

the graduate level will confirm, remains committed to imparting general knowledge about urban law, urban planning, urban real estate economics, and design of places that engender sociability. The expectation is that graduating students, with their ability to see the big picture, are the obvious people to make critical connections and lead design and planning efforts. Yet, much of what urban design promised when it was formulated in the mid-1950s, and now imparts at increasing numbers of programs at the graduate level of universities—mainly the need to make places and buildings that respect the synergies of the street, neighborhood, and city—is now accepted knowledge that laypeople, at least in Los Angeles, understand and act on. These people do not need urban designers to advocate these ideas for them. Urban designers cannot continue to be educated as generalists—in fact, urban design as a professional pursuit is in crisis—when the activist layperson’s understanding of the city and how to act within it is equivalent to the purported professional’s.

For designers who would be urbanists, the challenge is to move beyond what everyday citizens engaged in planning their communities already know. The future of urban design as a practice now lies in the development of knowledge and tools that all players in the community-making process will use. Understanding and supporting this knowledge and these tools such that they are used as an integral part of the democratic planning process are among the great opportunities for the planning and design professions, and portend a shift of historic proportions with regard to the means by which cities are planned, designed, and built as important as the design of any single piece of infrastructure. As opposed to advocating urban design education for the masses or leading the people to the city on the hill of good design, planners, architects, and landscape architects, acting as urban designers, must associate themselves and their specialized activities with everyday people to do everyday planning.

The public will thus get more of what it wants: a customized evolution of the urban landscape. Gropingly, the public in Los Angeles has already used this nascent process, this New Planning, to get cleaner air, cleaner water, better traffic management, less development intrusion into single-family-house neighborhoods, greener streets, better-designed projects, and more vital urbanism in select locations. However, the challenge is also qualitative, highlighting another dilemma for the generalist urban designer. Quantitative expertise, good planning processes, and generalized knowledge of urban design do not