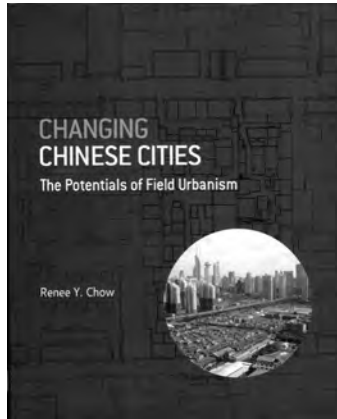


Book Reviews



Changing Chinese Cities: The Potentials of Field Urbanism. Renee Chow. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2015. 185 pp., b&w and color illus.

Sensationalized skyscrapers, super-sized automobile infrastructure, and splintered public spaces have all played a role in dislocating China's present urban development from historic forms. The country's unprecedented economic growth in recent decades has thus led to a dramatic loss of design quality in its urban centers, and trends indicate that the pace of this transformation is unlikely to slow. Urban designers today face the challenge of quenching the growing desires of an increasingly affluent Chinese population while attempting to preserve historical traditions of place. Can the momentum of growth be redirected to support a better quality of urbanism? What can designers do to facilitate such a change? And can pedagogy help develop practical tools that might facilitate it?

Suggesting answers to these questions is the focus of Renee Chow's *Changing Chinese Cities*. In it, she endorses an instructional paradigm that she hopes may one day lead to the development in China of "a progressive urbanism that propagates that which is already rooted in place" (p.15). Of course, the process of urban homogenization is not unique to China. But, as Chow notes, political, economic and urban conditions have recently highlighted a "rapid shift to figured development," making the problem of characterless cities particularly stark and obvious there (p.4).

A great volume of academic work has already warned of the perils inherent in current patterns of Chinese urban growth. Notable have been Thomas Campanella's *The Concrete Dragon: China's Urban Revolution and What it Means for the World* (2008) and Fulong Wu's *China's Emerging Cities* (2008). But it was not until Fei Chen and Kevin Thwaites published *Chinese Urban Design: The Typomorphological Approach* (2013) that theory was combined with historical analysis to produce a proposal for practical, teachable design strategies that might stimulate change. Chow responds to Chen and Thwaites's book with an attempt of her own to formulate new patterns of pedagogy, illustrated through case studies of Beijing, Zhujiajiao and Shanghai.

Balancing applicability for practitioners and theory for academics, Chow artfully weaves together personal narrative, historical context, and the technique of field urbanism to reveal the precariousness of contemporary urbanization in China. For readers unfamiliar with the term, "field urbanism" refers to the investigation of a specific type of urban fabric that parallels Kevin Lynch's notions of "district" and "grain" in his 1981 *A Theory of Good City Form*. A "field" thus consists of an invisible, three-dimensional mat extending across a legible district.

Chow proposes employing this concept both as a tool of observation and as a design paradigm to resolve the complex challenges of all cities — not just Chinese ones. In her view, situating the design process at the scale of fields allows a range of transformations to be simultaneously evaluated within a historical context. Thus, for example, with regard to Zhujiajiao, a frame of principled transformation might best be expressed through a series of three-dimensional diagrams: water topography depicting "the primacy of water"; orientation of the historic wall infrastructure depicting the "depth in the field of walls"; pedestrian mobility depicting "moving in relation to water"; and shadow analysis depicting "sunlight to the field" (pp.152–55).

The book is composed of three parts. In the first, Chow addresses the courtyard compound as the fundamental component of historic Chinese cities. Here she teases out qualities such as “indoor” and “collective” and points to the longstanding respect given in Chinese architecture to daylight, the unspecified use of rooms, and the gradients of privacy within each courtyard compound. In Beijing, the connections, exchanges and interactions between courtyard compounds and the city may more specifically be illustrated through the architectural pattern of the four-sided courtyard (*siheyuan*) and the planning pattern of the walled palace and peripheral city wall found in the Dong Cheng district.

In part two, Chow then introduces issues of fragmentation — which are a concern globally, but which are especially prevalent in Chinese cities. Here, she highlights the importance of policy to the way fragmented urbanism is constructed. In particular, she criticizes the role played by the government in promoting a system of urban construction based on the rapid achievement of tangible results, which citizens may endorse. This seemingly progressive approach is intended as a check on power, but in effect it prioritizes object-oriented, iconic architecture that splinters the urban fabric. Special economic zones, superblocks, mass-produced buildings, and the “inner realm” all additionally contribute to the ongoing crisis of identity in Chinese cities. In her analysis, Chow makes it clear she does not believe that strict conservation of historic buildings is a solution to contemporary needs. Rather, her intention is to raise awareness of the past so that it can be used in the present to form a progressive urbanism.

