

spectrum, the Russian city of Novgorod has sought to revamp its local, unique, city-based identity, both underplaying its status as a quintessential ethno-national centre and proposing a new, locally-inspired notion of Russian identity.

In the concluding chapter, the editors claim that the fall of communism has been ultimately a triumph of the nation-state (p. 336), obviously referring to the post-1989 disintegration of multi-ethnic federations and their replacement by 'ethnically clean' republics. Yet in many ways, the cases demonstrate how short-lived this triumph has been. Faced with a triple transition – post-communism, Europeanization and globalization – East European cities are reshaping themselves by invoking the end of nation-statehood and searching for either a deeply-local or deeply-transnational identity – but, in either case, a non-nation-state identity. In this sense, the editors are not only correct but perhaps prophetic in making their grand concluding claim that in their painful soul-searching for a post-nation-state identity East Europeans have found the secret of a unified Europe – the secret that European Union bureaucrats have sought for decades and have yet to find. In this sense Eastern Europe may indeed be the 'New Europe'.

Cities after the fall of Communism is a superb volume that must be added to the library of any scholar interested in Eastern Europe and the post-Soviet world. Further, by offering unique insights into the intersection of architecture, urbanity and culture, this book will be useful to scholars in a number of humanities and social sciences – for example, art history, architecture, sociology and cultural anthropology. It will make excellent reading in graduate seminars in any of these disciplines.

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After amnesia: learning from the Islamic Mediterranean urban fabric by *Attilio Petruccioli*, Edizioni ICAR, Polytechnic of Bari, Bari, Italy, 2007, 238 pp. ISBN 978-88-95006-03-1.

If we analyse the construction process of a house, we see that the builder possesses in thought the

form of the house; he knows what the fact of being a house is. In a certain sense the house has its beginnings in house: in something immaterial (its concept) that generates something that includes the material (Aristotle, *Metaphysics*, IX 1050a, 5-10).

The form of territory is the text in which history is written and the primary tool in understanding, recording and translating it. It is the direct expression of the history of mankind. The great feudal societies of the past can be considered, above all, as great civilizations of urban and building fabric, where economy, society, religion, and culture are all legible in a great common vision, in a great unified design, which finds in the urban and building fabric, and in their traces and persistence, the historical evidence of its existence and identity. Civilizations such as that of the Chinese and *Dar al Islam* reveal, in the immense variety of their buildings designed around a courtyard, 'always the same and yet always different', the reason for their existence. They tell us of the readings and interpretations that man has carried out over time. They patiently and precisely explain to us the civic organization of those societies. They let us glimpse, and know how to read, the possible forms of their future.

This is the main reason why Attilio Petruccioli's *After amnesia* is a precious document in the study of urban form. A civilization of urban and building fabric lends itself perfectly to a morphological interpretation of its urban and territorial structures, even when these are complex and profoundly stratified from a historical perspective. The book is full of interesting and useful insights not only in the numerous case studies analysed, ranging from Spain to Bosnia and from North Africa to the Middle East, but also in the issues that are addressed that have significance for the whole discipline.

In an ample introductory chapter, entitled 'The fourth typology', the author clarifies the concepts informing his work (for instance, the concepts of *type* and *typological process* and those of *organicity* and *seriality*) and highlights their profound historico-cultural implications. He then proposes a reading of the Islamic Mediterranean urban fabric. The book deals in turn with three interpretative tools and three scales for the concept of *type*, ranging from *building type* to *urban organism*. The author sheds light on a complex reality, whose systemic and civic dimensions, and so perhaps the more profound reason for its history, often eludes us.

Petruccioli offers us an efficient interpretative key. His interpretation of the Mediterranean

Islamic city is at all building scales, with a multitude of references to the societies and territories that produced it and transformed it over time. It is a reading of the urban landscape carried out with a striking awareness of the methodological value of this source of experience and of its paradigmatic role in the study of urban form. The city is unified in conception yet infinitely varied in its manifestations. Like every organism, it is comprised of homogeneous and complementary parts (*urban nuclei*), each formed by a composite fabric of elements (*building types*) connected by a complex series of links. It is the *routes* that set up the dialectic hierarchy between *nodality* and *anti-nodality* that guides the formation of the fabric and consequent urban polarities (*landmarks*): route, urban nucleus, fabric, building type, polarity-landmark are therefore the basic tools for understanding the Mediterranean Islamic city, but they are, above all, morphological concepts of great methodological efficacy. According to Petruccioli much of the confusion and disorientation in contemporary architecture is caused by the failure to find an alternative to market-oriented individualism, fashionable nihilism and picture-book historicism. He seeks a solution to the traces that human actions leave in the landscape. He is

not simply referring to the macroscopic phenomenon of the Roman *centuriatio*, but also to the primitive routes on top of ridges, landmarks in the urban topography, and signs on façades that signify permanence. These are the elements of spatial and historical continuity that fully represent a record of civilization (p. 9).

The scientific value of this work is not limited to *Dar al Islam*. Using this as a starting point, the whole humanscape is addressed, and has paradigmatic value in the interpretation and planning of different humanscapes. The tools of urban morphology and process typology are here verified and reinterpreted in a rich sequence of case studies, with a single, conscious critical and methodological vision, from the particular to the universal, from the family dwelling to the urban community, and from the territory to the large cultural enclave. Petruccioli's approach is both deductive and inductive, attentive to the physical reality of built environments, but constantly committed to placing them within a broader critical framework, in which the case studies are not fragments of a lost mosaic, but elements of an organic system, in a continual exchange of contents and meanings.

So the book seeks to uncover the settlement logic of the Islamic Mediterranean Basin, and partially completes 35 years of the author's research, in that koine which could be called the final legacy of the classical world, but also perhaps its most interesting modern translation. 'In Syria, in Palestine and Jordan, Islam guides the Byzantine city to the brink of modernity with no sensible breaks in continuity' (p. 224). The vast number of measured drawings, of both buildings and urban layouts, the breadth of the historical perspective within which they are analysed, the scientific awareness with which they are contextualized, and the theoretical and methodological clarity with which they are interpreted, all make *After amnesia* a very interesting experience in the field of urban morphology and building typology. It is a work against which we should measure ourselves in our future research.

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Archetipi di territorio by Anna Marson, Alinea Editrice, Firenze, Italy, 2008, 287 pp. ISBN 8860553008.

Modern urban planning has become a rational discipline mainly focused upon regulating the growth and development of cities. But can planning really address the needs, problems, pressures and changes occurring today within urban territories? Can it really help to shape new settings or better regulate existing ones for the inhabitants, with the aim of integrating them with their social and natural environments?

Anna Marson in her book *Archetipi di territorio* (*Territorial archetypes*) searches for answers to such questions by looking at how meanings, traditions and values related to our habitats have evolved over time. In her own words, she looks for 'archetypes of territory', namely what has remained constant through time and has responded to humankind's most essential needs. She finds a number of archetypes which she analyses from the point of view of different disciplines, such as mythology, anthropology, philosophy, etymology and religion, and then compares them to present cities and landscapes.