Writings on the pedagogy of urban design are relatively sparse in the extensive and burgeoning literature on the field. Of the seventy-eight selected excerpts from books and journals included in two recent “urban design readers” (Carmona and Tiesdell 2007; Larice and Macdonald 2007), none addresses this topic. A recent chronological anthology by David Gosling (2003) is an exception. Occasionally reflections on this topic have appeared in proceedings of conferences or seminars, some printed (Pittas and Ferebee 1982), some only in a typewritten form (Washington University 1962). Even such specialized journals as Urban Design International and Journal of Urban Design, have included very few papers dedicated to the teaching of urban design (Bartholomew 1980; Cuthbert 2001; Bakker et al. 2003; Radović 2004; Savage 2005). Other work on the matter has appeared in journals closer to the areas of architecture and urban planning (e.g. Tyrwhitt 1962; Kreditor 1980; Vernez-Moudon 1992) or has remained embedded in papers dedicated to the roles, challenges, and competencies of urban design, or concerned with teaching and training in the more generic realm of “design.”

As an integrative profession and discipline “traditionally [...] allied with architecture and city planning” (Lang 2007: 464), urban design remains uncertain as a field. In Europe and elsewhere, both architecture and urban planning continue to compete for urban design tasks and activities, including its pedagogy (see Cuthbert in this volume). In North America, aside from architecture and urban planning, conflicts of competencies and claims on urban design also come from other professions, such as landscape architecture or, even landscape urbanism, a more recent subject of study (Waldheim 2006), which is gaining an increasing interest despite its redundancies with more mature related fields.

Apart from being a field that can be considered “an ambiguous amalgam of several disciplines” (Inam 2002) or a “no man’s land” (Cuthbert 2001), urban design is also considered “largely fragmented in its practices, theories and methodologies” (Cuthbert 2007: 178). In addition to this, according to Anne Vernez-Moudon, “theories’ guiding practice have remained at a paradigmatic level, based on different exemplary solutions” (Vernez-Moudon 1992: 331). Moreover, urban design educators, who came to the discipline from a variety of different origins, have used such theories in “somewhat eclectic ways” (Cuthbert 2001: 303). Nevertheless, the value of urban design lies in its role as a social practice, and urban design education needs to recognize that it is “an interdisciplinary approach to designing our built environment” (Vernez-Moudon 1992: 331)
or, as Madanipour better clarifies, urban

design can be defined as a “multidisciplinary
activity of shaping and managing urban

environments, interested in both the process

of this shaping and the space it helps shape.

[...] Urban design is part of the process of

the production of space” (1996: 117).

Based on this preamble the chapter will

investigate the topic from two points of

view. The first part illustrates the five-
decade history of urban design education,

examining the thoughts of those who first

introduced urban design into American or

British universities. It will also look at the

considerations of the reflective educators

who tested the implications for education

programs of matters like role, values, and

competencies of urban designers, or topics

such as social participation, significance of

places, or emerging challenges such as glo-

balization and the use of new technolo-

gies. This part ends with an attempt to
depict the currently uncertain situation of
world urban design graduate programs
taught in English, followed by some further
considerations.

The second part will scan some of the
teaching techniques employed and devel-
oped by teachers in order to train urban
design students for their future profession,
looking into topics such as the field’s inter-
dependency with other professions, its
responsibilities toward the social fabric,
and the specific value of sites. The chapter
ends with some final remarks describing
the directions and topics that urban design
education should consider in the future.

Urban design education

The term “urban design” was coined in
the mid-1950s (Lang 2005) almost coinci-
dently with its first appearance in
academic curricula in the United States.
The first academic program was the
University of Pennsylvania’s Civic Design
Program, started in 1956 (Barnett 1982; Strong 1990), followed by Harvard’s Urban
Design Program in 1960. Thereafter the
term was imported into the UK, even
though it is in the UK where the
first course and the first department of
“Civic Design” at Liverpool University
began in 1909. The Liverpool University
course was intended to train planners
(Cullingworth and Nadin 2006), with a
“close connotation to municipal govern-
ment and functions such as ‘Civic Centre’”
(Cuthbert 2007: 180) and town planning
(The Builder 1908) and hence cannot
claim the progenitorship of today’s urban
design curriculum.

