Editorial

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When we set out on the adventure of editing *Urban Design International* we attended a research meeting at the Royal Institute of British Architects in London. The purpose of the meeting between a number of researchers and a number of journal editors, was to facilitate the publication of appropriate papers in refereed and other broadly academic journals: to clarify what, why and how. Towards the conclusion of a discussion dominated by would-be authors bemoaning how difficult such publication was to achieve, one very distinguished academic editor, drew a line under such hand-wringing by pointing out that the main problem for editors with regard to UK contributions was being offered them in the first place.

Over the ensuing years we have benefited from a steady increase in the flow of papers – albeit more from overseas than the UK. In publishing the best of these papers we have been substantially reliant on the efforts of our referees. Primarily, but not exclusively academics, these individuals give their services for nothing more than the satisfaction of helping to approve and often to modify authors' work, so that good papers on good subjects reach our (continuously increasing) readership.

Now the UK Times Higher Education Supplement (THES) makes it clear how lucky we are to enjoy this support. In a prominent back page article (*Journals blame RAE for shortage of young editors*, Anthea Lipsett, THES 17th March 2006, p 56) THES makes it clear that in the academic scrabble to publish papers in refereed journals for the next Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), fewer and fewer academics are prepared to edit refereed journals, an activity seen as too time-consuming and with an almost non-existent RAE return. After more than 10 years of such work this makes us very sad. We would be interested to hear from any reader who would like to sustain this journal (for a tiny financial and marginal academic return), by joining the editorial team.

In this issue we publish four papers

Karim Hadjri's paper which provides '*An analysis of the spatial structure of a new desert town: Al Ain, United Arab Emirates*' provides a commentary on the use of the Space Syntax methodology in this instance, identifying some apparent anomalies. He concludes with a warning regarding the challenges for a car-dominated settlement and advocates consideration of higher inner urban densities to provide a more compact core and promote pedestrian movement. We thank Professor Hadjri for his continued support for the journal.

Zena O'Connor, studying for her PhD at the University of Sydney presents a case study in her paper '*Environmental colour mapping using digital technology*,' which focuses on Berry's Bay in Sydney. She draws appropriately modest conclusions about the benefits of using digital technology in colour mapping. We look forward to seeing her work developing further.

Jan Gehl, Lotte Johansen Kaefer and Solvejg Reigstad, give us a timely reminder about how to improve our 'Close encounters with buildings.' They conclude 'When new buildings are planted in places people frequent, the buildings (or their designers and managers) must learn to make meaningful conversation with city spaces and the people in them.' Our thanks to Professor Gehl also for his continued support for *Urban Design International*.

In their paper on '*Awards, Patronage and Design Preference: An analysis of English awards for housing design*', Mike Biddulph, Alan Hooper and John Punter highlight the variety of agendas that these address. They identify that the distinctions 'between 'professional and 'lay' tastes' are not clearly drawn. 'Giving awards is not, therefore, an unbiased and value free process.' A not surprising conclusion to a very useful paper. We are

indebted to Mike Biddulph and John Punter for refereeing many papers over the years and to Professor Punter in particular, for guest editing two issues (though we should stress that this does

not mean favourable treatment when it comes to the publication of their own excellent papers).

Richard Hayward