

# Housing and the Prince of Wales

Tom Alves

In mid-November, the Office of the Victorian Government Architect hosted a symposium, 'Housing Melbourne', in association with Swinburne University's Institute for Social Research and the UK Prince's Foundation for Building Community.

The OVGA has a strong and deep interest in housing issues and worked with researchers from Swinburne University's Institute for Social Research (ISR) to develop the content of the day's proceedings. Attending the symposium were policy makers, industry experts, academics, planners, architects and other property and development professionals.

A key objective of the day was to cut across professional silos, knowledge disciplines and sectoral boundaries and thereby enable the cross-disciplinary conversations and integrated thinking required to find solutions to a number of intractable housing problems. Among these persistent problems three were identified as being of particular interest:

- appropriate, well-located housing is increasingly unaffordable for a growing number of low and middle income earners;
- current patterns of urban growth are unsustainable and threaten Melbourne's liveability;
- the provision of quality, affordable multi-unit housing is extremely difficult to achieve.

The challenge put forward was not simply to seek the means to increase the quantity, improve the quality and expand the diversity of new homes being built in Melbourne – a tall order by itself!

What was also being sought was a more positive, coordinated and effective role for the processes of housing provision (both new supply and redevelopment) in playing their part to transition our existing urban region to a more sustainable future and, in the process, develop communities that enhance the quality of life of both new and established residents.

Supported by improvement in the efficiency and sustainability of housing development being made possible through construction innovation by the local building industry, these new approaches offer an integrated response to the persistent problems of declining affordability and managing Melbourne's transition to a more sustainable urban form. More importantly, they can help build community by putting urban change into the hands of people who have an on-going stake in the liveability and success of their neighbourhoods.

In conjunction with the Royal Visit, the OVGA welcomed the participation at the symposium of Prince Charles, and representatives from The Prince's Foundation for Building Community. Foundation CEO, Hank Dittmar, spoke about community empowerment and decision making and the value of sustainable urbanism. He also presented a scale model that the Foundation had prepared for the event, demonstrating more intensive redevelopment of a suburban precinct using a terrace housing typology.

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▲ Prince Charles speaks at the housing symposium (photo credit: Herald Sun)

# URBAN DESIGN FORUM

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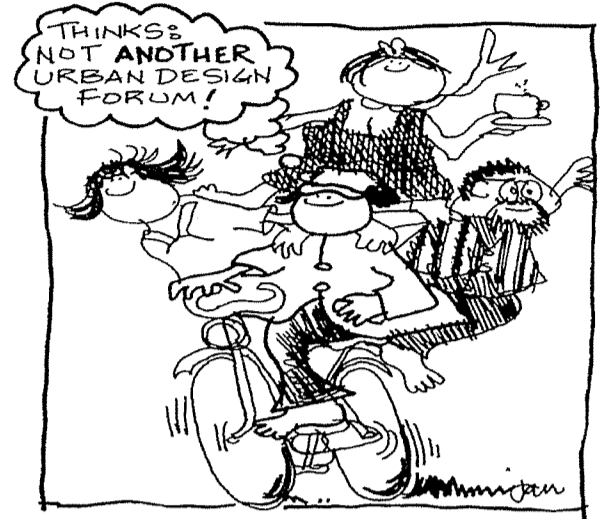
## UDF 100!

Who would have thought? A preliminary chat among a small number of urban design enthusiasts in Melbourne; some abortive attempts to get those same people together for a meeting; the decision to 'have lunch' instead of a meeting: and Urban Design Forum was born!

That was in 1986. An early decision was to produce a quarterly publication - a diverse, inclusive forum - for wide distribution. Despite shoe-string budgets, this is the hundredth edition of that publication.

Readers will be aware that rather than attempt to produce a super-glossy collector's item for the 100th, a more substantial compendium of writings from a range of about 35 authors is in progress. The initiators of the compendium, John Byrne, Bruce Echberg and Bill Chandler, were a little optimistic about the timing – so if you intended to give copies to your friends and family for Christmas, it may have to be a rain check until the New Year.

The final contributions for the compendium are now being received, and preparation of the book is underway. The limited edition book will be available for purchase (it has to be self-funding), as will a CD containing copies of all of the 100 UDF editions. If you want to reserve a copy, send an email to [wchandler@bigpond.com](mailto:wchandler@bigpond.com) ASAP to assist in determining print run.



▲ The late Jan Martin's insightful cartoon in UDF 1 (1987) - little did he, or we, know just how much urban design was about to blossom in Australia.

This 100th edition continues the tradition of including a diverse range of articles about urban design. Thank you to all of the contributors over the 25 years of publication, and a range of supporters, particularly Melbourne City Council. Notwithstanding the widespread use of electronic media (see [www.udf.org.au](http://www.udf.org.au)), it seems that the hard copy format is still strongly desired – so look forward to UDF 101 in March 2013.

