



BOOK NOTES

Cultural diversity of an ancient urban element: the cul-de-sac by *Hisham Mortada*, Benton Heights, Baltimore, USA, 2019, 136 pp. pb. ISBN 978–1699073445. The cul-de-sac is a unique urban element, especially in traditional settlements that feature compact organic urban forms. In addition to its countless social advantages, the cul-de-sac greatly contributes to humanizing harsh climatic conditions, in particular hot arid climates. Although many urban historians and planners ascribe its origin to the old Muslim city, the cul-de-sac had been in existence for centuries in various parts of the world. This book explores the social and environmental dimensions of the cul-de-sac using historic and contemporary examples from various geographic contexts. It also examines in detail the physical aspects of the cul-de-sac in historical Muslim cities, as well as contemporary Western cities.

The geometry of urban layouts: a global comparative study by *Mahbub Rashid*, Springer, Cham, Switzerland, 2018, 468 pp. pb. ISBN 978–3319808819. This book presents a compendium of the urban layout maps of two-mile-square city-centre areas of more than 100 cities in developed and developing countries – all drawn at the same scale using high-resolution Google Maps satellite images. The book also presents analytic studies using metric geometrical, topological (or network), and fractal measures of these maps. These analytic studies identify ordinaries, extremes, similarities, and differences in these maps; investigate the scaling properties of these maps; and develop precise descriptive categories, types and indicators for multidimensional comparative studies of these maps. These studies indicate that many geometric relations of the urban layouts of downtown areas follow regular patterns; that despite social, economic, and cultural differences among cities, the geometric measures of downtown areas in cities of developed and developing countries do not show significant differences; and

that the geometric possibilities of urban layouts are vastly greater than those that have been realized so far in our cities.

Urban blocks and grids: history, technical features, and outcomes by *Peter G. Rowe, Hanne J. van den Berg* and *Liang Wang*, Scholars' Press, Beau Bassin, Mauritius, 2019, 188 pp. pb. ISBN 978–6138916673. This book is about urban blocks and grids, one of the fundamental ways in which the space of cities and other urban settlements are arranged and ordered. It aims to trace the lineage of this form of city making across several cultural divides. The book explores urban blocks and grids relative to their historical development and technical requirements. It also provides insights about their structure and change in relation to several important factors including contextual settings and environmental conditions.

Comparative analysis of urban morphology: urban form and future perspectives in Nanjing and Algiers City by *Guoping Xiong* and *Mohamed Lamine Cheddah*, Springer, Cham, Switzerland, 2020, 128 pp. pb. ISBN 978–9811392382. This book presents a comparative analysis of the urban forms of Algiers and Nanjing. It underscores the different evolutions of the two cities and explains the relationship between their spatial structures and the major urban issues they are currently facing. It also explores the similarities in and differences between their physical structures in order to provide an accurate description of the type and extent of their growth. The book employs a qualitative and quantitative approach and combines a range of morphological methods such as historico-geographical, spatial configuration (space syntax), typo-morphological, remote sensing and cellular automata in order to extensively explore the urban issues that Algiers and Nanjing are now experiencing.

The production of urban space, temporality, and spatiality: Lyons, 1500–1900 by *Bernard Gauthiez*, De Gruyter Oldenbourg, 2020, 257 pp. e-ISSN 2365–323X, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110623062>. The production of urban space is scarcely studied by scholars in historical and urban studies, the city being still predominantly seen as a frame in which activities and social relationship develop, not a product in itself. The scope of the book is the comprehension of this production. This implies an adequate conceptualisation of the ways in which urban space can be measured and broken down into units which can be examined in relation to social processes and agents. The first part examines the concepts and their implications. The second deals with the anthropology and typology of architectural production considered in relation to demography. The third develops on the rhythms of the space production at Lyon from the late-fifteenth century to the nineteenth. The temporalities and spatialities of the production are determined and examined. The agents of the production are studied throughout the period, in parallel to the market aimed at investors in real estate, tenants, activities. Each phenomenon identified can be described and understood as in the meantime a temporal, spatial and social unit.

