



BOOK REVIEWS

The urban masterplanning handbook by Eric Firley and Katharina Gron, John Wiley & Sons, Chichester, West Sussex, UK, 2013, 287 pp. ISBN 978-0-97225-0.

Contemporary urban design is a multi-disciplinary activity that requires co-ordination among urban designers, architects, landscape architects, politicians, developers, lenders, transportation engineers, and many others. Indeed, the phrase ‘urban design’, emphasizing the physical and visual, may not do justice to the institutional and financial frameworks within which design actually takes place. But pedagogy is often split between the physical and the procedural (with urban designers often being in different academic departments from experts in urban policy and real estate), leading to the training of professionals who have a limited view of the full complexity of, and the interactions among, the practices involved in making cities.

The urban masterplanning handbook, authored by an architect (Eric Firley) and a planner (Katharina Gron), represents a step toward seeing urban design as the complex, multi-faceted activity it is.

The book provides solid accounts of twenty projects involving the masterplanning of urban districts, from the nineteenth century to the twenty-first century, in Europe, North and South America, Japan, China and the Middle East. Each project is described in both physical and institutional ways, demonstrating the intimate relationship between the form of the city and the social and economic processes that make it.

The projects are arranged from small to large rather than chronologically, geographically, or according to development strategy. By itself this order is not particularly illuminating (and in any case, since the volume is intended as a reference book, the reader may not read the case studies sequentially, as this reviewer did) – but the order does suggest comparisons between projects that

might not otherwise be seen together.

So, for example, the four projects (Stuyvesant Town, New York (mid-twentieth century); Battery Park City, New York (late-twentieth century); the Avenue de l'Opéra, Paris (nineteenth century); and Vauban, Freiburg, Germany (late-twentieth and early twenty-first century) follow each other in the book. This sequence, putting projects with very different characteristics next to each other, helps the reader understand differences in institutional frameworks (what the authors call ‘Project Organization/Team Structure’) in their relationships to morphological characteristics.

Stuyvesant Town, for example, was developed just after the Second World War as a single, large investment by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, and could therefore achieve a simple overall form with repetitive high-rise buildings – reminiscent of Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin for Paris. On the other hand, following the failure to find such a single investor for the Battery Park City project, originally designed as a modernist scheme incorporating towers on a plinth, the project was changed to allow individual investors for separate buildings, in a new plan based on smaller buildings within a traditional block arrangement. In this case, a project that is sometimes characterized as ‘traditional’ planning turns out to have been the result of a particular financing arrangement.

In a quite different manner, the development of Belgravia in London (and similar districts laid out under the authority of a leasehold system) allowed for the continuing imposition of high design standards over time, resulting in a highly coherent building fabric that persists to this day. Belgravia, first laid out in 1812, is the oldest project described in the book and perhaps the most surprising to find. But its inclusion makes sense given the intention of the authors to combine process and product. One of the values of the book is the consistent explanation of these kinds of relationships between the

institutional framework of projects and the physical results themselves.

The morphological characteristics of each project are clearly illustrated with a consistent format that includes four process diagrams (including the situation before the intervention, plot subdivisions, planning prescriptions for buildings on the plots, and the final state of the projects) and four analysis diagrams (including building uses, green space, transport and the street network). These diagrams as well as aerial views at the scale of 1:10 000 and figure-ground drawings at the scale of 1:5000 are consistent from project to project, allowing for ready comparisons. The case studies also include plans of typical buildings, with explanations of how features of urban morphology affect building designs themselves. Here as well, the connection is made to the institutional framework, so that for example in the case of Vauban, 'architecturally, the multitude of participating interests has led to a multitude of built solutions' (p. 95).

In addition to the types of maps and diagrams that are common to each case study, ample historical and current images help provide a complete picture of each project.

The concise writing, clear and consistent illustrations, and coverage of each project in a holistic way that includes politics, finance, urban morphology and building typology should make this book a useful reference for students and professionals alike. The word 'handbook' in the title is perhaps a misnomer, as the book does not lay out a simple set of procedures for urban design. But with a choice of case studies that span history and provide a variety of strategies for implementation and an equally wide variety of physical results, the book will prove to be a useful reference both for students and for the various professionals who have a hand in shaping cities.

