

Present classification of urban environments

APPENDICES

- APPENDIX ONE: THE CLASSIFICATION OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT (PROFESSOR S LE ROUX)

With notable exceptions, local authorities have got yet again to the opportunity. Under the new dispensation and the urge to devolve power and decision as close to the people as possible, the challenge will have to be taken up.

It is this tardiness to get involved that calls for a NCOP - not to embark on a new one but to assist local authorities in assessing the impact of intrusion in the environment, in the demarcation of sensitive precincts within their own areas of jurisdiction, in choosing an acceptable set of general principles and guidelines for advertising as they are, the development of a local policy within a national framework.

It is accepted that a common system of demarcation of advertisements - say, vehicle categories or types with guidelines relating to each - will deal with what is not advertising, but that these will be further regulated according to the specific classification of every city or town.

While the fixation of twentieth century urban planning, the Structure Plan, with its demarcations of Land Use and Zoning, may have become outdated, it remains - in the law legal systems of classification available to local authorities. It does not take into account socio-economic and aesthetic concerns and leads in some districts without thought to urban renewal and the over-crowding with traffic flow. Complexity of demands and ambiguity of the urban fibre play no role in this "comprehensive planning".

Since the sixties these considerations have come to the fore and many have grappled with themselves with the ways in which human beings experience and live in their environments. Emphasis switched from the knowledge of the expert to the experience of the citizen and understanding of the so-called lay person.

And in the build-up on environment significance shifted from the free-standing or isolated building to the relationship between buildings, landscape, streets and open spaces. It is the context of place - from the paper plan and principle to the visible and palpable environment and complementary intervention in the legalistic march, 1980 till today, environment.

Caring about Outdoor Advertising is one of the consequences of this shift from theory to understanding. To be in a position to make decisions regarding advertising signs also means the stated understanding of the local environment and the possibility to move towards its enhancement.

Present classification of urban environments

Protection of the built-up environment is at present regulated only by the National Monuments Act, Act No 28 of 1969 as amended in 1986. Apart from individual buildings, the law seeks to protect the so-called but as yet undefined preservation areas and to delegate decision making to local authorities. This act is now under review, but it can be assumed that the new act(s) will leave the classification of protected areas in cities and towns squarely on the shoulders of local authorities. The necessary process of classification for advertisements can run complementary with this endeavour.

With notable exceptions, local authorities have not yet risen to the opportunity. Under the new dispensation and the urge to devolve power and decision as close to the people as possible, the challenge will have to be taken up.

It is this tardiness to get involved that calls for a NCOP - not to entrench bureaucracy but to assist local authorities in assessing the impact of intrusion in the environment, in the demarcation of sensitive precincts within their own areas of jurisdiction, in adopting an acceptable set of general principles and guidelines for advertising in these and the development of a local policy within a national framework.

It is accepted that a common system of classification of advertisements into various categories or types with guidelines relating to each will assist both council and advertiser, but that these will be further regulated according to the local area classification of every city or town.

While the fixation of twentieth century urban planning, the Structure Plan with its demarcations of Land Use and Zoning, may have become outmoded, it remains one of the few legal systems of classification available to local authorities. It does not address socio economic and aesthetic concerns and leads to sprawl, districts without distinction, urban renewal and the over-anxiety with traffic flow. Complexity of communities and ambiguity of the urban fibre play no role in this "comprehensive planning".

Since the sixties these considerations have come to the fore and many studies concern themselves with the ways in which human beings experience and relate to their environments. Emphasis switched from the knowledge of the expert to the incorporation of the opinion and understanding of the so-called lay person.

And in the built-up environment significance shifted from the free-standing or individual building to the relationship between buildings, landscape, streets and open areas - that is the context of place -, from the paper plan and principle to the known and perceived environment and complementary intervention in the legibility (Lynch, 1960:14) of that environment.

Caring about Outdoor Advertising is one of the consequences of this shift from planning to understanding. To be in a position to make decisions regarding advertisements will also mean the stated understanding of the local environment and the possibility to work towards its enhancement.

