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When we design, build, manage, occupy or even just pass through a place, we change it. Whether we are conscious of it or not these changes can embellish, adorn, colour, tint or taint that place in the eyes of the people who share it. This book suggests these diverse actions embed messages in the built environment that influence the people who receive them to see and use a place in particular ways. Some of these messages will be subtle, created by designed characteristics that gently encourage or deter certain choices. Some of these messages will be anything but subtle, created by hard edges such as barriers and gates, reinforced by threats that enforce or prohibit what we experience and where we go (Figure 1.1). When we embed these designed messages in the built environment, we play a part in framing the range of experiences that others enjoy, endure or miss out on that will over time affect the trajectory of their lives.

This book considers how urban design—in its broadest sense—can align these messages to help people to meet their needs, thrive and fulfil their potential.

Nurturing and the Neglectful Places

Like any other influence on our lives, the messages we receive from our surroundings can be good or bad. They are good when they help us to do all the things we need to do to enjoy fulfilled lives. They are bad when they misdirect or deter us from doing these things. As the book will suggest, places rich in these ‘good’ messages nurture the people who experience them. Their inhabitants find it relatively easy to stay healthy, connect with one another and forge the bonds of family, friendships and community. They are inspired by surroundings that are beautiful and enjoy experiences that they find interesting and fun. Their choice of opportunities is wide and their ability to understand the choices available to them is cultivated.

In such a place people can accumulate experiences, fond memories, life lessons, self-organize, overcome challenges and gather insights that will help them thrive. They can draw reassurance from the knowledge that others in the community are looking out for them and their family. They will feel permitted, even encouraged, to express themselves and carve their own niche in their community. They can develop skills and nurture their own ‘islands of competence’ to borrow a term from Robert Brooks (2003) that can bolster a sense of self-worth. They are able to enjoy a degree of satisfaction from their contribution to work, family and social life and earn the respect of their peers. Their opinions about the character of their area and its future are sought and considered in what gets built. The levers of power are visible to them and they understand the levers they can pull, along with the responsibilities that come from pulling those levers. Their home, neighbourhood and community provide a

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Figure 1.1 Some of the Messages We Receive From Our Surroundings

refuge from life's stresses. These things are a good financial and emotional investment and reflect well on them in the eyes of the wider community. They feel able to bring up children who can benefit from the advantages that come from independent outdoor play and have the best chances of developing the life skills that will serve them well as they grow up. Misfortune that brings with it disability does not deny them opportunities to participate. In such a place older people benefit from the accumulated benefits of an active, stimulated life and a public realm that they interpret as acceptably safe so they can stay healthy and engaged for longer, enjoying more years of healthy life.

On the other hand in a neglectful place the 'helpful messages' that facilitate these outcomes are absent or obscured by contra messages inviting people to choose unhealthy,

isolating and unsustainable behaviours. People who live in such places are disadvantaged by their surroundings and the behaviours those environments encourage. These may consign people to diminished lives where the impacts that they have on each other is adversely influenced by the dysfunctional relationship between people and place.

The people who live, work or seek to learn in such places may find themselves isolated from opportunity behind multiple and reinforcing barriers. These barriers are usually not intended as such and the shackles that limit people's lives aren't always physical. Instead they are made by distance, prejudice, lack of awareness or social stratification, reinforced by a qualitatively inadequate physical environment. The people disadvantaged by these neglectful surroundings often find it difficult to do anything about it as the levers of power are obscured and if they can be found they are discouraged from pulling them.

Neglectful places require people to drive or be driven to get anywhere they need to go. If the inhabitants of these places do have a car and can drive they are dependent on an expensive, dangerous, polluting, resource inefficient, increasingly vulnerable, and time-consuming and mood-deflating mode of transport that imposes isolated and sedentary lifestyles. If they can't drive or don't have access to a car—8.6 per cent of Australian households (.idcommunity 2011, sourced from ABS 2011) and 9.2 per cent of US households (American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials 2013)—then they are trapped, unable to access opportunities.

Human nature being what it is, people will often overcome these difficulties and thrive, irrespective of the bad influences in their surroundings. However if our incremental design, management or behavioural choices combine to make it more difficult for some to meet their needs and prohibitively difficult for others, we are creating arbitrary and unjust urban environments. It diminishes us all when some people's lives are being stifled by their surroundings, denied opportunities to fulfil their potential and fully participate in, and contribute to, society (Figure 1.2).

