The role of Architecture in Soft Urbanism

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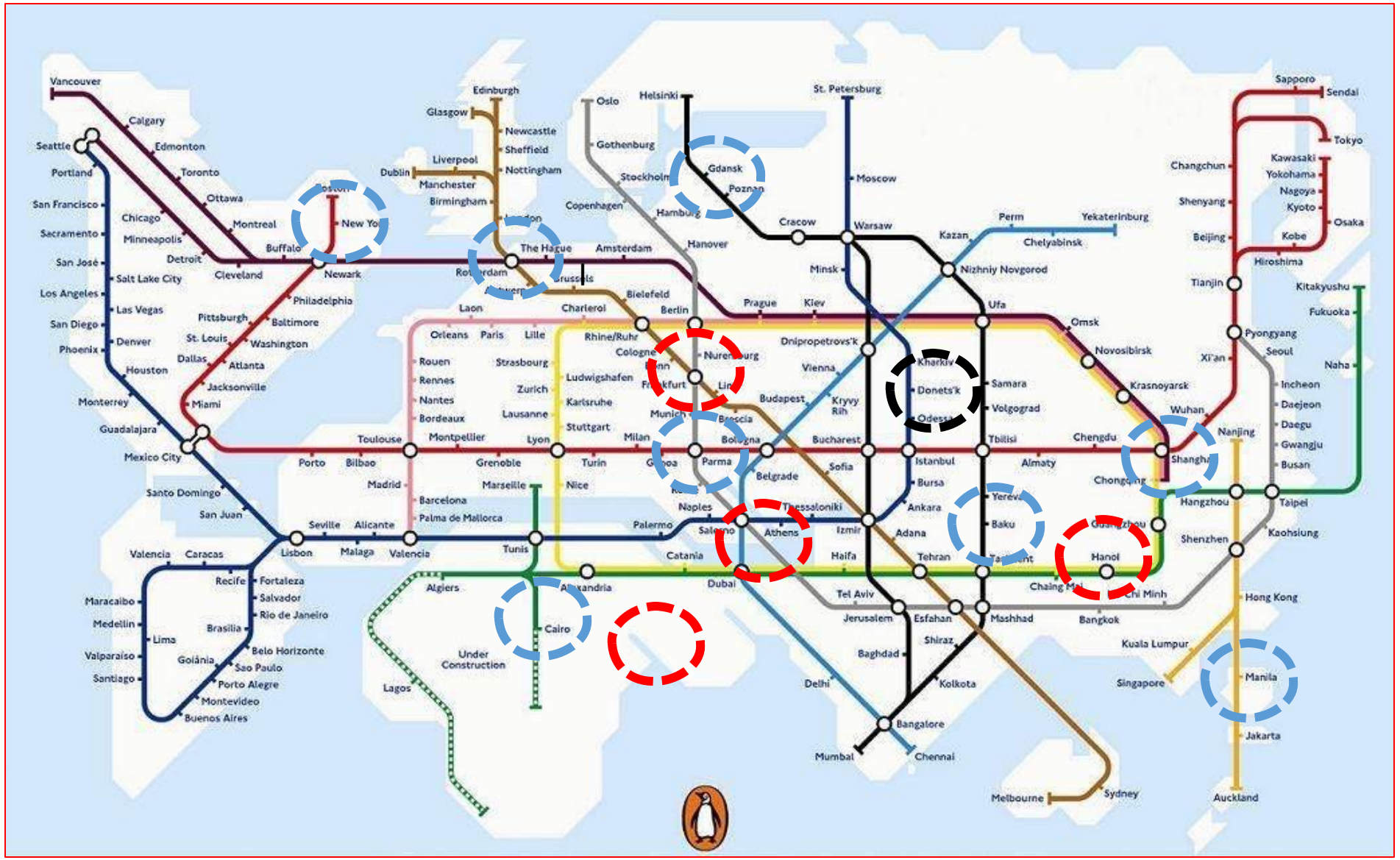
ISOCARP
Knowledge for Better Cities



