

Urban villages workshop

The current debate on Perth's continuing urban development has caused the need to explore alternative visions, and more contemporary, sustainable and community-based lifestyle approaches to the development of metropolitan urban fringe areas in Perth. The economic cost of physical and social infrastructure for low density suburbs on the urban fringe is having a significant impact on housing affordability. It is also resulting in the severe social and environmental costs associated with suburban sprawl and car dependency.

The WA Department of Planning and Urban Development, commissioned Hocking Planning & Architecture Pty Ltd (in association with Jan Martin, Anne Dunlop and Wendy Morris, Ove Arups & Partners and Harold Turen) to help them define the term 'Urban Village'. The brief was 'to provide a clearer picture of what an Urban Village would be in the Perth context' and to discuss how Urban Villages could be incorporated into future and existing structure plans for the metropolitan fringe growth corridors of the metropolitan region.

To explore these issues, a two day forum and workshop was held in March at the Shire of Swan. It involved the project team and, predominantly, professionals from the public sector, in exploring the implications of different models of Urban Village on the planning process. Jan, Anne

W A STYLE

and Wendy gave papers on current theories and practice, which formed spring boards from which the Urban Villages debate could begin and designs laid down.

A Design Challenge

The workshop participants were challenged to identify the physical planning components of an Urban Village, local considerations effecting the achievement of Urban Villages in Perth's new suburbs, and criteria for Perth's future Urban Villages (including identity, image, transportation, conservation and community focus). They then set out to prepare concept plans and design guidelines for the development of an Urban Village east of the Swan Valley, which may be incorporated in the North-East Corridor Structure Plan.

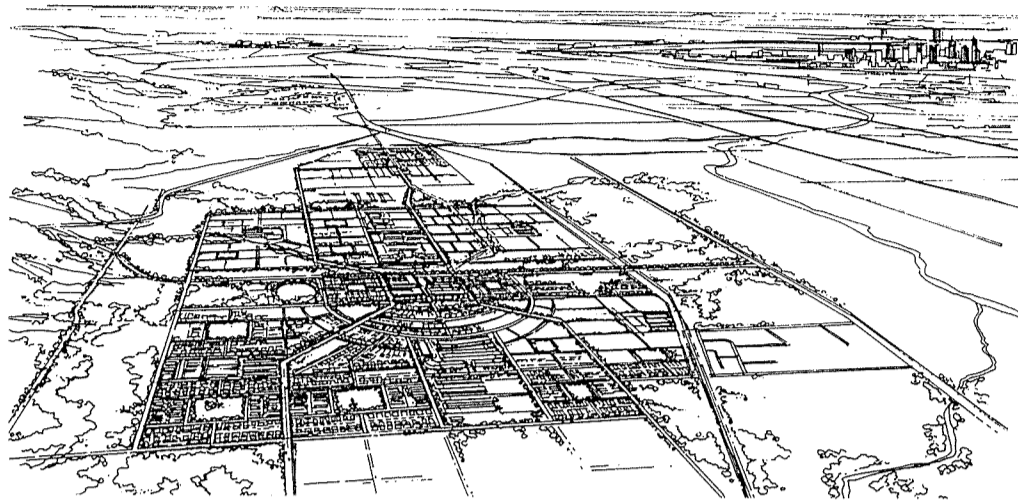
Group sessions identified the key characteristics of Urban Villages as: walkability, identity, diversity, lifestyle choice, containment, sustainability and intensity. Towards the end of the first day, three models based on transit scenarios (bus-sensitive, bus/light-rail transit and heavy-rail), were introduced to

COMING SOON!

Following on from last year's success at Broken Hill, anyone who is interested in urban design should pencil in the 8th and 9th October for the Second UDF National Conference. This year the conference is being hosted by NSW UDFers, and Chris Stapleton and his team have preparations well under way. The theme will be based on a comparison

of Australian City Images. The place will be, in retreat, at the Quarantine Station, North Head, Sydney.

Please note, as at Broken Hill, numbers will be limited. For more information phone Maureen McKinnon c/- Stapleton & Hallam on (02) 267-5300.



▲ An Urban Village on the fringe of Perth

explore the Urban Village concept. Three working groups, headed by Jan, Anne and Wendy, were formed to design hypothetical scenarios for the tract of land on the eastern side of the Swan Valley.

Different Models

At the end of the two days it had become clear that these models of Urban Villages were fundamentally different, each having a distinctive structure arising from their transit preconditions.

HP&A has developed a preferred concept plan for an Urban Village for the North-East Corridor. Its major features are: a population of 30,000+ of four neighbourhoods based on walkability and

two car-based neighbourhoods; each neighbourhood containing a primary school and local shopping; a bus/light rail transit; a mixed use town centre based on incremental growth, robustness and flexibility; building types configured into a pedestrian friendly public domain; containment provided by semi-rural edges and open space associated with educational sites; and a concept which incorporates the design elements of focus, variety, legibility, permeability and flexibility.