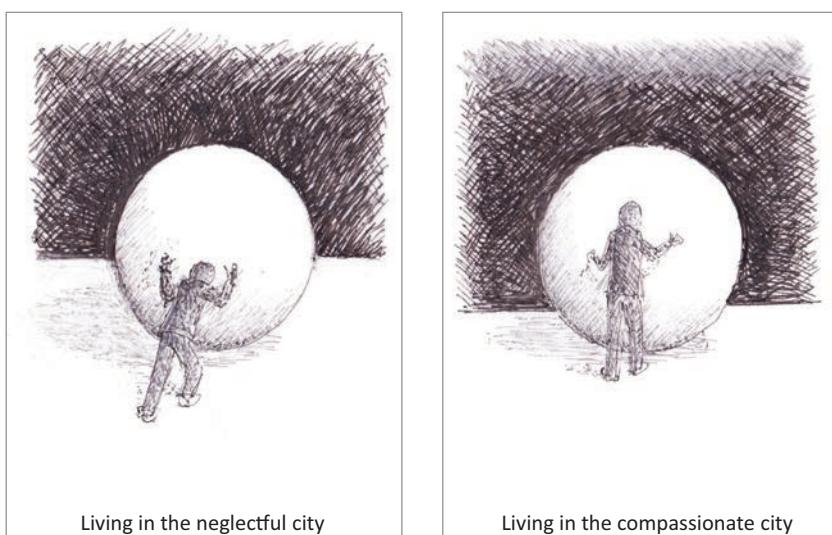


Figure 1.2 The Challenges of Living in the Neglectful or Compassionate City

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As this book will explore, these neglectful messages and barriers are concentrated amongst those already disadvantaged. This reflects the observations of Mai Stafford of the Medical Research Council in the UK and Sir Michael Marmot, director of the University College London Institute of Health Equity, who concluded that “*being relatively poor may be a barrier to taking a fully active part in society*” in their UK study on neighbourhood deprivation and health (2003). Sir Marmot further developed this view in his influential report *Fair Society Healthy Lives* (2010) which found that “*People living on a low income in deprived urban areas are more likely to experience worse health and be less physically active*” (reported in CABE 2010).

Furthermore those living in more deprived areas are less likely to find opportunity to escape or recover from the stresses of urban life that consequently can build up to toxic levels (Lederbogen et al. 2011). They are more likely to suffer the profound health problems that come from loneliness (Valtorta et al. 2016), inactivity (Australian Government Department of Health 2011), and problems of insecurity and violence (Muggah 2012), and to be stigmatized by their association with that place or activity (Hess 2012). They are more vulnerable to diabetes, heart disease, obesity, mental health problems, alcohol and drug abuse, and violence (Friel 2009). The causes of this are many and their interplay complex and they extend far beyond urban design. However “*there is a reciprocal relationship between urban social conditions and the built environment*”, according to Dr Sharon Friel (2011). The quality of the physical environment and the choices it offers play an important part in determining if people are able to meet their needs or not (Friel et al. 2009).

This inequity is profoundly unfair and is an important and growing issue: “*While city populations have tended to become wealthier than their rural counterparts, they have become increasingly unequal*” (Friel 2011). This is not just an ethical matter, it is a matter of practical efficiency and self-interest for all. People who live in more equal societies tend to be happier. Morgan Kelly’s (2006) study of crime and inequality found a strong relationship between inequality and violent crime (though not to property crime). Inequality.org quotes research from the World Bank that found that high levels of inequality negatively affect the health of the affluent as well as the poor (Inequality.org undated). Wilkinson and Pickett (2010) found that social inequity erodes trust, leads to increased anxiety and illness in all sections of the community, and encourages excessive consumption. They concluded that the healthiest and more resilient societies were not always the wealthiest but they were the ones where wealth was more equitably shared in absolute terms.

