

the city. The city acted as an important economic node in the region and had a strategic location along a prominent north-south roadway within the west of Iran. It was destroyed and then renovated numerous times before the Qajar dynasty (1794-1925). In the last part of the chapter, which mainly deals with the history of modernization, the shift from organic patterns of urban development to the explicit use of modern planning principles is spelled out, giving particular attention to the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1941) when attempts were made to provide Iran's rapidly-growing urban population with a better quality of life. A dramatic reduction in the growth of traditional parts of Zangan and an acceleration in the growth of newer parts of the city are described. Several factors are considered by the authors as having affected early-twentieth century Zangan's socio-spatial changes. These include the introduction of cheap rail fares for the transport of goods from Tehran to Turkey, the development of a regional train system to allow for the fast movement of passengers between the major cities in Zangan Province, and a land reform strategy, known as the 'Shah's white revolution', which accelerated population migration and helped change the pattern of urban development from a compact and labyrinth-like urban form to one of greater urban sprawl and informal development. Within this important chapter the authors provide an account of the policies of authorities in Iran and the challenge of urban development that they faced as they endeavoured to modernize the nation. They argue that the preparation of a master plan for Zangan was a pragmatic means to solve the city's many problems, such as the degradation of the socio-spatial character of the traditional city, and to simultaneously embrace the international modernism movement. The master plan of the city contrasted markedly with that of the traditional city and is interpreted as granting a foundation for further planned urban development following the Islamic Revolution and the end of the Eight Years War between Iran and Iraq in the second half of the twentieth century.

The modern transformation of Zangan, which imposed a new spatial structure upon an historic city, not only redefined the appearance and plan of the place but is shown to have also influenced the socio-spatial nature of Zangan's bazaar, the traditional hub of Iranian cities. Now the bazaar was no longer defined by its former 'hedonistic function' (Alemi, 1991), but rather it became an urban space lined with commercial activities and other functions borrowed from Western countries. In socio-spatial terms this development led not only

to the decline of the traditional bazaar, which subsequently only maintained a social function for those of low income, but ultimately the advent of modern planning: the traditional form and life of Zangan was displaced, reflecting the attitudes of the authorities to implementing modes of urban design derived from contemporary concepts of urban planning.

The chapters following the central analytical section of the book deal with some general themes specific to urban development plans in Zangan (for example, matters of socio-economics, housing characteristics, and different urban development scenarios) but little is provided on the complexity of spatial, social and political interactions, and their effects on the shape of the local urban environment. Nonetheless, the authors reveal the great potential for urban morphological exploration of Iranian cities and their social structures, in particular for analyzing and understanding their environmental histories and appraising the interventionist policies of modern political elites. Those wishing to learn more about changing patterns of urban development, especially concerning the application of modern strategic plans to old settlements, will find that *From Zangan to Zangan* is an important guide book.

Reference

Alemi, M. (1991) 'Urban spaces as the scene for the ceremonies and pastimes of the Safavid Court', *Journal of the Islamic Environmental Design Research Centre* 1, 98-107.

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Cities in modernity: representations and productions of metropolitan space, 1840-1930 by *Richard Dennis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England, 2008, 452 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-46841-1.

Studies in historical geography have made a major contribution to the expansion of urban historiography during the past few decades. As H. J. Dyos, the founder of British urban history

recognized, the value of historical geography predominantly lies in its attention to exploring and explaining the shape and structure of urban space which, reasoned Dyos as long ago as the 1960s, aided scholars fascinated by the urban past to better grasp the multiplicity of factors that operate within, and influence the character of, urban places. Such has been the impact of historical geography's approaches and methodologies upon urban historical studies, at least in Britain, that it nowadays forms the backbone of urban historical writing. Accordingly, social scientific approaches, concepts and methodologies comfortably sit alongside staple perspectives from social and economic history in the analytical armoury of the present-day urban historian interested in the evolution of communities.

Arising from the materialization of such a scholarly landscape are scholars who have collectively not only removed former historiographical barriers, such as localism and antiquarianism, but more to the point brought a comprehensive rethinking of the standpoint of urban historical studies in relation to the meaning and development of communities. With work ranging from the social composition of communities in the past to the design and evolution of urban forms during particular eras, scholars such as Richard Dennis have to all intents and purposes brought a rethinking of how to carry out historical analysis and how to appraise a variety of urban-based phenomena, including the structure of urban space. In the case of Dennis's latest work, *Cities in modernity*, a construal of how urban space is manufactured is put forward; one that is offered within the chronological context of modernity's manifestation. Leaning upon a wide range of primary sources and utilizing an array of outlooks and concepts in order to explicate how urban spaces are both produced and represented, Dennis provides an engaging and thought-provoking narrative that will be of interest to those absorbed by cultural advancement, spatial construction and urban transformation, notwithstanding whether or not they define themselves as historians.

Cities in modernity consists of twelve chapters which span such subjects as ideas of progress, surveying cities, improving streets, suburban growth, shopping and office geographies, and the picturing of urban place. Focusing geographically upon 'modern cities' in Britain and North America between 1840 and 1930, particular consideration is given to London, New York and Toronto, albeit with occasional references to large metropolises like Chicago, Montreal and Paris, so that notions of

what constitute the modern self and the formation of urban space within environments may be elucidated. In light of such an investigative angle, Dennis not only emphasizes, for instance, the planning, construction and use of types of urban spaces within urban cores and peripheries, or depictions of environments and the people who use them, but he also conceptualizes urban space as an artefact resulting from political, economic, social and cultural courses of action and which through its structures, he argues, provides both opportunities and constraints for the further evolution of those aforesaid processes.

