

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

on their potential and ambition to become more sustainable. The outstanding model is offered by Brussels, which is distinguished by its 'flexibility'. A sustainable, flexible city, it is argued, 'is easily reused, adapts to the changing requirements of its inhabitants and is future-proof'. In such a context, new developments 'do not lead to a fixed blueprint, rather they emerge from future-oriented, dynamic flexible planning' (p. 41). Chapter 2 outlines and illustrates a so-called 'stepwise approach' to planning, which is meant as an alternative to the traditional blueprint approach. It emphasizes: 'local flexibility', which fosters adaptation and transformation of existing elements of the context; 'user-driven flexibility', which promotes enhanced collaboration in adapted decision-making 'structures'; and finally, 'time-based flexibility', according to which the development process accounts for changing conditions (for example, economic conditions) and welcomes uncertainty about the future. Chapter 3 introduces 'instruments' for a flexible city. These are classified in four groups pertaining respectively to organizational, legal, financial and spatial aspects of development. Each group comprises nine instruments, giving a total of 36. Each instrument is defined, its purpose explained, and is illustrated by a concrete example. Instruments include 'matchmaking' (considered as *local organizational flexibility*), 'vacancy reuse incentives' (*time-based legal flexibility*), and 'crowdfunding' (*use-driven financial flexibility*). Among the examples is Glastonbury, England. This town uses the legal instrument of the temporary permit (allowing temporary use of space, namely time-based legal flexibility) to turn an underused space into a 'festival city' for 150 000 people for a week. Facilities and equipment are then removed for several years, so that the landscape can rejuvenate. Not everything that is designed in a city needs to exist for eternity according to the authors. Chapter 4 introduces a number of completed projects throughout Europe that constitute good examples of flexible city development. Each is described and analysed in a few pages. In Vienna a solution to densify the city consisted of the construction of new floors on the roofs of historic buildings. Densifying existing tissues is a good way to make the city more sustainable, because it keeps the green around the city, reduces the amount of traffic and leads to better use of existing built-up areas.

Interesting questions come to mind when reading this call to 'make the city more flexible'. Not all questions find an immediate answer. How could some of these initiatives be funded? How many

times can we transform components of the same place? How long will we be satisfied? And how much social and cultural upheaval will result from these transformations? Yet Bergevoet and van Tuijl present a useful toolbox that can help turn numerous initiatives into successes. Many examples from European cities are used for comparison, so that similarities and trends are identified and concrete examples are described in detail. This creates an inspiring handbook for anyone working on the future of the European city: from administrators and policymakers to developers, designers, builders and users.

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Fibercity: a vision for cities in the age of shrinkage by *Hidetoshi Ohno* with *Metropolis Forum*, University of Tokyo Press, Tokyo, Japan, 2016, 183 pp. ISBN 978-4-13-066855-2.

This study emerged from a research programme that had the city of Tokyo as its main field of investigation. The research was co-ordinated by Hidetoshi Ohno and supported by a large team of students, researchers and professors. The aim was to devise a development strategy for Tokyo in the year 2050, according to a scenario of population shrinkage. Centred on the built fabric, infrastructures and ecological systems, *Fibercity* proposes a planning theory, while testing formal solutions that seek to regenerate and restructure a derelict and increasingly unoccupied urban fabric. As a concept, it revolves around three key morphological components: linear structural elements, urban flows, and places.

The strategy has five components: 'Green finger'; 'Green web'; 'Green partition'; 'Blue necklace' and 'Urban wrinkle'. Each deals with programmatic spatial and formal aspects. 'Green finger' operates mainly in the suburban areas where population decline is most felt. Using existing railroads as infrastructural axes, the strategy identifies urban fabrics of increasing density to achieve a compact spatial reorganization around train stations. The reclaimed space