The "Urban Villages for Perth" report is currently in its last stages of preparation. If you would like more details phone Ian Hocking or Sally Grainger on (09) 388 2810.

Casino Blues....

In the scheme of things leading to an economic recovery and financial confidence through the initiation and/or encouragement of development and building projects, the establishment of a Casino in Melbourne is seen as a key element by the State Government. However, a deliberate and somewhat sinister withholding of information on any progress on the issue has precluded open debate while it is widely known - at least in professional circles - that a comprehensive study dealing with the selection of the site and the formulation of a design brief for the casino building(s) has been complete for some time.

In May the Premier Jeff Kennett revealed his Agenda 21. This is a set of public projects to be funded solely from the up-front licence fees and the subsequent annual revenue from the casino. The main ones are: the building of the Casino on the South Bank of the Yarra; the conversion of the partially-built new museum to an international Exhibition Centre; and the building of the new museum around a restored historic core of the Exhibition Building, in Carlton.

More Projects

The Agenda comprises some other projects also: the second stage development of the State Library; the restoration of the Old Customs House as a special art gallery to house the "Heidelberg School" collection; a Living Museum of Aboriginal Culture, in the Docklands area; and other projects previously announced: the Regent Theatre/City Square development, the Federally funded restoration of the Old

Treasury Building in Spring Street, and the city circle tram loop.

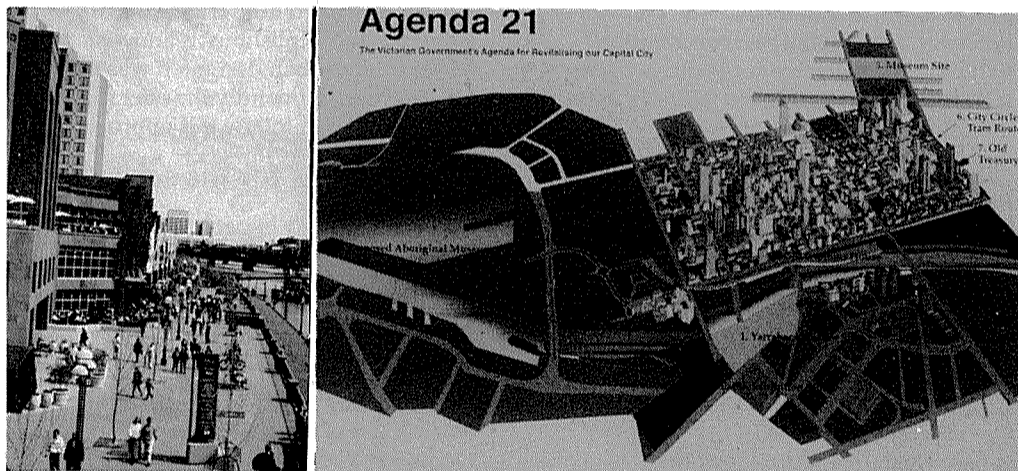
It seems that these secondary projects, with the exception (perhaps) of the extensions to the State Library, are not more than wishful intentions, without proper costing or estimated time for anticipated completion. For instance the Old Customs House must be acquired from the Commonwealth, and the Museum of Aboriginal Culture would require Federal funding. As for the Regent Theatre/City Square project it is anybody's guess as to what it will eventually involve.

Devoid of Urban Design

In contrast with Minister Maclellan's approach (see page 2) Agenda 21 is sadly devoid of any urban design vision, both in planning and architectural/architectonic terms. The Agenda is very much a hidden one.

Everything is pinned on the Casino. This may be sound financial sense but there are a lot of strange events which the government has created and needs to address, before it can gain the confidence of the people. Are we just creating more "big projects?"

The original 21 consortiums interested in the casino have now reduced to three. Their schemes were never displayed, public comment was never sought. At the government's threat to lose their \$100,000 bond and be disqualified from further consideration, the three bidders are not disclosing their visions for this very large scheme on a very important city site. Rumours and speculation breed more



▲ Urban design excellence is a critical challenge on Southbank.

3D Computer model of Agenda 21 (Peddle Thorpe (Architects)) ▲

distrust of the government's intentions and procedures. Is the government going to go down the path of privatising valuable public urban domain in a grandiose heroic gesture of telling us, after a fait accompli, "See what we have accomplished for you"? For how long are they to continue to manipulate the imagery of the vision for Melbourne to their own liking by keeping their cards so close to their chests?

Agendas and vague plans without vision are nothing more than general statements. Vision without design is, at best, a joke. Vision without form is speculative utopia. To see is to respond. In Agenda 21 we see very little and are not welcome to respond; it seems we are expected only to acquiesce and accept a spending formula. Urban design is about a comprehensive strategy within the context of a rigorous and exciting vision of place making.

Windowless Void?

