

Gustav Milne's Uncivilised Genes

A readable and convincing demonstration of the importance of designing and inhabiting places which are suited to human well-being says Jonathan Mannis

is an easily digestible summary of the evolutionary case for reconsidering modern life and, whilst relatively light on detailed solutions, contains a clear and convincing narrative: that human evolution has not caught up with the way in which we live today.

Milne is an archaeologist. He spent twenty years working as a rescue archaeologist with the Museum of London's Department of Urban Archaeology from 1973 to 1993 before joining UCL's Institute of Archaeology in 1991, where he is an Honorary Senior Lecturer. It is in this capacity that he worked as co-ordinator of research for UCL's 'Evolutionary Determinants of Health' project, which formed the basis for this book.

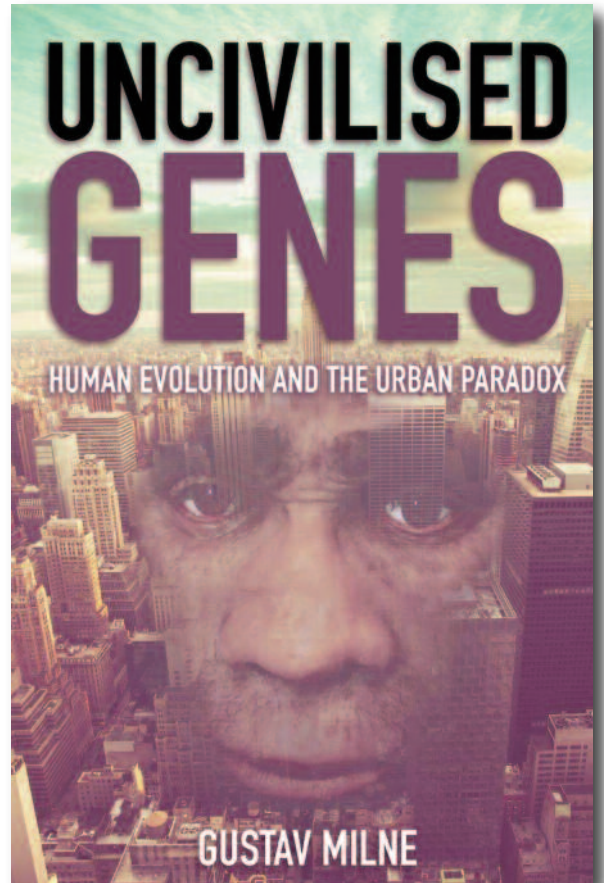
Milne's background becomes immediately apparent as 'our ancient but largely uncivilised genes' are described in their evolutionary context of food, tribalism, music and words from an archaeological-biological perspective. The content may not be ground-breaking in itself, but this does not diminish the book's relevance or increasing importance: so-called 'lifestyle diseases' are on the rise across the world.

The lineages of apes and humans began to diverge about six million years ago. Four million years ago early humans began walking with only two legs. Two million years ago we stopped inter-breeding with our apish counterparts. Then, 5-10,000 years ago, we began to cultivate crops and livestock, fundamentally changing the way in which we lived and giving rise to what would become towns and cities. *Uncivilised Genes* reveals the result, that a 'fundamental mismatch exists between our Paleolithic genome and modern urban living'.

Where *Uncivilised Genes* succeeds is in emphasising the extent to which 'large permanent settlements like cities seem the very antithesis of the hunter-gatherers' world' and that the human mind and body remains essentially identical that of those for whom 'nature was not a philosophic abstraction but a fact of life'. Where it less detailed is on the solutions. As we can't speed up evolution, Milne reasons, we must change our lifestyles.

Although Milne suggests a range of evolutionary-concordant protocols, termed 'Eden Protocols', these flag only cursory reforms of urban design guidelines and public health programmes; think access to green space, walkable neighbourhoods, integrated transport and medium-rise development. We're pointed towards carrot-and-stick measures of education and regulation, particularly in terms of diet and physical activity.

There's nonetheless a sense that Milne fails to fully find his voice as author. The tone blends that of one for academic and public audiences, at times seeming almost apologetic, claiming *Uncivilised Genes* to be 'an expression of a point of view, for which supporting evidence-based research has been presented'. The result is sporadic referencing and a flow which can at times feel a little clunky.