Chow moves beyond theoretical speculation and into the realm of practice in part three. Here, she proposes a program of urban design interventions in all three case studies, while guiding the reader through the process she uses to arrive at them. Chow’s experience teaching design studios at the University of California, Berkeley, shines through here in the form of clear, concise instructions for implementing the strategies of field urbanism. But it is her role as principal of Studio URBIS that informs practical solutions to the real and specific design challenges presented in the book. And to communicate her ideas, she employs a series of graphics that range from gestural diagrams to annotated maps to three-dimensional projections of solid-void relationships. The fact these all fall short of formal renderings is an intentional choice, designed to deprive the reader of a “realistic image” of a design solution. It is in this way that Chow emphasizes the nature of field urbanism as a method of thinking and understanding the intricacies of place.

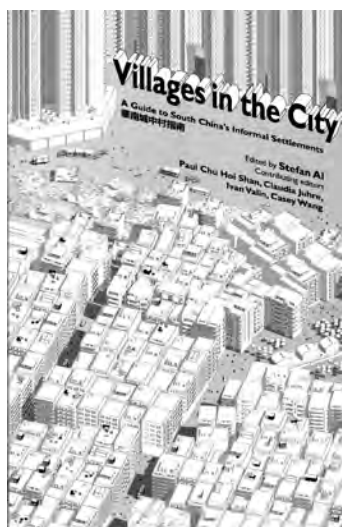
Chow presents field urbanism as a tool to understand both past and present urban contexts, and so construct a

specific language that will allow the traditions of place to be carried forward to meet the needs of the future. A further strength of her presentation is that it is grounded in theory while offering a view through the practitioner’s lens. Extending beyond this book’s title, it is an approach that may be applicable to a context far wider than China.

Lyndsey Deaton

University of Oregon

Villages in the City: A Guide to South China's Informal Settlements. Edited by Stefan Al. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2014. 203 pp., b&w and color illus.



This book, which combines academic essays with a rich graphic exploration of selected urban themes, provides a critical reflection on the political, economic, social and physical conditions of the southern Chinese phenomenon of “villages in the city” (VIC). Aimed at a wider audience than might typically be attracted to this subject, it argues for the study and preservation of these urban

environments. By understanding VICs as “places,” the book expresses hope that they can be rediscovered as critical assets for future urban development.

Following the initiation of economic reforms in China in 1978, Chinese cities quickly overtook their traditional boundaries, sprawling into their surrounding landscapes. In southern China, this rapid growth soon outpaced land-reform policy, especially near newly minted special economic zones such as Shenzhen and Zhuhai. One result was the VIC phenomenon, as nearby agricultural villages were engulfed by the expansion of cities. Because the lands in them remained in private hands, they were soon established as pockets of exemption from urban regulations and planning control. The villages were thus transformed into unique vehicles for maximizing development profit. As land values increased, villagers (often represented through shareholding collectives) developed their plots to maximum density and height, typically creating a tightly packed set of multistory residential apartment blocks — known colloquially as “handshake” or “kissing” buildings — set within a tight network of lanes. Farmers thus became landlords, renting out small apartments that provided ideal accommodations for rural migrants and others unable to afford space within the city proper.

Edited by Stefan Al, the book takes a close look at this phenomenon in two distinct ways. Its first section, roughly a third of its length, features an introduction by Al and five original academic essays. Its second section then presents an illustrated guide highlighting twelve villages and seven political and environmental themes.

In his introduction to the book, Al highlights a familiar narrative: the story of lost opportunities in everyday urban development in China. His particular example is Danchong, once a dense and lively village in the center of Shenzhen, but now scheduled for bulldozed erasure, its vibrant alleyways to be replaced by ubiquitous highrise superblocs. As Al points out, this will be the fate of many villages engulfed by urban development in southern China today. Despite their ingrained history and character, VICs are seen as a malignant form of urbanization, out of step with modern lifestyles. And for the last three decades, municipal governments have exerted enormous effort to eradicate them.

Al’s overview is followed by Marco Cenzatti’s “The City in between the Villages,” which explores the fundamental differences between urban development in the Pearl River Delta region and contemporary Western models of urban expansion. In the delta, urbanization begins within rural villages, which expand and merge into each other in a process he likens to the *synoikism* of ancient Greece.

Margaret Crawford and Jiong Wu then follow with an essay discussing how Guangzhou’s urban villages first emerged, but now are being eliminated. They describe in particular the case of Leide, a model of redevelopment where all traces of the former village were completely erased. This “normalization” extended even to the villagers themselves, who managed to obtain *hukuo* (household registration) privileges in the process.