In most cases where a casino is built as a new building (e.g. Burswood Casino,

Perth) as against a conversion of an existing building (e.g. Adelaide), it is a windowless building. It is a concern that under pressure from the potential casino operators and their concepts of security, the Melbourne Casino is likely to be a bulky, inward-looking, windowless, graceless mass of unsympathetic scale on the somewhat fragile new beginning of human scale and life on the Southbank. The image of the money-spinning *deus ex machina* will be that of an obtrusive, forbidding, and dark elephant.

Furthermore, I suggest that important public buildings like the Casino, the new version State Museum and the Exhibition Centre be open to staged competitions, rather than be stitched up in secret. The vision for Melbourne ought not to be monopolised by government and its bureaucracies. It ought to be shared openly and genuinely with the talented professionals of our city, and more importantly, with the community at large.

John Georgiou, is an urban design consultant and academic.

MINISTER DISCOVERS URBAN DESIGN

... and is pleased with what he sees

The new Minister for Planning in Victoria, Rob Maclellan, has discovered that urban design is a very positive feature in his attempt to get Victorian on the move again. "There are some", he says, "who believe that good planning and design hinder development". He strongly disagrees and clearly has little time for those who push that all too common view.

For the first four months of his ministry, Rob Maclellan didn't even know that his department had an Urban Design Unit. For reasons best known to the hierarchy, they were kept hidden from him. Then one day, as Minister for Planning, he was asked to approve works for a project which presented a very unsympathetic streetscape, and he was appalled. It had already been given approval in principle. He attempted to negotiate with the developer but discovered that it was too late - the houses had already been sold off the plan.

Discuss Urban Design Early

Determined not to be caught out like that again, he discovered that the Urban Design Unit had not been effectively involved at the earlier stage, when design influence and negotiation was possible. From that point on, the message was out to developers and regulators alike: discuss urban design matters early in the process, and the speed of approval will be increased, as well as achieving a better project. "It is a positive two way process", say Maclellan.

Currently, says Rob Maclellan, he can only insist on this process where he is the Responsible Authority i.e. in the central area of Melbourne. But he is expecting that all local councils will adopt a similar approach. And he is prepared to back that intention with supportive administrative changes. At present, many design matters are decided by the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. Maclellan says that this body is not competent to decide these matters. Instead, he intends to pursue the setting up of a panel of design arbitrators who will act in a similar fashion to the Building Referees - providing very prompt, specialist adjudication on design matters where a developer and a council disagree.

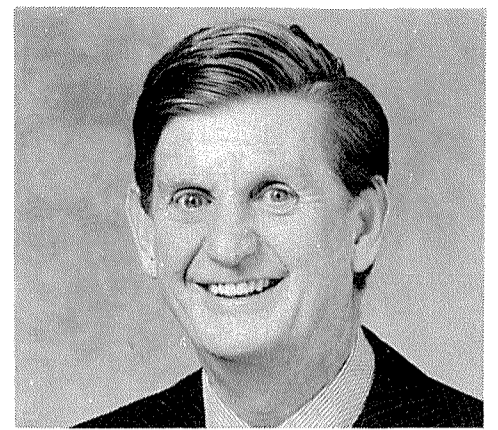
Sting In The Tail

The sting in the tail, though, is that third party rights to object will be waived and the community will have to rely on the council to represent its interests. There are major concerns about this process. The Melbourne City Square proposal highlights possible abuses to the process. The Minister clearly dislikes the present city square, but will the new design (which is being kept secret) be any better? Will it really honour the streetscape and bring public life to the Swanston Street Walk or will it become just another one of those ubiquitous foyers to an international hotel? Many people are worried that the latter will prevail.

UDF: How can, or should, governments intervene in the urban design process? Maclellan says that sometimes they should insist on good urban design, sometimes encourage, but never ignore.

Asked about urban design in suburbia, Maclellan says that "the suburbs are built to a price, not a design, but trees grow quickly, don't they?" The gardens are the saving grace. But what about increased densities, with smaller gardens. Maclellan says that Mao Tse Sung is his guide here. "Diversity is what we need, not mandatory densities. Let a thousand flowers bloom!"

When asked about the value of having competitions to achieve better urban designs, Maclellan is equivocal. But the question gives him the opportunity for another slick one-liner: "Australia has the best opera house in the world!" he says. "The outside of it in Sydney, and the inside of it is in Melbourne". He uses the irony to emphasise that Melbourne has a lot to learn in dealing with external public spaces. The Congress Centre and hotel, he agrees, is a bad example but he is less convincing when giving assurance that major projects such as the proposed Casino and Exhibition Centre will be any better. "The responsibility for achieving good urban design in these major projects is mine, but if I do get it wrong, the chances are their economic life will be only 35 years, so they can be rebuilt!"



UDF: What is your best or favourite urban space? After some considerable hesitation, Rob Maclellan nominated the Pioneering Women's Memorial Garden in the Domain. He declined to name a worst example.

