Editorial

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As *Urban Design International* approaches its 20th anniversary in 2015, our vision as newly incumbent co-editors is to position the journal as a high-quality and engaging platform to explore and debate the future of the discipline and profession of urban design. *Urban Design International* proudly takes due credit for seriously delving into the daunting questions surrounding its roots, identity and purpose. These soul-searching questions have engaged scholars in interdisciplinary endeavours, which have undoubtedly resulted in a thriving profession more aware of its past and present, as well as future challenges that lie ahead. Our ambition is to attract thought-leaders who will continue to define and re-define the pivotal role that urban design will play as the world continues to urbanise. Projections inform us that in 50 years time, more than 75 per cent of the world's population will live in cities, bringing with it opportunities as well as threats.

In celebration of the journal's anniversary, and to scope the agenda for future research, we are proposing to hold two conferences, in the United States and the United Kingdom, to instigate an intellectual exploration into the nature of these opportunities and threats. The conference themes will consider two interrelated sides to urban design research and practice. 'Future Cities' examines the future city as a product, an urban form and a spatial entity; and 'City Futures' explores the future city as a process, a host of social, political and economic scenarios and human experiences that trigger what Fry (2011) calls the 'defuturing' process. Recent urban scholarship is already identifying the key future spatial and experiential scenarios of city life. Fry (2011) writes about the 'age of unsettlement' with predictions of tens or even hundreds of millions of climate refugees by the end of the century requiring new forms of cities based on retrofitting existing resilient cities and discarding redundant ones to be replaced by 'moving cities'. At the same time, Burdett and Sudjic (2007) gather evidence of the new 'Urban Age' marked by an increasing disconnect between how the physical forms of cities (housing, buildings, transport, infrastructure, streets and public spaces) are failing to keep

up with social change such as migration, job mobility, governance structures, unfettered urban growth, wasted use of energy and resources, and social inequality. Indeed, cities are grappling with the tensions between residential enclaves for the rich and the poor, land use intensification debates to raise densities, improving connectivity and growth through public transport infrastructure, the explosive growth of populations requiring new towns, and even, in some cases, the decline of cities from lack of an economic base. We believe, urban design is poised to interrogate these futures from the micro-scale of the pavement and public space, to the meso-scale of the site and the neighbourhood, and to the macro-scale of the village, town or city. Our aim is to strengthen the connection between the bigger conceptual picture and the minutiae of everyday urban design practice.

We cannot look forward without recognition and acknowledgement of the past editorial teams who have contributed to the standing of the journal to date. We would like to thank Michael Pitt and Sam Griffiths from UCL and Vida Maliene from Liverpool John Moores University, whose commitment has been highly commendable. In meeting our ambitions for moving the journal forward, we are privileged and honoured to be working with an exceptional Editorial Board. Our existing and new board members reflect the cutting-edge research and practice we wish to attract from authors. Their role is to act as a sounding board and benchmark for ensuring we expand the journal's critical, comparative and truly international scope. We would like to renew our pledge to the editorial board knowing that with the continuous engagement of these esteemed colleagues we can continue to be ranked as a major international research forum in the field of urban design. Over the coming issues, we will be commissioning Special Issues broadening the geographical and sub-regional base of the case studies, as well as tackle key topics such as healthy cities, new cities, landscape-led masterplanning, conservation-led regeneration and participatory design.

Turning now to the five new contributions to this issue of *Urban Design International*, the papers

presented here concentrate on the divergent outcomes of targeting the spatial versus the social aspects of regeneration megaprojects through conceptual, pedagogical and practice-oriented lenses. Within the field, there has been an increasing concern about the urban regeneration forces that wind up creating barren and homogenised urban spaces instead of drawing from old and new inspirations. The resultant ubiquitous 'non-places' discourage social interaction and social contact, and ultimately generate social capital. Hence, far from being physical and spatial in nature, these concerns reflect broader shared social, political and cultural values that need to be incorporated into the design process.

Addressing the social dimension, Sunnam Park notes that 'internal drivers' as opposed to 'external drivers' provide an alternative to, and serves as, the antithesis of the standard command-and-control comprehensive planning strategies. 'Internal drivers' seek to change the long-term stigma associated with languishing communities rather than engaging them in short-term physical quick fixes.

In a similar vein, Matthew Carmona and Aya Sakai discuss the tension between regulatory mechanisms driven by modern individualistic design strategies that threaten the Japanese traditional typologies, on the one hand, and the hybrid models that accommodate to both sets of values, on the other.

In the third contribution to this issue, Bulent Batuman and Deniz Altay Baykan examine pedagogically the same tension of physical emphasis in the absence of the social attributes of urban form. Through a multi-stage critical reflection method they call 'critique by design', students are enabled to actively engage in the process rather than passively pursue aesthetically driven spatial alternatives.

A key challenge of a responsive and responsible urban design is to ensure that innovative design solutions are possible and appreciated, and to incorporate effective placemaking strategies into the urban design process. Marichela Sepe and Michael Pitt explore the characters of place by searching a 'microsystem' of placemaking within the 'macrosystem' of the whole city. They seek to find a mix of methods to link the concepts of 'place' and 'identity' knowing that 'place is not evident' because it contains both quantitative and measurable, and qualitative and intangible aspects.

The fifth article by Daniel Piatkowski and Wesley Marshall discusses one concrete example of the tension between the auto-oriented modern versus the pedestrian-friendly new urbanism developments in Denver, Colorado. Their research shows that whereas the new urbanist communities have not yet reached their transportation goals, the future of New Urbanism seems more promising in better incorporating the characteristics of 'old urbanism' by offering sustainable transportation alternatives to residents who ultimately prefer transit to commuting.

References

- Fry, T. (2011) Urban futures in the age of unsettlement. *Futures* 43(4): 432–439.
Burdett, R. and Sudjic, D. (eds.) (2007) *Living in the Endless City*. London: Phaidon.

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