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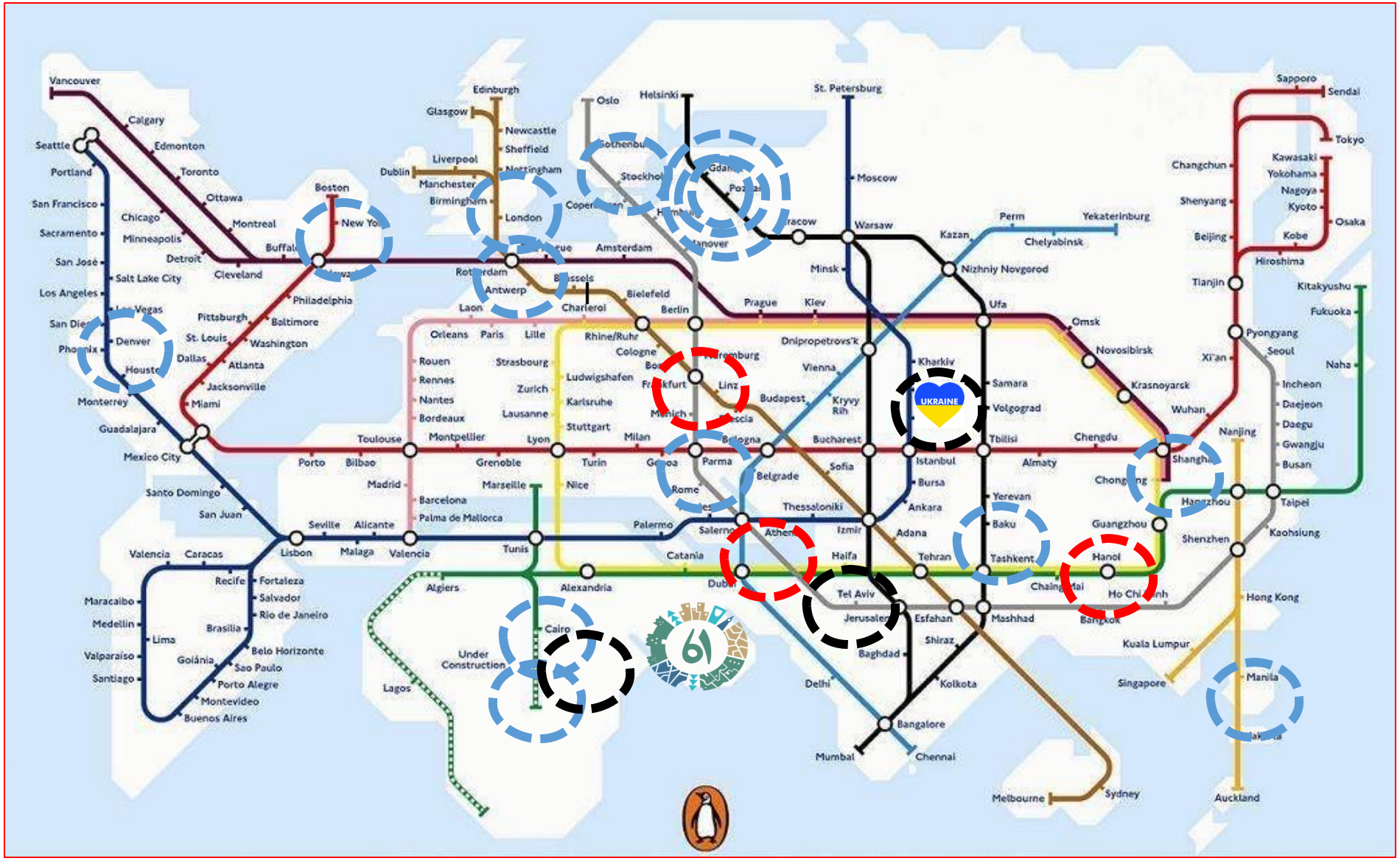

How can architectural policies interact with spatial planning and housing policies?

🏛️ Architectural Policies

Architectural policies provide the regulatory framework guiding the design, quality, and aesthetics of buildings and public spaces. They ensure that structures meet safety standards, contribute to cultural heritage, and align with environmental goals. For instance, in Madrid, a 2023 policy encouraged larger balconies in collective housing, promoting outdoor living and enhancing residents' well-being .

cityterritoryarchitecture.springeropen.com

🗺️ Spatial Planning

Spatial planning focuses on the organization and regulation of land use, determining where and how different activities (residential, commercial, industrial) occur. It aims to create cohesive, functional, and sustainable urban areas. Inclusionary zoning is one example, requiring developers to include affordable housing units in new projects, fostering mixed-income communities .

en.wikipedia.org +1

🏘️ Housing Policies

Housing policies address the provision, affordability, and quality of housing. They encompass strategies like rent control, public housing development, and subsidies. For example, Vienna's social housing model, where a significant portion of the population resides in municipally managed housing, ensures affordability and high living standards .

studysmarter.co.uk

How can architectural policies interact with spatial planning and housing policies?

🔄 Interactions and Synergies

- **Integrated Policy Frameworks**: Countries like Denmark, Catalonia, and Sweden have adopted integrated policy frameworks that combine architectural, spatial, and housing policies to address societal needs, promote sustainability, and enhance public participation . op.europa.eu
- **Design and Density Considerations**: Spatial planning policies that promote higher density can influence architectural designs to ensure livability, such as incorporating communal spaces and green areas .
- **Community Engagement**: Participatory planning approaches involve communities in decision-making, ensuring that architectural and spatial planning decisions reflect local needs and preferences . en.wikipedia.org

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⚠️ Challenges and Tensions

- **Market Pressures vs. Policy Goals**: In some regions, housing policies have become market-oriented, leading to conflicts with spatial planning objectives like environmental preservation and social integration . link.springer.com
- **Spatial Segregation**: Rigid housing differentiation can lead to spatial segregation, undermining efforts to create inclusive communities . link.springer.com

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✅ Conclusion

The interplay between architectural policies, spatial planning, and housing policies is crucial for developing urban environments that are sustainable, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of their inhabitants. An integrated approach ensures that these policies complement each other, leading to cohesive and vibrant urban landscapes.

Architecture, spatial planning, and housing policies are deeply interconnected, each influencing the others to shape the built environment. Architectural design can guide spatial organisation, which in turn informs policy decisions about land use, density, and community services. Conversely, policies can set parameters that architects must navigate, balancing regulation with innovation.

🏘️ Housing Policies Shaping Architectural Practice

1. Mixed-Use Developments

Policies promoting mixed-use developments encourage the integration of residential, commercial, and recreational spaces. This approach not only maximizes land use but also creates vibrant, livable communities. Architects respond by designing flexible spaces that can serve multiple functions. studysmarter.co.uk

2. Affordable Housing Initiatives

Government policies aimed at providing affordable housing often lead to the development of specific architectural typologies. For example, public housing projects may adopt standardized designs to reduce costs. However, architects can innovate within these constraints to create quality living environments.

