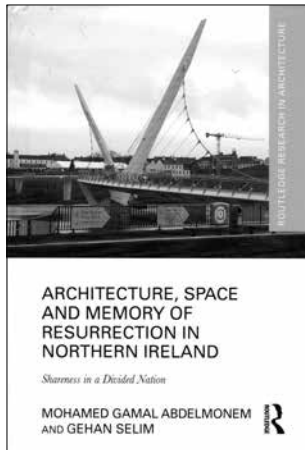# Book Reviews

Architecture, Space and Memory of Resurrection in Northern Ireland: Shareness in a Divided Nation.
By Mohamed Gamal Abdelmonem and Gehan Selim. Abingdon, Oxon, U.K.; and New York:
Routledge, 2019. 252 pp., 73 b&w illus.

A quarter of a century ago I was involved with a partnership of government and community
stakeholders in an elaborate exercise of vision planning for a future Belfast set in 2020. Now
that we've reached that milestone, I can reveal that very little of that ambitious agenda has
been realized. Rather, the issues and problems of planning a shared city remain stubbornly
unchanged. The same old, same old remains largely intact. What a surprise!

This book offers insight into this intractable nature of deeply divided cities caught in mac-
ro-contests about ethno-nationalism and sovereignty. It covers comprehensively the conceptual
and theoretical frameworks explored in a voluminous literature concerning the bearing of
such conflicts on architecture and space. Interestingly, it does so from a "foreign" perspec-
tive, in that both authors come from outside the U.K. and Ireland, and have no axe to grind
regarding the rival claims of the main protagonists in Northern Ireland. Thus, they have little
interest in arbitrating these competing narratives as distinct from exploring their collective
impact and imprint on the urban fabric. Usefully, they also do not focus exclusively on Belfast,
an arena that experienced a disproportionate share of the violence, and thus a lot of the media
and academic attention. They include discussion of Derry/Londonderry, and expose the tell-
ing differentiation between it and Belfast, while also referencing some issues about rural areas,
designed to highlight their distinctly urban dimension.

For the authors, architecture and space are not passive players in the contest, but rather
active agents. In other words, they help compose and recompose the meaning of places, partly
through a process of intertextuality, which links the role of memory, commemoration, and
recent history in the social construction of place. Here, the authors agree that planning and
architecture are inevitably involved not only in the making of place but also in the mediating
of space. Thus, far from evading the controversy of contested territoriality, they are obliged by
their remit to be central to its resolution.

For this objective, the authors advocate a series of steps, including the need to adopt a
multidisciplinary approach, one that particularly appreciates the politics of identity and belong-
ing; to avoid simplistic binaries of unity and integration versus division and segregation; and to
focus on the everyday lived experience. Each of these is well-stated for effective public policy
intervention. For instance, operating in a professional silo — be it as planner, urban designer,
architect, community development officer, or whatever — does not permit the holistic perspec-
tive needed to capture the complicated relational dynamics in volatile conflict. Similarly, per-
spectives on "cultural wars" have to take into account the fluidities as well as the solidities of
identity. Perhaps most importantly, the book emphasizes the practicalities of daily life amidst
long-standing enmity and conflict. In negotiating how to use space safely, people develop
strategies of resilience and concession. Also, they come to appreciate, even if subconsciously,
what the authors call the "shareness of everyday life." Not everything is always about division
and related ethnic markers. Everywhere experiences the universality of human existence and
global processes as well as the contingencies of particular place.

In this regard, the authors reference the significance of contact theory in grasping how
enduring conflict invariably brings a "layering of narratives," a process that can help "identity"

become more flexible and contextual. As they express it: ". . . enduring co-existence eventually builds shared heritage, understanding, and engagement with similar contextual, social, and cultural constraints and that these, by nature, infuse the population with similarities, coherence, and familiarity" (p.21).

