

BOOK REVIEW:

TEACHING URBAN MORPHOLOGY

Edited by Vitor Oliveira.

The Urban Book Series, Springer Nature Switzerland, Cham,
Switzerland, 2018, 338pp.

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Even though interest in urban form grew from the 1980s onwards, it is still relatively little known on how to teach it. This book, edited by Vitor Oliveira, presents a second book in the Urban Book Series of Oliveira's significant contribution and effort to highlight the importance of the Urban Morphology as a discipline (*Urban morphology: an introduction to the study of the physical form of cities* (Oliveira, 2016) and *J. W. R. Whitehand and the historico-geographical approach to urban morphology* (Oliveira, 2019)). The book series was intended to contribute to the general understanding of the urban morphology, to reveal teaching methods and clarify the reasons why and what should be taught, and eventually to highlight the lifelong contribution of individual scholars such as Jeremy Whitehand. Jointly, these three books give a holistic picture of urban morphology but raise a series of new questions and challenges that are left to be addressed in time to come.

This book gives close insights to different approaches undertaken by eighteen contributing authors according to their area of academic expertise and a variety of morphological schools that shaped their academic and professional practice. As explained by the editor, the selection of contributors was conducted according to the diversity of morphological approaches, geographical provenance, disciplinary background, and age/generation (p. 3). The book launching was organized at the 2018 International Seminar on Urban Form (ISUF) conference in Krasnoyarsk, where book editor Vitor Oliveira presented the book content, while prominent chapter authors (Giuseppe Strappa, Kai Gu and Ivor Samuels) explained their individual approaches.

The book consists of three main parts dealing with questions on why to teach urban morphology (1), what to teach (2) and essentially how to teach (3).

The first part deals with the notions of the relevance of urban morphology as a field of study, the ways on how it can add value to the understanding of the way city is being shaped, and the reasons why one should care about urban morphology. As explained by M. Barke in the second chapter, urban morphology and its focus on the ordinary-buildings and urban tissues, studied in both the past and the present, gives us insights into what not to do and how to do things better. The reasons of why we should care about urban morphology concerning the cultural, physical, and social dimensions of the city are deeply explained in this chapter. The third chapter by Tolga Unlu examines the relationship between research and practice in the urban form in relation to planning decisions and their implementation in the context of Turkey. Chapter 4 presents the notes written by M. R. G. Conzen between 1992 and 1999 and edited by J. W. R. Whitehand,

who strived to position urban morphology in a cross-disciplinary setting, while Nicola Marzot in chapter 6 tries to position urban morphology in relation to other research fields that share the interest of urban form. The fifth chapter, written by Giancarlo Cataldi, offers an extensive elaboration of the theory derived from Severio Muratori architectural thought aiming to understand the transformation processes. The seventh chapter by Meta Berghauser Pont elaborates on the space-morphology and explains various directions, highlights possibilities for their integration with each other, and with other morphological studies.

The second part is concerned with the contents and body of knowledge to be taught in higher education. It varies from the Michael P. Coznen explanation on how Town plan Analysis can be used for the understanding of the complexity and cultural meaning of cityscapes in Chapter 8, to understanding relations and influences of urban morphology on urban design in various contexts - New Zealand by Kai Gu in Chapter 9, Italian by Giuseppe Strappa in Chapter 10 and by Brazilian by Frederico de Holanda in Chapter 11. In Chapter 12, Emily Talen's argument builds on previous ones and explores how urban morphology could inform and improve urban design pedagogy. The question that arises in this part is whether academic background and the intellectual heritage of the specific urban morphology school influences the teaching process or should the education provide a holistic approach and understanding of various methods, tools, and theories. The mutual impression is that both process typological and historico-geographical approaches are deeply practiced in countries from which founding fathers of these approaches come from (Italy, United Kingdom) while the other urban morphology schools and networks (such as Portuguese and Cyprus ones) tend to include and combine approaches.

Third part concerns about problems of schools in which urban morphology should be thought (planning, urban design, geography, architecture), the study level, course, methodology, and the structure of the course. In chapter 13, Sophia Psarra, Fani Kostourou, and Kimon Krenz explore the ways how space syntax could be integrated into architectural education, while Marco Maretto, in Chapter 14, investigates how urban morphology can be used as a tool to achieve sustainability. The other important set of topics that are researched in individual chapters are the importance of observation of the real world for urban morphology highlighted by Peter Larkham (Chapter 15), how urban tissues can be used as a tool in urban design studio deeply explained by Richard Hayward and Ivor Samuels (Chapter 16) and practical methods used in teaching from analysis, through developing of design guidance and critic to design proposal

explained by Karl Kropf (Chapter 17). In the final chapter, Vitor Oliveira describes a specific course in urban morphology and gives a reflection on the theoretical, methodological, and procedural issues in the teaching of the course. All of the above-mentioned aspects have been analyzed through the student's perspective, since students' feedback about the importance and gained knowledge in the field of urban morphology was greatly appreciated.

Taking into account that origin of urban morphology at the University of Belgrade, Faculty of Architecture, goes back to the beginning of the 1970s, where urban form and the urban environment became the main topic of architectural education this book provides valuable views on past and previous reasons and methods of how morphology is to be thought. The importance of the topic has been emphasized in various courses for many years, and was further enhanced by the individual contribution of academics who published seminal books (*Urban morphology – city and city square* (Đokić, 2004) and *Urban typology – city square in Serbia* (Đokić, 2009)) and introduced new courses such as *Urban Morphology* and *Urban Typology and Morphology*. Having in mind this context, this book presents an important contribution in the urban morphology field that can serve for deepening specific knowledge both for students and academics.

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