Editorial (2000 5,2)

A sectoral approach to the development and management of our towns and cities arose as a response to the extreme environments of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries developed by laissez-faire capitalism during the industrial revolution in countries across the globe. Public/private; development/control; professions/industry; manufacturing/retail; it is possible to make an ever longer list as an essentially Fordist approach to the organisation of human endeavour took hold and endured through a large part of the twentieth century, with consequent specialization and narrowing of the interest of particular elements within the field.

Urban design, indivisible at first from civil engineering, architecture and the rapidly emerging discipline of town planning, lost its promising start in the first decades of the twentieth century. For some of us, the process of specialization reached its nadir in the 1960s and 1970s, when planning substantially detached from design and attached itself to social sciences and technocratic approaches, such as systems theory. At the same time, with the dark experiences of the rapid urbanisation of industrial revolutions still in mind, the very fabric of cities were shaped – zoned – by sector and use.

The embodiment of the opposition of public/private, control/production that characterised urban development for most of the century engendered an openly confrontational approach to change in our towns and cities. By the second half of the century professionals became themselves sectoralised – working almost exclusively in either the public or private sectors. Neither sector truly understood the needs and motivations of the other, and the guardian state sought constantly to manage and moderate the wishes of the private sector to achieve a vision of the neat and tidy, healthy and wholesome, planned and zoned setting for all human endeavour.

Negative popular reaction in the last three decades to the functional and social failure of public housing and the poor quality of much everyday private sector development, as well as shifts in the industrial, commercial and thus employment bases of the so-called developed

countries, led to emerging changes in attitudes. The need for cross-sectoral cooperation became not just an option, but a necessity. Ironically, both the functional and the qualitative failure of place brought urban design to the fore once again, as it had been (albeit without bearing the name) one hundred years ago, as a response to the failures of the past.

As we move into the new millennium, urban design is an international preoccupation and, as in any new market, almost everyone is prepared to profess themselves an urban designer. Cross-sectoral partnerships are taken for granted, and indeed, there is a blurring of established professional boundaries, with an emphasis on professional 'one-stop-shops' and team working.

However, one hundred years of rapid change, apparently accelerating without restraint, means that the tasks of urban design are ever more complex – from the strategic, to the everyday detail. Communication, and the dialogue to achieve broadly supported, effective change in the places where we work, live and play, is paramount. In this issue, we publish four papers which seek to contribute to the coalescence of theory and key practices.

We are pleased to publish the first two papers in this issue which were presented at the Second Space Syntax Symposium, held in Brazil in 1999. Our next issue will include further papers from this symposium.

In their paper, Hillier, Greene and Desyllas address the issues of rapid urbanization in Santiago de Chile, in terms of whether locational or spatial factors play a role in determining the long-term development of a settlement. Based on collaborative research, one of the key findings is that the critical spatial factor is the degree to which the settlement is able to develop edge-oriented commercial activity through its outward facing edges, and through this to participate in the wider local economy.

Julienne Hanson's paper builds on configurational ideas developed by the team at the Unit for Architectural Studies, University College London,

during the late 1970s, and is part of a larger project to use space syntax analysis to retrieve a structured history of design ideas. Her paper presents a case study which examines in detail the morphological changes that have taken place in the design of housing in the small inner London neighbourhood of Summerstown. She argues that it is essential for architects and urban designers to understand how social ideas about inequalities in power and control are built into our frameworks and assumptions.

Tony Hall provides a critique of the scope and use of local development plans. He argues that the paradigm of two-dimensional uniform land-use allocations upon which they are based has difficulty in dealing with mixed-uses, urban design principles and the more general pursuit of more compact and sustainable settlements and does not provide an adequate basis for public participation. Drawing upon principles from urban morphology and urban design he proposes an approach based on generalised outlines of

three-dimensional urban form, with land uses seen as consequent variables with which to guide new development.

In the final paper, Reeve and Symonds compare two places in Oxfordshire, England. The one, Bicester Village, is a designed and managed factory retail park, the other, the village of Bicester, is a traditional English small town. Using Baudrillard's notion of the 'hyperreal', the paper explores the idea that image is part of a system of values attached to commodities, along with exchange and use value. They argue that nowhere is this more obviously true than in the field of urban design and management. In a discursive analysis they pose a series of questions relating to authenticity of design and experience.

Richard Hayward
Sue McGlynn
Executive Editors
Joint Centre for Urban Design,
Oxford Brookes University