

class, ability and gender influence graffiti and street art practice. As with a handbook of any type, there is no dominant narrative and this is not a volume to read through cover-to-cover but rather one to consult in parts. This book is an essential addition to any university library and will no doubt be of great use to students and scholars. Those with interests in graffiti would particularly benefit from this resource.

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Two manuals to link urban morphological research and practice

The handbook of urban morphology, by K. Kropf, Chichester, West Sussex, UK, Wiley, 2017, 248 pp., £50.00, ISBN: 978-1-118-74769-8.

Urban morphology: an introduction to the study of the physical form of cities, V. Oliveira, Cham, Switzerland, Springer, 192 pp., £109.99, ISBN: 978-3-319-32081-6

Two books, Vitor Oliveira's *Urban Morphology: An Introduction to the Study of the Physical Form of Cities* and Karl Kropf's *The Handbook of Urban Morphology*, have taken their place within the recent discussions on the link between urban morphological research and practice. Oliveira asserts that his book is intended to be a manual 'to introduce the reader into the wonderful world of the study of physical form of cities' (1) that aims to catch the attention of researchers and practitioners in a variety of disciplines, including geography, architecture, planning, engineering, history, archeology and sociology. Likewise, Kropf points out that his book is intended to be a practical manual of urban morphological analysis; to provide a guide to methods and techniques of analysis, definitions, terms and concepts, and approaches to interpretations; and to illustrate how urban morphology is used in practice.

Departing from the similar aims of preparing their manuals, Kropf and Oliveira also take on a similar attitude in the structuration of their books. Both studies include coherent discussions on what urban morphology is, how the change in the built environment can be analyzed, and how urban morphological research could be utilized in practice. Kropf structures his book in three distinct but interrelated parts. The first part is about the principles of urban morphology, including core concepts, origins and approaches, aspects of urban form and minimum elements. The second part is on the methods of investigation, while the third part marks the development and use of urban morphological research through the case studies. Following the introduction, Oliveira discusses the elements of urban form and the agents and processes of urban transformation in the second and third parts. He continues with a brief analysis of cities in history and an investigation on three cities – New York, Marrakesh and Porto. The sixth part distinguishes the different approaches in urban morphology. Subsequently, Oliveira discusses the relationship of theory with practice, and the relationship of urban morphology with other fields of knowledge, such as society, economy and environment. In this vein, both manuals discuss the essence and definition of urban morphology, elements of urban form, the methods of analysis about the changes to urban form, which intend to bridge the gap between the research and practice.

In its very essential definition, urban morphology is ‘the study of urban form’ (Larkham 2002, 95). It deals with the cyclical nature of urban growth, the internal processes of adaptation and redevelopment, the roles of various agents taking place in these processes, and provides ideas for the future developments (Whitehand 2001). Oliveira follows this fundamental definition and defines the elements of urban form – urban tissue, streets, plots and buildings. Kropf adds rooms, structures and materials to these elements and draws attention to the interrelationship of these elements within a compositional hierarchy, in which our cities acquire their character through coming together of the urban form elements at different levels of resolution. Kropf highlights ‘normative impulse’ as the main motivation to form and transform urban form, and to create urban tissues at different levels of resolution. He defines it as ‘an expression of the fundamentally political nature of creating and changing the built environment’ (5).

Oliveira and Kropf address four main approaches in urban morphology to investigate the changes to urban form. First is the historico-geographical approach that seeks to explain the urban pattern and character through town-plan analysis, elaborated by M.R.G. Conzen through his studies on British towns. The second is called the typo-morphological approach by Kropf, and the process typological approach by Oliveira. Developed by the works of Muratori and Caniggia, and followed by two generations in Italy, this approach utilizes typological analysis within a critical understanding of the built environment to scrutinize the emergence of forms throughout their historical process of formation and transformation. Third is the configurational approach that focuses on the geometric and topological attributes of urban form through using mathematical and quantitative methods, of which space syntax is the most commonly known. The space is placed within relationships to other spaces within a spatial configuration and it is sought to understand the relationship between the space and movement. The spatial analytical approach conceives the city as complex adaptive systems within the interrelationships between social, economical and physical constituents.

Besides providing a robust framework for the analysis of the changes to urban form, one of the main challenges of urban morphology is to provide sound bases to practitioners to understand and comprehend their context (Whitehand 2009). As different actors take place within the contradictory and complex nature of the process of shaping urban form with their varying motivations, each of them wish to exert control with his/her preferences and value judgements, and the built environment becomes an object of continuous interventions of various forces and factors. The morphological agents (developers, politicians, professionals, users) would like to shape urban form as quickly as possible, while research, which enables us to understand and explain the intrinsic qualities of the built environment, requires longer time. Along this path, a Task Force was organized in ISUF (International Seminar on Urban Form) as a result of the growing interest on the link between research and practice in urban morphology. Samuels (2013) pointed out that the task force intended to raise the level of understating and application of urban morphology in a range of relevant professions.

Oliveira contributes the aim of bridging the gap between research and practice through making the use of different approaches and methods more concrete with their implementation in the city of Porto. As the last section of his manual, in order to discuss the link between the research and practice, Oliveira exemplifies the use of different approaches in practice in different cultural contexts, i.e., the works of Muratori in Italy, Kropf and Samuels in France, Space Syntax Limited in Jeddah. Since the divergence of approaches brings about different concepts and methods in urban morphology, Oliveira draws attention to the need of integration in the use of concepts and methods to be used in planning practice. Similarly, Kropf points out that the urban form is the same phenomenon of investigation for different approaches, and he depicts that multiplicity of description provides more insight. In this respect, Kropf suggests a general process of analysis, which consists of six iterative phases –

scope, information gathering, desktop analysis, field survey, interpretation and synthesis, and final outputs, is a synthesis of various methods. He structures the morphological research within the different aspects of urban form, level of resolution and time frame. He seeks to understand the relationship between urban form elements and develops the analysis within their compositional hierarchy. Furthermore, Kropf discusses the potential application of urban morphological analysis in planning practice in a range of various cities.

Each city represents a spatial configuration of the built environment in the effect of a variety of forces and factors, and gains their uniqueness through the changes to urban form in an ongoing process. Oliveira and Kropf both provide a sound base for developing a framework for investigation of the uniqueness of the cities through either idiographic or comparative studies, and show professionals the utilization of morphological methods in the shaping of urban form. They reveal that the successful places are produced through the part-to-whole relationship of urban form elements in a compositional hierarchy to constitute a coherent urban pattern in different levels of resolutions from the minor (buildings, rooms, structures, materials) to medium (plot, street, block) and major scales (neighbourhoods).

In conclusion, through their invaluable contribution to the field of urban morphology, Oliveira and Kropf both introduce the built environment to researchers as an object of study and contribute to the rise of their awareness about the intrinsic qualities of urban space, as well as showing discrete methods to be used by practitioners to increase the quality of the built environment.

Disclosure statement

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