UDF: When asked how the urban design implications of projects by other government departments were dealt with, the Minister was very quick to point out that he was not the "Minister for Urban Design!" One is left to wonder whether the departments, who can have a major effect on urban design, are also to be subject to the need for early design negotiation, as is the private sector? One is also left to ponder the thought: given the Minister's rejection of the pretence that he controls the planning actions of other government departments, perhaps he should give up being Minister for Planning, and instead become Minister for Urban Design!

Rob Maclellan was interviewed for UDF by Bill Chandler.

Letter to the Editor...

I strongly support the UDF objective to "tour the major cities", as ideally this could give breadth and depth to the journal by involving more people and more ideas, as well as provide a 'state of the art' overview of the nation. I do worry however, about what real contribution will be made over five consecutive issues, if the Melbourne edition is followed as a model.

"Making Melbourne for the year 2000" the focus of the March Forum, helped me off to sleep one night, not because of any lack of interest in this important city or a waning commitment to urban design matters, but because on first read it struck me as somewhat like a party political broadcast to the faithful, and I have grown tired of all that recently. Its predominant feel was of simply describing recent achievements coupled with enunciating optimism for the future. The didactic

opportunity of the edition was diminished in this arrangement. The centrefold, whilst potentially a concept to extend the messages by illustration, also missed the mark for me. The photos didn't connect either to the map or the main text, and the caption text didn't significantly strengthen the issues being addressed.

We understand that a forum is a place or means for public discussion, yet the edition contained little critical debate about the accomplishments and visions of Melbourne's urban design. It was more of a newsletter. Hopefully the next four editions will not follow this approach.

Expectations for the series?

What then are my expectations for this series? Basically, I am searching for examples of 'good city'. I am looking to each edition to inform on what kinds of processes and things contribute to improving the city. The notion of 'good city' frequently revolves around the workability of the city, the positive responses to the senses and the quality of the experiences the city invoke in users.

Workability has sub-components of economy, function, convenience and accessibility. The senses include elements of aesthetics, physiological responses, cognition and perception. Experiences include social, psychological and cultural matters. These concepts are capable of expansion, and their complex interaction with each other need to be frequently discussed in journals such as UDF.

I am also looking for discussion about indicators of success, to help me recognise false solutions. But not to do this from a single position based on vaguely implied values. When urban design achievements are appraised in the context of their articulated objectives and underlying premises, they provide the basis for developing the underpinning theory. When they are critically reviewed in a wider intellectual context, the theory is more fundamentally tested. Both tests of theory are needed to advance it and make it more robust. I am hoping that Australian urban design theory will strengthen as a result of this series. By the way, I use the sometimes intimidating

word "theory" here the same way as Humphrey McQueen in a recent 'Weekend Australian' article (17-18 April), "Theory is a higher level of explanation of the available evidence".

Useful models and principles?

Urban design is the result of processes and contains content which can be examined and reflected upon from various lessons pertain to the particular place and circumstances, and will have focused application, but others have the potential to become useful models and to establish principles for further application and testing, for both the city in question as well as other places.

What are the urban design lessons from Melbourne for Melbourne? I could find some but I suspect there are more! What are the urban design lessons from Melbourne for other Australian cities?

Gordon Holden, Brisbane.
(Ed. The next edition of UDF (September) will be compiled by Queensland UDF'ers)

RUMOURS & SNIPPETS

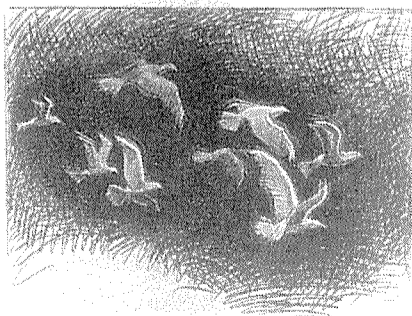
Sustainable Urban Form Seminar

The Faculty of Environmental Design and Construction at RMIT is running a seminar entitled "A Critical Urban Design Identity - defining our cultural diversity within a sustainable urban form". Venue: Melbourne City Council. Friday 9th July from 9am-5.30pm. Further details from Rozanne Edwards (03) 660 2990.

A Contemporary Tragedy

Visual artist Bill Kelly, a UDFer from way back, has recently been honoured with a one-person exhibition at the new Museum of Modern Art at Heide in Melbourne. It is a major contribution to the discussion about violence in urban society, based on the so-called "Hoddle Street Massacre" in 1987. As part of his long-standing concern about and research into the causes of violence, Bill has been actively involved in discussions about the relationship between crime and urban design. The 64-work exhibition asks

questions which are a challenge for urban designers concerned about the well-being of people in the public realm. It provides valuable insight, food for thought. Don't miss this show! It closes on 4th July. PS. As part of the 2nd National Conference on Violence a series of William Kelly prints will be on exhibition at the AIC, 4 Marcus Clarke Street, Canberra until 30th June. Details (06) 274 0200.



Sydney UDF is Alive and Kicking

The May UDF meeting was a presentation and discussion on 'Street Edges - The street as a public outdoor room contained by the facades of adjoining buildings' presented by Chris Johnson of the Public Works Department. Lunch meetings once a month continue to be well attended with everyone being involved in informal presentation and round table discussion. Not a place for the faint hearted. For more information contact Maureen on (02) 267 5301.