Essays by Nick R. Smith and Jiang Jun then provide a counterpoint, focusing on examples of successful village renewal as part of the city fabric. Smith describes how, through strategic investments by its well-connected development cooperative, Huanggang village has maintained and reinterpreted its rural identity, even as it has reformulated the VIC’s characteristically dense pattern of settlement into more typically modern forms. It is a story, essentially, of a public-private partnership between village residents and the city administration.

Whereas Smith describes an alternative form of village redevelopment, Jiang Jun’s examination of Dafen village offers an entirely different development scenario. He describes how it was revitalized based on its specialization in producing art replicas. In this case, the government helped stimulate a creative industry, and eventually recognized its value by using it to represent Shenzhen in the Shanghai World Expo 2010.

In the fifth essay, Laurence Liauw finally argues for redeveloping or upgrading VICs instead of tearing them down, citing the important, yet underappreciated role they play in filling a void in China’s social housing policy.

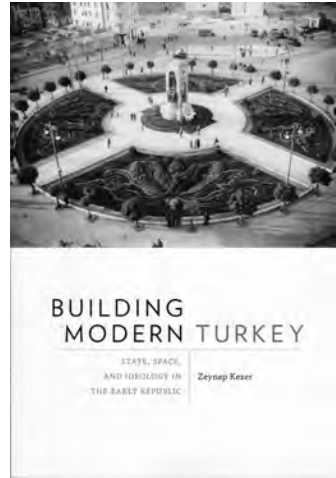
The illustrated second section that follows these texts compares VICs in five major cities of the delta region —

Shenzhen, Dongguan, Guangzhou, Foshan and Zhuhai — revealing subtle differences in their development trajectories, physical conditions, and character. The drawings here are clean and carefully constructed, focusing on village layouts and building types. Section and plan drawings are also animated with detail and information that reveals the diversity and specialization of activities in each village. The drawings fail to provide a sustained analysis of the spatial (and even dimensional) qualities of the public realm. Nevertheless, the accompanying snapshots, informal but plentiful, reveal the vibrancy of these places. Brief, candid interviews with occupants further humanize the story. Such breadth of presentation helps remind readers that VICs represent an urban process as much as an urban form.

This book provides a relevant and valuable contribution to understanding the special problems posed by urban villages in the Pearl River Delta. And by linking essays and illustrations, it takes an ambitious but comprehensive approach to the phenomenon. In terms of content, it provides only a small sampling of the many hundreds of VICs that exist in the region. However, the case studies do a good job of documenting their unique character, and urban designers everywhere should be able to appreciate the lessons they have to offer.

Natalia Echeverri
University of Hong Kong

Building Modern Turkey: State, Space and Ideology in the Early Republic. Zeynep Kezer. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2015. 344 pp., 88 b&w illus.



This book is a tour de force in the scholarship of architecture and nation building. Zeynep Kezer's main idea is that modern national-identity construction is a spatial process that works at multiple scales: visual, architectural, urban, infrastructural and geographic. Underlying this view is the understanding that power is not inherent in persons, groups, institutions or governments; it is rather produced through reconfigurations of space and through performances crafted for these newly configured spaces.

The book is organized in three sections: the first deals with the building of Ankara as the capital of a nascent nation state; the second examines the erasure of religious and minority communal lives; and the third deals with infrastructure and public works deployed as strategies of national integration. Each of the parts is comprised of two chapters that tackle different topics, which, when read next to each other, generate new meanings and fresh interpretations.

In the first pairing, Chapter One, "Political Capital," focuses on the intentions of the actors involved in building the new Turkish national capital of Ankara. In particular, it examines discrepancies between two plans for the new capital city — the 1924–25 plan by Dr. Carl Christoph Lörcher (1884–1966) and the 1927 plan by Hermann Jansen (1869–1945) — and what was actually built, especially commissions executed by Clemens Holzmeister (1866–1983). For example, the city's main north-south axis was originally meant to be lined with memorials, culminating with the Grand National Assembly. Its eventual termination with the Presidential Palace, however, signified a shifting center of power and a move to authoritarianism.

The title of this chapter doubles as a reference to the political nature of building a capital city, and to Ankara's new elite using their "political capital" to impose a top-down planning process while excluding the locals from decision-making. Here, Kezer also offers a dramatically different and

critical view of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. Specifically, she emphasizes how Kemal surrounded himself with subservient and “mediocre” statesmen who sought to establish spatial proximity to the Presidential Palace for their own residences — spatial proximity seemingly providing a reflection of political influence.