This is not a simple matter with a simple urban design fix. The complex relationship between people and place means that rarely can we say if we ‘do x then y will happen’. Design is far from destiny. As this book will explore, each of us has a different sensitivity and ability or desire to respond to the messages we receive from our surroundings. As such when we intervene in other people’s surroundings, we do not make a certain outcome happen; we can however make particular outcomes more or less likely. For example, designing (and then building) a footpath may facilitate people to walk; it doesn’t mean that everyone who could walk on that path will choose to do so. However some will, their choices swayed by their own interpretation of the invitation offered by their surroundings.

Unfortunately despite the undoubtedly good intentions of those engaged in urban design, the ‘causal pathways’ between what gets built and social outcomes are often not adequately explored in the design process (Haigh 2013). Experience suggests these pathways are either assumed, disregarded in the pursuit of other objectives or deemed unknowable and put in the ‘too hard basket’.

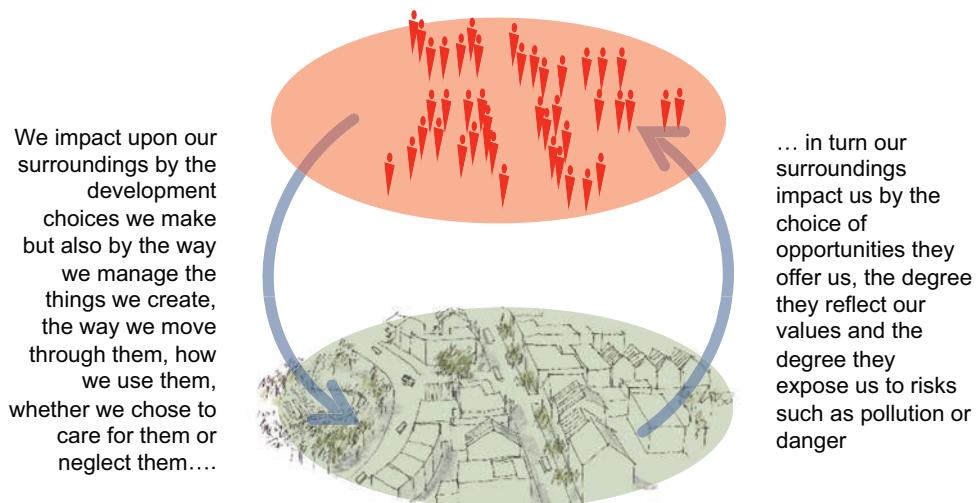


Figure 1.3 The Relationship Between People and Place

About This Book

This book has been written to offer a practitioner's perspective on this important issue. *Designing the Compassionate City* looks at how urban design—in its broadest sense—can influence many aspects of people's lives: how they feel, what they can do and what they want to do, amongst many other things. It recognizes that our interventions change the balance of power in the spaces we create, giving unwritten licence to some users and activities and discouraging others.

This book seeks to explore how we might tailor our interventions to become a better reflection of our underlying humanity and was written from the perspective that urban design is a social investment. It leaves a legacy that impacts the social fabric of the town or city it is embedded within and changes by a small or large degree the momentum of that community (Figure 1.3).

The Inspiration for This Book

Before I could articulate it I intuitively felt that our surroundings influenced the quality of our lives. Growing up in very urban London with frequent trips to rural County Wexford in Ireland, I was fascinated by the way that different places provoked different emotional responses. Some places brought happiness whilst others had the opposite effect. The places that felt 'happy' were diverse and could be found in the city or the country. Hence these places often looked very different but felt equally comfortable, interesting and welcoming. In contrast other places, usually urban in character, cultivated fear and cast strangers as potential enemies. Tension, anger or fear sat oppressively over these areas, fun was harder to find and parents discouraged children from playing outside. More often than not these places were grim and depressing. Opportunities of any kind were sparse and unappealing and the experiences they offered were often scary or distressing.

Yet sometimes the places that provoked these contrasting responses were very close to one another. I remember the contrast between the little houses on little streets such as ours



Figure 1.4 Contrasting West London Streetscapes That Seemed to Cultivate Contrasting Social Outcomes

(Figure 1.4) and the heroic development projects of the post war era that partly replaced them (Figure 1.5)—projects such as the tower blocks that dotted the horizon from where we lived, the huge sprawling housing estates not far away and the new towns that ringed the major cities.