A few years before the creation of the
Civic Design program at the University of
Pennsylvania, G. Holmes Perkins, then
Dean of the School of Fine Arts, set out a
common program in architecture, city
planning, and landscape architecture based
on the argument that: “the work of the
first three years of the [three] professional
courses [...] is, except in rare cases, iden-
tical in content, reflecting the fact that
all are parts of a common field whose
processes and objectives are the same”
Clarence Stein, a former member and sec-
retary of the Regional Planning Associa-
tion of America, co-designer, with Henry
Wright, of Radburn, NJ and author of
Toward New Towns for America (1951), was
asked by Perkins to draft a proposal for
the program at the University of Pennsyl-
vania. Stein established a definition of city
design that still retains its clarity today:
“CITY DESIGN is the art of relating:
STRUCTURES to one another and to
their NATURAL SETTING to serve
contemporary living” (Stein 1955 in
Strong 1990: 141).

Although the University of Pennsyl-
vania’s joint program did not survive, the
principle of cooperative activity between
architecture, city planning, and landscape
architecture, and the definition of city
design lived on, acting as keystones not
only in the Civic Design program, which began a few years later at the same university, but in almost all graduate and postgraduate programs in urban design offered since the 1960s in universities worldwide. For example, at Harvard, the curriculum in “urban design” in the early 1960s suggested “in a quite limited and specific sense […] an area of interaction between the three professions of architecture, landscape architecture and city planning” (Tyrwhitt 1962: 100). Thus conceptualized, urban design became a specialty for master degrees in architecture and city planning and not a degree in its own right.

In a 1979 urban design colloquium at the University of California at Berkeley, Kevin Lynch discussed the training of urban designers in American universities (Lynch 1980). His words provided personal, but significant, insights on the subject some twenty years after the first urban design course was offered in the US: “City design [the term he preferred to “urban design,” although he began his academic career by using “civic design” (Lynch 1954)] is not a well-developed skill, and I know no school where it is adequately taught.” (Lynch 1980: 655). Lynch proposed a “two-year graduate professional program” with three central, elementary skills that seemed to him indispensable. The first is “a sharp and sympathetic eye for the interaction between people, places, place events, and the institutions that manage them.” The second skill to be developed is an understanding of the theory, technique, and values of city design. Lynch rejected the prevalent idea that design was non-analytical, socially irresponsible, concerned with images and representations, and reserved for the gifted few. The third skill to be acquired by a city designer is in communication. City designers must be prepared to understand and use the four social languages: written words, spoken words, mathematics, and graphic images.

This legacy notwithstanding, today, in the early years of this new century, reflections on urban design education are more dispersed in the literature and are more often centered on common concepts, such as globalization, sustainability of development at the macro and micro scale, and digital technology, that can address the contemporary and future forms of teaching urban design. Susan Savage (2005), underlining the role of school, calls for a pedagogic orientation that emphasizes practical knowledge, real-time learning, problem-driven and interdisciplinary approaches, ideas which are supported by other authors (Inam 2002; Bakker et al. 2003; Lang 2005).

Today urban design education is facing new challenges brought about especially by the driving forces of globalization and mobility of students. International student numbers grow every year in successful universities, raising “in each situation […] implications for urban design education […] suggesting] that in the information age, universities and their constituent faculties are compelled to address globalization in their own programmes” (Cuthbert 2001: 300–301). Globalization and the attendant student flows, especially from East to West, raise questions about the applicability of Western analysis and design methods to the East (Radović 2004) or as Banerjee (1990: 175) has suggested, “environmental design education currently offered in the US or other Western universities may not be relevant or sufficient for students from developing countries.”

