DESIGN FOR URBAN MAN

ARCH THESIS

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STRUCTURE OF DOCUMENT

DESiRABILITY

POTENTIAL OF ATHLONE

NEEDS OF MAN

CONCERNS FOR URBAN MAN

PROPOSALS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE ATHLONE CORR

BRIEF

CONCEPT SKETCHES

DESIGN

EXISTING CONTEXT

ANALYSIS OF SITE

ANALYSIS OF PRECEDENT

FEASIBILITY
The Athlone Core is rapidly becoming a major commercial centre on the Cape Flats. It has the potential to become a symbol of security, identity and progress for the Coloured people if treated with the respect it requires and deserves. The Core also has the potential to develop in such a way that it may best serve the needs of the user, emergent urban man. The very fabric of the Athlone Core may either support and strengthen its potential, or undermine and weaken it.

At present the Core is used in a vital and active way. Any opportunity offered by built environment, such as a patch of shade in which to display wares, is made use of. (See Existing Context for more examples). This qui vive attitude to the built environment so part of the lifestyle and culture of the people using it, makes Athlone an educational experience and a joy for the designer.

A realisation of the inherent potential particular to the Athlone Core, and the necessity of actualising this potential in the built fabric has led me to choose Athlone as the venue for the testing of my concerns which are:

(a) to anticipate and to provide for urban man's physical needs (e.g. shelter, adequate light and ventilation) as well as his spiritual needs (beauty, harmony, rhythm) in design for him.

(b) to reinstate and include nature in the urban fabric.

(c) to design for optimum use of space.

(d) to seek solutions to the problems that arise when urban man lives in close contact with his fellow man in the city.

It is hoped that this thesis will demonstrate a concern for contemporary urban man within a city fabric such as Athlone, as well as acting as a model for physical development within the scope of the proposals for the Athlone Core as prepared by the U.C.T. Urban and Regional Planning Department.
OBJECTIVES OF THE URP PROPOSALS

The following summary serves to bring the essential features of the planning proposals to light. An in depth coverage is available in "The Summary Review of the Departmental Project Team" as compiled by Raeburn Chapman and Fabio Todeschini as well as the document and the model originally prepared by M. Brown, E. Williams and D. Jacobs, and completed in June, 1975. (29)

1) Old Klipfontein Road becomes a pedestrian priority area and buses are routed along it.

2) Pedestrian routes should be differentiated from vehicular areas by different types of paving and slight changes in grade. The creation of clear pedestrian domains such as the recommended square, while adding to convenience and safety, will provide a sense of place and memorability.

3) Parking to be located peripherally within two minute walking distance.

4) Buildings should be drawn over the pavement on colonnades, thereby providing shelter to pedestrians, extra floorspace and making possible a pattern of low storey structures. This results in a better ratio of lettable floor space to circulation and services, and is cheaper to build.

5) Existing setbacks are altered and bulk is increased to 3.7 over the whole area giving a 100% increase on ground floor area. A residential bulk bonus of 20% is allowed. Buildings are served from north - south streets.

6) Buildings of uniform height with small open spaces should be encouraged to reduce the funnelling effect of wind.

7) Implementational reality and community ideas will affect the initial proposals and different solutions will be possible in relation to commonly adopted objectives.

NOTE: Numbers in brackets behind a quotation correspond with the Bibliography and indicate the source of the reference.
PSYCHOLOGICAL AND SOCIOPHIOLOGICAL NEEDS OF MAN

"Human activities and needs find expression in forms and patterns which reflect and shape our lives. The built environment is the ultimate public statement of the human condition." - Shun Kanda. (13)

It is proposed to consider the sociological and psychological needs and attributes of man to arrive at objectives which will inform design. Considerations include community in the city; privacy; territoriality; identity; diversity and nature.

