A RATIONALE FOR THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

BY

PIETER FRANCOIS JORDAAN

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Supervisor: Prof. SW le Roux
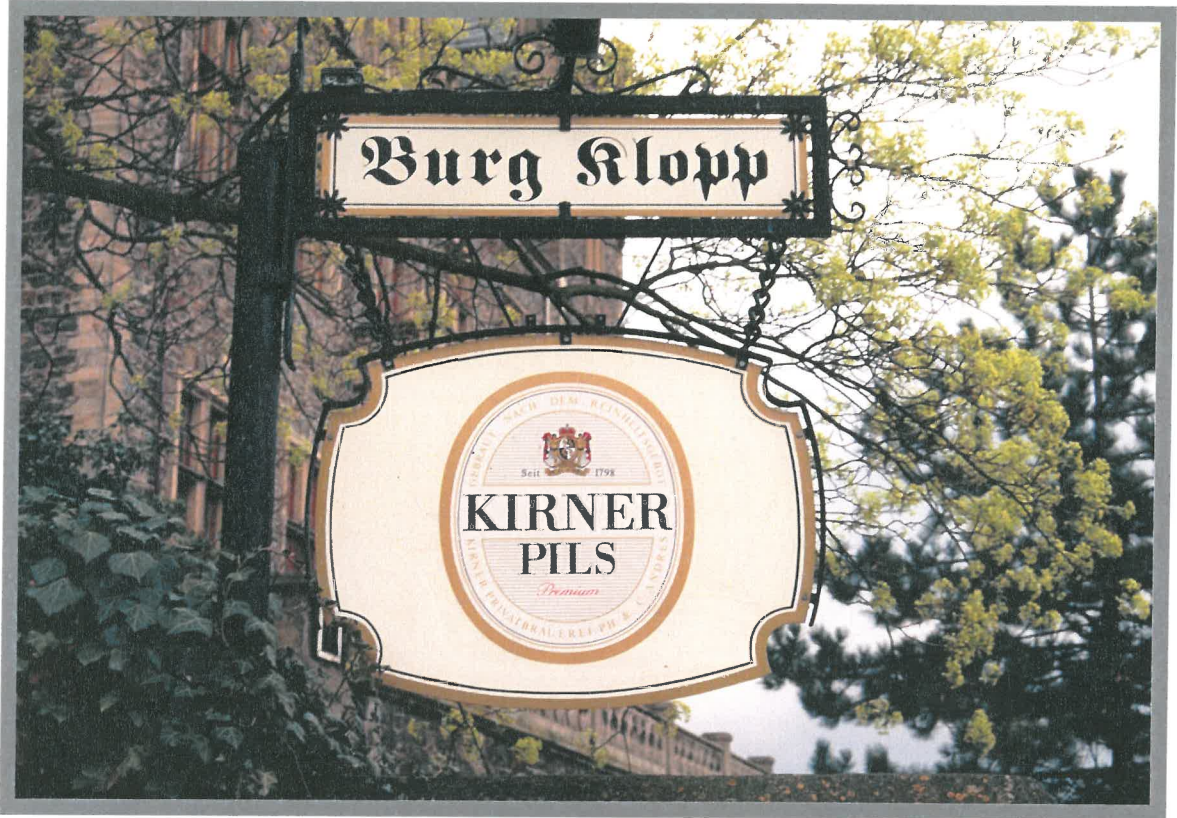
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PHOTOGRAPHS

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ABSTRACT

A RATIONALE FOR THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF
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PIETER FRANCOIS JORDAAN

Supervisor: Prof. SW le Roux

Ph.D. Landscape Architecture

This study has a dual purpose. Firstly, it is aimed at determining the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer as an important resource in the aesthetic environment. Effective management is seen as an optimisation of the benefits of outdoor information transfer, as well as a minimisation of its negative impacts. Secondly, this study was aimed at providing user-friendly guidelines to achieve this.

The South African Manual for Outdoor Advertising Control (SAMOAC) was developed in 1998 as a national guideline document to provide detailed conditions for the management and control of outdoor advertisements and signs. This manual recognises the differences in local needs and circumstances and suggests that controlling authorities should adapt the prescribed conditions in this regard. Up till now this document has not been implemented successfully by the relevant controlling authorities. Outdoor advertisements of all sizes are increasing at an alarming rate in South Africa to the detriment of the perceptual environment and tourism resources. One of the most obvious reasons for this is the lack of motivation amongst the controlling authorities together with the persistency of the outdoor advertising industry.

This study provides the necessary motivation for involving controlling authorities, the outdoor advertising industry and the public in the meaningful and sustainable management of outdoor information transfer. It looks at the benefits and impact of outdoor information transfer in a holistic manner by taking the variety and interrelationship of such impacts and benefits into consideration. Most previous studies have only concentrated on a single aspect of outdoor information transfer namely the correlation between billboards and road accidents.

A key finding of this study is that the effective management of outdoor information transfer is unnegotiable. A *laissez faire* approach by controlling authorities and self-control by the outdoor advertising industry will lead to *visual chaos.* A balanced and responsible approach should be followed in managing outdoor information transfer. Outdoor advertising should never be aimed at utilising and maximising every available advertising opportunity and implementing whatever is technologically achievable at the cost of the perceptual environment. The effective management of outdoor information transfer is in the interest of both the perceptual environment and the outdoor advertising industry.

It has been found that sense of place and placeness play an important role with regard to the impacts and benefits of outdoor information transfer.

The lack of sufficient environmental ethics in Western society has been identified as an underlying problem. A non-pragmatic environmental world-view has therefore been provided based on Christian axioms to serve as a basis for environmental management including perceptual resource management and the management of outdoor information transfer.

In order to actualise the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer general principles and user-friendly guidelines are provided that will be universally applicable. It will make the management of outdoor information transfer less subjective and will serve as a basis for legislative and control measures. These principles and guidelines are flexible enough to accommodate a variation in local conditions, lifestyles and aspirations. It can therefore serve as an instrument to adapt SAMOAC to suit local circumstances and needs.

The recommendations provided in this study are aimed at creating an appreciation for the perceptual environment as well as the role and aesthetic contribution of outdoor advertisements and signs. It is also aimed at involving the public, controlling authorities and the outdoor advertising industry in the sustainable management of outdoor information transfer as an important part of the perceptual environment.

EKSERP

`N RASIONAAL VIR DIE DOELTREFFENDE BESTUUR VAN BUITELUGINFORMASIE-OORDRAG

deur
PIETER FRANCOIS JORDAAN

Promotor: Prof. SW le Roux

Ph.D. Landskapargitektuur

Die doel van hierdie studie is tweeledig van aard. Eerstens het dit ten doel die bepaling van die behoefte aan die doeltreffende bestuur van buiteluginformasie-oordrag, as `n belangrike bron van die estetiese omgewing. Effektiewe bestuur word gesien as die optimalisering van die voordele van buiteluginformasie-oordrag tesame met `n gelyktydige minimalisering van die negatiewe invloed daarvan. Tweedens is hierdie studie gerig op die daarstelling van gebruikersvriendelike riglyne ten einde die eerste doelstelling te bewerkstellig.

Die *South African Manual for Outdoor Advertising Control (SAMOAC)* is in 1998 ontwikkel as `n nasionale riglyndokument ten einde gedetaileerde vereistes vir die bestuur en beheer van buitereklametekens neer te lê. Hierdie handleiding erken verskille in plaaslike behoeftes en omstandighede en stel voor dat beherende instansies die voorgeskrewe vereistes aanpas te einde hierdie verskille te kan weerspieël. Tot op hede is hierdie dokument nog nie suksesvol deur die betrokke beherende instansies toegepas nie. Buitereklame-tekens vemeerder tans teen `n onstellende tempo in Suid-Afrika tot nadeel van die perseptuele omgewing en toerisme hulpbronne. Een van die mees opvallende redes vir hierdie tendens is `n gebrek aan motivering onder die beherende instansies tesame met `n hardnekkige benadering deur die buitereklamebedryf.

Hierdie studie voorsien die nodige motivering ten einde die beherende instansies, die buitereklamebedryf en die publiek te betrek by die volhoubare en sinvolle bestuur van buteluginformasie-oordrag. Dit behandel die voordele en negatiewe invloed van

buiteluginformasie-oordrag op `n holistiese wyse deur die verskeidenheid van en verwantskap tussen sodanige invloede in aanmerking te neem. Die meeste voorafgaande studies het slegs op `n enkele aspek van buiteluginformasie-oordrag gefokus, naamlik die verwantskap tussen padongelukke en groter reklametekens.

`n Sleutelbevinding van hierdie studie is dat die doeltreffende bestuur van buiteluginformasie-oordrag onondelhandelbaar is. `n *Laissez faire* benadering deur beherende instansies en die beheer van buiteluginformasie-oordrag deur die buitereklamebedryf self sal tot visuele wanorde lei. `n Gebalanseerde en verantwoordelike benadering word benodig ten opsigte van die bestuur van buiteluginformasie-oordrag. Buitereklame behoort nooit gerig te wees op die benutting en optimalisering van elke moontlike reklamegeleentheid en om wat ook al tegnologies moontlik is te verwesentlik ten koste van die perseptuele omgewing nie. Die doeltreffende bestuur van buiteluginformasie-oordrag is in belang van beide die perseptuele omgewing en die buitereklamebedryf.

Daar is bevind dat `n gewaarwording van plek (*genius loci*) `n belangrike rol speel ten opsigte van die negatiewe invloed en voordele van buiteluginformasie-oordrag.

Die gebrek aan `n sinvolle omgewingsetiek in die Westerse samelewing is geidentifiseer as `n onderliggende probleem. `n Nie-pragmatiese omgewingsbeskouiing, gebaseer op Christelike grondbeginsels, is derhalwe voorsien ten einde as grondslag te dien vir omgewingsbestuur wat die bestuur van perseptuele bronne en buiteluginformasie-oordrag insluit.

Ten einde die behoefte aan die doeltreffende bestuur van buiteluginformasie-oordrag te verwesentlik is algemene beginsels en gebruikersvriendelike riglyne, wat algemeen tepasbaar is, voorsien. Dit sal die die bestuur van buiteluginformasie-oordrag minder subjektief maak en sal as grondslag dien vir wetlike en beheermaatreëls. Hierdie beginsels en riglyne is buigbaar genoeg ten einde `n veskeidenheid plaaslike toestande, lewenswyses en strewes te kan huisves.  Dit kan derhalwe as `n instrument dien om *SAMOAC* te wysig ten einde by plaaslike omstandighede en behoeftes te kan aanpas.

Die aanbevelings wat in hierdie studie voorsien word, is gerig op die tot stand brenging van `n waardering vir die perseptuele omgewing en die rol en estetiese bydrae van buitereklametekens.

Dit is ook gerig op die betrekking van die publiek, beherende instansies en die butereklamebedryf by die volhoubare bestuur van buiteluginformasie-oordrag as `n belangrike deel van die perseptuele omgewing.

Kernwoorde: Buite-inligtingsoordrag, buitereklame, plaaslike karakter, visuele omgewing, perseptuele omgewing.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 PROBLEM STATEMENT AND GOAL OF STUDY

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The purpose of this study is

❑ to determine the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer as an important resource in the aesthetic environment in terms of both its benefits and impact; and

❑ to provide user-friendly guidelines for the effective management of outdoor information transfer.

STATEMENT OF SUB-PROBLEMS

The following sub-problems are formulated as questions:

❑ What are the role and status of the perceptual environment in contemporary society?

❑ What are the nature and extent of the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer in terms of both its benefits and its impact?

❑ What are the nature and extent of user-friendly guidelines for the effective management of outdoor information transfer?

HYPOTHESES

The following hypotheses flow out of the sub-problems:

❑ The perceptual environment plays an important role in contemporary society and forms part of sustainable environmental management. The role of the perceptual environment is not yet adequately recognised.

❑ While outdoor information transfer, as an important part of the perceptual environment, benefits society and the environment, it also impacts negatively on society and the environment. Sense of place and placeness play a crucial role with regard to the benefits and impact of outdoor information transfer. If a *laissez-faire* policy is followed with regard to the management of outdoor information transfer, its negative impacts will overshadow its positive contribution and will neutralise many of the benefits.

❑ General principles and user-friendly guidelines can be developed for the effective management of outdoor information transfer in order to make the management of outdoor information transfer less subjective and to provide a basis for control and legislative measures. Such principles and guidelines can be used as an objective measurement for the sustainable management of outdoor information transfer.

1.1.1 THE ROLE AND STATUS OF THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT

Sub-problem 1: **What are the role and status of the perceptual environment in contemporary society?**

Hypothesis 1: **The perceptual environment plays an important role in contemporary society and forms part of sustainable environmental management. The role of the perceptual environment is not yet adequately recognised.**

The escalation in urbanisation, the complexity of modern man's living environment and the rapid pace of everyday life have produced a totally new perspective on the quality of human life and have highlighted the ever-increasing importance of the psychosphere or psychological

environment for all social groups. Kane and Starke (1992, p.21) make the following statement with regard to the contemporary urban environment:

> *With more than half the world expected to be living in cities by the end of this decade, efforts to make urban areas more **livable**, more self-sufficient, safer, and less polluted – both **visually**[1] and in their daily output of waste – are increasingly important.* (Emphasis added.)

Apart from more pleasant urban environments we also should not forget man's psychological need for contact with the natural environment. Despite the vital role played by aesthetics in man's psychological environment, the perceptual environment is in most cases still treated as an environmental stepchild.

> *The fact that significant official, even private, segments of the South African society regard urban aesthetics as supremely unimportant is proven by the visual appearance of a great many residential areas that have come into being since the war. The drabness and uniformity are so impressive as to reinforce the belief that they must have been purposefully planned* (Engineering Week, 1982, p.53).

According to the South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (1998, April, p.v):

> *The importance of the visual environment is often underestimated or is perceived as a fashionable and luxury environmental concern with no relevance outside the extravagant lifestyle of the upper reaches of modern society.*

The ever-increasing contribution of the tourism industry to the economy is also a factor to be taken into consideration when evaluating the role of the perceptual or aesthetic environment. In many cases the managers of tourism resources show a tendency to concentrate exclusively on isolated resources of high quality. According to the South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (April 1998, p.v) the importance of visual resources should not be limited to major tourist attractions such as scenic landscapes and cultural streetscapes.

> *The visual environment also forms a backdrop to most other tourist activities such as game watching, touring, entertainment, shopping and sport. The visual environment can be seen as the fabric that gives meaning and substance to any tourism experience.*

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[1] It should be noticed that the perceptual environment not only involves sight, but all the other human senses, although sight might be the most prominent sense. (For a definition of the perceptual environment see par. 1.3.1)

From time to time certain voices have been raised against modern man's treatment of and indifference to his aesthetic environment. Peter Blake's *God's Own Junkyard - The planned deterioration of America's landscape* can be seen as a pioneering work in this regard. The main title of this book has been derived from a cynical adaptation of the phrase *God's Own Country,* a reference to the natural beauty of the United States. Blake (1979, p.24) made the following statement with regard to the treatment of the American landscape:

> *Our towns and cities boast many isolated handsome buildings – but very, very few handsome streets, squares, civic centers, or neighborhoods. ... Our suburbs are interminable wastelands dotted with millions of monotonous little lots and crisscrossed by highways lined with billboards, jazzed-up diners, used-car lots, drive-in movies, beflagged gas stations, and garish motels. Even the relatively unspoiled countryside beyond these suburban fringes has begun to sprout more telephone poles than trees, more trailer camps than national parks. And the shores of oceans, lakes and rivers are rapidly becoming encrusted with the junkiness of industries that pollute the water on which they depend.*

The following quotations also clearly reflect dissatisfaction with modern man's disregard for the aesthetic environment:

❑ Charles Kuralt (online):

> *I have been to the place (Roanoke Island) often. As you arrive from the South through the Cape Hatteras National Sea Shore Park, you see nothing but sand and surf and sea oats and water birds in great profusion and your impression is of the "Goodliest Land Under the Cope of Heaven." If you arrive from the North, through Kitty Hawk and Nags Head, which is the way most people arrive, you pass through a clutter of clapboard and a forest of billboards, ... and a chaos of hotdog stands and tee-shirt shops and strip malls and amusement parks. These two environments collide at the Mobil Station at Whalebone Junction. North of the gas station, nothing but scenic discord which depresses people. South of it, all natural harmony which elevates people. I think of that Mobil Station as the fulcrum upon which is balanced the worst nightmare and the best hope of all of us in this room*

tonight. Two Americas meet there: the ugly one and the beautiful one. And of course, Americans of their own free will created them both.

❑ John Barr (1970, p.1) referring to Britain:

...today our senses are being peculiarly and extravagantly abused. In town and in country an ever-spreading ugliness assaults our eyes. ever-increasing noise assails our ears.

❑ Charles Kuralt (online):

America does not belong to the franchisers and the developers and spoilers who do not give a damn about their country. The land is ours. Ordinary Americans, I am persuaded of this with all my heart. ordinary Americans want a beautiful country.

❑ Ian McHarg (1971, p.20):

What are the visible testaments to the American mercantile creed – the hamburger stand, gas station, diner, the ubiquitous billboards, sagging wires. the parking lot, car cemetery and that most complete conjunction of land rapacity and human disillusion, the subdivision. It is all but impossible to avoid the highway out of town, for here, arrayed in all its glory, is the quintessence of vulgarity, bedecked to give the maximum visibility to the least of our accomplishments.

Notwithstanding the beginning of an apparent awakening amongst the public with regard to the importance of the perceptual environment, environmental aesthetics can still be seen as a new and relatively young field of study. (Berleant, 1992, p.xi). The effort of most environmental managers are still focused on environmental priorities such as water and air pollution and biodiversity while excluding the perceptual environment. Most environmental manuals and handbooks do not cover the perceptual environment at all, with the only exception being a casual reference to this topic now and then. It is also excluded from most environmental policies and guidelines, as well as from the state of the environment reports of most countries. According to Matlack (1991), billboard-control advocates have to concede that they have trouble countering the billboard industry because the billboard issue has never moved to the environmental movement's front burner. It is often difficult to counter the argument that the billboard issue is not as important as toxic waste or nuclear war. The perceptual environment is furthermore not seen as part and

parcel of sustainable environmental management. This tendency can be attributed partly to the abstract nature of the aesthetic environment, which defies both the development of concrete norms and standards and a balanced and effective management system for the perceptual environment that would include it as part of sustainable environmental management.

The essence of the problem of disregarding and misusing the perceptual environment can be traced back to contemporary society's consumeristic mindset and lack of proper environmental ethics. Although the problem lies deeper than the perceptual environment, namely society's disrespect of the environment as a whole, the misuse of the perceptual environment, and especially outdoor information transfer, symbolises society's consumeristic mindset and lack of respect for the environment. Through the misuse, disregard and destruction of the perceptual environment, society is making a clear statement that everything in life is about consumerism with a corresponding lack of care for the environment. This symbolism can play an important role in conditioning members of society and may have a very negative effect on any environmental awareness campaign. When reviewing the problem of insufficient environmental ethics it seems as if the influence of the Western World and Christian society played an important role in this regard. (cf. White, 1966; Ice, 1975). Placing the emphasis for today's environmental crisis on the Christian's influence is justified in terms of the important role Christian society has played and is still playing in shaping world opinion and world society. It therefore also makes sense that Christian society should rectify this matter and provide sufficient ethics for environmental management. A more detailed exposition of sufficient Christian environmental ethics is given in Appendix 3.

1.1.2 THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE NEED FOR THE EFFECTIVE MANGEMENT OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

Sub-problem 2: What are the nature and extent of the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer in terms of both its benefits and its impact?

Hypothesis 2: While outdoor information transfer, as an important part of the perceptual environment, benefits society and the environment, it also impacts negatively on society and the environment. Sense of place and placeness play a crucial role with regard to the benefits and impact of outdoor information transfer. If a *laissez-faire* policy is followed

with regard to the management of outdoor information transfer, its negative impacts will overshadow its positive contribution and will neutralise many of the benefits.

Shop signs have always formed an important feature of many a streetscape, while billboards have long since become a familiar landmark in both rural and urban landscapes. However, signs, advertisements and other forms of outdoor information transfer are among the components of the much-neglected aesthetic environment that have so far received the least attention as far as environmental management goes. Apart from the impact of outdoor information transfer the aesthetic potential of outdoor advertisements[2] is, according to Gordon Cullen (1971, p.151), also not realised today.

In the past various individuals or organisations have drawn attention to the negative effects of outdoor advertisements and signs as well as ineffective control measures. As far back as 1961 Constantine and Jacobson (1961, p.9) have made this statement with regard to the proliferation of urban signs:

> *...throughout the world, we are confronted with a vulgar and mistaken notion of free enterprise, expressed in the sign language of our time. We are assailed with a confusion of words, names and slogans in all sizes, in all forms, in all colors and shapes – a never-ceasing roar that moves, blinks, flashes warnings, pleads and cajols, demands, reminds, but seldom instructs.*

One of the best-known voices raised against the negative influence of billboards on the landscape is undoubtedly that of Ogden Nash in *Song of the Open Road* (quoted in Blake, 1979, p.27):

> *I think I shall never see*
> *a billboard lovely as a tree.*
> *Indeed, unless the billboards fall,*
> *I'll never see a tree at all.*

The following quotations serve as a further indication of dissatisfaction in this regard:

❑   Pat Brown:

> *When man throws an empty cigarette package from an automobile, he is liable for a fine of $50. When a man throws a billboard across a view, he is richly rewarded* (Citizens for a Scenic Florida, online, (1)).

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[2] For the difference between outdoor information transfer and outdoor advertising see par. 1.3.2

Scenic America
http://www.scenic.org

Photo by Nicole Rosenthal: Billboard Liberation Front
http://www.billboardliberation.com/home.html

Photo dates: March 2000

Billboards and signs may have an *impressive* impact on the aesthetic environment, whether it be in the United States of America (top left and right) or in the Republic of South Africa (bottom left and right). Impacts like these are giving rise to individuals and organisations speaking out against the negative effects of outdoor advertising and the ineffectiveness of control measures.

Figure 1.1

The negative impact of signs and advertisements

❑   Stephen Mulholland regarding the situation in South Africa:

> *A sort of anarchy is being loosed on our country which threatens to festoon our roads and suburbs with environmentally destructive signs and massive, garish billboards. All this flows from the greed and total disrespect for the law of local authorities, aided and abetted by national legislators who treat the Constitution with contempt...There is at work in our country a lethal combination of grasping outdoor advertisers with scant regard for the environment and politicians bent on squeezing every last cent out of every possible source* (Sunday Times, 2000 February 13).

Since it seems only logical that signs, advertisements and other elements of outdoor information transfer should, in terms of their role and function, also fulfil a positive and even crucial role in the perceptual environment of everyday life, it is no surprise that voices have also been raised in defence of the environmental potential of advertisements and signs. In the words of Gordon Cullen (1971, p.151) street publicity or advertisements can be seen as *the most characteristic, and, potentially, the most valuable contribution of the twentieth century to urban scenery.*

In many cases the reaction to outdoor advertising is characterised by opposing and extreme viewpoints, with a total ban on all billboards opposing no control at all, and which either excludes all benefits or all impacts. Certain factions in the outdoor advertising industry have for long been campaigning for a *laissez-faire* policy and for self-control. These factions often have a narrow vision with regard to the management and control of outdoor advertising and do not always recognise the benefits of effective management. They seem to ignore the fact that inadequate management and control may have a corrosive effect on those benefits of crucial importance to their own industry. Although on the one hand many parties in the outdoor advertising industry tend to behave responsibly, there are always the rogues and political pressure groups that do not. On the other hand certain environmental and community groups opposing outdoor advertising often tend to throw the benefits of outdoor information transfer out the window in their effort to tackle the impacts.

In many cases legislative instruments may exist for controlling outdoor information transfer. However, in most cases the public, controlling authorities and the outdoor advertising industry might have only a vague notion about the real importance of the effective management of outdoor information transfer. This tendency can mostly be ascribed to the lack of background information

Signs and advertisements may make a positive contribution to the aesthetic environment. In many cases this potential may not be fully realised. Signs in Oberwesel (above left and right), a town on the Middle Rhine in Germany, supplement local placeness or sense of place (bottom left and right), which plays a crucial role in the aesthetic environment.

Characteristic German letter type (top right) harmonises with the informal lines of the vine on the wall and supports a sense of place created by German architecture (bottom right). A stylish and unobtrusive advertisement on a street lamp (top left) enhances the sense of tranquility reflected by the leisurely pedestrian pace on narrow cobbled streets (bottom left).

Figure 1.2

The positive contribution of advertisements and signs

to motivate these parties and to ensure commitment and involvement in a holistic and balanced manner. In South Africa the *South African Manual for Outdoor Advertising Control (SAMOAC)* (DEA&T, 1998) was developed as a national guideline document to provide detailed conditions for the management and control of outdoor advertisements and signs. This manual recognises the differences in local needs and circumstances and suggests that controlling authorities should adapt the prescribed conditions in this regard. SAMOAC has been incorporated into legislation such as the Advertising Along Roads and Ribbon Development Act 21 of 1940 and the South African National Roads Agency Limited and National Roads Act 7 of 1998 in the form of regulations and is also applied by most local authorities through local outdoor advertising bylaws. Together with this legislation, SAMOAC forms a very effective mechanism for the management of outdoor information transfer. However, up till now, these mechanisms have not been implemented successfully by the relevant controlling authorities. Outdoor advertisements of all sizes are increasing at an alarming rate in South Africa to the detriment of the perceptual environment and tourism resources. One of the most obvious reasons for this is the lack of motivation amongst the controlling authorities together with the persistency of the outdoor advertising industry and the lack of involvement of local communities. The role of outdoor advertising as a source of income to controlling authorities is often overemphasised while sufficient information constituting a holistic rationale for the effective management of outdoor information transfer is not available as a motivational tool. In many cases, authorities, who want to implement effective management, do not have the necessary facts to defend such a step. Up till now the debate on the effective management of outdoor information transfer has been centred around a single aspect of road safety, while ignoring a multitude of other impacts and benefits. It seems as if the problem of ineffective control and inadequate application of legislation is also shared in other parts of the world. In the United States the 1965 Highway Beautification Act, which can be seen as an effective instrument of control, was rendered almost powerless due to the influence of the outdoor advertising industry and a lack of motivation amongst controlling authorities (Altoona Mirror, 1991; Matlack, 1991).

Another major problem is the tendency to limit the aesthetics of outdoor advertising to advertising contents while the relationship between advertising contents, advertising structure and the surrounding environment is ignored. This limited approach means that the important issue of placeness and the character of the surrounding environment is not taken into consideration when designing and evaluating outdoor advertisements and signs.

In the past no holistic approach has been followed in studying the subject of outdoor information transfer. Most studies concentrated on a single aspect – in most cases the correlation between traffic safety and outdoor advertising - and then only a single facet of such a correlation, namely the correlation between billboards and the distraction of driver attention. The meaningful management of outdoor information transfer will not be possible without a holistic approach that will give a true indication of the nature and extent of the benefits and impact of all types of outdoor information transfer.

1.1.3   THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF USER-FRIENDLY GUIDELINES

<u>Sub-problem 3:</u> What are the nature and extent of user-friendly guidelines for the effective management of outdoor information transfer?

<u>Hypothesis 3:</u> General principles and user-friendly guidelines can be developed for the effective management of outdoor information transfer in order to make the management of outdoor information transfer less subjective and to provide a basis for control and legislative measures. Such principles and guidelines can be used as an objective measurement for the sustainable management of outdoor information transfer.

The subjective nature of aesthetics and the perceptual environment has already been mentioned as a problem in managing outdoor information transfer effectively. In the words of Barr (1970, p.8):

> *The physiology of the eye, the act of perception, how the eyes see, are common to all sighted men; though the psychology of the eye, the art of perception, what is seen is an individual as a fingerprint.*

This problem is enhanced even further by the evasive nature of the concept of sustainability. A great need exists for sufficient guidelines and principles to involve controlling authorities, the public and the outdoor advertising industry in the effective, balanced, holistic and sustainable management of outdoor information transfer. Such guidelines should provide a logical and universally applicable basis for the formulation, interpretation and application of regulatory measures, as well as for the design of outdoor signs and structures.

1.2   FIELD, METHOD AND PERSPECTIVE OF STUDY

The following is necessary in order to clearly delimit the study:

❑   This study covers all forms of outdoor information transfer, with the exclusion of any signs forming part of an official roads traffic sign system.

❑   This study focuses to a certain extent on commercial advertisements provided by outdoor advertising contractors, which is the most dominant part of outdoor information transfer in terms of numbers, size and investment.

❑   Although the emphasis is placed on the aesthetic role and impact of outdoor information transfer, the economic, ecological and the other social aspects of outdoor information transfer cannot always be separated from the aesthetic. This study therefore covers the social, economic and ecological impact and role of outdoor information transfer as an aesthetic element in an integrative and holistic manner.

❑   Outdoor information transfer occurs mostly in urban areas due to population density and the concentration of economic activities. However, although outdoor information transfer does not feature as strongly in non-urban areas, its impact might frequently be more severe, owing to the *natural* state of the environment. This study therefore includes both urban and non-urban environments.

This study is based solely on a literature study of both written and electronic information which varies from peer-reviewed research reports on outdoor advertising and traffic safety to electronic newspapers and websites of pressure groups such as Scenic America. Care was taken to ensure the credibility of Internet resources. Although many of the sources are not and cannot be peer-reviewed due to its nature, it made a valuable contribution in identifying viewpoints, problems, opportunities and trends regarding outdoor information transfer. The Internet served a valuable function in tracing the most recent information in this regard. Older sources were also used in order to trace the roots of current problems and in some cases older sources were seen as crucial and *timeless* sources regarding the aesthetic environment.

With regard to study perspective, this study is conducted against the background of a Christian world-view and axioms. (In Appendix 3 an exposition is provided on a Christian environmental world-view. This also includes a Christian perspective on sense of place or *genius loci*).

1.3   MAIN DEFINITIONS

The following definitions are relevant to the problem statement and hypotheses:

1.3.1   PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT
(For more detail see par. 1.4.1)

In the simplest terms the perceptual environment can be seen as that which can be perceived by the human senses. It can also be defined as that which is concerned with the appreciation and evaluation of beauty, including the manifestations or absence of natural beauty and nature, as well as the manifestations or absence of cultural beauty, and which involves all human senses. Seen in this light, the perceptual environment can therefore be equated to the aesthetic environment.[3]

The following three characteristics constitute the essence of the perceptual environment out-of-doors:

❑   **Anthropocentrism**

Since the environment is perceived through the human senses, man can be seen as central to the perceptual environment. (See 1.4.1.2.)

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[3] According to the Concise Oxford Dictionary the term *aesthetic* is defined as *concerned with beauty or the appreciation of beauty* or *having such appreciation; sensitive to beauty* or *in accordance with the principles of good taste.* The term *aesthetics* is defined as *the philosophy of the beautiful, esp. in art* or *a set of principles of good taste and the appreciation of beauty.* For the purpose of this study, a broader meaning is bestowed upon the terms *aesthetics* and *aesthetic environment.* It is not limited to aesthetic appreciation in the sense of good taste, applying the rules and principles of art and the appreciation of fine arts by the cultural elite. The aesthetic environment also includes *natural beauty* or the aesthetics of nature and is not limited to areas of outstanding natural or cultural beauty but encompasses a diversity of cultural and natural landscapes to be experienced by ordinary people as well. For the purpose of his study the aesthetic environment is interpreted in terms of various degrees of beauty. Beauty and ugliness can therefore be seen as the opposite ends of a continuum of aesthetical experience. In order to understand and appreciate real beauty the antithesis of beauty is also necessary. The aesthetic environment is seen as that which can be **perceived and aesthetically evaluated** whether it has a higher or lower degree of beauty. Seen in this context the aesthetic environment can therefore be equated to the perceptual environment since the perceptual process also involves the evaluation of perception and imparting meaning and responding emotionally to what is perceived. For the purpose of this study, the discipline of environmental aesthetics also entails addressing that which has a very low aesthetic value in order to improve its value through the process of environmental management.

❑ **Holism**

The principle of holism is relevant to both the perceiver and the perceived. With regard to the perceiver, although sight is the most prominent sense, all human senses supplement each other to produce a holistic experience. With regard to what is perceived, elements of the biophysical and cultural environments interact in a synergistic manner to create perceptual experiences. (See 1.4.1.1.)

❑ **Environmental or natural order**

Certain natural perceptual laws and principles exist through which the environment expresses itself and which man can use to create pleasant environments. These laws create beauty and order and give meaning to man's experience of his environment. (See 1.4.1.3.)

1.3.2   OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER AND OUTDOOR ADVERTISING

For the purpose of this study the following is understood under outdoor information transfer:

Outdoor information transfer can be seen as the act or process of guiding, warning, informing, notifying, advising, promoting, advertising or any other act or process of transferring information in the outdoor environment by means of one or more of the human senses.

Outdoor advertising can be seen as the act or process of describing favourably or drawing attention to products, goods, commodities, activities, services, enterprises or business entities in the outdoor environment by making use of one or more of the human senses in order to evoke or promote sales, consumption or participation.

In terms of the number of messages and amount of money spent, commercial or outdoor advertising can be seen as the most prominent part of outdoor information transfer. However, outdoor information transfer encompasses much more than commercial advertising. It is also aimed at various other informative functions of benefit to the community. It is not always possible to distinguish between outdoor advertising and the rest of outdoor information transfer, or in other words, between commercial and non-commercial messages. The terms *outdoor information*

transfer and *outdoor advertising* might often be interchangeable. The link between outdoor advertising and the promotion of goods and services is not always clear-cut. For instance, should a guidance sign to a guest house, which forms part of an official roads traffic sign system, perhaps be seen as a commercial advertisement since it can be associated with the promotion of goods and services?

In the light of the aforementioned, it is preferable and safer to use the more inclusive term *outdoor information transfer.*

Conventionally outdoor information transfer consists of posters, billboards and various other sign types, ranging from the small *Beware of the dog* sign on the garden gate to the massive internally illuminated sign on a skyscraper. However, outdoor information transfer may make use of a variety of other instruments and media such as radio and television broadcasts at open-air gatherings, large television screens at sports events, and even technologically more advanced gimmicks such as talking bus shelters.

Seen in this light, outdoor information transfer means any perceivable presentation with the purpose of transferring information in the outdoor environment. An outdoor advertisement is furthermore not only limited to advertising content, but also includes any supporting structure or instrument or device necessary to convey the message.

It is also important to define the term *outdoor environment*:

In the simplest words the outdoor environment means the environment outside any building. The word *building* can be defined as any roofed structure, with or without walls, and which has a means of ingress and egress underneath the roof. The outdoor environment is interpreted anthropocentrically, with the position of the perceiver as the key element rather than the position of the advertisement or sign. In terms of this study outdoor information transfer will therefore also include any advertisement or sign inside a building which can be perceived by one or more of the human senses from outside such a building.

Outdoor information transfer and outdoor advertising should be clearly distinguished from the term *out of home advertising* which, if interpreted in its fullest sense, would also include any

advertisement inside a building other than a home and which is not perceivable from outside such a building.

1.3.3 EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

Effective management is seen as an optimisation of the benefits of outdoor information transfer, as well as a minimisation of the impacts thereof.

1.3.4 IMPACT

For the purpose of this study impact is seen as the negative effect or influence on the biophysical, cultural or socio-economic environment.

1.3.5 USER-FRIENDLY GUIDELINES

User-friendly guidelines refer to guidelines which may be interpreted and applied by anybody who cares to appreciate the aesthetic environment without the need for specialised skills and qualifications.

1.3.6 SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT
(For more detail see par. 1.4.2)

Sustainable environmental management is management aimed at sustainable development. Sustainable development can be defined as development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987, p.43).

For the purpose of this study sustainable development is aimed at the following:

❑ Improving the quality of human life, emphasising qualitative development instead of quantitative growth, and including all needs and all communities.

❑ A long-term commitment to future generations. Man does not own the earth's resources, nor does he have any exclusive rights regarding the utilisation of the earth's resources; he is merely holding the position of manager and steward of resources.

❑ A holistic approach which recognises the interrelationship between environmental and economic goals and includes all aspects of the environment.

❑ Order and the conscious limitation of human activities, which should be based on more than a mere pragmatic and materialistic approach to the improvement in the quality of human life.

1.3.7   HOLISM OR SYNERGISM

Synergism or holism refers to a unity where the whole is more than the sum of the parts and the relationship between units is more important than the individual units themselves. For the purpose of this study and viewed from a Christian perspective, this unity cannot be interpreted in pantheistic terms where all creation is seen as being of the same essence. Creation is not simply an extension of the essence of God, but was created by God outside Himself. This unity therefore also refers to a creational order upheld and maintained by God through his Son even today, despite the fact that the environment has been wounded by the Fall. Although man plays an important role in managing the environment there should be no polarisation between man and nature or culture and nature. Holism therefore also implies a unity between cultural and natural environments.

1.3.8   PLACENESS AND SENSE OF PLACE

Placeness or *genius loci* is a concept that cannot be ignored since it forms such a crucial element in the perceptual environment.

According to Motloch (1991, p. 296), placeness can be seen as the *innate ability* of a place or setting to form vivid mental images, to effect major changes in emotional state, and to be remembered over extended periods of time, whereas sense of place can be seen as the *mental construct* of place in the form of a vivid mental image.

Bell (1996, p.197) defines *genius loci* as: *The intangible qualities which contribute to the identity of a place and help determine the differences between one place and another.*

The totality of natural and man-made things, together with history, culture and tradition, assembled in a unique way, contribute to placeness. However, there may be key elements which dominate and which are of particular significance. Placeness is more than relatedness and character. It refers to uniqueness of quality and individuality of character which makes one place or location different from any other. *While all places have a character, this in itself is not adequate to induce genius loci. It is the uniqueness which makes it special and with which we can readily associate* (Bell, 1996, p.107).

Placeness is abstract and intangible, it tends to be more commonly understood on an emotional and subconscious level and it may require trained senses and aesthetic skills to recognise the factors contributing to it. *One of the difficult aspects of "genius loci" is that we may instantly sense its presence but be unable to identify what has created it* (Bell, 1996, p.107). It is sensitive, fragile and vulnerable and may be very easy to destroy and difficult to create. *... "genius loci" is an elusive quality which tends to be easier to conserve than create* (Bell, 1996, p.108).

For the purpose of this study, sense of place is purely an experience of beauty, aesthetics, culture and customs, and cannot be associated with any esoteric or mystic interaction between people and place advocated by practices and beliefs such as geomancy, Feng Shui, pantheism or paganism.

1.4   A MORE DETAIL DISCUSSION OF PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Two concepts, namely *perceptual environment and landscape* and *sustainable development*, which are of great importance to this study, and which are contentious and complex in nature, justify a more detail discussion.

1.4.1 PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT AND LANDSCAPE

The term *landscape* can be broadly defined as the perceptual environment out of doors. It can be used to describe a singular and undefined entity as well as more defined entities or specific environs and settings. Since human perception involves abstract qualities and subjectivity, landscape can also be associated with the psychosphere and psychological values. The following characteristics are of relevance in defining the term *landscape* more specifically:

1.4.1.1 Holism

Holism firstly implies a spatial synergism. Earlier definitions were rather restrictive and *reserved the term landscape only for those lands modified for permanent human occupation and defined landscape as the "anti-thesis of wilderness"* ... (Motloch, 1991, p.1).[4] In modern times, however, man and wilderness cannot be separated, since man's influence, such as the phenomenon of acid rain, extends to the most isolated corners of the globe. According to Berleant (1992, p.3), any kind of natural setting is difficult to identify in modern times,

> *...since nature, in the sense of a landscape unaffected by human agency, has long since disappeared in nearly every region of the industrialized world. Most wilderness areas are not primeval nature but regions that reflect the earlier and ongoing consequences of human action in the form of land clearing, erosion, strip-mining, reforestation, acid rain, modifications of the surface of the land and in the distribution of water, alternations of climate induced by the vast expanses of paved surfaces in urbanized areas, introduced species of fauna and flora, and now the dessication [sic] of the ozone layer, from whose consequences in global warming and increased solar radiation no area of the planet is immune.*

City and countryside are interrelated. According to the ecological footprint concept, urban centres are influencing the environment on a regional and global level. On the other hand the urban-dweller cannot be isolated from the natural environment, not even in high-density areas. There is a constant interaction between man-made urbanness and natural elements such as wind, sky,

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[4] The term landscape originated from the German word *landschaft,* meaning a small collection of buildings as a human concentration in a circular pasture or cultivated space surrounded by wilderness (Motloch, 1991, p.1).

rain, shadows, plants and birds. In its contemporary sense, therefore, landscape should be used as an inclusive term, embracing both wilderness and urbanness. In the words of Berleant (1992, pp.10; 174), landscape or the aesthetic environment is an inclusive concept, it *does not differentiate between the human and the natural and... interprets everything as part of a single continuous whole...*, and *the entire sensible world is included within the purview of aesthetics.*

Holism also embraces environmental influences and forces. According to Motloch (1991, pp.7; 45):

> *Landscapes are point-in-time expressions of a myriad of influences that are ecological, technological, and cultural. Settings are particular locations, designed or nondesigned, that are generated by these influences, ... Landscapes are, in a positive sense, the environmental litter left behind by a multitude of forces.*

The landscape or aesthetic environment is everything that there is; it is all-inclusive, a total, integrated, **continuous process** (Berleant, 1992, p.9). (Emphasis added.) Any single perceptual element can therefore not be perceived in isolation, but should be seen within the context of setting and process.

The landscape is also inclusive in terms of the perceiver. Landscape is not limited to specially designed areas, settings or scenes that can be seen as a form of art and that can only be enjoyed or truly perceived and appreciated by the experienced, the artist, the cultivated or the talented. The aesthetics of landscape should be interpreted as *applied* or *practical aesthetics*, the application of aesthetic values and principles by ordinary people to matters of daily life. According to Foote (online), the experience of place *is not reserved for academics, planners, and writers. It is for everyone, for you and me. And it's fun to figure out what place is all about.* And in the words of Sharp (1968, p.67):

> *The appreciation and enjoyment of townscape as such is not in the least limited to places where good architecture exists, nor to those who have expert eyes to see it. It is a pleasure to be got in any town that has some interest of form: and it can be enjoyed by anyone who cares to enjoy it.*

In the same sense landscape is also not limited to the perception of rural and natural areas of outstanding beauty or scenic value by the more privileged. It also includes the perception of a variety of landscapes with a diversity of character during everyday-life by ordinary people.

According to England's Countryside Agency landscape character occurs everywhere although it may be valued more in some places than others (Swanwick, 1999, June, p.C25).

Synergism in terms of the perceiver also refers to the human senses. The perceptual process implies a simultaneous involvement of all the human senses in perceiving our environment. Sight can be seen as the most dominant sense, with the other senses playing a supplementary role.

1.4.1.2 Anthropocentrism[5]

Landscape is in essence an anthropocentric concept since it necessitates the involvement of man as perceiver: *...the notion of man as the perceiver is central to the idea of landscape. Without man there would be no landscape, only land* (Kirkbride, 1997, p.24). Or as Berleant (1992, p.10) puts it: *Environment is nature experienced, nature lived.* Human experience and perception can therefore be seen as a key element of landscape. However, landscape implies something more than a mere perceptual process. It implies a participating experience through which the perceiver ascribes meaning to the perceptual characteristics of a setting and which involves a change in emotional state. The environment cannot be interpreted as a surrounding area that *lies outside the person, a container within which people pursue their private purposes* (Berleant, 1992, p.3). The landscape is not something that can be perceived from a distance, *as if it were outside and independent of ourselves* (Berleant 1992, p.4).

1.4.1.3 Natural order

Man perceives the landscape in terms of a natural or creational order which is interpreted and experienced by means of natural principles such as line, form and pattern. Berleant (1992, p.164) talks about *an aesthetic that bases our appreciative response on the awareness, selection, and understanding of the order by which natural forces have produced the objects we admire.* He compares the appreciation of order in nature with the appreciation of the skill and creativity embodied in the design of a human art object.

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[5] For the purpose of this study *anthropocentrism* should be distinghuised from *egocentrism.* Anthropocentrism is interpreted as man performing a leading role regarding the environment, while egocentrism is interpreted as everything being done for personal gain or for the sole benefit of man.

The same approach of experiencing order can also be applied to the cultural environment shaped by man and interacting with natural forces and elements. The same natural principles are also used to order man's experience of cultural landscapes.

Natural order implies that beauty and aesthetics should harmonise with nature and culture rather than clashing with it.

1.4.1.4 Process and change

No landscape is static. In the words of Bell (1996, p.5): *...all are subject to evolution and change over time as the result of natural or man-made processes.*

The landscape also shows change and variations over the short term since it does not consist of static elements only. Much vitality and interest come from non-static elements such as people, birds, animals, the weather, changing light conditions, cloud patterns and the wind. Short-term change is also reflected by the state of the perceiver. According to Motloch (1991, p.279), the sensing of landscape and place is *temporal, that is, it ebbs and flows with user movement, changes in setting (or the manner in which these are displayed), and changes in emotional state...* Sharp (1968, p.43) describes the relation between change and movement by the perceiver as follows:

> *The townscape becomes anything but static, anything but a series of set scenes, a succession of architectural still-lifes. It becomes a living moving unfolding kinetic experience, becomes a complicated resolution of changing relations.*

1.4.1.5 Character

The landscape can be categorised into different *landscape groups* based on elements such as the intensity of human activity, for example natural landscape, rural landscape, cityscape or streetscape, or the distinctive character of specific geographical areas[6], such as Bushveld

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[6] The concept of geographical diversity in the character of the rural England landscape forms the basis of the Countryside Agency's *Character of England Initiative.* A character map of England has been produced which divides the countryside into 159 *character areas*. These character areas and their landscape descriptions will form a framework for more detailed landscape assessments. In this manner an effective mechanism will be established for

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landscape, Western Cape landscape, Highveld landscape, etc. Geographical areas imply different ecological forces (ecosystems) and different cultural forces.

Ecological forces operating over time create regional landscapes, that is, regionally differing sets of expressions. ... Each landscape is an integrated set of expressions, which holistically responds to a multiplicity of influences. As systems, they function differently, one from another; as visual resource they express themselves quite differently; but each has its unique spirit of place, or "Genius Loci" (Motloch, 1991, p.53).

1.4.2   SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT

Sustainable development and sustainable management are key environmental concepts.

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

The above definition, formulated by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED, 1987, p.43), also known as the Brundtland Commission, is one of the first and best known definitions of the term *sustainable development*.

However, there are numerous other definitions of sustainable development and just as many interpretations of this concept. Unfortunately, most of the definitions leave room for misinterpretation to *greenwash* environmental damaging projects or to justify unhealthy economic growth and excessive consumerism.

The majority of definitions tend to limit the scope of sustainable development to the biophysical environment by emphasising aspects such as ecosystems (cf. IUCN *et al.*, 1991, p.10) or natural capital (National Commission on the Environment, 1993, p.2). However, some definitions also include the social environment by referring to community systems (cf. ICLEI *et al.*, 1996, p.3) or social systems (cf. Meadows *et al.*, 1992, p.209).

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the management of the perceptual environment in England. This will ensure the responsible and creative management of change in order to maintain, restore and enhance the distinctiveness of landscape character. (cf. Countryside Commission, 1993; Swanwick, 1999.)

Most definitions on sustainable development have the following attributes in common:

1.4.2.1 Anthropocentrism: Improving the quality of human life

Most definitions reveal a very strong sense of anthropocentrism by striving for the improvement of the quality of human life.

Although quality of life implies ensuring that every individual has a decent standard of living in terms of basic needs such as food, clothing and shelter, it does not necessarily imply economic growth under all circumstances and at all cost. In order to achieve sustainability, economic growth will have to be abandoned, postponed or transferred to another area in certain cases (cf. Badke, 1991, p.108).

Meadows *et al.* (1992, pp.xvi,xix) distinguish between growth and development and see growth as quantitative expansion and development as qualitative improvement, thus distinguishing between *quantity of output* and *quality of life*. According to this approach, improving the quality of human life in the first place implies qualitative development instead of quantitative growth.

Certain schools of thought have a purely materialistic approach to quality of life and see the improvement of the quality of human life as being limited to the provision of *basic* services to poorer communities (cf. ICLEI *et al.,* 1996, p.3). However, obtaining sustainable development necessitates a broader view of *quality of human life* that should include all needs and all communities. Although non-material needs are also relevant to poorer communities, it becomes more prominent and critical in wealthier communities. Such unmet non-material needs can be seen as a crucial factor, giving rise to unsustainable growth. It should therefore be taken into consideration and be provided for in a profound manner.[7]

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[7] *Poorer people desperately need more food, shelter, and material goods. Wealthier people, in a different kind of desperation, try to use material growth to satisfy other needs. which are also very real but are in fact nonmaterial-needs for acceptance, self-importance, community, identity. ... People don't need enormous cars; they need to feel attractive and they need excitement and variety and beauty. People don't need electronic entertainment; they need something worthwhile to do with their lives. And so forth. People need identity, community, challenge, acknowledgement, love, joy. To try to fill these needs with material things is to set up an unquenchable appetite for false solutions to real and never-satisfied problems. The resulting psychological emptiness is one of the major forces behind the desire for material growth. A society that can admit and articulate its nonmaterial needs and find non-material ways to satisfy them would require much lower material and energy throughputs and would provide much higher levels of human fulfillment (Meadows et al., 1992, pp.41; 216). Christians, along with the rest of society, have*

1.4.2.2 Long-term commitment and future generations

Although this attribute is still anthropocentric it is less pragmatic. The emphasis is not totally egocentric since it is diverted from the self to future generations.

Man does not own the earth's resources, nor does he have any exclusive rights in the utilisation of these resources. His position is merely that of *manager and steward of resources* to be passed on to future generations. This includes not only natural resources, but all material and non-material things and therefore also cultural resources.

1.4.2.3 Synergism and interrelationship

The National Commission on the Environment (1993, p.2) recognises the interrelationship between environmental and economic goals:

> *The key element of sustainable development is the recognition that economic and environmental goals are inextricably linked. Long-term growth depends on a sound environment, and resources to protect the environment will be forthcoming only from a strong economy. Both goals are intended to improve the quality of life of individuals, communities, and society. To the extent that either environmental or economic policy impoverishes the quality of life, it has failed.*

If a true holistic approach to sustainable development is followed such an approach should include all aspects of the environment, including the perceptual environment. This supposition is supported by Bell (1997, p.23):

> *... there is a need to develop the moral base for our environmental actions as a society drawing on the knowledge of ecology, natural sciences and aesthetics. This moral perception has weakened, along with the retreat of traditional religious beliefs. The resulting land use decisions based on poorly developed understanding and half knowledge may prove unsuitable and unsustainable. ... We need a better awareness of the link between nature, healthy ecosystems and aesthetics, and of*

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come to believe the unspoken maxim: A certain amount of damage to the earth is the cost of the lifestyle we require; we dare not sacrifice this lifestyle, because there is nothing else to give life meaning (Badke, 1991, p.130).

the wider meaning and value of aesthetics beyond the superficial level which the subject frequently receives.

Although the concept of *holism* implies unity and order it also implies diversity within such unity and order, which is a key aesthetic principle. There is therefore no reason for a sustainable society to be uniform and aesthetically dull and dreary. According to Meadows *et al.* (1992, p.213): *Diversity is both a cause of and a result of sustainability in nature, and it would be in human society as well. … Cultural variety and local autonomy could be greater, not less, in such a world.* They refer to the necessity of the *preservation of ecosystems in their variety, with human cultures living in harmony with those ecosystems – therefore high diversity of both nature and culture, and human tolerance and appreciation for that diversity* (Meadows *et al.*, 1992, p.226).

Placeness is an imperative for sustainability. Meadows *et al.* (1992, p.227) refer to a sustainable society that harmonises with local ecosystems, which they relate to the need for re-establishing *the sense of community and of **relationship to place** that has been largely lost since the Industrial Revolution* (Emphasis added.)

1.4.2.4 Limitation and order

Sustainable development should imply order and conscious limitation of human activities and should be based on more than a mere pragmatic and materialistic approach to the improvement in the quality of human life.[8] (See 1.4.2.1.) The emphasis should therefore be placed on *sustainable management* of the environment rather than on *sustainable development*, since sustainable management includes sustainable development and will lead to sustainable development. This will require a radical change in cultural perceptions and values. Meadows *et al.* (1992, p.192) talk about existing *cultural expectations and practices that maldistribute income and wealth, that make people see themselves primarily as consumers and producers, that associate social status with material accumulation, and that define human goals in terms of getting "more" rather than having "enough."*

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[8] *There is a constant flow or "throughput" from the planetary "sources" of materials and energy, through the human economy, to the planetary sinks where wastes and pollutants end up…. There are limits to the rates at which human population and capital can use materials and energy, and there are limits to the rates at which wastes can be emitted without harm to people, the economy, or the earth's processes of absorption, regeneration, and regulation* (Meadows *et al.*, p.45).

The industrialist and economist never fail to emphasise the importance of the interrelationship between environmental and economic goals as far as sustainability goes. Although this interrelationship should be recognised there is often a lack of honesty and seriousness amongst economists and developers in this regard. This interrelationship is more often applied in terms of how environmental concerns can be used or rather misused as a marketing mechanism to promote sales and consumption.

A sustainable society should not be seen as antagonistic to economic growth or commercial advertising *per se*. In the words of Meadows *et al.* (1992, p.210):

> *A sustainable society would be interested in qualitative development, not physical expansion. It would use material growth as a considered tool, not as a perpetuate mandate. It would be neither for nor against growth, rather it would begin to discriminate kinds of growth and purposes for growth.*

1.5 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are as follows:

- To look at the benefits and impact of outdoor information transfer in a holistic manner. Most studies and reports on outdoor information transfer focus on a single facet or type of outdoor advertising. The variety and interrelationship of impacts and benefits are mostly overlooked. Most interested and affected parties are guilty of tunnel vision – the outdoor advertising industry tends to ignore the impacts of outdoor advertising while groups opposing outdoor advertising tend to ignore or underestimate the value of outdoor advertising.

- To provide the necessary motivation for involving controlling authorities, the outdoor advertising industry and the public in the meaningful and sustainable management of outdoor information transfer as an important part of aesthetic resource and environmental management. The aim of the study is to stimulate interest and participation in the effective management of outdoor information transfer.

- To provide general principles and user-friendly guidelines that will be universally applicable and will form a basis for outdoor information transfer control and management by controlling authorities, the public and the outdoor advertising industry in a sustainable and less subjective manner. The aim is not to provide principles and guidelines of such comprehensiveness and magnitude that they would constitute the beginning and end of all principles and guidelines relating to outdoor information transfer, but rather to develop a framework and point of departure that would hopefully be added to by other practitioners in the field of outdoor information transfer.

- To provide useful recommendations regarding the management of outdoor information transfer.

This study is aimed at a wide variety of target groups:

- The main target group consists of non-design professions and people without design skills at controlling authorities, environmental bodies and pressure groups, and such people in the outdoor advertising industry and the public in general. This study will also provide graphic designers at advertising agencies with a more holistic approach to the perceptual environment and the design aspects of outdoor advertising. It is also aimed at emerging local authorities in South Africa and neighbouring countries, which for the first time have to grapple with the problem of controlling a flood of Western advertising types.

- This study will also benefit design professions such as architects, landscape architects, urban designers and planners.

In order to be of benefit to the main target group this study is presented in a more user-friendly style instead of the traditional academic style. This includes language, structure, layout and the use of a large number of quotations and photographs as practical illustrations. Although the length of the study may limit its practical use to a certain extent, a too concise exposition may have the same limitations. A more lengthy discussion of the various components of this study was seen as a mechanism for conveying new and often difficult concepts to diverse target groups, which might often have opposing views and motives, and to involve these groups in the effective management of outdoor information transfer. It would also provide the necessary material and

arguments for defending an approach of effective management. In order to solve the limitation of length, summaries of the key components of this study may be provided as an introductory mechanism while the original study would still serve as main reference for the effective management of outdoor information transfer. (See Recommendations 1 and 11)

1.6 A PREVIEW TO THE STUDY AND PRELIMINARY CONCLUSIONS

1.6.1 THE ROLE AND STATUS OF THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT

The first problem to be addressed in this study is to determine the role and status of the perceptual environment in contemporary society. With this in mind a hypothesis was formulated which states that the perceptual environment plays an important role in contemporary society while also forming part of sustainable environmental management. It furthermore assumes that the role of the perceptual environment is not adequately recognised.

Outdoor information transfer operates mainly within the realm of the aesthetic or perceptual environment, which in its turn forms a crucial part of the psychosphere. Seen against the intricate nature and complex demands of modern life it seems as if the psychosphere has assumed a role of ever-increasing importance in recent times. Should the role of the psychosphere and the perceptual environment be seen as an issue of critical importance, or should the voices being raised against the neglect of aesthetics be seen as an over-romanticised concern far removed from the realities of modern life – a life of rationality, of science and technology, and the realities of poverty, the unequal distribution of wealth and the freedom of commercial speech? Chapter 2 of this study will give more clarity in this regard by analysing the role and status of the perceptual environment in more detail and by testing the above hypothesis. Various issues will be addressed with regard to the role of the perceptual environment, such as the creation of more pleasant and healthy human living environments, the conservation and enhancement of tourism resources and the stimulation of economic development. The status of the perceptual environment will also be measured against its recognition in environmental legislation.

The following preliminary conclusions can already be made from Chapter 1 regarding the role of the perceptual environment:

- If an anthropocentric and holistic approach is followed, aesthetics cannot be ignored in defining the environment, but should be seen as an integral part of the environment. This will mean that the importance of and need for perceptual resource management can be equated to the need for and importance of environmental management in general. The perceptual environment should therefore be included in any holistic strategy for environmental management.

- Holistically spoken both basic human needs and non-material needs will have to be addressed in order to prevent the unsustainable utilisation of resources. Both types of needs may be seen as equally important contributing factors to environmental degradation and environmental collapse.[9] Unhealthy non-material needs, such as the craving for luxury and status items, will have to be channelled to more healthy expressions of such needs, for instance aesthetic enjoyment.

- Seen from a holistic perspective the perceptual environment plays a crucial role in the sustainable management of environmental resources. Sustainability is not possible without a solid moral basis and higher values. The aesthetic environment may induce such values and may contribute towards a moral basis. Aesthetics stimulates and sharpens man's consciousness of the need for responsible environmental management. Aesthetics forms the stage and decor in experiencing nature.[10] Even wildlife cannot be truly appreciated without a favourable aesthetic setting – without experiencing an appropriate sense of place. The elephant in the Pretoria Zoo is not exactly the same as the elephant on the banks of the

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[9] Meadows *et al.* (1992, p.275) present a hypothesis which states that collapse will take place in the form of *an uncontrolled decline in a population or economy induced when that population or economy overshoots the sustainable limits to its environment and in the process reduces or erodes those limits. Collapse is especially likely to occur when there are positive loops of erosion, so that a degradation of the environment sets in motion processes that degrade it further.* Since Meadows *et al.* (1992, p.3) see economy and the environment as one system that is irreversibly linked it may be concluded from the above hypothesis that collapse also refers to environmental systems, which may also include the aesthetic system. Aesthetic collapse may therefore be seen as the erosion and degradation of local cultures and placeness by a global culture and global economic growth, by introducing aesthetic elements not compatible to local character or placeness and destroying aesthetic elements that are important in expressing local character, until a point of now return is reached where it may be virtually impossible to restore any local character and placeness. This must be seen in the light of the fact that placeness or *genius loci* is sensitive, fragile and vulnerable and tends to be easier to conserve and enhance than to create (Bell, 1996, p.108).

[10] *Visual resources such as scenic landscapes and cultural streetscapes constitute major tourist attractions. The visual environment also forms a backdrop to most other tourist activities such as game watching, touring, entertainment, shopping and sport. The visual environment can be seen as the fabric that gives meaning and substance to any tourism experience* (DEA&T, 1998, April, p.v).

Letaba River in the Kruger National Park. The perceptual environment can either restore the human soul and spirit or pull it down in despair – this is true even in the case of the slum dweller. The landscape should be seen as the spatial and aesthetic setting for the activities of man.

❑ In order for the perceptual environment to generate a moral basis for the sustainable management of environmental resources a proper world-view on environmental management will have to be established. At the moment it seems as if the perceptual environment is providing negative values instead of providing a positive value base and inspiration for sustainable environmental management. It furthermore appears as if Christian society should take its part of the blame for the current lack of environmental ethics and the misuse and abuse of the perceptual environment. It also seems as if the western World and Christian society can play an important role in providing sufficient environmental ethics due to its prominent role in shaping world society. This issue is covered in more detail in Appendix 3.

❑ From a philosophical point of view the importance of the aesthetic environment is clearly reflected by the anthropocentric character of the landscape. Without man as perceiver no landscape would exist. Man has been created with a sense of appreciation of beauty in order to enjoy the aesthetic environment. He needs the enjoyment of aesthetics in order to exist. According to Nan Fairbrother (cited in Bell, 1996, p.6): *Man is … the only species who deliberately alters the design of its environment for no other reason than to give itself aesthetic pleasure.*

❑ In discussing the term *sustainable development* in 1.4.2, an element of Hypothesis 1, namely that the perceptual environment forms part of sustainable environmental management, has already been partly proven. This is mainly based on the essence of a holistic and anthropocentric approach to sustainable development and sustainable environmental management. The argument follows that if such a holistic approach is followed, all aspects of the environment, including the perceptual environment, would have to be included. The same argument follows in the case of an anthropocentric approach since the perceptual environment is in essence anthropocentric.

1.6.2 THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF THE NEED FOR THE EFFECTIVE MANGEMENT OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

The second problem to be addressed in this study is to determine the nature and extent of the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer in terms of both its benefits and its impact.

The following hypothesis has been formulated with regard to the above problem and will be tested in Chapter 3 of this study: *Outdoor information transfer as an important part of the perceptual environment benefits society and the environment, but it also impacts negatively on the environment. Sense of place and placeness play a crucial role with regard to the benefits and impact of outdoor information transfer. If a laissez-faire policy is followed with regard to the management of outdoor information transfer, the impacts thereof will overshadow its positive contribution and will neutralise many of the benefits.*

Since history tends to repeat itself, a historical perspective of the benefits and impact of outdoor advertising is used as starting point in Chapter 3. The benefits and impacts of outdoor advertising in contemporary society are covered in a holistic manner while public opinion and preferences regarding outdoor advertising are also included.

However, the following preliminary conclusions can already be made from Chapter 1 regarding the above hypothesis :

❑ It seems as if outdoor information transfer plays an important role regarding the perceptual environment.

❑ It was shown that while on the one hand there seems to be a certain discontent with the negative impact of outdoor advertisements and signs, on the other hand there seems to be a displeasure with the planning and designing professions not realising the design potential of advertisements and signs. The fact that voices are raised for and against outdoor information transfer therefore suggest that outdoor information transfer involves both benefits and negative impacts.

❑ It seems as if the impact of outdoor information transfer can be traced back to a lack of environmental ethics in contemporary society.

1.6.3 THE NATURE AND EXTENT OF USER-FRIENDLY GUIDELINES

The third problem to be addressed by this study relates to determining the nature and extent of user-friendly guidelines for the effective management of outdoor information transfer.

With this in mind, a hypothesis was formulated which states that general principles and user-friendly guidelines can be developed for the effective management of outdoor information transfer in order to make the management of outdoor information transfer less subjective and to provide a basis for control and legislative measures. It furthermore states that such principles and guidelines can be used as an objective measure for the sustainable management of outdoor information transfer.

The above problem and hypothesis are covered by Chapter 4 of this study. Both general principles as well as aesthetic principles and user-friendly guidelines are provided for the effective management of outdoor information transfer. However, certain important principles can already be identified from Chapter 1, which serves as a starting point for Chapter 4.

❑ Since landscapes are generated holistically by a myriad of influences and forces no single perceptual element should ever be perceived in isolation, but should always be seen within the context of a setting.

❑ Landscape is not limited to specially designed areas, settings or scenes that can be seen as a form of art which can be enjoyed or truly perceived by, and are of value only to the experienced, the artist, the cultivated or the talented. It includes a variety of landscapes with a diversity of character and it is to be enjoyed by all members of society.

❑ The management of the perceptual environment should not be aimed only at areas of outstanding aesthetic value, but should rather be aimed at maintaining, restoring and enhancing the diversity and distinctiveness of landscape character.

❑ Man perceives the landscape in terms of natural aesthetic principles through which an inherent environmental order is experienced and interpreted. Beauty and aesthetics should harmonise with nature and culture rather than clashing with it.

❑ The perception of landscape is a kinetic experience.

❑ Landscape character forms the basis for placeness and *vice versa.*

❑ Placeness is sensitive, fragile and vulnerable and should be managed carefully.

❑ Sustainable development should imply order and conscious limitation of human activities and should be based on more than a mere pragmatic and materialistic approach to the improvement of the quality of human life. Man must not allow himself or his technology to do everything he or it can do

1.6.4 A SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter 5 provides a summary of the conclusions arrived at in Chapters 1-4, as well as useful recommendations regarding the effective management of outdoor information transfer.

CHAPTER 2

THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF PERCEPTUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The following sub-problem and hypothesis are of relevance to Chapter 2 and will be addressed in this chapter:

Sub-problem 1: What are the role and status of the perceptual environment in contemporary society?

Hypothesis 1: The perceptual environment plays an important role in contemporary society and forms part of sustainable environmental management. The role of the perceptual environment is not adequately recognised.

2.1   THE STATUS OF THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT

2.1.1   BACKGROUND

In Chapter 1 it has been stated that contemporary man does not tend to see aesthetics and beauty as an important environmental issue. It seems that in true Cartesian tradition the perceptual environment is isolated from the rest of the environment and aesthetics is seen as something that no respectable environmentalist should ever consider seriously. We have come to regard beauty as a luxury to be enjoyed by the rich and important – not a necessity of everyday life fundamental to our communal psychological and economic well-being. Beauty has been banned to the wilderness, the ecotourism experience or the higher-income suburban garden.

The root cause of this problem can be seen as a lack of proper environmental ethics and contemporary society's consumeristic mindset which culminates in a pragmatic and egocentric

approach to environmental management. This approach not only tends to neglect the environment in general but, when it is recognised, tends to focus on more tangible and pragmatic aspects, such as water and air pollution, which have a more direct influence on the physical well-being of man.

This problem can be traced back to the tendency of most environmental world-views to be pragmatic and even egocentric. Even when a definite attempt is made to avoid a pragmatic approach, the centrality of man tends to resurface. The argument that crops up again and again in discussions about sustainable development is that sustainable development is necessary since it will ultimately be man who will benefit by such an approach, and that man's survival depends on a more sustainable and responsible approach to environmental management. The following serve as a good example in this regard:

Miller (1996, p.711) differentiates between two main types of environmental world-views: those that put humans at the centre of things and those that do not. According to Miller, the essence of the **human-centred world-view** can be seen as managing the earth's life-supporting systems for the sole benefit of man, together with the pursuit of unlimited economic growth. In contrast to this world-view the **biocentric and ecocentric environmental world-views** focus on the inherent or intrinsic value of all forms of life (the value that exists regardless of these life forms' potential or actual use to man) and on the value of earth's life-support systems. The biocentric and ecocentric world-views are seen by Miller as a more responsible and sustainable approach. However, Miller contradicts himself to a certain extent since these more responsible views can still be interpreted as having a pragmatic dimension on the grounds of the following statement made by him (1996, p.714): *At this level,* **our survival and economies** *are viewed as being totally dependent on Earth's natural processes...* (Emphasis added.) It is therefore clear that Miller's attempt to artificially polarise environmental world-views in two extreme opposites, in order to find a world-view that excludes mankind, was not successful since even his non-human world-view cannot ignore the importance of mankind.

2.1.2 THE RECOGNITION OF THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT IN ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND LEGISLATION

A more practical and accurate way to determine the current status of the perceptual environment and to test the above impression of contemporary society is to look at the recognition the perceptual environment enjoys in environmental policy and legislation.

The perceptual environment does not enjoy a great deal of prominence in policy and legislation. According to Foote (1999, online), the concept of *beauty* does not form part of the conservation movement's agenda, while the word does not even appear in recent statements on environmental sustainability and community liveability. The words *beauty, scenic* and *aesthetics* are entirely absent from recent policy documents and declarations in the United States. This includes the vision statement and goals of the *President's Council on Sustainable Development*, the *Charter of the Congress for New Urbanism* and the *Declaration on Environment and Development* of the *American Society of Landscape Architects*.

Even *Agenda 21* does not recognise the role of the psychosphere and perceptual environment, except for a few casual references to aspects such as the spiritual environment, psychological well-being, environmental quality and noise control as part of environmental health (United Nations, Earth Summit). This document, which forms a blueprint for action for global sustainable development into the 21st century, can be seen as one of the most important international policy documents on environmental management.

Although the perceptual environment is ignored more often than not, current environmental policy and legislation in many countries contain elements that refer implicitly to the perceptual environment and which may provide a basis for a better recognition of aesthetics as an integral part of environmental management. This is especially true of countries, states or provinces where the perceptual environment is of critical value for tourism. The legislation and policies quoted in this regard provide only representative examples, and the intention is not to reflect a comprehensive analysis of such legislation and policy or to draw up a complete inventory thereof.

2.1.2.1 Definition of the environment

In defining the term *environment,* environmental policy and legislation often make use of the following interrelated words which refer implicitly to the perceptual environment:

(a) Landscape

Human experience, *perception* and appreciation can be seen as the most important element of landscape: *...the notion of man as the "perceiver" is central to the idea of landscape. Without man there would be no landscape, only land* (Kirkbride, 1997, p.24). The word *landscape* can therefore literally be equated to *perceptual environment.* (See 1.4.1.) The following serve as examples of the term *landscape* being used in legislation and policy in defining *environment*:

❑   *Environment Protection Act, Act V of 1991* of Malta (Republic of Malta, online), section 51: Landscape *mean[s] both open country, village and town aspect;*

❑   *The White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa* (RSA, 1998, May, p.9) refers to agricultural, rural and physical and cultural landscapes.

(b) Place

Used in conjunction with landscape, place has a definite aesthetic and perceptual connotation. According to Motloch (1991, p.279): *"Place" is the mental construct of the temporal-spatial experience that occurs as the individual ascribes meaning to settings, through environmental* **perception** *and cognition.* (Emphasis added.) Place refers to perceptual experiences of deeper significance and emotional involvement. According to Rypkema (1996, p.58): *A place is imbued with something beyond its physical characteristics - something intangible, an experience, a sense, a power, a quality of being good.* Gussow (cited in Walter p.209) sees place as *a piece of the whole environment that has been claimed by feelings.*

❑   In defining *environment The White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa* (RSA, 1998, May, p.9) refers to *physical and cultural landscapes and* **places**. (Emphasis added.)

(c) Culture

This word is often used in relation to other words and phrases implying a perceptual and aesthetic connotation. The following serve as examples to illustrate this point:

❑ In defining *environment The White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa* (RSA, 1998, May, p.9) refers to ***places*** *of* ***cultural*** *significance and the qualities that contribute to their value* and *physical and* ***cultural landscapes*** *and* ***places***. (Emphasis added.) Apart from linking the term *culture* to the words *places* and *landscapes,* which have a definite aesthetic connotation, this white paper makes an indisputable connection between *culture* and *aesthetics* by stating that cultural resources include *objects, sites and properties of … **aesthetic** … significance* (RSA, 1998, May, p.72). (Emphasis added.)

❑ The *National Environmental Management Act* of South Africa *(Act No. 107 of 1998) (NEMA),* section 1(1)(xi) refers to *cultural properties* as part of the term *environment* (RSA, 1998, Nov.).

❑ *The Environment Act*, 1986 of New Zealand, section 2, includes *cultural conditions* in defining environment (New Zealand, 1986).

(d) Aesthetic

This key concept is contained in various definitions of *environment.* The following acts serve as examples in this regard:

❑ *National Environmental Management Act,* of South Africa *(Act No. 107 of 1998),* section 1(1)(xi) (RSA, 1998, Nov.).

(xi) "environment" means the surrounding within which humans exist and that are made up of –

    (i)   the land, water and atmosphere of the earth;

    (ii)   micro-organisms, plant and animal life;

    (iii) any part or combination of (i) and (ii) and the interrelationship among and between them; and

(iv) the physical, chemical, aesthetic and cultural properties and conditions of the foregoing that influence human health and well-being

❑ *The Environment Act,* 1986 (New Zealand), section 2 (New Zealand, 1986).

"Environment" includes –

(a) Ecosystems and their constituent parts; and

(b) All natural and physical resources; and

(c) The social, economic, aesthetic, and cultural conditions which affect the environment or which are affected by changes to the environment

2.1.2.2 Main environmental right

The following examples indicate that the citizen's main environmental right not only includes physical health and well-being, but also psychological health and well-being:

(a) Constitution of the Republic of South Africa

According to Section 24(a) of the Bill of Rights in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa *everyone has the right to - (a) an environment that is not harmful to their health or well-being; ...* According to the W*hite Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa* (RSA, 1998, May, pp.41; 72) *this includes their cultural interests in the environment.* Furthermore, this white paper sees *objects, sites and properties of ... aesthetic ... significance* as part and parcel of cultural resources. Barnard (1999, p.49) states that although our courts still have to define the precise extent of this main environmental right, the *health or well-being* of people covers a wide field. *Adverse impacts on health and well-being can also be caused by ... light and noise pollution and unreasonable visual degradation* (Barnard, 1999, p.50).

(b) Constitution of the State of Montana

Barnard (1999, p.50, footnote) refers to the following case: The Constitution of the American State of Montana grants every citizen the inalienable right to a clean and healthful environment. In *State v Bernhard* 173 Mont. 464, 468, 568 P.2d 136, 138 (1977) the Montana Supreme Court in referring to the Constitution *found that the state now has a valid reason for regulating based on*

aesthetics. The court held that no compensation was payable to the owner of an auto-wrecking facility situated in full view of the community where the state law required of the owner to shield junked cars from the public view for aesthetic reasons.

(c) The National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 of the United States of America (NEPA)

Section 101(b) of NEPA removes any doubt about the extent of the main environmental right:

*In order to carry out the policy set forth in this Act, it is the continuing responsibility of the Federal Government to use all practicable means, consist with other essential considerations of national policy, to improve and coordinate Federal plans, functions, programs, and resources to the end that the Nation may – 2. assure for all Americans safe, healthful, productive, and **aesthetically** and culturally **pleasing** surroundings;* (USA, online). (Emphasis added.)

(d) National Environmental Management Act of South Africa

According to section 2(2) of NEMA, *environmental management must place people and their needs at the forefront of its concern, and serve their physical, **psychological**, developmental, **cultural** and social interests equitably* (RSA, 1998, Nov.). (Emphasis added.)

2.1.2.3 Sustainable management of tourism resources

Many policy documents recognise the importance of managing tourism resources in a sustainable manner. Aesthetic or perceptual resources, such as landscapes and townscapes, can be seen as the heart of tourism resources. One of the objectives of the *White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa* (RSA, 1998, May, p.33) is *to ensure the sustainable management and respect for the integrity of **landscapes** and other environmental assets* as tourism resources. (Emphasis added.)

The World Travel and Tourism Council and the World Tourism Organisation (WTTC *et al.*, p. 30) also see aesthetic resources as an important part of sustainable tourism:

*It (sustainable tourism) is envisaged as leading to management of all resources in such a way that economic, social, and **aesthetic** needs can be fulfilled while*

maintaining cultural integrity, essential ecological processes, biological diversity, and life support systems. (Emphasis added.)

2.1.2.4 Visual impact management

Visual impact management is included in the environmental policies of most countries. One of the objectives of the *White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa* (RSA, 1998, May, p. 34) is *to ensure that the visual impact of development receives due consideration, particularly in areas of cultural or historic significance or areas of scenic beauty.*

The Environment Protection Act, 1991 of Malta, section 40, requires that an environmental impact assessment shall, among other things, identify, describe and assess the effects of a project on the landscape (Republic of Malta, online).

2.1.2.5 Other principles implicating an aesthetic and perceptual dimension

The following environmental principles contained in policy and legislation also imply the inclusion of an aesthetic and perceptual dimension in environmental management:

(a) Anthropocentric approach to environmental management

When the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), popularly known as the Brundtland Commission, was appointed in the early 1980s man was given a central position in environmental management by recognising the interrelationship between sustained economic growth for the benefit of man and the protection of the environment. *Environment and development are not separate challenges; they are inexorably linked* (WCED, 1987, p.37). According to the *White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa* (RSA, 1998, May, p.15), this approach is described as *environmentally sustainable people centred development.* Section 2(2) of *NEMA* states that *environmental management must place **people** and **their needs** at the forefront of its concern, and serve their physical, psychological, developmental, cultural and social interests equitably* (RSA, 1998, Nov.). (Emphasis added.) An anthropocentric approach is especially important in developing countries with high population densities, high unemployment figures and ever-increasing pressure on natural resources.

An anthropocentric approach to environmental management implies the centrality of man as perceiver of the environment. Seen in this light the importance of the aesthetic and perceptual environment cannot be disputed. Since aesthetic appreciation can be seen as one of the characteristics that distinguish man from other living beings, aesthetics should form an important element of human-centred environmental management. The introduction of an anthropocentric approach to environmental policy and legislation highlights the perceptual environment.

(b) Holism and the total environment

Holism can be seen as one of the most important principles of environmental management in recent times. This principle is acknowledged by *inter alia* the following policy documents and legislation:

❑ **NEMA section 2(4)(b) (RSA, 1998, Nov.):**

> *Environmental management must be integrated, acknowledging that **all elements of the environment are linked and interrelated**, and it must take into account the effects of decisions on all aspects of the environment and all people in the environment by pursuing the selection of the best practicable environmental option. (Emphasis added.)*

❑ **White Paper on Environmental Management Policy for South Africa (RSA, 1998, May, p.18):**

> *...government policy embodies a bold paradigm shift in its approach to environmental management. It introduces an integrated and coordinated management regime that: - addresses the total environment and all human activities impacting on it, ...*

❑ **The Environment Protection Act, 1991, of Malta, section 51** interprets *environment* as *the whole of the elements and conditions, natural and man-made, existing on earth...* (Republic of Malta, online).

Since holism is seen as such an important principle, perceptual resource management has to be seen as an integral part of environmental management.