Gold Coast Urban Design Forum

Who said the sun and surf dulls the brain! The Gold Coast Urban Design Forum has been initiated by a diverse bunch of enthusiasts who share a common concern that in the current restructure of the Council, urban design should not suffer because of the ignorance of politicians and bureaucrats. Everyone with interests and skills in the built environment is welcome. More information from Philip Follent on (075) 34 4166.

◀ Image by Kelly

Making Cities Livable Conference

The next MCL Conference will be held in San Francisco 22-26 February, 1994. If you would like to present a paper or case study, be a moderator, or just attend, phone Suzanne H. Crowhurst Lennard. USA. (408) 626 9080.

Community Culture & Tourism Conf.

Includes focus on communities, the arts, cities as places. To be held in Fitzroy, Melbourne 14-15th July. Details from Helen Madden (03) 415 1316.

Congratulations!

Congratulations to the WA Dept. of Planning & Urban Development for winning the recent RAPI National Award for Excellence in Planning in the category of Community Planning.

International Malls Conference

The 7th International Malls Conference will be held in Melbourne, 21-24 Sept 1993. The theme is "Streets and Spaces for People", with a focus on how to put life and vitality back into traditional shopping centres. With many speakers from Australia and overseas, a highlight will be an innovative and practical session led by journalist and broadcaster Phillip Adams. More details from Chris Walsh on (03) 658 9729.

Whitsunday futures

A studio look at design education for tourism - Catharin Bull

The Whitsunday region in Northern Queensland shares many things in common with tourist regions around the Pacific - spectacular scenery and natural resources, small local communities remote from sources of expertise in planning and design, plenty of high level investment in private infrastructure such as resorts and hotels, but little in the quality management of the overall public realm which constitutes the fundamental attraction.

The community in the Whitsundays and the Schools of Planning and Landscape Architecture at the Queensland University of Technology and Geographical Sciences at the University of Queensland, both 1,000 kilometres away in Brisbane, did something about that in 1992 - to increase community awareness of possibilities for a better future, and in the process, educate a new generation of planners and landscape architects about tourism.

A Developing Problem

By the time of this exercise, Whitsunday had a problem. It had been predominantly a rural shire whose economic, physical and social conditions were a product of sugar cane production. Its local politics reflected these formative influences even as the economic base changed and it became an important tourist region for Queensland, servicing the Whitsunday Islands and their burgeoning tourist activities in the 1970s and 1980s. The two major towns had developed independently. Proserpine was and still is a rural town, typical of many in

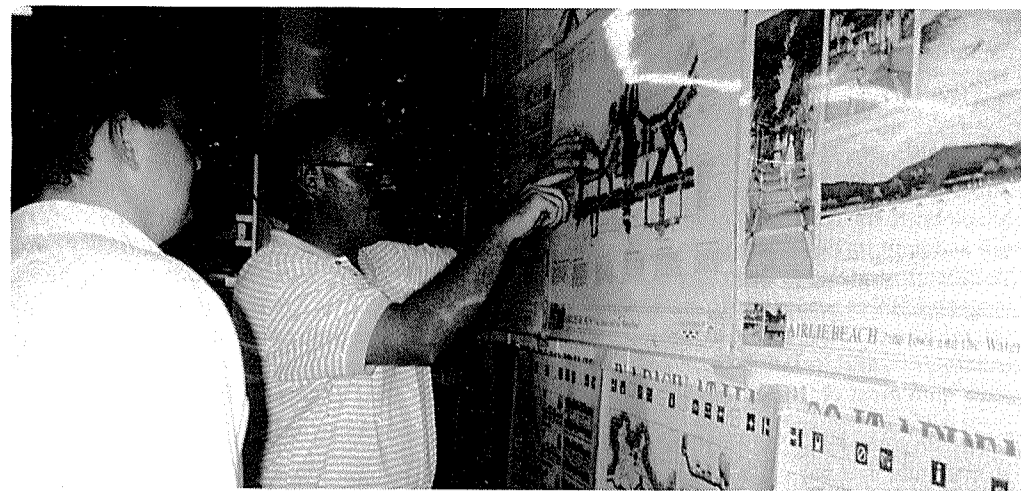
Queensland. Airlie Beach was initially a holiday town for rural Queenslanders to come and fish. Then, in the 1970s and 1980s, development around Airlie started in earnest. The major island resorts such as Hamilton and Lindeman were developed. More recently, integrated resorts have also been proposed for the mainland. While quality development has happened sporadically and continues on private sites, the communal realm has suffered.

By the late 80s, Airlie Beach was no longer highly valued as a destination in its own right and was mainly seen as an inexpensive staging point for the islands.

