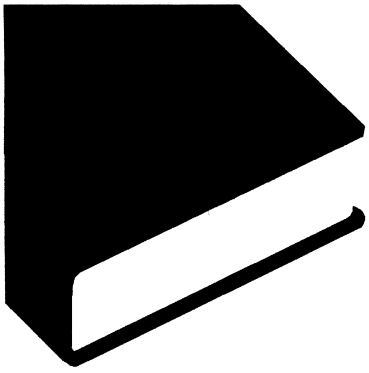

BOOK REVIEWS

The urban masterplanning handbook by *Eric Firley* and *Katharina Gron*, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, West Sussex, UK, 2013, 287 pp. ISBN 978-0-97225-0.

Contemporary urban design is a multi-disciplinary activity that requires co-ordination among urban designers, architects, landscape architects, politicians, developers, lenders, transportation engineers, and many others. Indeed, the phrase 'urban design', emphasizing the physical and visual, may not do justice to the institutional and financial frameworks within which design actually takes place. But pedagogy is often split between the physical and the procedural (with urban designers often being in different academic departments from experts in urban policy and real estate), leading to the training of professionals who have a limited view of the full complexity of, and the interactions among, the practices involved in making cities.

The urban masterplanning handbook, authored by an architect (Eric Firley) and a planner (Katharina Gron), represents a step toward seeing urban design as the complex, multi-faceted activity it is.

The book provides solid accounts of twenty projects involving the masterplanning of urban districts, from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first century, in Europe, North and South America, Japan, China and the Middle East. Each project is described in both physical and institutional ways, demonstrating the intimate relationship between the form of the city and the social and economic processes that make it.

The projects are arranged from small to large rather than chronologically, geographically, or according to development strategy. By itself this order is not particularly illuminating (and in any case, since the volume is intended as a reference book, the reader may not read the case studies sequentially, as this reviewer did) – but the order does suggest comparisons between projects that might not otherwise be seen together.

So, for example, the four projects (Stuyvesant Town, New York (mid-twentieth century); Battery Park City, New York (late-twentieth century); the Avenue de l'Opéra, Paris (nineteenth century); and Vauban, Freiburg, Germany (late-twentieth and early twenty-first century) follow each other in the book. This sequence, putting projects with very different characteristics next to each other, helps the reader understand differences in institutional frameworks (what the authors call 'Project Organization/Team Structure') in their relationships to morphological characteristics.

Stuyvesant Town, for example, was developed just after the Second World War as a single, large investment by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, and could therefore achieve a simple overall form with repetitive high-rise buildings – reminiscent of Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin for Paris. On the other hand, following the failure to find such a single investor for the Battery Park City project, originally designed as a modernist scheme incorporating towers on a plinth, the project was changed to allow individual investors for separate buildings, in a new plan based on smaller buildings within a traditional block arrangement. In this case, a project that is sometimes characterized as 'traditional' planning turns out to have been the result of a particular financing arrangement.

In a quite different manner, the development of Belgravia in London (and similar districts laid out under the authority of a leasehold system) allowed for the continuing imposition of high design standards over time, resulting in a highly coherent building fabric that persists to this day. Belgravia, first laid out in 1812, is the oldest project described in the book and perhaps the most surprising to find. But its inclusion makes sense given the intention of the authors to combine process and product. One of the values of the book is the consistent explanation of these kinds of relationships between the

institutional framework of projects and the physical results themselves.

The morphological characteristics of each project are clearly illustrated with a consistent format that includes four process diagrams (including the situation before the intervention, plot subdivisions, planning prescriptions for buildings on the plots, and the final state of the projects) and four analysis diagrams (including building uses, green space, transport and the street network). These diagrams as well as aerial views at the scale of 1:10 000 and figure-ground drawings at the scale of 1:5000 are consistent from project to project, allowing for ready comparisons. The case studies also include plans of typical buildings, with explanations of how features of urban morphology affect building designs themselves. Here as well, the connection is made to the institutional framework, so that for example in the case of Vauban, 'architecturally, the multitude of participating interests has led to a multitude of built solutions' (p. 95).

In addition to the types of maps and diagrams that are common to each case study, ample historical and current images help provide a complete picture of each project.

The concise writing, clear and consistent illustrations, and coverage of each project in a holistic way that includes politics, finance, urban morphology and building typology should make this book a useful reference for students and professionals alike. The word 'handbook' in the title is perhaps a misnomer, as the book does not lay out a simple set of procedures for urban design. But with a choice of case studies that span history and provide a variety of strategies for implementation and an equally wide variety of physical results, the book will prove to be a useful reference both for students and for the various professionals who have a hand in shaping cities.

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A blessing in disguise: war and town planning in Europe, 1940-1945 edited by *Jörn Düwel* and *Nils Gutschow*, Dom Publishers, Berlin, Germany, 2013, 416 pp. ISBN 978-3-86922-295-0.

It is now 68 years since the end of the Second World War and, whilst living survivors are becoming fewer and their memories are beginning to recede, new work continues to emerge covering the physical and sociological impact of the wartime destruction; for example by Richard Overy (2013). Detailed studies exploring the various efforts made in reconstructing urban environments following wartime devastation also persist in a range of academic disciplines. Although much has been written about the impact within Europe of replanning after the Second World War – both in terms of the planning process and the physical product – Düwel and Gutschow's lavish new volume provides fresh perspectives on the contested nature of reconstruction planning and its impact on urban form during the mid-twentieth century. Drawing on recently-unearthed and/or newly-interpreted data, this collection of essays is particularly impressive and visually striking. The unusually large page size helps in this regard as it allows for the high-quality colour reproduction of key maps, plans, and artistic representations associated with European reconstruction ideas. These form the central underpinnings of this book, and demonstrate the high standards of graphic representation and the concepts behind town planning during and after the Second World War. Chapters are provided by both renowned experts in the field and recent PhD researchers; furthermore, one of the book's editors, Gutschow, has a direct family connection to the debate surrounding post-war European reconstruction as his father was the wartime city architect-planner of Hamburg.

Three early chapters trace the contours of key debates relevant to European planning during the early part of the twentieth century; the visions of planning, and the politics associated with aerial and land warfare and of replanning are all explored. These chapters provide innovative perspectives on 'reconstruction' as a product of both the political and military histories of the nature and extent of destruction, and the political and personal ideologies of the planners and others involved. The beautifully-illustrated collection of essays by Düwel *et al*. provides a perceptive analysis of the ideas and convictions on which post-war urban planning was modelled; here it is suggested that 'we must ask again and again: what expectations did the 'professional experts' ... have of the city – and for future society' (p. 10). There is an insightful and provocative discussion of bombing as 'opportunity', despite how unpalatable this concept might be to those who lost family, friends and homes. This point is reaffirmed by Kuchenbuch in an instructive chapter in which he discusses