

Perceiving and recognizing cities

The image of cities has an important impact on their recognisability and perception. In this issue of the journal *Urbani izziv*, the authors discuss what determines cities' recognisability, how people perceive urban space, and how cities can be shaped to make them recognisable and evoke positive perceptions.

Andrej Pompe proceeds from the belief that no city would be a noteworthy and powerful brand if it did not possess recognisable, singular and distinctive elements of urbanism that make it unique. He establishes that urbanism with qualitative solutions helps shape a city's brand and that the criteria that demonstrate this are in agreement with the qualitative criteria of a brand. In his opinion, the positive consequences of understanding the connection of both areas will be long-term and will build a recognisable, consistent and stakeholder-friendly reputation for a city. In the second article, Aidan Cerar discusses the potentials of contributive participation. Urban planning and the development of methods for including the public in spatial planning continue to be characterized by a gap between decision-makers and planners on the one hand and local residents on the other. Cerar ascertains that the greatest focus has been on cases of participation that present some kind of reaction to plans or actions, whereas far less attention has been given to cases of participation based on initiatives and the search for new development for underused or decaying areas. He recommends that the spatial planning system should become more open to participation in terms of revitalising underused spaces because such space has been increasing during the economic downturn, and the complex and inefficient system of spatial planning is turning away many creative initiatives. Nataša Bratina Jurkovič examines the perception, experience and use of public urban spaces by residents of urban neighbourhoods. She believes that public green open spaces in cities offer residents a better quality of life. The behavioural patterns by which people experience and use these spaces are therefore a valuable source of information for spatial planning. According to Jurkovič's findings, residents perceive their "neighbourhood" to be the area around their home in which they know each other and socialise with neighbours. The factors that trigger a sense of satisfaction with their neighbourhood are well-maintained green areas near their home, parks with trees that provide spaces for a variety of activities, tree-lined streets, green areas connected into a system, the opportunity to use these areas for recreation and sports, and street furniture for rest or play. According to Simon Rankel, the author of the fourth article, future lighting solutions based on solid-state lighting will transform the appearance of cities at night. This article presents the first example of a study of future LED- and OLED-based lighting and its impact on the appearance of a city at night. The author explores whether its future use in general outdoor lighting will positively affect people's acceptance of urban space illuminated in this way. The results show that the proposed use of solid-state lighting solutions in most of the locations discussed would, on average, positively affect the perceived appearance of illuminated urban spaces. According to Rankel, prudent planning that considers factors in various aspects of urban lighting is necessary for designing sustainable urban lighting solutions that can enhance the positive impact of new lighting technologies on cities and their users, reduce their negative effects and at the same time contribute to designing the future appearance of cities at night.

The challenging topics raised in this issue are sure to provide interesting reading. Enjoy this issue of *Urbani izziv*!