

## From the Editor

### Prof. Das Stejn 2018

Urban planning developed alongside the urbanization of mankind. The oldest written reference to urban planning is by the Greek Hippodamus (fifth century B.C.); unfortunately, no copy has been preserved; we only know about it through Aristotle's writings. The next known reference work is the Roman architect Vitruvius's *De Architectura*, a treatise in ten ancient volumes on Greek and Roman architecture, translated as *The ten books on architecture*. It dates to about 28 B.C. and one of those volumes is about the origin and layout of cities. The next significant work on architecture and urban planning only appeared in 1452 with the publication of Leon Battista Alberti's *De re aedificatoria* (*On the art of building*). From the fifth century B.C. to the beginning of the twentieth century, urban planning was about the layout and design of cities, mostly by architects. This is termed blueprint planning because, like a building design, layouts had to be implemented slavishly as with a building plan. The plan was static and change was slow.

Theoreticians on urban planning are concerned with the WHAT question in planning. The content of planning is under discussion and is called Theory IN Planning, also known as Substantive Theory.

In 1909, the first two university departments in urban planning were founded at Harvard University (USA) and the University of Liverpool (Britain), respectively. The planners' task now was to draw up plans, set guidelines for enforcing them, and ensure that these were applied. In his *Town and country planning* (1933), Abercrombie's term "civic design" makes one realise that, at first, town planners thought more holistically about matters.

The Second World War brought huge developments in science, new approaches to economics

and management, as well as the discovery of medicines such as penicillin. This led to a population explosion in the first two decades after the war and gave birth to the term “*baby boomers*”. Blueprint planning was no longer serviceable; plans had to be continually adapted. Planning was ruled by the process of planning rather than its product and was called process planning. The major issue is the question of HOW. Urban planning theoreticians are involved in the Theory OF Planning, also termed Procedural Theory.

Hall (1990: 327) describes this development as follows:

*“... the discipline of physical planning changed more in the 10 years from 1960 to 1970, than in the previous 100, possibly even 1000 years. The subject changed from a kind of craft, based on personal knowledge of a rudimentary collection of concepts about the city, into an apparently scientific activity in which vast amounts of precise information were garnered and processed in such a way that the planner could devise very sensitive systems of guidance and control, the effects of which could be monitored and if necessary modified.”*

Lindblom (1959) and others query this rational-comprehensive planning process described by Meyerson (1956) and Banfield (1959), as they consider it non-feasible. Davidoff (1965) concludes that planners can no longer take up a neutral position regarding values. This eventually led to Klosterman’s (1978) finding that values-free planning is impossible, in principle, since planning is political. It is all about who gets what, when and where. Planning is now governed by values and is known as Normative Planning. Normative Theory is about normative planning issues, the Theory FOR Planning, and it attempts to answer the WHY question (Steyn, 2015: 9).

Modern life with its complexities has created a range of professions, each performing one part of the task of the initial architect. In South Africa,

contact with Architecture in academia lasted for years. Various departments of Town and Regional Planning originated from Architecture. For a long time, some people were both architects and town planners. They were capable of thinking three-dimensionally, although town planning is mostly two-dimensional. This contact with Architecture later disappeared, to a large extent, with the arrival of the planning team consisting of planners from various subjects such as geography, economics, and sociology. Many of these planners were experts in their field, but no longer had the ability to think three-dimensionally.

This brings us to urban design in this Special Edition. Initially, Prof. Paul Kotze was the Guest Editor. Unfortunately, he withdrew. He is the most suitable person to write this introduction. At both the University of Cape Town and the University of the Witwatersrand, he was involved in a Master's degree in Town Planning. Many persons in South Africa have obtained a qualification overseas.<sup>1</sup>

According to Van den Berg (1981: 35), in his *Inleiding tot de Planologie* (Introduction to Planning), the term *stedebouw*<sup>2</sup> means "*het ruimtelijkvormgeven aan een groepgebouwen: hun (rang)schikking in de concrete ruimte, ten opzichte van elkaaren van die onbebouwd te houden terreinen er tussen en er omheen, met het oog op een wijde ruimtelijk verband. ... Het begrip 'stedebouw' moet men derhalve niet erg betrekken op een stad, maar op elke plaats of nederzetting: het slat ook op een dorp of gehucht, of op een*

---

1 In 1979, the author obtained the degree M.Arch. (Urban Design) from the University of Toronto.

2 *Stedebouw* is the Dutch term for Urban Design.

*recreation complex.*"<sup>3</sup> Barnett (1982: 12) writes: "*Urban design is the generally accepted name for the process of giving physical design direction to urban growth, conservation, and change. It is understood to include landscape as well as buildings, both preservation and new construction, and rural areas as well as cities.*"

It is about designing urban environments without designing buildings, but to create open, user-friendly spaces that are pleasant to use. A balance must be found between the interests of the private sector, the government, the public as users, and the environment (nature and/or culture) in which these occur.

The object of this Special Edition is to expose town and regional planners to urban design projects and approaches. The review process rejected some of the articles. Two articles that address other aspects of urbanity had to be included in this volume.

The following articles address urban design:

- Schoulund & Landman argue that high quality public spaces often emerge through the spontaneous development of projects. They warn against too rational an approach to urban design.
- Viviers argues that, in the Verkykerskop project, the combination of design approaches could solve multi-functionality. The article shows that sufficient thought and funds invested in a rural project can provide dynamic solutions.
- Cloete & Yusuf's article investigates some public open spaces in Durban such as the Golden Mile, which can be described as a success, because they are well used and are highly liveable,

---

3 The spatial design of a group of buildings: their (grade) arrangement in the concrete space, with respect to each other of those areas to be kept undeveloped between and around them, with a view to a wide spatial connection. ... The concept of 'urban design' should therefore not be very involved in one-city, but in any place or settlement: it also slats on a village or hamlet, or on a recreation complex

whereas other public spaces are less safe and often cannot be used at night.

The other two articles address elements of urbanity:

- Van Niekerk argues that South Africa must develop a new policy regarding the role of housing, in order to combat urban sprawl.
- Conradie develops a research platform that enables one to study urban shadow design. The effect of street width, height of buildings, street layout, orientation and amount of sunlight available for trees and plants will, to a large extent, influence the provision of liveable open spaces and streets.

## VERWYSINGS / REFERENCES

Barnett, J. 1982. *An introduction to urban design*. New York: Harper & Row Publishers.

Hall, P. 1988. *Cities of tomorrow*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Steyn, J.J. 2015. *Reforming normative planning: Essays on a Christian approach to planning / Hervorming vir normatiewe beplanning: Opstelle oor 'n Christelike benadering tot beplanning*. Orania: Prisca Uitgewers.

Van den Berg, G.J. 1981. *Inleiding tot de planologie: Voor ieder een plaats onder de zon?* Alphen aan den Rijn: Samson Uitgewerij.