COMMUNITY IN THE CITY

"The city is a related collection of primary groups and purposive associations: the first, like family and neighbourhood, are common to all communities, while the second are especially characteristic of city life." - Lewis Mumford. (20)

Initially man seeks out his fellow man in a city in order to survive. "The city is made for the liberation of the human person with a view to his accomplishment." - Le Corbusier. He remains with his fellow men to converse, exchange ideas, make friends and share experiences and emotions such as love and joy. This has been summed up by Aristotle when speaking of cities as follows: "Men come together in cities in order to live; they remain together in order to live the good life". (20)

The city must make allowance for this need of man just as the living room should do so in the house: "A house is a tiny city, a city a huge house." - Aldo van Eyck. (27)

The "living room" of the city is its street, small courts and its heart, i.e. its core or square. Alison and Peter Smithson have stated that: "It is the idea of street, not the reality of street that is important - the creation of effective group spaces fulfilling the vital function of identification and enclosure making the socially vital life-of-the-streets possible." (23)

As an example of architecture for involvement Edward Hall recommends a look at the Spanish Plaza and the Italian Piazza - "whereas the strung out main street so characteristic of the United States reflects our lack of involvement in others." (6)
A city's square or core is an essential "living room" without which urban man would surely suffer. It is here that he can meet his fellow men, exchange ideas, observe others and "live the good life". It is also here that the varying moods of a community may find expression as the use of the square changes over time. CIAM 8 have suggested that the vitality of the square depends on three factors: a) the attraction it can exert, b) close contact between dwellings and the core, c) strong links to other cores by elements of the urban landscape. (4)

When a river slows down a lagoon results, likewise when pedestrian movement slows down a square results. It is in the square that human values and scale may be re-established within the public domain.

OBJECTIVES: To design for involvement and the Smithson's "idea of street" - vitality, identification.

To re-inforce the Core of Athlone as proposed by means of residential, public orientated office and shop components designed for maximum social interaction.

To allow components to partake of and interact with the "people energy" of the square by spaces for hawkers, pavement cafes, informal gathering etc.

PRIVACY

Man requires contact with his fellow men, but he also requires privacy. "The possession of inviolable space is the individual's basic necessity", say Alison and Peter Smithson; (23) and as stated by Serge Chermayeff and Christopher Alexander: "Only physical isolation against the danger and pain of invasion - interruption by people, traffic and noise - can inhibit chaos and confusion". (1)

Within the dwelling unit, man requires a private zone, both for the child and the adult, and a communal or family zone. Privacy when required is found in a bedroom or study
separated from the communal zone by a lock. Family zones are found in living and dining rooms and extensions of these such as balconies, solariums and terraces. Balconies or enclosed terraces accessible from the dwelling only are known as semi-private zones. The communal family zone of the dwelling meet by way of a transfer zone known as the semi-public zone. In reality this zone is similar to the "street in the air" as found in The Golden Lane Project (23), or in the Access Corridor of the Unité de Habitation in Marseille. (17)

OBJECTIVES: To eliminate visual and acoustic penetration of the most private zones.

To respect man's "personal space" by providing locks and transfer zones between the private and communal zones, such as doors, screens, changes in level etc.

To ensure that man can have absolute privacy where he requires it.

TERRITORIALITY

"Taking possession of space is the first gesture of living things, of men and of animals, of plants and of clouds. The occupation of space is the first proof of existence" - Le Corbusier. (16)

The concept of communal and private zones in man's environment as indicated in PRIVACY gives rise to the necessity of understanding territoriality.

Territoriality is a basic instinct of man - just as bees have a territory where they collect pollen, so man has territories which are imperative for his existence. Lyman and Scott distinguish four types of territories in human society and these are: (as quoted by Robert Sommer in "Personal Space" (25)

1) Public Territories - provide the citizen with freedom of access not necessarily of action e.g. court yards, parks and squares.

2) Home Territories - public areas taken over by groups of individuals e.g. club houses and coffee houses. The patrons have a sense of intimacy and control over the area.
3) Interactional Territories - have clearly marked boundaries and rules of access and egress, and social gatherings may occur here e.g. a restaurant or a self-service laundromat.

4) Body Territories or Personal Space - These are the most private and inviolate spaces belonging to the individual.

The authors distinguish three forms of territorial encroachment: a. violation - unwarranted use of territories; b. invasion - physical presence of an intruder within the boundaries of a territory; c. contamination - rendering a territory impure with respect to its definition and usage.