Chapter Two, “Theatres of Diplomacy,” then uses diplomatic sources to illustrate how real estate in Ankara became a tool of international diplomacy. Thus, when Britain resisted moving its embassy to Ankara, Turkey offered prime embassy sites to Germany and the Soviet Union to counter Britain’s initial lack of support. Kezer argues that the new regime offered land grants and tax breaks for the construction of new embassies in Ankara because its stature was intimately tied to recognition of the new capital city. In turn, the building of embassies, however, ensured future business and influence for foreign nations in Turkey and abroad. The Soviets, for example, used their presence on Ankara’s “Embassy Row” both to advance their status in Turkey and to communicate their post-revolutionary image on the international stage. As the pairing of these chapters thus shows, development of the new capital did not merely reflect power struggles between individuals within the new nation-state, but also between international powers.

Perhaps the most interesting chapter coupling is that which comprises the second part of the book. Its third chapter, “Dismantling the Landscapes of Islam,” deals with the appropriation and confiscation of the properties of *vakıfs*, or pious endowments; the closing down of *tekkes* and *zaviyes*; and the banning of religious attire. This is followed by a fourth chapter, “Of Forgotten People and Forgotten Places,” which discusses the dismantling of non-Muslim landscapes. This took a variety of forms. One was a process of “minoritization,” which was akin at certain times to “bullying” (p.119), and that at others involved high-profile detentions and incarcerations. Re-forming the state also involved repurposing aspects of the built environment that belonged to non-Muslim individuals, families and communities, as well as toponymic erasure.

Coupling these two chapters within the same section, one after another, is simply brilliant. It serves to express how, “The dismantling of non-Muslim landscapes was remarkably similar to the dismantling of heterodox Islamic landscapes . . .” (p.151). This is an insight no previous work has provided.

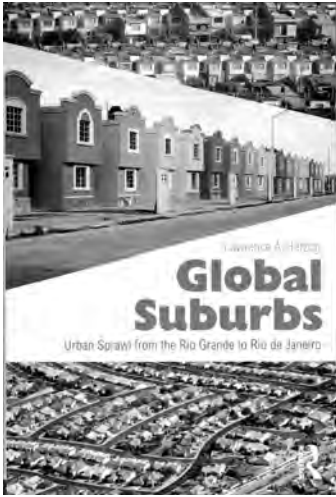
The third section of the book begins with the fifth chapter, “Nationalizing Space.” This examines a web of infrastructural services across Turkey and a series of performances administered from Ankara — all of which were intended to promote national integration and unification. This is paired with a final chapter, “Manufacturing Citizens,” that

examines schools, girl’s institutes, People’s Houses, and the kind of teaching that went on in these institutions of learning. It thus discusses how the Republican leaders envisaged the reproduction of a core constituency that would support and rely on the state and uphold the Kemalist values of the Republic into the future.

Kezer is unambiguously critical of the top-down authoritarianism of early Republican Turkey. But her position is not to be confused with earlier revisionist histories from the 1990s, which created a favorable milieu for the rise of the present ruling party, the AKP, under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. Although the work’s origin lies in the author’s dissertation, completed in 1999, historical distance has allowed this book, which initially appeared in 2015, to be augmented by new insights. Thus, Kezer is decidedly critical in her epilogue of the authoritarianism of Erdoğan’s rule, and she draws parallels between his strand of neoliberal authoritarianism and the earlier statist Republican one. This is another contribution of this book, which is bound to have a major impact on studies of modern Turkey.

Ipek Tureli
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Global Suburbs: Urban Sprawl from the Rio Grande to Rio de Janeiro. Lawrence A. Herzog. New York: Routledge, 2015. 288 pp., b&w illus.



Global Suburbs is a welcome, innovative take on suburbia. Although the topic may have been over-studied in the United States, the transnational nature of this book makes it innovative and relevant. Lawrence Herzog examines suburbanization as an originally American urban model that has been copied globally. But he also recognizes the various forms this model

has taken to adapt to different cultural settings. After contextualizing the urban history in the different places, he explains how the forces of globalization and economic neoliberalism have contributed to the transformation of the urban periphery into areas where different varieties of suburban development exist. Yet he also finds some common characteristics.

Overall, the book presents a powerful negative view of suburban development through the Americas — from San Diego, Las Vegas, and Phoenix in the U.S., to South American countries such as Brazil, passing through Mexico on the way. It examines an assemblage of criticisms of suburbs, focusing on urban sprawl and its by-products, such as automobile dependence, environmental damage, social problems, and deteriorating public health. The perspectives presented are disheartening. Suburban growth, driven by developers and economic forces in the current era of globalization, is deepening social and spatial inequality and transforming urban life.

Herzog is particularly interested in introducing the concepts of “slow urbanism” and “fast urbanism.” He thus argues that suburbanization, both residential and commercial, has led to a pattern of fast cities/fast urbanism — where public life is discouraged and the essence of urbanity is lost to heightened consumerism and the expansion of shopping spaces, advertising, high technology, private schools, and business parks on the urban periphery (p.131). Herzog claims that Americans, by preferring to live in suburbs, give up their quality leisure time — no longer being able to walk, bike, eat and socialize in the streets. Instead of the slow urban living characteristic of many European cities, in his account, Ameri-

cans have chosen the fast urbanism characteristic of the private, exclusive and secure environments provided by suburbs.

