



## BOOK REVIEWS

**Public Istanbul: spaces and spheres of the urban**, edited by *Frank Eckardt* and *Kathrin Wildner*, Transcript Verlag, Bielefeld, Germany, 2008, 352 pp. ISBN 978-3-89942-865-0.

This comprehensive multi-disciplinary study focuses on the transformation of urban space in Istanbul and, to a lesser degree, Turkey more generally. Although it is intended to be a compilation of contemporary discussions on Istanbul rather than a complete survey of the city, it nonetheless can be evaluated as a crucial initial step in stimulating further discussions concerning Istanbul's recent urban environmental changes. Consisting of 17 papers that collectively form a detailed discussion of the construction and constitution of public spaces in Istanbul, *Public Istanbul* is organized into two parts: 'Contested spaces' and 'Experiencing Istanbul'. The first concentrates on geographical and sociological perspectives; the second is concerned with everyday life at the micro level. Four discussion themes are presented: 'Divided Istanbul', 'Experiencing Istanbul', 'Planning Istanbul' and 'Representation of Istanbul'.

Interpreting Istanbul as an essentially European metropolis, the book addresses the notion of contested urban space between the processes of globalization and local urban planning projects. Efforts to overcome such polarizations as between historical and contemporary, centre and periphery, local and global, and traditional and modern are emphasized. The spontaneous, informal growth of the city as a consequence of the conflicts between national politics and global competition is in this way brought out. In line with contemporary scholarly thought, urban space is not pictured simply as a static container but rather as a complex evolutionary entity subject to a broad variety of influences.

The book begins with a discussion by Eckardt of globalization and social transformation in Istanbul focusing upon the metaphor of the Bosphorus and Galata Bridges – two symbols of 'publicness' that link Europe with Asia. The following two chapters illustrate the city's transitional social maps by analysing Guvenc's *Istanbul's metropolitan area atlas* and the emergent process of gentrification which, as Yucesoy reveals, has led to a conflict regarding the notions of openness and accessibility of urban spaces in places such as Cihangir and Galata. In subsequent chapters a number of authors, including Alkan, Esen and Rieniets, tackle a variety of subjects of interest to urban morphologists, including living spaces, social expectations and social fragmentation, gated communities, the role of a new spatial typology, green spaces alongside motorways, and attitudes to historical heritage.

The second part of the book, 'Experiencing Istanbul', opens with Wildner's introduction to alternative perspectives on Istanbul. Ignoring what may be said to be the common perceptions of the city, for example its historic silhouette, its ferries, and its tower blocks within the CBD, Wildner instead focuses on such matters as population density, commodity flows, and communication and interaction. She does this by using research methods of an ethnographic type, thereby establishing a paradigm shift from a panoramic (macro-scale) conception to a street-level (micro-scale) perception of Istanbul. The subsequent chapters continue this analytical perspective in order to scrutinize Istanbul's socio-spatial dimensions. Taking the fragmentation of urban space in Istanbul as its subject, Aksoy's 'Istanbul's worldliness' focuses on the modernization policies of the peripheral municipality of Esenyurt. Here she argues that Istanbul is becoming a 'dual city' within which urban transformation is a consump-

tion experience in which a new lifestyle is brought about at the expense of a loss of diversity and plurality of life forms.

Next, attention is given by Riedler to the isolation and marginalization of temporary labour migrants in the late-nineteenth century with reference to associated spatial typologies. Discussing 'otherness' and its association with the shaping of urban space in Istanbul, Grabolle-Celiker evaluates the notion of 'the public' and how it permeates individual lives to different degrees through discourses of gender and identity. Similarly, Ozdil neatly portrays how one distinct social group, West African immigrants, create new spaces and new forms of social relations as a form of resistance to their exclusion from formal citizenship. Taking the issues of race and gender further, Prehl discusses the rapid gentrification of Hayriye Cikmazi where gypsies and unemployed migrants from East Anatolia used to live; and with reference to spatial codes of urban gendered cartography Cicekoglu explores the alienation of women in public space. The book closes with Bosch's chapter on 'Subjects that don't count: places that are not important', which introduces works from the realm of media art so as to probe issues of otherness and migration.