The identification of territories in man's environment as defined by Lyman and Scott indicates the need for spaces that are defensible.

OBJECTIVES  (As guided by Oscar Newman in "Defensible Space" (21)

The physical environment should create perceived zones of territorial influence - areas of the environment should be articulated to aid man in assuming territorial attitudes.

Physical design should provide surveillance opportunities for residents - casual and continual watchful eyes on the non-private environment.

The uniqueness and stigma of the built fabric should be neutralised, and the image of isolation and vulnerability should be reduced by means of careful design.

A residential environment should be located next to "safe" activity areas e.g. a square which by its openness and activity affords continuous surveillance opportunities.

IDENTITY

Man has a basic need for identity within a community as well as within a family. A feeling of belonging, of being a participant and contributor to the community is a striving of most men.
Neil Young sings in "Out on the Weekend": See the lonely boy out on the weekend
trying to make it pay
He can't relate to joy, he tries to speak and
he can't begin to say.

An isolated man has difficulty in relating to his surroundings and he can also not express
himself as he would want to. The built environment can support or undermine man's
search for identity. Active participation in the building process fosters feelings of
identity control. An example of this is Ralph Erskine's work with Eskimos where the
Eskimos made decisions with regard to the location and layout of a proposed village for
them.

OBJECTIVES: To strive for and reinforce participation in the building process.

To remember that culture is "learned and shared behaviour". (E.T. Hall)
and that "people cannot act or interact at all in any meaningful way
except through the medium of culture" (7), and to design for this in the
particular context.

DIVERSITY

Unyielding uniformity and facelessness in the built environment undermines identity.
To have vitality, diversity is a requirement and to have diversity, choice is essential,
choice being a product of identity. Spatial choice in a community leads to spatial
variation of diversity as all men are not alike.

Diversity, such as when each man has expressed himself in his dwelling, leads to identity
through ease of recognition because of vital differences that occur in the mode of
expression. Le Corbusier said of the alterations done by the inhabitants to dwellings
designed by him at Pessac: "It's life that's always right and the architect who's
wrong." (12) Aldo van Eyck says of right size, number and distance: "Objects may elude
right-size, which includes right number and distance because they are the same in the wrong
way, or not different enough in the right way." (27)
OBJECTIVES: To enable choice to influence design.

To allow for and encourage self-expression in the built environment.

NATURE

The sound, smell, and feel of nature is becoming more important as it becomes apparent that man becomes both mentally and physically ill when deprived of and separated from this necessity. Le Corbusier stated that man's essential joys are sun, space and verdure. (14)

The CIAM Athens Charter stipulates: "that living quarters henceforth occupy the best sites within the urban area with respect to topography, climatic conditions, orientation for sun and available green spaces." (4)

OBJECTIVES: To design for a symbiosis of urban man and nature.

To allow urban man to cherish nature in the city.
INTRODUCTION

"Tasks of the architect: knowledge of man, creative imagination, beauty, freedom of choice (spiritual man), open fields of poetry to the soul by honestly bringing materials into play for the purpose of making them useful". - Le Corbusier. (10)

Additional Concerns for urban man include the pedestrian, Proximity, Orientation, Structure and Technology.

THE PEDESTRIAN

Urban man as a pedestrian requires: ease of movement and access, clearly defined ways, a human scale and safety from vehicles.

"Man's entire organism was designed to move through the environment at less than 5 miles per hour". - E.T. Hall. (6)

"To cater for the pedestrian means to cater for the child. A city which overlooks the child's presence is a poor place. Its movement will be incomplete and oppressive. The child cannot rediscover the city unless the city redisCOVERS the child." - Aldo van Eyck. (24)

PROXIMITY

The CIAM Athens Charter stipulates: "That the distance between home and place of work be reduced to a minimum." (4) By cutting the wasted time commuting from the dwelling to the central business district and back to a minimum, man is left with more time to pursue his interests, be they at work or at home. In this helter skelter mad rush age, urban man needs all the spare time he can get.

Proximity is aided by a bulk bonus incentive where residential bulk may be increased within the Athlone Core.
ORIENTATION

Desired focal orientation: views of Table Mountain as well as the Drakenstein Mountain Range. The view of activity on the square and view of verdure.

