive comments, and interacted with one another via the website over a period of six weeks. Participants received a daily email digest of all new postings to the website. Data obtained through observation of activity on the website were supplemented by follow-up questionnaires and participant interviews.

The cycology project provided an experiment in the creation of a new form of online social space, where commuter cyclists in a specific location could share both geographical information (functional route directions), and social information pertaining to the lived experience of cycling a particular route. Over the six weeks of the project, 132 postings were added to the site, of which 67 provided commentary on routes drawn on the map, and 65 comprised general comments, questions or responses. Unsurprisingly, the frequency of reading comments was far higher than that of writing them: the system recorded over 1000 viewings of individual markers on the website, and this figure excludes the many instances where participants read the daily email digest without following links to the website.

Route information shared on the website moved beyond the practical matter of how to travel efficiently from trip origin to destination, to encompass some of the more aesthetic and sensory aspects of the journey. Many postings combined functional route information with more informal (and sometimes humorous) commentary. The feature of a route most frequently noted was its steepness - the words hill, hilly, or steep appeared in one third of the postings (unsurprisingly, perhaps, in Bristol). Concerns with traffic avoidance, cycling infrastructure and safety were other common topics. Less predictably, encounters with animals along the way received a number of mentions, ranging from a warning to “watch out for hissing geese” to “there’s a black cat on a wall who appreciates a tickle behind the ears”. Pleasant scenery and views along the route were frequently mentioned, and some postings were used simply to air opinions or share experiences, such as the friendliness of other cyclists enduring the “hared ordeals of cycling in heavy rain.

The subsequent interviews revealed that most participants assessed the website in terms of its practical usefulness, which varied depending on how much new information individuals had obtained about routes useful to them. However, the majority also considered the personal accounts posted on the website to have served a social purpose in contributing to a sense of mutual trust and community spirit among people using this particular mode of transport to commute to a small number of neighbouring organisations. Information was regarded as reliable because it was up-to-date, and provided by ‘actual people with faces’. As one participant noted: “I appreciated the ‘real’, personal comments that people made – about what they personally enjoyed or found difficult about a route (…..). I was inclined to trust the information given because I knew it was from real cyclists….”.

The findings contributed qualitative insights into the ways in which informal information-sharing may be influenced by social and psychological constructs such as social identity, social norms, pro-social behaviour and related trust mechanisms. Many participants expressed a sense of “in-group identification” both with other members of the Cyclology group and with people who had cycled more generally, and demonstrated “pro-social behaviour” by providing helpful information and encouragement to others in the group. These social processes appeared to be reinforcing positive attitudes to cycling, but the project also provided some evidence of actual behavioural change in respondents, as the majority of participants reported having tried out at least one new route as a result of the project.

The findings suggested that this combination of geographic and social information might be especially helpful to less experienced cyclists or those making unfamiliar trips. What the research was unable to demonstrate was whether or not it could encourage non-cyclists to take up this mode of transport, as nearly all participants were already cycling to work at least occasionally. However, even those individuals who had not found the map-based website to be personally useful expressed the view that an initiative like this, if extended for general use, could be one factor in encouraging people to take up cycling to work. It may therefore be a form of information-delivery which could support sustainable travel planning within the workplace. Beyond the specific context of cycling, it also suggests new ways in which rapid technological advances in social media might be harnessed in the field of traveller information more widely.

1. For a summary, see Caroline Bartle, Erel Avineri and Kiron Chatterjee, “Exploring Word-of-Mouth Influences on Travel Behaviour: Application in the field of advanced traveller information” (paper presented at the 12th International Conference on Travel Behaviour Research, Jaipur, India, 13-18 December, 2010).
2. The authors wish to thank Toby Lewis, creator of www.bristolstreets.co.uk, for building the Cycology layer and for his ongoing support for this project.
4. Pro-social behaviour may be defined as helping action which is not motivated by professional obligation: Nino-Werner Benforst, Prosocial Behaviour (Philadelphia: Psychology Press, 2002) 9.
The industrial park: restoring a sense of community through sustainable interventions

Elena Marco and John Comparelli

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John Comparelli made ski films and worked off the west coast of Canada through a first degree at the University of British Columbia (BA in Art History). He left Vancouver in 1984 for the Architectural Association (AA Diploma) and worked with Ian Ritchie and Zaha Hadid during his time in London. He became a registered architect in 1993, set up an architectural practice and taught at the University of East London. In 2000 he joined UWE and completed an MSc in the Conservation of Historic Building at the University of Bath. He recently won the Lady Radnor Award for the conservation of a late 16th Century farmhouse. John.Comparelli@uwe.ac.uk

In September 2008 John Comparelli and Elena Marco launched a new unit within the bachelor of architecture programme at the University of the West of England, with an initial focus on practical sustainability. The aim of the unit is to explore the relationship between architectural form, materiality and environmental performance against evolving geographic, climatic, social and economic contexts. The investigations respond to an increasing awareness of sustainability and anticipate corresponding changes in both society and economics. The unit also aims to empower students to become critically reflective and develop particular theses on environmental change and associated environmental and social problems. It questions existing values and beliefs, and proactively explores and tests alternatives within architectural, environmental and socio-economic contexts. The theoretical underpinning of the unit is based on the belief that the 21st century is witnessing the emergence of a new kind of economy, which will have profound implications for the future of the built environment1. As Jomaa2 said, the symptoms of this transition include “the threat of peak oil, the need to mitigate our carbon emissions, the wholesale contraction of consumer credit, and the massive pressure on the reduction of public spending, as well as poverty, ageing communities, inequality and spreading of learning”.

The theme of the first set of projects was the industrial park. It intended to challenge preconceived notions of industry on the outskirts of town, industry as a necessarily ugly part of the environment and, conversely, the soft underbelly of housing as dormitories for commuters. The students were given a particular context and asked to find appropriate and sustainable industries for that context, whilst registering and then developing parallel landscapes. This tested their reading of that context, questioned the accepted wisdoms concerning sustainable communities, and presented a sufficiently complex architectural project.

The projects focused on the steel town of Stocksbridge near Sheffield. Sandwiched between the Peak District National Park and a valley of cyclopean industrial sheds, the town was chosen as it faces the all too common dilemma of a vanishing monolithic industry and a growing, sprawling, commuting community. This conundrum presented the unit with a fantastic and ‘real world’ opportunity to explore notions of place and community, compare and contrast alternative urban planning solutions, and posit tectonic and programmatic possibilities. All of this against the very real context of a town council facing more pressure for unsustainable housing developments, growing unemployment and increasing dependence on fossil fuels.

The client was the community of Stocksbridge. The community asked the students to look outside the box at the possible re-development of the town’s many brown-field sites. It wanted creative and sustainable proposals with strong social links which would generate employment opportunities during both construction and, more importantly in the longer-term, the briefs needed to be ambitious and challenging with the aim of transforming the unsightly and unsustainable into an exemplar of picturesque (or sublime) sustainability. They also needed to address the particular geographic (and topographic), political, economic and social contexts of the place.

The students’ proposals questioned current lifestyle choices and addressed their understanding of the needs of the community. They necessarily measured and then challenged the carbon footprints of the inhabitants. They were especially interested in re-establishing the relationship between ‘carriage and rent’. Historically, the further out of town one lived the more one paid for travel to enjoy a rural existence. Now, with effectively free roads (and expensive public transport), commuters are subsidised to live away from work. Town centres are decanted of life and carbon footprints increase. By proposing a new layer of appropriate industries and landscapes within the community, the students aimed to address this imbalance.
2. Transport hub: a gateway to the Peak District.
   Image credit: Bill Piers

3. Abattoir: internal view.
   Image credit: Ben Smith

4. Glass co-operative brief diagram.
   Image credit: Miranda Ashley
It was important to generate a way of measuring how the newly proposed developments would perform, not only against sustainable credentials but also against a socio-economic framework. As intractable social issues become prominent in the UK and other industrialised countries, it is clear that human well-being is central to sustainability. One cannot talk about sustainability without addressing its social aspects. The health map for planners1 shows the interconnection between individual health, lifestyle and physical activity, social networks, economic opportunities etc in the context of a sustainable human habitat. The students were therefore asked to measure their developments against this health-map and look beyond the typical sustainable agenda. With the help of Hugh Barton and Marcus Grant, they tested their proposed schemes against the spectrum appraisal2. This is a tool that facilitates consensus-building and creative decision-making in a very logical and practical way with the involvement of the community. The spectrum appraisal has been designed to recognise the integrated agendas of health, sustainable development and the need for an inclusive community process. By using the WHO healthy cities framework, as well as the SPECTRUM analysis tool, students were able to derive an urban masterplan for the town, incorporating sustainable and social, innovative and integrated proposals which rejuvenated their given sites and recreated the once thriving sense of community. Students’ proposals ranged from a series of new industries to social infrastructures. One proposal was for a Glass House Cooperative which incorporated a glass factory, recycling centre and a bottle washing facility for local pubs. Other briefs, such as a new library/post office or a leisure and food centre, tackled the social aspects of the community to improve health and well-being. A transport hub was also proposed, strategically located within the town centre to give access to adjacent neighbourhoods and provide a clear gateway to the peak district. All the projects complemented each other within a group agenda which was right for Stocksbridge.

The results have been presented to the community and have since been very positively received. The students’ analysis and ideas for regeneration will be used by local community groups to form the basis of a new Design Statement for the town. The intention of the unit is to continue developing the Practical Sustainability agenda within once thriving sites that are now struggling to maintain their identity – and, through student interventions, give towns/cities a new purpose within newly emerging economies and social structures. The unit will become a laboratory, exploring the change in the typology of projects created by architects as a consequence of changes emerging frameworks. ■


In 2005, I received a Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Travelling Fellowship to explore the relationship between heritage and society, and more specifically, the influence of old buildings on a community. The destinations selected were precedents uncovered during a masterplanning project to conserve a redundant colliery in Stoke on Trent. This was once the hub of the community, where everyone was employed and socialised, around which all the settlements in the locality grew and where all the roads still led. The site, now closed off and derelict, was a magnet for anti-social behaviour, its closure being a catalyst for the decline of communities around it – the ‘sunset crime’, unemployment and ensuing poverty, with people left living in ill maintained homes. Yet the winding gear, chimney and conical spoil heap remained as landmarks for the surrounding towns and signified the family history of many residents whose parents and grandparents had worked the mine.

