



## BOOK NOTES

**Communities, land and social innovation. Land taking and land making in an urbanising world**, edited by *Pieter Van den Broeck, Asiya Sadiq, Ide Hiergens, Monica Quintana Molina, Han Verschure* and *Frank Moulaert*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, UK, 2020, 304 pp. ISBN 978 1 78897 376 2. This timely and thought-provoking book examines the contemporary struggle of communities over land ownership and use rights in rapidly urbanising areas, analysing 12 key case studies from across four continents. Contributions from an international team of researchers, policy analysts and experts explore both neoliberal urban development policies and socially innovative initiatives, providing a state-of-the-art reflection of the field and contributing to an agenda for future research, policy and practice.

**Hitler's northern utopia: building the new order in occupied Norway** by *Despina Stratigakos*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, USA, 2020, 313 pp. ISBN 978-0-691-19821-7. Between 1940 and 1945, the German occupation transformed Norway into a vast construction zone. This remarkable building campaign, largely unknown today, was designed to extend the Greater German Reich beyond the Arctic Circle and turn the Scandinavian country into a racial utopia. From ideal new cities to a scenic superhighway stretching from Berlin to northern Norway, plans to remake the country into a model 'Aryan' society fired the imaginations of Hitler, his architect Albert Speer, and other Nazi leaders. In *Hitler's northern utopia*, Despina Stratigakos provides the first major history of Nazi efforts to build a Nordic empire – one that they believed would improve their genetic stock and confirm their destiny as a new order of Vikings. Drawing on extraordinary unpublished diaries, photographs, and maps, as well as newspapers from the period, the book tells the story of a broad range of completed and unrealized architectural and infrastructure projects far beyond the

well-known German military defences built on Norway's Atlantic coast.

**Heritage-led urban regeneration in China** by *Jing Xie* and *Tim Heath*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK, 240 pp. ISBN 9780367331894. Urban planning, regeneration and design are essentially cultural practices with the outcomes often depending upon an understanding of and engagement with the past. As cities in China strive to be competitive and attractive on the world stage, their decaying historical urban fabrics are being transformed into vibrant places through historical-cultural led urban regeneration: however, the impact of their rapid development has escaped serious scrutiny. This book presents the detailed evolution of three well-known historic streets in China: the Southern Song Imperial Street in Hangzhou; the residential Pingjiang Street in Suzhou; and the commercial Tunxi Old Street in Huangshan. From their original formation to their more recent regeneration, the book offers a critical evaluation of historical-cultural led urban regeneration projects in China and provides theoretical guidelines for contemporary practice in relation to its tangible and intangible urban heritage. Using interdisciplinary research in architecture, urban design, history and cultural studies, the authors provide an invaluable resource for urban designers, urban planners and architects interested in and working in China.

**Grid planning in the urban design practices of Senegal** by *Liora Bigon* and *Eric Ross*, Springer Nature, Cham, Switzerland, 2020, 210 pp. ISBN 978-3-030-29525-7. This book is the first to trace the genealogy of an indigenous grid-pattern settlement design practice in Africa, and more specifically in Senegal. It does so by analyzing how the precolonial grid-plan design tradition of this country has become entangled with French colonial urban grid-planning, and with present-day, hybrid, planning cultures.

It thus transcends the classic precolonial-colonial-postcolonial metahistorical divides. The authors, an urban historian and an urban geographer, have approached the issue from a variety of methodological and conceptual angles not normally conjoined in a single study. The book is a response to two main lacunae in the current historiography. The first is that the established scholarship in urban planning history – scholarship on grid planning in particular – is centred on the European experience. Secondly, of all the world regions, sub-Saharan Africa especially is generally denied an indigenous urban settlement design culture, one that is independent of medieval Arab-Islamic and modern European influences. In the Western imagery, grid planning is perceived as an expression of the almost unique ‘rationality’ of the West. Such rationality is rarely granted to the urban planning practices of other cultures. This book reveals that over the course of the last 500 years, grid plans have been implemented in Senegal by a variety of agents for a range of different reasons. In doing so, it sheds light on a complex local development of a rather common spatial practice, grid planning, discussed in other books reviewed in this journal.

