CONTINUITY AND CHANGE:  
THE NATURE OF URBAN CHARACTER  
AND  
ITS IMPLICATIONS FOR URBAN DESIGN  

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Design Issues

Questions:
• What is the future we seek?
• Do we want change?
• Do we seek to maintain a sense of place? or
• Create a new one?

The answers depend on a political stance
Reasons for Continuity

Diverse reasons:

• Maintaining a sense-of-self in a globalizing world
• Current patterns of built form work well
  - for people in all walks of life
  - for desired fuan and flora
  - biogenically:
    - climatically
    - ecologically
Reasons for Change

Diverse reasons:

• Past forms are not functioning well
  - functioning?
• A new image is sought to break from an undesired past
• A desire to be in fashion: up-to-date
An Era of Globalization, Nationalism and Individualism

Globalization?
  of investors/developers
  of urban designers and architects
  of education (e.g., the MUDD Program)

Nationalism and Regionalism?

Individualism?
The Urban Design and Architecture of Globalization

is characterized by the seeking of prestige through
- value adding institutions,
- the consumption of open space, and
- signature ‘modern’ buildings that act as advertisements (i.e., building as signs*),

but the positive qualities of environments that afford everyday life well can get lost.

Antecedents and Precedents

Design ideologies for change
Rationalist Modernism
Garden City in some places

Specific examples
La Défense, Paris
Canary Wharf, London
Rationalist Modernism
(e.g., The 23 de enero housing, Caracas, 1950s)

Carlos Raúl Villanueva, architect
A generic model of new housing, Shanghai, 2000+

Adapted from Miao Pu (2003)
La Défense, Paris
The spatial qualities and architecture of La Défense
Canary Wharf, London

Skidmore Owings Merrill, Architects
A view of Canary Wharf
The Designs of Change

Examples

Lujiazui, Pudong, Shanghai
Zhengzhou extension, Hanan, China
Proposed CBD, Beijing
Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao
World Trade Center site, New York
Songshang Lake proposal, China
Lujiazui, Pudong, Shanghai from the Bund
Zhengzhou extension, Henan, China

Kisho Kurokawa, architect
Proposed CBD Beijing
Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao

Frank Gehry, architect
SOM and Michael Arad/Peter Walker, designers
Sonshang Lake, Guangdong, China

Sonshang Lake Planning Department, designers
The Architecture of Globalization

• Ducks*
  – Walt Disney Concert Hall, LA
• Decorated sheds*
  – The office buildings of Lujiazui

*Source: Robert Venturi (1966)
A duck: the Walt Disney Concert Hall, Los Angeles

Frank Gehry, Architect
Urban design as a set of ducks: the Beijing Olympic complex
Urban design as a set of decorated sheds: Lujiazui
The Importance and Limitations of the Urban Design of Globalization

Source of Pride
- Being up-to-date
- Investment success
- We did it!

Problems/Criticism
- A loss of a ‘sense’ of place
- Behaviorally dull
- Not ‘sustainable’ layouts
Responses: The Search for Locality in Urban Design

- Revivalism
- The use of Historic/Religious Treatises
- The Neo-Vernacular
- Neo-Traditionalism (Critical Reconstruction)
- The Architecture of Abstract Symbolism
- The Programmatic Approach to urban Design
Revivalism: the Vihana Soudha, Bangalore

Mysore (now Karnataka) Public Works Department, architects
The use of Historic/Religious Treatises
Application of the Asana Mandala

Darshan Bubbar, architect
Neo-Traditional Urban Design or 
the New Urbanism

Louvain La Neuve, Belgium (1970s) 
Seaside, Florida (1980+)
Belapur Housing, Navi Mumbai (1995-7)
Paternoster Square, London (2001-4)
Lovain-la-Neuve, model
Louvain-la-Neuve: the spine in 1979
Seaside: an example of the guidelines

Duany, Plater-Zyberk Partnership, architects
Seaside: a view
Rector Place, Battery Park City, New York
Battery Park City: design guidelines for Rector Place
Battery Park City
Belapur Housing, Navi Mumbai

Raj Rewal, architect
Paternoster Square, London, proposal

Hammond, Beeby & Babke, Porphyrios Associates and John Simpson &Partners, Architects
Paternoster Square, plan

Whitfield Partners, architects
Paternoster Square, as built
Continuity meets Change

The Case of Potsdamer Platz, Berlin

The Hilmer-Sattler design

Potsdamer Platz as built

The Sony Center – the Helmut Jahn design
The Hilmer-Sattler plan – figure ground study
Potsdamer Platz: as built by 2002
Sony Center exterior
The way ahead?

The Rational model?
Embracing diversity
The urbanism of locality
Ecological design
Landscape urbanism movement
Creating a ‘sense of place’
What place?
The Problem-Solving (Rational) Model
Creating a Sense of Place

Designing with climate in mind
The ground floor of cities
   How buildings meet the street
   Behavior settings and activity patterns
Indigenous flora (and fauna)
Newington (Olympic Games 2000 Village), Sydney
Ken Yeang’s proposal for high rise tropical housing
The ground floor: the Nolli map of Rome, 1478
The ground floor: the Banking District (Horniman Circle) Mumbai
Architectural concerns

Block size – the case of Portland, Oregon
The way buildings meet the street
Building bulk
Form and texture
Materials
The ratio of solid-to-void on façades
The nature of building entrances
Adapting Global Models to Local Sentiments

The architecture of ‘glocality’ (Lim, 2003)
Renewing Existing Cities

Preservation Conservation and Urban Design

Designing the brief/program

Elements of the behavioral program

The behavior setting

Aesthetic character

The biogenic environment
Dealing with Diversity, Uncertainty and Change

Changing demographics and ways of life
Changing concepts of childhood
Changing aesthetic values
Ann Tyng’s hypothesis (1969)
Complexity and simplicity
The biogenic environment
Designing for flexibility and adaptability

Adaptability?
Robust environments
Flexibility?
The Task Ahead

Coming to grips with sustainability

• Economic
• Social
• Cultural

Losing a fear of the future

Dealing with known-knowns (simple problems), known-unknowns (tame problems), and unknown-unknowns (wicked problems)