This brings them to conclude that in Northern Ireland, the two main sides know and understand each other's values, and even share some. Exploring this scope for interculturalism is very relevant in identifying cultural ambiguity and hybridity. But of course, it can be overstated. Two antagonistic communities living in close proximity will likely come to "understand" each other. But this can still leave them, as some literature in this field refers to, as "intimate strangers." They understand some but don't understand enough, and they struggle to understand the difference between the two.

So, in a constructive way, the authors chart ways in which remaking social space through architecture and planning can optimize opportunity for contact across the divide, without any naiveté about being able to "design out" the conflict. In exploring this, they note the nuances that need recognition — for instance, how peace walls can be a canvas as well as a barrier, how public parks can be as significant as the built environment in accommodating pluralism and diversity, and how separation can be delivered inadvertently through natural environment as in the case of the river Foyle in Derry/Londonderry. But decades of "community relations" strategies in Northern Ireland and elsewhere indicate that *"contact"* is necessary but insufficient. It needs to be followed through with tough *"engagement"* that allows for a candid but respectful democratic exchange about difficult issues such as equity and cohesion, and it requires "civic" responsibility in circumstances where citizenship itself is at the heart of the contest. For me, this is the central limitation of contact theory.

Where I agree strongly with the authors is that practitioners intent on transformational change confront a paradox: they need to understand the situation in all its complexity, and yet can't let that intricacy paralyze them into inertia or low aspiration. In addressing this dilemma, the authors offer a series of steps toward practical progress in areas such as integrated housing. Some might dismiss these suggestions as social engineering, but others will appreciate the imperative for bold proactive intervention in a conflict situation where the grain of the conflict "engineers" people into separation.

I'll make only a few critical observations for prospective readers. Given the different subthemes covered and the comprehensive reach of the analysis, there is some repetition evident across the different chapters. And, while there is great benefit to be gained from the authors' insight as "outsider" researchers, there are some mistaken takes on the local situation, such as seeing Northern Ireland as seven rather than six counties (p.27).

But overall, there is plenty of historical and contemporary material here for practitioners to consider. Indeed, the theme of improved practice dominates the book. Clearly, as

academics, the authors believe that it is not enough to *understand* urban conflict and its spatial ramification. We have to be concerned about how best to *change* it. I think that that action-research commitment is to be commended.

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Kuwait Transformed: A History of Oil and Urban Life. By Farah al-Nakib. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016. Xv + 278 pp., b&w illus.
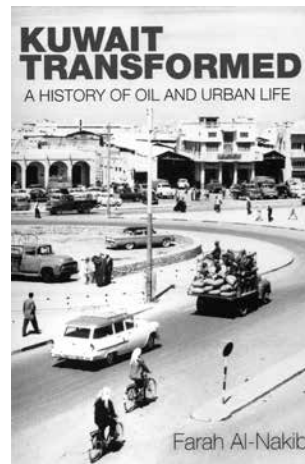
The voluminous, widely acclaimed, novel *Cities of Salt*, by Abdul Rahman Munif, recounts the sweeping effects that the discovery of oil has on a fictional, once idyllic oasis somewhere in the Arabian peninsula, and how an emerging economy of petrodollars becomes central to both making and breaking its community. *Kuwait Transformed* reads as if it has charted this fictional tale onto the real world of Kuwait City.

The book's entry point is a series of fatal scenes that provide a picture of urban violence and social malaise in today's Kuwait City. All are signs of a breaking society, and Farah al-Nakib, a historian and a Kuwaiti citizen, takes a socio-spatial approach to unearthing the urban causes behind them. Like Munif, she frames Kuwait's multilayered urban history around the beginning of commercial sales of oil from the country in the early 1950s. But she also borrows the key concept of "diversity" from Jane Jacobs — diversity of urban functions, people, and lifestyles — which Jacobs defined as the essential element of vitality and dynamism in cities. Al-Nakib then advances the argument that the transformation of urban space and everyday life brought about by oil-fueled modernization in Kuwait has led to an erosion of diversity and the creation of a highly segregated and factional society. Grounded in thorough historical research and a deep understanding of the cultural, physical and socioeconomic development of the city, the remainder of her book provides a nuanced historical critique of Kuwait's social and spatial shift from being an open, tolerant and cosmopolitan community in the pre-oil era to being an insular, hostile and parochial one today.

