



Designing Cities – The Future of Urban Design Theory

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Architecture, Urban design and Urban Planning have a coterminous existence as praxis, yet remain both theoretically and professionally isolated from each other. Urban Design is arguably the worst off since it has no professional identity of its own. Whether this undermines its theoretical position is debatable. Nonetheless what passes for theory is largely divorced from any substantial foundation in the social or natural sciences. Urban Design ‘theory’ tends to be eclectic, lacking in substance and indecisive as to its core values and meanings. The question is ‘How do we move forward?’.

In order to justify how the benefits of this paradigm shift might accrue, an assessment is made of the three major theoretical movements of the third millennium, namely Postmodernism, Post-colonialism and Globalisation, the latter offering some key insights into questions of urban form in the information age. The above project has relevance not only for urban design education, theory and practice, by association, it also has implications for Architecture and Urban Planning. In rebuilding one professional territory, it is clear that the others cannot remain unaffected.

This paper proceeds by reviewing key approaches in urban design theory over the last forty years, and concludes that urban design must realign itself with the substantial theoretical base being constructed within urban social theory, human geography and cultural studies, a grouping which roughly equates to what is termed Spatial Political Economy.

The data base for this paper is contained in a new book *Designing Cities* (Blackwell 2003) which I have edited and has just been published. The work contains a substantial introduction which addresses some of the above issues. Other papers published by the author have elaborated on various aspects of urban design to be extended and integrated in the above submission.

Ref

Cuthbert A (2003) *Designing Cities* Oxford, Blackwell.

Cuthbert A (2005) *The Form of the City* Oxford, Blackwell. (under contract)