These issues inspired a search for projects around the world where the source of decline, caused by the closure of the industry or enterprise around which communities grew, was tackled through the conservation of buildings. Where regeneration was achieved by bringing redundant buildings back into use for the community they now serve, with new uses relevant to their changing priorities and needs. Projects had the added complication of a growing and diverse community, where some people would continue their connection to the old buildings, but have the opportunity to include them in their current lives as identifying features of their neighbourhood and useful, often beautiful, community facilities. Destinations included the Los Caminos Del Rio region on the USA and Mexico border, The Niagara Frontier on the USA and Canada border and the Ruhr District of Germany. Each was selected to give an insight into the different stages of planning and delivery of large scale regeneration projects within differing cultural situations. In each place, the preservation of redundant buildings was used as a common tool to generate the revival of a place primarily through tourism but also through the introduction of new places of work and recreation. The large scale heritage tourism, whether local or visiting, is recognised worldwide as reliable fuel for promoting economic prosperity and putting a place on the map. In Mexico, dusty Old Guerrero brings tourists to a place that has never had cause to be frequented before it was ruined after being submerged by the Falcon Dam project in the 1950s. Zollverein X, the redundant colliery near Essen in Germany allows visitors to follow the story of coal extraction whilst taking in contemporary art, gourmet food and educational exhibits all on the same site.

In numerous projects, buildings had not been carefully repaired with like for like materials as may be required in Britain, but kept their eye on the bigger regeneration picture. The buildings still embody the past identity of the place in their form but now contribute to the emerging identity of each place in their use. To achieve this successfully the building fabric often has to fit with a new idiom and evolve. For example the gasometer at Oberhausen in Germany still looks like a gasometer on the outside reflecting

Community and conservation based regeneration

Funda Willetts

Funda Willetts is an urban designer at Bath and North East Somerset Council and a visiting lecturer at UWE. She has previously practised as an architect specialising in the sustainable conservation of historic buildings and sites. Her research and professional interest centres on achieving successful regeneration of dilapidated sites through the creative conservation of old buildings. She has contributed to the publication ‘Architectural Voices: Listening to Old Buildings’ (ed. David Littlefield and Saskia Lewis, 2007) with extracts from her research. Contact: fsw@hotmail.co.uk.

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heritage and actually interpreting it and if heritage tourism is an aspiration to enable economic growth, it is perhaps important that real heritage is presented to visitors rather than a recreation. In this respect, a region suffering economic decline has a higher chance of having old buildings retained with integrity as they may have been repaired and re-used due to lack of funds to knock them down for redevelopment.

Tourism has implications for the approach taken to historic preservation and this appears to be directly related to the society the site serves. Catering for the cultural needs of visitors is a consideration that needs to be managed like the tourist coaches entering Old Guerrero, rumbling over the decaying cobbles and stones to bring North American visitors deep into the site rather than encouraging them to walk from the entrance. Heritage tourism can be a vehicle for reviving lost crafts by imparting an economic importance to historic sites and the need to preserve them. Retention of cultural identity by creating a market for crafts and traditional skills is demonstrated particularly well in the Los Caminos del Río project.

A number of common themes emerged in the regeneration proposals for each of the study destinations and contributed to the success of the projects. These can be generally summarised as follows: creation of public private partnerships for both funding and co-ordination of projects; systematic identification of regional assets including buildings and green spaces and measures put in place to protect them such as national designations; strategic masterplan developed by public private partnerships and adopted as policy by relevant public bodies such as planning departments; heritage tourism targeted to boost local economy; introduction of linked heritage trails to connect urban places and green spaces; prioritisation of retaining open space and landscape settings; introduction of common signage and corporate identity for the region; and remediation and conversion of buildings and sites for public cultural uses and work spaces. There were also a number of variations revealed in the study such as the level and nature of community involvement in developing and realising proposals; the diversity of new economic industries to replace those in decline; and success in creating community cohesion.

There are lessons to be learned for the UK from these variations. The level of community involvement in decisions about their built environment appears to be a pivotal measure of how well regeneration proposals work for the communities they serve. Appropriate engagement is difficult if the construct of the region’s community is complex, involving people from diverse cultural backgrounds or even living on different sides of an international border. Achieving the correct balance between progression and preservation is a tricky task for all concerned in the development of our regions, but gaining the endorsement of the local people who actually relate to and create our places should be a priority. Cohesion of diverse communities was encouraged through creation of flexible cultural facilities in the destinations that were studied; however creation of employment opportunities across a variety of skills has also been critical. The service industry is able to replace lost enterprise to a degree, but the sustainable economic regeneration of a region and the guarantee that historic buildings require that they will remain useful and so have an economic reason to be preserved needs to be addressed. Education and training at grass roots level is essential as is allowing local people to facilitate their own enterprise based on their own needs and those of their community.
The emergence of the post-secular city and the planners’ response

Clara Greed

Dr Clara Greed is a professor of inclusive urban planning. She is concerned with the social aspects of planning and design, especially user needs and planning for everyday life, and researching gender, ethnicity and accessibility issues. She has published more than 12 books, including Inclusive Urban Design: Public Toilets (Architectural Press, 2003). While there is no end to the popularity of toilet issues, Clara is now researching something completely different. Worship, like urination, is a basic human need neglected by the planners. Clara.Greed@uwe.ac.uk

For centuries, cathedrals and churches were the tallest townscape features in European towns and cities. Quintessentially, the religious architecture and town planning of the Italian Renaissance shaped the development of European ideas about good urban design. Whilst generations of architects and planners drew upon ideas from the sacred phase of urban development, modern town planning developed as a child of the Enlightenment and secularisation and twenty-century planners applied rational, technological principles to urban policy. However, what passed as scientific in modern planning was interest in spiritual matters and a concern for faith issues in civil society and the city. Whilst there has been a decline in religious affiliation and in church attendance within the traditional denominations across European Christendom, there has been a growth in church attendance in the developing world especially in Africa and South America.

Some of the largest churches in the United Kingdom comprise pentecostal congregations which draw much of their membership from ethnic minority groups. For example, Kingsway International Christian Centre (KICC) comprises a mega church with over 12,000 members of 46 different nationalities, and is one of the largest churches in Western Europe. KICC has been the subject of a long-running planning saga, because it failed to get planning permission for a new church building large enough to accommodate its congregation on an industrial estate in Dagenham, East London. Its previous premises in Hackney were requisitioned as part of the Olympic site development. Because of their willingness to move, KICC leaders mistakenly imagined the planners would deal favourably with their application.

The KICC case went to appeal and was lost. Firstly, it was held that it was inappropriate for the church to relocate in an area designated for industrial use, because of the alleged negative economic effect on employment opportunities in the area. Secondly, it was refused as being unsustainable on transport grounds because of its somewhat remote location. KICC argued there was nothing large enough closer to the population centre, and that its members travelled to church via a dedicated fleet of church minibuses and by public transport. The inspector argued that this would put an unreasonable burden on local public transport and have a negative effect on specific bus routes. Let us unpick the reasoning behind these decisions, as they have been challenged as discriminatory on the grounds of race, gender and a false interpretation of environmental considerations.

First, concerning employment, there has been a limited interest in using this location for industrial development. Throughout the country, expanding churches are seeking to use empty out of town industrial units for worship and the DC casebook of Planning magazine frequently reports these applications being refused. Such churches provide a wide range of services to the local community including education, vocational training; youth work, employment opportunities and childcare facilities.

There was little appreciation, in the inspector’s report, of the importance of these social and community services that KICC would provide that would free people, especially women, to take up employment opportunities in the area. This is an almost textbook example of the continuing gendered, and racist, nature of planning. In contrast, there are instances of predominantly white provincial churches, for example in Peterborough, that have relocated on designated industrial, out of town locations, with extensive car parking allowed, whose leaders received respect and support from the local authority.

Second, concerning the lack of public transport, arguably it is up to the local authority, (especially the GLA which has additional powers), through negotiation, planning gain and good practice to facilitate better public transport provision where there is substantial increased demand. One only has to compare this situation with the willingness of the council to contribute towards better public transport, new road links and other facilities in the relocation of football stadia (such as Everton’s talks with Liverpool City Council, or Bristol council’s support of Bristol City’s proposed move to the greenbelt) to see the difference in attitude.

Thirdly, there is an underlying weakness in planning law. Places of worship are not covered by a specific use class, and come under D1 or D2 along with dance halls and other secular places of assembly. Such churches usually combine a wide range of uses within their buildings, not just worship, but also catering, community activities, office uses, and even social housing and employment advice centres. They do not, therefore, fit into existing building control and planning categories. Applications for mosques that incorporate facilities for feeding, ritual washing and caring for their constituents also do not fit into current classifications, while Jewish congregations may also find applications for synagogue extensions refused. Both the quantitative size and the qualitative value to the community of new religious buildings are underestimated. Smith and Parham recommend that religious buildings should be the subject of a sequential test as to the availability of central area sites, and be evaluated as to their likely local, city-wide, regional or even national catchment importance, just like new major retail developments. They should be the subject of a specific policy section in statutory planning documents, for example in the new London Plan, alongside employment, transport and housing. Otherwise, there are no approved policy-document grounds to base appeal arguments upon. In conclusion, much needs to change. While the government now preaches the gospel of diversity and equality, and urban policy stresses the importance of social inclusion, many have found the post-secular city unaccommodating to the basic human need to worship.

