THE CITY AS MASTER DEVELOPER
VIEW FROM THE CHAIR: KATY NEAVES

I was recently asked to undertake a landscape assessment for a site on the outskirts of Coventry city centre. I had not visited the city before, so the site visit provided me with an opportunity to explore the centre and its various layers.

I arrived by train, which was unfortunate as the route between the station and the city centre is currently being dug up as part of the new public realm interventions that are taking place, to allow better pedestrian movement through de-cluttering. Within the centre itself, there are two contrasting urban forms that define its character.

The first urban form developed in the medieval period when the city’s fortunes peaked with the textiles trade. Remnants of this can be found in the three surviving medieval sandstone spires that still dominate the city centre skyline, the city wall and the street pattern. A period of industrial growth took place between the 18th and 20th centuries, with textiles being superseded first by clock manufacturing and then by cycle and car production.

At the beginning of the 20th century, Coventry was noted for its medieval surroundings, but these were not suitable for the modern motor cars that were becoming popular. Just before the beginning of the Second World War, Donald Gibson became Coventry’s first City Architect and Planning Officer. He started to develop a masterplan for the city centre to resolve the motor car congestion, which brought about the second urban form. The result was the first UK traffic-free shopping area (and also rooftop parking!) whilst comprehensive engagement for district councils. The people who took part, a mix of politicians and professionals drawn from social services, community development through to engineering, valued having the opportunity to role play, and get a better understanding of the constraints experienced by other professions, as well as wrestle with the question: what is good design?

A group meeting, a single training session, an award event on their own may not make much difference, but together and repeated over a number of years, will have a powerful influence on the Solent region’s ambition and capability. In time, the goodwill, effort and enthusiasm being brought to the Solent Urban Design Group will bring results.

Katy Neaves

FOCUS ON UDG SOLENT

Over the past three years UDG Solent, convened by Peter Frankum of Savills, has gathered growing interest, support and influence. The group has played an important role in developing and part sponsoring the biennial Solent Design Awards, held most recently in the new award-winning Mary Rose Museum, and attended by local government chief executives, senior politicians, and senior industry figures from around the region.

A second initiative is design awareness training. In the group’s early days, Liz Kessler and John Hearn raised the need to improve design awareness among councilors and allied professionals, and together with Richard Eastham and Mark Waller-Gutierrez developed a training scheme which was launched this March. The training events have been devised as role-play workshops, using the PLACE acronym suggested in the Farrell Review. The delegates are divided into teams of five, with each member responsible for either planning, landscape, architecture, conservation or engineering. The teams are asked to examine a development site through a walkabout, and then to analyse the site and propose design principles. The training course includes a short booklet with PLACE prompts. The attendance achieved has been astonishing, with around 60 people at each event – far in excess of what would be expected

Robert Huxford

DIARY OF EVENTS

Unless otherwise indicated, all LONDON events are held at The Gallery, 70 Cowcross Street, London EC1M 6EJ at 6.30 pm.

Note that there are many other events run by UDG volunteers throughout the UK. For the latest details and pricing, please check on the UDG website www.udg.org.uk/events/udg

WEDNESDAY 16 SEPTEMBER

Underground urbanism

Increased densities and the scarcity of land in central urban areas is leading to attention being paid to the possibilities of using underground spaces in a far more imaginative and useful way. This event, led by Elizabeth Reynolds, explore the possibilities and case studies.

8–10 OCTOBER

The National Urban Design Conference – Bristol

This year’s conference takes place at the SS Great Britain and the associated, brand new, conference centre complex. The theme brings developers and housebuilders together with the urban design community to debate how we can create well-designed developments that are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable, and profitable.
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This issue has been generously sponsored by Nordic City Network

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Overview of west entry to Utrecht station and new public realm. © Urban-imPulse

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Welcome to a redesigned Urban Design. Having asked our readers what they liked or disliked in the journal’s presentation last year, we have introduced subtle rather than radical changes. We hope that you will appreciate and enjoy the new look which we think is clearer and fresher, and we welcome your feedback.

Five years ago, after the last general election (and about the time of the last redesign), we wondered whether the new coalition government would ‘protect the achievements of the past decades and not return to the bad practices of the 80s’. We were right to worry as the balance has not been a very happy one: CABE has been marginalised and privatised, the regional development agencies abolished, design review privatised, the housing crisis has grown, By Design is no longer part of the legislation and the importance of design has been diminished in the race for increasing profits.

The articles collected in this issue by John Worthington and Rosalie Callway indicate that there is another way. Commitment, Collaboration and Co-operation are how they describe the new approaches to ‘city building’ taken by our European partners. Responding to challenges caused by cuts and the retreat of the public sector, and to people’s dissatisfaction with the results of top-down urban development policies, citizens have joined forces to influence the way their neighbourhoods are planned and make authorities listen to them. This does not mean that politicians and professionals have relinquished power to the mob; on the contrary it has opened all sorts of possibilities of collaboration and enabling that in the examples shown, benefit the greater number.

Participants in the UDG visit to Hamburg, also described in this issue, had a chance to see for themselves the results of this approach. Coincidentally, one of the books reviewed in this issue showcases more successful examples resulting from co-operation and collaboration. The movement is spreading throughout Europe, but the UK lags behind in spite of a long tradition of public participation. Central government control, weakened local authorities and a dysfunctional market conspire against it. Politicians would benefit from visits to places such as Malmö, Utrecht, Hamburg or Berlin to see for themselves what can be done. Good governance and vision seem to be the common denominators of all the examples presented. It may be that neighbourhood plans and the proposed devolution to cities will allow for new initiatives to develop.

Meanwhile the UDG showcases some of the best urban design in this country through the Francis Tibbalds awards. We report on these and on the successful ceremony at which they were presented and we invite all our members to make sure they enter for the 2016 awards.

Sebastian Loew

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

Individual (UK and international) £50
UK student / concession £30
Recognised Practitioner in Urban Design £80
Small practice (<5 professional staff) £250
Large practice (>5 professional staff) £450
Education £250
Local Authority £100
UK Library £80
International Library £100
GARDEN CITIES FOR THE 21ST CENTURY
The Gallery, 18 March 2015

Colin Pullan from Nathaniel Lichfield and Partners, and Eili Thomas from Centre for Cities, addressed the questions of why there is currently an interest in garden cities, and why garden cities might be relevant to the 21st century. It was an entertaining and thought-provoking evening, and it did produce one unequivocal answer to these questions.

The central issue emerged as the distinction to be made between two ways of understanding garden cities: to borrow Reyner Banham’s snappy subtitle to his 1966 book The New Brutalism – ethic or aesthetic? Most attention focuses on the aesthetic, derived from Parker and Unwin’s work at Letchworth, and seemingly very hard to escape from: white-painted rendered cottages, grass verges, winding tree-lined avenues.

But the speakers effectively dismissed all the familiar visual and formal attributes of garden city planning and design, on the basis that none of them were essential or peculiar to the garden city concept. The only unique and radical principle behind the garden city concept, as formulated by Ebenezer Howard, is the economic principle of the collective capture of land value. The community owns the land, and benefits collectively from the increase in its value, resulting from development, which is realised when property is sold.

David Lock was quoted in support of this distinction, saying that a garden city is a radical and reformist solution, not a Kate Greenaway illustration. The 2014 Wolfson Prize winners were also credited with understanding the importance of the economic principle, unlike the hapless Housing Minister Brandon Lewis, whose instant dismissal of URBED’s proposals as being ‘... not government policy’ was again castigated.

In the discussion afterwards, the question was asked that if collective capture of land value is the defining essence of the garden city, could not that economic principle be applied to residential development in any form, even the high rise towers of the Ville Radieuse? It was pointed out that in Argent’s King’s Cross and in Grosvenor Estate’s Westminster, we have private sector versions of land value capture, where the developer stays on as landlord. But the ratio of public benefit to private benefit in this arrangement was questioned.

If the economic principle is the sole criterion, what is left with of the environmental qualities that Howard advocated for this Herbert associated health issues to planning ones, and emphasised the importance of policy frameworks at every level, national, strategic, local and neighbourhood. He cited Supplementary Policy Guidelines produced by the Mayor of London, The All London Green Grid and Shaping neighbourhoods: play and informal recreation, as good examples. And he flagged up two documents produced by HUDU, Rapid Health Impact Assessment Tool and Healthy Urban Planning Checklist. It would have been good to hear more about how these could actually help urban designers.

Lucy Saunders asked what should have been the most relevant question of the evening: how can we influence lifestyle? And gave the example of a theoretical healthy street (wide pavements, trees, places to sit, bus stops, cycle tracks, variety, etc). The Mayor’s Better Streets Delivered was one of the documents she mentioned that might clarify how this could be turned into reality. Two other TFL documents Transport and Health in London and Improving the Health of Londoners, were mentioned; hearing more about their recommendations would undoubtedly have helped the audience answer Lucy’s starting question.

It was getting late when Rachel Toms explained what Active by Design was about: it is a campaign to help developers transform neighbourhoods and design places that encourage healthier lives. Fortunately, she showed some examples of places that successfully promoted activity, thus moving away from statistics and proving that what was being discussed could also be achieved. And she directed the audience to the Active Design Guide they have produced. Finally she described a scheme in Bournemouth’s West Howe as an example of ‘a vision for physical regeneration with health in mind’. The evening would probably be more illuminating to the audience had it concentrated on such examples.

Joe Holyoak
Hamburg UDG tour
9 – 12 April 2015

In July 1943 the city of Hamburg was bombed by the combined British American air force in what was known as Operation Gomorrhah. Around 40,000 people died (more than in Dresden) and the port, industrial facilities and the commercial centre of the city were almost totally destroyed. Like a phoenix, the city was reborn from the ashes, and none of this can be seen today, though there aren’t many very old buildings either, but those that remain have been carefully restored. The 25-strong group of urban designers that visited the city mostly saw the more recent developments in the port area and the city centre where new buildings blend fairly well with restored older ones.

Perhaps one of the first observations was that five people could share a day-ticket for the public transport system, including the journey to the city centre from the airport, making it extremely affordable (around £1.70 per head per day). Surprisingly for visitors from the UK, there are no barriers to tube platforms and very rare controls; the system is based on trust.

LEAP ACROSS THE ELBE

Hamburg’s economy has always relied on the port which still has a strong physical presence. The wide river Elbe is a great asset, economic and environmental, but also a threat, as it regularly overflows its banks and will do more so in the future. It has also been a barrier to the city’s development across it. Just south of the city centre is a very large island, inhabited by poor immigrants and crossed by major transport infrastructure. In 1962, the island of Wilhelmsburg flooded, killing over 300 people.

A number of regeneration schemes followed but didn’t manage to change the poor image of the area. In 2001 the city fathers decided that a new approach was needed to tackle the environmental problems, respond to the growth needs of Hamburg and improve the attractiveness of this area: thus the idea of ‘Leaping across the Elbe’ in 2004 was born and the establishment of the International Building Exhibition (IBA) Hamburg the next year. This was the first area that the UDG traveller visited, guided by Kai Dietrich and Lukas Grellmann. Although the IBA as an institution has now ceased to exist, it has been replaced by something akin to a development corporation of the city of Hamburg. Much remains to be done but a number of interesting and often experimental projects have been completed and all were developed in collaboration with the local population.

Among the projects we visited was the Global Neighbourhood in Reiherspeck, a mixture of renovated inter-war and new social housing. Participation here included employing students from similar backgrounds to the local population and speaking a variety of languages, undertaking door-to-door interviews. One surprise was the openness of the common open spaces, all accessible to passers-by and yet well looked after. Like the underground system without barriers, the shared spaces rely on trust and respect. New and renovated buildings achieve high environmental standards and get their heat and power from the local Energy Bunker, a tragic relic from the war (an air raid bunker built by concentration camp prisoners), spectacularly transformed into a power plant using renewable forms of energy.

The centre of Wilhelmsburg is a mixed use neighbourhood with a local park, a new building for the local Ministry for Urban Development and the Environment and a number of innovative buildings, each one designed by a different architect and with a different investor: smart materi- al houses, smart price houses and hybrid houses. Everywhere the treatment of the public realm is of a high quality, the flooding risk has been taken into consideration and Hamburg’s centre is easily accessible by S-bahn, the metro taken by our group to reach the next step in the visit.

HAFENCITY

Hafencity is a new neighbourhood which links the city centre to the Elbe. It is a genuinely mixed quarter, adjacent to the traditional brick warehouse area of Speicherstadt and in walking distance from the city centre. One of the objectives of the development is to attract more residents, including families to the centre. Again here, water is both an asset and a threat, and this is reflected in the architecture and the public realm. After a presentation around a model of the area in one of the restored buildings, our host and guide Uwe Carstensen showed us parts of the area where buildings cantilever two stories above the water level to protect them from floods. Because of this, the street level is not always lively but to compensate, a floating pontoon has been installed in one of the docks creating a kind of rambla that goes up and down twice a day with the tide. Dominating the area is the Elbphilharmonie, a new concert hall and hotel designed by Herzog and de Meuron which is way over budget and behind schedule, but a stunning icon in the landscape. The most interesting aspect of Hafencity for British visitors is the way the city, which owns the land, implemented the project through architectural competitions and negotiations with investors, whilst maintaining strict control over design and land use. Much was said that could be food for thought for British politicians and one slide presented by Mr. Carstensen is worth quoting:

‘Appropriate governance regime: Strong role of the state investor for public goods/risk reducer/capability generator. Markets for urban development projects do not simply exist, they can and should be created to develop the public good character of a city (urbanity, sustainability) and optimise private investment’.

THE TRADITIONAL CITY

Our first day ended with a (slightly delayed) tour boat of the harbour in which we had a different perspective from the water of what we had seen from land; we also could appreciate the huge port and its importance for the city. A somewhat surprising aspect of the view from the Elbe is that the city has mostly maintained its historic skyline, with a more or less uniform height of 6 to 8 storeys, dominated by the church spires just as it was in the 17th century. Nobody seems to have claimed that to maintain economic growth, tower blocks were needed.

On our second day, we walked through the more historic city centre which developed around the Alster lake. Not many really old buildings remain but the various...
periods blend fairly harmoniously, arguably because of their uniform heights and their relationship with the streets, many of which have been pedestrianized or calmed. One particular building, the Chile Haus of 1924, attracted the attention of all because of its adaptation to the site and its expressive use of dark bricks. A walk through the leafy suburb of Harvestehude ended the organised tour. Participants revisited some of the city areas that we had only seen fleetingly before returning to London. Several urban designers expressed the desire to go back to Hamburg in the future.

Sebastian Loew
See also two articles by Daniela Lucchese in UD Issue 97 (pp. 34-35) and Issue 132 (pp.13-15).

1 Speicherstadt’s old brick warehouses with the Elbphilharmonie in the background. Photo Tim Hagyard
2 The 1924 Chile House by Fritz Höger
3 The unfinished Elbphilharmonie by Herzog and de Meuron, Photo Tim Hagyard
4 HafenCity new mixed use development and floating pontoon
5 The Woodcube residential building in Wilhelmsburg is carbon neutral
6 The Energiebunker provides heating and hot water for the whole neighbourhood using clean energy sources
Urban Design Interview: What does Urban Design mean to me?

Luke Hillson

Current Position and work
Senior Urban Designer at IDP

Past Experience
Senior Urban Designer at AMEC Foster Wheeler

Education
Urban Design PG Dip, Cardiff University
BSc City and Regional Planning, Cardiff University
Visualisation for Urban Designers, Birmingham City University

Ambitions
To get everyone’s wellbeing at the focus for all designers within the built environment and onto the national agenda.

Specialisms
Design Guides, Townscape Analysis, Strategic Development Frameworks, Public Realm.

Gorden Cullen’s mural showing the figure ground map of Coventry. Interestingly, it is located within the part of the City that the map covers.

