

with its involvement with the physical fabric of the city; others have focused on its scale, its points of departure from, or congruence with, planning and architecture, its political and management aspects, or its place in the planning process.

To arrive at a definition for urban design, we will need to take into account these various attempts and to identify the elements which create confusion and ambiguity. We could be then on our way to a clearer conception of what urban design is about. In its search for a definition of urban design, this paper relies on three sources of information. First, the practitioners' approach to urban design: I have collected information from the British firms specialising in urban design, asking them to send examples of their work and to explain their approach to urban design. Second, the educators' approach: I have collected the brochures and documents from British and American universities in which urban design is taught as a postgraduate degree programme. Third, the published discussions on urban design, which have been produced by both professionals and academics. An analysis of these sets of information shows the extent of ambiguity in the usage of the term urban design and its application, as well as showing ways of overcoming these ambiguities. By reviewing these documents, I have come to identify seven areas of confusion and ambiguity:

1. the scale of urban fabric which urban design addresses;
2. the visual or the spatial emphases of urban design;
3. the spatial or the social emphases of urban design;
4. the relationship between process and product in the city design;
5. the relationship between different professionals and their activities;
6. the public or the private sector affiliation of urban design; and
7. the design as an objective-rational or an expressive-subjective process.

An examination of these arenas, I argue, will illuminate the range of issues and tensions within urban design and will show how a way can be sought to clarify the definition of urban design and its roles and areas of involvement. As with any such attempts, the aim here is to find some patterns in a complex reality. As my intention is to confront areas of ambiguity, I have presented my argument along a list of dualities. This, however, should not be taken as an attempt to simplify the complexities of urban design. I have used dualities merely for analytical clarity in the context of ambiguity. The duality often represents the two ends

of a spectrum, with the actual circumstances located somewhere in between.

The paper starts by addressing the ambiguities about the product of urban design, urban space, discussing the question of scale, visual, spatial, and social concerns. This leads to an analysis of the relationship between process and product, which is a central, overarching area of ambiguity. This will be a point of connection to the discussions of urban design as a process, which includes the professional activities of urban designers and their affiliations. A wider debate about the nature and scope of the urban design process will take us to the paper's conclusion, which offers a definition of urban design.

Macro- or micro-scale urban design?

A main area of confusion is in the scale of urban fabric in which urban design is engaged. Definitions of urban design refer both to the design of cities and settlements as a whole and to the design of some parts of urban areas. The range of issues and considerations addressed at these two macro- and micro-scales of urban design, however, are very different from each other. Whereas the design of cities and settlements has focused on the broad issues of organisation of space and functions, micro-urban design has concentrated on the public face of architecture, on public space in parts of the cities, and more detailed considerations of design at that scale. When observed simultaneously, as happens in the definitions of urban design, they could create a large degree of ambiguity.

Such ambiguity can be seen in a comparison between two sets of definitions. Francis Tibbalds's preferred definition is the one which describes urban design as 'the physical design of public realm' (Tibbalds, 1988, 12). The term public realm often refers to the space in the city which is not private, the space outside the private realm of buildings, the space between the buildings. But does this lead to a lack of attention to the private space which makes up the bulk of every city's space? If 'urban' is merely the public parts of the city, what should we call the totality of urban space with its both public and private dimensions? How do we compare this micro-scale urban design with Kevin Lynch's broader definitions? In one attempt he defined urban design as dealing with 'the form of possible urban environments' (Lynch, 1984). He offered an even broader definition elsewhere (Lynch, 1981, 290), as 'the art of creating possibilities for the use, management, and form of settlements or their significant parts'.