This is despite some wonderful natural resources and attractions in the immediate area, some interesting cultural history and landscapes and a strategic location. In difficult financial straights, Whitsunday saw the need to invest in a concerted program of improvement to its physical fabric to help it re-establish itself as a competitor to the big resorts. The student work was envisaged as a contribution to the debate on how tangible improvements to the area could best be achieved.

Support for Student Involvement

The developer of the major Laguna Keys residential resort, Aqua del Rey, immediately came to the party and over the ensuing months the \$A10,000 needed to fund the project was contributed in cash and kind by local developers and



businesses. The process was co-ordinated by the Whitsunday Development Bureau and relied on the generous contribution of many local businesses and individuals. As such it also became an exercise in community activity and linkage, encouraging communication between various individuals and groups throughout the shire.

The planning students produced a strategic assessment and recommendations, principally in report form, which were not only issued to the locals but used as a basis for the design work in the second stage.

The task for the design students was therefore to define what kind of places Airlie Beach, Canonvale and Proserpine should be if they are to be rich and attractive destinations in their own right - destinations supporting the surrounding attractions. This included defining appropriate images and forms for the future and relating these to the way these places operate as communities. These included suggestions for streetscapes, waterfronts, town centres, road design and siting, pedestrian networks and town entries - all those things that make these places interesting to visit and pleasant to live in.

Community Appreciation

The local community was excited by the results which demonstrated so many opportunities for their place of work and living. Since the Shire is in the middle of the preparation of its strategic plan, it will be able to use the material to input into that process.

In addition to concepts of three dimensional quality and design to the strategic planning process, the quality issues, that are particularly important in tourist regions and need consideration during the development of engineering infrastructure such as road and drains, were presented. Specific projects which can be undertaken by the local authority were also identified, such as waterfronts and local pedestrian systems. All will need to be designed further by specialist landscape architects and urban designers before construction to ensure that appropriate levels of quality are achieved. While this level of expertise is common in the private developments in the region, it is yet to be established as the norm in the public realm.

Dr. Catharin Bull is Senior Lecturer in the School of Planning, Landscape Architecture and Surveying at Queensland University of Technology

BIO-CLIMATIC DESIGN

and new regional expression in urbanism and architecture
by Darko Radovic

In the continuous ferment of urban and architectural ideas in Europe, one current preoccupation is the concept of regional expression in design solutions. That is, an emphasised respect for local diversity and an understanding of the importance of co-existing differences. Social trends, as well as unique geophysical characteristics, should inevitably find expression in architecture and urban form. It could be called the New Regionalism.

Historically, regionalism was an ever-present stream in architecture, whether based primarily on socio-historical or geoclimatological properties of a certain epoch or place. The important part of a new, emerging regionalism comes from a wide social concern based on consciousness that man has to find a proper response to the current environmental crisis. Such pronounced awareness of the importance of natural surroundings, and the need to respect and follow the finest natural rhythms and processes of an immediate environment, brings back the place, reintroduces neglected classical concepts like *genus and anima loci*, to architecture of our time.

Diversity From Micro-climate

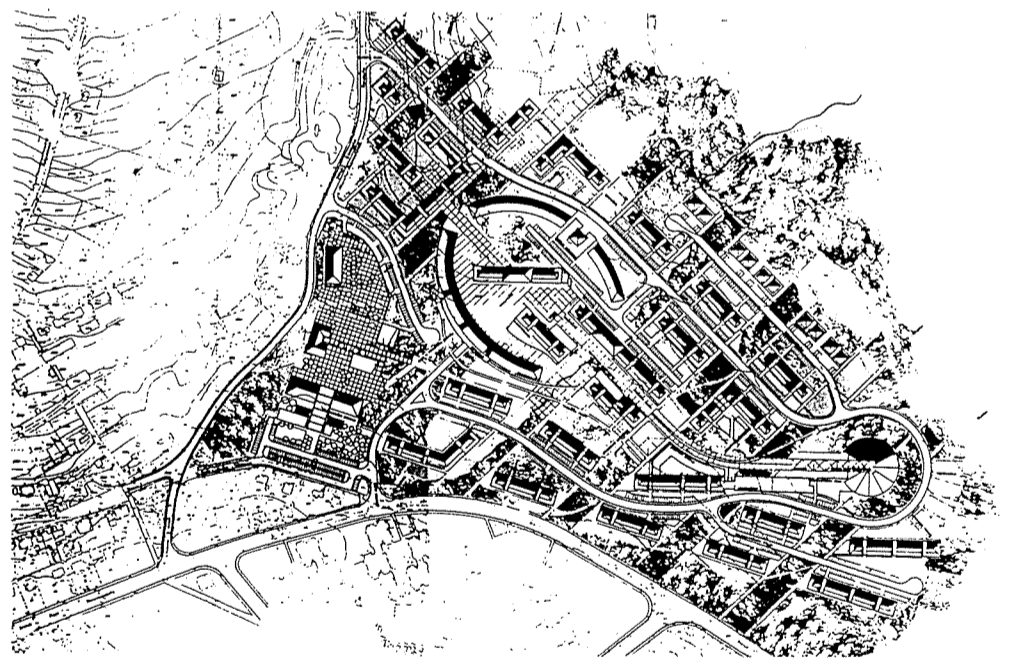
In this era, largely marked with instant communications and almost unlimited flow of ideas, people and material, in a world of increasing uniformity, local appearance of architecture depends, less than before, on indigenous materials, skills and technologies. Its locally based diversity stems mainly from microclimatic

conditions of specific sites. Having the endless range of climatically different places around the world, a plenitude of locally, regionally predictable architectural and urban expressions become prominent features of the built environment and constitute a rich basis for specific bioclimatic regionalism.

