but relevant excavations are rare. Discussion of morphology is very superficial. For a number of towns regularities of plans are mentioned. The characteristics of plots, parallel streets, and central rectangular market places suggest that there were new town foundations of a type known from the more north-westerly parts of Europe. But it is a major omission that this receives little explanation or illustration, and it would seem that no historical plans or maps were used as sources.

At the end of the book, Rădvan writes that his inclusion of 'topography' is a new addition to the historiography of Wallachian and Moldavian towns of the period. If this is true, his effort should be praised, although his method is crude and of limited scope. It is apparent that the discipline of urban morphology still has a lot to add to the study of Romanian and Eastern European urban history.

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Wim Boerefijn, Independent Scholar, Doelenstraat 24, 3512XJ Utrecht, The Netherlands. E-mail: wim_boerefijn@hotmail.com

Rappresentare la città: topografie urbane nell' Italia di antico regime edited by *Marco Folin*, Edizioni Diabasis, Reggio Emilia, Italy, 2010, 477 pp. ISBN 978-88-8103-600-4.

For many years urban historical iconography has been employed as a tool to read a settlement's history, society and culture. Interest in this has increased owing in part at least to the recent renewed success of studies of cartographic history; for example, work on town atlases (Nuti, 1996), and administrative cartography (Quaini, 2007; Rombai, 2007; Valerio, 2007). Urban iconography has proven to be a very useful means for building knowledge of *civitas* and its structures across time. If maps not only represent the growth of cartographic culture but also provide over time a means to examine cities, then the essays collected in Marco Folin's book are of great relevance. With attention placed on Italian cities such as Rome, Milan, Naples, Venice, Florence, Turin, Genoa, Parma, Ferrara, Imola, and Guastalla, 'monuments' to historical urbanism in Italy, and notably too places that have been the foci of Italian cartography, Folin offers a range of case studies, analysed with clarity and methodological rigour, to explain the significance of cartography to urban studies.

In *Rappresentare la città* maps offer a vehicle to closely read the design of towns and the different factors, for example cultural and technical, that have shaped their cartographic images. At the same time this book strives to contribute to a widening of urban historiography. For example, the examination of the map of Milan in the *Chronica extravagans* by Galvano Fiamma not only investigates it as an administrative document but as an historical-geographical work whose subject, even though belonging to a distinct time, in effect offers a visual text of the dynamic reality of Milan's evolution – its rise to the status of 'a great city'. Likewise the need to represent urban evolution does not appear in *Rappresentare la città* in merely abstract and theoretical terms. This is evident in the famous plan of Imola by Leonardo da Vinci, a great example of a very accurate drawing, but more precisely an unequalled masterpiece of renaissance scenery (p. 121). The map exposes the urban fabric with its blocks, plots and buildings. As such we should consider the plan of Imola as an urban morphological document, even though in reality it was drawn up with rough survey techniques albeit adjusted by Leonardo's incredible technical and architectural skill.

With reference again to Folin's attempt to widen urban historiography, *Rappresentare la città* provides a distinct interpretation of the origin of urban scientific geography as a tool for town reading, a reading shown to originate at the dawn of a new professional competence (p. 19) – a new professional know-how that, and not by chance, combined the town survey with elements of urban design, as the case studies of Parma and Guastalla demonstrate. Maps of these cities, particularly those crafted from the end of the seventeenth century, show a completely different perspective, as the essays by Ilaria Forno, Mario Bevilacqua and Brigitte Marin explain; one borne in part by the shifting cultural climate. In this period producing 'scientific' accuracy became the *manifesto* of the evolving cultural and political climate.

The maps included in this volume are only a selection of those that could have been examined.

Yet the objective quality of *Rappresentare la città* connects the individual sources to each other and in so doing provides a persuasive argument for the iconographic canon. However, unfortunately, historical town maps, at least in orthogonal projection, are now few and far between. Folin points out that this is an outcome of *iconographies*. Once conceived as practical tools being perceived, ironically they became of limited use over time: their utility, and therefore the justification for their conservation, ultimately became eroded when the circumstances that governed their drawing up changed. Of course there are some exceptions, as the examples gathered in this volume testify, but on the whole in the first Modern Age of Italy the idea of an intrinsic and complete survey of urban areas was not widely considered or valued. Folin concludes that 'the small number of towns *iconographies* is the result of a political culture not conceiving the use of power as an unitary and consistent government of a precise territory, but on the contrary as the mediation action between autonomous and heterogeneous bodies (mostly bent on self-governing), with whom the King or the Prince had a special relationship based on the circumstances' (p. 30).

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Marco Maretto, Dipartimento di Ingegneria Civile, dell'Ambiente, del Territorio e Architettura, Facoltà di Architettura, Università degli Studi di Parma, parco area delle Scienze no. 181/A, 43100 Parma, Italy. E-mail: marco.maretto@unipr.it

Urban housing handbook by *Eric Firley* and *Caroline Stahl*, Wiley, Chichester, UK, 2009, 328 pp. ISBN 978-0-4705-1275-3.

Some books look very promising due to their ambitious titles and glossy covers. Others are more modest. Yet when one begins to read, doors of information open. In some instances the book opens itself up in such a manner that the reader is rapidly sensitive to the author's accomplishments. The *Urban housing handbook* is this kind of book.

The book covers the study of 30 housing types in major cities built during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries when urbanization was progressively taking place. It does not attempt to study the history of architecture per se but rather the configuration of living spaces related to history, particularly when the rapid expansion of cities was taking place and 'framing' built environments. To be more precise, the book puts forward knowledge embedded in different social, cultural, and economic contexts relating to the relationship between architecture and the urban fabric. Based on this understanding of the historical context, the relationship is classified by type, both graphically and analytically.

The combination of the traditional and new eye-catching contemporary architectural examples, and linkages to buildings in different cultures around the world, makes the book unique. It not only casts light on the traditional debate between historical architecture conservation and contemporary architectural innovation but almost gives a clear answer that the co-existence and complementarity of two extremes are possible, and as such can lead cities to a better future. This book will no doubt remind the reader of Herman Hertzberger's *Lessons for students in architecture*, yet compared with Hertzberger's efforts Firley and Stahl's book is more pleasing and convincing in its extensive analysis of both ordinary and signature buildings in a wider global context.

As an architect and teacher in an architectural school, I should like to add a few more points from a professional and academic point of view. There is a lack of serious study of world architecture and a proper presentation of it. The concept behind this book seems to allow architecture of different economic backgrounds to be appreciated on the same platform. For me, it is a criticism of globalism that it is now dominating market and political powers, and identified through landmark buildings being erected everywhere in developing countries – edifices normally designed by a handful of Western architects. In contrast, the case analyses