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**DISCUSSION PAPER
FEBRUARY 2006**

**CITY DESIGN – A NEW PLANNING PARADIGM?
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**CITIES PROGRAMME
LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS**



Alfred Herrhausen Society 
The International Forum of Deutsche Bank

CITY DESIGN – A NEW PLANNING PARADIGM?

Contents

1. Introduction	2
2. Urban Planning	3
3. Urban Design	5
4. The relationship of planning and designing	6
5. Interdisciplinary and all-scale approaches	7
6. City Design	8
7. Conclusion	9
Bibliography	11

1. Introduction

‘Putting cities on the agenda’ certainly constitutes an important part of the message of Urban Age. But what is proposed beyond this consensus that cities should continue to play a key role in a globalised world and that any agenda on cities must further reflect the enormous rate of urbanisation in the developing world? Besides purely descriptive reflections on the Urban Age investigations, two categories of propositions relevant for decisions makers in cities can generally be differentiated.

One category covers specific solutions to urban development and by definition tends to be more normative and prescriptive. Possible examples are propositions regarding inclusive designs for urban neighbourhoods, demand management for transport or designs for network offices to respond to a new urban economy. The other category looks at questions related to the process of decision-making in cities and links these to final results – the new or redeveloped parts of cities.

This discussion paper aims to advance the latter category by directing the focus to the evolution of cities at the beginning of the 21st century in relation to mechanisms of change. With regards to planning cities, John Friedmann identified the withdrawal of the nation state from the urban agenda as perhaps the most significant change in the recent past.¹ Cities are now asked to become entrepreneurial, work in partnership with the private sector and need to find ways to deal with the new responsibilities given to them. Eventually, this will lead to the development of a new planning paradigm, one that is applicable for different geographic and political contexts. To contribute to this debate, this proposition looks at a new planning paradigm for cities, one that might be described by the term ‘city design’. The brief analysis of the key areas ‘urban planning’ and ‘urban design’ below will be combined with questions on interdisciplinarity, scale, democracy, devolution and project-based thinking.

The provocation that ‘designing the city’ should replace what is currently known as urban planning is intentional and should reinforce the discussion. Clearly, city design as currently imagined faces a serious problem of democratic legitimacy since it relies heavily on experts’ contribution and offers extended powers to consultants. Further, it privileges physical strategies at the expense of programming and management approaches. Most debates in this context tend to be self-referential. They remain within a certain professional or academic community and often declare as ‘new’ things something that have been common knowledge or even practice in a neighbouring discipline for many years. Therefore the ‘new’ is often nothing more than a step towards a more interdisciplinary approach. This is also the nature of the investigation below: design and planning paradigms, democracy and implementation scale are pairs not commonly used within the same discipline. In the future however, this will be critical.

2. Urban Planning

Urban planning is usually referred to as the core discipline in regard to city development. At the beginning of the 20th Century, planning emerged as an offspring of architecture concentrating on the larger scale of spatial development.² Urban planning has holistic aims – best illustrated by the modernists' Charter of Athens in 1933 – and regards fields such as housing, transport, neighbourhood and workplace development as sub-categories. However, relationships between these 'categories' are far more complex. Transport planning in particular, given its function of delivering supra-regional connectivity, developed as a parallel discipline to planning, rather than as a subsection thereof. Traditionally, urban planning has focussed on the spatial development of the city and concentrates on developing plans – as in two dimensional plans or maps – which lay the ground for future physical developments of the city.

Before exploring urban planning in more depth, it is worth unravelling the term and looking at 'planning' and 'urban' independently from one another. One definition for 'planning' is the 'the process of anticipating future occurrences and problems, exploring their probable impact, and detailing policies, goals, objectives, and strategies to solve the problems. This often includes preparing options documents, considering alternatives, and issuing final plans.'³ This leads to the final product of planning, in which the plan 'is a proposed or intended method of getting from one set of circumstances to another. They are often used to move from the present situation, towards the achievement of one or more objectives or goals.'⁴

The adjective 'urban' in urban planning refers to its most generic understanding of 'relating to or concerned with a city or densely populated area',⁵ positioning it between 'town planning' – the planning of smaller settlements – and 'regional planning' – of larger geographic areas. Urban planning, with its reference to 'plan' includes a strong temporal element, an emphasis on realisation over time. Further, the planning discipline seems to concentrate on the question of 'how' to achieve a certain goal. Therefore goals are somewhat pre-defined.