Landscape combining with the built environment creating a playful frontage which is continually evolving, Great Bourton.

Continually learning, evolving and reimagining. Working with Coventry University architecture students is rewarding and inspiring. (Image: IDP Studio, Ellena Varney)

Urban Design is blobs and arrows, places can all be broken down into a number of nodal points and linkages. (Image: Luke Hillson / AMEC)

People, people, people. All people, particularly young people. Urban design is making sure that everyone is considered, Bristol.

Public art adds interest to the streetscene and is a fantastic way-finding aid, Malmö.

Creativity is part of the job, it often requires tracing paper, sticky tape and magic markers.

Colour, lots and lots of colour, and people, lots and lots of people. Nyhavn in Copenhagen, vibrant and full of life.

Personalisation of the built environment is what adds to the character or the spaces. Design should facilitate and enable this, Berlin.

Color, lots and lots of colour, and people, lots and lots of people. Nyhavn in Copenhagen, vibrant and full of life.

All books are products of their time and this is especially true of The Character of Towns. In today’s work environment it is particularly hard to conceive of any public servant having the time to produce, let alone publish a book of this substance. Yet in 1969, Roy Worskett was working at the Ministry of Housing and Local Government (the equivalent, if there can be such a thing, of the Department of Communities and Local Government) and was proudly able to be ‘... grateful to the Ministry for facilitating the preparation of this book and for giving me permission to publish....’ The Character of Towns also bears clear signs of its forebears in the canon of urban design literature. Its direct ancestors include Gordon Cullen’s Townscape (see UD 125) and Buchanan’s Traffic in towns (UD 127). These, together with Ian Nairn’s Outrage have contributed to the growing civic amenity movement. The movement with the backing of Duncan Sands, who was himself a rare phenomenon, a senior politician with an interest in the built environment, had been a major stimulus to the passing of the Civic Amenities Act 1967. It was both the love of the built environment and the need to provide help with the conservation aspirations of the provisions of the Act that had inspired Roy Worskett.

In many ways the publication of The Character of Towns marks the end of the heroic days of the growth of urban design ideas. Perhaps with the exception of Francis Tibbalds’ Making Cities People Friendly, The Character of Towns (2000) is the last of the overtly personal views of how places work and how to enhance and protect them. The Character of Towns is not a passionate book in the way that Townscape is, yet it is clearly the work of someone who cared deeply about the world we live in and which we can either enhance or destroy. One can imagine Worskett working late into the night seeking the right photograph from his wide collection, refining an apparently simple sketch into a sophisticated message. The graphic style of The Character of Towns is also very much of its time. Worskett both wrote and illustrated the book, and the illustrations are of the Cullen genre, itself the hallmark of the publishers, the Architectural Press. It is perhaps indicative of Worskett’s natural modesty that the only clue to his role in the illustrations is given by a minute RW in the corner of the main illustration on the dust jacket.

The writing style is simple and direct, and reflects the role of the book as a working guide. There are five sections. The first sets out an approach to the notion of conservation in which Worskett seeks to define the overall concept. Put simply, too simply, Worskett sees conservation as a blending of preservation and thoughtful change. The process requires an assessment of the existing situation and this is covered by the second section, Approach to Conservation. Here the pressures on towns and cities are examined, and the contrast between the need for economic growth and preservation are examined, illustrated by the familiar photographs of narrow alley ways, enticing flights of stairs and tree filled squares, complemented by Worskett’s analytical sketches. It is remarkable to see how little clutter there was in urban spaces in the 60s. Has a tidal wave of signs, boxes, cables, CCTV cameras and burglar alarms swept over our urban areas in the last 40 years? From these illustrations it certainly seems so.

Moving on to establish principles to guide conservation, the next section establishes the need to recognise that change and preservation must be in balance, and that change may be necessary if important parts of a town are to be retained. Economic viability is seen as essential if conservation is to have any long-term relevance. Worskett also emphasises the need for the prioritisation of investment, and for positive community involvement. The last part of this section introduces conservation areas and finally environmental areas. Worskett then places these principles in a policy framework, before moving on to his core interest, design.

This makes up the bulk of the book in which, through a series of case studies using text, sketches and photographs, he examines a wide range of conservation opportunities. The range is impressive and buried in its heart, is a section on ‘townscape discipline’ which seeks to find means of identifying the essential character of a town through its component identity areas. The final section provides a guide to the survey and appraisal of an area as part of the overall planning policies. The emphasis is on appraisal in the field, and the guide sets down a stage-by-stage approach aimed at ensuring that conservation policies have been tested against other policy demands, and that they are rigorous and defensible.

This section is well worth careful examination by anyone faced with reviewing a conservation area.

To conclude, revisiting The Character of Towns tempts one to ask if we have not all become a little complacent. Where is the passion and belief in publications today? Yes there are worthy, well researched books that are clearly the product of collaboration and joint working. But they seem to lack the fire and energy that is found in the books of the 60s and 70s. Perhaps the codification and formalisation of good practice has made us all just a little too close to box tickers and seekers of defensible compromises, rather than passionate seekers of the best; alternatively, the privatisation of design professionals in the public sector has resulted in such a lean machine that nobody has time to think beyond the next bid, let alone write a book. ☻

Richard Cole

READ ON
Lynch, K The Image of the City (MIT Press, 1960)
Brett, L Landscape in Distress (The Architectural Press, 1965)

Roy Worskett died in Horsham in August 2014.
Once upon a time, long long ago, all cities were fair and beautiful. Whether they were designed by princes or build by merchants, they created urban societies where life may have been hard but where commerce and community could take root and civilisation and the arts could thrive.

Then along came the industrial revolution with its pollution and huddled masses. Then came housing reformers with their by-law housing and council estates, and the developers and speculators with their ribbon development and suburban sprawl. Then came pesky town planners with their bloody garden cities which were bastardised as new towns. Then came highway engineers with their underpasses and overpasses at the same time as we lost our head to the radicalism of the modernists with their socialist future of clean white lines. We got carried away with slum clearance, with deck access and high rise, with Radburn layouts and shopping structures…... and everything went horribly wrong.

Just as we were starting to realise the error of our ways, Margaret Thatcher was elected and Nicolas Ridley took all our powers away in the name of the free market. Design was no longer the concern of planners as shopping went out-of-town followed by business parks and suburban cul-de-sacs. Cities in the north collapsed while those in the south fell victim to loads-of-money speculators and post-Urban Design … and everything went from bad to worse.

Then in the 1980s a plucky band of urban designers emerged, brandishing their bible called Responsive Environments and it was good. It showed us the error of our ways and told us how we needed to change, inspiring a new generation of urban designers free from the taint of those horrid modernists. These vanguardists had to battle every inch of the way. They were criticised by planners and highway engineers, by the house builders and even the police. They were over-idealistic and unreasonable, would push up costs and create places that people and business would shun. They would cause crime and even kill children once cul-de-sacs had been outlawed. However over time the urban design message gained traction, it became part of policy guidance and was promoted by public agencies, even gaining its own champion in the form of CABE. But it wasn’t easy, people didn’t really understand, or weren’t listening. The plucky band may have grown in numbers but, at their annual conference they would moan about how difficult it all was, how they needed to educate their clients, persuade them to invest in quality.

This is the narrative of the urban design profession; our own creation myth. It sometimes acts as if it is the holder of the light of truth in an unbelieving world. Most urban design books proselytise this message, bemoaning the fact that the powers-that-be don’t get it and are ruining our cities as a result. However, if no one is listening, if 90 per cent of masterplans remain unbuilt (a statistic that Rob Cowan may have made up), if much of the urban environment is created without our input and without following the principles that we espouse, it is us that are doing it wrong, not everyone else. This message is something that has been exercising me for some time. It is not that I am questioning the principles of urban design – I’m not losing my faith – it is just that we can’t keep blaming everyone else for how ineffective we are as a profession.

LOST IN TRANSLATION
I started the presentation with an image from Gordon Cullen, whose centenary we celebrated last autumn. His beautiful drawings managed to capture the serendipity and delight of urban places. In his book Townscape he sought to bottle the essence of these places, to capture the principles on which they were built. If only we followed these principles, and got others to understand them, we would surely start to address our problems? This is what urban designers always do, but somehow the message gets lost in translation. I like collecting old urban design books most of which have a structure based on the narrative with which I started this piece. The first section deals with a golden age of cities from ancient Greece to Renaissance Italy and Napoleonic Paris. The middle bit then says how badly everything has gone wrong. Depending on the age of the book the villain will be the Industrial Revolution, the car, overcrowded cities, suburban sprawl, new towns, council estates and or indeed the planning system itself. The final part of these books then seeks to draw lessons from the golden age in order to create a new city of the future where
Everything will be lovely and civilised.

Last year I did a week’s residency in Coventry at the invitation of Laura Elliott and Michael Mayhew of Artspace. Coventry’s city centre redevelopment planned before the war and facilitated by the blitz, predates Cullen’s work but is based on similar principles: vistas, streets, and piazzas linked to create a serial vision experience. Indeed when you study the plan and walk around Coventry on a sunny day (and maybe squint a little) you can start to see what they were trying to do. It is, or could have been very beautiful, but modernism doesn’t look good with peeling paint, rain stained concrete and pigeon shit. It is not the principles that were wrong, or even the masterplan but something in the process by which it was built and has subsequently been managed.

What’s to be done?

So it’s not just a case of strengthening our message or finding better models. If asked what’s to be done, my very clear response is that I don’t really know. However I offer the following suggestions for what the profession might think about:

1. Urban design is not about aesthetics: In the US, New Urbanism has become associated with a design approach based on a Mid-American small town vernacular. The same happened in the UK with the Poundbury-inspired urban villages movement and we still have too many urban design guides that feel it necessary to specify brick types, window designs, fence details and the shape of roofs. I don’t mind traditional design, even if it is not what we do at UrBED. But I do object to design guidance that says that this is obligatory. As soon as we associate urban design with a particular aesthetic, it will become a passing style despised by future generations. Urban design is deeper than this – it should be possible to have modernist, traditional, deconstructivist, high-tech, sustainable urban design, all with very different aesthetics but based on common principles.

2. Urban design and quality are not the same thing: Too many urban design debates argue that we should invest in quality design and equate this with urban design. We can have high quality suburban and rural design and there is certainly a lot of poor quality urban design. They are not the same thing, it is just that too many people substitute the word urban with the word quality because no one is going to argue against quality. Obviously we should be trying to build high-quality schemes, but urban design is something different, relating to density and mix, permeability, enclosure, etc…

3. Urbanism is the missing ingredient: Doing urban design without understanding urbanism is like doing garden design without understanding horticulture. Urbanism is the ‘science’ of cities, how they work socially and economically. As a director of the Academy of Urbanism, I believe that it is the element that was missing in the urban design debates of the past. We borrowed urban forms from the golden age without understanding them and therefore missed vital elements that made these work.

4. We need to understand time: These problems are inevitable when we try to design a place on a drawing board and expect it to be built as conceived, and to work as planned. This is what Kelvin Campbell explores in his book Massive Small and that I have been developing through the Climax City project. Cities if allowed to, become self-organising and when this happens, successful urbanism ‘emerges’. This does not undermine the idea of master planning – Manhattan is both planned and self-organised. But it does suggest that we need to masterplan in a very different way.

5. If you are costing your client money you really are doing it wrong: Finally we should stop arguing that our clients need to invest in quality or to produce buildings that are less profitable. Our job as urban designers is to take the client’s brief, whoever they may be – councils, retailers, house-builders – and do what we can to provide what they need in a way that creates good urban places. It may not be possible, in which case we should maybe find new clients. However, as long as we keep swimming against the tide and make urban design an ideology or religion that must be followed, we will remain a marginalised profession and will have to resign ourselves to seeing 90 per cent of our plans remain unbuilt.

David Rudlin is a director of URBED and the winner of the 2014 Woolfson Economic Prize for his proposal for a new garden city.
The City as Master Developer
Commitment, Collaboration and Co-operation

The history of cities is one of connection through the exchange of goods and ideas. Successful cities are built on diversity, opportunity and anonymity bound together by a strong sense of civic responsibility supported by fair, democratic and effective governance. The city authorities we admire from the past were based on a common endeavour and shared values, allowing for a diversity of opportunity and freedom of speech. The city provided defence, means of access to goods and services, and common land for amenity and sustenance. The disposition of these elements, ‘the capital web’ was defined by the allocation of plots of land for individuals and institutions to live, work and prosper. The 19th century was a period of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, enterprise and global expansion. Vast fortunes were made alongside poverty and slum living conditions. Cities, such as Birmingham, were powerful with strong leadership from an elite. City governance had clear roles, to deliver water and energy, to ease the movement of people and the transaction of goods, and to manage waste resources, with the goal of sharing the wealth generated to enhance the competitive power of the city; housing, parks, culture and learning were supported by the philanthropic endowments of individuals.

By the 1930s, the modern movement in architecture and planning was partly a response to the opportunities that industrialisation offered, but also a reaction to the pollution, chaos and desperate living conditions it had created. Past neighbourhoods that had incrementally grown through time, were replaced by comprehensively planned districts, zoned by function. It was a closed system, controlled and built to the specification set down in a ‘blueprint master plan’.

At the end of World War II, Britain whilst victorious, saw cities devastated, food supplies diminished and social services disrupted; its left wing government saw the solution in urban renewal. Central planning and strong state intervention witnessed the founding of the welfare state and the passing of the Town and Country Act 1947. From this idealistic legacy has developed the most centralised system of governance in Europe, a deeply adversarial system of planning which militates against collaborative working, and a culture of dependency in the delivery of public services and amenities.

As we move into the 21st century, and past the credit crash of 2008, fundamental changes in expectations have been triggered. The Scottish referendum has released the genii out of the bottle on the drive towards devolution. Local community and interest groups are increasingly recognised as having a right and a role to play through civic engagement, supporting co-creation and co-production in shaping their livelihoods. There is also a healthy cynicism about the underlying message of the Big Society, where cuts in the public sector come with few additional resources for those community groups who are expected to fill the gap.

This topic of ‘The City as Master Developer’, aims to question some strongly held precepts within our city governance and planning system. The contributions reflect on both UK and continental European experience, with reflections from Dublin whose planning system mirrors Britain as well as its strong ties with North America and Europe. Professor Lawrence Barth presents a perspective bringing together thinking from both the UK and continental Europe. The articles from Malmö, Utrecht and Berlin reflect the context of cities with a far greater ability to act independently, and typically retain over half the money raised through local taxes and raise municipal bonds to leverage greater investment through the markets.

In contrast, the British government dominates policy making and 75-85 per cent of local government budgets are dependant on decisions made by the Treasury and DCLG (CIPFA 2013). In turn, ‘city hall’ makes plans and regulates their delivery but with limited capacity to go further. Developer is not a word that fits comfortably with the UK planning system. Development is too often seen to reflect self-interest and greed, a perception reinforced by the adversarial nature of the planning processes. It is synonymous with change, yet continuously repeating what has been done before, stifling creativity, innovation and intellectual, cultural and sustainable economic progress. Aspirations are of little consequence if planning has not first created a shared vision to inspire wider engagement, investment and wealth generation, essential for a city’s future.

The contributions that follow should be read in the context of development planning being a collaborative process of managing and moderating change, with the joint goals of stimulating sustainable economic success, whilst ensuring an equitable distribution of resources. City government leads in continuous dialogue with business and civil society through the life of a master-planned development, recognising that each project is part of the wider city dynamic in an urban landscape that is never complete, always adapting and self-organising over time. The city and state can provide confidence, commitment and facilitate change, through dialogue between the different interests to support positive collaboration and co-operation.

Rosalie Callway, PhD Researcher, School of Construction and Engineering, University of Reading, and consultant. Currently researching the value of urban design at the neighbourhood scale.

