H-Net Reviews
in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Yasser Elsheshtawy, ed. *The Evolving Arab City: Tradition, Modernity and Urban Development.* London: Routledge, 2008. xiv + 314 pp. $125.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-415-41156-1.

Besim S. Hakim. *Sidi Bou Sa'id, Tunisia: Structure and Form of a Mediterranean Village.* Halifax: School of Architecture, Nova Scotia Technical College, 2009. xiii + 181 pp. $19.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-9683184-1-6.

Besim S. Hakim. *Arabic-Islamic Cities: Building and Planning Principles.* EmergentCity Press, 2008. 197 pp. $25.99 (paper), ISBN 978-0-9683184-2-3; ISBN 978-0-9683184-3-0.

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Published on H-Urban (September, 2010)
Commissioned by Alexander Vari

Writing North African and Middle Eastern Cities

Recent developments in the United Arab Emirates and neighboring nations correspond to a resurgence of publications addressing Arab and Islamic cities and architecture. Studies continue to examine and advocate traditional building and planning practices in their various forms while investigating how examples from the past relate to the present.[1] However, contemporary political and economic events and the controversial results of some Middle Eastern and North African projects have newly infused some discussions with soul-searching analyses of ways to draw communities together through architecture and urban design. Three publications open a window into this side of the discourse and show its relevance across fields and disciplines. In *Arabic-Islamic Cities: Building and Planning Principles* and *Sidi Bou Sa'id, Tunisia: Structure and Form of a Mediterranean Village*, Besim S. Hakim renews his argument for building traditionally first articulated in the late 1970s to 1980s. Yasser Elsheshtawy and the contributors to *The Evolving Arab City: Tradition, Modernity and Urban Development* consider the results of ignoring exhortations like Hakim's. They also investigate attempts to satisfy them with external décor instead of locales for public gathering and low-income housing.

First published in 1986, the third edition of Hakim's *Arabic Islamic Cities: Building and Planning Principles* (2008) continues to address how the performance of religio-legal and ethical principles generated certain urban and architectural forms in primarily Tunisian contexts. The format in which Hakim presents his research–a wealth of images, including hand-drawn plans finished by Yahya Al-Najjar–shows that Hakim's target audience is architects and urban planners working in the Islamic world, and the decision-makers who hire and guide them. Chapter 1 relates how the practice of Islamic law regarding behavior shaped neighborhoods. Chapter 2 is an outline of key urban elements and their organization in city (*madina*) cores and suburbs. Chapter 3 is an exploration of building processes and urban morphology emanating from ruling bodies and city inhabitants. Appendixes in Arabic and English include relevant Qur'anic verses, the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad, and a list of primary sources on Imam Malik, founder of the Maliki school of law, which fourteenth-century master builder Ibn al-Rami referenced when developing his influential treatise on construction. Hakim also translates a page of Ibn al-Rami's manuscript from a 1913 lithograph in Fez, Morocco. The fourth appendix contains Hakim's arguments regarding why and what exactly designers, planners, and those who hire them should adopt from traditional architectural types, plans, and materials for religious, health, economic, historical, and ecological reasons. Hakim also uses the fourth appendix to accentuate ideas in Hakim's last chapter in which he suggests future research projects. Hakim's list addresses historical and contemporary subjects, and is as detailed and direct as one would expect from an architect and urban planner who has dedicated most of his career to writing about and encouraging others to contemplate and responsibly develop predominantly Muslim regions.

The most significant alteration to *Arabic-Islamic Cities* is Hakim's postscript on *urf* (customs). Hakim uses

a detailed analysis of Islamic law and its practice since the twelfth century CE, to demonstrate that through residents' continued use of communally held conventions, local authority both legitimized and manifested its power over architecture and urban design. Hakim concludes that built environments in Muslim contexts have been and, in some cases, continue to be formed through a symbiotic and legally recognized relationship between abstract and locally practiced religious and cultural guidelines. The guidelines include laws and legal scholars' and jurists' applications and interpretations (*fiqh*). Guidelines also include residents' practice of everyday life, such as long-established ways of developing and occupying space in certain regions of the Islamic world. A corollary of the postscript is that Arabic-Islamic building practices in the present might also recognize *urf*, a concept Hakim reifies in publications on generative processes, which he adds to *Sidi Bou Sa'id, Tunisia*.

Hakim initially articulated his approach to local agency and city morphology in a mid-1970s study he led in a Tunisian *madina* off the Mediterranean coast, Sidi Bou Sa'id. Joining Hakim and contributing to the original 1978 publication were ten then senior architecture students from the Nova Scotia Technical College School of Architecture in Canada: Harriet E. Burdett-Moulton, Carmen G. Caulfield, Brian A. Gillis, George H. Guimond, Miklos P. Jablanczy, Maria K. Jones, Jainarine Lalla, Paul M. Ledaire, James K. Ogden, and James H. Wright.