*Howard Davis, Department of Architecture,
University of Oregon, Eugene, OR 97403, USA.
E-mail: hdavis@uoregon.edu*

A blessing in disguise: war and town planning in Europe, 1940-1945 edited by *Jörn Düwel* and *Nils Gutschow*, Dom Publishers, Berlin, Germany, 2013, 416 pp. ISBN 978-3-86922-295-0.

It is now 68 years since the end of the Second

World War and, whilst living survivors are becoming fewer and their memories are beginning to recede, new work continues to emerge covering the physical and sociological impact of the wartime destruction; for example by Richard Overly (2013). Detailed studies exploring the various efforts made in reconstructing urban environments following wartime devastation also persist in a range of academic disciplines. Although much has been written about the impact within Europe of replanning after the Second World War – both in terms of the planning process and the physical product – Düwel and Gutschow's lavish new volume provides fresh perspectives on the contested nature of reconstruction planning and its impact on urban form during the mid-twentieth century. Drawing on recently-unearthed and/or newly-interpreted data, this collection of essays is particularly impressive and visually striking. The unusually large page size helps in this regard as it allows for the high-quality colour reproduction of key maps, plans, and artistic representations associated with European reconstruction ideas. These form the central underpinnings of this book, and demonstrate the high standards of graphic representation and the concepts behind town planning during and after the Second World War. Chapters are provided by both renowned experts in the field and recent PhD researchers; furthermore, one of the book's editors, Gutschow, has a direct family connection to the debate surrounding post-war European reconstruction as his father was the wartime city architect-planner of Hamburg.

Three early chapters trace the contours of key debates relevant to European planning during the early part of the twentieth century; the visions of planning, and the politics associated with aerial and land warfare and of replanning are all explored. These chapters provide innovative perspectives on 'reconstruction' as a product of both the political and military histories of the nature and extent of destruction, and the political and personal ideologies of the planners and others involved. The beautifully-illustrated collection of essays by Düwel *et al.* provides a perceptive analysis of the ideas and convictions on which post-war urban planning was modelled; here it is suggested that 'we must ask again and again: what expectations did the 'professional experts' ... have of the city – and for future society' (p. 10). There is an insightful and provocative discussion of bombing as 'opportunity', despite how unpalatable this concept might be to those who lost family, friends and homes. This point is reaffirmed by Kuchenbuch in an instructive chapter in which he discusses

the ways in which ideas for reconstruction are represented by diagrams as a means of communicating the 'hopes and expectations of [European] planners' (p. 55).

Whilst several chapters graphically disentangle the considerable differences in ideology and opinion between 'expert' planners, politicians, architectural theorists and others involved in conceptualizing and representing ideas for the future city, perhaps rather less attention is given to the perspectives or reactions of those people and communities that were being 'planned for'. Although each of the essays included in this text is underpinned by a hugely detailed and richly informative analysis of 'official' archival accounts, plans, maps, sketches, diagrams and other representations, there are also obvious dangers implicit in assembling planning histories that rely mainly on such sources. Accounts of the process of wartime and post-war urban planning that are reliant on these sources arguably offer a somewhat distanced view, removed from the experiences of those residents living, working and socializing in bomb-damaged and reconstructed cities. However, Hewitt's chapter on the destruction and subsequent replanning of Königsberg/Kaliningrad helpfully brings into question the view that wartime destruction should be interpreted as an 'opportunity' for planners to pursue such visioning with unbridled fervour, posing the question 'can planning be described as ... an ethical and responsible process, when it totally ignores the lives and places, as lived?' (p. 102).