Another relevant topic in urban design education is the interface with the reality of cities, societies, and places hence promoting a dialectic process with communities and sites, “a crucial aspect of environment” (Lynch and Hack 1984: 29), to stress the production of the public realm (Banerjee 2001; Hanson and Younès 2001, Arefi 2004; Arefi and Triantafillou 2005). Teaching the value of place and how to discover it through investigation and
surveys remains central to every program, especially when there is a cultural hiatus between the nationalities of students and places and communities (extremely simplified: West and East, or on reverse). These situations are more and more frequent because of the mobility of students and teachers and the broad diffusion of international design studios where Western educated students encounter “other” places and “other” meanings. As Darko Radović pointed out, in the exploration of the place “it is necessary to broaden the views of participants, to be able to accept, at the very least, otherness, and even embrace, at the other extreme, the totally alien, a tout autre” (2004: 184). Fortunately “urban design provides an excellent field to encounter, experience and address the totality of the other” (Radović 2004: 178).

The dialectic process with sites and communities also allows urban design students to perform the so-called “work-integrated learning” that is the practice knowledge that they deserve to face, in their professional future, real problems affecting real people. Similar issues have surfaced in parallel literatures on design, planning, architecture, and landscape architecture education. In the 1960s and the 1970s social movements required that urban designers and architects “become the anonymous servant of the masses. The architect’s ostrich-like fixation with imagery and aesthetics is challenged in the face of social need and participatory democracy” (McSheffrey 1978). Community Design Centers emerged in the 1970s in response to this new reality, drawing volunteer groups of architects, teachers and students “to exchange ideas concerning the provision of urban design services for moderate-to low-income communities” (Gosling 2003: 143, also chapter by Anthony in this volume). Some of them were strongly connected with universities. According to David Gosling, in the 1970s and 1980s there was a tangible transition “from education to practice,” as highlighted in Jonathan Barnett’s, *An Introduction to Urban Design* (1982). Thus claims for the contextualization of student work in the community, for education as reflection-in-action (Schön 1984; Shannon 1990), on the role of design (and its teaching) in the production of built environment and its effects on human health (Rodiek 2005), or about the ability of designers to assume the environmental, ethic, and cultural responsibilities of their acts (Levy 1990), appear as basic aspects of design education that are also intrinsic to the urban pedagogy.

**A survey of urban design programs in universities**

A study on the extent of urban design courses in different countries is yet to be written. Freeman (in Pittas and Ferebee 1982) compiled a “Directory of Graduate Programs in Urban Design in North America” dated 1981. Few scholarly articles are dedicated to reviewing specific aspects of undergraduate and graduate course syllabi, such as global urban topics (Ali and Doan 2006), land use planning (Miller and Westerlund 1990), physical planning (Pivo 1989) in the North American planning schools, or discuss architectural education in the US (Lyndon 1978). This chapter cannot fill this temporal and geographic void but few points can be made using data collected from various sources (see Table 3.1), which show the universe of graduate programs in urban design taught in English.

