

German, which limits the potential readership. However, similar to the growing necessity of considering multidisciplinary and transcultural approaches, linguistic diversity might stimulate the desire for reading texts in their original language, to avoid the increasing superficiality in some of our scientific discourses. In any case, the anthology invites its readers to discover or rediscover intriguing contributions, including some that they most surely will not yet have come across.

But why is such an anthology of interest to the urban morphologist? Within our own interdisciplinary positioning today, 'space' unfortunately plays a secondary role relative to the manifold other approaches. In this regard, urban morphology, similarly to today's architecture and urbanism, is often trapped in quantitative and procedural matters. So, ultimately the great value of the anthology lies with the dissemination of spatial thoughts, which are essential not only to the fields of architecture and urbanism, but to everyone dealing with the understanding and investigation of the quality of built forms.

Karsten Ley, School of Architecture at the Faculty of Building Sciences, Buxtehude University of Applied Sciences, Germany. Email: ley@hs21.de

Rome: urban formation and transformation, by *Jon Michael Schwarting*, Applied Research + Design, Novato, CA, USA, 2017, 211 pp. ISBN 978-193-9621-70-2.

This book was inspired by the Cornell Contextualist School of Thought led by Colin Rowe at the Cornell University School of Architecture. The theory of urban 'contextualism' is critical of modernist urban designs, which are seen as disruptive for their break with the traditional city. Contextualism argues in favour of the harmonization of contemporary urban and architectural design with earlier urban forms. This study originated in research in Rome undertaken at the American Academy in Rome in 1968–70 and was further elaborated through the teaching of a summer history and theory course from 1975 to 1982, in which students from Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture conducted research and produced part of the documentation that is presented in this volume.

The research looks back at history through the prism of the discourse between tradition/stasis and progress/change, arguing that to achieve progress it is fundamental for architects to look back and understand tradition. Accordingly, any type of architectural research should necessarily proceed with a historical analysis of both formal solutions and social programmes. Progressive approaches will transform them to resolve contemporary problems bringing about change, while conservatives will seek to reconstruct tradition to maintain past orders. Further, the author considers that any progressive proposition seeking to alter existing paradigms will nonetheless inevitably have to address and confront traditional models to validate its argument.

Another fundamental concept is the dialectical relationship between the ideal/utopian and the 'real,' existing conditions. Whereas idealistic tenets can underlie and inform a specific design solution, the concrete reality imposes itself and dictates the transformation that this idea must undertake to be materialized. The concepts of *ideal* and *real* might appear as polar opposites, or even as contradicting each other. Schwarting, however, argues that they both share a dialectical relationship. On one hand, the *ideal* is transformed and adapted when reified in physical manifestations. On the other hand, the *real* informs empirical observations, and has the potential to influence and impregnate the normative theoretical formulations concerning itself. Thus, these two concepts, rather than existing in opposition, maintain a constant dialogue between the idealized and the pragmatic, induction and deduction, belief and truth.

To illustrate the possible synthesis that evolves from the dialectic relationship between the ideal and the real, that is the conceptual and the contextual, in architecture and planning, the author explores the Italian Renaissance and Baroque periods. These periods mark a revival or rebirth of classical culture, where the humanist study of the classical past awakes free thought and encourages curiosity and speculation, as expressed in 'acts of civic importance'. The medieval craftsman, for whom theory grew out of practice, became an intellectual in the fourteenth century: practice grew out of critical theory. However, limited by the scarcity of resources, these grand ideas essentially remained confined to treatises. For the most part, they only gave way to small scale interventions, focused predominantly on a couple of built types.

The city of Rome provides fertile grounds to explore the dialectical relationship between the

ideal and the real. The city's evolution is reviewed while exploring the relationship between the site's geography and the formation of the ancient city, which has resulted in a mostly irregular city form, lacking discernible order. It is this context that Renaissance and Baroque architects would mostly inherit. However, rather than seeking complete transformation, popes and their architects would endeavour to gradually adapt Rome to the humanist concepts of an ideal city through several small interventions. These have nevertheless created a hierarchy of centres, hence restructuring the city through articulation of the whole and its parts. These nodes were carefully designed spaces, described as 'ideal set-pieces inserted into an existing urban fabric and thereby provide a degree of order by providing a reference, place or local centre for the surrounding area'.

The study of these ideal set-pieces, spaces and buildings designed according to an ideal order adapted to the existing urban fabric, is conducted through 28 case studies. These are presented in a common format, so that they can be easily compared. They include a brief historical synthesis, an analysis of the designs, as well as several photographs, diagrams, plans, elevations, sections and axonometrics. The drawings form a substantive part of the analysis, being used as a critical and interpretative tool, to unveil the underlying ideal order, and to explain its transformation. Produced by different contributors, these drawings occasionally show different graphic representation modes

between case studies. This does not, however, impair the overall legibility of the work.

The study of the city shape and urban design is argued for, not from the standpoint of grand utopian visions of a 'total design', but rather from the unique and more telling vantage point of small-scale distinct one-off projects. From such a series, a collage of mini utopias is revealed, which allowed the transformation of Rome, bringing it closer to the values of the Renaissance and Baroque periods without breaking with its medieval urban fabric. Although focused on the Renaissance and Baroque periods, ultimately the argument seeks to 'provide us with a means to be able to successfully relate the progressive planning goals with the existing context'. This lesson is of particular value in the contemporary world, where radical transformations brought about by Modernist precepts and ambitions have created new projects disconnected from their surrounding traditional urban fabric, with well documented disruptive effects at different scales. The book stands out for the compelling way in which it presents its argument, both by the clarity of its text and by the overall quality, detail, and quantity of iconographic material.

Pedro Vasco de Melo Martins, FORMAURBIS Lab, CIAUD, Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade de Lisboa, Rua Sá Nogueira, Pólo Universitário do Alto da Ajuda, 1349-063 Lisboa, Portugal. Email: pedro.vasco.martins@gmail.com
