

Urban design and 'extreme climate events'

*I love a sunburnt country,
A land of sweeping plains,
Of ragged mountain ranges,
Of droughts and flooding rains.
I love her far horizons,
I love her jewel-sea,
Her beauty and her terror,
The wide brown land for me!*

Since the last edition of Urban Design Forum, various parts of Australia have experienced what are euphemistically referred to as

'extreme climate events'. Is the much-quoted Dorothea McKeller poem a resignation, a celebration, or a reality check?

While our deep sympathies go out to all of those who are directly affected, particularly where there has been loss of life, perhaps it is a good time to reflect again on the relationships between the natural and built environment, and urban design. This edition includes some of those reflections.

Dispatch from the Front

John Byrne

In recent days, enormous areas of Queensland have been affected by extreme weather events. Others can talk of the extent, the acts of heroism, the amazing displays of social capital, the good luck, the leadership, alleged reasons, and long-term impacts. There is much to discuss, but let me offer 10 Brisbane-centric urban design reflections.

Will we see Urgent Short-Term Fixes (modified status-quo approaches) or Longer-Term Change for a better future? I suspect the extent of private and public loss will politically, pragmatically and humanely drive us towards the former. If the mandate were "changes", what should be the re-defined interface of floodable river and city form: retreat or advance/reinvent? Most of the design/planning dialogue so far appears retreatist, although that's not what anyone has said, nor should, in the current post-traumatic climate.

The Brisbane River is at the very "heart" of this city! The national daily said we "loved the river too much". Surely the issue is not too much but how well, how expertly, how creatively we do this loving? To turn our back on this historical, topographical, environmental and emotional central thread would surely be absurd.

Professional and editorial talk suggests lifting houses and city entries, and having lower storeys as car parks or other flood-accepting uses. There is little talk as yet of the consequent loss of built form and public realm integration, no matter how stylishly managed by the designers; or of its impact on urban grain, community safety, democratic

accessibility, residential presence in the city, civic quality or more. And lurking is a Buchanan-esque scenario.

Why not provide significantly more public open space along the low-lying bits of the river? Brisbane has less parkland near its centre than many cities but the rhetoric says creating more is not economically viable. Doesn't this deny the liveability demands of increased urban densities? Or the role of high-amenity environments in a competitive global economy? Or the emerging knowledge about the health / nature connections?

Is replacing at-risk housing an all-or-nothing response? Are there not ways of designing denser mixed-use precincts that deliver high amenity public realm and manage flood risk!

Much of the edge of the River is privatised and inaccessible to the community. Sadly, the dramatic substantial public investment in the floating Riverwalk pontoons has ended up in Moreton Bay, with the real possibility of not being replaced. Where is the discussion of neighbourhood structure, esplanades and promenades, designing for democratic access, legibility, and the like?

Beyond engineering solutions

There is definitely the mood for engineering solutions - both smart little ones and more heroic ones - that will "save us" next time. We were lucky this time and shouldn't assume we've seen the most extreme event. So all the technological wizardry is welcome ... provided we don't lose urban amenity big time. Cunning design is needed from elegantly multi-disciplinary work. In the current context, however, hard-nosed "practical" engineering is

Urban design – with the head or the heart?

Juris Greste

There are many great practical and highly sensible ideas of how a city with a meandering river deals with it when it is known that from time to time it will break its banks and cause heartache. But great practical and highly sensible ideas often do not necessarily get us very far. There is already an oversupply of them - while we remain paralysed to their implementation.

We like to think that what makes us different from the rest of the animal kingdom is that we can use reasoned thought and conjecture the future – all good head stuff. However, let us reflect on the premise that we make more decisions guided by the heart rather than the head. Consider this:

Where does a pioneer make a camp, if they have a choice? By the creek or the river! This trait is part of the Australian heritage and deep within the cultural genetic makeup. We want to get as close as possible to the water's edge. That is driven by the heart and not the head. Getting large parts of the city to vacate or withdraw from potential flood plains is unlikely to happen. Even those who have a choice keep returning to flood prone locations.

We do the things we do because we can, or can afford. While to various individuals the flood losses are painful, the reality is that we are a prosperous consumer nation that can afford it. What was thrown away as flood damaged goods would have been salvaged in most of the rest of the world. To us as a country or a city, a once in even 30 years major flood is wearable. A depressing thought perhaps, but economists acknowledge that the flood and storm wreckage will be good for the GDP. And if we end up with national compulsory disaster insurance, why worry? Just make the occasional claim.

Bad as January was, do we really want to make radical changes? Brisbane River does not flood

with predictable regularity for a compelling case to be made for major redesign. And I suggest that nothing could have been done to stop Grantham being washed away. Perhaps we do have to seriously accommodate the concept of 'an act of God'.

Instead of replanning the city and withdrawing way up the banks, we should consider building 'enduring quality'. How many will reline their walls and ceilings with plasterboard - again? My son's older house got flooded too. After a good scrub, the 75mm hardwood floor boards are as good as before. The VJ wall linings are almost untouched. The fibrous plaster walls merely need repainting. The biggest write-off was anything with chip board or mdf and hollow core doors.

How far do you go in protecting people against their own sense of denial. We now know almost as much as there is to know about how to build to withstand cyclonic conditions. Much of that knowledge is in mandatory building requirements. No house less than 30 years old should lose its roof, windows, suffer structural damage or storm surge inundation. Much of that knowledge can also be applied to older buildings as well. Yet, people find ways of dodging the sensible action – deciding with the heart and hope rather than the head. And many of us will readily continue doing that.

