

Fernandes presents three main reasons to justify his emphasis on the town plan and urban cartography. First, the town plan constitutes the summary of a city's history, in which one can follow the various development stages. Secondly, the examination of town plans enables effective comparisons between different spaces. Thirdly, the redrawing of town plans – a method that is used in this research – allows the interpretation of the existing situation, the representation of planning forecasts and the planning results so far achieved, and the identification of the stages of development and the most important decision makers.

In Portugal, the study of urban form has been developing in a fragmented way, mainly due to the existing disciplinary boundaries between geography, architecture, planning and history, and the virtual absence of research centres undertaking effective morphological studies in a systematic way. The fundamental contributions to the debate have been mainly individual, as can be seen in a recently-published synthesis of Portuguese morphological research produced during the last decade (Oliveira and Pinho, 2006). This is also the case with this very welcome book, which is founded on the work of two Portuguese authors, Orlando Ribeiro and Pereira de Oliveira, and clearly influenced by the Conzenian school and studies by Pierre Lavedan.

Three main themes from the current debate in urban morphology are inevitably raised by this book. The first theme, developed by authors such as Slater and Lilley, within a line of research on the origin, form and change of historical towns, is the dialectic between planned and non-planned contributions to the process of urban development. As a human artifact, the city is the result of planning and spontaneity, of regular and irregular forms, of systematic reflection and improvisation, and of detailed regulations and general guidance. What is particularly interesting in the work of Fernandes is that he demonstrates how these apparently opposed poles are in fact two elements of a continuum. The second theme, developed by authors such as Arntz and Larkham, is the impact of legislation on urban form. The exploration of this line of research led Fernandes to find clear links between a law decree published on 31 December 1864 – traditionally little-regarded by other Portuguese authors – and the main urban transformations in the selected cities during the period under analysis. The third theme is the local appropriation of international models. Fernandes carefully assesses the interpretation of a number of European planning models, highlighting the

specificities and the pragmatism of each particular interpretation, and the delay in their effective implementation in these six cities.

This is a thoroughly-researched book. The text is copiously referenced (1076 footnotes), profusely illustrated (140 original and redrawn maps), and grounded in complementary texts and tables (fourteen appendices). It is a major contribution to understanding the process of urban development in the north of Portugal during the last decades of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth century. It is hoped that an English translation of this book will become available in the near future.

## References

- Fernandes, M. (1995) *Viana do Castelo, a consolidação de uma cidade 1855-1926* (Edições Colibri, Lisboa).  
 Oliveira, V. and Pinho, P. (2006) 'Study of urban form in Portugal: a comparative analysis of the cities of Lisbon and Oporto', *Urban Design International* 11, 187-201.

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**The English semi-detached house** by Finn Jensen, Ovolo, Huntingdon, UK, 2007, 255 pp. ISBN 978-0-9548674-3-0.

This title is inviting to all those with an interest in the development and form of English suburbia. Jensen, a Dane, has published the result of his research at Liverpool John Moores University as an attractive and readable book that manages to combine something of the outsider's thoughtful overview – as of his fellow Dane Steen Eiler Rasmussen's book on London – with a thorough exploration of one specific house type, as Muthesius (1982) did for the terrace.

Although based on academic research, this book is not written primarily for an academic audience; nor is the publisher familiar to academics. Instead this is a worthy attempt to find a much broader public readership from a publisher better known for 'how to' titles often published in association with *Homebuilding and Renovating Magazine*. This has, perhaps, facilitated the use of a large number of

colour illustrations; it has also meant that referencing is rather less than an academic reader might expect, and its style sometimes awkward; and that some issues are explained rather more sketchily than one familiar with the outpouring of work on British suburbia might expect. However, this means that the book is in general appropriately focused on its main target readership.

This more populist approach is evident in the book's subtitle: 'how and why the semi became Britain's most popular house type'. Despite the range of information provided, this does not seem to be fully answered, and perhaps a more traditional concluding chapter could have done so more clearly.

There are 12 main chapters, following a standard chronology from the first. 'From the Restoration to the end of the Georgian era' to the final two, dealing with the period from 1990 to 2005. In fact this chronological breadth is very welcome, since most work focuses on a much shorter period; it is helpful to see the earlier emergence of suburbia and something of the most recent responses to the UK government's responses to 'sustainable development' and its pressure for higher densities within existing built-up areas. He gives some interesting examples of recent estate layouts incorporating a mixture of house types including semi-detached and detached, together with floor-plans and photographs of some more unusual houses that depart from familiar conceptions based on the ubiquitous inter-war 'universal plan'. Nevertheless, there are some even earlier examples of the semi-detached form than Jensen recognises (Coventry has an early timber-framed pair, for example).

The typo-morphologist will find little reference to the detailed work in the Italian tradition. Questions of the early origins of this peculiar dwelling form are hardly explored save for the useful reminder in chapter 2 that his earliest examples were rural. Nor is there reference to the 'micro-morphology' of English suburbia as detailed in the work of Whitehand, Carr and others over the past decade and more. In fact, readers already having such a familiarity with suburban form might even query Jensen's definition that 'each semi-detached house has the advantage of giving access from the front to the back of the house without having to pass through the house itself' (p. 10) – true in many cases but not all; and especially given more recent trends towards side extensions leading to the phenomenon of 'terracing'.

Despite the promise of the wide chronological sweep, Jensen does focus much of the book on the inter-war period (3 chapters). In these he

demonstrates great interest in the Tudor revival style, and develops a classification of external house form and applications of 'Tudorbethan' style.

But his focus on the semi perhaps misrepresents the variety seen even in some of the larger inter-war estates such as Edgware, where there are numerous detached houses interspersed amongst the semis. Other styles including Art Deco and moderne are also explored, and in the latter he comes closest to engaging with morphological concerns about agency: who designed and built these houses and estates? His examples of moderne estates were developed by companies (Crittall, Bata) and he begins to explore relationships between architect and both builders and the local authorities.

Inevitably, it could be suggested that this could have been dealt with in much greater detail; but Jensen's focus is on a broad country-wide overview, not the street or estate scale, nor the company scale necessary to uncover more detailed information. At the overview scale, perhaps more exploration of regional variations would be useful. Nevertheless, accepting this designed limitation, this is a fluent, interesting and informative book. While it does not have the academic rigour and richness of Muthesius's study of the terraced house, it would certainly provide a useful introduction to the semi as a major component of English suburbia.

#### Reference

Muthesius, S. (1982) *The English terraced house* (Yale University Press, New Haven).

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**The American suburb: the basics** by Jon C. Teaford, Routledge Publishing, New York, USA, 2008, 271 pp. ISBN 13-978-0-415-95165-4 (pb), ISBN 13-978-0-415-95164-7 (hb).

In 2007-2008, there have been at least 18 books published on the topic of suburbs and suburbanization: thus new books on this topic might have a relatively high standard to meet or exceed. Yet author Jon C. Teaford, Professor Emeritus of History from Purdue University, has