Any possible stylistic shortcomings do not detract significantly from the merit of *Uncivilised Genes* as a readable and convincing demonstration of the importance of designing and inhabiting places which are suited to human well-being. It empowers us to think confidently about how we should be living our lives, particularly in towns and cities, and the types of changes that might be required to secure a healthier and more prosperous future for us all. ■



Jonathan Mannis is director of planning, Colliers International

Contents include:

- 1. In the Beginning;
- 2. Genesis;
- 3. A View of the Garden;
- 4. A Hunger Game;
- 5. Food for Thought;
- 6. Body of Evidence;
- 7. A Life Less Sedentary;

- 8. Lost Tribes;
- 9. Hunter-Gatherer vs. Football-Shopper;
- 10. Music and Words;
- 11. Green and Pleasant;
- 12. Central Park;
- 13. Old Town;
- 14. Urban Regeneration;
- 15. Revelations.

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Colin Davies

A seminal new text on modern architecture, embracing all of the important architectural movements and influences of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

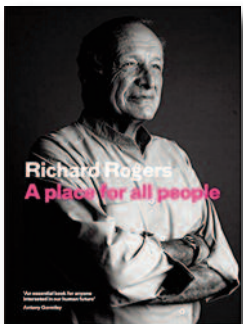


LAURENCE KING

'A place for all people'

A Place for All People: Life, Architecture and the Fair Society, by Richard Rogers and Richard Brown, Hardcover £20

Part autobiography, part history and partly a statement of intent; it would be difficult to put Richard Rogers' latest book, into one particular category says reviewer David Edwards



David Edwards is director of PLACE-MAKE architects

I should begin this review with two confessions. Firstly, while I could appreciate the significance of the buildings of Team 4, Richard Rogers Partnership (RRP) and Rogers Stirk Harbour + Partners (RSH) in truth, I haven't always understood the intent behind these. Secondly, at some point, I'd stopped reading technically and professionally related material of an evening.

For each of these reasons, I had reservations that I would be able to enjoy the book without necessarily understanding the practices' buildings and also, about mustering enthusiasm after a busy day in the office.

As it turned out, neither of these were an issue. I would find myself purposely saving chapters to read at later times and actually finished it in bed - usually the domain of fiction reading! Additionally, I was developing a particular interest in each project through having a greater awareness of both the context and the objectives that underpinned these.

Quite significantly, and I hadn't expected this, 'A place for all people' has been professionally invigorating. For many of us in practice, particularly those in small and medium sized offices, long days are often spent juggling administrative, business development, technical and if fortunate, design responsibilities. Sometimes, after a morning and a half of the first two, it is easy to lose sight of the initial reasons for choosing architecture as a profession; the enthusiasm for buildings and design.

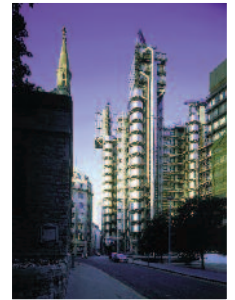
It was refreshing to read that regardless of the size or specialism of the practice, there will be parallels between your projects and the realisation of some of the great buildings of our time by one of the leading architects. How Piano + Rogers first won the competition for the Pompidou Centre, formulated a team and then battled through a political and logistical minefield to complete the project is a particularly interesting section. Equally, comparisons between the planning and implementation of Heathrow Airport's Terminal 5 in a UK context and Barajas Airport's Terminal 4 in Spain.

In 'A place for all people', Rogers intertwines personal and professional. I must admit, it took me a while to realise why the book is structured in this way. For Lord Rogers, these are inseparable; the buildings are rooted in the principles of the man and to appreciate the relationship it is necessary to alternate between the timelines of his life and portfolio.

The intent for the arrangement of the Bordeaux Law Courts may be partly related to Rogers' own experiences with the law as a young man in Italy. Similarly, how his road trip experiences through the American heartland has helped to shape his approach to services and circulation, which are a continual thread through his buildings. Or, how his attitude to the public realm is rooted in his political outlook, family, formative years in Florence and subsequent travels around Italy.

