highly organized, politicized and institutionalized.

As is usual with his work, Foran has provided a highly detailed account of the historical events leading to what we see today and many stories about the personalities who were involved, but the contribution to the planning and design disciplines is limited by some errors and omissions. First, it is frustrating that Foran stops at 1978. The greatest value of this book is likely to be in the lessons learned but, since it ends with events 30 years ago, the application to today is missed. The evidence is there just waiting to be elucidated, and it is to be hoped that Foran is busy on a second volume. Although the book is about urban development, there is relatively little discussion of physical urban form, and no comment on the qualities of the built environment – just underlying assumptions that what was produced was bad. There are far too few photographs and maps to complement the text and help the reader to see what the processes, decisions and policies produced. There are also several errors in the captions to the photographs (for example, those on pages 48 and 66 identify the directions incorrectly), some of the maps are graphically crude (particularly the maps showing Calgary's annexations), and many of the photographs are too general, or are unlabelled (for example, the cover photograph of the 1990s suburb of Royal Oak in north-west Calgary, is not identified in the text).

These limitations aside, *Expansive discourses* is an important book. The audience who would probably benefit the most includes City officials and the development industry. Students and professionals in the environmental design disciplines would benefit from consideration of this book alongside another that includes more graphics that illustrate the city's evolution, so that they could more completely understand the physical results of these many years of deals and decisions.

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City and cosmos: the medieval world in urban form by *Keith D. Lilley*, Reaktion Books, London, UK, 2009, 256 pp. ISBN 978 1 86189 441 0.

The distinguished historical geographer Keith Lilley, well known for his leading research on mapping in the Middle Ages and the geography of urban form, has produced a stunning new volume that explores the idea of the city in the medieval imagination. In a finely-detailed yet compelling account, Lilley considers the powerful and enduring link between medieval conceptions of the city and geometrical forms that expressed the work of God, highlighting the place of urbanism within a divinely ordered hierarchy. It goes almost without saying that such concerns have been marginalized in traditional morphogenetic town-plan analyses, and this treatment is an immensely welcome means of injecting extra life, colour and – above all – a flavour of the lived-in experience of the medieval world into the field. Nonetheless, it is a great merit of this book that it has been written by a scholar with a strong record of empirical research in the field of urban morphology, which is also drawn upon to good effect.

The coverage is principally north-west European, with England and France particularly well represented. The text is divided into three parts, each of two chapters. Part I deals primarily with urban form as revealed by medieval map-makers. The image of heavenly Jerusalem in particular is seen as an underlying model for an idealized Christian imagining of medieval urban form, and a variety of geometric forms – circles, squares and especially crosses that recur in town plans – are shown as redolent with rich religious and other symbolism. Here as elsewhere, the range of case studies covered is excellent, with English *burhs* and French bastides standing out as particularly compelling examples. Part II looks at the multiple meanings of town foundation. The agency of lordship in town planning is examined critically, and a persuasive model for the processes of medieval town planning and surveying is developed. The underestimated symbolism of the material culture of town planning – in particular reed and compass – also stands out. Part III examines what are styled the 'moral topographies' of towns, and demonstrates how town plans were also backcloths for performances and religious processions that lent a sense of unity to urban identities which were in so many other ways fractured. The metaphor of the city as akin to the body is a persuasive one: this section looks at the impact of urban laws on the social and moral organization of towns and explores the active marginalization through acts of town planning of sectors of the community, including prostitutes, lepers and displaced ethnic groups.

The volume is handsomely produced and richly illustrated. A sixteen-page full colour section

contains some marvellously vivid medieval maps, and the book is full of instantly intelligible plans of selected towns and cities. End-notes are full and thorough and highlight the broad and commendably interdisciplinary nature of Lilley's research. There are no criticisms; rather the merest quibbles. The volume starts off with an introduction ('The city-cosmos ideal') that is not the book's most accessible moment, and while the text generally succeeds in putting across complex ideas effectively, the reader must be alert not to trip over the differences between cosmology, cosmography and cosmimetry!

As Lilley recognizes, dry morphological studies of townscapes can only take us so far. This text is intensely thought-provoking and opens up radically different avenues for medieval urban research and for understanding the depth and complexity of Christian and other symbolism in the urban world. It is of huge interest to historical and cultural geographers, but medievalists in general, and archaeologists in particular, need to read it.

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La comédie urbaine. Voir la ville autrement by *Michaël Darin*, Infolio éditions, Collection Archigraphy, Gollion, Switzerland, 2009, 560 pp. ISBN 978-2-88474-583-3.

'It is at the scale of the city that we better see the work of time in space', wrote Paul Ricoeur (2000, p. 187) in *La mémoire, l'histoire, l'oubli*. A city, explained Ricoeur, confronts within the same space different times, offering to the eye a sedimented history of taste and culture. The city thus gives itself to both seeing and reading.

Michaël Darin's book is an invitation to see and read European cities so as to understand and recognize their imperfections and anomalies, as well as to inspire us to grasp better the multiplicity and diversity of the actors involved in making cities what they are. Time and a great number of actors explain why the city is what it is in Darin's view, and key to this is the *comédie urbaine*, an urban comedy which generates, according to Darin, an 'imperfect city'.

The work is organized into seven autonomous parts, seven books so to speak, along with some additional sections because, explains Darin, all the parts of the composition are conceived to be read independently of each other. Yet each of the seven books has its own purpose and takes on the subject of the urban comedy through a specific approach, starting from what we can all observe in our cities: local processes forging local urban distinctions, the imprint of the evolution of broader affairs tied to the design of cities and their urban spaces, and the ideas and people behind the main works undertaken within settlements – in this instance in French cities during the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century.

The first 'book' explores the notion of urban landscape as cultural landscape, but also the city as a 'work in progress'. One of the main purposes of this first book is to go back to the concept of city improvement, and one of its corollaries – the building line – so as to explain why built realities do not correspond to desired original projects. The subject of the second 'book', the city as a collective creation, investigates the city as a complex and contradictory organism. The city is made of permanencies as well as continuous and successive actions or operations that collide with each other in the form of urban design. The geographer Marcel Roncayolo (1996, p. 7) noted the significance of 'consolidated time', and Darin explores a similar phenomenon.

The third 'book' is dedicated to another essential aspect of urban studies: the words used to speak about the city and how we come to define key urban features: such as boulevards, avenues and places. The definition of these terms grants no place to ambiguity and seems, at first sight, to be very clear in linguistic terms. Yet by looking at a city map their meaning is less obvious. As urban forms evolve with time so the words used to qualify urban elements are subject to changes, and thereby misuse. The use of words is, of course, very dependent upon the framework in which they are conceived, which includes the image of itself that a city wants to promote. Evidently questions relating to city conceptualization and imagery are of great importance. More often a city's imagery and its reality do not match. Furthermore, a city could be modelled upon an image conceived by a select few architects, urban planners or politicians. This, states Darin, offers a fundamental urban contradiction: architects, for example, conceive cities and seek to bring immediate improvement to the structure and life within them, but the urban reality never matches the concept, in part because cities are formed by a host of agents and urban development is a lengthy process that requires time to bring changes.

The fourth section of *La comédie urbaine*