Don't forget to keep your articles coming. Simple rules: interesting and well-written, about 500 words, and a couple of 300 dpi jpeg pics.

# Lessons to be learned from the Integrated Design Commission

Daniel Bennett

How many integrated designers does it now take to change a light bulb? I ask as I ponder life after the South Australian Integrated Design Commission.

So, what next for design in Adelaide? Have we reached our design zenith now that the words 'integrated design' are no longer government-sponsored?

One wonders about the rationale for the decision to abolish the SA IDC. In many ways, perhaps our well-intentioned friends in the former commission overstepped the mark too quickly.

Perhaps the bigger, better-resourced government departments (let's say the people with the power, resources and influence) that are responsible for spending taxpayers' hard-earned folding stuff sought a respite from being told what to do by the IDC too earnestly. And perhaps once too often.

Or perhaps it was more simplistic: one administration (Rann) became another (Weatherill), and sought to rebrand a more voter-focused and listening approach to governing the state.

I remember the announcement to establish the IDC on Boxing Day in 2009, down by the tree in Glenelg. With much fanfare, and an earnest and welcoming (if a little sceptical) design community rushing to support a new model for design in government, it was a monumental day for design in South Australia. Here we had a government showing political vision (not to mention calculated courage) to integrate the benefits of design into the top levels of a state administration.

## Headline act, nationally significant

This was a headline act, and nationally significant. To see its demise is saddening, and not just for Adelaide ... there are many others watching to see what happens from the other side of the Great Dividing Range.

Also gone is the much under-valued Thinkers-in-Residence program, which had a longer history and breadth of thought. Another unfortunate cutback, in my view. After all, the

Thinkers program, headed by the amazing and talented Gabrielle Kelly, created the space for thought about integrated design in this state.

So, from emergence to the gallows for integrated design - all from a left-of-centre government in a matter of years.

I think the model for the Integrated Design Commission was spot-on, apart from one important detail – its structure. Placing it within the Department for Premier and Cabinet was always a risky strategy. The IDC was effectively placed in direct competition with the infrastructure and development mechanisms of the state - the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure (DPTI), Urban Renewal Authority (URA), etc - and over time this became obvious - especially to the design professions who have to be nice to everyone.

There appeared to be a battle between power and influence.

## Design-focused strategies important

Design-focused strategies and master-plans are the essential roadmaps for our cities. Often they are more important to the political process than anything else, because without support from the powerful positions in government they are effectively useless, though often beautiful, things. Look at the Port – aren't we up to Master Plan No. 9?

The biggest issue we face now is working out if there are any lessons to be learned. There is no doubt we have a strong legacy to build on the work of the IDC, but we must address the fundamental flaws of the model and create a - dare I say it - more integrated one.

The first thing to do is create a more collegiate and workable atmosphere within DPTI and URA (the appointment of Fred Hansen as CEO of the new URA is a critical first and positive step) to encompass the former roles within the IDC.

Our new bastion of all things design is Ben Hewett, the current Government architect. He will now be working within a new structure somewhere else in the administration, essentially restarting a process that began two years ago when the IDC was established.

As the wave of shock and awe that resulted from the abolishing of the IDC starts to retreat,

emergent and opportunistic ideas and actions are forming for design to continue as a force in government decision-making.

Strategies are never fixed; they're always changing, and at the whim of our political masters. Project delivery is something that governments are always undertaking, and there are many smart and intelligent people currently doing this within DPTI and URA, as well as other departments. It provides the chance for the design-focused and savvy among us to meaningfully engage with those charged with executing the state's complex and ongoing projects across the board

## Better engagement with government and professions

The design community needs to consider better engagement with the people in government who need our assistance – the project directors, managers, procurement advisers and Treasury officials who have probably been over-lectured on the benefits of design.

There is also a much-needed opportunity to better connect with other professions –

engineers, in particular. I've always said landscape architects have more to gain (and lose) from engineers than our collegiate friends, the architects.

The mechanisms for engagement ahead of us include using the design, planning and engineering institutes to lobby and connect more effectively with government. Our cousins in the Property Council and the Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) do this well (albeit with a more cashed-up membership base), and there are others who should also be involved, including the private practices and local government.

For a while, there will be a vacuum, which will be difficult to fill with 'fresh' air while we work out if we are further behind than where we started or whether we have moved forward. But I am optimistic. I have to be. We have to support whatever is shaken out of the system and pick up the pieces 'moving forward'.

Daniel Bennett is a registered landscape architect and vice-president of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, SA Chapter. His views are his own, and he can be contacted at [DJB\\_LA@optusnet.com.au](mailto:DJB_LA@optusnet.com.au)

# Western Australian urban design bounces back to life

Lucian Iacob

Exciting news. After almost seven years in hibernation, urban design forums in Western Australia have been revived. Lucian Iacob is co-ordinating them in collaboration with PIA Urban Design Chapter Convenor, Peter Ciemitis. They are keen that provide for a wide range of discussions and act as a meeting place for urban design exchange.

