

## **The Evaluation of Urban Development Project by Approach of Landscape Urbanism Tenets, the Case Study of Bowden, Adelaide**

Rasoul Rafat<sup>1</sup>, Sara Mirhadi<sup>2</sup>, Ehsan Sharifi<sup>3</sup>, Ali Soltani<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>University of Tehran, Tehran, Iran,

<sup>2</sup>School of Art, Architecture and Design, University of South Australia, Adelaide, Australia,

<sup>3</sup>School of Architecture and Built Environment, University of Adelaide, Adelaide, Australia

### **Abstract:**

Shortage of natural landscape in contemporary cities causes urban environments to lose vibrancy and attractiveness for human inhabitants. Urban development is driven by excessing need for density to accommodate urban dwellers in less energy and infrastructure demanding urban settings. However, urban development – in its business as usual practice – is commonly accompanied by replacing natural landscapes in and around cities with building mass. Landscape urbanism reclaims the vital need to utilize natural landscapes as the core infrastructure of urban development. Principal themes include process over time, horizontal development, environmental adaptation of techniques, natural aesthetical and relationship to people. However, landscape urbanism can result in urban sprawl. Landscape urbanism has the potential to incorporate the need for walkability, density, environmental adaptation and the use of natural landscapes beyond their aesthetical values in designing and retrofitting urban environments.

This paper presents 9 tenets for landscape urbanism based on reviewing appropriate literature in this subject. Adelaide metropolitan as a suburban city has a various development projects under “the 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide (2010)”. The focus of this plan is on creating a new walkable urban form with a pronounced shift away from continuing Adelaide urban sprawl to building a more livable, competitive and sustainable region. One of these development project is Bowden Urban Village development plan that is the case study of this paper. The Analysis of the pros and cons aspects of the development plan of Bowden have presented with SWOT matrix based on the tenets of landscape urbanism. According to Landscape Urbanism tenets, this project have several advantages and positive aspects. However some weaknesses of this project are lack of attention to the parklands in designing building block in Bowden Development Plan, ecological aspects and more importantly lack of consideration on the ‘Landscape’ as the main concept which results in discontinuity of open spaces and natural landscapes. Based on the analysis on this project, some problems may create threats such as ecological damages and vanishing the history of the site and Bowden industrial themes.

**Key words:** *Landscape urbanism; Adelaide; Bowden development; SWOT;*

### **Literature Review**

#### **Landscape:**

Landscape have been committed as a new profession in relation to architecture by American sponsors in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. In order to understand the core of landscape architecture, it is necessary to recognize architecture through cultural aspects and joined professional peer group for this nascent art. This historical view highlights the process of following development of urban planning as a different profession around landscape architecture in early 20<sup>th</sup> century and the discussions about landscape as a kind of urbanism in the end of the century as well (Waldheim 2013).

## **Landscape urbanism:**

Landscape urbanism is a theory of urban planning arguing that the best way to organize cities is through the design of the city's landscape, rather than the design of its buildings. The phrase 'landscape urbanism' first appeared in the mid-1990s. Since this time, the phrase 'landscape urbanism' has taken on many different uses, but is most often cited as a post modernist or post-post modernist response to the "failings" of New Urbanism and the shift away from the comprehensive visions, and demands, for modern architecture and urban planning.

Charles Waldheim traces the roots of landscape as a form of urbanism from its origins in the Renaissance through the twentieth century in his recent book: "Landscape as Urbanism: A General Theory" (Waldheim, 2016). Growing out of progressive architectural culture and populist environmentalism, the concept was further informed by the nineteenth-century invention of landscape architecture as a "new art" charged with reconciling the design of the industrial city with its ecological and social conditions (Waldheim 2016). In the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, as urban planning shifted from design to social science, and as urban design committed to neo traditional models of town planning, landscape urbanism emerged to fill a void at the heart of the contemporary urban project.

## **Urban development by approach of Landscape urbanism**

The conflict between design and practice have been reduced by landscape urbanism and each of them have been strengthened. Landscape Urbanism changes the way of thinking to landscape architecture from an art (or craft) of making beautiful landscapes to one of interdisciplinary negotiation and the seeding of strategic development processes. (Weller, 2008)

In the Landscape Urbanism Reader, Editor Charles Waldheim declares that "the landscape is the model for contemporary urbanism, increasingly characterized by horizontal sprawl and rapid change" (Waldheim, 2006, 37).

Landscape urbanism fundamentally draws attention to layers of context. More to the point, what it demands is the inclusion of landscape in all its aspects— built, vernacular, natural, historical, cultural and etc. as the basis for understanding the forces shaping projects and to which projects must respond. In this respect, landscape urbanism promotes an understanding of places and projects based on an ecology that includes people and what they do and have done in the same frame as a comprehensive view of the natural world. Charles Waldheim (2006) declares that "The landscape is the model for contemporary urbanism increasingly characterized by horizontal sprawl and rapid change" (Waldheim, 2006, 37).

