
During the mid-nineteenth century, Izmir developed into a major international commercial port within the milieu of the Ottoman Empire. This book elegantly explores various forces behind Izmir’s urban change in light of its not only having status as a ‘good harbour and crossroads location between Asia Minor and the Mediterranean’, but also as a consequence of the ‘dynamic structures of power’ found within the city and nation (p. 3).

A number of themes and concepts are used to structure the book: ‘state sovereignty, citizen subjectivity and constitution of modern public’ (p.188). There are four main chapters, in addition to instructive, long introductory and epilogue sections. The ever-shifting and contingent nature of the formative period of the city is an important theme. Zandi-Sayek illustrates how the design of the city was not promoted as a coherent or crystallized product by a single group within local society. Processes between the ‘global economy and centralizing state bureaucracy in the shaping of Izmir’ (p. 44) are elucidated, and the growth of the city under the influence of local needs, national politics and global forces operating within the Ottoman Empire is critically analysed. The urban environment is not read merely as a spatial configuration but rather as a complex and intense setting for interaction among institutional structures and diverse patterns of civic engagement. ‘The role of built environment as the locus around which notions of public good and public nuisance were forged and legitimated’ (p. 191) is highlighted.

Following an explanation of technical matters relating to the study, the book commences with an introductory section that includes the foundation of Ottoman cities and salient characteristics of the multi-ethno-religious demography of Izmir. The first chapter, entitled ‘Defining citizenship’, focuses on modern regimes of property rights and citizenship, and emergent tensions between the Ottoman state and privileged individuals and groups. The second chapter, ‘Ordering the streets’, examines the emergence of modern urban services. The third chapter, ‘Shaping the waterfront’, discusses divergent interests and priorities regarding capital-intensive infrastructural ventures in Izmir with reference to the construction of the city’s quay. The last chapter, ‘Performing community’, investigates how an alliance between public rituals and the form of the built environment was formed ‘to generate and sustain divergent socio-political identities’ (p. 46).

Key factors affecting the shaping of the city’s urban form are discussed. For example, in consideration of the waterfront, the roles of both public works and local debates about the ‘public good’ are examined so that their influence on shaping the city’s form can be understood. In the chapter on the formation of community, the intricate relationship between urban rituals and urban spaces is revealed through a concise study dealing with traces of religious and national events, for example the Corpus Christi procession of 1842.

Arguments and observations on the issues shaping Izmir’s environment are gathered in the Epilogue. There is also a very extensive bibliography of urban studies relating to Mediterranean and Ottoman cities as well as on Izmir itself.

Though indirectly leaning upon the Conzenian approach to urban morphology, Ottoman Izmir successfully provides a detailed explanation of the socio-spatial foundations of urban transformation within a city that is significant in both the historical Ottoman context and in the present-day Asian-European scene. The author tackles the issue of urban change from the perspective of how a modern city came into being: ‘the territorialisation of sovereignty, the changes in the definition of

Urban Morphology (2013) 17(1), 71-6 © International Seminar on Urban Form, 2013 ISSN 1027-4278
citizenship and the rise of the public sphere reveal unmistakable parallels between the experiences of Izmir and those of contemporary cities across the globe’ (p. 193). Good quality maps are provided as well as a variety of analytical visuals, so that cartographic sources such as those produced by Graves (c. 1836), Georgiades (c.1885), Storari (c. 1855), and Saad (c.1876) can be read with reference to morphological transformations. Other visual materials have been painstakingly compiled from rare collections or significant archives.

Zandi-Sayek approaches sources both as historian and detective, meticulously and judiciously weaving together civic and cultural events and aspects of the built environment. There are parallels with Civic realism by P. G. Rowe (1997) in regard to the relation between civic matters and the built environment (Cetin, 2000), and Zandi-Sayek’s book may be of special interest to readers familiar with the work of Rowe. This book successfully addresses a variety of issues that shaped Izmir during a significant era in its past. It is a major contribution to the literature on Izmir, and for scholars wishing to study the socio-spatial dimensions of urban form more generally it is an excellent starting point.

