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Living over the store: architecture and local urban life, by *Howard Davis*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK, 2012, 251 pp. ISBN-978-0-415-78316-3.

Howard Davis once remarked that to write a book takes him numerous years. This is particularly evident in *Living over the store*, a book whose origins are rooted in his hometown where as a child he was able to witness the versatility of the shophouse – the principal focus of this book.

In choosing the methods and tools necessary for performing a morphological analysis, Davis demonstrates a preference for the Italian school of urban morphology to define what a shophouse is: a building type that at its most basic level combines a first-floor dwelling with a ground-floor working space. As the author notes, this building type accommodates two of the most basic activities performed by human beings.

The book is divided into three parts. The first section presents the shophouse as a global phenomenon. The second section discusses the performance of this construction in the daily life of citizens. The third section investigates the reasons for the shophouse's relative demise within the contemporary urban scene.

The first part of *Living over the store* covers the surviving basic types of shophouse in Asia, southern and northern Europe, Britain, and North America. The presentation of each region includes a literary quotation carefully selected to describe and illuminate aspects of users' daily lives. The book is generously illustrated with photographs and plans. These include beautiful three-dimensional diagrams that show evolutionary aspects of the basic types. Every example of a shophouse in a specific location (for example, Kyoto, Rome, Lübeck, London, New York, and Portland) is presented in the form of interviews with residents, analysis of pictures and plans, and documentary research carried out in registration offices and local planning agencies. The author is consequently able to confirm that although buildings differ from region to region they possess commonalities. These include location, plots perpendicular to streets or canals, the use of upper floors for warehousing, and the use of lower floors for both

dwellings and commercial purposes.

While drawing comparisons between regions, Davis demonstrates that the shophouse is a global phenomenon adopted by many civilizations over the course of centuries. Moreover, the development of this building type with its mixed-use activities often performed in small spaces, Davis believes occurs owing to a combination of factors, such as the correct choice of site and location in a street block, and a distinct mode of implementation within a neighbourhood. It thus becomes apparent that the shophouse not only represents a point of convergence and communication between users, consumers, traders, and residents, but also functions as a diversified living space. Owing to this versatility it fits the categories suggested by Jacobs and Alexander by constituting a space that accommodates various qualitative attributes. These qualities in turn promote urban diversity by integrating physical space, and engendering partnerships and general economic activity. As well as acknowledging the work developed by Jacobs and Alexander, Davis also cites Rapoport whose work emphasizes the intrinsic value of universal building characteristics being shared by different cultures. In summary, as Davis makes clear, it is almost as if there were common forces acting upon the construction of these quintessential urban buildings: hence the consequent common results of shophouses around the world. Notably too, Davis surmises as to whether the object of his research might be a cultural example of a *world type* present in the minds of human beings, a building type constructed, shared and incorporated into a diversity of cultures by individuals within different societies.

On analysing other arguments that explain the shophouse's longevity and permanence, Davis addresses further issues related to its implementation in streets and neighbourhoods – suggesting that in a sense it reflects the qualities embedded in urban areas. Exploring as well the architecture of hybrid types, Davis presents examples of common building design attributes found in different cultures. In this context the solutions implemented by architects relating to, for instance, access and strategies employed for accommodating public and private uses in the same space, are also highlighted, albeit in conjunction with the shophouse's role as a small-scale, private contribution to urban sustainability and local economic activity. Curiously, as the author notes, very few of these elements in shophouses have been recognized or valued in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and, as a consequence, the shophouse has not received the

attention from researchers and scholars that it deserves. This, he implies, might be due to its simplicity, moderate scale, and humble usage which perhaps renders it inconsequential to many researchers. However, as he also points out, the shophouse as an element of social congregation, and one that reflects the choices and daily habits of people, indeed does merit our attention.

In the final part of *Living over the store* the decisions undertaken by public bodies that have served to privilege single use at the expense of mixed use are addressed. The blame for this planning mistake is attributed to the influence of modernism, and the adoption of zoning in modern cities. Recognition, however, is given to the fact that over time this practice has been increasingly criticized for creating artificial environments in cities, at the expense of vibrant communities. One of the possible alternatives to the problematic zoning of cities, as the author emphasizes, is the re-adoption of the shophouse and, in a sense, *Living over the store* represents a manifesto advocating a reappraisal of this sustainable feature of our metropolises. Finally, it is not surprising to be told that a book of this nature requires a great deal of investment of time. However, the result in this case needs to be commended for its depth and detail. It not only bridges a gap in this type of study, but also serves as a compelling and fascinating reference for scholars and researchers.

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A evolução das formas urbanas de Lisboa e do Porto nos séculos XIX e XX by *Vítor Manuel Araújo de Oliveira*, Universidade Porto Editorial, Porto, Portugal, 2013, 205pp. ISBN 978-989-746-007-4.

The study of urban form from a historical standpoint contains many little-explored aspects, especially relating to the use of graphic representations as a source of information and method of analysis. Vítor Oliveira's book makes a major contribution to rectifying this deficiency by the method he adopts and the excellent review of the literature on the evolution of urban form that he

provides.

Starting with two examples – Lisbon and Porto, two major Portuguese cities – Oliveira creates a basis for discussing the theories and scope for exploring the evolution of urban form. Moreover, he uses a new, almost unknown, method: cartography redrawn. In this light he questions the importance of cartography and iconography as sources for urban form study, and proposes to 'redesign' the cartographic source as a method for examining urban form. Important topics are discussed that are given little insight in other academic fields. By highlighting urban form as an object indispensable for urban planning the author opens a new perspective for urban study.

The book is structured in several parts. There is a literature review and section on theoretical substantiation, which is broad in its coverage but incorporates several discussions on the evolution of urban form. In relation to methodology the author focuses on such matters as historical reconstruction, the study of historical documents, and archaeological projects. His important literature review connects urban planning with urban morphology. It raises numerous issues concerning the concept of typology and the relationship between urban form and human activities that result from the historical processes of formation and transformation. He also analyses urban form through the study of Italian typology and French urban form, the normative approach, and space syntax. Reviewing the range of approaches in search of how best to examine urban form, the author considers how these approaches can be applied to understanding Portuguese urban morphology.

However, despite the excellent theoretical-methodological analysis of the study of urban form and its relationship to urban planning, the author does not maintain the same depth of analysis in his examination of the cities of Lisbon and Porto. Here the book becomes more descriptive than analytical, and this presents a problem in relation to the images employed. Oliveira makes clear the importance of cartography and iconography in urban studies, but presents plans that are sometimes too small. This hinders understanding of urban processes in the two cities, particularly for any reader who does not have intimate knowledge of them. Unfortunately the descriptions of the opening of the avenues and streets that accompanied the growth of the two cities are hard to comprehend without proper graphical representations. One cannot readily appreciate the growth of the cities by superimposing plans that are over-reduced in size. Larger-scale plans are required. Furthermore, the