

Mumford is cited) and to his own practical observation that ‘even a little time spent studying the map and then driving around an urban area will disprove [its undifferentiated character]’. The author has also profited by the view from the plane window and chooses this as his picture overview to start and finish the book. Quite right too.

As to remedies, Portland, Oregon, with its strong planning, is discussed. Is this reminiscent of England? Perhaps the creation (as at Poundbury, Dorchester) of high-density, mixed-era replica housing (attached to older suburbs) is one way. This is being imitated widely.

Conversely we might choose to follow Mischa Balen’s prescription (see ‘Land Economy’, a 40-page report from the Adam Smith Institute) and turn over 3 per cent of conveniently-placed farmland to wooded spacey housing – then we have a prescription for sprawl American style.

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Suburban form: an international perspective, edited by Kiril Stanilov and Brenda Case Scheer, Routledge, London, UK, 2004, 270 pp. ISBN 0-415-31476-3

Though little-commemorated, the year 2006 marks the sixtieth anniversary of the post-war suburban boom. It is, perhaps, sobering to note that suburban landscapes, so ubiquitous in the modern world, are no longer footnotes to the development of older cities, but are instead established urban phenomena in their own right. Existing suburban development shapes and constrains new expansion, while older areas, aging rapidly, confront planners with questions of conservation and renewal. Despite this current relevance, however, the urban form of the suburb has received far less attention than that of the central city. While these areas are all too often dismissed as essentially uniform and uninteresting, a trained eye can uncover rich complexity in suburban landscapes. *Suburban form: an international perspective*, edited by Kiril Stanilov and Brenda Case Scheer, explores this complexity. This volume, a collection of eleven essays presented at the 2001 conference of ISUF, draws together case studies of suburban morphology from four continents. These essays reveal that suburban landscapes worldwide vary greatly and begin to explore the suburb’s guiding principles and the

planning dilemmas they create.

In addition to their regional diversity, the case studies comprising this volume draw on a variety of disciplinary perspectives, ranging from geography to planning to architectural design. The essays’ authors raise numerous themes and concepts, many of which are still in their infancy. In light of this background, Stanilov and Scheer present the essays as explorations of a multitude of issues, rather than arguments advancing any single central thesis. Indeed, the introduction to the work has only limited success in developing a classification typology for the case studies. (‘Sprawl,’ the editors note on p. 7, ‘is often applied to every type of suburban extension’.) Therefore, Stanilov and Scheer organize the book not by the type or origin of each case, but rather by a loose division of the essays according to their thematic emphases. While the volume is formally divided into four parts, two main themes emerge: first the origin, variety, and operating principles of suburban areas, and secondly the role of planning in the suburb’s past, present, and future.

The first half of the book begins by showcasing the worldwide diversity of suburban environments, considering both differences between different cultures and variation of built environments within particular areas. This part opens by comparing the post-war development of Cupertino, California, USA and Toyokawa, Japan – two heavily technology-driven cities which nonetheless show their separate cultural backgrounds in their built form. Next, a research team from Laval University presents an analysis of five suburban areas surrounding Québec City, showing the partial – but far from uniform – influence of traditional French-Canadian long-lots. Finally, six *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro are examined, tracing the historical antecedents of their surprisingly different forms.

The focus then shifts away from the specific details of each case study, seeking to derive more fundamental principles of suburban geography from individual studies. Thus, in Chapter 4, Tatom reconstructs the historical development of two suburbs near Lyons, but uses this pattern to generalize conclusions about the differing tendencies of large and small land parcels over time. Similarly, in the next chapter Scheer develops the definition of ‘elastic tissue’ – rapidly-changing commercial development, as opposed to more static suburban housing. These are among the most interesting chapters of the book, as they openly invite further research to test their ideas’ applicability to other areas.

In contrast to the arms-length perspective of the

first half of the volume, the remainder of the work more directly confronts the historical role of urban planning in shaping the suburb. This part opens, somewhat surprisingly, with an overview of the development of new towns in Singapore – highly directed suburban expansions which stand in stark contrast to the previous case studies. Next, Corsini investigates the effects of the disconnection in architectural vocabulary between Rome's housing projects and historic city. Stanilov, however, offers the most scathing indictment of the potential weaknesses of planning, showing how a sprawling regional shopping centre outside Cincinnati grew with the direct involvement and co-operation of local planning authorities. The remaining chapters then examine the roles of planners, developers, and citizens in shaping the future of the suburb. Topics covered include efforts to remodel and retrofit Swedish public housing to modern architectural styles and energy standards, the effect of Portland, Oregon, USA's urban growth boundary on the morphology of new developments, and debates over official conservation for aging English suburbs.

While the two halves of the book raise intriguing ideas, several weaknesses stifle the strength of the volume as a whole. Perhaps the most significant of these is the sparseness of the editorial commentary through most of the work. Although Stanilov and Scheer provide a short introduction to the work, it seems tangential to many of the issues raised in the chapters. The editors' introductions to each of the book's four parts are even briefer, functioning more as outlines than as explorations of the common themes among the essays. A clearer articulation of these themes – for instance, a more explicit discussion of differing attitudes toward planning as a cause of suburban variation, or an application of the principles proposed at the end of the volume's first half to the cases discussed in its second half – would make the work far more cohesive. Furthermore, the varying standards of illustration among the eleven chapters can be frustrating to the reader. While most essays are well-appointed with clear and relevant maps and photographs, those on Singapore and Rio de Janeiro – areas with which many readers may not be familiar – are notably minimally illustrated. Public housing in Singapore forms an important counterpoint to many of the other case studies, yet its morphology is presented primarily through abstract, often poorly-labelled schematic maps and not a single photograph.

Both of these weaknesses, however, are fairly minor. While many of the diverse ideas threaded through these case studies are not immediately

apparent, they are a feast for the dedicated reader. Stanilov and Scheer offer the reader a wide-ranging and thought-provoking review of suburban morphology, presenting both new insights on familiar suburban landscapes and an introduction to alternative paths.

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Morphologie urbaine. Géographie, aménagement et architecture de la ville, by *Rémy Allain*, Armand Colin, Paris, France, 2004, 254pp. ISBN 2-200-26262-0.

This book is a comprehensive coverage of the different components of urban morphology.¹ It addresses the spatial and social relationships involved at every scale of urban form. The author aims to cover in a synthetic way, and with reference to major theoretical works, the main characteristics of the Italian, British and French schools of urban morphology. From the perception of urban reality, to the study of its constituent parts, and finally to development and redevelopment processes (*rénovation urbaine*), this book complements the main publications dedicated to urban morphology in French in the last 5 years.

The intended principal readership is students of architecture, urban planning and geography. The book's structure and content accord with city planners' preoccupations with such contemporary questions as the renewal of the urban fabric and gentrification. The diachronic approach found in the book *Formes urbaines*,² which concentrates on a single scale of investigation, is supplemented in this book by an attempt to systematize complex relationships at various scales. In the absence of a glossary, the reading of this book becomes even more profitable if accompanied by the recent book by Gauthiez,³ albeit that not all the complex processes described here are systematically defined in Gauthiez's '*vocabulaire*'.

The five core chapters of the book (namely Chapter 3 on *La macroforme: morphogenèse et contrôle*; Chapter 4 on *Plan et maillage: le dessin des rues*; Chapter 5 on *De la maille à la parcelle*; Chapter 6 on *Volume urbain et tissu constructif*; and Chapter 7 on *Rues, places et parcs: les espaces publics en tissu continu*) give a sequential analysis,