2.2 THE ROLE AND FUNCTION OF PERCEPTUAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

2.2.1 THE CREATION OF MORE PLEASANT AND HEALTHY HUMAN LIVING ENVIRONMENTS

Man has a basic need for pleasing sights and surroundings. Due to the complexity and pace of modern life, and especially urban life, the psychological role of the aesthetic environment is becoming more and more important. John Muir (cited by Foote, online), the 19th century American conservationist, once said: *We need beauty as well as bread.* This simple but true statement is becoming more relevant every day.

In his *Introduction to Landscape Design,* Motloch (1991, pp.) analyses various views on the experience of landscape. Of special interest is the view according to which man experiences landscape as *place*, and where the individual and the environment are inextricably bound in oneness, while the sensing of healthy places is seen as an essential dimension of human health and well-being (Motloch, 1991, p.20). This viewpoint was strongly influenced by the philosopher Heidegger (1977) and the architect Norberg-Schulz (1980). When one looks at the important role of the aesthetic environment in mental health, sufficient evidence is found in support of this viewpoint. According to Theodore Roszak (cited by Foote, online):

> *Stress managers will tell you that one of their most successful techniques for reducing stress is visualization. If you ask them what people visualize when they wish to relax, they never say parking lots or freeways or baseball stadiums. What do they mention? Well, we know the answer: forests and mountains and seacoasts.*

Professor Roger Ulrich (Foote, online) of the University of Texas studied the effect of visual pollution on commuters and found a strong correlation between blighted landscapes and buildup of high stress levels by the end of their commute.

Various studies, such as those conducted by Gallagher (1993), Oldenburg (1991) and Kemmis (1990), indicate that place, and by implication the aesthetic environment, has an immense impact on how we think and act as human beings. They also conclude that the built environment is, overall, getting worse instead of better and that a marked shift has been taking place away from the interaction between people and their place. These studies indicate that sense of place and spirit of community are important for aspects such as public safety, the crime rate, cultural development, neighbourliness, mental health, conflict resolution and urban decay; in short, for the creation of more pleasant and healthy living environments.

Bell (1997, p.21), referring to Berleant (1992), recognises the influence of the aesthetic environment on the potential of human lives: *The starting point for an understanding of the aesthetics of the environment in general ... is the recognition that the setting for our lives has a powerful influence on the quality and character of its contents and possibilities.* And in *The Experience of Place* Tony Hiss (cited by Foote, online) writes that:

> *We all react, consciously and unconsciously, to the places where we live and work, in ways we scarcely notice ... Places have an impact on our sense of self, our sense of safety, the kind of work we get done, the ways we interact with other people, even our ability to function as citizens in a democracy. In short, the places where we spend our time affect the people we are and can become.*

Mumford (1975, p. 344) puts perceptual needs at the same level as basic biological needs: *To starve the eye, the ear, the skin, the nose is just as much to court death as to withhold food from the stomach.*

The American legal system has also recognised the importance of an aesthetic pleasant human living environment.

> *Earlier in the 20th century aesthetics was deemed by some courts as a suspect or second-rate basis for the exercise of the police power. But urban living has become increasingly complex and has produced problems of crowding and blight unforeseen in those simpler times. Those changes have brought about an expanded view of the police power, and most courts in this decade recognize aesthetics as a valid part of the general welfare for the preservation of which, the police power may legitimately be exercised. (Judge Sharp in Lamar-Orlando*

Outdoor Advertising v. City of Ormond Beach, 415 So.2d 1312, 1314 (Fla. 5th DCA 1982) as quoted by Citizens for a Scenic Florida, online,1)

and

Pollution is not limited to the air we breath and the water we drink; it can equally offend the eye and the ear (Chief Justice Warren Burger as quoted by Citizens for a Scenic Florida, online, 1).

Psychological health also relates directly to physiological health. A study undertaken at the University of Delaware showed that surgical hospital patients who looked out of windows at clumps of trees had shorter hospital stays, received fewer negative comments in nursing reports and took fewer potent pain killers than surgical patients who looked at a brick wall. (Ebenreck, 1989, p.54). These findings imply that the aesthetic environment may have significant implications for health costs.

According to Motloch (1991, p31):

Our world society is today characterised by much homelessness, crime, stress, and a high incidence of what is referred to as "diseases of civilization," including heart disease, cancer, and strokes. These are all indications of a psychologically unhealthy culture. A large part of this unhealthiness is attributable to the fact that the designed urban environment does not address user psychological needs. This, in turn, speaks for the necessity to design healthy environments as one takes a holistic view of human health.

Currently environmental management in general does not address psychological needs sufficiently. It tends to concentrate on noise pollution only, while other sensory aspects such as the visual environment go unnoticed.

2.2.1.1 Community identity and involvement

The aesthetic environment and the experience of place are essential in creating community identity. Motloch (1991, p.20) describes the importance of this process as follows: The making of place, as human expression and concentration of meaning, is seen to be one of the major efforts of human existence. Placeness and community identity tend to reinforce each other. According to Rypkema (1996, p.60) community and place are inseparable.

"Place" is the vessel within which the "spirit" of community is stored; "community" is the catalyst that imbues a location with a sense of place... The character of our built environment, historic areas[11] and others, is directly related to both the strength of our communities and the quality of place.

Community and place provide the individual with a sense of belonging, identity and security. In the words of McCloskey (online): *If you don't know where you are, then you don't know what you're doing.*

The aesthetic environment plays a very important role by giving dignity to poorer communities. In their *Guidelines for Human Settlement Planning and Design* the South African *Council for Scientific and Industrial Research* (CSIR, Chapter 2, pp.4-5) describes this role as follows:

Positively performing environments reflect powerful sensory qualities. They are places which are aesthetically appealing and which add to the quality of peoples' lives.

The quality of the public spatial environment plays a critical role as far as the sensory qualities of settlements are concerned... The role of public spaces in the lives of the urban poor is particularly critical. When people are poor, the full range of a household's needs cannot be adequately met by the individual dwelling. Accordingly, a significant part of their lives is played out in public spaces. If properly made, these spaces can give dignity and a sense of permanence to environments.

Since community and place are inseparable, dignified environments give rise to dignified communities.

Sense of place and community pride encourage strong citizen involvement. *When a sense of place is strong, people have a clear idea of why they like living in a city and what they want to support with their dollars and energy* (Ebenreck, 1989, p.55).

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[11] By reflecting the history of communities the landscape or visual environment *allows us to develop a better understanding of who we are, by giving us an understanding of how we came to be. It reinforces our collective consciousness as a culture by focusing on our shared history* (Motloch, 1991, p.19).

2.2.1.2 Environmental awareness and care

Environmental awareness and care are important ingredients of pleasant and healthy living environments.

Since placeness promotes community identity and involvement it might be used as a basic tool for creating environmental awareness and environmental care at a community level. In the first place, placeness can therefore be seen as the driving force behind environmental awareness through community involvement. Secondly, aesthetics and placeness form a perceptual framework within which environmental awareness becomes tangible and manifest itself, and within which the object of awareness can be visualised, loved and respected. In the words of David McCloskey (online):

> We need the poetics of place as much as the ecologics... We don't love "ecosystems" in general, rather we love specific places and regions. An ecosystem remains a concept, not a percept; while outlining a system of exchanges in an abstract space, an ecosystem is no place in particular. An ecosystem remains a bodiless abstraction unless it is incarnated in specific places; otherwise, it floats without "a name or local habitation." thus remaining, as the poet reminds us, "an airy nothing" ... For the place is alive, has a face and name all its own which invokes its special character and calls the people home. The spirit in each land must be recognized and respected.

Rohe (online) describes the role of aesthetics to create love and respect for places as follows:
Only a place worthy of our respect will command respect. If we no longer care how our communities look, then respect will suffer.

Aesthetics and placeness can be seen as a catalyst for environmental awareness and environmental care, including both the biophysical and the cultural environments.

2.2.1.3 Crime and vandalism

Placeness and aesthetics may also discourage crime and vandalism, since it creates a psychological environment that is not conducive to these practices.
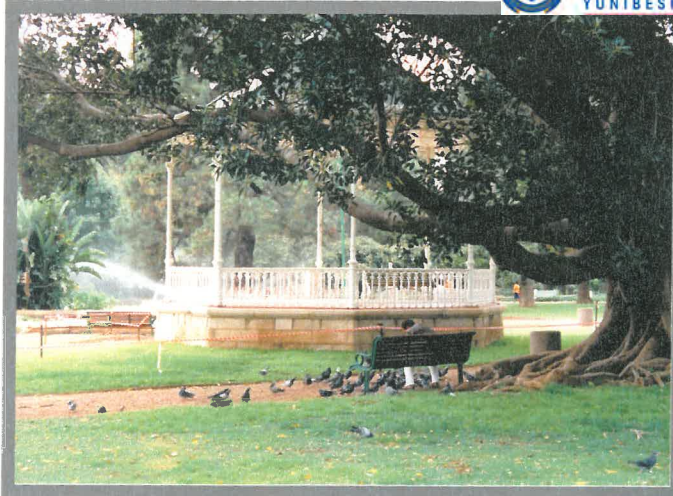
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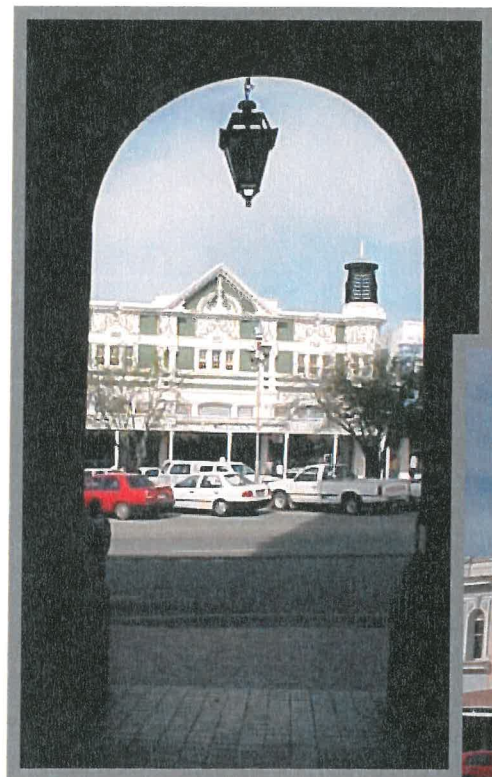
Photo dates: May 2001

The perceptual environment makes an important contribution to the creation of more healthy and pleasant human living environments. It is important for aspects such as the potential of human lives, discouragement of crime and vandalism, cultural development, community identity and involvement, environmental awareness and care, mental and physical health, conflict resolution and urban decay. Moreleta Spruit, Pretoria (top right); Burgers Park, Pretoria (top left); High Street, Grahamstown (bottom).

**Figure 2.1
Aesthetics and human
living environments**
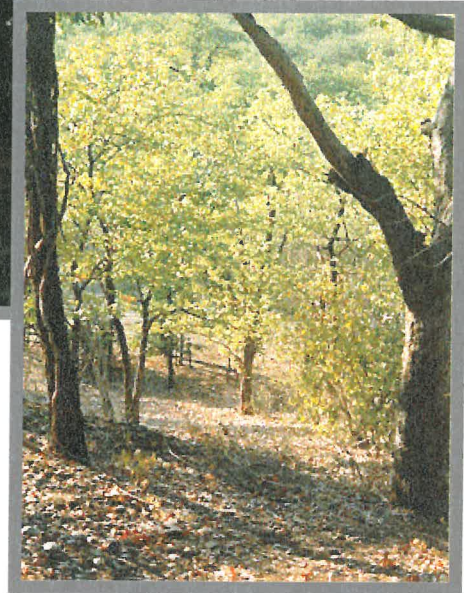
Sense of place - Images from the Pafuri-area, Kruger National Park: Aesthetics and placeness form a perceptual framework within which environmental awareness becomes tangible and manifests itself, and the object of awareness can be visualised, loved and respected. Placeness becomes a framework for visualising and giving a face to abstract concepts such as ecosystems.

Figure 2.2

Placeness and environmental awareness

Date of photos: September 1998

Not only crime, but also crime-related problems such as the fear of crime play an important role in the quality of the psychological environment and therefore the quality of the human living environment. In some instances fear of crime might even be a more important factor to deal with than actual crime itself. In the words of Jane Jacobs (1972, pp.39-40):

> ...if a city's streets are safe from barbarism and fear, the city is thereby tolerably safe from barbarism and fear. When people say that a city, or part of it, is dangerous or is a jungle, what they mean primarily is that they do not feel safe on the sidewalks... The bedrock attribute of a successful city district is that a person must feel personally safe and secure on the street among all these strangers.... It does not take many incidents of violence on a city street, or in a city district, to make people fear the streets. And as they fear them, they use them less, which makes the streets still more unsafe.

The physical and aesthetic deterioration of living environments is conducive to placelessness, crime and crime-related problems (such as fear of crime). According to Taylor and Harrell (1996, online):

> Neighborhood- and block-level [research] results ... indicate connections between physical deterioration, features presumably related to deterioration, or perceptions of deterioration and crime-related problems, crime or changes in crime

(cf. Schuerman & Kobrin, 1986; Perkins, Meeks & Taylor, 1992).

According to the *Broken Windows Theory:*

> ...at the community level, disorder and crime are usually inextricably linked, in a kind of developmental sequence. Social psychologists and police officers tend to agree that if a window in a building is broken and is left unrepaired, all the rest of the windows will soon be broken. This is true in nice neighborhoods as in rundown ones. Window-breaking does not necessarily occur on a large scale because some areas are inhabited by determined window-breakers whereas others are populated by window-lovers; rather, one unrepaired broken window is a signal no one cares, and so breaking more windows costs nothing. (It has always been fun) (Wilson & Kelling, 1982, online).

Broken windows symbolise not only physical and aesthetic disorder, but also public disorder in the form of disreputable or obstreperous and unpredictable people such as beggars, drunks, addicts, rowdy teenagers, prostitutes and loiterers. Just as placeness and community identity are inextricably linked, so also aesthetic disorder and public disorder. In other words, aesthetic order enhances public order and *vice versa*.

Order reflects community spirit and involvement. It indicates that the community cares, and when people feel safer owing to an aesthetically pleasant and *orderly* environment, this contributes to the development of community identity and community involvement. The first *broken window* that is not addressed in time, signals to the disorderly element that nobody cares. Consequently more *windows* are broken which leaves a more significant mark of aesthetic and public disorder. In this manner the beginning of a breakdown in community control and involvement is ushered in. A perception is created that crime is on the rise, which leads to fear. This leads to further modification of residents' behaviour and further breakdown of community involvement and control, both in terms of aesthetic order and crime prevention. And so disorder and disorderliness, the breakdown of community control and rising crime are caught in a downwards and destructive spiral. Crime escalates and such areas become vulnerable to a serious criminal invasion (Wilson & Kelling, 1982).

In the words of former New York mayor Rudolph W. Giuliani (online):

> *If a climate of disorder and lack of mutual respect is allowed to take root, incidence of other, more serious antisocial behavior will increase. There's a continuum of disorder. Obviously, murder and graffiti are two vastly different crimes. But they are part of the same continuum, and a climate that tolerates one is more likely to tolerate the other.*

The *Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) Movement* also recognises the role of aesthetics in crime prevention. According to one of the design principles propagated by this movement aesthetics and visual elements play an important role in expressing territoriality. Placeness should be seen as an important factor in establishing territoriality and promoting community involvement in crime prevention. *People protect territory that they feel is their own and have a certain respect for the territory of others* (NCPC, online).

The reduction or prevention of crime and crime-related problems such as the fear of crime contributes not only to the quality of life and more pleasant and healthy living environments, but also to tourism development and economic growth.

Aesthetic pleasant living environments and a strong sense of place should not be seen as a magic formula to solve all crime problems. Although such environments may play an important role in this regard, various other factors should also be taken into consideration in preventing crime. Creating aesthetic pleasant environments is especially a problem in the crime-ridden developing urban communities of South Africa. Any available open space is normally occupied illegally by squatters and home gardens and public streets are often the only space that can be used for creating aesthetic pleasant environments.

2.2.2 PROMOTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL INTEGRITY

Contemporary society often experiences difficulty in dealing with the environment in a holistic manner, with the result that environmental management is often approached in a fragmented way. Motloch (1991, p.31) describes the basis of this problem as follows:

> *Cartesian philosophy and newtonian (sic) science have caused a schism between art and science. They have placed in opposition intuitive and rational thinking. They have pitted logic against feeling. This rift has contributed in no small way to the psychological ills of contemporary society.*

A schism between art and science is reached when the perceptual experience is limited to a mere visual experience in the sense of interpreting visual forms on the basis of some language of art, for example, as form, colour, texture, proportion, balance, symmetry, unity, variety, and so on. The perceptual experience should also be seen as the ability to read and understand the landscape in terms of ecological processes[12] as well as cultural forces[13]. In the words of Motloch

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[12] *Ecological forces operating over time create regional landscapes, that is, regionally differing sets of expressions... Each landscape is an integrated set of expressions, which holistically responds to a multiplicity of influences. As systems, they function differently, one from another; as visual resource they express themselves quite differently; but each has its unique spirit of place, or "Genius Loci"* (Motloch, p.53).

[13] *The neat hedgerow-bordered fields and cosy villages which epitomize England in the minds of many people arose as a response to economic forces operating in a particular time, place and cultural context very different from those operating in the USA which have produced the high-rise, large-scale urban landscapes which epitomize that country. The landscapes of western, Christian cultures are varied but related to each other by certain sets of values and differ*

(1991, p.45): *A given landscape is read both as form and as pattern... "Pattern recognition" is the ability ... to read the landscape and understand its elements and forces.* In other words, the ability to understand process and change. Aesthetics cannot be separated from natural, ecological and cultural processes in the landscape. It cannot be separated from the forces of which it is a product.[14] This facet of the perceptual experience therefore promotes environmental integrity and a holistic approach to environmental management by providing a mechanism for interpreting the functioning of and interrelationships between environmental systems.

The perceptual experience is indispensable for and inseparable from sound environmental management.

> *Ours is a society in which we are attempting to plan and to manage the physical environment, but in the process we are either punishing or neglecting man's senses. It is almost as though we are ignorant of the fact that it is through the senses that our physical environment can be apprehended, appreciated - and criticized* (Barr 1970, p.1).

The aesthetic should not only be seen as an environmental component to be managed, but should also form part of the management process.

Today direct contact between the environmental manager and the physical environment tends to become less and less important. In this modern information age planner and designer have become detached from *reality* through a lack of personal perceptual involvement in the landscape and environment. Contemporary man is becoming more and more isolated in an electronic world and is increasingly losing contact with and a feeling for the physical environment. Owing to the immensity of the task of environmental management and the lack of manpower and funds, the manager has to rely very heavily on technological tools and rational deterministic procedures. Bell (1996, p.8) refers to *a tendency to rely on map-based assessments where the logic of the analytical process is paramount.*[15] However, no matter how sophisticated and timesaving,

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very markedly from those of Moslem, Hindu or Buddhist societies which each have their own deeply rooted cultural attitudes to the land (Bell, 1996, p.3).

[14] It is interesting to note that the visual environment forms an inseparable part of the rest of the environment since certain basic principles are relevant to both the ecological and the visual environments. For instance, order exists in any ecosystem (interrelationship between elements) and any ecosystem needs diversity (biodiversity). Visual environment also needs diversity within unity.

[15] In architecture this rational and analytical tendency crystallised into the Modern Movement where form follows function and where appearance is therefore considered less important than function, but according to Bell (1996, p.6)

technology will never be able to replace on-site perceptual experience, which will still be needed to make a meaningful decision with regard to many an impact assessment. There is a definite relationship between aesthetic perception of landscape and *understanding* the functioning of its ecological processes and the environmental sensitivity and the potential of the setting. Onsite perception creates a framework for a holistic approach in the mind of the decision-maker. Aesthetics can be seen as a binding factor that cements all environmental elements together in the mind of the perceiver in order to be able to approach environmental management in a true synergistic manner. Through this process aesthetic perception acquires a deeper dimension and meaning.

2.2.3   CONSERVATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF TOURISM RESOURCES

In the words of Foote (online): *Beauty is not only a feel-good matter, it's good business.* The economies of many areas rely heavily on tourism where visitors come to admire the natural scenery or urban streetscapes. However, the importance of visual resources should not be limited to major tourist attractions such as scenic landscapes and cultural streetscapes or highly designed landscapes or buildings. It is not only the highly designed elements or scenic settings in the landscape that are of value to the tourist but the ordinary elements of the landscape as well, the folk culture and vernacular tradition. The largest portion of the landscape consists of such common elements - areas dominated by vernacular expressions. The landscape of a specific culture or area can be seen as that culture's autobiography. The vernacular elements in the landscape communicate as much concerning the culture as the grand tradition (architectural monuments and highly designed elements). The vernacular tradition tells *us more about the actual culture and common life; the grand tradition more about the culture's grand aspirations, as viewed through the eyes of the design intelligentsia* (Motloch, 1991, p.9). The South African Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEA&T, 1998, p.v) makes the following statement with regard to tourism and the ordinary landscape:

> *The visual environment also forms a backdrop to most other tourist activities such as game watching, touring, entertainment, shopping and sport. The visual*

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this movement *with its honesty of trying to express form out of function has not found a great deal of support among the users of many of the buildings it has produced. This may in part be due to the desire to be able to understand a building or urban landscape in terms of visual as well as functional patterns at a human scale, or it might be that many people consider them "ugly."*

environment can be seen as the fabric that gives meaning and substance to any tourism experience.

Tourist experience cannot be measured only against major attractions and the highlights of a visit, but should be measured against the total experience and diversity in experience during a visit to a country or region. The highlights of a visit can very easily be neutralised by the negative impact of visually polluted or degraded areas. A holistic approach to aesthetic resources is therefore needed.

Placeness forms the basis of such a holistic approach since it focuses on the phenomena of place from a broader perspective and not on individual elements. It also focuses on uniqueness. The tourism experience based on placeness includes a variety of landscape characters and places and can be described as follows:

> *The immense variety, uniqueness, and individuality of places ...(to) move beyond the generalized understanding of an area, and seek to discover the uniqueness of the place... all places have their own special sense, and resultant value. [Placeness can stimulate] great numbers of people to travel around the world to experience a special city like Venice, or a region like the Alps* (Motloch, 1991, p.19).

Placeness or sense of place can therefore be seen as the most important ingredient of aesthetic resources, and a key ingredient for any tourism experience, whether it be impressive or ordinary resources.

2.2.4   STIMULATION OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

According to Rypkema (1996, p.61), *a sense of place and the spirit of community will be crucial for successful economic development well into the next century.* Since sense of place, placeness or place can be equated to the aesthetic environment this statement implies that the aesthetic environment plays a crucial role regarding economic growth. Rypkema (1996, p.62) gives the following description of the synonymy between aesthetic environment and place: *The **physical characteristics of a community**, natural and manmade, new and old, are corporeal manifestations of place, and by extension, community.* (Emphasis added.)

Rypkema (1966, pp.61-62) explains the important contribution of place to economic growth as follows: Localisation plays an important role in the process of economic globalisation. The vital role of cities, towns and even neighbourhoods in the globalisation process should not be ignored. In other words, the environmental slogan *Think globally, act locally* can also be applied to economic development, or the term *global localisation* can be used. Quality of life can be seen as a very important variable in economic development decisions, while quality of life can be best expressed in terms of sense of place and spirit of community. There is currently a shift in economic development decisions from cities being location dependent to cities being place dependent, in other words, to cities which reflect a strong sense of place or placeness. It all boils down to a matter of community or city differentiation.

> *In the free market, it is the differentiated product that commands a monetary premium. If in the long run we want to attract capital, to attract investment to our cities, we must differentiate them from anywhere else. It is our built environment that expresses, perhaps better than anything else, our diversity, our identity, our individuality, or differentiation* (Rypkema, 1996, p.62).

In the words of Kemmis, (1990, p.88):

> *Any serious move by a local economic development organization goes hand in hand with an effort to identify and describe the characteristics of that locality which set it apart and give it a distinct identity.*

A five-year study of 35 cities by the Mississippi Research and Development Centre concluded: *The way a community looks affects how both residents and visitors feel about it. An attractive community has a better chance at industry, including tourism* (Scenic America, online, 1).

The aesthetic environment also has a direct influence on the value of real estate.

> *It is also worth recognizing that scenic or aesthetic values are a legitimate product of the landscape: it is well known that people will pay more for a house with an attractive view than for one without, and that the economies of many areas rely heavily on tourism where visitors come to admire the scenery, or use a beautiful landscape as a setting for other forms of recreation* (Bell, 1996, p.6).

More and more communities and organisations are starting to realise the positive relation between economic development and aesthetics. In the words of Karl Kruse, Executive Director of Scenic Missouri:

> *Scenic Missouri believes that while growth might be inevitable, ugliness is not. If we are to protect and enhance our cultural and economic potential, we must reverse the "uglification" of Missouri. Scenic Missouri is dedicated to leading this effort* (Scenic Missouri, online).

2.3 FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE NEGLECT OF THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT

It has been shown that while the perceptual environment plays an important role in contemporary society it enjoys a relatively low status and is not adequately recognised. This is clearly illustrated by current environmental legislation and policy as has been shown in section 2.1.2.

The neglect of the perceptual environment is creating a problem in contemporary society. We can no longer escape from the pressures of city life by merely taking a vacation. The urban psychosphere is becoming worse each day, while the decay of the perceptual environment is spilling over from city to countryside. Breakaways take place at ever-shortening intervals, merely transplanting city stress and degradation into the vacation landscape. A stage will soon be reached where no amount of sunny beaches, blue skies or wilderness retreats will be able to erase the stress and pressures embedded into the lives of urban dwellers. One solution remaining is to start solving the problem at its source by improving the urban psychosphere.

The effective management of perceptual resources in both the urban and natural environments is becoming a crucial issue seen in the light of the increasing tempo of the deterioration of such resources. While the lack of environmental ethics in contemporary society can be seen as the basis of the problem of neglecting the perceptual environment, various other phenomena contribute to this situation. The following issues give an indication in this regard and need to be addressed in order to improve the state and recognition of the perceptual environment amongst the public, the tourism industry and other interest groups.

2.3.1 LACK OF INTEREST IN AND SUBJECTIVITY OF AESTHETICS

Contemporary man does not tend to see beauty and aesthetics as an important environmental resource and tends to exclude it from the rest of environmental management. It is often dismissed as an unimportant issue by assuming that disadvantaged communities are not interested in beauty since all they care about is the bare necessities for survival such as shelter, food and water. The question to be asked is how can that which is basic nourishment to the soul be reserved for a certain part of the community? It is to make oneself guilty of environmental discrimination. The aesthetic environment plays an important role in providing dignity and a sense of belonging to poorer communities. There is no need for aesthetic appreciation to be limited to highly designed elements in the landscape to be enjoyed by the *cultural elite* only. The interrelationship between ordinary people and the ordinary landscape or the vernacular elements of the landscape should also be considered.

> *...the appreciation and enjoyment of townscape as such is not in the least limited to places where good architecture exists, nor to those who have expert eyes to see it. It is a pleasure to be got in any town that has some interest of form: and it can be enjoyed by anyone who cares to enjoy it* (Sharp, 1968, p.67).

A responsibility for sustainable aesthetic resource management should become part of the larger environmental stewardship by removing beauty from its isolated position of exclusivity and making it part of the public domain.

The lack of interest in the aesthetic environment can be ascribed partly to aesthetic illiteracy and the difficulty among the general public to grasp the basic visual principles needed to appreciate environmental aesthetics. According to Sharp (1968, p.6):

> *The principles of good town-building, an understanding of the nature of town character, an informed appreciation of even the mere looks of a town have perhaps never been very highly developed among the general run of citizens - certainly they have not been so far the last hundred years and more.*

Subjectivity of aesthetics can be seen as another important reason why the perceptual environment is not often included in environmental management. Even in environmental education and awareness-raising the emphasis is placed on measurable environmental issues detrimental to the physical health of communities, such as water and air pollution. Apart from

noise pollution, which can be measured, the rest of the perceptual environment is not treated as an important issue, in all probability due to subjectivity and difficulty in measuring impacts related to such environments.

The low priority of the perceptual environment can also be seen as the result of a materialistic lifestyle aimed at ever-increasing consumption.

The problems of subjectivity and aesthetic illiteracy can be solved by developing a common language of aesthetics, and explaining basic aesthetic principles which can be understood by the general public and professionals alike. (cf. Bell, 1996, pp.7-8.) Together with ecology and the natural sciences, aesthetics should also become an integrated part of environmental education. In developing an aesthetic appreciation of the visual environment, local communities and the public in general will be motivated to take the responsibility for the management of their own local environments. Aesthetics need not be limited to the artistic minded and *eccentric.* In the words of Bell (1997, p.23):

> *We need a better awareness of the link between nature, healthy ecosystems and aesthetics, and of the wider meaning and value of aesthetics beyond the superficial level which the subject frequently receives.*

2.3.2 SEPARATION OF SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL PLACE

Placeness and sense of place form a crucial part of the perceptual environment.

According to Jackson (online):

> *Many of us have lost our sense of place. Lost our intimacy with nature, with our own neighbors and communities, with the other peoples and cultures of the world. We have lost our interconnectedness with both our private and shared places.*

And in the words of Deborah Tall (online):

> *Few would dispute the fact that we exist in a culture which keenly feels a lack of community, of connectedness. There is no sense of place for some of us who dwell herein.*

The loss of placeness and sense of community can be ascribed to a variety of factors such as modern society's impersonal lifestyle, the lack of social space on community level, the pace of life, the private motor car and advanced telecommunication technologies. As a result of these factors the stage is set for more and more people to try and escape reality by creating place in cyberspace and building virtual communities as a substitute for real sense of place and community (cf. Tall, online). This is nothing more than an illusion of community, belonging, identity and placeness - virtual communities without place and an attempt to experience sense of place in the *placeless* realm of cyberspace. The computer and other electronic media such as television and the cellular phone are contributing to this loss by undermining the relationship between social and physical place (cf. Meyrowitz, 1985). With increasing use of *cyberplace* the public is likely to forget what it means to experience real sense of place and be part of a true community.

Sense of place can only be real when experiencing natural and cultural elements by having direct contact and involving all the human senses. Although cyberspace may play an important role in rallying support for aesthetic resource management, it may also have a negative influence in this regard by undermining real placeness and physical contact between community members. If this tendency persists, communities' involvement in perceptual resource management and the creation of placeness will become an ever-increasing problem in the future.

2.3.3   CARTESIAN AND COSMOPOLITAN DESIGN APPROACHES

Placeness is undermined even further by these two appoaches.

Motloch (1991, p.278) describes the influence of the Cartesian design approach as follows:

> *Contemporary cities are often characterized by well-designed physical elements (buildings and sites) that aggregate into chaotic, psychologically unhealthy wholes. This is because most decision-makers are designing the city by using a Cartesian design-the-piece paradigm. Many are also capriciously pursuing new styles, rather than focusing on the management of environmental quality and richness of human experience... They design buildings and sites rather than landscapes, and sometimes they mistakenly define design as form-generation, not experience making ... they concentrate on the design of settings or the elements they contain,*

rather than the place that occurs in the mind as the individual experiences and imparts meaning to the settings they designed.

The cosmopolitan design approach can be described as follows:

> *As universal mass culture continues to spread into every corner of the earth, few significant regional landscapes are being built, particularly in North America – despite our great regional diversity. We seem, instead, to be caught in Rouse-ification, Disneyfication, museumification and every other form of mass kitsch and excessive self-consciousness. Global media and international trade agreements have created this universal culture expressed at the most mediocre level – a culture that results in endless placelessness* (Landscape Architecture, 1994, p.70).

It is important to give character back to the region, the landscape and the streetscape.

2.3.4   ISLAND SYNDROME AND GLOBALISM

The Cartesian and cosmopolitan design approaches are also reflected by Quammen's view on the *island syndrome and globalism*. According to Quammen (1997, p.58) there are two main factors that threaten biological and cultural diversity, namely ecological fragmentation and cultural unification.

> *As we humans have spread across earth's surface, asserting ourselves as the most devastatingly successful species in the history of life, we have transformed the great continental landscapes … by shrinking them overall and by dividing the remnants into pieces. Those pieces constitute ecological islands in an ocean of human dominion… The island syndrome challenges one of the most basic assumptions behind humanity's halfhearted efforts at nature conservation: that we can save the rain forest, the dry forest, the panda, the elephant, the multifarious richness of species and ecosystems. by setting aside a few tracts of expendable landscape and calling them parks, nature reserves, refuges. Truth is we can't. It won't work. It's not enough. Nature is too interconnected.*

According to Quammen (1997, p.58) the global village is also becoming a reality,

> *…as advances in communication and travel carry Web sites, rap music, Marlboro ads, American TV and English speaking tourists to every corner of the planet, pushing local cultures and languages to extinction. [This] connectivity, with its*

homogenizing effect, turns out to be just as destructive, in its own way, as the island syndrome... The dismal irony of our age is that these two seemingly opposite trends, cultural unification and ecological fragmentation, yield a common result: loss of diversity. The global archipelago will be a world that's starker, uglier, duller and lonelier for us humans as a species, and we'll all experience that loneliness together.

Quammen's approach of fragmentation and unification is also relevant to perceptual resource management. In modern society perceptual resources are also treated as isolated areas of high scenic quality. These visual islands and islands of placeness are seen as the only visual resources that are worthwhile to be managed and conserved; they serve as areas to which the urban dweller can escape if the pressures of every-day life get too high or as isolated tourist attractions. Just as animal and plant species cannot survive and are vulnerable in isolated areas, so man cannot survive psychologically and is psychologically vulnerable in isolated areas of high scenic quality to which he has to escape from time to time. The isolation of areas of scenic value and the globalisation of the visual environment through cultural unification will also lead to a loss of diversity of visual resources.

2.3.5 FUNCTIONALISM

This approach of focusing on functionality while ignoring aesthetics has a negative impact on the psychosphere and the quality of the human living environment.

 In the words of Sharp (1968, p.6): *How a town looks is no less important than how it works; and if in making a town work we destroy its looks we destroy a large part of its intrinsic value to our civilization.*

Towns are living organisms and should serve contemporary needs.

...their buildings must certainly have a basis in utility. But they cannot, in a civilised society, be judged wholly according to whether or not they are in a state of perfect usefulness. They are also objects: objects of character, personality, and a physical appearance which, according to the kind of society they serve, may be as important, with a different kind of importance, as their mere usefulness may be.

Their associations, as well as their appearance, may also be regarded as important - important as part of the history of the society that built them and has used them (Sharp, 1968, p.18).

Sharp (1968, p.19) speaks of towns in terms of *...the visual qualities, the architectural and social history and the sheer physical pleasantness that they nearly always display* - which may be very easily replaced by *... a modern neutrality where once there was grace and individual character.*

There is no need to have functionality at the cost of aesthetic appearance. This principle can be summed up as follows: *If functionality is necessary, ugliness is not.*

2.3.6 A NEED FOR MANAGING PLACENESS

The perceptual environment, with placeness at its centre, is under severe threat today.

According to McCloskey (online) *the homogenizing onslaught of [a] hyper-industrial global monoculture* leads to a decline in the diversity of species and cultures and of ecological legacies and cultural traditions:

> *[It] invades and pervades ecosystems, economies and cultures everywhere in the world in the name of universal "progress." ... Mindful of how far things have gone already, of how little social and ecological fabric remains intact, and the depth of the mindlessness of day-to-day, we experience an unprecedented culture shock in our own society, future shock of the soul.*

It has become necessary to reject the onslaught of a global monoculture and to conserve, create and enhance placeness through public awareness and involvement.

> *More than ever today we need to develop an ethic of place. No amount of governmental rules and regulations will ever suffice if people do not know the land, love and care for it in their hearts as their home... In rejecting the standardizing and centralizing thrusts of global monoculture, we opt for diversity and decentralization, a more appropriate scale for human affairs* (McCloskey, online).

The effective and sustainable management of visual resources is important in order to create placeness wherever possible. The urgency of such a step should be seen against the background of the dynamic character of modern society. Due to unlimited options provided by modern technology, the making and unmaking of regional identity and placeness has become much more complex, diffuse and unstable, with accelerating cycles of change (Landscape Architecture, 1994, pp.70.74).

> *In previous slowly changing low-technology cultures, the landscapes that emerged usually had an integrated, strongly systemic sense, because of the limited choices available. With our rapidly changing heterogeneous culture and powerful technology, however, achieving a coherent sense now requires a strong landscape-as-place emphasis and aggressive management of placeness* (Motloch, 1991, p.20).

Such an approach should be seen in the light of the fact that *genius loci* is abstract and intangible, it tends to be more commonly understood on an emotional and subconscious level and the factors contributing to it may be very difficult to identify. It is therefore very sensitive, fragile and vulnerable. *One of the difficult aspects of genius loci is that we may instantly sense its presence but be unable to identify what has created it* (Bell, 1996, p.107). It may be difficult to create. In the words of Bell (1996, p.108), *...genius loci is an elusive quality which tends to be easier to conserve than create.*

In the process of conserving, creating and enhancing placeness it is important to follow a holistic approach, namely to consider the interrelationship between placeness, aesthetics, community, culture and ecology.

2.4   SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT

In Chapter 1 it was pointed out that sustainable development and sustainable management are holistic in nature and that, if the principle of holism is applied consistently, it will have to include environmental aesthetics.

Landscape character and placeness, including both biophysical and cultural dimensions, can therefore be seen as an environmental asset that should be managed sustainably like all other

environmental assets (Beatley & Manning, 1997, p.32).[16] Something of this approach is reflected by the following statement made by John Ruskin (1981, pp. 176-177) almost 150 years ago:

> *When we build let us think that we build for ever. Let it not be for present delight, nor for present use alone; let it be such work as our descendants will thank us for, and let us think, as we lay stone on stone, that a time is to come when those stones will be held sacred because our hands have touched them, and that men will say as they look upon the labor and wrought substances of them. "See! This our fathers did for us."*

We are to conserve, contribute to and create placeness – a legacy we can leave to forthcoming generations. With the accelerating tempo of life today, the dynamic character of the visual scene and the uniformity of mass-produced building materials and building units it becomes more and more difficult to conserve, contribute to and create something timeless. It is important to see placeness as a continuing process which is passed on from generation to generation, a golden thread stretching through time, to be picked up by each new generation, and which once lost may be very difficult to find again.

The *Guidelines for Human Settlement Planning and Design* (CSIR, 2000, p.5) recognise the degree to which settlements reflect *timeless qualities* as a dimension of sustainability. As the phrase indicates, timeless qualities remain over time and are enriched by processes of chance.

The Countryside Agency in England is another institution that recognises visual resource management as part and parcel of sustainable resource management. The agency's *Countryside Character Initiative* treats sustainability in terms of the maintenance and enhancement of the diversity and the distinctiveness of landscape character (Swanwick, 1999).

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[16]In South Africa the eradication of alien invasive plant species through the *Work for Water Programme* should not only be praised for its contribution to biodiversity and water conservation but the value of its aesthetic dimension should also be recognised. Exotic species such as bluegum *(Eucalyptus spp.),* rooikrans *(Acacia cyclops)* and black wattle *(Acacia mearnsii)* have a huge impact on placeness by neutralising distinctive regional characteristics and creating a *monoplace.* No visitor to South can be blamed if he/she should see the bluegum as South Africa's national tree. *Eucalyptus* species from Australia have been planted almost everywhere in South Africa, especially in areas with few or no indigenous tree species of significant proportions, with the result that the Highveld areas of the North West Province may become almost indistinguishable from certain Fynbos areas in the Overberg district of the Western Cape.

2.5 CONCLUSIONS

Sub-problem 1 covers the role and status of the perceptual environment in contemporary society, while Hypothesis 1 states that the perceptual environment plays an important role in contemporary society and that it forms part of sustainable environmental management. This hypothesis assumes, furthermore, that the role of the perceptual environment is not adequately recognised.

The following conclusions can be drawn from Chapter 2 with regard to Sub-problem 1 and Hypothesis 1:

2.5.1 THE STATUS OF THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT

It is evident that the perceptual environment does not receive adequate recognition in contemporary society.

The root cause of this problem can be seen as a lack of proper environmental ethics, contemporary society's consumeristic mindset and a pragmatic and egocentric approach to environmental management. This approach not only tends to neglect the environment in general, but when it is recognised, tends to focus attention on more tangible and pragmatic aspects, such as water and air pollution, which have a more direct influence on the physical well-being of man. In order to solve this problem less pragmatic and more balanced environmental ethics, that would also recognise the importance of the psychosphere and the perceptual environment, is needed.

Environmental policy and legislation and the implementation thereof was used as an important indicator of the status of the perceptual environment. It has been shown that the perceptual environment occupies a relatively low status compared to other environmental issues and that even *Agenda 21* (United Nations, Earth Summit), which is the blueprint for global sustainable development into the 21st century, does not give recognition to the role of the psychosphere and the perceptual environment. However, current environmental legislation and policy contain certain key elements that provide a nucleus for the effective management of perceptual resources in future. It can almost be seen as an unrealised declaration of intent for recognising the important role of the perceptual environment. The only thing still needed to actualise this *legislative potential*

is a more acute awareness of the importance of aesthetics among the public as well as in government. The following can be mentioned regarding this *intention* of legislation and policy as analysed in 2.1.2:

❑ The inclusion of certain perceptually related words and concepts in defining the term *environment* points to a strong intention of such legislation and policy to recognise the perceptual environment as an integral part of environmental management.

❑ It has been shown that the citizen's main environmental right includes not only physical health and well-being, but also psychological health and well-being, which also encompass environmental aesthetics.

❑ Another indicator of the intention to recognise the perceptual environment is the inclusion of visual impact management in environmental impact assessments, and references to the importance of tourism resources in policy documents, which include aesthetic resources.

Certain environmental management principles contained in legislation and policy also provide a strong case for a stronger recognition of the importance of the perceptual environment. An anthropocentric approach advocated by environmental policy and legislation obligates the recognition of the importance of man as perceiver of the environment and therefore the importance of the perceptual environment. Likewise the holistic approach to environmental management followed by policy and legislation obligates the inclusion of the perceptual environment as part of the total environment.

Legal systems have already started to give recognition to the importance of an aesthetically pleasing human living environment, as a contributing factor to the general welfare of the public. Various court decisions have already been made on such grounds (Barnard, 1999, p.50, footnote; *Lamar-Orlando Outdoor Advertising v. City of Ormond Beach, 415 So.2d 1312, 1314 (Fla. 5th DCA 1982)* as cited in Citizens for a Scenic Florida, online,1*).*

2.5.2 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

Although this is not recognised adequately, it has become clear that perceptual resource management has an important role to fulfil in contemporary society.

Various meaningful conclusions can be drawn in this regard, which can be summarised as follows:

❑ Placeness and sense of place can be seen as the essence, the sum and substance of the perceptual environment. It forms the key to the sound management of the perceptual environment.

❑ The perceptual environment makes an important contribution to the creation of more healthy and pleasant human living environments. It is important for aspects such as the potential of human lives, discouragement of crime and vandalism, cultural development, community identity and involvement, environmental awareness and care, mental and physical health, conflict resolution and combating urban decay.

❑ Placeness and aesthetics have a high economic value. They form the fabric on which any tourism industry is based and promote economic development in general by attracting investments.

❑ The perceptual environment is not only a luxury to be enjoyed by the higher income groups, but it also plays an important role in the uplifting of disadvantaged communities through community identity and awareness and as a catalyst for economic development.

❑ Aesthetics and placeness not only have psychological and economic value and form an integral part of environmental resources to be managed sustainably, but also play a direct role in environmental management by providing an essential instrument for this purpose. They provide a perceptual framework within which environmental awareness and environmental management becomes tangible and manifests itself, and within which the objects of management can be visualised. The perceptual process also promotes

environmental integrity by creating a framework for a holistic approach in the mind of the environmental manager. Aesthetics can be seen as a binding factor that cements all environmental elements together in the mind of the perceiver in order to be able to approach environmental management in a true synergistic manner.

2.5.3 THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT AS PART OF SUSTAINABLE ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

It may be concluded that the perceptual environment forms part of sustainable environmental management. This conclusion is supported by the fact that a mechanism can be provided for expressing aesthetic sustainability. The conservation, enhancement and management of placeness as a continuous process serve as an adequate mechanism for this purpose.

The most convincing argument for including the perceptual environment remains the concept of holism. If a holistic approach to environmental management is followed perceptual resource management should be seen as part and parcel of sustainable management. If the principle of holism is applied consistently we have no other choice but to include perceptual resource management.

This argument is supported by the fact that institutions such as the *Countryside Agency* in England and South Africa's *Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)* have already started to recognise the perceptual environment as an integral part of sustainable environmental management.

2.5.4 VERIFICATION OF HYPOTHESIS 1

From the above conclusions it is evident that the perceptual environment plays an important role in modern society and forms part of sustainable environmental management. It has also been shown that the role of the perceptual environment is not adequately recognised.

Hypothesis 1 can therefore be accepted.

3.2   THE ROLE AND FUNCTION[17] OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

3.2.1   MAIN FUNCTIONS

As an important element in the perceptual environment outdoor information transfer can make a positive contribution with regard to the following:

3.2.1.1 Directing and guiding the road user and the pedestrian

To be directed by outdoor signs has always been a part of everyday life, to a lesser or greater extent, depending on the familiarity and complexity of the environment. Today the large number of functions, facilities and destinations in the urban environment has increased the need for direction and guidance. An ever-increasing mobility and tempo of life, the speed of modern transportation modes and the isolation of the motorist from fellow urbanites, by being encapsulated within the space of the private car, amplify this tendency. According to Preza (1994), the functional aspects of directing and moving people around the city are not only a matter of convenience. A system that efficiently guides tourists or shoppers to their destinations may also contribute to their quality of life by giving them more time to do what they came to do and a chance to do it in a better frame of mind. This also has economic implications, since pleasant visits imply return visits and higher spending by visitors. A well-planned sign programme may also contribute to traffic safety and the well-being of the motorist.

Signs also play an important role in directing and guiding the tourist and traveller. An effective sign system is needed to satisfy the information needs of the traveller. King and Wilkinson (1980, pp.46-48) proposed such a system for interstate and federal-aid primary highways in the United States in order to direct and guide motorists to services and attractions along the way. The system proposed for interstate and other limited-access highways consists of the following three information levels:

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[17] Billboards may even provide opportunities for outdoor recreation. In the Netherlands, where the topography provides absolutely no scope for rock climbing, many a rock climber takes up the sport of *buildering* or urban climbing. Participants

□ **General service signing:** The first and simplest level contains basic information on services and attractions and may include generic sign symbols. In South Africa this level will consist of brown tourism signs which form part of the official South African road traffic sign system. It therefore does not form part of this study.

□ **Specific service signs or logo signs:** The second level of the proposed sign system consists of logo signs which will supplement or replace the general service signing by providing more information on specific services. A logo sign consists of a relatively large sign with various panels containing the logos of hotels, restaurants, fast-food outlets, filling stations or any other service of interest to the motorist. Such a sign is placed in advance of an off-ramp on a highway and indicates the services which can be reached by using the off-ramp. Logo signs are supplemented by smaller directional signs with logos placed along or at the terminal end of the off-ramp. The outdoor advertising industry plays an important role with regard to logo signs, making it part of the free-market system.

□ **Information centres** along highways provide more detailed information in the form of brochures, maps and various displays.

On primary highways without limited access King and Wilkinson (1980, p.48) proposed a sign system consisting of only two levels. General service signing and small-size logo signing are combined to provide the first level of the system, while the second level consists of information centres.

3.2.1.2 Informing and warning the public in order to enhance general well-being and safety

Outdoor signs inform, warn and provide a public service in a myriad of ways. They ensure privacy and the rights of individuals and groups. They can be used as an *educational medium* by conveying messages concerning public campaigns such as family planning, environmental issues, health

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in this sport climb everything that is climbable – bridges, church towers, light masts, trees and even billboards. There are even guidelines available on how to climb billboards (Euronet, online).

...MISSING IN ACTION...

SOMEBODY TALKED

V-HOMES ARE CAREFUL

CARELESS MATCHES AID THE AXIS

PREVENT FOREST FIRES

NOW LET'S ALL BUY BONDS

Outdoor advertisements and signs can be used as an educational medium by conveying messages concerning public campaigns such as family planning, environmental issues, crime prevention, road safety and wartime campaigns. It may bolster fund-raising campaigns for charities and community services and may convey messages concerning issues such as views on the use of alcohol and tobacco and the wearing of fur coats.

The above illustrations reflect the important role billboards played in public service announcements during and for a brief period after World War II.

Figure 3.9

Outdoor information transfer provides a public service and enhances general well-being and safety

Sources: Sloman, 1999 [http://www2.kenyon.edu/people/slomanj/main.htm]; Fraser, 1991, p.89

issues[18], crime prevention, road safety and wartime campaigns. They may bolster fund-raising campaigns for charities and community services and may convey messages concerning social views on issues such as the use of alcohol and tobacco and the wearing of fur coats. Outdoor signs might be used for political campaigns and for informing people of their rights and responsibilities as citizens. They also provide information on and lead us in decisions which we have to make in our daily lives and which might have a direct bearing on our general well-being. Such decisions may vary from warnings against possible threats to instructions regarding the proper use of facilities and services, or decisions with regard to the spending of our leisure time.

Outdoor signs are used for the identification of enterprises, buildings or any other form of land use or locality. In contemporary society outdoor signs play an important role in the identification and awareness of urban elements and functions. A study conducted by McGill and Korn (1982, pp.198 - 9) on environmental awareness in an urban business area showed a much greater awareness of utilitarian elements labelled by signs such as businesses, than of purely aesthetic elements such as huge painted murals. These findings should be seen against the context and setting of the study area as well as cultural conditioning. The study area consisted of a small business area where people go to shop, eat and do business, while cultural conditioning implies the acquisition of a utilitarian rather than an aesthetic orientation to the environment by most urban residents. It must also be seen against today's lifestyle of ever-increasing consumption.

3.2.1.3 Stimulating economic growth and promoting freedom of commercial choice

As an important component of commercial advertising, outdoor advertising can make an important contribution to the complementary functions of expanding commercial sales and enhancing consumer choice.[19] These functions are described by certain proponents of economic growth as *freedom of*

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[18] Research undertaken in Nebraska in 1993 and 1994 has shown that paid outdoor advertising can be a valuable method of increasing community awareness of health messages (Vidlak and Huneke, online).

[19] According to a report on the uses of billboards by Missouri business, billboards provide several types of information that can help consumers make purchase decisions. A survey undertaken amongst billboard users in Missouri indicated that 75% of businesses making use of billboards, provide information on the types of products and services the business offers, while 36,7% provide information on the quality of products and services, 21,4% on convenience, 17,9% on savings and value and 10,7% on prices (Taylor, 2000, p.9).

commercial speech. According to this point of view freedom of commercial speech is seen as an important ingredient of freedom of expression and therefore as a fundamental right guaranteed by the constitutions of most democratic countries. *The Freedom of Commercial Speech Trust,* a South African organisation, defines freedom of commercial speech as follows:

> *The legal right to produce...*
> *bestows the legal right to promote...*
> *which ensures the consumer's right to choose.*
>
> (Outdoor Graphics, 1997, Summer (4), p. 12)

Freedom of commercial speech or advertising is seen as being at the heart of the market-driven economy and a major contributor to healthy competition. According to this view, advertising plays an important role in the upliftment of communities' living standards in general.

> *In a free society, mass production is predicated upon mass selling, another name for advertising. Mass production makes possible countless products at a cost the mass of people can pay and about which they learn through advertising* (Russel & Lane, 1993, p.11).

Advertising therefore plays an important role in lowering the cost of consumer items. It also plays a role by informing the public of the availability of products and services, thereby increasing consumer awareness. According to Oosthuizen (1997), an educated and informed consumer will be more demanding, which stimulates competition and therefore guarantees better products and brands since competition leads to innovation. Educating and informing the consumer stimulates economic growth directly by creating larger demands for products and services, through which job creation also takes place. Advertising is therefore important for both the economic well-being of a country and the material and social well-being of its citizens.

It can be foreseen that freedom of commercial speech and outdoor information transfer will play an increasingly important role in a new world of global trade and instant communication.

The outdoor advertising industry itself also contributes directly to job creation and serves as a source of revenue. Table 1 gives an indication of the economic impact of the outdoor advertising industry in the state of Florida.

TABLE 1
ECONOMIC IMPACT OF OUTDOOR ADVERTISING IN FLORIDA FOR 2000

Strength of outdoor advertising industry	$293 million
Estimate of strength by 2005	$306 million
Business revenues supported directly or indirectly by outdoor advertising	±$613 million
Income for Florida households directly or indirectly supported by outdoor advertising	$233 million
Jobs directly or indirectly generated	7 510
Sales tax generated by outdoor advertising firms	$25 million
Government income generated through licenses and permits	$13 million
Market value of *free* public service ads	$10,6 million
Landscaping and maintenance of public rights-of-way	$400 000
Source: FOAA, online (1)	

Unfortunately, the painting of billboards by hand, which contributes to employment, is now being replaced by digitally printed vinyl images at a lower cost. In a city such as Chennai, India, hand-painted billboards advertising movies, which are painted on cloth banners, can be seen as part of local tradition (Chennai best.com, online). According to Mr Paul Anthony, Buying Manager, Portland India Outdoor Advertising, digitally printed billboards are currently increasing their share by 15% per year at the expense of hand-painted billboards in Indian metropolitan areas (Varghese, 2001, online). It will therefore not take long before the hand-painting of billboards will disappear as a source of employment in India.

3.2.1.4 Enhancing the visual environment

If sound design principles are applied tastefully, advertisements and signs may be used as instruments for obtaining the necessary visual diversity, interest and character in drab and dreary environments. High-quality street and advertising furniture may, for instance, make an important contribution to streetscapes while the use of banners may create a rather festive atmosphere. According to Bell (1996, pp. 99; 101), it could be argued that man has a basic fundamental need for visual diversity to provide stimulus and enrichment to his quality of life. This need may have arisen early in the history of man through a recognition that landscapes containing variety tended to supply more food and opportunities for shelter and therefore protection from predators as well as a better chance of survival during climatic fluctuations or other periodic environmental stresses. A lack of visual diversity and environmental understimulation may create certain human behavioural problems. If applied in a responsible manner, outdoor advertisements and signs can therefore contribute to better living environments.

More permanent signs and advertisements such as signs on top of skyscrapers may contribute to the visual scene by forming prominent landmarks. Such signs may even contribute to community identity and a sense of belonging such as the *Osborne* or *Veterano* bull, which was erected in large numbers in the Spanish countryside to advertise *Osborne's Veterano Brandy*. These huge billboards became such part of the Spanish landscape and national identity that their intended removal by the authorities was met by public protest (Pretoria News, 1994, October 29). In the larger townships of South Africa, community towers, consisting of an illuminated billboard, a television screen and electronic advertising, serve as visual focal points and community gathering points (Outdoor Graphics, 2000, Autumn (1), p17).

The *en masse* and large-scale application of outdoor advertisements and signs create very striking nightscapes in entertainment and shopping districts such as Piccadilly Circus, Madison Square, Tokyo's Ginza district and the Strip in Las Vegas. Such large-scale application of outdoor advertising can be seen as a key ingredient of these world-renowned tourist attractions. Gordon Cullen (1971, pp.151; 85) sees such nightscapes as a most valuable contribution of the twentieth century to urban scenery – landscapes *of a kind never before seen in history, ... a surrealist drama of shapes, lights*

and movement in which the message sinks back under the free show, the evening-out sensation. The following descriptions of Las Vegas by Wolfe (1981, pp.20,18) give a very clear indication of the dazzling splendour of these night-time wonderlands:

> *... Las Vegas is the only town in the world whose skyline is made up neither of buildings, like New York, nor of trees, like Wilbraham, Massachusetts, but signs. One can look at Las Vegas from a mile away on Route 91 and see no buildings, no trees, only signs. But such signs! They tower. They revolve, they oscillate, they soar in shapes before which the existing vocabulary of art history is helpless.*

> *Las Vegas' Strip, U.S. Route 91, where the neon and the par lamps - bubbling, spiraling, rocketing, and exploding in sunbursts ten stories high out in the middle of the desert - celebrate one-story casinos.*

As a form of art or medium of expression, advertisements and signs can also influence architectural style and urban design. The French architect Jean Nouvel has projected a series of streetscapes and cityscapes, which can aesthetically be seen as a collage of popular visual culture. These images of an urban future are based on an overscaled and simultaneous display of information. According to Rasmuss (1996, p.11), Nouvel has taken Tokyo's Ginza district and even London's Piccadilly Circus as cues and has finally placed the *thrust of advertising into architecture*. Edgars City on the corner of Pritchard and Rissik Streets in Johannesburg can be seen as a good example of a visual component that will easily fit into Nouvel's cityscape. Referring to Edgars City, Rasmuss (1996, p.11) argues that Nouvel's cityscape images are a lot closer to the likely reality of future cities than the traditional language of architectural articulation and urban form and therefore merit serious attention. It embodies the actual street culture of our cities, and billboards and advertising panels provide a good medium to reflect moments of daily city life.

Another good example of outdoor advertising used as a design element is Robert Venturi's *Football Hall of Fame*, a building which is actually a huge billboard, displaying to passing motorists the results of recent football matches.

Figure 3.10

**Outdoor information transfer as a medium for architectural expression
Edgars City**

At Edgars City, on the corner of Pritchard and Rissik Streets in Johannesburg, signs are used as a medium of architectural expression and in this manner the necessary visual diversity, interest and character are obtained in a drab and dreary environment. It portrays the excitement of the city centre without contributing to visual clutter and sign proliferation. The Edgars City design speaks of harmony, simplicity and discipline. Large signs advertise brand names sold in Edgars. No smaller signs are allowed as they would clutter the design. This demonstrates that advertising control is necessary to ensure sound architectural and urban design.

Date of photos: October 2001

Figure 3.11

Outdoor information transfer as a medium for architectural expression

The Football Hall of Fame
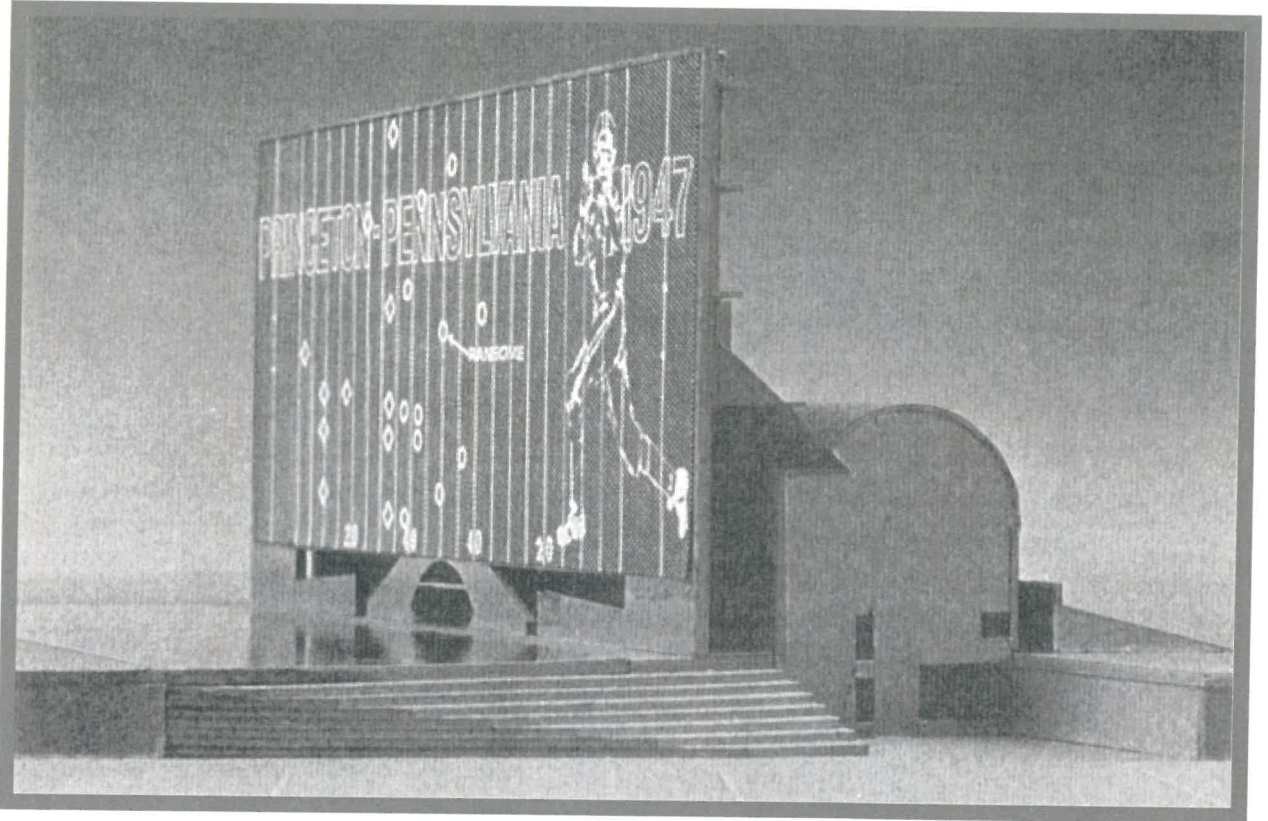
Outdoor advertisements and signs can make an important contribution to the visual environment by forming a harmonious part of architecture. The *Football Hall of Fame* by the architect Robert Venturi uses a huge scoreboard as an information device and important design element.

Source: Jencks, 1973, p.221

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Outdoor information transfer as a medium for architectural expression

Menlyn Park
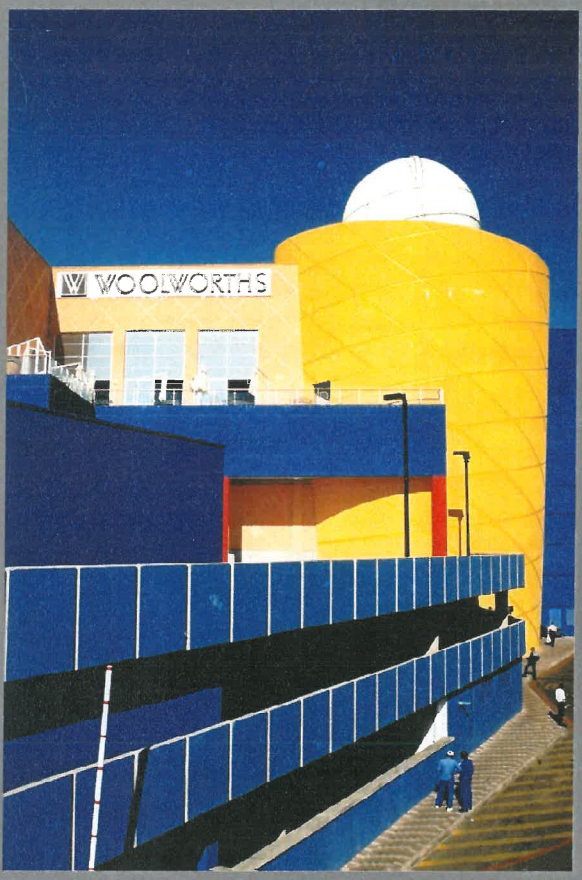
Date of photos: November 2001

Figure 3.12

continued

Outdoor advertisements and signs can make an important contribution to the visual environment by forming a harmonious part of architecture. The outdoor advertisements at Menlyn Park, the largest suburban shopping centre in Pretoria, fit well into the modern and colourful architecture of this shopping centre. Even the huge gantry billboard spanning across Atterbury Road next to Menlyn Park (top) blends into the architectural style of the shopping centre and contributes to local character. Gantry billboards normally provide good examples of the intrusive character of outdoor advertising since they confront the road user in a direct and blatant manner (Fig. 3.17). In this case the intrusive effect has been softened to a certain extent due to a harmony between billboard and architecture with regard to line, shape and colour.

Date of photos: November 2001

Advertisements displayed on billboards or as posters are often of a very high design quality and may be considered a form of art (cf. Diggs & Thompson, 1999). The French art poster of the latter half of the nineteenth century and American billboard advertising, from as early as the 1920s till the 1950s, can be seen as good examples of this art-form in the past. In Las Vegas winning posters from a school competition were recently displayed on billboards donated by an outdoor advertising company. This project formed part of an initiative by the Las Vegas Arts Commission to enhance local neighbourhoods by means of public art (City of Las Vegas, online). And in South Africa, near the small town of Nieu Bethesda, a billboard along the national road featuring a black and white photograph of a donkey was used as part of an exhibition by the artist Jo Ractliffe (Dodd, 1999).

Hand-painted billboards present a special artistic touch. In the Indian city of Chennai hand-painted movie billboards are being recognised as a significant form of popular art (Chennai best.com, online). Other possibilities for hand-painted original quality and uniqueness include painted advertising murals, while even passenger-planes provide a canvas for artistic expression, which brightens up many an airport. In South Africa a *Nationwide Airlines* aircraft was turned into a painted image of a southern right whale in order to promote whale tourism along the South African coastline (The Star, 1998, October 6). Hand-painted murals brighten up dreary environments, promote community spirit, may involve community artists and may include both educational and advertising murals. (Knoll, 1999, pp.14-15). Hand-painted advertising murals may also contribute to placeness by expressing local culture and artistic abilities. Unfortunately, hand-painted billboards are currently being displaced by billboards produced by modern techniques such as digital printing and computerised painting, which are less expensive. Although these modern techniques do not have the hand-made image and original value of hand-painted advertisements, they also provide immense possibilities for presenting outdoor advertising as an art form. One of the latest advertising trends, car or bus wrapping, together with other forms of mobile advertising, often makes a very striking contribution, which can be described as *art on the road* (cf. DC Media & Marketing, online; Drive Ad, online; Graewolf Mobile Media, online). Huge computerised painted advertisements stretched against building walls or across building facades also provide huge artistic possibilities. These larger-than-life computerised painted advertisements are often used to conceal unsightly building renovations or constructions, while billboard panels are used to demarcate building sites.

Fraser, 1991, p.60
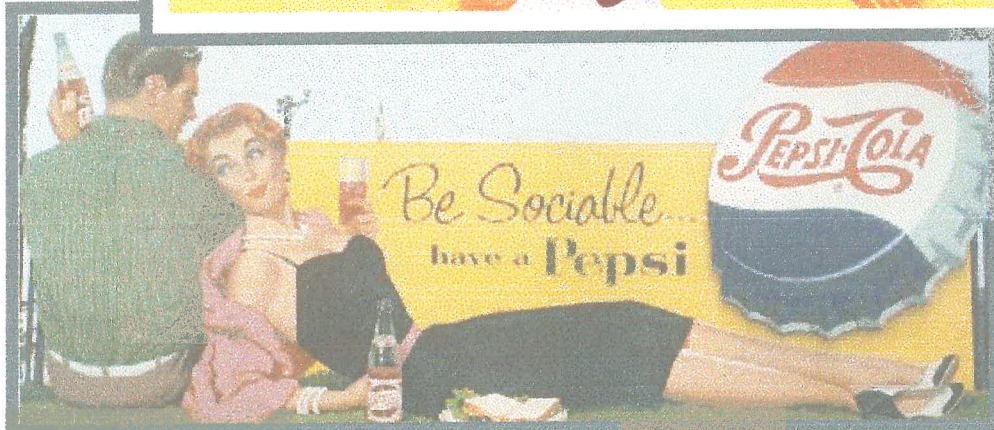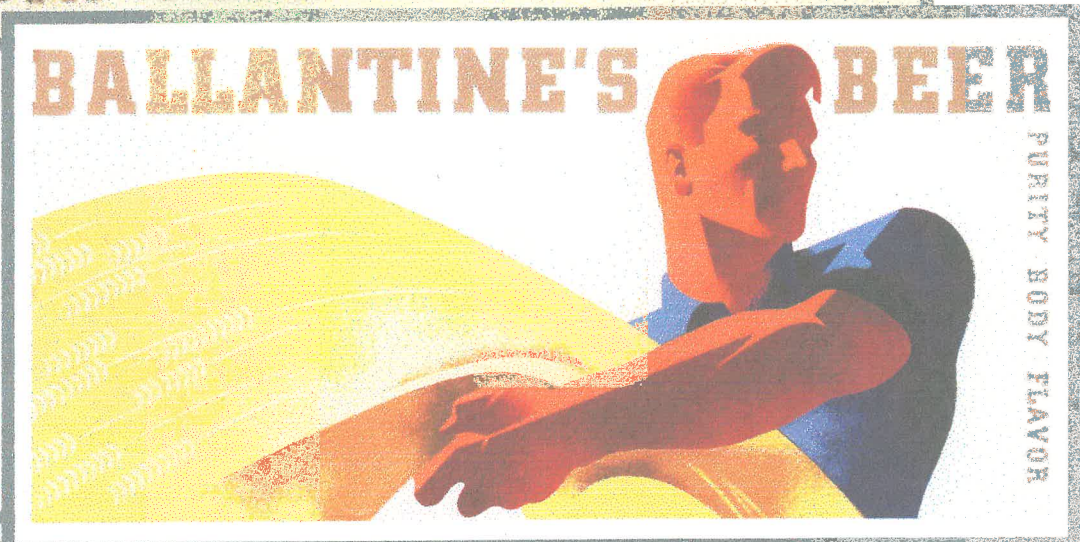
Fraser, 1991, p.74

Sloman, 1999 [http://www2.kenyon.edu/people/slomanj/main.htn]

Even billboard advertising may make a positive contribution to environmental aesthetics. In the past many of these advertisements were of a very high design quality and may be considered a form of art. The 1920s contributed a classical, realistic style (top), followed by the more stylized approach of the 1930s (centre), while the 1950s saw a return to painted realism in a somewhat more informal style (bottom).

**Figure 3.13
Billboard advertising
as a form of art**

Media & Marketing - http://www. wrap-a-bus.com

DC Media & Marketing
http://www.wrap-a-bus.com

Graewolf Mobile Media - http://www.graewolf.com
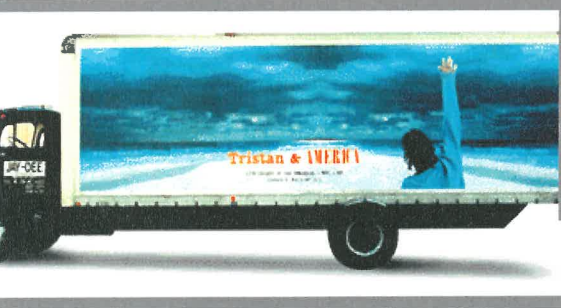
dern techniques such as digital printing provide immense
portunities for expressing outdoor advertising as an art form. One
the latest advertising trends, car or bus wrapping (top) together
h other forms of mobile advertising such as advertising panels
ttom), often make a very striking contribution which can be
scribed as *art on the road.*

**Figure 3.14
Art on the road**

Photo dates: 1999

Photo dates: September 1995

Advertising can be used to enhance the visual environment by concealing unsightly building renovations. After part of the Pretoria Municipal Buildings was destroyed by fire, banner type signs were used to conceal unsightly building facades (top). At the same time these banners also served as a source of income to the Pretoria City Council. In Paris a banner concealing restoration work harmonises perfectly with building and trees (bottom).

Figure 3.15

Advertising concealing unsightly building renovations

It has also been argued that advertisements such as billboards take the monotony out of long journeys and prevent road accidents by providing visual points of interest and stimulation to the weary traveller.

Outdoor advertising murals on walls and other surfaces, which are graffiti prone, may play an important role in combating this problem. This is especially applicable to walls and surfaces along railway lines in Europe and the United Kingdom where graffiti has become a major problem. However, such advertising murals should be provided with taste and must be maintained effectively.

3.2.1.5 Source of income and similar benefits

Outdoor advertising may serve as a source of income to local authorities, communities and institutions. Outdoor advertising companies may also provide facilities, services and amenities in exchange for advertising rights or to improve their image. The following serves as examples in this regard:

❑ In South Africa a publishing group provided community towers containing big-screen outdoor television which broadcasts a variety of programmes to previously disadvantaged communities. Apart from advertisements on the outdoor screens the community towers are also used as an advertising structure to market a periodical aimed at these groups. Kiosks next to the towers sell this periodical as well as other products advertised on the tower and television. Promotions and competitions also form part of the advertising strategy (Finansies & Tegniek, 1998, September 25).

❑ In Berlin two 52-meter-high advertising banners against the towers of the Kaiser Wilhelm Church not only concealed restoration activities, but also put $130 000 in the pockets of the church authorities – enough to cover all restoration costs (Beeld, 1999, Mei 11).

❑ An American enterprise, called *Beach 'n Billboard,* provides municipal beach cleaning machines with impression devices which impress advertisements in the sand, including *Please Don't Litter*

Figure 3.16

Advertisements and signs providing a source of income and similar benefits

An American enterprise, called *Beach 'n Billboard*, has a unique way of advertising. It provides municipal beach-cleaning machines with impression devices which impress advertisements in the sand, including *Please Don't Litter* signs. This has led to an estimated 20% reduction in litter on such beaches.

signs. This has lead to an estimated 20% reduction in litter on such beaches (Beach `n Billboard, online).

3.2.2 THE CHARACTER, EFFECTIVENESS AND CONTRIBUTION OF OUTDOOR ADVERTISING AS A COMMERCIAL ADVERTISING MEDIUM

Outdoor advertising is aimed mostly at people in transit - people in private cars, buses, taxis, trains or on foot. In contrast with the other conventional advertising media it cannot be ignored, covered, switched off, put aside or left unopened. This intrusive characteristic is seen as a marketing advantage by the outdoor advertising industry. Chris Carr, a vice-president of Gannet Outdoor Group, was quoted as follow in *The Boston Globe* of 9 August 1994: *People can't shut off a billboard. TV and radio ads can be turned off or tuned out; billboards are the last unavoidable medium.* Outdoor advertising is a highly effective medium since it reaches almost all, with or without permission. It is a constant 24-hour medium with outdoor messages reaching audiences at any given time of the day. The mere size of modern advertisements makes it even more eye-catching and unavoidable. In the words of Reece-Myron (online):

> *New technologies have turned one of the oldest advertising mediums into one of the most cost-effective, **high-impact** advertising mediums available. It's one medium where shear **size** and results are worth consideration.* (Emphasis added.)

Traffic congestion in most urban areas strengthens the compelling nature of outdoor advertising even further. It forces the peak-hour motorist to look at the outdoor advertisement in a more leisurely and attentive way.

Since advertisements and signs are dependent on the *outdoor environment,* the outdoor environment should be seen as the actual medium of communication for imposing advertising messages upon viewers in a way they cannot avoid. Seen against this background outdoor advertising, as an advertising medium, can therefore not be limited to billboard or poster or any other type of advertising structure or sign. A more inclusive approach should be followed which would also include the *surrounding outdoor environment* as part of the advertising medium. According to this approach outdoor advertisement and sign structure form the internal media content and the surrounding environment the external media content, in the same manner as programme and article surrounding

the advertisement in media such as television and magazines can be seen as external content. According to Gunther (online), outdoor advertising can be seen as a pure advertising medium which conveys advertising messages directly without the distractions intrinsic to magazines, newspapers, radio and television. In the words of Cimine (online): *Outdoor is the one and only medium with a single purpose: to deliver advertising. Its focus is not diverted by other concerns, like programming.* This means that outdoor advertising's external media content should be interpreted as neutral content, which provides an advantage over other advertising media.

Outdoor advertising is also an adaptable and flexible medium. According to the South African outdoor advertising industry there are approximately 40 different outdoor media types ranging from bus shelters and litterbins to huge billboards which address a variety of advertising needs (Davidson & Ogston, 1995, p. 60). It can be accepted that the number of outdoor media types will increase as technology improves. The *South African Manual for Outdoor Advertising Control (SAMOAC)* makes provision for 35 classes of advertisements and signs (DEA&T, 1998). The conventional approach to outdoor advertising focuses on billboards, posters and other standardised sign types. However, other advertising media such as radio or television applied in the outdoor environment also constitute outdoor advertising. Improved technology is making the outdoor environment increasingly accessible to electronic media, which may include gimmicks such as talking bus shelters or miniature colour screens at filling stations showing commercials while customers fill their tanks.

Outdoor advertising is a very effective method of visual communication to adult populations in developing countries such as South Africa. In 1996 19,3% of the South African population had no schooling, while 24,3% of the African group, which constitutes 76,7% of the South African population, had no schooling (Statistics South Africa, 2001, pp.9; 37; 41). In provinces such as Limpopo and Mpumalanga, where 89% and 60,9% of the population are non-urban, 36,9% and 29,4% of the populations respectively had no education (Statistics South Africa, 2001, pp.6; 38). A large percentage of households in the rural areas of South Africa does not own television sets and because of illiteracy few people read magazines or newspapers. Radio and outdoor advertising therefore constitute very important communication and advertising media in rural areas. In 1998 only 50,3% of African households owned a television set, compared to 86,4% who owned a radio (Statistics South Africa, 2000, p.56). One can assume that this ratio would be much higher in rural areas. Research

has shown that the awareness or recognition rate of a product advertised on billboards in urban developing communities in South Africa might be as high as 75%, compared to an average rate of 65% for television campaigns in general (Beeld, 1995, Julie 13).

Outdoor advertising is a very cost-effective advertising medium. The only other medium that compares favourably to outdoor advertising in this regard is radio. Prices for outdoor advertising vary widely, but advertisers typically pay a CPT (cost per 1 000 viewers) of about $2 for billboards in the USA, compared with $5 for commuter-time radio, $9 for magazines and $10 to $20 for newspapers or prime-time television (Gunther, online) (cf. Arens, 1999; Shimp, 1997). Comparative figures for South Africa (Table 2) also show that outdoor advertising is by far the most cost-effective advertising medium available. The cost-effectiveness of billboards can be ascribed especially to their effectiveness in providing high reach and frequency in a localised trade area (cf. McGann & Russell, 1988; Kotler, 1997)(cited in Taylor, 2000, p.16). Media planners define *reach* as the number of people in the target audience exposed to the message, while *frequency* is defined as the average number of times a member of the target audience is exposed to the message. According to a survey conducted amongst businesses using billboards in Missouri, 81,5% of the respondents find billboards to be cost effective, while 80% agree that billboards help them reach their trade area (Taylor, 2000, p.12). Lilley and DeFranco (1995; as quoted in Taylor, 2000, p.12) point out that billboard advertising in larger urban areas in the United States is mostly local in nature and that most billboard advertisers are small businesses. According to Taylor (2000, p.12), it is also well documented that other media are not as efficient as billboards in reaching a localised trade area (cf. Kotler, 1997; Arens, 1999). In the Missouri study of billboard users respondents were asked to rate a series of media alternatives in terms of their ability to communicate information at a price the business can afford. Billboards received an average rating of 5,42, which is considerably higher than any other alternative. The closest alternative is local newspapers at 4,15, followed by flyers at 4,06 (Taylor, 2000, p.13). According to Taylor (2000, p.16), the efficiency of billboards in reaching a local trade area is therefore especially critical for many small businesses who cannot afford any other expensive media.

