

The citations draw on a very broad literature, and it is interesting to see the types of links being made here. The literature has been thoroughly digested, as is shown particularly in the appendices detailing the sources of particular concepts and oft-repeated quotations or concepts (e.g. Appendix 2 for a range of 'desired patterns and properties'). In several cases these are welcome expansions of ideas represented as tables or illustrations within the main text. It is unusual to see so much explicit comparison of the ideas contained in so many citations. Yet all of this does lead to a very dense, complex text.

I read the book with the benefit of some knowledge of urban form, but having given little thought to the complexities of streets *per se*. For me, this was an extremely informative and helpful book. It explains some of the basics of network types and means of analysis, and explores the consequences of different street and network types for urban form and design. It could, perhaps, have been strengthened through greater use of non-UK examples; and perhaps the complexity of ideas and categories could be more clearly communicated through case studies. How is the author's suggested code to be implemented in the complex reality of contemporary urban form? This book is fascinating at the intellectual, academic, level. But I doubt that it will convince many practitioners – highway engineers, planners and designers – and this is a real missed opportunity.

*Peter J. Larkham, School of Property, Construction and Planning, Birmingham City University, Perry Barr, Birmingham, B42 2SU, UK. E-mail: peter.larkham@bcu.ac.uk*

**London: a life in maps** by Peter Whitfield, British Library, London, UK, 2006, 208 pp. ISBN 978-0-7123-4919.

In *London: a life in maps* Peter Whitfield, former director of Stanford's International Map Centre, traces the morphological evolution of London through the lens of a corpus of cartographic pieces dating from the mid-sixteenth century to the end of the last century. Split into four sections, 'London before the fire', 'The age of elegance', 'The Victorian metropolis', and 'The shock of the new', some of which contain up to twenty short subsections, this book gives a fascinating insight into features of spatial transformation within

England's capital city, and the political, commercial, cultural and aesthetic agents promoting change over continuity.

Opening with an informative glimpse of London prior to the Great Fire of 1666, an event shown to have hastened the evolution of cartography in England due to the post-disaster need for scaled maps rather than evocative illustrations (p. 55), the first section of the book reveals, amongst other things, the nature and significance of the earliest comprehensive images of the city. Noting how the first city-wide images of London coincided with the onset of a phase of urbanization that was to last for over 400 years (p. 9), Whitfield outlines the settlement's westward spatial migration and the foundation of physical changes (p. 12) that subsequently included the laying out of London's first planned residential square, Covent Garden, the architectural and spatial antecedent of the development of West London in the late-seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

Taking post-restoration and Georgian London as its subject, 'The age of elegance' appraises the triumph of private (aristocratic) initiative, money and taste (p. 56) in the layout of London. There is a focus on the unfolding patterns of squares and streets in the West End, thoroughfares wide enough to accommodate wheeled transport – a distinctive indicator of class status (p. 59). Especial attention is given to the growth and form of districts such as Mayfair, St James's, Vauxhall, Soho, and Kensington. However, as Whitfield demonstrates, the Georgian period was not only characterized by the arranging of exclusive suburban estates. Hence attention is given to the often overlooked growth of Whitechapel (pp. 80-1). Highlighting matters such as increasing maritime activity, post-reformation society's lenience towards foreigners, and the city's intolerance of particular industries, namely those that had an unpleasant effect upon polite society's ears and nose, Whitfield describes how these and other factors encouraged the distinct character of East London to be established some 100 years prior to the commencement of the Industrial Revolution. Accordingly, London's unique socio-morphological configuration is unravelled and shown to comprise contrasting East and West Ends, between which was sandwiched the City whose financial mechanisms underpinned both worlds.