Like *Arabic-Islamic Cities*, *Sidi Bou Sa'id, Tunisia* is a well-illustrated manual of vernacular, eco-friendly North African urban and architectural design, the histories behind their formation, and the techniques and materials used to create them. Appendixes eclectically contain a translation of a 1915 decree to preserve the *madina,* Guimond's housing development proposal, and recipes for couscous and *tajine*.

The 2009 edition has an updated preface in which Hakim ties his and his former students' studies of Sidi Bou Sa'id to his *urf* essays and Hakim's discussion of generative processes published after 2000. By generative processes, Hakim means a sustainable framework of decision-making, that, like *urf*, shifts over time and emanates from village and community performance rather than government designs and abstract regulations. In Hakim's conception, generative processes are open for change and contingencies in ways central level codes are not, including the 1915 French colonial law to preserve Sidi Bou Sa'id.[2] It is Hakim's belief that Sidi Bou Sa'id is a textbook case of how locally held conventions and community involvement in urban design result in successful morphology (p. viii).

Hakim's descriptions of conventions and process in *Arabic-Islamic Cities* and *Sidi Bou Sa'id, Tunisia* may dissatisfy some readers. Hakim sometimes glosses over details regarding agent identities, the arenas and formats in which customs are/were traded, and how exactly trade progressed in the past and in relation to non-religious laws today. It is occasionally unclear what roles non-Arab and non-Muslim populations played and continue to play in urban and architectural design. How did the colonial and post-colonial circumstances change populations and interaction, and how might specific case studies alter Hakim's theses? How did fissures and micropolitical battles within communities affect the progression of *urf* and generative processes?

However, these are precisely the issues and questions Hakim exhorts us to consider in our fieldwork and comparative studies. Hakim is especially interested in analyses of modern building types and materials, in addition to anthropological and sociological investigations showing how and if specific actors are as autonomous and aligned as he supposes. Hakim's conceptions of *urf* and generative processes leave open spaces to write about class, gender, and national and ethnic differences, including how they and related factors are envisioned in what authors such as Pierre Bourdieu, for example, discuss as doxa, habitus, social fields and practice, in addition to the ethnographic gaze.[3] That Hakim instigates conversations about power relations and the significance of local contexts are two of the great strengths of each publication, and why his recent editions will appeal across disciplines.

Like Hakim, Elsheshtawy and the contributors to *The Evolving Arab City: Tradition, Modernity and Urban Development* are inspired by the tensions between regional and foreign styles of development, which Elsheshtawy admits are under-problematized categories. However, most participants of *The Evolving Arab City* step back from Hakim's focus upon religion and effective local agents, and present a bleaker view of city inhabitants in the power hierarchy. Case studies demonstrate how urban practices today impoverish and ghettoize poorer city dwellers while catering to the needs of the elite. Facilitating the process are actors and conditions particular to globalization, such as multinational corporations and real-estate conglomerates in addition to consumer culture, immigration for labor purposes, and fetishization of Western conceptions of urban design. While the following questions are not asked directly, they nonetheless face the reader on most pages of *The Evolving Arab*

City: how can the Arab city remain true to its roots if it is not socially and culturally inclusive today, and why should residents and governments be satisfied with what amounts to neo-Islamic pastiche displayed on Western-style museums, skyscrapers, and malls?

The Evolving Arab City begins with two introductory essays explaining its authors' larger goals. In the first, Elsheshtawy positions the book as a companion to another volume he edited, *Planning Middle Eastern Cities: An Urban Kaleidoscope in a Globalizing World* (2004). Both anthologies tasked researchers to analyze the ramifications of East/West interaction in Arab contexts during primarily the past few decades. Fuad K. Malkawi calls for a new interdisciplinary research agenda that takes into account how cities play significant roles in and are shaped by local, national, regional, and, especially global networks and flows. Subsequent chapters in *The Evolving Arab City* are organized around two themes explained in Elsheshtawy's introduction: struggling and emerging cities.

In the section on struggling cities, Rami Farouk Daher, Sofia T. Shwayri, and Jamila Bargach investigate how the disconnect between wealthy and powerful stakeholders and poorer residents negatively affects places of public gathering in downtown Amman, Jordan; Beirut, Lebanon; and Rabat, Morocco. Government policies and wealthy financiers are set against citizens' needs for housing and infrastructure, with the inhabitants enjoying little if any effective recourse against decision-makers. In Daher's Amman, poor residents suffer when projects like the Abdali privatize public space under state-sponsored, neoliberal economic restructuring. The historic city center and those living there are left to ruin, and new developments discourage interaction across class lines. In Shwayri's Beirut, the once inclusive city center is newly segregated into gated enclaves for those who can afford to live there, a result of that city's turbulent history. However, Shwayri argues that the sometimes criticized revitalization of the city center is an important attempt to reclaim downtown Beirut's pre-civil war role as a place of interaction, even as Lebanon recovers from the war with Israel. Bargach is also concerned with the erosion of public marketplaces. She shows how government supported gentrification of Rabat's shantytowns and the Dubai-backed private developments along the Bouregreg River ghettoize Rabat's poor and middle-class away from the city center.

