

- University of Liverpool and John Moore's University, 9-11 April.
- Guy, B. (2005) Spatial urbanism: public space typology as urban planning zones, unpublished PhD thesis, Anglia Polytechnic University.
- Jacobs, J. (1961) *The death and life of great American cities* (Random House, New York).
- Kropf, K. (1996) 'Urban tissue and the character of towns', *Urban Design International* 1, 247-63.
- Lynch, K. (1960) *The image of the city* (MIT Press, Cambridge, MA).
- Nasar, J.L. (1988a) 'Visual preferences in urban street scenes: a cross-cultural comparison between Japan and the United States', in Nasar, J.L. (ed.) *Environmental aesthetics: theory, research and applications* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge) 260-74.
- Nasar, J.L. (1988b) 'Perception and evaluation of residential street scenes', in Nasar, J.L. (ed.) *Environmental aesthetics: theory, research and applications* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge) 274-89.
- Unwin, R. (1909) *Town planning in practice: an introduction to the art of designing cities and suburbs* (Fisher Unwin, London).

Linking urban landscape characterization and urban morphology

Alex J. Birkhamshaw, Urban Morphology Research Group, School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Birmingham, Birmingham, B15 2TT, UK. E-mail: ajb093@bham.ac.uk

Two previous contributions to *Urban Morphology* have drawn links between the programme of urban landscape characterization being undertaken by English Heritage and the discipline of urban morphology.¹ Nick Morton drew attention to the lack of acknowledgement of established morphological concepts and methods in the English Heritage characterization programme as it existed in 2001, pointing out, however, the obvious parallels between the mapping of character areas and the mapping of morphological regions.² Recently Roger Thomas, the head of urban archaeology at English Heritage, noted, with regard to the methodology used in English Heritage Extensive Urban Surveys (EUS), the debt to M.R.G. Conzen.³

A still more recent indication of the growing dialogue between those involved in the English Heritage characterization programme and those engaged in the discipline of urban morphology was the featuring of a paper, given by Jeremy Whitehand, on urban morphology at the latest English Heritage conference on urban landscape characterization.⁴ For me, an urban morphologist, the presentations and discussions at this conference raised a number of points concerning the relationship between the English Heritage characterization programme and the discipline of urban morphology: where they come together, where they pull apart and the possible grounds for a constructive exchange of knowledge between the two.

The principle of urban landscape characterization is very similar to that of morphological regionalization. Both aim to describe objectively and map the character of a particular place; both see the character of the contemporary urban landscape as the product of, and therefore intelligible through, its historical development; and the envisaged application of both is to provide a guide to the long-term management of the urban landscape, especially with regard to its conservation.

In practice, however, urban landscape characterization and morphological regionalization tend to be realized in quite different ways. Thomas's comment that 'the debt to M.R.G. Conzen is clear, although EUS is necessarily very rapid and broad-brush' hints at a significant difference between the work of M.R.G. Conzen and the work on characterization currently being undertaken by English Heritage.⁵ In fact, the indeterminacy of character descriptions and imprecision of boundary definitions evident in some of the broad-brush approaches to characterization demonstrated at the English Heritage Urban Characterization Seminar stand in marked contrast to the meticulously detailed morphological regionalization of Ludlow produced by M.R.G. Conzen.⁶ Conzenian urban morphologists, such as myself, are more accustomed to promoting the value of the slow and rigorous survey than that of the fast and broad-brush survey.

Whilst to date no direct comparison has been

made of the process and product of a standard urban landscape characterization survey versus that of a standard morphological survey, it is likely that such a comparison would reveal further points of separation between the two. In principle, a character area and a morphological region represent the same thing: an area of coherent character, distinct from that of neighbouring areas. And the character that forms the basis for each may be viewed as a composite of town plan, building fabric and land use characteristics. However, this combination of town plan, building fabric and land use is strictly adhered to for morphological regions, whereas character areas often present an ambiguous mixture of the three.

A further difference between character areas and morphological regions concerns their scale. Morphological regions are typically seen to form a hierarchical structure, in which small-scale regions sit within a series of larger regions of increasingly generalized character, or put another way, large-scale areas have sub-areas and sub-sub-areas. Characterization studies, on the other hand, rarely recognize character areas of different scales and generalities of character. In this respect, urban morphology offers an approach to areal delimitation that might better represent the reality of an urban landscape that people engage with and comprehend in terms of areas of various scale, according to the activity that they are involved in at a given time.

However, presenting urban morphology is not easy. Plenty of others share the urban morphologist's concern for the character of the urban landscape, yet for many the very word

'morphology' is immediately off-putting: urban morphology comes across as something esoteric. Nevertheless, the value of links between it and the English Heritage characterization programme is now acknowledged on both sides. For urban morphologists this provides an impetus to reflect on the effectiveness with which we communicate our theories and methods to others.

Notes

1. Morton, N. (2002) 'Reinventing morphological regions?', *Urban Morphology* 6, 97-8; and Thomas, R.M. (2005) 'English Heritage, characterization and the urban historic environment', *Urban Morphology* 9, 128-30.
2. Morton, op. cit. 97.
3. Thomas, op. cit. 129.
4. Whitehand, J.W.R. (2005) 'Characterization, urban morphology and urban design', unpublished paper presented to the English Heritage Second Biennial Urban Characterization Seminar, London, December. In attendance at this seminar were about 90 people, mostly employees of English Heritage and its local government partners from across England, as well as a handful of private consultants and academics.
5. Thomas, op. cit. 129.
6. Conzen, M.R.G. (1988) 'Morphogenesis, morphological regions and secular human agency in the historic townscape, as exemplified by Ludlow', in Denecke, D. and Shaw, G. (eds) *Urban historical geography: recent progress in Britain and Germany* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge) 253-72.

Anglo-Japanese post-war reconstruction

In September 2005 a small workshop on Anglo-Japanese post-war planning and reconstruction was held in Birmingham.

The first papers focused on individual towns: Tokyo by Junichi Hasegawa, and two papers by Michihiro Kita and Ayako Kita, one on Nagoya and one on Osaka. A second group combined the functions of giving national overviews of Japanese and UK reconstruction, and giving additional consideration to the development of post-war planning approaches in the two countries. Takashi Yasuda gave a broad overview of Japanese

reconstruction plans and the post-war development of planning; Shun-Ichi Watanabe used Tokyo to comment on Japanese planning approaches; Peter Larkham reflected on British reconstruction planning; and Colin Wood reviewed recent changes in the British planning system.

The papers are now available as Working Paper 1 of the Faculty of Law, Humanities, Development and Society, UCE Birmingham, costing £5.00: contact the editor, Peter Larkham: peter.larkham@uce.ac.uk