Other forms of outdoor advertising are even of more critical importance for the informal sector. Due to the accessibility, extent and diversity of the outdoor environment, outdoor advertising provides ample affordable advertising opportunities, both legal and illegal, to the informal advertiser and

entrepreneur. This includes posters and notices, as well as other low-cost opportunities such as advertising trailers and banners. Outdoor advertising can be seen as the most accessible medium for informal advertisers and entrepreneurs compared to other advertising media such as print, radio or television. For this reason outdoor advertising will play an increasingly important role in countries such as South Africa with its strong informal economic sector, as well as an interface between First and Third World economies, which stimulates advertising in the informal sector.

TABLE 2
COST COMPARISON OF ADVERTISING MEDIA
(Outdoor Graphics, 2000, Autumn (2), p.13)

MEDIUM	RATE	AUDIENCE	CPT
The Star (Daily newspaper)	R19 623.5	47 000	R 417.52
Sunday Times (Sunday newspaper)	R 45 595	236 000	R 192.78
Car (Monthly magazine)	R 45 700	109 000	R 419.00
Highveld 94.7 (Regional radio)	R 3 795	56 000	R 67.77
5fm (National radio)	R 3 270	52 000	R 62.88
M-Net (Pay TV)	R 26 000	100 000	R 269.00
M1 Spectacular (Internally illuminated billboard)	R 800	208 000	R 3.87
M1 Freeway gantry (Overhead billboard)	R 2 400	208 000	R 11.54
Bus shelter along Jan Smuts Ave Johannesburg	R 40	102 400	39c
Bus shelter along Oxford Road Johannesburg	R 40	67 200	60c

CPT = Cost per thousand

Newspaper ads refer to a half page ad while TV and radio refer to a 30-second spot. The outdoor advertising rate was calculated by dividing the monthly rate by 25 days a month. The number of people exposed to an outdoor advertisement was calculated by using the international average of 1.6 persons per vehicle.

According to *Outdoor Graphics* the above figures should be used with care since generalisations had to be made. In most cases rates are negotiable, and claimed reader / viewer / listenership has a margin of error. The figures are therefore for rough comparison purposes only. However, *Outdoor Graphics* argues that however one looks at it, even halving the exposure or doubling the cost of outdoor advertising, no other advertising medium comes near outdoor advertising in terms of being the least expensive way of broadcasting your message (Outdoor Graphics, 2000, Autumn, (2)).

Progress in technology associated with outdoor advertising may lower the cost of this medium even further. The printing of outdoor advertising images are going through a dramatic change. A few years ago it was prohibitively expensive to provide larger four-colour images, the only option being to hand-paint or screenprint the panel, raising the cost up to ten times. The advent of digital printing and painting processes now enables the production of images at a fraction of what it used to cost. It is expected that further technological progress will still lower prices significantly over the next few years. Electronic billboard structures, using different and more economical technology than the previous LED displays, are available today at half the cost (Outdoor Graphics, 2000, Autumn (3), p.14).

Outdoor advertising has a very high reach and frequency compared to other media. According to DeLite Outdoor Advertising (online), a typical *showing* in the United States reaches more than three out of four adults in the market at a frequency rate of 15 times each. The high frequency can be attributed to a large extent to the fact that most people travel the same route to work, the shopping centre and other destinations, and are therefore exposed to the same message over and over.

Outdoor advertising is a very effective supplementary medium. It is being used increasingly to supplement broadcast messages and to expand the coverage of television and radio advertising campaigns, as well as to extend the life of such campaigns and to delay its decay in people's minds. Research has indicated that, by supplementing television advertisements, outdoor advertising can sustain awareness levels initially established by television at a fraction of the cost (Outdoor Graphics, 1997, Summer (3), p. 9). In the United Kingdom 35% of the top 200 television advertisers used outdoor advertising as a supplementary medium in 1991. In 2000 the figure stood at more than 80%. Certain overseas marketers, having built up an awareness and image for their brands over years of investment in television, are now even launching new variants of well-known brand names using outdoor advertising as the only medium, with excellent results. They are achieving phenomenal brand awareness in a short space of time – and at a fraction of the cost of other advertising media (Outdoor Graphics, 2000, Autumn (2), p. 12). Apart from supplementing broadcast campaigns by means of billboards or other static images, a rapid advance in technology has made the outdoor screening of full television advertisement, or clips thereof, possible on video billboards, without any loss in picture quality. The coverage of television campaigns can therefore be expanded and their life can be

extended since customers are able to relive the television commercial experience at a fraction of the price (Outdoor Graphics, 2000, Summer, p.12).

Radio and billboard also interact as supplementary media in the form of *talking billboards.* Motorists passing such a billboard are able to pick up a special frequency from a micro-radio station to receive more information from the advertiser. This method is especially valuable for locality-bound or on-premise advertising such as a billboard advertising a housing development where motorists may learn more about the development's amenities, pricing options and other details as they drive by (Lach, online).

Outdoor advertising is a favourable medium for place-based advertising, which was seen by Kelly (1994; cited in McAllister, 1996, p.66) as one of the upcoming advertising trends of the 1990s, with a projected annual growth of 50%. Place-based advertising involves the application of conventional advertising media in the following manner:

❑ It consists of advertisements displayed at social places with specific functions and which attract people with specific needs, interests, demographics and psychographics

❑ The surrounding environment plays an important role in creating a favourable atmosphere conducive to specific advertising messages.

❑ The advertisements relate to the activities at and the function of the specific place, as well as the lifestyles and psychographics of visitors to such places. Consequently dynamic synergism exists between place, advertisements and visitor.

Place-based advertising offers the following benefits:

❑ Place-based advertising can be seen as an effective instrument for niche advertising. It is aimed at narrowly targeted groups with a disposable income.

□ Place-based advertising gives better control over viewing behaviour since it reaches consumers where they cannot escape since they are occupied by a specific activity or interest.

□ Place-based advertising reaches the potential customer close to the point of purchase, which may encourage impulse purchases.

□ The symbolic values of the relevant social places, as well as a friendly atmosphere, give credibility to the advertising message and put the potential customer in a receptive frame of mind.

From the above it is clear that outdoor and place-based advertising show a close similarity with regard to certain key issues, such as the importance of the surrounding environment and the tendency to impose messages upon audiences. This explains outdoor advertising's affinity for the place-based trend. The outdoor environment provides a large variety of place-based opportunities such as shopping centre parking areas, airports, sport stadiums, beaches and various other valuable social places. In general outdoor advertising is very effective at confronting people when they are ready to buy. This is especially true of billboards and signs along highways which guide and inform the weary and hungry traveller as to where to stop for food, fuel or lodging. What better example of a place-based advertisement is there when manufacturers of cars reach their best prospects, the owners of cars, with advertisements along roads and highways?

Outdoor advertising also fulfils an important role by being incorporated in and absorbed by other advertising media such as television. Television coverage of major sporting events provides many an opportunity for including outdoor images, such as advertisements featuring on racing cars, rugby or soccer fields, competitor's clothing or even on cricket wickets. In the United States this was a very effective way of getting round the ban on tobacco-related advertisements on television.

A certain part of outdoor advertising, called *ambient media* by the industry, also has a very high novelty value. One of ambient's main characteristics is the ability to surprise. Both its diversity and flexibility allow for placing messages in places the audience would least expect and for capturing surrounding audiences which are often difficult to reach. From petrol pump nozzle advertisements (in the United Kingdom where you have to fill your own car) and branded golf holes to ad bikes (small

advertising trailers towed by bicycles), the possibilities of ambient media are almost endless (Outdoor Graphics, 2000, Autumn (2), p.12)

The outdoor advertising industry is currently experiencing a revival. In the United States spending on outdoor advertising is growing by nearly 10% a year - faster than newspapers, magazines and broadcast television, though not as fast as cable television and the Internet (Gunther, online). Figures are even more impressive for South Africa.[20] Outdoor advertising is currently one of the fastest-growing advertising media in South Africa, which may be attributed to the relaxation of strict control measures, an increase in more sophisticated signs and a realisation of the medium's cost effectiveness (Advertising Focus '94, p. 111). (See table 3.) While the total advertising expenditure for all media grew by 11.41% for the year ending August 2001, the expenditure on outdoor advertising rose by 24,22% to over R370 million, bringing outdoor advertising's share of total advertising expenditure up to 3,88% from 3,48% in the previous year. However, this figure should be higher due to the fact that certain outdoor advertising contractors did not submit their expenditure figures during this period. According to Billboards.co.za (online (2)), a more realistic outdoor advertising expenditure figure for the year ending August 2001 would be in the region of R450 million. This would mean that outdoor's share of total advertising expenditure should be in the vicinity of 4,7%. Although outdoor's share of total advertising expenditure is relatively low in comparison with other mediums such as print, television and radio, a constant improvement has taken place from 2,3% in 1989 to the current estimated 4,7%. According to Tony Davidson of the Outdoor Advertising Association of South Africa, outdoor advertising shows a healthy potential for growth while the upper limit of outdoor's share of total advertising expenditure in South Africa could be as high as 10% (Advertising Focus '94, p. 112). Due to the diverse character of outdoor advertising the role, extent, contribution and importance of outdoor advertising in developing countries such as South Africa cannot be calculated solely in terms of advertising expenditure figures. The significant contribution made by informal contractors and advertisers is very difficult to calculate in monetary terms. The fact that outdoor advertising is one of the least expensive advertising media in terms of cost per thousand is another indication that share of

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[20] In countries that have only recently opened up to outdoor advertising and which can therefore be seen as virgin territories to be conquered by the outdoor advertising industry, growth rates are quite spectacular. According to Sign Biz Inc. (online), outdoor advertising in Beijing, China, grew at an annual rate of 273% from 1990 to 1999, while the use of outdoor advertisements nationwide increased 9 times during this 10 year period.

total advertising expenditure is not the most efficient way of calculating an advertising medium's role and importance. If the total audiences of each medium type could be calculated, this would provide a different reflection of outdoor advertising's contribution and importance.

TABLE 3
ADVERTISING EXPENDITURE
As Measured by AC Nielsen

MEDIUM	SEPT '99 – AUG '00	%SHARE	SEPT '00 – AUG '01	%SHARE	% INCREASE
Print	R3 578 295 498.00	41.76	R3 779 935 982.00	39.6	5.64
Television	R3 430 995 456.00	40.05	R3 974 823 995.00	41.64	15.85
Radio	R1 150 312 250.00	13.43	R1 206 833 432.00	12.64	4.91
Outdoor	R298 095 702.00	3.48	R370 309 014.00	3.88	24.22
Cinema	R66 526 729.00	0.78	R68 932 108.00	0.72	3.62
Knock N Drop	R43 353 260.00	0.5	R98 136 651.00	1.03	126.37
Internet			R46 519 466.00	0.49	
Total	R8 567 578 895.00	100	R9 545 490 648.00	100	11.41

Source: Billboards.co.za, online (2)

Various trends are counting in favour of outdoor advertising, which has acquired a more trendy and sophisticated image in recent times. An industry once known for advertising more *common* products such as beer and cigarettes, is now attracting image-conscious marketers such as Gap, Kelvin Klein, Apple and Disney (Gunther, online). New technology has made outdoor advertising more creative while digital printing ensures faithful reproduction and a neat appearance. A rapid advancement of technology used to manufacture video billboards and transmit the advertising messages they display has made the screening of television commercials in the outdoors possible without any loss in picture quality. Another exciting development include powerful light projection systems used to project advertising images onto large surfaces, while many an advertising sign can now shake, wink, glitter, speak and even puff scents into the air. Broad social trends are also favouring outdoor advertising, the most important of these being an increase in the use of cars. Daily vehicle trips in the United States are up by 110% since 1970 while the number of cars on the road have increased by 147% (Gunther, online). The increase in vehicles is outpacing population increase by far. The number of drivers in the United States increased more than three times as fast as the population between 1969 and 1995, and the number of household vehicles increased six times as fast. Furthermore, two thirds of all car trips are made by the driver all on his own, with only the radio and billboards for company (Edmondson, online). The increasing number of cellular phones is also creating possibilities of turning more and more billboards into direct-response advertising.

3.3 THE IMPACT OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY

As an important element of the perceptual environment, outdoor information transfer is also responsible for negative contributions. Outdoor information transfer may have a definite social and economic impact, while the potential for ecological impact is much more limited. The social, economic and ecological impacts of outdoor information transfer are closely interrelated and cannot be separated in most instances, for example the impact of outdoor information transfer on traffic safety, which may result in the loss of human lives, will have definite social and monetary implications. The

poisoning and removal of trees by the outdoor advertising industry have both an ecological and a social or visual impact.

The interrelationship between all human senses must be taken into consideration when assessing any form of environmental impact resulting from outdoor information transfer, since the total impact on all human senses will be more than the mere sum of the impact on the individual senses. The tendency currently exists amongst environmentalists and the public to overemphasise noise pollution to the detriment of environmental impacts on sight and all the other human senses. Although outdoor information transfer is aimed mainly at human sight, hearing will become more and more important with regard to outdoor information transfer in the future. Announcements from moving vehicles or at public gatherings are not an uncommon form of outdoor information transfer, while a combination of sound and sight is already a reality in the United Kingdom in the form of talking bus shelters. Recent technology is even making huge talking billboards of up to 100 square metres a strong possibility (Fox, 1996, p. 20).

3.3.1 INHERENT IMPACT AND CHARACTERISTICS OF OUTDOOR ADVERTISEMENTS AND SIGNS

By nature outdoor information transfer has a very strong impact due to its unavoidable nature.

[The outdoor advertising business] depends entirely for its success upon the occupation of places along the sides of highways and near parks and similar public places. Billboards are designed to compel attention. The advertising matter displayed upon them in words, pictures or devices is conspicuous, obtrusive, and ostentatious, being designed to intrude forcefully and persistently upon the observation and attention of all who come within the range of clear normal vision (General Outdoor Advertising Co. v. Department of Public Works, 193 N.E. 799 (Mass. Sup. Jud. Ct. 1935) App. dismissed 296 U.S. 542 (1935) and 297 U.S. 725 (1936) as cited by Floyd, online).

Market research undertaken by NFO CM Research in the State of Victoria confirmed that outdoor advertising is seen by the public as different from other forms of advertising with regard to the choice

Citizens for a Scenic Florida
http://www.scenicflorida.org

PromotionNmotion
http://www.promotionnmotion.com

Photo date: March 2000

Outdoor advertising is seen as an unavoidable advertising medium. In contrast with other conventional advertising media it cannot be ignored, covered or switched off. The messages on the photographs (top left and right) tell it all. Various ingenious ways are used to make advertising messages even more unavoidable. A gantry is used to position a billboard right in front of the motorist (bottom right), while a pedal-car parading in front of vehicles waiting at an intersection brings the messages even closer (bottom left).

Figure 3.17
The intrusive character of outdoor advertising
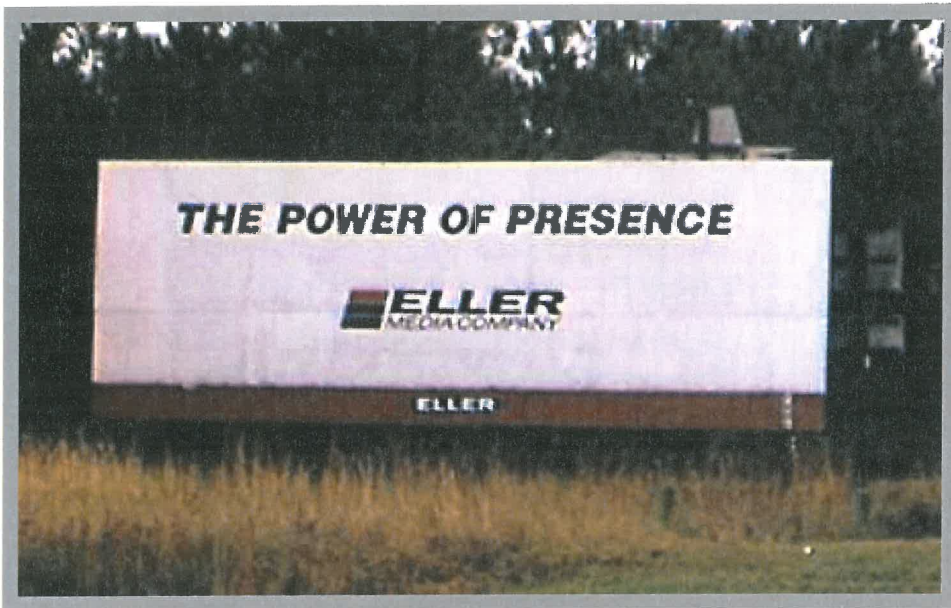
Citizens for a Scenic Florida
http://www.scenicflorida.org

Outdoor advertising is seen as an unavoidable advertising medium (top). In contrast with other conventional advertising media it cannot be ignored, covered or switched off. It seems that the only way to switch off a billboard is with the help of nature (bottom).

Figure 3.17 continued

to view. The majority of respondents (67 % female and male 56 % male respondents) agreed that outdoor advertising is more intrusive than other advertising media because it cannot be turned off or ignored (Office of Women's Policy, p.5).

It seems only logical that outdoor information transfer's primary function of transferring messages to the observer would tend to dominate its aesthetic contribution to streetscape and setting. This tendency is reflected in certain inherent qualities of outdoor signs and especially outdoor advertisements or commercially oriented sign types which are displayed according to certain principles and which have the potential of transforming functional dominance into a relatively high degree of perceptual impact:

3.3.1.1 Competition or snowball principle

Advertisements and signs tend to compete for the attention of the viewer. New additions to the scene tend to be bigger, higher, closer to the street and displaying brighter colours than existing advertisements. This may cause a snowball effect which can very easily get out of hand.

3.3.1.2 Encroachment principle

Advertisements and signs tend to advance towards the observer by either encroaching onto or even into the roadway or pedestrian route, or by offering information in advance of the actual site where the product or service is provided.

3.3.1.3 Attachment or domination principle

Advertisements and signs display the tendency to attach themselves to existing settings or designs and to force themselves upon the visual scene in a very obtrusive and audacious manner. They often strive to dominate the visual scene by taking advantage of prominent elements in a visual setting, such as a bend in the road or other visual focal points, and in the process may destroy both prominent elements and setting. Advertisements and signs can therefore, in many cases, be seen as visual parasites and may also be described as *visual squatters* or *gatecrashers.*

Photo date: 1994

Photo date: January 2000

Figure 3.18
Competition or snowball principle

According to the competition or snowball principle, advertisements and signs tend to compete for the attention of the viewer. New additions to the scene tend to be bigger, higher, closer to the street and displaying brighter colours than existing advertisements. This may cause a snowball effect which can very easily get out of hand. In Potgieter Street, Pretoria (top) the snowball principle fully manifests itself with signs competing for the attention of the passing motorist. A newcomer to the scene in Schoeman Street, Pretoria (left) is trying to outdo other shop signs in terms of height, size, colour and even by means of an arrow.

**Figure 3.19
Encroachment
principle**

According to the encroachment principle advertisements and signs tend to advance towards the observer by either encroaching onto or even into the roadway or pedestrian route, or by offering information in advance of the actual site where the product or service is provided. The photographs on this page are good examples of such advance signs, whether it be advertising for restaurants, accommodation facilities or property development. These examples illustrate a very negative impact on tourism resources.

ate of photos: September 2000

Photo date: January 2000

According to the attachment or domination principle advertisements and signs display the tendency to attach themselves to existing settings or designs and to force themselves upon the visual scene in an obtrusive and audacious manner. Although any setting or design should have the ability to accommodate change, this ability is often exceeded by the attachment of advertisements and signs to existing elements. This problem is often worsened by the designer's lack of sensitivity towards the need for outdoor information transfer. The original building or landscape design often does not make sufficient provision for existing or changing needs for outdoor information transfer. The above photograph serves to illustrate this point. Almost no provision has been made for attaching shops signs to this smaller suburban shopping complex in one of the eastern suburbs of Pretoria. Shop signs therefore not only impact on the appearance of the building but also tend to obstruct the view from the first floor windows.

Figure 3.20
The attachment or
domination principle

Introducing new elements, such as advertisements and signs, into any landscape can have far-reaching visual consequences. It might either lead to excessive order or diversity. In the case of advertisements it will mostly lead to an overemphasis on diversity or visual chaos. Although any setting or design should be able to accommodate change, this ability is often exceeded by the attachment of advertisements and signs to existing elements. In many cases this problem is aggravated by the designer's insensitivity towards the need for outdoor information transfer. The original building or landscape design might not make sufficient provision for outdoor information transfer or changing circumstances, and needs for outdoor information transfer may lead to advertisements and sign exceeding original provisions.

Commercial advertising also displays a tendency to attach itself to more worthy causes such as fund-raising for charities and community services in the form of sponsorships, or it may be attached to signs for guiding road users and pedestrians.

3.3.1.4 Imperialistic or ubiquity principle

Like all other advertising media, outdoor advertising wants to be ubiquitous and therefore tries to conquer new territories by entering or filling new spaces, or by making use of new technologies and advertising methods. Referring to place-based advertising, McAllister (1996, p.85) makes the following statement:

> *Advertising is … geographically imperialistic, looking for new territories it has not yet conquered. When it finds such a territory, it fills it with ads – at least until this new place … has so many ads that it becomes cluttered and is no longer effective as an ad medium.*

3.3.1.5 Transition principle

Advertisements and signs display a tendency for rapid and constant change, since the display periods of individual advertisement tend to be relatively short and can therefore not be seen as permanent visual elements. This feeling of impermanence is aggravated by the fact that most outdoor

advertisements are aimed at people in motion with limited time at their disposal to take in the information on such advertisements. According to an article in PMR, by Davidson and Ogston (1995, p.60), the average consumer has only three seconds to assimilate an outdoor message.

3.3.1.6 Disorder principle

Outdoor information transfer reveals a natural tendency for visual disorder. It can therefore be stated that where outdoor information transfer is managed insufficiently, visual disorder and deterioration will increase with time.

3.3.2 PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACT

With regard to psychological impact outdoor information transfer may contribute to various problems such as information overload and a loss of identity, which may contribute to phenomena such as perceptual stress and may also have certain economic implications.

3.3.2.1 Environmental overstimulation or information overload

Perceptual or environmental stress may result from either environmental overstimulation or environmental understimulation. While having the inherent potential to contribute negatively to environmental overstimulation in a major way, outdoor information transfer, as already mentioned, also has a positive ability to contribute to visual diversity and the prevention of environmental understimulation. (See 3.2.1.4.)

Environmental overstimulation may lead to various forms of behaviour breakdown, such as confusion, disorientation, distortion of reality, fatigue, anxiety, tenseness and extreme irritability, followed by apathy and emotional withdrawal in the final stages. This may lead to social problems such as the use of drugs, outbreaks of violence and vandalism and crime, while there are also strong indications that information overload may be related to various mental illnesses (Toffler, 1973, pp. 305 - 326). Environmental overstimulation may also lead to a lowering in human productivity, which will have certain economic implications. According to Motloch (1991, p.284), an overload of information leads

to cognitive fatigue, a desensitisation to setting, and decreased environmental awareness. Decreased environmental awareness might have far-reaching implications with regard to community involvement and environmental care at community level.

Today's urban environment creates a setting that is conducive to information overload. According to Motloch (1991, p.284), *...many people feel that the urban environment is pushing the limit of one's ability to cope with, and adapt to, information overload and the resulting cumulative stress.* Motloch (1991, p.288) also refers to the *...current chaotic urban condition, which fails to communicate effectively, and which desensitizes the viewer, dissuades exploration, conceals meaning, reduces understanding, and decreases sensory pleasure.*

According to Toffler (1973, p.310), environmental overstimulation can occur on at least three different levels, namely:

❑ **The sensory level:** This involves the bombardment of man's senses.

❑ **The cognitive level:** This level involves the processing of information and the interference with our ability to absorb, manipulate, evaluate and retain information by means of conscious thought due to environmental overstimulation.

❑ **The decisional level:** This involves decisions to be made on information received, which may lead to decision stress.

The line between the above-mentioned three levels is not always very clear.

Seen from an aesthetic point of view, environmental overstimulation and man's perceptual relationship with his surroundings are approached mainly from a cognitive and emotionally responsive level. According to Motloch (1991, p.278), the individual relates to his surroundings perceptually by *decoding* information, imparting *meaning* and *emotionally responding* to settings. Image formation, which reduces perceived complexity by aggregating visual parts into some recognizable pattern, can be seen as the essence of this process. Bell (1996, p.4) puts it as follows: *We see our surroundings as an interrelated pattern of component parts arranged in certain ways. We attempt to make sense*

and order out of the apparent chaos. The individual, however, has a limited ability to process information, and through this processing, to form images and to ascribe meaning to settings (Motloch, 1991, p. 280). Information overload may therefore cause stress in cases where this ability is exceeded.

Information overload is the function of both the amount and the relevancy of information.

> *Recent research leads us to believe that the relevancy of environmental information is extremely critical. It is currently believed that the relevancy of information is even more important than its amount, and that stimuli that do not contribute to our ability to ascribe positive meaning are highly frustrating and stressful* (Motloch, 1991, p.284).

Information relevancy forms the basis of the important concepts of imageability and a sense of place. Imageability or placeness can be seen as the *innate ability* of a place or setting to form vivid mental images, to effect major changes in emotional state, and to be remembered over extended periods of time (Motloch, 1991, p. 296), whereas sense of place can be seen as the *mental construct* of place in the form of a vivid mental image. By creating places with a high imageability the information load can be reduced through the chunking of stimuli into a reduced number of visual units and by aggregating parts into a regognizable pattern. On the other hand settings characterised by a high degree of placelessness may lead to excessive perceptual stress due to irrelevancy and unrelatedness of information.

Image formation and environmental stress can also be interpreted in terms of the fulfilment of psychological needs. The ability to image place through the relatedness of information address the individual's simultaneous psychological needs for understanding and exploration as parts of a two-stage perceptual process which consists of a precognitive and a cognitive stage. These needs are fulfilled through the simultaneous perception of visual order and spontaneity or diversity. Motloch (1991, p.280) views these psychological needs as part of basic human needs which must be satisfied by designed environments in order to be psychological healthy. Order and visual diversity should not be seen as opposing and irreconcilable components, and diversity should not be seen as the antithesis of relatedness. According to Motloch (1991, p.283):

Relatedness is the degree to which individual elements in a setting, and their characteristics relate... and order and spontaneity can be seen as polar extremes of a relatedness continuum. Together they determine the ability of the individual to relate stimuli, to chunk information and form symbols, to ascribe meaning to these symbols as supersigns, and to image place.

Order refers to recognizable patterns and the assimilation and interaction between elements and fulfils the psychological need of *understanding as well as safety and security* (Motloch, 1991, p.283). Spontaneity is perceived as a break in the pattern and refers to contradiction and fulfils the psychological need of *exploration and involvement.* The precognitive stage of perception is the nearly instantaneous appraisal of overall shapes and patterns in the environment; it is rooted in man's inherent need for survival and security and is linked to order. The cognitive stage of perception, based on detail and the need to sustain interest and discover more information, conveys associational meaning and is linked to spontaneity. Order and the precognitive stage of perception may be seen as the binding factor and framework within which spontaneity and diversity may be applied, to which such elements of detail relate and within which detail can be perceived or processed. Excessive diversity outside this framework will lead to disorder and visual chaos, which will in turn result in environmental overstimulation and stress.

By virtue of its function outdoor information transfer can be seen as a prime candidate for causing information overload. This tendency is reflected by the inherent characteristics of advertisements, which are displayed according to the competition, encroachment, attachment, ubiquity, transition and disorder principles as discussed under 3.3.1. Advertisements and signs may promote information overload by means of two interrelated components, which can be traced back to the dual function of outdoor information transfer, namely transferring messages and aesthetic appearance. These components are:

❏ **Large amounts of information:** The accumulation of a large number of direct messages on a multitude of advertisements and signs that compete for attention and force themselves upon the observer in order to evoke decisions may lead to information overload and stress on the decisional level. This problem is aggravated by the tendency of rapid and continuous change of

outdoor messages and the limited time at the disposal of the observer to take in such messages due to his mobility. (See 3.3.1.5.)

- ❑ **Destruction of placeness through the irrelevancy of information:** This is especially true of commercial advertisements, which have a *natural tendency* to accumulate and to be prominent, competing and contrasting, and which *destroy* relatedness, a sense of place and imageability. This excessive diversity and irrelevancy of visual elements caused by the accumulation of signs and advertisements therefore inhibit image formation. In essence this means the ability to reduce the information load is now greatly restricted due to difficulty in aggregating parts into manageable visual units. Consequently the information load becomes unmanageable, causing information overload and perceptual stress. In certain cases the accumulation of signs and advertisements may so dominate the visual scene as to result in visual chaos. This problem is aggravated even further by change as a result of human movement, which can be seen as an important part of experiencing landscape. (See 1.4.1.4.) Most advertisements and signs today are aimed at the road user. Due to the speed of the motor vehicle interaction between perceiver and setting becomes tense and impersonal and the possibility of aggregating visual parts into manageable visual units becomes even more impossible.

The mere excess of information may also inhibit image formation and chunking of information even if relevancy of information does exist to a certain extent. Image formation may therefore be inhibited and frustrated by both irrelevancy and excess of information.

The above-mentioned interrelated components of information overload may lead to a perceptual blockage or even perceptual shutdown in extreme cases, which inhibits or prevents image formation and the transfer of information. This can be seen as a built-in defence mechanism to try to counteract perceptual stress which is activated when information overload reaches certain levels. Barr (1970, p.29) refers to perceptual shutdown on accord of placelessness or ugliness as *landscape blindness* and quotes Richard Latham in this regard:

> *Rejecting what demands too much can cause us to stop seeing ugliness around us, and even cause us to contribute to the chaos and confusion of our world...like the man who strews empty beer cans around himself on a public beach. This happens*

imperceptibly because man is an adaptable animal, and to survive he accepts very quickly, almost subserviently, the pressures of his environment. His brain is apparently designed so that when intolerable signals come in over the circuits, **the perceptive systems themselves shut down and do not perceive.** *A man can live and even be happy in the environment of a garbage heap … any object that is ugly, bad, offensive, corrosive – unless it creates real fear and the urge to flee –* **means the shutdown or withdrawal of some human potential.** (Emphasis added.)

John Miller, (online) has made the following statement in this regard:

To maintain sanity, the public anesthetizes itself. We participate in and comply with the defacement of public space and the negation of right to privacy by our willingness to desensitize ourselves to these excessive assaults upon our sensibilities. We become oblivious to our immediate environment, sort of functionally unconscious. In compensation, billboards get bigger, litter gets deeper, graffiti becomes more outrageous.

Perceptual blockage and shutdown have a direct influence on the efficiency of the primary or message function of outdoor information transfer, which should be an important factor to be considered by the outdoor advertising industry. The **amount of information** plays an important role in this regard. Effectivity of individual advertisements through limited information on each sign is a principle that is already acknowledged by the outdoor advertising industry. According to an article in PMR by Davidson and Ogston (1995, p.60) the message on an outdoor advertisement should ideally be communicated in less than seven words since the average consumer has only three seconds to assimilate an outdoor message. The importance of limited outdoor messages was illustrated by research on billboard advertising undertaken by the Canadian media giant *Mediacom* in conjunction with the University of Alberta. This comprehensive analysis involved 500 awareness studies, testing the impact of various billboards on their respective audiences. A very important finding with regard to the number of messages on a billboard was that single-minded, focused advertisements deliver more impact. Unlike other advertising media where there is usually more time to communicate information, with billboards often *less is more.* This principle was dramatically illustrated by an advertising campaign for a specific product. The original billboard idea with one message achieved an awareness

rating of 41,1%. The same billboard with two messages had a 36,7 % rating, while awareness decreased to only 29,2 % after five messages (Outdoor Graphics, 1997,Summer (1), p. 6).

It seems only logical that if an increase in information on the same advertisement leads to a decrease in awareness, the same tendency should also be relevant when the number of advertisements and messages increase. The assumption can therefore be made that a proliferation of advertisements and signs will lead to a decline in the effectiveness of individual advertisements and signs. This conclusion is supported by the concept of *advertising clutter*, a problem recognised by the advertising industry in general and which can also be applied to outdoor advertising. The problem of advertising clutter is summed up by McAllister (1996, p.15) as follows: *Advertisers believe that the effectiveness of their messages decreases if their competitors' messages are too close or if too many other promotional messages swallow up their message.* Edward T. McMahon, Director of the American Greenways Program, describes this principle as follows:

> *In an effort to attract business, merchants often engage in a destructive competition to see who can build the biggest, tallest, most attention-grabbing signs. Ironically, in such competition both the merchants and the town lose. When there is an overabundance of competing signs, the message of each is lost. One city planner explained it this way: "When everyone shouts, no one can be heard; when all speak softly, each voice is distinct"* (Citizens for a Scenic Florida, online (1)).

The following also gives a good description of this principle:

> *For street graphics to communicate effectively, they must be neither too large nor too small, neither too numerous nor absent altogether, neither too garish nor too bland. The principle of less is more applies here. A smaller number of well-designed street graphics that are properly related to the activities to which they pertain do a better job of indexing or selling than a plethora of gaudy graphics that compete for the viewer's attention... When the environment becomes overload with graphic display... the cumulative is negative. The viewer actually sees less, not more* (Mandelker & Ewald, 1987, p.33).

In some cases it becomes physically impossible to read all the information provided on outdoor advertisements. Scenic America reports on a certain section of road in Hampton, Virginia, where

there were so many signs that a motorist travelling at 45 mph would need to read 1 363 words per minute just to understand all the information presented. This is five times the normal reading speed of a stationary person (Scenic America, online (1)).

Information relevancy and image formation should also be taken into consideration with regard to the effectiveness of individual advertisements. If contrast or diversity is used to focus the attention of the road-user on individual signs or advertisements, such contrast should still be within the framework of order and recognisable pattern. An advertisement will be most effective when it contributes to placeness and a sense of place, since placeness will lead to the creation of vivid images of which the advertisement will be part. Such images (and advertisements) will effect major emotional changes and will be remembered over extended periods of time. By contributing to sense of place information overload, stress and perceptual blockage will therefore be prevented. This argument is supported by the advertising industry's universal recognition of the important relationship between advertisement and external media content or the media environment that surrounds an advertisement – such as an advertisement on backpacks placed next to an article on hiking trails in an outdoor magazine. McAllister (1996, p.15) describes the complementary role of external media content as follows:

> *Advertisers want their ads to be surrounded by media content that attracts desirable consumers and that complements the ads. Advertisers especially want to be near **media content that puts people in a mood receptive to seeing and liking their ads.*** (Emphasis added.)

If a more inclusive approach is to be followed with regard to outdoor advertising as an advertising medium, the surrounding outdoor environment forming a background to advertisement and sign structure should be seen as the external media content that would fulfil such a complementary role. The principle of utilising the surrounding environment is already applied by the advertising industry with regard to the concept of place-based advertising in which case the supporting role of external media content, such as television or radio programmes, is supplemented even further by the surrounding place – such as an advertisement for a health drink during a sports programme on closed circuit television in a gymnasium. In this regard McAllister (1996, p.85) refers to *the matching of symbols in the ad to the tone and expectations of the place.* The unique atmosphere or placeness of a specific social place is therefore used to give credibility to the advertising message of place-based advertising and to put the potential customer in the right state of mind. In this way a synergism

is obtained between advertisement, place and visitor and placeness is used to amplify the advertising message.

3.3.2.2 Other impacts related to placelessness

A sense of place can be very easily destroyed by insufficient control of advertisements and signs. *Genius loci* is very *sensitive, fragile and vulnerable,* since factors contributing to it may be difficult to identify and, according to Bell (1996, p.108), *it is certainly vulnerable to damage or destruction if not recognized or valued and treated with sufficient sensitivity.* Such placelesness may, apart from contributing to information overload, also have various other negative consequences:

(a) Crime and vandalism (See also 2.2.1.3)

Placelessness and untidy environments may result in psychological environments conducive to crime and vandalism since an impression of a lack of control by and involvement of authorities and communities is created in the mind of the criminal. Even in cases where the crime rate might actually not be too high, placelessness could still result in psychologically unhealthy places by contributing to a feeling of insecurity and stress among people making use of such places.

Since the proliferation of advertisements and signs will in most cases contribute to creating untidy places and could therefore contribute to crime, vandalism and psychologically unhealthy places, Schmio Awards (online) sees billboard proliferation as a contributing factor in creating unsafe environments:

> *Communities across the country [USA] are demanding billboard reform as one stage in a broader movement to revitalize inner-city neighborhoods and create safe environments for children.*

Abandoned advertisements and empty structures will contribute even further to untidy environments and a perception of non-involvement and lack of control. According to Miller (online), the proliferation of outdoor advertisements and signs also leads to littering and graffiti, which aggravate the problem of untidy, unsafe and psychologically unhealthy environments.

> *When we tell advertisers it's OK to turn our communities into round-the-clock outdoor commercials, we are telling litterers and defacers that thrashing aesthetics and ignoring our right to privacy is acceptable. Litterers and defacers, and many of the rest of us, realize there is little difference between the crass intrusiveness of a billboard and that of deliberately dumped garbage or scrawling on a wall. ... Like the billboards they see around them, they have no conception of self-restraint. They are imitating, on an individual scale, the proliferating commercialization we have permitted to transform public space from a non-exploitative common ground into a commercial hunting ground. In the case of billboards, the objective is to establish product identity; in the case of litterers and defacers, it is to establish personal identity*

It is interesting to note that graffiti, an act of vandalism, also constitute a form of outdoor information transfer. Spry and West (1985, p.10) define graffiti as follows: *An intentional, unauthorised defacement of a surface by words or drawings and intended for public consumption.* According to Spry and West (1985, pp.14, 50; 53), unauthorised posters may even be seen as a form of graffiti. A more appropriate definition of graffiti might therefore be: *An intentional, unauthorised defacement of a surface or structure by words, drawings or any other message and intended for public consumption.* This altered definition will now not only include posters on larger surfaces such as walls, but also posters attached to smaller surfaces such as the poles of traffic signs and other unauthorised advertisements such as stickers attached to various surfaces. According to Spry and West (1985, p.10):

> *Graffiti are applied to other people's property and almost invariably cause some damage, nuisance, offence or expense and therefore are a type of vandalism. However they differ from the wantonly destructive vandalism in that they carry some kind of message, hence are a form of communication.*

Although numerous factors contribute to the phenomenon of graffiti, there is a clear indication that it is attracted by placelessness and visually deteriorated environments. *There is either a conscious or subconscious preference for walls of derelict rather than heritage buildings, ... for depressed rather than pristine inner urban centres* (Spry & West, 1985, p. 28).

Graffiti and littering can be seen as good examples of the disorder principle (see 3.3.1.6), which implies that where outdoor information transfer is managed insufficiently visual disorder and deterioration will increase in time. Just like littering, graffiti, an act of vandalism, which does not consist of scratched, painted or written messages only, but may include various other types of unauthorised outdoor information transfer, will invariably lead to more vandalism and an increased tempo of visual deterioration. *Its presence is an incitement to further defacement by vandalism, destruction and arson...* (Spry & West, 1985, p. 1).

The graffiti phenomenon *offends the eye and the senses and contributes to the ugly side of urban life - it shocks the sensitive – reduces the value of property - damages invaluable heritage buildings and monuments – reduces the function of ... decorative features* (Spry & West, 1985, p. 1). It may even include the defacement of authorised advertisements, signs and posters. The costs of removing, cleaning and protection against graffiti are staggering. *It was estimated to cost the United States $600 million a year as long ago as 1973 and $387 million in the U. K. in 1983* (Spry & West, 1985, p. 1).

In certain cases outdoor advertising may prevent graffiti if they are placed on surfaces which are graffiti prone.

(b) Poor community identity and a uniform world culture

A strong interrelationship exists between sense of place and community identity. (See 2.2.1.1). The creation of uniform visual environments through the promotion of a world culture and global economy should therefore be seen as a key factor in weakening the identity of groups or communities, which will lead to an identity crisis and uncertainty. A lack of community identity will also lead to a lack of community involvement and therefore to a lack of environmental care at a community level. Since sense of place forms the essence of the perceptual environment, a weakening of sense of place through a uniform world culture may have far-reaching consequences for perceptual resources.

The United States of America plays a leading role in promoting a world culture.
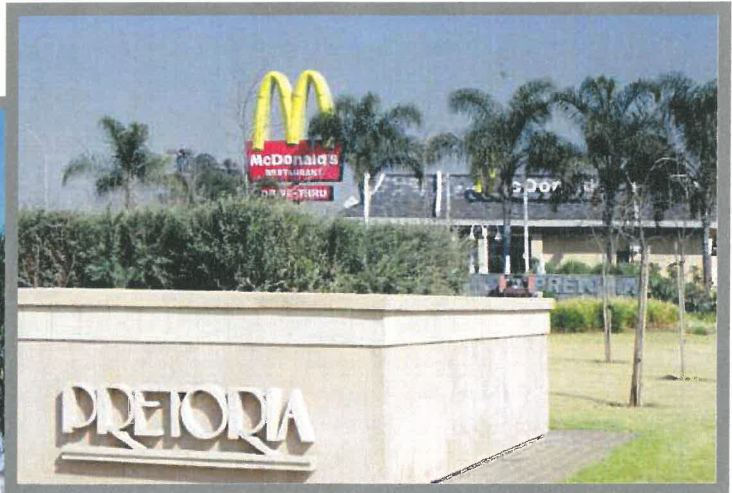
Outdoor information transfer may play an important role in promoting a world culture by creating a uniform visual environment. This tendency has a very negative impact on both sense of place and community identity. International franchises are the main culprits, not only through their uniform logos and signs, but also by using standardised buildings and structures as a way of advertising their products and services. A classic example in this regard is the Eastern Gateway to Pretoria. When one enters Pretoria from the east you are not greeted by visual elements expressing Pretoria's unique character, but by global symbols in the form of McDonald's, KFC and Holiday Inn signs.

**Figure 3.21
Uniform world culture**

Date of photos: August 2000

Insufficient control of outdoor information transfer may lead to placelessness and untidy environments which, in turn, may result in psychological environments conducive to crime and vandalism since an impression of a lack of control and involvement of authorities and communities is created in the mind of the criminal.

Abandoned advertisement and empty advertising structures such as those shown on this page are important contributing factors to untidy environments and a perception of non-involvement and lack of control.

Figure 3.22

Outdoor information transfer contributing to crime and vandalism

Perhaps the thing doing the most to keep the U.S. economy afloat is the one export it has that the rest of the world craves: its culture. But it's not the culture of the San Francisco cable car, the Kansas City barbecue, the Mississippi Delta blues or the Adirondack chair. Rather, it's the monoculture that has already done so much to suppress the once-beloved trappings of local America: Hollywood movies, MTV, McDonalds and the Gap (Ammann, online).

Outdoor information transfer and especially commercial advertisements may be seen as a major contributor to the creation of more uniform visual environments in accordance with a global economy and culture. Almost every corner of the globe has been conquered by billboards and other forms of outdoor advertising. Once isolated regions such as Tibet are now displaying large numbers of outdoor advertisements (Shengzhen Daily, online). In Nepal the international tourist, on his way to do some trekking in the mountains, is targeted by a series of billboards along the Katmandu-Pokhara road, which are aimed at creating international branding (Bicknell, 1999, online). The display of global products through outdoor advertising plays an important role in establishing visual uniformity. According to Cimine (online), *outdoor advertising is arguably the medium best adapted for branding products on a worldwide basis.* This tendency is enhanced even further through current international trends in the ownership of outdoor advertising companies. The last few years have seen an increase in global outdoor ownership. In 2000 64% of the world's out-of-home media were already owned by only three global players (Outdoor Graphics, 2000, Autumn (2), p.12). These trends favour international outdoor advertising campaigns with a large degree of uniformity in advertising contents and structures. *Poster Publicity International,* a London-based international outdoor advertising specialist agency, has described the effect of a globalisation in outdoor advertising contractors and agencies as follow:

*Outdoor is the international corporate medium offering advertisers intimacy and **familiarity** within each country and region. It tells a global audience that they offer the **same values** worldwide. We are just beginning to see the emergence of global campaign planning and buying* (Outdoor Graphics, 2000, Autumn (3), p.15). (Emphasis added.)

National trends also favour a national outdoor advertising monoculture (Outdoor Graphics, 2000, Autumn (2), p.13). In South Africa only four companies were responsible for up to 90% of the outdoor

advertising business in the year 2000. In the United Kingdom outdoor advertising sites were owned by 150 different contractors in 1990. In 2000 there were only 17 contractors, four of which controlled over 80% of the outdoor advertising market (Outdoor Advertising Graphics, 2000, Autumn (3), p.14).

Uniformity in advertising images and artwork is favoured by advances in printing technology. Media Options Inc. (online) made the following statement in this regard:

> *Advances in computer printed vinyl techniques enable you to have the same beautiful, 4-color bulletin in Tallahassee that you have in New York at a fraction of what it used to cost.*

The influence on more uniform visual environments is not limited to advertising structures and contents only, but also includes buildings and premises. According to Burke (1976, pp.111-112):

> *Most multiple stores and large retailers use their premises as advertisements in themselves by applying standard "house rules" for facades, fascias and lettering, without regard to geographical location or to the scale, proportion and style of their neighbours. The same shop-front is imposed in Oxford Street, London, as in the high street of Oxford, or of a cathedral city, county town or suburb. Rigid adherence to this practice on the part of large concerns with the necessary influence to get their own way has caused townscapes to lose much of their distinctive identity.*

This tendency has escalated in recent years with the rise in franchising on a global scale. This phenomenon has become an important factor in the destruction of local character and community identity in *automobile-oriented* countries such as the United States and South Africa.

(c) Destruction of a Sense of Permanence

As one of the most rapidly changing elements in the modern urban landscape, outdoor advertisements and signs have the inherent capability of destroying a sense of permanence and belonging. Bell (1996, pp.124-8) sees *continuity* as a very important aesthetic principle with regard to setting and landscape since it implies a sense of permanence by providing a framework within which changes can take place over time. In this regard he writes:

... continuity may provide a dynamic theme of stability at one level within which process and change can occur... Continuity represents the durable, long-term structures in the landscape allowing change to occur without chaos.

This need for permanence and continuity is becoming a subject of ever-increasing importance in contemporary society characterised by rapid lifestyles and constant transformation. In the past the spatial patterns in the landscape grew and developed over time in an organic fashion, which led to a strong sense of continuity and permanence.

Settlements may have started in a small way and have gradually increased in size over many years. In Britain this development was originally not planned but slowly changing local traditions in building style, use of materials and methods of farming ensured that it took on a pattern which had continuity across large areas of similar landscape and over a long period of time (Bell, 1996, p. 126).

This is no longer the case today and if advertisements and signs, of which the actual contents tend to change very quickly, should be allowed to dominate visual scenes or settings, such a domination will lead to an overwhelming sense of impermanence and instability.[21] If the variety and numbers of signs and advertisements in the modern city are taken into consideration this is a very strong possibility in

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[21] Modern technology has shortened the lifespan of billboards and larger advertisements even further by reducing the printing cost. Huge computer-generated images reproduced on giant rolls of vinyl polyester can cover whole sides of buildings *and* their windows. Such multi-storey wallscapes can be slapped onto buildings within hours, unlike hand-painted signs which can take months to create. Carrie McLaren (Stay Free, online (1)), an anti-ad activist, made the following comment with regard to the sense of impermanence created by vinyl advertisements which are starting to dominate certain parts of Manhattan:

Because vinyl ads can be changed in a matter of hours, I think they reinforce the idea that everything is temporary, plastic and disposable. They make the street look like a website. Entire buildings are suddenly deleted. And that can make you more inured to your whole environment.

In many cases the intention of the advertising industry is to change the advertising image in a relatively short period of time in order to stimulate the attention of the viewer. According to Billboards.co.za (online), the introduction of a certain advertising opportunity *offers the advertiser a package whereby his creative message can be "walked" before the message suffers a burnout, becoming part of the scenery.* The rapid changing of advertising images and messages finds its ultimate expression in electronic signs with variable messages and *video billboards* where text and messages are changed over very short periods of time.

certain areas of most cities. A more permanent visual framework and a continuity of patterns in the landscape is therefore needed in order to absorb changing advertisements and signs of a less dominant nature into a more dominant whole.

3.3.2.3 Devaluation of place and commercialisation of placeness

In accordance with the imperialistic principle (3.3.1.4), outdoor advertisements entering and dominating certain places may devaluate and even degrade the integrity of such places. Wernick (1991, cited in McAllister, 1996, p. 88) claims that advertising devaluates reference systems, because the advertisement implies that the reference system, no matter what it is, is always subordinate to the purpose of the advertisement, which is to sell a product. In the same manner outdoor advertising can devaluate certain places since the environments surrounding outdoor advertisements can be seen as the reference system or external media content. In South Africa schools, like many other institutions, are presently going through difficult economic times. Certain elements in the outdoor advertising industry exploit the situation by offering schools an income in return for allowing them to display outdoor advertisements on school sites. Schools and similar institutions with a prestigious image and educational status may thus be devaluated to mere places of consumerism and commercialism. This will also imply that value systems taught at such institutions may be impaired and devaluated to a materialistic level. Outdoor advertisements might in the future even invade, conquer and devaluate more sublime places like church sites.

By conquering non-commercial urban functions, outdoor advertising may contribute to devaluated uniform cityscapes of functional and visual monotony where a school cannot be distinguished from a church, or residential functions from commercial functions.

Place-based advertising, which includes outdoor advertising, utilises the unique character and appeal of certain places as a mechanism for advertising. It therefore devaluates placeness and sense of place to a mere commercial commodity. According to McAllister (1996, pp.221;88), advertising subordinates its referent systems by turning it into utilitarian systems which are useful for selling, while *place-based media's pervasiveness and conspicuousness make an even louder statement than traditional mediated advertising about commercialism's symbolic superiority over its environment.* In

Source of photos:
Scenic America - Photogallery
http://www.scenic.org/photos.htm

tdoor advertising shows a tendency to devaluate the integrity and value
stems of places such as educational and religious institutions.

e photographs on this page speak for themselves. Two cemeteries and a
urch are dominated by tobacco and alcohol advertisements symbolising the
periority of commercialism and materialism over spiritual values. The
ssage on the billboard in the top photograph, which reads *sent from above*,
also be seen as objectionable to public morals. (See Figure 3.25.)

Figure 3.23
Devaluation of
place
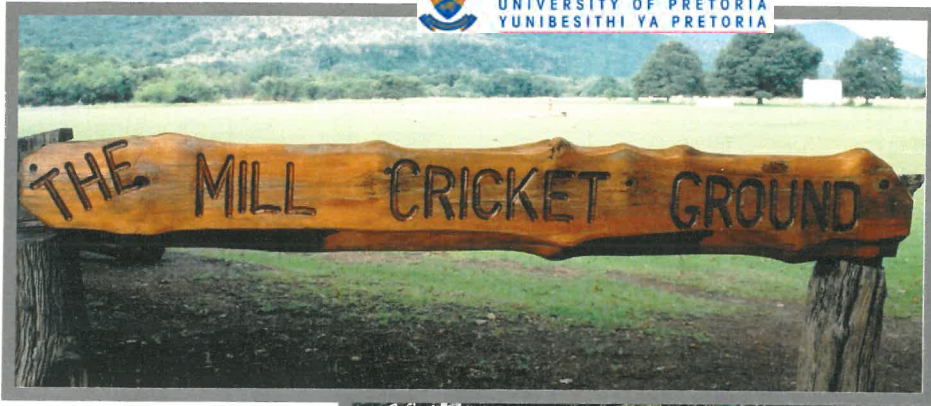
Figure 3.24

Devaluation of place and commercialisation of placeness

Date of photos: April 2001
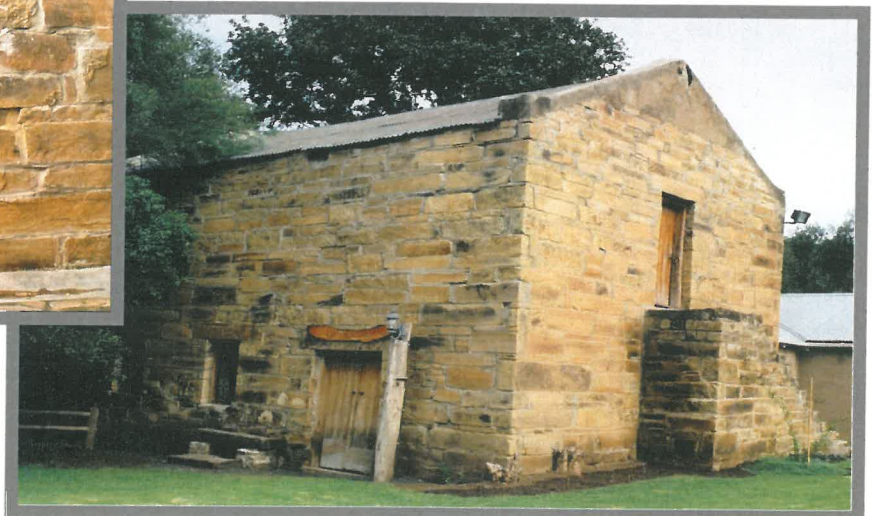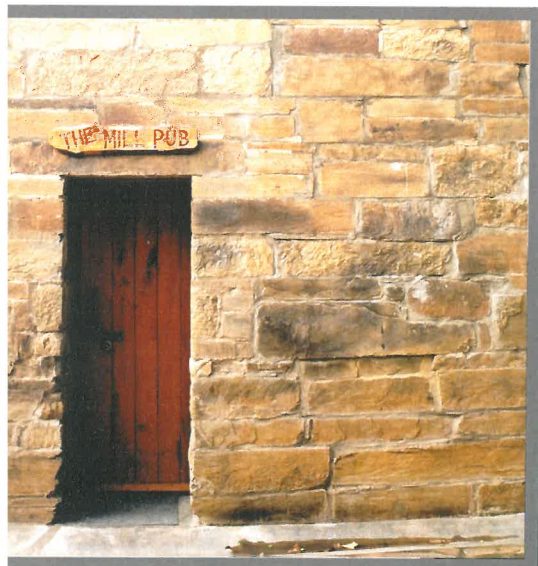
Date of photo: April 2001

Cricket used to be a game with much tradition and cricket grounds places with much character - places with grand old clubhouses and lots of shady oaks. Unfortunately the game and the ground have been commercialised to a large extent. Oaks and plane trees have been chopped down to erect more stands in order to bring in more money. Billboards and advertisements along the grounds have played an important role in breaking down tradition and character. Certain smaller cricket grounds, however, have succeeded in retaining their character.

Such a cricket ground is the Mill Cricket Ground (MCG) on a farm near Bedford in the Eastern Cape with a historical mill as a pub and massive oaks providing shade to spectators. This is probably one of the most beautiful cricket grounds, if not the most beautiful, in South Africa. Unfortunately a standardised beer sign on a very unattractive structure directs the visitor from the highway to the cricket ground. Thus a very negative first impression of the Mill Cricket Ground is created in the mind of the visitor while its rich placeness is devaluated and commercialised. A directional sign is needed that will reflect and enhance the placeness of the MCG. Even a standardised brown tourism sign on an attractive structure will make a huge contribution in this regard.

**Figure 3.24
continued**

this manner true sense of place may be lost, which may lead to uniformity and monotony. Outdoor advertisements should be allowed to supplement placeness and not to dominate, conquer and commercialise. Environmental managers should not manage the perceptual environment as a pure commercial commodity. If such an approach is followed the perceptual environment may become less valued in the eyes of the public. In certain instances placeness may be obtained only through the absence of all advertisements. The tendency of outdoor advertisements to be ubiquitous should therefore be managed and controlled in order to ensure places that are totally advertisement free.

Outdoor advertising, linked to sponsorships, may also devaluate prestigious sporting and cultural events (McAllister, 1996, p. 221). By dominating and conquering events such as the Comrades Marathon, the values and spirit for which such events stand may be seriously devaluated or even destroyed by outdoor advertising. The proud and rich tradition of the Springbok rugby team has been injured by highly visible beer advertisements that are being displayed on the chests of the national team members and which are more prominent than the Springbok emblem. Rugby supporters can therefore not be blamed for feeling that the Springbok tradition has been replaced by a new tradition of commercialisation and alcohol consumption.

3.3.2.4 The impact of vernacular culture

Outdoor advertisements and signs are being used as a medium for expressing modern vernacular culture. This takes on a variety of forms such as advertisements and signs in strip development and commercial and entertainment districts, and even the collage of brand names or corporate logos on NASCAR racing cars in the USA, which has been described as *a true folk art of our time* (Graphics 303, 1996, p.25). According to Blake (1979, p.27) the outdoor advertising industry even sees billboards as the art gallery of the public. Proponents for the greater recognition of modern vernacular expressions base their case on the argument that such expressions *accurately portray the values, dreams, and aspirations of major portions of our heterogeneous culture.* (Motloch, 1991, p.8). Blake (1979, p.14) describes this viewpoint in a more direct and less flattering manner. According to him this so called *pop-garde* have *pointed out that there are certain resources or manifestations on the popular scene that have been ignored for much too long and that should now be recognized for their potentially invigorating values. Garish billboards, flashing neon signs, and vulgar eyesores on every*

roadside of the land have become, in the eyes of some highly perceptive artists, a new and utterly unexpected cultural resource: a new pop art, a new pop architecture. Modern vernacular elements are seen as an important inspirational source for the grand tradition of design by the so-called *pop-garde*.

A clear distinction should be made between modern vernacular design and vernacular design in a more traditional sense. **Modern vernacular design** means a design process involving popular structure and style with no professional designer involved in the unselfconscious expression of important needs, values, desires and dreams of a people; where the owner of the structure plays an integral part in the formative process and where form, model, materials and construction reveal a certain amount of consistency and standardisation. It may also involve mass-produced or standardised units or structures designed by professional designers.

Vernacular design in a traditional sense means a design process involving the traditional building style of a specific cultural group within a certain geographical location with no professional designer involved in the unselfconscious expression of the needs, values, desires and dreams of such a cultural group; where the owner of the structure plays an integral part in the formative process; and where form, model, materials and construction reveal a large amount of consistency and standardisation. A professional designer may be involved giving expression to such a design process within the relevant geographical location, but only without emphasising the monumental and overt and without basing such design process on an anthropomorphic mindset.

The **grand tradition of design** means the professionally designed component of the total landscape, including its monumental and overt structures and buildings. It can be seen as the stock in trade of the professional designer. It is the high art that is usually taught in schools of design. The grand tradition of design is based on an anthropocentric (human as centre) and anthropomorphic (human as form-giver) mindset, communicating design statements as an expression of the intellect and personality of designers and the characteristics of certain movements and design style.

The involvement of ordinary people in forming the landscape through vernacular design can be seen as a very important part of the visual environment.

Landscapes that are inhabited by humans are records of, and transmit meaning about, the culture... The largest portion of the landscape consists of common elements...referred to as the folk tradition (Motloch, 1991, p.8).

Motloch (1991, p.8) also makes the following statement:

The fact that the vast majority of this landscape is unselfconscious, that we seldom think about it, results in a landscape that more honestly reflects the underlying forces to which it responds.

Most outdoor advertisements and signs can be seen as vernacular design elements due to the lack of professional designer involvement or due to mass-produced standardised sign and advertisement units and structures. The grand tradition of design is mostly limited to actual content of certain advertisements, which excludes advertising structure, and to specially designed signage projects.

Outdoor information transfer provides a favourable medium for expressing modern vernacular design. Advertisements and signs may play a rather dominant role as vernacular design elements in areas of economic activity such as commercial, industrial and entertainment areas and transportation nodes, especially if the American cityscape is used as point of departure. It is therefore no small wonder that one of outdoor advertising's most common traits, the creation of monetary wealth, is also reflected by modern vernacular design in general. The *values, dreams, and aspirations of major portions of our heterogeneous culture,* as portrayed by modern vernacular expressions, are totally overwhelmed and dominated by economic forces and *corporate influences.* Modern vernacular expressions leave very little room for reflecting other values and forces such as environmental awareness, placeness, cultural identity and self-esteem of communities. Almost no opportunity is given for the visual expression of such values and forces in order for the landscape to be able to more honestly reflect a broader variety of underlying forces to which it should respond. All higher values, dreams and aspirations are literally covered by a vernacular veneer of commercialism, materialism and monetary wealth on which vernacular culture is based. In a modern world with increasing environmental awareness, environmental self-regulation or co-regulation by corporate institutions and an ever-increasing number of international environmental treaties such an approach is unthinkable. The dominance of this materialistic attitude in modern vernacular expressions is authenticated even

further by the works of prominent architects such as Robert Venturi and Jean Nouvel, who make use of such materialistic symbolism as a source of inspiration in the grand tradition of design.

In contrast to vernacular design in a traditional sense, modern vernacular design tends to have a negative and contrasting influence on the visual environment. Traditional vernacular design is characterised by an inherent placeness due to the quality of *unity with variety, theme with variation (or) order with a healthy hint of spontaneity* (Motloch, 1991, p. 133). This quality was possible in the past due to certain limitations placed on traditional building style, such as closed communities within limited geographical areas, limited technology and a limited range of materials. Modern vernacular design and expression have lost all unity and have become swamped by detail and variety due to advanced technology, a large assortment of materials and prefabricated units aimed at instant construction, and hordes of gaudy advertisements and signs.

Modern vernacular design and expression therefore tend to destroy placeness and promote a uniform world culture and uniform visual environments of disharmony based on materialistic values. By symbolising monetary wealth it also supports and promotes unsustainable consumption and production patterns. These problems can be aggravated to a large extent by giving too much recognition to the modern commercial vernacular environment by means of expressing such elements through the grand tradition of architecture.

An almost unlimited choice with regard to technology and materials in modern society is inherent to the whole problem of visual disharmony in both the vernacular and grand traditions of design. Blake (1979, p.156) describes this problem of visual vandalism as follows:

The affluent society has many blessings, we are told, but it also contains within it the seeds of vandalism: for the first time in the history of mankind, we have complete and unrestricted freedom of esthetic choice! We can build anything, make anything, design anything, put it anywhere! Moreover, we can build, make, or design everything (so we tell ourselves) in such a way that it will be entirely different from everything else now extant on the face of the earth! The frantic search for novelty (for the sake of novelty) is encouraged by all the pressures that surround us: publications and other communications media are, by definition, dedicated to "news"; so that the successful

writer, designer, musician, movie maker or artist is not the one who pursues quality, but the one who pursues and captures novelty... All freedoms first lead to such abuses, of course: revolutions lead to indiscriminate bloodbaths - and our new, unlimited freedom of choice in material and esthetic things has led to indiscriminate vandalism. Yet the essence of all great art of all great periods of civilization has been the precise opposite: restraint, either self-imposed or, more frequently, imposed by economic or technical limitations.

The developing communities of the Third World are especially eager to accept a greater recognition of modern vernacular design and the razzle-dazzle of the American way of life since such environments symbolise progress, civilisation and economic prosperity. Since most developing communities are in a survival situation the values of such communities are very susceptible to economic forces and influences. The United States is seen as a world leader and role model by such communities and a life of material abundance as represented by American society is pursued in all earnest by developing communities. The United States of America can be seen as the exporter of cheap commercial vernacular architecture and design elements, including billboard structures and outdoor advertising trends, together with a supplementary materialistic mindset by means of economic globalisation, cultural imperialism or vernacular imperialism. Higher values and environmental lessons learned by First World countries are not recognised easily by Third World communities. This is understandable since the United States, which serves as role model, does not have a very good environmental record and the typical modern vernacular expression, which portrays the values and aspirations of modern society, excludes such higher values.

The large-scale acceptance of modern vernacular expressions is especially a problem in countries such as South Africa with both First World and Third World components. The First World component provides the mechanism for economic growth and a ready channel for transferring American commercial vernacular expressions, while the Third World component provides the ready acceptance of such expressions by means of large numbers of consumers.

The ready acceptance of modern vernacular design and architecture in developing communities impedes the effective management of visual resource in such communities, which includes the

effective control of advertisements and signs. Since excessive advertisements and signs are seen as one of the main building blocks of modern vernacular expression, the effective control of advertisements and signs could be interpreted as contrary to the needs, desires and values of such developing communities. This situation can very easily be exploited by the outdoor advertising industry.

3.3.3   ETHICAL OR MORAL IMPACT

Ethical impact occurs when the content of outdoor information transfer is objectionable, indecent or prejudicial to the public morals and values. Outdoor advertising has a larger inherent potential to impact on public morals than the other advertising media due to fact that it cannot be avoided, ignored, covered or switched off, which also means that children cannot be protected sufficiently from such advertisements (cf. Office of Women's Policy, p. 5). Schmio Awards (online) has put it this way: *Billboards are the most intrusive kind of advertising. Even unwilling adults cannot avoid them or turn them off to protect children from inappropriate or damaging messages.* The United States Supreme Court observed as follows [Packer Corp. v. Utah, 285 U.S. 105, 110, 52 S.Ct. 273, 274]:

> *Billboards, ... placards and such are a class by themselves... Other forms of advertising are ordinarily seen as a matter of choice on the part of the observer. The young people as well as the adults have the message of the billboard thrust upon them by all the arts and devices that skill can produce. In the case of newspapers and magazines, there must be some seeking by the one who is to see and read the advertisement. The radio can be turned off, but not so the billboard* (Floyd, online).

By revealing the objectionable, indecent and prejudicial in public such effects are amplified. It will therefore give offence, become degrading and evoke public reaction much sooner than advertisements with similar contents displayed in most other media, where the objectionable, indecent and prejudicial are cloaked to a certain extent by the privacy of the home. The obtrusive and public character of outdoor advertising is recognised by the *Advertising Standards Authority (ASA)* of the United Kingdom, which regulates advertising in the public interest through a system of self-regulation. Mention is made in their 2000 Annual Report of a *Yves Saint Laurent* perfume poster

which was ordered to be taken down because of its sexually suggestive nature. However, the ASA ruled that the same image was acceptable in newspapers and magazines (ASA, online).

Due to outdoor advertising's huge public audience and obtrusive nature, offensive advertisements might cause unacceptably high moral impacts before steps can be taken to remove such advertisements. Effective controlling measures are therefore necessary. After *French Connection* used an anagram of the f-word in outdoor advertising and *Yves Saint Laurent* displayed a sexually explicit advertisement on billboards these companies were ordered by the Advertising Standards Authority of the UK to submit all future posters for prior approval, effectively telling these companies that they could not be trusted to keep the industry's codes (Douglas, online). However, more localised advertisements which do not involve companies or advertising agencies cannot be controlled effectively by self-regulatory bodies. Even local authorities might find it difficult to control localised offensive advertisements of a highly mobile or temporary nature. This may include outdoor advertising gimmicks such as a lass wearing a scanty bikini inside a see-through bath on top of a bakkie (pick-up) being driven through peak-hour traffic in Johannesburg (The Star, 1998, March 19) or a nude male person forming part of a live billboard along a busy road in Pretoria. (Pretoria News, 1998, October 20). Such advertisements therefore enhance the inherent potential of outdoor advertising to impact on public morals.

The large degree of subjectivity involved in evaluating indecency and prejudice and dissimilarities in moral values is another factor that impedes the effective control of elements of indecency and prejudice in outdoor information transfer. For example, *The Atlanta Journal Constitution* of November 3, 1998 reported on a Georgia Supreme Court ruling that found a state law prohibiting highway billboards that advertise nude clubs and adult entertainment unconstitutional because it violates the rights to freedom of speech. Certain groups might therefore be subjected to indecent and prejudicial outdoor information transfer messages against their will while the same messages might not offend other groups or might be seen as an expression of freedom of speech by such other groups.

Advertising's impact in the ethical realm should not be underestimated. Independent research carried out in May 1998 for the *Advertising Standards Authority* (UK) revealed a hardening in UK consumer attitudes in taste and decency since the previous survey conducted in 1996-7. Concern about the

portrayal of women as sex objects in advertising has increased to 71% of the respondents, 53% were sensitive about the portrayal of men, almost 80% were concerned about disrespectful religious references, while 81% objected strongly to profanity in advertising (ASA of SA, 1999). And in Italy a group of celebrities, politicians and business leaders signed their names to a *declaration of discomfort* over the nudity proliferating Italy's media, which included outdoor media (Pretoria News, 1998, August 21). Owing to its obtrusive and highly visible character, outdoor advertising attracts relatively large numbers of complaints. In 2000 outdoor advertising attracted the second highest number of complaints received by the *Advertising Standards Bureau of Australia* (18,66%) following television (71,87%) (ASB, online). In the United Kingdom posters were responsible for the highest number of complaints (21,46%) received by the Advertising Standards Authority for the same year, followed by the national press (17,64%) (ASA, online). However, the broadcast media are not covered by the ASA. It is noteworthy that in both cases outdoor advertising elicited more complaints than the printed media.

The exposure of children to outdoor advertising messages glamourising tobacco and alcohol is a matter of great ethical concern in many countries and communities. In the United States of America studies have repeatedly documented the disproportionately high concentration of billboards advertising such products in low-income African-American and Latino communities, near homes, schools, playgrounds and other places where children congregate (Schmio Awards, online). It seems as if community action in the USA against billboards advertising tobacco and alcohol products was more successful than actions against billboards containing elements of indecency. Various local jurisdictions took measures to restrict alcohol and tobacco billboard advertising. This movement was activated by a 1996 US Court of Appeals decision upholding a Baltimore ordinance that removed alcohol and tobacco billboards in areas where children are likely to gather (Schmio Awards, online). The problem of tobacco advertising through the outdoor advertising medium was solved to a certain extent by the *Master Settlement Agreement* of 1998, a legal agreement between 46 states and the major tobacco companies, according to which all tobacco advertisements on billboards had to be removed before 23 April 1999. However, the *Master Settlement Agreement* still permits outdoor and externally visible tobacco advertisements at any point that manufactures or sells tobacco products, including those near schools and playgrounds. A study undertaken by the University of Illinois at Chicago (Wakefield *et al.*, 2000) indicated that tobacco companies have significantly increased retail

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cent or prejudicial to public values. Outdoor advertising has
ger inherent potential to impact on public morals than the
r advertising media due to the fact that it cannot be avoided,
red, covered or switched off, which also means that children
iot be protected from such advertisements.

billboard in the top left photograph advocates the virtues of
stablishment of a somewhat dubious character, while the
ict on morality is reflected by the irony in the messages
eyed by the other photographs: Top right - the directional
in the lower right-hand corner indicates a possible solution
verindulgence in worldly pleasures; bottom right - a
radiction in outdoor advertising messages trying to promote
denounce smoking at the same time; bottom left - a
ction of the educational value of outdoor advertising.

Figure 3.25

The moral impact of outdoor information transfer

store advertising and promotion since the ban on tobacco billboard advertising took effect. The study showed a 9% increase in stores with exterior tobacco advertising and a 21% increase in stores with a high level of exterior advertising.

Owing to the public nature of outdoor advertising, gender-related imagery has also become a contentious issue in recent times. In reporting to the Minister for Women's Affairs of the Australian State of Victoria, the Portrayal of Women Advisory Committee identified the following issues regarding the portrayal of women in outdoor advertising:

❑   The stereotyping of female images in outdoor advertising: According to market research undertaken by NFO CM Research for the Committee, only 17 % of females and 35 % of males agreed that sufficient examples of women of different shapes and sizes were used in outdoor advertising (Office of Women's Policy, p.5).

❑   The association of women with sex, as sexual objects and/or as sexually available: As can be expected, female market research respondents felt more strongly about this point than male respondents, as reflected by the 62 % of female as opposed to 44 % of male respondents who objected to women in sexually provocative positions. Furthermore, 61 % of female as opposed to 27 % of male respondents indicated that they wanted to see fewer outdoor advertisements with partially clothed women (Office of Women's Policy, p.6).

❑   Encouraging negative views of women's status in society: According to the above-mentioned market research the majority of female (72 %) and male (64 %) respondents agreed that the volume and type of imagery of women used in outdoor advertisements can influence the way men view women. Furthermore, 58 % of female and 46 % of male respondents agreed that outdoor advertisements do not reflect the contribution women make to society (Office of Women's Policy, p.6).

❑   Impacting on self-esteem: Women are pressured to try to achieve unrealistic goals in relation to their appearance, particularly their weight. This leads to feelings of inadequacy, anxiety and poor self-esteem. A relation may also exist between eating disorders, particularly among young

women and girls, and unrealistic images of women used in advertising. The majority of female (69 %) and male (57 %) respondents involved in the market research agreed that the volume and type of imagery of women used in outdoor advertising has, over time, impacted on the way women see themselves. Furthermore, 51 % of female respondents and 39 % of male respondents were concerned about the impact of outdoor advertising on young women (Office of Women's Policy, p.7).

3.3.4 UNSUSTAINABLE CONSUMPTION PATTERNS

Advertising may lead to unsustainable consumption patterns, which impacts at the social, economic and ecological levels. In modern society commercial advertising is promoting a lifestyle based on material wealth and a growing consumption of products and services. It tends to emphasise the *positive* or desirable aspects of consumption while deliberately ignoring the negative aspects of both consumption and production. Advertisements link the product with a socially desirable referent system. Acquiring a specific product will lead to the acquisition of certain valued meanings or goals, such as social acceptance.

According to Kalle Lasn, founder of the anti-consumerism group *Media Foundation*, over-consumption may be seen as the mother of all environmental problems, but the advertising industry should be seen as the father (Geary, 1997, p.70).

The developed countries of the North are currently drowning in a sea of advertisements aimed at stimulating the sale of products and services. The average North American is bombarded by more than 3 000 marketing messages a day (Geary, 1997, p.70). This deluge of advertisements, aimed at creating artificial wants instead of meeting people's needs, impact on the social environment by contributing to overspending, personal debts and strained human relationships. In extreme cases overspending finds expression in compulsive shopping and irrational purchasing. According to researchers this phenomenon can be seen as a psychiatric disorder, with conclusive evidence that it can even be considered a form of addiction (Day, 1997, p.22).

The promotion of products such as tobacco and alcohol has a high social and economic impact owing to their hazardous effects on human health. Especially tobacco, which drains society economically through the high health care cost of smoking-related diseases, the effects of passive smoking and even lost productivity due to early deaths (Bartecchi *et al.*, 1995).

As consumer patterns in the developed countries of the North become more environmentally friendly, sustainable and health-conscious, unhealthy, unsustainable and unrealistic consumer patterns are progressively transferred to developing countries in the South by means of aggressive advertising.

> Such advertising campaigns *portray unrealistic lifestyles, creating a thirst for Western luxuries that drains these regions of hundreds of millions of dollars that could go into grassroots development... Consumption trends in the South are moving in exactly the opposite direction of the planet's environmental needs and development priorities. They are fuelled by massive advertising for the usually unnecessary and sometimes harmful products of northern multinationals...* (Pradervand, 1992, p.76).

Cigarette sales can be seen as the archetypal example of the promotion of unneeded, indeed lethal, consumption goods in the South. As cigarette sales slump in the industrialised North, tobacco companies look to the South. According to the Pradervands (1992, p.77), one of the most disturbing effects of the promotion of Western consumption goods in Africa is the replacement of inexpensive, traditional, frequently healthy forms of consumption by more attractive but less suitable and usually more expensive Western alternatives.

Outdoor advertising *per se* can make an important contribution in promoting unsustainable and unhealthy consumption patterns. This is clearly illustrated by the important role outdoor advertising played in the USA with regard to tobacco-related advertising from the 1970s to the 1990s. After Congress banned all cigarette advertising on electronic media in 1971, such advertising shifted from television and radio to magazines, newspapers and billboards (Bartecchi *et al.,* 1995, p. 29). By the 1980s a third of all outdoor advertising in the United States was for tobacco products. (Saturday Business Report, 1999, April 24). However, in terms of the *Master Settlement Agreement* between 46 states and the major tobacco companies, all tobacco advertisements on billboards had to be removed as from 23 April 1999 (Advocacy Institute, online; Saturday Business Report, 1999, April 24).

Outdoor advertising is also a primary advertising medium in developing communities which are very susceptible to unsustainable consumption patterns. Although developing communities may very quickly develop a taste for the luxuries of the Western World and may very easily conform to westernised consumption patterns, most of these communities have not yet developed a social conscience and a sense of environmental responsibility and do not have the means to implement environmentally corrective measures that should go with such consumption patterns.

3.3.5 IMPACT ON TOURISM RESOURCES AND UNFRIENDLY TOURIST AND RETAIL ENVIRONMENTS

Today the tourism industry is one of the most important contributors to economic development. It is also one of the worlds biggest and fastest creators of employment. According to the *World Travel and Tourism Council* (WTTC, undated) the travel and tourism industry created 192 million jobs world-wide in the year 2000. According to estimates this figure will rise to 251 million jobs within a decade, which means at least one in twelve of the global total. In Hawaii the travel and tourism economy was expected to contribute 27,8% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and 31,6% to employment in 1998. According to estimates these figures would rise to 32,2% and 37,8% respectively within the next decade (WTTC, 1998, p.1). In the Southern African Development Community the travel and tourism economy contributed 20,9% to the GDP of Namibia and 27,9% to that of Mauritius in 1999. The corresponding contributions to employment were 15,1% and 20,6%. The travel and tourism economy contributed only 8,2% to South Africa's GDP and 7,3% to employment. However, South Africa has the biggest travel and tourism economy in the region, which stood at US$ 9billion in 1999 (WTTC, 1999, pp.4-5). Travel and tourism can make a much more important contribution to South Africa's economy in the future. This must be seen in the light of this country's huge tourism potential due to its diversity in landscapes, cultures, fauna and flora. The South African government has committed itself to tourism development as a priority. Opening Parliament in the year 2000 President Thabo Mbeki told the nation that:

> *Consistent with the decisions taken at the Job Summit, both public and private sectors have committed the necessary funds for the promotion of the tourism sector, commonly accepted as potentially the most important sector with regard to job creation. Work has therefore begun to vigorously promote the growth of this sector.*

Photo date: December 2000

Photo date: December 2000

Figure 3.26
Impact on tourism
resources

Outdoor information transfer may have a very negative impact on tourism resources, as illustrated by the photographs on this page.

