

sions have increasingly formed distinct disciplinary enclaves. In this context, perhaps urban design's unique value stems from its vagueness or rather from its provision of an overarching framework that can bridge more specialized design efforts. By its nature urban design defies neat categorization. It should not be thought of as architecture, landscape architecture, or planning disciplines are: Urban design is not a discipline; it is a "way of thinking." It is not about separation and simplification but rather about synthesis. It attempts to operate holistically in a world fragmented by disciplinary distinctions, to deal with the full reality of the urban situation, not the narrow slices seen through disciplinary lenses.

Urban design has always been and continues to be work in progress—progress not toward clarity of definition or professional accreditation but toward a professional engagement with the changing complexity of the urban condition. Urban design provides an important role for the generalist who has the ability to ask the questions that no one else is asking, to seek connections where others seek distinctions. The urban designer needs to understand, integrate, and communicate across professional divides all the evolving complex factors that create the urban situation.

If urban design is to stake a claim today on the city, we had all better be prepared to understand the characteristics of the territories we are claiming. In 1950 there were 86 cities with a population over one million; today there are 400, and by 2015 there will be at least 550. Ninety-five percent of this growth will occur in the urban areas of developing countries. We are witnessing the emergence of megacities with populations over eight million, and, even more spectacularly, hypercities with more than twenty million. By 2025, according to the *Far Eastern Economic Review*, Asia alone could have ten or eleven conurbations of over twenty million, including Jakarta (24.9 million), Dhaka (25 million), Karachi (26.5 million), and Shanghai (27 million).²⁷ The question for us all is this: Is the growth of these conurbations the ultimate triumph of the urban, or, as Mike Davis would have it,²⁸ are we witness to the largest human and ecological nightmare the world has ever seen? If this is so, what responsibility do we have as urban designers? What role will we play? What responsibility will we have?

Surely the urban designer must advocate sustainable development and high-quality urban places. Surely he or she must ask challenging questions and offer solutions based on a strong set of principles that