



BOOK NOTES

Building globalization: transnational architecture production in urban China by *Xuefei Ren*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, USA, 2011, 240 pp. ISBN 978-0226-7098-02. Between 2004 and 2008, Beijing and Shanghai witnessed the construction of an extraordinary number of new buildings, many of which were designed by architectural firms overseas. Combining ethnographic fieldwork, historical research, and network analysis, this book scrutinizes the growing phenomenon of transnational architecture and its effect on the development of urban space. Xuefei Ren has interviewed a great many architects, developers, politicians, residents, and activists. She has found that in the rapidly transforming cities of modern China, iconic designs from prestigious international architects help private developers to distinguish their projects, government officials to advance their careers, and the Chinese state to announce the arrival of China on the world stage.

Urban design, chaos, and colonial power in Zanzibar by *William Cunningham Bissell*, Indiana University Press, Indianapolis, USA, 2010, 394 pp. ISBN 978-0-2532-2255-8. In places such as Zanzibar, the British sought to import scientific techniques and practices, ranging from sanitation to urban planning. But time and again plans failed to come to fruition. By focusing on these flawed efforts to impose colonial order, Bissell offers a different view of colonialism and cities, revealing the contradictions, confusion, and even chaos that lay at the very core of British rule. In an engaging portrait of a cosmopolitan African city and an exploration of colonial irrationality, he opens up new perspectives on the making of modernity and the metropolis.

Urban theory beyond the West: a world of cities edited by *Tim Edensor* and *Mark Jayne*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK, 2011, 400 pp. ISBN 978-0-4155-8976-5. Since the late-eighteenth century, academic engagement with political, economic, social, cultural and spatial

changes in our cities has been dominated by theoretical frameworks crafted with reference to just a small number of cities. This book offers an important antidote to the continuing focus of urban studies on cities in the 'global north'. It raises important theoretical issues about cities throughout the world. Past and current conceptual developments are reviewed and organized into four parts: 'De-centring the city' offers critical perspectives on re-imagining urban theoretical debates through consideration of the diversity and heterogeneity of city life; 'Order/disorder' focuses on the political, physical and everyday ways in which cities are regulated and used in ways that confound this ordering; 'Mobilities' explores the movements of people, ideas and policies in cities and between them; and 'Imaginaries' investigates how urbanity is differently perceived and experienced. There are three kinds of chapters: theories generated about urbanity 'beyond the West'; critiques, reworking or refining 'Western' urban theory based upon conceptual reflection about cities from around the world; and hybrid approaches that develop both of these perspectives.

The new Asian city: three dimensional fictions of space and urban form by *Jini Kim Watson*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, USA, 2011, 312 pp. ISBN 978-0-8166-7573-9. The Asian Tiger metropolises of Seoul, Taipei and Singapore reveal a surprising residue of their colonial environments. Drawing on a wide array of literary, visual and political works, and juxtaposing close readings of the built environment, Watson demonstrates how processes of migration and construction in the hypergrowth urbanscapes of the Pacific Rim crystallize the psychic and political dramas of the colonial past and globalized present. She suggests that the post-war growth-at-any-cost approach, has buttressed nationalist enterprise along neocolonial lines. An approach is provided to enable better understanding of the metropolises of the Pacific Rim. Appreciating cultural production in conjunction with built environments can enrich our knowledge of the consequences of rapid economic and urban development.