

culture as a means to show the whole picture is tricky. Taking the issue of culture and nature in Japan, there is a need today, just as in the past, for designers and urban planners to fuse human built structures with the 'eight million deities' existing in nature. Whilst Japanese urban culture is humble and obedient to nature, this should not necessarily be viewed as stemming solely from care for material objects in natural settings: it is also a cultural response to thoughts and images of nature as they flow through time. Without comprehensively appreciating the flow of nature and its evolutionary phases one may not fully comprehend why in Japan views to green mountains are so common, and therefore so important.

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The evolution of urban form: typology for planners and architects by *Brenda Case Scheer*, American Planning Association, Chicago, USA, 2011, 129 pp. ISBN 978-1-932364-87-3

This book is an excellent introduction to urban typology and its use. The author discusses urban typology at a scale outside what could be called dense urban centres, such as midtown Manhattan or downtown Chicago, focusing on urban areas on the fringe of large urban centres – strip malls, industrial parks, and housing. As a professor of urban design I find this approach very informative.

The author raises the question as to why there are so many new strip malls, gas stations, apartment complexes, office parks, subdivisions, and big box stores built for every new 50 acres developed. She states that probable culprits according to designers are ordinary land-use regulations and, secondarily, that as a culture we have forgotten what is good design and need to be reminded through examples. The author proposes a new perspective, and relies on typologies as a first step towards good urban planning and/or design. She describes four theories of type: most buildings are exemplars of particular definable types; types emerge and evolve rather than being wholly invented; typological observation is an important urban analysis tool; and building types in and of themselves represent ideas that are carried forward in time.

All four of these theories have merit and could

be viewed as a foundation for typologies. The chapter that traces the history of typology is perfect for students. The chapter streamlines the long lineage of typology into a concise explanation. According to Scheer typology starts with the Age of Enlightenment, beginning with Abbé Laugier (1713-96), as described in his *Essai sur l'architecture*, followed by Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849), the first person to formally use the word *type*, and then J. N. L. Durand (1760-1834), who develops *type* as a building system. The lineage of *type* re-emerges in the 1950s with the Italian school of architecture in Venice, led by Saverio Muratori, followed by the Krier brothers. The chapter concludes by discussing the work of a British geographer M. R. G. Conzen and the school of urban morphology that he developed.

I cannot speak for the field of urban planning, but urban designers tend to overlook the field of urban morphology. An aspect of urban morphology that the author discusses is *urban tissue*; described by her as the arrangement of lots, blocks and streets, or the demarcation of the owned space of the city. She describes these demarcations, or property lines, as features that do not disappear even if the rest of the physical urban fabric is eliminated. According to her the *urban tissue* is planned and created to support a type of a certain scale. She goes on to explain that common building types arise within the context of a particular kind of *urban tissue*, and uses the example of the four square, which fits precisely on a lot of a particular size within a street and block pattern.

Towards the end of the book Scheer states that she has 'avoided embracing or endorsing any one definition of good urban design' (p. 112). However, with her focus on the typologies of large urban centres, strip malls, industrial parks, housing and areas outside the dense urban fabric, she sets the stage to critique New Urbanism, since New Urbanism tends to design and build new, low-density urban fabric, and joins these project areas to the typologies described in her book.

Typology is an admirable design tool for urban planners, designers and architects, and Scheer has written an excellent primer. I can even envisage a new edition in which the author begins to tackle other urban typologies and their possible use in design. As it stands, I plan to introduce the current edition in my course work.

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