According to these data – which have been collected mainly from the web, selecting only those graduate level programs taught in English with “Urban Design” in the title – there are more than fifty graduate programs all over the world mostly concentrated in the US, UK, and Australia. Continental Europe and Asia have only a few programs. No programs, at
Table 3.1 Graduate programs in Urban Design taught in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Course title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>Centre for Environmental Planning and Technology, Ahmedabad</td>
<td>Master of Urban Design¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>School of Planning and Architecture, Delhi</td>
<td>Master of Urban Design¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>National University of Singapore</td>
<td>Master of Arts (Urban Design)¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Master of Architecture (Urban Design)³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New Zealand</td>
<td>University of Auckland</td>
<td>Masters of Urban Design (MUrbDes)¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>University of New South Wales (Sydney)</td>
<td>Master of Urban Development and Design (MURDD)¹, ²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Adelaide</td>
<td>Master of Urban Design²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Melbourne</td>
<td>Master/PGDip in Urban Design¹, ²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Sydney</td>
<td>Master of Urban Design¹, ²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Curtin University of Technology</td>
<td>Graduate Certificate in Urban Design²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The University of Western Australia</td>
<td>Master of Urban Design²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>University of Cape Town</td>
<td>Master of Urban Design and City Planning³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Master of Architecture (Urban Design)³</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>University of Toronto</td>
<td>Master of Urban Design Studies¹, ², ⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>Arizona State University</td>
<td>Master of Urban and Environmental Design⁴</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>City College of New York</td>
<td>Master of Urban Design⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cleveland State University</td>
<td>Master of Urban Planning, Design and Development⁴⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Harvard School of Design</td>
<td>Master of Architecture in Urban Design: MAUD¹, ⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Master of Landscape Architecture in Urban Design: MLAUD¹, ⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kent State University</td>
<td>Graduate Certificate/Master in Urban Design¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>New York Institute of Technology</td>
<td>Master of Architecture in Urban and Regional Design⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pratt Institute</td>
<td>MSc in Architecture and Urban Design (Post-professional)⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Savannah College of Art and Design</td>
<td>Master of Urban Design¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of California, Berkeley</td>
<td>Master of Urban Design Degree⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Michigan</td>
<td>Master of Urban Design¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Texas, Austin</td>
<td>Master in Urban Design¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Washington University in Saint Louis</td>
<td>Master of Urban Design⁵</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>Lund University</td>
<td>Master of Sustainable Urban Design⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Royal Institute of Technology, Stockholm</td>
<td>Master of Urban Planning and Design¹, ⁶</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany and</td>
<td>Technische Universitaet Berlin and</td>
<td>Dual Master Program Urban Design (Berlin and Shanghai)¹</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>Tongji University Shanghai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Continued
least according to the sources investigated, are offered in the African continent (except for South Africa) or in South America. Urban design programs can also be found at Ph.D. level and at the undergraduate level but the graduate level seems to be offered the most.

Table 3.1 shows that, with very few exceptions, the graduate teaching of urban design is concentrated in the most developed countries. Additionally, teaching of urban design is mainly done in English-speaking countries. These issues lead to two considerations: first, Western universities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Course title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Politecnico di Milano</td>
<td>MSc in Urban Planning and Policy Design^1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ireland</td>
<td>University College Dublin</td>
<td>MSc in Urban Design^1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Anglia Ruskin University</td>
<td>MPhil/PhD in Urban Design^8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bartlett School of Planning, UCL</td>
<td>MSc in Urban Design^8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>MSc in Building &amp; Urban Design in Development^8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Birmingham City University</td>
<td>MA/PGDip/PGCert in Urban Design^8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cardiff University</td>
<td>MA in Urban Design^7,^8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Edinburgh College of Art</td>
<td>PGDip/MSc in Architecture and Urban Design^8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>PGDip/MSc in Landscape Architecture and Urban Design^8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Heriot Watt University</td>
<td>MSc/PGDip in Urban Design^8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lincoln University</td>
<td>MSc/PGDip/PGCert in Urban Design^8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Liverpool John Moores University</td>
<td>MA in Architecture and Urban Design^8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>London South Bank University</td>
<td>MA in Urban Design^7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Newcastle University</td>
<td>MA/PGDip in Urban Design^8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Oxford Brookes University</td>
<td>MA/PGDip/PGCert in Urban Design^7,^8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Queen’s University, Belfast</td>
<td>MSc in Urban and Rural Design^7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Birmingham</td>
<td>MA in Urban Design^7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Dundee</td>
<td>MSc Spatial Planning with Sustainable Urban Design^7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Greenwich</td>
<td>MA in Urban Design^8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Liverpool</td>
<td>MA in Civic Design^7,^8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Nottingham</td>
<td>MA/PGDip in Architecture and Urban Design^8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Sheffield</td>
<td>MA in Urban Design^8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Strathclyde, Glasgow</td>
<td>MSc in Urban Design^7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of the West of England</td>
<td>MA/PGDip in Urban Design^8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>University of Westminster</td>
<td>MA/PGCert/PGDip in Urban Design^7,^8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note:
1 RUDI (2009a).
3 www.urbandesigninstitute.co.za.
4 ACSP (2007).
6 www.studyinsweden.se.
7 RTPI (2008).
8 RUDI (2009b).

