



## BOOK NOTES

**Rubble: unearthing the history of demolition** by *Jeff Byles*, Three Rivers Press, New York, 2005, 353 pp. ISBN 978-0-307-34528-8. This is not an 'academic' text, but is an informative and entertaining perspective on a vital and little-appreciated element of urban change: the demolition industry. What motivates this industry is presented as more than mere finance: the personalities are equally important in many cases, and may determine the sensitivity (or otherwise) with which a building is erased from the familiar urban landscape. The book presents a broad overview, not quite thematic nor chronological. Some familiar examples are presented (Hausmann's Paris) along with some less familiar (the politics of clearing Chicago's inner suburbs).

**Brasilia: l'épanouissement d'une capitale** edited by *Gérard Monnier*, with photographs by *Stéphane Herbert*, Picard, Paris, France, 2006, 192 pp. ISBN 2-7084-0762-7. An examination of Brazil's federal capital city after 40 years of maturation. Several essays consider how the city's design is flourishing in certain ways within the constraints of capitalism, creating a metropolitan scale urban form; how its genuflection before the automobile has sacrificed the human scale; how its ideal plan and commitment to modern architecture has bred a special Brazilian style of architectonic modernity; how the political project produced a particular architectural typology; and reflections on analogies to, and aphorisms concerning, ethics in Brazilian urban space. The essays are assisted by a photographic album of Brasilia today. An appendix offers statistics and factoids on the city's site, chronology, population, transport pattern, and ecology.

**City and environment** by *Christopher G. Boone* and *Ali Modarres*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, PA, USA, 2006, 222 pp. ISBN 1-59213-284-7. This is a textbook for use in a range of courses addressing 'environment' and the city. What is remarkable about it, for urban morphologists, is that the first chapter, entitled 'Urban morphology and the shaping of an urban

ideal', presents a neat and concise overview of major changes in urban form in the 'Western' world from Sumer to the postmodern city (subsequent chapters address non-Western cities as well). By beginning with this overview, which in itself does not particularly highlight environmental themes, the authors set the stage for placing most of the remaining discussions – 'Population, urbanization, and environment', 'Feeding cities that consume farmland', 'Urban infrastructure: living with the consequences of past decisions and opportunities for the future', 'Healthy cities and environmental justice' and 'Green spaces, green governance, and planning' – against a backdrop of the historical dynamics and development of urban form.

**Chicago: a geography of the city and its region** by *John C. Hudson*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, IL, USA, 2006, 260 pp. ISBN 0-22635-806-2. This multi-faceted regional and historical geography addresses the city's physical and human geography from its early development to the present. It begins with the placement of the region within the 'Chicago-school' models of urban structure and change, and then returns to an analysis of those models in the context of Chicago's contemporary social and spatial forms in the final chapter. The book is amply illustrated, with more than 100 maps. In fact, it is really two books in one, as Hudson's 250-page book is followed by 102 glossy pages which constitute a book entitled *Chicago portfolio: where geography and photography meet* – a collection of 84 black and white and colour photographs originally published separately to commemorate the 2006 Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers. Hudson does not limit himself to discussions of the city of Chicago itself, but also includes analysis of the process of suburbanization in the Chicago metropolitan area, from the railroad suburbs of the mid-nineteenth century, to the shifting workplace locations and infill development of the late 1990s. He concludes the book as a whole with a revision of the 'sector model' which identifies six key trends/patterns he associates with the north-western 'sector' of the metropolitan region: the shift in the direction of suburbanization toward the north-west in the late-

twentieth century, the shift in new economic activities toward the north-west during the same period, reverse commuting and a shift from public transit to the private automobile, gentrification, new ethnic patterns, and new high-income development.

**Africa's legacies of urbanization: unfolding saga of a continent** by *Stefan Goodwin*, Lexington Books, Lanham, MD, USA, 2006, 515 pp. ISBN 0-7391-0731-3. As the title suggests, this book is more about processes of urbanization than urban form per se. However, not only does it provide an important historical contextualization (it begins with the Macedonians and ends with the twenty-first century challenges of globalization, migration, public health provision and environmental protection), but the author also has a feel for urban form and weaves discussions of the layout, scale and landscapes of African cities throughout the text. Goodwin begins by setting ecological contexts for African urbanization, and maintains ecological contexts as a theme throughout the book. His aim is to offer theorizations on African urbanization that are based more on African experience than on the only partially relevant experiences of the more traditional sources of urban theory. He also endeavours, with his far-ranging historical discussions, to dispel the popular tendency to equate Africa more with wild or rural areas than with its varied urban traditions.

**Visions of the emerald city: modernity, tradition, and the formation of Porfirian Oaxaca, Mexico** by *Mark Overmyer-Velazquez*, Duke University Press, Durham, NC, USA, 2006, 232 pp. ISBN 0-8223-3790-8. This book charts the impacts of 'modernity' on the city of Oaxaca between 1876 and 1911. During that period, this city had become a showcase for various modernizing projects launched by Porfirio Diaz. About half of the book is devoted primarily to social and political discussions, but there are also several chapters that address the uses, design and control of urban space – particularly Chapter 2 'The legible city', which charts the roles of urban planners, officials, and the police in shaping the city's newly modern space. The book should be of interest to urban specialists focusing on Mexico's turn-of-the century urbanization. However, it contains only a few maps and no other illustrations.

**Planning twentieth century capital cities** edited by *David L. A. Gordon*, Routledge, London, UK, 2006, 302 pp. ISBN 0-415-28061-3. During the twentieth century the number of national capital cities in the world exploded from 40 to over 200. This is an attractive – though Anglo-Euro-world-centric – review of the history of planning problems and outcomes in some 15 mostly mature capital cities (including 'super-capital' New York City, and two-state capital Chandigarh). The authors are architects, historians, landscape architects, planning historians, and other assorted urbanists. The chapter-length case studies include Berlin, Brasilia, Brussels, Canberra, Chandigarh, Helsinki, London, Moscow, New Delhi, Ottawa, Paris, Rome, St. Petersburg, Tokyo, Washington, and New York City. The limited range of cases is counterbalanced to some extent by a neat little essay by Peter Hall on 'Seven types of capital city' (multi-functional, global, political, former, ex-imperial, provincial, and super capitals), and an impressive, thickly comparative chapter by Lawrence J. Vale on 'The urban design of twentieth century capitals', which considers design in the context of imperial dismemberment, war and reconstruction, the search for post-colonial identity, federalism, the cultivation of urban image, and supranational challenges to urban design.

**Remaking Chinese urban form: modernity, scarcity and space, 1949-2005** by *Duanfang Lu*, Routledge, London, UK, 2006, 204 pp. ISBN 978-0-415-3450-9. This is an interesting and well-illustrated study of Chinese urbanism in the Communist era. The book is enlivened through the author's presentation of her fieldwork observations and interviews, especially with residents, and interestingly shows something of how these new spaces are used (especially Chapter 7). The issue of 'modernity' in planning and – to an extent – in architecture have created unique urban forms particularly through the development and widespread implementation of the 'work unit' (*danwei*). This is more than just a workplace but has become a cultural and social institution: a fusion of work, housing and social services unknown (save for a few experiments) in the suburbanized Westernized world. However, it was created with some difficulty as the socialist system led to scarcities of resources, thus postponing implementation of many modernist planning ideals.