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design follows. It would perhaps be interesting to analyse the next steps in the light of Donald Schön's findings, discussing the use of the conventional tools every designer has "in stock", but that would be another story.

Note

1. The park is a project of the IBA - Emscher Park. It was conceived in 1996 by Thomas Sieverts and planned and realized in 1997–2009 by the following offices: skt Sieverts, Knye, Trautmann, Bonn; Danielzik + Leuchter, Duisburg; Heimer + Herbstreit, Bochum. The developer is Landesentwicklungsgesellschaft NRW.

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Concluding Notes

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The contributions of this *Interface* have involved us in "a reflective conversation" with the legacy of Donald Schön, but have they also answered the questions that prompted the inquiry? The authors addressed the questions from different angles and different contexts. They span different disciplines (political science, planning, environmental science, management science, urban design), different perspectives (philosophical, educational, epistemological, professional), and different national contexts (North American, British, Swiss, Dutch, German). In each of these instances, the legacy of Schön is combined with that of others, resulting in different, and some would say even contrasting approaches, pointing at different interpretations of the role of knowledge and of the professional in

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society. The contributions are thus, admittedly, quite heterogeneous in character. Perhaps this is testimony to some ambivalence of Schön's message, but perhaps this is also testimony to its richness and timelessness, and to the need to further the discussion beyond his contribution, in other realms and terms. In order to make a start, let me summarize each of the arguments in this issue and then try to find both the specificities and the common threads.

David Laws argued that the complexity of the planning problems of today (such as planning fundamentally diverse cities or coping with the uncertainties of climate change) require that we break with existing professional routines and engage in an open, continuous inquiry with not just the "it" but also, and perhaps most importantly, the "others" of each situation. That is in his view also the essence of Schön's message. It is not an easy challenge, and one that requires renouncing the apparent safety of ingrained practices. The link with the argument of Marilyn Higgins is evident. She stressed the importance of educating planning professionals who are able to deal with problems creatively, and thus each time dare to question the very definition of what the problem is. However, she also pointed to the difficulties that the current context poses to educators trying to develop the engaging, open, risk-taking "trust relationships" with students that such an aim requires. In a different context, the transdisciplinary laboratory at the ETH in Zürich described by Roland Scholz and Michael Stauffacher seems to incorporate and even institutionalize many of the educational principles mentioned by Marilyn Higgins. It is no planning programme, at least not formally so, but the similarities are such that it could easily serve as a model. An interesting follow-up question when comparing the two contributions on education seems to be how the tension is dealt with between the need to keep the search for a problem definition open and the need to get it to a close and deliver a product accepted by stakeholders. Joan Ernst van Aken addressed the question of what sort of research social sciences with a transformative, not just a knowledge generation aim would require. His characterization of a design science continuously and reflexively engaging with social practices is close in spirit to the transdisciplinary educational approach at ETH, and certainly relevant for planning too. But what exactly are the research, and conversely social, practices it requires? Do existing institutions encourage or even allow these practices? This is also a discussion that would be useful to carry out further. Finally, Thomas Sieverts gave us some feeling of what it might mean to entertain a "reflexive conversation with the situation" in professional practice, in his case urban design. There is a lot of "letting speak", "listening", and "interpreting" in his description of the transformation strategy for the former Bochum steel works. It resonates strongly with Marilyn Higgins' plea for entering a professional task without a preconceived definition of what the problem is, and with David Laws' plea for conversing with not just the "it" (in this case, the site) but also the "others" (here the site users) of the situation. Again, an interesting follow-up enquiry would be that into how much of this is common, or rather exceptional professional practice, and for which reasons and with which implications.

And now, bringing it all to a provisional close, let me go back to where it all started: do these different contributions, taken together, answer the questions posed at the outset of this *Interface*? How? There were three sorts of questions: is Schön's message still relevant? If it is, is there still need to remind planners and planning institutions of it? And if this is the case, what can be done? As far as the first question is concerned all authors answer decisively and loudly in the affirmative. As I already mentioned, this is no random, statistically representative sample of contributors. The value of their answer should thus be rather sought in the forcefulness of their argumentation. This is, of course, up for the reader to judge. However, few would disagree with the basic contention that the planning

problems of today are no less ridden with complexity, uncertainty, instability, uniqueness and value conflict than they were in Schön's time. And that is where the whole argument starts, and what the need for reflection-in-action is predicated upon. Do planners and planning institutions need to be reminded of this? Yes and no. There seem to be enough practices and conceptualizations around that are convincingly furthering reflection-in-action. However, they appear by no means the norm, and entrenched professional routines and institutions continue to resist them, as some contributors note. In part, this seems inevitable. Schön's approach can almost by definition never become a norm. Still, the questioning of routines should and could become more common place, and maybe even a sort of routine itself. How then? All of the contributors provided hints, some of a more conceptual and some of a more operational nature. Some have even proposed models (as Roland Scholz and Michael Stauffacher), paradigms (as Joan Ernst van Aken), and strategies (as Thomas Sieverts). But none extensively reflect on what changing more conservative practices and institutions, and their entrenched models, paradigms and strategies would require. Answers to the third and last group of questions seems thus to lie beyond the scope of this *Interface*. The conclusion, then, appears to be that to get those answers we need to start a new round of reflection-in-action. But that's what Schön is all about, isn't he?

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