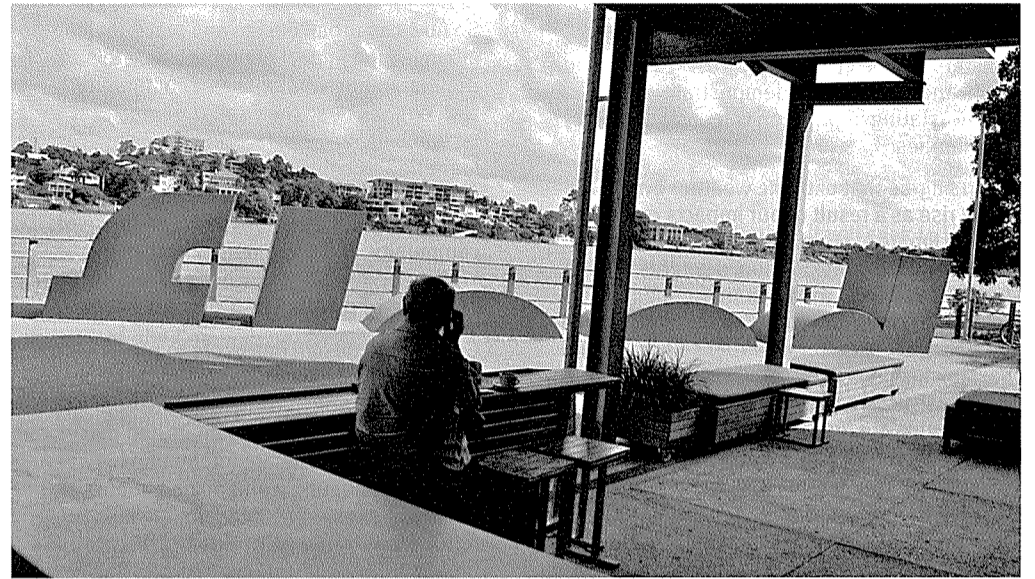
Brisbane is a very young city with a short history and collective memory. It might take more floods at shorter intervals and a few hundred years to instigate and motivate alternative ways of doing things. European cities with more frequent and extreme river level fluctuations often build walls to the river banks as in Arles (France) along the Rhone River. In Oporto (Portugal), the city has slowly raised and paved the banks of the Douro as well as stepped the building line back, using very durable materials.

The current orthodoxy is to let the market decide. Why not let the market decide how

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▲ Memory and prophesy – near Powerhouse on the Brisbane River

king and simple solutions generate community optimism. What we might call "design" risks being called unnecessary delay and relegated to lipstick luxury status. I energetically hope not...but I fear the mood is that way, unless all good folks conspire together.

But wait! We delight in the freedoms of our democratic society and its understandably risk-averse human systems. We accept compulsory acquisition of private land for pipes, busways and freeways...but not yet for river parks or new urban precincts, even if they not only increase community amenity but reduce future private problems and consequent public costs. I do not underestimate the difficulties here, but wonder where the balance between private rights and the overall community good (that so underpins other decisions) needs to lie when it comes to some things that have historically

not been seen as "essential" urban outcomes. This may, as yet, be beyond contemporary strong leadership.

And the community's emotional needs? We must celebrate our river in the face of more and nastier events. And one essential part of our healthy and pragmatic response must be to openly and honestly celebrate its potential destructive power, including through good Aussie humour, as in the "Watermark" in front of Brisbane's Powerhouse (above).

Such was the unforeseen damage in many places some polities called it a war-zone. This is not a war easily, perhaps ever, won. Stay tuned for further dispatches from the Front.

John Byrne, an Urban Consultant and Adjunct Professor at QUT, can be contacted at byrne.urbandesign@gmail.com



▲ Oporto, Portugal



▼ Arles, France

it wants to deal with a river that occasionally misbehaves.

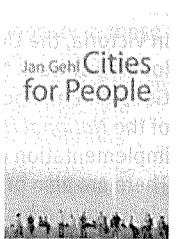
Juris Greste is an urban designer, lives in Brisbane, and is helping to reinstate a house that was recently flooded. He can be contacted at jandlgreste@optusnet.com.au

Cities for People

Jan Gehl has just published *Cities for People* (Island Press, 2010), summarizing his work over 50 years. Jan says "...city life and regard for people in city space must have a key role in the planning of cities and built up areas... caring for people in the city is an important key for achieving more lively, safe, sustainable and healthy cities, all goals of crucial importance in the 21st century." This fully illustrated

publication is a textbook for urban designers, explaining how we experience the city, and how to design a hospitable urban experience.

For more details see <http://islandpress.org/bookstore/detailsd456.html>



Urban design and natural disasters

Andrew Hammonds and
Vanessa Swinson

Good urban design which encourages interaction amongst neighbours can contribute to community resilience. This can help with preparedness and recovery, enabling neighbourhoods to bounce back quicker, minimising the impact of natural disasters.

The national capacity to respond to the increasing frequency and impacts of disasters is strained. Over the last forty years, 19 of the 20 largest property losses have been weather related. Worldwide the costs of natural disasters are increasing. The 2011 Queensland floods and Cyclone Yasi demonstrate the devastating impacts on Queensland communities.

