

tries to answer is to what extent expositions provide opportunities for urban innovation and for the application of urban development strategies directed towards catalysing different planning strategies and projects.

The first generation of expositions, from the mid-nineteenth century until 1930, which the author refers to as 'classical', began with architectural landmarks: towers, palaces and halls. These were emblematic monuments to technology and to the glory of the nation in question. From the end of the nineteenth century, feats of engineering tended to be less prominent than architecture: this was a time when movements that sought to make cities more beautiful began to make their mark.

The character of expositions changed after 1930. The modern age heralded a greater interest in the structuring and designing of their sites. After the Second World War, notable changes were evident in both general objectives and how events were used for the purpose of urban development. There was the growth of 'edutainment' (that is, education plus entertainment) expositions, which created spaces designed for entertainment and leisure. But at the urban scale, post-war expositions followed more pragmatic urban strategies and attempted to encourage changes in infrastructure that cities had already planned.

In events held during the last 20 or so years the urban development and planning strategies that have been promoted are suggested by Monclús to have been more interesting than the designs of the exhibition sites themselves. They reflect to a larger degree the logic of promoting and marketing the city, at the same time as carrying out urban development projects. In these new conditions for urban development expositions have been utilized, Monclús argues, as strategic instruments for urban development and planning.

Significantly, the successful longer-term impact of an exposition is shown to depend on its ability to integrate with the city and its broader goals. A good example of this is provided by a detailed case study of the Expo Zaragoza 2008 project, which is presented in the last part of the book. This project focused on integrating public spaces into the natural environment. This permitted the regeneration of the banks of the River Ebro and particularly the strategic Ranillas Meander site. The Ranillas Meander, which lies upstream from the city, was originally agricultural land but is now only 2-3 km west of the city centre and 1 km from the new high-speed railway station. It had already been proposed as an area for development in the Ebro Riverbank Regeneration Scheme of 2001. The Expo Zaragoza

2008 project was therefore the culmination of two urban development projects that complemented each other perfectly.

The ephemeral and synthetic experiences that expositions offer their visitors contrast with the spatial footprints that they have tended to leave and this is a theme that the author highlights. Since their first appearance, temporary expositions, such as the World Fairs, have sought to capture the heterogeneity of the world within a bounded enclosure. Today's expositions, in contrast, are shown to play with the ambivalence of this enclosed space. There is an interesting dialectic between what is temporary and what is permanent.

Through the study of expositions, Monclús explains how certain large-scale urban development projects can become urban catalysts and help define the character of cities. Expositions are therefore strategic instruments capable of not only promoting greater integration amongst existing urban and architectural elements but also fostering future urban development projects.

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Turning a town around: a proactive approach to urban design by *Tony Hall*, Blackwell, Oxford, UK, 2007, 187 pp. ISBN 978-1-4051-7023-9.

Tony Hall, now an Adjunct Professor in the Urban Research Program at Griffiths University in Brisbane, Australia, was for several years the main advocate of good urban design in Chelmsford, UK. He championed the adoption of sustainable development practices both as Professor of Town Planning at Anglia Ruskin University and, more importantly, as a member of the Chelmsford Borough Council. Between 1996 and 2003, he worked with fellow elected officials and professional planners to raise standards of good design and to facilitate the renaissance of the city centre. He has written a clear, well-organized, well-illustrated and stimulating account of Chelmsford's experience during his years of service as a council member. To echo the titles of other works that describe successful planning efforts (for example, Punter, 2004; Purdom, 1963), he could well have entitled his book *The Chelmsford*

achievement.

The book is divided into two parts. In the first, Hall describes the 'proactive approach' that Chelmsford adopted in order to improve the cityscape. The emergence of political leadership, the creation of a qualified urban-design team, the development of a vision, the adoption of policy documents and regulations, the enunciation of objectives and criteria and their application in negotiations with developers are explained in the first 80 pages of the book. In the next 90 pages, Hall documents the changes that better urban design brought about in mixed-use developments in central areas and in residential developments in all parts of the town. He uses a variety of projects, both private and public, large and small, to illustrate the successful collaboration of developers and planners and its outcomes.

By the early 1990s, Hall tells us, Chelmsford 'was not especially favoured in terms of its built heritage or administrative record' (p. 1) – hence what the city achieved should not be out of reach for other cities. By the early 2000s, all new projects met stringent criteria for urban integration, residential quality and architectural design. They helped to increase the intensity of land use, the sustainability of development, and the aesthetics of the public realm. Although Hall does not say so explicitly, what he describes is, in effect, a collective learning process involving officials, developers, planners and the public.

Change of such depth and scope as Hall presents can only be explained by a variety of factors. Chief among them is sustained political leadership, in large part by Hall himself, which made good urban design a requirement rather than a wish. The obligation to achieve quality was written into plans for large areas (strategies and master plans) and for specific sites (frameworks and briefs) by a team of professional urban designers. It was soon internalized by developers, who increasingly took to hiring highly qualified architects. For Hall, the lesson is clear: 'strong planning intervention' by means of 'detailed, . . . purposeful . . . [and] explicit controls' is needed to give 'clear guidance' to developers (pp. 175–6). This guidance must span the whole development process, from 'pre-application negotiation' to 'post-permission . . . monitoring' (p. 176). All this is possible only if elected officials provide strong political support to professionals and make themselves the champions of good design. Adopting a 'proactive attitude to urban design', Hall concludes, means 'having vision, making [the] implications of this vision very clear in advance to all parties and providing the

expertise to carry it [through]' (p. 177). The square brackets in the quotation above show places where mistakes occur in this key sentence of the conclusion.