Legend: PGDip – Postgraduate Diploma; PGCert – Postgraduate Certificate; MA – Master of Art; MSc – Master of Science.
have a massive responsibility to teach and disseminate urban design, through their international students, all over the world; second, urban design’s language, literature, and terminology is mainly in English which means that there is also a risk of globalization due to the hegemony of one language over others.

**Pedagogic techniques**

Beyond the substantive developments that influence university curricula, there are pedagogic techniques that are employed worldwide in the active teaching of urban design. Most of these techniques are shared with the parent fields of architecture, landscape architecture, and planning. As discussed in detail by Kathryn Anthony in this volume, the Design Studio is the most popular and widespread method for teaching and training students of every level to work together, to accept a dialectic exchange with instructors and classmates, and to acculturate students to the “real-world” environment with all of the noises, intrusions, and nuisances that are typical to sharing work-space. “Studios are active sites where students are engaged intellectually and socially, shifting between analytic, synthetic, and evaluative modes of thinking in different sets of activities (drawing, conversing, model-making)” (Dutton 1987: 16).

Donald Schön (1984) considers the studio a special form of reflection-in-action where design review plays an important pedagogical role both for students and teachers.

The studio, considered “a tradition of education for artistry” (Schön 1984) and “the heart and head of architectural education” (Dutton 1987), was subject to ongoing critiques and evolutions over the years on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean (Nicol and Pilling 2000; Salama and Wilkinson 2007). The most relevant innovations involving studio activities in universities are first, establishing links with the profession (Boyer and Mitgang 1996); second, increasing internationalization; and third, the use of new technologies.

Complaints about the relationship between schools and practicing professionals have been around “at least since the time of the École de Beaux-Arts” (Gutman 1984) and still remain on the agenda of the academia. Approaches for linking education to a professional aptitude of problem-solving include design seminars (Miller 1982) and workshop-like activities involving students, practicing professionals, government officials, local experts, and faculty. Such practices, devoted to problem-solving, also become part of “service-learning” as previously mentioned (Forsyth et al. 2000), or “communities of practice” (Schweitzer et al. 2008), which is work-based learning in collaboration with real communities with authentic needs acting as a model for learning. Also useful, as a didactic tool, is the use of juries composed, not only of academic and professionals, but also of public officials, stakeholders, and community members potentially affected by the design outcomes.

The internationalization of universities (Goldstein et al. 2006) has also affected studio practice as mentioned before. On the one hand there is the increasing activity of international field trips which “are fundamentally undertaken because of their educational merit, which is unsurpassed, if for no other reason than the sheer complexity of the experience” (Cuthbert 2001: 302). Sometimes field trips are associated with studio-format collaboration or a common participation to a competition between students from different countries who speak different languages but who benefit from the idea that “the language of spatial design is naturally a more communicable medium than speech or writing in circumstances when collaborators do not share a common language” (Abramson 2005).

On the other hand there is an increased internationalization of universities and
hence of curricula in urban design and related fields. Due to the multicultural origins of students, an environment has been created in which “students now learn (and staff teach) in a global domain, working as teams across continents in ways made possible by digital technologies, international travel and the expectation that much practice is and will be international” (Bull 2004).

At the same time, the growing internationalization has not assuaged the old doubts that “conventional design training in the US [or elsewhere in Western countries] often amounts to a socialization to professional world views and values of the Western world. [...] Which generates, in their home-countries...] an imported vocabulary of architecture and urban design that incongruously mimics Western environmental forms, or worse, creates caricatures of traditional architectural and urban design” (Banerjee 1985: 28; 1990; also see Bakker et al. 2003; Parin 2004; Chettiparamb 2006).