5. The KICC case, U0006 Number 1985-085-017, January 2010.
7. Smith, K. and Parham. S. 2010. Making Space for Worship: Planning. 12.02.10, see www.splanningresource.co.uk for this article and all consultation and transparency documents
10. DCS Number 100-065-643
Ruins portray contradictions: on the one hand they offer images of permanence whilst, on the other, explicitly symbolising the inevitability of death. Texture, surface and sensual experience provoke memory. “In the end, our society will be defined not only by what we create, but by what we refuse to destroy.” *

* John Sushill, former president of the Nature Conservancy, 1998
Non-visual aesthetics: the sound, smell and touch of places

Nigel Taylor

Nigel Taylor is a principal lecturer in the theory and philosophy of urban planning and architecture, and the aesthetics of urban design, in the Department of Planning and Architecture at the University of the West of England. His recent publications include articles for journals and encyclopaedias on aesthetics and ethics in relation to urban planning and design. Nigel.Taylor@uwe.ac.uk

In the ancient world, royal architecture... was often aromatic. Potentiates... In the Nanmu Hall at the imperial summer palace of the Manchu emperors at Ch'eng-te, the beams and panelling, all of cedarwood, were lacquered and paintless, so that the fragrance of the wood could influence the air. Builders of mosques used to mix rose water and musk into mortar; the sun would heat it and bring out the perfumes. The doors of Sargon II’s eighth-century B.C. palace at what is now Khorsabad were so scented that they would waft perfume when visitors entered or left.

(Ackerman, D., 1996, A Natural History of the Senses, pp 59-60).

Urban design, like architecture, is a practical art, and so has to meet functional requirements whilst simultaneously seeking to create aesthetically agreeable places. As such, urban design is a highly constrained art, unlike pure arts such as music and painting where, within the constraints of their media, artists are free to paint or compose as they please. In urban design aesthetic aspirations often have to be subordinated to, for example, specific space standards for activities or access, or constraints of cost. Nonetheless, as an art, urban design still aims to create aesthetically agreeable places and, though constrained, it remains a potentially diverse art in drawing on a great range of compositional elements with which to create aesthetic effects. Thus the compositional elements of urban design include topographically varied places and sites (think of medieval hill towns, or the Acropolis in Athens) and natural plants of all kinds (recall that Babylon was known for its hanging gardens), as well as buildings which, when brought together in juxtaposition with each other or with trees, can create the urban spaces that are a further distinguishing component of this art. The compositional elements of urban design also include sounds, smells and tactile surfaces.

Yet, from the limited literature on the aesthetics of urban design one could easily infer that urban design is only a visual art. But if we equate environmental aesthetic experience with sensory experience, then it is a fact that we hear, smell and touch places as well as see them, from which it follows that urban design is an auditory, olfactory and tactile art as well as a visual one. Consider, for example, the sounds of the city – the sounds, for example, of swishing and rustling trees in urban parks, and of birdsong, trickling water, church-bells, the patter of feet, the murmur of human conversation (think of the sound world of old Venice). Or consider the smells of the city – of fragrant flowers in parks, of incense in churches, baked bricks on a hot day. And as we move about cities our sensory experience of places is always tactile through the felt ground beneath us as we walk, cycle or journey in motorised vehicles (consider the pleasant sensation of cycling on a smooth path compared with a concrete road). As Bernard Rudofsky observed after walking through the Italian city of Gubbio, it was an experience that played “on all the senses”, including “waves of coolness and warmth; the echo of one’s own footsteps; the odour of sun-baked stones.”

Although our aesthetic experience of townscape is non-sensory, some may still object that urban designers cannot seriously pretend to design the sounds, smells and tactility of places as they do the visual scene. But this is not true. In designing urban squares and green spaces urban designers can create havens of relative quiet away from noisy streets, where people can converse, read or meditate inauditory comfort. In designing pedestrian streets, urban designers create a sound-world of footsteps instead of roaring internal combustion engines. And where urban spaces are planted with trees, shrubs and flowers, the urban designer can thereby generate the sounds of rustling branches and birdsong, and aromas for different seasons of the year (oak, pine, and hawthorn; verbena and elderberry, honeysuckle and jasmine; meadow-sweet and buddleia).

One final thought about urban design as an art of sound, touch and smell in our own times. It is a sad fact that most of the sounds, surfaces and aromas of the modern city are aesthetically unpleasant, and notably, of course, the sounds and smells of motor traffic, which are frequently cited as the most salient, and disliked, sensory qualities in people’s experience of contemporary cities. In our hectic and utilitarian society, we are a far cry from the world described in the quotation at the head of this piece. In these adverse circumstances, a central contemporary challenge for the art of non-visual urban design is the creation of places where the din and stink of our mechanised world is excluded or, at least, minimised. 1


2. This is an over-simplification of aesthetic experience; as my previous contribution to the first Volume 1 of this journal made clear, environmental aesthetic experience is cognitive as well as sensory. See Taylor, N., Aesthetic perception and experience as cognitive as well as sensory. Project: Journal of Urban Design, Vol 2, no 1, 1995, p 19.


4. Given this, it is surprising that there has been so little research into, or writing about, the aesthetic impact of motor traffic in the contemporary city. But for a rare example see Taylor, N. 2003. The Aesthetic Experience of Traffic in the Modern City. Urban Studies Vol 40, no 8, July 2003, pp 1609-1625.
On the other side of the wall: 
the strange and the estranged

David Littlefield

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What is a strange space? And what, indeed, is an estranged one? The words ‘strange’ and ‘estranged’ lie at the heart of an enquiry into the nature and aesthetic value of a set of underground vaults at the Roman baths in Bath. These vaults, out of sight and little known, are barely-used, semi-neglected spaces that lie literally on the other side of the wall which defines the edge of the principal space within this World Heritage Site. Significantly, these largely Georgian/Victorian spaces, which contain Roman remains, are likely to be redeveloped within the coming 18-24 months. The research project outlined below aims to explore the poetic and spatial potential of the vaults, searching for (or conjuring up) meaning hidden within their fabric, and looking for narratives which can provide a more complete understanding of them. Out-of-sight, uncurated and uncatalogued, can these vaults be exploited as spaces of value – spaces worth experiencing for their own sake? Indeed, do the vaults embody an ‘authenticity’ lacking in the main heritage space?

The research project is being undertaken by staff from three universities: David Littlefield and Thom Gorst from UWE; Ken Wilder from Chelsea College of Art and Design; and, Mathew Emmett from the University of Plymouth. Collectively, the team has been granted the status of ‘artists in residence’ for the duration of 2010. The original intention was to search for, and study, spaces that lie outside normal architectural experience – that is, strange space. The use of the word ‘strange’ begs a number of questions, however. Does the quality of the strange reside in the space itself, or in the mind of the person experiencing it? Does a space become less strange the more one visits it?  How is strangeness culturally defined? Indeed, can spaces be curated in order that they become strange? Encountering the vaults at the Roman baths not only emphasised the pertinence of these questions, but offered up the word ‘estranged’. The line of enquiry suggested by this new word focuses not so much on the vaults themselves but on the relationship between the vaults and the public spaces adjacent to them. To use a literary analogy, the spatial relationship can be compared to the main house and the attic in Jane Eyre – the former a place of domesticity and comfort, the latter a closed world of darkness, fear and captivity. Importantly, the word ‘estranged’ does not suggest that there is no relationship – rather that the relationship is of a very particular type and, indeed, an agent of change. Once Jane Eyre becomes aware of the secret of the attic, the main body of the house becomes altered. The same is true of the Roman Baths; once one becomes cognizant of the presence of the ‘other’, a relationship is established which alters one’s experience of the baths. The research project is an examination of how this relationship works, and how the presence, or even resonance, of the one space affects the other.

Close examination of the baths complex reveals that the wall is not, in fact, an impenetrable barrier; rather, it can be imagined as a semi-permeable membrane through which matter passes from without to within. Daylight penetrates through small apertures, turning the vaults (when artificial lighting is switched off) into a camera obscura – images from the Great Bath are captured by the vaults, inverted...
In November 2009 a group of 2nd and 3rd year architecture and planning students were introduced to the vaults as part of the three week options project. Students on this module were given no brief beyond the following guidance: ‘These are extraordinary spaces; respond in an extraordinary manner’. Consequently, student responses were varied and highly individual. One created a photographic essay based on the thinking of theorist Henri Lefebvre; another assembled a collection of ‘contemporary archaeology’ from found objects (largely debris) obtained from the streets surrounding the baths; another, angered by the neglect suffered by these spaces (especially the application of plumbing and electrical conduits) responded ironically by suggesting how these services could erupt through the ground as public art; yet another suggested removing part of the road surface, bringing daylight back down to the level of the Roman ground plane. This is not a comprehensive list – merely a flavour of the flair and imagination this group of students brought to the project.

Since this reconstruction, the spaces encapsulated by the vaults have had, at best, a strictly service and back-of-house function. Threaded by pipework in every state of condition (the decayed, the defunct and the relatively new), these spaces have been roughly handled and treated unsympathetically. Located beyond the boundary of the Heritage zone, the vaults represent a spatial ‘other’, a territory where the curatorial and conservational values of the Roman Baths do not apply – even though they occupy the same overall estate and contain Roman relics and archeology. They are, however, authentic in the sense that they are unmediated by any tourist/heritage agenda; they are simply there, embodying something of the architectural uncanny described by theorist Anthony Vidler as “a distancing from reality forced by reality” or “the familiar turned strange”.

Anthropological notions of ‘place’ and ‘non-place’ are especially pertinent to the vaults. They are uninhabited, and barely visited, but their experiential power is quickly suggestive of myth and the interiority of the mind. Unpicking these themes lies at the core of this research project. So, too, is the determination to establish a set of research tools and methodologies by which other estranged spaces can be understood.

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Informal urbanism

Louis Rice

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The ‘urban renaissance’ of the last decade has been largely predicated upon the regeneration of derelict areas orchestrated through masterplanning and urban design. Whilst the urban renaissance has been successful in re-using brownfield sites and reducing the loss of the greenbelt, the places created through these operations have also been criticised for creating bland clone-town developments, with a ‘public’ realm that is increasingly privatised and commodified and alienating1. There is a growing sense of a need to augment these official top-down planning and urban design approaches with less formal bottom-up modes, one such strategy is located in the informal spaces of the city.

Informal urbanism is defined as space used on a temporary/transient basis by individuals or groups who do not own the space2. Informal spaces are often considered ‘low-quality,’ in a policy context aimed at delivering ‘high-quality’ urban environments3. They resist such commodification through unregulated, unofficial or illegal uses and remain outside of formal planning/governmental controls and official data/knowledge sources5. The purpose of this informal space is not generated through formal planning processes but rather through users’ interests, for social and personal benefits, often with minimal financial investment6. These spaces are often ‘occupied’ by minority groups and/or groups not represented in positions of power, but provide the ‘third space’ for many social groups between their home and work, or home and school etc. Informal spaces share some of the qualities of Foucault’s ‘heterotopias’ in that they are “counter-sites” where “behavior is deviant in relation to the required mean or norm.” Informal spaces thus provide an important role as means of escaping the city.