3. Urban Density and Zoning Regulations

Zoning laws and density regulations directly impact architectural design. Policies that allow higher density can lead to the development of taller buildings and more compact living spaces. Architects must navigate these regulations to design functional and aesthetically pleasing structures. communities.springernature.com studysmarter.co.uk

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🏛️ Architecture as a Tool for Spatial Planning and Policy

1. Spatial Configuration and Social Interaction

Architectural layouts can foster or hinder social interaction. For instance, the design of public housing complexes can influence residents' social dynamics. Studies have shown that certain spatial configurations can lead to conflicts among residents, while others promote social integration. This highlights the importance of thoughtful architectural design in creating harmonious communities. tandfonline.com

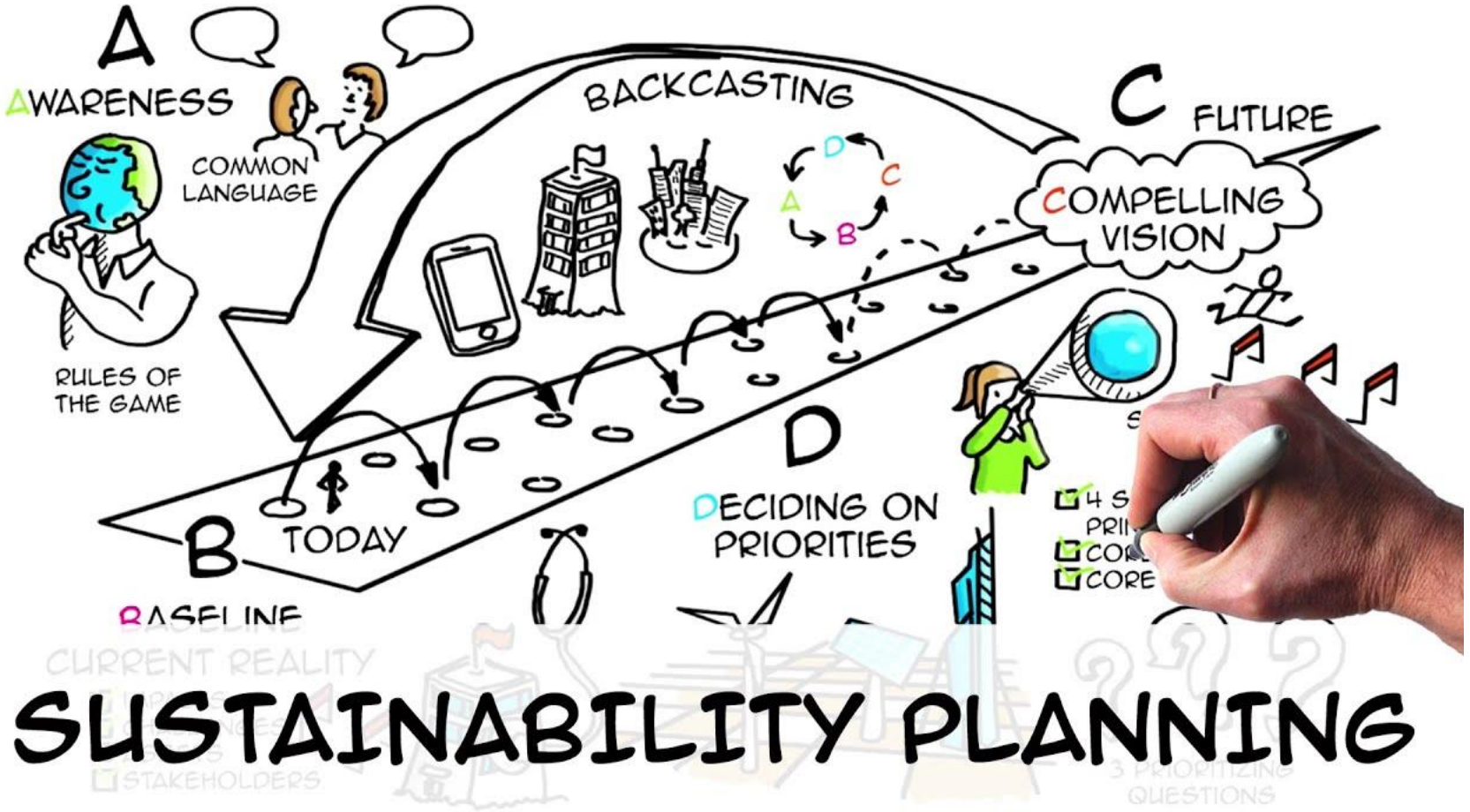
2. Visibility and Movement

Architectural elements like sightlines and movement pathways can affect how people interact within a space. Techniques such as visibility graph analysis help architects understand how design choices impact social interactions and movement patterns. This understanding can inform policies aimed at improving public spaces. en.wikipedia.org

3. Sustainable Urbanism

Architectural design plays a crucial role in sustainable urban development. Incorporating green infrastructure, such as green roofs and energy-efficient buildings, can reduce environmental impact. Policies that encourage or mandate such designs can lead to more sustainable cities.

It takes Integrated Sustainability Planning to deliver sustainable urban policies, plans, designs and architecture.