References


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The principle by which urban streets and ownership plots are arranged with geometrical gridiron regularity, situating urban life within repetitive modules of rectangular demarcation, reaches back to antiquity. Through history it has been favoured alike by dynastic rulers imposing order from above and democratic entrepreneurs seeking personal profit from below. Yet in no region on earth has the urban grid plan been more widely nor explosively diffused than in the United States. And nowhere in America has the grid assumed so pivotal a role in the urban consciousness of a city’s population and as a model for emulation elsewhere than in New York City.

Though begun with the more relaxed layout of Dutch New Amsterdam at the southern tip of Manhattan Island, most of the city’s subsequent layout became fixed in 1811 by a commission of three specially appointed city officials. As a result, the bulk of the island was laced with a street-grid without parallel. The circumstances surrounding this unique event and the significance it had for the city’s development, given its historical success as a global economic centre, are the subject of this stimulating book. Created to accompany an exhibition at the Museum of the City of New York celebrating the bicentennial of the Commissioners’ Plan, it explores critical aspects of the plan’s genesis, prolonged and contested implementation, multifarious alteration, and profound impact on the city’s evolving urban life.

The book’s arrangement traces that of the museum exhibit, namely thirteen major themes arranged within a broad chronological sequence: Manhattan before the grid; elements of the 1811 Plan; executing the plan by ground survey; opening the streets as public ways; selling the new ownership plots; creating open public spaces; developing the East and West Sides; restoring and reinserting Broadway as a common highway; alterations to the grid north of 155th Street; modern reforms; electric and subway infrastructure tied to the grid; and the grid in contemporary thought. The book contains in bound form much of the exhibition’s substance and organization, namely clusters of graphic displays on individual topics with accompanying label text, introduced by abbreviated essays on the themes. The topical text has been written by a mix of eighteen specialists on New York’s planning history drawn from the fields of architecture, architectural history, cartography, geography, history, historical preservation, journalism, urban planning, and wildlife conservation. Sprinkled among these substantive sections are seven casual ‘reflections’, most of them about three paragraphs in length, from ‘names’ associated with institutions concerned in some way with New York’s built environment, including the current mayor.

Reading this book is akin to roaming the exhibition itself, except from the comfort of an
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...armchair, and with its great potential for shelf life. It offers a provocative tour of the historical issues surrounding the Manhattan grid, rather than a complex and sustained inquiry that a conventional analytical book might provide. Yet, for what it does, it succeeds superbly. The full colour reproductions of maps, scenic sketches and paintings, portraits, and historical and contemporary photographs, together with pertinent and well-researched textual commentary, amply bring to life the changing landscape that imposition of the street grid produced.

The value of this book for urban morphologists lies in the wealth of specific detail presented concerning the planning, technical implementation, and disputes over the framing of a street pattern across a large stretch of rural land held in the form of large estates. For a cultural context in which laissez-faire economic forces have long held sway, this was a bold assertion of urban planning without existing legal precedent. The sustained effort required over decades to continue carrying out the project until the whole island was covered in built-up streets, creating in the process a modern and massive real estate market, is well set out. Further, the concessions to local practicalities, such as the restitution of Broadway following its initial suppression and the radical insertion of Central Park, illuminate the cut-and-thrust of decision-making and exemplify the degree of flexibility evident in what otherwise was a monolithic reordering of the urban fringe. Another useful feature is the brief comparisons of the Commissioners’ Plan, under ‘Precedents and Context’, with the ground plans of Lima in Peru (representing urban planning under the Spanish Laws of the Indies), Philadelphia, Savannah, Albany (as part precedent for the New York grid), the US rectangular survey system, London, Edinburgh, and Washington, DC.