PLANNING CULTURE

Societies as well as individuals have very specific attitudes towards planning. In recent years this has been increasingly acknowledged by scholars exploring planning cultures worldwide. They refer to different social contexts and values that ultimately generate a particular planning approach. Philip Booth identifies three key cultural determinants relevant for views on planning. First, attitudes towards

property; second, the role of central and local governments and third, the nature of the legal framework and its uses in ordering decision making. Furthermore, comparing overall differences between nation states and societies point towards fundamentally 'different attitudes toward the state and the culture of decision making, the nature of law, and the attitudes toward (and behaviour of) the private sector'.⁶

This interdependency of ideology and planning become particular apparent during the 1980s Thatcher government in the UK where conventional planning was discredited together with the role of government particularly regarding influencing any social outcomes through regulatory practices.⁷ Within Western Europe, a distinctively different planning culture is eminent in the Netherlands. For a start, there is a strong consensus amongst the Dutch population that 'the good of society as a whole is understood to imply some sacrifices of absolute individual rights'.⁸ Directly related and closely linked to their specific history, the Dutch do not regard their state as something remote or imposed from above. To a large extent, planners work independent from direct political interference and there is a great deal of respect for professionalism and expert decision making.⁹

PLANNING PRINCIPLES

Over the last 50 years, urban planning has repeatedly changed according to different prevailing paradigms. The post-war period, lasting until the late 1960s, was characterised by 'comprehensive planning' - a technocratic, positivistic approach largely influenced by civil engineering. This approach centred on the idea of a big scheme – often referred to as the masterplan – which, when defined and implemented, could solve all key problems. Large-scale social housing projects, urban motorways and Britain's New Towns all were developed under this paradigm. The creation of new problems through 'solutions' to existing ones, the negative outcomes of 'social engineering' and the proliferation of sterile urban environments eventually led to the revision of this extremely deterministic approach. The key problems of comprehensive planning arise from a knowledge gap – incomplete information about existing and future developments – compromises and delays related to democratic decision making, and the coordination limitations of a centrally organised system.¹⁰ The strict differentiation of facts and values was identified as another weakness of this paradigm, as social science increasingly suggested that any approach has normative components.¹¹ In addition, such all-encompassing regulation stands in opposition to public legitimacy and requires all disciplines involved to agree on a common, highly abstract goal.

Further, for any masterplan to represent public interest it needs to include goals and means that deal with the real life situation of those citizens concerned.

As a reaction to planning mistakes of previous decades, the planning paradigm of 'disjointed incrementalism' became of particular importance in the British context by the beginning of the 1970s. This pragmatic planning approach of *un-coordinated small steps* focuses on specific problems and offers solutions within a realistic, short-term framework.

Incrementalism aims to implement small but noticeable improvements, adjusts its goals to its means and is based on a selective, non-comprehensive analysis of concrete problems. The general intention was to promote new development and not to restrict it. Within the London context, the supply of housing in particular fostered the tradition of a 'hands-off' approach relying on the effectiveness of the private sector.¹² At the same time, 'new planning institutions emerged in the form of development corporations, rather than planning agencies, because what inspired the moment was entrepreneurship and development, not regulations and planning.'¹³

The general critique of incrementalism focuses on its deficit to respond to conflicts of interests. It further assumes that all interests can be equally articulated and organised, ignoring issues of social inequality. By the end of the 1980s it was the symbolic case of protecting London's greenbelt where even the UK's Conservative government had to reconfirm the value of plans and the planning process as a way of resolving conflicts.¹⁴ The initial idea to replace general land use plans by plans for mega projects and public/private partnerships altogether was replaced by approaches to combine projects and plans.¹⁵