Integrated (Sustainability) Planning means…

INTEGRATED means

1. Place-based SDG-integration
2. Multi-sectorial policies/plans
3. Multi-level governance
4. Multi-stakeholder partnership
5. Three-pronged approach (plans, regulations & finance)

PLANNING means

1. Strategic and driven by a Shared Vision
2. Evidence- and metric-based
3. Participatory/co-creative/collaborative
4. Action- and Project-oriented
5. Hard & **Soft Urbanism**

SUSTAINABILITY means

1. Within safe planetary boundaries
2. Carbon-neutral
3. Bio-diverse
4. Socially-equitable
5. Economically-regenerative
6. Humanity@Peace

Soft Urbanism

🏛️ Architectural Quality in Soft Urbanism

In the context of Soft Urbanism, architectural quality is not solely defined by aesthetic appeal or structural integrity but encompasses the following dimensions:

- **Human-Centric Design**: Prioritising the comfort and well-being of individuals through thoughtful spatial arrangements and accessibility.
- **Ecological Sustainability**: Incorporating green spaces, sustainable materials, and energy-efficient systems to minimise environmental impact.
- **Social Inclusivity**: Designing spaces that are accessible and welcoming to diverse communities, fostering social interaction and cohesion.
- **Adaptability**: Creating flexible spaces that can evolve in response to changing social, technological, and environmental conditions.

These elements collectively contribute to a built environment that supports human flourishing and resilience. strongtowns.org

Soft Urbanism

🌍 Global Perspectives and Applications

International examples illustrate the application of Soft Urbanism principles:

- **Caring Architecture**: Angelika Fitz and Elke Krasny advocate for architecture that integrates ecology, economics, social justice, and politics to address global crises. Their work highlights the importance of interdependency and the long-term impact of architectural decisions on people, animals, plants, and the environment . architecturaldigest.com
- **Complementary Architecture**: This movement promotes sustainability, altruism, contextualism, and continuity of regional design language. It seeks to harmonise new developments with local cultural and natural contexts, ensuring that architectural interventions respect and enhance their surroundings . en.wikipedia.org

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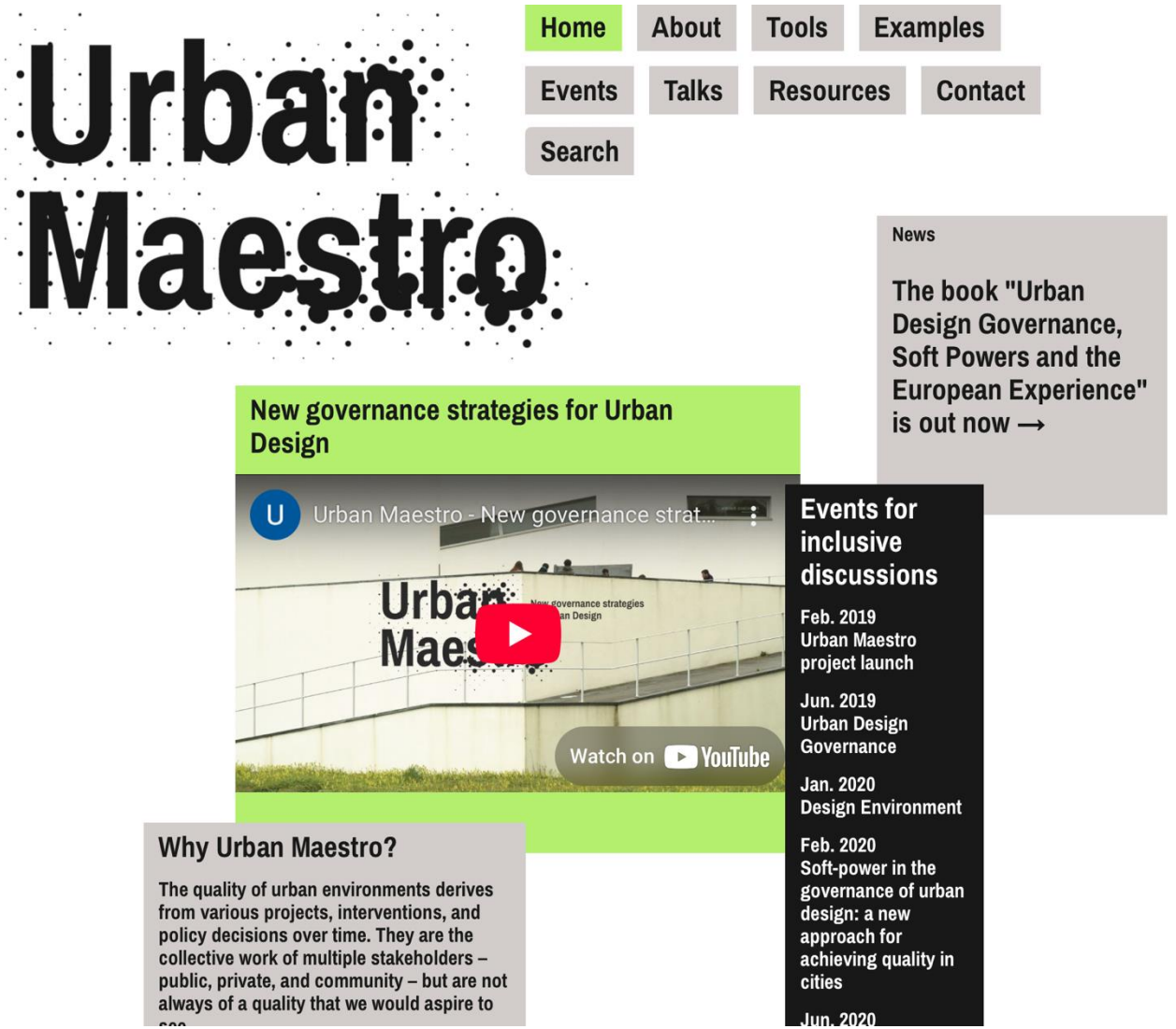
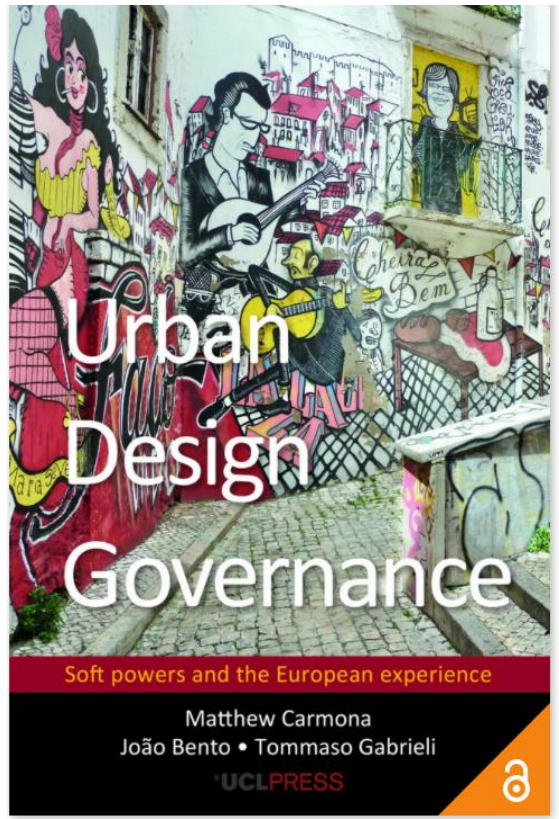
🧭 Conclusion