Recently, Don Newman and Erwin Roberts framed the historical planning and design context of the City Beach and Floreat suburbs and guided a vigorous discussion of more recent opportunities and challenges encountered by LandCorp and the project team.

The next forum will focus on Light Rail, and is tentatively scheduled for the end of February 2013. For this forum, PIA/UDC will partner with the Department of Planning to undertake a practical workshop on TOD typologies for the Light Rail project.

We are now busy working on a preliminary program for topics for the New Year. Our intention is to ensure topics are current, relevant and perhaps controversial at times! A program with something for everybody. If you have something to say or present, contact Peter or Lucian, or just get on the mailing list.

Lucian Iacob is WA Urban Design Chapter Forum Co-ordinator, Planning Institute of Australia, and can be contacted at [iacob@robertsday.com.au](mailto:iacob@robertsday.com.au)

## Endangered sounds: an acoustic history of Brunswick

This project has been the culmination of many years of dialogue with various disciplines and a fair amount of local knowledge. It aims to broach the issue of landscape perception amongst the community in a qualitative fashion and to respond to the shifting urban form. The role of landscape perception and the effects on spatial behaviour and attitudes, that facilitates the 'dichotomy' which Robert McLean identifies in his UDF article 'Melting the needs/wants dichotomy' (No.98) is crucial to this project.

Located 6km, from Melbourne's CBD, the area is well supported by public transport. Traditionally the area had an intimate mix of industrial and residential zones that formed an idiosyncratic physical and psycho-spatial matrix. But the area has been evolving (now rapidly) with off-shore industrial production and local industry relocation. Combine this with the Moreland Council's zoning changes that have occurred within the last two years, and the Draft Structure Plan, development pressures with the associated increase in population density in this urban corridor is gaining momentum. How will the new residents perceive their landscape in the future and how are the designers and planners addressing the issues of change? Knowing

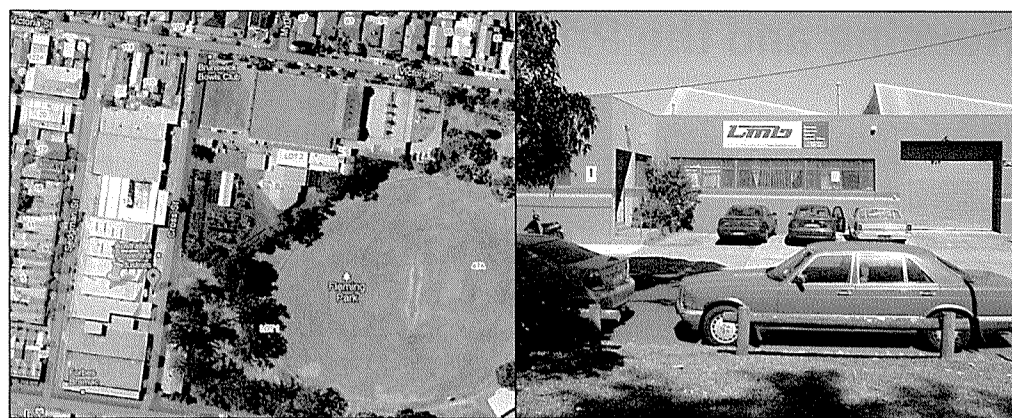
and understanding the relationships between people and their environments is a necessity for vibrancy.

### Evolution is inevitable

With the population set to rise by 8,285 to around 19,000 people in the next 20 years with 4,000 new dwellings, this project is grounded in the understanding that the current landscape's physical and social evolution is inevitable but that there is an opportunity to record information in novel ways for future residents.

Using Augmented Reality (AR) to overlay the virtual worlds via GPS positioning onto the physical site, AR interventions allow viewers to experience different unregulated site-specific bytes of information by launching an enabled phone or tablet. This mediated layer provides an arena for dialogue not previously accessible and, like most innovative technology, may change our behaviour.

The future and the past of the city can now be auditioned on these planes and layers, with a new set of AR senses, thus revealing what has shaped the city and its people from the old areas, social spaces, from business and from our imaginations.



### Listening to old and new stories

Listening to the oral history of the owner who has worked in Brunswick for over 50 years, to the sounds of a 130 year old machine singing, the current stories and the old stories mingle with stories of the immanent future stories of settlement change. As we know, the void created by a building being levelled for development can be confronting, yet the memories contained within the buildings and the stories it contained can now be voiced with a strong meta-connection to place.

By engaging the audience with the current landscape composition in terms of time and colour, texture, culture and history, this project allows people to listen with their feet as well as with their ears. Utilising sound as the core material, it has become apparent that the

sound itself is as important to knowing and communication as it is to other information and networks: the new meta-ecology.