Beaufort West is a very important stopover for the tourist travelling on the N1 to Cape Town. A proliferation of signs at the entrance of this town (top left and right) tries to convince the tourist to stay longer and spend more. However, the untidy and unfriendly atmosphere created by these signs might rather have the opposite effect, forcing the visitor to limit his stay to the absolute minimum.

Outdoor information transfer might have a diverse impact on tourism resources. Obstructing scenic views (left) or impacting on cultural resources, as is illustrated by the sign proliferation at the entrance to the Big Hole, one of Kimberley's most important tourist attractions (bottom left). Tourism campaigns might even be self-destructive destroying their own resources (bottom right).

enic America - Photogallery
:www.scenic.org/photos.htm

Photo date: December 1999

South African National Roads Agency

The proliferation of advertisements and signs may have a very negative impact on visual resources such as scenic landscapes and cultural streetscapes, which constitute major tourist attractions. However, the impact of outdoor information transfer is not limited to such outstanding attractions since the visual environment also forms a backdrop to most other tourist activities such as game watching, touring, entertainment, shopping and sport. The visual environment can be seen as the fabric that gives meaning and substance to any tourism experience. Each country, area, city or town has its own unique visual character and atmosphere, which plays an important role in the quality of any tourist experience. Mark Twain (cited in Scenic America, online (3)) has described the value of urban character as follows: *We take stock of a city like we take stock of a man. The clothes or appearance are the externals by which we judge.* Due to the universal appearance of advertising structures and even advertising contents (product names, logos and image) outdoor information transfer tends to contribute to the loss of identity and the creation of a uniform world culture. This tendency can therefore be seen as a contribution to the destruction of the uniqueness of local landscapes and settings, which implies a diminishing in value as tourist attractions. Edward T. McMahon, Director, *American Greenways Program*, has expressed himself as follows in this regard: *The more a community comes to resemble "Anyplace, U.S.A," the less reason there will be to visit* (Citizens for a Scenic Florida, online (1)).

Kimberley Fogle, Town Planning Director of Front Royal, Virginia, has made the following statement regarding billboards marring local character and tourism potential:

> *The biggest tourism component today is heritage tourism. People are going to communities because they have a sense of character, they show their heritage. They provide people with new information about how other people live. The billboards detract from that* (The Warren Sentinel, 1999, February 18).

The juridical system in the United States has acknowledged the economic value of aesthetic resources for tourism as a justification for billboard regulation.

> *Because this state [California] relies on its scenery to attract tourists and commerce, aesthetic considerations assume economic value. Consequently, any distinction between aesthetics and economic grounds as a justification for billboard regulation*

Date of photos: September 2000

Figure 3.27
Impact on tourism resources
Table Mountain

Date of photo: February 2002

Another good example of outdoor information transfer impacting on tourism resources. This is the tourist's first impression of Table Mountain, a world-renown landmark, when leaving Cape Town International Airport. The irony of the billboard message is clear ... it should have rather read – *Welcome to Cape Town, where a cloud covers the top of the mountain and Vodacom covers the rest of the mountain.*

must fail (Metromedia, Inc. v. City of San Diego, 610 P.2d 407, 413 (Cal. 1980), rev'd on other grounds, 453 U.S. 490 (1981) cited in Citizens for a Scenic Florida, online (1)).

A strong indication exists that the effective management of billboards has a positive influence on the popularity of tourist destinations. A survey involving 13 500 travellers ranked America's top ten tourist destinations. Hawaii and Alaska were placed first and second. Both states have banned and removed all billboards. Other states ranked in the top ten were Vermont, Maine (both billboard free), Oregon, Washington, Northern California, Colorado and Arizona (all with strict limitations on billboards or having hardly any billboards) (Scenic Missouri, online).

Billboard-free Vermont enjoyed a 50% rise in tourism expenditure in the two years after removing its last billboard, while the number of visitors rose by nearly 10%. According to Lymon Orton, Vermont store owner:

> *The billboard ban provided not only a level playing field for all of us, it opened the roadways to scenic vistas and created more than compensating publicity... The absence of billboards in Vermont is the best billboard of all for the tourist business* (Scenic America, online (1)).

The proliferation of advertisements and signs may have a very negative impact on retail business by creating psychological environments not conducive to shopping. This principle is recognised by the *City Council of Westminster,* which aims to obtain shopping street character and atmosphere that would be conducive to trade and attract local, national and international shoppers. A high premium is placed on the recreation of streets with a historical appearance, and shopping streets like Regent and Oxford Street can be seen as tourist attractions of world renown. Shop signs as an integral part of shopfronts are seen as an important element in creating the desired shopping street atmosphere. If not managed properly, advertisements and signs might, however, have a severe and detrimental effect on the streetscape and may cause shopping streets to lose their commercial viability. It is the total streetscape that attracts shoppers and not the appearance of individual shops or the prominence of individual shop signs.

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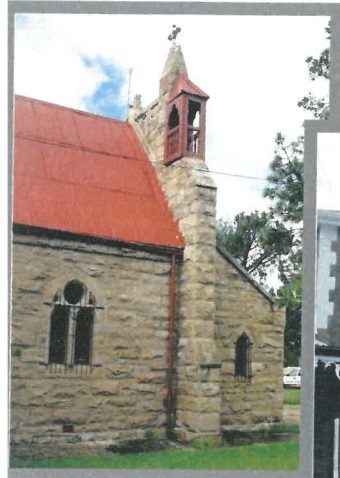
Figure 3.28
Impact on tourism resources
Cathcart and Hogsback

Cathcart in the Eastern Cape is a small rural town with various historical sandstone buildings (centre left and right), a strong sense of place and a large tourism potential. Unfortunately, a collection of very unattractive signs at the entrance to the historical town centre is quite detrimental to both sense of place and tourism potential (top).

A repetition of the same problem (bottom right) in Hogsback, a very attractive mountain village in the Eastern Cape (bottom left).

Making a shop "stand out" in the context of the street, does not always make it more attractive to shoppers. Evident respect for the character of the street and the area, will generally produce a high quality retail environment which is likely to attract more shoppers (City Council of Westminster, 1993, p. 16).

Edward T. McMahon, Director of the *American Greenways Program*, has made the following statement in this regard:

A good sign code is pro-business, since an attractive business district will attract more customers than an ugly one. Moreover, when signs are controlled, merchants do a better job of selling. and at less cost (Citizens for a Scenic Florida (1), p.7).

The proliferation of signs and advertisements may contribute to the run-down appearance of retail districts such as city centres and create a feeling of insecurity, which is not conducive to tourism and retail spending. In South Africa with its high crime rate this is a very important factor. The government of Singapore has taken the principle of creating a psychological atmosphere conducive to shopping even further by applying it on a city-wide scale and to trade and investment in general. Almost no advertisements are allowed in Singapore, even in industrial areas, in accordance with Singapore's *clean and green* image, in order to attract international investments. Strict control is exercised with regard to shop signs (URA).

3.3.6 IMPACT ON TRAFFIC SAFETY AND TRAFFIC FLOW

3.3.6.1 Detrimental effects of outdoor information transfer

Outdoor information transfer may have the following detrimental effects regarding traffic safety and traffic flow:

- Distracting the attention of the motorist
- Interfering and creating confusion with traffic signals, traffic signs and road markings
- Obstructing the view of the motorist
- Forming physical obstructions
- Billboards and signs hitting pedestrians, cyclists and motorists

❑ Impairing traffic flow

(a) Distracting the attention of the motorist

This issue has been the main focus of the controversy surrounding traffic safety and outdoor advertising.

By their very nature outdoor advertisements are designed to pull the eyes of the motorist off the road and onto roadside displays. In order to achieve maximum exposure, outdoor advertisements are placed in locations that are highly perceivable, but which also require special attention from the driver and are critical from a traffic safety point of view, such as bends in the road and intersections. The *Institute of Outdoor Advertising* (USA) itself has admitted that outdoor advertising has a distracting influence by stating:

> *Outdoor's sheer physical size allows for eye stopping, bigger-than-life illustrations. It is virtually impossible not to notice the world's biggest scoop of ice cream or shiny automobile. At night a billboard encounters no other visual to compete with the motorist's attention. There is only eye stopping visual display emblazoned across the sky* (Scenic Missouri, online).

In the United States federal and state courts have for long cited traffic safety as a legitimate basis for billboard regulation. The following serves as examples in this regard: (Scenic Missouri, online)

❑ In Major Media of the Southeast v. City of Raleigh (1987) the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals said:

> *… no empirical studies are necessary for reasonable people to conclude that billboards pose a traffic hazard, since by their very nature they are designed to distract drivers and their passengers from maintaining their view on the road.*

❑ Likewise, in Metromedia v. San Diego the California Supreme Court said: *We hold as a matter of law that an ordinance which eliminates billboards designed to be viewed from streets and highways reasonably relates to traffic safety.*

Figure 3.29
Impact on traffic safety
Distracting the attention of the motorist

Outdoor advertising creates a traffic safety hazard by distracting the attention of the motorist. By their very nature outdoor advertisements are designed to draw the eyes of the motorist off the road and onto roadside displays. In order to compete with other advertisements even more effective techniques are used to attract the attention of the motorist, such as making use of graphics displaying scantily clothed female figures.

Photo source: Citizens for a Scenic Florida
http://www.scenicflorida.org

Outdoor advertising may also contribute to information overload in roadside environments, which may have a very negative influence on driver attention. In the same manner as information overload interferes with aesthetic perception it also interferes with the information processing system of the driver. According to Bergeron (1996, cited in Van Schalkwyk & Visser, 2001, p.4), the driver's visual information processing capacity is limited and therefore a visual environment that contains too many stimuli creates visual confusion and causes driver error. An excessive information load impairs the information processing system and, as a direct result, the driver *loses control over the perceptive information he(/she) is receiving, the attention resources are exhausted and his(/her) sensor-motor and decisional performance may deteriorate, increasing the likelihood of an accident generating situation* (Bergeron 1996, cited in Van Schalkwyk & Visser, 2001, p.4).

Various studies have been undertaken regarding the distraction effect of larger commercial signs along the road. A large number of these studies indicated a definite correlation between accidents and the presence of roadside advertising (Minnesota Department of Highways, 1951; Rusch, 1951; Madigan-Hyland, 1963; Faustman, DJ, 1961; Weiner, 1973; Holahan *et al.*, 1978, Jan.; Holahan *et al.*, 1978; Stanway Edwards, 1995). These studies have received varying amounts of criticism regarding research methodology and statistical analysis. However, when studies finding no significant correlation between accidents and roadside advertising (Michigan State Highway Department, 1952; Lauer and McMonagle, 1955; Blanche, undated) were exposed to the same critical review they did even worse. According to Wachtel and Netherton (1980, pp.25-6), the Lauer and McMonagle study was, for instance, *so fraught with errors of conception and execution that it sheds no real light on the relationships between roadside advertising... and traffic safety, and any such conclusions may be unjustified.* Another study finding no correlation, the Blanche study, was also discredited since it seemed obvious that this study was undertaken to disprove the findings of the Madigan-Hyland study, which came to the opposite conclusion. An *a priori* bias on the part of the researchers seems a very strong possibility due to an alluded sponsorship by the Outdoor Advertising Association of America and the fact that Blanche only referred to previous studies indicating no correlation between advertising and accidents while ignoring studies proving the opposite (Wachtel & Netherton, 1980, p.28). On the other hand the Faustman study, statistically reanalised by Weiner, which found a definite correlation, can be seen as one of the most reliable studies on the subject. According to

Wachtel and Netherton (1980, p.30) Weiner's findings were based on a sophisticated statistical analysis of data collected by Faustman *under field conditions which were perhaps the best controlled of any of the reported studies on the subject of billboards and accidents.* Both the Faustman and Weiner reports *have received no comment or criticism in the substantial body of literature that continues to grow on the subject.*

An objective review of the above studies seems to favour a definite correlation between accidents and advertising signs along roadways. It must also be borne in mind that most of the above studies were undertaken a very long time ago, before the 1980s and mainly during the 1950s and 1960s, involving only ordinary billboards at the side of the road. Outdoor advertising has changed drastically from the billboard of the fifties and sixties. Nowadays variable message signs and other techniques and technologies are becoming more and more sophisticated, eye-catching and distracting, therefore making the correlation between accidents and outdoor advertising an even stronger possibility. Furthermore, the ordinary study on advertising and road accidents cannot take all factors into consideration. Factors such as the effect of advertisements in motion and advertising messages evoking a response from the observer and therefore enhancing the distraction effect, such as making a phone call or writing down a phone number while driving, are ignored in most cases.

It should be accepted that there never will be a research study that is infallible and free of criticism owing to the large number of variables to be taken into consideration. According to various researchers, determining the effect of roadside advertising on road safety is a difficult endeavour, owing to several theoretical and methodological reasons and to the variation in driver characteristics and driving environments, including variation and technological progress in advertisement types (Farbry *et al.*, 2001, p.8; Van Schalkwyk & Visser, 2001, p.3). There will therefore always be enough material to keep the controversy regarding road accidents and outdoor advertising alive. However, it cannot be denied, that due to the distracting characteristics of outdoor advertising, it has an inherent potential to reduce the safety of the road environment, but according to Van Schalkwyk and Visser (2001, p.15), *there are specific elements in each case that will increase the risk or reduce it to insignificant levels. [The] active regulation of outdoor advertising is [therefore] essential to ensure that [road] safety ... is not compromised.* It seems only logical that in the absence of effective control, accidents will happen and a *significant* correlation between accidents and roadside advertising will

exist. In the absence of effective control measures more and more advertising contractors will go to extremes in order to get on top of competitors, while the boundaries of extremity will be shifted further and further due to the inherent mechanism and characteristics of outdoor advertisements and signs (see 3.3.1). The following *extremities* serve as examples of very imaginative advertising stunts, but also sure recipes for causing accidents:

❑ Two fellows in mouse suits on motorbikes, pursuing in all earnest a big chunk of cheese on a trailer towed by a bakkie (pickup) on the Ben Schoeman, South Africa's busiest stretch of highway.

❑ A pair of naked and very shapely legs sticking out of the side window of a Volkswagen Beetle on an advertising trailer parked along a busy road in Sandton near Johannesburg (Beeld, 1999, Augustus 20).

❑ An advertising trailer carrying an advertisement for an *adult* magazine which does not leave much to both the adult and juvenile imagination, being towed through peak hour traffic.

❑ A very attractive and shapely lass, in a bathing costume (fortunately), showering in public, at the entrance of the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront in Cape Town. This one did cause an accident just before the advertising trailer and mobile shower could be towed away by the traffic authorities (Beeld, 1999, Augustus 19).

(b) Interfering and creating confusion with traffic signals, traffic signs and road markings

The driver may be confused by advertisements and signs on or at traffic signs or signals. The written messages, images or colours of such advertisements may be of such an eye-catching nature that they simply overawe drivers and override the messages conveyed by traffic signs and signals. Such advertisements may even physically conceal traffic signs and signals. The colours red, green and amber displayed in advertisements close to traffic signals have a very high potential for confusing motorists, or even advertisements carrying colours corresponding to the colours of traffic signs.

Figure 3.30

Impact on traffic safety

Interfering and creating confusion with traffic signals, traffic signs and road markings

Date of photo: 1993
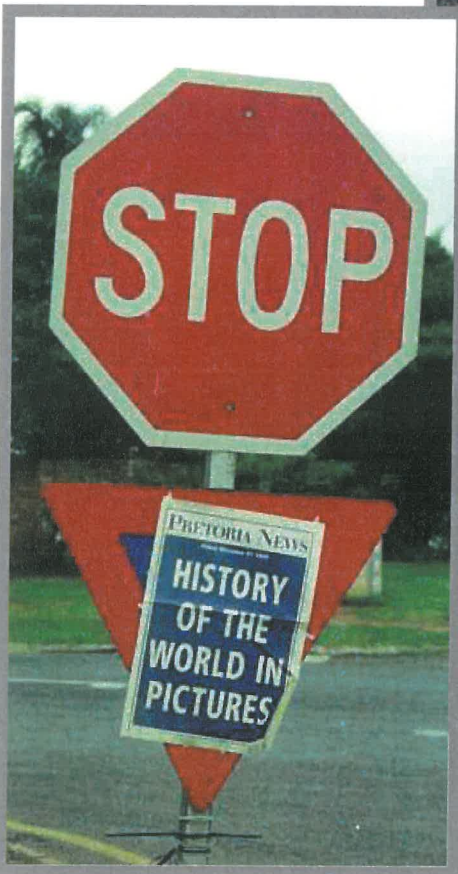
Date of photos: 1999

The driver of a motor vehicle may be confused by advertisements and signs on or at traffic signs and signals. In many South African towns and cities it is still common though illegal practice to attach posters to traffic signs (bottom right). In some cases the poster may even obstruct the traffic sign (bottom left). Confusion may also be created by using images of traffic signs as part of an advertisement. (top).

In many South African towns and cities it still is common though illegal practice to attach advertising posters to traffic signs. A lot of advertisers and poster manufacturers do not see anything wrong with attaching posters to traffic signal and traffic sign poles. It seems as if the average advertiser rather considers traffic signs as convenient structures provided by their local authority for the main purpose of promoting poster displays. In a letter to various organs of state *Citizen's Revolt Against Poster Pollution (CRAPP)* complained against the proliferation of outdoor advertisements in the Greater Johannesburg area, which includes *the ever increasing erection of posters on electricity poles, traffic lights, stop signs, trees, etc.* (The Urban Green File, 2000 March/April, p.2). Philip Lloyd (1996, p.66), columnist in the *Engineering News*, has put it this way:

> *Virtually every vertical surface for miles around carries a commercial message. … Traffic lights and stop signs used to be sacrosanct, but no longer are. Even a flashing warning light at a nearby dangerous intersection bears a load heavy enough to bent the pole.*

And in Pretoria a resident complained about *advertising that is displayed on every single pole that is available – including every traffic sign pole, that is essential to the safety of all the residents, particularly our children who make use of crossings controlled by stop and yield signs.* (Record East, 1998 August 28 (1)). A certain poster manufacturer has even argued that since traffic signs, carrying the main colour red, are often displayed close to traffic signals there can be no moral grounds for banning poster displays carrying the main colours green, red or amber, close to or even very close to traffic signals (Personal communication).

Another problem experienced in South Africa is large advertising trailers parked close to intersections and thereby concealing traffic signs or signals. In certain cases advertising signs also imitate traffic signs such as stop or yield signs in order to attract attention, contributing to confusion.

(c) Obstructing the view and impairing the vision of the motorist

Posters, advertising signs, trailers or other mobile displays may obstruct the view of the motorist with regard to other vehicular traffic, the roadway, cyclists or pedestrians. (Rekord-Oos, 1997, Maart 14 (2); 1997, Oktober 31). This may create a serious traffic safety hazard at stop streets and intersections (Record East, 1998 August 28 (2)).

Illuminated signs have the potential to blind or dazzle the road user. In other words it may lead to disability or discomfort glare. Disability glare refers to reduced visual capability resulting from one or more light sources in the visual field. Discomfort glare refers to visual discomfort as a result of exposure to bright light. In contrast to disability glare, which reduces the detection of objects, discomfort glare is normally only uncomfortable, but high levels and long exposure will increase fatigue (Van Schalkwyk & Visser, 2001, p.5).

(d) Forming physical obstructions

Posters, advertising trailers and other advertisements displayed on sidewalks and cycle paths pose a danger to cyclist who, having to swerve in order to avoid these obstacles, may end up in front of vehicular traffic (Rekord-Oos, 1997, Maart 14 (2)). A reader writing to the *Rekord-Oos* (1997 Maart 14 (2)), a Pretoria community paper, complained about very nearly running over a youngster who, in order to avoid an advertising sign attached to a road sign, did exactly that.

In most South African towns and cities estate agents' boards are not only allowed at the actual property to be rented or sold, but pointer boards are also allowed to direct potential buyers from main roads to show houses over weekends. Although a limited number of boards per agent is normally allowed, this practice leads to the excessive proliferation of boards at certain spots due to control measures being applied inadequately in many instances. In order to attract more clients by creating a perception that their company is really active, some agents are erecting as many boards as possible at one point. Estate agents' boards, attached to iron rods knocked into the ground, not only make certain pavement sections impossible to walk on (The Star 1996, March 25), forcing pedestrians onto the roadway, but also pose a serious hazard to joggers after dark.

Larger outdoor advertisements supported by substantial structures along highways pose a hazard due to the fact that such structures might be hit when a vehicle leaves the roadway during an accident.

(e) Billboards and signs hitting pedestrians, cyclists and motorists

Inadequate structures and fixtures may lead to billboards and signs coming down and injuring passers-by.

In Cape Town a tourist from Gauteng had to be taken to hospital after an advertising board blown down by the notorious South Easter landed on top of her (Die Burger, 1997, Desember 23), while in New York public outrage over outdoor advertising grew in 1999 after three women walking through Times Square were injured by falling vinyl signs (Ciezadlo, online). In Johannesburg one of the billboards along the M1 highway, advertising the *All Africa Games*, was blown over by a strong wind and hit a car on the highway (Beeld, 1999, Oktober 8). In another incident, along the Ben Schoeman highway close to Centurion, a strong wind folded down two massive billboards which fortunately did not land on the roadway (Pretoria News, 1997, December 29).

The above examples may be seen as a few isolated incidents, but with outdoor advertisements and signs increasing in size and numbers the increased incidence and seriousness of such accidents are becoming a stronger possibility.

Advertising trailers parked at the side of the road have a very high potential of being blown onto the road surface if not properly anchored and can therefore be a serious hazard to the motorist (cf. DEA&T, 1998, p.127, par.C(ii)).

(f) Impairing traffic flow

Outdoor information transfer may also contribute to a breakdown in traffic flow and serious traffic congestion. According to traffic engineers, traffic on a freeway behaves much like a fluid in motion, transmitting shock waves of congestion far upstream from bottlenecks or points of disruption (Holmes, 1994, p.36). According to Holmes (1994, p.37), various studies by traffic researchers show that these moving shock waves can result from the most trifling causes. Apart from more obvious causes such as a slip-road feeding traffic onto an already crowded freeway, or physical obstructions such as a car accident or road repairs, breakdowns in traffic flow can also happen spontaneously,

caused by nothing more than clumsy driving, gawking at an accident or just daydreaming for a moment. Advertisements along freeways may constitute a serious source of distraction which may cause a driver to slow down significantly enough in order to provide the original stimulus for setting a shock wave of deceleration in motion. This is especially true in cases where motorists try to read too lengthy advertising messages, when an electronic variable message changes too suddenly, or when a driver tries to dial a number displayed on an advertisement or to write the number down. Traffic congestion may cause an escalation in air pollution, loss of production time and a lowering in productivity and quality of life through irritation and frustration.

3.3.6.2 Attitudes and perceptions of the road user

Visser (1997) undertook a nation-wide study on the road user's attitudes and perceptions on outdoor advertising in South Africa. This also included attitudes and perceptions on traffic safety. Table 4 indicates that the respondents had a very negative perception of traffic safety in South Africa in general, which provided a reliable background for testing their perceptions of outdoor advertising and traffic safety.

TABLE 4
SOUTH AFRICAN ROAD USERS
GENERAL PERCEPTION WITH REGARD TO ROAD SAFETY

STATEMENT	AGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL
South Africans drive safely	25,8%	54,4%	19,7%
We drive over the speed limit	81,1%	8,6%	10,4%
We maintain a two-second following distance	18,3%	69,8%	11,9%
We are aggressive drivers	72,8%	13,1%	14,0%

Source: Visser, 1997, pp.51-58

TABLE 5

SOUTH AFRICAN ROAD USERS – NATURE OF OBSERVING OUTDOOR ADVERTISEMENTS

ACTIVITY	YES	SOMETIMES	RARELY	NO
Usually observe advertisements at a glance	57,3%	28,7%	6,5%	7,5%
Try to read contents	15,7%	32,4%	15,2%	36,6%
Try to read each advertisement you pass	7,4%	10,0%	11,2%	71,3%
Reduce your speed to try and read the advertisement	7,1%	8,5%	9,2%	75,3%
Change lanes to read an advertisement	2,5%	3,6%	4,0%	89,9%

Source: Visser, 1997, pp.58-66

According to Table 5 outdoor advertisements do not influence the respondents' driving patterns as they do not look at outdoor advertisements in a manner that might be detrimental to traffic safety. With regard to the respondents' perspective on the impact of outdoor advertising on road safety, Table 6 shows somewhat contradicting results. On the one hand, respondents indicate that outdoor advertisements along freeways do not cause accidents and do not obstruct the visibility of traffic signs along freeways, but only by an average margin. On the other hand, the respondents indicate that outdoor advertisements distract the attention of the driver by a rather high margin. Respondents also indicate by an even higher margin that advertisements positioned on a curve or bend in the road are dangerous to the motorist and that variable message signs negatively influence a driver's concentration. There is also a discrepancy between the results of Table 5 and Table 6. According to Table 6 outdoor advertisements distract the attention of drivers, but the figures in Table 5 indicate that

drivers do not look at advertisements long enough for their attention to be distracted. One explanation for this discrepancy is that when questions are aimed directly at respondents they do not want to admit that they observe outdoor advertisements in a manner that might be detrimental to road safety, but when questions are not directly aimed at them they do admit that outdoor advertisements distract a driver's attention.

It might be concluded that South African road users feel, by a high margin, that outdoor advertisements have the potential to distract the attention of the driver, especially in certain circumstances, while a significant percentage also indicate that advertisements along freeways cause accidents and obstruct the visibility of traffic signs. This points to the conclusion that South African road users feel that outdoor advertisements are detrimental to road safety.

TABLE 6
SOUTH AFRICAN ROAD USERS – PERCEPTION TOWARDS IMPACT OF OUTDOOR ADVERTISING ON ROAD SAFETY

STATEMENT	AGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL
ertisements obstruct the visibility of traffic signs ng freeways	36,3%	48,3%	15,3%
ertisements along freeways cause accidents	36,8%	47,3%	16,0%
ertisements positioned on a curve or bend in the ..., are dangerous to the motorist	80,8%	12,3%	7,0%
ertising boards that change their messages every few onds, negatively influence a driver's concentration	71,7%	17,6%	10,6%
ertisements distract the driver's attention	58,6%	26,6%	14,8%

Source: Visser, 1997, pp.67-73

3.3.7   DIRECT ECOLOGICAL IMPACT

Although the direct ecological impact of outdoor information transfer seems insignificant compared to its impact on visual resources, such ecological impact cannot be ignored completely.

Vegetation may be damaged in the process of erecting billboard structures or in order to improve the visibility of such billboards. In the United States of America thousands of trees are destroyed each year in order to improve motorists' views of billboards. According to a 1986 report by the US General Accounting Office, over 1 100 trees were cut down in Louisiana to improve the visibility of billboards at just two different sites near a highway (Scenic America, online, (2)). Although billboards are located on private land, eighteen states permit or require that trees be cut on the public right-of-way to provide a clear view of such billboards (Floyd, online). The Florida Department of Transport formulated a rule that provides a 1 000 foot (305 metre) billboard viewing zone on each side of a billboard, which means a clear zone of over one third of a mile (two thirds of a kilometre) for each billboard (Florida Department of Transportation). In the event of adequate measures preventing the trimming or cutting of trees in the public right-of-way, illegal cutting or poisoning of trees often takes place. For example, in 1972 testimony was presented to the Commission on Highway Beautification by the Florida Department of Transportation which indicated that more than 1 500 trees had been destroyed illegally along I-75, all in front of billboards (Floyd, online). And at the beginning of 1998 a total of 81 loblolly pines and hardwood trees close to an exit near Cartersville, Georgia were chopped down or trimmed, apparently to make billboards advertising certain enterprises more visible to the passing motorists. Damages, including replacement cost of the trees, were estimated at more than $50 000 (The Atlanta Journal Constitution, 1998, January 30).

The construction of advertising structures may also impact negatively on sensitive environments such as wetlands. The *Atlanta Journal Constitution* of August 29, 1998 reported about the construction of a number of storage sheds in Franklin County in Northeast Georgia, which provided a loophole for erecting billboards. One of these sheds was built in a swampy bulldozed area near a creek.

Figure 3.31
Ecological impact

Although the direct ecological impact of outdoor information transfer seems insignificant compared to its economic, visual or other social impacts, its ecological impact cannot be ignored. In the United States of America trees along the roadside are often poisoned (top left), trimmed (top right) or cut down (bottom) in order to make billboards more visible to passing motorists.

Photo source: Citizens for a Scenic Florida – Photo Gallery
[http://www.scenicflorida.org/pxunexpthumps1.html]

In the United States public opposition to tree-cutting along roads mostly takes place on the grounds of beautification and visual impact. However, since vegetation constitutes an important part of the biological environment, the destruction of vegetation can also be interpreted in terms of ecological impact. Aspects to be taken into consideration in this regard include habitat destruction, loss of bio-diversity, soil erosion and chemical pollution due to poisoning of vegetation.

In the urban environments of South Africa street trees are often damaged by the use of heavy-duty roofing nails for nailing illegal posters to such trees (Pretoria News, 1997, April 16). Philip Lloyd, columnist in the *Engineering News* (1996, July 26), must have had this problem in mind when he wrote: *Bother the tropical forests – our trees are dying from an overdose of iron, or strangulation by rope.*

3.3.8 SOUND POLLUTION

Modern sound technology has brought about an increase in sound pollution through outdoor information transfer. The voice of the public crier who through the ages has made an important contribution to local character and placeness is now literally being drowned by rock music resounding from enormous loudspeakers in front of the clothing or furniture store trying to draw the passer-by's attention to a promotion or sale. It seem as if developing communities show a special predilection for this type of advertising

A billboard on De Waal Drive, Cape Town, with the message H*oot if you want to be a millionaire,* evoked such a response from passing motorists (would-be millionaires) that the advertiser had to change the message after local residents complained about the noise (Pretoria News, 1998, January 17).

3.3.9 LIGHT POLLUTION

Light pollution or sky glow is becoming a recognised form of pollution in developed countries such as the USA. It has an impact at the following levels:

- First of all it has an **aesthetic** implication, especially in larger urban areas but also along freeways and other important roads which *are being whitewashed by floodlit roadside businesses whose commercial glow obscures the heavenly lights for miles around* (Cray, 2000, p. 56). In the words of David L. Crawford (1996, online):

  Most Americans are growing up unable to see the stars their grandparents knew so well. They see the night sky only in pictures or at planetariums. This is true not only in cities, but also in many suburbs where street lamps and other sources of "light pollution" have obscured our view of constellations, meteor showers, and planets... Light pollution is not a matter of life and death. Yet it is important nonetheless, profoundly so. We human beings lose something of ourselves when we can no longer look up and see our place in the universe. It is like never again hearing the laughter of children; we give up a part of what we are.

Aesthetic impact is not only about the loss of the stars: *Uncontrolled lighting often creates a garish landscape, with a confusing tangle of lights that shine into citizen's eyes rather than onto the ground, where it is needed* (Gilkison, 1998, online).

- At a scientific level light pollution has an impact on **astronomical observations**.

- **Psychological and physiological health and quality of life:** In city centres such as Manhattan, where the lights from illuminated billboards shine directly into the windows of residents, light pollution originating from outdoor advertising becomes a serious problem (Stay Free, online, (2)). It not only impairs the quality of life, but also creates a health problem since it interferes with the human body's biological rhythms by turning night into day (Graham, 1996, online). This problem becomes an even bigger reality where neon lights are used. In Mumbai, India, the Mumbai High Court ordered the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation to switch off all neon signs after 11 pm due to the effect of such lights on the lives of local residents (Indian Express, online). In referring to this case *Chennai Online* quotes a study undertaken by the International Institute of Sustainable Future which found that the continued direct contact with flashing neon rays leads to sleepiness, fatigue, headaches and frequent mood changes. According to *Chennai Online* a Mumbai neurologist has stated that neon lights may even trigger off epilepsy and migraine in some persons.

- **Ecological Impact:** It can be assumed that high-intensity, unshielded outdoor lights will have an adverse effect on many species of wildlife. The following serve as a good example in this regard. After being born, certain species of sea turtles rely on moonlight and starlight to direct them towards the safety of the ocean. Powerful lights from the shore disorientate these turtles with catastrophically consequences (Graham, 1996, online) (cf. Govender, 2001). Outdoor advertising technologies such as laser images and effects, used over longer periods of time in natural environments, may have a detrimental effect on the ecology. *Laser Force* (online), an outdoor advertising company, advertises its *Laser Billboards* as follow: *Make your message seen for miles. Dazzle audiences with laser graphics and beam projections. Put your logo anywhere … even mountains!* (Emphasis added.)

- **Economical impact – Waste energy:** Wasted light from inefficient lighting sources in the USA equates to an annual waste of 12 million tons of coal or 35 million barrels of oil costing $2 billion per year (Graham, 1996, online). The impact of this energy waste in terms of added acid rain and air pollution needs no mentioning.

- **Road safety impact:** Uncontrolled and unshielded lighting creates glare, diminishes visibility and contributes to accidents at night by blinding or confusing drivers and pedestrians.

- **Ratcheting:** This term refers to a snowball effect in the increase of outdoor light levels. When a specific enterprise illuminates its property at extremely high levels, surrounding areas that used to look adequately lit now appear too dark by comparison. This can be ascribed to the tendency of the human eye to adapt to the brightest object in its visual field. The iris in the eye stops down, letting less light in, as a result of this over-illumination and glare. The light levels of surrounding properties are now ratcheted up in order to compensate for the high light levels on the first property (cf. Gilkison, 1998, online; IDA, 1998, online).

Outdoor advertising provides the stimulus for ratcheting in the form of the competition factor. Certain enterprises, such as convenience stores and filling stations, are nowadays attempting to attract customers by making their canopy area the most brightly lit object in the neighbourhood. In this

manner illumination is used as the main instrument for advertising. This leads to a ratcheting war where enterprises in a neighbourhood are trying to outdo one another in attracting attention by illuminating their premises (cf. Gilkison, 1998, online; IDA, 1998, online). This problem is also evident among enterprises situated along freeways. From the above it is clear that outdoor advertising keeps the snowballing process regarding outdoor light levels alive.

In order to attract attention most billboards are ridiculously overlit. In certain cases externally illuminated billboards may be seen as an important contributor to ratcheting. The practice followed by many contractors of illuminating billboards from the bottom leads to excessive light spill into the sky, making an even larger contribution to sky glow. This problem is aggravated even further by the unnecessary practice of keeping billboards and signs illuminated throughout the night, even after the businesses advertised have closed (cf. IDA, 1997, online)

3.3.10 DEVALUATION OF PROPERTY VALUES AND URBAN DECAY

According to *Scenic America* (online, (1)), *billboards are both a symptom and a cause of urban blight.*

The proliferation of outdoor advertisements and signs also have an indirect effect in that it contributes to desensitising the human senses, which may tolerate and even contribute to urban decay:

> *In an age in which advertisers propose rocketing billboards into orbit to illuminate the night sky, it is no coincidence that litter and graffiti are on the rise. The proliferation of litter and graffiti increases exponentially in a society willing to tolerate, if not encourage, advertisers' intent on commercializing all public space, including outer space* (Miller, online).

The following verdict indicates a relation between outdoor signs and property value:

> *As is true of billboards, the esthetic (sic) interests that are implicated by temporary signs (political campaign signs on public property) are presumptively at work in all parts of the city, including those where the appellees posted their signs, and there is no basis in the record in this case upon which to rebut that presumption. These interests (aesthetic interests) are both psychological and economic. The character of*

Date of photo: 1997

Citizens for a Scenic Florida [http://www.scenicflorida.org]

Figure 3.32
Devaluation of property values

In the absence of effective management practices outdoor information transfer may devaluate property values in residential areas, as shown by the photographs above. The top photograph was taken in an upmarket suburb of Pretoria.

the environment affects the quality of life and the value of property in both residential and commercial areas (Justice Stevens in Members of the City Council v. Taxpayers for Vincent, 466 U.S. 789, 817 (1984) cited in Citizens for a Scenic Florida, online, (1)).

In higher density central city districts (downtown areas) such as Manhattan, New York, one may find the strange phenomenon where outdoor advertising may actually enhance the value of certain buildings while at the same time contributing to urban decay. According to *Stay Free Magazine* (Stay Free!, online (2)), some property owners in Manhattan earn so much from outdoor advertising covering their buildings that they do not bother to rent out interior space to businesses or residents. Buildings are sometimes bought strictly for their advertising potential. In 1997 the Times Tower, although considered unrentable above the first floor, sold for $110 million. The four major signs on its north side alone bring in $7 million annually. Considerable advertising income is also generated from the other three sides and the rent paid for the ground and first floors. Such *derelict* buildings, serving almost solely as giant outdoor advertising structures, will definitely contribute to a *ghost town atmosphere* and a lack of vitality in such areas due to the small numbers of occupants and visitors, which in the end will result in urban decay.

3.4 PUBLIC OPINION AND PERCEPTIONS

3.4.1 THE MARITZ SURVEY

A survey undertaken by Maritz Marketing Research of Fenton, Missouri (Edmondson, online) gave somewhat ambiguous results regarding Americans' views on billboards. On the one hand, this study indicates that most Americans have negative feelings about billboards by not agreeing with the statements that *billboards are entertaining* or that *billboards can be beautiful.* (Only about one in six and one in four adults respectively agreed with these statements.) On the other hand, a positive view is reflected since the number of Americans who disagreed with the statements that *billboards are ugly* and that *billboards should be banned* surpass those who agreed by quite some margin.

The ambiguity of billboards being seen as neither beautiful nor ugly might be explained by the fact that Americans tend to view billboards more in terms of functionality than in terms of aesthetics. This assumption is supported by the fact that 53% of all respondents agreed with the statement that *billboards can be useful but should be strictly regulated*, compared to only 20% who disagreed.

Edmondson (online) gives the following interpretation of the above-mentioned trends:

> *Most Americans do not appreciate the artistic or entertaining qualities of outdoor ads. Yet they don't hate billboards, either. They see outdoor advertising as marginally useful to their lives, and they accept it as a consequence of the free enterprise system.*

This acceptance might be interpreted as experiencing billboards as an integral part of the American landscape and an unavoidable part of the *American Dream*. After all, the billboard is an American invention. In the words of Gossage (1960, online) *...outdoor advertising has come to be regarded as an institution like any other overtly respectable industry ... it would be positively un-American to question them.*

Although the results of the Maritz survey support billboards to a certain extent, it still seems as if Edmondson (online), in analysing the Maritz survey, finds proof of a significant discontent among Americans concerning the increasing number and size of billboards. After making the following statement: *Many outdoor advertising companies believe that success depends on putting up more billboards, making them bigger, and loading them with ever-more elaborate gimmicks,* he comes to the conclusion: *But to ordinary Americans, more billboards and louder billboards will just add to the clutter, no matter how good-looking or creative they are.*

The bottom line of the Maritz survey is that although the majority of Americans may feel that billboards can be useful, they also indicate that billboards should be strictly regulated.

3.4.2   THE VISSER STUDY

The findings of the Maritz study are supported by a study undertaken by Visser (1997) on the attitudes and perceptions of the South African road user on outdoor advertisements. According to Table 7 respondents feel that advertisements are necessary. The number of respondents who agreed

with the statements that *advertisements supply information* and that *advertisements are necessary in our daily life* surpassed those who did not agree by a very high margin. However, most respondents did not agree with the statement that *advertisements reduce the price of goods.* The majority also did not agree with the statement that *we need more advertisements,* although by only a slight margin, which points towards the need for the effective management and regulation of outdoor information transfer. This conclusion is supported by the fact that while respondents feel strongly that businesses should be allowed to advertise on their *own* properties next to roads, the majority are not in favour of businesses advertising on *any* property next to roads, which means that they are not in favour of third-party or non-locality-bound advertising (Visser, 1997, pp.47-48).

TABLE 7
SOUTH AFRICAN ROAD USERS – ATTITUDES TOWARDS ADVERTISEMENTS IN GENERAL

STATEMENT	AGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL
Advertisements supply information	86,5%	7,1%	6,4%
Advertisements reduce the price of goods	30,6%	55,1%	14,2%
Advertisements are necessary in our daily life	80,9%	8,3%	10,8%
We need more advertisements	39,3%	43,4%	17,3%
Source: Visser, 1997, pp.38-47			

Although opinions were almost evenly spread in Table 8 it still means that a very large percentage of the respondents indicated that advertising boards have a negative impact when displayed next to roads. It is interesting to note that the opposition against outdoor advertisements increases when the environment becomes more natural or when such advertising boards are erected closer to residential environments.

TABLE 8

RESPONSE TO STATEMENT THAT ADVERTISING BOARDS CREATE A NEGATIVE IMPACT ON THE ENVIRONMENT IF DISPLAYED NEXT TO VARIOUS ROADS

TYPE OF ROAD	AGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL
Urban freeways	37,6%	49,7%	12,7%
Rural freeways	50,8%	37,3%	11.8%
Streets near residential offices	42,4%	42,7%	14,9%

Source: Visser, 1997, pp.91-92

Somewhat contradictory to Table 8, Table 9 shows that a large majority of respondents feel that outdoor advertisements do cause environmental pollution and that they are very strongly opposed to such pollution, even if it means that outdoor advertisements would subsidise road maintenance. Respondents also indicate, by an even larger majority, that outdoor advertising should be managed and controlled effectively. What is also of interest is that respondents feel that advertisements may have a positive environmental function by covering ugly sites. This view is confirmed by Table 10, where respondents actually request that outdoor advertisements should complement the environment.

In addition to the indication in Table 9 that outdoor advertisements should be managed effectively, Table 10 indicates that the contents and positioning of advertisements should be managed by limiting the information on advertisements and by preventing grouping and cluttering. Another indication of the need for effective management of outdoor advertisements is that the respondents who participated in this study felt that outdoor advertising impacts negatively on road safety. (See 3.3.6.2.) The support for the use of minimum letter sizes on advertisements expressed in Table 10, to ensure legibility, supports this opinion regarding outdoor advertisements and road safety.

TABLE 9
SOUTH AFRICAN ROAD USERS – PERCEPTIONS ON OUTDOOR ADVERTISEMENTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT

STATEMENT	AGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL
oo much advertising causes environmental pollution	56,2%	29,4%	14,4%
advertisements generate an income to subsidise aintenance costs on roads, I would be prepared to allow nvironmental pollution	19,6%	67,5%	12,9%
dvertisements obstruct scenery	53,8%	26,5%	19,7%
dvertisers should be allowed to advertise as much as they ant to, along roads	11,2%	83,7%	5,0%
here should be a *National Code of Practice* to limit dvertising along roads	91,4%	4,7%	4,0%
prefer to see advertisements, instead of green fields	5,3%	82,6%	12,1%
dvertisements should be placed on strategic places to ver ugly sites, for example railway lines	71,1%	19.2%	9,7%

Source: Visser, 1997, pp.93-106

An important conclusion that can be based on the findings of the Visser study is that the South African road user wants the opportunity to contribute to the management of outdoor information transfer. When respondents were confronted by the statement *motorists should have a say, whether advertisements should be allowed next to roads,* 71.2% agreed while only 16,6% disagreed (Visser, 1997, p.73).

TABLE 10

SOUTH AFRICAN ROAD USERS – CRITERIA FOR ALLOWING ADVERTISEMENTS

STATEMENT	AGREE	DISAGREE	NEUTRAL
The information on advertising boards should be limited	88,2%	6,3%	5,6%
Minimum letter sizes should be prescribed to ensure legibility	91,1%	4,4%	4,6%
The advertising board should complement the environment	87,4%	5,3%	7,3%
Advertising boards placed in groups along freeways are overpowering	80,2%	11,5%	8,3%

Source: Visser, 1997, pp.77-84

The final conclusion that can be made from the Visser study is that, although respondents feel that outdoor advertising fulfils an important role and that it should be allowed, it does impact negatively on the environment and should therefore be managed effectively, while the public should also have the opportunity to make inputs to such management. Outdoor information transfer should furthermore make a positive contribution to the environment.

3.4.3 STUDIES INDICATING A GROWING OPPOSITION TO BILLBOARDS IN THE UNITED STATES

It seems as if there is currently a growing opposition to billboards in the United States, as well as a growing realisation of the aesthetic impact of this kind of advertising. Organisations such as *Scenic America*, with its affiliates which include *Scenic Texas, Scenic North Carolina, Scenic Virginia, Scenic Missouri* and *Citizens for a Scenic Florida,* are campaigning actively in this regard.

Various surveys in certain states and cities are giving a clear indication of a growing opposition to billboards in the United States as indicated by the following facts:

BILLBOARDS DEGRADE THE ENVIRONMENT REDUCTION OF BILLBOARDS	BAN ON NEW BILLBOARDS
❏ **Florida:** Residents prefer reducing the number of billboards over future increases by a 10 to 1 margin.	❏ **Texas:** 25% of cities with a population of 5 000 or more have ordinances that prohibit the construction of new billboards city-wide.
❏ **New Hampshire:** 64% of citizens oppose billboards on highways with 53% strongly opposing billboards.	❏ **New Hampshire:** Residents favour a ban on new billboards by a 56% to 29% margin.
❏ **Rhode Island:** 62% of respondents state that billboards make state roads less attractive, as opposed to 31% who simply felt that it makes no difference.	❏ **Rhode Island:** A two-to-one public support for a ban on new billboards.
❏ **Missouri:** 69% of citizens felt that fewer billboards would make their state more attractive to tourists, while just 26% disagreed.	❏ **Missouri:** Margin of opposition to new billboard construction is 78% to 15%.
❏ **Houston, Texas:** 79% of residents support maintaining or strengthening the city's ordinance removing all	❏ **Houston, Texas:** 81% of residents favour an existing ordinance banning new billboard construction.

billboards by 2013.

- **Michigan:** More than 90% of residents believe that the state has too many billboards or the right amount of billboards as opposed to only 2% who want more billboards.

- **Michigan:** Residents favour a ban on new billboard construction by a 60% to 32% margin.

- **Virginia:** By a margin of 89% to 5% residents believe there are too many billboards or the right amount of billboards and by a margin of 34% to 5% they believe there are too many billboards versus too few.

- **Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce (NC):** Members favour a ban on new billboards by a margin of 68% to 25%.

- **Fayetteville Chamber of Commerce (NC):** 62% of members were for a reduction of the number of billboards permitted in Cumberland County with 28% against such a step.

- **Asheville Area Chamber of Commerce (NC):** 72% of members favour the banning of new billboards with only 26% against such a step.

OPPOSITION TO TREE-CUTTING FOR BILLBOARD VISIBILITY

LIMITED INFORMATION FROM BILLBOARDS

- **Missouri:** 80% of residents oppose a state law allowing the cutting of trees on public right-of-way in front of billboards (1994 survey).

- **Rhode Island:** 72% of respondents indicated that they received very little or no useful information about products and services from billboards.

- **New Hampshire:** 80% oppose tree cutting to improve visibility of existing billboards.

- **Florida:** 75% of residents oppose tree cutting to allow billboards to be seen.

- **Michigan:** Residents oppose tree cutting by a 63% to 33% margin.

- **Virginia:** Residents object to tree cutting in public right of way and would favour legislation prohibiting such a practice by a 63% to 32% margin.

- **Missouri:** 80% of residents oppose state law allowing the cutting of trees on public right-of-way in front of billboards (1994 survey).

- **Florida:** Residents derived more information about roadside services from official (LOGO) signs than from billboards by a margin of 63% to 16%.

- **Missouri:** Residents derived more information about roadside services from official (LOGO) signs than from billboards by a margin of 68% to 18%.

- **Virginia:** Residents prefer LOGO signs to billboards by a 71% to 21% margin.

- **Virginia:** Only 13% of residents stated that billboards were *very useful* to them, versus 20% who said they weren't useful at all.

(**Sources:** Scenic America, online (1) & (5); Scenic North Carolina, online (1) & (2); Scenic Texas, online (2); Scenic Virginia, online).

3.4.4 ACTIVIST GROUPS

Another indication of increasing public opposition to outdoor advertising and advertising in general is the various activists groups, the so-called culture jammers, which have come to the fore during the

past decade or so. According to Williams (online), culture jamming *refers to the deliberate disruption, distortion, or subversion of mainstream media messages, primarily advertising.* Where outdoor advertising is at stake these groups are not against the aesthetic impact of the outdoor advertising structures *per se*. Their protest is aimed at the message impact by drawing the public's attention to the social, environmental and economic consequences of consumerism, which is enhanced through advertising. According to Pedro Carvajal, *culture jamming is an anti-consumerist movement articulating a critique of corporate and media power* (Prothers, 1998,online).

Although culture jammers may fulfil quite a useful role in raising public awareness regarding the negative aspects of advertising, they tend to take a somewhat coarse and unconventional approach which sometimes shows a disrespect not only for cultural, but even for religious values.

Some of these groups are focusing on changing and alternating existing billboards, such as the *Billboard Liberation Front* and the *Cicada Corps of Artists*, while others, such as the *Media Foundation* and *Guerrilla Art*, cover a broader field.

In the case of the *Billboard Liberation Front* there is something more than culture jamming at stake. It seems as if this well-organised and professional organisation consists of some adventurous souls with a very good sense of humour getting a real kick out of taking on the billboard industry (cf. Redmond, 1990; BLF, online). They have even been called the *Robin Hoods of advertising* by the *San Francisco Magazine* (1989, Sept.).

3.4.5   THE FLORIDA SURVEY

In a survey involving 1 165 randomly selected Florida residents an independent research group found that an overwhelming majority of people feel billboards are useful and should not be banned (FOAA, online, (2)). Eighty one percent of the respondents said, *When travelling, billboards are somewhat useful or very useful*, 90% said, *They provide a way for local businesses to communicate with tourists*, while 82,7% said, *They provide information about products and services to the public.* As many as 89% of the respondents indicated that billboards should not be banned. The presentation of the results of this survey by the *Florida Outdoor Advertising Association (FOAA)* seems biased since

Before

After

An indication of growing opposition to billboards is the work of various activist groups, the so-called culture jammers, who have come to the fore during the past decade or so. The aim of these groups is to deliberately disrupt or distort mainstream advertising messages. Some of these groups focus specifically on changing and altering existing billboards as shown by the work of the Billboard Liberation Front. They are not against the visual impact of outdoor advertising *per se*, but rather against the social, environmental and economic impact of consumerism

**Figure 3.33
Culture jamming**

Photos by Nicole Rosenthal
Billboard Liberation Front, online
[http://www.billboardliberation.com/home.html]

they present only the results favouring the outdoor advertising industry on their website. The question on the banning of billboards is definitely biased since it implies the respondents' financial commitment by phrasing the question as follows: *Would you advise your government to spend time and **your** tax dollars banning billboards?* (Emphasis added.)

3.5   CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of Chapter 3 was to determine the nature and extent of the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer in terms of both the benefits and impact thereof. From conclusions in Chapter 2 on the status of the perceptual environment it can be derived that the nature and extent of the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer go back to insufficient and pragmatic environmental ethics, which leads to the misuse and abuse of the perceptual environment and outdoor information transfer. This misuse and abuse of outdoor information transfer not only have a direct impact on the environment and tend to neutralise the benefits of outdoor information transfer, but also serve as a very strong symbolism of society's pragmatic and consumeristic mindset which may condition members of society even further to accept and participate in environmental abuse.

From the above-mentioned sub-problem the following hypothesis was formulated: *Outdoor information transfer, as an important part of the perceptual environment, benefits society and the environment, but it also impacts negatively on the environment. Sense of place and placeness play a crucial role with regard to the benefits and impact of outdoor information transfer. If a "laissez-faire" policy is followed with regard to the management of outdoor information transfer the impacts thereof will overshadow its positive contribution and will neutralise many of the benefits.*

The following conclusions will shed more light on this hypothesis.

3.5.1 THE BENEFITS OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

It has been shown that outdoor information transfer benefits society and the environment by

❏ directing and guiding the road user and pedestrian.

❏ informing and warning the public in order to enhance general well-being and safety.

❏ stimulating economic growth and promoting freedom of commercial choice.

❏ enhancing the visual environment.

❏ providing a source of income and similar benefits.

A historical perspective on the function of outdoor information transfer has also revealed the importance of the outdoor advertisement and sign throughout history. Certain forms of outdoor information transfer, such as the generic trade symbol, the crier, the church bell and the artistic shop and inn sign, which contributed to the visual environment and a sense of place in the past, have perpetual value and are still relevant today.

Certain modern trends in the outdoor advertising industry point to a lesser environmental impact and even a positive contribution to the perceptual environment. These include new printing and painting technologies, which create more stylish and striking images and artwork, as well as the monopolistic tendencies in consolidating national and international outdoor advertising contractors, which means that smaller competitors, displaying less stylish products and images, are eliminated. However, these trends need to be managed effectively in order to realise their full potential.

3.5.2 THE IMPACTS OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

There can be no doubt that outdoor information transfer impacts on the environment and society in a myriad of ways. These impacts are often interrelated and consist of the following:

- Psychological impact
  - Environmental overstimulation or information overload
  - Other impacts related to placelessness
    - Crime and vandalism
    - Poor community identity and a uniform world culture
    - Devaluation of place and commercialisation of placeness

- Ethical or moral impact

- Unsustainable consumption patterns

- Impact on tourism resources and unfriendly tourist and retail environments

- Impact on traffic safety and traffic flow
  - Distracting the attention of the motorist
  - Interfering and creating confusion with traffic signals, traffic signs and road markings
  - Obstructing the view of the motorist
  - Forming physical obstructions
  - Billboards and signs hitting pedestrians, cyclists and motorists
  - Impairing traffic flow

- Direct ecological impact

- Noise pollution

- Light pollution

❑ Devaluation of property values and urban decay

It is interesting to note that even the advertising industry admits that billboards have a negative impact on the environment:

> *As a private person, I have a passion for landscape, and I have never seen one improved by a billboard. Where every prospect pleases, man is at his vilest when he erects a billboard. When I retire from Madison Avenue, I am going to start a secret society of masked vigilantes who will travel around the world on silent motor bicycles, chopping down posters at the dark of the moon. How many juries will convict us when we are caught in these acts of beneficent citizenship?* (Ogilvy, 1971, p.112.)

It has also been shown that the problem of uncontrolled signs and advertisements cannot be seen in isolation. It is closely linked to other practices that impact on the aesthetic environment, such as littering and graffiti. In the words of Miller (online):

> *Billboards, litter and graffiti must not be considered separate and disconnected phenomena; they can only be understood collectively... All three make a mockery of aesthetics and ethics by imposing unsolicited, uncompromising and unavoidable images upon the public.*

The management of outdoor information transfer must therefore also be linked to and co-ordinated with the prevention and management of littering and graffiti:

> *If we do not have the will to rid ourselves of litter and graffiti, we will never be able to stop the proliferation of outdoor advertising that is turning a drive around town into a trip through the Yellow Pages* (Miller, online).

3.5.3 PUBLIC NEED FOR CONTROL

It has been shown that although outdoor information transfer fulfils an important role and should not be banned, it does impact negatively on the environment and should be controlled. There is also a

rising discontent among the public regarding the increasing number of outdoor advertisements and the resulting impact of such advertisements.[22] This assumption is supported by the findings of various surveys in the United States, as well as the Visser study in South Africa. Even the Maritz survey, which is one of the studies most favourable to billboards, indicates that although billboards can be useful they should be subjected to strict regulation. These findings provide a very strong rationale for the effective management of outdoor information transfer.

Furthermore, it has been shown that the effective management of outdoor information transfer should include the involvement of the public.

3.5.4   A *LAISSEZ-FAIRE* APPROACH OR EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT?

If a *laissez-faire* approach is followed in managing outdoor information transfer the dynamics and inherent characteristics of outdoor information transfer may very easily get out of hand and may even be self-destructive. A balanced and holistic approach to the management of outdoor information transfer is needed. Benefits and impacts have to be seen in the context of effective management, which means optimising the benefits while minimising the impacts. A lack of effective management will not only increase the impacts of outdoor information transfer, but will also undermine and will be counterproductive to its main functions and benefits. An inverted situation may very easily be reached where impacts are maximised while benefits are minimised. Effective management will therefore also be in the interest of the outdoor advertising industry.

3.5.4.1 Lessons from history

History has shown that outdoor information transfer, and especially commercial advertising, has a latent and inherent capability of impacting negatively on the visual environment. It only needs favourable circumstances such as periods of economic growth, technological progress or periods of

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[22] Active opposition to outdoor advertising is not limited to developed countries such as the United States. Even in the Greater Johannesburg Metropolitan Area in South Africa organisations like *Citizens' Revolt Against Poster Pollution (CRAPP)* is taking a stance against the aesthetic impact of outdoor advertising.

promotional frustration in other advertising media for outdoor advertising to show its hand and leave major footprints on the environment. The current economic and technological climate provides extremely favourable circumstances for outdoor information transfer, together with major impacts on the environment and society. Economic globalisation is having a major influence by creating opportunities for exporting the American lifestyle to the rest of the world, together with a more extravagant and impetuous approach to outdoor information transfer.

3.5.4.2 Forces enhancing the impact of outdoor information transfer

The following driving forces behind outdoor information transfer will lead to an ever-increasing escalation of its impact if a *laissez-faire* approach is followed. These forces provide a sufficient motive for the effective management of outdoor information transfer:

(a) The obtrusive character and inherent dynamics of outdoor advertisements and signs

Outdoor information transfer's *modus operandi* of forcing itself upon the public inevitably points to a *natural* tendency of increasing its impact. This tendency necessitates the effective management of outdoor advertisements and signs and even necessitates stronger control than is exercised in the case of any other advertising medium.[23] The obtrusive character of outdoor advertisements and signs was described as follows by Justice Brandeis (Citizens for a Scenic Florida, online (1)):

> *Billboards, street car signs, and placards and such are in a class by themselves... Advertisements of this sort are constantly before the eyes of observers on the streets... to be seen without the exercise of choice or volition on their part. Other forms of advertising are ordinarily seen as a matter of choice on the part of the observer... The radio can be turned off, but not so the billboard* (Justice Brandeis in Packer v. Utah 285 U.S. 105, 110, 52 S.Ct. 273, 274, 76 L.Ed. 643 (1932)).

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[23] This is especially true with regard to moral impact. Due to its unavoidable nature it stands to reason that the moral impact of outdoor advertising should be controlled much stricter than is the case with any other advertising medium.

In other words, outdoor advertising violates the individual's freedom of choice. Every citizen not only has the right to look at decent environments, but also not to have outdoor advertisements pushed down their throats in a too obtrusive, blatant and indigestible manner. In the case of all other advertising media the observer has the choice to observe or not to observe. Advertisements in the printed media can be ignored by the turn of a page and commercials on television by changing channels. But when the outdoor advertising contractor makes use of the visual zone along streets and freeways the motorist has no choice but to observe. In the words of Gossage (1960, online) the television viewer is *allowed to skip to another channel … or to bed; you can turn it of entirely. Or you can throw the set out the window. You cannot throw U.S. 40 out the window, especially if you are on it. Nor can you flip a billboard over. Or off. Your exposure to television commercials is conditional on their being accompanied by entertainment that is not otherwise available. No such parity or tit-for-tat or fair exchange exists in outdoor advertising.*

What is more, in the process of forcing outdoor advertisements on the public the outdoor advertising industry is using publicly owned *media*, the road system and the aesthetic environment, free of charge or at a minimum fee. To quote *Scenic Texas* (Online, 1):

> *Isn't it enough that our cities are covered up with billboard blight? Surely Texans have had enough of this pervasive industry intruding on our "space" with advertisements that you cannot shut off. The billboard industry cannot exist without our publicly built roadway system. Yet, they pay no impact fee, and little in taxes. The taxpayer is essentially subsidizing a billion-dollar industry.*

And in the words of Gossage (1960, online):

> *Outdoor advertising is peddling a commodity it does not own and without the owner's permission: your field of vision. Possibly you have never thought to consider your rights in the matter. Nations put the utmost importance on the unintentional violations of their air space. The individual's air space is intentionally violated by billboards every day of the year.*

According to Gossage (1960, online), in contrast to other visual elements which might intrude on your gaze, such as power lines or a dumping site, billboards have no other real functions:

... it is there for the sole and express purpose of trespassing on your field of vision. Nor is it possible for you to escape; the billboard inflicts itself unbidden upon all but the blind or recluse. Is this not an invasion of privacy? ... this invasion of your privacy is compounded in its resale to a third party. It is as though a Peeping Tom, on finding a nice window, were to sell peeps at two bits a head. Thus we see that what the industry has to sell doesn't really belong to it. It belongs to you. So much for the free enterprise argument.

Gossage's statement that billboards have no other functions should not be seen out of context. As is shown in section 3.2.1 of this study, outdoor advertising might benefit individuals and communities in various ways. However, the purport of his argument is true, since the benefits of outdoor advertising are not in the same relation to its impacts as is the case with other advertising media, where the benefits of advertisements far outweigh their impacts. The essence of his statement should be read in his use of the words *fair exchange* earlier. In many cases the same benefits presented by outdoor advertising may still be obtained by using outdoor advertisements and structures with a much lower impact, or by using other media with an even lower impact and where the potential viewer can choose whether to view the advertisement or not. The bottom line is still that the outdoor advertising contractor and the advertiser are forcing messages onto the road user which he cannot avoid by using and misusing resources belonging to the public free of charge or at a relatively low fee. Many small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and informal entrepreneurs see the environment as a free-for-all advertising resource, to be utilised without any restrictions and at no cost. Where an outdoor advertising structure is erected on private property, the advertising contractor will normally pay rent to the owner of the property. However, this is only for the right to keep his structure on such land and not for the right to use roads and visual resources, which belong to the public, as advertising and viewing media. The value of outdoor advertising as a relatively inexpensive medium must be seen against this background. According to an article in *Little Man* (1996, March), the proliferation and high impact potential of outdoor information transfer can be ascribed to an advertising medium that is too cheap:

In the world of business, if the absurd position were to arise that a particular product was so cheap that it became uncontrollable in the market, the very first thing that

would be done would be to raise its price. In the case of outdoor advertising the product that is too cheap is street space and the viewability created by street space.

In order to solve this problem *Little Man* (1996, March) proposed the introduction of a viewability tax,[24] which would be payable on all outdoor advertising viewable from public open space. This should include outdoor advertising on private property. Viewability tax should be distinguished from rent paid for the physical occupation of property by advertisements, which is payable to the private landowner or to government where advertising takes place on public property. Viewability tax would not only provide financial resources which would enable controlling authorities to manage outdoor information transfer effectively and to remove illegal advertisements and signs promptly, but it would also support the maintenance and beautification of public streets upon which outdoor advertising depends for placement and viewing. By supporting public facilities the public will be compensated to a certain extent for enforced exposure to outdoor advertising. Viewability tax should not be seen as an unlimited source of income, to be exploited by controlling authorities at the cost of visual resources and the destruction of the perceptual environment. It still calls for sustainable management and a diminishing of the impacting potential of outdoor information transfer through correcting an aberration in the market caused by excessive cheap outdoor advertising opportunities. Viewing tax should rather be used as a mechanism to prevent the inappropriate and excessive number of advertising structures on public land in order to obtain sufficient funds to manage outdoor information transfer. Viewability tax should also be used to combat the unsustainable *Treasury Principle,* which refers to the persuasion of the controlling authority by the financial benefits offered up-front by an outdoor advertising contractor to obtain an outdoor advertising concession, which might actually not be to the benefit of the public since it might impact on tourism resources and the local living environment.

As a point of interest it is important to notice that the effective management of outdoor information transfer not only implies a limitation of choice in observing advertisements and, according to the proponents of freedom of commercial speech, a limitation of consumer awareness and therefore the choice of products and services. It also enhances and promotes the choice to look at beautiful environments and to ignore advertising audacity and blatancy. The limitation of the first choice is

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[24] Goa, a state in western India, has already levied a similar tax on outdoor advertising, which even includes advertisements displayed in showrooms or painted on glass windows (Noronha, online).

necessary to secure the second choice. No freedom of choice can ever be without limitations or can be separated from responsibility. A balance between freedom of commercial speech and the freedom to observe a pleasant environment is therefore needed in managing outdoor information transfer.

If a *laissez-faire* policy is followed, the inherent characteristics and dynamics of outdoor advertisements and signs, as expressed by the competition, encroachment, attachment, imperialistic, transition and disorder principles, will lead to an ever-increasing impact that will overshadow all benefits. Even if most of the outdoor advertising contractors within the industry may have a very responsible attitude, there will always be the uninformed advertiser and rogue contractor with an unscrupulous attitude who will lead the way and in whom the above-mentioned principles will find their fullest expression. Advertising messages projected against clouds and mountains and billboards in orbit around the earth might therefore not be too far-fetched.

The intrinsic dynamics of outdoor information transfer will also be to the detriment of the outdoor advertising industry. By using the surrounding environment as a neutral medium of communication, outdoor advertising, in contrast to the other advertising media, can be seen as a pure advertising medium without the distraction of articles, news reports or programmes intrinsic to magazines, newspapers, radio and television. However, this characteristic benefit of outdoor advertising can very easily be destroyed through the uncontrolled proliferation of signs. Through such a proliferation outdoor advertising will be polluting and cluttering its own neutral environment, forming its own distraction by signs competing against one another. The effect will be the same as paging through a magazine consisting of advertisements only, or viewing a television channel telecasting nothing but commercials. With an increase in sign proliferation a stage is reached where the internal forces and dynamics of outdoor advertising operate at an accelerated pace and where displayers of advertisements and signs are forced to compete against one another with an ever-increasing intensity. In the end only the fittest and most prominent signs will *survive* and be effective in this expanding billboard jungle, and in the process the aesthetic environment will be destroyed. Unfortunately, unlike Darwin's *survival of the fittest,* it will not be only the fittest that will survive, eliminating all other competitors. A large number of less fit billboards and advertisements will always be there, trying to catch some attention while outdoor advertising contractors owning less successful advertising structures will always be trying to convince their clients that outdoor advertising is

working. It is clear that if a *laissez-faire* policy is applied the internal forces of outdoor advertising and sign display will destroy advertisement and sign, as well as the aesthetic environment.

By managing outdoor advertising in an effective manner the playing field for all participants is levelled and thus a damper is placed on the dynamics of outdoor advertising that impacts on itself and the aesthetic environment.

The obtrusive nature and inherent characteristics and dynamics of outdoor advertisements should be seen against the background of the powerful economic forces behind outdoor advertising.

(b) The persistency and tactics of the outdoor advertising fraternity

Since outdoor advertising is a *billion-dollar industry,* this industry (especially in the United States) is very active in lobbying politicians, often using professional lobbying firms, and large sums of money are often spent to discredit campaigns for the effective management of outdoor information transfer and to undermine legislation.

The following quote gives a good indication of this approach.

> *The outdoor advertising industry has had doors slammed in its face all over Florida the last few years as residents grew tired of a landscape marred by towering signs and urged their local governments to ban billboards. But in those hallowed halls in Tallahassee where our state legislators work, the billboard industry has found the doors wide open and the red carpet rolled out* (The St. Petersburg Times, 1991).

A very good example of the power and influence of the billboard lobby in the United States, is the nullification of the 1965 Highway Beautification Act, passed at Lady Bird Johnson's urging, and which was aimed at cleaning up the clutter of billboards along federal highways. The billboard lobby succeeded in changing the Act bit by bit, adding exceptions and expensive compensation requirements up to a point where it was rendered almost powerless (Altoona Mirror, 1991; Matlack, 1991). In the words of Miller (online): *The Highway Beautification Act, initially passed to control billboards on federally funded streets and highways, has been lobbied-over into the "Outdoor*

Advertising Subsidy Act." The amended act has also been called *a sign-industry-dominated program that is actually enriching and subsidizing the industry* (Altoona Mirror, 1991).

In South Africa the lack of funds for the seventh *All Africa Games* was used by sponsors and outdoor advertising contractors to obtain billboard space in areas where billboards should never have been erected. This even included massive advertising gantries spanning freeways in the Johannesburg metropolitan area (Outdoor Graphics, 1999, Autumn (1)). These concessions have given momentum to a trend of erecting unwanted billboards in the South African metropolitan areas in conflict with the recommendations in the *South African Manual for Outdoor Advertising Control (SAMOAC)*. SAMOAC was introduced in 1998 as a national guideline document. The main purpose of this document was to limit the impact of outdoor information transfer by following the British and European approach of smaller and fewer billboards rather than the extravagant American approach. Due to the persistency of the outdoor advertising industry, large numbers of billboards are now being allowed in the South African metropolitan areas that are much higher and bigger than recommended by SAMOAC. This can be seen as one of the most important reasons why SAMOAC did not achieve its main purpose in most of the South African metropolitan areas. As a point in case even the previous Pretoria Municipality, which could be seen as very conservative regarding outdoor advertising, succumbed to the funds offered by the outdoor advertising industry and allowed a number of enormous gantry signs, which are not allowed at all according to SAMOAC.

A common practice followed by the outdoor advertising industry in the United States, in order to influence politicians, is to contribute to their campaign funds (Altoona Mirror, 1991; Matlack, 1991).

The donation of free billboard space to charity is often used as an important instrument of persuasion by the outdoor advertising industry.

> *Donations of free billboard space to charity would appear to be a commendable practice by the billboard industry. However, in the vast majority of cases, these donations are part of a calculated strategy to undermine local, state, and national efforts to control billboards. Furthermore, because billboard companies maintain more sign structures than they have advertisements, free billboards are a*

convenient way to fill otherwise empty billboard space. In short, free billboards aren't intended to be free at all (Scenic America, online, (6)).

The donation of free billboard space to charity is often not only aimed at lobbying officials at controlling authorities, but also at politicians to influence the vote on billboard legislation, while Scenic America (online, (6)) also mentions a case where free billboard space was used in an effort to influence a court decisions on a billboard company's challenge to local regulations. The strategy behind this approach is to provide free billboard space specifically to charities that are supported by key officials, politicians or decision makers (Citizens for a Scenic Florida, online, (2)).

Benefits obtained on behalf of communities by awarding billboard concessions cannot always be seen as beneficial. This problem is clearly illustrated by the *Treasury Principle.* This principle refers to the persuasion of the controlling authority by the financial benefits offered up-front by an outdoor advertising contractor to obtain a concession which might actually not be to the benefit of local communities since it might impact on tourism resources and the local living environment. Concessions are given to contractors without the necessary pre-planning and the involvement of local communities and civic groups. The only benefit received is the replenishing of the depleted coffers of the relevant authority, which is, in most cases, only a short-term benefit. The benefits obtained from outdoor adverting are often used as an enticement to obtain the involvement and co-operation of controlling authorities and policymakers in advertising strategies and to affect the judgement of decision and policymakers.

Owing to the current monopolistic tendencies of consolidating national and international outdoor advertising contractors, lobbying power are also being consolidated, which means that the persistency factor will become a much bigger reality in the future.

(c) Domination of outdoor advertising and monetary motive as driving force

Outdoor advertising, which can be seen as the promotion of the sale of goods and services and the generation of income, form the most dominant and aggressive part of outdoor information transfer. The creation of monetary wealth therefore seems to be the most prominent motive and driving force behind the largest part of outdoor information transfer, which again points to a tendency to generate

environmental impact. To be realistic, even less commercialised signs, such as shop signs or a brown tourism sign directing the tourist to a hotel or guest house, have as a primary function the generation of income and therefore have the potential of getting out of hand and impacting on the environment.

Even where outdoor advertising is used as a medium of expression in the grand tradition of architecture, in order to fulfil a more sublime function by contributing to the visual scene as a form of art, generating income seems to be the true motive. Nouvel's future cityscapes, which integrate outdoor advertisements into building design and which are seen by Rasmuss (1996, p.11) as *a lot closer to the likely reality of future cities,* can be seen as a good example in this regard. The following statement made by Rassmuss (1996, p.11) with regard to Nouvel's images reflects something of the monetary aspirations of a global economy:

> *The realisation that not only the floor area, but also the skin of a building can generate income, has long had an impact on urban buildings. We are only just beginning to see the flood of text and images that will devour our buildings in the future.*

It must be clearly stated that the concepts of architects such as Jean Nouvel and Robert Venturi using outdoor advertising as inspiration have merit and can make a very positive contribution to the visual environment if managed correctly.

Educated and informed consumer choice and an increased consumer awareness in order to rise living standards and the quality of life are other good examples of a noble function performed by outdoor advertising often presented to the public. However, the *Freedom of Commercial Speech Trust* had to admit that informing and educating the consumer to make an informed purchase choice is second to promoting and selling products and services (Outdoor Graphics, 1997, Summer (4), p. 12). This *noble* cause is therefore often misused as a handy instrument to increase sales and generate income.

The advertising industry and the proponents of freedom of commercial speech admit that advertising should take place in a responsible manner and that there should be certain limits to the motive of creating monetary wealth. According to Oosthuizen (1997, p.16), *...freedom of commercial speech does not imply freedom to promote at any cost.* However, it seems as if the true meaning of

responsible behaviour is not always fully grasped by the proponents of the freedom of commercial speech. The main objective still remains increased sales and profit. The commitment to responsible behaviour is therefore often misused for the mere purpose of *greenwashing* and the creation of an illusion of environmental concern in order to further their main objective of increased sales and profits and in order to ensure the self-regulation of commercial speech and outdoor advertising.

In many cases where the outdoor advertising industry is endeavouring the responsible management of outdoor advertising through self-regulation, intense competition between otherwise responsible companies may often lead to less acceptable practices. The *Outdoor Advertising Association of South Africa* (Billboards.co.za, online, (1)) has made the following statement with regard to its principles and code of conduct, which are kept by members on a voluntary basis:

> *...the Association will be the first to admit, with regret, that companies within this industry have often ignored these rules as members of this Association competed for market share and dominance.*

It has also been shown in 3.3.2.4 that modern vernacular expressions and design elements, of which outdoor advertising forms an important part, are dominated by economic forces and monetary aspirations. Modern vernacular expressions leave very little room for reflecting other values such as environmental awareness and cultural identity. Other values can only develop and find expression in a climate of effective management of visual resources, which includes the management of outdoor information transfer, together with sufficient community involvement and education.

The dominance of monetary and commercial values in modern society is often misused and basic management principles are often ignored in the design process in order to *give people what they want*. Peter Blake (1979, pp. 19-20) puts it this way:

> *Many members of the emerging pop-garde in environmental design have taken the position that the public wants junk, then – by all means – let us give them junk. Venturi, for example, has said that "Main Street is almost all right," which is balderdash. Main Street, USA, is almost uniformly dismal, disgraceful, and frequently disgusting. He has glorified the Las Vegas strip, conveniently forgetting, I suspect, that the proliferation of highway extravaganzas like vast shopping centers, fast food*

chains, and similar razzle-dazzle merchandizing efforts have destroyed whatever stores and restaurants the traditional urban street still had to offer – and thus destroyed a significant part of the quality of urban life, including the quality of Main Street – which ended up (as a direct result) not even remotely "all right".

*But, above all, it seems a bit condescending to me that highly sophisticated designers and critics have decided that if the public prefers vulgarity, then it is the function of artists and intellectuals to dish out garbage... At the risk of seeming a trifle pompous, I would like to suggest that **the artist must also be a messenger for an ideal.** (Emphasis added.)*

3.5.4.3 Neutralising the benefits of outdoor information transfer

Without effective management the benefits of outdoor information transfer will have a very negative impact on the environment and will even undermine and be counterproductive to the benefits themselves. A historical analysis of the function and impact of outdoor information transfer has shown that insufficient control can very easily neutralise any positive contribution. A good example is the English pictorial signboard of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which made a remarkable contribution to streetscape and sense of place, but were eventually banned during the latter half of the eighteenth century due to insufficient control of the size and number of signs. An objective view of the benefits of outdoor information transfer shows that this tendency is just as valid today as in the past.

(a) Directing and guiding the road user and pedestrian

Signs fulfil an important role in directing, guiding and indexing the surroundings, but an excessive number of signs for the purpose of directing and guiding, with excessive contrast and competition between signs, lose their functionality and purpose and become a liability by contributing to visual clutter. The situation can very easily get out of hand if each enterprise and institution is allowed to use pointer boards or guidance signs to direct the public to their enterprise or institution. In the United

States the use of large billboards for directing and guiding is often a common practice[25] (cf. Taylor, 2000). A well-designed, co-ordinated and well-managed sign system in both urban, rural and natural environments would be a far better option. In many cases such sign systems might contribute to the enhancement of local character and placeness. This may include historical town centres and conservation areas in the natural environment.

Many factors might contribute to the proliferation of illegal or unwanted directional and guidance signs of which the two most important are an insufficient sign system for directing and guiding and a lack of control and poor management. South Africa is a very good example in this regard. Of the three-levels of the system proposed by King and Wilkinson (1980) (see 3.2.1.1) only the first level, namely general service signing, has been implemented in any real sense of the word in the form of brown tourism signs, but in most provinces it is not functioning very well. Specific service signs in the form of logo signs are not allowed. However, certain elements of the specific service signs are currently being incorporated into the brown tourism signs. Information centres are limited to tourism bureaux in towns and cities, which are often difficult and time-consuming to find, while no such facilities are provided along important routes outside urban areas. In order to fill these gaps a proliferation of illegal advertisements and even illegal brown signs are provided in order to direct the tourist and traveller to services and attractions. There is no need to say that these illegal signs have a very negative impact on aesthetic resources crucial to tourism. This proliferation of illegal signs, together with insufficient control, also inhibits the viability of information centres to be provided by the private sector and which are of critical importance in providing more detailed information to the tourist and traveller in an aesthetically friendly way. The timely removal of illegal signs and advertisements is crucial in the effective development and functioning of any sign system aimed at directing and guiding the tourist and traveller. In referring to the slow removal of non-conforming billboards after the implementation of

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[25] According to a survey on the uses of billboards by Missouri business, 89.3% of companies who use billboard advertising indicate that they use billboards for directing people to their places of business (Taylor, 2000, p.9). It is therefore no surprise that information communicated on billboards can be especially important to the traveller and tourist passing through or visiting an area in the United States. The results of a survey conducted by the *U.S. Travel Data Center* (1991) indicate that motorists, by a large majority, find billboards to be helpful in locating services such as hotels, restaurants, filling stations, tourist attractions and retail stores. In South Africa *directing customers to your business* is also recognised as an important benefit of outdoor advertising by the *Outdoor Advertising Association of South Africa*, who mainly represents companies specialising in larger billboards (Outdoor Graphics, 1999, Autumn (2), p.15).

the *Highway Beautification Act of 1965*, King and Wilkinson (1980, p.37) made the following statement:

> *This slow pace of billboard removal is removing the urgency of developing and implementing alternate information systems. This condition applies particularly to information systems elements which requires the investment of private capital and/or financial commitments from service suppliers.*

Signs should not be seen as the only means of directing, guiding and orientating the road user and pedestrian. Imageability or placeness can almost be seen as a more important tool for orientation and guidance in urban areas:

> *The distemic space of the large city is overly complex, and lacks the necessary cues to facilitate its imaging and legibility by diverse groups of people who are unfamiliar with its spaces and structure.* (Motloch, 1991, p.285).

