http://www.itu.dk/people/alec/city_shaped_book_presentation_Kenneth.pdf
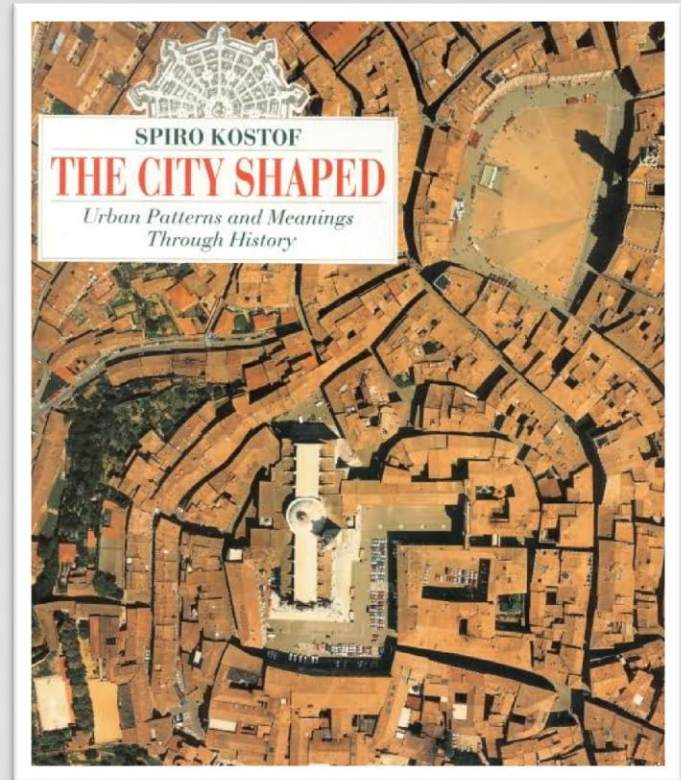
KENNETH NØRBAK IS PRESENTING

# THE CITY SHAPED

## WRITTEN BY SPIRO KOSTOF
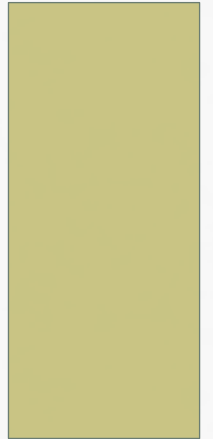
# AGENDA

- Spiro Kostof
- Introduction
- Organic Patterns
- The Grid
- The City as a Diagram
- The Grand Manner
- The Urban Skyline

# SPIRO KOSTOF

- Leading architectural historian(!) and teacher
- 7 May 1936 - 7 December 1991
- Greek born in Turkey
- USA from 1957

- Published books:
  - *America by Design*
  - *Caves of God*
  - *The Architect*
  - *The City Assembled*
  - *The City Shaped*
  - *A History of Architecture*

# INTRODCUTION

- Kostof's interest likes in real cities – designers are interested in ideal cities or cities that were never build.
- Urban process: Physical change through time.
  - "A city is never never complete, never at rest."
  - E.g. Rome: from 1M people to 50k – where did it go?

- The cosmic city: a spatical diagram of social hierachy (e.g. The city of Oblivion, the head of state lives in the middle of the city).

- The practical city: A functional contruct.

- The organic city: A living organism.

# INTRODCUTION

- Surplus production = creation of cities?
    - People came to the area for goods and services.
- Military and political stability, more so than trade, created the need for cities?

# WHAT IS A CITY? (P. 37-39)

- A city is...:
  - ''a relativiely large, dense, and peranent settlement of socially heterogenous individuals'' – L. Wirth, 1938.

  - ''a point of maximum concentration for the power and culture of the community'', Mumford, 1938.