### **Tenets for landscape urbanism**

There are some principals of landscape urbanism. There are many potentials in landscape urbanism principals that could improve urban projects based on following tenets.

1. include within the purview of design all that is in the landscape - infrastructure and buildings, etc., and shuffle across scales so as to bridge the divides between landscape design, landscape ecology, and landscape planning (Weller, 2008)
2. In Landscape urbanism the contrasts between city and landscape are vanished and city and its all elements equally as a landscape (Thompson, 2012). Thus the traditional way of thinking to separation between city and landscape as a country sides and city as a source of life facilities is changed. (Thompson, 2012).
3. Interpret and then represent landscape systems so that these systems can in turn influence urban forms, processes, and patterns.  
According to Corner's opinion about "failure of traditional urban designing and planning to operate effectively in the contemporary city", Landscape Urbanism is an approach in urban development in theory and practice (Mostafavi and Najle, 2003 pp. 58–59). Koolhaas has argued that we can no longer understand the city as the result of rational acts, no longer the result of a plan by an urban planner. Landscape was the only thing left that could link a city together (Koolhaas 1995).
4. conceptualize and then directly engage the city and its landscape as a hybridized, natural, chaotic ecology (Weller, 2008)

5. The impact of landscape urbanism is mostly on large scales like urban outer development and metropolitan cities.
6. Landscape urbanism present a context for socio cultural activities and other human being performances.
7. Landscape urbanism reveals hidden part of contexts and discovers the covered landscape infrastructures.  
“contemporary landscape urbanism practices recommend the use of infrastructural systems and the public landscapes they engender as the very ordering mechanisms of the urban field itself, shaping and shifting the organization of urban settlement and its indeterminate economic, political and social futures” (Waldheim, 2006, 39).
8. The approach of Landscape urbanism to ecology. In designing and planning progress, best relationship between natural and ecological processes is a most.

Design and planning should not set themselves against natural processes in a misguided quest for permanence. Instead they should be responsive and catalytic, generating creative syntheses. Future conditions can be anticipated, but never precisely predicted. As Weller puts it: “Landscape architecture—insofar as it is implicitly concerned with materials and processes subject to obvious change—seems well placed to give form to an ecological aesthetic. Landscape architecture is not frozen music” (Weller, 2006, 75).

9. Landscape urbanism recognizes the remedial possibilities inherent in the landscape (Thompson, 2012).

### **The case study of Bowden Development Plan**

Adelaide is known as a suburban city which is settled in 1836 concurrent with the growing idea of the modern form of suburb by British community (Hutchings, 1986). Adelaide is consistent of a main core, a belt of Park Lands and suburbs ring which is a combination of city and suburb in Adelaide Plains as a suburban Arcadia like the concept of suburbia that combines the best the city and country (Hirst, 1973)(Hutchings and Garnaut 2007).

Adelaide’s continued growth as an enjoyable and prosperous place to live is set out in the South Australian Government’s The 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide. One key step envisaged is the planning and implementation of new mixed-use developments that focus on public transport and allow for enjoyable and sustainable forms of living and working. The objective is to create pedestrian-friendly precincts containing a mix of medium to higher density housing, employment opportunities and community facilities located close to bus routes and rail and tram stations. There is no “one size fits all model”, however prerequisites for a successful walkable urban neighborhood include:

- high frequency public transport;
- higher levels of mixed development density and intensity; and
- local shops and community facilities.

Bowden has been purchased and prepared by the South Australian Government to show how the intentions of the 30-Year Plan can be realized.

In late 2008, the State Government acquired a 10.25ha parcel of land owned by Gerard Industries (known as the Clipsal site). In early 2010, the government acquired the adjoining 5.9ha site owned by Origin Energy (known as the Brompton Gasworks site). Both sites are located within the City of Charles Sturt and are directly adjacent to the Adelaide parklands. The aim is to transform the combined sites into an inner-city, higher intensity, mixed use urban village. The final vision developed collaboratively with the community and stakeholders states: “Bowden Urban Village is a creative and diverse community, living and working in a high density sustainable urban environment. Its character, parklands connections and integrated urban design will offer a new and distinctive place in Adelaide for residents and visitors.” (The Handbook and Urban Design Guidelines of Bowden. 2016)



Figure 1: Bowden Master Plan, 2016. source: <https://lifemoreinteresting.com.au>



Figure 2: Bowden development site and Adelaide CBD  
Source: The Handbook and Urban Design Guidelines of Bowden. 2016

### Analysis of the case study

Analyzing Bowden development plan by SWOT matrix could demonstrate the pros and cons of the project. The positive aspects of the project are listed as *strengths* and *opportunities* that extracted from 'The Handbook and Urban Design Guidelines of Bowden'. The *weakness* and *threats* listed on the matrix based on the landscape Urbanism tenets that have mentioned in this paper. This tenets are the principals that could evaluate the weakness and threats of Bowden Development project.