Abercrombie and Forshaw’s Social and Functional Analysis of London (1943)
City Planning as Initiator, Enabler, Regulator

Dick Gleeson describes how the city of Dublin has overcome the economic crisis

Dublin emerged from a low-point of decline and depression in the mid-1980s to one in the mid-1990s where optimism and energy was tangible, and where regeneration was managed through a series of ambitious non-statutory Framework Plans. A growing awareness of urbanism paralleled these initiatives and influenced the search for a systems approach to city planning which saw the emergence of key urban themes to reflect a holistic thrust and structure complexity. A growing sense of the spatial, and of the importance of the public domain, provided a platform for the local authority to initiate leadership and build powerful connections between sectorial spheres and the spatial character of the city.

The emphasis on building a strategic design culture was directly enabled by the then City Manager John Fitzgerald, assisted by a core ‘can do’ team within Dublin City Council which included the energetic City Architect Jim Barrett. The commissioning of the 2000 DEGW study on Intensification and Change perceptively recognised the primary challenge of consolidating the city. The City Manager also set up the Architectural Advisory Panel chaired by John Worthington and including external experts such as Sir Richard Mc Cormack and David Mackey. Meeting quarterly for over a decade, it was instrumental in helping to instil an urbanist mind-set within the City Council. It later evolved into the Urban Advisory Panel.

The delivery of an extensive programme of new public space underpinned the civic thrust of new urban regeneration and caught the mood of the public imagination. Many of these spaces, at various scales, were facilitated through international design competitions. The emergence of a number of agencies, Dublin Docklands Development Authority, Ballymun Regeneration, Temple Bar Properties, helped provide different models and constantly challenged any tendency towards a comfort zone or settled status quo.

COLLABORATIVE CO-PRODUCTION

While the city may have been on a sustainable trajectory in the 1990s and through the Millennium, the 2008 economic collapse had profound impacts on the development sector and led to an immediate paralysis in construction. While the crisis had international dimensions, and questions were asked about the role of government, the city was also challenged to respond and provide a constructive route forward. The Creative Dublin Alliance and the multiple projects that emerged under its umbrella such as Designing Dublin and Innovation Dublin, indicated the City Council’s need to draw in the energy of the city and forge collaborative alliances.
Designing Dublin brought together interdisciplinary volunteers from diverse backgrounds and teamed them, over three and six month projects, with employees from a number of City Departments. Designing Dublin encouraged a process of standing outside conventional hierarchy, looking between the cracks of institutional life and taking a deep dive to uncover the hidden meaning of place. Through the rich innovation and insights revealed by projects like Designing Dublin, the Council began to see the enormous potential in being a facilitator, in building creative bridges between the citizen, city institutions, and the disconnected spheres of arts/culture and economy.

Building a collaborative capacity has also seen the city look outwards to global partnerships. The Institute Without Boundaries (IWB), Toronto, had provided a leader for the original Designing Dublin projects, but in 2013 the relationship was deepened with the Dublin Project when the IWB, in partnership with the Council, explored the topic of Service Delivery in a 21st century city. The inspiring mantra 'Sense it – See it – Make it' expressed the bottom-up, design led, real-field context which informed IWB's collaborative philosophy. Pivot Dublin, the City's pitch for World Design Capital status, has also been influential in enabling bottom-up urban interventions. Generating the bid content helped galvanise cohesion amongst a fragmented design community and drive a creative discourse towards thoughts of legacy and capacity building.

THE STRATEGIC ROLE OF DOCKLANDS

The economic collapse in Ireland had a severe impact on government funding and local authority budgets, and in Dublin a number of major agencies were disbanded. A constrained budget meant the City Council was no longer able to commission ambitious plans externally but was forced to seek new capacity from within its own ranks. The Docklands Strategic Development Zone (SDZ) adopted in 2014 is a critically important regeneration vehicle with statutory backing, aimed at getting a stalled development process moving again. The plan was prepared in-house by an interdisciplinary team led by planners who worked closely with a wide range of stakeholders and communities in Docklands.

The plan commenced with a reflection on the role of Docklands, and through multiple workshops, produced a set of 'high-level themes' expressing a consensus on value system. These themes fed directly into a set of 'key structuring principles' which helped build a legible grid of large city blocks which were further refined through fixed and flexible elements, to produce development plots. The key strategy was the development of five hubs which would act as centres of gravity in the large city grid and form a dynamic network, connected by high quality walking routes and river bridges. The attractiveness of each hub was underpinned by a diverse chemistry of niche economic activity and by a unique public space exploiting the potential of water and heritage. The plan team in Dublin City Council fully acknowledged the extensive work of the Dublin Docklands Development Agency which had overseen the development of 600 hectares of Docklands from 1997 and had produced a series of masterplans which set much of the strategic context for the SDZ.

OPTIMISING A SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPE

Kees Christiaanse (KCAP) who also served on Dublin’s Advisory Panel, carried out research on the central areas of six major European cities. In relation to Dublin’s inner city he found that the economic, social, cultural and environmental landscapes of value were below levels found in comparable cities. Despite extensive urban regeneration, there is still great unevenness to be found across the inner city. Dublin City Council acknowledges this and has been working on a longer-term strategic and unifying framework to align the energy of economic and cultural sectors with a compelling spatial legibility and rationale.

In the visual bowl of the inner city, one can see three constituent parts. In the central area is the footprint of retreat, that area which the inner city had shrunk to in the mid-80s and incorporating the two retail cores, Temple Bar, and Trinity. Essentially this area is about retrofitting. To the west is the emerging Western Arc made up of Grangegorman, Heuston, New National Children’s Hospital at St James, and Digital Hub. This provides a mixed cultural and economic counterpoint to Docklands, connects the city with the glorious resource of the Phoenix Park, and emphatically defines the western gateway to the inner city. To the east is Docklands. Twenty years of urban regeneration has optimised the use of redundant docklands, created 35,000 jobs and brought the Civic City into closer contact with Dublin Bay and
the sea. Docklands is a work in progress and critical options still lie ahead.

Building a strong sense of inter-connection and unity between the three areas above is critical. The 2004 Dublin Legibility study built an evolving character area map and informed the public realm strategy of recent years. The key threads here are the recognition of an extensive network of character areas providing legible coherence and diversity at the local scale; the integration of dominant and ancillary economic engines and cultural clusters into the character areas; and the engendering of unity through the connective tissue of the public domain, through movement infrastructure, and through a growing awareness of the unifying network and inter-connectivity of the character areas.

**URBANISM – OUR FUTURE**

An urbanist’s sensibility has continued to guide the challenge of place-making and to motivate the City Council to constantly seek out new ways in which to bring the spirit of its urban themes to bear. These urban themes can be distilled into two key spheres, livelihood and liveability, and the process of urban governance is frequently about finding a consensus on the balance between the two. While the City Council has displayed leadership, it sees the role of facilitator as being critical in prompting collaboration and harnessing capacity. It is useful to make a distinction between the existing city, a given city, and the potential future city. The everyday citizen weaves a personal biography from the platform of the given city, utilising a range of soft and hard infrastructure. A collaborative urbanism must animate the role of the citizen in the imagination and delivery of the hard infrastructure of the future city and in the writing of soft infrastructure to support the multiple life-biographies of the future.

Dick Gleeson, independent urbanist, previously Director of Planning, Dublin City Council, Director of the Academy of Urbanism

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**Crossing Boundaries, squaring Interests**

Peter Bishop uses King’s Cross and Central St. Giles as examples of cross-border collaboration

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It is one of the bizarre features of planning department offices around London: on the wall you will often find a map of the borough, sometimes a street map, sometimes the local plan. It will show ward boundaries, local councillors and a range of planning designations, from conservation areas and viewing corridors to major development sites. But nearly all of them have one thing in common: around the edge, the borough boundary, there is nothing but white, blank space, Terra Incognita. The world beyond the borough boundary simply does not exist. The city (and with it both interest and responsibility) stops.

Take another perspective on London: superimpose the areas of the greatest concentration of urban problems or social deprivation and look at the correlation with borough boundaries. It is striking. Out of sight and out of mind, or are boundaries just plain difficult to deal with? Would the hypothetical London Boroughs of Finsbury Park, Kilburn or Willesden bring new focus to these issues?
forgotten administrative edges? And is there an easier way of doing this than political reorganisation with all its costs and disruption?

THE ROLE OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Let’s put this argument to one side for a moment and consider the nature of what has been happening in London local government over the last 25 years. The council as sole provider of services has largely disappeared, to be replaced by the enabling authority. Local partnership between the public and private sectors and greater emphasis on local accountability have been major, and for the most part, beneficial changes. And the organisations have become smaller and noticeably more efficient at service delivery. The downside has been the progressive impacts of resource and staffing cuts forcing authorities to fall back on ‘core business’. Alongside this the planning system has been attacked by politicians, tinkered with by governments and forced back into meeting targets that often stress simplistic metrics over any more considered assessment of what makes a successful place.

Speed and numbers certainly do not make for good planning. Underlying all the emphasis that is put on ‘place making’ (a particularly meaningless term), and ‘proactive planning’ (whatever that means), there are some simple miscomprehensions. Cities are complex, democracy can be difficult, and finding good, well crafted and balanced solutions takes time. Planning in a democracy has to be about brokerage and someone has to take the responsibility to do it.

The term ‘city fathers’ is, quite rightly, seldom used nowadays. But in this term there are still powerful messages regarding leadership, vision and long-term responsibility. It is about taking the initiative and, as we used to say at Design for London, ‘making good things happen’. It is about assuming the role (and earning the right) to hold the ring. It is about harnessing and directing the energy of different players. It is the role of the city as impresario. Impresarios bring people together, they understand agendas, they understand money and they solve problems. And sometimes, just sometimes, they put on a great show.

If planning is to assume this role, then it needs to step into the voids that exist in the city and become the client of last resort. The city is full of voids. Voids exist at borough boundaries, they exist outside the closely defined ownership boundaries of development sites, they exist between political administrations and they exist between professional disciplines. Voids are rarely easy places to operate. At best they lack obvious points of reference; at worse they are areas of intense conflict. They usually lack obvious rules of engagement. The benefit of course is that they are places where one can be creative. If planning is to have a role in the fractured world of the 21st century then it is a permissive, not a restrictive role. It is there to create the conditions for positive and continuous urban improvement, and to do this it needs to embrace the difficult conditions of the urban edge.

KING’S CROSS

The King’s Cross project is an example where planning had to step out of its comfortable regulatory role. This 27ha site had a particularly difficult series of different edges. It was politically in Camden (a Labour controlled borough) but geographically, due to the severance of the railway lines, in Islington (a Liberal Democrat controlled borough). Moreover, although it had very clearly defined physical boundaries, the solution to its development lay in its hinterland, a series of diverse communities suffering from high degrees of social and economic deprivation. Unless it could engage with its surrounding communities and achieve their support, local opposition would have effectively killed the scheme. One of the first moves on the project was for Camden to get the agreement of Islington to effectively negotiate on their behalf (a small triangle of land was in their area), This unusual agreement, brokered at leader level between two boroughs under different political administrations, simplified the planning process considerably.

There are few reasons why a landowner should voluntarily expend resources in planning and designing outside their site boundaries. There are, however, strong imperatives why a planning authority should persuade them to do so. In the case of King’s Cross there were two principal arguments.

The first was political capital. A developer willing to engage, listen and become involved in a wider neighbourhood, builds
trust and a long-term relationship with the community and its political representatives. This trust has long-term value when it comes to getting future consents. This is not just a cynical move to ‘buy’ approvals; a developer that builds a relationship understands the local issues. Its proposals are likely to be more sensitive and ultimately, a community that has been respected and involved in this way will be a better neighbour. Argent was exceptionally good at building relationships as was British Land on their nearby Regents Quarter development.

The second argument is concerned with the realisation of the opportunities in the surrounding area. Networks of open space, public transport, pedestrian movement, retail impacts, all concern areas outside site boundaries. If planning is interested in context, and it should be, then it needs to feel confident in extending the debate. No one else will. Often it is the opportunities that exist outside the site that open the opportunity for deadlock to be broken and creative deals to be made.

Often it is the opportunities that exist outside the site that open the opportunity for deadlock to be broken and creative deals to be made

There is also the question of time. A development proposal will, in most cases, be assessed only in its end state. Unless developers intend to own and manage a site (and therefore derive long-term value from it), as was the unusual case with Argent on King’s Cross, they will have little interest in what happens after completion and disposal. The local planning authority should. The city is open-ended, it is not a finished project. Each generation alters it and adds to it.

The custodian has to be the city authority, because for no other reason, if it all goes wrong they will have to pick up the pieces and the future costs. This stewardship role is often neglected by city authorities but long-term continuity is important. John Thorpe exercised this role in Leeds until recently, as did Peter Rees in the City of London. At Design for London we believed that part of our role was to plan for possible futures that others might one day realise. This approach is equally important at the local site level. A good development will set challenges for the next phases of city evolution. Twenty-five years is not a very long time for a proposition that is started on one site to be finished on another.

**CENTRAL ST GILES**

This was part of the planning thinking behind the Central St Giles development. This particular site, behind Centre Point, is another example of a city edge. The traffic gyratory upon which Centre Point is sited was never, thankfully, fully completed. Camden and Westminster share a common boundary, and Crossrail was set to almost double the throughput of Tottenham Court Road station. With the area already at full capacity, works were programmed over six years with road closures and considerable disruption. Around St Giles there were six major landowners, all looking to maximise their development envelopes and seeing each other as rivals rather than partners. A coordinated approach to the local area was essential, but this had to be cross-border and there was no body to claim responsibility and no powers to require any of the stakeholders to comply with a plan even if one could be produced.

The solution was simple. Design for London picked up the phone and invited the boroughs and the landowners to meet and discuss the opportunities in the area. It was clear that an uncoordinated scramble for development was likely to result in risks of public inquiries and stifled opportunities for the last landowners to come forward. There was no compulsion to enter into dialogue, but the implications of being left out in the cold were obvious. The upshot was that Sir Terry Farrell was commissioned to produce a loose public realm strategy. This was never seen as a masterplan but as a framework for exploration of options and negotiation around mutual benefits.

**CONCLUSION**

Crossing boundaries, whether physical or metaphorical is about stepping into new territories and exploring new situations. It might at times be uncomfortable and even risky, but if planning is to escape the stranglehold that it has been put in, it has to be prepared to enter into the terra incognita on the edge of its operations and become the city impresario. Only then can it make good things happen, or at least be proud that it tried.

Peter Bishop, Professor of Urban Design at UCL and Director at Allies and Morrison
Even in a country with an outstanding planning tradition like the Netherlands, we have seen a major shift in the role the authorities take in the process of urban change. Coming from the idea that ‘the authorities know what is best’, epitomised by the vast city planning departments which existed up until the 80s, the system has since slowly adopted models of public-private partnerships, but still behaving top-down in planning and decision-making. Top-down, blueprint plans were still realised up until the boom of the 1990s. Not being connected to real local needs, many were not as successful as wished.

UTRECHT RAILWAY STATION

A typical product of that era was the rethinking of the station district in Utrecht, one of the four major Dutch cities which together with Amsterdam, Rotterdam and The Hague, define the Randstad. The Utrecht City Project (UCP) Masterplan was the result of a public-private partnership between the city, two landowners and the Dutch Railways (as landowner and rail operator, and 100 per cent state-owned). It was a masterplan for restructuring an outdated shopping mall in which the station was embedded, the renewal of the national exhibition centre Jaarbeurs on the west of the railways, and the much needed renewal of the station itself. Utrecht, being the most important rail interchange in the Netherlands, was a cornerstone of the planned improvements of the Randstad rail network (including High Speed Railway). This was underlined by Utrecht Central Station being identified as one of the key projects in the Fourth National Planning Policy Document (from 1988 on). The strategic plan specifies a major programme of reconstruction and investment to prepare the station for the predicted growth. The project foresaw a programme of work which would be required not only to improve the operation of the rail infrastructure, but also to integrate the station with the surrounding city and ensure that it became a connector rather than a barrier. The station had to become a legible, convenient place of connection that celebrated connectivity, rather than being only a technical solution for transport.

