

centralized methods simply because of their past sins. In other words, the urbanist must learn from history, rather than bury it. In the end, however, one is confronted by the question as to whether this is a book about urban design or about housing design in the urban context. From this perspective, the main point of criticism that can be levelled against Ryan is that he seems too narrowly-focused on the subject of residential development, at the cost of other methods of urban revitalization. Although he does at times mention infrastructural, commercial or mixed-use development efforts, his clear focus on housing, without clarifying that the book is predominantly about housing, gives the reader the impression that cities are little more than a collection of residential neighbourhoods. Such a vision, especially in the case of post-industrial urban collapse, is a frightening one. The notion that a rapidly de-industrializing city suffering massive population and economic losses can react to the disintegration of its urban fabric by merely building high-design housing projects, seems as fitting as reattaching the falling leaves of a tree in autumn in order to fight off the coming winter.

It is important to realize that many of America's cities have still not been able to plan effectively for the potential or reality of rapid urban collapse due to sudden economic changes. As Ryan points out, Detroit and Philadelphia are poignant examples of this. Rather than assume urban collapse as inevitable, however, there is the potential to restructure urban economic networks and reposition the modern city as a point of productivity in the global economy. It is through the revitalization of such productivity that the critical approaches outlined by Ryan can actually build upon and enforce deep urban reform. Without this foundational restructuring, however, urban development faces the risk of operating as mere plastic surgery – hiding and beautifying without actually addressing the issues at hand.

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Seeing cities change: local culture and class by Jerome Krase, Ashgate, Farnham, UK, 2012, 290 pp. ISBN 9-7814-0942-8787.

Visual images are a powerful way to communicate knowledge about urban spaces. This approach,

revealing both the appearance and spatial location of urban spaces, has long been a tradition in the urban sciences with, for instance, sociologists being great exponents of visual analysis during the past few decades. Advocating a visual comprehension of the city, and a reunification of old and new urban sociologies, Jerome Krase in *Seeing cities change* sees the value of visual sociology as a social utility. In this framework he investigates social organization and cultural meaning in the production and decoding of urban images.

An important way to observe the city is to walk in it, as de Certeau (1985) has emphasized. Krase, following this principle, observes and understands cities by comparing Polish gentrification in Brooklyn (New York) and Krakow (Poland). Highlighting the role of sight in the city, he accentuates the need for individuals to be able to interpret what they see, and to note how they see it. For example, it is important to note that perceptions and valuations of residential neighbourhood spaces may be significantly different for 'insiders' as opposed to 'outsiders'. Thus when tourists visit 'Little Italies' or 'Chinatowns', communities that have arisen in not only European or American cities but in settlements scattered across Asia and Australasia, they do not see their environments in the same manner as an Italian or Chinese native does. As Krase reveals, we have different influences upon our urban reading.

In line with John Brinkerhoff Jackson's (1984) perspective on the 'vernacular landscape', urban scenery's form and meaning is shaped partly by the needs and tastes of people. In this context it is necessary to observe and describe how building types such as motels, fast-food franchises and garages not only participate in the visual competition of city streets but establish markers along them that grant inclusion and exclusion of certain people along thoroughfares. Ethnic communities in this regard provide good examples of issues associated with vernacular landscape manufacture owing to their dominance of spaces and places in cities. With the appropriation of territory to help express the presence of distinct ethnic groups in particular districts, such as 'Little Italies', language is also employed as a means of expressing and enforcing the concept of place. As Krase demonstrates (p. 68), Italian immigrants in New York, for instance, created words such as *Italianita* (little Italy), *bella figura* (keeping up good appearance) as well as *omerta* (maintaining secrecy) to help establish and display their identity within a certain part the city. Understanding urban space requires, with reference to urban sociology,

the use of visual surveys in order to observe the ways people value cities and so give meaning to them. Cityscapes contain, as Kruse explains, social and cultural meanings. Therefore attached to urban landscapes are not only particular activities resulting from people's views of the city, but also the grasp people have of how different areas of the city are seen and so understood as being distinct from other districts.

Immigrants in the US have historically had an impact upon cityscapes, just as Turks have affected German built environments, and North Africans those in France. By and large, immigrants established their communities by residing in houses that were already built, thereby becoming assimilated into the existing environment of the host society. However, Kruse stresses that the American cultural landscape, for example, exhibits traces of the most diverse array of ethnic influences anywhere in the world: immigration has created in many cities environmental layers between competing European, Asian, African, and Latin American groups. He argues that with the emergence of ethnic vernacular architectures – commonly seen today as an important aspect of local cultural heritage and so tourism – ‘ethnic theme parks’ (pp. 86, 131) have come to define the face of cities. These are not to be confused with ethnic enclaves. Instead Kruse employs the term to highlight the commoditization of vernacular landscapes as part of contemporary property markets, that is as ‘marketable life styles’. ‘In the spectacle of the ethnic theme park the social value of the ethnic neighbourhood ... is transformed by its capacity to produce festivals, restaurants, and other amusements for outsiders’ (p. 17).

As Kruse successfully demonstrates, settlements and the spaces within them are not only organized into a spatial order: they are constructed and organized through other means that include culture, a major element of urban studies. Allowing the reader to come to terms with the evolution of modern cities, *Seeing cities change* clearly shows how cities can be analysed and understood in terms of spatial semiotics and visual ethnography.

References

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Patchworks Parisiens: petites leçons d’urbanisme ordinaire by *Michaël Darin* (photographs by Gilles Targat), Parigramme/Compagnie Parisienne du Livre, Paris, France, 2012, 207 pp. ISBN 978-2-84096-690-6.

In 2009 Michaël Darin, in his book *La comédie urbaine* (Darin, 2009), invited those interested in urban settlements to consider the complexity and diversity of European cities, and in so doing he explained that what we often regard as imperfections or defects are just the effects of time as well as the multiplicity of actors involved in the making of a city (Maumi, 2011). Revealing that the process of making cities is extremely long, streets were shown to be the expression of rules, negotiations, compromises and renunciations. Darin’s interest in *La comédie urbaine*, as well as in *Patchworks Parisiens*, is not the planned city, or the monumental city, but rather the ‘imperfect city’ or what might be called the ordinary or banal city. The introduction to *Patchworks Parisiens*, entitled ‘Banal incongruities’ explores the notion that the city is a collective work and deserves to be looked at with attention, curiosity and patience.

Patchworks Parisiens is in many respects a continuation of *La comédie urbaine*, but focused on the French capital. It is a collection of curiosities composed by Darin as a result of 40 walks (each of 2 hours duration) along Paris’s streets. The survey made is supported by investigations in the archives and analyses of plans. Having in mind the historical work undertaken to explain the ‘urban comedy’, the reader of *Patchworks Parisiens* is invited to go out into the street and look at it. The book is addressed to the *flâneur*, an individual who loves to see and be seen in the urban scene. It invites us to look at what we see, and to be surprised by it. The book thus is made to arouse curiosity, to question all the irregularities we are used to seeing around us in the urban scene. So in this context it is an invitation to go for a walk, but it is not organized as a guide or itinerary. It is comprised mostly of photographs and short notices related to the photographs, explaining briefly the ‘incongruity’ shown. Unlike *La comédie urbaine*,