

considerations of the same underlying process are like ships passing in the night. One way to take up this issue is to examine what happens when different “forms of life”—to use Wittgenstein’s terminology—are brought to bear on the same subject and to attempt to discern strategies that might effect more reconciliation, intertwining, or convergence. A common approach, implicit in contemporary urban planning and design in interdisciplinary educational settings, is a kind of crossing over or “reading” between various forms of life. This often results in connoisseurship for planners and facility in various kinds of social measurement for architects. Another, far less common strategy is to overlay various forms of life and look for instances or methodologies where the logics and results of one might bear on another. Recent spatial studies of the economies of urban agglomeration, for instance, in attempting to account for amenity and environmental quality in the attraction and shaping of investment, point in this direction. This is where the calculus of one form of life becomes opened up to concerns of another and vice versa. A third, or variant of this strategy, is to explore what happens to the logics and essential entities of “forms of life” when the manner of their use and discussion is radically shifted away from what is “normal.” For instance, this is a little like the arithmetic teacher who has no difficulty convincing students that $2 + 2 = 4$, but when entering politics discovers that construal by colleagues may range from 3.5 to 4.7. The point of the anecdote is to suggest that there may be mutability to what is held hard and fast in one arena in another arena. This then opens up the possibility of interdisciplinary dialog and does so by avoiding placing one perspective under another, or placing both under some poorly defined, presumed-to-be-overarching rubric, as seemed to be happening in 1956.

Fundamentally, though, now as then, urban design is a sphere of operation involving design as a way of dealing effectively with the apparent incommensurability of constraints that come from the intertwining of competing claims in urban construction and reconstruction, including resources, poetic values, and considerations of appropriate use. It is not a separate discipline or something close to it, as might have been imagined in 1956. Also, it need not and should not exclude participants from disciplines other than design, nor should it lead to making arbitrary distinctions between, for instance, architects, landscape architects, environmental designers, and physical planners. Further, urban design seems to have more pertinence—