The treatment of this grid as a product of planning and specific design is neither adulatory nor severely critical. The creation of long shallow street blocks, favouring east-west communication between the island’s two long shores when it is north-south communication that has proved imperative, simply demonstrates the difficulty in correctly anticipating the future. The absence of median alleys within blocks, beneficial for urban services and infrastructure and found in many contemporaneous urban grid designs elsewhere, is harder to explain, and excuse.

This book provides a ringing endorsement of the truisms well known to urban morphologists that the urban ground plan shapes the mobility of a city for generations and centuries, and confines development in ways that have often hampered increasingly large-scale designs – it is striking how little altered the Manhattan grid remains in the face of the relentless pressure for height and horizontal plot amalgamation. That the book treats with sumptuous visual accompaniment the signal street and property system of one of the world’s most renowned and dynamic cities is a matter for congratulation. Yet much analytical work remains to be done on the historical legacies of New York City’s 1811 Plan, work that goes beyond mere illustration to reveal subtler, systematic patterns of influence and resistance, and the geographically variable consequences of its superficial uniformity. This appealing volume should serve as inspiration for that work.

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Too often new declarations and recommendations by UNESCO appear to materialize out of a vacuum for those not closely involved in the meetings and seminars that led up to them. This book aims to demystify both the context and the underlying principles associated with a recent UNESCO initiative – the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach – linked to the adoption of the ‘Recommendation on the historic urban landscape’ by the General Conference of UNESCO in November 2011. The book also aims to influence a wide range of decision-makers to endorse the HUL approach to complement and enhance existing policies and practices for conservation of the built environment. The authors argue that these policies and practices will be reaping the best of an evolving paradigm in urban heritage planning as the HUL approach is ‘a new way to include all these aspects of conservation in an integrated framework’ (p. xvi).

So, first of all, how does The historic urban landscape: managing heritage in an urban century fit into the literature on urban heritage conservation...
and planning given that there is already no shortage of titles on the topic, particularly from Europe? It seems that it neatly fills a niche between those titles that comprise discourses on value-based methodologies and principles of urban heritage management (Rodwell, 2007), and those that offer the conservation architect and/or urban planner more of a checklist or toolkit (Orbaşlı, 2008). Despite the best intentions of these works, the advent of the 1994 Nara Document on Authenticity and the subsequent efforts to marry tangible and intangible heritage in planning contexts, many urban conservation projects still evoke much of twentieth-century modernist thinking in terms of their intellectual and operational frameworks. Bandarin and Van Oers, by virtue of their international experience in the roles they have played over the years, have tried to avoid this mindset and to a large extent have been successful in their discussions of ideology and case studies from around the world. However, it will be interesting to compare and contrast this book and its HUL approach with the discussion of urban heritage conservation that will appear in a forthcoming book with a decidedly Asian focus: Managing Asian heritage: contexts, concerns and prospects (Silva and Chapagain, 2013).

The layout and design of the HUL book is quite thoughtful in the way it both leads the reader through the topic from the beginning, but also allows for its use as a reference resource for specific concepts and data. After a preface that acts as an introduction, there are six chapters supported by three appendices. The writing style is neither too academic nor too technical to put off either readership and each should learn something about the other’s area of interest. There are carefully chosen urban vistas accompanying each case study. Access to more photographs and figures, perhaps through a greater use of web links or a designated website for the book, would have provided even more visual support for the cases made.

The one aspect that is not covered as well as it might be is the literature that has influenced the mindset on community participation in urban planning processes. For instance, this section appears to be missing the American planner Arnstein’s (1969) influential concept of the ‘ladder of citizen participation’, which would have preceded anything by De Carlo and Turner mentioned in the text (pp. 25–7) in regard to the early thinking on this matter. As many cities around the world still struggle to meet the requirements of the lowest steps on the ladder, more could have been said about it and how the aspirations for community involvement that it embodies are fulfilled by the HUL approach. In the examples of best practices in the book not much is provided on how community participation was facilitated by heritage and urban planning authorities, which is often the trickiest part. Some examples of handbooks from around the world could have been cited to assist practitioners and others to find resources for implementing the inclusiveness aspect of the HUL approach.

