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Teaching Urban Morphology

 Springer

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Foreword

There seems to be a lack of hard evidence as to when the subject that is now known widely as urban morphology began to be taught. However, it is a reasonable presumption that in small ways urban morphology began to be communicated in institutions of higher education at much the same time as researchers started to develop a professional interest in the form of cities.

If publications are the most reliable indicator of this early research, then those towards the end of the nineteenth century, such as that by Johannes Fritz on *Deutsche Stadtanlagen* in 1894, may well be indicative of the beginnings of teaching. But the very diversity of the elements that make up the form of cities has inevitably meant that those engaged in its research have come from many disciplines. Fritz was a high school history teacher in Strasbourg, but by the late 1890s German-speaking university geographers, notably Otto Schlüter, who initially studied history at the University of Halle, had begun the serious investigation of urban form.

By the second decade of the twentieth century, the disciplinary foundations of urban morphology were broadening further, most notably in the work of Hugo Hassinger, who went on from his early studies in geography, history and geology to become a high school teacher and then as an academic to study historical architectural styles. He was much concerned initially with the problems of preservation in the Old Town of Vienna, particularly in respect of historical monuments, eventually producing an ‘art-historical’ atlas of the whole city. However, his mapping was arguably more architectural than geographical, as the titles of a series of his publications up to the middle of the First World War suggest. Thus, a century ago there were already the seeds of at least four of the disciplines—architecture, geography, history and planning—that are shaping the growing field of urban morphology in the early twenty-first century.

These early influences can be detected in this book, though rarely do the names of the founding fathers occur. New strands of thought, including from other disciplines, began to emerge in the inter-war years. Yet, like teaching in a number of fields of knowledge, that in urban morphology remained on a small scale. Nevertheless, two key researchers and promulgators, M. R. G. Conzen and Saverio

Muratori, who are conspicuous for their intellectual presence in aspects central to many of the chapters of this book, were undergoing some of their most formative years at that time.

The 1950s, 1960s and 1970s paved the way for research and teaching in urban morphology as it is recognized today, though on the world map of the subject's development relatively little was happening in these years outside of central Europe, France, Italy, the United Kingdom and the United States. In Italy, Muratori and his principal successor, Gianfranco Caniggia, were major influences. Perhaps most significantly, the concept of the typological process was being developed, notably within the school of thought to which the work of these architects gave rise.

In a lineage that was at the time quite separate, in the United Kingdom, M. R. G. Conzen built strongly on the central European legacy in geography and more widely. This was evident not only in his conceptual development of urban morphology, for example, underpinning major developments of the fringe-belt concept, but also in his teaching of urban morphology to undergraduates. Dialectical thinking, which had captured his imagination as a student in the University of Berlin, was fundamental to the structure of his seminar teaching for advanced undergraduates, including in field seminars, throughout his quarter-century academic career in Newcastle upon Tyne (initially in King's College, which was later to become the University of Newcastle upon Tyne). Practically, all his seminars, ranging widely over the field of urban morphology, were student led, beginning with a student presented paper on a topic selected by Conzen, and followed by discussion among students, chaired by one of the student groups. In the field, direct observation of urban landscape phenomena was integral to the application of the dialectical method.

Much the same seminar method spread to the University of Glasgow, where it was participated in by third- and fourth-year undergraduates taking urban morphology as an option. Thence, it spreads to the University of Birmingham in the early 1970s, again in an advanced course in urban morphology for undergraduates, some of whom stayed on to do research in urban morphology and formed the beginnings of the Urban Morphology Research Group. This group still exists in the University of Birmingham but now comprised largely of international researchers (Ph.D. students and visiting academics).

By the 1990s, significant links were beginning to develop between the Muratorian architectural school and the Conzenian geographical school. An important development was the formation of the International Seminar on Urban Form (ISUF) in the mid-1990s. This drew in academics from a range of disciplines and also practitioners. Soon the annual ISUF conferences, which began in Europe, had spread practically worldwide. Dissemination was aided by the beginning of publication in 1997 of the first international journal in the field, 'Urban Morphology'. Recognition of the need for textbooks in urban morphology was reflected in the publication in 2016 of 'Urban morphology: an introduction to the study of the physical form of cities' and in 2017 of 'The handbook of urban morphology'.

Probably partly because of the tendency for the teaching of urban morphology in universities to constitute just a small part of the teaching in a single department, the momentum for the publication of a book on the teaching of the subject has been slow to develop. This deficiency has now been recognized, and experts in this subject from most parts of the world in which it is well represented have been brought together here to share their first-hand teaching expertise in the field in which much of their scholarly reputation has been built. The range of advice they provide on why to teach (or indeed study) urban morphology, the exposition of the major components of that study and the explanation of how to teach this field of knowledge forms a remarkable collection. For anyone seeking to engage with urban morphology as teacher or taught, there is no better place to start.

Birmingham, UK
December 2017

J. W. R. Whitehand
Urban Morphology Research Group
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Abbreviations

CASA	Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis
CBD	Central Business District
CIAM	<i>Congrès Internationaux d' Architecture Moderne</i>
CNPq	<i>Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico</i>
EDR	E-merging Design Research
ENPAS	<i>Ente Nazionale Previdenza e Assistenza ai Dipendenti Statali</i>
FSI	Floor Space Index
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GPS	Global Positioning System
GSI	Ground Space Index
IBGE	<i>Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística</i>
INA	<i>Istituto Nazionale delle Assicurazioni</i>
ISSS	International Space Syntax Symposium
ISUF	International Seminar on Urban Form
IT	Information Technology
IUAV	<i>Istituto Universitario di Architettura di Venezia</i>
JCUD	Joint Centre for Urban Design
LUBFS	Centre of Land Use and Built Form Studies
MAUP	Modifiable Areal Unit Problem
MIT	Massachusetts Institute of Technology
NACH	Normalized Least Angular Choice
OSR	Open Space Ratio
PDM	<i>Plano Director Municipal</i>
SST	Space Syntax Theory
UCL	University College London
UK	United Kingdom
UMRG	Urban Morphology Research Group
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UN	United Nations
USA	United States of America
WAM	Workshop in Architecture and Urban Morphology
WWII	World War II

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