As the book unfolds, readers learn this way of living is expanding from the U.S. to the Americas at large. Suburbs “south of the border,” take a slightly different form, however, because they are altering the peripheries of cities from zones of entirely low-income housing to areas dotted with expensive enclaves, which are literally “islands of wealth in an ocean of poverty” (p.132).

According to the author, the suburban trends in Latin America, especially in Argentina, Chile, Mexico and Brazil, have been strongly influenced by the U.S. models of gated communities. They likewise include malls, private schools, and recreational clubs that depend heavily on automobile access. Across the continent today, such high-end spaces are spreading to areas formerly occupied by squatter communities, increasing social tensions due to intensified exclusion, isolation and fragmentation. They are also bringing a loss of public life, which is again one of the characteristic elements of U.S. suburbs.

Another important urban trend in Latin America, mentioned in the book, is the building of megaprojects. This takes the gated community to a whole different scale through the construction of “gated cities.” A paradigmatic example here, one that surely reflects the materialization of “fast urbanism” and its values, is the Santa Fe megaproject in Mexico City. The author explores how, by mirroring the problems found in suburban U.S., Santa Fe’s shortcomings make these problems even more extreme than in developments further north.

Herzog refers to the importance of narrative as one of the main driving forces of suburban expansion and he argues that these narratives have not received enough attention. The values fostered by what Herzog calls the “socio-cultural design narrative” of suburbs embrace social exclusivity, privatization of public space, securitization, and homogenization of communities and built environments (pp.128–29). And in his view, the widespread internationalization of these values at the beginning of the 1990s is a major factor contributing to the current era of “global suburbs.” This is an important contribution, since advertising and marketing do, in fact, play a very important role in housing choices. Even if people are dissatisfied with many aspects of suburban life (such as car dependence), the convenience, exclusivity and security stressed in the suburban design narrative still make life there appear attractive.

In the last section of the book, the author asks how it will be possible to move beyond the pattern of urban sprawl that has become so dominant in both North and South America. Interestingly, he proposes that too much weight is

being placed on the need for design and planning solutions. Instead, he calls for a wider societal transformation, where the practice of “slowing down” enhances the engagement of people with their surroundings. As a planner, however, Herzog also presents new policy directions for overcoming urban sprawl and fast urbanism, and he calls for more sustainable approaches to urban design across the continent.

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White City, Black City: Architecture and War in Tel Aviv and Jaffa. Sharon Rotbard. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2015. 256 pp., 100 b&w illus.



White City, Black City is a book with very large goals. In dry yet passionate prose, Sharon Rotbard, an architect, writer and educator, portrays the history of Tel Aviv-Jaffa as a tale of two cities: the celebrated, “white,” modern, Hebrew Tel Aviv; and the actively forgotten, “black,” Arab-Palestinian Jaffa.

The present edition, from MIT Press, is largely the English translation of Rotbard’s acclaimed work of the

same name, originally published in Hebrew in 2005 by his own architectural press, Babel Press. At the time, *White City, Black City* was his response to Tel Aviv’s recognition in 2003 as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The designation was based on its concentration of modernist apartment houses from the 1920s and 1930s and its urban plan by Sir Patrick Geddes. Rotbard’s polemic, however, set out to challenge this canonization of Tel Aviv’s “white” landscape by exposing its “dark side” — Arab-Palestinian Jaffa and its southern neighborhoods populated by Mizrahim (Eastern Jews).

Rotbard’s mission to change the city by changing its history essentially involves two complementary acts. In the first part of the book, he challenges the narrative of a modernist city built in the spirit of the Bauhaus, in defiance of Nazi ideology, by German-educated architects. One method he uses effectively to accomplish this is to present images of the white city, framed within the pages of the publications that originally celebrated them. Rotbard is thus able to communicate how the narrative of the “white city” was deliberately constructed to legitimize Tel Aviv’s existence. This is a bold act of resistance to the city’s administration and to the hegemonic milieu of the Israeli architects who collaborated in producing it.

The second part of the book, “Black City,” then sets out to expose the forgotten history of Jaffa and its southern neighborhoods, and show how this was actively erased to produce and sustain the narrative of the “white city.” Here

Rotbard documents acts of urban renewal and erasure by both the British Mandate government and the state of Israel. These began with the British “anchor” plan to Haussmanize the Old City, and they continued with the Israeli occupation and near-complete demolition of the Manshia neighborhood; the problematic preservation of the Old City; and the social destruction of its southern neighborhoods through construction of the Brutalist New Central Bus Station.

