

sketches are prepared, to when they are formulated as a set of instructions for making something which leaves the details to be worked out, and to making plans and drawings necessary for the construction of a building which the workers have to follow (*Oxford English Dictionary; Longmans English Larousse*). Each of these definitions is given as an independent definition for design. And yet if we put them all together, they still mean design, or rather the design process.

Nevertheless, these definitions fail to inform us of all the moments in the sequence of the design process or of the process as a whole. On the other hand, the attempts which have been made to provide a more comprehensive definition of design have found an entirely different focus. For example, in his entry for the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Kevin Lynch (1984) offered a definition of design as 'the imaginative creation of possible form intended to achieve some human purpose: social, economic, aesthetic, or technical'. Elsewhere, he elaborates this definition of design as 'the playful creation and strict evaluation of the possible forms of something, including how it is to be made' (Lynch, 1981, 290). Here the focus is on an action, the creation of possible form, which is not mentioned in our dictionary definitions, with a reference to its mode, mechanisms, and areas of concern.

The relationship between process and product goes beyond this formal analysis, as they are closely intertwined. To understand urban space, it should be argued, following Henri Lefebvre (1991), that we will need to look at the processes which produce the space. Urban design is a major component part of these processes and it is concerned with cities and with how to shape and manage them. However, there are many professionals who are involved in this process of shaping. Where do urban designers stand?

## Professional divide

A major area of ambiguity seems to be where we expect a practical clarity to reign. Where should we look for definitions of urban design and find out what urban designers do?

The Urban Design Group is the main forum dealing with the subject in Britain, largely bringing together urban design professionals. To produce a manifesto for urban design, initiated in 1986, the Group proposed a seven-point agenda which was aimed at 'making explicit what urban designers do, or should do' (Billingham, 1994, 38). Urban design, as outlined in this agenda, is an interdisciplinary activity, occupying 'the central ground between the recognised

environmental professionals'. It is 'concerned with the careful stewardship of the resources of the built environment' and with 'helping the users and not only the producers of the urban environment'. Therefore they 'must understand and interpret community needs and aspirations', as well as 'understanding and using political and financial processes'. In short, urban designers operate 'within the procedures of urban development to achieve community objectives'. Following this principle, 'Urban design education and research must be concerned with the dynamics of change in the urban environment and how it can be adapted to be responsive to the ways in which people's lives are lived' (Billingham, 1994, 34). A list of 'an irreducible minimum' of the criteria for the form of the 'good city' concludes the agenda (Billingham, 1994, 35). These criteria, derived from a variety of sources, include attention to variety, access, security and comfort, opportunity for personalisation, and clarity.

But are these concerns exclusive to urban designers? Can other environmental disciplines and professions not claim to have similar concerns? The first point in the Urban Design Group's agenda, however, explains more:

*Urban design has emerged as a discipline, primarily because it is able to consider the relationships between the physical form and function of adjacent sites, unlike the Architect who is constrained by site boundaries and client intentions and the Planner who has been reluctant to address issues appertaining to the physical design agenda. (Billingham, 1994, 34)*

Does this principle imply that urban design is physical design for more than a site, for a group of adjacent sites? After all, interest in physical design was the first principal objective of the Urban Design Group as published in its first issue of *Urban Design Group News* in July 1979. The Group was being established, 'To provide a forum for those who believe that planning should be more concerned with improvement of the design of the physical environment and the quality of places and to encourage all the professions to combine to this end' (Linden and Billingham, 1994, 30).

A decade later in February 1995, the agenda was updated by the Group in a one-day conference. The new text is a marked improvement on the previous agenda. It has remained, however, 'an amalgam of the views expressed at the day's discussion' (Billingham, 1996, 38). It is rather loosely organised under the headings Objectives, Guiding Principles, Approaches,