Editorial

The design and animation of public space is at the very heart of urban design practice and theory. Public space at the centre of settlements has been of particular concern because of the historic role of the core as the place for social and economic exchange, and as the carrier spaces of civic and local identity. The papers in this double issue address many aspects of the theory, design and management of public spaces.

The issue starts with a major new paper by Bill Hillier. The paper offers a re-conceptualization of the functional and spatial elements of the centre of settlements. Hillier draws attention to how little we know of the processes by which centres are generated and sustained, and he argues the case for understanding centrality as a process rather than continuing to describe it as a state. He builds on his earlier paper 'Cities as movement economies' in the very first issue of this *Journal* (Vol. 1, 1) for which he won the AESOP Prize in 1996. Here, Hillier develops his account of the impact of spatial configuration on movement by explaining the subsequent influence this has on land-use choice and the development of 'attraction inequalities' in the settlement layout as a whole.

Ivor Samuels' paper explains the application of a typomorphological approach to plan making for St. Gervais, a French alpine resort. Against a background of the erosion of local character, and especially the loss of the qualities derived from the relationship between building and landform, the paper describes the method for preparing the plan that will act as a framework for guiding the future development of the town. The main challenge, within a highly prescribed legal process, was to identify and promote building forms that will maintain the quality of the natural environment, and the distinct character of the settlement while still allowing the development of tourism.

In their paper, Bentley and Ko discuss the ideological structures which provide designers with the justification for using particular types in designing particular places. They make the case that the ideological explanations are less important to users who are primarily interested in what happens on the ground. Building on the book *Responsive Environments* (Bentley *et al.*, 1985), they argue that developing the ethic of choice articulated in this approach is one way of re-attaching user-positive ethics to user-positive types. The final part of their paper explores how we might build alliances between the *Responsive Environments* approach and other vernacular traditions elsewhere in the world, such as the Chinese vernacular tradition of Feng Shui.

Mike Biddulph's paper also presents a case study of a methodology and process of plan making – the University of Liverpool's new Precinct Development Plan prepared by a team from within the University in 1999. Many of the older British universities have large land holdings in the centre of cities yet their approach to real estate management has primarily been a functional, building-led one. Biddulph makes the case that the campus environment is increasingly regarded as a critical factor in attracting students and staff, and that greater attention needs to be paid to the improvement of the spaces between and around buildings and at the threshold of the university precinct to the public spaces of the city.

Patrice Bulliard's paper is concerned with the regeneration process and proposals for a sequence of public squares in Fribourg, a small university town in Switzerland. A combination of post-war development and increasing car ownership has brought about a gradual shift of the town centre to the west, leaving the historic core in physical and social decline. A recent change of approach in planning policy has initiated the development of proposals for the regeneration of a series of spaces

along the spine of the original settlement. Unlike the previous plan that assumed the spaces would be pedestrianized, the new plan accepts the need for vehicular access and adequate parking but channels vehicular movement to minimize its impact on the alternative uses of the three squares.

The issue concludes with an extended review by Alan Reeve of a series of publications *The Richness of Cities: Urban Policy in a New Landscape*, by Comedia in association with Demos.

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