



BOOK NOTES

The evolving European city by *Giuseppe Marinoni* and *Giovanni Chiaramonte*, translated from Italian by *Joyce Myerson*, McGill-Queen's University Press, Montréal and Kingston, Canada, 2015, 271 pp. ISBN 978-0-7735-4528-1. Italian architect and planner Giuseppe Marinoni and his associate, photographer Giovanni Chiaramonte, present fourteen case studies of urban revitalization projects from France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Germany, the Netherlands and the UK. Situated in strategic locations, often near new transportation infrastructure, and at the interface between dense old tissues and lower density more recent urban extensions, these projects are articulating refined responses to complex local conditions while redefining their broader urban contexts. Their quality stems to a large extent from an original mode of production. All are the product of a unified urban plan, which is devised and executed under the responsibility of a planning director, often chosen following a competition. In a majority of cases, these projects were not subjected to the usual planning and regulation mechanisms. Rather, their realization was carefully co-ordinated between hired professionals and local stakeholders. Complying with ambitious sustainability criteria, each development is a variation on the theme of the 'compact city'. These experiments are seen as providing an urbanism that eschews grand schemes and formulaic solutions in favour of a framework that enables the production of co-ordinated and localized proposals of high quality.

Urban morphology: an introduction to the study of the physical form of cities by *Vitor Oliveira*, Springer, Cham, Switzerland, 2016, 192 pp. ISBN 978-3-319-32081-6. The discipline of urban morphology lacks manuals that can do justice to its depth and breadth, while synthesizing and illustrating key concepts and methods for the benefit of planning students and practitioners. This self-proclaimed 'manual' aims at remedying

this lacuna for an English readership. The nine chapters are divided into two parts. Theoretical discussions are interspersed with concrete and straightforward illustrations, as well as with case studies. Chapters 2 to 5 focus on the physical forms of cities and their production. The basic elements of the urban fabric are introduced, followed by a presentation of the key agents of morphological change and a discussion of their actions. A brief introduction to cities in different civilizations helps the reader to take the measure of the diversity and complexity of the urban phenomenon in history. The latter question is explored further by retracing the tale of three cities: New York, Marrakesh and Porto. The second part of the book concentrates on 'morphologists and practitioners'. Key proponents of the discipline are presented, before introducing the study of urban form through the lenses of seminal books in which methods of enquiry are outlined in Italian, British, French and American contexts. The theoretical and methodological contributions of historico-geographical, process typological, space syntax and spatial analysis approaches are then further discussed. A case study in Porto offers the pretext to test a mixed analytical approach and to illustrate the singularities and complementarities of the four perspectives. The last two chapters focus on the resonance of urban morphology in broader contexts by highlighting, first, how the disciplines of planning, urban design and architecture could benefit from relying more on empirically-grounded and informed practice, and secondly, how knowledge of the physical forms of cities could enrich our perspective on questions such as public health, climatic change and even urban social justice.

Fundamentos de morfologia urbana by *Stael de Alvarenga Pereira Costa* and *Maria Manoela Gimmler Netto*, C/Arte, Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 2015, 234 pp. ISBN 978-85-7654-302-2. This is a highly synthetic, albeit systematic, introduction in Portuguese to the

tenets, theories and methods of urban morphology from the so-called Conzenian and Muratorian schools. Detailed case studies in the UNESCO World Heritage site of Ouro Preto in Brazil illustrate how these complementary approaches allow analysing and interpreting the morphogenesis of a small, yet complex artefact. The work is generous in many ways. In plain language, it introduces the origins of the British and Italian research traditions, going as far as to trace the cultural and intellectual contexts in which the journeys of M. R. G. Conzen and Saverio Muratori took root and flourished. A tribute is duly paid to the seminal work of the founders, Conzen and Muratori, but also to the contributions of other key proponents, including predecessors, who paved the way to Conzen, in central Europe and Germany from the turn of the twentieth century. Intellectual rigour and depth does not translate in an arcane or heavy presentation. On the contrary, students and newcomers to the field will appreciate the straightforward approach. Part 1 and Part 2 of the book are respectively dedicated to the Conzenian and Muratorian approaches. After briefly establishing the conceptual and ideological context of the development of ideas, ten Conzenian and seven Muratorian key concepts are identified that are put into practice in the case studies that follow. Conzen's theories and methods are mobilized to look at the morphogenesis and structure of Ouro Preto's landscape at the organism and plan-unit scales, while the Muratorian school approach to process typology is applied to decipher architectural and urban tissue forms. The analyses are abundantly illustrated, which would facilitate reproducing similar research in other contexts. A two-part glossary is included, which provides definitions of some 200 and 60 terms from the British and Italian schools respectively.

