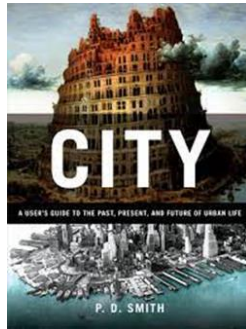


BOOK REVIEW

Urban Kaleidoscope

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City: A guidebook for the Urban Age (2012)

Author:

P.D. Smith

Publisher:

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Pages: 400

Price: 799

Cities are glorious examples of anything an urban life offers. They are not just conglomerations for large number of people, but have been magnets for people's aspirations, ideas, traditions and culture and technology. In his book 'City' the author P.D Smith tries to catch hold of these identities that make the cities enigmatic and curious.

As the cities are complex entities, reading and understanding them need many perspectives and the author takes us with his vision on how to understand the city. He divided the book into eight chapters— 1. Arrival, 2. History, 3. Customs, 4. Where to stay 5. Getting around 6. Money, 7. Time out, and 8. Beyond the city. Through these chapters, he tries to establish a context of a generic city that he calls 'Every City'.

He starts the book with migration of people who settled and built cities and then continues to some of the Major Cities in History. The Chapter Customs discusses peoples' socializing methods using formal and informal communications through writing, languages, art, festivals and celebrations. The 'Stay' talks about different places and neighborhoods and the differences of these places of stay yet how all of these are integral part of the city regardless of their status. To feel or understand the City, one has to move around and see it. In 'Getting Around' he talks about different transport systems and how by walking around you get to know more about the city. No one can deny the importance of money and he discusses different market sizes in 'Money', its implications such as differences in affluence, poverty and crime in the city. Cities are not only busy bees making money but also places for enjoyment, leisure and relax—the chapter 'Time Out' talks about these places where you can enjoy and relax by visiting a theatre, a museum, a park, or just eat out some street food. In the last chapter, he talks about the technologies that a city offers and their futuristic implications. And finally he concludes with 'The Ruin' by looking into different cities that became ruins now. In this chapter, he gives a philosophical perspective that everything has to end to give way to a new idea or development.

Throughout the book the author touches upon different aspects of the city like whirlwind without any specific direction. For example, in the Chapter 'The Ideal City', He starts with Italo Calvino's *Invincible Cities* to talk about Marco polo's meeting with Great Khan, touches upon Chinese imperial cities and cosmic significance, and continues to Jerusalem, Plato's Republic, Calvino's Renaissance, Vitruvius's 'De Architectura Libri Decem' and his design of Sforzinda, Florentine sculptor and architect Antonio di Pietro Averlino, Pope Pius II's attempt to transform the village of Pienza, Leonardo da Vinci, and H.G. Wells's futuristic city. And then he continues to Ambrogio Lorenzetti's the city of Good Government, Giorgio de Chirico's *Mystery and Melancholy of a Street*, Albert Durer, Thomas Moore's *Utopia-Amaurote*, Atlantis, Tommaso Campanella's *The City of the Sun*, Pieter Bruegel the Elder's *The Tower of Babel*, C.R. Ashbee's *Ruislip Garden City*, Johann Valantin Andreae's *Christianopolis*, Andreae's Rosicrucian secret society for ideal Christian community, Francis Bacon's *New Atlantis-Bensalem*. Finally he ends with Margrave Carl Wilhelm's *Karlsruhe*, Louis-Sebastian Mercier's science fiction 'The Year 2440', Canon Barnett's *The Ideal City*, Ebenezer

Howard's Garden Cities of Tomorrow, and Le Corbusier's Ville Contemporaine—a redesigned Paris in 1925. One has to search for other sources for additional information on them to understand the context. This may exhaust the reader sometimes with too much information on authors, incidents, examples, and pioneers of cities—especially if this is his/ her first book to read on the subject of the cities. However, there is rationality in this swift briefing as it tries to link all of them with the inherent idea of the ideal city and how different artists, architects, planners, and even religious leaders thought about an ideal city throughout the history. For the same reason, the reader can open the book on any page and start reading and still get the sense of a city even by reading few paragraphs. The book offers similar examples throughout the book.

This book offers a view for those who would like to get the sense of a city on how different aspects of the society and physical environment make the cities exciting to know. Especially, this book is recommended for those who are into urban studies and try to get the hold of many different facets of the society, be it economics, socio-demographics, architecture or services. The author narrates the connection between these aspects of the society and how they intertwine despite they may seem unrelated or different from each other; and he has succeeded fully in his attempt to grasp the reader's attention. ■



Aruna Sri Reddi, PhD, is a professor in ICAFI School of Architecture. She has been into teaching for the last eight years teaching the subjects of Architecture, and Urban & Regional Planning at both Bachelors and Masters Level. Before getting into academics, she worked in the USA and India in the field of transportation planning and Architecture respectively. She was also an Associate Editor of this journal 'TEKTON' between 2017 and 2020. Her research interests include land use, transportation planning, and growth management techniques.

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