To find out more and listen to recordings visit:

<http://repressedmemories.com.au/endangeredsounds/>

*Anthony Magen is a freelance designer with 10 years professional experience in landscape architecture and urban design, and President of the Australian Forum for Acoustic Ecology. To facilitate listening workshops and Soundwalks email to [anthony@repressedmemories.com.au](mailto:anthony@repressedmemories.com.au) [ED: a longer version of an article on this subject was published in the August 2012 edition of PIA (Vic) Planning News]*

## Victorian Landscape awards

The recent Victorian AILA's awards have just been announced. The Victoria Medal for Landscape Architecture was awarded to Site Office for Keast Park, the client being Frankston City Council. The citation describes it as '...a finely crafted project that sits firmly, yet gently in the landscape, marrying architecture



▲ Lonsdale Street, Dandenong

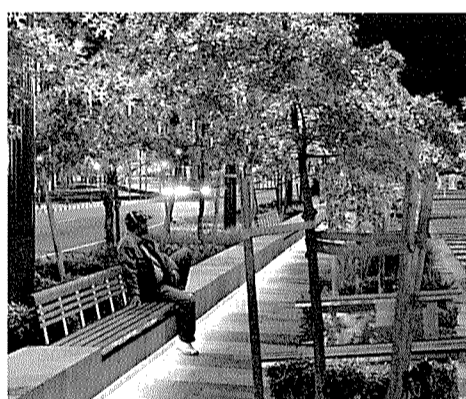
and landscape to define the transition from coastal dune to the built environment. The jury was impressed by the understated design, and the way it subtly embraces and reveals the landscape. The project demonstrates an exemplary sensibility to landscape and community...The project explores the integration and overlap of multiple community facilities and activities, promoting a stronger sense of community ownership and engagement.'

The Excellence Award was given to Taylor Cullity Lethlean for the Lonsdale Street Dandenong project, for client Places Victoria with the Greater Dandenong City Council. The citation said 'Transforming a busy urban thoroughfare in a declining urban centre to a vibrant pedestrian boulevard has injected activity and life back into the heart of Dandenong. TCL in collaboration with BKK, rethink the traditional car-dominated thoroughfare function of a major road through the city centre and re-orientate it towards pedestrians.'

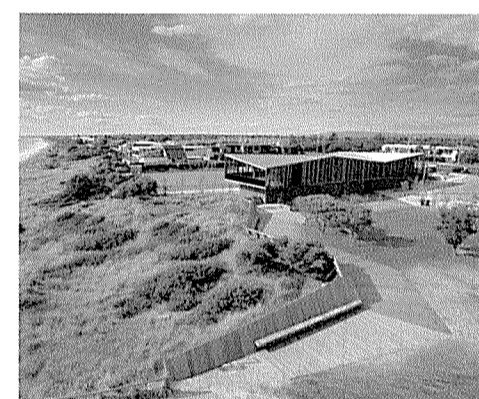
With this single gesture, they transform Lonsdale Street into a more civilised street...A strong vision and a 'principle-led' urban design approach guided complex and difficult negotiations with stakeholders. The successful reconciliation of competing user needs demonstrates the critical role landscape architects play in leading large multi-disciplinary public realm infrastructure projects.'



▲ Keast Park, Frankston



▲ Lonsdale Street, Dandenong



▲ Keast Park, Frankston

## Road safety and planning and development

Ray Brindle

The Australian Road Research Board (ARRB) is undertaking research 'Safe System in the Planning Process' (Austroads Project ST1766). It aims to get a picture of current practice regarding road safety considerations in the planning and development approvals process. As part of this study, I am asking a selection of practitioners in the traffic planning field to share some of their insights and experience. I hope you, or a colleague you may care to pass this on to, can provide some input.

This subject comes up in several guises: Safe System planning, safety-conscious planning, Level 1 safety audits, town planning for road safety, and so on. This qualitative review seeks to provide background on the relevance of Safe System to the planning process. The focus is on the process and resources for 'safety-conscious planning' rather than detailed technical rules and guidelines.

I'd appreciate any information and responses on as many of the following questions on which you or a colleague feel able to comment:

- Is road safety a consideration at any stage of land use planning and development

control in your part of the world? Do traffic and road safety people get a say in the planning process? If not, why do you think this is? (eg is road safety accepted as a primary planning objective or not?)

- Specifically, are Safe System concepts and objectives explicitly considered in the planning or development control processes?
- What is used as the source of knowledge on this subject? Is practice guided by local or state policies and guidelines (please cite relevant documents if so)?
- What would help to lift road safety into more prominence at the planning stage - ie how can a Safe System approach become part of planning and development control?
- Can you cite any planning case studies in which road safety - and specifically Safe System - played a role in the decision process?

Brief responses and dot points are quite acceptable at this stage; if there are gaps to be filled, we can do that later.

Ray Brindle can be contacted at [ray@brindle.name](mailto:ray@brindle.name)

## New national campaign to create 'Liveable' homes

A front door you can easily wheel a pram through; living spaces that are safer to move around in; a step-free shower; a handrail on your stairs; and a toilet on the ground floor. Livable Housing Australia (LHA) will target the housing industry to achieve the Livable Housing Design Quality Mark as part of a national campaign to ensure all new homes are safer, more comfortable and easier to get around by 2020.