Other planning approaches that were developed and implemented at the same time as incrementalism include 'mixed scanning' and the collaborative or communicative model. While mixed scanning agreements are based upon defining minimum requirements on a macro level and on market mechanisms on the micro-economic level,¹⁶ the collaborative or communicative model sees the 'planner's role mediating among 'stakeholders' within the planning situation'¹⁷ The latter approach represents the basis of any kind of participatory planning and is typically challenged by the lengthy time required for such processes. It further raises serious concerns when involving citizens in metropolitan-wide planning where local familiarity is not a given.¹⁸ However, re-defining the relationship between the planning subject (the planner) and the object (the environment) is commonly regarded as a

more intelligent approach. System theory argues that a feed-back loop of permanent reflection and continuous interaction between planner and environment needs to replace a linear subject-object sequence.¹⁹

Musto suggests that a solution for the *planning problem* is neither a patchwork approach nor abandonment of planning altogether. Arbitrariness and coincidence do not offer a sensible alternative, while adding planning variables, better methods for quantification or improved forecasting – more complex problems solved in a more complex manner – only represent additive solutions.²⁰ Therefore a shift from 'planned change of behaviour' to 'planning of behaviour which itself is based on changing behaviour'²¹ becomes key. 'The required system is one that is able to constantly re-programme itself.'²² The focus of planning activity shifts from defining and maximizing selected goals to an integrated 'design' of social processes, primarily those of communication and presentation. This is what Musto's planning paradigm of a so-called *self-directed learning system* focuses on – an intensified feedback within society.²³ For the case of German-speaking Europe, John Friedmann describes this planner's role as follows:

*'In this new game, planners must play various roles, be it as coach, player, manager, and even, at times – according to the authors – simply as a spectator. It follows that standardized national planning cultures are gradually being replaced by local, at best regional, cultures, as exemplified by planning in quasi city-states such as Munich and Zurich.'*²⁴

In the more recent debate on planning at the beginning of the 1990s, Friedmann introduced what he called the non-Euclidian mode of planning. An important focus here is the linkage between knowledge and action: 'Planning is that professional practice that specifically seeks to connect forms of knowledge with forms of action in the public domain'.²⁵ He emphasizes the real-time character of this new planning approach, which focuses on the present and not the far future. It further is decentered leading to a wider distribution of risks, exploration of place-specific solutions and ultimately is more democratic. Friedmann identifies five key characteristics of non-Euclidian planning – it ought to be normative, innovative, political, transactive and based on social learning.²⁶

This brief overview on planning paradigms already suggest that new approaches are not only developed in various directions but also that none so far has

successfully replaced the old science and engineering based comprehensive planning model; a model that has become largely irrelevant to public life or at least highly dysfunctional.

The current critique of urban planning points in two directions. One view sees planning as an outdated, inflexible tool that compromises good design on the scale of individual buildings. The second view stresses that planning lacks the vision, commitment and power to offer reliable approaches to large-scale strategies and projects – particularly infrastructure projects – which include participatory elements. The first view is often articulated by architects or design professionals frustrated with the inflexibility of zoning, historic preservation and design codes. The latter view is more commonly expressed by either property developers, relying on clear commitments by planners to infrastructure projects, or those concerned with local democracy in respect to large-scale projects.

3. Urban Design

Before elaborating on *urban design*, an overview of general attempts to define this term is a useful introduction. Popular definitions include very specific qualitative understandings of urban design such as the following.

*'An aspect of urban or suburban planning that focuses on creating a desirable environment in which to live, work and play. A well-designed urban or suburban environment demonstrates the four generally accepted principles of design: clearly identifiable function for the area; easily understood order; distinctive identity; and visual appeal.'*²⁷

Another approach follows the scale-based definition of the following paragraph.