Equally, through presenting the practices' immense body of

work in such a manner, it is possible to recognise Rogers' own influences from traditional Japanese villas to Joseph Paxton, Frank Lloyd Wright and the Bauhaus and also, to see how his individual approach has evolved over time. Particularly, a consistency in the methodology and treatment of each building is clearly apparent, which



serves to unify these as part of a family with variation according to scale, function and context. Some references to the 'practices' buildings' rather than to 'Rogers' buildings' are intentional. For me, one of Richard Rogers' most notable and endearing qualities appears to be not only his ability to bring people together but also to share the fruits of the labour. Throughout this book, he consistently credits those individuals that have had a particular impact in delivering a project in addition to the significance of the multidisciplinary team and the collaborative process.

The book is peppered with recollections of his experiences with some of the leading artists, architects, designers, thinkers and politicians of the age. It was particularly interesting to read about his relationship with Prince Charles and the impact this had on the practice while his anecdote about Jim Sterling and the RSPCA is worth the admission fee alone!

It is just over fifty years ago that Rogers and Team 4 completed their first project, Creek Vein and almost half a century since he and Renzo Piano were appointed for the Pompidou Centre. With this in mind, it would have been quite justifiable to make this book all about him - and for a good part it is. However, to me, it is also the story of those that he has connected with along the way - from tutors and colleagues to family and friends. In keeping with the ethos of his practices and the great buildings they have produced, the book also represents the coming together of many parts to create something special.

Passages about (as yet) unrealised projects will be particularly interesting to those who are already very familiar with his completed works, chapters about planning and society are a must read for anyone with an interest in place-shaping or simply a love of the city while sections about growing up, life and family are warm and honest.

Ultimately, I enjoyed this book so much that I may now have to begin it again at a more leisurely pace while last weekend, I returned to see the Lloyd's and Leadenhall buildings afresh and visited a recently completed residential project on London's South Bank. At some point in the near future, I'm hoping to visit the Pompidou specifically rather than as part of a weekend's sightseeing trip. Having started this book with a touch of trepidation, I've finished it (or perhaps just begun) with a great admiration for both the author and his almost unparalleled collection of work. ■

A New History of Modern Architecture by Colin Davies

Colin Davies introduces his important new book



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RIGHT: Images from the book



Colin Davies is an architect who was until recently Professor of Architectural Theory at London Metropolitan University. His other books include *Thinking About Architecture*, *Key Houses of the Twentieth Century*, *The Prefabricated Home* and *High Tech Architecture*

Each new generation of architects disparages its immediate predecessor. The Modernists hated the Beaux Arts classicists, the Postmodernists ridiculed the Modernists, the Deconstructivists despised the Postmodernists and now the Parametricists ignore all precedents on the basis that they were pre-digital and therefore pre-historic. Well, we'll see. The break with history may not be final. Because there is another process at work, a different historical rhythm. Paradoxically, the striving for novelty usually involves a backward glance, not to the previous generation but to the one before. For example we recently passed through period of renewed interest in the Brutalist Modernism of the 60s, and now an enthusiasm for 80s Postmodernism is making itself felt in the offices and lecture halls.

With each new phase, the whole of history of modern (small 'm') architecture shifts slightly in the memory and in its various scholarly containers. Thirty years ago architectural historians thought their main task was to tell the story of the 'inevitable' rise of Modernism. So when they looked at the architecture of the 1920s and 30s they mainly ignored, or only mentioned in passing, the various non-Modernist styles – Art Deco, the New York skyscraper, the Chinese 'National Style', traditional classicism, both fascist and democratic – to which the majority of important buildings conformed. Modernism, though still widely acknowledged as the characteristic style of the twentieth century, now takes its place in a more balanced historical view.

This doesn't mean that history's attentions have been re-apportioned 'fairly' according to some statistical or democratic principle. That would be a history of building, not a history of architecture. We have to accept that there is a bias built in to the very concept 'architecture'. Viewed globally, it is not so much a profession or a discipline as a loosely bounded, western oriented cultural field. The dictionary may define it simply as 'the design of buildings' but we know very well that in practice most buildings – factories, warehouses, retail parks, popular housing, shanty towns, refugee camps – are excluded from the category 'architecture'. Nikolaus Pevsner's famous distinction between a cathedral and a bicycle shed still applies.