Though not directly intended for the readers and followers of, say, Conzenian morphological analysis, *Public Istanbul* lays the socio-spatial foundations of transformations of urban form. Despite its limited number of illustrations, it successfully highlights non-tangible motives that shape tangible aspects of the urban environment. With its strong references to aspects of philosophy, *Public Istanbul* skilfully bridges from the domains of sociology, economy, politics and urban history to those of city planning and urban design. Although at first sight it may appear to lack coherence owing to its breadth of subject matter, *Public Istanbul* is an important contribution to the existing literature on Istanbul's urban transformation because of its alternative insights and critical appraisal of spatial changes at the micro-scale. Therefore, for scholars who wish to cast light on the socio-spatial structure and processes that directly condition the form of urban space, or to unveil current events and recent historical developments in global centres in various parts of the world, this book is an excellent choice.

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**From Zangan to Zanjan** (in Persian) by Kyoumars Habibi, Ahmad Pourahmad and Abolfazl Meshkini, University of Zanjan, Zanjan, Iran, 2008, 394 pp. ISBN 978-969-8885-13-2.

*From Zangan to Zanjan* discusses several themes central to analyzing the evolution of cities. It also provides a historical analysis of Zangan in what is today the Zanjan Province of north-west Iran, in so doing explaining how this historic city has been transformed to its present-day metropolitan condition. For the authors the current state of Zanjan is definable through three structural/spatial layers within the city, 'old areas', 'middle quarters' and 'marginal districts', which together form the analytical bedrock upon which *From Zangan to Zanjan* sits. Partly based on Kyoumars Habib's University of Tehran doctoral thesis (entitled 'An evaluation of the rehabilitation of the historic core of cities through GIS: a case study of Zanjan') this book offers much original material on Iranian urban morphology and in so doing relates the development of Zanjan, a noted historic city in Iran, to both theoretical perspectives of urban design and urban development in practice.

Organized into seven chapters the opening chapter on 'The concepts of urban development' provides the reader with a background to the general ideas and strategies of urban planning and the management of historic urban places in the Iranian context. Explaining the process of urban change in relation to, for instance, the rise of modernity and national modernization, the chapter relies heavily on the works of various scholars to lay the foundation for subsequent analytical chapters. In the second chapter, 'Geographical setting of the city', the emphasis shifts to the geographical characteristics of Zanjan including its topography, flora, soil and geology, and climate, an element that greatly influenced the development of traditional urban form in Zanjan Province. Together the first two chapters offer general information concerning the physical fabric of the city and its development, and pointers are provided as to planning principles that have shaped the city in the past.

The third chapter, on 'Changes in the city's physical fabric over time', is the investigative backbone of the book and presents in detail the growth of Zanjan, a settlement originally located in proximity to an historic commercial road between the ancient city of Ray and the Azerbaijan border to the north. The first section of this chapter describes the nature and significance of the earliest images of

the city. The city acted as an important economic node in the region and had a strategic location along a prominent north-south roadway within the west of Iran. It was destroyed and then renovated numerous times before the Qajar dynasty (1794-1925). In the last part of the chapter, which mainly deals with the history of modernization, the shift from organic patterns of urban development to the explicit use of modern planning principles is spelled out, giving particular attention to the Pahlavi dynasty (1925-1941) when attempts were made to provide Iran's rapidly-growing urban population with a better quality of life. A dramatic reduction in the growth of traditional parts of Zangan and an acceleration in the growth of newer parts of the city are described. Several factors are considered by the authors as having affected early-twentieth century Zangan's socio-spatial changes. These include the introduction of cheap rail fares for the transport of goods from Tehran to Turkey, the development of a regional train system to allow for the fast movement of passengers between the major cities in Zangan Province, and a land reform strategy, known as the 'Shah's white revolution', which accelerated population migration and helped change the pattern of urban development from a compact and labyrinth-like urban form to one of greater urban sprawl and informal development. Within this important chapter the authors provide an account of the policies of authorities in Iran and the challenge of urban development that they faced as they endeavoured to modernize the nation. They argue that the preparation of a master plan for Zangan was a pragmatic means to solve the city's many problems, such as the degradation of the socio-spatial character of the traditional city, and to simultaneously embrace the international modernism movement. The master plan of the city contrasted markedly with that of the traditional city and is interpreted as granting a foundation for further planned urban development following the Islamic Revolution and the end of the Eight Years War between Iran and Iraq in the second half of the twentieth century.