# WHAT IS A CITY? (P. 37-39)

- Kostof:
  - A) Energized crowding
  - B) Urban clusters
  - C) Physical circumscription
  - D) Differentiation of uses
  - E) Urban resources
  - F) Written records
  - G) Cityand countryside
  - H) Monumental framework
  - I) Buildings and people

# ORGANIC PATTERNS

- The designed city
  - A geometric diagram, grid, circle, polygon etc. - A planned city.
- The spontaneous city:
  - No designers, an irregular city, organic.

- City as an organism:
  - The parks and open squares (lungs), city center (heart), the streets (arteries).
    - (Nice way of thinking when doing level design).

# ORGANIC PATTERNS

- No city, however arbitrary its form, is unplanned.
- Power design cities.
  - The state is the owner and can create a pattern of their choosing. Still possible today?
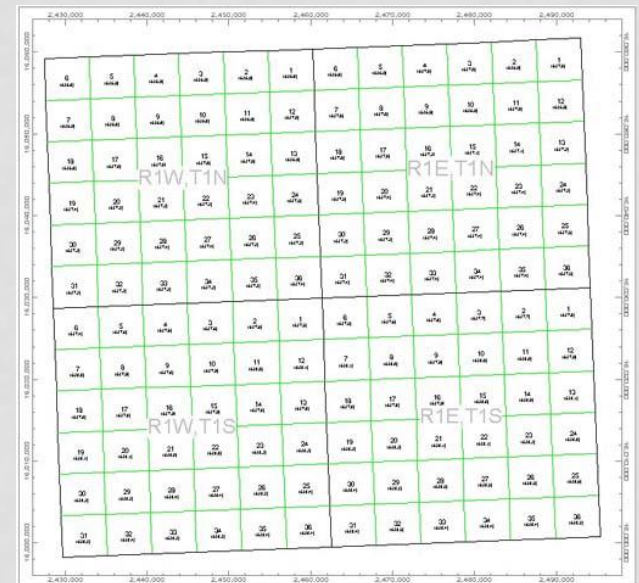
# THE GRID

- Rectilinear planning. Commonest pattern for planned cities.

- Several issues with grid planning, e.g.:
  - When and how does the grid terminate at the outer edges?
  - Open spaces and their distribution.
  - Size and shape of blocks – internal organization.

# THE GRID

- ''The most persistent belief that **urban grids** represent an **egalitarian** **system** of **land distribution** is expressed in the context of modern democracies, principally the United States: 'Simplicity **in land surveying**, recording, and subsequent **ownership** transfer.''' – dividing land equally.

# THE GRID

- The grid served two purposes:
  - To facilitate orderly settlement, colonization in its broader sense.
  - Instrument of modernization.

- Also, it served military arrangements, religious covenants, mercantile capitalism and industrial planning.

# THE GRID

- The grid became standard for new sections in old towns in America.
- Open/Closed grid.

- "Where there is the chance of making money from urban land, the claims of the public good will be set aside" – New York commissioners justified their decision not to provide public space in their 1811 plan.

# THE GRID

- Gridded extensions
  - Where two type of grids meet – or a grid and a origanic core.
- E.g. Amsterdam used the best from gridded and organic planning.

- Block organization
  - Notable features are the size and the density of the blocks. Neither remains fixed at all times. The larger block, the more likely to create new breakthroughs (again, a city is never at rest).

# THE CITY AS A DIAGRAM

- The ideal city…
- Palmanova (ideal city?)
  - Perfectly shaped polygonal city (Italy) – and still is.
- Ideal city often short-lived in their pure state.
  - Reality kicks in – the city evolves.

# THE CITY AS A DIAGRAM

- Centralized systems
  - Concentric organization
  - Radial organization

- The functional diagram (- the logic of defense)
  - Circle inefficient – no straight curtains between two bastions.
  - Square – cheapest, but least flexible.
  - Regular polygon – best solution.