SUCCESSIVE MASTERPLANS

The first UCP masterplan received the green light in 1991 but was cancelled when it came to sharing the costs and the private partners realised the long-term commitment they were agreeing to. It was replaced by a new version in 1996 with even more extended terms of agreement,
to be finally abandoned in 2001 following municipal elections in which Leefbaar Utrecht (a new local political movement) won a landslide victory.

Even before the elections, UCP was encountering difficulties in creating a fully shared land development bank, based on the over-optimistic assumption that the public and private parties could have equal interests and complete the different parts of the plan over the same period. The private partners found themselves taking risks in the realisation of a new public transport node over a period of 10 or 20 years. Initially all parties accepted such a development model, as it seemed to be working for the major housing extensions operations in the Netherlands like the Utrecht Leidsche Rijn, a city extension for almost 100,000 people to be completed in 15 years. But the characteristics there proved to be much less complex than those in a city centre, not least because restructuring an existing area has greater and longer-term impact on the city than a greenfield development with a largely single building type programme.

Additionally the masterplan proposed a comprehensive rebuilding programme lacking any meaningful relation to what this part of the city needed: creating meaningful places and bringing back the vitality expected around a central station. An immense opposition grew against the scale of the plan, which was perceived as unfit for the small-scale city centre of Utrecht. The private partners backed off and the city found itself on its own once again.

The new political movement had promised to drop the ‘money-driven’ scheme and declared that the city would solve the problems around the station by itself, rejecting the idea of a public-private partnership for the overall scheme. They announced a referendum offering the citizens a choice between two schemes. To run the referendum, a small municipal project office was set up with representatives from the relevant local authority departments. The call for a transparent process towards the referendum and the design approach appropriate to the characteristics of the area, led to the project office deciding to add a communication agency to the team.

The newly installed city-led project office translated the political question into proposing two schemes based on different values: being aware of the necessary changes that would happen anyway (the unavoidable renewal of the station, the outdated shopping mall and the exhibition centre), the issue of urban change was captured in the question “What kind of city would you like Utrecht to be?”

The two schemes 1 and A, both first in a row were:

1. A national business district: a market driven scheme, emphasising the city as ‘permissive facilitator’ for national orientated services (the national exhibition centre, insurance companies and banks, education, etc), well-connected to the renewed station and paid for by the initiators.

A. A city quarter: adding new character to the existing city quarters in which the city would invest in the infrastructure networks and the quality of the public realm and would induce the landowners to invest in their properties in a way it would support the overall scheme and add to the multi-coloured and multi-layered city life.

The outcome of the referendum was a convincing endorsement for Scheme A, which then became the basis for the next step: the design of a masterplan for the railway station district.

Before discussing the masterplan itself, it is important to stress that this was going to be the third round of plans for the area. As well as addressing the general questions of urban regeneration of this type and scale, the City of Utrecht was determined that this time the plans could be implemented. They would have to incorporate both public and private interests in a realistic and transparent way.

AN INCREMENTAL APPROACH

The masterplan to regenerate Utrecht Station District (finally approved in 2004) was not a conventional blue-print for future development, but rather a framework based on the values captured through the referendum process and shared by all the stakeholders and the communities. These values were summarised in three principles that up until today guide the process: Restore, Connect and Give Meaning. The aim was
to stimulate and allow continuous urban change by framing the network of infrastructure and steering development through straightforward guidelines always addressing these principles.

An intensive process of participation and gaining support has made it possible to implement major changes in the existing urban context, optimising and expanding the transport interchange and addressing the local needs of the stakeholders and communities. The success of the project is growing through its incremental character of development and the approach has enabled the development to survive the current economic crisis.

The scheme, the masterplan, has become an ‘attitude’, a way of thinking about how to deal with continuous urban change. One has to bridge the inertia of the existing context of buildings and necessary infrastructure and the constant changes in the socio-economic environment, and one has to realise that major urban change takes a generation to mature.

Evolved from a political movement or better, a political experiment, Utrecht has changed the definition of a masterplan and especially of the role the city can take in setting it up and implementing it.

The Dutch Scientific Advisory Board on Government Policies (WRR) has recently published a report on the changing role of government in public affairs. In it, a possible future role of the government was explained in three sentences:

- to regulate, establishing the regulations and formal rules
- to facilitate, giving way for others to act and develop
- to stimulate, enabling development by financing, better regulations, etc.

One has to bridge the inertia of the existing context of buildings and necessary infrastructure and the constant changes in the socio-economic environment, and one has to realise that major urban change takes a generation to mature.

Although these cover the role a city can or should take in average spatial developments, in the case of (sometimes necessary) large-scale developments I would suggest adding the verb to induce.

In the aftermath of the earlier schemes and agreements and in the initial disbelief in the referendum, the City of Utrecht had to induce its ‘neighbours’ to take part in the renewal and development of the area for which everyone agreed something had to be done. By doing so and initially focussing on expressing and understanding each other’s values and ambitions, it established a solid basis for a way forward, defined and designed in the masterplan. It moved away from setting up complex and overarching long-term super-agreements and instead, following the incremental steps in development, it set up incremental agreements for discrete parts of the project. The City induced the landowners (not the developers!) to be loyal to the long-term vision, following the themes and values agreed as a result of the referendum: they initially exchanged ‘loyalty-cards’ instead of contracts!

The process of understanding, reformulating and managing the process of urban change takes time and the only party that can lead such a process is arguably the government, and in this case the city.

Henk Bouwman, Director of Urban-imPulse and Director of the Academy of Urbanism
Going through a dynamic period of development, the city of Malmö is in the process of identifying its new role both at local and regional levels. Malmö, the third largest city in Sweden with around 318,000 residents, is a multi-ethnic city with some 100 languages and 176 different nationalities. It is in transition from being an industrial city to a city of culture and knowledge. A manifestation of this is Malmö University opened in 1998 which is Sweden’s latest venture in the field of higher education, accommodating some 25,000 students. This is one of the important strategic long-term investments in Malmö. The European Housing Exhibition, Bo01, in Västra Hamnen, is another strategic aspect of transformation that focuses on new values and new possibilities for Malmö, in areas such as future housing, the sustainable society, an enlightened approach to recycling and good architecture. In conjunction with the Housing Exhibition, a first step was taken in the creation of a new district where, after 150 years, the city has re-established its contact with the sea. Now the city is focusing on social imbalances and has presented the report Malmö’s path towards a sustainable future – Health, welfare and justice by the Commission for a Socially Sustainable Malmö.

STRATEGIES
The decline in the traditional industries created much concern during the early 1990s. In January 1995, the Municipal Executive Board took the initiative to create an extensive vision with the objective to formulate a feasible future for Malmö. The strategy consisted of two primary components: the establishment of a university in the central part of Malmö city centre and the creation of an attractive new city environment in Västra Hamnen, next to the university. In this way, Malmö could be transformed from an industrial city to a lively, future-oriented city where its cultural diversity, its young population and the abandoned industrial areas became valuable assets that could be developed into an opportunity and a strength.

During the dynamic development period from 1995 to 2010, the main focus was directed towards the construction of strategic infrastructure, which was a pre-requisite for economic growth. Now, as a result of the action programme Welfare for all – the dual commitment, all eyes are turned towards the imbalances within different areas of Malmö – from demographic, economic, business
and educational points of view. An in-depth and extensive programme which was completed in 2008 indicated extremely good results for the various investment areas. In order for the many strategic initiatives to succeed, it was also important to ensure that all of the people that worked in the city, were sharing the same vision and the same basic common values, and were pulling in the same direction. That was the reason why the action programme Commitment Malmö was started. Approximately 1,000 city leaders became catalysts for the implementation of the values adopted within the municipality's 18,000 strong personnel. This gigantic pioneering and ambassadorial project echoed throughout Sweden and can also be seen as an inward dialogue project.

**DIALOGUE, AWARENESS, COMMITMENT AND PARTICIPATION**

We must work to achieve greater awareness of our residents as resources and how we make use of our social capital. Malmö faces a big challenge in terms of energy targets: by 2020 all buildings must use renewable energy and by 2030 the entire city must do so. Our work in this field with our four climate arenas – Western Harbour, Eco city Augustenborg, Sege Park and Hyllie – has been a great asset, creating awareness among all target groups in the city. To succeed, we need a paradigmatic shift or a shift in values from a more physical approach towards developing human capital via alliances and network solutions. This could be expressed in that we are seeking more value-based urban planning in which contents and values become increasingly important for the processes used to create sustainable, attractive urban environments: a form of increased participation throughout the population.

When we proceed to the next step, additional factors clearly need to be incorporated in the concept. These are climate and water management, how spatial organisation can enhance social sustainability, culture and collective knowledge as a driving force and, in particular, processes that create participation and trust. It is essential to the development of Malmö to create a socially balanced city with good living conditions for all. The urban space is important for good social development, as a shared place for meetings between people and to stimulate democracy and participation. More meeting places need to be created and safety and gender equality in the urban space need to be increased. Social and creative meeting places are a means of achieving balance. Good public health is a precondition of positive development, welfare and growth. The reduction of health inequalities in the city is a high priority. People who feel involved enjoy the best health and prosperity. The city is enhanced socially by citizen participation and it is important to work concertedly in the area of physical planning to increase participation in processes of change. This involves social mobilisation and participation in urban development and is also a cornerstone of economic sustainability.

**THE CREATIVE DIALOGUE AT WESTERN HARBOUR**

The City of Malmö’s successful efforts to combine environmental management with urban planning resulted in an invitation from the Swedish government to participate in ByggBoDialOgen (the Dialogue Project for Building, Living and Property), a national environmental project. In 2004, the City of Malmö, together with 13 developers, architects and citizens, launched a new communication process referred to as The Creative Dialogue. This dialogue provided a platform bringing together various stakeholder groups to discuss common themes related to the built environment: architecture, planning, environmental aspects, as well as a focus on quality. The primary goal was that the process itself – instead of dictates from the planners – would result in a detailed plan incorporating sustainability as well as affordability for new homes built in Flagghusen, the next development in Malmö’s sustainable district, the Western Harbour. In essence, the goal was to further develop the successful methods used for the Bo01 area, and take them to the next level: mainstreaming sustainability. The intention of the dialogue was that both public and private actors – particularly private developers – would benefit from sharing knowledge, building upon their collective expertise. By working together they could develop new solutions focused on sustainability whilst simultaneously reducing their production costs. Three years after the launch of the dialogue process, the first tenants moved in.

**THE MASTERPLAN DIALOGUE**

Our future-oriented strategic instrument of government, the masterplan, guides the development of the city by limiting the area of urbanisation and instead allowing the city to grow inwards by raising the density, thus preserving the valuable agricultural landscape. The plan...
is one of the biggest public involvement projects initiated by the city. Acceptance by and involvement of the residents of the city has been an important factor, as well as the link to the action programmes.

THE YOUNGLIVING (UNGBO) DIALOGUE
UngBo was a communication project initiated by the City of Malmö in partnership with the construction industry to provoke a debate on the shortage of housing among young people. With an ideas competition, a competition for architects and the first homes exhibition for young people in Sweden, the operators in the housing market have been brought together to take shared responsibility for increasing construction for young people as the target group. The web-based ideas competition involved young people aged between 18 and 30 submitting proposals for how they want to live in the future, and ideas on what can be done about the housing shortage. The project has therefore created a new form of citizen participation, with the involvement of young people without any need for prior knowledge. A process has been kick-started with UngBo, and the project has generated knowledge capital that requires management.

The intention of the dialogue was that both public and private actors – particularly private developers – would benefit from sharing knowledge, building upon their collective expertise

UngBo's homes exhibition for young people resulted in an UngBo initiative: it stipulates a number of responsibilities that the various operators on the housing market can assume separately and/or jointly, to contribute to more homes being built for young people. It is hoped that the initiative will start the machinery turning and put pressure on national housing policy so that other municipalities follow the example of the City of Malmö.

The UngBo 12 ideas competition resulted in as many as 350 proposals being submitted and created a new type of participation process, with young people being involved in urban development on their own terms. The competition can also be seen as an extensive market survey of young people's preferences and has enabled us to distinguish several clear trends that can be summarized as: flexible housing, green, collective, car-free, and more than just housing.

CONCLUSION
The city is now restarting its journey and is in the process of creating a new narrative for the next stage of urban development. On the commission for a socially sustainable Malmö and in our new masterplan, we will continue to develop greater consensus and partnerships, knowledge alliances and co-creation described above. Our new approach to urban planning processes and its acceptance by the actors concerned and residents will be essential to success. Consensus and partnership with the business community are also extremely important, and by extension, their willingness to invest. The City’s initiatives on key projects such as Malmö Live and the family swimming centre in Hyllie, create the preconditions and the basic security for future private sector investments. Partnership and consensus, co-creation and knowledge alliances are tools for building the city democratically and sustainably. Political leadership is equally important: without clear visions, clarity, awareness and risk-taking, we will not succeed.

Christer Larsson, Planning Director, City of Malmö
Göran Rosberg, Senior Advisor, City of Malmö
The Growth of Cambridge

Peter Studdert exposes the strengths and weaknesses of UK city governance

Cambridge is a small city with a global reputation. People are often surprised that the population of the city is only 126,000 people, a figure that includes a large proportion of the 29,000 students who attend the city’s two universities. However, Cambridge lies at the heart of a wider sub-region. South Cambridgeshire District surrounds the city like a doughnut; its 165 villages contain a larger population than the city (150,000 people), and the ring of market towns beyond bring the total sub-regional population to over 400,000.

This distributed spatial context has presented Cambridge with significant challenges of governance and political leadership, requiring close co-operation between the City and South Cambridgeshire Councils as planning authorities at the heart of the sub-region, and Cambridgeshire County Council as the authority responsible for transport and other strategic services.

Despite this complex governance structure, Cambridge has taken a proactive approach to meeting the challenges of growth that has its origins in the Cambridge Futures initiative of the late 1990s. Up to that point the planning strategy for the city had been shaped by the 1950 Holford Plan which asserted that Cambridge should not grow beyond a population of 100,000 or else it would lose its status as the ‘only true University town’. Holford’s assertion that ‘one cannot make a good expanding plan for Cambridge’ became the guiding principle for the subsequent 50 years, and the Green Belt was tightly drawn around the city to reinforce the point. Housing was exported to the surrounding ‘necklace villages’ and to new settlements beyond the Green Belt at Bar Hill and Cambourne. New jobs were decentralised to low-density rural business parks, and a proposed out-of-town shopping centre at Duxford, south of Cambridge, was only averted at the last minute by the decision of the Secretary of State John Gummer in 1994.

GROWTH STRATEGY
Cambridge Futures challenged this decentralising process, and as a joint initiative between ‘town and gown’ stimulated an open debate about the choices open to Cambridge and the economic, environmental and social consequences of those different choices. Out of this debate came a balanced strategy that accepted the need to accommodate growth, and to take a sequential approach to its location which started with urban regeneration, then moved to a review of the inner boundary of the Green Belt, then to finding a location for a new settlement beyond the Green Belt with good transport connections back to Cambridge.

The strategy was predicated on a vision of compact new neighbourhoods built around convenient public transport and cycling links to centres of employment, and with excellent local facilities and easy access to the surrounding countryside. This built on the characteristics that already made Cambridge such an attractive place to live.