The modern transformation of Zangan, which imposed a new spatial structure upon an historic city, not only redefined the appearance and plan of the place but is shown to have also influenced the socio-spatial nature of Zangan's bazaar, the traditional hub of Iranian cities. Now the bazaar was no longer defined by its former 'hedonistic function' (Alemi, 1991), but rather it became an urban space lined with commercial activities and other functions borrowed from Western countries. In socio-spatial terms this development led not only

to the decline of the traditional bazaar, which subsequently only maintained a social function for those of low income, but ultimately the advent of modern planning: the traditional form and life of Zangan was displaced, reflecting the attitudes of the authorities to implementing modes of urban design derived from contemporary concepts of urban planning.

The chapters following the central analytical section of the book deal with some general themes specific to urban development plans in Zangan (for example, matters of socio-economics, housing characteristics, and different urban development scenarios) but little is provided on the complexity of spatial, social and political interactions, and their effects on the shape of the local urban environment. Nonetheless, the authors reveal the great potential for urban morphological exploration of Iranian cities and their social structures, in particular for analyzing and understanding their environmental histories and appraising the interventionist policies of modern political elites. Those wishing to learn more about changing patterns of urban development, especially concerning the application of modern strategic plans to old settlements, will find that *From Zangan to Zangan* is an important guide book.

## Reference

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**Cities in modernity: representations and productions of metropolitan space, 1840-1930** by *Richard Dennis*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, England, 2008, 452 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-46841-1.

Studies in historical geography have made a major contribution to the expansion of urban historiography during the past few decades. As H. J. Dyos, the founder of British urban history

recognized, the value of historical geography predominantly lies in its attention to exploring and explaining the shape and structure of urban space which, reasoned Dyos as long ago as the 1960s, aided scholars fascinated by the urban past to better grasp the multiplicity of factors that operate within, and influence the character of, urban places. Such has been the impact of historical geography's approaches and methodologies upon urban historical studies, at least in Britain, that it nowadays forms the backbone of urban historical writing. Accordingly, social scientific approaches, concepts and methodologies comfortably sit alongside staple perspectives from social and economic history in the analytical armoury of the present-day urban historian interested in the evolution of communities.

Arising from the materialization of such a scholarly landscape are scholars who have collectively not only removed former historiographical barriers, such as localism and antiquarianism, but more to the point brought a comprehensive rethinking of the standpoint of urban historical studies in relation to the meaning and development of communities. With work ranging from the social composition of communities in the past to the design and evolution of urban forms during particular eras, scholars such as Richard Dennis have to all intents and purposes brought a rethinking of how to carry out historical analysis and how to appraise a variety of urban-based phenomena, including the structure of urban space. In the case of Dennis's latest work, *Cities in modernity*, a construal of how urban space is manufactured is put forward; one that is offered within the chronological context of modernity's manifestation. Leaning upon a wide range of primary sources and utilizing an array of outlooks and concepts in order to explicate how urban spaces are both produced and represented, Dennis provides an engaging and thought-provoking narrative that will be of interest to those absorbed by cultural advancement, spatial construction and urban transformation, notwithstanding whether or not they define themselves as historians.

*Cities in modernity* consists of twelve chapters which span such subjects as ideas of progress, surveying cities, improving streets, suburban growth, shopping and office geographies, and the picturing of urban place. Focusing geographically upon 'modern cities' in Britain and North America between 1840 and 1930, particular consideration is given to London, New York and Toronto, albeit with occasional references to large metropolises like Chicago, Montreal and Paris, so that notions of

what constitute the modern self and the formation of urban space within environments may be elucidated. In light of such an investigative angle, Dennis not only emphasizes, for instance, the planning, construction and use of types of urban spaces within urban cores and peripheries, or depictions of environments and the people who use them, but he also conceptualizes urban space as an artefact resulting from political, economic, social and cultural courses of action and which through its structures, he argues, provides both opportunities and constraints for the further evolution of those aforesaid processes.