In many regards *Cities in modernity* is not only an interpretation of urban transformation and the fashioning of urban space under the lights of modernity but is also an exploration of social strains borne from, and associated with, the construction and imagery of urban space. The fragmentation of public and private domains receives much attention, as do methods to counteract problems of social division, with one notable example coming in the economic and cultural explanation of department store design in Toronto in the early 1900s (pp. 304-8) which, Dennis contends, was aimed at encouraging consumerism through gender and class interaction. Similarly, he asserts that bridges should be seen as mechanisms to establish the assimilation of people within cities (pp. 10-20) due to their capacity to allow persons based on different banks of a waterway to more easily interact. They also, in some instances, act as metropolitan icons which fuse together metropolitan dwellers irrespective of class, race, age or gender. The Brooklyn Bridge is cited as a structure that literally pulled New Yorkers together. London's Tower Bridge, in spite of vociferous disparagement from within the architectural community given its seemingly archaic design form, came to act as an emblem for the national and imperial capital city.

Despite not necessarily being inspired by the works and ideas of those working within the genre of urban morphology, *Cities in modernity* nonetheless leans upon concepts embedded in studies of urban form and has much to offer readers interested in the cultural manufacture of urban space. Expertly researched and drawing on a variety of source materials, there is much for scholars of urban and cultural studies, geography, and history to take from this book. Dennis should be congratulated for composing a clear and lively account of spatial production, consumption and improvement. He exemplifies the contention, observed decades earlier by Dyos, of the value of

spatial analysis in appreciating the urban historical past.

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Il paesaggio delle differenze: architettura, città e territorio nella nuova era globale by Marco Maretto, Edizioni ETS, Pisa, Italy, 2008, 191 pp. ISBN 978-884672035-1.

Dans le développement d'une discipline, il est des moments où une synthèse, fût-elle en apparence prématurée, rend plus de services que beaucoup de travaux d'analyse (Bloch, 1931, p. 11).

This quotation indicates the kind of endeavour Marco Maretto has undertaken in this book. He has synthesized much of the material produced in his years of study, tuition, and design practice.

Son of the renowned architect Paolo Maretto, and himself an architect, Maretto has an interesting background. He has designed fine, contemporary structures based on the formative process of developing architectural types, has held courses in architectural design in the faculties of Rome and Parma, conducted research on built landscapes in different parts of Italy, and is very well travelled around the world. He is also well versed in recording the character of places; collecting together evidence on a diversity of types of sites, architecture, and people. The resulting study, *Il paesaggio delle differenze: architettura, città e territorio nella nuova era globale*, has a sound structure and deals with problems of analysing territorial form in an era when territorial structure seems lost, fragmented, and dispersed, owing to the effects of globalization.

The main goal is ambitious: the investigation of one of the most conspicuous problems (perhaps *the* problem) of built landscape reading – the knowledge of identity, its dialectical relation to the notion of difference, and its formation process. In other words, the thesis provided by Maretto is not only concerned with the problem of diversity in the physical description of different territories, but with trying to create a sort of metaphysics of that diversity; a theory in which every fact finds its place in a general speculative framework. The theme is thus a very wide one, involving different

aspects: philosophical, anthropological and architectural.

Edmund Husserl once explained the origin of phenomenology as being two phases of knowledge: the *empirical* intuition which considers the individual objects, and the *categorical*, which places any peculiar object in a universal context and in so doing giving common meaning. Maretto seems to employ the same concept in investigating diversity in built landscapes at different scales, starting with distinguishing the empirical knowledge of 'matter' from the categorical notion of 'material', which thereby allows for the collection of materials and their subsequent placing in categories distinguishable by their character and purpose. In a similar way the natural soil is transformed into a territory by the practical awareness of people. This is achieved first through the use of material, and secondly by knowledge of its individuality. Though these are topics well explored by researchers of the Muratorian School, Maretto places them in a contemporary context, thereby giving them fresh meaning.

The current Italian debate about the future of architecture is dominated by two opposing ideas. One is the transforming of the built landscape into 'spectacle', accepting the disintegration of territorial form as unavoidable and producing self-seeking objects unable to shape an urban frame. The other is the rise of so-called 'archistars': famous architects who impose, as in the visual arts or advertising, objects they invent through the iconic power of their images – objects noted by critics as being 'luxury architecture' because they are wasteful of resources. The recent success of the book *Contro l'architettura (Against architecture)* by La Cecla is a symptom of the broad interest in this second perspective, even if no real solution to the problem seems to be proposed at the moment. However, change is occurring associated with the crisis in the international stock market, the collapse of a number of major banks, and the first global trading recession since 1982. These changes have drawn attention to the need for the wiser employment of the planet's resources, and hence created a new climate for the work of architects. Now even the myth of virtuality, which has so fascinated the recent generation of architects, seems to be quickly decaying.

To understand the usefulness of Maretto's work, we must consider its place in this quickly shifting context: it is a small but precious indicator of how the present architectural generation is rethinking the role of contemporary design, reconsidering such long abandoned, powerful ideas as continuity in the