Greenbie (1981, as cited in Motloch, 1991, p.285) puts it as follows:

> *....the larger urban landscape has become a bewildering catchall of discordant elements. without perceptible structure and clear means for orientation for the traveller, as anyone leaving an expressway to enter the typical large city for the first time knows very well.*

The business community and planning and roads authorities may very easily fall into the trap of trying to solve the problem by providing excessive signage in order to orientate, direct and catch the attention of tourists, travellers and pedestrians. Such an approach will only worsen the problem since the excessive number of signs will further contribute to the *bewildering catchall of discordant elements* and complexity of the visual environment and will therefore make the urban environment even less legible and destroy what little imageability may exist.

(b) Informing and warning the public in order to enhance general well-being and safety

Without effective control this function is often misused by the commercial sector. The logo of the sponsor and the *commercial message* may very easily overshadow and even destroy the primary function of warning and informing.

(c) Stimulating economic development and promoting freedom of commercial choice

The stimulation of economic development is an important function of outdoor advertisements and signs and cannot be ignored. But, if managed ineffectively, outdoor information transfer might be detrimental to economic development and might even neutralise its positive contribution. It can also be said that though economic development is necessary and inevitable, ugliness and aesthetic decay are not.

Although the right to freedom of commercial speech and commercial choice is important it should be considered together with the right to an environment that is not harmful to human health or well-being. It should also be measured against the freedom of choice and personal right to avoid any commercial message. The right to freedom of commercial speech can therefore not be seen as an unlimited right.[26] This is especially true of outdoor advertising, which should always be within the limits of decency and aesthetic respectability, all the more so since outdoor advertising has a natural tendency to enforce its message onto the viewer and to dominate the visual scene. This tendency is even admitted by the outdoor advertising industry with billboard messages such as *try crumpling this ad up & throwing it away* and *the power of presence*. (See figure 3.17.) The principle of a limitation regarding *outdoor advertising speech* has been recognised by the juridical system:

> *We do not think the right to advertise a business is such that a businessman may appropriate common airspace and destroy common vistas* (Judge Bronson in Sun Oil Co. V. City of Madison Heights, 199 N.W.2d 525, 529 (Mich. 1972) as cited in Citizens for a Scenic Florida, online, (1)).

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[26] Proponents of freedom of commercial speech in the United States very often allocate an almost untouchable status to this *right* by linking it directly to the Free Speech clause of the First Amendment of the American Bill of Rights and to the rights of the individual (cf. Huber, online). According to Person (online), an outdoor advertising proponent, commercial messages on billboards are also expressions of the same right that gives the American citizen freedom of political speech:
> *The First Amendment makes no distinction between commercial and non-commercial speech, and the message "Two McBurgers - $ 1.99" should be no less constitutionally protected than "Free Nelson Mandela."*
>
> and
>
> *...it shouldn't matter whether a billboard is beautiful or ugly: Both are protected by the right of private property. The idea that someone's property rights should be taken away because a handful (or even a majority) of people deem a particular structure "ugly" is absurd.*
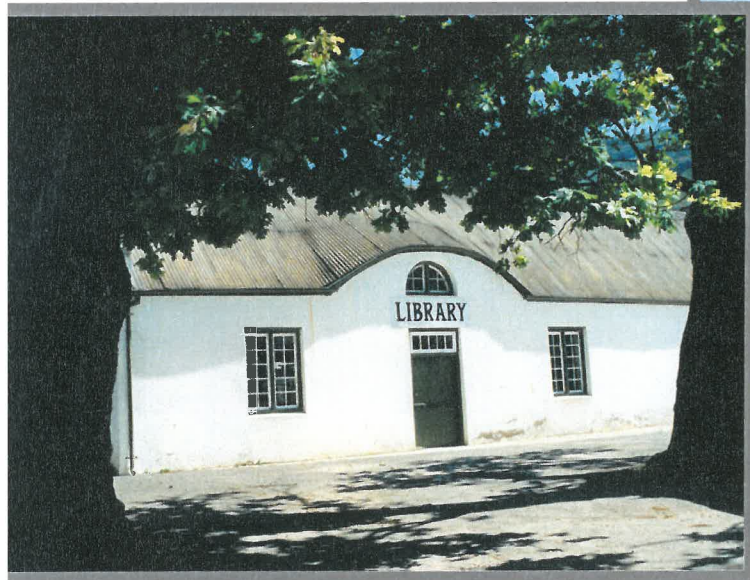
village of Suurbraak, near Swellendam in the Western Cape,
established as a mission station of the London Missionary
iety in 1812. This village has a rich history, a very strong
se of place and huge tourism potential.

welcome sign to the village is a good example of how
loor information transfer's function of informing the public
be misused by the commercial sector. The logo of the soft
k overshadows the primary function of welcoming the visitor.
ough the name Suurbraak is written in quite large letters, the
background of the message supports the commercial logo.
soft drink company has taken advantage of the community's
of funds by providing a welcome sign that is nothing more
a direct advertisement of their product. Their sponsorship of
welcome sign should have been more subtle, or their product
rtisements should have been limited to shops in the
munity where the product is sold.

Figure 3.34

Advertisements and signs

Destroying the function of informing the public

Date of photos: Sept. 2000

Very often outdoor advertising proponents do not see the connection between freedom of commercial speech and the freedom to live in a decent and healthy environment.

The proponents of unrestricted outdoor advertising opportunities often base their case on the argument that advertising leads to an increase in consumption and therefore to economic growth and the creation of additional job opportunities. The relation between advertising and economic growth is not as simple as it seems. An increase in outdoor advertising will not always lead to an increase in economic growth. The effective management and the limitation of outdoor advertising speech might even be beneficial to economic development. This tendency can be linked directly to various positive results of the effective management of outdoor information transfer, such as the aesthetic improvement of communities, the improved visibility and legibility of signs and the prevention of visual complexity and information overload. Contrary to the belief of the outdoor advertising industry that businesses such as service stations and eating and drinking establishments would be devastated financially by effective control measures, various towns and cities in the United States showed a steady increase in sales after the introduction of stricter control measures.[27]

Effective management of advertisements and signs contributes to the efficiency of such advertisements and signs. Effective management which contributes to placeness and sense of place will lead to the creation of vivid images of which the advertisement will be part and which will be remembered over extended periods of time.

Even where an increase in outdoor advertising makes a positive contribution to the development of certain enterprises or economic sectors, such benefits will have to be weighed against a possible impact on the tourism industry resulting from degenerated tourism resources brought about by unrestricted and uncontrolled outdoor advertising.

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[27] In Williamsburg, Virginia sales for eating and drinking establishments rose by more than 65% from 1988 to 1992, three years after billboard controls were tightened. In Raleigh, North Carolina sales from eating and drinking establishments rose by about 20% from 1989, before billboard control, to 1992, after controls were introduced. The total retail sales in Houston, Texas grew by over 100% from 1981, the year after a ban on new billboard construction was passed, until 1992 (Scenic America, online (1)).

It is therefore a foregone conclusion that the effective management of outdoor information transfer is essential, both to provide sufficient opportunities for conveying messages and to conserve and enhance the aesthetic environment, of which both are fundamental to economic development. It is furthermore clear that the sustainable management of outdoor information transfer cannot be limited to the sustainability of the aesthetic environment only, but should also embrace sustainable economic development.

Seen from a different angle insufficient control of outdoor information transfer might be detrimental to economic growth through creating a climate that discourages investment and retail sales. According to Rypkema (1996, p.62), local urban character and placeness play an important role in attracting investments in the global economy. (See 2.2.4.) It is therefore no surprise that government institutions in Singapore are using this country's *clean and green* image as an important attraction in obtaining foreign investments. In accordance with this policy outdoor advertisements are controlled strictly and are even not allowed on industrial sites. Another example is the *City Council of Westminster* who is placing a premium on maintaining the local character of shopping streets such as Regent, Oxford and Bond Streets in order to attract shoppers from all over the world (City Council of Westminster, 1993). (See 3.3.5.)

From the above it is therefore clear that outdoor information transfer also reveals a destructive and neutralising tendency with regard to the function of stimulating economic growth in the absence of effective management.

(d) Enhancing the visual environment

According to Jacobs (1972, p.39), streets and sidewalks can be seen as a crucial aesthetic component of the city: *Streets and their sidewalks, the main public places of a city, are its most vital organs... If a city's streets look interesting, the city looks interesting; if they look dull, the city looks dull.* Outdoor signs, and especially shop signs, can play an important role in giving life to certain urban streets and contributing to placeness if managed effectively. If not, it can destroy aesthetic attributes and placeness.

Many an outdoor advertisement may be considered a work of art. However, no outdoor advertisement can be treated in isolation, but has to be seen in relation to advertising structure as well as outdoor setting. The outdoor advertising industry tends to spend as little money as possible on outdoor advertising structures, concentrating on the structural aspects while ignoring aesthetics. Sufficient landscaping of sites surrounding outdoor advertising structures seldom receives any attention. The artistic contribution of most outdoor advertisements is neutralised by the visual impact of advertising structure and sign proliferation and the lack of integration between advertising contents, advertising structure and the surrounding environment. Sense of place and the surrounding environment should be taken into consideration if the aesthetic and artistic potential of outdoor information transfer is to be actualised.

In general it can be said that although outdoor information transfer has an exceptional potential to contribute to the aesthetic environment and placeness, this potential is seldom realised. At the basis of this dilemma is the outdoor advertising industry's exclusive focus on the message function of outdoor information transfer, to the detriment of the aesthetic function, which is supposed to provide an important supportive role to the message function. In most urban areas no co-ordinated strategy exists to unlock the aesthetic potential of outdoor advertising and the rest of outdoor information transfer. In many cases outdoor advertising structures such as billboards tend to be concentrated in areas of urban decay, which creates the perception that outdoor advertising is both a source as well as a product of urban decay.

In reality outdoor information transfer, and especially commercial advertising, contributes to the aesthetic environment only in exceptional cases. Cost-effective structures are generally given preference over more pleasant-looking outdoor advertising furniture and other appealing approaches such as the incorporation of advertising panels into building design. The striking effect of car wrapping is often lost in the humdrum of urban traffic. The appeal of shop signs, once an important contributor to streetscape and placeness, has been lost to the unchecked internal forces of outdoor advertising as well as uniformity and drabness, which is the outcome of modern sign materials, design techniques and production methods. Even the striking nightscapes of entertainment districts have its dark side. These districts might not reveal the same enchantment and glamour during daytime:

Piccadilly Circus, or Times Square in New York, or almost anywhere in the central areas of Tokyo, Los Angeles, San Francisco, or any great city, are transformed by night into magical scenes of brashly colourful, vivacious wonderland. By daylight, the same places in most cities – Piccadilly Circus especially – show building facades of sordid shabbiness (Burke, 1976, p.112).

It is obvious that effective management is a prerequisite for actualising the aesthetic potential of outdoor information transfer, in the absence of which outdoor advertising will destroy whatever its own aesthetic potential might be.

(e) Source of income and similar benefits

This function should be treated with caution. Apparent benefits may not always be benefits, but may turn out to be liabilities instead. Donations of free billboard space and financial donations to charities by the outdoor advertising industry are often used as a calculated strategy to undermine efforts by authorities to control outdoor advertising and to influence decision-makers (Scenic America, online (6)). Even if there are no ulterior motives involved, the negative aspects of outdoor advertising may still outweigh monetary benefits. Since the perceptual environment is a public asset, benefits obtained from outdoor advertising should not be limited to individuals but should be aimed at the community. Monetary and community benefits obtained from outdoor advertising should be acknowledged, but should not be obtained at the cost of aesthetic decay.

Without effective management the source of income obtained from outdoor advertising might often be neutralised by the lack of income from sources such as tourism or retail sales due to the impact of outdoor advertising.

3.5.5   THE ROLE OF PLACENESS

In this chapter it has been shown that placeness plays an important role in analysing and expressing the benefits and impacts of outdoor information transfer.

❑ At the base of this statement lies the pivotal role of placeness in the perceptual environment. Sense of place forms the essence of the aesthetic environment and it can therefore be said that without sense of place beauty and aesthetic appreciation will lose their meaning. Sense of place makes one place distinct from another and gives it charm and appeal.

❑ From the beginning of recorded history outdoor signs have made an important contribution to local character and sense of place. Whether it be the voice of the Greek crier in ancient Athens or the pictorial signboard of seventeenth and eighteenth century England.

❑ Placeness is an important ingredient for creating favourable conditions for tourism and economic development, for community identity, the quality of human living environments, prevention of crime and vandalism, a sense of permanence, friendly retail environments and for maintaining and improving property values. There is also a strong relationship between placeness, information relevancy and information overload. Outdoor information transfer has a large influence on placeness. Placeness therefore serves as an important instrument in analysing and expressing the impacts and benefits of outdoor information transfer.

❑ It has been shown that if the artistic contribution of outdoor advertisements and signs is seen in isolation this contribution will be lost. Sense of place and the surrounding environment are necessary ingredients to actualise the aesthetic and artistic potential of outdoor information transfer.

❑ Placeness is necessary to put the advertising message in the mind of the observer. Placeness can be seen as the innate ability of a place or setting to form vivid mental images, to effect major changes in emotional state and to be remembered over extended periods of time (Motloch, 1991, p.296). Effective management of outdoor information transfer that contributes to sense of place will lead to the creation of vivid mental images of which advertisements will be part, and such advertisements will therefore be remembered over extended periods of time.

3.5.6 VERIFICATION OF HYPOTHESIS 2

Hypothesis 2: Outdoor information transfer as an important part of the perceptual environment benefits society and the environment, but also impacts negatively on both. Sense of place and placeness play a crucial role with regard to the benefits and impact of outdoor information transfer. If a *laissez-faire* policy is followed with regard to the management of outdoor information transfer, the impacts thereof will overshadow the positive contribution and will neutralise many of the benefits.

The above conclusions have shown that:

❑ Outdoor information transfer benefits society and the environment.

❑ Outdoor information transfer also impacts on the environment and society.

❑ Sense of place and placeness play a crucial role with regard to the benefits and impact of outdoor information transfer.

❑ If a *laissez-faire* policy is followed with regard to the management of outdoor information transfer, the impacts thereof will overshadow the positive contribution and will neutralise many of the benefits.

❑ There is a definite need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer.

Hypothesis 2 has therefore been shown to be true.

CHAPTER 3

THE FUNCTION AND IMPACT OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

Sub-problem 2: What are the nature and extent of the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer in terms of both its benefits and its impacts?

Hypothesis 2: Outdoor information transfer, as an important part of the perceptual environment, benefits society and the environment but also impacts negatively on society and the environment. Sense of place and placeness play a crucial role with regard to the benefits and impact of outdoor information transfer. If a *laissez-faire* policy is followed with regard to the management of outdoor information transfer, the impacts thereof will overshadow its positive contribution and will neutralise many of the benefits.

Outdoor information transfer fulfils two interrelated functions. The primary function is to transfer messages to the observer by means of guiding, warning, informing, notifying, advising, promoting or advertising, or by means of any other way of transferring such messages or information. The second function relates to the aesthetic appearance of sign and sign structure in relation to setting. As elements in the perceptual environment, advertisements, signs and sign structures can therefore also fulfil an aesthetic function by contributing to streetscape, setting and image formation in general. It seems only logical that the *direct message function* of outdoor information transfer should display a tendency to dominate and overshadow the *environmental aesthetic function*. It therefore tends to limit the application of aesthetics by keeping it within the confines of individual signs, advertisements and messages. This is especially true of commercial advertising where increased sales and profits are the main driving forces. It is interesting to note that the aesthetic function can play an important role in supporting and actualising the message function.

The impact exercised by outdoor information transfer bears a close resemblance to the above-mentioned functions by having a *message impact* as well as an *aesthetic impact,* each of which may have social, economic or ecological consequences.

3.1. HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE FUNCTION AND IMPACT OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

This section will cover the above topic from the period of antiquity until the beginning of the twentieth century. Regarding the impact of outdoor information transfer it will concentrate mainly on the aesthetic impact of advertisements and signs.

Outdoor information transfer harks back to the beginning of human history. Outdoor advertising can be seen as the earliest and most enduring form of commercial advertising. It has survived since the earliest civilisations and has been continuously adapted in accordance with economic development, technological changes and the needs and ingenuity of man.

3.1.1 PERIOD OF ANTIQUITY (2000 BC – 600 BC)

Babylonian merchants employed barkers or criers who advertised their masters' wares by shouting out their qualities to passers-by. They also hung over their doors the symbols of their trade, which indicated the nature of their business. Written signs or messages could not be used widely owing to the illiteracy of the populace (Presbrey, 1968, p. 3). As long as the majority of the population remained illiterate the wandering or static crier, for both public and commercial announcements, and the trade symbol remained the most important means of outdoor information transfer.

Inscriptions by Egyptian kings on monuments to bolster their prestige can be seen as an early form of outdoor information transfer. According to Presbrey (1968, p.4), the only form of commercial advertising known to the people of early Egypt was the crier, and his announcements were confined to the arrival of ships and the offering of items from their cargoes. The owner of a shipload of wine,

spices or metals, or any assortment of goods, would send out his announcer to sing or chant his story and attest to the desirability of articles just received. He would give further interest to his announcement by describing in florid and very colourful language the regions from which the articles came and the difficulties under which they were obtained. Egyptian shops only rarely made use of signs containing inscriptions or emblems (Larwood & Hotten, 1951, p.1). Henderson and Landau (1981, p.9) mention Egyptian merchants carving sales messages into *stelae* or stone tablets placed by the roadside.

3.1.2 CLASSICAL WESTERN PERIOD (450 BC – 450 AD)

Although signboards outside shop doors are known to have been a form of advertising in ancient Athens, the crier was still the most common medium used for commercial advertising in this Greek city. While his main task was to advertise auction sales of slaves and animals, he also acted as auctioneer by doing the actual selling. The Greeks' love for beauty and perfection was reflected by the public crier. They demanded art from their public criers. He was selected for his pleasing voice and elocutionary ability, and was often accompanied by a musician (Presbrey, 1968, p. 5).

Roman tradesmen also made use of barkers at the door as an important advertising medium (Presbrey, 1968, p. 14). The signboard was another common method used by the shop-keeper to draw the attention of passers-by. Symbols used included a bush of evergreens to mark the wine shop or to indicate the sale of wine at an inn, a cow for the dairyman, and a mule turning a mill as a sign for the bakery (Presbrey, 1968, p. 5; Larwood & Hotten, 1951, p.2). According to Larwood and Hotten (1951, p.1), some shop signs were painted, but as a rule these signs appear to have been made in relief using stone or terra-cotta, and were fitted into the walls at the sides of the open shop-fronts. A smooth space or *album* was also provided alongside the door of the Roman house for displaying the name and profession or trade of the occupant. Various picture signs or symbols were tastefully incorporated into a written album format while sculptors applied their trade by making house tablets of terra-cotta or stone with lettering and illustrations in relief to be set into the album (Presbrey, 1968, p. 6).
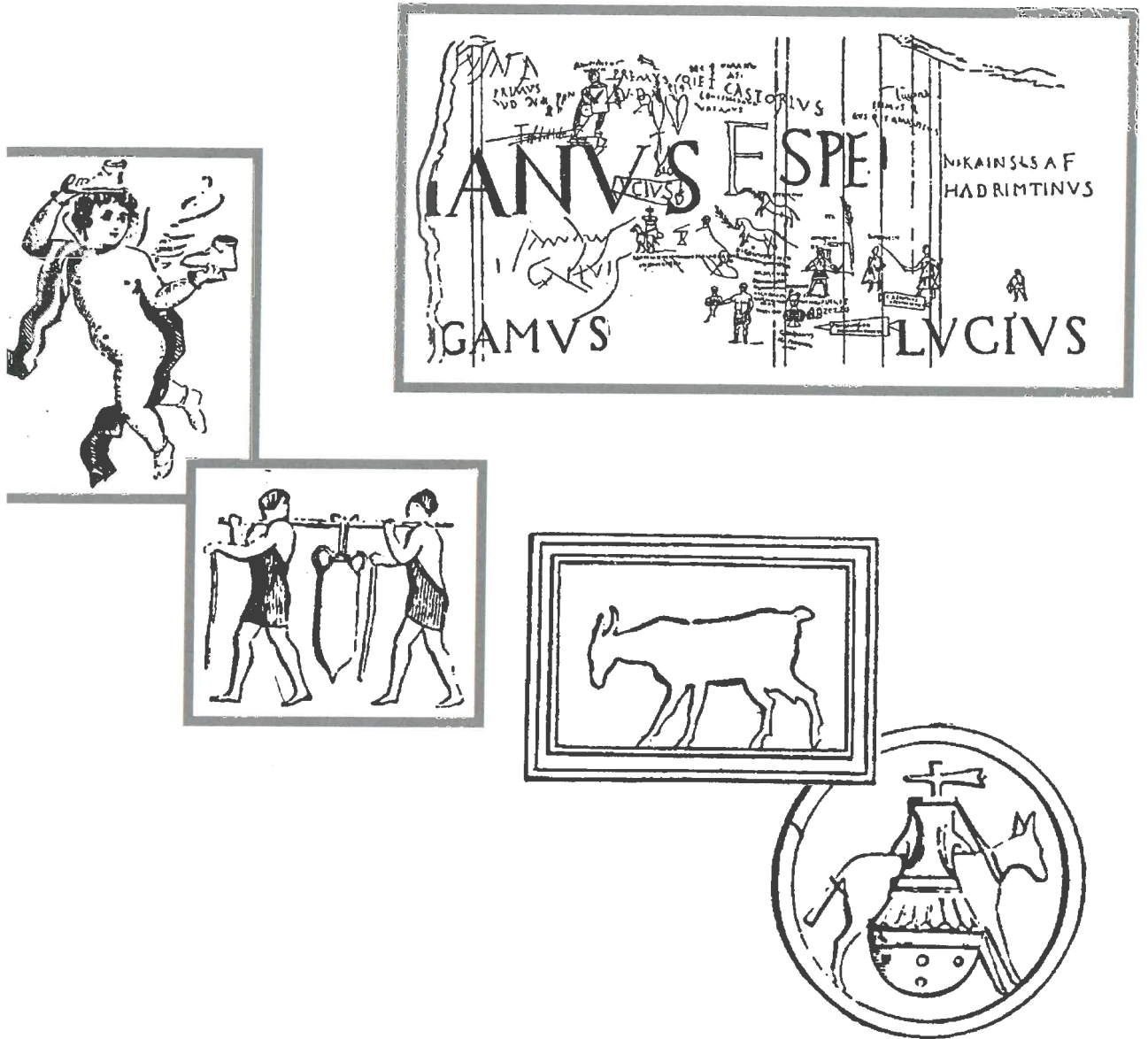
art from the barker at the door, the Roman shopowner also
ed signboards to draw the attention of passers-by. The above
istrations provide typical examples of symbols used by the
ious trades: The shoemaker at Herculaneum (top left), the wine
rchant at Pompeii (centre left), a goat indicating the dairy at
mpeii (centre right) and a grain mill indicating the bakery at
mpeii (bottom).

idely painted messages on advertising walls can be seen as the
t false note that crept into outdoor information transfer – the
t tendency to abuse and pollute the visual environment by
ans of commercial advertising. The advertisements shown in
top right corner advertise gladiators and poets and were found
excavated walls at Pompeii. They show an untidy graffiti-like
pearance.

Figure 3.1

**Signs of the classical
Western period**

The importance of the sign as an instrument of orientation is reflected by the fact that some streets in Rome derived their names from signs (Larwood & Hotten, 1951, p.1).

Written advertising became more common after the spread of literacy throughout the Roman Empire, only to disappear with the decline in the ability to read during the Dark Ages. Advertising walls were used in Roman cities to carry a variety of crudely painted messages in black or red at places were crowds gathered, or at central points were people passed in great numbers. These messages mostly advertised theatrical performances, sports and baths, houses to let, and gladiatorial exhibitions. According to Presbrey (1968, pp. 6-7), such walls, which showed signs of advertising psychology and which might have been controlled by advertising contractors, can be seen as the first advertising that comes within the twentieth century meaning of the term. Advertising walls excavated in Pompeii showed an untidy graffiti-like appearance, which reveals a strong similarity to the more extensive problems to be created by large-scale billposting in England during the 1840s and 1850s. The habit of creating new advertising space on such walls by simply whitewashing over older messages contributed to the untidy appearance. Crudely painted messages were also used on or alongside house doors to indicate that a house was for rent. These untidy messages on advertising walls and house doors contrasted sharply with the more artistic house tablets or shop signs. It can be seen as the first false note that crept into outdoor information transfer – the first tendency to abuse and pollute the visual environment by means of commercial advertising.

3.1.3   THE MIDDLE AGES (500 – 1550)

With the decline in literacy and trade the more advanced advertising methods of Roman times were lost. Town criers and barkers again became the most common medium for outdoor information transfer, and they continued to be used for centuries in many European countries. Town-wide crying, however, was in most cases restricted to official use, announcing a new war, or peace, or an execution. Especially in England the merchant mostly had to be satisfied with the barker at the door who reached only those who passed that way. At a later stage public auction sales were included in the wandering crier's announcements, as well as wine shops and a few other commodities. In France tavern keepers had an ingenious way of touting their fine wines: They would have the town crier blow

Town Crier in London

At the Sign of the Lion

The Bull and Mouth

The Nag's Head

The Black Jack and Pewter Platter
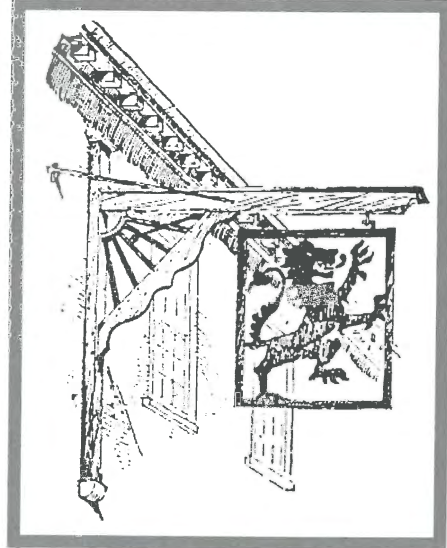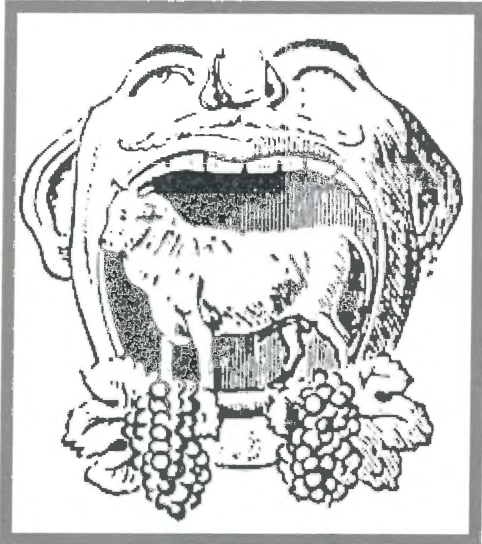
Figure 3.2
Outdoor information transfer in England during the Middle Ages and the early pictorial signboard period

With a decline in literacy and trade during the Middle Ages, town criers and barkers (top left) again became the most common medium for outdoor information transfer. Town-wide crying was mostly restricted to official use, announcing a new war, or peace, or an execution. At the end of the Middle Ages the development of the inn sign had outgrown the generic sign and reflected the name and character of the individual inn. The individualised inn sign started with a more simple design (bottom right) and elements derived from coats of arms (top right). The heraldic sign was followed by emblems not derived from any coat of arms (bottom left), as well as more intricate designs (centre) during the early pictorial period.

Source of illustrations: Presbrey, 1968

a horn in the street, gather a group – and offer samples! (Russell & Lane, 1993, p.4). Striking processions were used as an effective way to announce theatrical shows.

For the largest part of the Middle Ages the English tavern made use of signs of a rather austere nature containing only generic symbols such as the bush, indicating the availability of wine, and a long pole or ale stake, indicating the availability of ale. It was only by the twelfth century that the naming of taverns, inns and alehouses became common practice and these establishments began to display more interesting designs based on coats of arms or other heraldic elements and religious symbols (BLRA, online; Lamb, 1976, pp.4-5; Rotheroe, 1990, pp.4-7). The development of the inn sign was given momentum in 1393 when King Richard II of England decreed that alehouses had to have signs so that the official examiner or tester of ales would be able to locate all alehouses (Peter's Official Pub & Inn Sign Page, online). When a new brew was to be offered for sale the innkeeper had to hang an ale-garland outside his inn. This usually took the form of a wreath or ball of flowers, and it was a common practice of innkeepers to use the symbol of their house as a central figure within the wreath (Delderfield, 1972, p.14).

According to Presbrey (1968, p.14), signs appear to have been almost entirely confined to the tavern or inn until the twelfth or thirteenth century when shopkeepers and tradesmen started using generic signs such as the red-and-white-striped barber's pole. Later on signs reflecting specific wares in a more imaginative way, such as a gloved-hand for the glove-maker and a frying pan for the brazier, found its place outside shops. The competition between generic signs soon became rife. The custom of confining specific trades to particular streets played a major role in this regard.

The advantages of the system [of generic signs] quickly became obvious and as the signs multiplied, each tradesman vied with the other for a bigger and better and more colourful mark of his trade (Delderfield, 1972, p.14).

The public poster made its appearance in England at the end of the fifteenth century. These announcements were originally hand-written by scribes and were called *Siquis* or *If anybody* because they usually began with the Latin words for *If anybody desires* or *If anybody knows of.* The first *siquis* printed from type in the English language appeared at about 1480. As the name indicates, most *siquis* were of the personal or want-ad type aimed at advertising services, vacant posts or lost

articles. However, some *siquis* were also used to advertise luxuries such as tobacco, perfume or coffee. *Siquis* were posted on church doors or other places where crowds gathered (Presbrey, 1968, p. 15).

3.1.4   THE PICTORIAL SIGNBOARD PERIOD IN ENGLAND (1600 – 1780)

Out of the heraldic sign of the Middle Ages developed a tavern sign displaying painted animals that were not taken out of anybody's coat of arms but were just animals – the sign of the bull, the bear, the cock or the lion. Various other emblems were added and the variety of emblems and tavern signs grew throughout the Renaissance and throughout the eighteenth century as each new tavern-keeper sought something distinctive to differentiate him from his competitors. Signboards were either projected from building facades or hung from poles fixed onto the sidewalk. The development of the pictorial tavern or inn sign culminated in pictorial signs of a more intricate nature which could be seen as paintings of true artistic quality. The *Spectator* of 8 January 1743 made the following comment in this regard:

> *The other day, going down Ludgate St., several people were gaping at a very splendid sign of Queen Elizabeth, which by far exceeded all the other signs in the street, the painter having shown a masterly judgment and the carver and gilder much pomp and splendour. It looked rather like a capital picture in a gallery than a sign in the street.*

Many coach-painters, who transformed the coaches and sedans of the wealthy classes into moving picture galleries, also became sign-painters. High prices were paid for the painting of such artistic inn signs and some of the men who did this type of work had a high standing in the art world. Among them were even members of the Royal Academy. Sign-painting made an important contribution to the development of art in England. Several well-known painters were apprenticed to sign and coach-painters and there are even indications that the English School of Painting derived from the primitive craft of sign-painting (Larwood & Hotten, 1951, pp.21-22) (cf. Presbrey, 1968, p. 19 - 20).

Outdoor signs became the decorative art of European inns in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Since this was still an age of widespread illiteracy, inns vied with one another in creating attractive signs that could be recognised by all. Together with distinctive names these signs lent a certain charm to inns, especially in England (Russel & Lane, 1993, p. 5).

Tradesmen and shopkeepers were slower in following the example of taverns. Out of the generic and representative symbols of trade grew a need for lending individuality and identity to particular shops. In order to obtain a more distinctive identification the medieval heraldic sign of the tavern was copied by adding to the trade symbol a coat of arms, usually that of a noble family which the tradesman served (Presbrey, 1968, p. 22). According to Delderfield (1972, p.15), the tendency of providing individualistic signs already started in the fourteenth century due to the competition between the same generic trade signs congregating together in specific streets.

The absence of street numbers up to the latter half of the eighteenth century in England can be seen as one reason for the importance of shop and tavern signs. A shop or tavern would be known as being in a certain street, near some well-known structure, such as a specific church, *and by its sign* – the sign of the lion, the anvil or the boot. The sign was used as a landmark and not only became the address of the tradesman, shopkeeper or innkeeper, but the signs of more prominent enterprises also served a more general orienting function. When the naming of streets became general, such names were often taken from the principal or most popular tavern or inn in that street as represented and reflected by the sign of that inn. This practice was taken even further much later, for when the Croydon railway was opened in 1839 many a station took its name from popular inns in the vicinity or along the route (Delderfield, 1972, p.17).

Signboards became progressively larger, more elaborate and more colourful throughout the seventeenth and the first half of the eighteenth centuries, while also showing a greater excellence in workmanship. This tendency made an important contribution to local character and aesthetics.

> *Many of them were carved in relief on wood and gilded. Sculptured heads of royalty, of Shakespeare and of pretty maidens were numerous and vied for attention with the red and golden lions, green dragons and other subjects from the animal world. The streets of London looked like a picture gallery* (Presbrey, 1968, p.25).

Of special interest were the so-called gallows or beam signs used for inns. Such gallows signs started with ordinary signs fixed on bars that projected from building facades. However, competition soon urged each innkeeper to project his sign a few centimetres further across the street, until the gallows sign came into being which spanned the whole width of the street (Delderfield, 1972, p.15). Some of
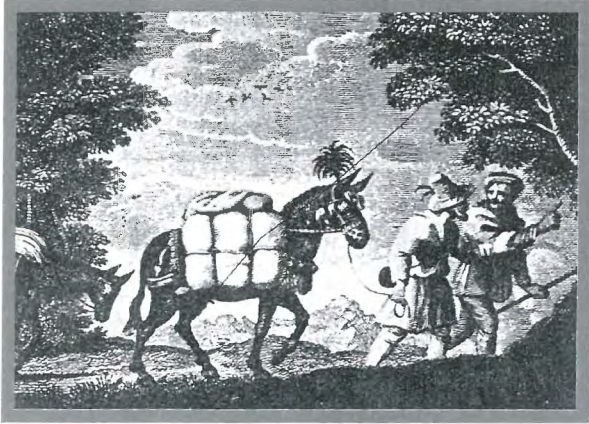
The Muleteers An inn sign by the Italian painter Correggio

A London tavern signboard in the 1730s painted by Hogarth

The sign painter

During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries outdoor signs became the decorative art of the inn. Some of the men who created these signs had a high standing in the art world. Inns vied with one another in creating attractive signs that could be recognised by all. Together with distinctive names these signs lend a certain charm to inns (top right and left). The inn sign was followed by the shop sign. Signboards became progressively larger and more colourful, while also showing greater excellence in workmanship. Sculptured heads and gilded signs in relief changed the streets of London into a picture gallery. Of special interest was the gallows or beam sign which spanned the whole width of the street. Some of these signs were of large proportions and cost huge sums of money (bottom right). The uncontrolled increase in size and numbers of signs created a safety hazard which eventually lead to the demise of the pictorial sign.

Figure 3.3

Signs of the pictorial signboard period

Source: Top left, top right and bottom left - Presbrey, 1968; bottom right - Inn signs, online

these signs were of enormous proportions and cost large sums of money. A gallows sign for the White Hart in Scole, Norfolk, included 25 life-size figures and cost £1 000 in the latter half of the seventeeth century, which was an enormous amount in those days (Rotheroe, 1990, p.6; Delderfield, 1972, p.16). However, not all signs were of distinguished pictorial quality. At the end of the pictorial signboard period many signs were still of a more elementary and austere design and it was not always possible to make out the object a particular sign was supposed to be depicting (Larwood & Hotten, 1951, p.15).

The above tendency of larger, more elaborate and more colourful signs, which was driven by competition between individual enterprises, also had a very negative impact on the perceptual environment. The uncontrolled increase in size and number not only blocked out the sun in narrow streets, but also created a safety hazard, which eventually brought about the end of these picturesque signboards. In 1667 it was decreed that no sign should span the street. This, however, did not stop signs from expanding vertically and becoming so heavy that in 1712 one fell down in Fleet Street, London, taking the front of a house with it and killing four passers-by (Rotheroe, 1990, pp.6-7). According to Presbrey (1968, p.25), the authorities ordered all pictorial signs to be removed in 1762 as a result of accidents caused by signs falling. With the ban came an order requiring the numbering of houses, since literacy had spread to a level where it was believed most people could read a number.

By 1773 houses were numbered, the picture gallery in the streets had largely disappeared, and London and other English cities had passed through a colorful period in early advertising (Presbrey, 1968, p. 25).

According to other sources (Inn Signs, online; Delderfield, 1972, p.15), the order to remove all dangerous signs or signs which could in any way be considered an encroachment or an annoyance only came in the latter half of the 1790s. According to Delderfield (1972, p.17), a street numbering system was only fully established in England in 1805.

The pictorial signboard period in England lent a certain charm to tavern, shop and streetscape and contributed to a sense of place and a sense of identity and belonging. Unfortunately this contribution came to an end due to a lack of sufficient advertising control at the initial stage. This tradition was

only kept alive to a certain extent by means of the traditional pub and inn sign of today using symbols and influences of the past.

3.1.5 THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF BILLPOSTING IN ENGLAND (1775 – 1860)

Although the advertising wall in the Roman city provided a foretaste of visual resource mismanagement, the first serious impact of advertising on the outdoor environment occurred during the Industrial Revolution in England. Official proclamations and notices of auction sales have established billposting as an occupation by 1780. But it was really the authorisation of the lotteries by Parliament in 1795 that gave a real impetus to billposting and continued to widen the application and impact thereof until the lotteries were abolished in 1826. In rural areas lottery posting took place in both the countryside and in towns. In London vans covered with lottery advertisements was a common sight during the first quarter of the nineteenth century (Presbrey, 1968, p. 491).

After billposting had been established as a more or less common practice an excess of manufactured goods, coupled with a London press that still placed many restrictions on advertising, led to an explosion in outdoor advertising in the mid 1800s (McAllister, 1996, p. 65). This situation was aggravated by a tax levied on each copy of the English newspaper, which limited the circulation of newspapers, as well as an additional tax on each advertisement placed in a newspaper.

> *In the 1840s there was a wide expansion in lettering of dead walls and in billposting. Stenciling of sidewalks also entered a big run. The sandwich man came out in force. Advertising wagons plastered with bills made processions in the streets. Buses carried advertising inside and out. It was the golden age of outdoor advertising (Presbrey, 1968, p. 91).*

After the formation of the first billposting company in London in 1839, a war began between the owners of licensed hoardings and *advertising guerrillas*. By 1855 these night-working *guerrillas*, stencilling sidewalks and pasting posters on every available space had become an enormous problem. Nothing would escape the attention of these guerrillas, not even the doors of private homes nor the kerbstone and lamppost in the street, and sunrise would reveal whole districts plastered with
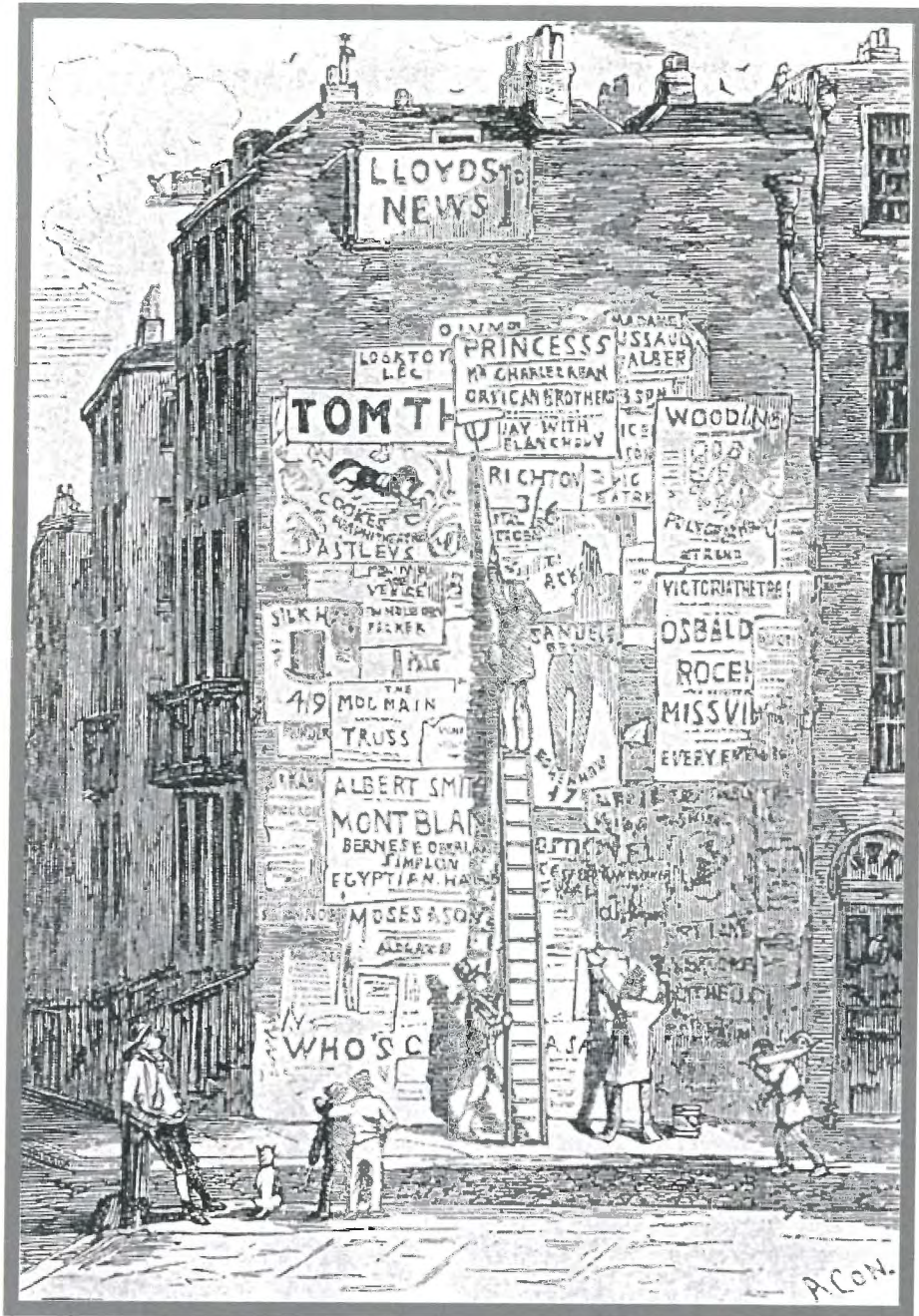
Source: Presbrey, 1966

ring the Industrial Revolution billposting became quite a
oblem in England. This problem reached its peak during the
50s. Billposting guerrillas operating under the cover of darkness
re stencilling sidewalks and sticking up posters on every
ailable space. Sunrise would reveal whole districts covered by
sters. Nothing would escape the attention of these guerrillas,
t even the doors of private homes or the lamppost on the street.
e chaotic conditions created by uncontrolled billposting forced
authorities to take the necessary regulatory steps. Authorised
vertising stations, as indicated above by a London bill station in
1840s, were provided and the night-working guerrilla was
idually eliminated.

Figure 3.4

**Billposting during the
Industrial Revolution**

posters. Dyer (1982, p. 320) makes the following statement with regard to this period: *At one time in London billposting was so popular that it seemed you might never get to see a building at all.*

These chaotic conditions created by uncontrolled billposting forced the authorities to take the necessary regulatory steps. *Advertising stations,* or authorised places for posting, were established. Defacement of private property without permission was stopped and the night-working *guerrilla* was gradually eliminated, while reputable individuals and firms took control of the billposting business. The 1860s saw haphazard quilts of ill-struck bills replaced by more colourful and better-designed posters in neatly arranged patterns. However, the regulation of billposting resulted in an increase in the number of poster-covered wagons travelling the street.

3.1.6   THE FRENCH ART POSTER (1867 – 1905)

During the latter half of the nineteenth century French artists produced outstanding advertising posters which gave outdoor advertising a salient quality and transformed poster displays into outdoor art galleries. According to Presbrey (1968, p.495), Jules Cheret, who produced his first advertising poster in 1867 and who pioneered the use of colour in the modern poster, can be seen as the father of the true art poster. Cheret used a bold combination of colours to attract attention without giving offence. In this way he succeeded in drawing attention to the product by first drawing attention to the poster (Henderson & Landau, 1981, p.9). His colour schemes were never harsh or vulgar and the subjects on his posters reflected much gaiety and movement. Other French artists, such as Grasset and Willette, took up the same line of work and in 1900 it was estimated that there were two hundred poster artists in Paris. The development of the true art poster in England and the United States was much slower. It never reached the same heights of artistic expression as in France and it never really took root until 1890.

3.1.7   OUTDOOR ADVERTISING IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (1670 – 1930)

Originally the development of outdoor advertising in the American colonies followed more or less the same pattern as in England. However, the colonial signboard never reached quite the same heights as those of the English pictorial signboard period. Nevertheless, due to a more impetuous and

A Poster by Cheret (Presbrey, 1968)

Figure 3.5
The French art poster

During the latter half of the nineteenth century French artists produced outstanding advertising posters which gave outdoor advertising a salient quality and transformed poster displays into outdoor galleries. Cheret, who can be seen as the father of the true art poster, did outstanding work in this regard.

pioneering spirit, the Americans soon adopted a more extravagant approach with regard to outdoor advertising and became world leaders in this field – a distinction upheld till this very day.

The evolution of outdoor information transfer in America started in the seventeenth century with inn or tavern signs featuring heraldic or similar elements. These signs were followed by the tradesman's symbol and the pictorial sign. Among the first trade symbols were wooden figures for tobacco shops which were carved by men who made figureheads for ships. They had a certain aesthetic appeal and artistic quality and made a positive contribution to the character of the local street.

The American pictorial signs could, however, never be compared with those of the golden age of the English pictorial signboard. According to Presbrey (1968, p.114), they were not *at any time numerous enough or large enough to give the American thoroughfare the picturesque appearance of a London street of the early eighteenth century, nor were they so well done as the famous English signboards.* Nevertheless the American pictorial sign still reached a rather high artistic standard and came into its widest use just before the Revolutionary War in Philadelphia, America's art centre at that time. Portrait signs that depicted famous personalities became rather popular. Painters such as Matthew Pratt painted outstanding signboards that became well-known and contributed to the popularity of those taverns where they were displayed.

According to Presbrey (1968, p. 498):

> *Real outdoor advertising – promiscuous posting on walls, trees and fences – probably was done first, as in England, on behalf of lotteries, which were active in New England in the eighteenth century and are known to have used the printing press freely.*

During the late 1860s the intense activity in cities, which was noticed in England a decade or so earlier, had spread to the United States. Urban areas were characterised by intensive billposting (Fraser, 1991, p.10). Even telegraph poles in the streets and the pillars of New York's first elevated railway (1867) were plastered with bills, while fresh kerbstone posters and stencilling on the sidewalks greeted people every morning (Presbrey, 1968, p. 500).

One of the most important contributions to a more impetuous and extravagant approach to outdoor advertising in America was made by an entrepreneur by the name of TC Barnum. Barnum was a

rather colourful character who had a certain flair and natural ability to make use of outdoor advertising that attracted attention. During the latter half of the nineteenth century he made use of a variety of gimmicks and flashy methods on a grandiose scale, such as brass bands, processions, gas-lit advertisements, banners and painted signs to advertise enterprises such as the American Museum in New York (Presbrey, 1968, p.215).

While the height of the Industrial Revolution in the United States saw its share of outdoor advertising in the cities this country also distinguished itself with regard to another outdoor advertising development aimed at the countryside – painted messages on rocks, cliffs and manmade structures (Fraser, 1991, p.10). This is a clear reflection of the extravagant and impetuous American approach to outdoor advertising. This rock-painting tradition, which had quite a significant impact on the visual environment, was introduced by the patent-medicine manufacturer at the beginning of the nineteenth century. After building up some momentum a wave of patent-medicine advertising hit the American countryside between 1860 and 1880. Painted letters were put onto rocks and cliffs, on barns and abandoned structures, and on the roadside fence and any other available place everywhere. In the words of Presbrey (1968, p. 501), *no good rock or obtainable barn anywhere [went] undecorated*. St Jacob's Oil, a patent medicine for rheumatism at that time, produced some of the more prominent and well-known if not notorious examples in this regard. A Mississippi River steamboat, painted a brilliant red, was used to deliver cargoes of St Jacob's Oil along the river. This steamboat carried the words *St Jacob's Oil* in letters 12 ft (3,7 m) high, so that it could be read from almost as great a distance as the boat could be seen. In another typical case the words *St Jacob's Oil* was written in huge letters on a prominent rock at the Niagara Falls. However, this advertisement aroused such a wide criticism from thousands of tourists that it had to be removed (Presbrey, 1968, p. 390). Patent medicine advertising was soon supplemented by advertisements for other products. A good example in this regard is a painted advertisement for a dentifrice on Maiden's Rock near Redwing, Minnesota. The word *Sozodont* was written on Maiden's Rock in letters of such a size that it could be seen by Mississippi River steamboat passengers from a distance of three miles (4,8 km) (Presbrey, 1968, p. 402). The visual zone along the railroad became an even more popular hunting ground for these *rock-painters* than the riverboat routes. Apart from rocks and other surfaces not only the sides but also the sloping roofs of barns along the railroad were adorned with product reminders. In 1870 the

Henderson & Landau. 1981, p.21

The American Highway Project
[http://www.highwayproject.org/galley.htm]

Henderson & Landau, 1981, p.21

Figure 3.6

Painted signs in the United States

Due to a more impetuous and pioneering spirit, the Americans adopted a more extravagant approach to outdoor advertising. One of the first manifestations of this approach was painted messages on rocks, cliffs and manmade structures in the countryside during the latter half of the nineteenth century. An advertising message in huge letters was even written on a prominent rock at the Niagara Falls. These painted signs were concentrated along railway lines and riverboat routes. Along railway lines not only the sides but also the sloping roofs of barns were adorned with product reminders.

first national painting service was organised by Bradbury and Houghteling, who had *a reputation for reaching and painting rocks regarded as inaccessible* (Presbrey, 1968, p. 501).

Another important contribution to outdoor advertising by the Americans at the beginning of the twentieth century was the free-standing billboard (Fraser, 1991, pp.8;14). An increase in car ownership during this period broadened the scale of both the application and impact of outdoor advertising.

> *Then came the automobile and a rolling audience of thousands along country roads that formerly had seen only the occasional farmer going to town. The "circulation" that grew with the spread of the automobile gave outdoor display a new importance to both local and national advertisers. Certain suburban sites for the poster or painted board became as valuable in their way as the crowded street corner in the city was to the cigar store. Where there never had been a board the roadside in places now acquired long rows of them* (Presbrey, 1968, p. 503).

The private motor-car can be seen as the single most important factor in the history of outdoor information transfer. It introduced a new era. From now on outdoor advertisements and signs would be aimed at transportation routes, competing for the attention of the motorist. Outdoor advertisements and signs would soon become a major influence and visual element to be reckoned with in both rural and urban landscapes. The turning point in this regard came in the 1920s and 1930s when the motor car became an established mode of transport in the United States (Fraser, 1991, p.46; Russel & Lane 1993, p. 330).

Night displays and the large-scale application of illuminated outdoor signs in the American city is another achievement typical of American approach to outdoor advertising. Before the advent of electricity, gaslit signs were used since 1840 to display outdoor advertisements after dark. The first huge electric sign away from the premises of the advertiser was constructed on Broadway in New York in 1891 against the blank wall of a nine-storey building. Various other signs followed this advertisement until, in the words of Presbrey (1968, p. 508), Broadway became the *great white way* at the beginning of the twentieth century. This brilliant and dazzling display of a magnitude of colourful, flashing and moving signs attracted large numbers of sign gazers after dark. Large-scale night displays were also established in other cities with large evening crowds such as Chicago,

Atlantic City and Detroit. However, Broadway remained the trend-setter and some illuminated signs even became major attractions of international importance at the beginning of the twentieth century, such as a seven-storey-high sign erected on the roof of the Hotel Normandie in 1910.

The mid 1920s saw a decline in incentives for aggressively exploring outdoor advertising strategies, as broadcasting became a viable national advertising medium (McAllister, 1996, p. 66).

3.1.8   SOCIAL FUNCTIONS OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

Apart from commercial advertising outdoor information transfer performed a variety of social functions of a more basic but nevertheless important nature in the past. The functioning and survival of towns and cities actually depended on effective outdoor information transfer. In the first instance almost every city or town had a collective communication system to gather people together in times of danger or for festivities of communal importance. According to Mumford (1975, pp. 79-80), the range of such systems played an important role in limiting the size of town and city.

> *Mesopotamian cities had an assembly drum, just as medieval cities used a bell in a church town to call their citizens together... In the Middle Ages to be within sound of Bow Bells defined the limits of the City of London; and until other systems of mass communication were invented in the nineteenth century, these were among the effective limits to urban growth.*

Secondly, such instruments of public communication were also used for various other purposes of a more general nature, some of which are still of relevance in modern times. A good example is the church bell, which is still used today in certain towns to announce the hour or to announce important happenings such as weddings or funerals, or simply to call churchgoers to church.

3.1.9   CONCLUSIONS

A historical perspective of outdoor information transfer has shown that especially commercial advertising has a latent and inherent capability of having a negative impact on the visual environment. It only takes favourable circumstances such as periods of economic growth, technological progress or

periods of promotional frustration in other advertising media for outdoor advertising to show its hand and leave major footprints on the environment. Good examples in this regard include:

❑ The untidy graffiti-like advertising walls of Roman cities reflecting the economic stability and high degree of literacy enjoyed in the Roman Empire.

❑ Competition between generic shop-signs during the Middle Ages due to the custom of confining specific trades to particular streets.

❑ Signs competing with one another during the pictorial signboard period, each one striving to be bigger and projecting further away from the shop-front than the neighbouring sign, leading to the gallows signs which spanned the whole street and which not only had an aesthetic impact but also created a safety hazard.

❑ Excessive billposting during the latter half of the Industrial Revolution in England, followed by a similar trend in the United States owing to an excess of manufactured goods and promotional stress caused by a press that placed many limitations on advertising, especially in England.

❑ Advertising messages painted on rocks and other structures in the American countryside, which reached a peak between 1860 and the mid1880s.

❑ An increase in car ownership at the beginning of the twentieth century, which broadened the scope of outdoor advertising along transportation routes and introduced a new era in outdoor information transfer.

❑ The large-scale application of electrically illuminated signs at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Conditions have never been as favourable for the flourishing of outdoor advertisements and signs as during current times due to economic globalisation, the availability of credit, a spirit of materialism and consumerism and the progress made in the field of electronic and digital technology. Scenic America

(online, (4)) estimates the current number of billboards along major American highways at 500 000, with an estimated annual increase of between 5 000 and 15 000.

The impact of outdoor advertising can also be related to cultural factors and the efficiency of control measures. In contrast to the American approach, various countries such as the United Kingdom, France and South Africa followed a rather conservative and more visually pleasing approach to the management of outdoor information transfer. Unfortunately, as a result of economic globalisation, the more extravagant and impetuous American approach to outdoor information transfer, together with a high impact on the environment, is currently being exported to the rest of the world. South Africa in particular is rapidly changing to the American model.

History has also revealed certain attributes of outdoor information transfer which contributed to the visual environment and a sense of place in the past. Some of these attributes may still be of relevance today. The following examples may be mentioned in this regard:

❑ Some of the earliest and less obtrusive forms of outdoor information transfer, such as the generic trade symbol, the crier and the church bell seem to have a perpetual value, making an important contribution to local sense of place throughout the ages while also contributing to a sense of permanence and stability. The trade symbol survived until modern times in the form of the striped barber's pole, while in Third World economies of today the informal street seller is still using his voice to advertise his wares to passers-by. The voice of the crier can also still be heard in various other places such as Hermanus, a coastal village in South Africa, where a *whale crier* blows a horn of dried kelp and announces the arrival of whales to visiting tourists. And at Boppard the bells of St Severus resounding across the River Rhine links past with present and bear witness to the timeless beauty and grace of the church bell.

❑ Throughout the ages signs attached to shops or other enterprises often formed a medium for artistic expression and contributed to the local sense of place. The sculptured Roman album or house tablet in terra cotta or stone displaying the name and profession or trade of the resident; wooden figures at the American tobacco shop carved by men who made figureheads for ships; and pictorial signboards often painted by men who had a high standing in the art world. The

Image IT (online)
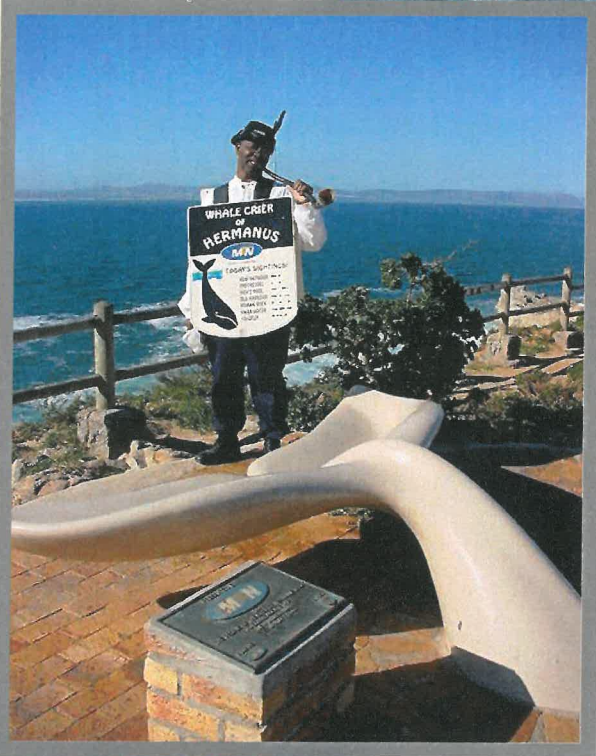
Figure 3.7
Whale crier

Some of the earliest and less obtrusive forms of outdoor information transfer such as the generic trade symbol, the crier and the church bell seem to have perpetual value, making an important contribution to local sense of place throughout the ages while also contributing to a sense of permanence and stability.

The trade symbol survived until modern times in the form of the striped barber's pole, while in Third World economies of today the informal street seller is still using his voice to advertise his wares to passers-by. The voice of the crier can also still be heard in various other places such as Hermanus, a coastal village in South Africa. In the months of June through November the Southern Right Whales come to mate and calf in the warmer waters of Walker Bay. During this period Wilson Salakusana, the only whale crier in the world, walks the streets of Hermanus blowing his kelp horn to alert hundreds of shore-based whale-watchers to the whereabouts of whales. The key to the codes he is blowing is shown on his sandwich board, together with the number of whales spotted at each location
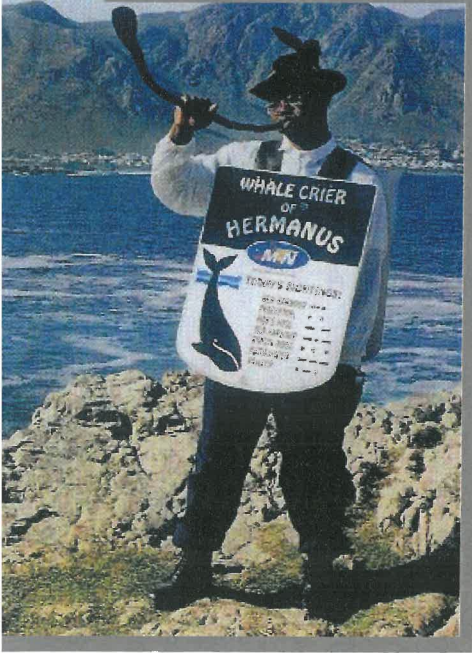
Think Quest (online)
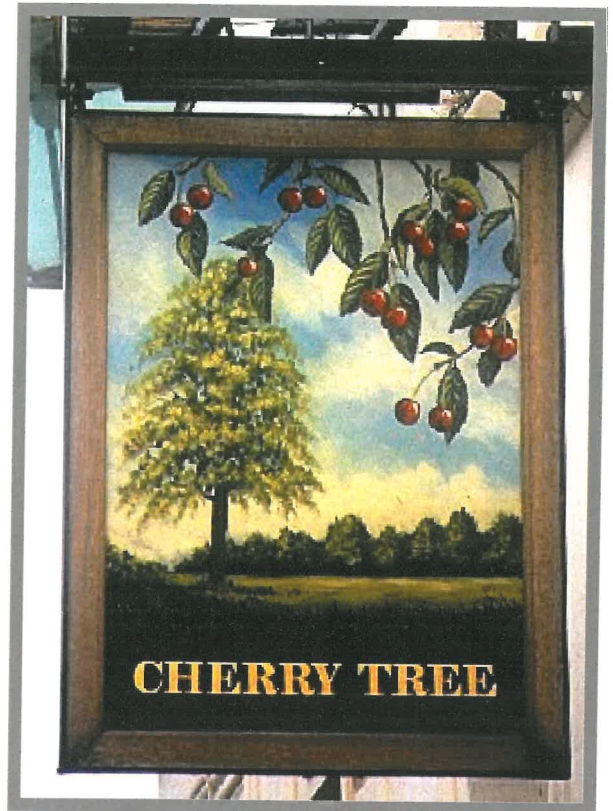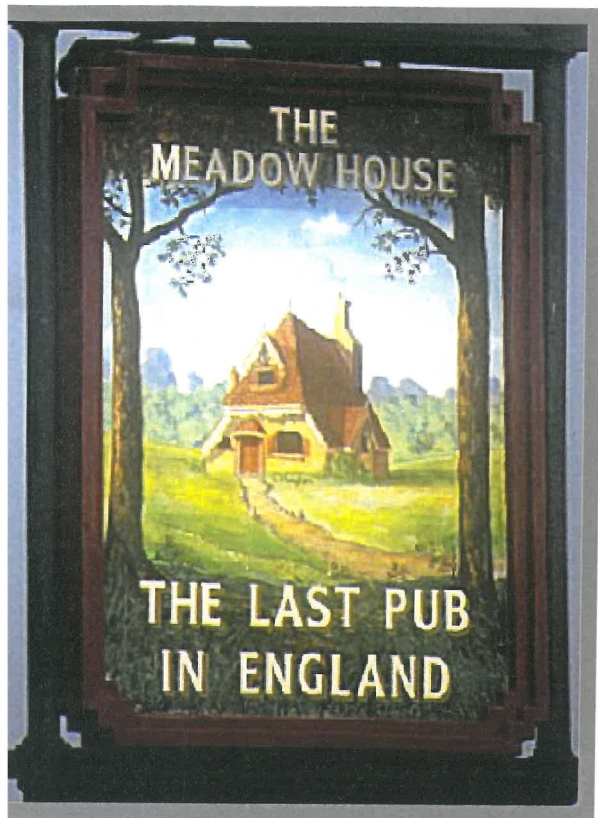
Figure 3.8

Contemporary English inn signs

The English inn sign of the past often formed a medium for artistic expression which contributed to the local sense of place. This tradition has been kept alive over the years and even today inn and pub signs can be seen as a key contributor to local sense of place. Present-day inn signs have been described as *an illustrated guide to the history of Britain* (Inn Signs, online), and as *a great open-air portrait gallery* where much can be learned about the past, and often the present, of different local communities (Rotheroe, 1990, p.3).

pictorial signboard of shop, inn and tavern made a very important contribution to the English streetscape of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. It could be seen as decorative art and in most cases formed a visual harmony with the building to which it was attached. These signboards formed the essence of the identity, character and charm of many a shop, inn or tavern. However, the most striking example of the sign's contribution to placeness is the fact that the signs of more prominent shops and inns often served as landmarks and were even used in the naming of streets. The tradition of the English inn sign of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries has been kept alive over the years and even today inn and pub signs can be seen as a key contributor to local sense of place. Present-day inn signs have been described as *an illustrated guide to the history of Britain* (Inn Signs, online). They have also been described as *a great open-air portrait gallery* where much can be learned about the past, and often the present, of different local communities (Rotheroe, 1990, p.3).

❑ The French art poster of the latter half of the nineteenth century gives additional proof of the potential of advertisements and signs as a medium for artistic expression.

❑ The large-scale display of illuminated signs at the beginning of the twentieth century opened up the way for advertising displays in entertainment districts such as Las Vegas and Times Square which became major night-time tourist attractions.

History has also shown the effective management of outdoor information transfer to be an absolute necessity in order to optimise the positive elements while at the same time minimising the impacts thereof. Insufficient control of advertisements and signs can actually be detrimental to the positive elements of advertisements and signs of a high aesthetic quality and may even neutralise such positive contributions. This point is clearly illustrated by the English pictorial signboard of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which made a very positive aesthetic contribution to streetscape and sense of place, but were eventually banned at the end of the eighteenth century owing to insufficient control of the size and number of signs.

CHAPTER 4

PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES FOR THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

Sub-problem 3: What are the nature and extent of user-friendly guidelines for the effective management of outdoor information transfer?

Hypothesis 3: General principles and user-friendly guidelines can be developed for the effective management of outdoor information transfer in order to make the management of outdoor information transfer less subjective and to provide a basis for control and legislative measures. Such principles and guidelines can be used as an objective measurement for the sustainable management of outdoor information transfer.

Some impacts on our senses, such as noise, can be objectively measured. Others, such as aesthetics, are much more subjective and difficult to measure. *The "physiology" of the eye, the "act" of perception, "how" the eyes see, are common to all sighted men; though the "psychology" of the eye, the "art" of perception, "what" is seen is as individual as a fingerprint[28]* (Barr, 1970, p.8). The possibility of conditioned perception and blunted senses through the assault of a technological and information age should also be taken into consideration in this regard, since it may have a major influence on the psychology of the eye. According to Barr (1970, p.9), a *diminution of perception... may be happening in varying degrees to all of us; we tolerate ugliness in the landscape, do not really see it.* In the words of John Miller (online):

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[28] It should be mentioned that human perception does not only include sight but all the other senses as well, although sight might be seen as the most prominent sense.(For a definition of perceptual environment, see par. 1.3.1.)

> *Billboards...commit the truly indefensible act of assaulting our collective public space and our individual psychic space. To maintain sanity, the public anesthetizes itself. We participate in and comply with the defacement of public space and the negation of our right to privacy by our willingness to desensitize ourselves to these excessive assaults upon our sensibilities. We become oblivious to our immediate environment, sort of functionally unconscious. In compensation, billboards get bigger, graffiti becomes more outrageous.*

And in the words of Gossage (1960, online):

> *...billboards have somehow acquired an easement across our minds just as they have gained squatter's rights on our visual air space. They've been there – everywhere – for a long time and we have grown used to them.*

The assault of the technological and information age on the aesthetic environment and the ability to perceive can furthermore be linked to the second law of thermodynamics, which according to Whitcomb's (1990, p.14) interpretation, *states that disorder in a closed system increases with time*. In aesthetic terms this means that aesthetic disorder increases without any conscious management of the aesthetic environment. This also includes *disorder* in terms of blunted senses. Blunted senses may mean that the individual and communities may have lost their appreciation of beauty, or that almost everything may become beautiful as the fancy or whim may take hold of the perceiver. If certain principles and guidelines, based on universal and natural aesthetic principles, can be formulated and applied to the effective management of outdoor information transfer, such management will become more objective, an important contribution can be made in stemming the ever-increasing decay of the aesthetic environment, and blunted senses will be revitalised. Such principles and guidelines will still have to make allowance for a variation in aesthetic values and individual preferences.

Insufficient community participation can be seen as another stumbling block in perceptual resource management. A lack of understanding and communication between designers, environmental managers and the public can be seen as one of the most important reasons for insufficient community participation in perceptual resource management. This can be attributed mainly to the absence of a common language of aesthetic expression enabling a proper debate on aesthetic issues:

... we need [an aesthetic] vocabulary which allows two or more people to discuss and evaluate what they see (or a proposed design) and to discuss its pros and cons in a rational and informed way so that a view on the value of a particular landscape or a proposed course of action which involves aesthetics can be reached which has a broad agreement (Bell, 1996, p.7).

Such a common language of aesthetics will ensure the involvement of the local communities, the outdoor advertising industry and controlling authorities in perceptual resource management and the management of outdoor information transfer. The aim of this chapter is to produce a common aesthetic language for the effective management of outdoor information transfer by formulating aesthetic principles in the form of user-friendly guidelines. The main purpose of such principles and guidelines is to provide an instrument for actualising the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer as identified in Chapter 3.

It should be recognised that no amount of principles and guidelines will lead to the effective management of outdoor information transfer unless such principles and guidelines are grounded in a proper environmental world-view. In order to be effective such a world-view should not be centred in pragmatism and materialism.

4.1   GENERAL PRINCIPLES

4.1.1   RELEVANCE AND APPLICABILITY

These general principles resulted from the conclusions arrived at in the previous chapters. It can be seen as logical point of departure for the effective management of outdoor information transfer, in other words for minimising the impacts of outdoor information transfer and for optimising its benefits. A balanced approach should be followed and a certain amount of leeway should be allowed in applying these general principles. On the one hand, a rigid and fundamentalistic application should be prevented. On the other hand, one should also guard against the attenuation of these principles and its misuse for the mere purpose of *greenwashing* and promoting outdoor advertising at all cost.

When applying these principles a variation in local circumstances, design objectives and aesthetic values and preferences should be taken into consideration.

4.1.2   A BALANCED AND RESPONSIBLE ECONOMIC APPROACH

The management of the impact of consumerism is inseparably linked to economic policy. In a contemporary capitalistic society this impact will always be high. Under the current policy of economic growth commercial advertising forms an important pillar of consumption at all costs. The consumeristic impact of outdoor information transfer cannot be managed effectively and sustainably if a policy of economic growth is not exchanged for a policy of economic development.[29]

Sustainable development should imply order and a conscious limitation of human activities and should be based on more than a mere pragmatic and materialistic approach to the improvement of the quality of human life. Man must not allow himself or his technology to do everything he or it can do. Outdoor advertising should not be aimed at utilising and maximising every available advertising opportunity and implementing whatever is technologically achievable. *Restraint should be a key word in outdoor advertising display.*

Outdoor advertising should not be aimed at maximum sales and economic growth at all costs. It should rather have a responsible and balanced approach. This is a very difficult principle to apply in our current materialistic and capitalistic society. The problems presented by such an approach become very clear when one considers the fact that the heart and soul of outdoor advertising is to promote the selling of products and services. Economic development and the creation of jobs are important, but there are many ways to achieve this. A balanced approach always needs to consider alternatives.

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[29] A distinction between economic growth and economic development can be made, where growth is seen as quantitative expansion and development as qualitative improvement, or a distinction between quantity of output and quality of life. Improving the quality of human life in the first place implies qualitative development instead of quantitative growth (Meadows *et al.*, 1992, pp.xvi,xix).

Another important principle to be taken into consideration is that a balance should be found between the right to freedom of commercial speech and the right to live in a psychologically healthy and aesthetic pleasant environment. Freedom of commercial speech should never be treated as an unlimited right. No human right can be unlimited, since individual rights affect other community members and communities affect each other. This argument can be seen as a very basic assumption on which the effective management of outdoor information transfer should be based. The right of each community to aesthetic self-determination must be recognised – the right to define and attain aesthetic values in order to establish and enhance community character and identity. The *Treasury Principle*, which refers to the persuasion of controlling authorities by the financial benefits offered up-front by an outdoor advertising contractor in exchange for billboard or advertising concessions, which might not be to the benefit of local communities, should be tempered and neutralised as far as possible. A balanced and responsible approach should be followed by local authorities, which should not try to obtain an income from outdoor advertising at every opportunity and at all costs. They should remember that they serve as keepers of the aesthetic environment, which belongs to the community. The aesthetic self-determination of communities implies certain limitations to the right of creative self-expression by the design disciplines and the advertiser or advertising contractor.

In the provision and management of outdoor advertisements and signs, and in using outdoor information transfer as a form of architectural expression, the designer should not concentrate solely on expressing economic forces, consumerism and the creation of wealth as the only design philosophy available. Other values such as environmental awareness and cultural identity should also be reflected. The expression of economic forces, consumerism, the freedom of commercial speech and the creation of wealth through the use of signs and advertisements must be handled carefully in both vernacular design and *supplementary* grand tradition of design in order not to dominate and exclude other important values and aspirations. Other values can only develop and find expression in a climate of effective management of visual resources, which includes the management of outdoor information transfer, together with sufficient community involvement and education. It is further imperative that freedom of individual choice in materials and design elements, together with a culture of creating novelties, should also be tempered with responsibility through effective management. Effective management should take place within a framework of certain basic principles such as placeness, unity with variety and the enhancement of local culture and identity. For the sake of

conserving and enhancing tourism resources certain elements inherent to the character and identity of a country or geographical entity should be used as point of departure and reference system for vernacular design and the effective management of outdoor information transfer and visual resources.

The above statement is not an argument against the concepts of architects such as Robert Venturi and Nouvel, who use outdoor advertising as an inspiration and a way to generate income. These concepts have merit in that they present advertisements and signs in a more integrated, harmonious and artistic manner, in contrast to the normal proliferation and utter visual chaos of insufficiently managed billboards and signs. However, such concepts should be applied in relevant locations such as entertainment districts and certain commercial districts, basic management principles should always be taken into consideration and these concepts should still relate and contribute to local character and placeness.

The normal approach to outdoor information transfer aimed at increasing consumption at all costs, through the promotion of products and services, should change to an approach that is more informative and educational in nature. Signs aimed at directing and locating should enjoy a higher priority, while educational messages should also include messages on sustainable living. It is of the greatest importance that outdoor information transfer should give a higher priority to providing a service to the road user or pedestrian by directing, guiding, warning or informing. All effort should be made to break free from the shackles of profit and the creation of monetary wealth as the dominant motive in outdoor information transfer. More effective integration should also be obtained between outdoor information transfer's primary function of transferring messages and its secondary function, which relates to the aesthetic appearance of sign and sign structure in relation to setting.

Finally, the monetary benefits obtained from outdoor information transfer should not be brushed aside, but should be acknowledged. However, these benefits should not be obtained at the cost of aesthetic decay or other serious impacts. Cost benefit analyses should therefore form an important tool in the effective management of outdoor information transfer and should include both monetary and non-monetary aspects, which should be interpreted in monetary terms.

4.1.3 A NATURAL APPROACH

A strong correlation exists between the aesthetic and biophysical environment. To give an example: Order exists in all ecosystems (interrelationship between elements) and all ecosystems need diversity (biodiversity), while diversity within unity is also a basic principle in the aesthetic environment. In formulating and applying guidelines for the effective management of outdoor information transfer a holistic approach should therefore be followed that will find the necessary correlation and integration between the aesthetic and biophysical environment. Man perceives the landscape in terms of natural aesthetic principles through which an inherent environmental order is experienced and interpreted. Guidelines for the effective management of outdoor information transfer should therefore be based on such natural and universal aesthetic principles.

As part of the aesthetic environment outdoor advertising should harmonise with nature and culture rather than clash with it. Outdoor information transfer should respect the character and integrity of both the biophysical and the cultural environments. This principle implies an enhancement of sense of place by outdoor information transfer.

As part of the principle of natural harmony certain high-impacting sign types such as free-standing billboards should not be allowed in natural and rural landscapes. This principle should not be negotiable. All advance signs and directional signs should form part of a tourism sign and road traffic sign system. However, all enterprises and institutions in the countryside should be allowed to be identified by means of signs on relevant buildings or at entrance gates. These signs should be of a limited size. Room should also be left for advertisements as a form of art as discussed under 4.2.15.

As a general principle the countryside should, as far as possible, be kept free of billboards and other visually disturbing advertisements and signs. Control measures in the countryside should be applied rather strictly. Advertisements and signs could be allowed more freely in urban areas due to the concentration of economic activities in such areas. Urban areas should be classified on the basis of aesthetic sensitivity and advertisements and signs should be displayed in accordance with such a classification. Advertisements and signs should be limited and strictly controlled in historical areas and in communities with a strong sense of place.

Outdoor advertisements and signs should not be aimed solely at the motor car to the exclusion of the pedestrian. Advertisements and signs should rather be reoriented towards the pedestrian and more natural ways of locomotion (See Appendix 1.)

4.1.4   A HOLISTIC APPROACH

Since landscapes are generated holistically by a myriad of influences and forces, no single advertisement or advertising structure can ever be perceived in isolation, but should always be seen within the context of a setting.

The management of outdoor information transfer should not be aimed only at areas of outstanding aesthetic value to be enjoyed by the privileged, but should seek to maintain, restore and enhance the diversity and distinctiveness of landscape and townscape character that can be enjoyed by and are accessible to all members of society. Management should therefore include all landscapes and all urban areas.

The principles and guidelines provided in this chapter should not be applied in isolation and should not be taken out of context. They should rather be applied holistically, and should recognise the relationship and balance between various principles and guidelines.

4.1.5   HUMAN SCALE

Since the perceptual environment is essentially anthropocentric and depends on man as the perceiver, aesthetic environments, and especially townscapes, should be characterised by their human scale. In the words of Thomas Sharp (1968, p.109):

> *[The] qualities and attributes of townscape and town character ... can be properly appreciated only in slow movement about a town and through unimpeded views of the different parts of it... So the townscape pleasures of the street can only be got in any true and full measure by walking there.*

Outdoor advertisements and signs may be an important factor in this regard. As society becomes more and more dependent on the motor-car, outdoor advertisements and signs become bigger, taller

and more prominent in order to vie for the attention of the motorist while contributing to the dehumanisation of the environment. It is therefore no surprise that the energies of controlling authorities are focused mainly on billboards along freeways and other important roads and arteries. This tendency is reflected by WISDOT's (1994) definition of outdoor advertising as signs that *display "non-traffic related information"*. (Emphasis added.) Although the perception of the landscape is a kinetic experience, this principle is overemphasised by the motor-car, which leads to advertisements constantly increasing in size. It is essential that outdoor advertisements be provided at a human scale wherever possible.