Architectural quality discourses within Soft Urbanism approaches advocate for a shift towards urban environments that are adaptable, inclusive, and ecologically sustainable. By integrating both physical and digital realms and prioritising human-centric design, these approaches aim to create cities that support the well-being of their inhabitants and the health of the planet.

Soft Urbanism





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Soft Urbanism

Urban Maestro

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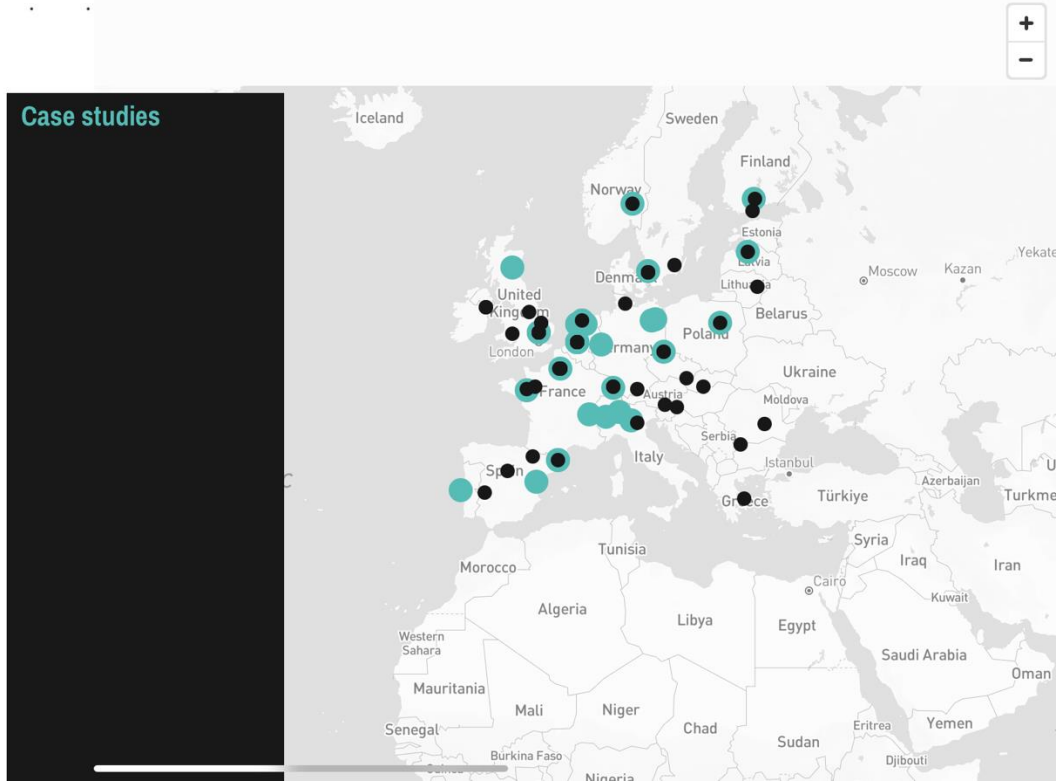
Selected Examples of innovative practices



Why Urban Maestro?

The quality of urban environments derives from various projects, interventions, and policy decisions over time. They are the collective work of multiple stakeholders – public, private, and community – but are not always of a quality that we would aspire to see.

Urban Maestro examines how the soft (non-regulatory) powers of the state can shape the decisions that help to deliver better-designed places. These approaches often combine different, informal tools in order to guide, encourage, and enable better design.

European countries and cities apply these informal tools often in innovative ways; therefore, Urban Maestro aims to capture how these tools are put into practice, with what purpose, and what impact they have on real-life solutions.