Al-Nakib dedicates the first part of the book to probing the people and places of the port settlement in the pre-oil era. The history that emerges tells how urban life reflected

a sense of diversity that taught townspeople how to coexist with difference. The daily life of this era is vividly portrayed as it occurred in the spaces of the port, the *souq*, the *firjan* [neighborhood], and the courtyard house with its rooftop and *diwaniya* (a space within home with direct access from the outside typically used for male guests). These important spatial patterns, which defined the spatial organization of Kuwaiti traditional society, are all examined as functionally integrated spaces of diversity and spontaneity, whose inner organizational logics were rooted in a cultural mode of living and the organization of an economy of pearling and trading.

Many interesting insights in this section challenge the often strict delineation in literature of traditional Arab or Gulf urban spaces along public and private uses for privacy and gender segregation purposes. For example, al-Nakib describes how the low parapet walls that separate neighboring roofs of houses, where most families slept in the hottest summer months, rendered the strict privacy of the individual domestic sphere somewhat tenuous, as they allowed male and female neighbors to freely check in on each other and interact.

The narrative then takes the reader to a new Kuwait in the post-oil discovery era. From the outset, al-Nakib is unequivocal in her criticism and condemnation of the centralized, top-down, modernist city-planning approaches implemented in the following few decades. Her deep critique of the alienating nature of modern planning policies and practices renders the book significant not only to researchers on Kuwait, but also to others interested in urbanism in the wider region and even beyond. With concrete examples from social and political life, she convincingly argues that the numerous urban renewal projects in the historic core, functional zoning, privatization of public space, and the sprawling and suburban schemes, employing a North American single-family villa model of development, not only swept away all historical memories of the city, but also severely limited opportunities for healthy community interaction.

My favorite part of this discussion is al-Nakib's ability to show how the related processes of relocation in new areas and land acquisition of old ones have led to significant inequalities in wealth distribution, and consequently resulted in social tension and destruction of the social fabric. This is a significant theme that invites scholars of cities in the wider Gulf region to compare and contrast her findings with theirs (I am here thinking of Pascal Menoret's study on Riyadh, for example). Readers interested in the impact of the invasion of Iraq, or of the subsequent Gulf Wars, on Kuwait's urban development will be slightly disappointed, as these events are not the focus of the historical narrative.

Al-Nakib's concluding chapter takes the reader back to the present and points to a possible alternative future for Kuwait. Shifting her prose to urban activism, to "the right of the city," she discusses a few, bottom-up, urban projects by a new generation of critical young Kuwaitis, which she takes as signs of a slowly emerging urban alternative that has the potential to forge a new spatial and social reality for Kuwait. This chapter reveals that her real intention in the book is far from being nostalgic for past urban or social conditions, or even limited to shedding light on how the past has shaped the present. Rather, it shows that her ultimate goal is to show how history can help shape the future. A great read.

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Planning Abu Dhabi: An Urban History. By Alamira Reem Bani Hashim. Abingdon, Oxon, U.K.; and New York: Routledge, 2018. 276 pp., 50 b&w illus.
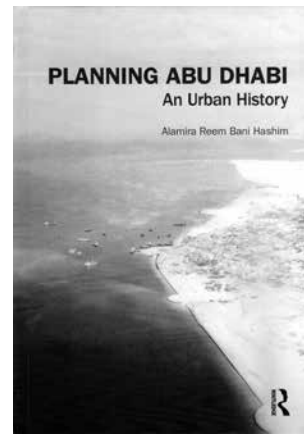
Planning Abu Dhabi unpacks the development of Abu Dhabi from a small desert settlement in the mid-eighteenth century to the bustling metropolis of the twenty-first. In doing so it adds to the growing number of recent meticulous studies of oil-rich Arab cities, including Farah al-Nakib's *Kuwait Transformed: A History of Oil and Urban Life* (2016); Arbella Bet-Shlimon's, *City of Black Gold: Oil, Ethnicity, and the Making of Modern Kirkuk* (2019); *Modern Architecture Kuwait: Volume 2, Essays, Arguments & Interviews*, edited by Ricardo Camacho, Sara Saragoça, and Roberto Fabbri (2018); and *The Evolving Arab City: Tradition, Modernity and Urban Development* (2011), edited by Yasser Elsheshtawy.