*'Urban design is related to urban planning, but deals at a more fine-grained scale. It may include the arts of civic design and elements of architecture.'*²⁸

Both attempts to define urban design are unsatisfactory and even problematic. Particularly the 'fine-grain' focus contradicts the common notion of urban design as 'large scale architecture'

*'The attempt to give form, in terms of both beauty and function, to entire areas or to whole cities. The focus is on the massing and organization of buildings and on the spaces between them, rather than on the design of individual structures.'*²⁹

The lack of consensus about definitions and borders of urban design require looking at its origins. The introduction of *urban design* as a standing term and a

professional orientation took place at the end of the 1960s and was another reaction to the disastrous quality of the built environments created in previous decades. As much as comprehensive planning was substituted by new paradigms, its spatial counterpart – the tradition of modernist architecture – was gradually modified, resulting in postmodernist approaches. The majority of writings on urban design, therefore, are the product of post-modern thinking.³⁰

Velibeyoglu regards the work of Jane Jacobs, Kevin Lynch, Gordon Cullen and Christopher Alexander as the 'real body of urban design' and lists books such as Rossi's "Architecture of the City" (1965), Venturi's "Learning from Las Vegas" (1972), Colin Rowe's "Collage City" (1984), and Peter Calthorpe's "The Next American Metropolis" (1993) as the theoretical and philosophical context.³¹

Today, a consensus exists regarding certain normative characteristics of urban design: 'well-designed', 'high-quality', 'sustainable', 'liveable' as well as 'aesthetics' or 'beauty' are part of the classic vocabulary within the discipline – further accentuated by the professional relationship placing urban design closer to architecture than to urban planning.³²

Typically, urban design is project-based, focuses on urban renewal, historic preservation and public space improvement, and generally includes urban space on all scales. In particular, a central agenda is the design for pedestrian environments, often accompanied by traffic calming and a general aim to reduce car-use. In the early 1960s, urban design also replaced 'civic design' which included dealing with public buildings, streets, parks and other open space.³³

Particularly in the US, urban design is closely linked to the normative agenda of the New Urbanist movement calling for design 'that includes a variety of building types, mixed uses, intermingling of housing for different income groups, and a strong privileging of the 'public realm'.'³⁴ More generally, Susan Fainstein sees New Urbanism as a design-oriented approach to planned urban development with a strong focus on the neighbourhood scale, predominantly in a suburban context. New Urbanism is frequently accused for being spatially deterministic – a critique which equally confronts urban planning.

As a result of imprecise definitions, the contemporary discourse on urban design is strongly influenced by public and private bodies aiming to generate values that suit their agendas. For example, the Institute for Urban Design (IUD) specifies the following design criteria for projects:³⁵

1. Historic preservation and urban conservation
2. Design for pedestrians
3. Vitality and variety of use
4. The cultural environment
5. Environmental context
6. Architectural values

while the Urban Design Group aims to define the profession by summarizing key assets:

*'An urban designer needs to understand the planning system, the principles of urbanism, development economics, context appraisal, movement analysis, regeneration strategy, conservation, landscape design, site planning, masterplanning, public and stakeholder collaboration, implementation, project funding, project management, graphic communication, negotiation, and how to formulate design policy and write guidance.'*³⁶

Still, urban design lacks key components of either a profession or a discipline and has difficulties to go beyond an 'art of creating possibilities for the use, management, and form of settlements or their significant parts'.³⁷ However, urban design consistently sends an important message to both urban planning and architecture: the spaces between building are as important as the buildings themselves.³⁸

4. The relationship of urban planning and urban design

Manual Castells sees the integration of planning, urban design and architecture as the defining factor in the preservation of cities as cultural forms.³⁹ For a start, a better understanding of the interface of these disciplines is essential. As shown above, planning and designing are closely related while at the same time offer distinctive features. Planning is broader, located on a higher meta-scale whereas designing as in 'giving form to something'⁴⁰ occupies a far stronger spatial meaning. As a subset of planning, design includes the development of a plan for an aesthetic and functional object, which usually requires considerable research, thought, modelling, iterative adjustment and re-design.⁴¹ In its wider sense, design as in 'Gestaltung'⁴² is a creative process that is different to art by aiming to solve problems.

