

the relationships between the urban block and the grid on the one hand, and the urban block and the plot on the other.

Based on both its original conceptual approach and clear graphic materials I warmly recommend the use of the *Atlas of the Dutch urban block* as a useful teaching and research tool in the fields of urban morphology, urban geography, urban planning, urban design, architecture and urban policy. I agree with the authors of this atlas that learning to read a map is an important element in the professional practice of architects and urban planners, and I might add in the study of urban form by undergraduate and graduate students. Furthermore, in addition to maps and drawings, this atlas also provides simple but important elements pertaining to dimensions, numbers, density and the average size of dwellings, which are useful in examining and understanding the characteristics and evolution of the urban block in particular and the urban fabric in general. Finally, for researchers and decision-makers, this atlas can be used as a reference work that assembles plans and information otherwise difficult to gather.

This book is very well designed and illustrated and offers important insights into understanding how urban change or urban continuity can be captured via 'reading' the morphological and chronological evolution of the urban block. It is clearly an important contribution to the field of urban morphology in general and urban morphological analysis at the urban block level in particular.

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The form of cities: political economy and urban design by Alexander R. Cuthbert, Blackwell Publishing, Oxford, UK, 2006, 304 pp. ISBN 1-4051-1640-4.

In *The form of cities: political economy and urban design*, Alexander Cuthbert has entered into an effective and multi-faceted dialogue with his own previous edited work, *Designing cities: critical readings in urban design*. (Yet another facet of this dialogue is contained in the longer version of Chapter 1 available on Cuthbert's faculty website at the University of New South Wales under the

'publications' heading). Both books are organized into the same ten parts: theory, history, philosophy, politics, culture, gender, environment, aesthetics, typologies and pragmatics. But whereas *Designing cities* is an anthology of 30 previously-published works by different authors, *The form of cities* is Cuthbert's effort to synthesize those and numerous other works within their theoretical and methodological contexts. As such, it reads as a broad survey of recent social theory in the context of the production of urban form.

Cuthbert's training in architecture, planning and economics and his subsequent years of experience in the design field are evident here in a wide-ranging exploration of the philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of the production of urban form. His discussion moves beyond the classic canon of urban design to tackle such philosophical issues as 'what is history?' and 'what is sustainable development?' And his conceptualization of urban form is multifaceted, encompassing, integrating and contrasting 'forms' from the physical to the philosophical. Within these diverse discussions, however, he rarely strays far from the theme of 'political economy and urban design' with which he subtitled the book. In this perspective, urban form, in all its manifestations, is produced and co-produced through the dynamics, structures, and exercises of power in the political, legal, economic, social and cultural realms.

Each chapter of the book lays out a set of diverse ways urbanists, social theorists and other academics have approached its central theme. The first chapter, entitled 'Theory', surveys 'mainstream' urban design theory, political economy, and critical theory. A table and accompanying discussion portrays the different ways in which the fields of architecture, urban design, and urban planning have tended to view and/or operationalize different elements of the urban, including structure, environment, resources, objectives and behaviour. The theory chapter is concluded with a sharp critique, noting that the 'cult of the individual architect' has influenced urban design theory to a striking degree, so that the conceptualizations of urban form embodied in the theoretical literature tend to be unrelated, singular, and devoid of a basis in socio-economic and political practice.

The chapter on history, after a foray into the general theories of 'what is history?' focuses on an organizational scheme for the literature on urban history and change which centres on five types: chronologies, typologies, utopias, fragments, and materialist theory.

Cuthbert uses individual cities and the 'schools

of thought' associated with them as the organizational scheme for his chapter on philosophy. He presents these as the Vienna school (Wagner, Sitte); the Frankfurt school (Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse and others, and sometimes Habermas); the Chicago school (Park, Wirth, Burgess); the Weimar and Dessau school (the Bauhaus: Gropius, Meyer, and Mies van der Rohe); the Paris school (Lefebvre, Castells and others); and the Los Angeles school (Scott, Soja, Dear, Wolch, Davis and others). Subsequent discussions in this chapter centre on semiotics, phenomenology, and Marxian political economy. The discussion of Marxian political economy as a philosophical system, and its relationship to urban design, provides an effective transition to the subsequent chapter on politics, which relates power and ideology to design in the public realm, with an emphasis on the writings of Lefebvre, Foucault and Marx.

The chapter on culture covers topics such as Modernism and Postmodernism, state control of culture, globalization, and 'the new ruralism/urbanism'. This last section, though it identifies the New Urbanism as a 'class-based reaction to perceived problems ...', has relatively little to say about the New Urbanism per se, and instead is focused on a phenomenon Cuthbert entitles 'the New Ruralism' in which new information technologies enable the lessening of urban/rural differences, and concepts such as 'heritage', 'nostalgia', 'cultural uniqueness of place', and 'cultural emblems' are used to produce and promote new types of space.

In his review of the literature on gender and urban space – in contexts such as society, patriarchy, capital, and the public realm, Cuthbert endeavours to summarize the main arguments in a wide ranging literature on gender and urban space. He sees the goal of such analysis as an effort to move closer to a 'truly democratic and non-sexist city', but recognizes that this is a long and difficult project for urban design.

The seventh chapter, on environment, focuses almost entirely on sustainable development and contends that cities are inherently unsustainable within the capitalist system, and that to try to make them sustainable through the mechanisms available to urban planners and designers may be counter productive in the end. Here Cuthbert, in my opinion, misses an opportunity to weave the classic ideas he presents from David Harvey's work into more contemporary theories and case studies of environmental justice. While there is merit in the argument that environmental 'sustainability' is

difficult, if not impossible, to attain through urban planning alone, this chapter could be strengthened with a more multifaceted analysis of the various environmental lenses through which urban analysis has been carried out in recent years – such as environmental justice and ecological footprint theory.

