Editorial

For most urban designers, the car represents one of the most contentious areas of problem solving. In much of mainland Europe, urban traffic has been successfully calmed and clean and efficient public transport competes with the private car for many regular urban journeys. Sadly in the UK, this is very seldom the case. Despite many improvements in service delivery, public transport in general, and buses in particular, are perceived as being dirty, irregular and unreliable, uncomfortable and expensive. Added to this, if you have any reasonably severe mobility problem, your chances of finding an accessible bus are very poor indeed.

Many urban designers with an interest in compact, sustainable cities are generally pleased to see the private car challenged in its previously assumed right of passage through our towns and cities. At the same time, they and many others, abhor the development of out-of-town retailing and the damage that it does to the mixed-use economies of our urban centres. The British Government agrees: the previous Secretary of State, John Selwyn Gummer, started the process of reining-in out-of-town retail development. The new Secretary of State, John Prescott, is now enjoying a high public profile for his proposed legislation which will allow Local Authorities to charge cars coming into towns and cities and benefit from the hypothecation of such charges for spending on local public transport and the like.

The questioning by some of the legitimacy of taxing people off the roads before providing an efficient public transport system is easily answered in post-Thatcher Britain. A privatized public transport system will only invest in response to a clear market pressure - and nobody yet knows how the new approach will function in terms of pricing people off the roads.

But this is by no means the most important part of the problem. Out-of-town retailing for every-

thing from fashion and food to ferns and furniture is easily accessible by car and enjoys the benefits of effectively unlimited free car parking for the consumer. Increasingly, out-of-town food superstores are also served by free or subsidized bus services. Town centre traders are being helped into oblivion: by ever increasingly restricted on-street parking - usually contrived, in part, at least, by traffic engineers intent on removing the obstacles to vehicle flow; by prohibitively expensive local car parks; and by bus services with little notion of customer care. Charging people, in addition, to bring their cars into town, before they have even wrestled with the problem of where to park when they get there, should finish the job!

Even this may not be the most important issue. In this country, large-scale retailing, and particularly food retailing, has almost established a series of monopoly cartels, that not only maintain some of the highest food prices in the world, but also have a stranglehold on the global supply chain. Thinking globally and acting locally, UK supermarket chains have almost destroyed much of the diversified food production of British agriculture - or hold it in the balance by the thread of the deal between each chain and the individual supplier. As a result, orchards are lost and the varieties go with them; producers have become entirely dependent on their one client and can no longer supply local wholesale or independent retail markets.

Thus the small independent retailers for most food - and indeed, many other goods - find themselves without the benefit of any competition in the supply market - or, increasingly, without any viable suppliers at all.

Let's keep unnecessary traffic out of towns by all means. Let's provide better public transport first and then charge for access to town centres; but let's also charge for parking at out-of-town

centres and put the income from these charges into genuine public transport and the upgrading of our town centres as viable centres for trading local and regional goods in competition with the global produce of the supermarkets.

In this issue we start with a paper by Kim Dovey on Euralille as a programatically innovative experiment in urban design. Conceived as a generic city of transition and movement, Dovey concludes that the project would have benefitted from a better understanding of urban spatial structure and that many of its successes are familiar rather than new.

In their paper, Bagnoli and Patel discuss the work of the American city planner and landscape architect, John Nolen. Their paper traces the development of Nolen's approach to new settlement design through two case studies: Myers Park and Venice. At a time when the private car dominates new settlement design, the issues reviewed in this paper are timely and compelling.

Pedro Buraglia suggests in his paper that recent residential developments in Bogota, Colombia, despite their modernist origins, are transformed into the more traditional structures of barrios

over time. In his conclusion he calls for more culturally sensitive approaches to design guidance and control.

This is a theme that underlies Eduardo Nobre's paper which is concerned with the pattern of urban development in São Paulo. He demonstrates that economic change and growth has greatly influenced urban land markets. He concludes that development control has been unable to tackle the problems of land speculation and its effects on the quality of life for the poorest sectors of the population.

We conclude this issue with a paper by Ayssar Arida which is concerned with urban design and the post-Cartesian paradigm. Arida proposes that the new Millennium will be accompanied by a radical paradigm shift. This will be informed by quantum theory. This paper poses the question whether a world view based on quantum theory can produce a better approach to the problems of the city.

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