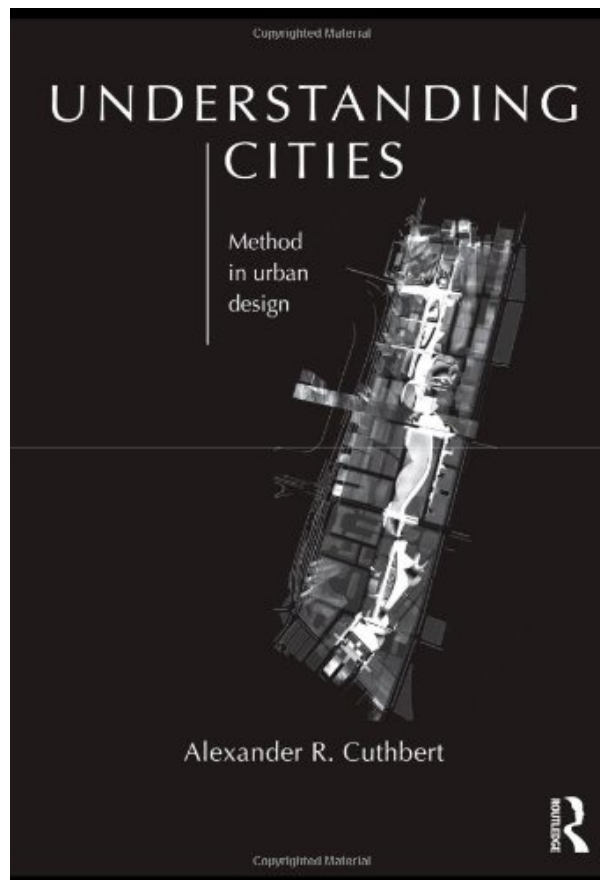# UNDERSTANDING CITIES: METHOD IN URBAN DESIGN BY ALEXANDER CUTHBERT

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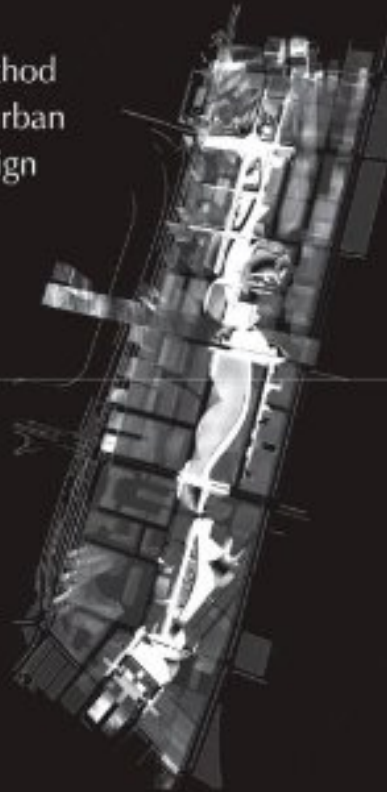**UNDERSTANDING CITIES: METHOD IN URBAN DESIGN BY ALEXANDER CUTHBERT**

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Review

Cuthbert places urban design in the context of urban political economy: he does so in masterful fashion and as a result has provided a book that will be important to students of architecture, planning, and urban design but also to scholars in a broad spectrum of social science. For design professionals, Cuthbert offers a robust new intellectual framework. For social scientists, Cuthbert demonstrates the importance of theorizing urban design and development. - Paul Knox, Distinguished Professor, Virginia Tech

In this last instalment of his major trilogy, Alexander Cuthbert presents us with a framework of knowledge that is essential for urban designers. This is a major intellectual contribution to the urban design field, one that flatly and rightly rejects physical determinism and the notion that urban design is merely large scale architecture. Cuthbert deconstructs the old paradigm and skilfully reconstructs a much more robust one that draws from the social sciences and spatial political economy to enhance our understanding of cities and their design. - Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, Professor of Urban Design and Planning, UCLA

With his three book 'tour de force' Cuthbert makes a seminal contribution to outlining a unified field for Urban Design so that it can assert its place among the built environment disciplines. Understanding Cities invites scholars and reflexive practitioners to understand and build upon the knowledge shaping the discourse of new Urban Design. All Built Environment disciplines will be enriched by this contribution. - Taner Oc, Emeritus Professor of Urban Design and Planning, Editor- Journal of Urban Design.

About the Author

Alexander Cuthbert is Emeritus Professor of Planning and Urban Development at the University of New South Wales in Sydney. He has degrees in architecture, urban design and urban planning, with a doctoral degree from the London School of Economics. He has taught, practised and lived in Greece, Britain, America, Hong Kong and Australia. He has over 100 academic publications.

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Understanding Cities is richly textured, complex and challenging. It creates the vital link between urban design theory and praxis and opens the required methodological gateway to a new and unified field of urban design. Using spatial political economy as his most important reference point, Alexander Cuthbert both interrogates and challenges mainstream urban design and provides an alternative and viable comprehensive framework for a new synthesis.

He rejects the idea of yet another theory in urban design, and chooses instead to construct the necessary intellectual and conceptual scaffolding for what he terms 'The New Urban Design'. Building both on Michel de Certeau's concept of heterology – 'thinking about thinking' – and on the framework of his previous books Designing Cities and The Form of Cities, Cuthbert uses his prior adopted framework – history, philosophy, politics, culture, gender, environment, aesthetics, typologies and pragmatics – to create three integrated texts.

Overall, the trilogy allows a new field of urban design to emerge. Pre-existing and new knowledge are integrated across all three volumes, of which Understanding Cities is the culminating text.

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