



Editorial

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Year 2005 is the 200th anniversary of the Battle of Trafalgar – a date of no minor import in Greenwich; but for us, much more importantly it is our 10th year of publication!

Like the passage of time with respect to most things in life, 10 years seems at once a very long period and a mere instant. The general landscape of urban design publication is not so very different now to what it was in 1996, as a glance at any journal (other than this one) or shelf of books will show. However, as we have commented before, the popularity of the subject has increased dramatically. In 1986, urban design was certainly a minority occupation; by 1996 it was at least recognised as almost part of the development mainstream. But in the last 6 or 7 years, it has become a primary focus – at least in terms of rhetoric – of the professions and government agencies alike.

Our original remit, prompted and partially defined by an international Oxford gathering in 1992, was to link academics, practice and research in a way that would be useful to the development of the quality of urban design and urban designers. Our readers will have to decide how far we have succeeded: but this remains our key focus.

In the first issue, we covered a range of material: based on practice in South Africa; issues related to the quality of public space in Egypt; ‘cities as movement economies’, in a paper by Bill Hillier that subsequently won the coveted AESOP Prize; town centre management; art and public space in towns; relationships between linguistics and urban form; the compact city as evidenced by Hong Kong; and design guidance and sustainable tourism. Streetsweeper, characterised by the drawing by Graham Paul Smith, which has marked this sometimes intemperate, usually but not always anonymous short tail-piece ever since, railed against the privatisation of places of public assembly and the dangerous marginalisation of truly public space.

We will shortly be inviting all subscribers and friends to an event in central London towards the end of 2005. Undoubtedly, the event will have some formal educative element, but more importantly, will provide a convivial opportunity for all of those who enthusiastically and tirelessly pursue the practice, teaching and research of urban design to come together to argue and plan, propose and review where we are and where we really want to be for a further decade involved in urban design internationally.

In this issue, we start with a paper by Susan Savage on how to prepare students to be reflective practitioners. In her paper Savage discusses ways in which urban design education can prepare students for digital and international futures. She presents urban design as an essentially practice-based, rather than a theory/knowledge-based discipline. However, fundamental to her analysis and approach is the recognition that in order to develop through professional life, as students urban designers need to learn how to manage ‘knowledge development through practice’.

Kevin Thwaites and Ian Simkins are working to develop an open space design vocabulary to inform processes of urban place making in residential settings. We should welcome all attempts to articulate how to make and evaluate good urban places. In their paper, the authors emphasise ‘quality of place, rather than mere provision for dwelling, in making residential settings that can sustain a good quality of life for their inhabitants’. The paper will no doubt generate debate about the value of single use districts or ‘neighbourhoods’ as the authors characterise them. Thwaites and Simkins pay tribute to the work of Christopher Alexander and most particularly to Bill Hillier and the Space Syntax team. It remains to be seen whether their approach will achieve such success. We wish them well.



In their paper, Dafna Fisher-Gewirtzman *et al* give an account of their three-dimensional urban design models, with a particular emphasis on morphological analysis. They employ three case studies to demonstrate the importance of 'visual openness' in urban morphology and in particular the benefits of sea views in coastal locations.

In a case study of Analco in Puebla, Mexico, Marie Lessard and Guadalupe Milián Ávila focus on historic practices which could inform approaches to sustainable development now. The performance of Analco in the historic centre of Puebla, is evaluated in terms of both environmental and 'community-based' parameters. The study is used to begin to propose policy guidelines which might be extrapolated for other old cities in the developing world. The ambition of the study is to demonstrate that old established neighbourhoods may be managed and maintained to achieve enhanced urban quality while maintaining residential affordability.

We conclude this issue with a paper by Sergio Porta and John Renne, which examines social urban sustainability in Perth, Western Australia. It is a fitting paper in its broad analysis with which to conclude the first issue of our 10th volume, for it is inspired by the best authority – Jane Jacobs – in giving the street a pole position: 'it's where community development, economic development, and environmental development either succeed or fail to achieve sustainability. Urban design can promote or hinder this process, especially with respect to social sustainability...'. In a compelling account, the authors describe how to use an analytical tool in a comparative assessment of two case studies: Joondalup and Fremantle, two urban centres in the Perth metropolitan area. The paper concludes with proposals for policies to achieve social sustainability in these places.

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