

morphological research are involved in practice almost continuously. For some researchers it provides their main source of research funding and income. Indeed rather than urban morphology being in an 'ivory tower' it is sublimated to the imperatives of architectural and planning practice. As a consequence in China the evidence base provided by research is relatively weak in spite of much research and practice being undertaken by the same people.

A further problem in China is the integration of the research basis of the administrative and operating systems into the legal system. Clearly such problems go well beyond what it is practicable for the ISUF Task Force on Research and Practice

to consider. However, as in most countries, in China a stronger link between urban morphological research and professional education is a major need.

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Translating 'Alnwick' into Italian: a tribute to M. R. G. Conzen

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In a recent issue of this journal, Jeremy Whitehand lucidly set out the key points that characterize urban morphology's current position as a field of research and practice (Whitehand, 2012). In his opinion, urban morphology needs to build on its interdisciplinary relationships; mitigate the effects of what he terms 'anglophone squint' and 'Euro-American myopia'; relate the particulars of individual places to a wider framework of thinking; give greater attention to comparative studies, not least cross-cultural ones; pursue more integrated approaches to urban form; and advance the relationship between research and practice. Several years ago similar priorities spurred representatives of the Conzenian geographical and Muratorian/Caniggian architectural schools to pursue experiments involving their respective methodologies. Some of us began to analyse from our own viewpoints and with our own disciplinary instruments an urban area previously studied by the other school. We focused on Alnwick and Como, the places examined in detail by M. R. G. Conzen and Gianfranco Caniggia in their classic works (Caniggia, 1963; Conzen, 1960). The results of these investigations were presented at the International Geographical Symposium in Urban Morphology in Newcastle upon Tyne in 2004 (Cataldi *et al.*, 2004; Conzen, 2004), but the papers presented were not published and they arguably merited greater discussion than they were accorded at the time.

Carrying out the investigation of Alnwick

entailed the translation into Italian of the text of Conzen's study. This took longer than anticipated. However, the work of translation enhanced our awareness of Conzen's contribution and of the need to make it known to scholars in our own country. We are grateful to the publisher, Franco Angeli for having accepted our proposal to publish the Italian edition of 'Alnwick' (Cataldi *et al.*, 2012) and for making it possible to present a preliminary view of it at the recent ISUF Conference in Delft and link it to the centenary of the birth of Saverio Muratori (1910-1973).

The tribute simultaneously to these two pioneers of urban morphology (see also Whitehand, 2012, p. 62) prompts us to speculate about how it was that at much the same time a geographer and an architect of the same generation (Conzen was born in 1907, 3 years before Muratori) should quite independently of one another publish these exceptional works. Not only were they exceptional in their originality but they had notable similarities in their principles and methods. Both were aware of the limited nature of the various disciplinary approaches to towns. Each was also conscious of the appropriateness of viewing the town as a small-scale model of the world of human activities. This awareness seems to have driven both these scholars to broaden their horizons, guided by the principle of connecting particular observations and findings to more general principles (Conzen, 1960, pp. 3-4). Hence there is a 'holistic' approach in their methodologies, based on the concern to set within

a framework the key components that combine to form the complexity of urban phenomena. They shared the same desire for 'global' comprehension that makes their schools of thought compatible. This could provide the basis for convergence towards a shared system: a basis for a unified theory of urban morphology. Conzen revealed his awareness of this in the introductory part of his book, where he notes that 'our geographical comprehension of townscapes is hampered by the lack of a theoretical basis yielding concepts of general application' (Conzen, 1960, p. 3).

From this perspective, a role of primary importance is played by the 'processual' viewpoint, which is unquestionably the soundest, most consistent common denominator between the two schools (Conzen, 1960, pp. 4, 9; Muratori, 1967). However, awareness of the time-spans associated with urban processes raises the issue of the interrelationship of past, present and future. On the one hand, this involves the 'historical' question of the urban forms of the past as a basis for understanding those of the present, and, on the other hand, the 'architectural' question that is posed for those who have to 'plan', that is 'project' (literally 'throw forward'), the present forms into the future. A fundamental issue for architects is that it embodies the dialectical interrelationship of 'reading' and planning (Whitehand, 2012, p. 61). Planning has an ambivalent role: it can be understood and used both as a 'means' (that is as a tool for the 'reading') and as an 'end' (that is as an intentional product resulting from the reading). Those who do not practice as architects can legitimately find it hard to recognize the role of

planning and its importance in the transformation process of the man-made environment (Caniggia, 1976).

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Vegetation as a component of urban form

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In Conzen's formulation the urban landscape (or townscape) comprises three form complexes – land use, building fabric and town plan – and their interrelationship over time. The town plan, in turn, comprises the street pattern, plot pattern and building block plans (Conzen, 1960).

The question arises of how does or should vegetation fit into this established theoretical and methodological framework? This question can be illustrated by an ongoing debate in the British planning system. Does backland development in urban gardens constitute a desirable contribution to

the policy goal of encouraging development on previously developed land as part of an overarching strategy of urban concentration? While the debate is in part about maintaining an appropriate level of green space in urban areas and the need to consider the biodiversity benefits and other ecosystem services provided by brownfield sites, it also raises a wider question of whether a garden is seen as an integral part of the urban fabric or as something that has a different, non-urban character. If it is the former, as many would argue, then there should be some identifiable way of incorporating gardens, and