

position, if there is a unified point of view, is generally that one has to tolerate bad designs in the name of freedom of action on the part of all architects and their clients. In addition, seeing bad designs enables one to appreciate the good even more. Opinions differ on whether this argument is a strong one or not. In urban design, the quality of individual works – sculptures or building as sculptures – often does not affect the way cities are experienced provided the spaces created on the ground floor of a city, suburb or building complex function well in a multi-dimensional manner.

The problem arises when property developers and their architects focus on highly individualistic designs as objects in space in the name of art and in the furthering of their own careers. Fiscal conservatives argue that in the long run such competition results in a better world. The case studies fail to support this view. Indeed the whole basis for the existence of urban design is in ensuring that the basic requirements for making good public realms are fulfilled. What is regarded as good is always open to debate but there is now much empirically based theory and many examples, and even detailed case studies that provide the basis for sensible discussions about what should and should not be designed.

True creativity involves not the making of innovative building and urban forms but rather the designing of a problem in a new and more appropriate way and recognizing that specific patterns respond well to the problem. Maybe being able to evaluate designs well is the most important ability to possess in creative problem solving. Maybe it is the ability to see the affordances of innovative patterns.

### ***Dealing with the Future***

Dealing with the future is at the heart of urban designing. For public policy-makers and designers the question is: ‘What kinds of futures do we seek?’ Or is it simply ‘What designs can be sold?’ The procedural question is a more encompassing one than designing robust environments. How does one deal with potential changes in the future political environment while a job is in progress? Political change often brings projects that are long in gestation to a grinding halt or a change in direction. Battery Park City in New York and the Jubilee Line in London are examples of projects whose progress stopped and started due to changes in governments after elections and at Paternoster due to changes in property ownership.

The same concerns arise in dealing with the future state of the economy of a city or country. The questions in design are: ‘Will sufficient funds be available to carry out a project?’ and, perhaps, as importantly, ‘Will the funds be there to maintain the project once it has been built?’ Such concerns are seldom explicitly considered and seldom explained in the case studies of projects. Perhaps we are all optimists and believe that things will all work out well in the end. The world, however, is replete with forlorn public squares and parks, full of non-functioning, decaying, sometimes vandalized fountains.

Values change. Areas of the city become obsolete and others are gentrified. A general rule of thumb, implicit in much urban design, has been not to look