designers as a way of recognizing existing form more precisely. Morphologists need to work a little harder to define and recognize different generalized tissue types and to name these terms consistently. Naming formations helps diagnose conditions (diseased tissues do exist), as well as establish how unique conditions can be discovered.

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The contemporary city: speaking the same language in design and theory

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Urban morphology and urban design point in different directions: one looking back at existing reality and the other looking forward to a future reality (Marshall and Çalışkan, 2011, p. 416). This has led several authors to describe urban morphology and design as part of a continuum in which the *understanding* of the city can eventually lead to a better *design* of the city (Marshall and Çalışkan, 2011; Moudon, 1992; Whitehand, 2005): looking backwards and learning from the successes and failures of the past can assist designers in shaping future built environments. This historical approach to design remains popular in urban design discourse. But the separation between past and present, understanding and design, has been a challenge in the development of a meaningful shared language between theory and practice.

The significant body of knowledge produced by the British tradition of urban morphology and the French and Italian traditions of typomorphology have been strongly grounded in urban historical development. In these traditions, however, the focus on European historical cities 'may seem to hinder practical application in today's wider world' (Moudon, 1997, p. 9). In the work of the Italian school, 'the application of the concept of building type in urban design practice has been systematically affected by the overwhelming importance placed on the culture of historic centres' (Marzot, 2005, p. 30). Morphogenetic analysis of the historical core, and the reification of the traditional building type, became design tools used to guide architectural and urban practice. It is not surprising that this backward glance became so prevalent during the period of reaction against the failures of modernism in the 1960s. It seemed to many that the only means of establishing a more integrated solution to modern city form was to reconnect the study of urban form to the development of a theory of city design by looking to historical city-building traditions as the *modus operandi* for city making.

This reaction to modernism also explains the rise of historical approaches in urban design practice outside Italy. There were two developments in particular. The first was a strong movement to conserve and manage established settlements before they were demolished by the indiscriminate force of modernism. The second was a pattern-book approach to reproducing the spatial relationships of the European pre-industrial town in the neo-traditional style of New Urbanism (Krier, 1979). In both cases, urban design practice was motivated by a sense of loss and what MacCormac (1994, p. 70) describes as a 'deep sense of incongruity and a feeling that the nature of change is such that instead of affirming what exists and adding to it, the modern environment is perceived to have destroyed what was good and not to have improved on it'. Driven by a need to protect and manage urban quality, as well as renew the dignity and value of architecture, much of urban design practice became more about design control rather than conceptual

and experimental design.

In the UK, the influence of urban morphology on the practice of design control can be seen in such terms as 'townscape management' (Conzen, 1966). Although for Conzen townscape combined physical forms and cultural processes, in urban planning the categorization of character areas has frequently not been accompanied by rigorous morphological methods, as Birkhamshaw and Whitehand (2012) have pointed out. Where there has been a thorough morphological approach to character area analysis, as in the much publicized *Stratford-on-Avon District Design Guide* (Kropf, 2001), there has been a focus on interpreting the historical development of the component parts of the town plan (see also Kropf, 1996). Arguably, it is the detailed definition of these particular morphological characteristics that makes it possible to be more specific in judging whether new development proposals will enhance an area. This approach can help repair historical areas that have suffered from erosion of their historical qualities. This has been demonstrated in the market square in Kettering, Northamptonshire. Here by 2009 the buildings closing off the southern edge of the square had been demolished, leaving the church exposed and the square undefined. In the redevelopment of this area the Council has attempted to trace the historical building footprint and recreate the massing and heights of the ensemble of built forms.