Regardless of the numerous measurable benefits of bioclimatic design (which originated in the early seventies with efforts to save energy and to use alternative resources) probably the most important social effect of such an approach is just that distinguishable quality of formal and functional sense of belonging to a specific place. That regionalism presents an intriguing blend of local and global, particular and universal, regional and inter-regional, and thus it could be said that bioclimatic architecture brings a specific international regionalism.

Interactive process

Success in the development of architecture and urbanism with such qualities largely depends on understanding that all space-creating professions - from town planning and urbanism to architectural design and building itself - are but interactive parts of the same process. Without a proper initial planning concept or without its correct urban design elaboration, a bioclimatically successful scheme is impossible. The same stands for the opposite situation: whatever quality of architectural design, detailing or building procedure, they



▲ Residential area, layout based on bioclimatic principles. Belgrade, winning competition scheme. Architects Radovic and Zivkovic.

Research on local form - Energoprojekt ENTEL, architects Popovic and Radovic. ▼



cannot make up for errors made at "earlier" levels. Only a comprehensive view of the whole and a true interdisciplinary approach to the creation of the built environment results with quality of genuine, indigenous regionalism, regionalism for a new *fin-de-siecle*.

Dr Radovic is with the University of Belgrade in former Yugoslavia and is Visiting Research Fellow at the Architectural Association Graduate School in London. Currently he is teaching at RMIT and Oceania Polytechnic, Melbourne.

The town of Narrogin in Western Australia proposed the creation of a park to celebrate the centenary of local government in 1992. The park site was a swathe of wasteland, approximately 2 km long and 500 m wide, which cut through the middle of town, dividing the inhabitants, and isolating those on the east side from most of the town's facilities.

Council saw the opportunity to strengthen the cultural and social life of the community through an innovative approach to the planning and development of the park, involving the community and the Council in a collaborative process with professional artists and designers. A Community, Environment, Art and Design (CEAD) grant from the Australia Council supported this community participation process, and the concept of a collaborative design team approach to planning.

Documentation to Design

The process involved documenting the existing landscape, historical research and extensive community consultation to produce design concepts which incorporate the cultural and natural heritage of Narrogin. The town already had a strong attitude of civic pride and with Council leadership had undertaken an extremely successful townscape development program. The park project built on this foundation and extended it into new areas of community development.

In the 10 months since construction work began several projects have been

completed. The Newton House barbecue, a two kilometre walkway and cycleway, a new toilet block, two timber board walks across the creek and lawn, and tree planting have transformed the area into a popular picnic spot for locals and visitors, and a focus for community celebrations.

Community Involvement in Implementation

An innovative approach by Council involved the community in much of this implementation. Trees were planted by school children on Arbor Day and community working-bees were held to clean up the creek and to plant lawn.

Most notable was the Council's creative solution to attract State Government assistance with the Park. This was obtained from the State Government, not in cash, but by "borrowing" 120 public servants employed in Narrogin for a day's labour in the Park. The Deputy Premier of WA also actively participated in the day as attested by the blisters he received! This inaugural "State Government - Community Work Day" won enormous positive publicity and public support and is now being replicated in other communities within WA.

Artists and designers have worked with the community on many aspects of the project - Newton House with its stone chimney and cottage gardens; the Centenary Pathway incorporating 100 granite tiles designed by local school children to illustrate significant events in the town's history; the toilet block architecture reminiscent of early buildings



▲ Public servants enjoy a good days labour on the Narrogin Park Project. (Photo courtesy West Australian Newspaper Ltd)

on the park site; and a display of baskets and sculptures made from natural bush materials collected in the park.

Beneficial Results Apparent

The park was the focus for the town's centenary celebrations with a huge community "Picnic in the Park". Other picnics and events have followed. An annual community festival centering on the park is now being planned by the local tourism committee.

The park project will continue to be developed over several years. Already a number of beneficial results are apparent. The extensive community involvement has fostered a strong sense of local pride and

ownership; the inclusion of the Aboriginal community in both planning and implementation stages has resulted in a closer understanding between both communities; there is new confidence in the leadership role of Council; and the people of Narrogin have a much needed recreation area linking both sides of the town.

The most outstanding recent success for the project has been its being awarded the overall 1993 National Award for Innovation in Local Government, as well as the specific Arts and Cultural Development Category Award. If you would like more information about the project, contact Mary Silverman, on (098) 811 944.