In many regards *Cities in modernity* is not only an interpretation of urban transformation and the fashioning of urban space under the lights of modernity but is also an exploration of social strains borne from, and associated with, the construction and imagery of urban space. The fragmentation of public and private domains receives much attention, as do methods to counteract problems of social division, with one notable example coming in the economic and cultural explanation of department store design in Toronto in the early 1900s (pp. 304-8) which, Dennis contends, was aimed at encouraging consumerism through gender and class interaction. Similarly, he asserts that bridges should be seen as mechanisms to establish the assimilation of people within cities (pp. 10-20) due to their capacity to allow persons based on different banks of a waterway to more easily interact. They also, in some instances, act as metropolitan icons which fuse together metropolitan dwellers irrespective of class, race, age or gender. The Brooklyn Bridge is cited as a structure that literally pulled New Yorkers together. London's Tower Bridge, in spite of vociferous disparagement from within the architectural community given its seemingly archaic design form, came to act as an emblem for the national and imperial capital city.

Despite not necessarily being inspired by the works and ideas of those working within the genre of urban morphology, *Cities in modernity* nonetheless leans upon concepts embedded in studies of urban form and has much to offer readers interested in the cultural manufacture of urban space. Expertly researched and drawing on a variety of source materials, there is much for scholars of urban and cultural studies, geography, and history to take from this book. Dennis should be congratulated for composing a clear and lively account of spatial production, consumption and improvement. He exemplifies the contention, observed decades earlier by Dyos, of the value of

spatial analysis in appreciating the urban historical past.

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**Il paesaggio delle differenze: architettura, città e territorio nella nuova era globale** by Marco Maretto, Edizioni ETS, Pisa, Italy, 2008, 191 pp. ISBN 978-884672035-1.

*Dans le développement d'une discipline, il est des moments où une synthèse, fût-elle en apparence prématurée, rend plus de services que beaucoup de travaux d'analyse* (Bloch, 1931, p. 11).

This quotation indicates the kind of endeavour Marco Maretto has undertaken in this book. He has synthesized much of the material produced in his years of study, tuition, and design practice.

Son of the renowned architect Paolo Maretto, and himself an architect, Maretto has an interesting background. He has designed fine, contemporary structures based on the formative process of developing architectural types, has held courses in architectural design in the faculties of Rome and Parma, conducted research on built landscapes in different parts of Italy, and is very well travelled around the world. He is also well versed in recording the character of places; collecting together evidence on a diversity of types of sites, architecture, and people. The resulting study, *Il paesaggio delle differenze: architettura, città e territorio nella nuova era globale*, has a sound structure and deals with problems of analysing territorial form in an era when territorial structure seems lost, fragmented, and dispersed, owing to the effects of globalization.

The main goal is ambitious: the investigation of one of the most conspicuous problems (perhaps *the* problem) of built landscape reading – the knowledge of identity, its dialectical relation to the notion of difference, and its formation process. In other words, the thesis provided by Maretto is not only concerned with the problem of diversity in the physical description of different territories, but with trying to create a sort of metaphysics of that diversity; a theory in which every fact finds its place in a general speculative framework. The theme is thus a very wide one, involving different

aspects: philosophical, anthropological and architectural.

Edmund Husserl once explained the origin of phenomenology as being two phases of knowledge: the *empirical* intuition which considers the individual objects, and the *categorical*, which places any peculiar object in a universal context and in so doing giving common meaning. Maretto seems to employ the same concept in investigating diversity in built landscapes at different scales, starting with distinguishing the empirical knowledge of 'matter' from the categorical notion of 'material', which thereby allows for the collection of materials and their subsequent placing in categories distinguishable by their character and purpose. In a similar way the natural soil is transformed into a territory by the practical awareness of people. This is achieved first through the use of material, and secondly by knowledge of its individuality. Though these are topics well explored by researchers of the Muratorian School, Maretto places them in a contemporary context, thereby giving them fresh meaning.