A further means to enhance the skill of students to face international urban problems is through their participation in design competition. In almost the entire world, urban design competitions are progressively becoming a way to orientate urban transformations (OCCE 1998; Gospodini 2002; Beriatos and Gospodini 2004; Punter 2007). Competitions are launched by municipalities, governments, private owners, or even organized by groups of citizens. For professionals, participation in national or international urban design competitions is becoming a “must-do” studio activity, essential for getting themselves known and securing new work (see also chapter by Lehrer in this volume). As explained by Carmona (2006) however, participation in international competitions is full of risks – especially associated with overwhelming architectural emphasis and misunderstanding of place values and social behaviors. Simulating participation in a competition – or genuinely participating in national or international competitions for students (Palmer 1982) – can work as a didactic tool for creating multidisciplinary teams of students, obliging participants to deal with the competition program, and organizing a process and a timetable. An authentic or a simulated participation in international competition results in “confirm[ing] that urban design norms and principles are culturally specific, [... oriented to] capture a sense of local distinctiveness through their response to site context and the resulting urban form” (Carmona 2006: 123).

New technologies are introduced in the pedagogy of urban design, such as the use of GIS for analysis, powerful rendering software, and 3D modeling, satellite and aerial images, and intercontinental communication tools (some of them free of charge and widely available). Their effects on urban design pedagogy are still not fully evaluated. New technologies also allow distance education (Godshalk and Lacey 2001), which is becoming a flourishing field in the US and in Europe. However, teaching design at a distance presents problems (Alomyan 2004) resulting from individual differences and preparations, which are more controllable in face-to-face interaction or in-person group-evaluations. A more effective approach may involve the use of web-based-communication to link groups of students working on the same task but in different places. Studio practice also can be affected by the use of technology. Apart from the use of games like “SimCity” as a teaching tool (Gaber 2007) to build potential scenarios, innovative technologies are mainly used for design analysis and representations (Fraser and Bjornsson 2004, and also Bosselmann and Ben Joseph in this volume).

Conclusion

Contemporary urban problems (Rodiek 2005; United Nations 2004) will require
urban designers to be prepared differently from the past. Urban design education could be the means for preparing professionals who see urban design not as “exercise in beautification of public spaces,” but rather as an activity that will “reshape urban spaces [...] in the overall transformation of cities [...] to accommodate the new urban conditions” (Madanipour 2006:174, 191), and to participate in the production and reproduction of urban form as social space (Cuthbert 2007).

Urban designers, who “have the aptitude to give expression to creative intentionality matched with scientific knowledge and the capacity to manage processes” (Palazzo 2008: 268), need to improve, starting from the universities, their recognition and concern for contextual specificities, avoiding generic solutions and concepts valid elsewhere, and finding a balance between technical knowledge and creative expression. The classic argument, since the time of Plato and Aristotle through to Heidegger, of distinguishing between téchne and poiesis, where “téchne was the dimension of revelatory knowledge about the world, and poiesis was the dimension of creative, symbolic representation” (Corner 2002: 20), needs to be reconsidered in urban design teaching in order to give correct proportions to both sides of this apparent dualism. Awareness of both topics will induce urban design students to be soundly prepared to face urban problems, to understand places, social needs, and community roles, and to deal with decision-makers with solid technical skills; thus using poiesis and creativity to express their personal view on the matter. The correct balance between téchne and poiesis is also relevant in the praxis where urban designers have to apply their skills and knowledge in different places, within different cultures. A possible way to reach this outcome is to strengthen the teaching of processes and methodologies for approaching various issues and sites (Palazzo 2008; Steiner and Butler 2007; Lang 2005; Moughtin et al. 2003; Roberts and Greed 2001). Another way is to confirm the role of the studio as the place where the final product, with its aesthetic dimension, is assembled by means of a dialectic exchange with teachers and peers.

Finally, to avert the risk of one culture’s dominance over others and of a diffusion of world-wide standardized solutions to urban problems, there is a need that urban design is taught in the universities of different countries, where local versions of teaching methods, languages, and applications are created. The aim is to banish the idea that urban design only applies to rich countries and, on the contrary, to reinforce the role of the urban designer as an honest broker and a promoter of design processes, and the active agent of social creativity for the realization of the public realm.

References


—— (1955). “Proposed Department of City Design in the School of Fine Arts, University of Pennsylvania,” manuscript, Graduate School of Fine Arts, University of Pennsylvania.
School of Fine Arts of the University of Pennsylvania.

Further reading