But to return to the Structure Plan. Main zonings are usually as follows:

- Residential - with various densities
- Business - with various orders
- Offices - with orders of size
- Industrial
- Commercial
- Educational
- Hospitals
- Government or Municipal
- Open spaces - local, nature area, city wide, sport
- Roads - freeway, main
- Public transport

This information is indicated on plans and is used for future planning and rezoning applications. It has economic rather than environmental implications.

The demarcation of areas of desired quality will have to take in consideration the present sensibilities regarding the human environment but strategically it may be wise to marry these with the information of the Structure Plan - in short, one should be looking for a refined structure plan that will acknowledge and incorporate the quality of the environment.

A proposal for classification of the urban environment

It is accepted here that the following will be defined in the main report and will be applicable to all environments - natural, rural and urban:

- a main system for the classification of advertisements, i.e. Maximum control/express consent, Partial control/deemed consent and Minimum control/no consent;
- a thorough classification for classes of advertisements; and
- accepted guidelines and definitions for the size and design of advertisements and their supporting structures.

To this must be added the classification of the existing or desired quality by detailed zoning of every environment within local jurisdiction. Environmental factors to be taken into account in the decision making process are:

- the character of the place, suburb, district or region - including the visual, historical, architectural, cultural or contextual (scale and massing, predominant land use, presence of listed buildings) elements; and
- the acceptable impact of intervention - development, change of use or fibre and physical addition, including Outdoor Advertisements.

While the principles for defining character may be common for most areas, the criteria will differ, as will the desired quality. It is this part of the classification that will be the task of local authorities, lead by the more general guidelines of the NCOP.

When we accept the main system for the classification of advertisements, it means that we will try to fit all classified environmental pockets into these. At this stage they could be predicted as follows. Structure Plan classifications in bold:

Maximum Control

The size, number and positions of advertisements are strictly controlled, with some freedom for their design. Apart from signs identifying owners or tenants or building names, all advertisements are scrutinised according to well developed and well defined regulation. As all advertisements affect the appearance of the building, structure or place where they are displayed it may be necessary to develop conditions and regulations to specific detail. Local trade and amenity organisations are to be consulted about the policy of demarcation.

- Conservation areas - National or local heritage sites or buildings, special tourist areas, historical or contextual streetscapes, skylines from viewing points [**to be demarcated**];
- Areas of strong architectural context or historical scale [**to be demarcated**];
- Exclusively residential areas, mostly low density single [**residential**];
- Important gateways [**to be demarcated with roads**]
- Characteristic vistas - over built up area, down streets or avenues [**to be demarcated with roads/open space**];
- Important throughroads [**roads**];
- Interface of natural landscape and built fibre; natural edges like water, rivers, ridges, forests [**open space**];
- Open areas like parks, squares, commons [**open space**].

Partial Control

Greater freedom is allowed for the size, number and positions of advertisements and well-stated guidelines may be enough to regulate most cases.

- Residential areas with shops and offices interspersed, mostly high density mixed [**residential**];
- Residential areas in transition [**residential**];
- Small commercial enclaves in residential areas [**commercial**];
- Ribbon development along main streets [**roads/commercial**];
- Roads [**roads**];
- Man-made edges like railway lines, bridges, roads [**roads**];
- Public transport connections like train and bus stations or harbours [**Government or municipal**];
- Educational institutions [**educational**];
- Sportsfields or stadia [**open space**];
- Government enclaves, including diplomatic or civic amenities [**Government or municipal**].

Minimum Control

Any lawful and safe advertisement is allowed.

- Commercial districts, shopping centres and office parks or precincts [**commercial**];
- Industrial areas or parks [**industrial**];
- Entertainment districts or complexes [**commercial**].

For each of these specific guidelines/criteria should be formulated taking in consideration the following and stating each unambiguously:

- Character
- Objectives
- Appropriate opportunities
- Required standards
- Number of signs per identified site
- Size of signs