

urban designs continued to make important contributions to people's quality of life. They give people enjoyment and a sense of pride and will do so in the future (Dreier *et al.*, 2001). The proviso is that urban design needs to be based more on an empirical rather than a purely rationalist foundation. Rationalist thinking will, however, make us consider future possibilities that are departures from failing traditions.

So What Then is Urban Design?

The case studies included in this volume show the breadth of urban design work. The field is concerned with specific design products varying in type from new towns, to precincts of cities, to elements of city infrastructure. The size of urban design endeavours has varied considerably over the past 50 years. Brasília is a national capital, Pariser Platz is a square, and Trudslund consists of a group of houses. It is always concerned with the three- and preferably the four-dimensional world. Procedurally, urban design is concerned with four types of projects: total, all-of-a-piece, piece-by-piece and plug-in urban design. Substantively and procedurally urban design is thus concerned primarily with design policies and designing at the project level in order to intentionally shape the city.

Urban design concerns and activities clearly overlap those of other fields. It should do so. It does and should overlap city-planning endeavours concerned with broad policies about the distribution of activities in space and the linkages between them. Urban design products are produced under that umbrella and create it. Similarly, urban design does and should overlap civil engineering in ensuring the buildability of large-scale elements of infrastructure. It does and should overlap landscape architecture in its concern for the detailing of the space between buildings and in designing for sustainable futures. It does and should overlap architecture in its concerns for how buildings front and make, behaviourally and symbolically, the public realm.

The city is a collage of overlapping precincts, places and linkages (Rowe and Koetter, 1978). How should these elements be designed and organized? Should they be clearly differentiated or merged? These questions deal with broad policy concerns. The position taken here is that it is through political channels that communal decisions should be made, and it is the responsibility of politicians to set directions as representatives of those who elected them. Design professionals have to possess the competence to inform both politicians and the public about future possibilities, to challenge political assumptions, and to follow ideas through. They need stamina and considerable tenacity of purpose if they are to succeed.

A coherent city is not simply a haphazard collage. It is one of distinct and varied paths, districts, landmarks, edges and nodes. Kevin Lynch identified these elements as giving legibility to cities (Lynch, 1960). His research has held up well under considerable scrutiny since it was conducted 40 years ago. Edges are not as important as he thought they are; nodes are probably more important. Clear