The 2003 Cambridgeshire Structure Plan became the main vehicle for developing this strategy. In setting the basis for the review of the inner boundary of the Green Belt in subsequent Local Plans it allocated four areas for major growth:
to the south, new neighbourhoods around Trumpington and a new biomedical campus at Addenbrooke's Hospital; to the north west, two new neighbourhoods including one specifically for University expansion; employment growth around a new station to the north close to the Science Park; and crucially major development to the east, relocating the privately-owned Cambridge Airport and establishing a new neighbourhood of 12,000 homes and a new centre to accommodate uses that would complement and relieve pressure on the historic centre. All this new development was to be within a 25-minute cycle ride from the centre of the city. The Structure Plan also identified Northstowe, eight miles to the north west of Cambridge, as the best site for a new settlement of 10,000 homes linked to Cambridge by the Cambridge to Huntingdon Guided Busway.

This ambitious strategy had a natural fit with the Labour Government's 2004 Sustainable Communities Plan, and the Cambridge authorities were rewarded with generous funding to establish Cambridgeshire Horizons as a locally-controlled delivery vehicle to co-ordinate the implementation of the strategy, and most crucially to develop a vision for the quality of the new neighbourhoods that were to be created. A particular focus was the adoption in 2010 of a Quality Charter for Growth that was drawn up with the help of Nicholas Falk at URBED following study tours to exemplar developments elsewhere in the UK and northern Europe. The Charter focussed on the four 'C's of Community, Connectivity, Climate and Character, which became the template against which the developing masterplans were assessed. The commitment to quality was reinforced by the appointment of an expert Quality Review Panel to advise the Joint Development Control Committee that was established to oversee the planning of the new communities, and which has survived the winding-up of Cambridgeshire Horizons following the cuts of 2011.

**SuCCesSES**

Twelve years on from the adoption of the Structure Plan, and following an economic recession and changes in national and local political control, how has the strategy stood up and what lessons can be learned about city governance?

The market downturn that affected most of the UK has in reality had little impact on Cambridge, and the city's economy continues to expand at a dramatic rate, fuelled particularly by the biotechnology and pharmaceutical sectors linked to Addenbrooke's Hospital. The growth of Cambridge University is continuing particularly in research, and it has strengthened its position as one of the top universities in the world. Its North West Cambridge development is on site and will provide 3,000 new homes, half of which will be affordable homes for University key workers, as well as 2,000 new student rooms and 1 million square feet of research and academic floorspace.

To the south of the city around Trumpington a new community of 4,000 homes is well advanced, providing new homes including 40 per cent affordable homes, together with new primary schools and a new secondary school and two new country parks linking to the wider countryside. The development provides new homes close to Addenbrooke's Hospital and its Biomedical Research Campus, and is linked to the city centre by guided bus and segregated cycle paths. The Abode development by Proctor and Matthews for Countryside Homes has won the top prize in the 2014 Housing Design Awards, building on Countryside's earlier success in winning the 2008 Stirling Prize for the Accordia development, which was the largest regeneration site within the city. Judged against the four 'C's of the Quality Charter, the Trumpington development sets a high benchmark.

**Setbacks**

Progress elsewhere has been slow. Although regeneration of the former railway land around Cambridge Station is beginning to move ahead, the new station on the north side of Cambridge is not due to open until 2018, delaying the much needed regeneration of Chesterton railway sidings and the reconfiguration of the Cambridge Sewage Treatment Works. A Joint Area Action Plan is in preparation to guide the development of this area. The fragmentation created by privatised public transport and utility companies has made co-ordination a particular challenge, adding layers of additional complexity to an already complex development challenge.

Progress has also been slow in starting work on the new settlement at Northstowe. This has principally been caused by a failure of central government, which deferred crucial investment in the congested A14 road corridor in the 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review, together with Treasury Green Book rules preventing the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) from playing the lead role in driving forward investment in their supposed flagship development. Northstowe has been delayed by wrangles over infrastructure provision and affordable housing, and although Gallagher Estates, the HCA's private sector partner and the original promoter of Northstowe, has secured outline planning permission for the first 1,500 homes on the northern green field element of the development, the original aspirations for a model Eco-town have long since been watered down. The biggest disappointment of all has been the inability to relocate Cambridge Airport to allow for the essential eastern expansion of the city. After years of searching for a satisfactory relocation site, the Marshall group which owns the airport and which was an active
participant in the growth strategy from the days of Cambridge Futures, decided in 2011 to remain on their current site for the foreseeable future, and only develop relatively small sites adjacent to but outside the airport perimeter. This has given the local authorities major headaches as they update their Local Plans, and South Cambridgeshire in particular has had to allocate new sites around Cambourne to the west of Cambridge and at a further new settlement on surplus Defence Estates land at Waterbeach to the north of Cambridge to make up the shortfall in housing. A faint hope has arisen, however, from the announcement that the US Air Force is vacating their base at Mildenhall by 2020, fifteen miles to the east of Cambridge and an ideal place to relocate the airport; too late to influence this round of planning but in time to underpin the next.

In spite of the abolition of regional planning and the winding-up of Cambridgeshire Horizons in 2011, the local authorities around Cambridge have maintained their commitment to the growth strategy through a joint Memorandum of Co-operation on housing growth, and have retained a small Joint Planning Unit within the County Council. Closer joint working is also a prerequisite of the City Deal agreed between the core authorities, Cambridge University, the Local Enterprise Partnership and the Government in 2014.

CONCLUSION

The Cambridge story highlights the weaknesses as well as the strengths of the UK delivery model for accommodating growth. It expects local authorities to operate largely as regulators of a dysfunctional market rather than as active partners with the private sector. When the local authorities rise to the leadership challenge with vision and tenacity, and where the market works well, as at Trumpington, North West Cambridge and many of the regeneration sites, high quality development can be brought forward to meet demand.

But the regulatory model struggles to bring forward larger new developments in challenging locations such as at Northstowe and East Cambridge. Locally controlled Development Corporations, building on past experience of the New Towns and more recent northern European practice, would be the model best equipped to address the complex challenges that developments at this scale have to overcome. Lessons can also be learned from the 2012 Olympics and the way in which a well-resourced public agency can deliver high quality large scale regeneration in a challenging location to a tight timetable, working in partnership with the private sector and with local authorities.

The need to provide new and affordable housing in places such as Cambridge deserves no less a priority than the Olympics. Given the right resources and more purposeful public/private partnerships, Cambridge could become a showcase for how attractive new neighbourhoods can be created to support economic growth. A good start has been made around Trumpington and on the University’s North West Cambridge development. But although design quality is high, delivery is slow and the larger sites need new locally controlled development agencies to drive them forward and to maintain a high quality vision. There also needs to be a far greater decentralisation of financial control from central government than that offered by the current City Deal, on the grounds that well-targeted public investment would be recouped many times over by the tax revenues that would flow from the wealth created.

Peter Studdert, Independent adviser on city planning and design based in Cambridge, Chair of the Quality Review Panel (London Legacy Development Corporation)
TIME magazine recently acknowledged Berlin as the ‘new capital of creative inspiration’. Since reunification, the city has developed into one of Europe’s most important locations for the creative industries. From subcultures, professional structures and flourishing companies have emerged. At the same time, the economic sectors of media and creative industries, and information and communication technology generate sales of €28 billion, accounting for around 16 per cent of the total turnover of Berlin’s economy. This is achieved through 34,000 mostly small and medium enterprises with approximately 250,000 employees.

This development was facilitated by the consequences of war destruction, urban renewal, the Berlin Wall and reunification, and the large number of niches resulting from this process. More than in other metropolises, vacant, partially dilapidated residential and commercial buildings, as well as numerous brownfield sites dominated the cityscape.

Andreas Huyssen, professor at Columbia University, refers to the ‘voids of Berlin’, caused by structural incisions in its development. These offered plenty of space largely free from limiting property yields, for subcultural experiments and creative uses. A creative milieu radiating from the Kreuzberg district drew the world’s attention to Berlin itself from the 1970s onwards. The combination of special locations, unconventional lifestyles and experimental space – supported by a unique level of public funding – was one of the keys to the enormous attraction of the city. It was also the impulse for developing new types of civic engagement. Originally focused on the establishment of cultural and educational institutions and on charitable projects addressing the misery of the industrial proletariat, the focus has recently shifted to secure living space and to realise self-fulfillment projects, in particular those pursued by young people.

With the fall of the Berlin Wall, the era of the old West Berlin was over. German reunification, and especially the collapse of the East German economy prompting the progressive de-industrialisation of the entire city, changed its key development parameters. The restitution of land socialised under the GDR regime, as well as abandoned large industrial and administrative sites, offered new spheres of activity not only for international investors but also for a great number of private initiatives.

Soon after, an intense period of new ideas and experimentation began, coupled with an openness and readiness to take risks by an increasingly young population from all continents. Their initiatives created a wide range of ideas and projects that resonate far beyond Berlin. However, the transformation of places, especially those with a rough character of metropolitan flair, requires visionary power and a pioneering spirit. Each of the resulting projects is based on social creativity, collaborative planning and unconventional cooperative economic models.

The following examples illustrate the wide range of this spectrum, ranging from models for collective housing and temporary use of inner city brownfield sites, to the durable re-use of derelict industrial sites and the public appropriation of large wastelands of transport infrastructure.
LAB FOR HOUSING EXPERIMENTS
At the interface between civic engagement and collective private initiative, a new type of urban housing originated in Berlin. Projects initiated by building cooperatives, combined with intensive participation in the planning and construction process, deliver exemplary contributions to cost-saving construction and variety in apartment buildings. The completed projects, mostly in inner-city locations, are privately financed and usually occupied by community members, mostly young families or multi-generation households. Some critics argue that their contribution to the revitalisation of the surrounding neighbourhoods is limited and that they are forerunners of a creeping gentrification.

The first of these projects, Wohnetagen Steinstrasse, offered a different perspective: initiated by a joint building venture of young families with diverse occupational backgrounds, it was realised in a dense inner city district. Due to low construction costs and despite the central location with relatively high land prices, it could offer affordable family- and child-friendly accommodation as well as community facilities and shareable gardens. In contrast to developer projects, net cost prices without risk charges could be realised. This made it possible to offer high living standards for an average price of under 2,000 €/m², that would otherwise never have been possible in a comparable location.

The project Spreefeld offers a more extensive experimental approach: in a central location on the River Spree, it contributes to the upgrading of the surrounding neighbourhood. As a cooperative housing project with 70 apartments – some of them large community homes for up to 20 people – it breaks new ground with a mixture of residential, commercial and community uses. Parts of the property, as well as so-called option rooms are accessible to the public. They are available for neighbourhood groups who only pay the running costs. This project is also characterised by low construction costs and high environmental standards. Through its cooperative financing structure, it contributes to sustainable, non-speculative use of inner-city real estate.

The cooperative owns the land and the buildings; its members are the tenants who don’t own their apartments. The shares of the cooperative cannot be inherited or sold on the open market and they don't yield an interest. Because of the high energy efficiency of the project, low-interest loans were available to cover the cost, which otherwise could not have been afforded. The cooperative drive of an increasing number of similar projects cannot be rated high enough. Instead of displacing long-established residents, these new building projects contribute to the socio-economic stabilisation and regeneration of the surrounding neighbourhoods. Co-ownership, low building costs with generous space standards and a variety of floor plans combine to provide an important stimulus for public real estate and housing policies.

TEMPORARY GARDENS IN URBAN NICHEs
Temporary urban gardens are now a worldwide phenomenon. In Berlin, in 2009 one of the most spectacular projects was realised by young urban activists on the site of a derelict war-damaged former department store, in the Kreuzberg district. A permanent use of the site is currently not foreseeable but if the property were to be sold, the ecological community garden can be moved with transportable compost beds. This ‘mobile field’ is a green oasis for self-supporters in an inner-city area with significant lack of open space. Similar to the historical concept of common land, neighbouring residents can cultivate vegetable patches and enjoy an open-air café. The result is a garden that grows with the number of people who contribute to it. Meanwhile more than 50 offshoot projects have arisen throughout the city.

CREATIVE QUARTERS ON BROWNFIELD SITES
The ExRotaprint initiative which transformed the former Rotaprint printing factory with a focus on ‘work, art and social life’, is one of the most prominent civil society projects in Berlin. It was created by artists. To avoid a future resale, they decided to transfer the land to two charitable foundations which in turn assigned the leases to the founding members. Part of the identity of the project is the fascinating architecture of the buildings revealing a successful transformation of a Wilhelminian-style quarter by using the design vocabulary of modernism.

Since 2007, under the term ‘social sculpture’, social and educational facilities, studios for artists and creative enterprises, have been established on the site in a close mix with production and craft enterprises. There are nearly 100 rental contracts. In addition to a cafeteria, guest apartments and a venue for events and conferences were also established.

In contrast to this is the ambitious scheme to convert a former nightclub venue and temporary green space in the Holzmarkt area, a prime city centre location. On the initiative of the Cooperative for Urban Creativity, an urban development project has been established in which ‘creative ideas, doers and innovative funding models, support each other sustainably’. The initiative emerged from protests against Media-Spree, one of the largest investor-led projects for the location of media companies in the former man’s-land along the Wall, on the banks of the river Spree. In 2012, the 18,600 m²...
property was acquired by the Swiss Abendrot Foundation and assigned by leasehold to the Holzmarkt Cooperative as a developer. The vision of an artist village, foundation centre, hotel, student housing, urban garden and restaurant will be realised on the site of the legendary Bar 25. (See UD 130 p33-35)

SPECTACULAR OPEN SPACES
According to the plans of an increasing number of supporters, Berlin’s largest pool, 750 m in length, will be built in a prominent place in the city’s historic centre in the immediate vicinity of the UNESCO World Heritage Museum Island. In a tributary of the Spree, a reed pool and unique habitat is planned for the natural purification of river water. The project is now one of the 21 ‘national projects of urban design’ and receives subsidies of €4 million from the Federal government and the State of Berlin. The most prominent civic cooperative project however, is the one on the Tempelhof Field. In 2010, after almost 100 years of use as an airport, the 4 km² area – larger than Central Park and Hyde Park – was opened to the public. This happened mainly as a result of pressure from residents groups in adjacent neighbourhoods that significantly lack open space. Since the Berlin blockade of 1948/49, the site with its imposing terminal building, is deeply rooted in the consciousness of Berliners. When it opened, more than 230,000 visitors were attracted to walk, run, skate and bike on the taxiways and runways, and to picnic on the extensive lawns. Earlier initiatives argued for its use as a public open space. Thereupon, in summer 2007, the planning administration of the Berlin Senate initiated an internet dialogue in which 2,400 citizens participated actively, evaluating and evolving their ideas together. 68,000 visitors looked at the online dialogue. The proposals discussed were taken on board and for the most part implemented, in conjunction with the opening of the former airfield.

Shortly after the opening, the debate about the integration of this area into the Berlin development strategy caused controversies. The intention of the Berlin Senate was to develop three residential neighbourhoods and a commercial area on the edges of the former airfield. The remaining 230 hectares were to be preserved as green space. In 2011, a citizens’ initiative was established with the aim of overturning these plans through a referendum, and preventing any development. After a heated public debate, a referendum was held in May 2014 on the future of Tempelhof Field: 739,124 Berlin voted for a law to preserve the entire open space as a leisure and recreation area, thus making the previous plans obsolete.

As a result, a development and management plan for the preservation of the open space on the former airfield is now being developed with full public participation. A new process was launched at the end of 2014 with numerous working groups and an internet forum, as well as subsequent planning workshops. The draft plan will be discussed and further developed until the autumn of 2015. After that, its political adoption is expected.

The debate about the future use of the Tempelhof Field is still ongoing on the internet. However, with 1,800 participants and 300 proposals, the participation is comparatively low. Even if there is no viable alternative, this process could become an alibi. Nevertheless the success of the referendum against a building development is a milestone for citizen participation in the planning process. It has ensured, that the citizens of Berlin, more than ever, are involved at an early stage in urban development planning.

