



## BOOK NOTES

**The sociology of architecture: constructing identities** by *Paul Jones*, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, UK, 2011, 288 pp. ISBN 978-1846-3107-75. This book addresses some of the ways in which major architects and their designs have been drawn into state-led identity projects during periods of major political change. It positions architecture as part of a repertoire of cultural forms mobilized in the construction and maintenance of social categories such as the nation. Attention is drawn to the tensions associated with connecting architectural projects to wider social values and collective identities. It is contended that architecture should not be considered a neutral cultural form, but as an inherently social production that reflects one way in which those with political power attempt to materialize status and make it socially meaningful.

**The urban code of China** by *Dieter Hassenpflug*, Birkhäuser Architecture, Basel, Switzerland, 2010, 176 pp. ISBN 978-3-0346-0572-4. The focus here is on what is essentially Chinese about the Chinese city: the features and hallmarks that Chinese cities have more or less in common – their spatial grammar, their syntax, in short their code. By deciphering their commonalities, a clear picture can be obtained of Chinese cities' internal structures. Moreover, deciphering the code of the Chinese city enables the author to 'read' cities newly designed by Western architects. He thereby helps the reader to arrive at new insights into China's booming process of urbanization and urban development.

**Makeshift metropolis: ideas about cities** by *Witold Rybczynski*, Scribner, New York, USA, 2010, 352 pp. ISBN 978-1416-5612-55. Here is a glimpse of an urban future that might serve as a template for cities around the world. This book integrates history and prediction in its survey of the development of the American city. A brisk look back takes us from colonial town planning through the Garden City and City Beautiful initiatives of the

early-twentieth century that so strongly influenced the distinctive aesthetic character of such cities as New York and Chicago, to the big box era. Consideration is also given to how contemporary urban designers and planners are revisiting and refreshing older urban ideas, for example bringing gardens to a blighted Brooklyn waterfront.

**Carrot city: creating places for urban agriculture** by *Mark Gorgolewski, June Komisar and Joe Nasr*, Monacelli Press, New York, USA, 2011, 240 pp. ISBN 978-1580-93311-7. This is a collection of ideas about reintroducing agriculture in cities. Focusing on the need and desire to grow food within the city to supply food from local sources, the contributions of architecture, landscape design, and urban design are explored. The authors show how city planning and architecture that considers food production as a fundamental requirement of design result in such developments as community gardens, greenhouses tucked under raised highways, 'edible' landscapes in front yards in place of resource-devouring lawns, 'living' walls that bring greenery into dense city blocks, and productive green roofs on schools and large apartment blocks.

**Companion to urban design** by *Tridib Bannerjee and Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris*, Routledge, New York, USA, 2011, 736 pp. ISBN 978-0415-5536-43. This volume comprises over 50 original contributions from internationally recognized authorities on urban design. It addresses a host of major issues in this field: important ideas that have shaped current practice; major methods and processes that have been influential at various scales; the latest innovations relevant to the pedagogy of urban design; continuing debates, conflicts and contradictions in theory and practice; possible responses of urban design to such challenges as climatic change and globalization; and disciplinary influences on the theory, research and practice of urban design in recent times.

**Beyond preservation: using public history to revitalize inner cities** by *Andrew Hurley*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, USA, 2010, 248 pp. ISBN 978-1-4399-0229-5. Across the United States, historical preservation has become a catalyst for urban regeneration. Inner cities, once disparaged as zones of poverty, crime and decay, have been re-branded as historical districts. Although these preservation initiatives, often supported by government tax incentives and rigid architectural controls, deserve credit for bringing people back to the city, raising property values, and generating tourist revenue, they have been less successful in creating stable and harmonious communities. This book proposes a framework for stabilizing and strengthening inner-city neighbourhoods through the public interpretation of historical landscapes. The central argument is that inner-city communities can best turn preserved landscapes into assets by subjecting them to public interpretation at the grass-roots. Based on an examination of successful projects in St. Louis, Missouri and other American cities, Hurley demonstrates how rigorous historical analysis can help communities articulate a local identity and plan intelligently on the basis of existing cultural and social assets.

**Megacities: urban form, governance and sustainability** by *André Sorensen* and *Junichiro Okata*, Springer, New York, USA, 2010, 432 pp. ISBN 978-4431-99266-0. Through fifteen in-depth case studies by researchers from around the world, this book examines the major challenges facing megacities today. The studies are organized around a shared set of concerns and questions about issues of sustainability, land development, urban governance and urban form. Answers to a number of questions are sought. What are the most pressing issues of sustainability and urban form in each megacity? How are major issues of sustainability understood and framed by policymakers? Is urban form considered a significant component of sustainability issues in public debates and public policy? Who are the key actors framing urban sustainability challenges and shaping urban change? How are unsustainability, risk and disaster imagined, and how are those concerns reflected in policies?

**Urban design: the composition of complexity** by *Ron Kasprisin*, Routledge, New York, USA, 2011, 248 pp. ISBN 978-0415-59147-8. For planning to be successful, design must mean more than simply blindly following the dictates of legislation and regulation. Yet losing sight of the importance of the design process is all too often what has happened. This book for students of planning and urban design reconnects the process of designing with outcomes on the ground, and puts thinking about design back at the heart of what planners do. The elements and principles of composition are identified and compositional order and structure as they relate to the meaning and functioning of cities are explored. New directions and methods are discussed, and the importance of both buildings and the open spaces between them are outlined.

**The transatlantic collapse of urban renewal: postwar urbanism from New York to Berlin** by *Christopher Klemek*, University Chicago Press, Chicago, USA, 2011, 328pp. ISBN 978-0-2264-4174-0. This is an examination of how post-war thinkers from both sides of the Atlantic have considered urban landscapes radically changed by the political and physical realities of sprawl, urban decay and renewal. With a coverage that includes New York, London, Berlin, Philadelphia, and Toronto, changing responses to the challenging issues that most affected the world's cities are traced. In the post-war decades, the principles of modernist planning came to be challenged – in the grassroots revolts against the building of freeways through urban neighbourhoods, for instance, or by academic critiques of slum clearance policy agendas – and then began to collapse entirely. During the 1960s, several alternative views of city life emerged among neighbourhood activists, New Left social scientists, and neo-conservative critics. Ultimately, while a pessimistic view of urban crisis may have prevailed in the United States and Great Britain, Klemek demonstrates that other countries more successfully harmonized urban renewal and its alternatives. This book provides an international perspective on issues central to urban historians and planners.