Using compelling data from a variety of archival sources — among them historical maps, architectural drawings, films, and oral history — Rotbard manages to weave a convincing narrative that helps point scholarly, activist, and even institutional attention to this part of the city. To convey his claim that this was a forgotten, erased story, Rotbard presents “raw” data — images, maps, drawings, and film stills — all missing from previous discourse on Tel Aviv. This evidence was revelatory for academics and professionals when it originally appeared, and it generated a wave of new research and debate.

There are also clearly race-related undertones to Rotbard’s story. While “black” and “white” do not directly correspond to skin color in the Israeli context, they do adhere to a distinction between European and Eastern heritage and privilege. However, Rotbard’s last chapter, which attempts to unpack this issue, was originally the book’s weakest part, failing to drive the discussion of Tel Aviv-Jaffa beyond its particular case and the peculiar workings of Zionism. It thus failed to serve as a springboard for discussing other times and places.

Controversial and contested when it first appeared, the book’s premise — that Zionist “white” modernism has neglected, othered and erased Jaffa’s history, rendering it “black” — is now well-accepted within cultural studies. In Israel, it also marked Rotbard as part of an influential new wave of Israeli scholars, together with such figures as Eyal Weizman, Rafi Segal, Zvi Efrat, and Haim Yacobi. These were all architects who used a disciplinary lens to investigate the social and political conditions of Israel-Palestine, highlighting the role that architecture, landscape and planning played in producing and maintaining Zionist power in “the conflict.”

The publication of an English version of this book, however, raises interesting questions. How does one publish such an iconic volume for a different audience ten years later? Should its arguments be amended to reflect its own very public effect? Should further research be included to reflect contemporary discourse? And should more context be provided for international readers?

The book’s cover gives some sense of the English edition’s approach to these issues. It employs the negative image of one of “white” Tel Aviv’s iconic modernist buildings. Meanwhile, the cover image from the original Hebrew

edition appears only on the inside sleeve of the new book. A far less “marketable” image to an international audience, yet one which better reflects Rotbard’s story, that original image portrays the Giddi House, a waterfront relic of Jaffa’s Arab Manshiya neighborhood, which was transformed to serve as the museum to Jaffa’s 1948 occupation by Etzel militia.

Rotbard hints in his acknowledgements that some of the changes to the English edition have required getting accustomed to. The change of cover image may have been one of these. But a number of the book’s other original physical features have similarly not been translated as-is. For example, this new edition is smaller in size and printed on plain paper rather than shiny-white chromo paper. More importantly, the English edition allocates significantly less “territory” to images. Thus, the prominence of the architectural evidence — a key tool for dismissing the old narrative and proposing a new one — suffers a significant downsizing in the new edition.

This may seem like a small change, but it is not. Rotbard’s original book in Hebrew was produced by an architect for architects. And in it he explicitly declared that he was not a historian. Rather, his aim was to transform the city by changing its narrative. The Hebrew book, therefore, was conceived in the tradition of modernist design manifestos, from Le Corbusier to Team Ten. Rotbard’s decision not to add to or amend the book’s original content also follows from his understanding of it as an urban manifesto. Yet, reducing the impact of the images in the English edition has shifted the text-image balance away from this quality of architectural manifesto. And it correspondingly highlights the fact that Rotbard has not updated his account to reflect the change to “black-city” historiography that he, himself, did much to set in motion.

I am reminded of my excitement opening the Hebrew edition for the first time. Rotbard’s original presentation required me to “read” architecture and take it seriously as a source of historical data. The book thus validated architectural inquiry as a mode of research into the seemingly unpackable complexity of contested space. This aspect of the 2005 edition is surely diminished here. But it will probably also be underestimated by readers who never encountered the original. The shift toward emphasizing the text also exposes the need for updated research. Nonetheless, it cannot diminish the importance of this book or its impact on the historiography of Tel Aviv and the use of architectural research as a method of inquiry into spatial conflict and inequality. Readers interested in the origins of “the conflict” in Israel-Palestine will surely benefit from it.

Yael Allweil

Technion — Israel Institute of Technology

New Architecture on Indigenous Lands. Joy Malnar and Frank Vodvarka. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015. 416 pp., 20 b&w photos, 20 b&w plates, 155 color plates.



New Architecture on Indigenous Lands, by Malnar and Vodvarka, conceals a hugely ambitious project that extends well beyond contemporary Native-American architecture. The authors incorporate a broad and richly textured perspective that considers history, anthropology, material culture, and socio-cultural critique. They present well-documented case studies of indigenous design and planning, as well as new design methodologies. And yet it is their ethnographic interviews with Native clients that lend special depth and insight to their research. The coauthors, Joy Malnar, a professor of architecture at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Frank Vodvarka, a professor of design at Loyola University Chicago, crisscrossed North America in order to reconsider Native-American architecture, not only within its historical occurrence, but also to understand its cultural significance today.