For those living in many (but by no means all) of these major urban renewal and development projects, it seemed that life was harder and hope that things could get better seemed to be more difficult to maintain. That is not to say that the bonds of humanity, the friendships and a sense of community didn't survive or even flourish in those places, they self-evidently did. My experience as a play leader organizing games for children in a park in a West London housing estate as a student vacation job reaffirmed this for me. However it also led me to feel that this was a testament to people's resilience and adaptability. These people flourished *despite* their surroundings. If a place could be attributed human characteristics, such places might be described as neglectful, unresponsive and uncaring. To my eyes the places these estates and new towns partly replaced, the little terraced houses overlooking narrow streets, although far from perfect, seemed so much more of a nurturing, more human place to live.

This interest inspired me to study town planning. Through my studies I noticed that as well as the obvious benefits of planning, there were often social costs. The wholesale intervention in the settings for people's lives—the clearance and rebuilding that I observed in London—had been advocated, designed and built by professionals who were motivated by a desire to make the city a better place. Their intent had been noble and they were as well read and trained as I aspired to be, but their efforts had left a mixed legacy. Living in some housing estates allowed people to flourish whilst other apparently very similar ones didn't. It was obvious that the architecture, planning and landscape were not the only factors that influenced whether people thrived but at the same time they were an important influence on people's chances in life.

To me this arbitrary distribution of benefits and problems seemed unfair and presented a serious flaw in the way planning was undertaken. That is not to say this led me to believe that the idea of planning was fundamentally flawed. A moment's study of the history of urbanization and the human cost of uncontrolled development is enough to see that 'the



Figure 1.5 Contrasting West London Streetscapes That Seemed to Cultivate Contrasting Social Outcomes

market', left alone, is much worse at delivering places that support people's well-being. For example the rapid uncontrolled urbanization of the industrial revolution in the UK contributed to a dramatic fall in life expectancy, in the case of Liverpool falling to 25 years when their rural compatriots lived to 45 years (Haley 1978). The question seemed to me not should we intervene, but how can we intervene better? This made me think, what could we learn from the patchily successful planning of the past? What was it about the way that people, buildings and spaces interacted that meant some places supported people whilst others didn't? It seemed that when we intervene in the public realm, we are intervening in a very complex system where others had intervened, for a range of different reasons and with differing capacities, insights and degrees of comprehensiveness. It struck me this was like someone tinkering with a machine that they do not understand properly that had already been tinkered with using an outdated manual with pages missing. The diversity and complexity of humanity means that we can never know exactly how people will respond to our interventions and the outcomes of those interventions will always be something of an experiment. However that doesn't mean we shouldn't try and learn as much as possible so we might design places that were at least *more likely* to help people to thrive.

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Through my professional life I have come across many inspiring projects that have thoughtfully addressed the relationship between people and their surroundings. This has offered me a few insights into some of the mechanisms by which people's urban surroundings become traps or refuges, catalysts or inhibitors of fulfilment. It has also revealed some insights that might be helpful in understanding how well-meant interventions have gone wrong, leading to unforeseen and sometimes detrimental outcomes. It is to share these insights that I have written this book in the hope that others may find it helpful to apply themselves, their skills and insights to the task of designing places where people thrive.

The Beliefs Behind This Book

The philosophical foundations for this book are that:

- Everyone, born or not yet born, has *inherent dignity*, deserving of our respect and consideration and has an inalienable right to seek to fulfil their own potential;
- The design of our towns and cities and the social processes they cultivate play a part in moulding people's lives by framing the opportunities open to them.

Consequently if we alter the settings within which other people lead their lives, we have a responsibility to consider the impact this will have on them, ensuring we do nothing that diminishes their ability to fulfil their potential and everything to support it.

Inherent Dignity

A commitment to recognizing the dignity of all people is not merely an abstract ethical position, it is a cornerstone of human well-being and is reflected in the preamble of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. This states that "*recognition of the inherent dignity and of the equal and inalienable rights of all members of the human family is the foundation of freedom, justice and peace in the world*" (UN 1948). Inherent dignity might be visualized as a spark of unique worth and potential within each person. This spark is dimmed or brought up to its fullest brightness according to the ability of that person to access the opportunities and experiences they require to meet their needs and develop their abilities. Consequently the compassionate city seeks to empower its inhabitants to meet their needs and explore and develop their abilities. This is a perspective with parallels in *Building Better Places*, a report of Select Committee on National Policy for the Built Environment by the UK House of Lords, which stated: "*striving to develop a built environment where all people can live well and make a full contribution to society should be a key objective for decision makers*" (House of Lords 2016).

