

Her objective is to find approaches to urban planning that consider both the natural environment and the environment that has been culturally adapted to accomplish a respectful relation between people and nature, and in which humans ultimately become part of nature. To this end Marson says that she wants to rediscover urban planning's 'cosmic anamnesis', 'as a reflexive practice continuously verified on the basis of natural rules, instead of a mere functional or rhetorical technique' (p. 16). Reflecting on archetypes may help to plan sustainable places, whose meanings, well established and rich in symbolic connotations, will not vanish with time.

Suggesting that sustainable planning projects should be based on the study of the role of natural elements in shaping the territory and archetypes resulting from a long process of interaction between nature and man, Marson reports the abuse of natural elements and archetypes by modern society, and by ideologies supporting the use and capitalization of land and exploitation of natural resources.

In most ancient cultures mythical theories about the cosmos were based on the four elements: earth, water, fire and air. Life comes from and depends on the equilibrium among them. They are the first archetypes upon which Marson focuses. She uncovers how, through history, they have been representing a whole system of functions and meanings. At the same time she realizes that today we consider them almost like chemical elements that we own, careless of their power, and make use of for our purposes.

Then Marson focuses her analysis on the city itself and its traditional formation along cultural lines tied to our understanding of our place in the cosmos. Although we can still read systems of rules, symbols and their meanings in many historical centres today, Marson points out that we cannot find the same in modern urbanization. Therefore she continues her search for other archetypes: the urban centre, borders, gardens, and natural areas. From her analysis Marson observes that humans have engaged in a process of progressively losing the balance between distinct parts of the city and consequently losing 'meanings' important to reading the city. She hopes for a recovery of these sensations and archetypes so that knowledge and experiences well rooted in history can be rediscovered.

The book concludes with a proposal for a process by which to recover relationships between planning and territory through memories, an anamnesis of the past, and the study of archetypes and their modifications. Accordingly Marson

distinguishes four needs: to avoid uncontrollable urban growth and to find natural rhythms of growth; to slow down by reclaiming old knowledge and traditional techniques, instead of thinking in terms of logistics, consumption and technological choices; to shape, defined as providing architecture that relates to an urban planning that regains sense, meanings, references and, in Vitruvius's words, '*concinntas*'; and finally, to find again – not trying to dominate nature but utilizing traditional design and spatial processes, and imitating or interpreting nature through a dialogue with territory.

Reviewing the book I found a fascinating journey through history, and through several disciplines, in search of forms, meanings, symbols and traditions to help us discover how places, or territories, have been shaped and successively changed through time. The author investigates why old values and meanings have been lost. Her historical analysis has a colloquial rhythm that is rich in information and references, and stimulates further reading. Identifying what she finds wrong with today's cities and planning, Marson does adopt a circumspect attitude. The choice, relevance and details of some of the arguments about actual problems seem to reflect the desire to provoke and encourage discussion. There is, perhaps, a gap between the accuracy of the historical analysis and the reporting of the present-day urban condition. The author's aim to provide foundations to support a more conscious and reflexive approach to territory is evident.

Archetipi di territorio is thoroughly absorbing. It should prove an inspiration to students of architecture and planning and is also recommended to professional planners and politicians dealing with territory.

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Planning Latin America's capital cities 1850-1950, edited by Arturo Almandoz, Routledge, London, UK, 2010, 282 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-55308-7.

First published in 2002 as a hardback edition, *Planning Latin America's capital cities 1850-1950* was awarded the 2004 International Planning History Society Prize for the best book on Spanish and Latin American planning, and the recent paperback edition not only reflects the continuing

growth of interest in the local diffusion of foreign-developed planning models and ideas but also underlines the relevance of the work in itself. The book focuses on the planning history and urban modernization of Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Santiago de Chile, Mexico City, Lima, Havana, Caracas and San José as part of a series dedicated to 'capital cities'. Previous volumes studied the planning processes of European, Middle Eastern, and twentieth-century capitals, and recently included the capitals of central and south-eastern Europe and Pacific Asia.

Concentrating on a key phase of the post-colonial period, when the predominance of the United States in technical and cultural terms was incipient and urban reforms and development plans mirrored European ideas, *Planning Latin America's capital cities* deals with the modernization of important capital cities and looks back at the transfer of modern ideas that led to the local crystallization of planning and its institutionalization in Latin America. Notwithstanding that the political independence of Latin American countries occurred a few decades before the period covered by the book, *Planning Latin America's capital cities* avoids simplistic attributions of their characteristics to the effects of external economic dependence. The form of Latin American cities is explained not only in terms of the interests of foreign investment but also by the attitude of Latin American elites. From a cultural perspective Latin America's adoption of foreign planning ideas is understood as part of native aspirations for national identity and modernization, and the dream of transforming the colonial-city image into a somewhat European-like civilized urban environment. Stating that 'every city has once wanted to be another' (p.109), the book has made a significant contribution to the debate on the diffusion mechanisms of planning. It deals with the dynamics of the process, and in places unveils a very creative nature in the attempt to adapt the importation of foreign spatial models to specific contexts and incorporate local elements.

Whilst British participation in the post-colonial Latin American urban economy was predominant, French urban prestige was conspicuous as Second-Empire Paris became the paradigm of 'civilization' and 'refinement'. Haussmann's diagonal system of boulevards and tree-lined avenues, together with Beaux-Arts architecture, became a modern sign of urban quality, both in technical and aesthetic terms. Not surprisingly, 'Paris goes West' was once under consideration as a possible title for the book. The term 'urbanism', commonly employed by the

authors, affirms the French planning tradition in Latin America and only in later times, when the presence of the United States could be felt, did the word 'planning' become more popularly used.

Under the editorship of Arturo Almandoz, an Associate Professor of the Urban Planning Department at Simón Bolívar University in Caracas, and himself a notable researcher and authority on Latin American planning history, scholars from different backgrounds manage to 'combine ingredients relating to urban history, urban culture and its representation, the emergence of planning and the transfer of urban ideas and models' (p. 10). Almandoz is himself responsible for the lively introduction and initial chapter, presenting a strong theoretical framework for, and good articulation with, the subsequent series of case studies. The well-structured sequence of chapters leads to the conclusion that the diffusion of European urban models and planning ideas was uneven in Latin American capitals and less evident in the smaller cities. Some of the capitals acted as intermediaries in the diffusion process. One is left in no doubt as to the richness of the theme of internationalism within urban history.

To sum up, *Planning Latin America's capital cities* reveals undeniable expertise, brilliant and comprehensive analysis, and an impressive myriad of sources. Extensively illustrated, it makes a remarkably innovative contribution to the documentation and understanding of the building of Latin America's capital cities. Moreover, it is a fundamental piece of urban history both for local urban morphologists and historians and also for those researching the development of non-capital and hinterland towns, many of which have taken their capitals as role models.

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Planning Europe's capital cities: aspects of nineteenth century urban development by Thomas Hall, Routledge, Abingdon, UK, 2010, 408 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-55249-3.

Originally published in hardback in the late 1990s, Thomas Hall's *Planning Europe's capital cities* was described then as 'a remarkable achievement' (Fehl, 1998, p. 119) and as providing 'a convincing