Another round of editing of the text would have removed such errors and would have perhaps helped to improve some awkward sentences elsewhere. It would have been good as well to include a general map of Chelmsford, to give the reader a better sense of the place and to identify the location of specific areas, sites and buildings which are discussed in the text.

Although Hall presents detailed explanations and numerous illustrations of plans and guidelines, he does not show clearly the extent to which morphological analysis was used in their preparation. Like any good urban designer, he notes the importance of analysing existing urban and architectural forms, but the prescriptions he presents for new development – for example, 'continuous frontage, building on, or near the footway, modest front-to-front distances, shallow-plan dwellings, good size and shape for the back gardens' (p. 48) – are fairly general and do not seem to result from a desire to reproduce local patterns and types. When Hall talks about relating the present to the past, it is mostly to tell us that the poor quality of the inherited urban landscape pushed the planners to recommend departures from established norms rather than adherence to them.

In his conclusion, Hall notes that being proactive on urban design means, among other things, 'knowing what its citizens want and need' (p. 177). However, there is very little indication of the way in which officials and planners got to know citizens' expectations. Public consultation is mentioned only twice, and only once does the reader get any information about the involvement of ordinary citizens in creating a collective vision. The story, as told by Hall, is one of officials and professionals – planners, developers, architects – working together to make their city a better place. The reader is left to surmise that the population supported the council's policy because it yielded positive results.

Even though his narrative is focused on the work of officials and officers, among whom he was prominent, Hall writes with modesty: he does not use the first person, refers to himself only indirectly as one actor among many, and admits freely that 'both good fortune and design' (p. 134) were necessary to enable Chelmsford to change for the better. He acknowledges the fact that local planners found much inspiration in national and regional planning policies and design guides, and

he recognizes that their merit lies primarily in using existing opportunities well.

But Hall also writes with assurance. His intimate knowledge of both the political/procedural and of the substantive issues comes through in his account of the city's experience and in his description of specific plans and projects. Although the lessons he presents are not very original, they are based on solid evidence and sound analysis. Hall is right that senior planners who have achieved success in their career must write about it 'so that others may benefit from it' (p. vi). Best-practice books such as his are useful to younger professionals in giving them a sense of what it is possible to achieve and an understanding of how to achieve it. Hall must be thanked for telling us his story, and for telling it well.

References

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Urban paleontology: evolution of urban forms by Ming Tang and Dihua Yang, Universal Publishers, Boca Raton, Florida, USA, 2008, 233 pp. ISBN 978-1599429496.

Analogical reasoning is a prominent tool for effectively familiarizing the unfamiliar. Organic analogy based on biological references to the wholeness of an organism has been a powerful design conception in art and architecture (Steadman, 2008). This approach is reflected, for example, in normative and analytical urban theory, with the organic metaphor of the city as a vibrant, growing and regenerating entity (Marshall, 2009). Within this framework *Urban paleontology* provides an addition with regard to evolutionary emergent urbanism.

As a research domain, transformation of urban form viewed as a developmental or evolutionary process – morphogenesis – is far from being a new branch of scholarly thinking. However, Tang and Yang propose a further perspective incorporating a

series of concepts borrowed from palaeontology. In their conceptual framework, each emerging pattern is explored on the basis of its previous condition. The method of analysis is based on decomposing the whole fabric of districts. The conceptual link between palaeontology and urban morphology is concisely provided in the first chapter. Homologous and analogous structures, 'urban fossil', 'urban plasm' and 'urban stratum', are presented as the key concepts in the subsequent relational framework.

In the following two chapters palaeontological concepts are exemplified by case studies, termed 'urban excavations', in Beijing, China and Savannah, USA. The basic unit of analysis in 'excavations' is the street with layer-based illustrations of pattern transformation allowing for the identification of 'urban species', that is typological elements of the urban fabric. 'Species' are types of street structure and buildings: their solidness, location, integration, and evolutionary characteristics. Whilst demonstrating the nature of 'species', their adaptations in relation to external factors ('magnetic fields') are also depicted. In this way, relating physical development and transformation processes to the socio-cultural and political aspects enriches the morphological analysis.

In the last chapter of the book, the authors define their overarching conceptual schema – the 'urban evolutionary tree'. Within the definition of the family-tree the primary argument is that different urban patterns are rooted in the same ancestor. In terms of another concept – 'interrelated reproduction' – the authors suggest that the formation of street patterns is the product of the iteration of the same genetic codes by different individuals. But, as the authors point out, development of the method in a more comprehensive way is reliant upon integrating case studies in the future. Only then can a general theory of morphological urban elements be developed.

The major weakness of the book is the lack of sufficiently detailed explanations. The lack of textual elaboration is especially evident when linkages are made between the key concepts of palaeontology and urban form. In addition, a clear definition of the selection criteria of the scale levels for determination of the sites and urban species is required.

Reflecting the professional standpoint of the authors, the book does not end with grand analytical statements. The main motivation of the authors is to present a new working basis for