Authors on emerging cities explore the broader symbolism and results of modernizing Gulf settlements. Mashary A. Al-Naim describes how the Al-Riyadh Development Authority helped the Saudi government retain its conservative image while developing Riyadh during the 1970s and 80s. Yasser Mahgoub relates the irony of international and national architects creating landmarks conveying the Kuwaiti national identity as the government destroyed historic architecture that could serve the same purpose. Mustafa Ben Hamouche examines a similar problem in Manama, Bahrain, only in his city the historic core has become a slum for low-income laborers. Khaled Adham's chapter on Doha and Elsheshtawy's on Abu Dhabi consider how large-scale residential and cultural centers reinforce class and ethnic segregation in Qatar and the United Arab Emirates. Several essays reveal how traditional elements decorating Gulf architecture have acquired multivalent meanings, simultaneously referring to a suitably conservative past for some and symbolizing new regional power hierarchy and social divisions for others. One surmises from the section on emerging cities that the next great hurdle Gulf administrators face is similar to one addressed in the articles on struggling cities: how they will house the people building and serving their settlements and provide spaces to strengthen community cohesion.

As a whole, *The Evolving Arab City* is a richly illustrated collection of well-researched essays illuminating development in portions of our world still underconsidered in contemporary urban studies and histories. It should be of interest to sociologists, political scientists, architects, and historians studying the ramifications of rapid urbanization and development in newly wealthy and post-colonial contexts.

While one cannot deny the importance of recognizing and dispersing critiques found in *The Evolving Arab City*, one cannot help but wonder, especially after reading Hakim's publications, what the paths forward will be now that the problems are identified and disseminated. Most essays do not discuss or under-address resistance and the activities of non-professional designers. It is sometimes unclear how effective the few mentions of opposition are, including blogging, place-making, and "other signs of hope" to which Elsheshtawy and Daher allude (pp. 15, 20, 23, 62-64). If these activities are not efficient, how can citizens challenge the state and decision-makers and communicate residents' ideas and needs, especially since, as Elsheshtawy argues, officials' privileging of Western architects' and planners' visions of Middle Eastern cities exacerbates current social problems?

Arabic-Islamic Cities, *Sidi Bou Sa'id, Tunisia*, and *The Evolving Arab City* collectively point to studies nearly absent from the discourse on Arab-Islamic built environ-

ments. While several publications have analyzed definitions of Arab, Islamic, and traditional architecture, there are comparatively few regarding the relational formation of urban space and the social effects of contemporary urban planning. One hopes Hakim's and Elsheshtawy's texts will encourage future investigations regarding how the adjective "modern" differs when applied to North African and Middle Eastern contexts, and if we can continue to use concepts like modern and Western interchangeably given present developments. Perhaps the argument can be made for the existence of some sort of cultural exchange like Hakim advocates in addition to the cultural imperialism Elsheshtawy discusses. Riyadh residents' and their hired contractors' translation of mud-brick homes into concrete may provide interesting case studies, among others mentioned in *The Evolving Arab City*. The history of walls, quarters, and marketplaces over time in North African and Middle Eastern contexts may additionally prove useful in future scholarship building upon the timely themes in *Arabic-Islamic Cities*, *Sidi Bou Sa'id, Tunisia*, and *The Evolving Arab City*.

Notes

[1]. Examples of recent and past studies include Jamel Akbar, *Crisis in the Built Environment: The Case of the Muslim City* (Leiden: Brill,1997); Udo Kultermann, *Contemporary Architecture in the Arab States: Renaissance of a Region* (San Francisco: McGraw-Hill, 1999); Khalil Pirani and Attilo Petruccioli, eds., *Understanding Islamic Architecture* (New York: Routledge, 2003); the many Aga Khan Award for Architecture publications since the 1970s; and *MIMAR* magazine articles from the 1980s reprinted at www.archnet.org.

[2]. Also see Hakim's description of *urf* in "Built Environment, in Law" in Gundrun Krämer et al., eds., *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 176-179. Regarding his understanding of generative processes, Hakim credits Christopher Alexander, *A Pattern Language* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977); and Alexander et al., *A New Theory of Urban Design* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), ix.

[3]. Pierre Bourdieu, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993), especially 29-73; and *Outline Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), especially 78-86 and 159-197.

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Citation: Colette Apelian. Review of Elsheshtawy, Yasser, ed., *The Evolving Arab City: Tradition, Modernity and Urban Development* and Hakim, Besim S., *Sidi Bou Sa'id, Tunisia: Structure and Form of a Mediterranean Village* and Hakim, Besim S., *Arabic-Islamic Cities: Building and Planning Principles.* H-Urban, H-Net Reviews. September, 2010.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=30659

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