Right to Choose How to Participate

This commitment to inherent dignity also leads to the conclusion that, as a default position, everyone has a right (assuming competence) to make their own choices about their path to well-being and how they can best participate in society. This requires giving people a wide range of appealing choices so they can select the particular healthy/fun/enlightening/sustainable behaviour that suits them best and makes the adoption of that choice one of personal preference rather than imposition. For example where behavioural changes are required—as it is in car-dependent neighbourhoods that impose sedentary, isolated

lifestyles—the compassionate city should seek to address this by attracting people to active transport rather than demanding they stop driving. In other words it should be more ‘carrot’ than ‘stick’. This aligns with the conclusions of Neil Thin (2012), who found that the benefits of changing behaviours contribute more to people’s well-being when they are freely chosen rather than enforced.

It follows from this that it is not adequate to just quantitatively embed the opportunities for people to meet their needs into their surroundings if those opportunities are insufficiently appealing. If the past (unhelpful) behaviours are still felt of as preferable then why would people change behaviour? For example providing access to an unattractive, exposed play area, even one with many different play apparatuses, may make play possible but it is unlikely to make it competitive against screen-based entertainment (Hemmings 2007). Consequently in the compassionate city where people have the right to do everything or nothing, we need to create surroundings that make needs-fulfilling activity not just *possible* but *preferable*.

Emotional Capital

Another reflection of this commitment to the inherent dignity is a recognition that people who live, work or otherwise experience an area will care about it and accumulate insights and experiences that the designer will not have. These insights and the emotional responses they trigger matter to people; they generate emotional capital. This is the “*shared sense of trust, safety, and reciprocity that promotes involvement and commitment*” (McGrath and Buskirk, undated.). Although the term ‘emotional capital’ is more often used by economists and sociologists to explain people’s loyalty to organizations or brands, it is also a useful way to look at a person’s commitment to their surroundings and the people around them. This can be a very powerful motivating force, compelling people to take action to make things better or protect what they value.

The Importance of Being Connected

Human beings are social creatures with a profound need to connect who thrive best in complex social structures. This book reflects the belief it is both reassuring and rewarding to forge connections with one another that “*make us feel that we matter, that we are engaged with others and that we are embedded in networks of mutual appreciation and care*” according to Australian social researcher Jane Frances Kelly (Kelly et al. 2012). In her informative report “Social Cities” for the Australian social policy research centre the Grattan Institute, she observes the true importance of belonging and being connected becomes apparent when it is missing. Loneliness can be severely damaging, bringing with it “*serious health consequences, with a similar impact to high blood pressure, lack of exercise, obesity, or smoking*” (Kelly et al. 2012).

She goes on to quote fieldwork from the Young Foundation (a UK social policy research centre) that reveals young people go “*without food in order to keep their mobile phones topped up, leading the Foundation’s former chief executive, Geoff Mulgan, to conclude that ‘the human need for connectedness’ outweighs ‘almost everything else’.*”

The Importance of Health

Health and its absence frames human potential. Unhealthy people are less happy (Guo and Hu 2011), do less well at school (Zhang et al. 2014) and have lower levels of attainment in

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the labour force (Currie et al. 2008). The stifling effect of ill health echoes through generations, passing from parent to child (Currie et al. 2008). The book reflects the view that good health is “*a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity*” (United Nations 1948). The book was written from the perspective that the experience of living in the city should offer a person many of the things they need to support their physical and emotional health and impose few things that diminish it.