The book is divided into three parts — history, territories, and typologies — to reflect concerns that are also interspersed throughout as general themes. Part One traces the dismal history of first contact, tribal removals and relocations, and assimilation. Part Two concentrates on the identities and traditions of three North American territories — British Columbia, the Central Plains, and the Southwest — giving special attention to how climate and geography shape design. Part Three addresses architectural issues related to typology and scale: schools, community centers, housing, and large-scale community planning frameworks.

We learn in the discussion of history that Native design is a highly sophisticated response to specific ecological condi-

tions and complex socio-cultural traditions. Pre-1800 structures were built from local materials with pre-iron age tools, while later structures tended to employ conventional building techniques. The book's examples range from the exquisitely crafted plank houses on Vancouver Island to the Zuni adobe pueblos in the Southwest. While Native Americans certainly responded to climate and availability of building materials, according to Malnar and Vodvarka, the evolution of their building forms was also “affected by social organization, patterns of gathering food, religious life, and history.” In the Pacific Northwest, for example, the climate was cold, and due to an abundance of natural resources, the buildings of relatively prosperous peoples reflected a high level of craft and permanence. By contrast, on the Central Plains, mobility was embraced as a prime organizing principle. Thus, the Lakota and others there traveled in accord with the seasons, following the buffalo migration, and their structures had to be lightweight, efficient and portable.

Unfortunately, as many are aware, the contested history of Native peoples did not end with modernism. To fully tell that story, the book continues the historical design assessment by examining reservation construction. In a fascinating account, it outlines the labyrinthine planning processes of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), from its banal and monotonous guidelines for construction on reservations in the 1960s to the present day. HUD did not study Native cultural imperatives, and instead hastily established building directives that were more fitting to a Levittown, albeit one constructed of T-111 plywood siding. These directives continue to stand as evidence of the paucity of thinking about indigenous design and the struggles facing Native designers today.

One of the strengths of this book is that it seeks to redefine Native-American design culture by presenting the topic holistically. For example, a defining feature of the Native American Museum in Washington, D.C., is that it was designed by a Native-American architect according to specific geospatial principles. Yet its very singularity seems to deny the rich and diverse heritage of Native-American culture. This feature of Native-American experience has also been overlooked in previous design publications. Historians apply different research methods, and have a different set of goals than those of practicing architects. *New Architecture on Indigenous Lands* attempts to reconcile those two approaches.

The authors also did not want the architecture of Native Americans, First Nations, and Metis to be marginalized to reservations. Rather, they wanted it seen as relevant to a larger discussion, and thought of as informing general trends in architecture. Subjects such as critical regionalism,

sustainability, and participatory design are all relevant in a Native context. And many of the case studies presented here relate to award-winning architects such as Rick Joy, Antoine Predock, Peter Zumthor, and others known for their sensitivity to context and materials. Their design process also directs attention to effects: the sounds, smells, tactile qualities, and moods of materials; and even to what Steven Holl has called “spirit-material” — evident, for example, in the red light of sunset reflected on warm adobe walls, the low whistle of the wind through pinyon pines, or the dappled shadow created by a desert willow. Such a deep understanding of material effects may help provide a foundation for a legible formal language and a basis for visual expression.

Beyond such evocative qualities, many of the structures examined here demonstrate sustainable building principles. Native culture was dependent upon specific ecological landscapes for survival, including the use of local materials. An excellent example is the Rosie Joe House in the Navaho Nation, constructed in 2004 by Design Build BLUFF (DBB University of Utah School of Architecture) using recyclable materials. This off-grid building is heated and cooled using passive methods including solar orientation and 18-inch rammed-earth walls, and the inverted profile of its butterfly roof diverts rainwater into a cistern. It offers as close to zero-net-energy use as it is possible for a conventional building type to achieve.

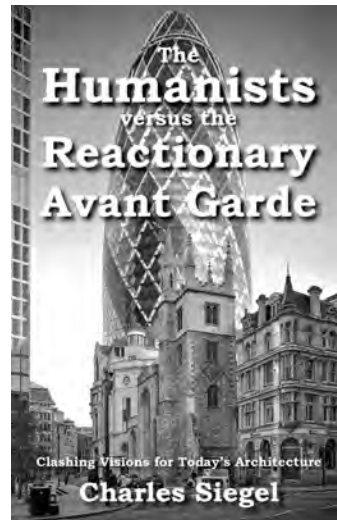
Lastly, the authors lay out an alternative design methodology by posing a series of questions. For example, how do designers — Native and non-Native alike — make provisions for clients whose broadly cultural modalities are significantly different from their own? How do we define the controlling factors in creating a new and innovative design paradigm on Native lands? The research here suggests that “the willingness of the designer to listen and sensitively respond to the client’s unique set of expectations which — while time consuming—is critical to the result.”

