environment – only a (small) proportion of whom might actively claim to be urban designers. There is a continuum from 'knowing' to 'unknowing' urban designers (see Carmona *et al.*, 2003: 15–16). 'Knowing' urban designers are typically the professionals employed or retained on account of their urban design expertise (i.e. urban design practitioners). At the other end of the continuum are the 'unknowing' urban designers: those who make urban design decisions without appreciating that this is what they are doing. This is not a distinction that necessarily reflects on the quality of outcomes (i.e. the product) – the outcome of each can be 'good' or 'bad'. As Jonathan Barnett (1982: 9) has argued:

> *Today's city is not an accident. Its form is usually unintentional, but it is not accidental. It is the product of decisions made for single, separate purposes, whose interrelationships and side effects have not been fully considered. The design of cities has been determined by engineers, surveyors, lawyers, and investors, each making individual, rational decisions for rational reasons.*

But, without conscious recognition of the qualities and additional value of good urban design, the creation and production of urban environments often occurs by omission rather than explicit commission.

Urban design's current status is based on a large and growing body of theoretical writings that have their roots in critiques of post-1945 modernism and in the urban development of the past fifty years, and, in particular, in a set of classic texts dating from the very early 1960s from writers such as Kevin Lynch (1960), Jane Jacobs (1961) and Gordon Cullen (1961), and in another larger set dating from the late 1960s and 1970s including Ed Bacon (1967), Ian McHarg (1969), Christian Norberg-Schulz (1971), Robert Venturi *et al.* (1972), Jan Gehl (1971), Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter (1978), Christopher Alexander (Alexander *et al.*, 1977; Alexander, 1979) and William Whyte (1980). The ideas and observations of these writers and others have been debated, criticized, tested, developed and extended by a wide range of theorists, practitioners and policy makers in the period up to the current day. The resulting urban design literature is extensive and growing, and constitutes the foundation for contemporary urban design policy and practice.

An attempt to structure the urban design literature into a number of interrelated dimensions was made in our book *Public Places Urban Spaces: The dimensions of urban design*, co-authored with Tim Heath and Taner Oc (Carmona *et al.*, 2003). This book provided an exposition of the different, but intimately related, dimensions of urban design thought and practice. Synthesising and integrating ideas and theories from a wide range of sources, it derived from a comprehensive reading of existing literature and research. Taking a holistic approach, it neither focused on a limited checklist of urban design qualities nor – it was hoped – excluded important areas.

Drawing on the material that inspired the writing of *Public Places Urban Spaces*, the current book presents a selection of key texts in (substantially) their original form. While including a good range of contemporary texts/authors/figures in urban design, together with papers that are simply useful as distillations of key areas of urban design knowledge, the intention has been to produce a 'useful' reader that includes a good range of 'classic' or 'staple' texts – that is, those that are referred to again and again. In this respect, this reader presents papers from the classic urban design canon – for example, Kevin Lynch on legibility, Jane Jacobs on vitality, Gordon Cullen on townscape, and Edward Relph on meaning and sense-of-place. The reader does not seek to replace the 'classic' texts. Instead, it seeks to provide an introduction and a taste of them, while placing them in relation to each other. To see them in their 'whole' and in context, readers need to go to the original sources, something that is essential for an in-depth understanding. It is also noticeable how many of the later selections – Jarvis (1980) and Sternberg (2000), for example – refer back directly to these works.

By this means, we bring together key texts that provide foundations for the place-making view of urban design. This urban design canon has been followed by others who, for example, have argued that urban design is an important and necessary consideration in the land and property development process, either directly or indirectly – Tibbalds (1992), Rowley (1998) and Duany *et al.* (2000) – and those who have advocated urban design as a response to what are seen as the failings of contemporary development practice (e.g. Trancik, 1986; Loukaitou-Sideris, 1998). A selection of these texts has also been included.

Public Places Urban Spaces utilised a simple three-part structure:

- *The Context for Urban Design* consisting of three chapters – urban design today, urban change, the contexts for urban design.
- *The Dimensions of Urban Design* consisting of six chapters, each focusing on a particular dimension of urban design.