The Importance of Hope

Hope is often overlooked but when hope dies so does motivation. This book reflects the belief that realizable hope is a critical precondition to motivate people to do what is required to achieve improvement and safeguard against deterioration. An absence of hope deters people from setting goals and encourages people to give up, leaving problems unsolved and left in the ‘too hard basket’, seemingly intractable. The profound effects of hope and its absence were explored by Dominique Hes and Chrisna du Plessis in their insightful and deeply thoughtful book *Designing for Hope* (2015). They contend that to challenge the despair and despondency that can result from the apparent prevailing momentum of history—taking us down a path of climate change and resource depletion—we need the innovation born of hope, quoting Raymond Williams: “*to be truly radical is to make hope possible, rather than despair convincing*”. Hes’s and du Plessis’s work suggests that designers’ ability to visualize their way around problems and create inspiring images of the future can provide people with a direction and focus that can make a belief in a better future a more influential factor in their quality of life. However hope is a fragile thing: it needs careful cultivation and when it is based on unrealistic expectations or is raised only to be dashed it can be bitterly disappointing and discourage future involvement.

The importance of hope and the critical part that the planning process can play in it was demonstrated to me in the aftermath of the devastating earthquakes of 2010–2011 in Canterbury, New Zealand, by Rob Kerr of Waimakarara District Council. The sudden destruction and loss of so many layers of community life negated previous hopes and left people with very little ability to visualize a better future. Instead they were focussed on what they had lost. This sense of loss and lack of hope brought with it significant psychological distress that proved hard to shift. “*Repairing the roads and buildings would be the easy bit*”, Rob told me (pers. corr. 2013). However, his experience of the recovery and rebuilding demonstrated to him the importance of the planning process in cultivating hope. It provided survivors with reassuring evidence that the worst was past and allowed them to look into the future with a degree of confidence. In doing so it released them from the past and its trauma. As Rob put it: “*a good plan supported by good visualisations is worth a thousand hours of counselling*”. He found that the process they had chosen and refined, with its sensitivity to the psychological processes of the survivors and explicit recognition of hope, helped to cultivate the belief that what was lost or would have to change was going to be replaced with something better. He told me, “*Before the earthquakes people came to planning meetings to voice their fear of what could be, whereas afterwards people came to find hope in what could be.*”

The Importance of Happiness

According to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon (2014): “*Happiness is neither a frivolity nor a luxury. It is a deep-seated yearning shared by all members of the human family. It should be denied to no-one and available to all,*” a view shared by Neil Thin, who stated:

“Happiness is more than just a desirable personal objective that can be discarded for more important objectives, it is a social and public good and is a matter of importance to all of humanity” (Thin 2012). Happiness is a good state in its own right but also brings with it many other desirable outcomes that one would wish to use to support people to thrive: *“Numerous studies show that happy individuals are successful across multiple life domains, including marriage, friendship, income, work performance, and health”* (Lyubomirsky et al. 2005). Building up a stock of happy memories can protect people against ill health (Siahpush et al. 2008) and has been linked to reducing the effects of stress, supporting heart health (Davidson et al. 2010) and supporting the immune system (Cohen et al. 2003).

What happiness actually consists of however is contested and has long been the focus of attention of poets, philosophers, politicians and psychologists. The author adopts the views of Huta and Ryan (2009) that happiness has two components: hedonia (seeking pleasure and comfort) and eudaimonia (seeking to express and develop the best in oneself). C. D. Ryff (1989) stated that eudaimonic well-being is about *“belonging and benefiting others, flourishing, thriving and exercising excellence”*. Huta and Ryan (2009) concluded that *“hedonia and eudaimonia occupy overlapping and distinct niches within a complete picture of well-being, and their combination may be associated with the greatest well-being.”* Eudaimonia might come from visiting a friend’s house to help them move, fix something for them or take the time to listen to their concerns and support them through difficult times. Hedonia might come from visiting them for a party. From this perspective happiness isn’t just smiles, pleasure and comfort. Discomfort and effort can contribute to happiness when they help us achieve eudaimonic well-being, when they are investments in helping others and give us opportunity to do the right thing. However, fun is an equally essential part of our well-being. It seems apparent that hedonia and eudaimonia overlap; experiences can be fun and satisfying, as people who play team sports or volunteer for a cause important to them will attest. Thus from this point of view happiness spans a life of meaning—striving to fulfil one’s potential in relation to others’—and enjoyment.

Cascading from these beliefs are a series of other philosophical positions that are also reflected in this book.