Experts agree that extreme weather events are on the rise as a result of our impacts on the earth's climate system. Increases in extremes of temperature, precipitation, droughts, storms, and floods will be more frequent in Australia. This is compounded by a growing population, concentrated within 50 km of the coast, exposing greater numbers of people and infrastructure to extreme weather events. These trends are projected to continue for at least the next half century, and thus Australia's vulnerability to extreme weather events will continue to increase.

Building individual and community resilience is integral to our nation's ability to respond to natural disasters. The aim of the Australian National Disaster Resilience Framework "is to support measures to strengthen communities, individuals, businesses and institutions to minimise the adverse effects of disasters. This improves the ability to prevent, prepare, respond to and recover (PPRR) from disasters across social, economic, environmental

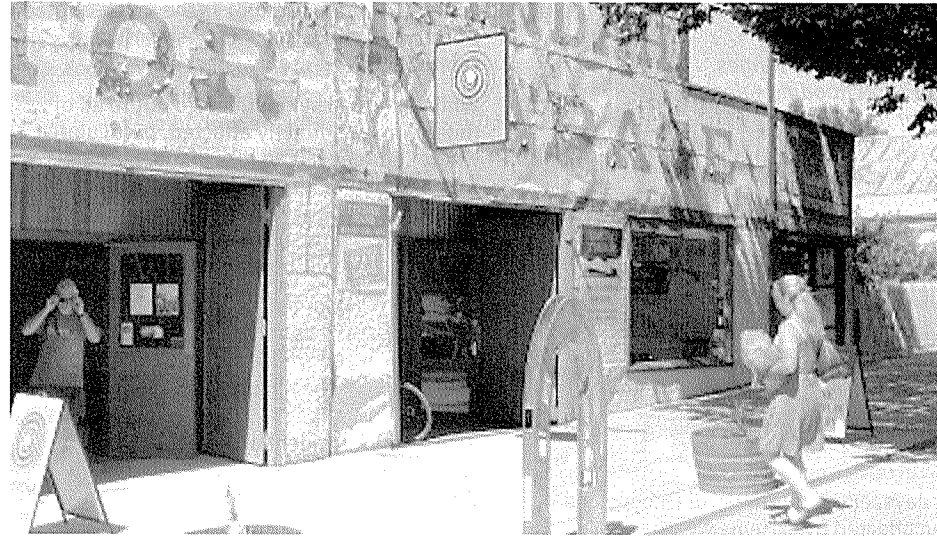
and governance elements" (Australian Government, 2008).

Resilience is the capacity of social groups and communities to recover from, or respond positively to crises. After a crisis, resilient communities can even be in a stronger position post-event. Those that are not resilient are prone to long term suffering – physically, socially and financially. They are then more prone to adverse impacts from smaller scale events. Communities have varying levels of resilience.

So how can urban design and place-making minimise the impact of natural disasters? Understanding what makes a community resilient has been the subject of much research. A range of factors have been identified as contributing with those of particular relevance to urban design including social capital, social cohesion and sense of community, and community involvement.

The role of good urban design

Good urban design has a role to play in building social capital, the ability to form and maintain relationships to facilitate goal and objective attainment. Buildings and places can be designed to facilitate interaction between people – residents, workers, neighbours and users of places, to enable relationships to form. Many of the great cities of the world benefit from a consistency in urban form which encloses the street. This gives these places the quality of continuity and enclosure. The streets, footpaths and open spaces are overlooked by buildings, which facilitates interaction. For example, houses which have a front veranda or porch to the street enable residents to interact with neighbours and passers-by.



▲ High Street, Yackandandah, Victoria, where even service stations (or motor garages) used to relate to the street, enabling people to enjoy public places.

Another place-making quality of inclusiveness and interaction can support social cohesion. We need to protect and create public places where all people are free to encounter each other as civic equals. We can design active, safe and well used streets, parks and squares through: active edges; activities in and overlooking public spaces; and comfortable and interesting places.

Good urban design introduces, maintains and intensifies human interaction within the public realm and enables these connections to be built over time. It is these social connections which ultimately create social support which can be accessed during times of trouble or crisis, and in times of support and calm. As stated by Chia (2010) "connections do not happen; rather they are slowly developed with relationships increasing mutual respect and

understanding amongst relational parti

Urban design and place-making can minimise the impact of natural disaster. Those researching and working in the area of disaster management have identified the value of community resilience before and after events like floods, hurricanes and bush fires. Neighbours who know each other tend to help each other - especially those, like the elderly, who need assistance. With natural disasters likely to increase in frequency and intensity, the government and insurance agencies should support good urban design outcomes which enable community resi

For more details and references, see www.placefocus.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=366%3Aurban-design-natural-disasters&catid=78&Itemid=14

Urban Living beyond the Metroplex

Rod Duncan

Australia's cities are currently the focus of some long overdue attention in the national debate, including the incisive papers from the Grattan Institute, the Federal *Our Cities* discussion paper toward a National Urban Policy, UDF's advocacy for elevating the design agenda, and various city-based initiatives. However there is a significant group of cities that are being largely overlooked in the current discussion of an urban agenda for Australia.

Occupying a seemingly invisible position between the major conurbations and rural Australia are four or five million urban dwellers - about 20% of the national population - living in several dozen mid-sized and smaller cities that form a critical element of Australia's settlement network. These are urban citizens, not straw-chewing country folk, participating in urbane activities with an intensity that may eclipse many of their suburban cousins. Their cities each have a rich history, an evolved

▼ Tropical, urbane, proud Mackay, Queensland



complexity and individual character that contribute to distinctiveness and engender a strong sense of identity.