Within the urban planning and design world, Velibeyoglu suggests a differentiation based on professionals working in either one of the two fields:

'An urban planner, was some one who was primarily concerned with the allocation of resources according to projections of future need. Planners

*tend to regard land use as an allocation of resources problem, parcelling out land, for zoning purposes, without much knowledge of its three-dimensional characteristics, or the nature of the building that may be placed on it in the future. The result is that most zoning ordinances and official land use plans produce stereotyped and unimaginative buildings. Architect, on the other hand, designs buildings. A good architect will do all he can to relate the building he is designing to its surroundings, but he has no control over what happens off the property he has been hired to consider. There is a substantial middle ground between these professions, and each has some claim to it, but neither fills it very well.'*⁴³

While the practice of urban planning gained momentum by offering practical spatial solutions to the unhealthy physical environments of the 19th Century's exploding cities, physical qualities were increasingly neglected in the 20th Century as urban planning shifted its focus towards socio-economic aspects of the built environment.⁴⁴

In recent years this tendency has started to reverse itself and planning is exploring a new relationship with urban design, embracing its methods and values to a larger extent compared to previous decades. However, the two areas continue to generate debates between urban planning and design: the priority given to aesthetics over social issues and the scale of intervention.⁴⁵ 'Scale' in this context refers not only to projects' geographic scales but also to their time frames. Urban design focuses on the development of the specific, in its narrower sense a site or an object with a certain form. It concentrates on the present and immediate implementation while planning identifies sites and suggests long term preferences for development.

The widespread use of computer technology further emphasises the difference of approaches. While urban designers utilize 3D design software on a CAD (Computer Aided Design) basis to communicate their vision for the future, planners focusing to a larger extent on 2D representations produced by GIS (Geographic Information Systems) software to visualise a more abstract, descriptive analysis of the urban condition. However, the extensive use of GIS with its great emphasis on 'appearance over substance and image over content'⁴⁶ shifts the planner's work closer to that of designers. On the other side, urban design has thus far failed to consider planning approaches for a better understanding of the social dimension, often ignoring that being 'engaged in

shaping the urban space, [urban designers] are inevitably dealing with its social context'.⁴⁷

5. Interdisciplinary and all-scale approaches

Having compared only two urban disciplines – although the key ones for proposing large-scale spatial urban development – this chapter intends to broaden the discourse towards an interdisciplinarity which includes many other urban professions. Whether planning or designing, the new emphasis is clearly towards a more interactive approach of holistic and interdisciplinary character. And instead of concentrating on any single objective – an approach which has led in the past to conflicting economic and social goals – a more multifaceted debate emerges.⁴⁸ Consequently, a better understanding of multi-disciplinary, interdisciplinary and multi-scalar approaches to the city becomes critical.

Multi- and interdisciplinarity

Ben Wootton defines multidisciplinary as 'the coming together of people from many disciplines to complete useful work'.⁴⁹ As many scholars note, multidisciplinary or cross-disciplinary usually refers to studies across or shared by disciplines. Interdisciplinary, on the other hand, refers to new areas of study that are not adequately covered by existing disciplines.⁵⁰ This distinguishes fields that address voids in other disciplines, like urban design (interdisciplinary), from work across disciplines, such as regional studies (multidisciplinary).⁵¹

Linking to and understanding related disciplines is common to both multi- and interdisciplinarity, as is the combination of existing knowledge to produce new solutions. Ideally, these solutions stand in contrast to what Susan Szenasy, describes as indicative processes of narrow design solutions.