Desired sun orientation: Morning sun - bedrooms (to wake up).
Noon sun - balconies, terraces (lunch in the shade).
Afternoon sun - discussion space of the day's events.
South light or studio light - working spaces require constant light - typing, sewing or cooking.

Desired climatic orientation: wind shelter - dwelling orientated away from southerly winds and the rain bearing north wester, where rain has been known to move horizontally.

STRUCTURE

The use of re-inforced concrete in the Athlone Core is not unknown, the tallest building, a seven storey office tower, makes extensive use of this material. It is proposed to use re-inforced concrete column and slab for reasons so well already stated by Le Corbusier; "localised foundations; suppression of weight bearing walls; possibility of using the entire facade for lighting the interior; free ground between the slender stilts; the roof constituting new ground for the use of the inhabitants and the interior wall dispositions are entirely free, floor above floor." (15)

TECHNOLOGY

The words of Ivan Illich in the "Deschooled Society" serve as a strong guideline: "Properly controlled, technology could provide each man with the ability to understand his environment better, to shape it powerfully with his own hands and to permit him full inter-communication to a degree never before possible." (9)
EXISTING CONTEXT

Existing use of the Athlone Core gives clues as to the characteristics of the context that must be anticipated and allowed for in physical design.

PATTERN

The street is filled with diverse activity both at ground and first floor level - people chat, sit in the sun on the pavement, observe others, queue for the cinema and gather informally. Shopkeepers stand in front of their shops and observe the by-passers. Children use the pavement to play on.

PATTERN

Part of a house which is centrally located has been converted into a shoe repair shop - the dividing line between living and working becomes very small.

PATTERN

Vendors still make use of the horse and cart to transport their wares to and from the Athlone Core. Wares, such as fish or vegetables, are also sold directly from the cart to people that are passed as the vendors proceed to the Athlone Core. The presence of a horse drawn cart in the heavily trafficked Old Klipfontein Road indicates that drivers of vehicles respect slow moving traffic and the pedestrian.
The People of Athlone comment on its Past, Present and Future.

Dennis Gordon works on the pavement as a shop assistant: "I have been here for forty years. This place used to have sand roads and corrugated iron shacks. It had a tin church and was always known as West London. Previously I was working in the building trades and was in the army."

Alfred Tookley a jack of all trades and friend of Dennis's: "I am of the blood of a Highlander of Simonstown, do you understand that? I used to be a greaser for Irvin and Johnson. Why don't they make a plan with all the loafers hanging around? This place is dangerous at night - people get robbed. I used to be able to walk home from here late at night, now it is too dangerous. I did not go to the army like Dennis but stayed at home to look after a woman."

Mrs. E.N. Smith the owner of Mayfair Stores, a clothing shop for women: "We have customers from the townships here - Retreat, Manenberg, Grassy Park. The Coloured people prefer to shop at Claremont rather than Cape Town because of the cost of bus fares. We have a big African trade and I would say I have more respect for them than my own people. There are many Coloured children playing on the streets here who do not go to school because it is not compulsory."

Mrs. T.S. Anthony her assistant, says: "This shop is forty years old, and we have been here for the past five years. There are many more people here now than there used to be. There used to be a lot of water here."

Mr. John S.V. Solomon, recently put out of work at Mitchell's Plain, originally from George: "Many people are going to be here on the streets in Athlone because they are going to be fired at Mitchell's Plain. I used to be in Tripoli in the Army and Sonny Leon was a sergeant major there. I support him completely - I am a Coloured Boer. We are capable of looking after ourselves. White men cannot understand me, in fact I have no belief in them. The white men are robbers of my children. I have three sons and a daughter, aged 25, 24, 21 and 20 years. They are telling me not to say "baas" to anyone any more, those days are gone. I am scared here in Athlone - I have to look after my purse -
it is not like the open surroundings at Mitchell's Plain.

The Coloured situation is a tragic tragedy (tragiese tragedie). I want respect, to express my viewpoint and freedom of behaviour."

Not one of the people interviewed knew anything about the development proposals for Athlone.