

built landscape, and showing awareness of processes that form territorial organisms.

Following the main stream of the research conducted by Saverio Muratori, Gianfranco Caniggia and his father Paolo Maretto, and updated by a small group of Italian architects, Maretto suggests an almost forgotten way forward. This concerns the identity of reading and designing, and the recognition of the actual landscape as the consequence of historical processes still operating in a crisis of transformation. The originality of Maretto's proposal emanates from the starting point of his thinking: not 'identity', the sum of common characters distinguishing groups and classes, but its dialectical opposite and complementary notion of 'differences'. This notion seems to correspond to the postmodern condition of plurality of forms and languages, investigated by F. Lyotard. This allows a partial updating of the idea of 'continuity', which in Muratorian theories is based on historical and territorial homogeneity (the concepts of *fase storica* and *area culturale*). The tradition, itself a central topic in studies of the permanence of built landscape forms, could be regarded as a transmission of differences. The book first takes into account the origin of dwellings and then, in the following chapter, analyses the territorial organism. Avoiding the Muratorian School's consuetude of investigating in succession the four traditional scales – building, tissue, urban organism, territorial organism – Maretto emphasizes the forming of domestic space as the deepest possible relationship between a civilization and its environmental context. In this way the urban organism is explained as an individual interpretation of a common territorial language whose character is shown by its urban tissue and its monuments.

This is a timely book. Among its many qualities is the flowing style of writing which allows for easy reading even if readers are unaware of Muratorian theories. Among the very few possible weaknesses is the bibliography, which mostly reports the texts quoted: it is less 'dedicated' than one would expect in a work of this standard.

Reference

Bloch, M. (1931) *Les caractères originaux de l'histoire rurale française* (Belles-Lettres, Paris).

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To scale: one hundred urban plans by Eric J. Jenkins, Routledge, New York, USA, 2008, 225 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-95401-3 (pbk), ISBN 978-0-415-95400-6 (hbk).

As a teacher, researcher or practitioner – or just someone who is interested in urban form – we often try to understand a place by comparing it to somewhere else that we know. To make sense, and to be of any use, such comparisons need some consistency and commonality.

To scale allows a quick, easy and direct comparison between places. It consists largely of 100 figure-ground plans, each covering a 500 x 500 m sample area of the centre of 78 cities worldwide. The page size (250 x 250 mm) is larger than standard to facilitate these reproductions. This is its novelty and major contribution for urban morphological study and teaching. The fact that the figure-ground plans are all drawn to the same scale is one essential asset, and the main point of the book; but the supporting text prompts the reader to think about what can be learnt from the representation of these spaces. It is therefore a resource for all environmental professionals interested in patterns of space and place – and it will be invaluable for students.

The figure-ground plans allow striking comparisons and contrasts; no more so, for example, than where various street and space patterns in Paris (nos 63-67) are viewed before Le Corbusier's intended *Plan Voisin* (no. 68). In the less familiar actual townscapes, the images make the reader contemplate the relationship between built forms and the spaces that are created in between, the significance of scale and the symbiotic relationship between the two. Moreover, these raise questions of how large, in terms of height, mass and volume, the buildings represented by the black shading should be in order to successfully and comfortably enclose and contain the white spaces, and what activities both building and void could accommodate. As well as a brief commentary, most plans have accompanying black and white photographs and line drawings to help with the visualization and understanding of the places.

This book can, and should, help all those interested in the built environment to enquire further about the interrelationship between space and built form, how certain conditions allow spaces to become inhabited and used – which, in turn, transforms them from spaces into places – and therefore recognize how important such graphic representations can be.

It is, essentially, a very simple idea – to collect plans from different cities from around the world, arrange them alphabetically, from Amsterdam to Washington DC, and redraw them at the same scale (in this case 1:250), ‘north up’, using a consistent graphic technique. Delving a little deeper, it becomes clear that what appears simple is often more complicated to realize.

The original sources of plans are wide and varied. What are now accepted conventions, such as ‘north up’, were less so in the past. Attempting to assimilate into a common format drawings from different parts of the world, at a range of different scales and produced using a variety of drawing styles will, inevitably, produce inconsistencies. It is explained that the methodology for compilation has been rigorous, seeking ‘authoritative’ primary sources in order to increase the likelihood of accuracy.

The drawing type is based upon what is referred to as ‘modified Nollis’ plans (p. 3); that is, plans that delineate areas that are generally open to the public or are considered to be part of the ‘urban experience’. The horizontal cut is generally at 1 metre above ground level. This exposes one of the problems with figure-ground analyses, in that everything is shown as if it were on a flat plane – but these subtleties of representation are useful for students to appreciate and learn, and for the rest of us to be reminded of from time to time.

The author admits that familiarity has played a part in the selection of the places depicted. Spaces have been chosen that a range of people may have visited, although one would have to be fairly well-travelled for this to be the case. At least many may be aware of these places through their studies and education.

The spaces chosen are unambiguous – primarily secular, public, open air, and set in a dense urban context so that the void is clearly defined and contained. They are recognizable ‘outdoor rooms’ within the city, more usually a product of cultures that have greater traditions of social, open space. Other societies may identify gathering spaces based on temporal rather than spatial perimeters, and are

therefore less likely to design or draw such spaces – and so will not be represented here.

This demonstrates that the concept of public space varies from country to country, indeed from region to region, but that this, in itself, is a strength of understanding. Ultimately, physical availability and governmental bureaucracy have played their part in selection. Many countries remain unwilling to allow the United States government access to official, national plans.

The book weighs the advantages against the disadvantages of figure-ground drawing as a method of graphic analysis, concluding that ‘all representations reveal bias. There is no such thing as an objective, accurate and unbiased drawing’ (p. 4). This in no way, though, diminishes the worth and enjoyment that can be derived from it.

It may have been just bad luck, but one concern would be the physical robustness of the publication in that, during the process of reviewing a paperback version, the binding began to fall apart. For an image-based book, which is well suited to being thumbed through and consulted time and again, scanning back and forth for comparison and contrast, a fear is that it could degenerate into a loose-leaf format in no time at all – which could aid the process of comparative analysis, of course!

Nonetheless, this book is an attractive study aid, and feeds a desire to find out more about the places and spaces that are represented. To a practitioner, it may be of less obvious use – but no less interesting – and will surely encourage thought about the places within local areas of responsibility. As the author apparently suggests to his students, the next, almost irresistible, step is to draw up a known place, using the same graphic conventions. No doubt these simple techniques will help when describing, understanding and comparing examples closer to home.

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Journal of Urbanism

Recent issues of the *Journal of Urbanism* contain research papers and ‘viewpoints’ of interest to urban morphologists. In 2009, Volume 2, Number 1 contains ‘Generators of urbanity – a new paradigm for urban street design’ (Rofe, Y.Y.) and ‘Towards

modern urban housing: redefining Shanghai’s *lilong*’ (Arkaraprasertkul, N.) and Volume 2, Number 2 contains ‘Different approaches in the study of urban form’ (Pinho, P. and Oliveira, V.) and ‘Retrofitting suburban morphology’ (Williamson, J.).