*'Have you ever met a car designer, for instance, who talked about transportation – the need to get people to and from work, school, and play? What they do talk about is cars. Do car designers even think about smart growth; the movement to plan and design communities where several modes of transportation might be available, the car being just one of them?'*⁵²

Interdisciplinary approaches within urban development policies became particularly well known though the positive examples of Curitiba's former Mayor Jaime Lerner.⁵³ The Curitiba collaboration is 'inter-sectorial action that is focused on assisting community's objectives, counting on the integrated participation of Municipal Secretariats that are in partnership with non-governmental organizations, enterprises, and scientific community representatives,

all committed to principles and values defined by the community itself'.⁵⁴

Looking at similar examples around the world, one wonders whether very generally 'innovative' solutions are simply 'interdisciplinary' solutions. Often what makes a solution innovative is that it comes from outside the traditional domain of problem-solving in a given field.⁵⁵ However, regardless of existing positive examples, critics of the interdisciplinary approach emphasise its contradictions.

*'There is continuing recognition that some degree of cross-disciplinary "fertilization" is fruitful, but the possibility of any interdisciplinary methodology is largely considered a contradiction in terms. Attention has instead focused on the manner in which some useful form of cross-fertilization can emerge in the application of different disciplinary methodologies in response to a single, concrete problem in practice. At its most cynical, this leads to programmes in which interdisciplinarity is only evident in the binding together of the individual disciplinary contributions in a single report of the initiative -- aptly described by the German term "Buchbindersynthese".'*⁵⁶

In addition, separating the overall task into separate subtasks where only one professional field dominates is motivated by language barriers to cross-disciplinary cooperation where different disciplines 'have different vocabularies, presuppositions, priorities, criteria [and] references.'⁵⁷ In this context it is important to re-emphasise that different professional fields are ultimately about different dominating personalities and characters. Different ways of thinking and feeling are often even larger barriers than the use of professional jargon, which is just used as a tool to emphasise and defend this difference.

Scientific research and decision making

A critical factor of interdisciplinarity is further linked to the relationship of scientific findings to political decision making or planning. Science is more likely to be described by terms such as 'proven', 'solid', 'well-founded', 'rich in content', 'careful', 'neutral' and 'observant', whereas politicians and planners focusing on the future developments operate closer to categories such as 'courageous', 'possible', 'active', 'normative', 'speculative', and 'creative'.⁵⁸

Therefore the integration of institutions such as universities and research centres into an interdisciplinary process to find solutions for future urban development works best when differentiating different fields of science and separating the following two categories.

1. Pure science in the form of research and teaching
2. Applied science in the form of consultants and members of the political power structure (think-tanks).⁵⁹

Although most researchers and theorists agree that there are many benefits to interdisciplinary study, it is often the level of transferability of research that differentiates pure science from applied science. The latter can be far more easily integrated into any interdisciplinary policy or planning process.

Interdisciplinary approaches and the built environment

As mentioned above, fields such as urban planning, but also architecture have increasingly become more multidisciplinary, while other fields, such as urban design, are more fundamentally interdisciplinary. Nowadays, urban planning has moved into the fields that affect development, such as social policy, economics, environmental studies and design. A typical example in education is the setup of the University of Washington's College of Architecture and Planning.

*'The college is inherently multi-disciplinary, not only in terms of the dimensions of reality that it treats, but also in regard to the specialized disciplines, methods, and practices that it employs: history, theory, cultural criticism, engineering, design, planning, urban design, energy sciences, acoustics, lighting, environmental psychology, ecology, real estate analysis, statistics, management, horticulture, soil science, law, public policy, and ethics.'*⁶⁰

Urban design on the other hand is struggling with a clear focus on the interdisciplinary field somewhere between architecture, planning, engineering and social science. In addition, the faster changing and more adoptive private sector struggles to connect with the slower public sector. Urban design firms are often frustrated dealing with government departments which are often limited by the narrow, traditional training of employees. But even within the private sector, examples of interdisciplinary work that consider all project components together and not separately are rare. The London based consultancy firm Arup attempts to provide an economic basis for interdisciplinary design based on an analysis of their recent projects.⁶¹

Interestingly, it is within the field of architecture – traditionally one of the most multidisciplinary professions – where representatives demand a new

focus on core competences. Alejandro Zaera-Polo of Foreign Office Architects emphasises this the following way.