**Urban morphology and housing market** by *Yang Xiao*, Springer Geography and Tongji University Press, Shanghai, China, 2017, 188 pp. ISBN 978-981-10-2761-1. This book investigates the question of how the housing market values urban form. It is thus devoted to fill the ‘urban economics niche’ in morphological studies and conceptualizes a framework for valuing urban form via the local housing market. The research examines two distinct types of housing market, one in the UK and the other in China, and the results show that urban form does, in fact, have a statistically significant impact on housing price in these two distinctly different housing markets. Advanced network analysis techniques are employed to describe the urban environment, although it should be noted that urban form is primarily described with measures of accessibility and centrality such as are central to space syntax. It is shown that urban network form features can have both positive and negative impacts on housing price. The negative accessibility premiums are, for instance, locations likely to be congested;

and positive premiums are, for instance, locations highly connected to destination opportunities. This work will appeal to a wide readership from scholars and practitioner to policy makers within the fields of real estate analysis, urban and regional studies, urban planning, urban design and economic geography.

**Archetypes in architecture** by *Thomas Thiis-Evensen*, Universitetsforlaget, Oslo, Norway, 2020, 452 pp. ISBN 9788215046419. This online open-access book from Norwegian architect Thomas Thiis-Evensen from 1989 is now available in digital format online. It develops a grammar for the basic elements in the art of building: the floor, the wall and the roof. Drawing on examples from the history of architecture, a range of archetypes connected to these basic elements are discussed. The book explores how these architectural archetypes affect us psychologically. In other words, it investigates how our experiences of architecture are tied in with our bodily experiences of archetypes as carriers of specific meanings, which in turn influences our experiences of the relationship between inside and outside. The aim of the book is design oriented. The idea is that with more accurate knowledge of the archetypes and their variations, we can reuse them, without necessarily resorting to copying motifs from the past.

**Urban morphology, outdoor thermal comfort and walkability: the case of hot and arid regions, a comparative study in the city of Sidi Okba (Algeria)** by *Nassima Mouada, Noureddine Zemmouri and Rim Meziani*, LAP Lambert Academic Publishing, Beau Bassin, Mauritius, 2019, 92 pp. ISBN 978-3330333994. Due to the harsh weather conditions and excessive level of urbanization in Algeria’s Saharan cities, urban planning in these cities has focused more on automobile usage and less on people’s physical activity. This strategy has created an automobile-dependent society. As a result, walking has gradually decreased as a mode of transport. This study aims to investigate different urban environments in the hot, dry city of Sidi Okba, Biskra (Algeria) during the summer season and defines the upper and lower limits of the thermal comfort range for the PET index. A second

aim is to quantify the walkable environment and highlight the relationship between urban form and walking behaviour. This research recommends a set of general guidelines to improve and incorporate the outdoor thermal comfort and walkability into the local government regulations of hot dry cities.

**Urban adaptation to climate change: the role of urban form in mediating rising temperatures** by *Vivek Shandas, Cynthia Skelhorn and Salim Ferwati*, Springer, Cham, Switzerland, 2020, 96 pp. ISBN 978-3030265854. This book presents the findings of a three-year study on urban heat in Doha, Qatar, and discusses guidelines and strategies for planning agencies to consider in the context of moderating temperatures to provide pedestrians with greater access to outdoor spaces and greater choice in modes of transport. If modifying urban form can reduce extreme temperatures in one of the hottest places on the planet, then perhaps other communities can learn how to create liveable cities during a time of rapid climate change. In fact, despite the periods of extreme heat, strategic planning and management of urban areas can improve the ability of residents and visitors to live, work, and move throughout the city comfortably. Doha (Qatar), a city with one of the most extreme climates on earth, has undergone rapid development over the past 40 years. Although cities in the Middle East are expanding at three times the international average, the rapid population and physical growth remain largely unexamined, particularly in terms of the unique conditions, qualities, and characteristics that give rise to these emerging centres. Speed, quality, and the nature (ie form) and extent of urbanization affect neighbourhood-scale environmental conditions, and this book provides evidence that urban forms and materials can help to mediate temporal variation in microclimates and that landscape modifications can potentially reduce temperatures and increase accessibility to outdoor environments.

**High-rise urban form and microclimate: climate-responsive design for Asian megacities** by *Feng Yang and Liang Chen*, Springer, Cham, Switzerland, 2021, 211 pp. ISBN 978-9811517167. This book comprehensively

investigates the relationship between critical urban form and fabric parameters and urban microclimate in the high-rise urban environment that prevails in Asian megacities such as Shanghai. It identifies climate-responsive urban design strategies and tactics for effectively mitigating the negative impacts of deteriorating urban thermal environments on pedestrian thermal comfort, outdoor air quality and building energy consumption. It also reviews the latest advances in urban climate research, with a focus on the challenges in terms of outdoor space comfort, health, and liveability posed by the high-rise and high-density development in emerging Asian megacities, and proposes an integrated framework in response to the pressing need for microclimate research. It then presents a series of studies on high-rise residential and non-residential urban neighbourhoods and districts based on instrumented field study, validated numerical simulation, and spatial analysis using a GIS platform. The book includes extensive experimental data presented in a clear and concise manner. The thermal atlas methodology based on empirical modelling and spatial analysis described is a useful climate-responsive design tool for both urban designers and architects.