Through eye-level placement smaller billboards and advertisements in the urban environment might in many cases be as effective as larger advertisements. Fortunately, street furniture, including bus shelters, information kiosks and news stands, is currently the fastest growing segment of the outdoor advertising market, accounting for some 20% of outdoor advertisements in Europe and 5% in the United States (Outdoor Graphics, 2000, Autumn (2)). This trend should be encouraged wherever possible. Unfortunately, many street furniture advertisements are still aimed at passing motorists instead of at pedestrians. As a general rule above-awning signs should be limited in number since such signs are generally larger than those at or below awning level and could therefore dehumanise the city environment.

Advertisements, signs and advertising furniture should play an important role in humanising streetscapes. Although there is a place for the visually pleasant outdoor advertisement in the landscape of the motorist, the emphasis of outdoor advertising should be taken away from the motorist and reoriented towards the pedestrian and slower-moving modes of transport in the interest of the aesthetic environment. This point has relevance to both the impact and benefits of outdoor information transfer. (See Appendix 1.)

4.1.6   MINIMISATION (See also 4.2.2.5 Simplicity)

The principle of minimisation implies, in the first instance, to the minimisation of the inherent impacts and characteristics of outdoor information transfer.

The management of outdoor information transfer should be aimed at counteracting the inherent impact of outdoor advertisements and signs.

4.1.6.1 Competition or snowball principle

Advertisements and signs tend to compete for the attention of the viewer. New additions to the scene tend to be bigger, higher, closer to the street and displaying brighter colours than existing advertisements. This may cause a snowball effect which could very easily get out of hand.

As a general principle signs and advertisements should not be larger, higher, brighter in colour or more numerous than is reasonably necessary to convey basic messages. This is especially true of signs indicating enterprises or facilities.

4.1.6.2 Encroachment principle

Advertisements and signs tend to advance towards the observer by either encroaching onto or even into the roadway or pedestrian route, or by offering information in advance of the actual site where the product or service is provided.

As a general principle advertisements and signs should not be allowed within the road reserve. Signs needed in advance of an enterprise or facility should be concentrated at outdoor information nodes (see Appendix 1), or should form part of an official roads traffic sign system.

4.1.6.3 Attachment or domination principle

Advertisements and signs display the tendency to attach themselves to existing settings or designs and to force themselves upon the visual scene in a very obtrusive and audacious manner. They often strive to dominate the visual scene by taking advantage of prominent elements in a visual setting, such as a bend in the road or other visual focal points, and in the process may destroy both prominent elements and setting.

Advertisements and signs that are attached to prominent elements in the visual scene should be designed with the utmost care in order to harmonise with the environment and to prevent traffic safety hazards.

Commercial advertising also displays a tendency to attach itself to more worthy causes such as fund-raising for charities and community services in the form of sponsorships or advertisements, or may be attached to signs providing information to road users and pedestrians. Sponsored signs also bear the names of small and medium enterprises, together with the names of their sponsors. Corporate colours are often used by the sponsor to dominate such signs, thereby making sponsored messages irrelevant. The sponsor's logo and commercial message should not cover more than a quarter to a third of the sign, depending on the design, while corporate colours should not dominate. The commercial message should be subtly integrated into the rest of the sign.

Advertisements also tend to proliferate at enterprises trading in more than one product or brand name. There should be a limit to the number of products and brand names displayed by such enterprises, unless these can be incorporated into a unified design that harmonises with and contributes to the appearance of the shop front and building.

4.1.6.4 Imperialistic or ubiquity principle

Like all other advertising media, outdoor advertising wants to be ubiquitous and therefore tries to conquer new territories by entering or filling new spaces, or by making use of new technologies and advertising methods. Referring to place-based advertising, McAllister (1996, p.85) makes the following statement:

> *Advertising is ... geographically imperialistic, looking for new territories it has not yet conquered. When it finds such a territory, it fills it with ads – at least until this new place ... has so many ads that it becomes cluttered and is no longer effective as an ad medium.*

Certain areas, such as residential areas, should be kept free of advertisements, especially non-locality-bound advertisements, as far as possible.

4.1.6.5 Transition principle

Advertisements and signs display a tendency to change rapidly and constantly since the display periods of individual advertisement tend to be relatively short and can therefore not be seen as permanent visual elements. This feeling of impermanence is worsened by the fact that most outdoor advertisements are aimed at people in motion with limited time at their disposal to take in information. According to an article in PMR by Davidson and Ogston (1995, p.60), the average consumer has only three seconds to assimilate an outdoor message.

This tendency can be counteracted by making use of advertising structures with a permanent appearance, by incorporating advertisements into buildings that make an important contribution to the visual scene, and by focusing on the pedestrian and outdoor information nodes. (See Appendix 1.)

See also 4.2.6 - Visual Continuity and Permanence.

4.1.6.6 Disorder principle

Outdoor information transfer reveals a natural tendency to create visual disorder. It can therefore be stated that where outdoor information transfer is managed insufficiently, visual disorder and deterioration will increase with time.

The only solution to the disorder principle is sufficient and effective management, control and maintenance of outdoor advertisements and signs.

4.2   AESTHETIC PRINCIPLES AND GUIDELINES

4.2.1   RELEVANCE AND APPLICATION

The aesthetic principles and guidelines provided in this chapter should not be seen as hard and fast rules to be applied at all costs. Room should be left for variation in aesthetic values, design objectives

and local circumstances and preferences. These aesthetic principles are not applicable under all circumstances and most of them can be interpreted, experienced and applied in more than one way. Figure 4.4 may be used as an example to illustrate this point. The principles and technique illustrated by this figure refer more specifically to traditional and certain historical building facades and might not always be applicable to other facade types. In the case of Menlyn Park (Figure 3.12) some of the aesthetic guidelines presented in this chapter were ignored in order to enhance the architectural style of the shopping complex. Advertising panels and the name of the centre are breaking the roofline which should normally not be seen as good practice according to Figure 4.6. Some of the sign panels are also leaning forward instead of forming part of the flat plane of the wall. (See Figure 4.1.) As the words *principles* and *guidelines* indicate, this chapter only provides a framework and point of departure. The application of these guidelines still requires initiative, creativity and design skill from the design professions involved in the management of outdoor information transfer. All of these guidelines and the application thereof should be tested against the relevance of each situation. Existing perceptual resources should be analysed while architectural style, streetscape character, sense of place and design objectives should be taken into consideration with definite design proposals and an outdoor information plan, where applicable, as the end result. Strategic environmental assessment (SEA) can be seen as an important tool in this regard (See appendix 2).

However, if the guidelines and the visual principles in this chapter are ignored, it should be on specific merits in accordance with local circumstances, while there should be a specific design purpose for such a step in order to make a positive contribution to the perceptual environment. Aesthetic principles and guidelines should not be ignored solely to promote the sale of goods and services at all costs while destroying perceptual resources in the process. Advertisements and signs should never be seen in isolation, but should be used as a design element wherever possible. Although room should be left for a certain degree of aesthetic and artistic subjectivity, such subjectivity should always be contained within a basic aesthetic framework based on natural aesthetic principles - in other words, subjectivity within objectivity. The concept of subjectivity should not be violated or misused just in order to create a novelty. Such a basic framework is indispensable as *a common language of aesthetic expression* to revitalise and stimulate communities' blunted senses caused by a degraded environment, and to provide an instrument for participation.

The aesthetic principles and guidelines in this chapter should also not be seen as the beginning and end or a completed set of aesthetic guidelines on outdoor information transfer, but only as certain elements of aesthetic design, which can still be developed and added to.

The following aesthetic principles should be interpreted against the above background and should be seen as guidelines only.

4.2.2   UNITY AND BALANCE IN COMPOSITION

Balance, unity and order in the environment of outdoor advertisements and signs can be obtained in the following manner:

4.2.2.1 Datum

A datum is a basic element, such as a point, line, plane or volume, used as a reference for other component elements in design (Bell, 1996, p. 167). By placing diverse advertisements and signs on buildings in the same street in a straight line and at the same height a strong sense of order can be achieved amongst a clutter and confusion of signs. This will also make signs easier to read. Advertisements with diverse characteristics can also be ordered by affixing such advertisements onto a plane or advertising panel. Such a panel then serves as a background against which various advertisements are arranged (Bell, 1996, p. 168). Generally speaking an advertisement against a wall makes a much better impression than a free-standing advertisement, especially if the advertising contents harmonise with the character of the building and setting and two or more advertisements are involved. In this manner advertisements can be integrated into the environment by becoming a harmonious part of a building. Harmony between building and sign becomes an even stronger possibility where painted murals are used. (See Figure 4.1.)

4.2.2.2 Proportion and balance

According to this principle, advertisements and signs should have the correct proportion in relation to important elements in building and shopping centre design. The scale of advertising signs should also

Photo date: April 1999

Photo date: April 1999

Photo date: 1998

A datum is a basic element, such as a point, line, plane or volume, used as a reference for other component elements in design. Advertisements with diverse characteristics can be ordered by affixing such advertisements onto a plane or advertising panel. Such a panel then serves as a background against which various advertisements are arranged. This is clearly illustrated by signs fixed onto a building wall at Sammy Marks Square in Pretoria (bottom).

The organising effect of a plane is even more effective in the case of murals as illustrated by examples from the German town of Bingen (top), where intricate scenes are presented as a unity. Harmony in colour also contributes to unity. These relevant scenes furthermore contribute to the character of a jeweller's shop and a hotel as well as to local sense of place.

Figure 4.1

Using a plane to obtain unity

UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Standard Bank

Figure 4.2
Proportion and balance

The Standard Bank sign in Piketberg, Western Cape (top left), is not aligned with the architectural design lines. A better balance could have been obtained if the sign had been aligned midway between the window head and sill. Still this projecting sign does not fit well onto the facade, since the symmetrical design lines do not allow for a projecting sign of this size on one side of the window. A smaller projecting sign lower down the building would have been more appropriate. The bottom sign on the same building (top right) shows perfect balance and proportion.

It is often very difficult to fit internally illuminated projecting signs aimed at the motorist onto existing facades. The projecting sign on a furnishers store in Hermanus, Western Cape (centre), contrasts sharply with, and dominates the flat elongated panel due to its projecting nature. It is much easier to fit smaller signs which are not internally illuminated and are aimed at the pedestrian onto existing facades. In contrast to signs aimed at the motorist these can make an important contribution to building and streetscape character, as shown by signs in the German town of Oberwesel (bottom).

be compatible with nearby buildings, street widths and other existing signs, while the scale of free-standing signs should be compatible with the spaces in which they are placed. However, it should be clearly stated that when existing signs do not comply with basic design principles, this fact should not be used as an excuse for new signs to also violate these basic design rules. Before new signs are added, it would be better to take a new look at the signs of a whole street facade or group of buildings in a holistic manner. In attaching signs to buildings care should be taken that the original architectural character, as set by the lines of awnings, window and door openings, parapet lines and setbacks remain dominant. Signs should complement the architectural design of the building to which it will be added, as well as the designs of adjacent buildings, instead of overpowering them.

Signs attached to buildings should be aligned with and relate to the architectural design lines of the building facade, or in the absence of design detail and decoration, they should relate to the design lines of adjacent buildings. By extending the main design lines of a building, potential sign panels might be identified which, if used correctly, will reflect the necessary proportion and balance. (See Figure 4.4.)

Buildings might be given a horizontal or vertical appearance simply by the way in which the sign panels are arranged across or down a building. In order to achieve this, the proportion of signs to building elements might get out of hand and might dominate the building facade. Signs might become overpowering at the expense of the original architectural character. A far better option would be to take a more holistic approach by using signs as the basis for creating patterns and themes for the streetscape as a whole. This will require an outdoor information plan or sign plan based on a strategic environmental assessment. (See Appendix 2.) However, it might sometimes be desirable to change the architectural character of a building or streetscape, and in such cases advertisements and signs may contribute to a new image for the building or streetscape.

4.2.2.3 Prominent lines

As a general rule advertisements and signs should not break roof and skylines or other prominent lines in the landscape or building design. (See Figures 4.5 & 4.6.) They should not obstruct or affect
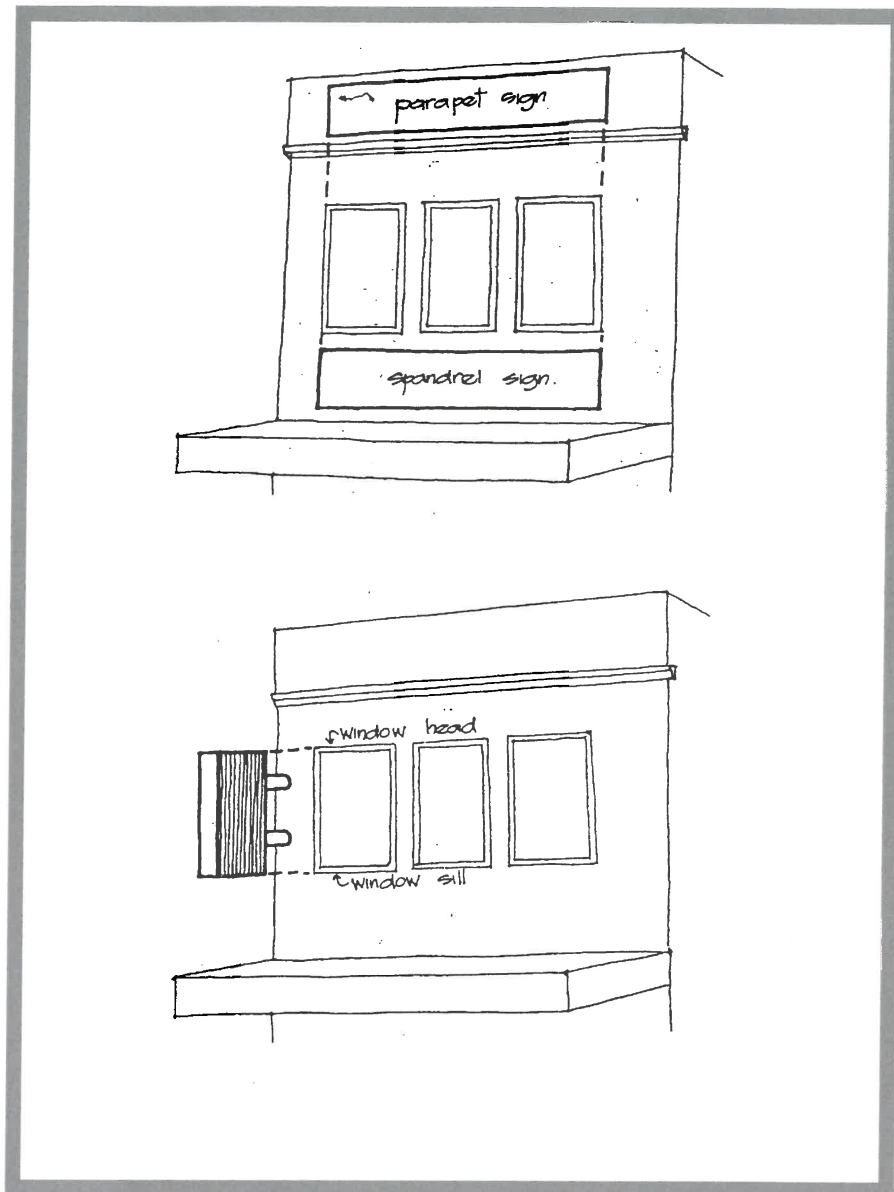
Signs on or attached to buildings should be aligned with and relate to the architectural design lines on the building facade in order to obtain the necessary proportion and balance. The following serve as an example:

❑ Flat panel signs are to be aligned with the sides of windows or doors and placed on spandrels or parapets.

❑ Projecting signs are to be aligned with window heads and sills, or be centred midway between the head and the sill.

Figure 4.3

Proportion and balance
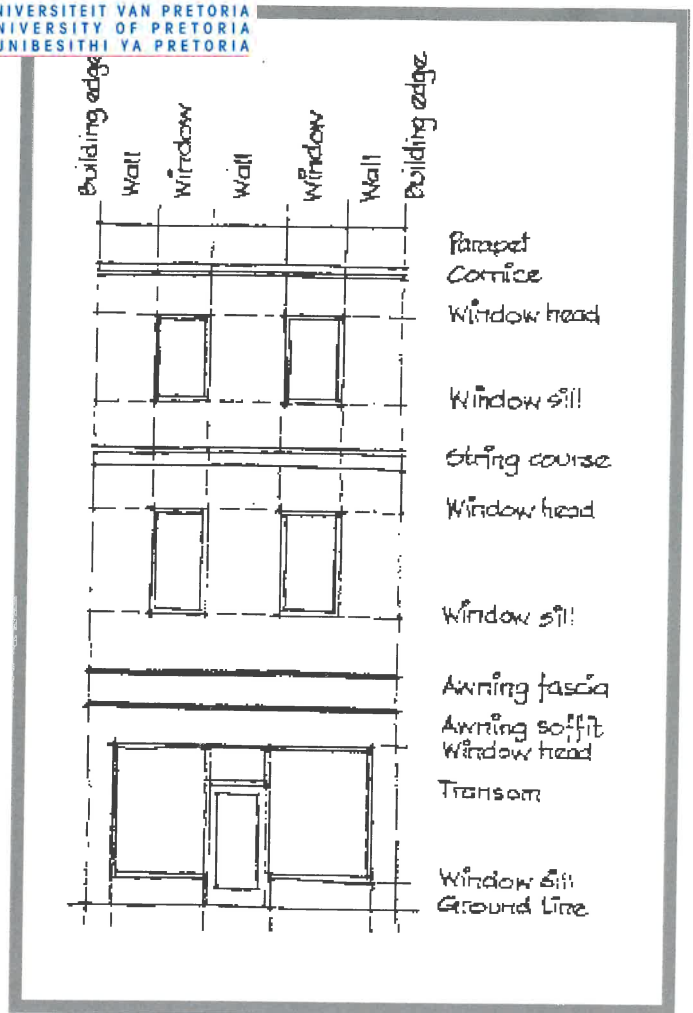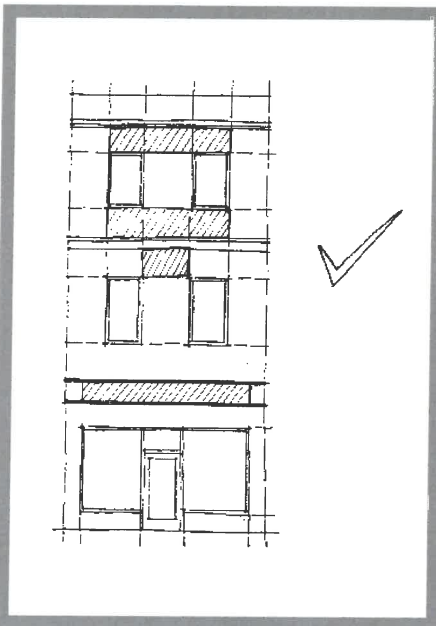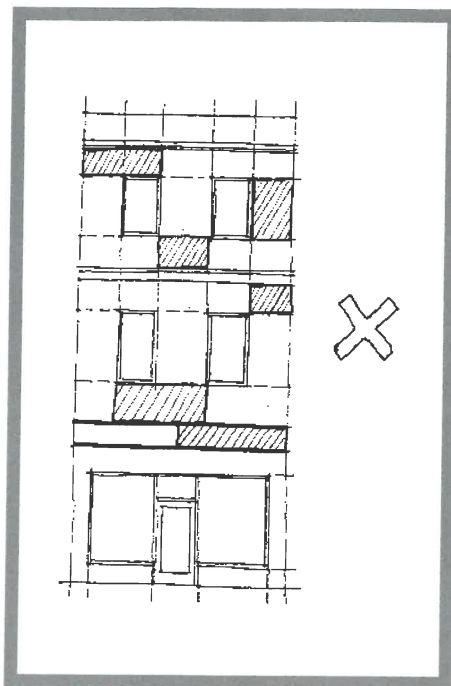
Figure 4.4

Proportion and balance

Identification of potential
sign panels

The following simple technique can be applied to identify potential sign panels on a building. While the technique relates specifically to traditional building facades, the principles can also be applied to other building forms.

To identify sign opportunities the facade is subdivided using the main design lines to form a series of panels. Many traditional building designs can be easily divided into a grid based on the alignments of the parapet, cornice, veranda, window and door.

To identify possible panels for sign display the rectangles of the grid might be used separately or be joined together to form horizontal or vertical panels.

After identification of potential sign panels, signs cannot be attached to the building in an indiscriminate manner. The principle of proportion and balance should be taken into consideration (left top & bottom). Needless to say there is also a limit to the number of panels that can be used for signs. It is also not necessary to use the full size of a panel. A less overpowering effect is often achieved when a sign does not actually touch prominent design lines such as window heads and sills, but are smaller than the identified panel. The number of signs allowed will depend on the character of the building and streetscape and the function of the area.

Source: OAASA (undated)
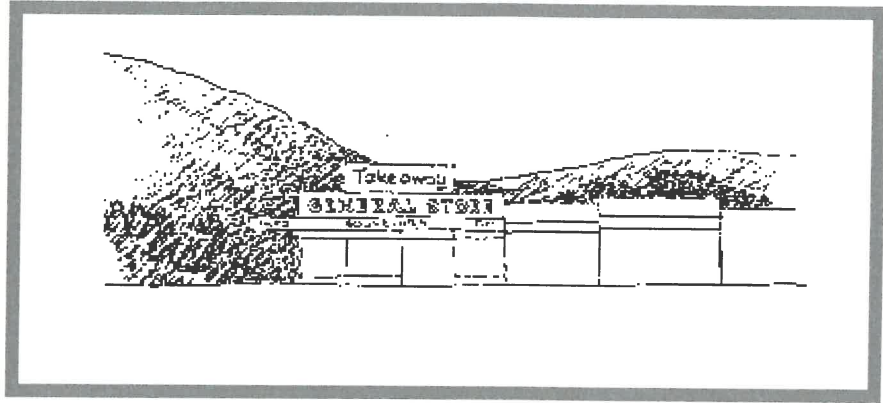
Photo data: December 1999

Photo date: August 2000

Advertisements and signs should not break prominent lines in the landscape, of which the skyline is the most important. This principle is clearly illustrated by the three examples on this page. The hotel sign advertises a hotel near White River in Mapumalanga and was placed on a ridge in order to be visible from a nearby highway. This sign has a major impact on the environment due to its size and the fact that it breaks the skyline. It is totally unnecessary and out of place. A brown tourism sign along the highway and a sign at the hotel's entrance gate would have been sufficient.

Figure 4.5

Prominent lines in the landscape

Figure 4.6

Breaking rooflines and prominent design lines
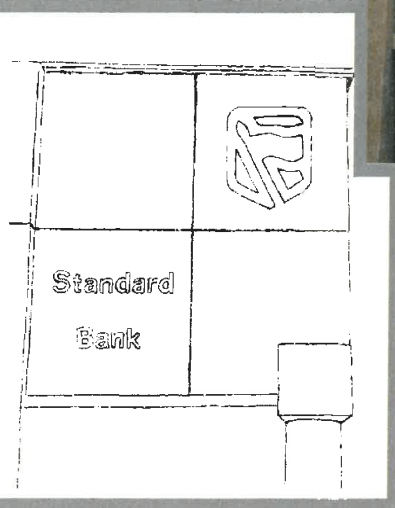
Advertisements and signs should not break any rooflines or other prominent design lines in a building and it should never obstruct or affect any architectural feature.

The Standard Bank sign (top right) breaks prominent grid lines in the building design. Such grids should rather be used as an element to frame sign elements and to integrate it into the building design (top left).

The roof sign (centre) breaks the roofline of the shop and affects the chimneys, which constitute an important architectural element. It should have been smaller and fitted lower down the roof. The sign on the stationary vehicle in front of the store (bottom, left) creates a much better impression.

The suspended signs (bottom right) obstruct and affect important architectural features (windows and doors). Smaller signs of the same colour and design, indicating only the name of the enterprise should have been fitted onto the white stoep wall.

oto date: 1997

Photo date: 1997
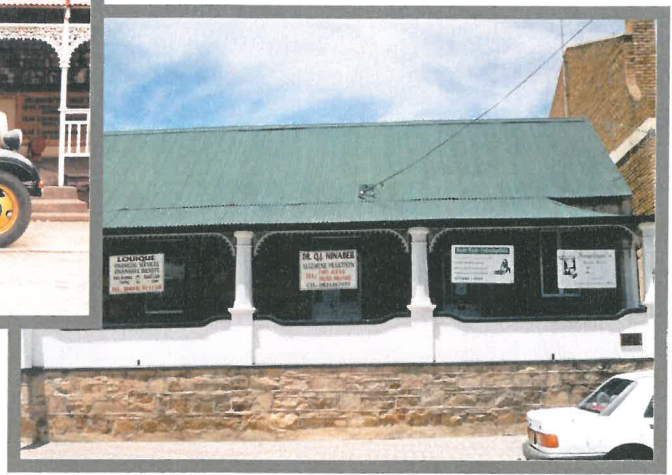
Photo date: December 1997

any architectural features. Large signs on top of buildings should be an extension of the building form and skyline. (See Figure 4.7.)

A harmonious effect is obtained when advertisements and signs reflect prominent lines and forms in the building design.

As shown in 4.2.2.2, the prominent design lines of building facades play an important role in obtaining the necessary balance when attaching signs to buildings.

Prominent building lines could also be used to soften the impact of projecting signs, which by their very nature seem to be more obtrusive than most other signs attached to buildings. This result can be obtained by placing elongated projecting signs between or parallel to vertical design lines on a building facade. (See Figure 4.7.)

4.2.2.4 Similarity

Unity, balance and order may be obtained by applying the principle of creating unity through similarity.

> *The more elements display similarity of shape, size, colour, texture and all the other variables the more we tend to connect them visually. Compatibility of shape, colour and texture are often key aspects creating unity in a design, or a balance in composition. ... Shape is a particular dominant variable where the colour or texture, for example, can vary while the repeated form holds a design together. ... There may be a hierarchy of shapes, with a strong geometric shape repeated which has lesser, more varied shapes within it* (Bell, 1996, p. 128-9).

In applying this principle, signs, and especially larger ones, should have the same shape as the basic geometric shape used in a building design or streetscape. (See Figure 4.8.) The contents of individual advertisements, however, may consist of lesser more varied shapes.

In the same manner individual signs on a shopping complex could be unified by being fixed onto a plane reflecting the main geometrical shape of the complex, while the sign panels and contents of the

Source: OAASA

Photo date. 1997
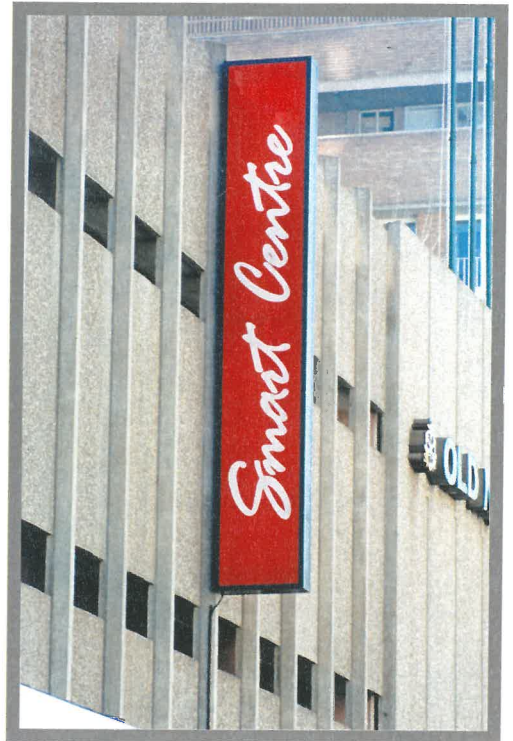
As a general rule advertisements and signs should not break rooflines or other prominent lines in the building design. Large signs on top of buildings should therefore form an extension of the building form and skyline, thereby reflecting the prominent design lines of the building (left).

The principle of reflecting prominent design lines is classically illustrated by the projecting sign in the photograph at the right. Normally projecting signs are very obtrusive due to their projecting nature. However, in this case unity between building and sign is obtained by means of the repetitive vertical building lines. The rhythmic effect of these lines focuses the attention on the sign, which remains unobtrusive.

Figure 4.7

Reflecting prominent design lines and forms
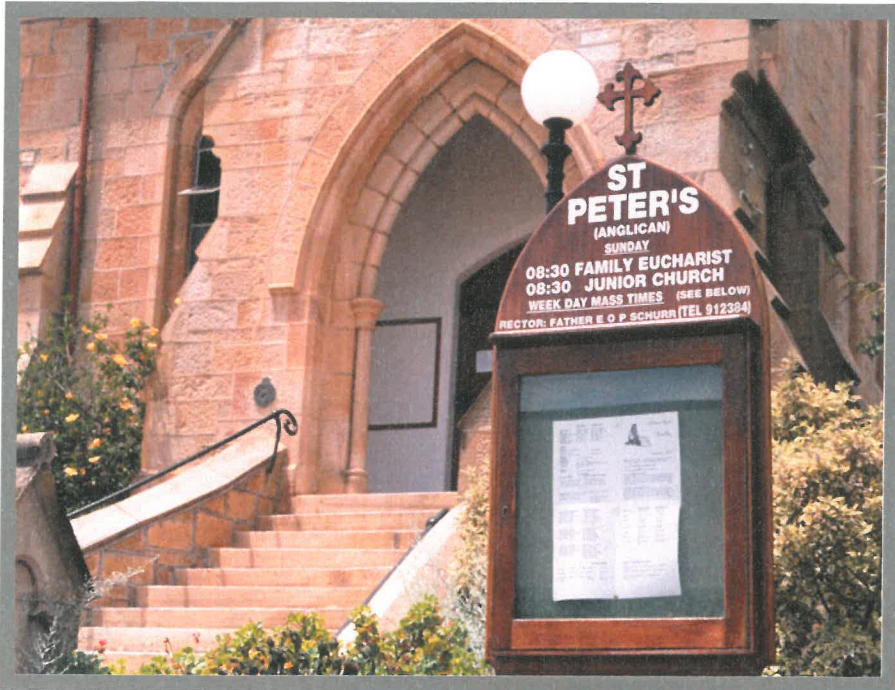
Photo dates: December 1997

The sign in front of St Peter's in Mossel Bay, Western Cape (top) shows a high degree of unity and balance in composition. It reflects the same form and lines used in the building design. The principle of similarity also comes into play. Sign and building show harmony in colour and in the use of natural materials (wood and stone).

In the case of another church in Mossel Bay (bottom) there is no unity, balance and order between sign and building. There is a strong contrast in colour, form, material and style. Although this sign is aimed at the youth, a *dynamic* sign could still have been provided that would have formed a unity with the historical building. The sponsor's logo is also *commercialising* the church by impacting on its status and image. The irony is that this influence can, apart from minimising the sponsor's logo, be prevented only through harmonising sign with landscape and building, and by contributing to placeness and sense of place. The sign in front of St Peter's contributes to a sense of peace and harmony, while the sponsor's sign creates a feeling of contrast and turmoil.

**Figure 4.8
Prominent lines and
similarity**

individual advertisements consist of lesser, more varied shapes. (See Figure 4.1.) Signs may also take on the same shape as certain elements of a building by being draped around such elements. (See Figure 4.21.)

In some cases it might be necessary to harmonise the colours of advertisements and signs with the surrounding environment. The practice of using a whole building as an advertisement by painting it a bright contrasting colour should be strictly controlled. (See Figure 4.9.) Such a building should preferably harmonise with the rest of the streetscape. The snowball principle could very easily cause this principle to get out of hand. A colourful building might serve as a focal point in drab and dreary environments. However, such a building should be painted tastefully and should integrate and harmonise with the general building style and the rest of the streetscape. If bright colours are used on a dilapidated building, or in a dilapidated area with a proliferation of signs and advertisements, the building and streetscape might even look more dilapidated. By relating to local tradition and culture colourful buildings might contribute to placeness. A good example is the bright colours used in the traditional architecture of the Ndebele people of South Africa.

It must be emphasised that the principle of similarity should be applied wisely so as to avoid monotony and dullness.

Similarity in design style also plays an important role. With regard to advertising contents a formal and more realistic art design will do much better in a historical area than a modern abstract design.

Similarity and harmony with regard to local character or sense of place should not be overlooked. (See 4.2.11.)

4.2.2.5 Simplicity

As a general rule the simpler and less *busy* the art design of an advertisement is, the more easily it will fit into the landscape or streetscape. (See Figure 4.22.) More natural, realistic and formal and less abstract designs tend to form a better unity with the environment. This principle cannot be applied indiscriminately and, if required, a special effect might be obtained by using a busy or abstract design.

Photo date: April 2001

Photo date: April 2001

Photo date: April 2001

Figure 4.9
Similarity in colour

In some cases it would be necessary to harmonise the colour of advertisements and signs with the surrounding environment in order to obtain the necessary balance. The practice of using a whole building as an advertisement in itself by painting it in bright contrasting colours, as is clearly illustrated by the striking butchery and general dealer in Great Brak River, Western Cape (top), should be prevented as far as possible. Such a practice can very easily get out of hand as a result of the snowball effect as is shown in the case of Kirkwood, Eastern Cape (second from top).

A coloured building might serve as a focal point in drab and dreary environments. However, such a building should be painted tastefully and should integrate and harmonise with the building design and the rest of the streetscape. If used on a dilapidated building or in a dilapidated area with a proliferation of signs and advertisements the building and streetscape might look even more dilapidated. It is needless to say that this principle should not be applied in historical areas as was done in the historical centre of Cathcart, Eastern Cape (second from bottom) where even the sandstone blocks in the building were painted over.

The practice of painting structures in bright colours is even found in the countryside, as illustrated by the curio stall at the entrance of the Addo Elephant National Park (bottom) where natural materials and colours are required
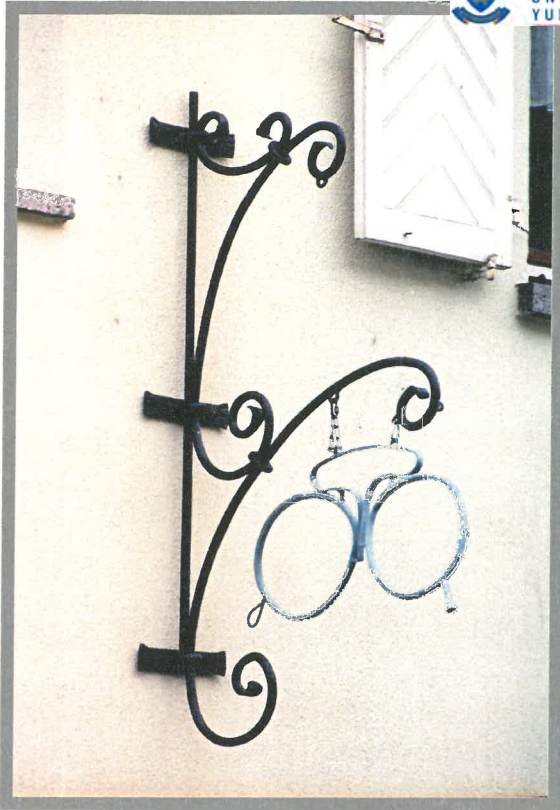
Figure 4.10

Simplicity

Using symbols without words

Date of photos: April 1999

Simplicity can make an important contribution to unity and balance in composition, whether it be simplicity in graphic design or the use of graphics and symbols without words as illustrated by the examples of shop symbols from the German towns of St Goar and Oberwesel. Apart from contributing to local placeness this is often also a very effective way of advertising. The giant teddy bear in front of a toy shop will surely attract many more children and adults than an ordinary sign.

**Figure 4.10
continued**

Simplicity is also reflected through the use of symbols and graphics without words, whether it be a art object in the countryside, a shop or trade symbol of yesteryear, shop wares exhibited on the sidewalk, a billboard design or a painted mural. (See Figure 4.10.) Simplicity becomes even stronger when there is a strong relationship between the symbol and the surrounding environment.

The prominent display of street numbers can make an important contribution to simplicity by reducing the need for advertisements and signs. (Figure 4.11.) A system of conspicuous street numbers should be combined with advertisements in other advertising media, referring to a specific enterprise at a certain street number, and with road maps and other aids.

Simplicity in design and style may contribute to road safety since a simpler message is more readily interpreted.

The method of providing electrical services to illuminated signs and billboards might also influence sign simplicity. The supply of electricity for illumination could very easily create an untidy and complicated appearance.

Simplicity in outdoor information transfer plays an important role in natural and historical environments/areas and in creating a specific atmosphere such as tranquillity and sublimity.

It should be mentioned that in extreme cases an over-emphasis of simplicity might lead to monotony. (See 4.2.14.)

4.2.2.6 Framing

Unity and harmony can be obtained by using certain elements in a building to *frame* an advertisement or sign and to integrate the advertisement or sign into the building and the environment. (Figure 4.12.)

Figure 4.11

Simplicity through street numbers

The prominent display of street numbers can make an important contribution to simplicity by reducing the need for advertisements and signs. A system of conspicuous street numbers should be combined with advertisements in other advertising media, referring to a specific enterprise at a certain street number, and with road maps and other aids.

**Figure 4.12
Framing**

Photo dates: 1997

Unity and harmony can be obtained by using certain elements in a building to frame an advertisement or sign and to integrate the advertisement or sign into the building and surrounding environment. Although integrated, the advertisement or sign is also accentuated. This is clearly illustrated by a restaurant in Boppard, Germany (previous page, centre) where there is no need for a large name sign, but the restaurant is rather advertised by means of a framed mural above the door. At another restaurant in Boppard (previous page, bottom) the whole facade serves as a sign, consisting of various framed elements. The principle of similarity is also applied by using bunches of grapes as a unifying theme.

At a hotel in Mossel Bay, Western Cape (bottom), a frame is used to accentuate and integrate both a vodka advertisement and a door.

At Knysna, Western Cape (top), the top part of a window is used to integrate a Konica emblem into the shop facade.

**Figure 4.12
continued**

4.2.2.7 Interlocking

Design elements interlock with each other when they overlap, intersect or fit into each other like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Through interlocking such elements appear to become part of one another and thus form a more unified pattern.

Due to their irregular and flowing lines, painted murals have a potential for providing unity between sign and building by way of interlocking. (Figure 4.13.)

4.2.2.8 Rhythm

The aesthetic principle of rhythm can be described as follows:

> *Similar elements repeated at related, regular or similar intervals create rhythms, especially when there is also a strong sense of direction involved. ... Since shape is one of the strongest variables, repeating similar-shaped elements is one of the strongest means of producing rhythm* (Bell, 1996, p.141).

By making use of rhythm, unity can be obtained between various signs by using the same form, colour and/or letter type. Thus contrast between signs, which may create a sense of sign proliferation, may be reduced. When exactly the same sign is used repeatedly to create a sense of rhythm, care should be taken that these signs are not cluttered by other contrasting signs which interrupt the sign repetition. In such cases a clean setting or background is needed.

Rhythm may be promoted by harmonising the shape of the signs with the dominant geometrical shape used in the building or design. Thus greater unity can be achieved between signs and building design by fitting signs into the building design. (See also 4.2.2.4.)

> *Many of the details in built design can be more successfully brought into the composition and given a decorative as well as functional part to play using rhythm. All of these aspects contribute strongly to unity by linking all the elements together* (Bell, 1996, p.144).

Photo date: April 1999

Design elements interlock with each other when they overlap or fit together like pieces of a jigsaw puzzle. Through interlocking such elements appear to become part of one another and thus form a more unified pattern.

With regard to outdoor advertisements and signs, painted murals have a potential for providing unity between sign and building by means of interlocking. This is clearly illustrated by a mural on a hotel in Boppard, Germany, where the coach scene, window frame and the rest of the wall interlock with each other. Unity is enhanced even further by means of harmony or *similarity* in colour. The mural supplements the name and character of the hotel and contributes to local sense of place.

Figure 4.13

Interlock

Date of photos: 1997

Figure 4.14
Rhythm

e of photo: 1997

Similar elements repeated at related or regular intervals create rhythm, especially when a strong sense of direction is also involved. Rhythm is an important instrument in obtaining unity in composition. This principle must be applied carefully since it might lead to monotony, sign proliferation and an overkill situation (centre). Banners are well-suited for applying the principle of rhythm in any streetscape (top right). By using banners, even advertisements aimed at the motorists can be kept at a human scale. Monotony may be avoided by using different colours even if the design and the message are the same.

Rhythm can be used to obtain direction and movement of the eye from sign to sign. The individual sign comes alive in this manner and the observer's attention is focused on the individual message or enterprise name on all the signs without the need for individual signs to compete with one another in terms of size, colour, position and height (bottom left).

e of photo: September 1996
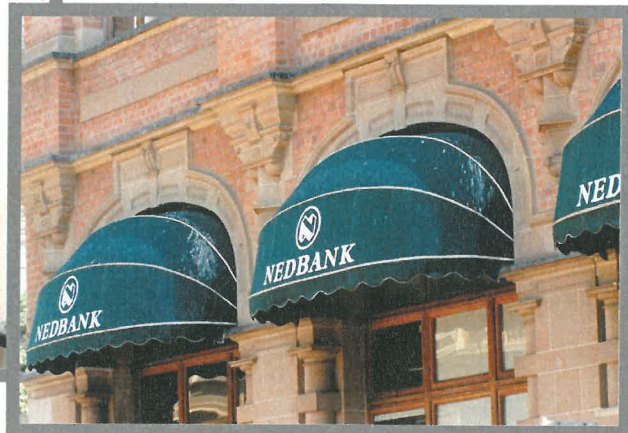
Date of photo: 1997
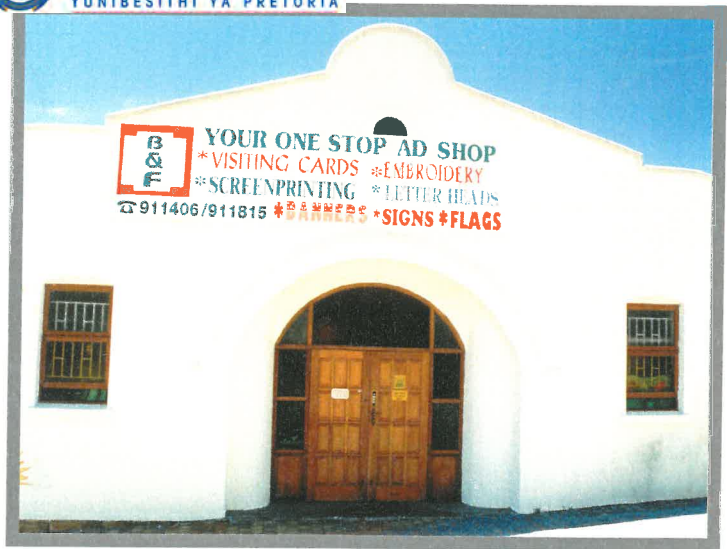
Figure 4.15
Balance and unity in composition

art from not being aligned with the important architectural design lines on the facade, the sign on ad shop in Mossel Bay, Western Cape (top right) is also out of proportion. Too much information rovided on one space. The information should be divided between various panels. However, the itectural design lines do not allow for sufficient panels. Greater simplicity could be achieved by ting the sign to the name and main function of the enterprise. The existing sign also obstructs an ortant architectural feature above the door.

ontrast to the Mossel Bay sign the shop facade in Edinburgh (bottom left) is a good example of t shop signs should look like. Information is divided between various panels created by the itectural design lines, while the principle of similarity is applied by using only two colours. The rmation is furthermore organised by using the straight lines above the windows as a datum. A e amount of information can therefore be presented without creating an overpowering effect.

art studio sign in Hermanus, Western Cape (top left) is limited to the name of the enterprise and aks of simplicity, style, proportion and balance.

e case of the sign in Oberwesel, Germany (bottom right) unity, balance and order are obtained by ing use of similarity in colour. The sense of balance is also strengthened by aligning the sign the main architectural design lines. Notice that the projecting sign is aligned with the main sign.
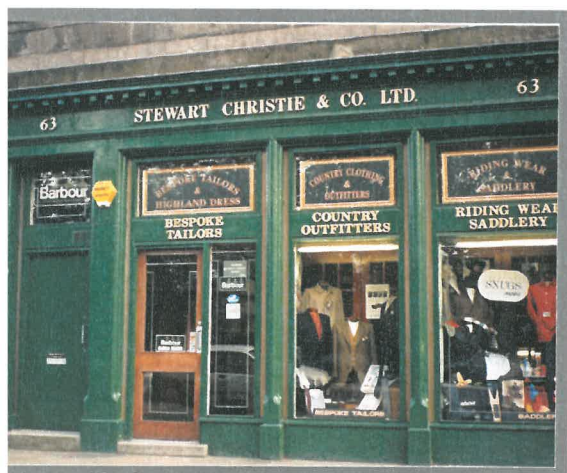
Date of photos: April 2001

Figure 4.16

Impact on the aesthetic environment

The advertisement on the side of the tourism information bureau in Beach Road, Port Elizabeth (top) impacts on aesthetic unity in the following ways:

❑ Proportion: The billboard overshadows the building housing the tourism information bureau.

❑ Prominent lines: The billboard breaks the roofline of the information bureau, while the broken horizontal line of the billboard does not reflect the straight lines used in the building.

❑ Similarity: The colour and abstract design of the billboard form a rather sharp contrast with the building, which has a more formal and historical appearance. It also does not harmonise with the natural stone-wall below the billboard. (The rectangular sign on the facade of the building should reflect the rounded lines of the facade.)

❑ Simplicity: The complicated and busy design, both in terms of text and lines, does not harmonise with the formal and historical character of the building.

❑ Sense of place: The abstract and complicated design, together with the contrasting colours, create a restless atmosphere where a more tranquil atmosphere would have been more appropriate. This is even more true of the oceanarium next door to the information bureau (bottom) which presents even bolder colours.

Figure 4.17

**Megasign against a silo structure
along an urban freeway**

Two silo units on each side are used for *framing* the sign.

The sign reflects the *prominent* vertical *lines* of the silo.
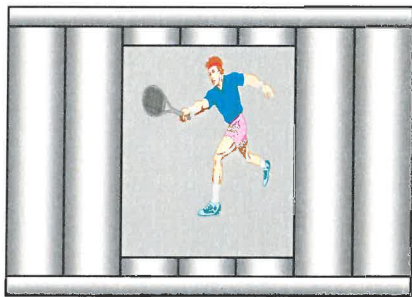
Vertical lines above and below the sign are visible, which means that prominent vertical lines are broken by the sign, resulting in a lack of unity between sign and silo structure.
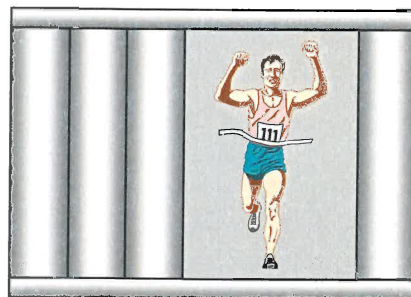
Sign and silo composition has wrong proportions and is out of balance.

Sign and structure form a pleasant visual whole and are used as a *landmark*. Although the sign tends to dominate the silo structure in terms of size, a harmonious integration between sign and structure is obtained by applying the principle of *framing*. Sign dominance can also be counteracted through *simplicity* by using a harmonious design style with subtle colours and a minimum of wording, or none at all. This principle will also benefit traffic safety, which can be enhanced even further by making the sign message interpretable from a distance.

Rhythm can be used to obtain direction and movement of the eye from sign to sign. This will bring individual signs to life and focus the observer's attention on the individual messages of all the signs without the need for individual signs to compete with one another in terms of size, colour and more prominent position and height.

Banners are well-suited for applying the principle of rhythm in any streetscape. By using banners even advertisements aimed at the motorist can be kept on a human scale. Monotony may be avoided by using different colours, even if the same design and message are repeated.

4.2.3 DOMINANCE OF ADVERTISEMENTS AND SIGNS AND HIEARCHY OF VISUAL ELEMENTS

A hierarchy of visual elements refers to those aspects of design that require some parts of the design to be visually more important or dominant. In more complex compositions a clear hierarchy is desirable to establish order in the relationship between the parts and the whole (Bell, 1996, p.163-4).

As a general rule, advertisements and signs should normally be of a lower hierarchy and should not be visually dominant with regard to visual scene or setting, but should rather fit into it. However, there are certain exceptions. In the case of entertainment districts and central business districts (CBDs) of cities and larger towns signs and advertisements may play a prominent or dominant role to a greater or lesser extent since a commercial character will be the essence of placeness. However, in such instances each setting should still have its own individual character. It should not become part of a uniform world culture and global commercialised cityscape. The Pretoria CBD should differ from the Tokyo CBD. Advertisements and signs should not dominate and neutralise elements unique to specific CBDs or entertainment districts. Rather, they should promote placeness by using advertising and street furniture with a unique character, local sounds and sign structures, and by advertising contents reflecting local culture, tradition and history.

When advertisements and signs form part of a building or are attached to a building they should be seen as architectural elements of secondary importance and should not dominate and become elements of primary importance. (See Figure 4.18.) There are also exceptions in this case such as a

huge sky sign on top of a skyscraper serving as a prominent landmark, huge murals on the sides of buildings, or architectural styles which make provision for advertisements to form a dominant part of the design. However, such advertisements dominating buildings should serve a logical aesthetic purpose, be limited in number and should also take cognisance of both the location and the local character and sense of place. Advertisements dominating buildings would be allowed more readily in the central business district or industrial area of a large city than in the business area of a tranquil tourist town. For the same reason, signs on top of buildings would not normally be allowed in local shopping centres unless they are compatible with the scale of development.

As a general rule above-awning signs should be limited in number since such signs are generally larger than those at or below awning level and could therefore be too dominant and could affect the architectural character of a streetscape.

Due to the encroaching character of projecting signs, such signs should either be aimed at the pedestrian or should be limited to enterprises relying on the passing trade of road travellers.

Increasing diversity tends to reduce scale. This principle plays an important role in entertainment districts with both huge signs and a large diversity of advertisements and signs. Such diversity therefore tends to humanise the scale of entertainment districts.

The non-dominance of advertisements and signs is important in terms of visual continuity and permanence. Continuity and permanence are represented by the durable, long-term structures in the landscape. They provide a permanent framework within which change can take place, therefore allowing change to take place without chaos. Advertisements and signs of which the actual contents may change very quickly should therefore not dominate a visual scene or setting since this will destroy any sense of visual continuity and permanence.

In certain streetscapes and settings a functional hierarchy of signs might be necessary. More important functions and enterprises might require more dominant signs in terms of size, height and colour. However, this principle should not be overemphasised. Only a limited number of functions

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Apart from certain exceptions, outdoor advertisements and signs should normally be of a lower hierarchy and should not be visually dominant with regard to visual scene or setting, but should rather fit into it. When advertisements and signs form part of a building or are attached to a building, they should be seen as architectural elements of secondary importance and should not dominate and become elements of primary importance. Ngee Ann City in Singapore is a classical example of the non-dominance of outdoor advertisements and signs. Unlike most other shopping centres, almost no advertisements and signs are visible from the outside, except the centre's name. This is in line with Singapore's clean and green image.

Figure 4.18

Non-dominance of advertisements and signs

should be considered as important. In a shopping centre such functions should normally be seen as the main businesses attracting visitors to the centre, such as the larger chain stores.

4.2.4   FOCAL POINTS

4.2.4.1 Feature and background

Some forms or objects may stand out as features against a more general background, such as a sculpture in a square. By applying this principle to outdoor information transfer, advertising furniture or other advertising features could be used as features against a background or even as a strong focal point to give more interest to streetscapes, shopping centres or open spaces. Although such features are usually relatively strongly contrasted with the background, exaggerated contrast may be a drawback in certain instances. A balance should be maintained between contrast and harmony and the contrasting element should still form part of the whole, especially where advertisements are the contrasting features or form part of contrasting features. In some instances it might not be desirable for a sign or advertisement to stand out too strongly from its surroundings since it may become intrusive, for example a sign in a natural environment or in an urban open space with a natural character. In such cases the intrusive effects could be mitigated by reducing contrasts too a minimum, by using natural materials for instance, in an attempt to attach the sign to its background and even to convert it from feature to background.

Focal points can make a very important contribution to sense of place. They should always contribute to instead of impacting negatively on placeness. However, not every sign can be a focal point since this will defeat the very purpose of focal points and will lead to visual chaos. Other signs on a square or at a shopping centre will have to be more humble. A focal point should benefit more than one enterprise, or an entire shopping centre, if possible. (Figure 4.19.) It should contribute to the character of the whole area. The problem of signs competing for prominence can also be solved by using a combination sign which can be seen as a feature against a background. (See 4.2.16 for more information on combination signs.) However, combination signs do not always contribute to local character and sense of place. Instead of providing a sign for each and every enterprise on a
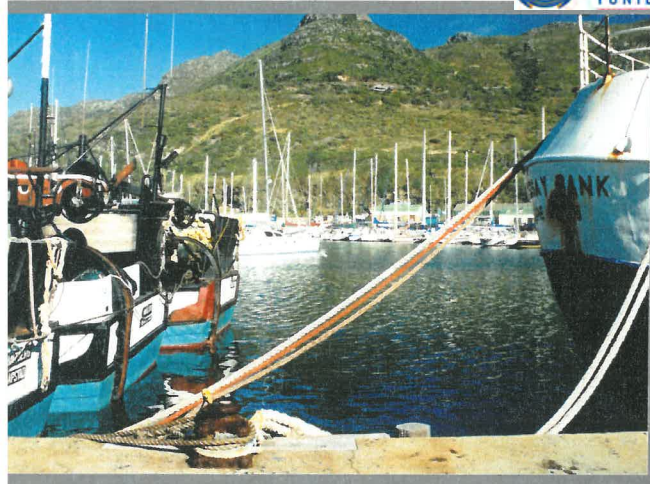
Figure 4.19

Feature and background

Outdoor advertisements may be used as features standing out against a general background. Such focal points can make an important contribution to sense of place and may give interest to streetscapes and shopping centres. Not every sign can be a focal point. Signs serving as focal points will therefore have to benefit more than one enterprise, or even a whole shopping centre, while contributing to the character of the whole area. Mariner's Wharf (centre) at Hout Bay harbour (top) is South Africa's first harbourside emporium. The boat forms a very striking focal point which benefits all the shops in the emporium. It is a much more effective advertising medium than a standardised combination sign indicating the various shops. It might have been even more effective if it was placed a bit further from the background.

The photograph at the bottom shows an Impala aircraft at the Aviations Pub in a shopping centre next to Port Elizabeth airport. This plane can be seen as a feature against the sky as background. It benefits not only the pub but the whole of the shopping centre, which is associated with the airport. The hangar-like structure of the pub enhances local placeness even further.

Date of photos: September 2000

combination sign, a single and unique sign feature or emblem, which reflects and enhances the character of the shopping centre, might be much more effective in attracting visitors.

4.2.4.2 Vistas

A vista can be defined as a confined or framed view and consists of a viewing station, intermediate ground and a terminal or focal point.

An advertisement, whether a flat plane, a sculpture or a piece of advertising furniture, could be used as the focal point of a vista. The advertising structure and contents should harmonise with the viewing station and intermediate ground of the vista. Since great vistas have a sense of permanence, such advertisements should be displayed for longer periods and advertising contents should not dominate the advertising structure or furniture.

An advertisement that forms the focal point of a vista should not be too complicated in terms of both design and text. Basic shapes should be visible from the viewing station. Text or copy should be limited to a minimum, while blending with the advertisement design instead of contrasting with and dominating it. In cases where a billboard or another advertisement forms a focal point along the axis of a road, text should be limited to one or two words and should be large enough, while complicated and detailed designs should be avoided at all costs. In such cases the advertising structure is normally placed at the bend of a road to obtain a vista effect with the car window providing the necessary frame. The advertising contents and message should be visible from quite a distance in order to prevent the driver from having to focus on advertising detail and lengthy or small text when he has to concentrate on the task of driving while approaching and entering the bend.

4.2.5   LANDMARKS

Advertisements on aesthetically pleasing structures, such as skyscrapers, may be used as prominent and striking landmarks. Such advertisements should harmonise with and complement the host structure, while the advertising contents should not dominate ether the scene or the structure. (See Figure 4.7 top & Figure 4.17.) Advertisements might even brighten up less appealing or mediocre

structures. However, the bottom line is that structure and advertisement should form a visually pleasant whole that might serve as a prominent and striking landmark. In order to provide a sense of permanence to an advertising landmark, advertising contents should be of a more permanent nature. Such advertisements should also not form part of structures that have great landmark value on their own and which will be devalued by any advertisement. (See Figure 4.20.)

In exceptional cases free-standing billboards might also serve as landmarks. However, such billboards will need custom-designed structures of a very high aesthetic quality. Community towers, consisting of an illuminated billboard, a television screen and electronic advertising, may serve as landmarks and community gathering points for lower-income communities. Such community towers should not consist of standardised structures, but should reflect the character of individual communities and should enhance the identity of those communities. Local character can be further enhanced by means of landscaping. As a rule, welcome signs to cities, towns and villages should not be used as advertising structures. Such signs normally make an important contribution in creating the first image of a city, town or village in the mind of the visitor. If advertisements are incorporated, these usually overshadow welcome signs and dominate their character, which is not at all conducive to placeness.

Art objects provide interesting opportunities for landmarks in the landscape. (See 4.2.15.3.)

It is also important to notice that a prominent and unique building or building complex that constitutes a landmark and is associated with a certain corporate institution or function such as a shopping centre, might in itself be seen as an advertisement. This would reduce the need for elaborate signage.

4.2.6   VISUAL CONTINUITY AND PERMANENCE

Continuity and permanence are represented by the durable, long-term structures in the landscape and provide a permanent framework within which change can take place, therefore allowing change to take place without chaos. Since the contents of outdoor advertisements tend to change over short periods of time, advertisements might have a very negative impact on sense of permanence. This

Source: Henderson & Landau 1981

Figure 4.20

Landmarks

An advertisement forming a landmark should harmonise with and complement the host structure. It should not obstruct or affect any architectural feature and should not dominate the scene or the structure. It should also not form part of a structure that has a great landmark value on its own and which will be devaluated by such an advertisement. The Citroen sign on the above photograph breaks all these rules.

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Figure 4.21

Continuity and permanence

Continuity and permanence are represented by the durable, long-term structures in the landscape. They provide a permanent framework within which change can take place, therefore allowing change to take place without chaos. Since the contents of outdoor advertisements tends to change over short periods of time, advertisements might have a very negative impact on sense of permanence.

Creating a sense of permanence is even more important in the case of temporary advertisements. Although temporary advertisements need to be easily removable, they should nevertheless have a tidy and *permanent* appearance. One way of achieving this is by covering a structural element such as a pillar with a tight-fitting banner, as illustrated by this example at a shopping centre in Orchard Road, Singapore. The banner thus obtains the shape and permanent appearance of the structural element.

tendency can be counteracted by fixing advertisements onto permanent structures such as buildings. However, as a general rule, such signs should not dominate the more permanent structure but should be made a harmonious part of the structure by using appropriate design principles such as framing. (See 4.2.3.) Due to their conspicuousness, dominant signs will enhance the sense of impermanence created by outdoor advertisements and signs. Exceptions to this general rule of non-dominant signs are possible, for instance when advertisements are used for screening unsightly views or buildings or when a huge advertisement is used as part of a *total design* to obtain a special effect.

The creation of a sense of permanence is very important in the case of temporary advertisements. Although temporary advertisements should be easily removable, they should nevertheless have a neat and tidy appearance since an untidy and degenerated appearance intensifies a sense of impermanence. This can be obtained in the following manner:

❏ Covering a structural element such as a pillar with a tight-fitting banner, so that the banner obtains the shape and permanent appearance of the structural element.

❏ Fitting posters into permanent poster-holders on lampposts.

❏ Sense of visual permanence can also be given to posters on construction boundary walls by placing them at the same height and interval.

❏ Huge banners hung onto the walls of shopping centres or other buildings can also be used as temporary signs. Such walls should form a flat plane and should have no architectural detail and a minimum of other signs. The plane of the wall serves the purpose of unifying banner with building and giving it a more permanent appearance.

4.2.7 CONTEXTUALITY

Contextuality refers to the relationship between signs and advertisements on the one hand, and local character, aesthetic context and sense of place on the other hand, with special reference to franchise companies, petroleum companies and chain stores.

Such corporations and enterprises are interested in creating an instantly recognisable image that can be perceived by passers-by from moving cars. This tendency is not limited to signs and logos only. Buildings and premises are used as advertisements in themselves through the provision of standardised buildings, facades and landscaping.

Franchise companies, filling stations and similar enterprises should be prepared to make a contribution to placeness and should not allow too much uniformity, for instance with regard to building structures.

According to Burke (1976, p.112), one should *advocate greater respect for local building materials and textures, and for particular characteristics of scale, vertical emphasis, plot-frontage width and similar local circumstances, so that redevelopments can be modern, but still mannerly, neighbours.*

In the case of historical buildings and districts the colours of corporate logos should not be allowed to contrast to sharply with the colours of traditional materials. Such logos should be incorporated into buildings and settings in a visually harmonious manner.

Visual guidelines on contextuality should be set by communities, not only with regard to advertisements and signs, but also with regard to structures.

4.2.8   INCORPORATION OF ADVERTISING SPACE IN NEW DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

Inserting new elements, such as advertisements and signs, into any setting or structure can have far-reaching visual consequences. It might either lead to excessive order or diversity, in other words it can distort the balance between unity and diversity. (See 4.2.14.) In the case of advertisements it will mostly lead to too much diversity or visual chaos. Sufficient space should be provided for advertisements and signs when designing buildings, shopping complexes and pedestrian streets as part of the overall design, while allowance should also be made for a hierarchy of signs. (See 4.2.3.) Signs should become a recognised design element. They should not appear to have been pasted onto a design at a later stage.

As a general rule, the principle of integrating advertisements and signs into building, shopping complex or streetscape design should be aimed firstly at locality-bound advertisements and then at non-locality-bound advertisements in order to prevent advertisements getting out of hand and dominating the design. The number of advertisements and signs to be used in any design and the prominence of these advertisements and signs as a design element will depend on various factors such as the architectural style, the character of the streetscape and the urban character. An office precinct or complex, for example, will allow for less signs than a commercial district or complex, and a residential area for even fewer. The strategic environmental assessment (SEA) procedure might be a very handy instrument for integrating advertisements into shopping complex and streetscape design. (See Appendix 2.)

The use of prominent visual elements in a building, shopping complex or streetscape for the purpose of advertising, such as a focal point in a vista, should be treated with the utmost care since such elements could be very easily destroyed if misused and exploited.

4.2.9   INFORMATION LOAD AND INFORMATION RELEVANCY

Wherever possible the aim should be to establish a strong correlation between the information load and information relevancy of outdoor advertisements. A higher information load may be allowed if the relevancy of the information is also high. Not only the visual relevancy should be taken into consideration, but also the relevancy of the actual message in terms of location. This will mean that third party or non-locality-bound signs will have a low relevancy and should therefore be limited to the brand logo and a very short message. In this case minimalism should be the key word. This principle is of importance not only to traffic safety, but also to aesthetics. By applying the principle of minimalism true art can be created and in this way advertising content may make an important contribution to the aesthetic environment. (See Figure 4.22.) In its ultimate form the layout is of such artistic quality that it gives rise to wordless communication. Such advertisements *rely on the message from the logo or product image to reinforce the manufacturer's or product's presence, rather than explain its importance or persuade us to buy* (Fraser, 1991, p.154). (See 4.2.2.5.)

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The relationship between advertising contents and billboard structure plays an important role in obtaining unity and balance. Unity between billboard graphics and structure is an important factor in integrating a billboard with the surrounding environment. The billboard on this page shows extraordinary unity between graphics and billboard structure. This was obtained by means of *similarity* in colour, *simplicity* in both graphics and structure and the *framing* of billboard contents. With the necessary landscaping around this billboard it might serve as an important example of the *commercial art along the road* concept.

Figure 4.22

Harmony between billboard structure and contents
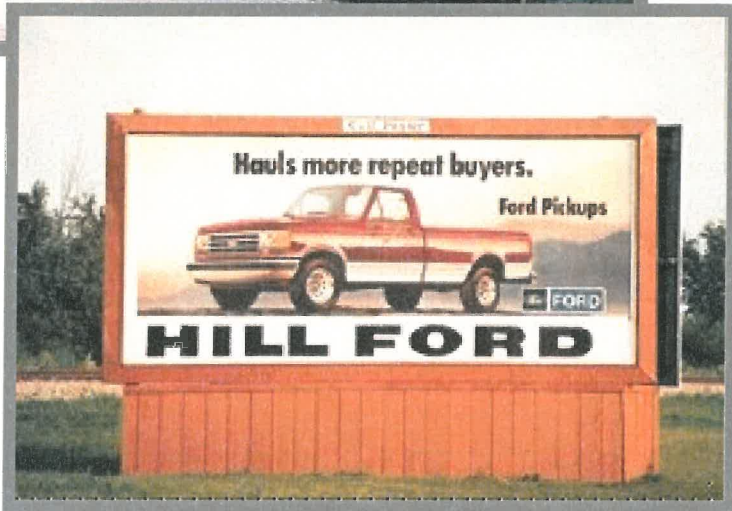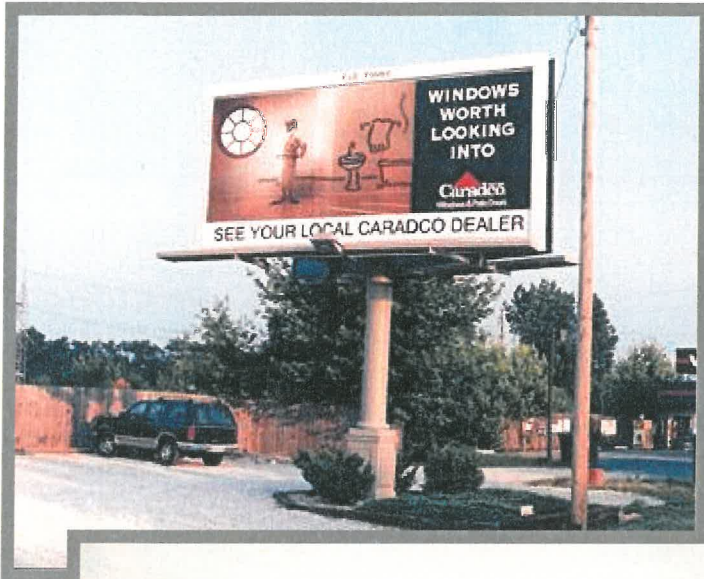
The relationship between advertising contents and billboard structure plays an important role in obtaining unity and balance. Unity between billboard graphics and structure is an important factor in integrating a billboard with the surrounding environment. The billboards at the top and centre of this page show unity between graphics and billboard structure through a harmony in colour. Unfortunately, the scaffolding, external illumination and pole supplying electricity to the top billboard impair upon this harmony to a large extent. Harmony can also be enhanced by means of framing (centre and bottom). The historical billboard from the early twentieth century (bottom) provides an extraordinary sense of harmony through a special framing effect.

Figure 4.22

continued

Source: Henderson & Landau, 1881, p.51

4.2.10   INTEGRATION OF ADVERTISEMENTS AND SETTING OR EXTERNAL MEDIA CONTENT

In terms of outdoor advertising the surrounding environment has been defined as the external media content. (See 3.2.2, second paragraph.) Care should be taken to ensure that the external media content is not manipulated and exploited for advertising purposes in the sense that such manipulation leads to major changes in setting, which may be detrimental to placeness. As a general rule advertisements and signs should not manipulate the character of the setting, since the danger exist that placeness may be commercialised by creating a cheap, universal commercial character, which will lead to placelessness. Setting and existing sense of place should rather manipulate or influence advertising structure, and in certain cases even advertising contents.

Advertisements can be integrated into a setting in the following ways:

❑   Prominent lines of free-standing advertisements can be softened by making use of vegetation, thus integrating outdoor advertising structures into a visual scene. (Figure 4.23.) In the case of larger advertisements, it would be preferable to use existing vegetation or larger trees that can be readily transplanted.

❑   The more flowing lines of free-form billboards may harmonise well with the environment if vegetation is used to blend the billboards into the environment. (Figure 4.23.) This is especially true if only a free-form image without any text (copy) is used, which can be easily linked to a specific product, service or enterprise. Free-form billboards without copy have a huge potential in supplementing, confirming and expanding the television coverage of an advertising campaign. However, in an environment with a proliferation of other structures the free-form billboard may actually contribute to the existing problem of clutter and visual complexity. In such a case conventional billboards with strong geometric lines, which are reflected by the other structures, might be more appropriate.

❑   In general, advertisements and signs have a much better appearance in a street scene with street trees than in treeless streets, since the trees serve as an integrative and unifying element that softens the harshness of advertisements, signs and any service structures. Street furniture
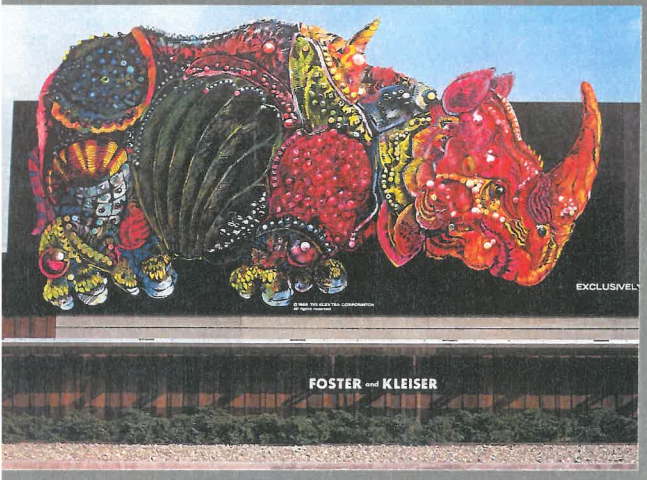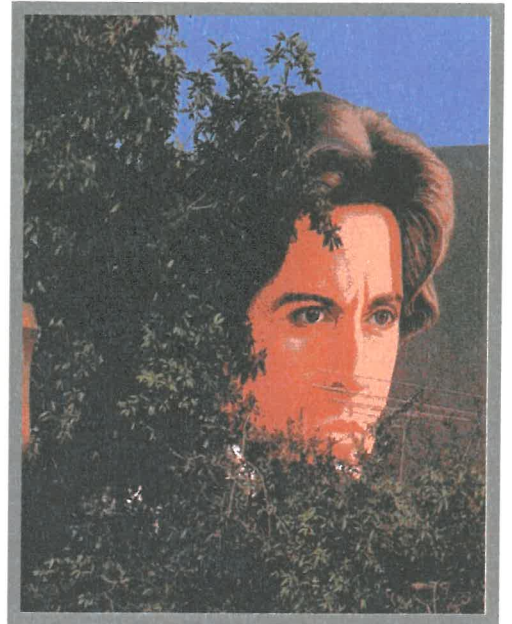
dvertisements and signs can be integrated into the environment in
arious ways:

Prominent lines of free-standing advertisements can be softened
by making use of vegetation (top). In this case huge palm trees
were used that could be easily transplanted on the site.

Due to their more flowing lines, free-form images may blend very
well with the environment if vegetation is used (bottom right).

By linking billboards to the ground, harmony can be obtained
between billboard and environment. At the beginning of the
twentieth century the so-called *Lizzies* introduced the use of
lattice-work as an integrated part of the billboard structure for this
purpose (black and white, bottom, next page). In the case of the
rhino billboard (bottom left) a wooden fence as well as other
landscaping elements were used to obtain an aesthetically
pleasing link between billboard and ground. An extraordinary
effect is obtained by a stone-framed billboard in the old part of
Shanghai (centre, next page), which apart from linking the
advertisement to the ground, also harmonises with the historical
stone buildings in this part of the city.

Figure 4.23

**Integration between
advertisement and
setting**

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Figure 4.23

continued

and artefacts such as traffic lights, street lamps and overhead service lines must be taken in consideration when managing advertisements and signs. These elements may be an important contributing factor to visual impact and the visual complexity of the street scene.

❑   Advertising contents could play an important role in integrating advertisements into the environment by using design elements representative of the surrounding environment. (See Figure 4.24). Local character and sense of place should be taken into consideration when designing sign contents and sign structure. In the case of bigger signs and billboards an even more effective integration should be achieved through being site specific. Excuses are often offered by advertising contractors that they have no control over the contents of an advertisement to be placed on their structures after obtaining a client. They cannot prescribe to the advertising agency or the client in this regard. However, in order to achieve an integration between advertisement and environment the advertising agency, together with the client and the contractor, should be involved in the process of managing outdoor advertisements and signs and therefore the visual environment. Such an approach should not be seen as a limitation of creative self-expression or artistic abilities. Rather, it should be seen as a challenge to the artist at the advertising agency to express true artistic skill by integrating advertising content, sign structure and the surrounding environment. The right of creative self-expression should not be seen as an unlimited right, but should be tempered and adapted so as to express local character and placeness. Progress in digital printing technology is not only creating possibilities for mass-producing advertising images, but also creates exciting possibilities for digitally adapting the design (artwork) of specific advertisements to make them more site specific. In designing advertising contents the advertising agency should not only be responsible to the client, but also to the public and to the communities who are the owners of the aesthetic environment. By contributing to sense of place the commercial artist will also promote the interest of the client by creating a vivid image in the mind of the observer, which will be remembered over extended periods of time and which will also include the specific advertisement.

In certain cases a setting may have to be changed by landscaping the area around an advertising structure in order to promote more effective integration between setting and advertising structure. This should not be seen as a case of advertising structure manipulating setting as long as such

Source: Henderson & Landau, 1981, p.63

Date of photo: November 2001

Figure 4.24

Integration between advertisement and setting

Design elements from the surrounding environment

Advertising contents can play an important role in integrating advertisements into the environment by using design elements representative of the surrounding environment. The free-form clouds of the Tahiti scene (above) blend well into the blue sky behind the billboard. The landscaping in front of the billboard and the closeness of the billboard to the ground contribute to harmony between billboard and environment. The only negative factors are the fence visible on either side of the billboard and the contrast between graphics and copy. In the case of the gantry billboard in Hatfield, Pretoria (below), integration with the environment is obtained by the thorn tree on the billboard and the presence of a real thorn tree in the foreground.

landscaping contributes to placeness and as long as the main purpose of the landscaping is not to focus attention on the advertisement. If landscaping serves to focus attention on the advertisement it becomes an integral part of the advertising structure and internal media content.

A very important principle is that if contrast or diversity is used to focus the attention of the road-user on individual signs or advertisements, such contrast should still be within the framework of order and recognisable pattern. Individual signs and their effectiveness should not be treated in isolation, but the visual relationship between advertisements and the rest of the setting should be seen as an issue of great importance.

4.2.11 PLACENESS AND SENSE OF PLACE

Placeness and *genius loci* can be very easily destroyed by uncontrolled advertisements and signs. It is very sensitive, fragile and vulnerable since factors contributing to it may be difficult to identify. *It is certainly vulnerable to damage or destruction if not recognized or valued and treated with sufficient sensitivity* (Bell, 1996, p.108). Advertisements and signs should be presented in such a way as to support and restore placeness. Although it might be difficult to identify all factors contributing to placeness, as well as the interrelationship between these factors, the key elements and essence of placeness should be identified in order for advertisements and signs to be supportive to *genius loci* and placeness. It is not only concrete visual elements that should be taken into consideration, but also aspects such as local culture, tradition, history and climate.

In order to save costs the outdoor advertising industry prefers standardised outdoor advertising structures, which have a very detrimental effect on placeness in most instances. In contrast to such an approach custom-made structures, especially advertising furniture, could make a very positive contribution to placeness. Outdoor advertisements and signs could also play an important role in enhancing the local character of a shopping centre and even in establishing a unique character for such a centre by limiting standardised advertising structures and by integrating outdoor advertisements and signs into shopping centre design. Sign systems and sign themes can make an important contribution to local sense of place not only at shopping centres, but also in towns and villages as a whole. These may include carved wooden signs indicating various facilities at a

Date of photo: April 1999

By using design elements that reflect local character and placeness, sign contents can play an important role in integrating signs into the environment. A high degree of integration can be achieved by being site specific, as is illustrated by this directional sign to Burg Rheinfels just outside Boppard in Germany. The image of a knight is used which, can be associated with castles, while Burg Rheinfels can be seen in the background.

Figure 4.25
Integration between sign and setting
Reflecting local character
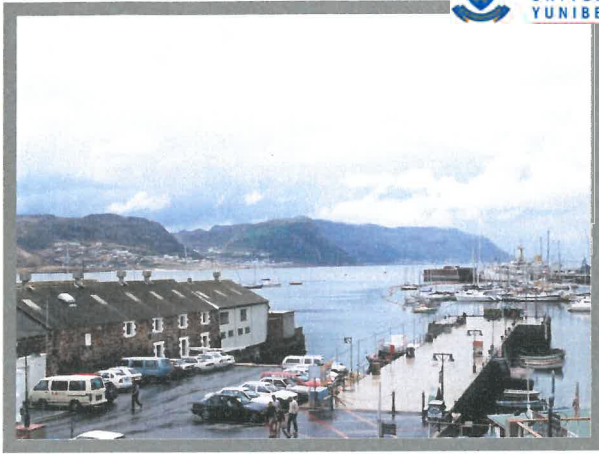
Figure 4.26

Placeness

In order for outdoor advertisements and signs to enhance local placeness the key elements and essence of placeness should be identified and advertisements and signs should then reflect these elements. This should include not only concrete visual elements, but also aspects such as local culture, tradition, history and climate.

Simon's Town on the Cape Peninsula has for long been a British naval base. This harbour town therefore has a noticeable British character (top). This character is enhanced by the *Salty Sea Dog* signs (centre). One of the most *colourful* characters of Simon's Town was the naval dog, *Just Nuisance* (bottom right). This part of local history is reflected in the Quayside sign (bottom left).

of photos: December 2000
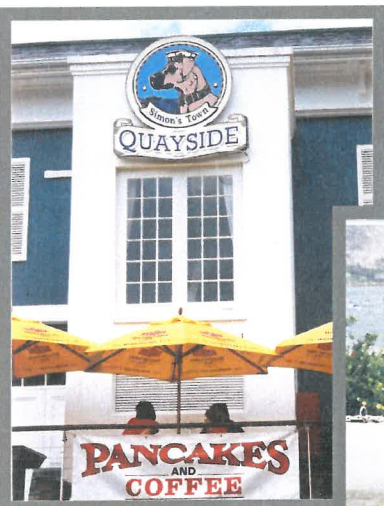
Date of photos: October 2001

The sign of a photo studio in Church Street, Pretoria (top left and right) enhances the cottage character of the studio. This is placeness on a very local scale. The distance signs at Matjiesfontein highlights the isolation of this Karoo town and the long distances one has to travel in this region (bottom right). The multi-coloured resort sign reflects the colourful decorations on local Ndebele huts, as well as cultural artefacts (bottom left).

