

Buildings Complexes as Urban Design?

The classification system used in this book is at its fuzziest in dealing with complexes of buildings. Is the new Stata Center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (see Figure 6.12) a building, or a series of buildings, or a total urban design project? It is presented as an object in space tied into the university's infrastructure system. Rockefeller Center and Pruitt Igoe have been categorized in the core of urban design, yet here the cemetery at Modena, Kresge College built on a green-field site, and the rehabilitation of the Ghirardelli complex in San Francisco have been classified as primarily architectural works. The logic for locating these three examples outside the mainstream of urban design activity is that they are self-contained professional architectural works. All three are really independent units.

The Ghirardelli Square scheme has had an enormous impact on its surroundings. This multiplier effect was not part of a conscious overall urban development policy but it has shown the potential importance of individual projects of its scale as generators of urban rehabilitation. The cemetery at Modena is a creative adaptation of a building type and Kresge College, has become a precedent for total small college designs but neither has had a catalytic impact on its surroundings. All three are fine examples of the integration of open and enclosed space into a coherent overall design. Much can be learnt from them.



Figure 6.12 The Stata Center, M.I.T. in 2004.