| <b>Strengths</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | <b>Weaknesses</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- A sustainable and commercially feasible residential, retail and commercial walkable neighborhood.</li> <li>- An internally and externally connected community both physically and virtually, in the context of the great Adelaide city.</li> <li>- High quality Design Approach to parcels and buildings.</li> <li>- Respond to the Adelaide microclimate including sun, shade, breeze utilization, building mass and weather protection.</li> <li>- Demonstrate strong and logical architectural solutions that create interest and identity without being overbearing;</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- According to tenet 1 of landscape urbanism : The approach of planning this site is not consider the site as a holistic project that should be merge with Adelaide cite specially with Adelaide park land in connection of Bowden East.</li> <li>- Landscape of the project should has been considered as a major concern by planning team.</li> <li>- Designing open spaces should be the most important part of planning. The network of green open spaces should be joined and connected continuously. In current planning, open spaces are located in remaining spaces after design building blocks.</li> <li>- Ecological aspect of site should be considered as a principal item in urban sustainability.</li> </ul> |
| <b>Opportunities based on Bowden vision</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | <b>Threats</b>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Demonstrate innovation to provide a new inner city urban living experience where apartments and terraces have logical internal layouts including generosity of space and light.</li> <li>- Connected indoor-outdoor relationships and a high quality of design and finishes including features not normally expected in higher density homes.</li> <li>- A project that is flexible, capable of adapting to changing market and demographic conditions.</li> <li>- Have a street based, cohesive urban character with well-defined streets and building edges and respectful of its neighbors.</li> <li>- Have a strong sense of local identity and place, linking Adelaide generally and Bowden specifically;</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- History of Bowden will be disappeared, if it is not take into consideration in development plans.</li> <li>- Ecological concern about neighborhood should be considered in the planning stage of development.</li> <li>- Bowden industrial themes could be vanish without taking into serious attention of design team. The example of postindustrial landscapes like Peter Latz landscape designs is useful.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

Table 1: SWOT analysis of Bowden Development Plan

## Discussion

Regarding suburban development, suitable responses to the process of adaptation of the project to the current circumstances, how the form of open spaces might be and how suburban Arcadia can be provided by landscape aesthetics. The form of open spaces and the level of interference of site conditions are dependence to the exact point of entrance of the concept of landscape in the design process.

In Bowden development plan, it should be considered the landscape urbanism tenets as different approach to this project. If landscape was a basic development strategy the outcome of development plan would be various and positively different. An analysis on the SWOT matrix, presented in Table 1, mentions following points:

### **According to 'Weaknesses' column:**

- The contrast between parklands and proposed building block in Bowden Development Plan could be vanished by continuing more green natural places in Bowden neighborhood.
- Landscape Urbanism has a holistic perspective to urban spaces and landscapes as one phenomenon and ecologic system for urban life. If Landscape Urbanism has a strategic role in the design process from the beginning, better design developments can be reached, to illustrate it more, the formation of the networks of streets, open spaces, land uses and public utilities can be designed (Weller, 2008). However, as it is considered, landscape of the project is not noticed as a major concern by planning team. In addition, open spaces and the network of green open spaces are not connected continuously and they are designed only on the basis of the remaining spaces after design building blocks. Moreover, ecological aspect of site should be considered as a principal item in urban sustainability which have not been noticed.

### **According to 'Threats' column:**

- Landscape Urbanism Recognizes the Remedial Possibilities Inherent in the Landscape. The history of industry of site is a vital item in design process that could have reveal as a postindustrial landscape and design into public open space based on landscape open space network in Bowden development site.
- Another threat is related to ecological aspects of this neighborhood which should be considered in the planning stage of development according to Landscape Urbanism.
- Based on Landscape urbanism tents, Bowden industrial themes could be vanish without taking into serious attention of design team.

## Conclusion

Landscape urbanism with its holistic approach to urban development should have been the method for planning and design suburban development projects and Landscape as the principal and basic development strategy should be taken into account in the design process. The neighbourhood and suburb should be considered as a landscape that have its own character and identity. Discovering natural and ecological process in site and revealing historical story and previous live of the site in future development could make place pleasant a recognizable. The Bowden Development project is an example of contemporary urban village development plans. Although this project have a several advantages and positive aspects, unfortunately the landscape urbanism principals is not evident in that. According to Landscape Urbanism tenets, some weaknesses of this project are the contrast between parklands and proposed building block in Bowden Development Plan, lack of consideration on ecological aspects and lack of attention to the Landscape as the basis concept which can devalue the continuity of open spaces and natural landscape. Furthermore, some important threats may occur such as ecological damages, vanishing and devaluing of the history of the site and Bowden industrial themes.

Thus, developing approaches to adapt ecological and industrial aspects of a site, depends on the landscape architects' skills. In ideal approach, this requires to happen in sub divisional and reginal scales and it should be supported by stakeholders and consultants participated in suburban planning and design.

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