This group of cities is also a vibrant contributor to urban change, with many growing at rates exceeding the major capitals. Inward migration is attracted by a combination of lifestyle choices, proximity to recreational or natural features (sea, snow or bush), housing affordability, and a quest for more intimate participation in community activities. In turn, this is being reflected through increasingly sophisticated, cosmopolitan character that, with increasingly flexible work modes, is attractive to footloose creative enterprises and micro-businesses.

A workshop conducted at LaTrobe University Bendigo last September attracted a spectrum of participants from cities, government agencies and universities around Australia and New Zealand to discuss the issues, opportunities and challenges facing 'mid-sized' cities. It was concluded that these cities are under-recognised in debate, research and policy formulation, with existing information limited, scattered and lacking a clear focus.

Poor recognition is compounded by absence of a clear, agreed term. For now 'regional cities' seems to be the best available, despite risking confusion with the wider 'regional and rural' agenda which, while important, is largely distinct from addressing the urban aspects of cities beyond the dominant metroplexes. To be commensurate with their contribution and potential, a significant lift in information resources, research capacity and cross-sectoral communications is required.



▲ Temperate, urbane, proud Bendigo, Victoria

Regrettably, the *Our Cities* paper adopts an arbitrary statistical unit population threshold (rather than function and identity) to include some mid-sized cities and urban clusters in its discussion while excluding many others. Again a significant proportion of Australia's urban scene remains largely invisible during policy formulation.

Proposed Centre for Regional Cities

A group of interested practitioners spanning various professions, local and state government, business and academia is pursuing establishment of a Centre for Regional Cities. This will provide a platform for trans-disciplinary and cross-sector discussion, information interchange, experience-sharing of precedents and initiatives (national and global), and a clearing house for sharing skills and expertise. This can help bridge the fragmented decision-making and communication blockages that frequently constrain or dilute transition toward preferred futures.

Initially concentrating on Victoria - reflect the new State government's appointment of a Minister for Regional Cities - this initiative will pursue a national perspective and may encompass New Zealand, whilst drawing practice globally. Persons and organisations interested in contributing to this initiative contact rod.duncan@deakin.edu.au.

Inspiration for the potential of mid-sized cities comes from the Swedish city of Malmö, a former ship-building town the size of Wollongong that now ranks in the world's ten cities for creativity and for sustainability. Among Australia's mid-sized cities, there are several potential contenders to emulate this achievement.

Rod Duncan is Associate Professor of Urban Planning at Deakin University, and has worked in a variety of public sector roles with a particular interest in regional cities and strengthening city centres. The views expressed are his own.

Australian Urban Design Initiative (AUDI) update

Following the successful Australian Urban Design Initiative (AUDI) Roundtable in Adelaide at the end of November, various activities are occurring across the country to advance both the advocacy for and practice of urban design for our cities and towns.

In Victoria, the Urban Design Forum group is looking at ways to engage with the new State Government, and ways to support the adoption of the *National Urban Design Protocol* and the implementation of other Federal programs. There are also preliminary discussions taking place around how to support the design of regional cities (see above article).

The Board of the Queensland Urban Design Alliance has recently approved a strategic plan for the next two years. Their vision is for QUDAL to be a catalyst for the creation, design and management of quality and sustainable places for people throughout the State. Key initiatives include: monthly forums on urban design; annual dinner in a unique 'place'; 3rd annual UDAL conference; people-nominated place awards, annual Sunshine and Gold Coast events, regional participation, and an upgraded internet site.

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects is exploring ways in which urban design agendas can be given more strength, and in

particular how better cooperation between the various organisations involved in urban design might reinforce their individual agendas.

The next edition of Urban Design Forum will include further updates on progress with a range of initiatives. If you have something to promote, send it to wchandler@bigpond.com by 5 May.

Meanwhile UK's CABE (or a portion of it) has been merged into the UK Design Council, but with a much reduced remit - and budget to match. More than 80% of CABE's 125 staff have left or are leaving. Continuing Chair of CABE Paul Finch said: "This very positive

move will place architecture at the heart of the economy as a driver for competitive businesses and places. I am very much looking forward to the combined expertise of our two organisations coming together to achieve that." The new arrangements begin 1 April (an auspicious day?), and will force the new UK Government's 'localism' agenda. It will be interesting to see how the Design Council now evolves, and to what degree it picks up the CABE challenges and successes.

For more information see a series of articles on BDonline at www.bdonline.co.uk/news/its-official-cabe-merges-with-design-council/5013271.article#ixzz1EDMsBjPb

Our Cities: national urban policy in progress

Dorte Ekelund

In December 2010 the Australian Government released for public consultation the discussion paper *Our Cities - Building a productive, sustainable and liveable future*, and the associated background and research paper *Our Cities - The challenge of change* - with the aim of stimulating a national discussion on the outcomes we need for our cities and the role that the Australian Government can play in helping to achieve those outcomes.