Broad Responsibilities of Urban Designers

Those people who call themselves professional urban designers are only one of the groups of players who influence the world other people share, but their role is important. The Urban Design Group (in the UK) tells us, *“What gets urban designers out of bed in the morning is the challenge of creating a place that will be used and enjoyed by a wide range of different people for different purposes, not only now but in years to come”* (undated). As such, professional urban designers are dedicated to considering the social impacts of their work and have (hopefully) the training and experience to draw informed conclusions about these impacts. Furthermore urban designers influence the form of masterplans and the content and priorities of design guidance which guide development decisions that involve commitments of vast amounts of resources. Thus the outcomes of our handiwork will be experienced by many people and will probably be around a long time. In the UK it is estimated that *“90% of the buildings and infrastructure that will exist in 30 years have already been built”* (House of Lords 2016). In helping to make such an indelible mark on the landscape, urban designers have been given a great privilege and responsibility. The places we help create frame other people’s choices about what they can do and want to do way into the future. Hence our actions will almost definitely impact upon people unknown to us or not yet born.

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Recognition of the Uniqueness of Everyone's Perspective

Every man is influenced by his fellows, dead and living, but his mind is his own and its functioning is necessarily an individual affair.

(Emerson 1963)

In any shared environment our experience of our surroundings will overlap with many other people who will be looking on those surrounding in a similar way. However despite these broad similarities everyone's picture of their surroundings will vary in detail, reflecting their unique perspectives about whether their surroundings help or hinder them to do all the things they need to do. Consequently this book stresses the importance of listening, of understanding these perspectives and of applying creative design skills to find solutions that resonate with as wide a variety of these perspectives as possible.

Recognition of the Complex Nature of Cities

Cities are not just inanimate compositions of buildings and spaces. Cities are complex and ever-evolving systems animated by the people and the wider biological community that occupy them. Affect one of these variables and you affect the others, often in unexpected ways. This complexity denies perfect knowledge and masks impacts by obscuring cause and effect. As Charles Montgomery (2013) points out, interventions made by well-meaning, well-informed and educated people nonetheless often detrimentally affect people's lives through many "*unintended consequences*". He cites the examples of how interventions designed to make roads safer through such measures as road widening and the removal of street-side trees actually encouraged faster speeds, which in turn led to more accidents and an increased likelihood that those accidents would be fatal.

The Importance of Compassion

For most of humanity, one of the cardinal points of our values is compassion, the "*concern we feel for another being's welfare*" (Keltner undated). Evolution has taught us we do better when we co-operate and consider others (Goetz et al. 2010) and we have become "*hard-wired for compassion*" according to Donna Petsinis (pers. corr. 2015). This commitment to collective well-being is reflected in our "*desire to uphold ethical norms*" (Bowles and Gintis 2011) and is not only an expression of ethical values but is intrinsically rewarding: "*A strong correlation exists between the well-being, happiness, health, and longevity of people who are emotionally and behaviourally compassionate*" (Post 2005). Furthermore, "*people think that cooperating is the right thing to do and enjoy doing it, and they dislike unfair treatment and enjoy punishing those who violate norms of fairness*" (Bowles and Gintis 2011).

This book reflects the view that this perspective resonates with most planners, architects and others who intervene in the settings within which other people lead their lives. It is taken as read that many such professionals are drawn to this field, at least in part, by a desire to create places that contribute to the lives of the people who experience their handiwork. For this perspective, 'good design' in the built environment responds not just to the physical landscape, the needs of the client and planning code requirements but it also responds to the social landscape. It considers people who haven't contributed financially to the development nor exercise formal power over it but are still impacted by it. Consequently this book reflects a belief that for many designers their sense of what represents good design may change with their understanding of the link between built form and social impact.

The Scope of This Book

This book considers the differences that urban design can make to people's lives and seeks to identify the types of interventions that best facilitate people to meet their needs. This book does not seek to comprehensively address all of the aspects that influence the relationship between people and their surroundings. That relationship is too complex and informed by too many other variables (Haigh 2013) that extend well beyond the scope of urban design to make such a claim. The book embeds itself in the social context within which urban design interventions are made. It considers issues such as social inclusion, public health, safety and sustainability that are influenced by the design of the built environment. Following Jan Gehl's advice, "*First life, then spaces, then buildings—the other way around never works*" (quoted in Project for Public Spaces undated), this book has been written with an emphasis on the perspective of the users of the public realm and their ability to contribute to each other's quality of life. The book doesn't peer inside the buildings that define the public realm other than to consider their impact and responsibilities to the public realm. Some very important issues such as housing, healthcare and education are only very lightly touched upon, despite the undoubtedly profound impact they have on a city's ability to nurture its inhabitants. Beyond recognizing the importance of these and other issues, the urban design focus of this book requires that they are left for others to address.