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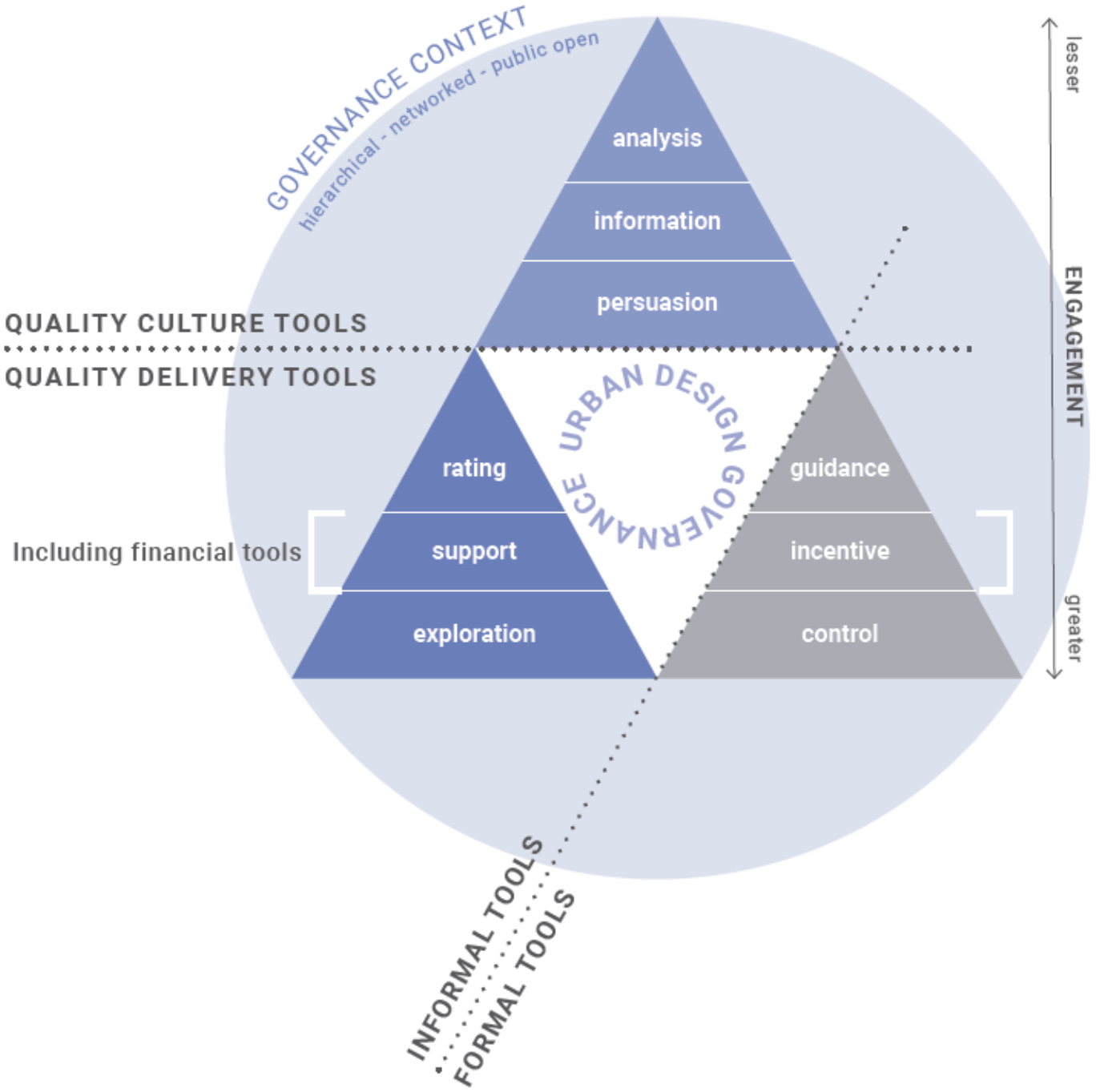