The use of derelict land and buildings by informal users has been shown to have multiple benefits. Creative groups, artists and performers using previously derelict or unused buildings is an accepted practice of regeneration and gentrification8. The informal use of disused or neglected public spaces for recreational activities has also been examined9 and links to their value to health benefits through physical activity, social cohesion, community development and revitalising run-down areas. There are also links to research on the value of bottom-up governance from groups affecting their local areas10.

The process of appropriating space follow what Deuze and Guattari describe as the determinatisation and subsequent reterritorialisation of derelict land under a new purpose11. This re-appropriation of space through activity can also be understood as part of the practice of everyday life where this practice forms an important element in the generation of the meaning of space for its users12. The multiple meanings generated through practice are transient, evolving and/or contested and mirror the flux of uses. These (temporary and/or permanent) spaces provide alternative perspectives to the formal planning and urban design processes that dominate the contemporary reproduction of space. They act not in opposition to the formal city, but in addition to, as part of a rhizomatic urban condition.13

Establishing the role of informal spaces justifies their place in the city and begins to make an argument for these spaces to be valued as constituent parts of a successful city. It raises questions about the gradual removal of these spaces – where redevelopment invariably means commodification. Informal urban spaces might be protected and supported as part of regeneration strategies. The formal city is augmented by the often messy, chaotic and unplanned informal city and should form part of an urban renaissance. 1
The changing role of the *jardin publique* in the planning of Paris

Mike Devereux

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Paris has some of the finest urban parks and gardens in the world, and whilst Mitrašinović notes that the historical distinction between the terms ‘park’ (from the Latin ‘parcus’, a small tract of land) and ‘garden’ (signifying something more ordered and designed) has become blurred, the map of Paris nevertheless exhibits a considerable number of both. Because of their size and location these spaces, such as the Jardin des Tuileries and the Parc du Champ de Mars, as well as the city’s many places and squares, can easily give the impression that the population is well provided for. However, what appears to be a generous provision at street level misses the implication of the high density development of Haussmannian-influenced blocks and apartments that make up so much of Paris intra-muros.

Paris, with 24,400 persons per km², is the most densely populated capital city in Europe, yet at the same time it is one of the capitals that offers its inhabitants the least green space (Paris 13m² per habitant compared with London 45m²). This presents enormous challenges for those planning the city. These are made all the more daunting by a growing population. On top of this Parisian planners are now faced with new challenges familiar to many twenty-first century planners around the world: transport, regeneration, ecology, health issues etc. As a consequence, those planning Paris have placed great importance on the provision of open space when producing plans to cope with this density and even with increasing it. This has been so for the last 150 years, since the grand designs of Napoleon III and his city planner Baron Haussmann. This research has found that over the last thirty years or so the role of the park and garden in Paris has changed dramatically as planners see its position developing in response to today’s planning challenges.

Over these last thirty years the park and garden has become a planning tool par excellence in Paris and their changing roles can be traced back through a number of important plans and instruments. The publication of the Plan d’Occupation des Sols identifying potential sites for open space coincide with the devolution of some planning powers from the President to the Mairie de Paris. Whilst the Elysée has continued to impose its ‘grands projets’ on the capital the Mairie has used its new planning role and its ability to create Zones d’Aménagement Concerté (ZAC) to increase the number and types of parks and gardens in the city. The ZAC in particular has proved its worth at bringing together multi-disciplinary teams of planners, landscape designers and architects along with the finance and power to implement ambitious projects in a designated quarter of the city. The successor to the POS, the Plan Local d’Urbanisme continues this practice of using parks and gardens to address planning priorities of the moment by identifying the next tranche of public parks and gardens for the city and their functions.

As a result Paris has moved away from the traditional parc or jardin publique, laid out either à la française (Place des Vosges and Jardin du Luxembourg) (figure 1) or à l’anglaise (Bois de Boulogne and Buttes Chaumont) (figures 2 and 3) to, for example: a regeneration opportunity (La Villette 1982), a 4.5km

1. Place des Vosges, 1605, the oldest square in Paris. Image credit: Mike Devereux

2. Bois de Boulogne, 1852, provided for a growing population by Napoleon III. Image credit: Mike Devereux

3. Buttes Chaumont, 1867, garden showcase for the Universal Exhibition. Image credit: Mike Devereux

(Far left) 2: Bois de Boulogne, 1852, provided for a growing population by Napoleon III. Image credit: Mike Devereux

(Left) 3: Buttes Chaumont, 1867, garden showcase for the Universal Exhibition. Image credit: Mike Devereux

(Far left) 1: Place des Vosges, 1605, the oldest square in Paris. Image credit: Mike Devereux

(Far left) 3: Buttes Chaumont, 1867, garden showcase for the Universal Exhibition. Image credit: Mike Devereux
car free urban artery (Promenade Plantée 1988), a space for local residents and workers (Parc André Citroën 1992) (figure 5), an urban retreat (Jardin Atlantique 1994) (figure 4), an educational tool (Parc de Bercy 1997) (figure 6), a social and cultural space (Paris Plage 2002), a showcase for neighbourhood sustainability (La Cour du Maroc 2007) and an ecological lifeline (Jardin des Grands Moulins 2009.) These and other recent Parisian parks and gardens are all distinct in the way they approach their particular responsibility, so bringing a new variety to the very formalistic Haussmannian layout of the city.

The way in which the Mairie de Paris has pushed that agenda has lessons for planners in all large cities. For example, in June 2009, ‘The High Line’ a 2.3km long linear park directly modelled on La Promenade Plantée opened in New York and in 2011 the Bloomingdale Line will open in Chicago. This importance placed on the diverse uses of parks and gardens as central to urban living and as playing a vital role in modern Paris is set to continue with the redevelopment of Les Halles (starts 2010) and the particular emphasis it places on inclusion of a ‘health’ garden ‘for all ages’ in the complete rebuilding of this quarter of the 1ère arrondissement in the heart of Paris.

The evolution of parks and gardens in Paris responds to the demands placed on planning to address contemporary urban issues and the creative response from the Mairie de Paris has changed the perception of the Parisian park from parc and jardin publique to espace polyvalent.

The author brings his research findings to fourth year planning students during a week long study visit to Paris in which they assess whether the new parks and gardens match Lefebvre’s analysis of public space as either ‘representations of space’ (planned, controlled, ordered space) or whether they have evolved away from original intentions into ‘representational space’ (appropriated space).}

Space per person in the UK: a report for the government’s Foresight Review of Land Use

Katie Williams

Professor Katie Williams is an urban theorist, planner and urban designer. She is director of the Centre for Sustainable Planning and Environments. Katie specialises in sustainable urbanism, and has undertaken evidence-based critiques of many key policies such as compact cities, brownfield development, and sustainable communities. Katie has held over £4 million in grants from research councils, government (UK and USA) and industry, and has authored over 100 papers and reports on sustainable urbanism. Her current research focuses on designing neighbourhoods to support sustainable lifestyles and adapting suburbs for climate change. Katie.Williams@uwe.ac.uk

This paper is a summarised extract from a report that forms part of the UK government’s Foresight project on land use futures. It reviews the issue of ‘space per person’ in the UK, using literature and data to identify ways of measuring living space, describe levels of space per person, and set out some drivers that have affected trends in living space.

How is space per person conceptualised and measured in the UK? One would expect that establishing the extent of ‘space per person’ would be a straightforward calculation of a person:land ratio. Such calculations can be made, but the issue of space is more nuanced than this simple average would suggest. Three measures of ‘space per person’ are now used commonly in the UK.

Population density is most usually measured in persons per square kilometre. It is the most widely used measure in population statistics, and is useful when comparing large areas, such as cities and regions, but is dependent on where boundaries are drawn. It is less helpful in understanding actual levels of space per person, as it takes no account of the distribution of space between individuals. Dwelling densities are the number of dwellings per an area unit of land, and are also widely used as a measure of the intensity of residential land uses, particularly in housing and planning policies. The most commonly used metric is dwellings per hectare. This measure is useful in understanding densities in built up areas and is a proxy measure of space, but it tells us little about the distribution of space between households or individuals.

Dwelling size is a measure of the attributes of a habitable unit. Both floor areas and room numbers are used, but the general currency for housing statistics, planning practice and house sales is number of bedrooms. For the purposes of studying space per person, information about dwelling sizes (floor areas) is very useful. It is a measure of how much ‘private’ indoor space people consume. Measuring homes by bedroom numbers can be misleading as houses with the same number of rooms can vary considerably in floor space.

What is the current picture in terms of ‘space per person’ in the UK? In answering this question it is important to take forward the aforementioned differing concepts of space as these demonstrate a complex picture. First, in terms of population densities, the UK lives at an average of 257 people per km², but this masks considerable spatial differences (see figure 1).

As would be expected, population densities map quite closely onto dwelling densities. Although, there are areas (such as inner cities) where, for a number of social and economic reasons, homes are more intensively occupied, and others such as retirement areas, where many older couples and single people live, and where homes are far less intensively used. For new housing, densities have increased from an average of 25 dph (dwellings per hectare) in 1997 to 46 dph in 2008. In terms of the amount of dwelling space that people occupy, the average space (in England) is 44 m². Those in the owner occupied sector have more space on average (46 m²) than those in social housing (36 m²).

What are the current trends in space per person in the UK? The temporal picture of space per person in the UK is multifaceted. Overall, the population has grown continuously over the last century, and is projected to increase to 71 million by 2031 (figure 2). This rise is due mainly to natural increase (more births than deaths) and because it is assumed there will be more immigrants than emigrants. Hence, in simple terms the amount of space per person is reducing year on year. However, this calculation masks a number of trends in both local and regional densities, and in the ways in which the UK population forms households and consumes living space.

