

Session 4

RETHINKING EDUCATION: URBAN SPACES FOR ENGAGEMENT

Ms Meaghan Dwyer

John Wardle Architects

Cities and Sustainability

The city in history has been the place of commerce and culture, and the place of exchange and debate. Meaning and collective memory has been invested in the public realm and through the creation richly layered of public places and spaces.

Cities were indelibly marked on the advent of modern infrastructure. This significant investment in built form characterizes many of our cities with a pattern that will be evident for a long time to come. New technology, new modes of production and different forms of governance have led, some would argue, to a demise of the public realm.

Today over half the world's population reside in cities and cities are faced with the serious challenges of rapid population growth and climate change. Recognized as the site of innovation cities are at once the great challenge for sustainability and the great opportunity for change. As Kostof describes, the city is shaped through ...'a virtual contest between socio-economic change and the persistence of the artifact...'

Universities as City Builders

Universities are considered an integral part of the Australian innovation system. They are fundamental in the production, application and diffusion of knowledge. They are the nation's leading providers of training for the future workforce. They generate much of the new knowledge that is essential to the future and they link Australia into global research networks.

Australian universities are also significant contributors to city building.

In history, the contribution of universities to city building is particularly evident - Oxford and Cambridge in England, Perugia in Italy and Leuven in Belgium are cases in point. These universities grew with, were shaped by, and in turn shaped their social and cultural setting. These are exemplars that we continue to look to today.

More recent development the world over has seen a strategic shift in the way that universities seek to connect and engage with the city. Today universities seek to strategically align their research activities with their local economy, and in turn create places and spaces that support knowledge transfer and exchange between researchers, industry and scholars. They seek to differentiate themselves through consolidating the disciplines and activities for which they are already renowned – promoting a global profile yet creating environments designed to attract the best students and researchers to a particular destination. Universities are turning away from the cloistered campus and strive to connect the campus with the city fabric, and perhaps more recently through directly embedding new institutes in the most highly contested places and spaces in the public realm.

Technology

Universities are leading the charge in creating spaces that are responsive to their parallel and profound shift to virtual space. This shift is creating enormous impact to existing campus fabric – classrooms and lecture theatres planned for didactic delivery are being outmoded by spaces that provide a setting for collaborative

Presenters Biography

Meaghan Dwyer joined JWA, John Wardle Architects, in 2000 and has been involved in all aspects of institutional, commercial and residential projects, becoming a Senior Associate of the practice in 2005. Her focus in the practice is to understand the complexities of our institutional clients and establishing comprehensive briefing information at the commencement of a project. Meaghan is well versed in creating a bridge between a client's brief and a conceptual design.

Meaghan is currently undertaking a post-graduate Master of Social Science International Urban and Environmental Management at RMIT University. Her course outline is focussed on learning about cities and urban environments. She has been a guest critic at RMIT University and the University of Melbourne in design.