This book makes a significant contribution to redefining indigenous design culture and the participatory design process. Indeed, it has so much original research that the interwoven organization of the book is a bit hard to follow. Perhaps my only other criticism is that a few of the photographs could also have been redone by a professional photographer. This is a highly useful book for anyone working with indigenous cultures. It will also provoke architects and designers to consider different ways of thinking about architectural culture in general and the participatory design process in particular.

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The Humanists Versus the Reactionary Avant Garde: Clashing Visions for Today’s Architecture. Charles Siegel. Berkeley, CA: Omo Press, 2016. 167 pp., b&w illus.



This book argues, with uncertain success, that in contemporary architectural practice, the “humanists” — i.e., those practitioners who espouse New Urbanism and a contemporary version of classical architecture — are more innovative than those members of the “avant garde” who design buildings based on images of contemporary technology. The author, Charles Siegel, thus sets

up a dichotomy between two professional extremes, and this dichotomy forms the vehicle for his arguments.

To Siegel, technology seems to be “gleaming glass, steel and concrete buildings” — i.e., certain kinds of objects — rather than a complex social/economic system. In this regard, perhaps one of his most telling comments is that “we need to see that the industrial revolution has been an interruption to the development of Western civilization, because it focused on technological values rather than on humanistic values. This focus was beneficial at the time, because it cleared the way for the economic growth needed to eliminate scarcity, but now we must move beyond it.” Another is that “the real symbol of imperialism today is the modernist style — which was invented in the West, which claims to be valid everywhere, and which is being imposed on the world by multinational corporations.”

Although the author somewhat qualifies these sentiments to recognize some of the benefits of contemporary technology, these are ultimately simplistic views both of the history and nature of technology as well as of twentieth-century architectural history. They are tied to the author’s polarization of ideologies, and consequent lack of any middle ground. As other authors have pointed out, architectural modernism is not one thing, but rather a wide variety of approaches. These include the buildings that the author derides but also sensitive, place-responsive, and regionally appropriate ones. It may, indeed, be the case that architects like Frank Gehry should be criticized as the “reactionary avant garde” because they design buildings that lack human scale and materials. But they may not be representative of the vast

number of practitioners who consider themselves modernists but who are also working closely with clients; who design buildings that are of human scale; and who reject “modernist urbanism” in favor of buildings that help form good urban space through their massing and functional contributions to the life of the street. These architects surely deserve more recognition than they get, but the author’s all-or-nothing argument necessarily ignores them.

Christopher Alexander’s work is given special attention here, particularly the “timeless way of building.” This is interpreted as “based on the common elements [patterns] that are found in all vernacular and traditional architectural styles worldwide, a way of building that people are comfortable with because it fits human nature.” This is not an inaccurate characterization of Alexander’s views, but it does fail to emphasize questions of process in his work, which are as important as the patterns themselves. The author’s tendency, when looking at Alexander (or architecture in general), thus seems to be to look at the object rather than the processes that make it. This static view forces a black-or-white choice between things rather than a dynamic view that emphasizes human agency.

Such a tendency also affects the view of city planning developed in the book. Siegel makes a useful distinction between modernism in architecture and modernism in urban design, and correctly points out that methodologies of urban design and city-building are moving away from functional zoning and the development of automobile-dominated transportation systems. But here, too, his view is unnecessarily narrow, presenting little discussion, for example, of issues of racism and class that have been entangled with twentieth-century planning.

One important point of the book is the author’s broad view of New Urbanism, avoiding what is too often a critique based on a nostalgic interpretation. But new approaches range beyond it, and the book provides no discussion of grassroots movements, the legitimization of informal settlements, performance zoning and other transformations of Euclidean planning, projects of “tactical urbanism,” and urban interventions that are intended to catalyze local action and support local control. The author may be unwittingly painting himself into an ideological corner that is akin to modernist urbanism itself (or his definition of it) when he espouses only the single approach of New Urbanism.

Architectural criticism needs a strong, humanistic foundation that puts people first and that clearly recognizes the differences between buildings that can support peoples’ lives and elevate their spirit and buildings designed for the edification of the architectural cognoscenti alone. A strength of the book is the author’s uncompromising understanding of this choice and its implications, backed up by his call for

the “human use of technology.” But — perhaps particularly in our new political world where belief overshadows fact — architectural criticism also needs considered argument, an appreciation of the built world’s complexity and processes of formation, and an ability to use careful scholarship in the service of a polemic of improvement.

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