

The Objectives of Urban Design

A number of generic objectives can be identified in the writings on urban design. The built environment should be efficient in the way it handles the variables described in Figure 1.6. It should be designed to encourage economic growth. It should provide a sense of historic continuity to enhance people's self-images. It should help sustain the moral and social order of a society and should be designed with a sense of justice for all to the extent that these are physical design concerns (see Harvey, 2003).

The broad goal of urban design is to provide opportunities, behavioural and aesthetic, for all the citizens of and visitors to a city or one of its precincts. These opportunities have to be accessible. What, however, should the opportunities be and how does one deal with accessibility? Who decides? The marketplace? The public policy question is 'How far should the public sector intervene in the marketplace in providing opportunities for what range of people?' and then 'How accessible should the opportunities be?' 'For whom?' 'People in wheelchairs?'

Secondarily, if one accepts Maslow's model, there is a need for people to feel comfortable in engaging in the activities they desire and that are regarded by society as acceptable. Comfort has both physiological and psychological dimensions. The concern is with the nature of the microclimate and with the provision of feelings of safety and security as people go about their lives. Safety and security are related to feelings of control over one's privacy levels and over the behaviour of others towards one. How much privacy are we prepared to give up in order to feel safe because we are under public surveillance? Safety concerns are also related to the segregation of pedestrians from vehicular traffic flows and the construction quality of the environment around us.

One design concern is to enhance the ambience of *links* (streets, arcades and sidewalks) and *places* (squares, parks and roofs). The ambience of places and links is related to the provision of a sense of security as well as to feelings of self-worth and being part of a worthwhile society. Ambience is also related to the aesthetic qualities of a place, its layout and illumination, the activities that are taking place there, and to the people engaged in them.

The artificial world does not exist in a vacuum. It exists in terrestrial niches formed by the climate, geology, and flora and fauna of a place. One of the objectives of urban design is certainly to ensure that this niche is not destroyed. The concern is, or should be, with improving its quality so that it functions better as a self-sustaining system that, in return, enriches human experiences.

The Issues

The basic urban design question is always 'What makes a good city?' The question is asked at both a global and at a detailed level. 'Who should decide?' 'Once decisions are made, who should be responsible for implementing them?' 'Is a good