Our Cities furthers the Australian Government's commitment to a national approach to urban development and provides the basis for developing a national urban policy, to be released later in 2011. As part of the consultation, the Major Cities Unit has held workshops with State, Territory and Local Governments and other key stakeholders across Australia's 18 major cities. Amongst the many important discussions and questions these consultations generated, the following three are briefly discussed below:

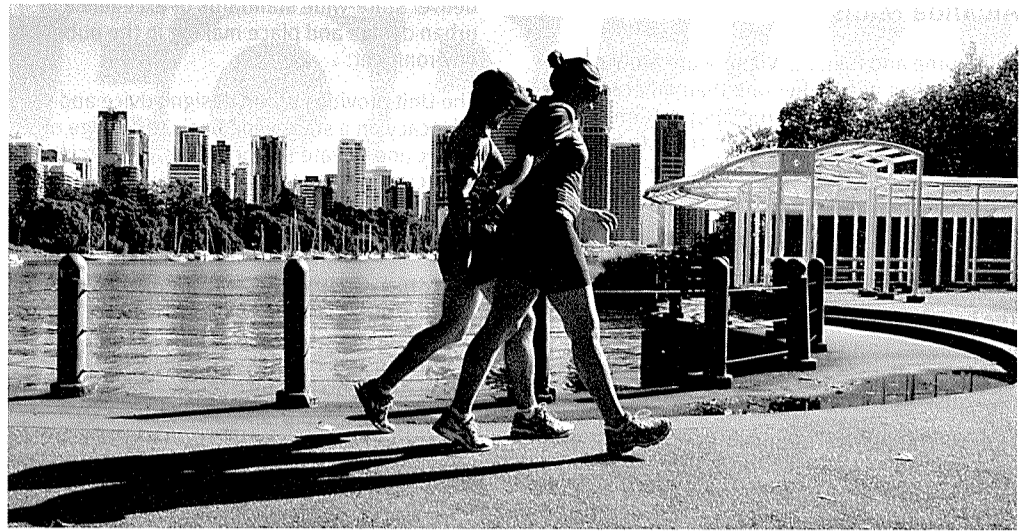
- What is the relationship between national urban policy and other Australian government policies and reforms?
- What is relationship between national urban policy and the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) agreement on a national objective and planning criteria for capital city planning systems?

- What is the role of the Australian government in national urban policy in relation to the other spheres of government and the private sector?

National urban policy

The national urban policy is being developed concurrently with a number of other major Commonwealth policy initiatives that have implications for cities: the Sustainable Population Strategy and the COAG agreement on capital city planning are particularly notable.

The Sustainable Population Strategy is due to be released in the first half of 2011. The ageing of the population, with its declining contribution to the workforce and rising health costs, poses a significant challenge to the economy. Maintaining our future productivity and quality of life requires that we take a longer term view of population growth. Cities are critical to national productivity and will be the centres for most of the projected population growth. Two key directions for national urban policy, therefore, involve prioritising the integration of land use and infrastructure to maximise productivity and ensuring that the supply of housing, infrastructure and services meet the needs of the growing and changing urban population in a way that is socially and environmentally sustainable.



In accordance with the December 2009 COAG cities agreement, States and Territories will have strategic plans for capital cities that meet criteria by January 2012. As part of the agreement, the Commonwealth will link its future investment in cities to these strategic plans. The COAG Reform Council is presently reviewing metropolitan planning systems for their adherence to the criteria, and its findings will be released later in 2011.

The national urban policy will not duplicate or replace the State, Territory or Local Government responsibilities for city planning

and functioning. Rather, it will seek to identify ways that the Australian Government can contribute to improvements to the planning and management of our cities and support the streamlining of administrative processes to achieve a more productive, sustainable and liveable future for our urban communities.

Dorte Ekelund is Executive Director of the Major Cities Unit at the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure and Transport. Our Cities Discussion Paper can be sourced from www.majorcities.gov.au

Can New Urbanism foster a sense of community? It is still a claim!

Alpana Sivam and
Mohammad Javad Koohsari

The New Urbanism emerged in the late 1980s in the United States of America, as one alternative to suburban sprawl, and is now recognised as one of the more popular concepts in modern urban planning. With the rise in popularity of the New Urbanism in countries such as the USA and the UK, this movement has now captured the special attention of the Australian Commonwealth Government.

Advocates of the New Urbanism present an extensive list of the movement's benefits, which are aimed to appeal to both professionals and interested stakeholders. However, after two decades, there is still not sufficient evidence to confirm or reject the success of the approach. One of the principal features of the New Urbanism is the fostering of a 'sense of community' through physical design. Emily Talen (1999), noted that the "creation of a sense of community is the essence of new urbanism design theory."

What is 'sense of community'?

There are many different definitions of what constitutes a sense of community. Various researchers - depending on their research interest and discipline background - often present contrasting definitions of this concept. For example, Lund (2003) believes 'sense of community' to be the "latent aspect" of a community. This includes such aspects as: interactive support; neighbourhood security; and a sense of belonging. In another definition, Nasar (2003) states that "sense of community refers to the feeling an individual has about belonging to a group". This sense of community has many personal and public advantages including identity, safety, satisfaction and mental health.

There are many factors that contribute to the creation of sense of community. Lund (2003) puts these factors into three broad categories: the social environment; personal/socio-demographic status; and the physical environment. The first two categories have been extensively investigated, especially by

social researchers. However, the importance of the physical environment in improving sense of community has not been examined in great detail, and there are many debates in this field among planners and urban designers.

What is the research evidence?

