

'iconic architectures and other top-down developments, but also formal and informal practices that shape urban environments, produce and address urban problems, organize people as well as ordering space' (p. 1). The 'expertise' of various fields is problematized by highlighting how their contributions to place making are sequenced. The core themes in urban design – connectivity, permeability, accessibility, and integration – are regarded as being as much 'social concerns as they are spatial conditions' (p. 3).

Design is defined as a force that communicates 'social practices and processes that shape spatial forms, relationships and outcomes in intentional as well as in less intended ways' (p. 5). A range of underlying or sometimes invisible forces are highlighted that provide the tectonic space upon which the physical infrastructure of the city is built, occupied and adapted over time. Defining design is difficult because of the contrasts between the predominant disciplines that claim to 'design' cities. Tonkiss argues that this difficulty arises from disciplinary tendencies that too often disregard the power dynamics at play in the very communities and physical environments to which an attempt is being made to give shape.

The lens of ordinary urbanism is therefore used frequently in the book to counter globalizing urban theories, many of which tend to homogenize cities and the forces that have shaped them. Three important points arise from this: first the critique of prevailing conventions within urban theory; secondly, a concern with the distinctiveness of different cities; and thirdly, an emphasis on the range of actors engaged in the process of city making. Tonkiss extends the 'informal' to touch on all hues of the economic spectrum, arguing that when wealthy populations are concerned, informality is a very distinct but critical factor in the shaping of contemporary urban relationships and physical outcomes. She switches the discussion of 'informality' to urban processes as a whole, and goes beyond the more familiar and sometimes overstated bottom-up points of view. When she says 'the infrastructures of everyday life are composed out of embodied labour, mundane materials and quotidian connections' (p. 24) she is expanding these phenomena into the realm of somehow measurable and comprehensible networks. The reader is being persuaded to recognize the ubiquitous rickshaw or the human sign as profoundly similar to the less immediately visible elite business tycoon's extra-legal appropriations. And as those two unique but arguably intersectional characters – the deregulated

wealthy and the 'informal' poor – are compared, Tonkiss is suggesting the critical need to recognize that both those who seek to understand the city and agencies that try to act on it or influence it need to think about the human clay as well as about the concrete (p. 25).

In the first six chapters, Tonkiss chronicles and elaborates a series of diverse ways that social actors influence and ultimately shape contemporary urban compositions. She repeatedly underlines, from a range of perspectives and with meaningful spatial designs, difficulties related to the advancement of societal objectives. The good intentions of designers are called into question, as seemingly blindly ambitious and even quixotic, and often unable to generate real support for peoples' lives, and livelihoods. The multiple concerns of segregation, homogenization and at times disconnection, among other urban issues in crisis, are highlighted. However, in the seventh chapter there is a switch from the past to consider 'The possible city'.

The book's conclusion illuminates a powerful and yet understated force that is making micro-utopias possible all over the world, not in the mere occupation of ideal places somewhere in space, but rather in the act of self-making and in the re-making of existing underutilized and latent sites for new uses. That act of recalibrating placelessness, or what Kevin Lynch calls the 'non-place' as a means of offering people different possibilities for new spaces and alternative ways of adding or even measuring value, is less about a projective or speculative attitude than it is about an ownership of tangible possibilities, grounded in present conditions.

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Urban morphology, architectural typology and cities in transition edited by *Yinsheng Tian, Kai Gu and Wei Tao*, Science Press, Beijing, China, 2014, 197 pp. ISBN 978-7-03-040218-9.

The process of rapid growth and transformation of Chinese cities in the past 30 years is creating great challenges for understanding and managing their urban landscapes. At the same time, a wide range

of theories originating from the West are being employed by researchers in the study of Chinese cities. Among these, geographical urban morphology, associated with M. R. G. Conzen, and process typology, associated with S. Muratori and G. Caniggia are attracting increasing academic interest. The two approaches, which were mainly developed after the 1950s, are concerned with methods and techniques for analysing the spatial structure of urban form. The geographical-morphological approach (Wu, 1990) and typological thinking (Shen, 1988) were first introduced in the Chinese language in the late 1980s. The Chinese translation of M. R. G. Conzen's classic work, *Alnwick, Northumberland: a study in town-plan analysis*, was published in 2011. A systematic review of Muratori and Caniggia's ideas and their publications on the use of their morphological and typological methods in planning were lacking in China until now.

