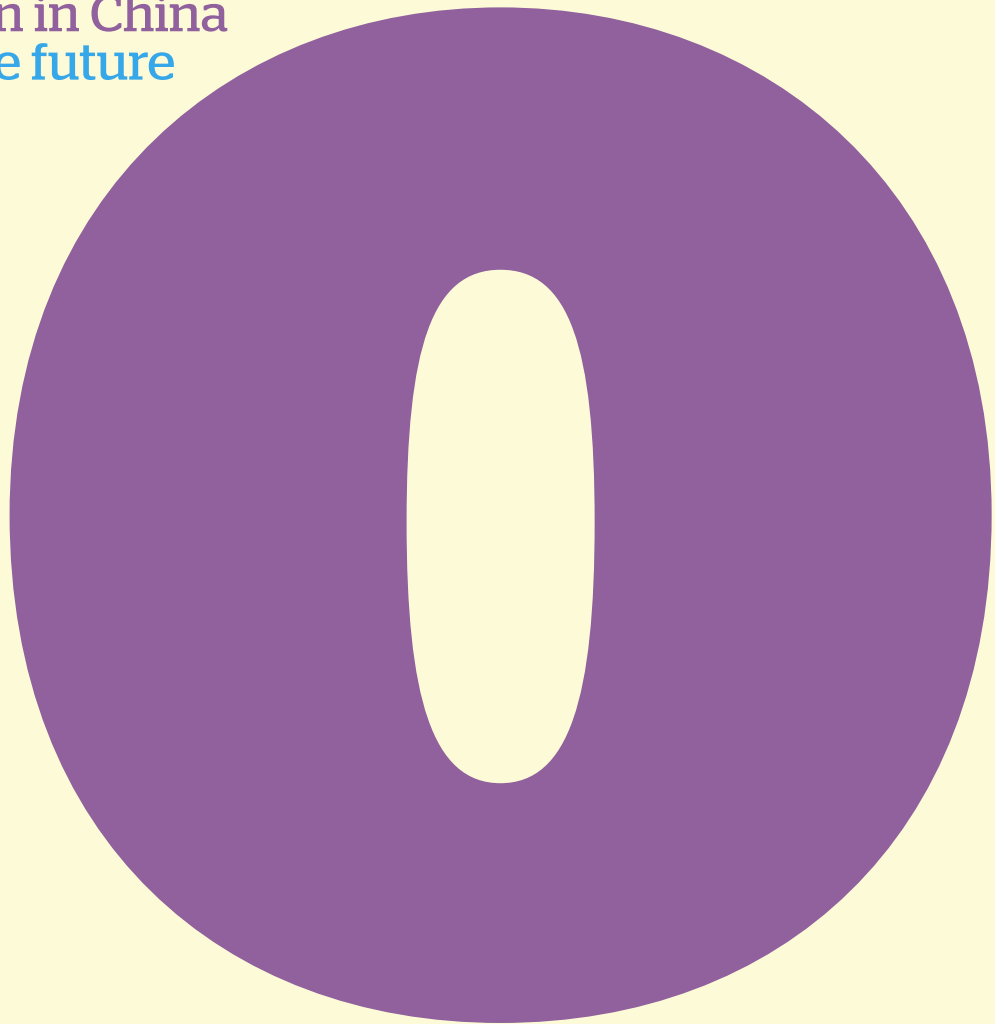


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Si, Milano! NZ design on the Continent
Hello, Shanghai! NZ design in China
Issue 100! Thoughts on the future



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Future education



Anthony
Flannery

Anthony Flannery,
managing director of
Chow:Hill

The socio-dynamic conditions affecting institutional transformation in the USA have intriguing parallels in New Zealand. In the US, the majority of heartland cities are in decline as population and economic growth continues to migrate to the coasts. There are, however, exceptions. A small number of heartland cities, euphemistically referred to as New Knowledge Cities, are bucking the trend and sustaining population and economic growth patterns comparable to the coastal boom. Sasaki's research suggests that the single unifying characteristic of these cities lies in the evolving relationship between their tertiary "learning" institutions and key public and private sector partners.

New Knowledge Cities embody the new zeitgeist - a deep and fundamental shift in the culture of tertiary institutions, a transformation from 'teaching culture' to 'learning culture', a rediscovery of the purpose and practice of education, a re-invention of social, economic, environmental and operational paradigms, and a passionate re-engagement with the new knowledge economy.

Teaching is essentially a process of dictation, while learning is essentially a process of facilitation. In a world where more new information will be created this year than in the last 5,000 years, and where by next year the amount of technical information produced will be doubling every seventy-two hours, and where the top ten jobs in ten year's time haven't been invented yet, we need to prepare students for jobs that don't yet exist, using technologies that haven't yet been invented, in order to solve problems that we don't even know are problems yet. In such a world, nothing can be dictated. We need to facilitate students' ability to learn.

Emerging learning communities are, in many ways, the antithesis of yesterday's teaching institutions. Tomorrow's learner is different from yesterday's student. Successful knowledge-based societies will require everybody to be a learner. Learners will be demographically and culturally diverse, more sophisticated, unpredictable, demanding, impatient, unreasonable, inquisitive, knowledgeable and street-wise. They will be increasingly audacious in their demands and expectations, but they will also have unprecedented choice. They will expect the environments in which they learn not only to function, but to inspire.

So what will the new environments and facilities needed by our learning communities look like? Strangely enough, they will look more like normal

places and less like most of New Zealand's current university and polytechnic campuses.

Because learning is inherently facilitative, learning environments don't require the same profile of specialist space as teaching environments. Learning spaces are modest, simple, generic spaces that encompass both internal and external environments - but they are very smart, flexible, agile and technologically sophisticated. Aspirations of new learners will mean that the focus of learning environments will increasingly be directed towards 'place' rather than 'building'. Successful learning precincts will have to be attractive, vibrant, accessible and safe, 24 hours-a-day, 7 days-a-week, 365 days-a-year.

These vibrant mixed-use precincts will have real main streets, real shops, cafes, bars and facilities - all provided by a prosperous private sector rather than subsidised by a cash-strapped institution. They will be inherently sustainable and they will be lived in. They will be relatively high-density places where people can live within five-minutes walk of their learning facilities. And their learning facilities will be seamlessly integrated into the precinct environment.

Can we afford them? Well, we can't not afford them - not if we want to continue to compete internationally. But the truth is that learning precincts are cheaper places to build, maintain and operate than exclusive, single-focus, specialist tertiary campuses. They just require a different attitude - one based on dynamic public/private collaboration rather than exclusive institutional self-protectionism.

And where does New Zealand sit in this New World? Pretty much in the same place as everyone else. In some areas it is beginning to lead, in some areas it is way behind. **New Zealand culture is at its best when it retains its core values of agility, flexibility, ingenuity and a sense of audacious ambition - the essential characteristics of successful knowledge precincts. It is at its worst when it hides behind dated concepts of tradition, process, self-protectionism and institutional control.** In some areas, particularly in the leadership thinking of some of our polytechnic and technical institutes, New Zealand is 'up there'. In other areas it appears, to paraphrase Sasaki's observations, 'about 20 years behind'.

The opportunities for tomorrow's design communities are unprecedented. However, a transformed tertiary culture also requires a transformed total-design culture. The age of exclusive institutions - whether they be tertiary or design professionals - is dead. Welcome to the future.

Chow:Hill and US-based firm Sasaki describe themselves as total design companies, with teams across fields of architecture, landscape architecture and urban design for the purpose of creating integrated environments. Sasaki, based in Boston USA, are widely recognised as the world's leading tertiary precinct master planners.