responsible for only a fraction of additions and alterations to the built environment.)

What term can we use to describe the relationship between the contemporary urban designer and the designed object? Contemporary urban design appears to be a higher-order design activity in the sense that it is indirectly related to the designed object. The term *metadesign* offers itself as a candidate. Meta-activities are those that involve the recursive application of an activity: for example, meta-analysis is the analysis of other analyses, it is 'analysis of analyses;' hence, metadesign can be understood to mean 'design of designs.' In that sense, unfortunately, the term *metadesign* is clearly too grandiose, and using it to describe urban design may be overstating the scope and nature of contemporary urban design.

Another candidate, the term *second-order design*, appears to be more appropriate. Second-order relationships are indirect relationships in the sense that the related objects are one step removed from each other. Some examples from human relationships might help delineate the difference between meta and second-order relationships: grandparents can be described as metaparents (they are 'parents of parents'): the children of siblings, on the other hand, are second-order siblings (they are not 'siblings of siblings,' rather they are siblings once removed from each other). Contemporary urban design is design that is one step removed from the designed object; hence, it is second-order design. While architectural programming is another second-order design activity, most other professional design endeavours involve first-order design.

FIGURE 6.1
The relationship between the typical designer and the designed object.
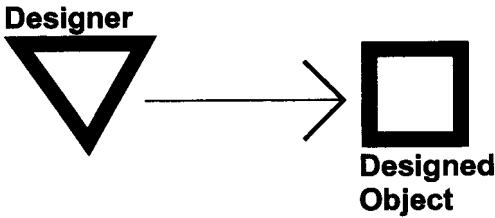
Why a second-order approach to urban design?

Why is a second-order approach to urban design necessary? Does such an approach reduce urban design to what Shirvani (1990, p. x) contemptuously refers to as 'a mere bureaucratic process'? Can urban design still be a creative task? Does urban design have to be an enterprise distinct from architecture
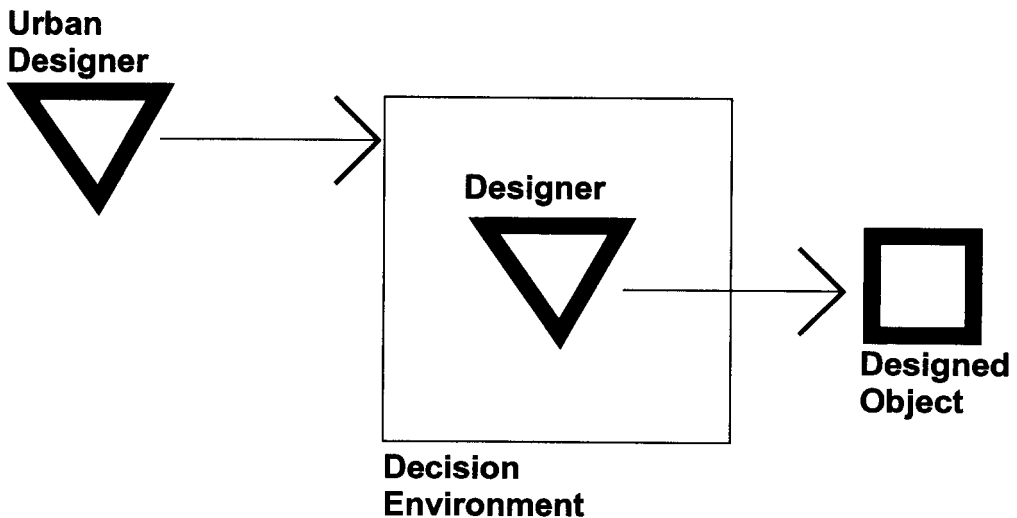

FIGURE 6.2
The relationship between the urban designer and the designed object.