# THE GRAND MANNER

- Major L'Enfant – creating a new Federal capital.
  - Appropriatness of the location
  - Natural features:
    - Public building and their hierachy,  the Capitol, Supreme's Court etc. etc.
- Components of Baroque Aesthetic:
  - 1. focal point.
  - 2. topography, links
  - 3. landscaping
  - 4. vistas
  - 5. public spaces
  - 6. dramatic effects
  - 7. superimposed

# THE GRAND MANNER

- The Design of Heights
  - Platforms
  - Stairs
  - Ramps

- The Baroque Diagonal
  - Example: Wall Street, Salt Lake City
  - E.g.: used to seperate to sections of urban laytor (old core <-> modern development).
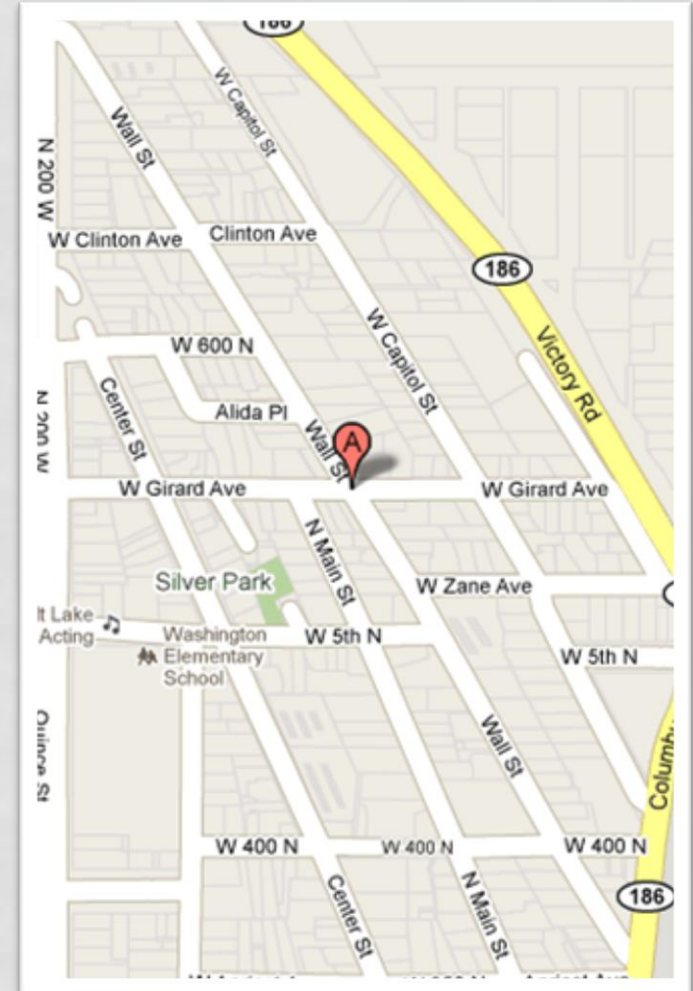
# THE URBAN SKYLINE

- Unique beacons: Eiffel Tower (tech), Mesopotamian ziggurat (religion) – only symbolic, not useful.

- Skyscrabers (private enterprise) – functional payoff *and* sybolism.

# THE URBAN SKYLINE

- The skyline makes impression by
  - Extraordinary landscape features.
  - Pre-eminent buildings



- Skyline not determined by distintive building shapes.
- It's determined by repetitive use of architectural features: domes, spires, ind. chimneys etc.

# THE END

"If we still believe that cities are the most complicated artifact we have created, if we believe further that they are cumulative, generational artifacts that harbor our values as a community and provide us with the setting where we can learn to live together, then it is our collective responsibility to guide their design."

*- Spiro Kostof*

# THE BOOK

- Can be a difficult read – especially for people with limited or no knowledge in urban patterns or creation of cities... Or a particular commitment to this field.

- A LOT of examples, references and images. Some more relevant than others when studying game and level design.

- A lot of the examples are not interesting if reading the book with game design and level design in mind – but they create a solid view of urban pattern and urban creation.

- The information presented today is just a small part of the content of this book.