Bani Hashim's approach and methodologies offer a much needed critical view of Abu Dhabi, one that intentionally moves beyond fallacies and "stories of glorified urban and architectural triumphs, powered by foreign and local investment, tourism and trade" (p.1). While the literature on the region is vast — with books and articles covering its history, politics, and resources, among other topics — there has been a little attention so far paid to its architectural and urban history, a condition that is even more pronounced when it comes to scholarship and criticism by local practitioners. *Planning Abu Dhabi* addresses both deficiencies head on. Bani Hashim, a practicing urban planner and Abu Dhabian, cleverly weaves personal and urban history together, using archival material, interviews with key actors, and spatial mapping. A chronological investigation that engages images, diagrams, and narratives, it provides a methodology that may prove useful for future studies of other Arab cities.

The first of its six chapters examines existing literature, establishing a foundation for those that follow. Chapter 2, "From the Hinterland to the Coast: Origins of an Urban Identity," then provides a much needed addition to the study of urban form, arguing for an expansive study of the intricate relationship between people and environments. This is especially the case in the Arabian Gulf region, where the desert plays a critical and decisive role in human settlements. The chapter also examines the profound impact of oil as a driving force in urban development in the region.

The subsequent three chapters each focus on a single ruler and his position in regard to the city's urban development following the discovery of commercial quantities of oil offshore (in 1958) and onshore (in 1960). Chapter 3 covers the reign of Sheikh Shakhbut bin Sultan Al Nahyan (1960–1966); Chapter 4 examines the boom of both Abu Dhabi and the unification of the United Arab Emirates (U.A.E.) under the leadership of Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan (1966–2004); and more contemporary developments under Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al Nahyan (2004–2016) are the focus of Chapter 5. The intent of all three is to examine the "vision of rulers; urban governance and role of planning institutions; plans of experts; and urban morphology" (p.6). This approach ably demonstrates how the focus of individual rulers have had a profound impact on planning and policies in the region.

In these three chapters Bani Hashim also cleverly combines analysis of interviews, letters, and remaining master plans to stitch together an urban history where other sources of material are scarce, destroyed, or simply nonexistent. The first six years after the discovery of oil in commercial quantities in Abu Dhabi were characterized by big plans but little follow-through. While the British, who were still involved in the city's internal and external affairs, encouraged such a major planning effort, the ruler's reluctance to develop Abu Dhabi, and his desire to preserve the "Arab" character of the city, hindered its development. Relying on British documents, master plans, and interviews, however, Bani Hashim was able to examine all facets of Abu Dhabi's early development. And she was also able to understand the process by which Sheikh Shakhbut's steadfast attachment to the traditional way of life eventually made way for Sheikh Zayed's grand vision of a united federation and a modern city.

It was under Sheikh Zayed's rule that urban planning became an institutionalized practice that used oil revenues to transform Abu Dhabi into a modern city. And in chapter 4 Bani Hashim argues that "it was [specifically] the institutionalization of urban planning and public works that ultimately dictated the city's morphology" (p.102). Zayed's reign thus saw the implementation of the city's first five-year plan, the establishment of the first institutions of modern governance, and the appointment of Abdelrahman Makhlouf as the first director of town planning at the Abu Dhabi Municipality and Town Planning Department. Thus, the decades between 1966 and 2004 were a period of immense building activ-

ity, which Bani Hashim meticulously examines at both the macro urban scale and the micro architectural scale.