The last Census (2001) shows that since 1991 only London saw a significant increase in population density, with the East Midlands, North West of England and Glasgow becoming less densely populated. In terms of living space, there has been a downward trend in household size for some time now. We currently occupy our stock at about 2.3 people per dwelling. Only 7% of households in the UK contain more than 4 people (half the figure for 30 years ago), and the proportion of one-person households rose from 18% to 29% over the same period. Almost 70% of the projected household increase to 2016 will be single person households, nearly half of which will contain pensioners. These trends have significant implications for the ‘intensity’ with which we occupy the housing stock. On average personal living space has risen from 38 m² per person in 1991, to 44m² in 2001 (ODPM, 2003).

What are the causes of these trends in density and space? These trends in space are the result of the interplay between a number of factors, including demographic changes, land and housing economics, and planning and housing policies. Broadly, in the UK in the post war period, planning has limited the supply of land for housing. It has attempted to protect open greenfield land and contain urban
development. In the last 15 years, there has been an explicit and continued effort to concentrate development in existing built up areas and to raise housing densities. This pattern of spatial development is seen as contributing to sustainability and urban regeneration. At the same time as these policies have been pursued, demand for housing has grown, with large increases in the number of households being formed (currently around 252,000 per year in England). These dual pressures of restricted land supply and increased housing demand saw both land and house prices increase. However, land prices increased more steeply than house prices, and this economic reality, coupled with pro-high density policies, led developers to build more small, higher density units.11 12 13.

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Sustainable development: environmental performance or improvement of social inequality?

Melissa Patterson

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The way our towns and cities have been designed in the last part of the twentieth century has caused a number of social, economic and environmental problems. Poverty, inequality, pollution, unemployment, lack of access to jobs, goods and services, and lack of community cohesion still make up the communities in which we live. Increased dependency on car use and a reduction in ‘active travel’ such as walking and cycling have led to a rise in obesity levels, health inequalities and, from an environmental perspective, amplified the threat of climate change. Significant changes in the earth’s climate, coupled with an increasing scarcity of natural resources has lead to a number of global problems which could ultimately become the biggest threat facing humanity. The way in which we continue to live our lives and design our towns and cities could push the planet’s climate into dangerous, unchartered territory.

Development, now, must maintain at its core a commitment to ensuring sustainability, however, the lack of a definitive explanation of the term ‘sustainable development’ has led to a number of interpretations, conflicts and discrepancies in the way in which it should be delivered. Categorising issues as either; social, environmental or economic, provides thinkers with a condensed model of development, which simplifies the formulation of solutions. It is often the mistaken belief that these problems can be solved simply by adopting like measures, however, the reality is more complex, and the effective resolution of individual issues lies in the co-ordination of all three.

With recent discussion concerning itself predominantly with climate change, sustainable development can often be misinterpreted as having a purely environmental goal, and therefore sidelined by those who have an economic or social agenda. This polarisation of sustainable principles has a potentially significant effect on the realisation of a comprehensive approach towards a sustainable future, making its evaluation imperative. Although it is recognised that economic considerations are intrinsic to achieving holistic sustainability, this study focuses on the social and environmental factors that shape sustainable development. Since it is not possible to separate individuals from their social groups or their environments, ensuring social and environmental sustainability requires comprehensive and widespread alterations to lifestyles and behaviours. These we call ‘sustainable behaviours’ – actions undertaken by individuals or groups that contribute to sustainability objectives.

In order to understand the current situation of sustainable development two schemes are assessed on their potential to enable sustainable behaviours, enabled by specific design features of a neighbourhood scale development in order to identify which areas of sustainability are prioritised within the construction industry. Both the recently completed Accordia Living in Cambridge and the proposed Hanham Hall, Bristol (Barratt Developments PLC, 2010) claim to have been designed with the aim of seeking a balance between social, environmental and economic performance according to sustainable principles, with Accordia Living receiving a number of design awards (CABE, 2009). The assessment criteria moves away from past methods in which environmental effects rely heavily on quantitative predictions whilst social assessments are judged qualitatively. Using this method, and that of the BRE Environmental Assessment
Method and the Code for Sustainable Homes, the case studies are measured against a criteria which establishes a quantitative method for both social and environmental issues. Both criteria are given equal worth of 50% to identify whether sustainable development is more focussed on achieving environmental performance over tackling and improving social inequalities.

Accordia Living demonstrates a greater emphasis on the provision of infrastructure for society than for the environment, with scores of 38% and 33% respectively. Overall, a 71% total indicates that there is still room for improvement, for instance, in the under-provision of renewable energy generation and reliance upon existing services, such as schools and healthcare facilities which are already overcrowded.

The development is, thus, fairly limited in its use, contradicting national and regional emphasis on mixed-use, and although 30% of units are ‘affordable’ relative to the rest of the housing, the overall cost exceeds the budget of a large proportion of the community.

Hanham Hall, a prospective ‘eco-village’ is conceived as a potential template for future ‘eco-towns’, making the implications of this development widespread. Achieving a score of 39% for social provisions, and 43% for environmental, it outperforms Accordia Living through its implementation of environmental initiatives. However, by developing on a Greenfield site, rather than previously used land, the scheme is fundamentally flawed as a template for future eco-towns, and whilst it proposes a number of leisure facilities and employment opportunities within the site, potential residents are still expected to rely upon neighbouring services, such as schools and hospitals. A number of the initiatives proposed for Hanham Hall that primarily aim to tackle environmental problems can be seen as also improving the state of society. From the localisation of facilities could emerge social cohesion, equity and safety as well as promoting active travel as a viable alternative to car use. A good provision of open green space encourages casual leisure activities, improving fitness; all of which contributes to the mental health and wellbeing of residents.

By comparing the two case studies it is possible to identify a shift in the nature of sustainable development towards environmental objectives. However, as Hanham Hall proves, this shift has significant benefits not just for environmental sustainability, but also for social. Therefore, the increasing polarisation of sustainable development towards the environment could be seen as a justified approach to delivering sustainable development. “Many decision processes that control change in the built environment have not caught up with the new agenda” (Barton and Grant 2008, 1). It is intended that this criterion be used to support decision-making regarding a development proposal during the planning application stages, in order to ensure the end product is suitably equipped to enable sustainable behaviours and ensure holistic sustainability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Score achieved against criteria (%)</th>
<th>Accordia Living, Cambridge</th>
<th>Hanham Hall, Bristol</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety and security</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohesion</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prudent use of resources</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce emissions from travelling</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection of the local environment</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental total</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>43</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total for scheme</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>82</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Chocolate Manufactory. The context for this project is the small town of Ludlow, Shropshire, a town that prides itself on its food and culinary excellence. It serves a large hinterland by providing a point of exchange and gathering for local food artisans. The chocolate classroom is a craft manufactory for the learning and exploration of chocolate making process; it is a proposal which seeks to develop the town’s passion and commitment to food excellence.

The architecture is been derived from the understanding that a chocolatier’s profile is governed by an intimate knowledge of the creation and tasting processes of chocolate. It provides an ideal environment in which the craftsperson teaches the apprentice to appreciate chocolate: appearance, flavour, aroma, texture and even the sound it makes when snapped.

This simple and elegant architectural proposal is conceived within a long narrow plot within Ludlow’s strict urban grid. It is composed of three elements: manufactory, garden and residence. The manufactory and residence are set at either end of the plot and are separated by a secret garden which provides ingredients for chocolate. The manufactory confronts Ludlow’s market place which is a source of inspiration for the apprentices, while the residence peers out of the town towards the Teme valley, providing a retreat and a place where the craftsperson can welcome the connoisseurs of other gourmet foods. The elements share a continued materiality and circulation, emphasizing a constant need to learn.

The manufactory at ground level accommodates the creative processes, which are contained in a broadly transparent space, while the tasting rooms are removed and placed at the first floor level. The creative level will expose apprentices to the entire ‘bean to bar’ process, while the tasting level will give the apprentices a means to reflect on the chocolate created. The tasting level accommodates both public and private rooms so their innovations in chocolate can be tested in the company of the public and other chocolate connoisseurs.
Place-based leadership and public service innovation

Robin Hambleton

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How can scholars contribute to current debates about place-shaping and public service innovation? More specifically can planners and urban designers gain inspiration from imaginative civic leadership in other countries?

A new report, published by the Local Authority Research Council Initiative (LARCI) in 2009, explores this terrain. LARCI is a national effort to bridge the worlds of academe and local government practice, and the Cities Research Centre was commissioned to write a report on international insights on civic leadership and public service innovation.1

Much of the present debate about leadership, planning and innovation in UK local governance seems to be neglecting the potential of learning from abroad. This study examines whether international exchange could play a more prominent role in policy making and it explores how those concerned with public service reform in the UK could become more effective in drawing practical lessons from experience in other countries. The study identifies three overlapping ‘realms of leadership’ in any given locality. These realms are: political, managerial and community. The analysis suggests that the areas of overlap between these realms provide ‘innovation zones’ in which new ideas and approaches can be tried out. Figure 1 illustrates this conceptual framework. In this framework people with different perspectives are brought together, opening up new possibilities for dialogue. Empowering approaches that stimulate exchange could play a more prominent role in policy making and it explores how those concerned with public service reform in the UK could become more effective in drawing practical lessons from experience in other countries. The study identifies three overlapping ‘realms of leadership’ in any given locality. These realms are: political, managerial and community. The analysis suggests that the areas of overlap between these realms provide ‘innovation zones’ in which new ideas and approaches can be tried out. Figure 1 illustrates this conceptual framework. In this framework people with different perspectives are brought together in active collaboration.

We, therefore, stress the importance of cultivating leadership that can work across boundaries. Our study shows that it is possible to respond more effectively to current challenges and pressures if people operating in the different realms of ‘place-based’ leadership can be brought together in active collaboration.

Illuminated by cameos describing practical examples of civic leadership and public service innovation in five different countries – USA, Sweden, The Netherlands, Brazil and Colombia – the report suggests that adopting an international perspective can provide the UK debate with a welcome injection of fresh ideas. The cameos illustrate innovation in five different policy settings:

• Regional civic innovation in the Capital District, New York, USA
• The civic leadership response to climate change in Malmo, Sweden
• Urban leadership and community involvement in Enschede, The Netherlands
• Participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre, Brazil
• The planning and participatory budgeting programme in Medellin, Colombia

These cameos were chosen to illustrate the inventive approaches taken by localities in other countries to issues that we believe to be of real interest to localities in the UK. In these case studies it was noticeable that successful public service innovation depended on building new relationships between different stakeholders. This is, in itself, an important insight – the third sector organisation, the government department, the local authority that thinks it can promote successful innovation by embarking on internal culture change might well be able to do useful work.