By the third section, 'The Victorian metropolis', matters such as London's immense demographic surge, poverty's comprehensive presence, and the pursuit of wealth (p. 107) are brought to the fore. Expounding the struggles of the city's authorities to deal with growing social and environmental

predicaments, *London: a life in maps* nonetheless reveals the ability of architects, such as John Nash and Charles Barry, and master builders, such as Thomas Cubitt and James Burton, to transform the appearance of the city. Reflecting on matters of challenge to London society, the section on 'The Victorian metropolis' efficiently elicits the intermittent sense of crisis amongst the city's numerous public authorities in their improvement endeavours. The extent of the challenge reflects in part the fact that the city was never subject in previous times to a comprehensive plan (p. 115), notwithstanding Wren's proposed, but not implemented, city scheme following the Great Fire. Consideration is given to a variety of factors affecting nineteenth-century London's social and urban form. These included trains as a mediator of slum clearing due to 'rail land hunger', suburbanization associated with Acts to reduce fares for the labouring population (pp. 132-3), aesthetic fashions (pp. 138-44), the creation of cemeteries (pp. 144-7), the arranging of parks (pp. 148-9), the design of prisons (pp. 150-1), and the laying out of new roads like the Thames Embankment (p. 153), which were high-water marks of the metropolis's growing aspirations, self-confidence, and efforts to present itself as a worthy centre of nation and empire.

In the final section, 'The shock of the new', the twentieth-century's physical and social attacks on the city are spelled out. In addition to detailing the unrelenting suburban expansion of London, Whitfield describes the redevelopment of the urban core, for example after 1945 when architectural modernism and regional planning were embraced as part of the city's redefining of its image (p. 177). Highlighting many subjects previously examined, like architectural fashions, expositions, transportation, dockland expansion and objections to planning orthodoxies, this concluding section also clarifies the injurious role of the London County Council, British urban planners and German bombs, for as Whitfield makes clear the assault on London came from both endogenous and exogenous sources.

*London: a life in maps* is an interesting and important contribution to a hitherto somewhat neglected subject: the biography of urban transformation in cartographic form. Though not written specifically for urban morphologists, for no mention is made of prominent proponents, theories and methodologies, the book nonetheless successfully bridges the genres of morphological survey, urban history and mapping. It underlies the Conzenian observation of the value of town plans to historians. With its rich illustrations and insights

into the diversity of life and spatial transformation of London in the past 450 or so years, Whitfield should be praised for an erudite contribution – an exposé of the value of maps as historical documents, as sources of information, and as a means to investigate urban form. Although extremely fragmented owing to its many subsections, most of which are just two pages in length (including diagrams), and lacking in concluding comments to each of the four principal sections, *London: a life in maps* nevertheless provides a superb introduction to the notion of spatial continuity and change, and the abundance of factors that affect aesthetic and morphological expressions in a place, in this instance London. For scholars wishing to enlighten students about such matters, to shed light on the structure of cities and processes of intra-urban evolution, or to explain how the urban fabric develops its own distinct features within different historical epochs, then this book is an excellent starting point.

*Ian Morley, Department of History, Fung King Hey Building, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin NT, Hong Kong, PR China. E-mail: ianmorley@arts.cuhk.edu.hk*

**The practice of modernism: modern architects and urban transformation, 1954-1972** by *J. R. Gold*, Routledge, London, UK, 2007, 352 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-25843-2

Published in 1997, John Gold's *The experience of modernism* was a major contribution to our understanding of the history of Modern Movement architecture. Focusing on the future visions of modern architects, the book drew on a vast range of primary analysis, including unpublished documentation and personal interviews with architects. *The experience of modernism* sought to capture the feeling of the time, exploring 'the fascination that modernism had for its advocates as well as identifying elements that later represented its pitfalls' (Gold, 1997, p. xi). In doing so, Gold highlighted the complexity and contingency that underpins the 'grand narratives' of modernist history. The book was also a passionate defence of aspects of architectural modernism in the face of powerful narratives of modernist failure.

*The experience of modernism* covered the period from 1928 to 1953. The cut-off point was the