The last three chapters – aesthetics, typologies, and pragmatics – have particular relevance for urban morphology. In regard to aesthetics, Cuthbert contrasts perspectives such as Aldo Rossi's interpretation of the city as a work of art and Paul Clarke's view of aesthetics as an element in the production of symbolic capital. He includes subsections on mathematics, contextualism (especially Camillo Sitte and Gordon Sutton), rationalism, symbolic capital, regulation, and theming. The chapter on typologies is introduced with a discussion entitled 'Taxonomy, typology, morphology and system' which, much to my own personal disappointment, does not mention morphology except in the title. Nonetheless, Cuthbert makes a significant effort at categorizing (typologizing?) different typological schemes under three sub-headings: typologies derived from associated disciplines (Geddes, Doxiadis, E.T. Hall, Perrin); typologies derived from traditional urban design perspectives (Vidler, Yifchatel/Abel, Krier, Alexander), and 'implications' (typologies) from spatial political economy (Saunders, Castells, Soja, Appadurai, Foucault). The final chapter, entitled 'Pragmatics', focuses specifically on two factors in the production of knowledge in urban design: the relationships between the professions, universities, and urban design, and urban design as a socially sanctioned activity.

The form of cities is a wide-ranging and masterful literature review of works relevant to urban design practice and analysis. It falls somewhere between the categories of 'textbook' and 'academic work', to the extent that while it has much to teach, it would make difficult reading for a reader unfamiliar with the works it cites, many of which are not explained within the text. Nor are its case study examples easily understood without prior knowledge. However, an advanced student, or professional urban designer, planner, architect or geographer will find a wonderful array of 'food for thought' in this recasting of both classic and contemporary works.

As for urban morphology, despite, perhaps, its title, *The form of cities* does not make much use of the current work or even most of the historical antecedents of today's urban morphologists, save Anne Vernez Moudon, whose essay 'A catholic

approach to organizing what urban designers should know' was reprinted in *Designing cities*. (He also cites Jivén and Larkham's 2003 commentary on sense of place, authenticity and character in the *Journal of Urban Design* in his chapter on philosophy). Had Cuthbert looked beyond Moudon's 1992 work, he might have incorporated the issues, debates and theories of urban form embodied in the work of members of ISUF.

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Caribbean urban modernization: a typomorphological study of two towns in Guadeloupe (1928-2003) by *Katrine Dupré*, Department of Architecture, Tampere University of Technology, Tampere, Finland, 2004, 312 pp. ISBN 952-15-1162-1.

This is a beautifully designed book. The cover photograph shows a typical Caribbean house: small, with yellow stucco walls and red tin roof, juxtaposed to a large, white, modern, stucco building. What a perfect illustration for the subject of this study. The story could almost end there.

Imagine my surprise to find when I opened the book – a dissertation! Publishing a dissertation is fine, but it should be edited and restructured for an audience larger and more diverse than the dissertation committee. Not being privy to the dissertation committee's agenda, I was initially at a loss as to how to proceed. From my point of view, it is a perfectly acceptable dissertation, but it is, in all kindness, not ready to be launched on the cruel seas of academic scholarship. However, in this dissertation lie the seeds of a number of interesting monographs and perhaps even a more generalized, broad ranging work in the manner of Braudel, whom the author mentions as a source of inspiration.

As I read through this work, a number of questions arose that were suggested by the research and observations of the author. It occurred to me that I could best write about this dissertation by discussing those areas of interest that could and should be expanded upon. In doing so I may have some critical comments about the dissertation, but only in the sense that I think the author needs to step back herself and look at her subject more critically and in some cases in more detail.

Dupré's study is centred on two towns: Gossier, about 3 km to the west of Pointe-à-Pitre along the coastal road, and Trois-Rivières on the adjacent island of Basse-Terre along the coastal road to the city of Basse Terre. One of the statements that the author makes that indicates to me she has been too close to her subject, particularly Gossier, is that both towns are 'more alike than different'. From her own evidence, I see many more differences. About the only similarity is that both are located on a coastal road, but in the case of Trois-Rivières the coastal road is inland from the coast, perhaps by 1 km or so, whereas Gossier is truly a beach town. The author also describes both as unplanned ribbon developments. I would agree that that is true about Gossier, whose public buildings are spread out along the colonial road without apparent rhyme or reason, but in Trois-Rivières there is actually a city centre and the public buildings have a relationship to one another. This leads me to believe that someone guided the layout of this town. I think Dupré needs to do some more research on the founders and foundations of these towns. She does give the reader some broad generalities: Gossier was essentially a fishing village and Trois-Rivières was a plantation town. I need to know more. What were the names (if not faces) of these early founders? How was the land allocated? How was it surveyed? What was the land tenure system? Who were these early settlers – free blacks, Creoles, Europeans? Why Gossier? Why Trois-Rivières? There are many more questions to be answered if Dupré were to undertake a broad spectrum work, which I wish she would. However, if she sticks to a typomorphological approach, she should pick up the essential differences in the architecture of the stone buildings common to Trois-Rivières and the wood shacks of Gossier, both full of architectural charm.

Dupré does an excellent and detailed job of describing both modern and traditional floor plans. I would like more comparison and contrast, particularly of single-family dwellings with the new multi-family projects that have sprung up in recent times. Although I suspect apartment living is common in the cities of Guadeloupe, I think it was an innovation in the small towns. In investigating the impact of this life-style change, a sociological and anthropological approach might be most appropriate – speak to the inhabitants. There should be some interesting and valuable information gleaned from talking with those who have made the transition from traditional single family to apartment living. Dupré has included commentaries from ordinary people on other