And even within architecture, there is a selectiveness with which history connives. That privileged group of examples known as the 'artistic canon' may be full of distortions and injustices but that doesn't mean it isn't useful. In fact it is essential to the progress of the art, because it is a meeting place, a common point of reference for architects and architectural students all over the world. Anyone who wishes to participate fully in the international architectural conversation

must have a knowledge of the canon. Of course, the canon is not static. As our view of the past changes, like the widening wake of a ship, the relative importance of historical examples will alter, some rising in importance, others sinking into irrelevance. And there will be new observations and examples to add, not all of them products of the recent past.

One school of thought asserts that history, as a discipline, must ignore the needs of the present in order to deliver truths about the past. This may apply to those historians who produce 'new' history based on deep research into narrow fields of primary evidence. But practical people – for example architects, planners, politicians and developers – need a bigger picture. Their understanding of the past is based on comparison; comparison of buildings, periods, styles, movements, ideas and, most importantly, comparison of the past with the present. 'A New History of Modern Architecture' provides the means to make those comparisons and gain that understanding, combining copious illustrations, including plans and sections, with an engaging, readable text. In a word, it aims to be useful. ■



The Design Companion for Planning and Placemaking

The NPPF gives weight to the need for good, appropriate design and supports planners' efforts to create successful places. The Design Companion has been published to help with this says Kevin Radford

What has been needed since the publication of *Better Places to Live: By Design* and *The Urban Design Compendium* (two stalwarts in the urban designer's reference shelf now closing in on twenty years old) is a clear, concise guidance manual for planning practitioners dealing with complex design matters.

For a long time there has been little advice for planning officers on how to critique mediocre design, or tools to enable them to present an argument for better design. Instead, the likes of the Design Council-CABE and local design panels such as Design:South East and the GLA Architecture, Design and Urbanism Panel have been the prime arbiters of design commentary on planning applications.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) gives weight to the need for good, appropriate design, and paragraph 58 in particular, supports planners' efforts to create successful places. The Design Companion has been published for local authority planners to help with this. It has been written by a group of experienced designers from across the public and private sectors as a companion to the NPPF and Planning Practice Guidance, to provide a greater level of detail and ensure the successful delivery of great places and sustainable development.

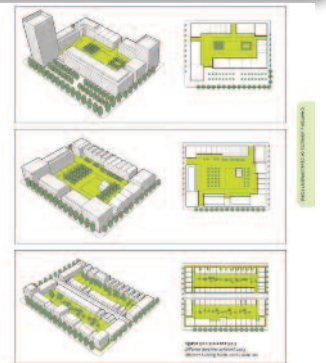
The book has been split into two parts. The first looks at the integration of planning and design and how both influence and are influenced on each other, including a review of relevant legislation and processes. The second part focuses on the specifics of design and dealing with the day to day design matters that influence the success of a planning application and ultimately the quality of the built environment. It has been edited with short introductions before presenting key issues and some solutions. In particular the second section provides guidance on critical issues for designing successful places.

Whilst the overall layout is simple and clear and the chapters logically run from the overview to the detail, there seems to have been significant editing down of the guidance almost to bullet point format. This then relies on informative diagrams and precedent imagery to illustrate the points raised. The quality of the imagery and diagrams associated with the text does vary and therefore can detract from the good points being made.

Each chapter in part two has been authored by different individuals, focusing on a specific design area, from street design to tall buildings. Inevitably this leads to a varying degree of quality of information and guidance. Each chapter introduces the key design principles and issues to consider which are then illustrated through the use of diagram, precedent photographs and text, finishing with a bullet point list of key points for planners to consider. Ultimately though, the solutions and examples shown fall short of real guidance in securing a high quality solution all plan-



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See Esther Kurland's introduction to the book in our last issue, *PIL 103*

ning matters. This is not a failing of the authors so much as the magnitude of approach taken by the book. Design is about understanding the place first and foremost followed then by the application of clear design principles based on best practice.

The book is a useful reference document for local authority planning departments by providing a commentary and points of note on the key design principles for creating good places. There is straight talking advice on issues to watch out for and tools for a shared dialogue with professional teams although the book does fall short of providing real clarity on understanding the sense of place and what is important in any one location. This ultimately comes down to experience. ■



Kevin Radford is associate director of masterplanning and urban design at PRP Architects

The Essential Guide To The Use Of Land And Buildings Under The Planning Acts

This splendid book by Martin H Goodall certainly makes real sense of land use in our convoluted planning system, says Andrew Rogers

I was recently reminded that in April 2011 Eric Pickles, then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, proposed (yet again) a simplification of the planning system to make development issues more straightforward so that planning barristers and consultants would "think twice about that third week in Tuscany or whether to buy the Lamborghini after all".