While the content of these chapters is far reaching and can seem overwhelming, Bani Hashim is able to address it in a clear and articulate manner. The chapters are also divided into smaller segments that offer clarifying background and content to help orient the reader. Moreover, each of these three main chapters ends with a summary of the period in question, bringing together the many facets of development discussed. Chapters 4 and 5, which cover the years between 1966 and 2014, are also accompanied by maps that allow the reader to visualize and contextualize the physical transformations of the city and the expansion of Abu Dhabi. Studying these maps alongside discussion of various master plans, showing visions that have yet to materialize, allows the reader to better understand the complexities that face Arab cities as they undergo processes of modernization.

In the conclusion, *Planning Abu Dhabi* eloquently situates the history of Abu Dhabi within both global histories and narratives and histories of cities of the Gulf region. Although the book primarily provides an urban history of Abu Dhabi, it will thus also appeal to a wide-ranging audience, including readers interested in the Gulf, urban history, planning practices in the region, and/or the city itself. While the book could have benefitted from more Arabic sources and first-hand accounts, Bani Hashim successfully maneuvers the sensitive political terrain by being both constructive and critical — a feat in and of itself.

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The Palgrave Handbook of Bottom-Up Urbanism. Edited by Mahyar Arefi and Conrad Kickert. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Handbooks, 2019. Xvii + 357 pp., 54 b&w illus.
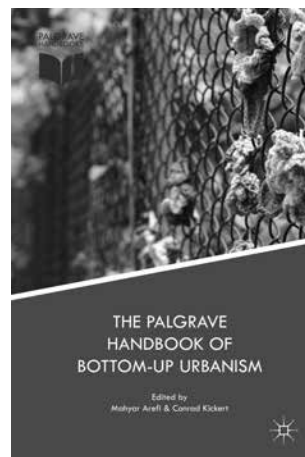
Within contemporary society a focus on small-scale living environments and interest in everyday events and the behavior of individuals is becoming increasingly important in many sciences. Such concern has been evident in social sciences such as economics, anthropology and sociology; the socio-environmental sciences of architecture and urbanism; and even in some technological fields such as artificial intelli-

gence and data analytics. Researchers in all these fields are progressively turning to the fragmented and pluralist perspective of individual action, and are seeking the participation of small groups of citizens to uncover innovative answers to long-lasting questions and human challenges.

The Palgrave Handbook of Bottom-Up Urbanism involves the discipline of urbanism in this debate. It offers an investigation of how people use, produce, reclaim and sometimes subvert living environments at a small scale (e.g., in the spaces of houses, streets and neighborhoods) in opposition to rigid top-down planning schemes and technocratic regulations. Its premise is that this may lead to a reinterpretation of the basic elements of the city, allowing a revision of perspectives and definitions about how an urban environment lives and "is lived." Such a new bottom-up planning perspective might even be used to inform macro-level policy-making, or to drive and test small-scale design interventions that could transform cities and the lives of citizens, starting at the level of individuals and communities.

This book provides a rich, detailed study of bottom-up urbanism as a practice whose historical origin coincides with the emergence of the city, and whose roots lie in its human-centered nature. It thus contextualizes bottom-up urbanism in contemporary discussions as a new status quo both with regard to rigid technocratic planning and informal process of city-making. And it seeks to describe the nuances and potentials of bottom-up urbanism through a variety of scientific lenses such as those of anthropology, sociology, geography, public studies, architecture and urbanism. These new debates are then grounded in detailed case studies from around the world — from both developed and developing countries — as well as through historical and theoretical interpretation of related literature and an exploration of terms such as DIY urbanism, lean urbanism, informal urbanism, among others.

As an edited volume, the book proceeds according to a structured and well-conceived narrative that divides the topics it covers into four sections, which allows a pleasant reading experience. The first section offers a fertile intellectual conceptualization of bottom-up and informal urbanism, including a discussion of definitions and a historical analysis of urbanism according to various schools of thought. The second section of the book focuses on bottom-up practices in the global North, particularly in the U.S. and Europe. And the third describes bottom-up urbanism as it has already developed as the status quo in the global South, focusing on problems with how informal settlements are conceived, defined and addressed in Latin America, Africa, and South Asia. Finally, the book's last section describes the importance of engaging bottom-up urbanism in both theory and practice to open new discussions of its nature and potential as a mode of planning.

