

Potsdamer Platz shows that global architectural imagery and the internalization of public space can be integrated with some local urban design precedents.

Urban and architectural designs such as Seaside, Florida and Battery Park City in New York (both described in Chapter 8) are examples of reactions to the seeking of a global imagery in urban design. They have local precedents on which to draw. Many people see them as dull and old fashioned but they are outsiders. Architectural theory has responded with the concept of critical regionalism (Frampton, 1983). It is imprecisely defined but it is an ideology that is against vernacularism, sentimentalism and the picturesque. It supports the position that architecture and, presumably landscape architecture and urban design, should be responsive to cultural and societal values but it is weak in addressing exactly what this position means in terms of design guidelines. Perhaps designing for a healthy biogenic, sustainable environment peculiar to specific climatic niches will steer architects and urban designers in the direction that they will have to go in defining a sense of place. Such a goal has both social and physical design dimensions and both urban spatial and building design implications.

A Healthy Biogenic Environment and Sustainable Development

All urban design projects change the nature of the terrestrial environment in which they are located. In terms of the health of the planet many of these changes have been detrimental. Cities suffer from high levels of pollution, many rivers are filthy, and irreplaceable energy resources are being depleted. Designing for a healthy natural environment and a built world healthy for people are two sides of the same coin. Dealing with the polluting effects of human wastes, automobiles and industries is already a major topic of discussion for city planners and public policy-makers. Progress has been made in addressing them. Other environmental issues are deemed to be less important.

In building new precincts of cities, private and public projects have been imposed on many sensitive landscapes. All of the case studies included here have hardened the surface of the earth, even those such as the Potsdamer Platz district of Berlin that have roof gardens (see Figure 8.49). Some developments, such as Battery Park City, have required much landfilling. Singapore continues to reclaim land from the sea to expand the state's dimensions. The Netherlands has stopped. Parts of Jakarta and Shanghai built on reclaimed land sink into the earth centimetre-by-centimetre each year.

There is increasing pressure for attitudes towards the natural world to change and for people to be husbanders rather than consumers of the land. More specifically for urban designers, there is a need to be discerning about the actions we advocate and a need to be more diligent in applying the principles for creating sustainable cities – those in which the embodied energy consumed in building and in running and maintaining designs are, at least low, if not replaceable.