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BRIEFING
Urbanism

Holy water? USA

California's drought has inspired the City of Angels to live up to its name: Los Angeles has launched a benevolent pilot programme to dispense recycled water to residents for free, for use in their homes.



Safe in the city

UK [URBAN SECURITY]

Perhaps one of the most chilling aspects of July's attack in Nice, which left 84 people dead and more than 300 injured, is that even the most ordinary of objects – in this case a lorry – could be used for terrorism.

The other side of that coin, however, is that even the most ordinary of objects in urban design can be used to prevent such attacks. Security firms are now predicting that cities across Europe will be reviewing their need for embedded counter-terrorism measures.

City halls will be looking for examples from the UK, where it's not just bollards and concrete barriers that are preventing vehicle attacks. In cities across the country, street furniture – such as park benches, bus stops,

public statues and railings – work double time. Designed with reinforced materials, they are sturdy enough to prevent vehicles from getting close to major buildings or areas crowded with people.

"We're one of the world leaders in vehicle-defence measures because we needed to be," says Chris Phillips, managing director at Ippso, a consultancy firm that specialises in counter-terrorism. During the 1990s, when the threat of the Irish Republican Army loomed large, car bombs became a potent threat. "We realised very early on that you can put a much larger bomb inside a vehicle, and a vehicle bomb can actually bring down buildings," he says. After the 1996 truck bombing in Manchester, which devastated part of the city, experts including Phillips began to think how they could prevent such events from happening – and how they could integrate these security measures into the fabric of cities.

This method has allowed safety measures to sit in plain sight without appearing to be safety measures at all. A prime example is the Emirates Stadium in London's Holloway neighbourhood, which is the home of football club Arsenal. The stadium, which was completed in 2006, needed to integrate protective measures. The answer? Large reinforced concrete letters that spell out the team's name on the pavement outside the stadium. "It looks like a statue," says Phillips. "But it's actually vehicle-defence." — MJG



Creative thinking

London [PUBLIC ART]

Too often public art is an afterthought, shoehorned into a square or park at the last minute. But what if the artist had a hand in building public infrastructure from the ground up? That's the idea that inspired Mark Davy, the founder of London-based urban place-making agency Futurecity, and Mollie Dent-Brocklehurst, the president of Pace Gallery's London branch, to launch Future/Pace earlier this year.

Future/Pace matches artists such as Michal Rovner and Kohei Nawa with public projects from the outset; art is embedded in the fabric of urban design. "There's a hunger from city authorities to see artists involved," says Davy. "A bridge could be just a bridge or also a sculpture that you can walk across." — MJG

Soak it up

Hasle, Denmark [PUBLIC SPACE]

The town of Hasle, on the Danish island of Bornholm in the Baltic Sea, was once considered an important stop-off for Denmark's trawlers. However, since the ships ceased docking here in the 1980s the municipality has been left high and dry, working to bring new life to the area. The year-round Hasle Harbour Baths, built in 2013, have finally done the trick, helping to draw new crowds as well as inspiring further growth.

"Young people loved it – they started cycling over from the nearest town," says architect Gugga Zakariasdottir, who co-managed the project. The baths now boast a sauna and a sunbathing platform; meanwhile a raft of beachside cafés and bars, as well as a maritime museum, are also cropping up. — SZ



Q&A

Lin Jou-min
Urban commissioner
Taipei

After 32 years working as an architect, first in New York and then in Taipei, Lin Jou-min joined the Taiwanese capital's administration in 2014.

Q What tempted you to leave the private sector?

A My previous architecture practice undertook a lot of public building projects so I know what the public sector is about – although the government is one of the reasons why Taipei is not as good as it should be. In 2014 I started contributing articles to a monthly periodical. I said Taipei is not as beautiful as you think; it's horrible and we have huge room for development. After that my phone rang and now I am sitting here.

Q What is city government's role in urban planning?

A It all starts with a grand vision; think of Tokyo 2020. But most mayors of Taipei have simply been solving problems. Our city should also have a grand vision, which is why we came out with Taipei 2050 last year. Mayor Ko [Wen-je] has two major missions: public housing and urban renewal.

Q What long-term projects do you have in mind?

A We want to relocate Taipei's second airport out of the city centre. Songshan Airport and the surrounding green areas have the same footprint as Central Park in New York – it could be the greatest park in the world. — JCH



The Urbanist

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With an influential audience of city mayors, urban-planners and architects, *The Urbanist* is Monocle 24's guide to making better cities. Be it sprucing up public spaces, state-of-the-art subways or compact apartments, it's all covered here.