One of the book's most interesting discussions concerns the need to raise awareness of how such bottom-up planning might help reveal the deficiencies and failures of hegemonic economic systems, and thus drive the scale and scope of urban practices away from large-scale policy-making and macroeconomic logic. One possible aspect which could be further explored here relates to how bottom-up practices are already well established in developing countries as a result of contingency and inequality. Yet, most often, they are still described as a form of alternative planning in the global North — a less rigid alternative mostly associated with creative classes, as Fran Tonkiss described in a chapter entitled "Informality and Its Discontents" in the 2014 edited volume *Informalize! Essays on the Political Economy of Urban Form.* Meanwhile, immigration, informal work, and the crisis of housing affordability in the U.S. as well as many other "developed" countries is leading to ever more precarious forms of dwelling and urban life. Indeed, tent villages in California and car-living across the U.S. may be seen as having a common root with the developing-world practice of squatting, which arose in response to the same contingent situations and premises as a way for people to self-plan to meet their urban needs.

Therefore, a constructive analysis of bottom-up planning within a neoliberal global order might start with an analysis of relative contingency among groups living precariously at the edges of prevailing economic systems. This might highlight discrepancies with the richest parts of the population, in what I have defined as "primary and secondary needs" in my 2018 book *Housing Shaped by Labour: The Architecture of Scarcity in Informal Settlements.* Such a view might ultimately allow traditional categories such as "global North" and "global South" to be overcome at a national level.

In conclusion, this book defines and complements ongoing debates in a variety of fields about the need to develop new policies and theories, and it offers a warning to future generations of urban planners. It stands as proof that a human-based perspective toward the design of cities design is needed to recover the identity and roots of the urban settlement as spatial reflection of the human kind.

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Historic Cities: Issues in Urban Conservation. Edited by Jeff Cody and Francesco Siravo. Los Angeles: The Getty Conservation Institute, 2019. Xxi + 610 pp., b&w and color illus.

When I started working as a conservation architect in the mid-1980s in Cairo, "urban conservation" was a new and exciting concept that I read about but didn't practice. Needless to say, notions such as "sustainable heritage," "participatory conservation," "culture-specific authenticity," "values-based conservation, and "historic urban landscape" were unknown to me. At the time, the term "modern heritage" sounded like an oxymoron. But my career since then has been an exciting
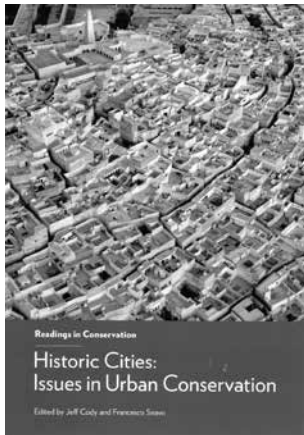
journey of continuous learning and training, as the field of conservation has rapidly evolved and expanded.

The Athens Charter issued by the International Congress of Modern Architecture (CIAM) in 1933 recommended the safeguarding of monuments and their immediate urban contexts. Since then, conservation theory and practice have come a long way. Thus, in 2011, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) adopted the *Recommendations on the Historic Urban Landscape* (HUL), which extended the concept of heritage to include the wider social, cultural and natural contexts of historic cities, as well as aspects of intangible heritage. HUL advocated a holistic approach to urban conservation, including concern for the participation of local communities and a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

What should one read to understand the development of the theory and practice of urban conservation from the Athens Charter to HUL and beyond? What are the essential readings on the concept of the historic city and its significance? Why should it be conserved? How? And for whom?

