

A chapter is dedicated to several examples of modern and contemporary churches, with texts and drawings by Franco Purini, Mario Botta, Dom Hans Van der Laan, Giorgio Grassi and Francesco Cellini. All sections are accompanied by drawings and schemes explaining the morphology of each building type. All examples are shown in detail and include an extensive iconographic documentation. Particular attention is drawn to the contemporary design conceived as the last transformation phase of an inherited formation process, and to all aspects of architectural composition and urban design. The volume therefore provides a fundamental reference for contemporary architects engaged worldwide in the design of sacred space, and is also a useful resource for researchers and professionals interested in the history, morphology and preservation of traditional religious architecture.

#### References

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**Saverio Muratori: a legacy in urban design** by Marco Maretto, Franco Angeli, Milan, Italy, 2012, 144 pp. ISBN 978-88-204-0808-4.

Of the five interlaced branches of activity that characterized Saverio Muratori's working life — architect, urban planner, lecturer, scholar and philosopher — his role as urbanist has been perhaps the least investigated. In light of the current interest in urban morphology it is probably this role that has the most potential for further development. In fact, in this regard the above roles might be reduced to four, in the desirable event that the current separation of the roles of architect and

urbanist be rectified, since this divide has been one of the main causes of the crisis of urban form: a divide first perceived and investigated at an international level by Muratori and his school.

It is a well-known fact that disease comes first, doctors later. Which is why in Italy we were able to detect in advance the alarming symptoms of our 'high-profile patients': historic centres dramatically set apart from the sprawl of modern peripheries, reminiscent of the ingravescence of a tumor. Hence our international reputation, perhaps undeserved, and the bitter controversies that have accompanied, in Italy, the development of the 'Muratorian school', characterized by a drift of rather widespread and enduring platitudes.

The book by Marco Maretto can help to shatter the hard surface of prejudice once and for all, presenting to Italian and non-Italian readers Muratori's urban projects, which are quantitatively amongst the most significant of twentieth-century Italy. Muratori's experience spanned from his experiments in rationalist and empiricist realms, before and after the war, to his projects in the late 1950s for districts in Naples, Rome and Venice. In the process, his practice was subjected to radical rethinking and critical review, the direct result of his fundamental studies in Venice and Rome, which led him to found the Italian school of urban morphology. However, his design experimentation was abruptly interrupted in 1959. During his final years (1960-1973) he gave up planning and devoted himself largely to lecturing, as well as to the development of his 'architectural' thinking and to his studies on local territory.

More than any other of his assistants, Gianfranco Caniggia pursued the lesson of 'working history', in the Quinto district of Genova and the Giudecca project in Venice. In a frequently cited article, written on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of Muratori's death, Caniggia concisely expressed his critical judgment of the evolutionary process of the maestro's urban projects: focusing in particular on the INA-Casa districts, in which he acknowledged the negative presence of six theoretical *idola* drawn from external models of the Modern Movement. No trace of the latter can be found in Muratori's final 'high profile' projects, attesting to how he gradually arrived at design based on fabric, considered by Caniggia the royal road to urban projects.

This is the very meaning of Muratori's legacy, to which the English title of the book refers. Maretto on the one hand develops and examines in depth, from the point of view of urban form and stylistic features of architecture, Caniggia's hypothesis,

while on the other re-evaluating the INA-Casa districts for their historic function as a 'laboratory of verism'. From such experimental practices, Muratori was later able to draw the reflections contained in an extensive passage of *Architettura e civiltà in crisi*, considered by Mareto to be a sort of manifesto of Muratori's architectural neo-realism. It should, however, be noted that the term 'neo-realist' seems to be more relevant (from the point of view of formal intentions — unless the Italian historical period in its entirety be included under the same label) in relation to Quaroni and Ridolfi's Tiburtino, which was explicitly inspired by the sporadic and picturesque model of the Italian village. This is in stark contrast to the Tuscolano by Muratori and De Renzi, which was inspired by the model (no less picturesque) of Scandinavian neo-empiricism. This is in fact where Pier Paolo Pasolini in 1962 shot the film *Mamma Roma*, one of the last cinematic expressions of Italian neo-realism: probably a chance circumstance, but offering suggestions that could favour Mareto's thesis.

In any case, Muratori's studies of working history in Rome and Venice were what determined the crucial leap in the quality of his final urban projects, resulting from the dialectic between 'reading' and 'design', perhaps the most important and widely shared theoretical contribution of the Italian school. At the end of his book, Mareto therefore presents the three projects in Naples, Rome and Venice as paradigmatic examples of the potential benefits derived from the application of Muratori's concept of working history. Designers of prospective districts are offered a new methodological tool, no longer based on arbitrary reasoning but scientifically derived from the very evolutionary process of the city. The 'readings' of this process, as different as they are, can only produce a finite number of solutions, all to some extent scientifically sound.

Mareto analyses the three projects. He describes their conceptual genesis and innovative value with accuracy and critical participation, although unfortunately this is not always matched by the quality of the images. Amongst the mentioned innovations, the attention, based on landscape, to the morphology of locations, is clearly visible in drawings and models. In the Loggetta and Magliana projects, the interpretation of the original ridge directions in the area (probably derived from his studies of Rome) translates into a project in which the ridges are primary axes of the urban layout. These axes integrate in a single design the three basic components of urban form

(paths, fabrics and building types), resulting in a wide range of homogeneous and consistent solutions. An in-depth linguistic analysis of these might have led to solving the 'aesthetic' problem concerning cities — achieving the correct balance between typological uniformity of fabrics and morphological (and architectural) variety of individual buildings.

In his analysis of the three projects presented in 1959 to the Venetian competition for the Barene di San Giuliano (San Giuliano Sandbank), Mareto in conclusion highlights the methodological innovation of the project proposal. The entry is not made up of alternative solutions, but rather presents three successive stages of a single design process, which Muratori viewed as a symbolic summary of the entire working history of the lagoon city, thus indicating 'a possible route to a morphological approach to city design'.

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**Atlas of urban expansion** by *Shlomo Angel, Jason Parent, Daniel L. Civo and Alejandro M. Blei*, Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Cambridge, MA, USA, 2012, 404 pp. ISBN 978-1-55844-243-6.

The *Atlas of urban expansion* is a probably of little relevance to the expert researcher of urban form. However, for the introduction of undergraduates to matters of fundamental import to morphological study it will have some worth. Outlining urban change in more than 100 cities, the *Atlas of urban expansion* is basically intended to help people 'better understand and plan for the massive expansion of cities' (p. 1) and by doing so to 'increase awareness and help residents, policy makers, and researchers around the world come to terms with the expected global urban expansion in the coming decades' (p. 1). However, owing to the way information is presented, in particular the lack of detailed urban analysis and the numerous maps lacking in detail, it would be difficult for an urban morphologist interested in, for example, plot patterns and their evolution to find much use for the atlas. Nevertheless, with its general consideration of urban land cover, expansion and density, the