

armchair, and with its great potential for shelf life. It offers a provocative tour of the historical issues surrounding the Manhattan grid, rather than a complex and sustained inquiry that a conventional analytical book might provide. Yet, for what it does, it succeeds superbly. The full colour reproductions of maps, scenic sketches and paintings, portraits, and historical and contemporary photographs, together with pertinent and well-researched textual commentary, amply bring to life the changing landscape that imposition of the street grid produced.

The value of this book for urban morphologists lies in the wealth of specific detail presented concerning the planning, technical implementation, and disputes over the framing of a street pattern across a large stretch of rural land held in the form of large estates. For a cultural context in which *laissez-faire* economic forces have long held sway, this was a bold assertion of urban planning without existing legal precedent. The sustained effort required over decades to continue carrying out the project until the whole island was covered in built-up streets, creating in the process a modern and massive real estate market, is well set out. Further, the concessions to local practicalities, such as the restitution of Broadway following its initial suppression and the radical insertion of Central Park, illuminate the cut-and-thrust of decision-making and exemplify the degree of flexibility evident in what otherwise was a monolithic reordering of the urban fringe. Another useful feature is the brief comparisons of the Commissioners' Plan, under 'Precedents and Context', with the ground plans of Lima in Peru (representing urban planning under the Spanish Laws of the Indies), Philadelphia, Savannah, Albany (as part precedent for the New York grid), the US rectangular survey system, London, Edinburgh, and Washington, DC.

The treatment of this grid as a product of planning and specific design is neither adulatory nor severely critical. The creation of long shallow street blocks, favouring east-west communication between the island's two long shores when it is north-south communication that has proved imperative, simply demonstrates the difficulty in correctly anticipating the future. The absence of median alleys within blocks, beneficial for urban services and infrastructure and found in many contemporaneous urban grid designs elsewhere, is harder to explain, and excuse.

This book provides a ringing endorsement of the truism well known to urban morphologists that the urban ground plan shapes the mobility of a city for

generations and centuries, and confines development in ways that have often hampered increasingly large-scale designs – it is striking how little altered the Manhattan grid remains in the face of the relentless pressure for height and horizontal plot amalgamation. That the book treats with sumptuous visual accompaniment the signal street and property system of one of the world's most renowned and dynamic cities is a matter for congratulation. Yet much analytical work remains to be done on the historical legacies of New York City's 1811 Plan, work that goes beyond mere illustration to reveal subtler, systematic patterns of influence and resistance, and the geographically variable consequences of its superficial uniformity. This appealing volume should serve as inspiration for that work.

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The historic urban landscape: managing heritage in an urban century by *Francesco Bandarin* and *Ron Van Oers*, Wiley-Blackwell, Oxford, UK, 2012, 236pp. ISBN 978-0-470-65574-0.

Too often new declarations and recommendations by UNESCO appear to materialize out of a vacuum for those not closely involved in the meetings and seminars that led up to them. This book aims to demystify both the context and the underlying principles associated with a recent UNESCO initiative – the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach – linked to the adoption of the 'Recommendation on the historic urban landscape' by the General Conference of UNESCO in November 2011. The book also aims to influence a wide range of decision-makers to endorse the HUL approach to complement and enhance existing policies and practices for conservation of the built environment. The authors argue that these policies and practices will be reaping the best of an evolving paradigm in urban heritage planning as the HUL approach is 'a new way to include all these aspects of conservation in an integrated framework' (p. xvi).

So, first of all, how does *The historic urban landscape: managing heritage in an urban century* fit into the literature on urban heritage conservation

and planning given that there is already no shortage of titles on the topic, particularly from Europe? It seems that it neatly fills a niche between those titles that comprise discourses on value-based methodologies and principles of urban heritage management (Rodwell, 2007), and those that offer the conservation architect and/or urban planner more of a checklist or tool kit (Orbaşlı, 2008). Despite the best intentions of these works, the advent of the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity and the subsequent efforts to marry tangible and intangible heritage in planning contexts, many urban conservation projects still evoke much of twentieth-century modernist thinking in terms of their intellectual and operational frameworks. Bandarin and Van Oers, by virtue of their international experience in the roles they have played over the years, have tried to avoid this mindset and to a large extent have been successful in their discussions of ideology and case studies from around the world. However, it will be interesting to compare and contrast this book and its HUL approach with the discussion of urban heritage conservation that will appear in a forthcoming book with a decidedly Asian focus: *Managing Asian heritage: contexts, concerns and prospects* (Silva and Chapagain, 2013).

The layout and design of the HUL book is quite thoughtful in the way it both leads the reader through the topic from the beginning, but also allows for its use as a reference resource for specific concepts and data. After a preface that acts as an introduction, there are six chapters supported by three appendices. The writing style is neither too academic nor too technical to put off either readership and each should learn something about the other's area of interest. There are carefully chosen urban vistas accompanying each case study. Access to more photographs and figures, perhaps through a greater use of web links or a designated website for the book, would have provided even more visual support for the cases made.

The one aspect that is not covered as well as it might be is the literature that has influenced the mindset on community participation in urban planning processes. For instance, this section appears to be missing the American planner Arnstein's (1969) influential concept of the 'ladder of citizen participation', which would have preceded anything by De Carlo and Turner mentioned in the text (pp. 25-7) in regard to the early thinking on this matter. As many cities around the world still struggle to meet the requirements of the lowest steps on the ladder, more

could have been said about it and how the aspirations for community involvement that it embodies are fulfilled by the HUL approach. In the examples of best practices in the book not much is provided on how community participation was facilitated by heritage and urban planning authorities, which is often the trickiest part. Some examples of handbooks from around the world could have been cited to assist practitioners and others to find resources for implementing the inclusiveness aspect of the HUL approach.

Finally, one of the most insightful observations in the book is the comment on the tragic situation of Venice, after 50 years of mass cultural tourism. It showcases the authors' local and international knowledge to good effect. Using photographs, Venice is contrasted strikingly with Varanasi in terms of conservation mindset and concepts of heritage value. While the former is seen as a success in terms of preserving its historic urban fabric, the latter has been far more successful in continuing to embody its value as an important Hindu spiritual centre. The authors then pose a question: 'when choosing the city that best exemplifies our contemporary concept of heritage, should it be Venice or Varanasi?' (p. 71) Understandably, this is a classic debate that will continue even after other books, such as that by Silva and Chapagain, are published, possibly signalling that more changes are on the way for the international conservation heritage mindset of UNESCO and the book's potential readership.

References

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