Although this book is written from a professional urban designer's perspective, I hope it is of interest to anyone concerned about social outcomes in urban areas and the quality of the built environment. This book suggests a way of looking at the built environment that might help people to question whether their towns and cities nurture or neglect their inhabitants. By drawing people's attention to this issue and inviting them to consider their interventions in this light, it is hoped to provide a means that may help people apply their insights and invest their emotional capital in making places more nurturing for the people who experience them.

Designing the compassionate city does not seek to promote a single, consistent aesthetic beyond some characteristics established by underlying physiological and emotional needs. No such single aesthetic exists. Beauty is indeed very much in the eye of the beholder. The sense of what represents aesthetic perfection varies by culture, class, experience and personal taste, amongst many other variables (Porteous 1990; Green 2010). This book does not seek to impose an aesthetic or say anyone's sense of what they find visually appealing is right or wrong. However that is not to say beauty is unimportant. As this book will suggest experiencing the inspiration of beauty is a basic human need, it just can't be reduced down to a simple universal equation or list. Thus the images and ideas contained in this book reflect my own aesthetic values, albeit for the most part having been tested for conformance with the values of the clients and the communities affected. Consequently what the compassionate city might look like when viewed through the lens of another culture may be very different in appearance to my interpretations of projects outlined in these pages. However it is suggested that, despite these differences, the compassionate city—wherever in the world it would be found—would still need to facilitate underlying and universal human needs.

It is recognized that throughout this book the word 'community' is used loosely. Place and communities are not bound in a strict 'one place = one community' relationship. The concept is far more amorphous than that: "*In fact, the concept of 'community' means different things for different people in different circumstances*" (Marsh et al. 2018). People can belong to one or more communities and a single place can be home to many communities. A sense of community can arise through anything shared; it does not have to be geography.

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Faith, employment, allegiance to a movement or even a shared support of a sporting code or club can all create a sense of common interest and shared purpose. Consequently, in any given place, there will probably be people who identify themselves as members of different communities and who bring multiple interpretations about what that place means to them. Consequently when the word ‘community’ is used in this book, it is shorthand for all users who experience a place and encompasses the diversity of perspectives they may hold.

This book is also not the last word. It is a practitioner’s perspective and was written to add to the discussion about what represents good design. It is hoped that some of the insights may prove helpful, that the examples of projects covered in the book may inspire and that the lessons learnt and recounted in the studies help people avoid pitfalls and unnecessary difficulties. It makes no claim to scientifically prove its thesis.

Chapters 1 to 5 present the ideas that underpin the book, the relationship between people and place, and what it means to live in nurturing or neglectful surroundings. They consider how we embed and interpret messages in our surroundings and how those messages influence other people’s ability to meet their needs. They suggest that in addition to the quantitative paucity of opportunity in disadvantaged communities, these people are also often disadvantaged by a qualitative paucity. Their surroundings only half-heartedly invite them to take up those opportunities that do exist. I will suggest that this inequitable distribution of the encouragements we get from our surroundings creates a steep ‘social gradient of invitation’ akin to the social gradient of health that compounds disadvantage. This part of the book concludes by suggesting an abstract model of the compassionate city that considers the optimum relationship between people and place and allows us to realize our individual and collective potential.

Chapters 6 to 14 look at the stories of a number of projects that have been undertaken explicitly to enhance the relationship between people and place. They include projects that changed the physical fabric of the city, the way people think about and use their surroundings, and the administrative framework which governs the rights and responsibilities to land and the people who occupy it. These studies outline the project, its goals, the key design characteristics that were employed to achieve those goals and the lessons learnt from those experiences—what worked and what didn’t work.

Chapters 15 to 19 take stock of the lessons learnt from these projects and others, as well as seeks to make some observations about what this all means for an urban designer. They outline the barriers to achieving these goals, as well as the principles, processes and product characteristics that may help us overcome these barriers and achieve a more compassionate city, mindful of the constraints/limitations of all parties.

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