LHA will work with industry leaders to adopt design features to help make homes not only easier to access and live in, but more cost-effective to adapt when life's circumstances change. They champion the adoption of seven critical 'liveable' [ED: adopting the Australian rather than the US spelling] design features that help make homes easier to access, navigate and live in.

Liveable homes work for pregnant mums, young families with kids, as well and those with disability and Australians with sporting or traumatic injuries. Liveability also caters for the needs of an ageing society by promoting

homes better suited to seniors, and reduces stress on Australia's 2.6 million strong army of unpaid carers.

The features in the guidelines are inexpensive to incorporate into new-build dwellings and will deliver huge dividends as well as peace of mind to future generations of Australians, with a commitment to liveability features when a home is first designed and built rather than waiting for an unplanned need to arise. The goal is to persuade the market to incorporate these features in all homes by 2020. Common sense and international research indicates it is much more efficient to design the house for change rather than retrofit it when an unforeseen necessity arises.

*Copies of the LHA Design Guidelines and 3D graphics of the design principles applied to an average home are available on request. For more information see [www.livablehousingaustralia.org.au](http://www.livablehousingaustralia.org.au)*

# Hamburg surprises

Rob Deutcher

A recent visit to Hamburg provided a range of surprises. The initial motivation to visit Hamburg was to look over Hafencity, the largest urban renewal development in Europe and now into its second decade. Hamburg is Germany's second largest city with a population of 1.7 million people located on a thriving inland port and important infrastructure hub on the Elbe River.

Melbourne's urban design community likes to talk at length about the exemplar projects of Copenhagen and its effective bicycle network, however Hamburg seems to have done similar on a number of levels.

Within the old city, pedestrians can safely navigate on pathways that run contrary to the road pattern. The main vehicle traffic has been pushed on to a ring road system. This creates the opportunity for streets like Monckeberg Strasse, a major retail strip, to perform a new role that is pedestrian friendly but also



▲ Marco Polo Terrassen, Hamburg

accommodates bicycles and a bus route through a single surface paving treatment.

This pedestrianisation continues through the simple gesture of knitting the former port area back into the historic city. This has been done by continuing and extending the existing network of street corridors.

Hafencity has been planned as a series of precincts that have developed in a logical order. It is about a new urban identity for the city. The area of regeneration covers some 157Ha, 126Ha being land with 10.5km of new waterfront with promenades and squares, and will expand the city by some 40% in area.

Secondly, there was an early decision and commitment to build two underground stations to service the new area, with costs being recouped through increased land values.

Thirdly, there has been a strong commitment to management by a separate but wholly-owned company as a subsidiary of the City of Hamburg.

## Resilient infrastructure and communities

In Hamburg, Hafencity faced the issues of planning for the future now by developing infrastructure and communities that are resilient, rugged and adaptable to planetary changes. They have taken the opportunity for new models of buildings and new uses to inform these developments. In turn they have been able to attract some of the best of Europe's architects.

Hafencity ensures quality through design competitions, constraints for developers, and sustainability requirements according to Stephen Behnisch from Behnisch Architekten.



▲ Monckeberg Strasse, Hamburg

The scale is not overpowering, with most of the canal-side buildings capped at around 7-8 storeys and higher towers emerging on strategic sites up to 12-13 storeys. This scale still manages to create an effective density of development and mix of uses. Additionally, there was large investment in landscape the design of which was also subject to a competition process, rather than simply being left to the developers.

The masterplan was reviewed in 2010, and construction has commenced on a new university. The promenade area for the first few stages are in place and, like many waterfront renewal projects, is still to find its identity. New businesses, however, are

grabbing the opportunity that this closely-linked area offers.

My observation is that good governance and effective investment in infrastructure, coupled with a high priority on good design outcomes, has been important to the quality of outcomes witnessed in Hamburg. Adapting has become the reality to future planning. (For further information see [www.hafencity.com/en/home.html](http://www.hafencity.com/en/home.html))

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# Coffee: manna from urban design heaven?

Jo Prego

*The answer isn't another bloody coffee shop!*

If I read one more article, attend one more conference, or sit through one more planning meeting where the words 'vibrant coffee shop precinct' get flung about willy-nilly like a groupie amidst a gang of footy players, I'm going to scream.

The coffee shop has become manna from urban design heaven. It is the 'haute-couture' equivalent of modern-day town planning. If you have an area that needs urban renewal, someone will invariably call for coffee shops. If you have an area getting developed; that's fine, here come the coffee shops? Do you need more car parking in the city? No problem mate, have a bloody coffee shop. ARGHHH!