Finally, one of the most insightful observations in the book is the comment on the tragic situation of Venice, after 50 years of mass cultural tourism. It showcases the authors’ local and international knowledge to good effect. Using photographs, Venice is contrasted strikingly with Varanasi in terms of conservation mindset and concepts of heritage value. While the former is seen as a success in terms of preserving its historic urban fabric, the latter has been far more successful in continuing to embody its value as an important Hindu spiritual centre. The authors then pose a question: ‘when choosing the city that best exemplifies our contemporary concept of heritage, should it be Venice or Varanasi?’ (p. 71) Understandably, this is a classic debate that will continue even after other books, such as that by Silva and Chapagain, are published, possibly signalling that more changes are on the way for the international conservation heritage mindset of UNESCO and the book’s potential readership.

References


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This book is dedicated to those who are concerned with spatial diversity. Although Japanese urban space is somewhat hard to comprehend at first glance, I am convinced that Learning from the Japanese city will be well-received by those interested in and informed about Japanese urban spaces. It is by a Western scholar with a background in architecture and urbanism, and he perceptively decodes the nature and meaning of urban space through detailed explanation. Compared to the books of Augustin Berque, the interpretations here are explicit and the conclusions sharp. Yet what is it that the author would like us to learn about Japanese cities?

He reveals the apparent contradiction between modern Japanese architecture and traditional urban fabric, and promotes the view that the characteristics of Japanese cities, though rooted in national culture and history, have much affinity with contemporary ideas in science and philosophy which are mostly generated in the West. As a Japanese scholar, I am sympathetic to the book’s claim that the beginning of a proper understanding of Japanese urban spaces is in Western thinking. Nevertheless, to conclude that the chaotic admixture of the modern and the traditional explains the diversity of Japanese urban spaces is to oversimplify. Whilst the book seeks to explain the features of diversity, oddity and eccentricity disclosed in Japanese urban space and architecture, it must be recognized that the Japanese way of thinking about urban space differs from that in the West. For example, Japanese thinking has more affinity with the concept of area, whereas that of the West has more to do with line. This inevitably leads to great differences in the role and meaning of spatial fragmentation, transformation and metamorphosis. A thesis that connects Japan and the West, seeking to uncover the role of modernity and its continuity with traditions inside the contemporary city, is therefore ambitious. The conclusion, in the chapter ‘Learning from the Japanese cities’, about Japan’s capacity to both engage with and liberate itself from European traditions in architecture and urban planning is therefore interesting. Japanese urban space takes on a unique quality and status, with features within it that contrast with Western ideas of urban design. Attention by the author to matters of linear and sequential organization, spatial fragmentation and integration, and urban transformation highlight this complex but important point.

As far as spatial theories are concerned, attention is given to matters that include Machitsukuri – town and community, its making and management – which has been integral to city planning in Japan for the past 40 or so years. In this regard Machitsukuri methods demonstrate the uniqueness of Japan’s cultural background. In relation to scholars such as Yoshisaka Takamasa, an individual who has presented the theory of ‘discontinuous continuity’, they emphasize the unique character of the Japanese urban fabric. In a sense the author’s viewpoint on urban space contrasts Japan and Western Europe. As the Japanese see it, this is in effect a contrast between Machitsukuri and planning systems in the West.