Des dels edificis. Desde los edificios. From buildings edited by *Pere Joan Ravetllat*, Universidad Politècnica De Catalunya, Barcelona, Spain, 2014, 185 pp. ISBN 978-84-9880-471-3. In Catalan and Spanish with English translations, this collection of essays finds its source in a course on housing taught at the Universidad Politècnica De Catalunya. Editor Pere Joan Ravetllat has invited nine colleagues, all professors, to share their reflections on housing, and

in particular on multi-dwelling housing forms, and the city. The theme that permeates their contributions is the relationship between these two topics, which the book deems foundational for the human urban experience. Each chapter takes the form of a case study that focuses on different aspects of modernist housing projects built over the course of the twentieth century. A lot of attention is devoted to the spatial mechanisms and material devices associated with 'transitional spaces', those spaces of mediation, either found within the dwellings themselves, in the shared spaces of multi-family buildings, or more generally in spaces of transition between the domestic and public realms. Though the modernist architectural corpus under consideration in these essays precludes any typomorphological explanation, the proposed perspective develops a similar 'structural' approach, according to which apparent dichotomies – interior/exterior, intimate/public, open/enclosed, seen/unseen – are reframed in terms of multi-scalar spatial dynamics and dialectical relationships. Based on the premise that city and housing 'are part of the same phenomenon, and ultimately of the same project' (p. 6), the analyses seek to uncover the 'conciliatory logic' in projects, as an 'instrument capable of solving the different scales of work at the same time' (p. 7). The originality of that perspective stems in part from the fact that modernist architecture is noted more for ignoring the urban context than for embracing its complexities. This novel approach allows revisiting such an assumption.

Architecture, culture and spirituality edited by *Thomas Barrie, Julio Bermudez and Phillip James Tabb*, Ashgate, Farnham, UK, 2015, 249 pp. ISBN 9781472441713. Fascinating questions arise from juxtaposing the notions of architecture, culture and spirituality. What is sacred? What is profane? And how does the material environment manifest these realities in different historical and cultural contexts? Taken in isolation, each of these notions is almost inscrutable due to its inherent complexity. Yet the exploration of the articulations is highly stimulating and surprisingly fertile. This collection of essays questions how the built environment, as part of material culture, mediates our relationship to the world. The editorial perspective will resonate with the readers of this journal. A wide array of theoretical and

disciplinary perspectives is organized around five topical themes: being in the world; sacred, secular, and the contemporary condition; symbolic engagements; sacred landscapes; and spirituality and the designed environment. Architecture and cultural landscapes, it is argued, frame our embodied experiences of the anthropized world, as well as our subjective responses to it. The elusive question of the meaning of the built environment is raised in many contributions. Some authors aim at finding meaning in the formal and spatial characteristics of the built environment, while others see the rituals supported by architecture as an attack on meaningful representations. The dialectics, or perhaps the fluidity, between the built forms and the cultural practices that they embed or support, is a central question that is collectively addressed here.

New York. Réguler pour innover. Les années Bloomberg edited by *Ariella Masbouni* and *Jean-Louis Cohen*, Éditions Parenthèses, Marseille, France, 2014, 223 pp. ISBN 978-2-86364-235-1. Some twenty collaborators reflect on the heritage of Mayor Bloomberg's years in New York City. Most offer first-hand accounts of their experience as civil servant, private consultant or community organizer. Published in French under the auspices of the Direction Générale de l'Aménagement du Logement et de la Nature (Directorate General of Land Management, Housing and Wildness), this generously illustrated work offers a detailed overview of the innovative planning practices and outcomes that have characterized the 2002–2013 period. It starts with the turmoil following the 2001 tragedy and includes the 2008 subprime crisis and the 2012 Sandy hurricane. These were times of remarkable planning innovation, notably in a renewed administrative approach. The big issues, or themes, have been addressed in a transversal approach. A roof gardening initiative, for instance, could be seen as contributing to many objectives: reducing the heat-island effect, reducing the pressure on infrastructure by retaining rain water, improving food security, and training local youth. Such an approach also allowed capitalizing on long-term experience of public, private and community collaborations and of tripartite land-use negotiations. These proved fertile grounds for planning innovations, such as those stemming

from community organizations or institutions. The National Science Foundation has since taken up the opportunity of financing design-research initiatives on climatic change, now seen as a worthwhile and promising approach.