What is elucidating about this is that Australia has transitioned from a cup-of-tea group of people to a caffeine-dependant bunch of Trend-ites and Groovies. This has happened in less than thirty years, that's only a generation and a bit. In the workplace, that transition has evolved from tea-lady to smoko to coffee in a styrofoam cup - makes sure it's got lots of froth I can lick!

What's shocking is that, in terms of urban planning, you'd think that Walter Raleigh had only just returned from the new world with a

boat load of beans for the roasting thereof. Modern day urban designers bang on about coffee shops with a quasi-ecumenical fever that makes you feel as though God created the world in six days and on the seventh went for a latte with his new groovy friends Adam and Eve. I may be blaspheming a bit but when God created the African savannah he certainly didn't get a bunch of hippos holding placards outside his planning department chanting 'we want more coffee shops'.

## Will everywhere look like nowhere?

Those professions involved in the design and creation of public space have to stop thinking of the coffee shop as the saviour of place-making. It lacks imagination. The point here is that a place must, above all, look like that place. If we start throwing coffee shops into every uninhabited corner of everywhere, then pretty soon everywhere will look like nowhere.

*The common denominator is not the coffee shop. It is the individual human.*

So why is the coffee shop the front-line, first response to a planning solution? My opinion is that it's because of the pictures. The image of happy people congregating al-fresco having fun and socialising is just too alluring. The desire to instantly install that into a rundown area is simply too tempting. But we must be careful: an image of people chatting



and laughing in a coffee shop appeals to us deeply not because of the quality of the roasted bean, but because of the humans. That is what gives us the quality.

Places must be designed so that they can be the best they can for the humans that use it.

And if you have to cater for God and a couple of hippos, then so be it.

Jo Prego is coordinator of the Heritage and Urban Planning Unit at Townsville City Council. He can be contacted at [Jo.Prego@townsville.qld.gov.au](mailto:Jo.Prego@townsville.qld.gov.au)

# Incubators and start ups

Rodney Jensen

Interesting ways of overcoming work from home limitations and sourcing economic offices for start-up businesses in the innovation and creative industrial sectors have been trialled in many overseas locations and some Australian cities. Newcastle, Sydney and Melbourne have experimented with so-called 'incubators' in the central business districts of each of these cities. They are located in marginally economic shop fronts (as in Newcastle CBD), and open plan offices, sharing communication and other office services in Sydney and Melbourne.

The Newcastle project was initiated by Marcus Westbury in 2008 - with an announcement in Facebook addressing Newcastle's economic woes. Westbury was particularly interested in the parallels between Newcastle and Glasgow including an abundance of unlettable poorly maintained shopfronts. Overwhelming interest in the Facebook initiative led to the

establishment of 'Renew Newcastle' a non-profit organisation designed to license vacant shop fronts from property owners short term. Streets such as Darby Street and Beaumont Street have been enlivened by new visitors, a fresh mix of cafes, women's' clothing, and a slightly bohemian atmosphere.

## Some success stories

An incubator in Melbourne known as "the Hub" has been established close to Southern Cross railway station in a heritage building. The Hub according to a the office manager goes beyond simply providing space for new enterprising business but puts considerable emphasis on new work patterns and networking. As of mid 2012, some recent start-ups have already become success stories. Users of the Hub generally seem to be in the sub-40 age group and the open plan layout provides very limited scope for privacy - but that appears to be exactly what this generation of new business entrepreneurs is looking for.

In the so called central "Sydney Oxford Street Activation" a series of offices and shops, located in Oxford Street (to the south east of the CBD edge) are being leased short term while the buildings owned by the City Council are undergoing capital works and upgrades. Target businesses include new and not-for-profit organisations working in the creative and cultural sector. The success of this initiative will be measured by a number of KPIs including pedestrian counts, employment surveys and broader surveys of economic, cultural and social impacts according to a spokesperson for the City.

## A stepping stone

The main conclusions that I have derived from this brief review are that incubators will suit some but by no means all sectors of the creative, cultural and innovation sectors. Since they are premised on short term tenancy they must be regarded as only a stepping-stone for individual businesses. But enforced short term tenancy could be seen as an advantage

and an incentive to growth/sustainability. Equally important will be the wider benefits and effects on surrounding areas. Whether, on the balance, outcomes are generally positive remains to be seen, and in similar overseas case studies it has been found that the very process of rejuvenation can lead to gentrification, in effect pricing out the very creatives and innovators who were sought-after in the first place.

Whether incubators prove to be a short term 'fad' based on mixed results from other global cities, or the magic bullet which will overcome blighted and economically depressed areas will undoubtedly have much to do with local context and broader economic forces. However, from the case studies described in this review, there would definitely seem to be grounds for optimism.

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# Travelling by bike (part 2)

David Rayson

Following our ride in the UK (UDF 99), the Channel crossing was notable for the company, as cyclists we were lumped in with the motorbikes. The destination for fellow travellers, 100 of the most intimidating people on the planet, was the Belgian Moto Grand Prix. Passports weren't the issue on leaving the ferry in Rotterdam it was the results of the breathalyser.