B O O K S

(Architectural) History is Bunk History and Precedent in Environmental Design by Amos Rapoport
Plenum Press New York 1990
Review by Stephen Axford

"For many anti-scientists objectivity is not so much impossible as reprehensible", John Passmore.

Science is the most objective of human endeavours, writes Rapoport, but architectural history as it has been traditionally studied is neither scientific nor objective.

In choosing to open his book with the Passmore quote, Rapoport gives an indication of where he places most architectural historians. Rapoport believes the community has been ill-served by their efforts, with too much emphasis having been given to a select sample of work chosen for unknown, or at best subjective, reasons. But the intention of the book is not to be a critique of the traditional methodology of architectural history; rather, he sets out to demonstrate its inadequacy by developing a better model - one based firmly on a scientific basis.

The alternative suggested is based on the field of Environment - Behaviour Studies. In this model, the population of buildings and environments is sampled in a systematic way. Thus instead of studying only houses by the "great names" of a particular period, we would look at samples drawn randomly from the "population" of houses of that period in question. Following the scientific approach, hypotheses can be formed, data analysed, and objective results collected. The ultimate aim for Rapoport is to develop broad theories, principles and paradigms which can then be applied to new design problems.

The book includes a good range of "samples" of traditional pedestrian environments, which alone would make it a valuable reference. Rapoport is not always an easy writer to read, as he develops his case with great particularity; yet the central message comes through clearly, and along the way you pick up objective arguments to support well established subjective notions: for example, the need for complexity and detail in the pedestrian environment is demonstrated by contrasting the "organic" arrangement of unplanned environments with the formal arrangements found in planned towns. Thus "it is significant that in general, the grid has tended to disappear when strong central authority and power have weakened.In this way the desirable levels of complexity are stored as grids give way to more complex patterns. it is typically a recurring "problem". For example, in Paris as early as 1607 attempts were being made to prevent projections into the streets. ...Nearly 1500 years earlier a similar process took place in Damascus after the decline of Roman rule, even though the Roman street with its arcades had reasonably high complexity levels." (p270).

Given the Morris/Murray/Martin debates re grids and non grids that have appeared on these pages, I couldn't resist the above quote. Of course I have taken it out of context. To see which of the debate he comes down on, you will have to read the book!

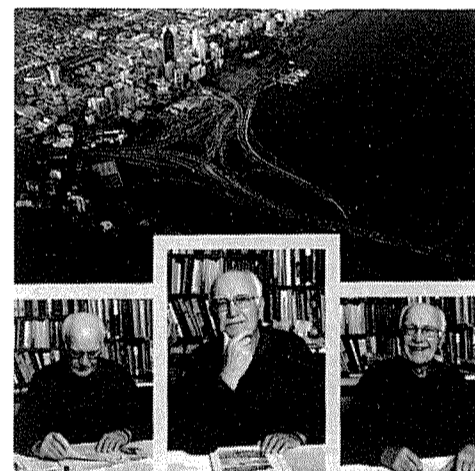
Rapoport's basis hypothesis, that we should learn from earlier environments, is hardly new (eg. Christopher Alexanders "A Pattern Language", which curiously is not referred to) but the difference here is the strength of the case made for an empirical process. And in dealing with paradigms drawn from a range of studies, he shows how quite complex issues can be addressed with a process that is often dismissed as being too narrow.

On a Human Scale. A Life in City Design

by Gordon Stephenson
Edited by Christina DeMarco. Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 1992. RRP \$34.95
Review by Gordon Rushman

Gordon Stephenson has to be the doyen of Australian urban designers. Reading his autobiography spanning an enormously satisfactory professional career of sixty years, one can only be astonished at the extent of his achievement. At the outset he worked with Le Corbusier in Paris and with Corbett, Harrison and MacMurray in New York, on the Rockefeller Center. During World War II he worked first on big emergency projects, then with the UK's new Ministry of Town and Country Planning laying down the basis for postwar development and statutory planning. He also worked with Abercrombie on the Greater London Plan. Later he was Professor at Liverpool where he also edited the Town Planning Review. Then at Toronto, and then Perth. And so the impressive account goes on up to the 1990s including the Perth Metropolitan Region Plan of 1955 carried out with Alastair Hepburn. In his involvement in planning he has never severed himself from design which has always been integral to his work. He has always been an urban designer. Gordon Stephenson has chosen to stick mainly with his projects and not to dwell at any length on the politics that inevitably impinge on any work in planning and urban design. While he mentions Senator McCarthy whose influence prevented him taking up a chair at MIT, there is, for instance, no mention of Professor Pontecorvo. Without those two, the Stephenson family might never have arrived to settle in Australia.

This book is both inspirational and an important historical document which, in chronicling the work of a major figure, gives us a lot of valuable information about our field as a whole. Above all, it demonstrates that urban design is no recent arrival in the built environment field but has been a continuous line of development over a long period.



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