SOCIAL CONFLICT MANAGEMENT IN THE TRANSFORMATION PROCESS
The examples described represent only a small sample of the plurality of civil society generated projects that have changed the face of Berlin. In 1990, the Stadtforum Berlin initiated an open discourse for the bringing together of the divided city. The model of a ‘city contract’ formulated at the time – community based agreements on urban development – remains an idea. However, the discourse-model of the Stadtforum has changed. This applies not only to new participants and changed problems, but also to new forms of dialogue, such as internet-based ones. In this context, many civic and experimental initiatives are important and fruitful stimuli for a change in planning and building cultures. At the same time, in the context of wider urban development issues, they remain comparatively marginal. Nevertheless, the projects described fulfill an important role in managing social conflict in urban society, regardless of their specific characteristics and strategic importance. Their impact on the creation of new models of social and economic life in the transformation process of Berlin is significant. Many of these projects are part of local economic activities that secure their place between the alternative and the global economies. Additionally, their creativity contributes significantly to the formation of memorable places that support successful livelihoods in the city.

Ulrich Becker, Managing Director UrbanPlan GmbH
Erhart Pfotenhauer, Planning Group Manager, epUrban, Berlin
The Water Environment Federation’s Global Risks Perception Survey showcases that future risks (climate change, water crises, biodiversity loss and ecosystems collapse, extreme weather events, natural catastrophes, man made environmental catastrophes, etc) are increasing in frequency and impact. At the same time these risks show a clear and strong interdependency on a regional, most often urban scale. The city is the scale where mankind can adapt to and mitigate these risks through a comprehensive approach and by connecting planning, design and politics.

Water is the global connecting factor. If current practices continue, two billion people will be effected by 2050, and four billion by 2080. Of all worldwide disasters, 90 per cent are water related. Global urbanisation provides growth, prosperity, emancipation and development opportunities, but climate change, sea level rise and the increasing impacts of these, risk putting a lot of pressure on cities, societies and citizens, on economies and ecology. If we don’t act, the system will collapse and we will be the victims of our own failure.

Water is at the heart of this uncertain future: it is through water that most of the impact of climate change is felt. Water is essential for the economy and for social and cultural wellbeing. Water quality defines society’s economic and societal prosperity, and water risks – too much or too little – define societies’ vulnerability. In an urban context, water is an asset if right but if not, it is a severe risk. And while urbanisation has this emancipatory capacity – women work and kids learn – it is the collective water issues that can put urban places at higher risk, thus straining once again the emancipatory curve. Water connects economy and ecology, and on the urban-regional scale, we can adapt and mitigate, thus strengthening cities and communities worldwide.

Hurricane Sandy in 2012 left a big mark on the North East region of the United States, the country’s largest metro-region and a great economic power, destroying and damaging more than 650,000 houses and hundreds of thousands of businesses. Sandy unveiled the social and physical vulnerabilities of this region and their interdependencies. It exposed its tensions, the disconnect between politics and people, and emphasised that there was no clear path forward. The socially vulnerable lived in the most vulnerable places, where they were hit hardest by the storm's devastating power, fully dependent on others to get back on their feet.

With Rebuild by Design, a large and inspired coalition of stakeholders, initiated by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, joined forces with the ambition to set a new standard for resilient development. Ten teams were selected out of a worldwide response of 1,488 teams of engineers, scientists, architects and activists from all over the world that collaborated with a wide variety of agencies: federal, state and local governments, businesses and community groups, affected citizens and activists groups such as Occupy Sandy. Supported by research partners and a group of dedicated funders such as the Rockefeller Foundation, Rebuild by Design became more than a programme; it evolved into a movement for resilience directed at the hearts and minds of the people. It created alliances for change, pushed for research by design and connected with real projects, linking design to politics and advocating reform through new perspectives, for a true cultural change.

Henk Ovink, Special Envoy International Water Affairs (Netherlands), Principal Rebuild by Design. Former Special Advisor to the Presidential Hurricane Sandy Rebuilding Task Force
In 2050 approximately 70 per cent of the world population will live in cities. This is offering challenges in the field of energy, water, food, waste, mobility and housing of an unseen magnitude. Cities are looking for strategies to deal with these challenges in a globalising world economy, where large companies are organising themselves to deliver services that until recently were in the public domain. Information technology generates numerous possibilities to make cities ‘smart’, and individual citizens find each other in communities that are developing many small-scale solutions for their cities. How do we develop cities in this era of shifting paradigms?

Cities are the footprint of society. They are the reflection of the economic, social, technological and political forces that shape our lives. The change of most western societies first from an agricultural into an industrial economy, then from an industrial into a post-industrial service economy, and now into an idea-driven, creative service economy (Florida, 2010) has generated different forces that shape our cities. In city planning in most developed economies, we have seen a shift in the force field in the past three decades.

From systems that were more oriented to solidarity, availability and equality and initiatives from the public domain, the growth of personal wealth of citizens and a process of individualisation have generated more private market initiatives that are more geared to the individual consumer. The willingness to pay taxes for the good of society has diminished, and spending for personal interest increased. Privately financed communities and clubs have expanded and privately owned public space has become a common phenomenon.

On the other hand the rise of information technology enables citizens to make their own data about their own environment, and through big data they can ‘sense the city’. We are now able to make living labs of parts of cities and use processes of co-creation with stakeholders to generate alternatives that are well rooted in society.

Are we going to (re)develop a more civic society with a better balance between societal and individual needs? How does that translate into physical solutions in the making of our cities? And what is the role of market parties in this?

In The Netherlands, after many decades of detailed city planning by public bodies, we seem to have forgotten where we came from. When Amsterdam was planned, the city limited itself to defining the underlying structure of canals, roads and defence works, and left it to private initiative to ‘fill in the grid’. With private capital, the plots were filled and altered over time when change in demand occurred. The first railroad in The Netherlands was a privately-run business. The same happened with the large tracts of land that were reclaimed from the sea: private companies and cooperatives took care of that. Later when the state developed into a welfare state, Dutch city development became an example of successful top-down planning for many decades. And when the public sector failed to deliver solutions to growing societal needs, many different solutions were generated through Public Private Partnerships. Successful examples are plenty in the domain of toll roads, bridges, sewage systems, transportation systems, energy plants, etc.

**THE DUTCH EXPERIENCE**

What does this mean for city making? In my view, it means that private initiatives and profit driven arrangements are necessary to make cities, but that city governments as representatives of their citizens should establish the basic rules of the game under democratic control, thus securing the long-term interest of the civic society. They should leave as much as possible open to private initiative and stimulate innovative solutions and challenge market parties. They should set clear goals and boundaries and be reliable over time. In that way they create a stable and clear investment climate for all kinds of private initiatives. Not only large scale top-down ones, but also small, community-driven bottom-up ones.
They should allow mix and change of functions over time and should separate long-term, high-impact infrastructural decisions from the short-term, low-impact ones. Cities are living organisms and we have never been capable of planning them in such a way that they are alive from day one. For reference, look at Chandigarh, Canberra or Brasilia. Patience is an important ingredient for city making, but today we seem to have no time. The only answer to that is the kind of open planning I described above: fix what is necessary, leave open where possible. Cooperate with market parties in such a way that they also take responsibility for the less profitable but socially necessary solutions. But above all: use the intelligence of citizens in processes where stakeholders are co-creating new solutions for cities. In the meanwhile we have to take care that we create meaningful, beautiful public space. This will appear to be the greatest asset of cities and a clever investment for private parties too. If cities fail to develop strategies that facilitate the developments I described above, they are bound to find out that profit-driven private initiatives will spill over into default arrangements for the city.

**COLLABORATION WITH ACADEMIA**

‘Making city’ today requires a different set of competences than we were used to a few decades ago. Multidisciplinary work in complex settings with multiple stakeholders is offering numerous challenges. That is why the City of Rotterdam, Erasmus University and Delft University combined forces in 2002 and created a successful post-experience, postgraduate training. Professionals from different disciplines and different stakeholders work side by side in a two-year part-time MSc programme (Master City Developer). They work on challenging projects from practice while getting academically trained, and they become reflective practitioners.

The City of Rotterdam has reviewed its city planning strategies in the past years and is now combining these in order to develop the city:

- Plan, make legislation and uphold only where it is necessary
- Facilitate societal initiatives
- Initiate where market fails to pick up societal needs.

Recently the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Delft University of Technology and Wageningen University, created Amsterdam Metropolitan Solutions (AMS) in co-operation with the City of Amsterdam. The city will serve as living lab for many new experiments in design, engineering and management of cities, and many companies will collaborate in this programme.

Altogether I have a tremendous faith in the vitality of the city. Confronted with the challenges to accommodate a growing population in a globalised economy, close cooperation between public and private sectors, between institutions and bottom-up initiatives of citizens, is vital. This will be facilitated by using technology to create smart cities that enable co-operation between many different stakeholders. With a good understanding of each other’s interests I am convinced we will find the solutions to the challenges we are faced with.

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Professor Hans de Jonge, Chair of Real Estate and Development, Delft University of Technology, Chairman of Brink Group and initiator of MSc programme Master City Developer
Birmingham's Big City Plan has drawn considerable positive attention in recent years for its role in the continued transformation of the city's centre, and there are a number of features of the plan which should attract our interest and encourage discussion. As a masterplan it is interesting both for the successes it has enabled under adverse conditions and for the ways it invites comparison with international examples. Perhaps most important among these features is the plan's focus on building partnerships and supporting strategic decisions by multiple actors. In this respect, the plan follows the visioning study by Professor Michael Parkinson, but is also a useful example of the kind of collective thinking that underpins the notion of 'the city as master developer'. However, other features of the plan are necessary complements to this focus on strategy and partnership, and we may look at these to open a comparative discussion of lessons to be learned from abroad.

BIRMINGHAM'S CLEAR VISION

Firstly, the plan is clear about its ambitions and the way these are founded upon current trends and evolving models. Economic development and job generation come foremost in its vision, based on a knowledge-city model which emphasizes the growth and development of cultural and educational institutions, creative and digital industries, and a broad range of office and work spaces. Tied together with this ambition is another emphasizing high-quality, city-centre living. This is a plan which acknowledges the advantages which may be gained from the city's youthful and diverse population if meaningful support can be given to its existing knowledge institutions and the rich urban potential of its city centre. Taken together, these ambitions and the current economic conditions on which they're based underpin a strategy to generate value in the medium to long-term, and it is clear that the value envisioned can be seen as both social and economic. City leadership must act as stewards promoting the creation of that value through broad-based collaboration and partnership over time.

Secondly, as we turn from ambitions to the means of urban transformation, there is a very clear coupling of infrastructural development with a comprehensive emphasis upon all forms of mobility. Throughout the plan, not only is mode variety emphasised, but the condition of the system of streets, spaces, and transport networks is addressed in terms of enhancements to overall mobility and connectivity. There is an emphasis upon extension, balance, diversity, and permeability which serves pedestrian life and cyclists, while simultaneously encouraging the hierarchy and nodality required for successful development of public transport. In this way, investment in infrastructure gains its justification through its role in the broader integration and capacity-building of the city. At the same time, the stakeholder base for infrastructural development is broadened and the risks of overall investment lowered.

Thirdly, the plan is based very clearly upon the concept of urban areas – their character, integrity, richness, and vocation are emphasised repeatedly. This contrasts with restrictive land-use planning and encourages the diversification and intensification commensurate with central-city capacity-building. Also, however, these urban areas are not seen as bounded enclaves, but as mutually supportive parts of a greater whole. The areas are understood as layered and interconnected with their surroundings. The vision of the plan moves fluidly across scales, so that local proposals can be understood in relation to broader metropolitan transformation. This is integration through differentiation. Emphasising urban areas within the plan promotes two further patterns of successful practice within the overall urban development process. First, the design reasoning which ensues aims toward the intersection of complexity and coherence, such that a consistent and repeatable morphology can offer nevertheless a considerable diversity and flexibility of spaces. Secondly, the emphasis upon urban areas in the plan encourages a complementary approach to delivery. The
Big City Plan encourages the formation of a robust set of area-based, cross-sectoral delivery mechanisms, such as place-based initiatives and business improvement districts.

EUROPEAN COMPARISONS
We may take these features of a promising UK plan as a starting point for wider discussion and consideration of seminal plans and projects from other European cities, such as Malmö’s Western Harbour, Hamburg’s Hafencity, and Paris’ Rive Gauche and Bercy. Before we do, however, it is worth considering against what we would place such a collection. All of these are examples of large-scale projects requiring leadership, joined-up vision, and a focus on long-term value. They are noteworthy because they start from the recognition that the current scope, complexity, and, importantly, potential value of urban change exceeds what the market and piecemeal private development can address. Throughout the UK, as in Europe, the regulatory and restrictive bias of planning, together with the market, leave cities poorly equipped to address the uncertainties and risks of redevelopment, precisely at a time when there is greatest opportunity to harness global trends for radical improvement in our cities. The issue is much more than simply having an overview and technical competence to drive change. However, France has a long tradition, extending from the 50s and 60s, establishing in law the instruments to enable state-led leadership through project-based contracting authorities for large-scale urban change. More recently, in 1999 and 2000, France passed a set of laws to improve the way local governments can act in concert – across boundaries and sectors – in order to fulfil strategic ambitions. The focus shifted to collaborative action, sustainability, social cohesion, and a coherent and consolidated approach among all facets of urban development – infrastructural, economic, and social. Leadership became oriented more toward the building of broadly based competence and capacity.

The shift in French laws show that it is not simply a case of taking a grand vision – this had long been possible in both France and the UK – but in enabling a broad set of stakeholders to take collective decisions under conditions that are too complex and dynamic for either the single vision of the state or the wildly dispersed interests of the market. To combat complexity and risk on the one hand, and take full advantage of forces for positive change, on the other hand, requires stewardship and a vehicle for promoting dialogue amongst actors on ambitions, values, and local conditions. This is the role of plans like those we have seen in Birmingham, Malmö, and Hamburg. They are propositional and flexible rather than restrictive, and highly ambitious rather than merely regulatory. Christer Larsson, Director of Planning at the City of Malmö, has long been an advocate of ‘value planning’, an approach that emphasises dialogue, collaborative learning, and the clarification of key ambitions in urban development. This has been a hallmark of the successful transformation of Malmö over the last two decades, in which we have seen city government retain the trust both of its citizens and the business sector as it rapidly shifted its core vision away from declining industries and toward emerging sectors (see article on page 20).

However, beyond these emerging characteristics of leadership, the other features of Birmingham’s Big City Plan deserve consideration alongside these European examples. Each of them is strongly based on the concept of urban areas, promoting mix, complexity, and coherence through a studied emphasis upon morphological consistency and variation, rather than on land-use distinctions. Similarly, all of them link infrastructural investment in transport to an insistence upon rich patterns of micro-mobility to support broader integration. Hafencity, like Birmingham, presents a project for the expansion and diversification of the city centre. The ambitions are also similar: enable the growth of key business sectors, emphasise knowledge and cultural institutions, promote accommodation of creative industries, and most especially, cultivate new opportunities for city-centre living. However, the case of Hafencity, with its unique powers as a contracting authority, allows us to see very clearly and didactically the role of both design and finely developed legal instruments in enabling the management of risk, the broadening of the stakeholder base, and the rapid pursuit of transformation.

Hafencity GMBH, as the contracting authority, not only controls the land but has the power to link the point of its sale to planning and design approvals along with an obligation to build and occupy. The emphasis throughout the process is placed upon building an urban community of stakeholders committed to long-term value. The plan and the legal instruments are the tools. The legal instruments are perhaps not replicable in the UK, but the key ideas are transferable. In the UK, the possibility of area-based planning and delivery vehicles allow us to similarly address problems of risk and uncertainty through collective stewardship. Design reasoning can support this process. In Hafencity, each phase of the plan was geared to develop relatively complete urban areas in sequence, and the design emphasis was placed upon the intersection of coherence and variety. In the earliest phase, the proposition of simple and consistent types enabled
In Hafencity, each phase of the plan was geared to develop relatively complete urban areas in sequence, and the design emphasis was placed upon the intersection of coherence and variety.