Several detailed chapters discuss the individual cases of Rotterdam, Hamburg and Königsberg/Kaliningrad. These chapters are perhaps the key strength of the volume. For example, Wagenaar's chapter unpicking the two different reconstruction plans designed during the German occupation of Rotterdam by the Head of the Municipal Town Planning Office, Willem Gerrit Witteveen, and his colleague and successor, Cornelis van Traa, is richly illuminating. It explains how the replanning process came to be shaped by a complex and intricate mesh of military, political, economic, personal and professional ideas. Whereas the assiduously assembled architectural work of Witteveen stressed the importance of defining the qualities of urban form in the streets, squares, and parkways that came to characterize Rotterdam's historic public spaces (p. 126), Wagenaar draws attention to the contrasting personal design ambitions of Van Traa which sought to 'relegate the aesthetic qualities of urbanism' in favour of 'functional zoning and the design of traffic

systems' (p. 126). There were understandable concerns from local businessmen that a post-liberation plan for Rotterdam, based on Witteveen's intricate network of aesthetic rules and regulations (p. 127), would dangerously inhibit the economic functioning of the post-war city.

The detailed chapters are supported by overviews of Germany, England, Vichy France, and the USSR. The overview chapters are informative but perhaps less novel, though it is also instructive to read of the significance of international connections and how, for example, German planners were conscious of Donald Gibson's plans for the reconstruction of Coventry as early as 1941. These chapters are also particularly useful in allowing the reader to draw comparisons between the process and product of replanning.

This volume was designed to accompany an exhibition held in Hamburg in late 2013, which also explains the book's main focus on Germany and on Hamburg itself; but one might question whether the key messages from each of the excellently-produced chapters will be interpreted by readers beyond those already working in the field of post-catastrophe reconstruction. Furthermore, chapters tend to start and end rather suddenly. Clearer chapter conclusions could have been provided; and the links between chapters might have also been made stronger. Individually, these are very small issues that should not detract from the overall quality of the book. However, greater attention to the links between chapters might have helped to guide readers into making connections across and between the different case studies. There are, inevitably, some rather minor errors that might have been identified by thorough proof-reading; there is some repetition of material within and between chapters, though perhaps these points are the unavoidable consequence of producing such a far-reaching multinational and multilingual work of this nature.

Notwithstanding these observations, this book makes a substantial contribution to several academic and practice fields: not just to the sub-discipline of post-war reconstruction planning, but to wider understanding of twentieth-century planning history; the shaping and re-shaping of urban form and, lastly, to the way in which planning ideas were (and could be) communicated amongst professionals and to a wider public.

Reference

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David Adams, *Birmingham School of the Built Environment, Birmingham City University, Millennium Point, Curzon Street, Birmingham B4 7XG, UK. E-mail: david.adams@bcu.ac.uk*

Living over the store: architecture and local urban life, by *Howard Davis*, Routledge, Abingdon, UK, 2012, 251 pp. ISBN-978-0-415-78316-3.

Howard Davis once remarked that to write a book takes him numerous years. This is particularly evident in *Living over the store*, a book whose origins are rooted in his hometown where as a child he was able to witness the versatility of the shophouse – the principal focus of this book.

In choosing the methods and tools necessary for performing a morphological analysis, Davis demonstrates a preference for the Italian school of urban morphology to define what a shophouse is: a building type that at its most basic level combines a first-floor dwelling with a ground-floor working space. As the author notes, this building type accommodates two of the most basic activities performed by human beings.

The book is divided into three parts. The first section presents the shophouse as a global phenomenon. The second section discusses the performance of this construction in the daily life of citizens. The third section investigates the reasons for the shophouse's relative demise within the contemporary urban scene.

The first part of *Living over the store* covers the surviving basic types of shophouse in Asia, southern and northern Europe, Britain, and North America. The presentation of each region includes a literary quotation carefully selected to describe and illuminate aspects of users' daily lives. The book is generously illustrated with photographs and plans. These include beautiful three-dimensional diagrams that show evolutionary aspects of the basic types. Every example of a shophouse in a specific location (for example, Kyoto, Rome, Lübeck, London, New York, and Portland) is presented in the form of interviews with residents, analysis of pictures and plans, and documentary research carried out in registration offices and local planning agencies. The author is consequently able to confirm that although buildings differ from region to region they possess commonalities. These include location, plots perpendicular to streets or canals, the use of upper floors for warehousing, and the use of lower floors for both

dwelling and commercial purposes.