*'Theory, to some degree, can help reach decisions in a project. What might be confusing about it is that, unfortunately, everyone now understands the field of architectural theory as cultural theory – politics, sociology, anthropology, etc. – and somehow architects have lost the capacity to theorise about their own tools. This is why I think a return to the history of architecture and typological analysis is interesting now. Since it has been abandoned, the meaning of research has lost its architectural content, and I think that there is specific design research that needs to be done now.'*⁶²

However, the role of architecture in regards to the entire city leads to a critical point of interdisciplinarity, namely scale. What has been left aside within most debates in the context of urban planning or design is the question of the scale of focus. Particularly the translation of information from the two-dimensional geographic scale to the three-dimensional urban design scale and vice versa must form the core of the future debate. While architects and designers untrained in socio-economic and systematic thinking on the metropolitan scale are often labelled as 'bad planners', urban planners on the other hand fail to understand the act of giving form to urban structures.

6. City Design

Urban planning has still not overcome its crisis of finding a convincing answer to the ambiguity of comprehensive planning, the insufficiency of incrementalism and the complexity of the communicative model. Urban design on the other hand appears to be too naive and too narrowly focused on aesthetics and small scale design to offer a holistic alternative.

Interestingly enough, the term *city design* has not yet found widespread application and offers an opportunity to draw a clear distinction in relation to the other two disciplines. 'City' re-emphasises the scale of the debate: City design must not be public space design only – which urban design too often is regarded as. City design is responsible for the integration of the third dimension on the metropolitan level. City design gives form to the city on all scales. It has to remind politicians taking very general city-wide decisions that there is a design consequence, a result for the 'Gestaltung' of the city. By doing so, it seeks a stronger relationship to the traditional focus of urban planning. 'Design' on the other hand follows the logic of urban design by

emphasising a creative element with strong links to project-based realisation in the immediate future.

City design follows Musto's argument that any emancipation from anonymous *inherent necessities* – which developed as a result of increasing scientific and technological principles – is only possible through a new focus on spontaneity and creativity. Ultimately both are seen as the actual objective of planning.⁶³ Planning becomes creative, planning becomes design.

In many ways, city design could also stand for what John Friedmann introduced: a non-Euclidian mode of planning.⁶⁴ It is essential that planners, become attached to decisions and actions linked to implementing city structures at present rather than just imagining a distant future. Further, linking planning knowledge and action through face-to-face interaction in real time and re-emphasising the focus on a regional and local level would allow for valuable citizen participation.

For these objectives to be realized, *city design* will have to employ new strategies of team-based designing, planning and governing in a multidisciplinary manner. Potentially, this is where the Urban Age project will be able to contribute with its diverse and interdisciplinary team of urban experts and its investigation in cities around the world.

To be more specific about possible suggestions arising from the Urban Age investigation, a rudimentary overview of one promising element of city design: the creation of city design boards follows below.

City design boards

City design boards will include urban experts from a variety of different disciplines including planning, architecture, transport, sociology, economics, and environmental protection to name just a few. They will be appointed by elected officials, ideally by the mayor and/or regional governors. Most importantly besides their interdisciplinary structure, city design boards will have to deal with the entire city region on all scales. They will operate as the think tank for spatial strategies, assisting the mayors and regional governors with key decisions, will prepare key planning decisions and supervise their implementation. City design boards will act as the city-region entity developing visions – *city designs* – based on certain timeframes. Combining the city-region-wide strategy with site specific developments will be the key focus of these *city designs*.

A distinct feature of city design boards will be their involvement in very specific urban development projects to be implemented during these timeframes.

