

the industrial sectors of numerous other Western cities, though at a smaller and less spectacular scale. New Orleans's experience, pre- and post-Hurricane Katrina in 2005, displays similarities to Detroit. Victor J. Jones argues that from its foundation in 1718 as a French outpost, New Orleans has always been 'the site of a struggle between human intentions and the natural tendencies of the place' (Chapter 9, p. 170). Focusing on the response to the Hurricane Katrina disaster, Jones discusses three initiatives: 'shrinking the footprint', 'the Viet village urban farm,' and 'reinventing the waterfront'. Though intervening at different scales, each initiative is seen as an illustration of 'ecological urbanism'. The first proposed, in a top-down approach, to reshape and reduce the city's footprint by forbidding reconstruction on the most vulnerable land. But, as in the case of Detroit, citizens refused to accept the seemingly predictable outcome. The second initiative, which was capitalizing on the experience of a Vietnamese community was more successful. And so was the third, which proposed innovative solutions to restoring a natural shoreline. The second and third initiatives may have succeeded because they were more congruent with a local history of urban planning and design based on active and intensive transformation of the environment. The initiatives, however, suggest a new approach that pays greater respect to natural forces.

Built from the ground up as a new capital city, Brasilia is in many ways the epitome of modernist urbanism and civic architecture. Yet, in an account of the design and implementation of Lucio Costa's *Brasilia Pilot Plan*, Fares el-Dahdah finds that the essence of the design lies in the voids rather than in the buildings, making Brasilia a 'park city' (Chapter 4). Following the addition of Brasilia to UNESCO's World Heritage list, heritage preservation regulations established that – aside from a handful of civic buildings – only the buildings outlines, and hence the 'voids' that they delimit, would be protected. Most buildings could then be demolished in the future as long as the buildings replacing them were of the same volume. It is therefore 'the 'Pilot Plan' as 'park city' – rather than the city itself that is to ultimately survive' (p. 67). Again, this is an outcome that seems to contravene accepted wisdom and international heritage preservation practices, but that is congruent with the urbanism of Brasilia.

All chapters of the book, with one exception, focus on a specific city in order to highlight different urban issues and the local responses they have elicited. All stress that the desires, experience

and knowledge of planners and designers had to adapt to local social and material circumstances while being framed, enriched and sometimes constrained by the local collective experience. In the final chapter on New Urbanism, co-editor Edward Robbins explores the conceptual roots of that movement as well as its contribution to planning debates and to the renewal of urban development practices. Though New Urbanists strongly affirm their will to distance themselves from modernist planning principles, Robbins explains how, institutionally and operationally, New Urbanism resembles Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne (CIAM), including in the production and promotion of a 'Charter' that defines the core principles of each movement. Such approaches to urbanism as CIAM and New Urbanism are at odds with the multiplicity and richness of approaches illustrated in the previous chapters of the book, which might explain their limited success.

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Chinese urban design: the typomorphological approach by *Fei Chen* and *Kevin Thwaites*, Ashgate, Farnham, England, 2013, 244 pp. ISBN 978-1-4094-3388-0.

Authors Fei Chen and Kevin Thwaites contend that urban design can be seen as an endogenous concept firmly rooted in Chinese culture and tradition (p. 1). Although the study of urban form in China has existed for a long time, it has had only limited influence on recent Chinese urban design and planning. China is undergoing rapid urbanization and material transformation in parallel with impressive economic growth. This has been associated with the rapid destruction of traditional urban tissues, and a crisis in the cultural identity of cities. This crisis and some solutions to it are the main topics dealt with in this book.

To those concerned with the practice of Chinese urban design, Chen and Thwaites offer a new perspective and approach: typomorphology. The authors begin by briefly summarizing the studies of the characteristics and evolution of traditional Chinese urban form. Continuity, they argue, is a core concept in that evolution. Such a

consideration paves the way for their discussion of the current morphological context in China. Chapter 3 introduces the disciplinary and geographical origins and key precepts of typomorphology. The concise, clear writing makes core concepts easily understandable especially for readers from China, who have little knowledge of typomorphology and have had little exposure to the work of British geographers and Italian architects. A new typomorphological framework is proposed that is adapted to the Chinese context (Chapter 4). Building on the work of authors such as Kang Qi and Jin Wu, the framework is based on seven morphological elements: general plan, silhouettes, streets and street networks, urban blocks and plots, public spaces, public buildings and houses (p. 66). The seven elements are not new to Chinese scholars; especially to those architectural urban morphologists whose research has been influenced by Kang Qi's significant paper on 'The urban forms' (Qi, 1982). Because all seven elements had been transformed during the 30-year period of rapid urbanization in China, though at different rates, they form the main concerns for urban spatial regulation and urban design. In this case, these elements were integrated into a systematic approach, which not only meets the requirements of typomorphology with respect to the scale and interconnection of the elements, but also fosters the notion that cultural identity is embodied in urban form. The authors assimilate the seven elements in the notion of type. They stress that typomorphology analyses and operates in a hierarchical system of scales (p. 59). They contend that the relationship between the elements is as important as the elements themselves (p. 66).

A case study in Nanjing, based on the authors' form-analysis framework, interprets the typological process of the seven elements (Chapter 5). This aspect of their work undoubtedly helps readers to deepen their understanding of the use of a typomorphological approach in a Chinese context. Nanjing is a historically and culturally important city in China. Its built environment had been studied from different perspectives in the past. The approach of Chen and Thwaites is distinguished by its methods and in particular the attention paid to matters of scale and historical continuity.

Far from stopping at the analysis and interpretation of urban form, an urban design approach is proposed based on typomorphology, using Nanjing again as its field of inquiry (Chapter 6). The authors display a deeper understanding of Chinese cities and the conditions of their

management and planning than most Western scholars interested in these questions. Their familiarity with Nanjing serves them well in their attempt at developing an operational urban design framework inspired by Saverio Muratori's 'operative history' theory and methodology. They develop 28 design guidelines associated with the seven elements of their framework. By highlighting how all the elements are interconnected, while illustrating how 'priority could be given to certain elements depending on the scale of the development that designers are dealing with' (p. 195), Chen and Thwaites illustrate how an approach inspired by typomorphology could be easily integrated into the current system of urban planning and design in China. The final chapter highlights the spatial relationship between typomorphology, cultural identity and social cohesion.

In a context where Chinese city development driven by intense political and economic forces in which matters of continuity and cultural identity have been overlooked, typomorphology-based design guidance appears timely. Such an approach to urban design might convince planning officials and designers of the necessity to consider continuity when addressing expectations for the future that require flexibility in regulations, creativity and inclusiveness.

Reference

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Urbanismo na composição de Portugal by *Luísa Trindade*, Coimbra University Press, Coimbra, Portugal, 2013, 713 pp. ISBN 978-989-26-0535-7.

The systematic operations of planning and construction of new towns in late-medieval Europe has attracted the interest of researchers of the city and its form for a long time. By documenting the Portuguese experience, this book enriches European historiography of this topic. Its starting