The current Italian debate about the future of architecture is dominated by two opposing ideas. One is the transforming of the built landscape into 'spectacle', accepting the disintegration of territorial form as unavoidable and producing self-seeking objects unable to shape an urban frame. The other is the rise of so-called 'archistars': famous architects who impose, as in the visual arts or advertising, objects they invent through the iconic power of their images – objects noted by critics as being 'luxury architecture' because they are wasteful of resources. The recent success of the book *Contro l'architettura* (*Against architecture*) by La Cecla is a symptom of the broad interest in this second perspective, even if no real solution to the problem seems to be proposed at the moment. However, change is occurring associated with the crisis in the international stock market, the collapse of a number of major banks, and the first global trading recession since 1982. These changes have drawn attention to the need for the wiser employment of the planet's resources, and hence created a new climate for the work of architects. Now even the myth of virtuality, which has so fascinated the recent generation of architects, seems to be quickly decaying.

To understand the usefulness of Maretto's work, we must consider its place in this quickly shifting context: it is a small but precious indicator of how the present architectural generation is rethinking the role of contemporary design, reconsidering such long abandoned, powerful ideas as continuity in the

built landscape, and showing awareness of processes that form territorial organisms.

Following the main stream of the research conducted by Saverio Muratori, Gianfranco Caniggia and his father Paolo Maretto, and updated by a small group of Italian architects, Maretto suggests an almost forgotten way forward. This concerns the identity of reading and designing, and the recognition of the actual landscape as the consequence of historical processes still operating in a crisis of transformation. The originality of Maretto's proposal emanates from the starting point of his thinking: not 'identity', the sum of common characters distinguishing groups and classes, but its dialectical opposite and complementary notion of 'differences'. This notion seems to correspond to the postmodern condition of plurality of forms and languages, investigated by F. Lyotard. This allows a partial updating of the idea of 'continuity', which in Muratorian theories is based on historical and territorial homogeneity (the concepts of *fase storica* and *area culturale*). The tradition, itself a central topic in studies of the permanence of built landscape forms, could be regarded as a transmission of differences. The book first takes into account the origin of dwellings and then, in the following chapter, analyses the territorial organism. Avoiding the Muratorian School's consuetude of investigating in succession the four traditional scales – building, tissue, urban organism, territorial organism – Maretto emphasizes the forming of domestic space as the deepest possible relationship between a civilization and its environmental context. In this way the urban organism is explained as an individual interpretation of a common territorial language whose character is shown by its urban tissue and its monuments.

This is a timely book. Among its many qualities is the flowing style of writing which allows for easy reading even if readers are unaware of Muratorian theories. Among the very few possible weaknesses is the bibliography, which mostly reports the texts quoted: it is less 'dedicated' than one would expect in a work of this standard.

## Reference

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**To scale: one hundred urban plans** by Eric J. Jenkins, Routledge, New York, USA, 2008, 225 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-95401-3 (pbk), ISBN 978-0-415-95400-6 (hbk).

As a teacher, researcher or practitioner – or just someone who is interested in urban form – we often try to understand a place by comparing it to somewhere else that we know. To make sense, and to be of any use, such comparisons need some consistency and commonality.

*To scale* allows a quick, easy and direct comparison between places. It consists largely of 100 figure-ground plans, each covering a 500 x 500 m sample area of the centre of 78 cities worldwide. The page size (250 x 250 mm) is larger than standard to facilitate these reproductions. This is its novelty and major contribution for urban morphological study and teaching. The fact that the figure-ground plans are all drawn to the same scale is one essential asset, and the main point of the book; but the supporting text prompts the reader to think about what can be learnt from the representation of these spaces. It is therefore a resource for all environmental professionals interested in patterns of space and place – and it will be invaluable for students.

The figure-ground plans allow striking comparisons and contrasts; no more so, for example, than where various street and space patterns in Paris (nos 63-67) are viewed before Le Corbusier's intended *Plan Voisin* (no. 68). In the less familiar actual townscapes, the images make the reader contemplate the relationship between built forms and the spaces that are created in between, the significance of scale and the symbiotic relationship between the two. Moreover, these raise questions of how large, in terms of height, mass and volume, the buildings represented by the black shading should be in order to successfully and comfortably enclose and contain the white spaces, and what activities both building and void could accommodate. As well as a brief commentary, most plans have accompanying black and white photographs and line drawings to help with the visualization and understanding of the places.