Holland is the best place to ride imaginable, its flat paths are well signed so navigation is easy and it is beautiful. Wind farms are everywhere but were unable to find the mixed use re-development we were looking for, it is their traditional cities which fit the bill. They are dense, mixed use, walkable and absolutely beautiful. New development is either high rise predominantly residential with lots of car parking, or low rise within residential only precincts with lots of car parking. Maybe it was the emphasis on riding that skewed our investigation techniques.

Copenhagen is an overnight train trip from Amsterdam, bikes have to be in bags because you will probably have to store it on the floor of your, sardine tin sized, sleeper. This is not a whinge, just a warning, as the whole adventure was great fun.

Copenhagen is a beautiful city, it is built around water and is full of life and vitality, it is my ideal sustainable city.

## Mixed use communities?

I did find some new development, to the south at Amager Vest. This is a vast series of massive, residential only, apartment complexes set in extensive parklands. The buildings are imaginative, wonderful architecture and look very luxurious, however, I am sure that this arrangement doesn't work and does not provide the setting for new communities to evolve but more investigation would be worthwhile. The saving grace is there is an elevated train system running along the whole precinct with easy access to the city.

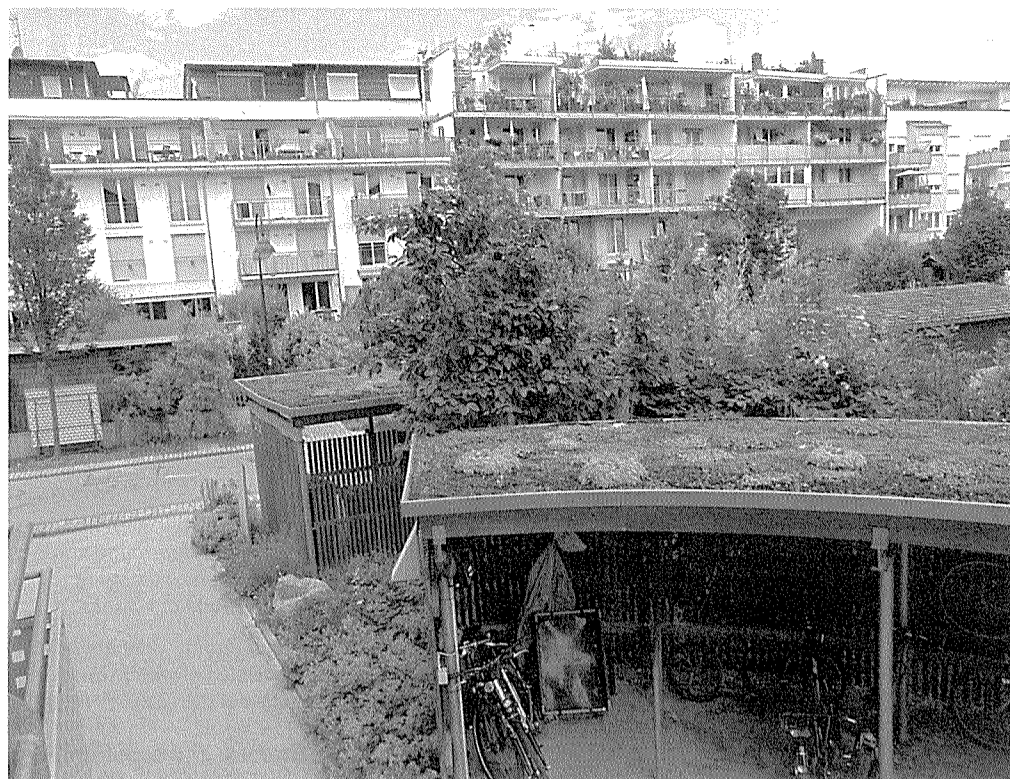


Malmo, Sweden is just a short train trip across the Flensburger Forde on the 7km long, Oresundsbron bridge and tunnel. As with most of the other cities visited, Malmo has seen opportunities and challenges resulting from changing economics and new port and shipping systems. The residential development on the former shipyards on the western harbour (Vastra Hanmen) is a wonderful, dense mixed use precinct. Buildings are generally around 6 storeys, with one notable exception, Santiago Calatrava's 'Turning Torso', a 50 storey office tower. One extraordinary building certainly provides a landmark. Again there are some beautiful public spaces, waterfront precincts and intimate unexpected places. The precinct is an easy walk or cycle to the city centre.

Stockholm is also an extraordinary city with some wonderful heritage buildings and precincts. It is built around a complex web of waterways which have also provided exceptional opportunities for development. Hammarby Sjostad (Sea City) is the focus where new 5-7 storey buildings have been built close together on a relatively regular streets layout. All are close the T-bahn train or light rail. The result is a rich, sustainable and enjoyable foreshore precinct. There is no magic in this formula. The relatively consistent building height is absolutely fundamental, as well as diverse architectural outcomes, closeness and the pedestrian friendly streets and accessible waterfront.