Hafencity to seek a broad set of developers and stakeholders as preferred bidders, and then coax them from them greater levels of design and programmatic ambition throughout a consultation process prior to final agreement and development. There were no land-use restrictions, but values were rooted in the larger ambitions of the expansion of the central city, and consequently promoted both office and residential functions in the early phases. The simplicity of the types supported these ambitions.

However, the consistency and variation that define urban areas are not our only design challenges. What is also distinctive about the current period is the dramatic explosion of complex networks of collaboration that define innovation-based economies of today. Workplaces are changing, as are universities, libraries, museums, stadiums, and so on. All of them are increasingly oriented toward multiple functions and wider urban synergies. With Renzo Piano’s design for St. Giles in London, the transformation of today’s office-building lobby could become a resource for a redefined urban plaza. Seattle’s Central Library by OMA not only redefines the experience of being in a library and the services on offer, but offers a new kind of urban resource in its design direction. Examples such as these abound, and this may be extended into new approaches to housing in central cities. In Malmö’s Western Harbour, Hafencity, Rive Gauche and Bercy, design leadership in housing is clearly evident. The Marco Polo residential tower directly adjacent to Unilever’s headquarters in Hafencity demonstrates not only the possibility of high-quality family living in a tower environment, but also a high degree of floorplan variation for a complex social mix, and also the great potential of private outdoor space in a residential tower. In Rive Gauche, the differentiation of the overall project into distinctive neighbourhoods enabled design exploration into the particular qualities and advantages of different morphological starting points. In the Tolbiac district, the emphasis is upon the possibilities of the perimeter block, while in the Massena district, Christian Portzamparc’s plan called for a rich experimentation with the possibilities of mid-rise point blocks under conditions of high density.

**CONCLUSION**

The Big City Plan is not in itself a statutory plan, but lends itself to the development of Birmingham Council’s Core Strategy, which does have statutory standing. In addition, it has been adopted by a wide variety of organizations involved in the city’s area-based development, and can also serve to guide local statutory plans. As the key features of the plan are absorbed into the collective stewardship of the city’s development, the role of design in the management of risk and creation of value comes into sharper relief. Here is where we can learn most from the more detailed and studied consideration of contemporary design thinking emerging globally. This design competence can support our efforts for coherence together with complexity and innovation, and in this way serve both stewardship and the value proposition underlying urban change.

Professor Lawrence Barth, lecturer on urbanism at the Architectural Association Graduate School.
Cities develop over generations. Each of the contributors reflects on the importance of a long-term view for their city, composed of a commitment to a vision and achieved through incremental steps. The role of the city authority is to focus on integrating the past, present and future, by managing change, not primarily by relying on a fixed master plan but by establishing processes to support collaboration and co-production within a guiding framework. HafenCity is an example of what Professor Bruns-Berentelg, its CEO, describes as ‘actor-centred induced development’, where increased complexity and uncertainty requires a planning approach on many different levels, physical, technical and socio-cultural, as well as the involvement of a range of stakeholders, including users and civil society. HafenCity, an enlargement of Hamburg’s city centre by almost 40 per cent, is more than a construction site; it is equally concerned with economic, social and cultural development. It is innovative in its approach, focused on quality, learning through evaluation, reflection and feedback. Barth describes HafenCity as a process of building a community of stakeholders, committed to long-term value, and addressing problems of risk and uncertainty through collective stewardship.

Our two UK contributors, both with eminent careers leading local authority teams, offer pointers towards a more collaborative inclusive approach. Studert’s description of the development of a planning strategy for Cambridge and its sub-region, recognises the value of the work of Cambridge Futures, a joint initiative between town and gown, to the planning authority, when framing the issues and options for the city development plan. Whilst Cambridgeshire Horizons Quality Charter for Sustainable Growth sets high expectations and a sound platform for the current Quality Panel, Cambridge is a story of high ambitions, with strong support from civil society, but as is often the case, slow in delivery. Studert sees ‘local authorities operating largely as regulators of a dysfunctional market rather than an as an active partner’. Peter Bishop talks about the parochialism of ‘city hall’ governance, and the implications of the shift from being the sole provider of services to becoming an enabler of public/private delivery agencies. He reminds us that cities are complex, that democracy can be difficult, and that framing robust, resilient and balanced solutions takes time. Planning in a democracy is about brokerage and leadership, for which the city has to earn the right to lead by making good things happen. Planning, he argues, should be ‘permissive not restrictive’, citing the breakthrough for Kings Cross and St Giles when planners stepped outside their ‘comfortable regulatory role’.

Irish planning, based on the British legal system, is tempered by European experience. City leadership comes from the city manager appointed by the State. Dick Gleeson, as an instinctive ‘collaborative urbanist’, moved between the formal role of making and regulating the statutory development plan, and the participative role. Drawing on the energy of the city to initiate small-scale local change led to establishing Creative Dublin, an informal partnership between the city, its agencies, the universities and business.

The continental articles highlight the greater autonomy of other European cities, with their different legal structures and strong emphasis on community, collaboration, and equality. They provide strong models, whilst also showing the pressures that city developments are facing, as systems move from solidarity, availability and equality to greater individuality, selectivity and inequality. Malmö, a city based on heavy industry which 30 years ago faced a declining economy, sought a strong vision and political leadership. It has repositioned itself through focusing on a green agenda of environmental sustainability, social equality and working together to establish shared values through dialogue. Berlin before re-unification was a city split by ideology, with the western sectors dependent on central government support. Post re-unification and now the seat of government, the city is developing its role as a creative hub. The pre-unification legacy of a large student population and alternative lifestyles has supported a culture of experimentation, which is moulding the character of the city through small-scale infill initiatives, and opening up larger unused areas such as Tempelhof to public debate. These initiatives, external to the formal planning process, are initiating change through small-scale examples and on the larger sites. They are stimulating new mechanisms for participation, ownership and delivery.

In the Netherlands, Utrecht’s central station presents a 30-year long-term regeneration project likely to have had an impact across the city and its immediate region. The process, with strong themes and values established by referendum, was implemented incrementally with the city as ‘ring master’. It began as a blueprint masterplan which, after the local referendum, developed to become a collaborative process of co-creation and co-production. The director of the project, Albert Hutshemaekers likens the process to open-heart surgery: ‘the client must stay alive, all specialists have their own opinions and the family needs to be informed constantly’. Henk Ovink, previously Director for Spatial Planning at the Dutch Ministry for Infrastructure and Environment, provides a global perspective of applying a collaborative approach that connects, planning, design and practices to tackle the crisis of water, its risks and opportunities.

In this era of rapid change, the masterplan becomes a device for managing progressive urban transformation, through a process of commitment, collaboration and co-operation. The process is one of creating a big vision, established and delivered in partnership with local people and stakeholders through an iterative journey. The state provides the infrastructure for cities and their citizens to thrive, and the certainty to make decisions in a timely manner. Cities provide long-term vision, leadership and facilitation, supporting the success of their citizens, seeking sustainable and equitable outcomes for all. Civil society contributes to the ambitions of the city, through social, ‘green’ and economic enterprises, stimulating resilience, prosperity, global competitiveness and innovation.

John Worthington
Rosalie Callway
The National Urban Design Awards 2015
11 March 2015, Victory Services Club, London

The Urban Design awards have now been in existence for eight years, developing from a relatively modest initiative by John Billing-ham to a more wide-ranging competition that now includes awards for practices, the public sector, students, developers, books and lifetime achievement. At the same time the award ceremony has expanded in size (140 people attended this year) and quality, culminating this year with a new format – suggested by Noha Nasser, Chair of the Awards group – that allowed for more networking, conviviality and, not to be neglected, better food.

During the first hour, attendees mingled informally and networked, with drinks in their hands. The next part of the evening, the more formal one, was organised around tables for twelve people. After a welcoming by UDG Chair Katy Neaves, David Rudlin of UrBED gave a stimulating, humorous and very visual key-note address (reproduced on page 8–9).

Former Chair of the UDG, Amanda Reynolds then introduced the awards which, as in previous years, showcase some great examples of urban design work produced in the UK over the past 12 months. For four of the six categories, the shortlisted candidates had prepared short videos which were shown before Janet Tibbalds presented the winners with their awards on behalf of the Francis Tibbalds Trust. The exception to this format was the Book award which was introduced by Louie Sieh, chair of the panel of judges for this category. Half-way through the proceedings there was a pause to allow for the excellent dinner to be served. The guitar duo of Charles Alexander and John Blackwell with vocalist Liz Fletcher provided music during this interval. The last of the awards, for Lifetime Achievement, was given to Terry Farrell who couldn’t be there in person but was shown on film being interviewed by Jeremy Hernalesteen.

After the presentation ceremony, participants lingered for some time, networking and discussing the evening which by all accounts was a great success. In developing the awards for future years, the UDG needs more entrants to all awards categories and more practices attending the event. There are many more good schemes around the country, both from the public and private sector that should be known to a wider audience; there are exemplary developers that need to come forward; there are pioneering local authorities taking initiatives that could be replicated elsewhere. The awards are there to make sure these get recognition.

All those reading this article should think of entering for one of the awards and tell their colleagues to do so.

As in the past, the short-listed entries in the Practice and Public Sector categories were published in Urban Design and the UDG membership was invited to vote for the winner. The Student and the Developer Award were chosen by the UDG executive, the Book Award by the reviewing judges and the Lifetime Achievement award by the UDG Trustees.

The awards evening was generously sponsored by publishers Routledge, Urban Initiatives Studio and Bespoke. Thanks are therefore due to the sponsors as well as to all those that helped making the evening a success, including those who attended; and congratulations to all winners and shortlisted entrants.

The Urban Design award ceremony is now a highlight in the professional calendar. The UDG needs to put the price up for the ticket of the awards evening: those that attended got a very good meal and abundant alcohol for a mere £20. It must have been the best value deal in town!

PRACTICE AWARD
Winner
URBED for the Trent Basin scheme in Nottingham

Shortlisted
HTA Design LLP for the South Acton Masterplan,
John Thompson & Partners for the St Clement’s Hospital, Bow,
Levitt Bernstein for the Ocean Estate regeneration, Tower Hamlets,
All shortlisted entries published in UD 132.

PUBLIC SECTOR AWARD
Winner
Birmingham Municipal Housing Trust,
Birmingham City Council

Shortlisted
London Borough of Hackney for King’s Crescent Community Orchard Pocket Park
Telford and Wrekin Council for Southwater Regeneration of Town Centre
All shortlisted entries published in UD 133.

DEVELOPER’S AWARD
Winner
Barratt Homes Southern Region for
Bentley Priory (Phase 1), Stanmore
Trumpington Meadows, Cambridge
Montague Park (Phase 1), Wokingham

Special commendation was given to
Davidson Homes

BOOK AWARD
Winner
Smart Cities: Big data, civic hackers, and the quest for a new utopia
by Anthony M. Townsend, W. W. Norton & Company

Runner up
How to study public life,
Jan Gehl and Birgitte Svarre, Island Press

Shortlisted
Food City, CJ Lim, Routledge
Sustainable Urban Metabolism, Paulo Ferrão and John E. Fernandez, MIT Press
The City as a Tangled Bank: Urban Design vs Urban Evolution, Terry Farrell, John Wiley and Sons
Street Design: The Secret to Great Cities and Towns, Victor Dover and John Massengale, John Wiley and Sons, Inc
Designing Urban Transformation, Aseem Inam, Routledge
All shortlisted entries published in UD 133.

STUDENTS AWARD
Winner
Clara Kohler of Cardiff University for her project of Re-imagining Swansea High Street – The Green Lanes.
Published in the next two pages.

Shortlisted
Karina Wahyuni Utami, Cardiff University, Breaking Down Barriers – Birmingham Central Mosque
Adriyan Kusum, University of Nottingham Nottingham Mediapiark
Siti Anis; Sen Chen; Osman Khalifa., Strathclyde University Regeneration of Urban Neighbourhood.

Sebastian Loew

3 David Rudlin giving key note speech, with Katy Neaves and Amanda Reynolds
4 The student award announced by Sebastian Loew being presented by Janet Tibbalds to Clara Kohler.
5–7 shortlisted student projects, top to bottom Karina Wahyuni Utami, Adriyan Kusum, Siti Anis, San Chen, Osman Khalifa
Re-imagining Swansea High Street: The Green Lanes
Clara Köhler explores the informal activation of medieval alleyways

BACKGROUND TO THE PROJECT
During medieval times, the High Street in Swansea was a bustling shopping area. However, after the Second World War, the city centre moved to the south-west, and today, the High Street has lost its original function. The area around this once so vibrant street faces many problems such as vacancy, physical decline and a negative image. Against this background the Urban Design Group of Swansea City Council commissioned a strategic urban design framework in order to explore the potential for the High Street to be re-vitalised through the overarching topic of ‘greening’. The following design project was conducted in response to a brief set out in this framework and was informed by the previously undertaken site analysis, community involvement and precedent studies.

AIM OF THE PROJECT
With its strong north-south direction the High Street functions as an important connection between the city centre and the railway station. However, because of the inherent topography and the fact that it runs parallel to two major streets with only one link across for vehicles, the High Street is poorly connected to its surrounding areas. For pedestrians there are several small-scale alleyways in an east-west direction embedded within the medieval structure of the place, but those are perceived as dark, unfriendly and unsafe. This project aims to strengthen the strategic east-west connection from the university down to the river by opening up and activating the alleyways in order to use these forgotten spaces more efficiently and re-integrate them into the public realm of Swansea.

THE GREEN LINES
The east-west lanes have the potential to become an asset for the whole neighbourhood, to make up for the lack of public space in the area and help strengthen the social bonds of residents, workers and visitors alike by providing spaces to stay, play and meet. As well as making the area safer and changing people’s perception, the green lanes can improve the first impression of Swansea when coming from the train station, and become a specific feature for Swansea as a green city. Of special importance are the intersections between High Street as a proposed shared space and the green lanes. These are to be marked firstly through the introduction of temporarily movable trees and street furniture, which could then be solidified by permanent fixtures over time, carrying the character and identity of the green lanes into the High Street.

AN ACTIVE GREENING STRATEGY
The proposed greening strategy for the reuse of the lanes consists of two approaches, one for activating the lanes through community events and one for improving the environment. The activation strategy explores how greening can be combined with community, arts and culture as well as retail. It seeks to bring people to the lanes and increase their usage through temporary and regular events, happenings or installations. The greening and physical improvement of the lanes through informal as well as formal transformations are to be managed and led by a proposed growing and community hub.
centre in direct collaboration with an adjacent food centre and the planned creative hub of Coastal Housing’s Urban Village.

**KING’S LANE AREA DESIGN FOCUS**
The design focuses on the area where High Street and King’s Lane meet. The block to the south of King’s Lane is reconfigured with retail frontages towards High Street with residential use above. The community and growing centre incorporated in that block faces onto King’s Lane and an open space to the east of the block, which provides space for urban agriculture and community gardening. A previously demolished building plot is transformed into the New Lane, a public space providing a series of terraces as stages for a more informal and organic occupation. The terraces are flexible enough to adapt to different requirements and activities, encouraging individuals to become more engaged and take ownership of the spaces through greening.

**THE PROCESS**
Suggested is a step-by-step transformation of the area, with the growing centre firstly being located in a vacant shop and using the existing open spaces such as the demolished building plot for informal growing with moveable and temporary structures. This helps establishing a culture whilst testing people’s interest and the viability of the growing centre as an institution. In collaboration with Coastal Housing, the King’s Lane area is developed with residential and public functions as anchor uses. Both lanes are renovated in consultation with the residents through interventions such as paving, lighting, seating and trees. The final stage would be the construction on the New Lane plot as public space where formal terraces pose the stages for informal activation, greening and street life.

