Editorial

Henco Bekkering

Emeritus Professor of Urban Design, Delft University of Technology, Delft, the Netherlands

The August 2017 issue of *Urban Design and Planning* shows (again) how the publisher and the editors bring together content from science – that is, technical and social sciences – on the one hand and urban design and planning on the other. Behind it hovers, sometimes hardly discernible but much intended, the idea that, at least partially, the disciplines of urban design and planning can be regarded as scientific, using scientific methods. And – as a goal further ahead – that this is relevant for the development of disciplinary theory as well as the application thereof in practice.

Another characteristic evidenced by this issue is the international character of this endeavour, with contributors from all over the world: Taiwan, Egypt (on Saudi Arabia), the Netherlands (including comparisons with Sweden and Flanders), Ireland and Italy.

The first paper (Chiang, 2017) deals with the research of transport arrangements in Taipei City, Taiwan. It introduces economic modelling for recognising and ranking travellers' preferences on vehicle selections at weekends, thus revealing possibilities for influencing the modal split in the urban region, and "helping urban government to arrange public transportation for city weekend travellers" (Chiang, 2017: p. 144).

The second paper (El-Esawy *et al.*, 2017: p. 151) investigates "the changes in urban identity due to the transformation on landform configuration" in the city of Makkah/Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It combines the analytical technique of the space syntax method with a descriptive study. The results bring up one of the many dilemmas that so often characterise the practice of urbanism: the strengthening of the identity of a place through cultural representation, supporting 'Islamic-ness' in specific parts of the city, at the same time weakens the legibility of the city as a whole.

The third paper looks into the possibilities and advantages of the integration of subsurface management and urban planning by comparing the cases of the Netherlands, Sweden and Flanders (Hooimeijer and Tummers, 2017). The invisible infrastructure beneath the ground that allows for day-to-day life in the city, has – or should have – a profound influence on the planning of its maintenance, transformations and extensions. Integration of the two is effective environmentally and economically. The authors conclude that, "rather than new regulations,

a ... change in planning culture is the key to successful integration of the subsurface" (Hooimeijer and Tummers, 2017: p. 161). From my own experience, I might add that the difficulty of achieving such a culture change is one of the unpleasant side-effects of the privatisation of public works and services.

The final paper, by Dyer *et al.* (2017), advocates public participation as an approach for evidence-based urbanism, building its argument on a bibliometric analysis of a range of relevant literature. This analysis clearly shows gaps and missed connections in the standard literature of the discipline, and in so doing sets an agenda for future research: not for later but for now.

Looking at the themes of these four papers – transport, identity, (subterranean) infrastructure, participation and evidence-based urbanism – they show in a nutshell the state of art of Urban Design and Planning (with and without capital letters).

Please notice that *Urban Design and Planning* publishes its most recent articles ahead of print on its Virtual Library homepage: www.icevirtuallibrary.com. This allows the scientific and professional community quicker access to fresh content. The journal has a current call for papers for a themed issue on 'visions for future cities' (manuscripts due by 1 October 2017). The upcoming themed issue on 'built environment education and participation of children and youth' is planned for the December 2017 issue.

REFERENCES

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