Figure 4.26

continued

Date of photo: December 2000

Date of photo: 1992

Date of photos: 1996

Source: C&U Poster Ad. Co.

Source: C&U Poster Advertising Co.

Figure 4.27

Creating placeness through non-standardised advertising structures

In order to save costs the outdoor advertising industry prefers standardised outdoor advertising structures, which might have a very detrimental effect on placeness. Certain standardised structures, and especially slender pole-like or frame-like structures, also appear very untidy (top). This effect can be minimised by using non-standardised structures and by improvising on existing structures in order to express and enhance local character and placeness (centre and bottom). Care must be taken not to allow non-standardised advertising structures to become standardised by using them too often, or by using them at localities where they contrast with local placeness or architectural style.

The transformation of an unattractive billboard: The photographs on this page show what can be done with some additional funds and a little bit of ingenuity. The additional funds are well spent since the *new-look* billboard will attract more attention and the message will be remembered over a longer period of time. Notice the attractive appearance of the reverse side of the revamped billboard.

Figure 4.27 continued

Date of photos: Feb

WINE SALES
PARKING ONLY

Reeden Lodge
SELF CATERING
COTTAGES

Date of photos: February 2002

Fromages de France
CHEESE SHOP
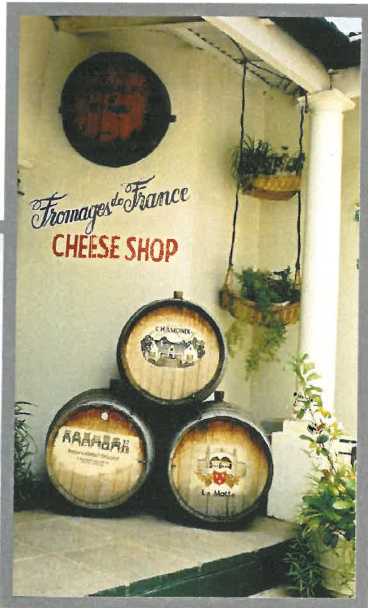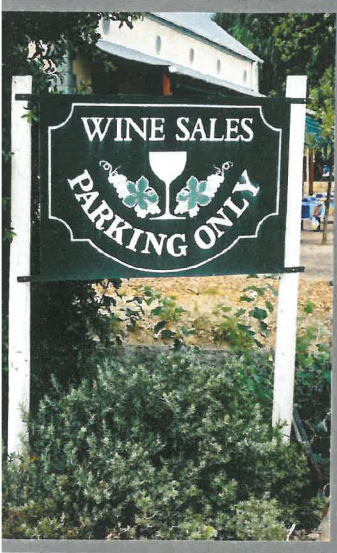
Figure 4.28

Placeness through sign systems and sign themes

Sign systems and sign themes can play an important role in enhancing placeness. The town of Franschoek in the Western Cape uses a uniform design of framed signs with rounded corners (top).
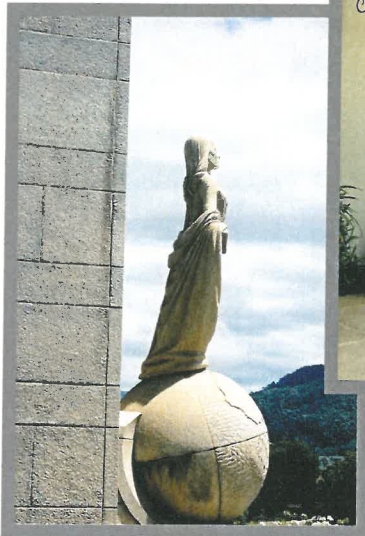
This town also has its own guidance sign system (bottom left). Although this design is somewhat modern for a historical town like Franschoek, the French national colours where used, which reflect the French character and tradition of this town (centre right). This tradition can be traced back to the French Huguenot refugees of 1688 (centre left) who were settled in the vicinity of this town.

A mascot or emblem, which reflects local tradition or history can be used to enhance local character, while a common design element, such as a flower theme, can be used for shop signs. The flower sign at the bottom right hails from the town of Knysna in the Western Cape. The wooden sign reflects the indigenous forest bordering the town. If wooden signs with a flower theme could be repeated in Knysna it would do much to enhance local sense of place.

LA COSTA
RESTAURANT

FRANSCHHOEK
STATIONARY & GIFTSHOP

BORDEAUX HOUSE

AUBERGE BLIGNY
(THE ANCHOR)

MONT ROCHELLE
MOUNTAIN VINEYARDS

VEE'S VIDEO

Photo date: Feb. 2002

MACKINTOSH'S
COUNTRY STORE

Date of photo: 1996

shopping centre or in a town or village, or hand-painted guest house signs in traditional inn-sign style. (See Figure 5.3.) A mascot or emblem could also be used that reflects local tradition or history, while a common design element such as a flower border can be used for shop signs.

The use of sound for the purpose of outdoor advertising can also play an important role with regard to sense of place. The use of universal pop music to attract customers may diminish placeness. Sounds unique to a specific location or region (e.g. traditional music) should rather be used. The whale crier in Hermanus, announcing the sighting of whales, is another good example of promoting placeness by means of sound. (See Figure 3.7.)

One should not always rely on signs as the main or even the only means of orientation and direction, but should rather concentrate on the creation of placeness which should include the effective management of outdoor information transfer. Urban design should be used as an important mechanism for orientation while signs should rather supplement the orientation and guidance role of placeness and urban design elements instead of working against and impeding upon them.

4.2.12 STATUS, TRADITION AND IMAGE OF INSTITUTIONS

In the case of institutions with a special status, tradition or image, such as prominent government buildings, institutions portraying an environmental image, churches and educational institutions, sense of place plays an important role in maintaining such status, tradition and image. The ineffective management of outdoor information transfer could very easily devaluate status, tradition and image.

If any advertisement or sign is to be provided at such institutions, advertising and sign structure should not dominate but should rather harmonise with architecture and landscape while enhancing local placeness. For instance, custom-designed advertising structures should be provided by using the same building material and style used for existing buildings and other structures.

The environmental message portrayed by environmental institutions and organisations should not be hijacked through corporate sponsorship for the mere purpose of providing such a corporation with a greenwashed image. (See Figure 4.30.) The corporate message should blend into the environmental
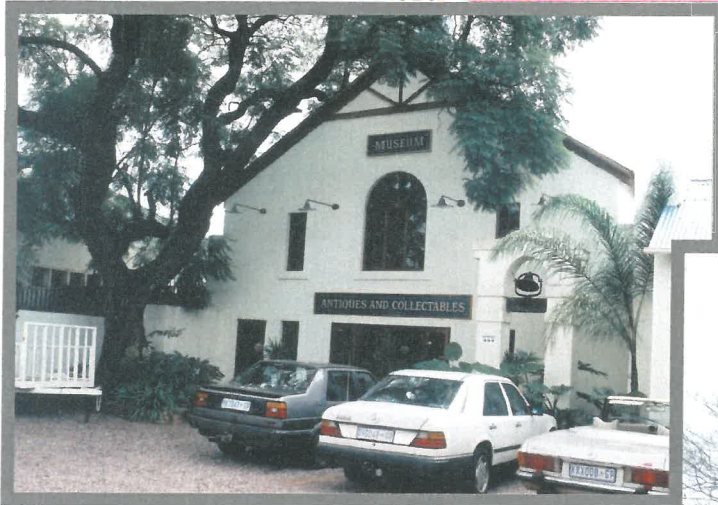
Advertisements and signs can play an important role in providing any enterprise with a certain image, character and placeness. This is clearly illustrated in the case of De Merindol Collector's Gallery and Restaurant in Pretoria, where signs made an important contribution in creating a stylish image. The only false note is the unattractive temporary signs that are used during the holiday season.

**Figure 4.29
Business image**

Photo dates: November 2001

Figure 4.30

Status, tradition and image of institutions

Bayworld in Port Elizabeth is a prestigious environmental institution consisting of a natural and cultural history museum (the third oldest in South Africa), an oceanarium (famous for its dolphins) and a snake park. Although a famous tourist attraction it also represents higher values such as environmental sustainability, natural and cultural conservation and research. Unfortunately, the environmental message portrayed by this institution has been hijacked through corporate sponsorship. The corporate name, colours and product dominate the entire facade. (Also notice the advertisement on the bus shelter in front of Bayworld.) This full-facade advertisement actually undermines Bayworld's credibility as an environmental institution and its educational and research function. The gaudy colours and abstract design of the mural and the *plastic* sign at the main entrance, announcing happenings at Bayworld, contribute even further to creating an image of a mere amusement park aimed at maximum profit, unsustainability and cosumerism.

A much more tranquil and environmentally friendly atmosphere could have been created by a more natural and less abstract mural consisting of various shades of sea-green and turquoise, which would also enhance the Bayworld and Oceanarium theme. Corporate logo and product could have been integrated into the mural in a much more subtle manner through product placement, or could have been limited to Bayworld brochures. A more environmentally friendly entrance sign constructed from natural materials would also have improved the environmental image of this institution to a large extent.

Date of photos:
April 2001

image and message provided by the environmental institution in a subtle manner and should be subordinate to it. This can, for instance, be obtained by using non-corporate colours sympathetic to the environmental image, by allowing only relatively small corporate logos and by not implicating the corporation directly in any text used.

4.2.13 OVERKILL

Overkill takes place when an enterprise makes use of a large number of advertisements or signs in order to attract attention where one or two might have been sufficient, whether it be a variety of signs or a repetition of the same sign. (Figure 4.31.) However, in certain circumstances the same sign might be used repeatedly to create a sense of rhythm. (See 4.2.2.8.) Overkill should be discouraged as far as possible since it will fuel the competition principle, which means that various enterprises will compete against one another to provide the largest number of signs.

4.2.14 UNITY AND DIVERSITY OR ORDER AND SPONTANEITY

The balance between unity and diversity is a key element in creating and enhancing placeness: *The ultimate visual objective in any design is to balance unity with diversity and to respect the spirit of the place* (Bell, 1996, p.93).

Advertisements and signs can be seen as important elements in any streetscape. If advertisements and signs are managed effectively, they could make an important contribution with regard to placemaking and the creation of a balance between order and spontaneity. However, if advertisements and signs are not controlled effectively, they may destroy placeness and create visual chaos. According to Motloch (1991, p.286), any design variable can contribute to order or spontaneity, but certain variables and certain scales are more important for creating order and others for creating spontaneity. Smaller advertisements and signs, such as shop signs and street furniture, can play a very important role with regard to spontaneity and variety.

However, there are limits within which spontaneity and variety should be applied. *While contrast is important for vitality and interest, too much will cause a loss of unity in the resulting visual confusion*

Figure 4.31
Overkill

Overkill takes place when an enterprise makes use of a large number of advertisements or signs in order to attract attention where one or two might have been sufficient, whether it be a variety of signs or a repetition of the same sign. The examples on this page are from Hermanus in the Western Cape, one of the best spots in the world for land-based whale watching. Carit Estates (top) has five signs (including the small one in the window on the right) for people approaching from the north, where one would have been sufficient. Aïda Properties (centre) has four signs, including the two smaller ones on the veranda, and Absa Bank has three indicating their autoteller. Overkill should be discouraged as far as possible since it will fuel the competition principle, resulting in various enterprises competing against one another to provide the largest number of signs. As sign proliferation takes place the value of individual signs is diminished. The above examples are all in the same street not far from one another. It is therefore quite clear that the competition principle has already kicked in in Hermanus.

Date of photos: September 2000

(Bell, 1996, p.94). Diversity may very easily get out of hand, ending in visual chaos. The principle of relatedness and information relevancy should always be taken into consideration. Order, understanding and relatedness form the framework within which spontaneity and diversity may be applied and within which detail can be perceived or processed. Bell (1996, p.94) refers to *complementary unity*. *Complementary unity involves the deliberate use of opposites or contrasts which nevertheless relate to the whole... Unity concerns the relationship between parts of a design or landscape as a whole.* Sharp (1968, p.13) talks about: *...a variety that is not so much of contrast but "variety within the same kind, variety within an established rhythm," variety (one might almost say) within similarity, within a broad unity of character.*

Various design principles can be applied to obtain unity, e.g. rhythm and similarity. In displaying advertisements design elements such as form, style, scale, colour and texture could be used to obtain a balance between diversity and order. This implies an interaction between design elements, some representing order and others diversity.

For any design to posses an identifiable, if not unique character, there should be an all-embracing, unifying theme, a sort of constant idea behind it (Bell, 1996, p.94). In many cases certain features stand out as dominant contributors to landscape character. A unifying theme and dominant features can be seen as the essence of placeness. Such features must be identified before the effective management of outdoor information transfer can take place.

Various factors will influence the amount of variety that is needed within a unifying theme. In the case of historical buildings and towns a strong visual harmony often exists between buildings and local environment due to the use of a limited variety of local building material. In such cases the contrast between sign and building should not be too prominent. (Figure 4.34.)

4.2.15 ADVERTISEMENT AND ART

In contributing to art, billboards and other outdoor advertisements and signs have an untapped potential. A contribution to the arts cannot be limited to advertising contents. The relationship between advertising contents, advertising structure and the surrounding environment should be
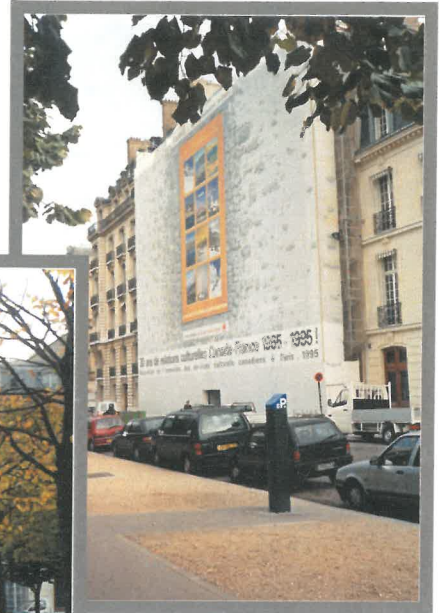
One of the most important visual objectives is to balance unity with diversity. Advertisements and signs can be seen as important elements in any streetscape. If advertisements and signs are managed wisely, they can make an important contribution with regard to placemaking and the creation of a balance between order and spontaneity. However, if advertisements and signs are not controlled effectively they may destroy placeness and cause visual chaos.

The colour of the bus shed in Westminster, London (top) harmonises with the building in the background, while the colours of the advertisement provide the necessary diversity. A good balance between unity and diversity is obtained.

Another good example of harmony between unity and diversity is the large advertisement against scaffolding in Paris (bottom). It contrasts with the building and environment in terms of size, but sufficient harmony is obtained in terms of colour. The softer lines and small letter size of advertising content also contribute to harmony while the rectangular pattern in the centre of the advertisement reflects the detail of window lines. The enormous size of this advertisement is made acceptable through harmony in colour.

Figure 4.32

Balance between unity and diversity

Date of photos: September 1995
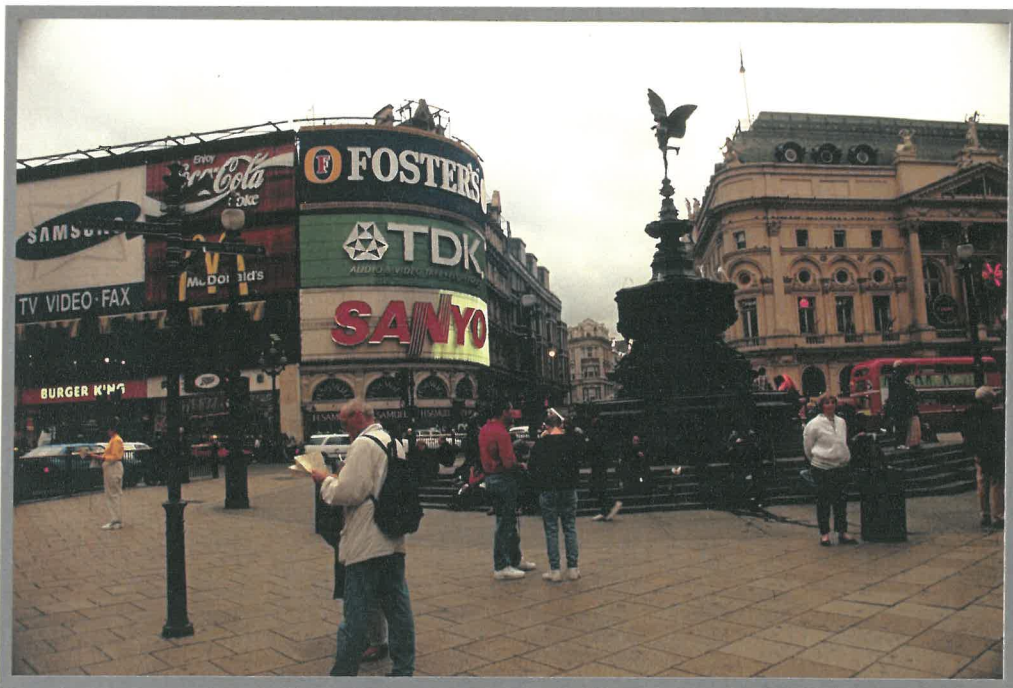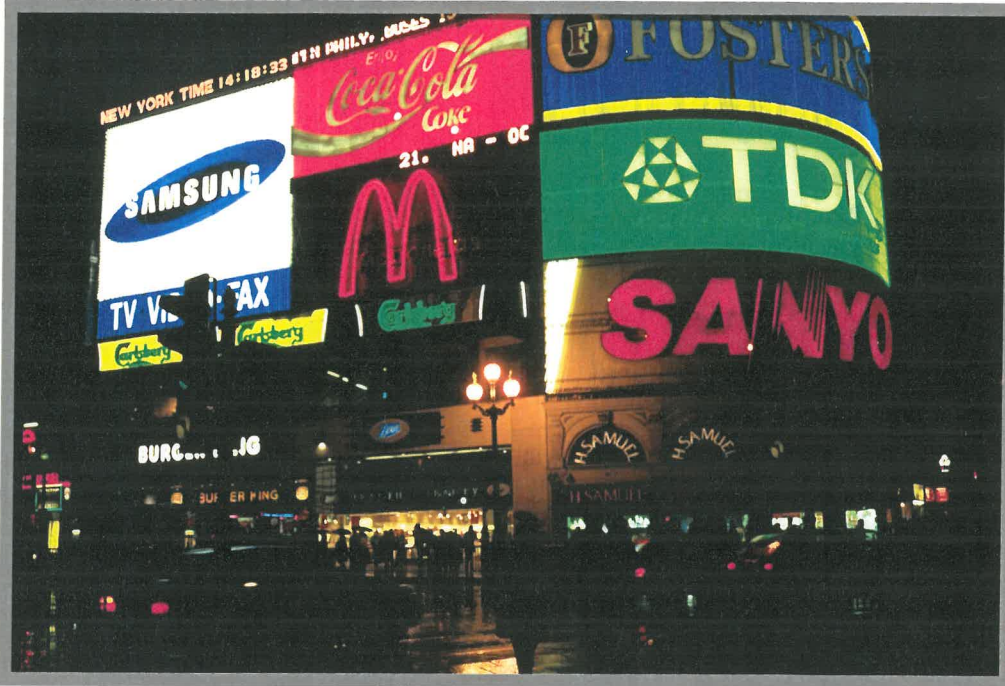
Figure 4.33
Balance between unity and diversity
Entertainment districts

With so much diversity and contrast between signs with regard to design elements such as colour and form, it seems impossible to achieve a balance between unity and diversity in entertainment districts. A unifying factor does exist in the form of sign illumination with the night sky as background, and in this manner the necessary balance is obtained. However, during daylight hours this unifying factor disappears.

Date of photos: September 1995

Date of photo: September 1995

To obtain a balance between unity and diversity all diversity and contrast should always take place within a unifying theme. Various factors will influence the amount of variety that is needed within a unifying theme. In the case of historical buildings and towns a strong visual harmony often exists between structures and between structures and local environment due to the use of a limited variety of local building materials. In such cases the contrast between sign and building structure should not be too prominent. The banner pictured here was used with no contrast in colour.

Figure 4.34

Balance between unity and diversity

Historical buildings

approached in a holistic manner. (Figure 4.22.) The lack of a holistic approach has been the main shortcoming in outdoor advertising's artistic contribution up till now. The artwork on certain billboards might be of a very high standard, but these contributions may be neutralised by the visual impact of the billboard structure.

The following artistic possibilities of outdoor advertising need mentioning:

4.2.15.1 Commercial art in the park

Free-form advertising images and even replicas of commercial products have a very exciting potential in this regard. They might be displayed in a subtle manner by making use of plant material to integrate such images into the landscape design, or they could be used as focal points. Free-form images may consist of painted boards or sculptures. Advertising furniture and other appropriate structures carrying various sizes of posters and billboards might also be used with success. Apart from making art accessible to the ordinary citizen, another benefit may be the landscaping and maintenance of the urban park by the advertisers or outdoor advertising contractor in exchange for obtaining the advertising rights. Adequate control by the local authority and community is a prerequisite before such a project can be undertaken. Advertising structures and contents should be of true artistic value and should not consist of standardised and *mass-produced* structures, while advertising campaigns should not be misused by unscrupulous advertising contractors by aiming such advertisements at the motorist passing the park. The advertising node concept provides exciting possibilities for art in the park in a more concentrated form. (See Appendix 1.)

As is the case with *art objects as landmarks,* pop art also forms an ideal style for expressing commercial art in the park due to its affinity for commercialism, consumerism and mass produced items.

4.2.15.2 Art along the road

If a holistic approach is followed of harmonising advertising content and advertising structure with the surrounding environment and of contributing to sense of place, outdoor advertising can also make an

important artistic contribution along urban freeways and even along higher-order non-urban roads under special circumstances, as shown below.

Artistic advertisements might even be allowed within road reserves. Erecting advertisements and signs within road reserves is a contentious issue. As a general principle advertisements and signs are not allowed within the road reserve, with certain exceptions. One of the exceptions provided for by the South African Manual for Outdoor Advertising Control (SAMOAC) is *Sponsored Road Traffic Projects.* This sign class consists of signs relating to the sponsoring of projects specifically intended for the road user and aimed at the provision of road services, the promotion of road safety or the management and conservation of roadside environments such as scenic roadways. According to SAMOAC such signs should not exceed a maximum size of 4,5m^2 and a maximum height of 3m (DEA&T, 1998, p.119). This size is adequate, even for free-form boards or sculptures which allow for almost unlimited possibilities. A specific character or mascot, consisting of a series of postures, might be created for a specific campaign. Copy or text should be limited, while all copy, sponsorship logos and brand names should be integrated into the free-form design. The advertising character may carry a banner with a road safety message and may have a certain brand of soft drink in his other hand or wear a certain brand of clothing. In the case of the traditional geometric sign, standardised sign structures should not be used. Custom-made structures and frames should be developed for a specific campaign. Regional variations in free form images or custom-made sign structures and sign content might also be necessary in order to reflect regional character and sense of place. Apart from sponsoring the design of sign contents and sign structures, the actual signs itself, the landscaping at the signs and the management of the sign campaign, sponsors might also contribute to other facets of the campaign and even to amenities along the road. The right to put a certain logo and product on the signs for a specific campaign might be put on *tender* to obtain the best sponsorship and benefits for the controlling authority. The possible involvement of outdoor advertising contractors in such projects should be approached with caution. Since the driving force behind outdoor advertising contractors is maximum profit, sign quality and campaign efficiency might be jeopardised. The involvement of advertising contractors might also mean that sponsored signs will serve as the thin end of the wedge for obtaining the right for other advertisements and signs inside the road reserve by

applying the *Treasury Principle*[30] or similar measures. This might lead to a proliferation of signs along roads and the destruction of the aesthetic environment. Therefore ownership of all advertising structures by the relevant roads authorities as well as the control of advertising contents by such authorities is a prerequisite of sponsored road traffic projects, while design review by public involvement should also be possible. By applying the strategic environmental assessment (SEA) procedure, *Sponsored Sign Plans* might be developed for a whole campaign, route or road section with the necessary conditions, design and other specifications. This procedure will also provide for the necessary public involvement and design review inputs. However, owing to the scale of many of such projects public involvement and design review cannot be too emphatic.

Sponsored signs could also be used to combat driver fatigue along long stretches of road. Sponsored signs indicating tourism attractions such as historical sites or natural features could play an important role along roads. However, care should be taken to exclude tourist facilities which might lead to a proliferation of signs along the road. Care should also be taken that the reverse sides of especially free-form signs do not present an unattractive appearance. This might be prevented by repeating the same image on the reverse side of the sign.

4.2.15.3 Art objects as landmarks

Huge art objects or sculptures can be used as a form of advertising and as important landmarks in the landscape. (Figure 4.35.) However, due to its prominence this type of advertisement should be treated with the utmost care.

Pop art forms an ideal style for expressing such advertising objects in the landscape owing to the affinity of pop art to mass-produced everyday items symbolising a contemporary consumeristic lifestyle and owing to its affinity for commercial art techniques.

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[30] The *Treasury Principle,* refers to the persuasion of a controlling authority by the financial benefits offered up-front by an outdoor advertising contractor to obtain an outdoor advertising concession, which might actually not be to the benefit of the public since it might impact on tourism resources and the local living environment.

The following are prerequisites for art objects in the landscape:

□ They should preferably be placed in the rural landscape where rural land use can form a backdrop to such objects. Since they are treated as important landmarks, settings should be chosen with care.

□ Such landmarks should not be placed in natural landscapes or landscapes of high scenic or historical value.

□ Art objects should not be cluttered by other advertisements, signs, structures or infrastructure, such as power lines, since they will then contribute to and become part of the visual clutter. No written message should be allowed on such objects. These objects should be easily recognisable, while their design should not be complicated and too busy. In urban areas art objects should be treated with special care. They should be treated as focal points, in harmony with the rest of the urban landscape, while avoiding sign and advertisement clutter. Setting should therefore be chosen with care. Owing to the large number of buildings, structures and services in urban areas such objects can very easily contribute to visual decay.

□ The numbers of this type of advertisement should be limited and they should not be repeated too often. A specific area, landscape or district should be limited to a single art object with which that area, landscape or district can be associated. If this advertising type is applied too often the idea of landmark and uniqueness will be destroyed and the landscape will be transformed into a mere *Disney World*.

□ Although an art object may advertise a specific enterprise or institution it should have a broader advertising value. It should always be associated with local activities, cultures or land use. It should never be misused for advertising a single enterprise or franchise without a broader reference to the area, landscape or district. No corporate or commercial logo or mascot should be allowed on an art object or should become an art object.

□ Art objects should form permanent landmarks.

Date of photos: April 2001

The Big Pineapple on Sunnighill Farm at Bathurst in the Eastern Cape: This art object is a well-known landmark to local inhabitants and visitors to the Eastern Cape. Apart from advertising pineapple production on the farm and the Eastern Cape pineapple industry in general, it also advertises and draws attention to various tourist activities and facilities on the farm without using any written messages or any supplementary signs. It is also associated with pineapple research on the farm and the Pineapple Growers Association, which has its offices on the farm. The Big Pineapple is well-placed within the landscape and its meaning and message are enhanced by the surrounding pineapple fields, which emphasises its association with pineapple production in the Eastern Cape. The advertising value of this object is therefore not limited to Sunninghill Farm, but has a broader and more universal application. By contributing to the character and sense of place of this particular region of the Eastern Cape it plays an important part in promoting tourism. It is therefore not by chance that the Big Pineapple is well-featured on the tourism brochures of the Eastern Cape.

Figure 4.35
Art objects as landmarks

There is one false note. This pop art object is located at the entrance of the village of Bathurst and forms a strong contrast with the historical character of this village (see next page). Seen in this light the Big Pineapple has a rather negative impact on the local sense of place. This criticism must be seen against the background of the relatively few historical villages and towns in South Africa. The Big Pineapple would have made a much better contribution had it been located further away from the village of Bathurst or any other historical or scenic attribute.

Figure 4.35 continued

The village of Bathurst forms an important part of the history of the British Settlers of 1820. The village was founded in the same year and named for Lord Bathurst, colonial secretary of the time. Various historical buildings remind one of the British Settlers. The Anglican Church of St John (1837) (top left) not only served as a place of worship, but also as a place of refuge during the three frontier wars. Bradshaw's mill (1821) (bottom left) was the first water-driven wool mill built in South Africa. The powder house (top right), a historical home (centre) and a penny-farthing against the wall of a shop (bottom right) contribute even further to local character and placeness.

Date of photos: April 2001
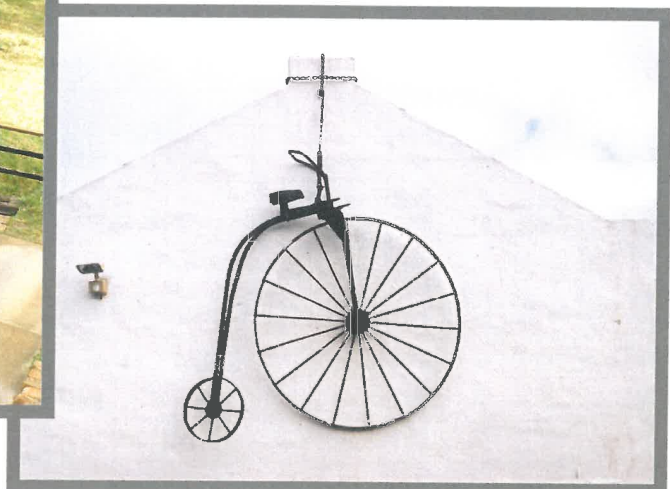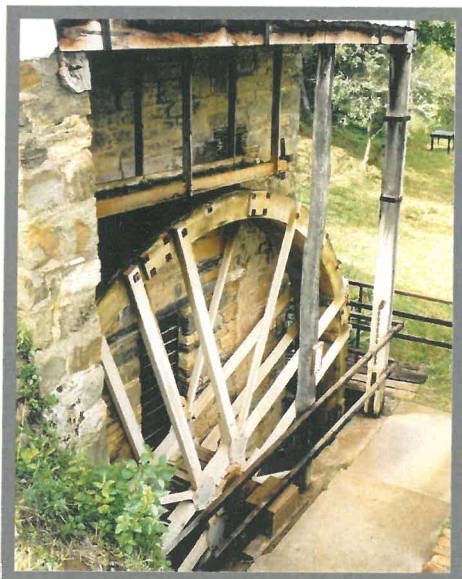
- Art objects need not be limited to objects portraying a consumeristic lifestyle, but may also portray deeper environmental values.

- The *strategic environmental assessment* (SEA) procedure should be used to obtain the best location for a landmark in a specific area or district.

4.2.16 UNIFICATION AND SHARING OF INFORMATION

The proliferation of advertisements and signs could be prevented by the unification and sharing of information.

- A popular solution is to use combination signs at locations such as shopping centres and the entrances of arcades. Care must be taken to prevent a too complex composition. The necessary unity should be obtained between the individual signs included in the combination sign by applying principles such as similarity and framing. As a general rule, the messages and graphics of individual signs should be kept as simple as possible and should be limited to enterprise name and logo. Competition between individual signs in terms of colour and size should be prevented. If the number of enterprises becomes too large more than one combination sign should be used in succession. An *overutilised* combination sign is not only visually unattractive, but also poses a traffic safety hazard. Owing to the large number of enterprises at larger shopping centres the efficiency of combination signs is limited to smaller shopping centres. Excessive signage is often used for rectifying poor shopping centre design and functionality. Effective shopping centre planning should therefore include an outdoor information plan from the start. The SEA procedure provides a mechanism for developing such plans. (See Appendix 2.)

- The most acceptable option visually would be to provide a free-standing sign indicating the name of the shopping centre only. The only signs indicating enterprises at the shopping centre will be integrated into the structure of the shopping centre. An indoor sign displaying a list containing all the enterprises at the shopping centre will be one of the most visually effective advertising mechanisms for presenting these enterprises to the public. This approach also highlights the

important principle of not relying solely on outdoor advertising, but to combine outdoor advertising with other advertising media. This implies that there is no need for potential visitors to a shopping centre to be dependent solely on a proliferation of signs or an oversized combination sign for providing information on the various enterprises at the shopping centre. Shopping centres will also have to rely on other advertising media such as the press and radio. By limiting the number of signs displayed at a shopping centre, and by concentrating on the name and appearance of the centre, opportunities are developed for creating a more stylish and attractive image, which may attract more visitors than a proliferation of signs. This approach implies that the various enterprises at the shopping centre are represented by the image, name and character of the shopping centre. This approach to advertising at shopping centres might be seen as the ultimate way of information sharing.

❑ Another unobtrusive manner of sharing information is to make use of one or two sign structures at the entrance to a shopping centre to display special offers and sales at the various enterprises in the centre alternatively or just to show the names of the various enterprises on a rotational basis.

4.2.17 NATURAL AND CULTURAL DESIGN

Natural design can be seen as fitting advertisements and signs into the biophysical or natural environment by using natural materials or applying any other relevant measures to achieve this purpose. Natural design is of special relevance to conservation areas. Cultural design can be seen as the use of traditional materials for signs or sign structures, or the application of any other relevant measures to give signs and sign structures a historical or cultural appearance. Cultural design also implies harmonising signs and sign structures with historical buildings and historical areas. (cf. Bath City Council, 1993, pp.55-62)

In the case of natural and cultural design, advertising opportunities and acceptable sign types are more limited than in other areas.

Photo date: December 2000

Photo date: September 2000
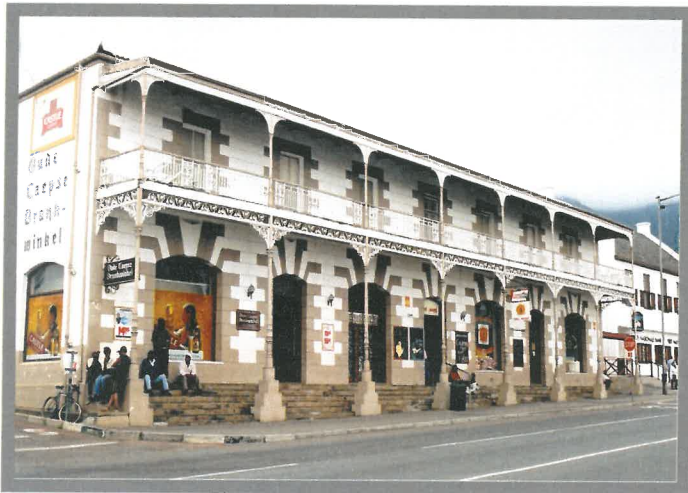
Photo date: December 1997

Historically signs were placed so as to allow the architectural details of buildings to remain prominent. The architectural characteristics of a historical building should therefore always dominate. On buildings with decorative facades, signs should not be placed on the decorative forms or mouldings. For example, signs should not be placed on first-floor veranda balustrades or veranda frieze-work. This point is illustrated by a shop in Beaufort West (top) where a first-floor veranda balustrade was covered by a white board to make provision for advertisements and shop signs. A historical shop in Swellendam (centre) shows what a first-floor veranda should look like. Signs should rather appear on the undecorated wall surfaces of historical buildings (bottom).

**Figure 4.36
Cultural design**

The use of signs of limited size and number allow the architectural details of these historical buildings in Grahamstown, Eastern Cape, to remain prominent.

Figure 4.36 continued

Date of photos: April 1999

The following may serve as pointers for natural and cultural design:

❑ Historically signs were placed so as to allow the architectural details of buildings to remain prominent. The architectural characteristics of a historical building should therefore always dominate. On buildings with decorative facades, signs should not be placed on the decorative forms or mouldings. For example, signs should not be placed on first floor veranda cast-iron work or balustrades or veranda frieze work. They should rather appear on the undecorated wall surfaces. Generally speaking, signs on historical buildings or in historical areas should be discreet and should complement the building or area.

❑ Advertisements and signs should be placed in locations on the building which would traditionally have been used for such purposes. If the building has no such locations, advertisements and signs will usually be inappropriate and should be limited to what is absolutely necessary. In cases where decorative facades allow no traditional sign locations, projecting signs constructed from traditional materials and of limited proportions may be provided.

❑ As a general rule, no signs should break the historic roof-line or parapet of a building. A possible exception may be single-storey veranda roof-lines where historical signs sometimes projected across the veranda roof but not above the main roof-line.

❑ Side-walls of historical buildings provide opportunities, but their use for displaying signs should be considered carefully.

❑ In certain cases advertising and sign graphics and lettering on historical buildings should have an authentic *historic* appearance, while traditional materials should also be used in sign construction. In most cases modern standardised *trademark* advertising would be inappropriate. Such presentations can be modified by placing the modern sign in a framed panel. The use of plastics as sign material should also be avoided as far as possible.

❑ In the case of historical buildings and areas, or any other area or building where local, traditional or natural building materials are dominant, the colour of signs should not contrast too sharply with

Palace of Justice

Old Raadzaal

Figure 4.37

Cultural design

Historical buildings with limited sign opportunities
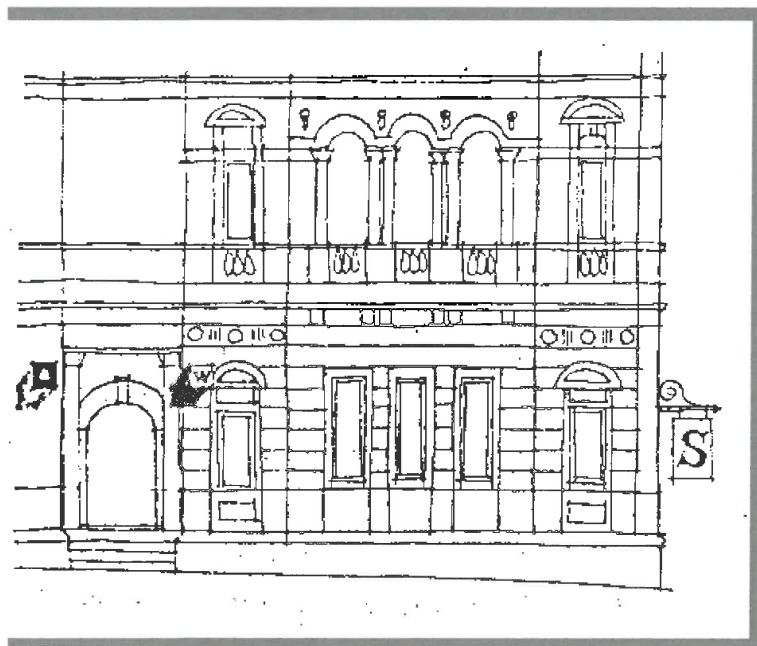
Advertisements and signs should be placed in locations on the building which would traditionally have been used for such purposes. If the building has no such locations, advertisements and signs will usually be inappropriate and should be limited to what is absolutely necessary, as is the case with the Palace of Justice (top) and the Old Raadzaal (centre) on Church Square in Pretoria. In cases where decorative facades allow no traditional sign locations, projecting signs of traditional materials and of limited proportions could be provided (bottom). The style of such signs should harmonise with the building

In some cases advertising and sign graphics and lettering on historical buildings should have an authentic *historic* appearance, while traditional materials should also be used in sign construction. In most cases modern standardised *trademark* advertising would be inappropriate. This modern advertising sign in Boppard, Germany has a historic appearance, although internal illumination and perspex panels are used, which are normally not recommendable for historical areas.

Figure 4.38

Cultural design

The use of traditional materials

the dominant colours of such materials. Advancing colours (the red, orange and yellow range) should be used carefully in such circumstances. If the colours of corporate logos contrast with historical buildings or traditional materials they should be adapted to obtain the necessary unity.

❑ In order to obtain authentic signs the colour ranges, material and lettering styles of signs of the various historic periods should be researched.

❑ Internally illuminated and electronic signs should be avoided

❑ In the case of country towns with a historical appearance, particular attention should be paid to the view from the road as one enters the town. Careful consideration should be given to the placement of any advertisements so as to not detract from historic townscapes. The proliferation of signs at the town entrance to direct the visitor to enterprises and attractions should be avoided at all costs.

In the case of natural design, custom-made signs reflecting the character of the area should be used.

Simplicity plays an important role in harmonising advertisements and signs with the natural or cultural/historical environment and complementing natural or historical features, whether it be simplicity with regard to advertising graphics, copy, advertising structure or number of signs.

4.3 CONCLUSIONS AND VERIFICATION OF HYPOTHESIS 3

The aim of Chapter 4 was to look at the nature and extent of user-friendly guidelines for the effective management of outdoor information transfer

In order to solve this problem a third hypothesis was formulated which states that general principles and user-friendly guidelines can be developed for the effective management of outdoor information transfer. Such guidelines would make the management of outdoor information transfer less subjective
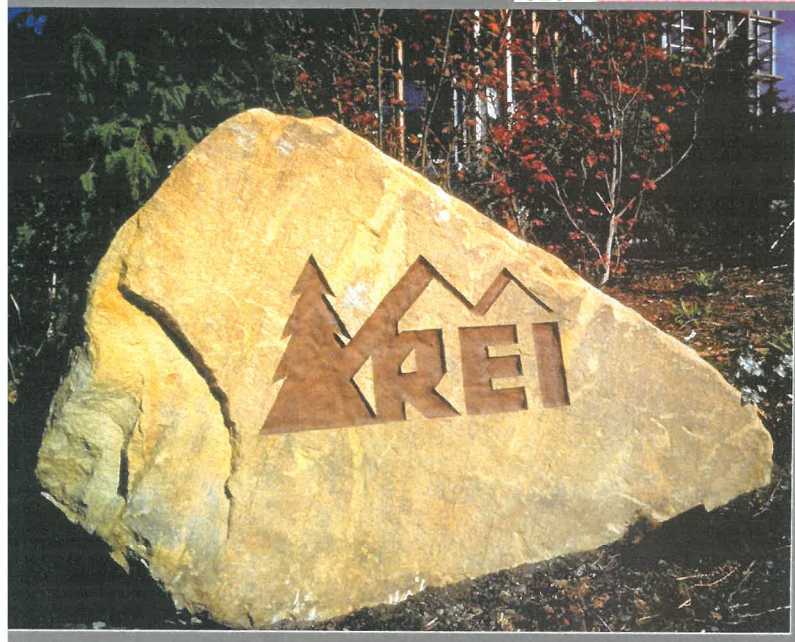
Natural design can be seen as fitting advertisements and signs into the biophysical or natural environment by using natural materials or by applying any other relevant measures for obtaining harmony between sign and natural elements.

Simplicity plays an important role in natural design. This is clearly illustrated by the four-ton engraved boulder marking the beginning of an outdoor test track at REI's flagship store in Seattle (top, left).

Colours used for signs should not contrast too sharply with the natural colours of the surrounding environment. The advancing colours (the red, orange and yellow range) in particular should be used with care. A sign in Singapore (top, right), indicating the southernmost point of the Asian continent, uses browns which blend with soil and rock, while the blue blends with the ocean. The red in the corporate logo of a sign in the Letaba rest camp of the Kruger National Park (bottom) is small enough not to be disturbing, while the natural wooden colours blend with the environment. Exceptional harmony between sign structure and natural environment is achieved through the use of natural tree trunks.

**Figure 4.39
Natural design**
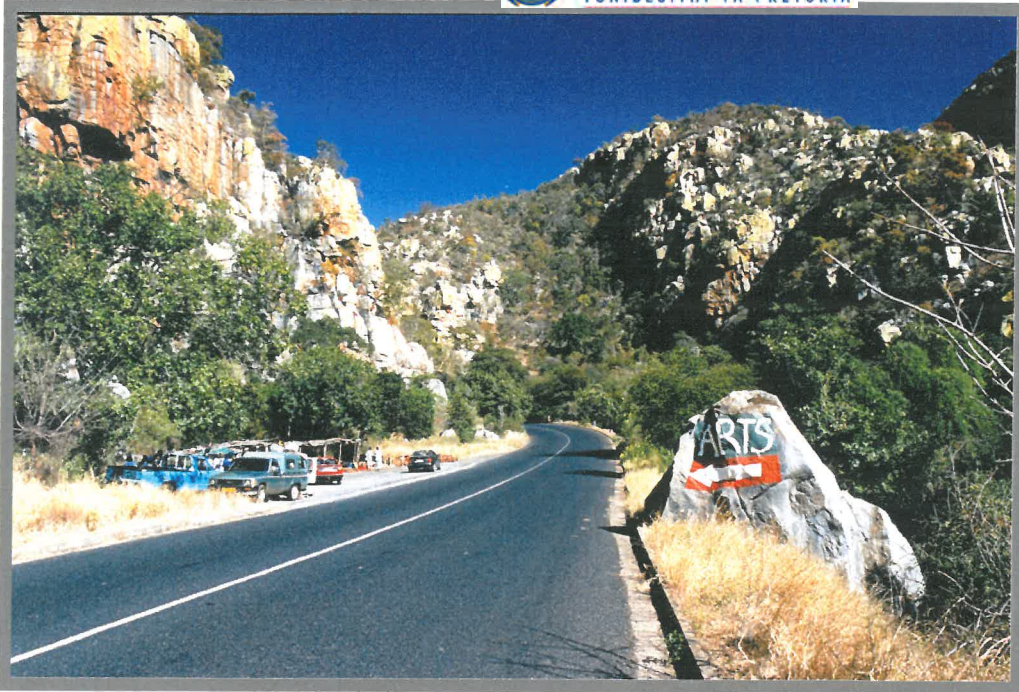
Signs and advertising messages should not be painted directly onto rocks or other permanent features in the natural environment, as indicated by this sign advertising a curio stall near Strijdom Tunnel in Mapumalanga. Such practices can very easily get out of hand and create a *don't care attitude* towards the environment. Also notice the impact of the red used. An official brown tourism sign would have been more appropriate.

Figure 4.40

Natural design

Preserving natural elements

Date of photos: July 2001

and would provide a basis for control and legislative measures. It was also assumed that such principles and guidelines could be used as an objective measurement for the sustainable management of outdoor information transfer.

4.3.1   CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from Chapter 4:

❑ **Nature and extent of user-friendly guidelines:** Chapter 4 produced a variety of user-friendly principles and guidelines aimed at addressing the issues and concerns identified in this study. User-friendliness was obtained by means of a large number of illustrations and cross-references. From these principles and guidelines it may be concluded that the nature and extent of guidelines needed for the effective management of outdoor information transfer can be seen as far-reaching, requiring a revolutionary and dedicated approach by outdoor advertising contractors, advertising agencies and controlling authorities.

❑ **Moral basis for principles and guidelines:** No amount of principles and guidelines will lead to the effective management of outdoor information transfer unless such principles and guidelines are grounded in a proper environmental world-view. The formulation of an effective environmental world-view, which is not centred in pragmatism and materialism and which can serve as main source of motivation for the effective management of outdoor information transfer, will have to be investigated.

❑ **Basis for control and legislative measures:** *The South African Manual for Outdoor Advertising Control (SAMOAC)* was developed in 1998 to provide detailed conditions for the management and control of outdoor advertisements and signs. This manual recognises the differences in local needs and circumstances and suggests that controlling authorities should adapt conditions in this regard (DEA&T, 1998, pp.v-vi). Cape Town, for instance, with mountains and sea and a rich history and cultural resources, and which is known as South Africa's most important tourism city, finds SAMOAC too lenient and has therefore adapted this document to serve their need for stricter control. In contrast to Cape Town, Johannesburg has a strong commercial character and

is known as South Africa's *economic capital*. It is therefore no surprise that Johannesburg is applying the conditions in SAMOAC less strictly since advertisements and signs will benefit the city's commercial character. The principles and guidelines provided in this chapter may form an objective basis for adapting SAMOAC to suit local circumstances. It may serve as an objective tool to develop any control measures or legislation pertaining to outdoor information transfer, while it can also be used by outdoor advertising contractors and advertising agencies in planning, managing and designing outdoor advertisements. As another application these principles and guidelines may serve as an objective instrument for evaluating strategic environmental assessments and environmental impact assessments on developments regarding outdoor information transfer.

❑ **Principles and guidelines as an objective measure for the sustainable management of outdoor information transfer:** Since placeness plays an important role in analysing and expressing the benefits and impacts of outdoor information transfer, as was shown in Chapter 3, and since placeness serves as a mechanism to express and measure the sustainability of the perceptual environment, placeness will undoubtedly play an important role in the sustainable management of outdoor information transfer. It has been shown that the principles and guidelines in this chapter are important in actualising placeness and sense of place. It can therefore be said that these guidelines and principles may serve as an objective *measuring tool* for the sustainable management of outdoor information transfer.

❑ **A common language of aesthetics for the effective management of outdoor information transfer:** The principles and guidelines in this chapter provide a common language of aesthetics for not only involving the outdoor advertising industry and controlling authorities in the sustainable management of outdoor information transfer, but also local communities. Such a *common language of aesthetic expression* is needed to revitalise and stimulate communities' blunted senses caused by a degraded environment, and to provide an instrument for participation.

❑ **Subjectivity within objectivity:** Although the guidelines in this chapter provide an objective framework for legislation and control measures and for the sustainable management of outdoor information transfer, they should not be interpreted as having to be applied to the letter of the

word, at all costs and under all circumstances. Sufficient scope is left for a variation in aesthetic values, individual preferences and local circumstances. A certain amount of subjectivity is therefore possible within a framework of objectivity provided by these guidelines. The term *objectivity* or *objective tool* might also be interpreted in the sense of the proposed guidelines providing a point of departure against which any design might be evaluated. If any of these principles and guidelines is rejected, it should be for a logical reason in accordance with local circumstances, while there should be a specific design purpose for such a step in order to make a positive contribution to the perceptual environment.

4.3.2   VERIFICATION OF HYPOTHESIS 3:

From the above conclusions it is clear that Hypothesis 3 can be accepted.

CHAPTER 5

SYNOPSIS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main purpose of Chapter 5 is to provide meaningful recommendations to round off this study logically. In order to put such recommendations in the right perspective the purpose of the study, problem statement and main conclusions are repeated here. Chapter 5 can therefore be seen as a synopsis of the study which can be read separately.

5.1. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND CONCLUSIONS

The problem statement was formulated in the form of a study goal. This study has a dual purpose. Firstly, it is aimed at determining the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer as an important resource in the aesthetic environment. Effective management relates to both the benefits and impact of outdoor information transfer. Secondly, this study is aimed at providing user-friendly guidelines for managing outdoor information transfer effectively.

5.1.1 ROLE AND STATUS OF THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT

Since outdoor information transfer operates mainly within the realm of the aesthetic or perceptual environment, the first sub-problem addressed by this study is to determine the role and status of the perceptual environment in contemporary society. With this in mind, a hypothesis was formulated which states that the perceptual environment plays an important role in contemporary society while also forming part of sustainable environmental management. This hypothesis furthermore assumes that the role of the perceptual environment is not adequately recognised in contemporary society.

5.1.1.1 The role of the perceptual environment

The following conclusions can be drawn with regard to the important role of the perceptual environment in contemporary society:

❑ **Placeness and sense of place:** The importance of the perceptual environment has to be considered against the background of placeness and sense of place, which can be seen as the essence or the sum and substance of the perceptual environment. It forms the key to the sound management of the perceptual environment.

❑ **Healthy and pleasant human living environments:** The perceptual environment makes an important contribution to the creation of healthier and more pleasant human living environments. It is important for aspects such as the potential of human lives, discouragement of crime and vandalism, cultural development, community identity and involvement, environmental awareness and care, mental and physical health, conflict resolution and urban decay.

❑ **Stimulation of economic development:** Placeness and aesthetics have a high economic value. They form the fabric on which any tourism industry is based and promote economic development in general by attracting investments. In the process of economic globalisation the local character of towns, cities and neighbourhoods can be seen as a very important variable in making economic development decisions.

❑ **Upliftment of disadvantaged communities:** The perceptual environment is not a luxury to be enjoyed by the higher income groups only, but also plays an important role in the uplifting of disadvantaged communities through community identity and awareness and as a catalyst for economic development.

❑ **Instrument for environmental management:** The perceptual environment plays a direct role in environmental management by presenting an essential instrument for this purpose. It provides a perceptual framework within which environmental awareness and environmental management become tangible and are manifested, and within which the objects of management can be visualised. It can also be said that the perceptual environment provides

a moral inspiration for responsible environmental management by stimulating and sharpening man's consciousness of the need for responsible environmental management. However, if the perceptual environment is to make a meaningful contribution in this regard, it should be supported and strengthened by an appropriate world-view on environmental management. The perceptual process also promotes environmental integrity by creating a framework for a holistic approach in the mind of the environmental manager. Aesthetics can be seen as a binding factor that cements all environmental elements together in the mind of the perceiver in order to be able to approach environmental management in a true synergistic manner. (See 2.2.1.2 & 2.2.2.)

5.1.1.2 The perceptual environment as part of sustainable environmental management

The importance of the perceptual environment is enhanced even further by the fact that it forms part of sustainable environmental management. The inclusion of the perceptual environment in the process of sustainable environmental management is based on the following arguments:

❑ **The expression of aesthetic sustainability:** An adequate mechanism can be provided for expressing aesthetic sustainability. The conservation, enhancement and management of placeness as a continuous process provides such a mechanism.

❑ **Holism:** Holism is currently seen as an important principle in environmental management. This is the most convincing argument for including the perceptual environment. If a holistic approach to environmental management is followed, perceptual resource management should be seen as part and parcel of sustainable management. If the principle of holism is applied consistently, we have no other choice but to include perceptual resource management.

❑ **Fulfilment of non-material needs:** The perceptual environment can make an important contribution to the sustainable utilisation of resources by providing more healthy opportunities for the fulfilment of unhealthy non-material needs, such as the craving for luxury and status items, through aesthetic enjoyment. (See 1.4.2.1, footnote 7)

❑ **The recognition of the perceptual environment:** Institutions such as the *Countryside Agency* in England and South Africa's *Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR)* have already started to recognise the perceptual environment as an integral part of sustainable environmental management.

5.1.1.3 The status of the perceptual environment in contemporary society

Although the perceptual environment plays an important role, this is not adequately recognised in contemporary society. This conclusion is based on the following arguments:

❑ **Insufficient environmental ethics and moral basis:** The root cause of the perceptual environment's poor recognition can be seen as a lack of proper environmental ethics and contemporary society's consumeristic mindset which culminates in a pragmatic and egocentric approach to environmental management. This approach not only tends to neglect the environment in general, but when it is recognised, tends to focus on more tangible and pragmatic aspects, such as water and air pollution, which have a more direct influence on the physical well-being of man. Since the conservation and management of the perceptual environment is less concrete and measurable than other environmental issues, an appropriate moral basis is essential to motivate and ensure the effective management of the perceptual environment and outdoor information transfer.

❑ **Environmental policy and legislation:** Environmental policy and legislation and the implementation thereof was used as an important indicator of the status of the perceptual environment. The perceptual environment occupies a relatively low status in environmental policy and legislation compared to other environmental issues. Even *Agenda 21* (United Nations, Earth Summit), which is the blueprint for global sustainable development into the 21st century, does not recognise the role of the psychoshere and the perceptual environment. However, current environmental legislation and policy do contain certain key elements that provide a nucleus for the effective management of perceptual resources in future. It can almost be seen as an unrealised declaration of intent to recognise the important role of the perceptual environment.

5.1.1.4 Verification of Hypothesis 1

Hypothesis 1, which refers to the important role of the perceptual environment in contemporary society, its integration in sustainable environmental management and its poor recognition, has been proven correct.

5.1.2 THE FUNCTION AND IMPACT OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

Determining the nature and extent of the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer, in terms of both its impacts and its benefits, can be seen as the key problem addressed by this study since it would provide the essence for a rationale for the effective management of outdoor information transfer.

With this key problem in mind the following hypothesis was formulated: *Outdoor information transfer as an important part of the perceptual environment benefits society and the environment, but also impacts negatively on the environment. Sense of place and placeness play a crucial role with regard to the benefits and impact of outdoor information transfer. If a laissez-faire policy is followed with regard to the management of outdoor information transfer, its negative impacts will overshadow its positive contribution and will neutralise many of the benefits.*

The important role of the perceptual environment can be seen as the point of departure and *raison d'être* for the effective management of outdoor information transfer. The benefits and impact of outdoor information transfer must therefore be seen against the background of the importance of the perceptual environment. If one wants to get even closer to the root of the problem regarding the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer, one will again have to go back to the insufficient and pragmatic environmental ethics of contemporary society. This insufficient ethical basis leads to the misuse and abuse of the perceptual environment and therefore to the misuse and abuse of outdoor information transfer, while it also leads to the poor utilisation of the aesthetic potential of outdoor information transfer. This misuse and abuse of outdoor information transfer not only have a direct impact on the environment and tend to neutralise the benefits of outdoor information transfer, but also serve as a very strong symbolism of society's pragmatic and consumeristic mindset which may condition members of society even further to abuse the environment.

5.1.2.1 The benefits of outdoor information transfer

Outdoor information transfer benefits society and the environment by

❑ directing and guiding the road user and pedestrian,

❑ informing and warning the public in order to enhance general well-being and safety,

❑ stimulating economic growth and promoting freedom of commercial choice,

❑ enhancing the visual environment, and

❑ providing a source of income and similar benefits.

5.1.2.2 The impacts of outdoor information transfer

Outdoor information transfer impacts on the environment and society in a myriad of ways. These impacts are often interrelated and consist of the following:

❑ Psychological impact consisting of
  ▪ environmental overstimulation or information overload, and
  ▪ other Impacts related to placelessness, which can be divided into
    ● crime and vandalism,
    ● poor community identity and a uniform world culture, and
    ● devaluation of place and commercialisation of placeness.

❑ Ethical or moral impact

❑ Unsustainable consumption patterns

❑ Impact on tourism resources and unfriendly tourist and retail environments

- ❑ Impact on traffic safety and traffic flow, which involves the following issues:
    - ▪ Distracting the attention of the motorist
    - ▪ Interfering with and creating confusion regarding traffic signals, traffic signs and road markings
    - ▪ Obstructing the view of the motorist
    - ▪ Forming physical obstructions
    - ▪ Billboards and signs hitting pedestrians, cyclists and motorists
    - ▪ Impairing traffic flow

- ❑ Direct ecological impact

- ❑ Noise pollution

- ❑ Light pollution

- ❑ Devaluation of property values and urban decay

5.1.2.3 The role of placeness

Sense of place and placeness serve as an important instrument in analysing and expressing the benefits and impacts of outdoor information transfer. Underlying this statement is the pivotal role of placeness in the perceptual environment. Placeness is necessary to actualise the aesthetic and artistic potential of outdoor information transfer and to put the advertising message in the mind of the observer and to keep it there. However, outdoor information transfer has a natural tendency to impact on placeness as the essence of the perceptual environment. Through effective management, outdoor information transfer should rather enhance placeness instead of working against it.

5.1.2.4 The effects of a *laissez-faire* approach to the management of outdoor information transfer

If a *laissez-faire* approach is followed in managing outdoor information transfer the dynamics and inherent characteristics of outdoor information transfer might very easily get out of hand. This will

lead to the impacts of outdoor information transfer overshadowing its positive contribution and may even neutralise many of its benefits. Benefits and impacts have to be viewed in the context of effective management, which means optimising the benefits while minimising the impacts of outdoor information transfer. A lack of effective management may very easily lead to an inverted situation where impacts are maximised while benefits are minimised.

The above statement is based on the following arguments:

❑ **Lessons from history:** History has shown that outdoor information transfer, and especially commercial advertising, has a latent and inherent capacity for impacting negatively on the visual environment. It only needs favourable circumstances such as periods of economic growth, technological progress or periods of promotional frustration in other advertising media for outdoor advertising to show its hand and leave major footprints on the environment. The current economic and technological climate, together with the *globalisation* of the more extravagant and impetuous American approach to outdoor information transfer, provides an extremely favourable climate for outdoor information transfer and consequently for major impacts on the environment and society.

❑ **Forces enhancing the impact of outdoor information transfer:** The following three driving forces behind outdoor information transfer will lead to an ever-increasing escalation of its impact if a *laissez-faire* approach is followed.

▪ **The obtrusive character and inherent dynamics of outdoor advertisements and signs:** Outdoor information transfer's *modus operandi* of forcing itself upon the public inevitably points to a *natural* tendency to increase its impact. This tendency necessitates the effective management of outdoor advertisements and signs and even stronger control than is exercised in the case of any other advertising medium. The obtrusive character of outdoor advertisements and signs is enhanced even further by its inherent dynamics, as expressed by the competition, encroachment, attachment, imperialistic, transition and disorder principles. If a *laissez-faire* policy is followed, the inherent dynamics and characteristics of outdoor information transfer will lead to an escalating impact which will overshadow all benefits.

- **The persistency and tactics of the outdoor advertising fraternity:** Since outdoor advertising is a *billion-dollar industry* this industry (especially in the United States) is very active in lobbying politicians, often using professional lobbying firms, and large sums of money are often spent to discredit campaigns for the effective management of outdoor information transfer and to undermine legislation. The industry is very persistent in its endeavours and almost every avenue and enticement is used to obtain advertising rights and concessions from controlling authorities.

- **Domination of outdoor advertising and monetary motive as driving force:** Outdoor advertising, which can be seen as the promotion of the sale of goods and services and the generation of income, form the most dominant and aggressive part of outdoor information transfer. The creation of monetary wealth therefore seems to be the most prominent motive and driving force behind the largest part of outdoor information transfer, which again points to a tendency to generate environmental impact.

5.1.2.5 Verification of Hypothesis 2

Outdoor information transfer has a variety of potential benefits and even a larger number of potential impacts which cover the social, economic and ecological spectrum. Outdoor information transfer has a huge potential to either benefit or impact on placeness and the perceptual environment, or to employ the perceptual process in generating impacts and benefits. Owing to its diversity and the extent of possible impacts and benefits, it may be concluded that outdoor information transfer forms an important component of the perceptual environment. There is a definite need for the effective and active management of outdoor information transfer, which would involve all interested and effective parties, as the only alternative to a *laissez-faire* approach or self-regulation by the outdoor advertising industry. This need is confirmed by public opinion, which reflects a definite preference for the effective management of outdoor information transfer. Effective management implies optimising the benefits and minimising the impacts of outdoor information transfer. Effective management is therefore essential to both the perceptual environment and the outdoor advertising industry.

From the above it is clear that Hypothesis 2, which refers to the benefits and impacts of outdoor information transfer, the pivotal role of placeness and the undesirability of a *laissez faire* approach to the management of outdoor information transfer, can be accepted as true.

5.1.3 USER-FRIENDLY GUIDELINES FOR THE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER AND THE VERIFICATION OF HYPOTHESIS 3

General principles and user-friendly guidelines are necessary to actualise the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer and to address the issues and concerns identified in this study. As a result of this problem a third hypothesis was formulated which states that general principles and user-friendly guidelines can be developed for the effective management of outdoor information transfer. Such guidelines would make the management of outdoor information transfer less subjective and would provide a basis for controlling and legislative measures. It was also assumed that such principles and guidelines could be used as an objective measure for the sustainable management of outdoor information transfer.

Hypothesis 3 was proven true by producing guidelines covering a variety of issues in order to address the concerns raised in this study. Although these guidelines can be used as an objective framework for legislation, control measures and the sustainable management of outdoor information transfer, they still need to be applied flexibly to accommodate a variation in local conditions, lifestyles and design aspirations.

Four basic principles were used as the point of departure for the formulation of these guidelines:

❑ **A balanced and responsible economic approach:** In terms of outdoor information transfer this means that outdoor advertising should not be aimed at utilising and maximising every available advertising opportunity and implementing whatever is technologically achievable at the cost of the perceptual environment.

❑ **A natural approach:** As part of the aesthetic environment, outdoor advertising should harmonise with nature and culture rather than clash with it. Outdoor information transfer should respect the character and integrity of both the biophysical and cultural environments rather than change them.

- ❏ **A holistic approach:** No single advertisement, sign or advertising structure should ever be perceived in isolation, but should always be seen within the context of a setting or broader design.

- ❏ **Human scale:** Outdoor advertisements and signs should be kept on a human scale wherever possible.

5.2   RECOMMENDATIONS

To actualise the need for the effective management of outdoor information transfer and to implement the guidelines provided for this purpose specific recommendations are needed.

5.2.1   A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO THE MANAGEMENT OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

It was shown that the perceptual environment plays an important role in sustainable environmental management and that outdoor information transfer constitutes an important part of the perceptual environment in contemporary society. The effective management of outdoor information transfer will therefore only be achieved by starting at an appreciation for and involvement in the sustainable management of the perceptual environment. In order to achieve such a holistic approach the following should receive attention:

Recommendation 1 – Awareness raising and availability of educational material: Popular as well as more advanced material in the form of brochures, booklets and guidelines explaining the importance of the perceptual environment should be developed. The National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEA&T) should be responsible for initiating this material which should also be placed on the DEA&T's official website. Common principles and guidelines for the appreciation of environmental aesthetics and placeness should be provided, thereby making the appreciation of the perceptual environment less subjective. Such principles and guidelines should focus on the relationship between ordinary people and the ordinary landscape by including the vernacular elements of the landscape. Material should also be provided for

school curricula, while more advanced material should be aimed at the design and planning professions. An awareness-raising campaign should be launched by the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism in co-operation with the provincial environmental departments and should be aimed at the following target groups:

❑ Communities, community groups and environmental groups

❑ The outdoor advertising industry

❑ The tourism industry and tourism authorities

❑ Environmental managers and authorities responsible for the environment

❑ Authorities controlling outdoor advertising

❑ Scholars and students

❑ The design and planning professions, including the engineering profession

Recommendation 2 – The perceptual environment as an instrument for creating and encouraging environmental awareness: The appreciation of the perceptual environment should be used as an instrument to promote awareness of other environmental issues as well as community involvement in sustainable environmental management. It should be used to instil higher environmental values and a love for both the biophysical and cultural environments among the South African public. This will contribute to an appropriate moral basis for environmental management. Appropriate visual and audio-visual material should be developed for this purpose and should be aimed at the various target groups.

Recommendation 3 – Introducing environmental aesthetics into school curricula as well as other forms of education: Environmental aesthetics should be introduced into school curricula in an integrative and holistic manner. This will not only serve as an instrument for creating environmental awareness, but will also contribute to solving a variety of other problems in various professions in the future by using environmental aesthetics as a perceptual framework for a

holistic approach to the environment. The Cartesian approach and functionalism in the design and planning professions may serve as a practical example of problems to be solved in this regard. According to the Cartesian design approach buildings, sites and settings are designed in isolation rather than contributing holistically to the aesthetics and character of landscapes or places. Functionalism focuses solely on the functionality of buildings, structures, sites, neighbourhoods and towns while ignoring the aesthetics. Both approaches have a negative influence on the perceptual environment and placeness. In South Africa outcomes-based education provides an ideal opportunity for integrating environmental aesthetics into school curricula in a holistic manner. However, environmental aesthetics should not be limited to school curricula, but should also form part of all forms of formal and informal environmental education as well as planning and design disciplines. Reference should be made specifically to the monetary value of aesthetics in order to counter the restrictive approach of functionalism.

Recommendation 4 - Conserving, enhancing and creating placeness: Owing to the fact that placeness is threatened on various fronts, special care should be taken to conserve, enhance and create sense of place wherever possible. This should be seen in the light of the fact that placeness forms the essence of perceptual resource management and the management of outdoor information transfer. Important features that contribute to placeness should be identified for specific locations and areas. It is not only the general public that should be made aware of the importance of placeness, but environmental managers and the design professions as well.

Recommendation 5 – Landscape Character Areas: In order to achieve Recommendation 4, *Landscape Character Areas* with distinctive identities should be identified for South Africa on a regional basis, taking both the biophysical and cultural environments into consideration. The main features contributing to or impacting on these distinctive characters should be identified. This landscape character classification will be used for managing aesthetic resources in a sustainable manner and to identify distinctive features that might be utilised for tourism development. Such a classification should be the responsibility of the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEA&T) as part of provincial Tourism Potential Atlases (TourPats) under their Environmental Potential Atlas (ENPAT) Project, in co-operation with provincial tourism authorities. The necessary guidelines for the management of perceptual resources and outdoor information transfer should also be provided for the various landscape character areas. Landscape Character Areas and urban design/perceptual plans (Recommendation 7) should supplement each other. A
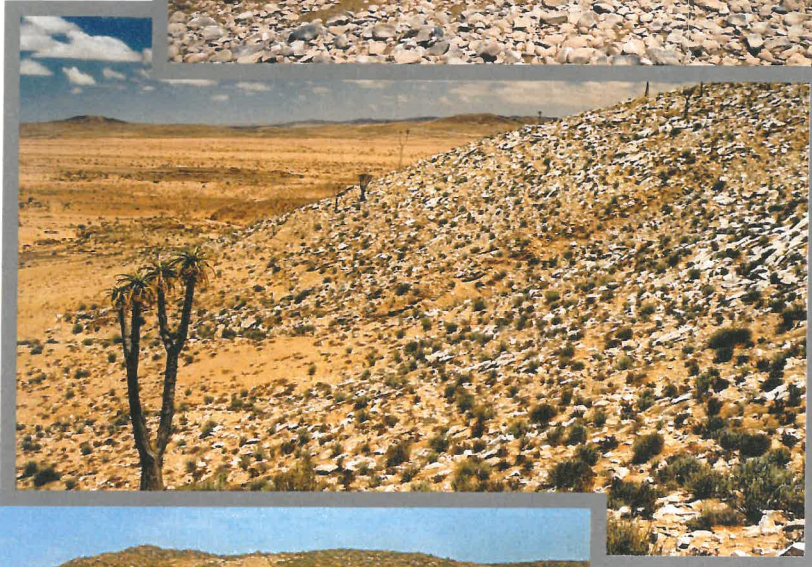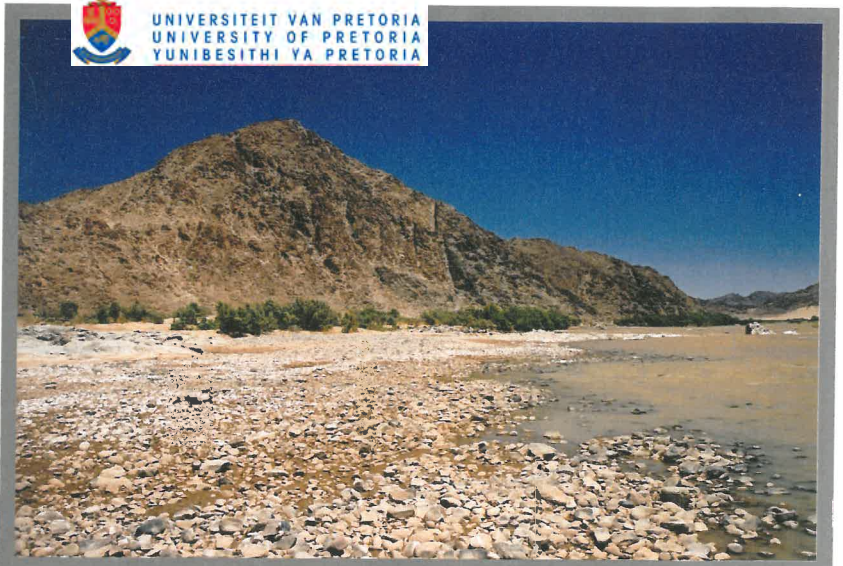
Photo date:
Feb 2002
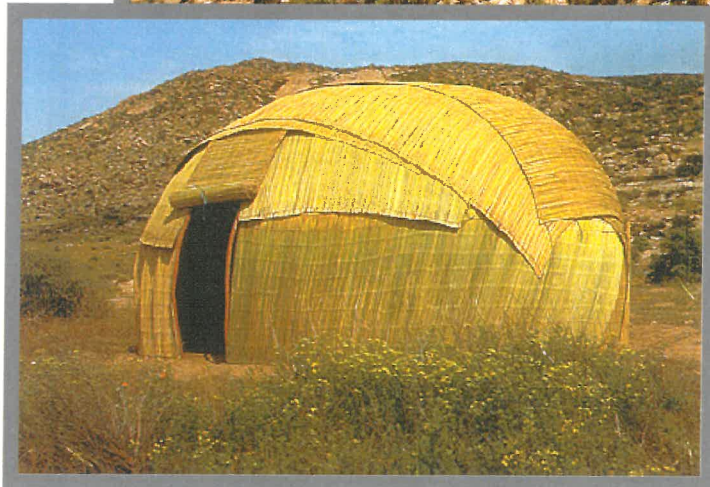
Photo date:
Feb 2002

Source: The Tourism Blueprint cc, 2001, p.192

In order to approach the management of outdoor information transfer in a holistic manner one should start with the appreciation and management of the perceptual environment in its totality. For this purpose *Landscape Character Areas*, with distinctive identities, should be identified for South Africa on a regional basis, taking both the biophysical and cultural environments into consideration. The main features contributing to or impacting on these distinctive characters should be identified.

The barren landscape of the Richtersveld in the Northern Cape has a character of its own (top and centre), which is enhanced by the local Nama culture (bottom *matjieshuis* / mat house).

Figure 5.1

Landscape character areas

The landscape of the Overberg area in the Western Cape is characterised by rolling wheat-fields with patches of Fynbos in between and prominent mountain ranges to the north (top). Fishing communities along the coast make an important contribution to local culture and tradition as indicated by the historical fishing boats at the Old Harbour in Hermanus (centre) and traditional fisherman's cottages at Hotagterklip (*left rear rock*) at the entrance of Struisbaai (bottom).

Figure 5.1 continued

Date of photos: September 2000

Landscape Character Area classification should also be used as an educational instrument in order to achieve Recommendation 2.

Recommendation 6 – Eradication of invasive alien plant species: In support of Recommendation 5, South Africa's *Work for Water Programme* should be used as a mechanism to enhance and restore the character of Landscape Character Areas. Together with the eradication of invasive alien species a programme should also be developed to promote the planting of non-invasive species which can contribute to regional character. The Department of Water Affairs and Forestry should take the initiative in this regard in co-operation with the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism.

Recommendation 7 – Urban design and perceptual resource plans: Arising from Recommendation 5, local authorities should develop urban design and perceptual resource plans, which should also form part of provincial, regional and local tourism initiatives. A guideline document compiled for this purpose should be provided by the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEA&T). This document should also be available on DEA&T's official website. Smaller local authorities that cannot afford professional fees for such a plan should be assisted by the design schools of universities and other tertiary institutions. A national initiative should be launched in this regard by the National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism, with the assistance of professional institutes such as the *Institute of Landscape Architects of South Africa (ILASA)* and the *South African Institute of Architects (SAIA)*, the *South African Heritage Resource Agency (SAHRA)* and the design schools of universities and other tertiary institutions.

Recommendation 8 – The holistic management of tourism resources and the perceptual environment: The perceptual environment should be managed holistically in its totality and not as isolated areas of high scenic value, while the local scenic diversity and local character of the everyday living environment should not be ignored but should be conserved and enhanced wherever possible. This should be achieved by taking both Landscape Character Areas and urban design and perceptual resource plans into consideration, as mentioned under Recommendations 5 and 7. Tourism authorities should become actively involved in the management of the perceptual environment. Such authorities should not concentrate on isolated eco-tourism areas only, but should also be involved in the management of a variety of landscapes

with diverse landscape characters, including both biophysical and cultural resources. Not only the impact of tourism development should receive attention, but also the impact of all other activities on the perceptual environment as an important tourism resource. The National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism should take the initiative in this regard. The awareness-raising material to be provided under Recommendation 1 should emphasise the importance of the perceptual environment as a tourism resource.

Recommendation 9 – Community involvement in perceptual resource management: In order to ensure community involvement in perceptual resource management, the provision of functional and attractive social space should be incorporated in urban planning to serve as important nodes for experiencing sense of place and sense of community. The provision of guidelines to improve communities' appreciation of environmental aesthetics will be of no use if no opportunities exist to experience place and to apply these guidelines. Appreciation for the environment should be developed during everyday life and not only during isolated periods of exposure to exceptional natural areas.

Recommendation 10 – Integration and co-ordination of the management of outdoor information transfer and relevant practices such as littering and graffiti: Since sign proliferation and other practices impacting on the aesthetic environment, such as littering and graffiti, are mutually affecting each other, the management of outdoor information transfer should be co-ordinated with anti-litter and anti-graffiti campaigns. Wherever possible the management of outdoor information transfer and relevant practices impacting on the environment should be managed by the same controlling authority.

5.2.2 PROVIDING AND DESIGNING FOR OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

Recommendation 11 – Guidelines and awareness raising: Popular material in the form of brochures, booklets and guidelines explaining the impacts and benefits of outdoor information transfer should be developed from this study. Popular and more advanced material, containing principles and guidelines for the effective management of outdoor information transfer, should also be developed from Chapter 4 of this study. The National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism (DEA&T) should be responsible for initiating this material, which should also

be placed on the DEA&T's official website. An awareness-raising campaign should be launched by the DEA&T and should be aimed at the following target groups:

❑   Communities, community groups and environmental groups

❑   The outdoor advertising industry

❑   The tourism industry and tourism authorities

❑   Environmental managers and authorities responsible for the environment

❑   Authorities controlling outdoor advertising

❑   The design and planning professions

Recommendation 12 – Updating of guidelines: Providing guidelines for the effective management of outdoor information transfer should be a continuous process. Guidelines should be updated and improved as circumstances change and new needs are identified.

Recommendation 13 – A sign system for directing the tourist and traveller: An effective and well-ordered sign system to direct and guide the tourist and traveller to services and attractions along important tourist routes should be established in South Africa. Apart from generic signs containing general information, as provided for in the South African road traffic sign system in the form of brown tourism signs, two additional sign levels should be provided. To provide more specific information on services and attractions a sign type similar to the American logo signs should be considered, or otherwise more specific information should be incorporated into the brown tourism signs. A system of interrelated, multi-purpose and safe information nodes should also be provided along important tourism routes. Both the additional sign levels should be aesthetically pleasing and should contribute to a South African, regional or local character wherever possible. It should furthermore be aimed at providing sufficient information to the tourist and traveller and at creating opportunities for the outdoor advertising industry in order to neutralise illegal billboards and other signs aimed at tourist attractions and services. The National Department of Environmental Affairs and Tourism should take the initiative in establishing such a

An effective and well-ordered sign system to direct and guide the tourist and traveller to services and attractions along important tourist routes should be established in South Africa. In order to provide the tourist and traveller with more specific information the American logo signs (above) should be considered, or otherwise such information should be incorporated into the brown tourism signs in a more sufficient manner. The logo signs have a neat appearance since they contain only the logos of the various enterprises and the freeway exit number.