Advocates of the New Urbanism movement claim that neighbourhoods which are built according to physical design principles - including the integration of mixed land uses, high densities, walkability and connectivity, the provision of adequate public transit, good access to open spaces, community and social facilities - can create a stronger sense of community than other, differently designed, neighbourhoods. However, recent literature in this field is quite inconclusive and in some cases, contradictory.

Some studies confirm the role of the physical neighbourhood design principles which are advocated by the New Urbanism as fostering the sense of community (Lund, 2003; Kim and Kaplan, 2004; Kim, 2007; Rogers, 2009). On

the other hand, there are some studies that question the strong relationships between these two aspects (Brown and Crooper, 2001; Nasar, 2003). All of these studies were conducted in the context of US cities.

While it seems that the New Urbanism could be an appropriate alternative for conventional suburban development, examining the claims of this movement can provide opportunities for applying its principles to different cultural contexts. Australian cities as a multi-cultural context can be a good case to examine one of the most important and challenging claims of New Urbanism: *fostering sense of community*.

Alpana Sivam is a lecturer at school of Natural and Built Environment, University of South Australia. She can be contacted at Alpana.Sivam@unisa.edu.au Mohammad Javad Koohsari is a PhD student in Urban Design at Melbourne School of Design, University of Melbourne. He can be contacted at koohsari@student.unimelb.edu.au

Excluding children in cities

Elena Kalnin

The 48th International Making Cities Liveable Conference, Charleston, South Carolina explored the exclusion of children in cities and the relationship between the built environment and children's health.

Sixteen percent of children in the U.S. are obese. Too many now suffer from chronic diseases - type two diabetes and heart disease. The conference contention was that these diseases should be avoided through environmental design. Speakers from fields of design, planning, disease prevention and elected officials were united against the current situation where many conditions, such as shyness and loneliness, are medicalised rather than prevented. To overcome the current unhealthy exclusion of children from cities will require the development of places to interact with community and nature, and a recognised role for children in public spaces. Long-term urban design leadership will enable cities to change.

Children can safely learn how to interact with strangers with access to public space and the support of a web of sustained adult relationships. Places to gather that are not mono-cultural are crucial. At the conference, children raised in comfortable backyards with hovering parents structuring their play were likened to battery hens: prevented from realising their full potential by environmental factors. Children need to have independent mobility close to home between the places of their interests. To develop independence and exercise responsibility children need to be

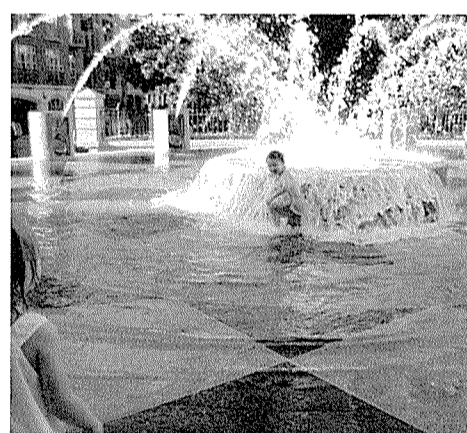
enabled to walk, bike and take public transport alone. For those uncomfortable with this idea - consider the repercussions of the alternative, and that 'stranger-danger' is largely a myth.

Children need to be allowed to participate

To take part in city life children need to be allowed to participate in their way: to climb sculptures, to play in fountains, to dance along with buskers, to take part in festivals. These requirements will alter cities, suburbs and towns.

A relationship with nature is central to active living and healthy eating. Advocates of biophilic design argued that a connection with nature is related to intellectual development. An environment with elements of nature allows for unsupervised explorative play, which is crucial to the development of tacit knowledge. The gradual disappearance of this kind of learning has been linked, amongst other things, to poor performance in science subjects.

The exemplars showcased long-term vision and long serving patrons. Charleston's Mayor, Joe Riley, has served the city for thirty-five years and sees himself as "Chief Urban Designer". The long-serving former Governor of South Baden, Germany, Sven von Ungern-Sternberg, described the stabilisation of car use over ten years through an investment in a bike network through Freiburg. Randy Wade, Director of Pedestrian Projects Group, NYC described the recent transformation of road space to useable public space made possible by a supportive patron and ten years of work.



Considering the obesity epidemic, urban design has a legitimate social engineering role. Children's needs will modify cities, not unlike the transformations made for accessibility. An accredited scheme for places that meet the needs of children, similar to Green Star rating, is being developed by IMCL, more details on the website soon. <http://www.livablecities.org/home.html>

Elena Kalnin is an Urban Designer, she works at Maribyrnong City Council. Elena presented a paper at the conference on organised street activities. You can listen to, review or download all the presentations by registering at <http://www.livablecities.org/user/register>. You will be emailed a temporary password that you will need to change the first time you login. Then, visit the eConference page in the Conferences menu and register for the Conference. Registration is \$495. Access is available until 31 May.

Need for more than clichéd hopes

John Mant, although having retired as an urban planner and lawyer, is still a keen contributor/commentator to planning and design debates.

He is somewhat scathing about recent major reports on cities. The *State of Australian Cities 2010* report, he says, "is replete with all those clichéd hopes that have peppered urban policy papers for decades - integrated infrastructure planning and programming, innovative urban design, consideration of place impacts of development, healthier cities, sustainable cities, affordable housing, less car dependent, shorter trips, access to a wide range of services and facilities ...