Centred on the theme of 'Urban morphology and urban transformation', the first conference organized by the International Seminar on Urban Form (ISUF) in Asia took place in Guangzhou in 2009. This book is an outcome of this successful conference, which attracted about 220 scholars and practitioners from 26 countries. Based on a systematic introduction to Conzenian and Caniggian approaches, the main purpose of the book is to explore their application in cities in transition, especially in China. Following the introductory chapter, two chapters examine fundamental ideas about morphological thinking. Chapter 2 focuses on Conzenian ideas, which are deeply influenced by the German morphogenetic tradition (pp. 11-13). In Britain new research carried out by Conzen's followers has mainly been concerned with urban morphological change at the micro-scale, the cross-cultural application of morphological theory and the connection between morphological research and planning. The idea of urban fringe belts is one of the most complex and frequently studied morphological concepts. In Chapter 3, a framework for its cross-cultural comparative study is presented, based on a systematic study of formation and transformation processes, the agents of change involved, and the physical characteristics of urban fringe belts.

Muratori and Caniggia's ideas are not always easy to comprehend. This is attributable in major part to delays in the adequate translation of relevant publications into English. Aiming to deal with that problem, Chapters 5 and 6, authored by Cataldi and others outline the origin and development of the theory. The authors provide an introduction to

Muratori and Caniggia's cultural and educational backgrounds and their philosophical influences, before discussing the intellectual connection between Muratori and Caniggia and the evolution of the typological thinking in their work.

A second part of the book focuses on the application of morphological and typological approaches in the understanding and planning of built forms. It comprises Chapters 4, 7 and 8. Chapter 4, a case study of an inner city area in Newcastle upon Tyne, UK, shows how to apply Conzenian ideas, especially morphological periods and fringe belts, to comprehend the transformation of the urban landscape. In Chapter 7, Whitehand and Gu develop the argument, based on a thorough literature review, that the study of the urban form of Chinese cities has rarely been the subject of micro-scale analysis, particularly at the scale of the plot. The lack of integrated methods of 'reading' the evolution of traditional urban form is a major problem. In exploring alternative approaches, Conzenian and Caniggian ones merit research attention (pp. 135-7). In this light, Chapters 8 and 9 investigate Guangzhou and Suzhou. Guangzhou has a long history of trading with the outside world and successive residential building types can be found in its historical core. The investigation carried out by Gu and others shows a residential typological process that is inherently continuous before the 1950s. The persistent plan and design features are envisaged as providing a basis for form-based and regional-specific development control. Chapter 9 focuses on the spatial analysis of the walled city area of Suzhou. Chen and Romice investigate the typo-morphological aspects of the traditional urban form of Suzhou and their implications for urban design.

Research on urban morphology and design typology seeks to advance knowledge of urban landscapes through the study of their changing processes and the agents and ideas involved in their creation and transformation. This book mainly introduces the origin and development of the intellectual histories and methods of geographical urban morphology and design typology. It focuses in particular on their application in planning and design practice in China, a country facing great pressures for change. The book is the first publication in China that presents a cross-cultural assessment of geographical urban morphology and architectural typology. It echoes a morphological comparison between Como, Italy and Pingyao, China (Conzen *et al.*, 2012) that has been recently completed through international research collaboration.

Despite recent advances in morphological and typological research on Chinese cities, they have faced a variety of challenges, among which those relating to sources of information have been especially pronounced. The use of cartographical sources, especially large-scale urban maps and plans, is fundamental to understanding urban landscapes. But most traditional Chinese maps and plans are generally limited to the depiction of street systems and key landmarks. True ground plans showing streets, plots and building block-plans are rare in China until the second half of the twentieth century and limitations on their accessibility limit the selection of study areas (Gu and Zhang, 2014).

Although this edited book has clearly set out the successful application of morphological and typological concepts and methods to the urban landscape and its management in China, it is unfortunate that the seminal work on Pingyao (Whitehand and Gu, 2007) and a comparative study of Como and Pingyao (Conzen *et al.*, 2012) have not been included. Nevertheless, the contents of the book have been selected carefully and organized appropriately. There is no doubt that this first systematic publication on Conzenian and Caniggian approaches and their utilization in China will stimulate further morphological and typological research, and contribute to the growth of international expertise in urban landscape research.

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Meeting of the Council of ISUF

The next meeting of the Council of ISUF will take place during the Conference of ISUF to be held in Rome, Italy, 22 to 26 September 2015. Any matters that members of ISUF wish to bring to the attention of the Secretary-General of ISUF, Dr Kai

Gu, should be communicated to him at the School of Architecture and Planning, University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland, New Zealand (e-mail: k.gu@auckland.ac.nz) by 1 August 2015.

Elections to the Council of ISUF

In accordance with the Constitution of ISUF, elections to the Council will take place at the Conference of ISUF in Rome, Italy, 22 to 26 September 2015. There will be three vacancies to fill. Nominations should be forwarded to Dr Kai

Gu, Secretary-General, ISUF, School of Architecture and Planning, University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland, New Zealand (e-mail: k.gu@auckland.ac.nz) by 1 July 2015.