By seeking to explain the nature of elements of urban culture in Japan, the author tries to understand the whole cultural picture in the country. And given its form, Japanese urban culture demands the understanding of designers and urban planners through grasping the role, significance and multiplicity of nature, including what the Japanese label as its ‘eight million deities’. Even native Japanese culture contains a dynamic multiplicity, and in recent years viewpoints have arisen that emphasize Japan’s composition as a society of ‘various individualities’. With this ‘diversified Japan’ concept in mind, as revealed in archaeology and coastal Japan’s culture, Learning from the Japanese city ventures to unravel the presence and impact of elements of Chinese culture in Japan, and how these and other ‘borrowings’ shed light on several characteristic Japanese attitudes to space and design. As the author notes, China is an essential backdrop to Japanese urbanism and built form, both in historical and contemporary frameworks. Nevertheless, as important as it is to connect Japanese culture and Chinese culture, to solely focus on China would fail to explain the diversity and plurality of influences that have shaped, and are still deeply embedded in, Japanese cultural mores. Even native Japanese culture contains a dynamic multiplicity.

By trying to explain the making and patterns of architectural dynamics in modern cities, this ambitious book strives, using numerous illustrations, to enable its readers to better understand the complex and heterogeneous nature of culture and thus Japanese design. Both chaotic and ordered, focused and broad in its approach, this book refers to spatial recognition in a society of both deep urban traditions and modernistic outlook. Yet focusing just on fragments of Japanese urban

This book is an excellent introduction to urban typology and its use. The author discusses urban typology at a scale outside what could be called dense urban centres, such as midtown Manhattan or downtown Chicago, focusing on urban areas on the fringe of large urban centres – strip malls, industrial parks, and housing. As a professor of urban design I find this approach very informative.

The author raises the question as to why there are so many new strip malls, gas stations, apartment complexes, office parks, subdivisions, and big box stores built for every new 50 acres developed. She states that probable culprits according to designers are ordinary land-use regulations and, secondarily, that as a culture we have forgotten what is good design and need to be reminded through examples. The author proposes a new perspective, and relies on typologies as a first step towards good urban planning and/or design. She describes four theories of type: most buildings are exemplars of particular definable types; types emerge and evolve rather than being wholly invented; typological observation is an important urban analysis tool; and building types in and of themselves represent ideas that are carried forward in time.

All four of these theories have merit and could be viewed as a foundation for typologies. The chapter that traces the history of typology is perfect for students. The chapter streamlines the long lineage of typology into a concise explanation. According to Scheer typology starts with the Age of Enlightenment, beginning with Abbé Laugier (1713-96), as described in his Essai sur l’architecture, followed by Quatremère de Quincy (1755-1849), the first person to formally use the word type, and then J. N. L. Durand (1760-1834), who develops type as a building system. The lineage of type re-emerges in the 1950s with the Italian school of architecture in Venice, led by Saverio Muratori, followed by the Krier brothers. The chapter concludes by discussing the work of a British geographer M. R. G. Conzen and the school of urban morphology that he developed.

I cannot speak for the field of urban planning, but urban designers tend to overlook the field of urban morphology. An aspect of urban morphology that the author discusses is urban tissue; described by her as the arrangement of lots, blocks and streets, or the demarcation of the owned space of the city. She describes these demarcations, or property lines, as features that do not disappear even if the rest of the physical urban fabric is eliminated. According to her the urban tissue is planned and created to support a type of a certain scale. She goes on to explain that common building types arise within the context of a particular kind of urban tissue, and uses the example of the four square, which fits precisely on a lot of a particular size within a street and block pattern.

Towards the end of the book Scheer states that she has ‘avoided embracing or endorsing any one definition of good urban design’ (p. 112). However, with her focus on the typologies of large urban centres, strip malls, industrial parks, housing and areas outside the dense urban fabric, she sets the stage to critique New Urbanism, since New Urbanism tends to design and build new, low-density urban fabric, and joins these project areas to the typologies described in her book.

Typology is an admirable design tool for urban planners, designers and architects, and Scheer has written an excellent primer. I can even envisage a new edition in which the author begins to tackle other urban typologies and their possible use in design. As it stands, I plan to introduce the current edition in my course work.

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