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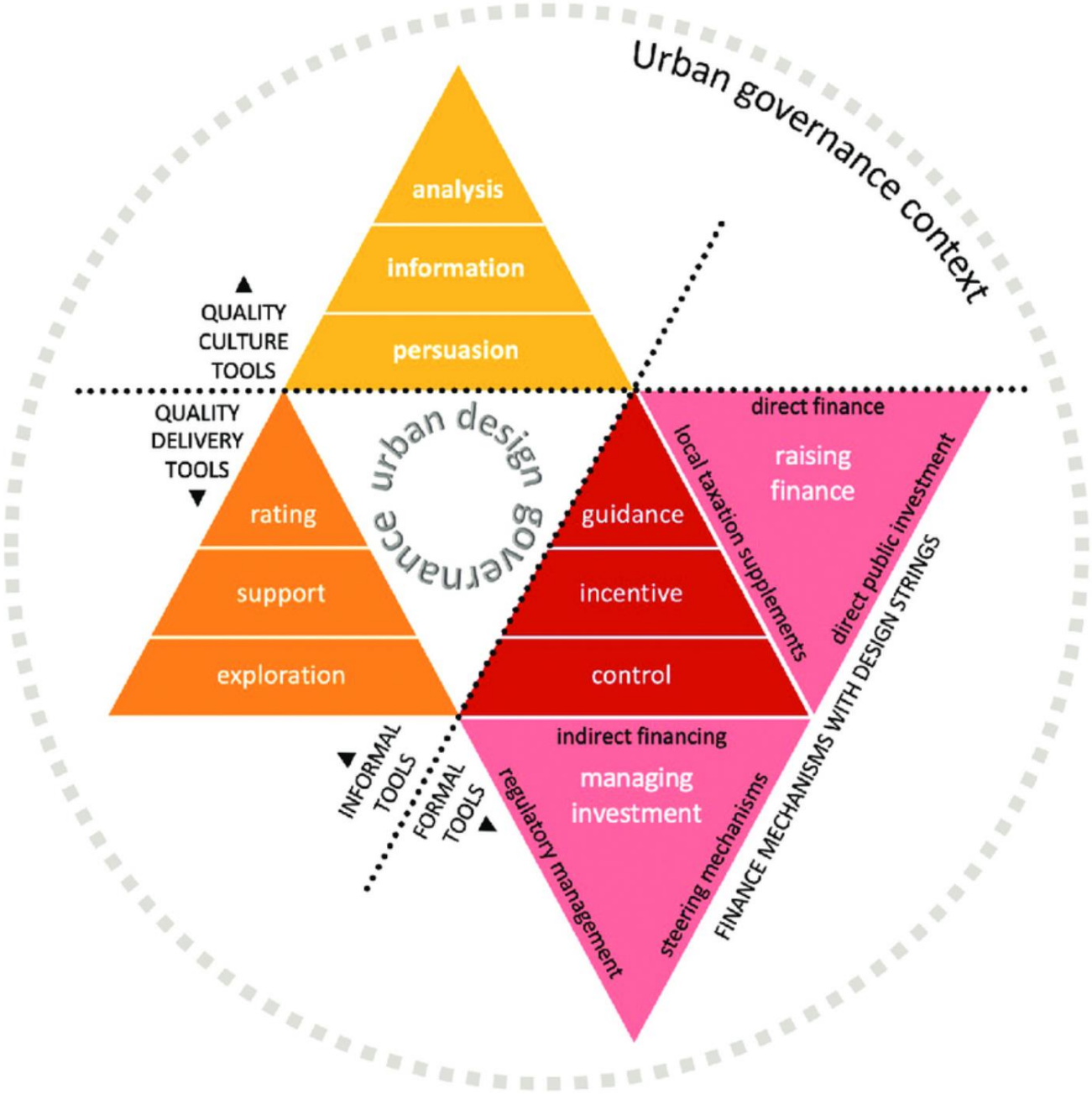
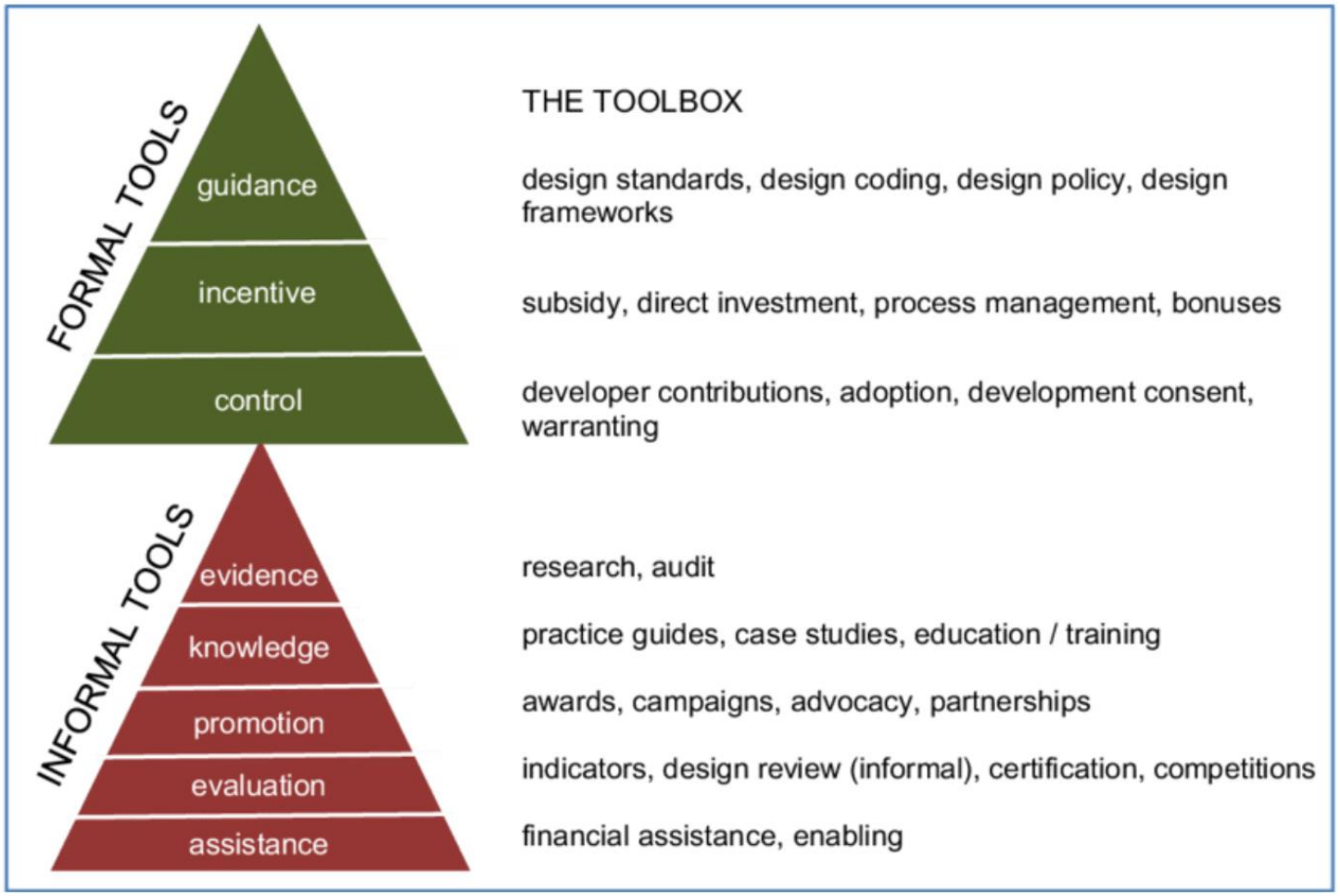


Urban design governance tools and financial mechanisms (image Matthew Carmona).