"One gets a warm glow from these documents. They don't disappoint by explaining what we really would have to do to achieve their lofty aims. To explain would be to expose the hollowness of the analysis and the solutions. The truth is inconvenient because it is to be found within government and the way it operates. Rather than face up to it, much better to wrap the clichés around some pictures of happy citizens and pretend you are across the issues".

"The point is, let's have some honesty in these urban reports. For years the same hopes have been stated. Nobody writes why it is that those hopes are not realized. If we had some real analysis, we might see some real solutions", is John Mant's conclusion.

Strengthening Victoria's liveability

Amanda Millis

Melbourne and regional Victoria are growing and changing at a higher rate than other states in Australia, with Melbourne's population likely to reach 5 million before 2030. The rate of population and economic growth, combined with the challenges of climate change, housing affordability and transport congestion, will collectively influence the shape of Melbourne, regional cities and towns.

The key challenge for Victoria is to continue to deliver a strong economy whilst conserving and enhancing our quality of life, one that is recognised around the world.

Much of this can be attributed to the design of our built environment, which supports the well being of our communities.

The Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development's (DPCD) Urban Design Unit assists in delivering the Government's objective to improve and

deliver state-wide standards of excellence in urban design and place making in the public environment.

The Unit provides urban design advice and advocacy on a state-wide basis to a range of public and private sector clients, and assists in both creating and leading the implementation of innovative projects in metropolitan Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Building design knowledge and capability

In order to achieve higher standards of urban design to enhance the liveability and sustainability of our towns and cities, we need to build the urban design expertise and knowledge of built environment professionals, particularly those who make or influence decisions about development.

In response, the Urban Design Unit has built a significant urban design training resource to support and contribute to the Government's

urban policies for managing the growth and change in Melbourne and regional Victoria. Since 2006, over 1,000 public and private sector built environment professionals from metropolitan Melbourne, regional Victoria and interstate have participated in a variety of urban design training events.

This year's Urban Design Training Program has been designed with a particular emphasis on regional Victoria. Its aim is to improve the skills and competencies of participants so that they can better shape the urban environment through improved public safety, better urban layout and subdivision design and functional activity centres.

If you would like to know more about the Urban Design Training Program, please contact the Urban Design Unit on (03) 8644 8819 or visit www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning/urbandesign For online registrations, visit the PLANET Professional Development Program www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planet

an urban design training program for Victoria



Department of Planning and Community Development

Reviving Melbourne's historic Northbank

Northbank is rich with history spanning nearly two centuries contributing to making Melbourne the great international city it is today. It is where Melbourne began – the site of Melbourne's founding when the first European settlers landed on the north bank of the Yarra River from the schooner Enterprize in 1835, providing Melbourne's first port. Northbank also played a colourful role in Melbourne's gold rush history. The discovery of nearby goldfields in 1850 brought thousands of people from distant shores to its banks.

The Northbank Promenade Redevelopment is a series of major projects to strengthen Melbourne's central city riverfront spine alignment between the CBD and Docklands. The Victoria State Government, together with the City of Melbourne, is bringing this historical precinct back to life as an important Melbourne destination and linkage.

▼ Charles Grimes Bridge Underpass Artistic Impression. Image Credit: Aurecon Group & Cox Architects



Both levels of government recognise the importance of the riverfront to the city, and the Northbank Promenade is a unique asset waiting to be transformed to a vibrant and water-focused experience. It will complement a series of completed key developments in the precinct including the new Seafarers' Bridge and the new Melbourne Exhibition and Convention Centre.

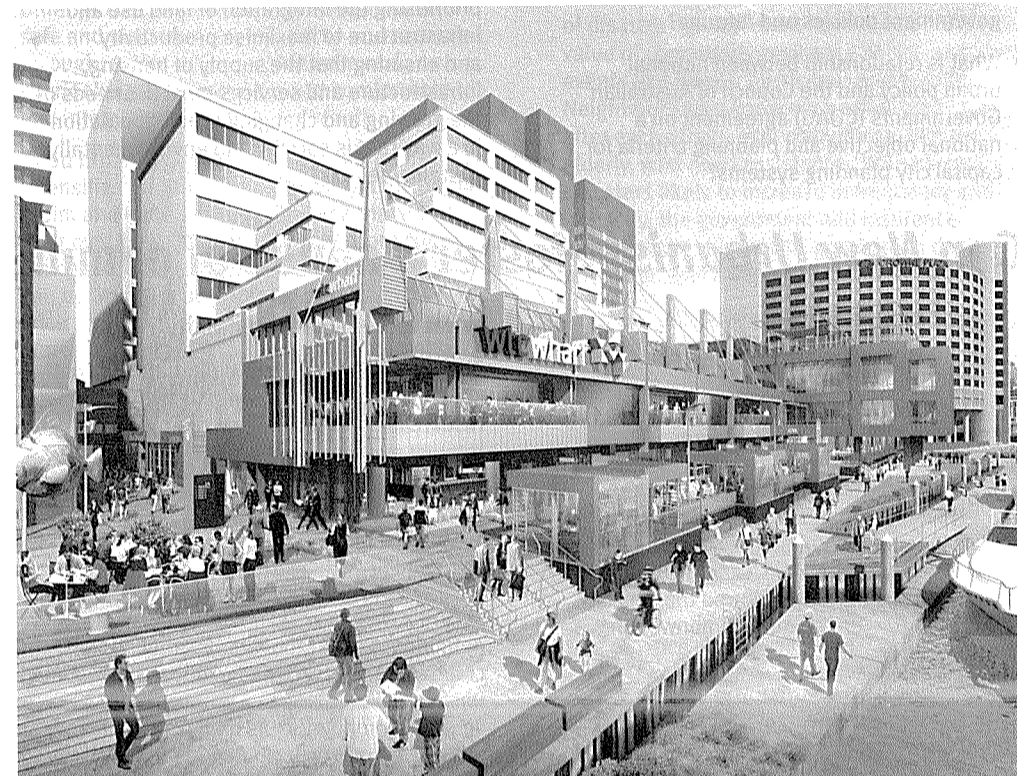
The DPCD Urban Design Unit, in partnership with the City of Melbourne, is investing \$18 million in the Northbank Promenade Redevelopment project. This creates a continuous river frontage for pedestrians and cyclists between Spencer Street and the Charles Grimes Bridge and facilitates adjacent private sector investments. The project is being delivered over four years, 2008-2012. When completed, it will provide a vital link between Melbourne's CBD, Docklands, Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre and Southbank. It will also complete a major link in the Capital City Trail – a long standing aspiration of both the State Government and the City of Melbourne.