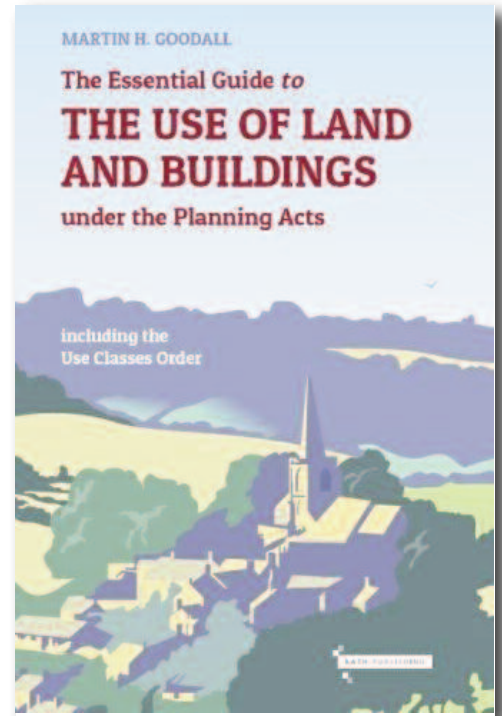
Six and a half years later we have a pair of guides to the over-complicated planning system written by planning lawyer Martin Goodall. The latest explains the planning issues relating to the use of land and buildings using 338 pages of text, with reference to more than 200 court cases (30 of these arising after the statement made by Uncle Eric). Regular readers will know that Martin's first tome, *A Practical Guide to Permitted Changes of Use*, ran to 316 pages - and was quickly followed by a second edition. So much for simplification.

An author's note at the start of his new volume sets out the context of use classes in planning and emphasises Martin's aim to produce a convenient work of reference, bringing together a wealth of material to explain "the legal and practical ramifications of land use planning" - from Aerodomes and Afforestation to Youth Clubs and Zoological Gardens.

After several general chapters on the planning unit and other concepts including material changes of use and how uses can subtly alter over time, Martin tackles the Use Classes Order with individual sections on shops/retail, catering, business/industrial, residential including non-domestic use, leisure, institutions and agriculture/forestry. The final quarter of the book, and for me the most fascinating, covers unlawful uses, lawful development certificates and appeals.

There are currently 15 main use classes with some 37 subdivisions, plus a catch-all for anything not included known as *sui generis* (of its own kind). Switching between uses is a complex business that is thoroughly explained. It is by no means clear to me that such a variety is really necessary - it could be argued (although not of course by Martin) that only three use classes would be sufficient: noxious, residential and other. But that's another story.

What I like most about Martin's excellent book - aside from his clear description of what numerous varied and/or unusual uses mean in planning terms - are the incidental explanations of often obscure or difficult concepts such as curtilage, live/work and abandonment - always with extensive references to established case law.



He covers a wide range of use issues, including the difference between primary and ancillary uses as well as between operational and material changes, the implication and validity of restrictive conditions, and how to distinguish between passive omission and deliberate deception.

Following its completion, events continue to demonstrate Martin's prescience in dealing with his subject. My on-line Planning Resource has just picked up two very recent appeal summaries that, although not directly included because they post-date publication, happen to be comprehensively covered by passages in the book: a permission granted for change of use from retail to a massage salon (explained on page 107); and a refusal for the continued use of a listed windmill for short-term holiday lets (page 262).

Ultimately this book proves that Uncle Eric - like so many before him (and indeed since) - failed utterly to simplify the planning system. It will, like its predecessor, take a place on my bookshelf and computer desktop as an indispensable guide to a complex but fundamental part of planning, the everyday use of land and buildings.

Alexander Pope observed that "'Tis use alone that sanctifies expense, And splendour borrows all her rays from sense." This splendid book certainly makes real sense of land use in our convoluted planning system. ■



Andrew Rogers is planning consultant