**Designing cooler cities: energy, cooling and urban form: the Asian perspective** edited by *Ali Cheshmehzangi and Chris Butters*, Palgrave Macmillan/Springer Nature, Singapore, 2019, 232 pp. pb ISBN 978-9811349201. This edited book surveys the major sustainability challenges facing Asian cities, in particular those related to urban energy and city cooling. It discusses the key concepts and issues involved, addressing the three levels of micro (individual buildings), meso (neighbourhoods/districts) and macro (whole or large parts of cities). It illustrates different paradigms of urban development and explores how cooler cities could be created by applying integrated sustainable design and planning on all three levels, bridging the gap between specialist approaches by highlighting both built projects, processes, and research. It also raises questions about prevalent paradigms of urban development as well as topics relating to urban district cooling solutions, sustainable construction materials, and processes towards effective delivery of sustainable cities.

**Urban form and accessibility: social, economic, and environment impacts** edited by *Corinne Mulley* and *John D. Nelson*, Elsevier, Amsterdam, Netherlands, 2020, 717 pp. pb ISBN 9780128198223. The growth of global urbanization places great strains on energy, transportation, housing and public spaces needs. Transport and land use are thus inextricably linked. This book consolidates key insights from multidisciplinary perspectives on the relationship between urban form and transportation planning. Synthesizing the latest cutting-edge research and drawing on evidence-based success stories worldwide, the book translates academic evidence into practice. Starting with an overview of the key concepts relevant to each discipline, it covers critical elements such as governance, travel behaviour and technological disruption, showing how to move towards a more sustainable society for all city inhabitants.

**Spatial modeling and assessment of urban form: analysis of urban growth from sprawl to compact using geospatial data** edited by *B. Pradhan*, Springer, Cham, Switzerland, 2018, 348 pp. pb ISBN 978-3319853444. This book discusses the application of geospatial data, geographic information systems and remote sensing technologies in the analysis and modelling of urban growth processes, and their patterns, with particular focus on sprawl and compact forms of urban development. The book explains these two urban forms in detail in terms of their advantages, disadvantages, indicators, assessment, modelling, implementation and their relationship with urban sustainability. It confirms that the proposed modelling approaches, geospatial data and GIS are very practical for identifying urban growth, land-use change patterns and their general future trends. The analyses and modelling approaches presented here can be employed to guide the identification and measurement of the changes and growth likely to happen in urban areas.

**Chinese urbanism: urban form and life in the Tang-Song Dynasties** by *Jing Xie*, World Scientific Publishing Company, Singapore, 2020, 296 pp. ISBN 978-9811204814. Since the 1990s, urban landscape change in China has

been of a speed and scale unrivalled in any country. Rapid urbanization, facilitated by the modern planning mechanism for growth, provides opportunities for property developers. Yet associated urban problems such as housing affordability, traffic congestion, energy consumption and environmental deterioration are increasing. This book takes a historical approach to investigate the planning philosophy, urban form and life of the past. Through a detailed study of urban development from early times through the Imperial period, with a focus on the Tang-Song dynasties, this book attempts to articulate the good qualities of urban landscapes from the past that still have value for modern practices. The focus on the Tang-Song period is not only because China was the most advanced civilization of its time, but also because it underwent a similar process of ‘urbanization’, evident by tremendous economic growth, a dramatic rise of urban population and an extended building boom. Through evaluating the streets, city layout, public places, urban communities, houses and gardens, and using interdisciplinary research in urban planning, urban design, architecture, history and cultural studies, this book asserts that the past is quintessentially important. The past not only truthfully records the course of social and cultural formation of urban community and its associated physical fabric, but also shapes the directions we may take in the future.

**Spacematrix: space, density and urban form** (2nd edn) by *Meta Berghauser Pont* and *Per Haupt*, Nai010 Publishers, Rotterdam, Netherlands, 2020, 280 pp. ISBN 978-9462085381. This revised edition of Meta Berghauser Pont and Per Haupt’s 2010 volume attempts to analyze the connections between density, urban form and performance – a prerequisite for understanding and successfully predicting the effects of specific designs and planning proposals. Its main focus is the relationship between types of urban environment and data such as amount, size and physical properties. Berghauser Pont and Haupt demystify the use of image-based references and concepts such as ‘compact city’ and ‘park city’ by challenging the reliability of such concepts and critically examining the possibility of redefining them through the concept of density.