Jeff Cody and Francesco Siravo set out to address this task in compiling *Historic Cities: Issues in Urban Conservation*, the eighth volume in the Getty Conservation Institute "Readings in Conservation" series. The aim of the series is to provide a selection of seminal texts that have contributed to the development and understanding of the history, theory and practice of conservation. The result is an anthology of 67 essays addressing a wide variety of urban conservation-related issues. The earliest of these is "War on the Demolishers" by Victor Hugo, from 1832, and the latest is "The Conservation of Urban Heritage: A Sustainable Development Opportunity for Cities" by Eduardo Rojas, from 2017.

The essays are woven into a tapestry based on the argument that cities around the world have been affected and transformed over the last two centuries by one or more of three major ruptures: the industrial revolution, the Second World War, and more recently, globalization, mass tourism, and aggressive real estate development. The selected essays, by a range of authors, further focus on a range of case studies and cities, aiming to achieve a "balance . . . between theories and practices, between 'Eurocentric' historic urbanism and other kinds of global cities, and between older perspectives and newer trends to confront the challenges of urban conservation."

To organize the readings, *Historic Cities* is divided into eight parts. These are titled "The Shared Nature of the Historic City"; Geographic Diversity of Historic Cities"; "Re-

actions to the Transformation of Traditional Cities: Three Critical Ruptures"; "Reading the Historical City"; "The Search for Contextual Continuities"; "The Search for Significant Values"; "The Sustainability of Urban Conservation"; and "Managing Historic Cities." Each part further ends with a "Visual Summary" of images reflecting actual issues of urban conservation. Finally, an Appendix, by Siravo, reviews the "Key International Conventions, Recommendations, and Charters Related to Urban Conservation."

There are many ways to read a book like this, and few are likely to read all its offerings from end to end. One that I found to be particularly interesting was to follow an argument or an idea through different essays, even when these were written in different times and contexts. For example, in the fifth essay, "Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture," from 1979, Christian Norberg-Schulz states that "[man] cannot be friends with scientific 'data,' but only with qualities." One finds a complementary echo to this in the conclusion of the last essay, "A City is Not a Computer," from 2017. Here Shannon Mattern writes, "*City-making* is always, simultaneously, an enactment of *city-knowing*, which cannot be reduced to computation."

The question of Eurocentricity in conservation theory and practice likewise appears in several essays, particularly with regard to Asian contexts. Thus, in "Conveying the Spirit of Place," from 2007, Laurence Loh notes that "To Western eyes, accustomed to the preservation of frescoes in their found fragmentary form, not only would the new painting look too bright, fresh and intact, but also it would be deemed poor conservation practice, resulting in the loss of material authenticity." And this point is further elaborated by Carmen C.M. Tsui in "Revitalizing Effective Memory Cues in a Chinese City: Urban Conservation Principles for Huizhou (Guangdong)," from 2002: "The Chinese respect for the past is not manifested in conservation efforts on historic structure. Chinese philosophers suggest that all tangible materials will disappear one day and cannot be preserved; only intangible values remain eternal. . . . The Chinese shoulder a natural-born duty to transmit what they have inherited from the ancients. 'Transmission' is in fact the pivotal central mechanism in Chinese culture." Besides Chinese cities, discussions of other "non-Western" cities are also included in the book, such as with regard to Islamic, Arab, Indian, Japanese and African cities.

Historic Cities is enjoyable and informative reading, with plenty of great illustrations. It is an important resource for anyone interested or engaged in historic cities, their conservation and management.