Housing estates in the Baltic countries. The legacy of central planning in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania edited by *Daniel Baldwin Hess* and *Tiit Tammaru*, Springer, Cham, Switzerland, 2019, 383 pp. ISBN 978–3–030–23392–1. This open access book focuses on the formation and later socio-spatial trajectories of large housing estates in the Baltic countries – Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. It also explores claims that a distinctly ‘westward-looking orientation’ in their design produced housing estates that were superior in design to those produced elsewhere in the Soviet Union (between 1944 and 1991, Estonia was a member republic of the USSR). The first two parts of the book provide contextual material to help readers understand the vision behind housing estates in these three countries. These sections present the background of housing estates in the Baltic Republics as well as challenges and debates concerning their formation, evolution, and present condition and importance.

High-rise urban form and microclimate: climate-responsive design for Asian mega-cities 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.

Dwelling on the future. Architecture of the seaside, middle England and the metropolis by *Pierre d’Avoine*, UCL Press, London, UK, 2021, 358 pp. ISBN: 9781787350540. An open access book, *Dwelling on the future* studies the design of dwellings and their numerous environments. It explores how architects can, or should, respond to the complex challenges of providing humane places in which to live for a growing, multifarious population in an increasingly divided world. The issue, Pierre D’Avoine shows, is never just housing. People – individuals, groups and societies – can and do have different goals and aspirations. D’Avoine covers a wide range of examples, including proposals for luxury housing and designs for low-cost dwellings, which all address the needs and desires of

their potential inhabitants. The book explores an inclusive approach to the design of settlements – and not just in cities – that recognizes difference, an approach that demands a fresh political vision to resolve humanity’s increasing inequality, for the benefit of all. Simultaneously practical and aspirational, *Dwelling on the future* casts a much-needed light on our thoughts and aspirations, and on our definitions of home.

Fabricate 2020. Making resilient architecture edited by *Jane Burry, Jenny E. Sabin, Bob Sheil* and *Marilena Skavara*, UCL Press, London, UK, 2020, 320 pp. ISBN: 978–1787358119. *Fabricate 2020* is an open access book, the fourth title in the FABRICATE series on the theme of digital fabrication, and is published in conjunction with a triennial conference (London, April 2020). The book features cutting-edge built projects and work-in-progress from both academia and practice. It brings together pioneers in design and making from across the fields of architecture, construction, engineering, manufacturing, materials technology and computation. *Fabricate 2020* includes 32 illustrated articles punctuated by four conversations between world-leading experts from design to engineering, discussing themes such as drawing-to-production, behavioural composites, robotic assembly, and digital craft.

Designing change – professional mutations in urban design 1980–2020 by *Eric Firley*, nai010 Publishers, Rotterdam, Netherlands, 2018, 496 pp. ISBN 978–9462084810. The pace of urbanization has dramatically increased worldwide, with new challenges emerging that deeply question the validity of the post-war planning paradigms. City-making is a pluralism of choices and viewpoints, so how can urban designers prepare for the future? Authored by Eric Firley, *Designing change* examines this and other questions through in-depth conversations with twelve leading practitioners in the field, such as Winy

Maas, Paola Viganò, Bruno Fortier and Wenyi Zhu. It offers a combination of case study analysis and theoretical debate that addresses the complexity of the topic not only from the perspective of experts, but also as a question of wider societal debate.

The art of classic planning: building beautiful and enduring communities by *Nir Haim Buras*, Belknap Press, Princeton, NJ, USA, 2020, 496 pp. ISBN 978–0674919242. An accomplished architect and urbanist goes back to the roots of what makes cities attractive and livable, demonstrating how we can restore function and beauty to our urban spaces for the long term. Nearly everything we treasure in the world’s most beautiful cities was built over a century ago. Cities like Prague, Paris, and Lisbon draw millions of visitors from around the world because of their exquisite architecture, walkable neighbourhoods and human scale. Yet a great deal of the knowledge and practice behind successful city planning has been abandoned over the last hundred years: not because of traffic, population growth, or other practical hurdles, but because of ill-considered theories emerging from Modernism and reactions to it. The errors of urban design over the last century are too great not to question. The solutions being offered today – sustainability, walkability, smart and green technologies – hint at what has been lost and what may be regained, but they remain piecemeal and superficial. In *The art of classic planning*, Buras, an architect and planner, documents and extends the time-tested and holistic practices that held sway before the reign of Modernism. Well-illustrated, the book seeks to restore and revitalize the foundations of urban planning. Inspired by venerable cities like Kyoto, Vienna and Venice, and by the great successes of L’Enfant’s Washington, Haussmann’s Paris and Burnham’s Chicago, Buras combines theory and a host of examples to arrive at clear guidelines for best practices in classic planning for today’s world.