



BOOK REVIEWS

Paris, la forme d'une ville: précis d'anatomie urbaine du moyen âge à nos jours edited by *Michaël Darin*, Parigramme, Péronnas, France, 2016, 216 pp. ISBN 978-2-84096-871-9.

Paris, la forme d'une ville is a thorough descriptive and analytical interpretation of the urban evolution of a capital city of indisputable prominence. Remarkably illustrated, this is an accessible foray into decades of painstaking work on Paris by Michaël Darin, a founding member and first Secretary of ISUF. The work focuses more specifically on the genesis of the components of the city's arterial network from medieval times to the present, arguing that it is to these foundational routes, streets, promenades and places – a society's collective work par excellence – that Paris's exceptional image and compelling urban form are largely attributable. The book is divided into two parts. The first retraces the city's formation and transformation process over the last 4 centuries, a period deemed critical in defining its current urban form. The second examines the structure of the street network and its components.

Part one, entitled 'Four centuries of constant upgrading', begins with medieval Paris – its streets and promenades, its river, suburbs and villages. It stresses the different evolution of the already dense central parts of the city from that of the periphery. Chapter 1 covers the compact form and its close relationships to the surrounding countryside in c. 1600. Chapter 2 spans the 1600–1800 period, marked by the opening up of the city by the transformation of its fortifications into promenades. The old city was regarded as an ad-hoc collection of built forms, unplanned in its development. Chapter 3, dedicated to the 1800–1900 period, centres on the radical transformation of Paris following the introduction of the railway. This new mode of

locomotion drastically altered the city's physiognomy by triggering a spatial expansion towards the periphery while inducing densification of the inner-city urban tissues. A wide variety of operations included the creation of breakthrough routes, demolitions, land subdivision, the construction of covered galleries (the famous *passages*), the construction of Haussmannian apartment buildings, and the creation of new squares. Chapter 4 analyses the city after 1900. This period is marked by the evolution of architectural and urban design languages, espousing modernity but without rejecting the city's inestimable architectural and urban heritage richness. An increased awareness of the notion of 'heritage' and the generalization of zoning are key guiding principles that define a period that had lasting and profound impacts on today's city image. After the 1960s, modernist urbanism principles were called into question. Of particular concern was their damaging impacts on the social and urban fabrics of the city, and the need to develop new methods of city building that reinstated the street's central function. One of the current challenges for the capital city is to reinforce the coherence of its complex urban territory, both functionally and symbolically, and maintain the broader imperatives of sustainable development in the context of pressures induced by the city's global attractiveness.

The second part of the book is entitled 'A four-dimensional puzzle'. It stresses in an opening statement that traces of the ancient city of Roman origin are still perceptible and readable in current Paris, though they need to be deciphered through multiple layers deposited by successive historical periods and innumerable transformations. The concern is then with the components of urban form that are constitutive of, and inform, the street network – the city's matrix. Five of the six chapters are dedicated in turn to the city's *foyer* or hearth of

origin; the foundation roads; the ring boulevards associated with successive fortification walls; the interstitial areas, composed of tissues stemming from the foundation roads as well as urban fringe tissues; and finally the breakthrough routes (avenues and boulevards) and what Darin terms the *entrailles* or technical ‘entrails’ of the city, composed of canals and railways. Each of these chapters focuses first on the formation and transformation of the components under consideration before looking at their current ‘physiognomy,’ that is their associated architectural and urban forms. The sixth and last chapter retraces the general evolution of the street network, from the rudimentary composition of its origin to its current complex network of more than 6300 routes in relation to the city’s *site*, understood here as its general geomorphological context.

Paris, la forme d’une ville contributes to urban morphology by its original approach to the interpretation of urban form and city genesis, seen here through the prism of one of its most fundamental and structuring components: the street. The method seeks to understand the street network as a system, while considering its relationships with other components and systems of urban form, such as the plots and the building fabric. The approach allows the interpretation of highly complex realities (Paris’ evolution over 2000 years) in a relatively economical manner. The book will be of interest to a varied readership, including researchers in urban morphology, urban history, urban geography and planning, as well as to a broader public interested in the history of this extraordinary city.

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The imagined cities in the urbanization plans: Cape Verde, 1934–1974 by *Sergio Padrão Fernandes*, Argumentum, Lisboa, Portugal, 2016, 195 pp. ISBN 978-972-8479-90-9.

This book addresses a significant knowledge gap within Portuguese urban morphology. It considers Portuguese overseas territories focusing on the Cape Verde archipelago. It interprets the evolution

of the proposed urban design tools for the main settlements of this former Portuguese colony, over a 40-year period. This was the time-span between the implementation of a specific decree establishing the General Urbanization Plan as the main reference for national urban development and the closure of the Portuguese colonial administration. These were two milestones in the development of the Portuguese city, both in the homeland and in overseas territories (Mendes *et al.*, 2005).

There is a simple, clear structure to the book. After a synthetic contextualization, the reader can readily engage with the core subject. The text is practical in its selection of relevant information. In the first chapter, the underlying geo-strategic importance of the archipelago for consolidation of the Portuguese Empire is established. This is largely related to the domination of the Atlantic maritime routes. The ‘Background elements of the urban plans’ are established for the 30s, 40s and 50s. These decades reflect the transition from a simple territory occupation policy, when territorial planning was undertaken by military engineers and surveyors, to firmer attempts to extend and consolidate existing settlements. At this time, architects, clearly influenced by the French formal school, dominated urban planning. Urban proposals relied on the importation of a European city model, though the colonies presented a wider experimental field, and some places appeared largely free of constraints from the past. The diversity and extent of the Portuguese colonies led, in 1944, to the creation by the central government of a specific colonial office, mandated to address all the relevant overseas interventions. This Colonial Urbanization Office was a key influence for more than a decade. João Aguiar, a prominent Portuguese architect, had a dominant role until the formal dismantling of this office. His interventions were generally characterized by a consolidation of existing urban centres, framed by a wider urban expansion, inspired by garden-city models of low-density housing. The draft plan of 1959 for the city of Mindelo is taken as an example (Lôbo, 1995).

The following chapter explores what the author defines as the ‘Foundations of urban production in the 1960s and 1970s’. He contends that the urban interventions of that period are broadly based on, or associated with, six fundamental premises: the incentive plans; the areas for immediate occupation; the occupation of the colonies and the incentive for emigration; the racial integration experiences; the beach urbanization plan; and the influence of the Modern Movement.