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Equity in Heritage Conservation: The Case of Ahmedabad, India. By Jigna Desai. Abingdon, Oxon, U.K.; and New York: Routledge, 2019. 212 pp., 50 b&w illus.
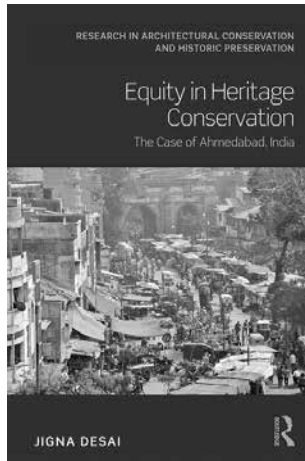
Equity in Heritage Conservation: The Case of Ahmedabad, India, by Jigna Desai, is an invaluable reference for everyone working in the areas of research, strategic planning, administration, and design of urban heritage sites. A solid, scientific and professional book that relies on field research, it may be especially useful in the context of cities in developing countries where heritage activities may be underfunded or in need of vision. Its focus on equity in heritage conservation as an element of sustainable development also tracks with U.N. efforts to make cities more inclusive, safe and resilient. As such, it should also provide a concrete approach to promoting the identity, dignity and welfare of affected communities.

As an aid to readers, Desai opens the book with a background description of terminologies, concepts, and institutional bodies involved in the conservation and management of heritage sites. Her explanations here consider a full range of theoretical issues, from tangible and intangible heritage, to definitions of heritage value, to questions of authenticity and integrity. She then divides the book into six major chapters: 1. Decoding Equity in the Context of Heritage Conservation; 2. Walled City of Ahmedabad: A World Heritage Site; 3. Bhadra — from Maidan to Plaza; 4. The Heritage Street Project; 5. Chowks as a Day-to-Day Meeting Place; and 6. Interpretation of Equity and Way Forward.

The book's structure allows the discussion of heritage conservation in Ahmedabad to flow effortlessly. It starts in the first chapter with a description of equity principles and their value with respect to sustainable development. This includes a description of paradigms and approaches to sustainable development in developing countries before moving on to discuss cultural heritage as an enabler of equity and the design of sustainable cities. In this opening chapter Desai also offers several examples of sustainable urban conservation, showing how a framework of heritage equity may assist in the creation of a sense of place and serve as a resource for cultural and economic development.

The second chapter then describes the context of Ahmedabad: its largely nonplanned character, its emergent locations, the structure of its places of public engagement, and philosophies and practices influencing existing conservation efforts. The latter include the British conservation movement, traditional conservation processes related to the city's religious architecture, the work of local academic and institutional agencies, and efforts by the municipality to comply with national and international agendas.

Three case studies are then showcased in chapters three to five which describe work on the walled city, Bhadra square, and the Heritage Street Project. Each of these chapters starts with a description of methodologies: tools and techniques used to gather documentary evidence, historical narratives referenced to understand the community, and the design of surveys and ethnographic studies. This is followed by an identification of the processes and policies used to develop heritage proposals, their objectives, a chronology of events for each redevelopment project, and an explanation of the agencies involved. Each of these three chapters ends with concluding reflections on how the concept of equity was used to frame work with regard to visual integrity and historic identity, issues of continuity, planning processes, and economic imperatives. Also included in discussions explaining the challenges of revival are issues of urban meaning, the appropriation of cultural assets, the role of politics, concerns for safety, and the importance of a sense of community.

The final chapter presents the key findings of the study as these are related to heritage attributes, sense of place, and cultural and economic resources. This is coupled with an assertion of the conceptual shifts required to properly problematize the value of heritage in relation to an exemplary ethics of engagement.

Desai's smooth language and writing style engages the reader from the first page of this book. This trait is achieved through a choice of vocabulary and its explanation for an international audience. As a writer, she also makes use of long, descriptive sentences that are fluently strung together with comas and semicolons. The amount of content per topic is also well calibrated.

In addition to her documentation of heritage conservation projects, one of the most outstanding aspects of this book is its coverage of methods and its analysis of case studies. These fill a gap in the literature of participatory-action research methods for millions of scholars around the world. As such the book will be of interest within the realms of heritage conservation, urban design, and environmental behavioral studies.

The book's illustrations are a further success. Their design and annotation, as well as their variety, not only make them appealing to readers, but also emphasize how important graphic representation is to scientific research. Also important are the book's tables and matrixes; its bibliography of books, published papers, newspaper articles, official documents, court case records, and Web portals; and side and endnotes. These too are catalysts that may help transform this volume into a classical reference.

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