Our analysis suggests, however, that working with others who are outside your organisation, outside your realm of experience, is crucial to the delivery of bold and successful innovations. This ‘place-based’ approach to civic leadership and innovation has much to offer to the ‘total place’ approach to policy development advanced in the Chancellor’s Budget in May 2009.

Sceptics will say that UK local governance has nothing to learn from abroad. They will claim that countries differ so much that fruitful cross-national exchange is doomed. This is out of date thinking. We recognise that there are risks associated with ‘policy tourism’ but these can, in our view, be circumvented by developing more sophisticated ‘lesson drawing practice’. The international learning task is not to search for a mythical ‘best’ approach. Rather the aim should be to discover ‘relevant’ practice – that is, insights and approaches that can help agencies respond to the concerns and challenges that face them in their ‘place’. Acceptance of this argument suggests that international exchange should give focussed attention to the processes that brought about change in the foreign locality being examined. Naturally the outcomes will excite interest – who benefited in what way will be of great interest to policy makers. But, if international insights are to drive successful innovation in the UK, it is more helpful to understand the drivers and processes linked to specific innovations in other countries.

Innovation and sustainability are of central importance in planning, urban design and architectural thinking. The relevance of this study for these disciplines is that it makes the connection between engagement processes and innovative outcomes. The cameos illustrate how dialogue between political, managerial and community leaders in a locality can bring about more informed, more inclusive and more sustainable local developments.  

The environmental sustainability of the Bristol City region: current and potential scenarios

Matthew Taylor

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2010: The orange streetlight glow of the city of Bristol, viewed from the suburb of Totterdown on a cold and wintry January evening. The lighting, courtesy of electricity generated from the combustion of coal, nuclear fission of uranium and combustion of natural gas (methane), is helping to prevent crime and accidents on the streets. The inhabitants are kept warm predominantly from the on-site combustion of natural gas. Their food, water, medicine, cosmetics, clothes, furnishings and consumer goods have been produced, processed and/or transported through the use of various crude oil products, an energy source also primarily responsible for powering their journeys around and beyond the city come the morning.

2050: This scene could look fairly similar or vastly different – the reality depends on a range of physical and political factors, the most compelling of which are likely to centre around the availability of crude oil fuel products. Holmgren has suggested several future energy scenarios, the best cases being either: technological innovation will provide sufficient alternatives to oil and other fossil fuels to enable global socio-economic continuity; or that no convenient oil equivalent will be found but that society has enough time to adapt to a more localised, energy efficient way of life before oil is completely depleted. The worst case scenario, on the other hand, is that the oil decline is swift, climate change is increasingly destructive, planning is inadequate, the market economy collapses and no usable infrastructure exists to meet basic human needs.

The best case scenarios for 2050 might bear a resemblance to the 2010 night scene above, be it with some very different technologies or lifestyles within. The pessimistic scenario of blackout, cold, starvation and anarchy constitutes a stark warning against an apathetic approach to future energy and food security. It is within this context that the concept of environmental sustainability is being approached in this research. Food and warmth along with clean water and sanitation are basic human needs. If technological innovation is unable to provide a suitable clean, abundant, mobile energy source capable of replacing liquid fossil fuels, then it is highly likely that food, fuel and products formerly imported using such energy will need to be produced locally. Therefore the land surrounding Bristol – that constituting the city-region county formerly known as Avon, would need to be relied upon to sustain the population with food, fuel, timber and minerals indefinitely. Environmental sustainability would be as crucial as it was before the industrial revolution.

This extreme re-localisation scenario could be viewed as one side of a future socio-economic scenario polemic relating to human scale. At the other end of this polemic is the technological innovation scenario, whereby a combination of efficiency measures and new technologies (such as nuclear fusion) enables the global economic system to continue. For this latter scenario to be sustainable “indeﬁnitely”, limits on consumption and high standards of environmental management will be required to ensure global ecosystems are able to cope with resource demand and waste assimilation (pollution) and that non-renewable resources are not wasted, but are recycled and used sparingly. At this spatial scale of human activity the impact on the environments of other regions, countries and continents, and the management of the global stock of non-renewable resources for future generations, become more prominent.

Between these poles lies a continuum of potential socio-economically sustainable lifestyles (see figure 2). As these extremes represent two very different spatial and economic modes of activity, a study of the environmental sustainability of the Bristol city-region requires examination of both spatial scales in its methodology – the local and the global.
The design for this research has therefore been modelled to assess the quality and quantity of local natural resources to capture the local spatial scale of environmental sustainability from a ‘bioregional’ capacity perspective, as well as to examine the flows of materials and energy into and out of the city-region to assess whether its ‘industrial metabolism’ is environmentally sustainable in a global context. This will enable a set of baseline indicators of the current environmental sustainability of the Bristol city-region to be established, including a set of pressure-state-impact indicators of local natural capital and an ecological footprint of the current level of consumption. The extent to which the city-region could be self-sustainable at defined levels of resource consumption and population can then be calculated, the negative impacts of local and global pressures can be examined, and future trends based on a “business as usual” scenario predicted.

The second half of the research will examine several future scenarios in more detail. Much future “visioning” has been undertaken already for the Bristol city-region, which will be drawn upon with reference to the human scale scenario model. An examination of how these visions can be achieved and at what pace would then be undertaken using backcasting from the year 2050, whilst at the same time factoring in natural resource depletion rates, rate of climate change and socio-political factors.

The significance of the research is that it will be the first holistic assessment of the environmental sustainability of the Bristol city-region, incorporating both the local and global spatial scales of the city-region’s economic activity. The research methodology for the baseline assessment could also be applied to other city-regions in the developed world. The baseline assessment, future visions and examination of the steps required to achieve such visions should prove useful to those stakeholders within the city-region who are working towards making it a more sustainable environment. It should also be of help to those taking valuable steps towards planning for a very different energy future than we have known to those taking valuable steps towards planning for a very different energy future than we have known.

Government is under pressure to undertake speedy regulatory reform in order to facilitate policies identified as ‘climate friendly’; rafts of new rules are being published with alarming frequency in response. However, many of the solutions currently the subject of new legislation promote new and unproven technologies that may not be the most appropriate. Hence, this paper argues that there is a balance to be struck between hasty response to any measure thought to cut emissions and allowing the technological development to mature to a point at which development scenarios are more certain, so reform can be more targeted and considered.

History is peppered with cases of technologies which initially appeared promising, but in practice failed to capture a market due to factors ranging from technical flaws to fashion. The field of low environmental impact transport offers many such examples: at the turn of the twentieth century, electric cars were initially at least as promising as internal combustion engine cars; investments were made in developing airships for international passenger travel, despite major safety limitations;
the Sinclair C5 electric buggy had a six-month career in the market for personal travel in 1985, before practical limitations and image concerns resulted in early retirement.

Many new technologies require a response in planning terms. There is evidence to suggest that some planning regulations are not always conceived correctly, whilst the Government expects planners and others to implement them quickly. For example, in the case of telecommunications, there was a market imperative to roll out a mobile phone network, and new regulations allowed for a proliferation of points without proper consideration of the social and aesthetic impacts. Subsequent research by Askew has indicated that a different approach could have offered better solutions. Changes have already been made to the use of micro-generators on domestic dwellings, just one year after the initial regulation was published. Linked to this, the Green Energy Act of 2009 somewhat unusually contains a clause which permits certain alterations to the General Permitted Development Order 1995 to provide for the grant of planning permission for specified classes of equipment for micro-generation in and around dwelling houses. More worrying, new regulations allow for easier provision of air conditioning units on buildings, illustrating a lack of joined up thinking about climate change, offering the potential for a real threat to the aesthetic quality of the built and natural environment from proliferation. There are many flaws in this kind of impulsive policy making, not least of which is that the regulations are often not underpinned by research, and they may, therefore, lead to unexpected consequences such as social dissatisfaction (in the case of mobile phone masts), aesthetic impacts (air conditioning units) and ineffectual technology (micro-generators).

The latest example of policy making of this nature refers to new regulations to allow electric vehicle (EV) charging points in domestic and non-domestic settings, including in the public domain. A review conducted for CLG in fact noted that: “...leading industry experts advise that both EV and charging point technologies, patterns of usage and the business models for achieving them remain uncertain but are developing at a very rapid rate. It is therefore too early to know what the future large scale implications will be for the planning system and how it should be adapted. Instead, premature regulatory changes could serve as an additional and unnecessary barrier to the industry's development by introducing unjustified technological or business constraints.” (p5)

Nonetheless, the same review moves from making recommendations about facilitating EV charging points to consider requiring their installation as a condition of planning approval for new parking capacities. Whilst the small number of current owners of battery electric vehicles would clearly welcome additional charging points, it is by no means clear whether this will be the dominant future technology. The adoption of EVs is very much seen as an important ‘technological fix’ which may enable the national carbon footprint to fall with minimal behaviour change. In this context there is strong pressure within the framing of policy for climate reduction short-cuts and practical barriers to be downplayed. The need for low-carbon electricity to power an EV fleet is a major issue, with just 6 percent of current UK energy consumption being supplied from renewable sources. For the planning system the major barrier presented by battery EVs is that many of the potential UK owners currently park their vehicles overnight on the public highway, a distinctiveness to be taken account of in forming policy.

If the future is highway recharging points then there will need to be a proliferation of charging points, as well as much tighter regulation of parking arrangements to ensure vehicles can be aligned with points without creating trailing cable hazards. Given the potentially explosive local political nature of any attempts to alter local parking regulations, this process can be expected to be far from smooth in our many dense, terraced streets, where parking practices often function at or beyond what is technically permitted. Wireless ‘inductive’ technologies may reduce the need for trailing wires, but will increase the need for vehicle-charging point proximity.

In this context, the emergence of battery swap solutions is an important development which reduces the need for street charging points in hard-to-equip locations. Although the main motivations of the innovators may be to reduce the need for prohibitively expensive fast-charge facilities, there may be additional consumer benefits if expensive batteries are leased rather than purchased.

