

Book Review

URBAN DESIGN

Alex Krieger and William S. Saunders: editors,
Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, 2009

ISBN 978-0-8166-5638-7
368 pages Hardcover 72.31 US \$

By the world is becoming more urbanized people evolve as urban species as a result of manifold variables. In order to handle the troubles of this new age we need to combine many disciplines with the areas of knowledge. The urban design is one of these disciplines which involve politics, planning, architecture, social sciences and so on.

The book with the title "Urban Design" includes a collection of essays in 6 chapters and examines the contribution of the varied enterprises about urban design. The essays from 1950's to 2000's are grouped under key issues highlighting the nature of the urban design, the origins of the notion, Urban Design in 1950's and the territories of Urban Design practice today.

The book also stresses the recent and radical relationship between urban design, landscape architecture, planning and architecture. The editors of the book try to define the Urban Design notion by analyzing recent and previous approaches in the field.

The first chapter of the book "Origins of an Urban Design Sensibility" evolves three essays. First essay with the title "The first urban design conference: Extracts" includes the views of many researchers and academicians such as Charles Abrahams, Jose Luis Sert, Lewis Mumford, Jane Jacobs and others. The chapter covers the suburbanization and rapid growth in American cities, the increasing levels of crime, pollution, traffic congestion in 1950's, and the need of recentralization. Urban design was seen as a solution to those problems as it was the most stirring force in transforming the cities into centers of fancy and delight. Luis Sert saw the urban design as a team work of architects, landscape architects and city planners. It was also decided in the conference to go back and look at some lively cities in order to design new ones, the participants also emphasized on the importance of the outdoor space (public space). The second essay -belongs to Eric Mumford-expresses "the emergence of Urban Design in the Breakup of CIAM". The essay gives the relations between views of Sert, Team 10 and CIAM on Urban Design notion. Mumford emphasizes the importance of urban pedestrian life, cultural institutions, and the value of natural environment, better organization of the traffic and circulation patterns. The third essay "The Elusiveness of Urban Design" includes the perpetual problems in the definition and in the role of Urban Design.

The second chapter called "Urban Design at fifty" starts with the expression of the personal view of Denise Scott Brown. Brown makes a critique of the trends in the field from 1950's to 1980's with the discussion of the future of the notion and the education of the urban design. In the "Fragmentation and

Friction as Urban Threats: The Post 1956 City” Fumihiko Maki debates the Urban Design practices in Tokyo from the perspectives of globalization on politics, economy and lifestyle between 1950 and 2000’s. He also argues the meaning of Urban Design for practitioners and academicians. In the third essay Jonathan Barnett also argues the theory and practice of designing cities since 1956 as F. Maki does in the previous essay. Barnett emphasizes the role of urban designer, the relation between urban design and natural environment, public space as civic vision and the role of urban design to support social interaction.

The third chapter criticizes the territories of urban design practice. The first essay in the chapter covers where and how urban design happens. Krieger argues the urban design from different conceptions; as the bridge connecting architecture and planning, a public policy and restorative urbanism, the art of place making, smart growth, landscape urbanism and visionary urbanism. The following essay includes the works of an exhibition Cities: 10 lines: Approaches to City and Open Territory Design, at Harvard University Graduate School of Design in 2005. The exhibition based on a research project, captures the current distinctive reality of the cities that are experimenting transformation and rehabilitation. The aim of the research project is to provide taxonomy or guidelines for different design projects that give suggestions for the most important problems of our cities.

The following chapter based on debates about mandates and purpose, includes three essays about the scope of the urban design, role of architects in urban design projects. The chapter examines some applied projects of architects, the role and effects of architects in the urban design process. In “Bad Parenting” Emily Talen emphasizes to save urban design from the domination of architects in order to learn from the past mistakes in urban design field. Talen also criticizes the approaches of CIAM architects and planners in 1950’s.

The fifth chapter called “expanding roles and disciplinary boundaries” expresses the recent approaches in Urban Design field. In “a third way for urban design”, Greenberg points out the dichotomy between new urbanism and post urbanism in recent years in talks, articles and so on. Author criticizes the new urbanism and post-urbanism as they are older ways of urban design. Greenberg defines a new aspect as the third way of urban design evolving in an environmentally sensible way that the recent projects care about energy consumption and green design. In the following essay Timothy Love suggests the variety and vitality in urban design projects. Author emphasizes that the large scale urban design projects in America are mostly directed by private sector. This new case enforces architects and urban planners to understand the economic and regulatory underpinnings that drive development decisions. The essay provides the readers to understand the different urban design processes and methods by the comparative analysis of different approaches.

The last chapter emphasizes the challenges and new openings of our new century. In the “Designing the post metropolis” Edward Soja argues the former views and approaches of L. Sert, L. Mumford and J. Jacobs on Urban Design. In 1950’s urban design became the “cutting edge” in the

redevelopment of the American cities, but by the 1970's the world economic recession changed all the future development plans. The following three decades new urbanization moved in the cities as a new tool in redevelopment. By the end of 20th century urban design became a part of architecture, transformed itself and changed modern city. Soja emphasizes that urban designers should look in to cities; understand the global, regional, local tendencies and tensions. He also discusses the primary forces driving the transformation of the modern metropolis as globalization, new economy, information and communication technologies, global and natural circumstances. In the following essay "Unforeseen Urban Worlds" Peter Rowe criticizes the thoughts of the participants of Harvard's 1956 Urban Design conference. Rowe considers the urban design history in three sections; the first section is the period of 1960's and 1970's; the time of social awareness on basic right, social justice and participation. The second section is the end of 1980's and the beginning of 1990's which was shaped by computers and information technologies, public access to internet and personal privatization. The third section includes the 21st century the period of increased awareness and consciousness of global warming, global terrorism, natural and environmental processes. The last chapter of the book includes 21st century urbanization, global and geographical values, the role of urban design in the future development, local, regional and national scales in design, and the factors such as geography, climate, culture, religion, political history and economic market that affect the urban form and social structure. The urban design should be interpreted as unique model for different cases and depended on local circumstances. The most important subjects of this new age are energy, climate change, social inclusion, social interaction, transportation, equal rights in health and education.

The book with various essays provides to see and discuss the different views and approaches on Urban Design from 1950's till today. The evolution of contrasting interpretations and assessments provides to criticize the different perspectives about the notion. The book also seeks to encourage designers to mind the energy consumption and vitality of cities in shaping the future environment.

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