## Community initiative

Freiberg in southern Germany was my next destination, a long overnight train journey from Stockholm. It is one of the prettiest towns in Germany. Within walking distance is Vauban a former French military base. Ten years ago this precinct was developed using the best possible, sustainable urban design techniques and is now an iconic project. I was lucky enough to spend a couple of hours with some original residents who played an important role in the initial building development and community formation.



An architect put together a syndicate of 15 people to buy a lot and construct an apartment block - the development process went relatively smoothly and the subsequent community has been cohesive and successful. The dwellings were relatively affordable and residents accepted that their cars had to be stored in a central parking area away from their houses. Residents are proud of being part of an important, environmentally sustainable, project.

Again the urban design principles are relatively simple; buildings are around 4-7 storeys, their foot print is small and the road layout is relatively simple. Car parking is centralised and public transport is available, commercial and employment opportunities exist either on site or close by and the buildings contain many energy saving techniques.

Finally arriving in Paris, (via Gent and Bruges in Belgium), I asked a buddy to take me to

the outer suburbs just to see how bad they were. He sent me to Val d'Europe, Chessy. Just a short RER trip, about 20km from Paris. The station is new and well appointed and, on exiting, to my surprise and delight there was a beautiful town square surrounded by new 4-7 storey buildings - all with commercial at ground level and apartments above. The architecture was very Parisian but contemporary, that is solid masonry with regular fenestration and some typical traditional decoration, but not contrived. The whole precinct was similar in scale and detail, some buildings beyond the square were more contemporary. Much to my dismay, fronting the square in an inconspicuous corner was the massive shopping mall, with associated car parking, but the concept of mixed use seemed to work well.

David Rayson is very fit and regularly involved in Urban Design Forum activities in Melbourne. He can be contacted at david@rayson.cc



## New books, etc

### The Little Book of Density,

In 2011, Dr. Chris Boyko and Prof. Rachel Cooper at Lancaster University created an online survey about density. The aim was to better understand the decision-making process around density - who makes density decisions, when they make decisions, and what they use to make decisions.

Based on the survey, they wrote a report, and also a practical guide to density, called *The Little Book of Density*. If you would like a hard copy or a PDF, email to c.boyko@lancaster.ac.uk

### The small world of stakeholder groups: cascading concepts for urban change.

M. Ganis, J. Minnery and D Mateo-Babiano, The University of Queensland, School of Geography, Planning and Environmental Management.

Stakeholder groups often have different urban design ideas for planning urban change. This research seeks to understand why some groups adopt novel urban design notions and others tend to lag in the uptake of these ideas. Key stakeholder groups participated in a semantic differential task of bipolar urban design qualities. A concept map for each group was plotted using Multidimensional scaling and a Kendall Tau correlation revealed those groups who aligned their concept of good urban places.

The results showed that architects and planners are early adopters of urban design concepts, engineers, developers and the community are an early majority of adopters and landscape architects and councillors are the late majority. It is proposed that small world networks offer a framework for cascading concepts of what makes good urban places.

### Holes in the Whole - Introduction to the Urban Revolutions

Krzysztof Nawratek Zero Books 2012

This is an engaging book - written in the first-person, and crossing genres of criticism, confession, analysis and polemic. It provokes the reader to think about urbanism as a dynamic intellectual field of ideas and experiences. Specialists and general readers will find this book stimulating as the author leaps around from idea to idea, always provocative and always full of insights.

Nawratek relates issues in architecture, the city and urban life to a range of historical philosophical and cultural issues - from justice and ethics to creativity and community, public space and violence. There are few writers who take such a synthetic and wide-ranging approach in the English speaking world. Moreover, it intellectually reconnects Europe's East and West, introducing a sense of flair into an overly-laboured field of academic research.

(Review by Dr Jonathan Vickery, Associate Professor, Director MA Global Media and Communication, Centre for Cultural Policy Studies University of Warwick).

## Conferences, etc

### E-mail forum

The UK Urban Design E-Mail Forum, run by the Urban Design Group, is open to all academics and professionals for the free exchange and development of knowledge and practice on all aspects of urban design. The most recent issue being debated is what sort of 'good practice guidance' should be provided by the Government authorities. It has raised a perennial but important discussion about what exactly is 'urban design' and what is 'planning'?

If you are interested in joining this email forum, send an e-mail to robert.huxford@udg.org.uk www.udg.org.uk

### Making Cities Livable 50th conference

23-27 June 23-27, 2013  
Portland, Oregon USA

Paper proposals are invited for the 50th IMCL Conference on Reshaping Suburbia into Healthy Communities. Proposals must be prepared for blind peer review. Deadline for submission is 20 December, 2012.

Papers must be presented in person at the conference and will be published in the digital conference proceedings. Selected papers will also be published in Documentation Sets on focused topics.

For more information see www.livablecities.org/call-papers

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