Today's complex urban environments will require a far more subtle change that is well balanced and reviewed by the wider public. Therefore, one key requirement for all interdisciplinary members of a city design board is that they be directly involved in the specific implementation process of one key urban development project, putting them more at the centre of activities – an entrepreneurial role which is publicly accountable. These projects will include citizen participation to a larger extent and guarantee feedback loops for the general city vision to close the gap between expert and experiential knowledge as demanded by Friedmann.

This further leads to a new form of a 'scale-inclusive' city design that develops sensible ways to incorporate questions on the design of houses, work places, streets and public space into an overall, city-region wide strategy. The awareness and interdependence of city form and social structure will further play an important role particularly on the intermediate scale – the scale of neighbourhoods. It is here where city design boards will have to prove a functioning interdisciplinary understanding of both social and spatial dynamics.

An important future challenge for city design boards will be the reconciliation of contradictory planning for either zones or flows: 'Urban planners and designers must come to terms with this evolution, as we are traditionally more used to dealing with zones rather than flows, with proximity rather than accessibility.'⁶⁵

Finally, city design boards will have to offer coherent spatial strategies. The board should avoid simply finding the best possible combination in a matrix of e.g. a land-use strategy (x) and transport strategy (y) in the fashion of x_i plus y_i but instead utilise its interdisciplinary strength by developing the land-use and transport strategy in an iterative way: x_i plus $y(x_i)$ and y_i plus $x(y_i)$.

7. Conclusion

The unanswered questions posed by this discussion paper remain not only with regards to the practically of the city design approach, but particularly regarding its relationship to urban planning. While arguing above that planning needs to be more project oriented, real time based and particularly more creative, it seems important to clearly re-emphasise the importance of developing plans for cities.

In this respect, the case of London is of special interest. Mayor Ken Livingstone recently emphasised that 'The beauty of London is that there is no master plan. You walk through London and there is change'.⁶⁶ At the same time the Mayor was very committed to

the development of the London Plan – an important policy document outlining London’s future development and internationally regarded as a coherent piece of urban governance.

So, where do we really want the plan and where is its absence more desirable? Non-deterministic approaches, incrementalism, local dialogue and communication all seem fine as long as they involve a certain group of urban elements concerning equally strong interest groups. According to some, parks, public space, community facilities even cultural buildings might be successfully implemented according to these principles. Very different though, the realisation of a new underground rail line or the implementation of a new airport, for example, emphasises the limitations of any ‘unplanned’ approach.

Due not only to their technical complexity, long time frames and budget implication, but also to their far reaching implications affecting the overall structure of a city, this latter sort of projects do require a very tight and clear planning process – sometimes even decades in advance. No doubt the desire and need for realising such projects comes along with making decisions for future generations and defining life in 20, 40 if not 100 year increments. Pointing out that there are only certain urban elements that require a much more rigorous determination does not help either since they are not single artefacts. Large scale transport infrastructure, for example, breeds consequences for the location of working and housing and even their character by creating higher real estate values around stations leading to more compact and dense developments at these nodes.

Complex urban structures and economies further rely on clear planning horizons and the delivery of projects within given time frames. For example, it was the City of London with its financial institutions that demanded a higher level of planning commitment in regards the future of London’s centre while the *laissez-faire* approach to the development of Canary Wharf initially led to the striking absence of public transport accessibility.

Again, it is the intermediate scale which is most controversial. This is the scale that includes planning – or better, regulation – related to housing and office developments. Frequently, zoning, floor ratios, density standards and design codes are under attack. While any complex planning system has to be updated from time to time, to challenge the general idea of planning on this level leaves the following questions unanswered:

- Democracy: How can conflicting interests between unequal parties be solved without a third instance representing the public?
- Protection: How can green land along the city’s fringe be preserved without very clear zoning?
- Quality design: What is the motivation of developers to think about higher design standards and investment in the public realm if it is not through the pursuit of planning permission?

To these questions, one might add another more provoking one: aside from London’s unplanned beauty, why is it that the most successful urban areas are the product of a great vision and a master plan: Hobrecht (Berlin), Haussmann (Paris), Cerda (Barcelona)? They just needed 100 years to be truly successful.

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