From the perspective of the present article, this example serves to underline that imposing infrastructure requirements on new developments cannot be justified until needs are clarified. Whilst no government wishes to be seen as ‘failing to cut needless red tape’ or otherwise ‘holding back progress’, transport energy policy has arguably already shown the potential errors of ‘picking winners’. EU directive 2003/30/EC legislated for road fuels to contain 5.75 percent biofuel by 2010; a source of energy now seen in current forms to be highly unsustainable. A degree of conservatism in the planning system is important for avoiding similar unintended consequences.

2. Green Energy Act 2009, (Section 3(1))
8. See for example, www.betterplace.com

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Bristol’s lost quarter

Ian Parkes

Ian Parkes and Tim Forster, graduating students from last year’s Bachelor of Architecture degree, worked with UWE’s James Burch to design an exhibition of their studio unit’s study of Bristol’s Castle Park. This unit was led by Harry Charrington who, together with James and Tom Russell, worked with seventeen students to study the problem of this park and develop individual propositions for new public buildings surrounding its boundary. The exhibition, at Bristol’s Architecture Centre, re-cast this work as a group-show that aimed to set a historical and urban context for debate over the park’s future use. Ian Parkes reflects on the exhibition below; four of the Unit’s agendas for the park, designed by Tim Forster, are shown overleaf.

A bombing raid intended for the city’s docks obliterated the historic heart of Bristol on 24 November 1940. One night of fire and devastation was followed by 70 years of indifference. This saw a vital urban quarter recast as an underused expanse of grass punctuated by war memorials and concealed hints of a former life. The unit’s goal was to remake this undervalued city quarter as a landscape of internal and external public spaces. Against this new and varied backdrop, the unit’s vision was for the quarter to be used for the exploration of a full public life as a virtuous and necessary counterpart to an equally full private life.

The unit’s approach was framed by establishing an agenda of 12 criteria (see box). Interventions were guided by principles including traffic hierarchies restructured to favour pedestrians, improving connectivity and permeability, and most importantly, maintaining the total area of park. Yona Friedman’s work on the socially focused “feasible utopia” and in engaging the public in architectural theory, rather than maintaining it as the preserve of the specialist, made his work a touchstone for the task of communicating the agenda. With the unambiguous communication of these criteria being vital, the inspired use of Friedman’s stick-figure vignettes made plain each point with humour and simplicity.

Larger programmatic interventions were introduced to facilitate the Unit’s work, the most dramatic being decking over the ring road and extending the park, re-establishing the severed historic route between Old Market and St. Nicholas Market. Similarly, in closing the Galleries car park the ceaseless flow of traffic around the park would be eased, making the park and the city more accessible and opening its currently inactive wall to embrace the park opposite.

Seventeen interventions ring the park, restoring a built element to its western edge and reworking the existing fabric of the city. Themes of assembly, communication, play and “creative misuse” were explored in reclamining a car park. Routes into the city from Old Market and Temple Meads converge at a botanical garden. The park’s role as a place of memory and memorial was built upon with museums to empire, nature and blitz. Programmes of production, education, welfare and health stand in stark contrast to the surrounding homogeneity of shops and offices established through uninspired commercial development.

The Architecture Centre offered a public venue for academic commentary on this debate. The simplicity and understated tone ensured the agenda’s success in conveying the varied constraints and aspirations the unit had set itself. The site’s history was described in a time-line of historic maps plotting its changing topography from medieval streets and bomb craters to the terra nullius of the last 70 years. With limited hanging space, only the essence of each proposal could be imparted through a brief abstract and handful of images, with much of their academic narrative concealed.

Constructive debate on development around Castle Park proved difficult. While the majority of commentators praised the unit’s agenda and interventions as a hopeful and considered approach to a sensitive topic, the principle of development proved anathema to others. The open format of public debate at times fell victim to the strong opinions of particular ‘concerned citizens’ offering vitriolic denunciations of the industry in general - and of the exhibition in particular.

The park is of unquestionable value to those who use it and has the potential to offer much more to the city as a whole. Without considered intervention the park may persist, but as a shadow of what it was and a pale imitation of what it might become.

1. Exhibition opening January 2010 at the Architecture Centre, Bristol

Image credit: Adam Holmes

2. Notional future figure-ground analysis for the boundary conditions of Castle Park

Image credit: Ian Parkes
3. The twelve agendas, as drawn by Tim Forster.
Image credit: Ian Parkes

4. The argument to maintain the park area – as drawn and scripted by Tim Forster.
Image credit: Tim Forster

The 12 agendas:

RE-CONNECT OLD MARKET
CONNECT WITH TEMPLE MEADS
ENGAGE FLOATING HARBOUR
PERMEABILITY AND PUBLIC ACCESS
CASTLE PARK AS A DESTINATION
DIVERSIFY STREET AND PARK
TRAFFIC HIERARCHY
ALL TRAFFIC AT GRADE
ENERGY EFFICIENCY THROUGH MASSING
MAINTAIN PARK AREA
RECYCLE BUILDINGS
MAKING THE PAST LEGIBLE

There are lots of things wrong with the park but the fact that we have a park in the middle of our city makes us very lucky.

It is a contentious piece of land.

A few people want to make money out of it and make it smaller . . .

Children will tell you that this is selfish.

Other people want to ‘save the park’ and give it village green status to make sure it is left alone . . .

Children will tell you this is silly because leaving the park alone won’t solve its problems, and that this city is not a village.

We think it’s important to address the park’s problems by building on and around it to make it more lively and more loved. This doesn’t mean making the park smaller, the new park will be good only if it is at least as big as the old park.

This is very important to us.

There are lots of things wrong with the park but the fact that we have a park in the middle of our city makes us very lucky.

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This is very important to us.
Reflections on consensus and participation in Dutch and British design and planning

Victoria Burvill

Victoria Burvill specialises in sustainability, community engagement and the built environment and is currently studying for an MA town and country planning at UWE. Most recently she worked for Forum for the Future advising local and regional government on sustainability, helping councils to maximise their contribution to sustainable development through their policies and projects. Recent work involved developing a sustainability toolkit for large urban developments. Previously Victoria was based in Freiburg with Local Governments for Sustainability (ICLEI) working on projects with local and regional authorities across Europe. Victoria2.Burvill@uwe.ac.uk

Dutch case studies are often used in British literature and guidance as examples of good design and sustainable living.4 The MA Town and Country Planning field trip (March 2009) was an opportunity to visit some new developments in the Netherlands and find out about the processes and stories behind the examples and enable comparison with urban extensions being planned in the UK. This article draws on insights gained during the field trip, literature review and other recent experience to develop ideas about future issues for public participation in planning in the UK. The article also reflects on the value of immediate experience of international good practice examples. The case studies used here are Borneo-Sporenburg and Ijburg, urban extensions to Amsterdam designed as modern suburbs, well-linked to the existing city. Their locations were specified and agreed in the VINEX strategy in the 1990s. The literature review and site visits focused on the use of public engagement and the reasons for success in the new developments.

There is an aspiration in the UK for a high level of participation in design and local planning processes, whereas this does not seem to be the case in the Netherlands: observations and questions during visits to Ijburg and Borneo-Sporenburg (and other developments on the study tour) confirmed that the planning culture in the Netherlands is for professionals to proceed with the design and delivery of quality developments, without public consultation about detail of plans or design. Public participation or consultation in the Netherlands tends to be done instead at the strategic level. This means that problematic or contentious issues are discussed and resolved at early stages of strategy-making. Part of the Dutch consensus model includes involving the public in debate and enabling them to form opinions about important issues, which means that people are engaged in the planning process and awareness of spatial issues is raised. For example, a public vote was part of decision-making about the controversial location of Ijburg. People were informed via television broadcasts and could vote and comment via telephone.5 There seems to be trust in the consensus system as a good basis for the professionals to proceed with planning, design and delivery.

In Britain, the planning system tends to separate strategic and local issues, involving different types of stakeholders in each.6 Consequently, the general public are not well-informed about (let alone have the power to influence) strategic issues, such as housing targets, the principles behind urban extensions, greenbelt or the need for certain types of control or promotion of certain types of development. Due to the lack of opportunity, especially for individuals and local groups, to engage in discussions early in the plan-making or development process, strategic issues can end up being debated in principle during the processes for local consent or masterplanning.6

The main successes of the Dutch case studies are related to the quality of design. In terms of participation and consultation processes, the most important lesson is the positive effect of engaging the public in strategic issues, and the trust in professionals to design and deliver quality development. This reflection continues with some emerging issues for public and stakeholder participation in spatial planning. The experience of Dutch examples provokes thinking about which stage in the processes and what sort of engagement might be the most appropriate and effective for certain types of issues or debates.

Firstly, we need to differentiate clearly between types of stakeholders (government departments and agencies; stakeholder organisations; professionals; representatives of community groups; and the general public) and recognise that it is appropriate to involve different types of stakeholders in different parts of the development process. Recent UK legislation5 has encouraged greater public engagement and stakeholder consultation but this sometimes results in less meaningful consultation or consultation fatigue, and has not increased empowerment.6 In light of this we should review the effects of involvement at different stages in planning and design processes, be clear about what should be achieved with public or stakeholder engagement and evaluate and improve the processes accordingly.7

Secondly, the study tour observations and literature review lead us to conclude that the Dutch-style consensus in strategy development can be time-consuming and arduous, and inflexible, adopted plans containing fine detail may not have the capacity to accommodate changes in technology or the latest thinking about good design.8 However, the point is not only to ponder whether this approach might work in the UK, but also to think about how the positive effects might be achieved in a different way. The benefits of the consensus model stem from controversial issues being addressed early in the process. Perhaps this could be achieved using existing UK planning processes. The processes to produce National Policy Statements could provide more opportunity for debate and input from the public and a wider range of stakeholders, supporting democracy and increasing understanding about important issues.

Thirdly, we could investigate the benefits of approaches where bottom-up planning meets top-down, building on experience of models where communities have organised themselves to produce a local...
2. Borneo-Sporenburg: imaginative design of buildings and open space, but the quietness in daytime does not convey the reputed sense of community and vibrancy.

In conclusion, increasing the opportunities for the public and other stakeholders to be aware of and involved in discussions about the strategic issues such as the need for development, its location and size will mean that this is not left until later consultation stages (for example urban extension masterplanning), which can be better used to design and plan the best quality development possible.