This book can, and should, help all those interested in the built environment to enquire further about the interrelationship between space and built form, how certain conditions allow spaces to become inhabited and used – which, in turn, transforms them from spaces into places – and therefore recognize how important such graphic representations can be.

It is, essentially, a very simple idea – to collect plans from different cities from around the world, arrange them alphabetically, from Amsterdam to Washington DC, and redraw them at the same scale (in this case 1:250), ‘north up’, using a consistent graphic technique. Delving a little deeper, it becomes clear that what appears simple is often more complicated to realize.

The original sources of plans are wide and varied. What are now accepted conventions, such as ‘north up’, were less so in the past. Attempting to assimilate into a common format drawings from different parts of the world, at a range of different scales and produced using a variety of drawing styles will, inevitably, produce inconsistencies. It is explained that the methodology for compilation has been rigorous, seeking ‘authoritative’ primary sources in order to increase the likelihood of accuracy.

The drawing type is based upon what is referred to as ‘modified Nolli’ plans (p. 3); that is, plans that delineate areas that are generally open to the public or are considered to be part of the ‘urban experience’. The horizontal cut is generally at 1 metre above ground level. This exposes one of the problems with figure-ground analyses, in that everything is shown as if it were on a flat plane – but these subtleties of representation are useful for students to appreciate and learn, and for the rest of us to be reminded of from time to time.

The author admits that familiarity has played a part in the selection of the places depicted. Spaces have been chosen that a range of people may have visited, although one would have to be fairly well-travelled for this to be the case. At least many may be aware of these places through their studies and education.

The spaces chosen are unambiguous – primarily secular, public, open air, and set in a dense urban context so that the void is clearly defined and contained. They are recognizable ‘outdoor rooms’ within the city, more usually a product of cultures that have greater traditions of social, open space. Other societies may identify gathering spaces based on temporal rather than spatial perimeters, and are

therefore less likely to design or draw such spaces – and so will not be represented here.

This demonstrates that the concept of public space varies from country to country, indeed from region to region, but that this, in itself, is a strength of understanding. Ultimately, physical availability and governmental bureaucracy have played their part in selection. Many countries remain unwilling to allow the United States government access to official, national plans.

The book weighs the advantages against the disadvantages of figure-ground drawing as a method of graphic analysis, concluding that ‘all representations reveal bias. There is no such thing as an objective, accurate and unbiased drawing’ (p. 4). This in no way, though, diminishes the worth and enjoyment that can be derived from it.

It may have been just bad luck, but one concern would be the physical robustness of the publication in that, during the process of reviewing a paperback version, the binding began to fall apart. For an image-based book, which is well suited to being thumbed through and consulted time and again, scanning back and forth for comparison and contrast, a fear is that it could degenerate into a loose-leaf format in no time at all – which could aid the process of comparative analysis, of course!

Nonetheless, this book is an attractive study aid, and feeds a desire to find out more about the places and spaces that are represented. To a practitioner, it may be of less obvious use – but no less interesting – and will surely encourage thought about the places within local areas of responsibility. As the author apparently suggests to his students, the next, almost irresistible, step is to draw up a known place, using the same graphic conventions. No doubt these simple techniques will help when describing, understanding and comparing examples closer to home.

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## ***Journal of Urbanism***

Recent issues of the *Journal of Urbanism* contain research papers and ‘viewpoints’ of interest to urban morphologists. In 2009, Volume 2, Number 1 contains ‘Generators of urbanity – a new paradigm for urban street design’ (Rofe, Y.Y.) and ‘Towards

modern urban housing: redefining Shanghai’s *lilong*’ (Arkaraprasertkul, N.) and Volume 2, Number 2 contains ‘Different approaches in the study of urban form’ (Pinho, P. and Oliveira, V.) and ‘Retrofitting suburban morphology’ (Williamson, J.).

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