While drawing comparisons between regions, Davis demonstrates that the shophouse is a global phenomenon adopted by many civilizations over the course of centuries. Moreover, the development of this building type with its mixed-use activities often performed in small spaces, Davis believes occurs owing to a combination of factors, such as the correct choice of site and location in a street block, and a distinct mode of implementation within a neighbourhood. It thus becomes apparent that the shophouse not only represents a point of convergence and communication between users, consumers, traders, and residents, but also functions as a diversified living space. Owing to this versatility it fits the categories suggested by Jacobs and Alexander by constituting a space that accommodates various qualitative attributes. These qualities in turn promote urban diversity by integrating physical space, and engendering partnerships and general economic activity. As well as acknowledging the work developed by Jacobs and Alexander, Davis also cites Rapoport whose work emphasizes the intrinsic value of universal building characteristics being shared by different cultures. In summary, as Davis makes clear, it is almost as if there were common forces acting upon the construction of these quintessential urban buildings: hence the consequent common results of shophouses around the world. Notably too, Davis surmises as to whether the object of his research might be a cultural example of a *world type* present in the minds of human beings, a building type constructed, shared and incorporated into a diversity of cultures by individuals within different societies.

On analysing other arguments that explain the shophouse's longevity and permanence, Davis addresses further issues related to its implementation in streets and neighbourhoods – suggesting that in a sense it reflects the qualities embedded in urban areas. Exploring as well the architecture of hybrid types, Davis presents examples of common building design attributes found in different cultures. In this context the solutions implemented by architects relating to, for instance, access and strategies employed for accommodating public and private uses in the same space, are also highlighted, albeit in conjunction with the shophouse's role as a small-scale, private contribution to urban sustainability and local economic activity. Curiously, as the author notes, very few of these elements in shophouses have been recognized or valued in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and, as a consequence, the shophouse has not received the

attention from researchers and scholars that it deserves. This, he implies, might be due to its simplicity, moderate scale, and humble usage which perhaps renders it inconsequential to many researchers. However, as he also points out, the shophouse as an element of social congregation, and one that reflects the choices and daily habits of people, indeed does merit our attention.

In the final part of *Living over the store* the decisions undertaken by public bodies that have served to privilege single use at the expense of mixed use are addressed. The blame for this planning mistake is attributed to the influence of modernism, and the adoption of zoning in modern cities. Recognition, however, is given to the fact that over time this practice has been increasingly criticized for creating artificial environments in cities, at the expense of vibrant communities. One of the possible alternatives to the problematic zoning of cities, as the author emphasizes, is the re-adoption of the shophouse and, in a sense, *Living over the store* represents a manifesto advocating a reappraisal of this sustainable feature of our metropolises. Finally, it is not surprising to be told that a book of this nature requires a great deal of investment of time. However, the result in this case needs to be commended for its depth and detail. It not only bridges a gap in this type of study, but also serves as a compelling and fascinating reference for scholars and researchers.

Staël de Alvarenga Pereira Costa, Escola de Arquitetura, Departamento de Urbanismo, Rua Paraíba 697 Sala 404 c. 30.130.140 Belo Horizonte/MG/ Brasil. E-mail: spcosta@arq.ufmg.br

A evolução das formas urbanas de Lisboa e do Porto nos séculos XIX e XX by *Vítor Manuel Araújo de Oliveira*, Universidade Porto Editorial, Porto, Portugal, 2013, 205pp. ISBN 978-989-746-007-4.

The study of urban form from a historical standpoint contains many little-explored aspects, especially relating to the use of graphic representations as a source of information and method of analysis. Vítor Oliveira's book makes a major contribution to rectifying this deficiency by the method he adopts and the excellent review of the literature on the evolution of urban form that he

provides.

Starting with two examples – Lisbon and Porto, two major Portuguese cities – Oliveira creates a basis for discussing the theories and scope for exploring the evolution of urban form. Moreover, he uses a new, almost unknown, method: cartography redrawn. In this light he questions the importance of cartography and iconography as sources for urban form study, and proposes to 'redesign' the cartographic source as a method for examining urban form. Important topics are discussed that are given little insight in other academic fields. By highlighting urban form as an object indispensable for urban planning the author opens a new perspective for urban study.

