

The role of Urban Design in designing better Urban Spaces

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Much of the form and dimensions of the urban spaces of recent urban environments are the product of building codes. However, it is believed that for the past decades, since we have assisted to a proliferation of a mass suburbia urban fabric, we have also witnessed to a great loss of quality in the urban spaces of these new areas, when compared to most lively and enjoyable urban spaces of some historical cities.

This paper introduces a method of urban form analysis that aims to bring new knowledge to the analysis of the urban environments. And, therefore explores in a comparative manner, and in a critical way, how do change occur in the urban fabric over time, and therefore how do urban and building codes allow change to occur. Moreover, it is argued by the present work that these urban and building codes, which should be regulated by a conscious urban design based on sustainable urban principles, regulate the form and the dimensions of our urban spaces, and therefore are the greatest contributors to the assurance of the minimum quality for our urban environments.

This method, recently explored also as a planning teaching programme in an urban design module has proved to support students to realises how can change occur in the urban fabric over time, and the significance of the urban codes to control urban space. Thus, it is believed that the adoption of the present methodology would also assist all those concerned with the quality of urban spaces proposals, and that could be used as guidelines for the lay out of new urban spaces or in the regeneration of existing ones. In addition, the present paper provides a stimulus to rethink and to redraw the manner in which urban design can provide a framework for identification of the physical qualities or the codes of urban form, that have been shaping the city and have been modified during different periods of time.

References

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