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Editorial
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Editorial

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The complexity and scope of issues addressed by urban designers and planners is evident in the range of topics addressed in this issue of *Urban Design and Planning.* Contributions address topics ranging from the detail and process of designing a specific public space, through to evidence and tools to guide urban regeneration and development, and finally to the implications of climate change for cities. Whilst each of these topics requires specialist knowledge and policy formulation, they are all of cross-cutting relevance to urban professionals and researchers. Urban design and planning must take consideration of climate change mitigation and adaptation, yet such issues cannot be addressed without strong processes, evidence and consideration of local places.

The briefing paper in this issue comes from Newcastle, UK. Paterson (2013) provides a balanced and thoughtful account of the design of the 'Blue Carpet' in central Newcastle, and its ultimate utility as a public space. The briefing shows the importance of public and stakeholder engagement and professional guidance in steering innovative and artistic urban design. The Blue Carpet has not achieved its full potential as a place for people to gather, rest and interact, despite positive evaluations and national awards for the design. Problems with material choice and maintenance have resulted in the 'blue' pavement that gives the space its name losing its colour, undermining its design coherence. Paterson suggests specific interventions to improve the space, but more importantly highlights the need for robust processes in developing design briefs and implementing designs within existing urban spaces and systems.

Measuring how people interact with and use urban spaces is notoriously difficult, yet it is useful in providing evidence to inform design and planning. Van der Spek *et al.* (2013) report on the use of satellite global positioning system technology to track how different people move within a city centre. Whilst this technology has limitations as a research methodology, it provides rich and reliable data that may not otherwise be available to researchers, designers and planners. Such data is used in conjunction with qualitative methods to understand the connection between quality of urban space and how it is used and experienced by different groups. This can provide evidence that challenges designers and planners to better address user experience, but also highlights contradictions and divergence in how different groups and individuals experience the same space.

Moving from the specific details of how people use and interact with space to general tools for planning and design, Payton and Hawkes (2013) review transect-based models for designing new transit systems. A compromise between the need for customised place-based design and the need for generalizable information to facilitate early planning and consultation, the transect-based model provides a typology of stations to be selected based on the characteristics of the local neighbourhood and the role of the station within the proposed new transit line. Case studies from different US cities show how the approach provides the means for communities, stakeholders, developers, planners and designers to converge around a set of agreed characteristics for the station and its neighbourhood in the design and planning process.

Returning to Europe, Brombach *et al.* (2013) address the overlooked issue of regeneration of district centres within cities, reporting results from a study of such centres in Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands and the UK. They present a typology of different district centre types and outline principles for successful regeneration of these areas. An integrated approach, strategic investment and townscape appearance are key factors for success, as evidenced by their case study sites. Successful regeneration of district centres requires grounding in local community needs and place characteristics, as well as strategic support within urban and regional planning and development processes.

Adapting to and mitigating climate change adds further levels of complexity in planning, designing and managing cities. Hunt *et al.* (2013) provide a useful review of key scientific and policy issues presented by climate change and related environmental issues, including the urban heat island effect, air quality, extreme events and water scarcity. Cities have an important role to play in mitigating climate change and must also prepare for its impacts on infrastructure, buildings and people. Achieving this within a framework of sustainable development requires good scientific knowledge to support robust policy-making, planning and design.

From an artist-led public realm design to an overview of the science of climate change, the key themes that connect these papers are the need for reliable evidence and robust processes to support planning and design. As urban systems become more complex and urban places more contested, planners and

designers need sound principles and robust tools to deliver high quality outcomes. This issue of *Urban Design and Planning* demonstrates that researchers and practitioners continue to deliver new methods and guidance for meeting these challenges, from pavement durability to planetary environmental change.

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