Suburban urbanities: suburbs and the life of the high street edited by *Laura Vaughan*, UCL Press, London, UK, 2015, 346 pp. ISBN 978-910634-13-4. In four parts and eleven chapters by no fewer than 24 collaborators from a variety of disciplinary and geographical horizons, this is a contribution that is more far-reaching than the title would suggest. Far from focusing solely on high street multi-faceted realities, this is an invitation to revisit the very notion of suburb, a term deemed epistemologically fragile (p. 11). And from there, one might argue, to reconsider the broader questions of urban change and morphogenesis. Anchored in the space syntax morphological approach, while embracing complementary geographical, anthropological, ethnological and urban studies viewpoints, the contributors collectively explore how the configurational make-up of cities mediates their socio-spatial arrangements and informs their temporalities. In the words of Charalambous and Geddes, 'such an approach treats cities as social-spatial entities, as 'highly relational systems' with complex organization... that are driven by evolutionary processes that might generate, reproduce and transform urban phenomena over time' (p. 77). Case studies in the UK, Cyprus, Libya, Spain, Israel and Sweden explore themes such as long-term configurational evolution and land-use transformations, and the impacts of configuration on the daily rhythms of life and everyday practices. The theoretical and methodological questions raised are also highly relevant for morphologists of process typology and historico-geographical 'obedience'.

Beyond gated communities edited by *Samer Bagaeen* and *Ola Uduku*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK, 2015, 246 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-74825-4. Gated communities are to be understood in very broad terms in this collection of essays compiled following the 7th International Conference on Gated Communities and Urban Governance held at the University of Brighton in June 2013. The 'gates' here can assume either a

literal or more metaphorical meaning, and prevent access temporarily or permanently by excluding or by virtue of exclusiveness. Twelve case studies are presented. Most discuss fixed geographical locations, though at different scales, while some explore the question of economic and social exclusion in more general terms. The cases studies are concerned both with the Global South (South Africa, Thailand, Mexico, Chile), and the Global North (South Korea, Ireland, Israel, Canada, UK). Themes that authors were encouraged to address included: urban gating; structures and processes; networks of power and social relations; and critical perspectives on the future of urban gating. In her foreword, Saskia Sassen insists on the significance of the reformulation of the notion of gating that is presented in this volume: 'In today's global modernity, the work of gating a space is likely to consist of thick, localised interventions by diverse actors, who can be local or global, good or bad'.

City choreographer: Lawrence Halprin in urban renewal America by *Alison Bick Hirsch*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, USA, 2014, 335 pp. ISBN 978-0-8166-7979-9. This traces the original professional and artistic journeys of landscape architect Lawrence Halprin, accompanied by his wife and collaborator, the dancer and choreographer Anna Halprin. Halprin is known as a prominent figure of his profession for a number of important productions, such as the FDR Memorial in Washington. However, Hirsch argues that his most important contribution, not yet fully recognized, might lie in his highly innovative design methods and philosophy, both areas in which his collaboration with his wife has played a crucial role. The author focuses on the 1960–76 period. In reaction against the 'sensuously deprived' condition that he perceived in the rational and functionalist city, Halprin searched for alternative principles and design methods. He devised a method named 'RSVP cycles', which stands for resources, scores, 'valuation' and performance. In his mind, the term 'resources' refers to the environmental conditions of a site, as well as to

archetypical forms of people-environment interactions that he was trying to uncover in nature and in human rituals. He considered ancestral Native American Cultures as well as the new artistic and political rituals of marches and demonstration in the public space. 'Scores' are temporal-situational guidelines represented by a sophisticated notation system developed by Halprin in collaboration with his wife. 'Performance' represents the acting out of the scores, while 'valuation' is meant to signify critical feedback. The importance of Halprin's contribution is undermined by the apparent disparity between the inventiveness of his conceptual approach to space and the design process and material manifestations of his artistic work. Yet, some aspects of his work can still resonate today.

The handbook of urban morphology by *Karl Kropf*, John Wiley & Sons, London, 2016, UK, 256 pp. ISBN: 9781118747698. Intended as a practical manual of urban morphological analysis, this handbook provides a guide to methods and techniques of analysis, working definitions, terms and concepts, and approaches to interpretation. It includes brief case studies of specific applications to illustrate how urban morphology is used in practice. The first part explores the core principles that define urban morphology as a field and the different approaches taken in developing and applying those principles: urban form is broken down into different aspects – a precursor to comparison and synthesis. The second part explains the range of different methods used in urban morphological investigations. While the emphasis is on the practical techniques of desktop analysis, field survey and synthesis, these are linked to the theoretical considerations that inform the methods and techniques. The third part surveys different applications of urban morphology, both to illustrate the ways it can be put to use and to shed further light on the ideas and techniques. Applications range from theoretical explorations of possible form and investigation of environmental performance to formulation of planning policy, development control and generation of designs.