The first stage of Northbank was completed in March 2010. Since opening, the redeveloped promenade at the World Trade Centre has become a lively destination lined with cafes and public venues. The refurbishment and widening of this part of the promenade has created generous walkways and a floating pontoon, including berthing facilities.

More projects to come

Stages to be completed over the next two years are:

- Crowne Plaza Hotel Promenade – providing more generous promenade access between Spencer Street and the Northbank riverfront.
- Charles Grimes Bridge Underpass – providing a simple, elegant 'state-of-the-art'



▲ WTC Wharf Artistic Impression. Image Credit: Asset1 WTC Pty Ltd and McGauran Giannini Soon Pty Ltd

suspended underpass establishing the missing link between the CBD, Docklands and South Wharf.

Beyond these projects, further riverfront improvement works have been identified as part of the North Wharf site redevelopment project to be undertaken by the Department of Treasury and Finance. This will see private sector investment for the redevelopment of the historic Goods Shed, Seafarers Rest public space, and the refurbishment of the North Wharf promenade.

The planning and implementation of the Northbank projects has involved strong collaboration across multiple government agencies and stakeholder groups including the Department of Treasury and Finance, Department of Sustainability and Environment, Parks Victoria, VicUrban, VicRoads, Melbourne Water and Bicycle Victoria.

For further information contact Amanda Millis at the Urban Design Unit, Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development amanda.millis@dpcd.vic.gov.au

Conferences, etc

Understanding place

13 March, 2011 University of WA, Perth

Understanding place – the resource of landscape is the theme of a Forum-Day Seminar to be held at the University of WA. Speakers will lead discussion about the cultural values which contribute to the making of a place or a discernable landscape.

The Forum is the first time there has been an assembled cross-discipline discussion about place-making and landscape in WA, and it is intended to use the event as a stepping stone towards clearer use of language, and methodologies of interpretation and assessment.

The point of past discussion has been to introduce the notion that there is more to places than architecture and artefacts. This session will go further by examining examples, case-studies and also some of the different schools of thought on landscape and place. This discussion has a strong bearing on many elements of urban design. The event is sponsored by the Australian Garden History Society, the National Trust (WA) and Australia ICOMOS. Enquiries to Ross Montgomery roscomonty@westnet.com.au or Caroline Grant – grantspc@inet.net.au

International seminar on Urban Form

26-29 August 2011, Montreal, Canada

The 18th International Seminar on Urban Form has a theme of Urban Morphology and the Post-Carbon City. The objective is to explore how interdisciplinary research on urban form can contribute to debates, policies, and progressive professional practice for addressing key environmental challenges of our times.

Abstracts of papers on the conference theme, or any other theme related to Urban Form are welcome. Send abstracts ASAP to isuf2011@alcor.concordia.ca. For more information visit www.isuf2011.com

4th International Urban Design Conference

22- 23 September, 2011, Surfers Paradise, Queensland

The conference will be held at Surfers Paradise Marriot Resort and Spa. Registration is now open, and a discount is available to delegates who register and pay before the close of Early Bird. To register visit the conference website <http://www.urbandesignaustralia.com.au/registration.html>

Walk21

3-5 October, 2011, Vancouver, Canada

The Walk21 Metro Vancouver partnership of community groups, health authorities, universities and governments is proud to present an international conference to discuss how car dependent communities around the world can take the next steps beyond the automobile city. Participants are invited to follow their heads, their hearts and their hands, and vote with their feet by contributing, and you need to take action ASAP.

For updates and details about the conference visit www.walk21.com/vancouver, or contact vancouver2011@walk21.com

State of Australian Cities Conference Call for papers

Australian society and economy is dominated by its cities and regions, and the future of Australia's environment is also linked to urban sustainability. The State of Australian Cities is a national forum, held biennially, to share scholarship directed at the complex and multidimensional issues facing us as an urban nation. This conference will seek ways of bridging the divides created by a focus on disciplinary-based approaches to research, towards better cities in a better country.

The Conference Committee invites you to submit an abstract ASAP for the 5th State of Australian Cities Conference to be held at Melbourne University, 29 November – 2 December, 2011, in the following themes: Governance, Environment, Economy, Social, and Infrastructure. For more information and to submit an extract see www.soac2011.com.au

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Web: A new consultant register and an increasing range of related information is available at www.udf.org.au

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