Soft Urbanism



Rendering master plans is a crucial aspect of architectural and urban design, transforming conceptual ideas into visual representations that communicate the project's vision effectively. This process involves creating detailed, often photorealistic images or animations of a site plan, which can include buildings, landscapes, infrastructure, and surrounding environments.

Soft Urbanism

https://youtu.be/Kw9zpbTLn4M?si=2MxpMM7AF-yhqL9A

Soft Urbanism

Baku General Master Plan 2040, by AS+P, Germany

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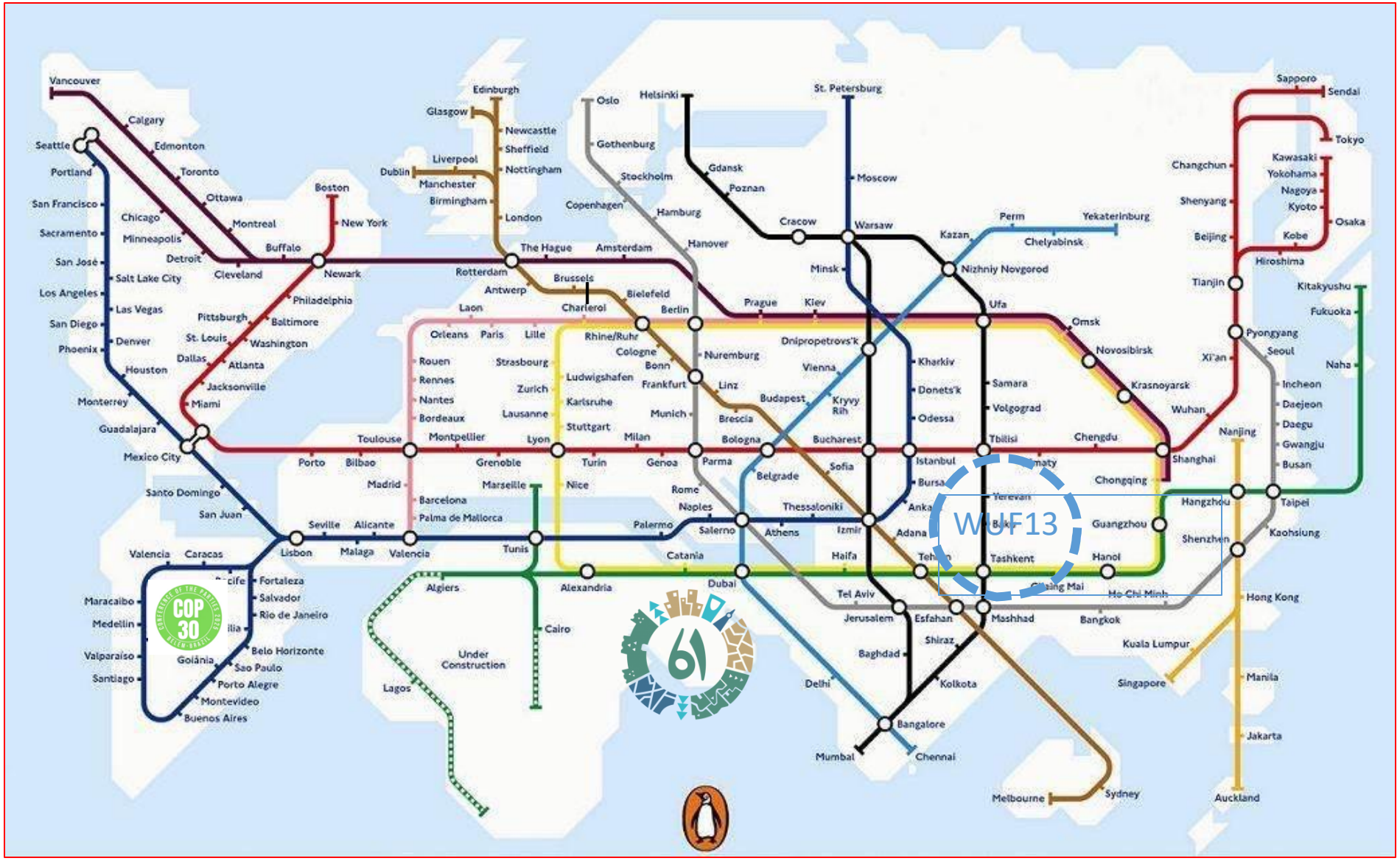

Cities & Regions in Action

Cities are at the frontline of response to multiple crises that the contemporary world faces, which, if managed well, could open up tremendous possible futures for the way we plan, manage, and govern cities. As a home for already more than half of the world's population, centers of innovation, magnets of talent, and locus of economic productivity, cities are uniquely placed to reflect on the quality of life, address well-being, and prototype solutions to global problems, capturing advances in Artificial Intelligence for the benefit of all people. At the same time, cities are called to lead the response to the climate crisis through localizing global frames of reference towards urban resilience.