On reflection, the international study visit created space for alternative thinking. Even though the issues raised in this article are largely subjective observations, they could form the basis of a deeper study. Visiting examples abroad stimulates the imagination and increases consciousness of the nuances of systems and cultures in the home country. Successes can be highlighted as well as lessons learnt. Venturing out of the usual situation or context will provoke thinking about why things happen the way they do in the UK, and can renew motivation about existing work, or inspire change.

Acknowledgement

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Planning and terrorism

Sandra Manley

Sandra Manley is a principal lecturer and director of UWE’s short course programme. She teaches urban design, planning and conservation, with a substantial proportion of her teaching contributing to the faculty’s extensive programme of continuing professional development. Her research and writing has focused on inclusive design and equality of opportunity, particularly for women and disabled people.

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In 2010 Lord West, Under Secretary of State for Security and Counter-terrorism warned that “the UK faces a threat from international terrorism of a nature and magnitude different to any we have encountered before” (Home Office 2010).

Planners, architects and other professionals whose work involves the design of new places or the management of existing places can hardly ignore this warning. The terrorist threat to the UK was raised from “substantial” to “severe” by the Home Office in January 2010. This implies that a terrorist attack is “highly likely”. The risk of injury and even death to people following a terrorist attack is a frightening prospect and in places where large numbers of people congregate, such as shopping centres, transport terminals, sports and leisure venues, and other crowded places that might be targeted for attack, the risks are particularly high. The attacks in London in July 2005, Glasgow Airport in June 2007 and the Mumbai attacks in November 2008 underline the fact that the threat of terrorism must be taken seriously. However, opinion is divided about the extent to which built environment professionals should respond. The arguments against a response by designers were expressed vociferously by the architect, Piers Gough, speaking at an RIBA Building Futures debate in June 2008 when he said:

“Every special interest group in the country wants architects on their side to carry their paranoia. Don’t listen to them!”

Whether or not individuals subscribe to Gough’s view, it is evident that the approach taken to the development of a place that has the potential to attract large numbers of people has changed with the expectation that planners and architects will work to take into account the new guidance to protect crowded places. Consultations provoked debate about the nature of the steps to be taken to reduce the likelihood of a terrorist attack.

In addition to Gough’s reservations that the response by government amounts to paranoia, other concerns about the efficacy of the use of anti-terrorism measures have been raised. For example, the joint response to the consultation document by the British Property Federation (BPF) and the British Council of Shopping Centres (BCSC) raised the concern that particularly during a time of economic constraint caused by the recession; the added costs for developers of anti-terrorist measures may stifle new development. More significantly they also raise the point that terrorists may simply move on to other methods of terrorism and abandon the use of improvised explosive devices or vehicle borne improvised explosive devices that have characterised attacks in recent years. If this is the case then costly physical measures designed to limit the chances of a vehicle entering a shopping centre or a sports venue or other crowded place may be just an expensive and pointless exercise, as terrorists change tactics and find another way to frighten, injure or kill people.
Government guidance to local authority planners on the avoidance of crime is soon to be updated, with advice on counter terrorism, hence Manley’s willingness to host the NaCTSO workshop, albeit with her academic antennae finely tuned for potential propaganda: her introduction includes a warning to students to critically assess the information they are given rather than swallowing it whole.

Undoubtedly this session raised many issues that need to be explored in more depth. A one day short course on the topic is now part of the Short Course programme at UWE where it is possible to reflect in detail on this topic. See http://www.bne.uwe.ac.uk/short/coursedetails.asp?id=145).

An intelligent approach must surely be to take a balanced view of the guidance against other legitimate concerns and avoid developing the fortress approach to design and the paranoid society that Piers Gough fears so vociferously.

Reading strategic spatial plans as planning discourse

Diane Hopkins

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The ‘plan’ represents both a key tool for planners and a key discourse of planning. Strategic spatial plans typically comprise a diagrammatic map-based representation of planning strategies for a particular locality and an accompanying textual document outlining these strategies along with a description of the context of the locality and the key planning issues.

A number of trends have been observed by planning scholars that indicate that the nature of strategic spatial plans has changed over time – from plans to projects back to plans again; from blueprint to strategic policy-based plans; from technical to political documents; with the introduction of new discourses around sustainability and governance; and from technocratic to collaborative, actor-based processes to produce plans5. While such trends have been observed over time, there have also been suggestions that contemporary plans differ between regions, reflecting the institutional and cultural contexts of different places. In Australia, it has been suggested that there is a distinct paradigm that characterises the new plans: considerable land use detail; a reliance on private investment; and plans being a coordinating instrument for development and infrastructure.

There has been a new series of Australian strategic spatial plans produced for metropolitan regions over the last ten years, including: ‘City of Cities: A plan for Sydney’s future’; ‘Melbourne 2030: Planning for sustainable growth’; ‘Network City: Community planning strategy for Perth and Peel’ and the ‘Planning Strategy for Metropolitan Adelaide’. A number of important trends can be identified through a textual analysis of these contemporary Australian plans:

1. A broadening scope for planning reflecting a shift away from land-use regulation as the sole focus of plans. These new plans cite aims of making more ‘sustainable’ and ‘liveable’ cities and now cover a diverse range of public policy areas spanning the environment (e.g. biodiversity, natural hazards, energy efficiency); the economy (e.g. knowledge economy, innovation, economic competitiveness); and the social realm (e.g. social capital, local identity, cultural vitality).

2. A changing conception of space towards relational geography. The traditional physical geography of the social realm (e.g. social capital, local identity, cultural vitality). 2003. Strategic spatial planning in a global era, Urban Policy and Research, 14, 4, pp. 529-533.

3. A focus on participatory planning to formulate and implement plans. The shift in the process of planning from a public sector practice to a collaborative practice involving a range of stakeholders and the general public is demonstrated in the Australian plans. Each of the plans stresses the level of community and stakeholder input that contributed to their development – the Perth plan is even described as a ‘community plan’ in its title. The role of participation is also highlighted as critical to the successful implementation of the plans. The process of planning is now seen to be of equal importance to the substantive content of plans.

These contemporary Australian plans demonstrate a shift toward European and UK planning practice. In particular, the broadening scope for planning and the separation of strategy from policy detail in these plans reflect the influence of the new UK spatial planning system. While there are unique cultural and institutional factors that influence the characteristics of strategic spatial plans in any given country or region, a critical reading of plans can reinforce our understanding of the changing role of planning from an international perspective.


4. Plans are becoming more graphic. Many of the Australian plans contain full-colour pages of text and images reflecting a shift away from technical report-style documents. The influence of graphic design is particularly visible in the Melbourne plan, which pays close attention to the layout of text and the use of fonts, headings and photos to make the document attractive, publicly accessible and reader-friendly. In many cases the photographs used in these plans do not correspond to the planning issues or strategies mentioned in the text; rather they illustrate smiling people and attractive landscapes, clearly an attempt to market the cities and ‘sell’ the strategies within the plans.

5. The separation of strategy from policy detail. With the exception of the Adelaide plan, the Australian plans are not all-inclusive documents and their content is spread across different sets of documents, including: 1) the key public document containing a broad vision and strategic directions (the public ‘face’ of planning); 2) issues papers comprising research and background information on the planning problems facing the cities; and 3) land use zoning and development plans detailing specific policies and planning frameworks for sub-regions of the city. The technical and political aspects of plans are now often separated, with the political content setting a broad vision and framework for technical planning strategies.

6. A focus on city branding reflecting both reinvigorated interest in urban design and place-making and the growing politicisation of planning. Plans. The aims of the Melbourne plan highlight the importance of city branding: ‘In the next 30 years, Melbourne will grow by up to one million people and will consolidate its reputation as one of the most liveable, attractive and prosperous areas in the world for residents, business and visitors.’ The marketing of place is now an integral part of many of the Australian plans with these new plans concerned with creating desirable places not only to meet the needs of existing residents but also to attract external investment.

7. A focus on sustainable development. Many of the Australian plans contain commitments to sustainability and the environment. The Melbourne plan, for example, states that it will be a sustainable, green city and aims to be a model for sustainability in urban planning.

8. A focus on city branding reflecting both reinvigorated interest in urban design and place-making and the growing politicisation of planning. Plans. The aims of the Melbourne plan highlight the importance of city branding: ‘In the next 30 years, Melbourne will grow by up to one million people and will consolidate its reputation as one of the most liveable, attractive and prosperous areas in the world for residents, business and visitors.’ The marketing of place is now an integral part of many of the Australian plans with these new plans concerned with creating desirable places not only to meet the needs of existing residents but also to attract external investment.


In June 2008 Stride Treglown was appointed to design a new academic facility for the Faculty of Environment and Technology at the University of the West of England, Bristol. This extension to the design studio building will accommodate architecture and product design students and staff.

Stride Treglown produced a design proposal that evolved from the existing studio, providing a building that meets the requirements of the faculty and the wider needs of the university. It provides both flexible and purpose-built spaces with enhanced environmental standards. The building, with its own clearly defined entrance and plaza, consists of approximately 2700m² of teaching and office accommodation, informal learning spaces, a café, conferencing and training rooms, and social spaces.

The design includes a number of innovative technologies and materials to deliver an environmentally sustainable building which, as an example to the students that will use it, can be used as a teaching tool. The building has an inventive natural ventilation strategy involving: a ground coupled ventilation system, stack ventilation chimneys and air intake louvres. Lecture space is ventilated via external air intakes linked to a labyrinth of buried ducts located under the external plaza; north facing teaching and studio spaces are naturally cross ventilated via stack ventilation chimneys; all teaching spaces benefit from a unique window design that includes low level intake louvres for natural ventilation that are controlled via the building management system.

High levels of natural daylight are provided and controlled via external solar shading louvres and solar controlled glazing. Highly sustainable materials have been specified, including a prefabricated straw bale cladding panel which will be used to enclose a 150-seat ground floor lecture theatre. The building will be the first to use a new rainscreen cladding tile comprising 93% recycled material content (slate and clay dust). A bio-fuel boiler and rainwater harvesting are also incorporated.

The building is due to be completed in September 2010 in time for the start of the academic year.
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