In New Urbanism, 'codes' are identified in the urban patterns of pre-industrial cities. More generally, design codes have emerged as another design control tool in the past 10 years (Marshall, 2011). Unlike the design guides, character appraisals, and conservation area management plans that regulate urban change in existing environments, the design code is used in new developments such as extensions to urban areas. There has been criticism of New Urbanist models as being a re-packaged form of suburbia. They have also been criticized for their emphasis on the reuse of traditional building types and styles not necessarily in keeping with either their context or societal changes. Nevertheless, there are cases in which design codes have been formulated by an examination of what Roger Evans, Director of Studio REAL terms 'shared values for urban form' that produce morphological attributes that are remarkably consistent in different environments. Studio REAL has identified 22 key urban form attributes that govern the planning and development process and provide 'rules of assembly'. These attributes operate at one of four scales: settlement pattern; neighbourhood form; relationships between the plot and the street; and architectural responses. At the scale of a development parcel, a regulating plan governs the relationships between the plot and the street. It controls, amongst other things, street alignments (segments in space syntax terms), building lines or 'build-within' zones, the perceived heights of buildings, and the placement of building entrances.

The limitations of the historical application of urban morphology in urban design are largely responsible for why urban designers may not always conceive of urban morphology as a generator of new urban concepts. Within the realm of design control, urban morphology's strong connections with pre-industrial cities only narrowly responds to the challenges of contemporary city processes, forces of change, and socio-economic shifts. Indeed, the real underlying questions in the strengthening of the links between theory and practice are how can urban morphology as a discipline provide the repertoire of design concepts for today's design challenges, and how can urban design form a new area of study for urban morphological analysis? Kropf (2011) has already alluded to 'opening out the perspective' to combine different kinds of social and environmental information to offer greater insights into what kinds of intervention might be most appropriate. At the same time, urban design needs to link the 'designing' of urban space and form to fundamental societal processes beyond the enduring market rationale (Cuthbert, 2007). It is apparent that urban morphology and design can support each other if the focus of study lies in what Marshall and Çalışkan (2011) call 'abstraction', in which such abstractions as geometric shapes, dimensions, properties and types become the shared language. What does this mean for the study of urban morphology and for the practice of urban design? For urban morphology it means revisiting the enduring concept of the objectivation of the spirit of society (Conzen, 1966, p. 59). This concept is valid in any temporal frame, including the present day. To give urban morphology greater currency in urban design, there is a need to examine how the spirit of society, influenced by such dramatic forces as globalization, environmentalism, migration and privatization, is and will be shaping the city.

As Marshall and Çalışkan (2011) argue, morphology and design 'speak the same language'. They communicate using the basic building blocks of urban form that essentially provide the 'raw material' of design. Working in the present, by speaking the same language, and by understanding

the city at this moment of 'making', provides the intellectual space where theory and practice can find a shared platform. This recognition is already influencing the urban morphology research agenda, as witnessed in the ISUF 2011 conference on 'Urban morphology and the post-carbon city'. For designers there is a need to understand the tools at their disposal to shape cities according to the spirit of society. In parallel, urban morphologists can help understand and critically evaluate contemporary rapid change. In this way it will no longer be necessary to speak only in terms of a continuum, of past or future. Instead an arena can be constructed in which urban morphology and urban design support each other to offer solutions to the challenges of the contemporary city.

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Morphology and design: the developing dialogue

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The development of new understanding in emerging fields of study is followed naturally by the urge to apply or test this in practice. In the field of urban morphology, however, we find that in the relevant disciplines of practice, such as urban design, morphological understanding is often already applied, without its application being fully understood. With a broader awareness of meaning, such application could be so much richer in its outcome.

It is timely to link good practice in urban design to an understanding of the principles of urban morphology. The growing awareness of morphology and the sensitive study of urban form occur at a time when attitudes to urban development are already being re-focussed.

Throughout much of the twentieth century, the process of urban renewal was about large-scale clearance of urban fabric, expunging buildings, plots and memories to provide a tabula rasa for extensive redevelopments. We have moved some distance from regarding this as the ideal form of urban renewal.

The tendency now for renewal to focus on the surgical infill of existing urban sites has helped to create among designers an awareness of the morphological dimension by which such sites relate to each other and to the city, albeit that they may