The book is structured in several parts. There is a literature review and section on theoretical substantiation, which is broad in its coverage but incorporates several discussions on the evolution of urban form. In relation to methodology the author focuses on such matters as historical reconstruction, the study of historical documents, and archaeological projects. His important literature review connects urban planning with urban morphology. It raises numerous issues concerning the concept of typology and the relationship between urban form and human activities that result from the historical processes of formation and transformation. He also analyses urban form through the study of Italian typology and French urban form, the normative approach, and space syntax. Reviewing the range of approaches in search of how best to examine urban form, the author considers how these approaches can be applied to understanding Portuguese urban morphology.

However, despite the excellent theoretical-methodological analysis of the study of urban form and its relationship to urban planning, the author does not maintain the same depth of analysis in his examination of the cities of Lisbon and Porto. Here the book becomes more descriptive than analytical, and this presents a problem in relation to the images employed. Oliveira makes clear the importance of cartography and iconography in urban studies, but presents plans that are sometimes too small. This hinders understanding of urban processes in the two cities, particularly for any reader who does not have intimate knowledge of them. Unfortunately the descriptions of the opening of the avenues and streets that accompanied the growth of the two cities are hard to comprehend without proper graphical representations. One cannot readily appreciate the growth of the cities by superimposing plans that are over-reduced in size. Larger-scale plans are required. Furthermore, the

tables presented in Chapters 4 and 5 could be better understood if accompanied by explanatory drawings of the regions to which they refer. Detailed information on parts of Lisbon and Porto would have helped the reader to appreciate how their urban structure has been changed over the past two centuries or so.

Nevertheless, the book presents a new methodology that will be beneficial to urban historians. The method that has been applied to these Portuguese cities opens the possibility of further case studies employing a similar approach.

This book enables different phases of urban development to be recognized in Portugal. The utilization of plans and their redesign gives a fresh understanding of different urban forms. There is

the basis here for identifying and appreciating the morphological strategies adopted in Lisbon and Porto. Cartographic redesign, as the author states, is a key to not only studying the form of cities but can be used as a tool applicable to urban planning within the contemporary city. And it is here that Oliveira's book makes a major contribution to the study of urban form: not just in what it presents, but also in what it facilitates in the future.

Eloísa Petti Pinheiro, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Arquitetura e Urbanismo, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Rua Miguel Lemos 51 ap. 503, Copacabana, Rio de Janeiro-RJ, 22071-000, Brazil. E-mail: eloisapetti@gmail.com

ISUF 2014: Our common future in urban morphology

The Twenty-First International Seminar on Urban Form (ISUF2014), hosted by the Faculty of Engineering of the University of Porto, will take place in Porto, Portugal, from 3 to 6 July 2014. The theme of the conference is 'Our common future in urban morphology' and topics to be covered include:

- Urban morphological theory
- Urban morphological methods and techniques
- The evolution of urban form
- Agents of change
- Revisiting urban morphological classics
- Multidisciplinarity in urban morphology
- Comparative studies of urban form

- Integrated approaches
- Teaching urban form
- The relations between research and practice (planning, regeneration, conservation)

The deadline for registration and fee payment is 31 May 2014. Further information is available on the Conference website (isuf2014.fe.up.pt/).

Post-conference excursions will take place in Lisbon (including the Monastery of the Hieronymites and the Tower of Belém), the historic centre of Guimarães, and the Alto Douro wine region. All these places are represented in the World Heritage List.

Meeting of the Council of ISUF

The next meeting of the Council of ISUF will take place during the Conference of ISUF to be held in Porto, Portugal 3 to 6 July 2014. Any matters that members of ISUF wish to bring to the attention of the Secretary-General of ISUF, Dr Kai Gu, should

be communicated to him at the School of Architecture and Planning, University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland, New Zealand (e-mail: k.gu@auckland.ac.nz) by 1 June 2014.