Figure 5.2
Logo signs

Photo source: IDT, online

sign system with the necessary assistance of and participation by provincial environmental and tourism departments and the private sector. The prompt removal of illegal billboards and signs will be essential to ensure the viability of logo signs and especially outdoor information nodes.

5.2.3   EMPOWERMENT AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Recommendation 14 - Training of local artists and sign-writers: In order to create employment local artists and sign-writers should be trained in the design and upkeep of signs, sign structures and advertisements in accordance with acceptable norms and standards. Local controlling authorities and tourism bodies should also be included in such training in order to build capacity for the effective management of advertisements and sign programmes. In training local artists and sign-writers a holistic approach should be followed. The design, production and maintenance of signs, advertisements and sign structures should be combined with other perceptual components such as landscape maintenance, window displays, litter removal and the removal of graffiti in order to create viable job opportunities for the informal sector and small business.

Recommendation 15 - Outdoor advertising courses for the informal sector and small business: The necessary short and long courses, as well as correspondence courses, should be provided at technikons and universities. Such courses should include practical work and should cover components such as:

❑   The importance of the perceptual environment and the role of outdoor information transfer in the perceptual environment

❑   Graphic design of a variety of sign types

❑   Design of advertising structures

❑   Landscaping around larger signs and advertisements and the relationship between signs, sign structures and the surrounding landscape

Photo date: Feb 2002
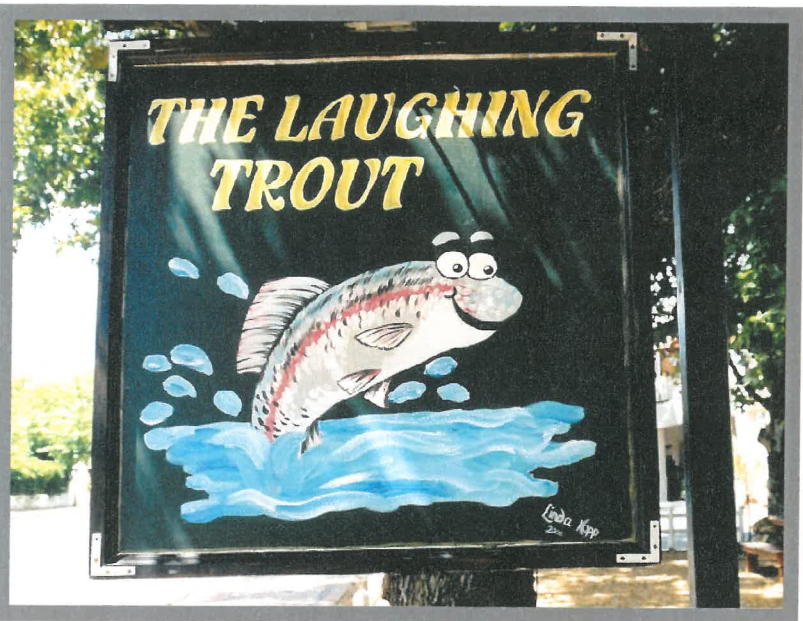
Photo date: 1996

Figure 5.3

Capacity building

Creating employment opportunities for local artists

In order to create employment, local artists and sign-writers should be trained in the design and upkeep of signs, sign structures and advertisements in accordance with acceptable norms and standards. The photographs on this page illustrate the possibilities for creative expression by local artists

Photo date: September 2000

- ❑ The use of local and natural materials for signs and sign structures and the use of indigenous plant material for landscaping, the development of sign themes and sign systems and the enhancement of placeness

- ❑ The maintenance of advertisements, signs and sign structures including road signs and brown tourism signs

- ❑ Landscape maintenance, including the maintenance of parks and town entrances

- ❑ Small business management

- ❑ Window displays

- ❑ Removal of litter and graffiti

Recommendation 16 – Building the capacity of the formal sector: Outdoor advertising contractors and advertising agencies should be trained with regard to the following:

- ❑ The importance of the perceptual environment in contemporary society

- ❑ The contribution of outdoor information transfer to the perceptual environment and the creation of a sense of place

- ❑ A holistic approach to the design of advertisements and advertising structures, the relationship between sign content, sign structure and the surrounding landscape, basic principles of landscape and urban design

Appropriate long and short courses should be provided at tertiary institutions. The above principles should be integrated into graphic design courses relevant to the advertising industry, while these courses should be influenced by the landscape architect and urban design disciplines. Both outdoor advertising agencies and the landscape architect profession should become involved in the design of advertising structures.

Recommendation 17 – Competitions and bursaries: Competitions should be organised for designing posters, outdoor advertising structures and furniture and outdoor advertising nodes. Emphasis should be placed on local character and the enhancement of placeness. Such competitions could also be linked to student bursaries.

5.2.4 CONTROLLING AND MANAGING OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

Recommendation 18 – Public involvement: The only effective way of controlling outdoor information transfer is by involving the public and local communities. They can be involved in the following ways:

❑ Contributing to the approval of applications for outdoor advertisements and signs through strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedures

❑ Removal of smaller illegal advertisements, such as posters, at community level

❑ Reporting of illegal advertisements. Special helplines should be provided by larger controlling authorities for this purpose

❑ The establishment of pressure groups

Public involvement with regard to the management of outdoor information transfer will only be possible after the necessary awareness raising and provision of popular educational material has taken place.

Recommendation 19 – Establishing the right of public involvement: The right of the public to have a say in the management of outdoor information transfer, and especially commercial advertising, should be established as a non-negotiable right. This should be based on the principle that the perceptual environment belongs to the community, and cannot be seen as the exclusive property of landowners or the outdoor advertising industry.

Recommendation 20 – Public involvement at various levels: Public involvement in the management of outdoor information transfer should not be limited to local community level. National and regional environmental organisations should also be involved where more important rural or urban routes or landscape elements are at stake. This principle will prevent local communities from making concessions in order to benefit from outdoor advertising while such concessions might have a negative impact on the aesthetic attributes of greater urban, regional or national importance which are valued by society as a whole.

Recommendation 21 – Establishing an environmental organisation for championing the perceptual environment: A national environmental organisation with regional branches and specialising in the perceptual environment should be established in South Africa. Such an organisation should make an important contribution to the management of natural and cultural beauty, as well as outdoor information transfer, by making use of effective measures such as exposing illegal and undesirable outdoor advertisements on the Internet[31] and by involving local communities and the local tourism industry.

Recommendation 22 - Involvement of the tourism industry: In order to ease the burden placed on controlling authorities and managers of outdoor information transfer, the tourism industry should become involved in the management of outdoor information transfer at various levels. The tourism industry, and especially local tourist organisations and communities benefiting from tourism resources, should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own signs in accordance with relevant norms, standards, principles and guidelines. The tourism industry and local communities should be made aware of the value of the perceptual environment, visually pleasant signs and a proper tourism sign system, including information nodes.

Recommendation 23 – Involvement of the outdoor advertising industry: The outdoor advertising industry should become involved in the holistic management of outdoor information transfer by taking the interaction between sign content, sign structure and the surrounding environment into consideration and by involving design professions in this regard.

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[31] In Manhattan, New York, a full-colour map with supplementary information, called *A Rough Guide to Manhattan Ad Creep*, was produced in the form of a tourist map. This map indicates high impacting billboards and outdoor advertisements in Manhattan and can be seen as a very effective awareness-raising tool (Stay Free! online (2)).

Recommendation 24 – Immediate removal of illegal advertisements: Controlling authorities must be able and willing to remove illegal advertisements and structures immediately without having to become involved in lengthy court cases. A lengthy juridical process will have unnecessary cost implications for the controlling authority while illegal advertisements will attract more illegal advertisements, which may lead to an uncontrollable situation. Delay tactics might also be followed by the owners of illegal billboards, making it possible for such billboards to remain almost indefinitely (cf. Chard, undated). It is important that both advertisement and advertising structure be removed. Although legislation in South Africa does make provision for the immediate removal of illegal advertisements, this option is not implemented in most cases, since it is currently viewed as an intolerant and political incorrect way of doing things.

Recommendation 25 – The use of buildings as advertising structures: Controlling authorities should prevent the use of buildings for the sole purpose of carrying advertisements since this may result in such buildings becoming derelict and contributing to urban decay.

Recommendation 26 – Impact assessment of outdoor advertisements and signs: Strategic environmental assessments (SEA) (see Appendix 2) and environmental impact assessments (EIA) should be used as important instruments in managing environmental information transfer. These instruments should be used to minimise the impact and maximise the benefits of outdoor information transfer. Public involvement and alternative development scenarios should be applied as important principles of EIAs and SEAs. Cost benefit analysis should also form an important tool in the effective management of outdoor information transfer and should include both monetary and non-monetary aspects, which should be interpreted in monetary terms. The negative impacts of the *Treasury Principle* should be neutralised by applying these instruments. The *Treasury Principle* refers to the persuasion of controlling authorities by the financial benefits offered up-front by outdoor advertising contractors to obtain concessions that might impact on the perceptual environment an might not be in the best interest of local communities or the public at large.

Recommendation 27 - Outdoor information strategies and plans: Strategies and outdoor information plans, which should include the contribution of outdoor information transfer to the aesthetic environment, should be developed by controlling authorities in order to optimise the benefits of outdoor information transfer and to minimise its impacts. Such strategies and plans

may include more detailed sign plans for individual streets or districts. The SEA procedure should play an important role in developing such strategies and plans. Outdoor information strategies and plans should become an integral part of urban design and perceptual resource plans. This recommendation should therefore be co-ordinated with Recommendation 7.

5.2.5 FURTHER RESEARCH AND STUDIES

Recommendation 28 - Research on landscape character areas: Research aimed at identifying factors that contribute to and impact on the character and placeness of landscape character areas, as mentioned under Recommendation 5, should be undertaken.

Recommendation 29 - Immediate removal of illegal advertisements: Research on the multiplyer effect of illegal advertisements and signs should be undertaken.

Recommendation 30 - Job creation and hand-painted signs: Research should be undertaken on the role of hand-painted signs and advertisements in contemporary society and the outdoor advertising industry, as well as opportunities for and contributions by the informal sector and small business in the outdoor advertising industry. Such research should cover all outdoor advertisement and sign types and should be sponsored by the outdoor advertising industry.

Recommendation 31 – Viewing tax: For the viewing of their billboards and advertisements the outdoor advertising industry depends heavily on public roads which belong to various roads authorities and which are constructed using tax-payers' money. The possibility of a viewing or viewability tax to be paid by the outdoor advertising industry to relevant authorities should be investigated as a possible source of income for managing outdoor information transfer and for the maintenance and beautification of urban streets. Such tax should be levied on certain categories of outdoor advertising viewable from public open space and mainly roads, whether they are located on public land or not, and can be calculated according to the surface area of advertisements and other indicators such as traffic counts. Principles and mechanisms should be established to prevent the exploitation of viewability tax by the authorities at the cost of visual resources and to ensure the sustainable management of both viewability tax and the perceptual environment.

Recommendation 32 – Historical shop signs: In order to contribute to the restoration and conservation of historical town centres research should be done on shop signs of the various regions and historical eras in South Africa, and design guidelines should be provided in this regard. Such shop signs could make an important contribution to local character and placeness and could even be used in modern shopping centres with a historical theme. Examples in this regard include a possible Dutch and French influence in the Western Cape and a British and German influence in the Eastern Cape.

Recommendation 33 – Viability of outdoor information nodes: Research should be undertaken on the viability of a functional system of outdoor information nodes in order to ensure the involvement of the outdoor advertising industry. Such a study should include the possibility of subsidising less profitable nodes by means of more profitable nodes or by means of local communities contributing to such less profitable nodes in order to market their services and attractions. The proposals made on outdoor information nodes in Appendix 1 of this study should serve as a starting point for such a viability study. All information nodes should be of a high standard, while such multi-purpose nodes should benefit the informal sector and local communities not only by providing information on local services and attractions, but also by providing a point of sale for local commodities.

Recommendation 34 – A non-pragmatic environmental world-view: A more detailed study should be undertaken on the formulation of a non-pragmatic environmental world-view relevant to the problems and challenges of contemporary society. Such a world-view should not only provide a basis for the sustainable management of the environment in general, but should also provide a basis for the sustainable management of the perceptual environment and outdoor information transfer in particular. Due to the fact that the current inefficient environmental ethics have to a large extent been influenced by improper Christian axioms or a misinterpretation of such axioms, such a study should focus on Christian society's contribution in this regard.

Recommendation 35 – Outdoor advertising and road safety: No recommendations will be made regarding research on the contentious issue of the correlation between outdoor advertising and road safety since sufficient recommendations have already been made in this regard in recent studies such as the study conducted by Farbry *et al.* (2001).

In order to contribute to the restoration and conservation of historical town centres research should be done on shop signs of the various regions and historical eras in South Africa and design guidelines should be provided in this regard. Such shop signs can make an important contribution to local character and placeness and can even be used in modern shopping centres with a historical theme.

The Kimberley Mine Museum next to the Big Hole (centre) displays a variety of signs dating back to the latter half of the nineteenth century when diamond digging was in full swing.

Date of photos: December 1999

Figure 5.4
Historical signs

Figure 5.4 continued

BLACKLAWS'

Blacklaws
SKOENE WINKEL
TAILOR

S. PERILLI
HEAD OFFICE GLASGOW SCOTLAND

CIGARETTE MANUFACTURER

TOBACCO MERCHANT

CIGARETTE EXPORTERS

Date of photos: December 1999
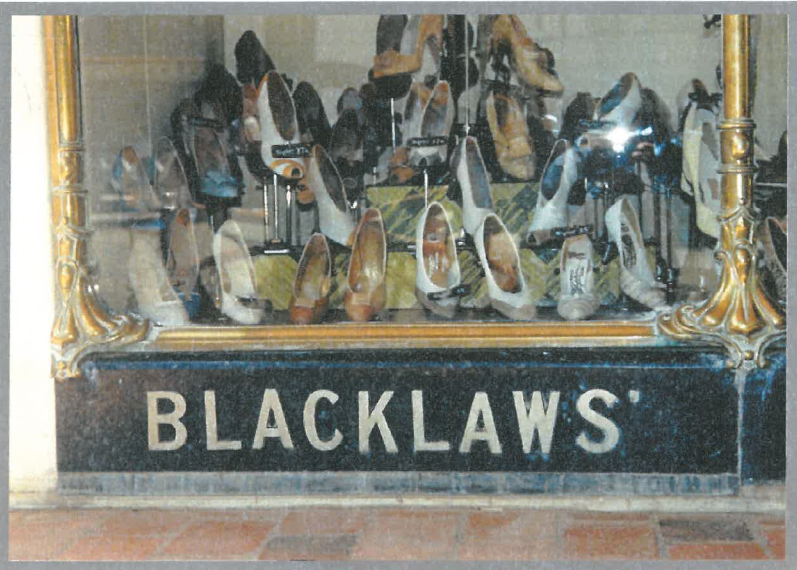
Recommendation 36 – Other human senses and outdoor information transfer: Research should be undertaken on the role of the non-visual human senses in managing outdoor information transfer in order to provide guidelines in this regard.

APPENDIX 1

OUTDOOR INFORMATION NODES

The advertising node concept is specifically aimed at South Africa with a mixture of First and Third World economies and formal and informal sectors. With certain adaptations this concept might also be applied in other countries.

1. PROBLEM STATEMENT

The rationale for developing outdoor information nodes may be found in the following problems:

❑ Owing to poor economic conditions, increasing unemployment and various other factors, smaller businesses, part-time enterprises on residential premises and informal trading on sidewalks are increasing. Many of these enterprises are finding themselves in a survival situation and do not have the financial means for proper outdoor advertising or advertisements in other media. Many of them therefore make use of affordable but illegal outdoor advertising, mostly in the form of posters on lampposts or traffic signs and smaller advertising trailers. Some of these entrepreneurs even use very untidy written messages on pieces of cardboard. These illegal advertisements create a traffic hazard, contribute to visual pollution and often create an unprofessional image.

❑ The current *laissez-faire* approach of providing information on enterprises to tourists and travellers create the following problems:

   ▪ The proliferation of advertisements and signs at town entrances and along busy routes (inside and outside towns), trying to attract the attention of tourist and travellers in advance.

   ▪ The encroachment of projecting and free-standing shop signs onto streets and sidewalks.

- Advertisements and signs competing for the attention of the viewer. New additions to the scene tend to be bigger, higher and closer to the street and display brighter colours than existing advertisements. This may cause a snowball effect which can very easily get out of hand.

- These advertisements and signs cause visual pollution, destroy local sense of place, create a traffic safety hazard and distract from any tourism experience.

- The proliferation of estate agents' boards on sidewalks. These boards create visual pollution, distract from any tourism experience and create a hazard for pedestrians, joggers and cyclists using sidewalks. Many local authorities experience difficulties in controlling guidance signs to show houses over weekends and self-regulation by the industry has also proven fruitless in many instances.

- The lack of sufficient tourist information on a co-ordinated basis in certain centres and smaller towns, especially after normal shopping hours.

2. PURPOSE OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION NODES

The purpose of outdoor information nodes is to provide two or more of the following:

- Sufficient information concerning local tourist facilities and attractions in a coherent, visual pleasing and efficient manner.

- Ample opportunities for informal business to advertise in a legal, professional, visually pleasing and cost-effective manner.

- Ample outdoor advertising for estate agents.

- A favourable climate for the viability of such nodes by means of business opportunities for outdoor advertising contractors and/or opportunities for sponsorships.

❑ Contribute to job creation and the alleviation of poverty.

3. LOCALITY

Well-designed information nodes should be located at stopping places for motorists and at urban locations where people congregate and where a lot of pedestrian activity takes place, or where the potential for such activity exists. Such places may include the following:

❑ Parking areas at shopping centres
❑ At town entrances or at turn-offs to towns
❑ Filling stations and rest and service areas
❑ Strategic locations along tourist routes
❑ Popular urban parks
❑ Pedestrian malls
❑ Transport nodes such as railway stations and airports

4. COMPONENTS AND DESIGN

Information nodes will consist of a composition of the following:
❑ Tourism information section
❑ Sponsored advertising for the informal sector and small businesses
❑ Advertising component for outdoor advertising contractors
❑ Real-estate advertising
❑ Supporting facilities such as:

- Picnic areas
- Tea gardens
- Refreshment kiosks
- Play areas for children
- Rollerblade and skateboard facilities
- Arts and crafts/ fruit stalls

❑ Supporting events such as:

  ▪ Flea markets

  ▪ Fêtes and fairs

  ▪ Fashion shows and competitions

These components will supplement each other and may be integrated to some extent in order to be more functional. The number and prominence of components, as well as the design and size of an information node, will depend on its location, the availability of space and information needs. A too large information node may become unmanageable and dysfunctional, while a too small node might not be dynamic enough. A minimum of at least two components will be needed to ensure the necessary public appeal.

4.1 Tourism information facilities may consist of outdoor displays, manned or unmanned kiosks and electronic displays. It is important to orientate the visitor with regard to the town, city or larger region. At smaller information nodes or nodes with a less prominent tourism component, tourist maps might be provided on advertising structures. In any case, it can be assumed that often advertising components for both formal and informal enterprises will also carry advertisements that will be of interests to tourists and travellers. It may be very helpful if information and advertisements concerning tourist facilities, events and attractions can be categorised. Interpretative signage on the local ecology can also be provided. Tourism information provided at information nodes may be incorporated into a tourism information system for a whole city or region, with information nodes referring to the geographical location of other nodes.

4.2 Sponsored advertising for the informal sector and small business: Creative and visually pleasing structures should be provided for displaying smaller posters for informal sector and small-business advertising. This component should be divided into various enterprise categories, services and products. This will allow for easy comparison between activities and services of the same type. Such components could therefore become an open-air yellow pages for the informal sector and could be seen as a treasure house of information for somebody looking for a specific activity or service. Smaller advertisements in the form of newspaper *smalls* can also be displayed on neatly printed and well-designed sheets. An income may be derived from such adverts by asking a fee for placement, or

they may be placed as a service to the community. This section may also be used for displaying special information, such as matric or university examination results. Art students may contribute to designing posters for the informal sector while the services of local artists may be obtained and even sponsored in order to provide an income to such artists. In the case of sponsorships the sponsor's name or logo may appear on the poster, which apart from the main advertising message will serve as an advertisement for the sponsor. In this manner advertising nodes may contribute to poster art and job creation amongst previously disadvantaged artists. Artists might also undertake their task of poster-painting at the advertising node which may serve as an additional tourist attraction. Hand-painted posters might even be sold to tourists.

4.3 Outdoor advertising facilities for contractors: This component provides advertising space which is sold in the normal way to advertisers by outdoor advertising contractors and operates according to free-market principles. This component will form the advertising backbone of the information node and sufficient space must therefore be allowed for this purpose. The majority of advertisements should preferably relate to products, events, services and enterprises in a specific town, centre, area or region.

4.4 Real-estate advertising: Space should be made available for advertising by estate agents at reasonable rates. This will serve as a reasonable alternative to the inexpensive advertising space that is currently being utilised on sidewalks. The real estate fraternity could either manage this component themselves, or it could become part of the previous component. In the latter case more realistic fees could be asked once the use of advertising nodes by estate agents has become established.

4.5 Supporting facilities: These facilities can be seen as an additional attraction for visiting an information node. The security situation along tourist routes can be improved by concentrating curio and fresh produce outlets at information nodes.

4.6 Supporting events could be staged where additional space is available, such as parking areas at shopping centres during off-peak shopping hours. Such events could become an important attraction and stimulate visitor activity at the shopping centre. This would also provide further opportunities for the informal sector. Certain events may cater specifically for the tourist and may

themselves become tourist attractions to a greater or lesser degree. During such events sound systems could also be used as an additional advertising and information medium.

4.7 Landscaping and design: The following landscaping elements will contribute towards making information nodes more attractive:

- Soft landscaping (trees, shrubs, flowers)
- Hard landscaping (paving, benches, litter bins, advertising furniture)
- Focal points and special features such as water elements and prominent advertising furniture

The design of an information node should be aimed at reflecting local character and creating a unique sense of place. All structures, including advertising structures, should be of a high visual standard and should contribute to a local sense of place.

Information nodes should be designed as visual attributes that will immediately attract attention and invite people to visit them

Advertisements and signs at information nodes should never be aimed at passing motorists, but always at people visiting the information node on foot.

Information nodes should be designed within a safe environment and sufficient security should be provided to visitors.

5. FINANCING AND VIABILITY OF INFORMATION NODES

The success of any information node will depend to a great extent on important factors such as locality, attractive and functional design and efficient management.

In terms of economic viability, the section provided for outdoor advertising contractors can be seen as the most important component. Parts of the tourism section and the real-estate section (after it has

been established) may also be seen as economically viable. The same operator might therefore manage these three sections as a single unit.

The necessary sponsorships for the section catering for informal sector and small-business advertising will be essential. Advertising space will have to be provided free of charge to the informal sector, while advertising space for small businesses should be provided at a minimal fee. Sponsorships for this component may cover the following elements:

❏ The actual space for erecting such components
❏ Developing costs (structures and landscaping)
❏ Maintenance costs
❏ Printing of posters for informal entrepreneurs who cannot afford to pay for their own posters

The following sponsors may play an important role:

❏ Owners of shopping centres
❏ Petroleum companies and owners of rest and service areas.
❏ Advertising contractors and agencies
❏ Any other companies or enterprises

The responsibility for some or all of the less viable components of an information node may also be included in the lease agreement for such an information node. The whole node can therefore be run by a single operator, such as an outdoor advertising contractor, for his own account while having to subsidise certain of the components. This option is supported by the functional interrelationship between the various components of the node and the need for integrating these components. Tourism information may, for instance, be incorporated into other components such as both the formal and informal advertising sections.

Sponsors may use their involvement in such projects for advertising purposes. Being involved in such projects will create an environmental-friendly image as well as an image of caring for previously disadvantaged and less privileged groups. Sponsors may even place advertisements in other

advertising media such as newspapers, advertising information nodes as well as their own involvement in such projects.

In certain cases additional facilities such as fresh-produce stalls and curio shops may enhance the viability of the information node to a large extent.

It might take some time for information nodes to become fully established. Especially at the beginning one could assume that a visit to an advertising node will be combined with activities such as shopping, a visit to a park, a visit to a filling station or buying some fruit or curios along the road. However, after some time, depending on the success of this concept, a visit to an advertising node to gather information may become the main activity for many visitors.

6. MANAGEMENT

The efficient management and maintenance of information nodes will be of crucial importance.

All information nodes should have either a full-time or a part-time manager, as well as the necessary security personnel.

A knowledgeable person at larger tourist information sections may also assist tourists. Real-estate sections can also be manned during *show days* to direct potential clients to show houses.

All advertisements and posters in the section catering for the informal and small business sectors should be of a high standard and should be displayed in a well-organised manner. Hand-written notices and smaller pamphlets with an untidy notice board appearance should be avoided at all cost. Assistance should also be available to informal entrepreneurs in the designing and printing of posters. The size of advertising posters and the materials used will be very important. Too large posters will demand too much space while under-sized posters may create an untidy appearance. Certain criteria will also have to be applied in order for applicants to qualify for sponsored advertising.

All additional facilities and events such as fruit stalls and flea markets should also be of an acceptable standard in order to attract tourists and visitors.

Certain components of information nodes will only be successful if illegal advertisements are controlled effectively by the relevant authorities and if information nodes therefore become one of a small number of options for displaying certain types of advertisements or for catering for certain advertising needs.

7. BENEFITS AND ATTRIBUTES OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION NODES

Information nodes will provide the following benefits:

- ❑ They will solve the problem of visual pollution caused by certain types of outdoor advertisements and signs and will contribute to better living environments and more friendly and attractive tourist environments with a strong sense of place, while at the same time bolstering the informal sector, small business and community projects. Information nodes will provide a more environmentally friendly way of advertising, especially in important tourist areas such as the Garden Route, where advertising structures with a relatively high impact such as larger billboards should not be allowed at all.

- ❑ Information nodes may become an asset for shopping centres since certain events may boost sales during off-peak hours. They may even become draw-cards for tourists with favourable spending patterns.

- ❑ They will provide controlling authorities with a better moral footing for applying strict control with regard to certain types of illegal advertisements and signs since they will provide ample alternative opportunities for the effective display of such advertisements and signs.

- ❑ Information nodes will contribute towards creating a responsible and green image for all sponsors, advertisers or any other parties involved in such a project.

❑ Information nodes will also provide an important service to the visitor – sufficient information for the tourist and a large choice of and comparison between a variety of services by the informal sector and small businesses. A visit to the real-estate section will ensure more focused visits to specific show houses of interest to a potential client.

❑ Information nodes will benefit local communities by providing opportunities for charitable activities such as fairs and fêtes, by making information available and by creating job opportunities.

❑ Information nodes will provide a variety of services to the tourist in a save environment. They will improve the quality of products and services rendered to the tourist and will also improve sales due to the concentration of tourists at such nodes.

8. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Community involvement should be obtained with regard to such projects. The benefits to the visual environment, informal entrepreneurs, community projects, the users of the information and the sponsors should be explained to local communities. The involvement of churches and other charitable organisations may also be of crucial importance.

Local labour should be used in the construction of information nodes. The maintenance and management of information nodes will also create permanent job opportunities.

9. CONCLUSION

Initially opposition might be expected from informal entrepreneurs making use of illegal street posters, who believe that they have a right to put up posters wherever they want. Opposition might also be expected from some members of the real-estate fraternity who are currently overstepping their right to use guidance signs directing potential buyers to show houses. However, advertising stations might be one of the only viable and legal advertising options left to such entrepreneurs and estate agents in the near future. If this concept can be established by means of one or two successful pilot projects the benefits to all parties involved should become apparent. The location of such pilot projects should be

selected carefully, preferably at larger new shopping centre developments where they can be incorporated into such developments in a functional manner.

10. EXAMPLES OF OUTDOOR INFORMATION NODES

These designs are for illustrative purposes only and bear no relevance to any site.

10.1 Information node at a shopping centre (See Figure A)

The following components are provided:

10.1.1 Large billboards

A large billboard with a maximum size of 36m^2 will form the focal point of the design. The structure should be without unsightly supports at the back. Since this billboard will be aimed mainly at pedestrians it should be placed much closer to the ground and should actually be joined visually to the ground by putting the advertisement within a frame. Difficult as it may sound, not only the frame but also the contents of the advertisement should fit into the general design theme. For instance, if an African Bundu theme is used the advertisement should consist of a Bushveld or wildlife scene. Thus the billboard will become a true piece of art which will form the aesthetic cornerstone of the advertising node.

10.1.2 Display cubicles

Hexagonal display cubicles consisting of poster panels will have two open sides for pedestrian circulation. Posters of various sizes will be displayed on both the inside and outside of these cubicles. These cubicles may also be used as booths during fêtes and craft markets by placing tables that can serve as counters inside the cubicles. In order to be more appealing the cubicle panels should be framed. Poster panels should be lifted from the ground to make information easier to read. By using lattice-work at the bottom of such panels a better visual unity with the ground will be obtained and air circulation inside the cubicles will be adequate.

Figure A
Outdoor Information Node at Shopping Centre

Wall with advertising murals

Large Billboard as focal point

Advertising towers

Children Play Area

Birdcage with background panel consisting of natural landscape with incorporated advertisement

Refreshment kiosk

Tourism kiosk

Vertical advertising banners

Parking Area

0   5   10

metres
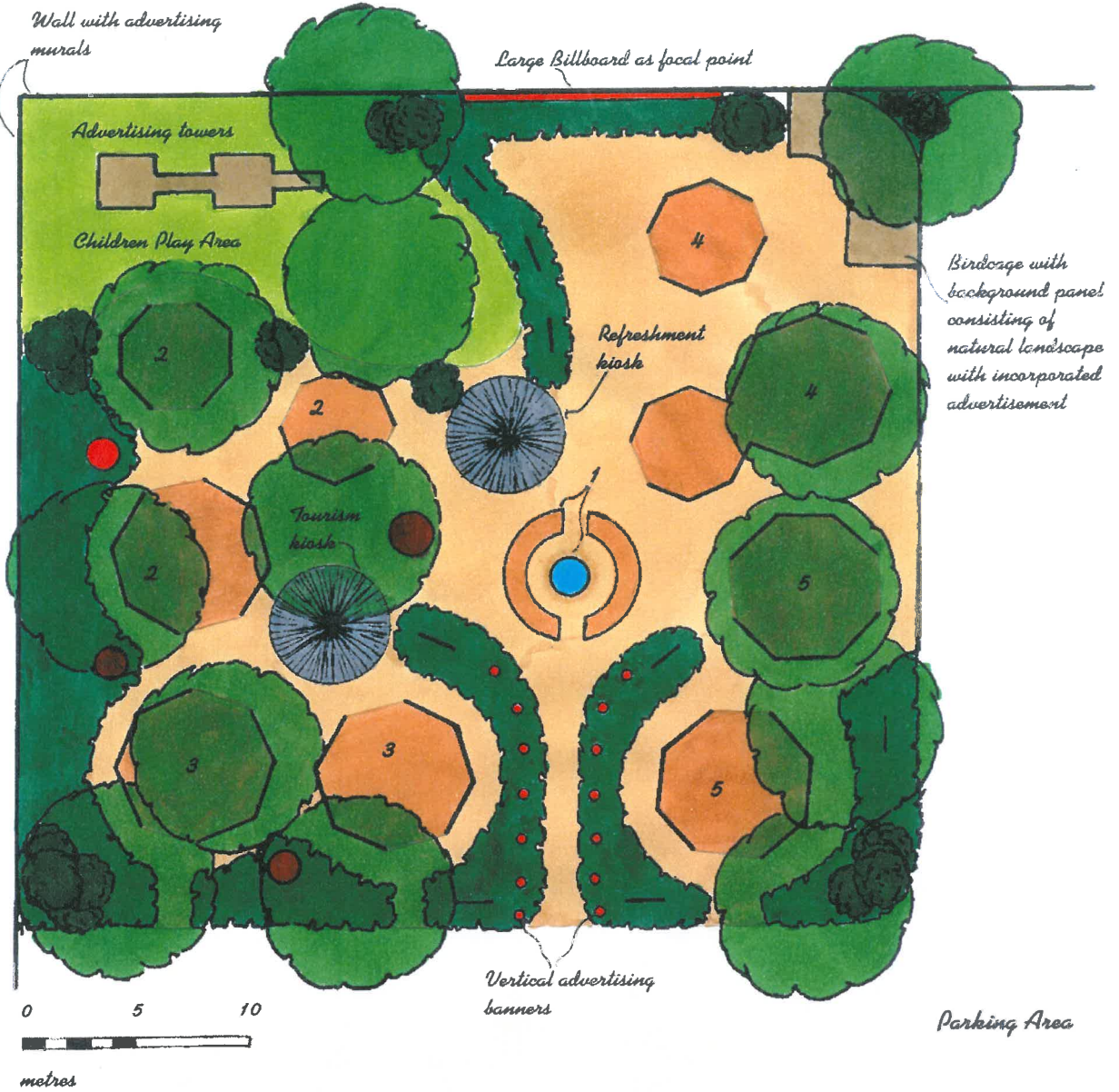
1. Seats with water feature
2. Display cubicle for contractors
3. Tourism cubicle
4. Display cubicle for informal sector
5. Real estate cubicle

Advertising furniture

Ground cover

Paving

Freestanding poster panel

10.1.3 Freestanding posters panels

Freestanding poster panels are provided in the groundcover or flowerbeds. These structures should be artistically designed and should form a visual unity with the ground. Standard poster structures on slender poles should be avoided.

10.1.4 Banners

Flagpoles carrying vertical banners at the main entrance to the node will create a festive atmosphere and will lead the eye to the large billboard at the back of the node. These banners may be used as a focal element to attract the attention of visitors once inside the parking area.

10.1.5 Advertising furniture

Well-designed advertising furniture could make an important contribution to the design theme and local sense of place.

10.1.6 Advertising murals

Artistically painted murals on the walls demarcating the node that contributes to the central theme could create a very special effect and would therefore be a very effective advertising medium. A second mural could be painted on the back wall of the bird-cage as a *natural* background scene. The birds will make this billboard come alive and a very striking effect will therefore be created.

10.1.7 Children's play area

Parents may leave their children here while shopping. A play leader may be appointed to look after the children and initiate their participation in play activities. Advertising panels can be incorporated into the play structures.

10.1.8 Plant Material

The plant material should also support the general theme, e.g. indigenous Bushveld plant material for a Bundu theme.

10.1.9 General

The various advertisements and advertising structures should not compete with each other, but should complement each other both functionally and visually.

A town crier in a special costume or carrying a sandwich board could be stationed at the entrance of the information node or may roam through the parking area announcing *specials* at the shopping centre and drawing attention to the information node.

10.2 An outdoor information node along a major tourism route in the Western Cape (See Figure B).

10.2.1 Local character and placeness

Cape Dutch architecture is used. This architectural style is complemented in the following ways:

❑ **Plant material:** Although the European oak (*Quercus robur*) would make the best contribution to placeness, this species is too slow growing. Therefore, the London plane (*Platanus acerifolia*), which is also a stately tree, is used.

❑ **Landscape design:** A formal and geometric design is used for the main part of the development. The placement of buildings, outdoor advertising structures and paving is accentuated by prominent rows of trees.

Figure B
Information Node Along Important Tourism Route in the Western Cape

0   10   20   30   40   50

metres
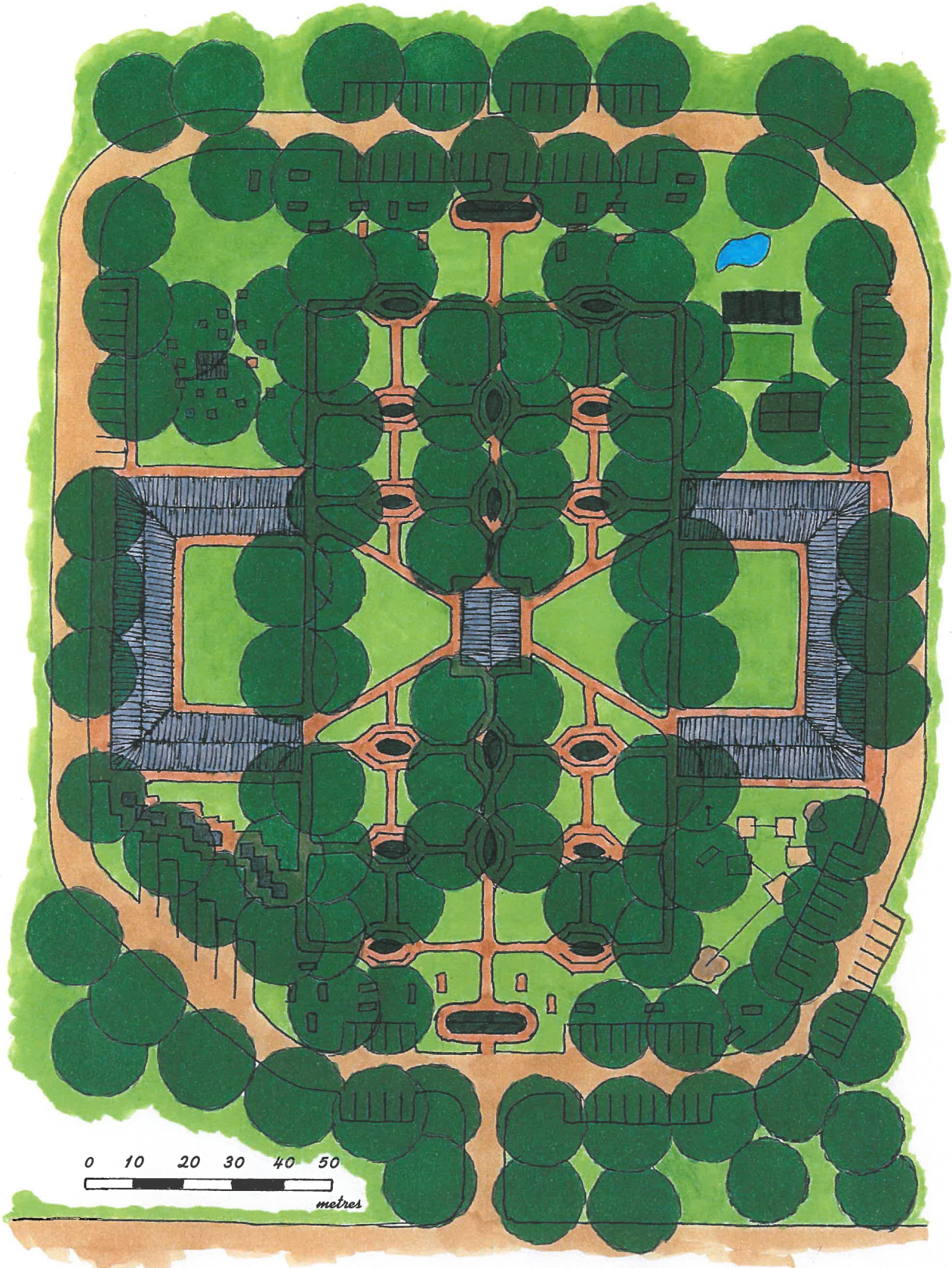
❑ **Focal points:** The advertising graphics at the focal points should consist of vineyard and other Western Cape farmland scenes.

❑ **Farm animals:** The pens containing farm animals will make an important contribution to the Cape Dutch farm theme. Free-roaming farm animals such as geese could also be allowed.

❑ **Fresh produce and wine:** The selling of fresh produce and wine will enhance the Cape Dutch farm theme even further.

❑ **Curios** reflecting local culture and tradition.

❑ **Advertising structures:** Advertising structures, such as advertising boards and furniture, should contain Cape Dutch design elements.

10.2.2 Shopping facilities

Two centrally located buildings facing each other make provision for the selling of curios, fresh produce, wine and other items that might be of interest to the tourist and traveller. Kiosks for selling a variety of curios and other items have been provided in the bottom left corner. Curios should be of local origin and should reflect the local culture and tradition. This component will improve the viability of the information node to a large extent. Part of these facilities should be made available to the local community for selling handcrafts and local produce. Such a venture should be presented to the tourist in a well-organised and attractive manner.

10.2.3 Tourism information bureau

Apart from tourism information on the outdoor advertising structures, a tourism information bureau has been provided at the centre of the information node.

10.2.4 Advertising structures

Sixteen advertising units consisting of two advertising boards facing each other along paved walkways have been placed along a central axis and six lateral axes. Advertisements are to be placed both on the insides and the outsides of the boards. These boards should be joined to the ground by means of lattice-work and by framing the boards. Advertising themes are to be grouped together along these axes. Advertising furniture is also provided at appropriate points.

10.2.5 Focal points

Two larger billboards with a maximum size of 36m^2 have been provided to form focal points along the central advertising axis. These billboards should have a low profile and should be attached to the ground by means of the advertising structure.

Four painted advertising murals are provided on the shopping complex's shorter walls facing inwards, while murals are also provided on the side walls of the tourism bureau.

10.2.6 Picnic areas

Picnic facilities are provided at the top and bottom of the advertising node.

10.2.7 Children's play area

A children's play area at the bottom right-hand side of the node consists of adventure play facilities, including a cable slide. Advertising panels can be incorporated into the play structures in a subtle manner without visually overpowering these structures.

10.2.8 Tea garden and animal farm

A tea garden and animal farm at the top left and right-hand corners would enhance pedestrian movement and therefore the functionality of the advertising structures.
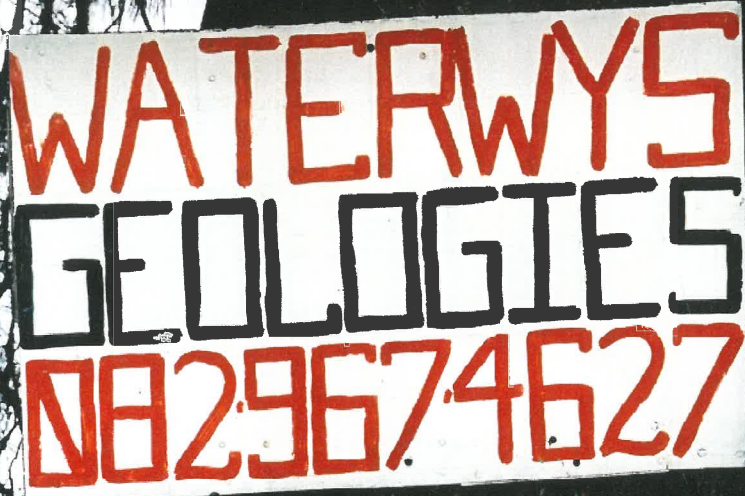
Figure C

Unprofessional signs

Due to poor economic conditions, increasing unemployment and various other factors, smaller businesses, part-time enterprises on residential premises and informal trading on sidewalks are increasing. Many of these enterprises are finding themselves in a survival situation and do not have the financial means for proper outdoor advertising or advertisements in other media. They are therefore making use of affordable but mostly illegal outdoor advertising. Some of these entrepreneurs are even using written messages on pieces of cardboard or other more durable material, which create a very untidy appearance. These advertisements create a traffic hazard, contribute to visual pollution and often create an unprofessional image. The top photograph represents the ultimate form of unprofessionalism. It not only consists of untidy spray-painted letters but is also supported by stones and pieces of junk (centre). The bottom photograph indicates a sign added to an existing tuck-shop and soft drink advertisement. It not only consists of untidy lettering but also untidy grammar. Signs with such a shabby appearance tend to remove any inclination of stopping at the enterprises they advertise.

Date of photos: January 2002

WATERWYS GEOLOGIES 0829674627

Date of photo: March 1996

MUTSA COOP
SCHOOL OF DRESSMAKING
CUTTING & DESIGNING
FLOWER ARRANGING
ALTERATION & OVERLOCKING
ROOM 211 2ND FLOOR
TRAFALGAR COURT

The top photograph shows a sign advertising a water-finder, making use of geological methods and probably operating from his home. The equally untidy sign on the right might harm rather than benefit the advertiser.

**Figure C
continued**
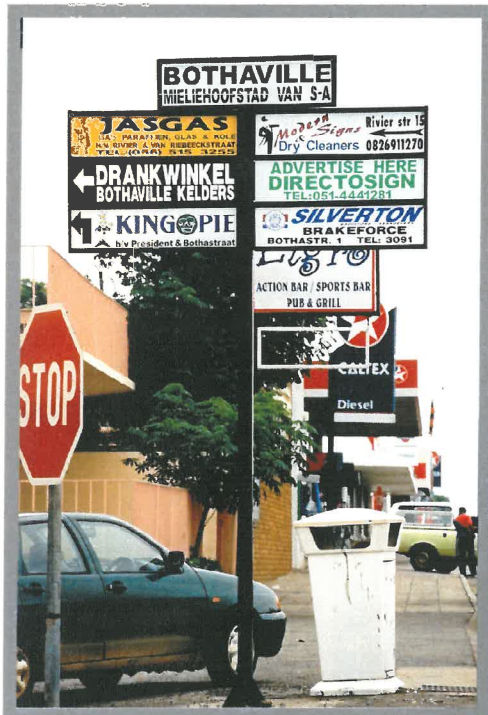
The proliferation of signs at town entrances creates a huge problem by impacting on placeness and creating a negative first impression of such towns. This problem is clearly visible at the entrance of Bothaville in the northern Free State, which is known as the *Maize Capital* of South Africa. The *Honger en dors?* (Hungry and thirsty?) sign in the bottom photograph is followed by a number of successive signs or *Burma signs* (top), reading *Here is the answer* and then advertise ice cold beer at a liquor store and meat products at a butchery.

Figure D

Proliferation of signs at town entrances

Date of photos: January 2002

10.2.9 Parking

Parking has been provided for both cars and tour busses. The parking areas have been scattered in order to lower the visual impact.

10.2.10 Nature trail

A nature trail with interpretative signage at the beginning and end will enhance the environmental friendly nature of this development.

10.2.11 Management

Certain components such as the advertising component, tourism information bureau and shopping facilities may be leased to separate entrepreneurs, or the information node might be operated by one entrepreneur as a whole.

APPENDIX 2

STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT (SEA) AND OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

1. THE NATURE AND PURPOSE OF SEA

Where Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) is aimed at site specific projects, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is aimed at projects and programmes covering a wider geographic area or a whole sector.

According to the *Guideline Document on Strategic Environmental Assessment in South Africa* (DEA&T & CSIR, 2000, p.10) SEA has the following benefits and objectives:

- **Pro-active:** It pro-actively informs the development of plans and programmes.

- **Opportunities and constraints:** SEA identifies the opportunities and constraints that the environment places on development. In contrast to EIA, it not only looks at the impact of development on the environment, but also assesses the effect of the environment on development.

- **Sustainability:** It provides guidelines to ensure that development takes place within sustainable limits.

- **Integration:** It has the ability to integrate across areas, regions or sectors.

- **Cumulative effects:** SEA improves the way in which cumulative effects are dealt with in environmental assessments.

- **Chosen level of environmental quality:** It focuses on the maintenance and enhancement of a chosen level of environmental quality, rather than on minimising individual impacts.

2. THE SOUTH AFRICAN MANUAL FOR OUTDOOR ADVERTISING CONTROL (SAMOAC).

SAMOAC is a guideline document that provides conditions and principles for the management and control of 35 classes of outdoor advertisements and signs. It is aimed at both the outdoor advertising industry and controlling authorities with the purpose of encouraging the standardisation of assessment criteria and uniformity in the application of these criteria. SAMOAC focuses on the control of advertisements and signs on an individual basis and requires an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) for any outdoor advertisement or sign larger than 36m².

It is important that SAMOAC be seen as a guideline document only. The onus is placed on controlling authorities to give legal status to this document by incorporating it into relevant legislation. SAMOAC gives controlling authorities the option to adapt the original document in accordance with local character and needs before taking such a step.

Like most other outdoor advertising control systems the approval of outdoor advertisements and signs under SAMOAC is based on specific and deemed consent. Specific consent implies that the controlling authority must approve the application for a certain sign type before it may be erected. Deemed consent implies that certain sign types are deemed approved without the controlling authority having to provide specific consent as long as certain prescribed conditions are adhered to.

3. A CUMULATIVE APPROACH TO OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

The most important limitation of applying regulatory conditions and specifications such as those contained in SAMOAC is that outdoor advertising applications are considered on an individual basis. The cumulative effect of outdoor advertisements and signs, in a positive as well as a negative sense, is therefore not taken into account. This individual approach also has various other negative effects such as a huge strain on limited manpower resources and long waiting periods for the approval of applications.

In order to give expression to a cumulative and holistic approach to the management of outdoor information transfer, the SEA procedure should result in *Outdoor Information Plans (OITs)* which

are to be incorporated in relevant legislation. Such plans may cover larger suburban shopping centres, road sections, urban districts or even whole cities or towns.

3.1 Benefits of the SEA procedure and Outdoor Information Plans (OIP)

Applied to outdoor advertisements and signs the SEA procedure has the following benefits:

❑   A co-ordinated and more significant contribution can be made to the aesthetic environment and local sense of place.

❑   A cumulative impact assessment of outdoor advertising and signs is possible.

❑   An important contribution can be made to the sustainable management of perceptual resources.

❑   An OIP based on a SEA will reduce the number of applications for individual signs and advertisements and will therefore result in a more productive application of scarce manpower and funds by controlling authorities.

❑   The outdoor advertising industry will benefit from a simplified procedure for obtaining permission to erect outdoor advertisements.

❑   More effective community involvement will be obtained in the management of outdoor information transfer and the aesthetic environment. This will result in optimum environmental benefits for local communities.

❑   Controlling authorities will derive a better income from advertising rights on their land without impairing perceptual resources.

By looking at the broader environment in a holistic manner, Outdoor Information Plans can be more *environment specific* and can make a co-ordinated contribution to local character and placeness. By giving expression to local circumstances and perceptual environmental conditions, through more specific environmental design directives and more appropriate conditions and

specifications, such plans will serve as an instrument to adapt the original SAMOAC document, as was intended by this document. The detail of conditions and specifications prescribed by an OIP may vary depending on the scale of the OIP. With regard to the position of advertisements, for example, the OIP may indicate the exact location of sign types such as large billboards, or it may more or less indicate where they may be erected by providing certain conditions regarding placement. Ideally, the starting point should be to develop a broad Outdoor Information Plan of the total area under a controlling authority's jurisdiction in full co-operation with local communities and in accordance with local sense of place and the needs of local communities and controlling authorities. Such a plan will then form the basis for developing more detailed and localised OIPs through the SEA procedure, or for regulating and managing outdoor information transfer where such more detailed OIPs do not exist or are not needed. The localised OIPs should be incorporated into the broader OIP as and when they are developed, while all OIPs should be supported by appropriate legislation on outdoor information transfer.

3.2 Implementing SEAs aimed at outdoor advertising

3.2.1 SEA requirements

The following are required for any SEA aimed at outdoor advertising:

❑ It is to be undertaken by an independent environmental consultant with an aesthetic background and with the necessary expertise regarding traffic safety.

❑ The cumulative effect of all possible classes of advertisements and signs should be taken into consideration.

❑ Outdoor advertisements in and other environmental aspects of adjoining areas should be taken into consideration.

❑ The SEA is to be approved by the relevant controlling authority.

❑ Public participation and involvement of interested and affected parties are essential.

❑ Alternative development scenarios should be considered.

❑ Maximum long-term environmental benefits for the community. This will include the psychological, ecological, social and economic environments.

❑ The implementation of the Outdoor Advertising Plan (OIP) derived from the SEA shall be monitored by an Aesthetic Management Committee (AMC) during both the construction and management phase of outdoor advertisements and signs. Such an AMC should have the necessary expertise regarding design review. Both the controlling authority and the community should be represented on this body. An AMC might be established for a specific project, or it might be based on spatial planning or administrative units, in which case it will be responsible for all outdoor advertisements in a specific area as well as other perceptual or aesthetic matters.

❑ Existing legislation and guidelines will serve as point of departure.

Once the relevant authority or authorities have approved a SEA and its resulting OIP, all advertisements and signs covered in the OIP might be erected with deemed consent by whoever has acquired the relevant concession or rights, subject to the conditions of the OIP, unless the OIP stipulates that certain advertising structures may be erected only after the approval of a more detailed Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), which will imply that specific consent is required.

3.2.2 Alternative approaches to the SEA procedure

One of the main problems relating to the implementation of the SEA procedure aimed at outdoor information transfer involves the responsibility for and financing of the SEA.

3.2.2.1 Where the controlling authority is the sole owner or body responsible for administrating land or property

In such cases SEAs will cover all advertisements and signs inside road reserves and on other land belonging to a local or roads authority, or which had been placed under its administrative control.

The negative effects of the *Treasury Principle*[1] may be neutralised by applying the SEA procedure and involving local communities and civic groups. In such cases, SEAs should be financed by the relevant controlling authority. In order to assure maximum financial benefits for the controlling authority and environmental benefits for the community, the advertising concession should be put out on tender. Concession specifications should be in accordance with the findings of the SEA. The relevant community should be represented on the body awarding the tender and finalising conditions for erecting and maintaining outdoor advertisements and signs. The tender amount should include the cost of the SEA study incurred by the controlling authority. If any major deviations to the concession specifications are decided upon due to proposals by a tenderer, an extension of the SEA should be undertaken and the whole concession should go out on tender again.

Another possibility is for the outdoor advertising industry to fund a SEA through their own controlling body, such as the Outdoor Advertising Association of South Africa (OAASA). Such studies should still be undertaken by an independent consultant and approved by the relevant controlling authority, for instance a local authority or roads authority. In such a case tenders for the concession should be open only to the members of the relevant outdoor advertising body. This will force more contractors to become members of the controlling body, which will improve control within the industry. The tender amount could still include the cost of the SEA, which can then be paid back to OAASA by the controlling authority, or OAASA can devise other means of funding SEAs to the benefit of its members.

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[1]The *Treasury Principle,* refers to the persuasion of the controlling authority by the financial benefits offered up-front by an outdoor advertising contractor to obtain an outdoor advertising concession, which might actually not be to the benefit of the public since it might impact on tourism resources and the local living environment.

3.2.2.2 Where the land involved is under private, corporate or institutional ownership or control.

This category will include larger tracts of land and developments such as shopping centres and business parks

Two approaches are possible:

❑ The owner of the land may fund the SEA himself and put the outdoor advertising concession out on tender.

❑ The owner might be approached by an outdoor advertising contractor to acquire the outdoor advertising rights for a certain amount, in which case the SEA will at the cost of the contractor.

In both cases the following will be required:

❑ The SEA will have to cover all advertisement and sign types that might be provided in the study area - even sign types that might be of no interest to an outdoor advertising contractor, such as shop signs, which are to be provided by a shopping centre management.

❑ Any meaningful deviations from the conditions of the OIP, in the opinion of an AMC, will have to be approved on the basis of an extension of the original SEA.

3.2.2.3 Where a variety of landowners is involved

This may include controlling body, private ownership and other institutions and public bodies.

From an environmental point of view, this option constitutes an ideal and more holistic approach since larger areas may be covered by a SEA where all advertisement and sign types will be included.

With regard to obtaining and awarding advertising rights this option might be a bit more complicated. Certain outdoor advertising types of relevance to outdoor advertising contractors

might have to be awarded to individual contractors, while the tender procedure for obtaining concession rights might be applied where relevant.

Three funding options exist for the SEA:

a) A body within the outdoor advertising industry such as OAASA
b) The relevant controlling authority
c) A combination of a) and b)

APPENDIX 3

A CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENTAL WORLD-VIEW WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PERCEPTUAL ENVIRONMENT AND OUTDOOR INFORMATION TRANSFER

1.   INSUFFICIENT ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

*Christians, along with the rest of society, have come to believe the unspoken maxim: A certain amount of damage to the earth is the cost of the lifestyle we require; we dare not sacrifice this lifestyle, because there is nothing else to give life meaning (*Badke, 1991, p.130).

The essence of contemporary society's problem of disregarding and misusing the perceptual environment can to a large extent be traced back to the Western World and Christian society's lack of proper environmental ethics throughout history. This argument is based on the major influence of Christian society on the rest of the world and its current influence on the process of globalisation. Although the problem lies deeper than the perceptual environment, namely Christian society's disrespect of the environment as a whole, the misuse of the perceptual environment and especially outdoor information transfer symbolises society's consumeristic mindset and lack of respect for the environment. Through the misuse, disregard and destruction of the perceptual environment, contemporary society is making a clear statement that everything in life is about consumerism with a corresponding lack of care for the environment. This symbolism can play an important role in conditioning members of society to an increasing extent to neglect and abuse the environment.

The crucial influence of Christian society on the poor environmental ethics of contemporary society is based on the following facts. The Western World and Christian society provided the basic values for the contemporary economic system, with the United States of America, with its profound influence in the establishment of a global economy and culture, as the most important role-player. Furthermore, according to White (1966, p.74), all successful technology is Western in origin, while all significant science is Western in style and method. Although the Western World

can no longer be seen as a Christian civilisation in the true sense of the word, and although many *Christians* are not committed to Christianity any longer, environmental ethics or the lack of environmental ethics in the West is still being based on axioms and traditions derived from Christianity. According to White (1966, p.78): *We continue today to live, as we have lived for about 1,700 years, very largely in a context of Christian axioms.* Furthermore, the Christian of today is being treated as contemporary symbolism of established environmental ethics. A poor environmental performance by the contemporary professing Christian will therefore enhance a poor environmental reputation based on established Christian axioms.

Christianity and Christian tradition have often been accused of pragmatism and the exploitation of the environment for the sole benefit of man (cf. White, 1966; Ice, 1975). The Calvinistic work ethic is frequently referred to in this regard. The irony is that concern for the environment is often lost between Christians focusing on two pragmatic extremes, namely a spiritual mindset and a materialistic mindset. According to the spiritual mindset it is only eternity that counts. The earth does not. It will, after all, be destroyed and replaced by a New Earth (cf. Freudenberger, 1990, p.16):

> *We have convinced ourselves that people issues are the only important concerns for the Christian. To defend the earth from destruction would be to divert our time and energy away from our God-given mandate to drag human beings out of the jaws of eternal destruction* (Badke, 1991, p.12).

According to the materialistic mindset the Calvinistic work ethic and the Christian's relationship with the rest of creation have been deliberately misinterpreted to focus on economic growth at all costs, the accumulation of possessions and the enjoyment of life. Max Weber, the well-known German sociologist's theory on the prominent role of Protestantism in the development of capitalism in Western Europe serves as a prime example of the danger of misinterpreting and misusing Christian axioms, which in the end led to a total disregard of disrespect for God's creation.[1]

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[1] Weber's theory is based on an interpretation of the Protestant view of God's calling for each believer. Fulfilling this calling to the honour of God is seen as a way of obtaining certainty of grace and life everlasting. This worldly asceticism had a methodical, rational and disciplined character and consisted of hard work and a focussed effort. The ascetic importance of a fixed calling led to a rational organisation of capital and labour and provided an ethical justification for a specialised division of labour and profit making by business men. The attainment of wealth as a fruit of labour in a calling was seen as a sign of God's blessing.

In the beginning profit making was accompanied by rational and utilitarian use of wealth willed by God for the needs of the individual and the community – the use of the profit maker's means for necessary and practical things. During the earlier stages of capitalism, the exclusion of the spontaneous enjoyment of life and all it had to offer was also

A very good example of contemporary Christianity's negative contribution to an already damaged environmental image, due to a materialistic mindset and economic pressure, is the reversal of the United State's commitment towards the Kyoto Protocol by President George W. Bush, a professing Christian. By pulling out of the Kyoto Protocol the United States has weakened the agreement on the reduction of global warming gases that was eventually reached by the rest of the world. Corn (2001, online) describes the unfairness of this stance taken by the United States[2] as follows:

> Bush asks other nations to feel America's pain [September 11] and to respond to its fears, even if that entails sacrifice. Yet he turns away when scores of other nations come together to declare their concern and plead with the United States to join the fight. Since Bush does not deny the reality and the seriousness of global warming, the message he sends is clear: don't you dare expect American citizens [and the leading Christian nation] to sacrifice for the common good. He asks for more than he is willing to give.

Seen against the above background it seems obvious that the prevailing Christian world-view on the environment would focus only on the pragmatic, and not on more sublime things like aesthetics and the perceptual environment. It can be assumed that where the environment might

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seen as an important Protestant ethic. This restraint which were imposed upon the consumption of wealth naturally served to increase it by making possible the productive investment of capital which gave momentum to the system of capitalism.

With time, the religious roots on which capitalism was originally based died out slowly giving rise to utilitarian worldliness. The intensity of the search for the Kingdom of God passed gradually over into sober economic virtue. An accumulation of riches led to a decrease in the essence of religion. At some stage, the misinterpretation of Christian axioms became deliberate and turned into the misuse thereof. In the end the religious basis died out completely and material wealth became the reason for existence.

Since Max Weber has published his *Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism* in 1905 materialism has become rampant in contemporary society and advertising is creating a multitude of unwanted needs.

In evaluating Weber's theory one may conclude that the process of creating capitalism through ascetic Protestantism was not successful by losing it religious basis since it was flawed from the start. In essence, it was based on a purely pragmatic, egocentric and selfish motive – obtaining certainty by the individual of God's grace, salvation and life everlasting. Instead of being based on fear of not receiving salvation and a lack of faith in God's promises, it should have been based on a much higher and more pure Christian axiom, namely love – love and respect for God, humanity, the self and God's creation. This provides a much more balanced ethical approach while the recognition of self-worth is only necessary to support love and respect for God, humanity and God's creation.

[2] The United States is the leading producer of greenhouse gasses by being responsible for 25% of such gases (Corn, 2001, online).

crop up the emphasis will be placed on more tangible and obvious issues, such as water and air pollution, which will have a more direct influence on the well-being of man.

Since the current insufficient principal environmental world-view is based on improper Christian axioms, or the improper interpretation of such axioms, it is the responsibility of Christian society to provide a proper world-view based on relevant Christian axioms and principles in order to solve this problem. Although Christianity does provide values for a non-pragmatic and deeper approach to environmental management, these values have often been overlooked deliberately and conveniently in order to justify a consumeristic and materialistic lifestyle. Since the conservation and management of the perceptual environment is less concrete and measurable than other environmental issues, such as water and air pollution, an appropriate moral basis is essential to motivate and ensure the effective management of the perceptual environment and outdoor information transfer.

2. A NON-PRAGMATIC CHRISTIAN WORLD-VIEW ON ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

2.1 Background

Miller (1996, p.711) differentiates between two main types of environmental world-views: those that put humans at the centre of things and those that do not. According to this approach the essence of the **human-centred world-view** can be seen as managing the earth's life-supporting systems for the sole benefit of man, together with the pursuit of unlimited economic growth. In contrast to this world-view the **biocentric and ecocentric environmental world-views** focus on the inherent or intrinsic value of all forms of life (the value that exists regardless of these life forms' potential or actual use to man) and on the value of earth's life-support systems. The biocentric and ecocentric worldviews are seen as a more responsible and sustainable approach. Most proponents of such more sustainable and responsible environmental worldviews share the opinion that human-centredness or anthropocentrism should be seen as the main cause of environmental ills.

In order to be viable any environmental world-view should have **a** deeper or religious base. There should be a deeper motive why one should strive for a more sustainable and responsible approach to environmental management. If man's ethical responsibility for sustainable environmental management is not anchored to deeper values there will always be the tendency to fall back to pragmatism where everything is done for the sole benefit of man. White (1966, p.85) makes the following statement in thi**s** regard: *Since the roots of our (environmental) trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious, whether we call it that or not.*

Simplistically seen from a Christian perspective there are, broadly spoken, three possible foundations to an environmental world-view:

❑   A **theistic** approach where everything was created by and lives for the glory of God.

❑   A **pantheistic** approach that sees God as the sum of all that exists in the universe and where all things in the universe are of the same substance and thus of the same value.

❑   A **pragmatic** and **egocentric** approach where man is his own god and where everything is done for personal gain or for the sole benefit of man. For the purpose of this study an egocentric approach must be distinguished from an anthropocentric approach, which is interpreted as man performing a leading role regarding the environment.

The problem with the present Christian world-view is that it seems to be primarily inclined to the last approach while ignoring the first approach.

There may be various approaches to or interpretations of a non-pragmatic and theistic Christian world-view on environmental management. The Christian world-view presented here is based mainly on Schaeffer's (1972) approach to environmental management. In order to make this proposed world-view more applicable to perceptual resource management and the management of outdoor information transfer the following three characteristics, identified as inherent to the perceptual environment, will serve as the main framework for expression (See Chapter 1, Section 1.3.1):

❑   Anthropocentrism

❑   Synergism or holism

❑ Environmental or natural order

In order to give further substance to the proposed Christian world-view on environmental management and to put the concepts of anthropocentrism and non-pragmatism in the correct framework the important topic of human dignity and human limitation will also be covered. Furthermore, a Christian perspective of *genius loci* will also be included since it plays such a crucial role with regard to perceptual resource management.

2.2   Anthropocentrism

Since a world-view indicates a particular view or philosophy of life and the world held by *man,* it is anthropocentric in essence since it revolves solely around the thoughts and beliefs of man. All environmental world-views therefore have an anthropocentric point of departure. The fact cannot be denied that man is the most powerful and dominant species on earth. Seen in this light we have no choice but to manage the influence of our own actions on the environment. As an act executed by man, environmental management is anthropocentric in nature. Even a pantheistic world-view, which sees God as the sum of all that exists in the universe, and therefore believes that man should not dominate nature, but look after the environment in a sustainable manner since each thing in the universe is of the same substance and thus of the same value, is still anthropocentric. If man is to be truly of the same essence as the animals or the trees, so that he should reject all desires to dominate nature, then he should logically also reject any attempt to care for and manage creation. He should also not live in accordance to his full potential less he should become the dominant species.

It is therefore only the interpretation of and approach to the term anthropocentrism by the various world-views and the motive for placing man in a central position that differ; it is the motive for managing the environment that differs. Thus it is not anthropocentrism *per se* that is negative, but the interpretation and application of anthropocentrism. Most environmentalists tend to confuse and equate anthropocentrism with pragmatism and egocentrism, since anthropocentrism has a natural tendency to divert to pragmatism and even egocentrism if not anchored to deeper values. It is true that most views on environmental management do have a pragmatic approach as true motive. The argument that crops up again and again in discussions about sustainable development is that sustainable development is necessary since it will ultimately be man who will

benefit by such an approach, and that man's survival depends on a more sustainable and responsible approach to environmental management. Ironically enough even the most advanced level of environmental awareness, as proposed by Miller (1996, p.714), and according to which the value of all forms of life exists regardless of their potential or actual use to man, can be interpreted as having a pragmatic dimension on the grounds of the following statement made by Miller:

> At this level, **our survival and economies** are viewed as being totally dependent on Earth's natural processes... (Emphasis added.)

The problem with a pragmatic motive is that it can very easily become purely egocentric and exploitive to the detriment of the environment. Motloch (1991, p.23) gives the following description of such an exploitive anthropocentric approach:

> The anthropocentric view, ... has humans as the center of the universe, dominant over nature; and nature exists to serve human needs. The environment has value only in its ability to serve; it exists to be exploited for people's use and benefit.

In such a case environmental management is substituted for environmental manipulation and exploitation.

The Christian environmental world-view presented here contains a higher motive where anthropocentrism involves much more than mere pragmatism. It puts God at the centre and as a result it also puts the emphasis on both man *and* the environment. Schaeffer (1972) considers the unique nature of the Judaistic-Christian God, who is Personal and Infinite at the same time, as point of departure of the Christian's view of the environment. According to this view man is both separated from and united with nature. Since only God is Infinite and only He is Creator, everything else is the creature and is finite. On the side of God's infinity there is therefore a great chasm between God and everything else. In the biblical viewpoint man, animal, plant and machine are equally separated from God, which points at a unity between all created things.

THE PERSONAL   -   INFINITE GOD

_____ **Chasm**

Man

Man

Chasm _____   **Animal**

Animal   **Plant**

Plant   **Machine**

Machine

(Schaeffer, 1972, p.36)

On the side of the Personal there is a chasm between man and the rest of created things. God has created man in His own image and therefore man's relationship is upward rather than downward. Man has a personality and as such has a unique position among the rest of creation. He also has the opportunity of a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Although man's relationship is basically upwards and although he is separated from the rest of nature on the side of the Personal he also has a downward relationship and is united with all other things as being finite and created on the side of God's infinity.

On the side of the Personal the Christian perspective of the environment is anthropocentric, to a certain extent, in the sense that man has dominion over the lower orders of Creation. Nevertheless, it involves much more than mere pragmatism and exploitation of nature for the *good* of man, since on the side of the Infinite man should treat creation with respect. *...for the Christian the value of a thing is not in itself autonomously, but because God made it. It deserves this respect as something which was created by God, as man himself has been created by God* (Schaeffer, 1972, p.44). Mankind's mandate for responsible environmental management is found in the commission to work the Garden as God's envoys on earth, by *imaging* God and by dealing with the environment as if God Himself were at work (Genesis 2:15). A mandate still valid after the Fall with many indications in Scriptures that this is the case (Badke, 1991, p.149). A disregard for the environment means an *egocentric denial of God... The ruin of nature and the denial of God go hand in hand, because both overexalt human beings* (Carmody, 1983, p.79).

To respect Creation also implies that man has a responsibility of substantial healing in nature of some of the results of the Fall, arising from the truth of Redemption in Christ:

> *In each of the alienations arising from the Fall the Christians, individually and corporately, should consciously in practice be a redemptive factor. By God's Grace they should consciously in practice be a healing, redemptive factor in this life in the separation of man from God, man from himself, man from man, man from nature and nature from nature. And certainly this is true in regard to nature. A Christian-based science and technology should consciously try to see nature substantially healed, while waiting for the coming complete healing at Christ's return* (Schaeffer, 1972, p.58) (cf. Badke, 1991, p.126).

The concept of substantial healing is also reflected by Badke's *Fifth Witness* which involves the responsibility of man to enhance creation's bright witnesses and to limit its dark witnesses[3] by actively repudiating environmental exploitation. *As the Maker has taken hold of the lives of those committed to Christ, giving them new life, so too we can demonstrate, through environmental action, that God is laying claim as well to the world he made* (Badke, 1991, p.151).

In a Christian perspective anthropocentrism and the importance of man should always be seen within the context of theocentrism and the sovereignty of God. For the purpose of this study anthropocentrism should therefore be defined as follows:

> *To regard the human race as God's envoys on earth and therefore central to the universe created, upheld and maintained by God.*

The Christian view of environmental management finds its ultimate motive in the glory of God and the redemptive power of Jesus Christ.

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[3] Creation's original and natural witnesses, glory and nurture, called the **bright witnesses** by Badke, both *testify to and honor the Creator God, the first by showing his majesty through the complexity and beauty he has made, and the second by demonstrating that God intends to support abundantly the ongoing life he has created* (Badke, 1991, p.146-7). Man's rebellion against God in the spiritual realm brought a corresponding harshness to the environment. After the Fall two additional witnesses have been added to nature's proclamation, penalty and precariousness, called the **dark witnesses** by Badke, and which serve as opposite to the bright witnesses. *Instead of glory, we find condemnation in the mortality of all things, the horrors of natural disasters, and the growing crises of ecological pollution. This is the witness of penalty. Instead of nurture, we discover that the earth no longer supports life without extreme effort, and that death can snuff out in an instant all that we have worked for. This is precariousness* (Badke, 1991, p.148). In his sinfulness man now has a selfish tendency to exploit nature for his own benefit. Man's sinful nature enhances the dark witnesses by degrading the environment.

2.3   Holism and natural order

Synergism or holism refers to a unity where the whole is more than the sum of the parts and the relationship between units is more important than the individual units themselves. According to a Christian world-view this unity cannot be interpreted in pantheistic terms, where all creation is seen as being of the same essence. Creation is not simply an extension of the essence of God, but was created by God outside Himself. Although the environment has been wounded by the Fall, God still upholds and maintains the environment directly through his Son in accordance with natural laws and a natural or creational order instituted by Him.

> *He (Christ) is the sole expression of the glory of God [the Light-being, the out-raying or radiance of the divine], and He is the perfect imprint and very image of [God's] nature,* **upholding and maintaining and guiding and propelling the universe** *by His mighty word of power...* (Hebr. 1:3; Amplified Bible). (Emphasis added.)

There is a growing consensus among many Old Testament theologians that the Wisdom Literature of Scripture stresses Creation's goodness because of its inherent order. It constantly refers to the rich diversity of God's Creation reflecting an overarching harmony. The Wisdom Literature recognises a meaning to all human experience founded on Creation's order (cf. Hermisson, 1984; Johnston, 1987; Loader, 1987). Badke (1991, p.37) expresses this truth as follows:

> *Creation is structured by the God who structures all life. Because the physical world is ordered perfectly by the Maker, we may understand that human experience has the same sort of underlying order to it. ... The God whose wisdom formed an ordered world is the God who has ordered human experience.*

For the Christian the word holism acquires a unique meaning since order, unity and wholeness are centred in God's providence and a unity in Christ that does not only refer to the unity between believers as the body of Christ but also to a unity of Creation as a whole.

> *For it was in Him (Christ) that all things were created, in heaven and on earth, things seen and things unseen, whether thrones, dominions, rulers, or authorities; all things were created and exist through Him [by His service, intervention] and in and for Him. And He Himself existed before all things, and*

in Him all things consist (cohere, are held together) (Col. 1:16-17;
Amplified Bible). (Emphasis added.)

A Christian interpretation of anthropocentrism and holism implies that man manages creation in a responsible manner, but without an antagonistic polarisation between man and nature or culture and nature taking place. In the words of Loader (1987, p.22), *There is only one creation. It is not bifurcated into "nature" and "culture".* Creational order therefore reflects a holistic unity between both the cultural and natural environments. Man's work and culture have to reflect the natural order of creation. Loader (1987, p.22) makes the following statement with regard to creational order: *The creation concept makes it possible to understand the universe, and humans can organise their labour, **their culture** and their very humanity into harmony with it* (Emphasis added) (cf. Crenshaw, 1976, p.34). Seen against this background the management of the cultural environment also becomes man's responsibility, in the same manner as the management of nature is his responsibility. Created in the image of God man has a special responsibility regarding the aesthetic environment (in both the cultural and natural spheres) by conserving, enhancing and creating beauty and by using natural order and natural principles as point of departure: *We must make it our goal to bring a certain kind of beauty to our surroundings, a beauty which harmonizes with nature rather than clashing with it* (Badke, 1991, p.152).

2.4   Human dignity and limitation

All created things (humans, animals, plants and machines) should be treated with integrity in the way and order God made them. (cf. Scheaffer, 1972, pp.42-43). A non-pragmatic approach to anthropocentrism does therefore not mean that human dignity and human needs should be overlooked or trivialised by romanticising nature. However, the Christian principle of simplicity should be considered seriously in considering and fulfilling human needs. This includes a serious look at modern society's consumerism mentality and the *necessity* of consumer items (cf.Badke, 1991, pp.108; 137). Christian simplicity is a topic that has received much attention in recent times and may be of much relevance to the environmental crises if applied in the correct manner (cf. Cloninger, 1993; Foster, 1994). Simplicity also relates to the important principle of conscious and voluntary human limitation, which is an important ingredient for order and responsible environmental management. First of all, this means that limits to economic growth and consumption have to be recognised by man. In the words of Schaeffer (1972, p.66):

In the making of profit in industry and business, ... man must put a "self" limitation on himself. He must not be driven either for greed, or haste, to remove all the self limitations. Or we can put it in another way: that we must not allow ourselves, individually, nor our technology, to do everything we or it can do.

The principle of limitation is also important in managing the aesthetic environment, especially with regard to the self-exaltation of man through monumental works, which in certain cases may be seen as exploitation of the aesthetic environment.

2.5   A Christian perspective of *genius loci or sense of place*

Genius loci plays an important role regarding the aesthetic environment. In recent years, with a revival of mysticism, various perspectives and interpretations of the concept of *genius loci* or sense of place have developed. It is therefore necessary to relate this concept to the Christian world-view in order to state clearly and exactly what is meant by sense of place.

According to a Christian perspective sense of place is an aesthetic experience with three dimensions:

Spiritual – The upward dimension

In a spiritual sense it can be seen as becoming aware of the greatness and glory of God by experiencing the wonder and beauty of nature, as well as the creative ability of man as representative of God who also reflects His image. It is experiencing the unique character and charm of a rich variety of landscapes and cultures created and instituted by God. Experiencing place also means becoming aware of oneself as a being created in the image of God and as God's envoy on earth.

Natural – The downward dimension

Experiencing the beauty of Creation as part of Creation and as a fellow creature created by God.

Social – The sideways dimension

Experiencing place provides the individual with a sense of belonging and a sense of community. This must be seen against the background of the Christian's responsibility towards fellow believers and humankind as a whole.

In terms of this Christian perspective sense of place is purely an experience of beauty, aesthetics, culture and customs and cannot be associated with any esoteric or mystical interaction between people and place advocated by practices and beliefs such as geomancy, Feng Shui, pantheism or paganism.

2.6 Conclusions and recommendations

Apart from having a negative impact on the environment, current environmental ethics based on Christian axioms also portrays a very negative image of Christianity. It has become time for professing Christians to take the lead and establish non-pragmatic environmental ethics and a Christian world-view which is based on core values and which would give sufficient recognition to the perceptual environment. The material provided in this appendix should serve as a point of departure for a more intensive study on this subject

The following points should be taken into consideration when undertaking such a study:

❑ It is important that the Christian's responsibility towards the environment and environmental management be taught at Christian schools, seminaries, and at Bible schools and institutes. It should also be included in religious studies in public schools.

❑ The Christian's contribution to the perceptual environment and the design professions should be emphasised. This should include outdoor information transfer as a symbol of a Christian world-view on environmental management.

❑ Study material on environmental management, the perceptual environment and outdoor information transfer should be provided on Christian websites. All viewpoints should be based on biblical principles.

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