

Typology: Paris, Delhi, São Paulo, Athens - Review No. III edited by *Emanuel Christ, Victoria Easton, Christoph Gantenbein and Cloé Gattigo*, ETH Zurich and Park Books, Zurich, Switzerland, 2015, 228 pp. ISBN 978-3-906027-63-0.

A previous number of this Review series published in 2012 was devoted to Hong Kong, Rome, New York and Buenos Aires. Though it could be interesting to read these volumes in parallel for contextual and comparative purposes, this volume of *Typology*, dedicated to the cities of Paris, Delhi, São Paulo and Athens, has value as a stand-alone volume.

The team of authors from ETH Zurich led by Emanuel Christ and Christoph Gantenbein, present in this volume the results of an exhaustive work conducted during 2013 and 2014. With the support of local teams in each of the four cities, they have systematically collected, characterized and classified the commonest building types of each city – usually collective housing, but also exceptions justified by local idiosyncrasies such as the Athenian *polykatoikia*, which includes office and parking buildings.

The book is systematically organized. An initial part is composed of a set of critical essays. This is followed by the individual characterizations of buildings, and finally by a selection of colour photographs of buildings in their urban settings. The encyclopaedic character of the work encourages the placing of bookmarks that facilitate revisiting buildings of interest for comparative purposes, or following the reading of the critical essays. Fortunately, besides its good quality graphics and printing, it is also a physically robust volume that supports the handling required of the repeated consultation of a reference book.

Following a visual index, that also plays the role of ordering the types of each city, the book opens with the bilingual ‘Introduction: moderne städte/modern cities’. Christ and Gantenbein stress that beyond its simple encyclopaedic inventory, the Review aims to be useful for the practice of architecture, following work such as the *Encyclopédie de l’Urbanisme* by Robert Auzelle and Ivan Jankovich (1947–58). The second essay is a reprint in English and the first translation into German of Rafael Moneo’s essay ‘On Typology’, which was originally published in 1978 in *Oppositions: a Journal for Ideas and Criticism in Architecture*. Its inclusion testifies to the importance conferred by the authors to this contribution by Moneo

some 37 years after its original publication in English.

Thematic essays, one for each city, precede the individual entries. Anupam Bansal, André Lortie, Thomas Maloutas and Nadia Somekh introduce the buildings and the cities in question, including the processes, legislation and historical contexts, which conditioned their creation.

For the 194 buildings considered individually, the material provided includes a site plan of the building and its surrounding area; a typical floor plan; an axonometric perspective; a photograph; and a brief description of the building.

The presentation is clear and evokes a certain timelessness that characterizes the classical works of the discipline, such as the seminal work of J-N. L. Durand (1800) on *Recueil et parallèle des édifices de tout genre, anciens et modernes*. The floor plans have scales, which allow easy reproduction: nevertheless, the existence of a common scale of representation would allow more immediate comparisons.

Following the individual entries, there is a selection of full-page colour photographs, to illustrate the diversity of each of the four cities.

Occasionally dubbed as historicist, the typomorphological studies rooted in Saverio Muratori’s approach find in this work an unquestionable contemporary development in buildings that nowadays compose the greater part of the built fabric of the city.

The number of buildings and the diversity of elements that comprise this atlas, and the rigorous and systematic methodology used, make it a valuable tool in the study of architecture and the city in these four metropolises. When associated with the previous volume of *Typology*, the possibilities of comparative studies are multiplied while opening the door to typological ‘transfer’ – an idea developed by the authors and already discussed in the second Review in this series (Christ *et al.*, 2012).

References

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Durand, J-N. L. (1800) *Recueil et parallèle des édifices de tout genre, anciens et modernes: remarquables par leur beauté, par leur grandeur, ou par leur singularité, et dessinés sur une même échelle* (Gillé fils, Paris).

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Building types and built forms by Philip Steadman, Matador, Kibworth Beauchamp, UK, 2014, 424 pp. ISBN 978 1783062 591

Over a span of half a century Philip Steadman has addressed such varied fields as art history and environmental engineering, and architectural history and the mitigation of catastrophe risks. All of these topics have been approached with the same methodological rigour (Steadman, 1990, 2001). The focus, systematically placed on logically formalizable and quantifiable features such as structural similarities, geometrical or topological relationships in space, statistical correlations between dimensional characteristics (for example, floor area/built volume), reflects affinities with the structuralist school as well as precocious skills in what has come to be called digital humanities. Since the early 1970s Professor Steadman has been able to anticipate, together with the British mathematician, architect and artist Lionel March, the heuristic potential of computerization both for the systematic treatment of compositional challenges and the survey of existing built complexes (Steadman, 1971). His early contributions to the morphological study of architectural layouts developed in close continuity with the approach Christopher Alexander presented in 1964 in his famous *Notes on the synthesis of form* and also in intellectual affinity with the circle of space syntax around Bill Hillier at UCL (Steadman, 1983).

In addition to numerous case studies and very specific explorations, Steadman has authored essays of a more philosophical range, questioning analogies and essential differences between artefacts and living organisms in respect of their behaviour through time (Steadman, 1979) or attempting to circumscribe, from a quite metaphysical standpoint, the transient areas between probability, possibility and radical impossibility in

architectural design. This last issue is already present in his *Architectural morphology* (Steadman, 1983). In refined clarity, at the core of the present book, it explains the meaning and uses of the concept of 'morphospace' through a series of applications.

The most valuable outcome of the present study resides in the clear distinction between the narrative reporting of historical facts and events and the attempt to explain these within an explicit theoretical framework. Care is taken to disentangle the institutional definition of buildings as receptacles of activities ('activity types', like hospital, theatre, church, station) and the classification of buildings according to intrinsic formal geometrical properties ('form types', like pavilion, block with or without courtyard, detached or semi-detached house). The author emphasizes that the relationships between building types and built forms, that is between uses or functions and certain spatial arrangements, remain very flexible through time: a built form developed in the context of museology may obtain further applications in the realm of medical care, penitentiary punishment or retail marketing; conversely a specific function – such as housing – may be compatible with the broadest range of built forms including those initially dedicated to other purposes (for example, residential lofts in former storehouses).

All odd-numbered chapters focus on selected episodes of the building developments triggered by the industrial revolution in the UK and USA. Chapter 1 compares four London residential buildings of the later-nineteenth century. Chapter 3 relates the fate of Florence Nightingale's pavilion hospital. Chapter 5 observes the gradual replacement of 'central hall plans' by 'pavilion plans' in elementary school building between 1870 and 1930. Chapter 7 compares the rise of tall office buildings in Chicago and New York between 1890 and 1930, paying particular attention to the site. Chapter 9 closes this series of case studies, recording the genesis and organizational refinements of panoptical prisons since the last decades of the eighteenth century. A common feature of those chapters is the emphasis on the various individual and collective actors, inventors, and commissioners – upon all those people, who seem to be the exclusive bearers of 'historical agency' because of their permanent involvement in practical choices.

The even-numbered chapters enlarge the perspective in order to include what the author calls the 'morphospace', which is the backdrop of