

offers a common ground for the various topical explorations.

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The town house in medieval and early modern Bristol by *Roger H. Leech*, English Heritage, Swindon, UK, 2014, 440 pp. ISBN 978-1-84802-053-5.

This is an important work in a number of ways. First, it is an authoritative account of a major English provincial town. Secondly, it reaches much farther afield, looking at links across the Atlantic into the Caribbean and what became the USA. Finally, it raises interesting methodological points. Like virtually all British practitioners in urban archaeology (the author's discipline), urban history and historical geography, Leech is well aware of, and uses, Conzenian analysis. However, in a work concerning typology he never refers to the Italian School, instead working from a number of British predecessors.

He commences by looking at the growth of the city, beginning with the Saxon and medieval town where he relies heavily on Conzenian methods, and then turns to the developers responsible for the early modern expansion. Next, he looks at house types where he distinguishes two types calling them by names found in a late-medieval rental. They were the hallhouse and the shop-house. The former were large premises centred on a typical medieval hall open to the roof. The shop-house was smaller and comprised a ground floor shop with other accommodation restricted to the floors above. These units had often been divided off from the street frontage of a hallhouse. By the last years of the Middle Ages a further type was appearing beyond the walls on the slopes above the Rivers Avon and Frome. This was the garden house or lodge where affluent merchants could retreat from the noise and smells of the city. These were set in gardens often surrounded by high walls and located at the upper end of the slope regardless of the position of the access. They were typically of several storeys giving a view of activity in the harbour below. These, unlike the other two,

were a form particularly associated with Bristol. Another idiosyncrasy of the local property market was the absence of small shops with a miniature hall behind, such as survive on the opposite side of Gloucestershire at Tewkesbury.

Moving on to the early-modern period, the abrupt change from vernacular architecture to classically-derived forms that occurred around 1700 is addressed. This is set in the changing economic and social environment during which there was a rapid expansion beyond the medieval limits. Leech then turns to Bristol and the Atlantic world before ending with a consideration of the relationship between merchant capitalism and the streets of Bristol.

Returning to methodology as an issue of particular interest to readers, Leech bases his classification on an approach pioneered by William Pantin in the 1960s. Pantin (1962–3) looked at larger town houses of the medieval period, that is those with large or open halls, producing a typology based on whether the hall was parallel or at right angles to the street. He saw this as an adaptation of the more prestigious rural forms to the constraints of urban living. Pantin did not consider smaller houses or examine the social and economic contexts. This was addressed by subsequent writers. The more significant (and heavily used by Leech) begin with John Smith (1983) who was concerned with the role of towns in architectural innovation that led him to discuss tall, narrow and often unheated dwellings. Then John Schofield (1995) produced his own classification for London using room numbers as an indicator of economic and social status. Jane Grenville (1997) then set urban housing in its wider context. Finally, Roland Harris (1994) has examined houses with commercial uses on two storeys. This proved very relevant for Bristol, where taverns were usually located in basements.

For the moment, Leech's study can be seen as the culmination of this British approach. It is very pragmatic when compared with the Italian school. There is no quest for archetypes but much interest in practical detail such as carpenters' techniques.

This is a handsome, lavishly illustrated and comprehensive book. Bristol did not suffer a Great Fire and many historic buildings survive at least in part, whilst far more lasted long enough to be recorded by antiquarians, water-colourists and sketchers. More recently, some 50 years of rescue archaeology has added a further dimension. All this material can be related to rich documentary sources, not only the properties' deeds but also the

early modern probate inventories that recorded the contents of a house room-by-room. In this Bristol is lucky, as many of these records for south-west England were destroyed in the blitz. It is a loss that researchers on Bath, Exeter and Wells feel deeply.

This volume is worth reading as a study of Bristol, but Leech's aim is to do more than produce another single town study. He uses his material to illuminate wider social, economic and architectural questions and provides an Atlantic dimension.

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The flexible city: sustainable solutions for a Europe in transition, by Tom Bergevoet and Maarten van Tuijl, nai010, Rotterdam, The Netherlands, 2016, 216 pp. ISBN 978-94-6208-287-8.

Compared to urban areas in other parts of the world, European cities seem to be at a turning point. After a tremendous expansion in the twentieth century, their physical growth has slowed down. This has many different causes. In some cities the trend corresponds to a demographic decline, while other cities are rather constrained in their spatial expansion by administrative borders, or have made a conscious decision to put a halt to urban sprawl. These circumstances create new challenges but also new

opportunities for cities: to remain vibrant and keep their vitality, the existing urban fabric should be made more sustainable. The challenge of sustainable development is an integral one, that involves for instance the creation of jobs, increasing social inclusion and smart urban densification measures. Building upon their published work on Dutch cities, Tom Bergevoet and Maarten van Tuijl widen their analysis at the European scale. *The flexible city* introduces a step-by-step strategic and flexible spatial development model offering sustainable solutions for a 'Europe in transition'. This model is based on an analytical review of projects that are successful within the current context, while anticipating evolving conditions beyond the initial use of the built space. Their work focuses on projects that are user oriented, time based and that account for transformations. This involves considering different speeds of spatial development, such as long-lasting flexible structures that can adjust to different programmes and users' needs at one end of the spectrum, and temporary re-usable structures that can quickly fulfil peak demands at the other end.

At the beginning of their collaboration, Bergevoet and van Tuijl noticed how quickly spatial development changes occurred in Europe as a result of economic, social and environmental influences. Curious about the factors triggering change, and aware of the vast array of differences between cities, they set about studying similarities of evolution in different European villages and cities. Their work revealed three common evolutionary phases: 'the historic city', 'the modern city', and 'the city in transition'. The latter phase marks the end of an era of great urban expansion. Studying the transformation processes in the last phase delivered key findings to address the question of how to make European cities more sustainable, without resorting to spatial expansion. Development in the form of outward expansion is relatively simple. It involves relatively few stakeholders, it is legally simple and clear, it leads to increases in real estate value, and it is characterized by design freedom and a tabula rasa approach. However, the forms produced by this type of development make such urban contexts difficult to change, and hard to make more sustainable. Transformation is complicated, as it involves many stakeholders, it is legally intricate and it calls for design solutions that are customized. Furthermore, the profitability of the operation is uncertain.

In the book's prologue, three cities, Vestervig (Denmark), Utrecht (Netherlands) and Brussels (Belgium), are used as models and compared based