**LESSONS LEARNED**
The project revolves around the idea that rather than solely being a physically designed and constructed object, public space can also be approached in a more informal way of space production through social and cultural activation. For this, community involvement and consideration of the needs of local people is vital, in order to provide opportunities for them to take ownership of the spaces. The design process also showed that urban design is more than just the arrangement of physical objects or uses, it is about building relationships and facilitating partnerships between different stakeholders and groups. And in doing so, understanding how urban design is ultimately about the people who bring life to the spaces.
Completing Our Streets

Barbara McCann, Island Press, 2013, £35.00, ISBN 978-1-610914307

There are times when a book covering a narrow issue raises wider concerns and points at significant weaknesses in the urban design scene. This is such a book. The book is well structured, clearly written, driven by a passionate belief in its message, a message that McCann explained in UD 125.

Completing Our Streets is a handbook and polemic seeking to promote the doctrine that streets should be more than efficient surfaces for motor vehicles. Unfortunately it seems that in spite of being aware of our journal, Barbara McMann has never heard of European experience that stretches back to the 70s. In the days of Google Search, it is sad that our American colleagues are so unaware of the ‘reclaiming our streets’ movement here. Such an omission is a failure of both sides, ours for failing to promote our experience and theirs for apparently believing their experience is unique. We must do better.

To end this rant I note that Completing Our Streets is praised by Gabe Klein, Chicago’s Commissioner for Transport. This is the city that sold street parking rights to Morgan Stanley, blocking any hopes of introducing bicycle lanes along the city’s main routes. Bicycle lanes are an integral element of McCann’s complete streets.

The book has good intentions and contains a guide to ways of changing institutional attitudes which is at the heart of McCann’s message. She claims not to promote design solutions, but by showing examples of success she cannot avoid appearing to endorse particular solutions. To this European mind, the illustrations do raise concerns. I fear that by promoting separate routes for cars, bikes and people, the Complete Streets movement will be missing the point that movement systems should be available to all, and that we should be aiming for safe shared surfaces. Separation of modes just divides different users, until they must inevitably meet, more than likely at a junction which is one of the most dangerous parts of any route. If only the Complete Streets movement had looked across the Atlantic they might have avoided falling into this trap.

Completing Our Streets, is however, a useful book for guideline and handbook writers. There is much good sense. It is clearly written and economically laid out. Interestingly, there is evidence that traders on complete streets note an increase in business, much the same message that followed early pedestrianisation schemes in the UK. Plus ça change! ●

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

Transforming Cities – Urban Interventions in Public Space

Kristin Feireiss and Oliver G.Hamm (eds), Jovis, Berlin, 2015, £32.00, ISBN 978-3-86859-337-2

As the governing body of a city that has been transforming itself continuously for most of the last fifty years, Berlin’s Senate instituted the Urban Intervention Award Berlin to showcase urban projects that make a contribution to the quality of life in European cities. This bilingual (German-English) book sponsored by the Senate, documents the 47 projects shortlisted for the award. The diversity presented is somewhat overwhelming and therefore the interventions are grouped under seven headings and preceded by a Preface and five introductory essays. One glaring criticism must be made at the outset: there is no table of contents or index, which is a pity though it doesn’t diminish the interest of the book.

The initiator of the award, Regula Lüscher is the author of the Preface and the first essay, which shares the title with the book. Both emphasise the fact that urban development and planning cannot be seen as they were in the last century; citizen participation, bottom-up initiatives are now established, new solutions are needed to face a new set of problems. City centres, neglected for a long time, are having a renaissance but the periphery should not now be marginalised and requires different approaches. Some cities are growing fast and their inhabitants are scared to see their environment change; others are declining equally fast and need to find new functions. Striking the Right Balance is the title of the second essay, followed by Permanent Urban Redevelopment, both trying to address these challenges. The last essay, Research-Driven Design is based on work done by students and staff of the Berlin Technical University together with a multiplicity of stakeholders on Gropiusstadt, a huge 1960s housing scheme which was used as a live laboratory.

The shortlisted projects respond to the preoccupations discussed; they can be permanent or temporary interventions, large or small, physical or social, and are grouped under headings that give the flavour of their aims: Converting Urban Infrastructures, Urbanising the Periphery, Revitalising ‘Non-Places’, Upgrading Neglected City Centres, Social Projects in Public Space, Educational and Cultural Initiative in the City and Improving the Housing Environment. Some are using recycled materials, one is a jacket to help people maintain their equilibrium in the tube, another the burying of an urban motorway underground to create a park, etc. The background, purpose and outcome of each one is given in a brief paragraph and illustrated in a way that makes it immediately accessible.

The Award itself is an encouraging initiative and the book should stimulate and inspire urban designers and their clients to approach their work in a new imaginative way. Readers will admire the results and be tempted to see the real thing and learn more about them. ●

Sebastian Loew
The Fabric of Place


In recent years, there has been a growth of books about architectural/urban design practices which, apart from anything else they may be, are clearly marketing tools for the practice. On my shelves I have books about Terry Farrell, Dixon Jones, MJP Architects, Edward Cullinan Architects, Eric Parry Architects, and several others. They vary in their nature: some are written by the practice, some by a commissioned author; some are a straightforward record of designs and projects, some more reflective.

This book from Allies and Morrison is of the thoughtful and reflective variety – even modest. It has no narrative to tell. You will not learn about the history of the practice. It does not try to hit you over the head with hype about how good the practice is. It is fairly unstructured, rather like a loose-leaf folder of pieces assembled between covers. But it conveys very well that the firm is a creative group of people with an impressive track record of intelligent interventions in cities.

The contents are in the form of three different types of elements – essays on a series of subjects (the city, density, typology, urban space, tall buildings), case studies and observations – all interspersed. The essays are written by a number of individuals, the short observations are, for some reason, uncredited. The case studies of Allies and Morrison’s work range in scale from the 2012 Olympic campus and Argent’s King’s Cross development, down to a small residential infill in an Oxfordshire village. The connections between the three elements are not hammered home: the reader is left to find them.

All three elements are beautifully illustrated with a variety of photographs, sketches, figure-ground plans and many other kinds of drawings. I was particularly pleased to see the A to Z Map test applied to the King’s Cross masterplan: I learned about this tool years ago but have not previously seen it published. I liked too the examination of a number of types of plan drawing used in the same masterplan process, for different purposes of analysis and communication.

This book demonstrates a satisfyingly mature approach to urbanism. There is no flashiness: it is sober and thoughtful, learning from history, employing techniques of building typology and urban morphology, emphasising the processes of the shaping of space and placemaking. Where urban design generates architecture, space is enclosed by eloquently articulated tectonic surfaces: a civilised background for human activity.

Joe Holyoak

Black Country Allotment Society

Susie Parr, Multistory, West Bromwich 2014. £15.00 to residents of the Black Country (plus P&P), or £25.00 plus P&P for the rest of the UK

Unlike any other books and pamphlets that have been in reviewed in these pages, this specially commissioned box of booklets celebrate the value of allotments to nature, but also to people – here eight residents of Sandwell in the West Midlands. The author Susie Parr has produced nine illustrated booklets with accompanying postcards, two very interesting maps, a pencil, plant markers, wildflower seeds, and a DVD of Bee Movies by film maker Chris Keenan about Black Country beekeepers.

Commissioned by Multistory – a Black Country community arts organisation – this boxed set is about Black Country life, and the allotments provide the author with the means to do that. After two years of regular visits and in different seasons, Parr portrays the resourceful plot-holders, focuses on the value of weeds to pre-industrial society, the array of allotment food, and clever recycling, with a calm and poetic feel. The Bee Roads booklet contains a fascinating map of the route that bees took around one allotment site and the subsequent analysis of the 200 different pollen grains found in one small sample of local honey. This emphasis on every-day and ordinary places that have not been formally designed, and in some cases hope to stay hidden in our towns and cities, is refreshing and an education about leaving places alone.

The excellent photography and film-making describe quiet yet vibrant communities, and help to convey great value to what might otherwise be scorned as commonplace or suburban pursuits. As the author says:

‘Walking through the allotment gate, you step away from the clamour and tensions of the street and enter a quiet place, a place of hope and order, where people connect with plants, the seasons and each other.’

Louise Thomas, independent urban designer
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Master of Arts in Urban Design consists of 1 year full time or 2 years part time or individual programme of study. Shorter programmes as Postgraduate Diploma/Certificate. Project based course focusing on the creation of sustainable environments through interdisciplinary design.

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W Wwww.ncl.ac.uk/apl/study/postgraduate/taught/urbanscience/index.htm
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E cnez@uclan.ac.uk
W Wwww.uclan.ac.uk/courses/msc_urban_design.php
The MSc in Urban Design enables students to work with real cities and live projects, politicians, policy makers, architects and designers in a critical studio environment. This along with the study tour to European cities help to prepare students for practice addressing the demands of our urban future.

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C Giulia Carabelli
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The MSc Building and Urban Design in Development programme combines cultural, social, economic, political and spatial analysis in the effort to present a critical response to the growing complexities within the design and production of urban realms.

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

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W Wwww.bartlett.ucl.ac.uk/planning/programmes/postgraduate/mscinterdisciplinary-urban-design
The MSc Interdisciplinary Urban Design cuts across urban design programmes at The Bartlett, allowing students to construct their study in a flexible manner and explore urban design as a critical arena for advanced research and practice. The course operates as a stand-alone high level masters or as preparation for a PhD.

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

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School of Art, Design & Architecture
Queen Street Studios
Huddersfield HD1 3DH
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C Dr Ioannis Delante
E i.delante@hud.ac.uk
W Wwww.hud.ac.uk/courses/full-time/postgraduate/urban-design-ma/Mac/Dipl/PGCert in Urban Design (Full Time or Part Time).
The MA in Urban Design is aimed to provide students with the essential knowledge and skills required to effectively intervene in the urban design process; develop academic research skills, including critical problem-solving and reflective practice; facilitate design responses to the range of cultural, political, socio-economic, historical, environmental and spatial factors. It also aims to promote responsibility within urban design to consider the wider impact of urban development and regeneration.

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The University of Northampton
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C Sabine Coady Schaeblitz
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W Wwww.northampton.ac.uk/study/courses/courses-by-subject/social-sciences/integrated-urbanism-msc
MSc Integrated Urbanism: Eight Urban Design and Urbanism Modules plus Master Thesis to explore the complexities of creating and managing people-friendly sustainable urban environments.

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Department of Architecture and Built Environment, University Park
Nottingham NG7 2RD
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C Dr Amy Tang
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W Wwww.nottingham.ac.uk/pgstudies/college/architecture-and-built-environment/sustainable-urban-design-march.htm
Master of Architecture (MArch) in Sustainable Urban Design is a research and project-based programme which aims to assist the enhancement of the quality of our cities by bringing innovative design with research in sustainability.

UNIVERSITY OF PORTSMOUTH
School of Architecture
Eldon Building, Winston Churchill Avenue, Portsmouth PO1 2DJ
T 02392 842 040
C Dr Fabiano Lemes
E fabiano.lemes@port.ac.uk
W Wwww.port.ac.uk/courses/architecture-property-and-surveying/ma-urban-design/
The MA Urban Design course provides the opportunity to debate the potential role of design professionals in the generation of sustainable cities. One year full time and two years part time.

UNIVERSITY OF SHEFFIELD
School of Architecture, The Arts Tower,
Western Bank, Sheffield S10 2TN
T 0114 222 0341
C Orkan Kossak
E f.kossak@sheffield.ac.uk
W Wwww.shef.ac.uk/architecture/study/pgschool/taught_masters/maud
One year full time MA in Urban Design for postgraduate architects, landscape architects and town planners. The course has a unique focus, integrates participation and related design processes, and includes international and regional applications.

UNIVERSITY OF STRATHCLYDE
Department of Architecture
Urban Design Studies Unit
Level 3, James Weir Building
75 Montrose Street, Glasgow G1 1XJ
T 0141 548 4219
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E ombretta.romicz@strath.ac.uk
W Wwww.gusu-strath.ac.uk
The Postgraduate Course in Urban Design is offered in CPD, Diploma and MSc modes. The course is design centred and includes input from a variety of related disciplines.

UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST OF ENGLAND, BRISTOL
Faculty of the Built Environment,
Framchay Campus, Coldharbour Lane, Bristol BS16 1QY
C Janet Askres
T 0117 328 3508
MA/Postgraduate Diploma course in Urban Design. Part time two days per week for up to two years, or individual programme of study. Project-based course addressing urban design issues, abilities and environments.

UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER
35 Marylebone Road, London NW1 5LS
T 020 7931 5000 ext 66553
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MA or Diploma Course in Urban Design for postgraduate architects, town planners, landscape architects and related disciplines. One year full time or two years part time.
It’s always a delight to learn about unexpected connections between places and people, which you would struggle to make credible if you were writing fiction. I found out about one recently: between a small urban village in the Black Country, known for coal-mining and steel-making, and a Viennese socialist intellectual, a member of the Vienna Circle of philosophers.

The place is Bilston, now part of the city of Wolverhampton, but in the 1940s an independent municipal borough. The mining and steel-making is all gone, and the economy has never fully recovered, but the fabric of the town centre largely survives. It has attractive streets, with many characterful buildings. In one of them is housed the Bilston Craft Gallery, where I saw an exhibition about this unexpected connection: Bilston’s Happy Housing.

The intellectual was the sociologist and political economist Otto Neurath, who in Red Vienna in the 1920s and 30s worked on the development of modern housing and city planning. In 1932, with the architect Josef Frank and others, he created the Werkbundsiiedlung, a model housing development. He also invented a graphical method of displaying statistics, such as those on slum housing, public health and new housing types, in pictorial form. He called it Isotype (International System of Typographic Picture Education).

He arrived in England as a refugee in 1940, and set up his Isotype Institute in Oxford. In 1945 Bilston’s Town Clerk wrote to Neurath and invited him to become Bilston’s Consultant for Human Happiness. How did this unlikely-sounding event happen? It’s not fully explained, but those were heady days, when the dream of new scientifically-based housing, which could transform the lives of the working-class, was evidently circulating not only in Frankfurt and Paris but in an obscure little Black Country town as well.

Neurath died suddenly later in 1945, but he had already instigated the development of a new municipal housing development in Bilston which became the Stowlawn Estate. Seven organically-shaped greens were surrounded by a variety of two-storey houses and maisonettes. The site plan looked rather like a cluster of seven pebbles.

After Neurath’s death, the estate was designed by others including the architect Charles Reilly, eminent neo-classicist-turned-modernist, and another Viennese émigré, the architect Ella Briggs. The architecture was not astonishing, but it had a distinctly exotic flavour of European modernism imported into the Black Country. Sadly, several of the greens have subsequently been built on, and the double-glazing practitioners have removed a lot of the original character of the houses. We are now rather more pragmatic about the role of good housing in people’s lives. We think that good housing is important, but we don’t see socialist politics, radical architecture, and public health, wellbeing and happiness combined together into an ambitious social programme, least of all by a small local authority. Walking through Stowlawn, I get a romantic scent of a time, not so long ago, when this future was considered possible.

I thought of the parallel with another central European exile, the architect Walter Segal who, a generation later, was invited by the London borough of Lewisham to work with residents on their council house waiting list. Segal showed them how to design and build their own timber-framed houses, on sloping sites which Lewisham had rejected for house-building: they became, like Stowlawn, unfamiliar and exotic places.

I remember Ken Atkins, the chairman of the Lewisham Self Build Housing Association, testifying how the experience of designing and building his house had transformed his life: with Segal he had achieved something he had not thought himself capable of, and this had changed him entirely. Housing had certainly made him happy. Immigration is a divisive subject, but immigrants like Neurath and Segal have enriched British life, and are rightly celebrated.

Joe Holyoak, architect and urban designer
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