

Lived Urban Form. Using Urban Morphology to Explore Social Dimensions of Space

Tihomir Viderman

TU Wien, Austria

tihomir.viderman@daad-alumni.de

Iliaria Geddes, Chrystala Psathiti

University of Cyprus, Cyprus

iliana.geddes@gmail.com | c.psathiti@gmail.com

Abstract

The urban form is a political and social arena. It is produced as a composite of sediments of various ways of living, of complex flow of history, of relationships and subjectivities through which people build and exercise their agency to negotiate and change contingent urban realities. Studies of urban form have so far confronted the challenge of grasping this complexity by scrutinizing a city's physical features. However, this paper puts forward a proposition that urban morphological approaches can also be resourceful tools for conceptualizing and scrutinizing dynamic relations between plural urban realities and transformations of the physical urban fabric. By drawing on the experiences from the Erasmus+ project Emerging Perspectives on Urban Morphologies (EPUM), this paper suggests a multidisciplinary, open educational framework combining various urban morphological approaches as a productive means of developing an understanding of multifaceted spatializations of lived space within urban form, as well as materializations of urban form within lived space. Such an endeavour can extend the study of urban form beyond the focus on an object, to embrace the processes, practices and agents of the production of the built environment, including multiple tensions between changing scales and material manifestations of political, economic and social relations.

Keywords: urban form, urban morphology, education, social space, representation

To cite this article:

Viderman, T., Geddes, I. and Psathiti, C. (2023) "Lived Urban Form: Using Urban Morphology to Explore Social Dimensions of Urban Space", *The Journal of Public Space*, 8(3), pp. 79-92, doi: 10.32891/jps.v8i3.1410.

This article has been double blind peer reviewed and accepted for publication in *The Journal of Public Space*.



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution - Non Commercial 4.0 International License <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>

I. Conceptualizing social aspects of urban form

Urban form is perpetually imagined in countless ways and continuously reinvented. It displays how society has settled its past, has negotiated its present and how it has envisioned its futures. The urban form is a product of plural relations between the (routinized) social practices embedded in everyday life and social agents who shape the transformation processes of urban space (Viderman et al., 2022). While urban morphologists have tended to focus on physical urban fabric and actors with certain leverage on planning decisions (Larkham, 2019), sociologists have highlighted the impact of group formation, the significance of urban rhythms, patterns and routines, as well as the influence of structural factors in the shaping of urban form (Westin, 2016). To address the challenge of grasping this complexity, urban morphological approaches have primarily focused on scrutinizing a city's physical features. However, this paper suggests that the study of urban form could extend its focus beyond an object, as it allows for explaining a dynamic intertwinement between physical urban fabric and the multiplicity of urban realities. By inquiring into urban form as habitual space produced by different urban actors, epistemology of urban morphology could embrace the processes, practices and agents of the production of the built environment, and assess the built environment as a material manifestation of urban populations and their political, economic and cultural practices (Geddes et al., 2024 - forthcoming). While being more attentive to the realm of lived experiences such an epistemology would also be reflexive of trajectories of scientific production, which inevitably shape the spatiality and define the meaning of particular urban form (Feng and Hou, 2023).

Epistemology of urban morphology engages with physical elements that structure and shape a city: urban tissues, streets and squares, urban plots, buildings and voids (Oliveira, 2016). Brenda Scheer (2015, p. 2) referring to Karl Kropf emphasizes that the “reduction of the key knowledge of urban morphology to fundamental built form elements and patterns is a way of paring down the scope of the field”. She upholds that “urban morphology is a distinct field of knowledge that does not have the ambition of achieving a complete description of the complicated dynamics of the city. Rather, it is concerned with describing, defining and theorizing a single segment of urban knowledge (form and formal change) and suggesting how that knowledge is brought into specific relationship with other dynamics and conditions in a particular place (including transport, ecology, social and economic conditions, human behaviour, and political agents)” (Scheer, 2015, p. 3, original emphasis). Despite the fact that the conceptual and methodological practices of studying urban form have been extensively outlined and continuously expanded, the framework to bring this knowledge into specific relationship with other fields and agents of knowledge production, as brought up by Scheer, appears to be missing. This paper argues that an endeavour to establish such a conceptual framework is crucial not only for exporting insights from the field of urban morphology to other disciplines, but also for expanding epistemology of urban morphology beyond object-centred externalized view of the city towards reflexive engagement with the interplay between urban space and its representations (cf. Griffiths and von Lünen, 2016).

Because cities are “at once territorial, material, social and imagined” (Viderman et al. 2022, p. 5), urban form materializes not only by design and construction in various degrees of (de)regulation and (in)formality, but also through its representations (or absences from representation). Reinier de Graaf's (2017) collection of essays illustrates to what extent this often-implicit notion guides transformations of the physical urban

fabric. In this context, discursive and visual representations that shape the city as a field of intellectual speculation are embedded in and are performative of the fabric of lived space. Representations are therefore not free of power struggles. They are imbued with power, and, in turn, entrench asymmetries of power in urban realities (Davoudi et al, 2018). This unfolds at many levels; in the politics that define built interventions, in the way how space is represented and conceived through plans and maps and also in the processes of constructing the urban fabric. For this reason, any epistemology centred on urban perception inevitably entails implications for many contingencies of socially produced urban space. By proposing the concept of lived urban form, this paper introduces into epistemology of urban morphology an aspect of reflection, as urban form is inextricably intertwined with its representations and with the material dimensions of social relations, constellations and configurations.

With a reference to Jane Jacobs's activism of the 1950s and 1960s, de Graaf (2017, pp.119-121) identifies a turning point in how urban space is engaged with. Jane Jacobs's actions to save untidy and decaying neighbourhoods have become archetypal examples of linking urban form to social space in theory and practice. Her pleas for preservation of informality and unpredictability of street ballets against planning concepts based on the modernist principles of sanitation and increased mobility have emphasized that urban morphology cannot be reduced to spatial arrangement of physical elements or neat visual representations – urban morphology is also a political arena and lived social space. Not only did the activism of that period spark interest in the entanglements between built urban form, (meaningful) experiences in everyday life and the ways how scientific production and professional practices conceive and spatialize urban form, but it also made tangible the extent to which urban form is a cultural and social spatialisation of asymmetries in power relations. Although the concern of studies of urban morphology has primarily remained with the physical structure of the city (Batty, 2013), this paradigm shift is reflected in the move away from celebrating large gestures of urban markers towards attentive commitment to mundane urban fabric and people's interaction with it (Psathiti, 2018), advancing an understanding that the 'physical city' and the 'social city' "act conjointly to produce significant outcomes" (Hillier and Vaughan, 2007, p. 205). Spatial analytical approaches aim at an understanding of urban networks based on socio-economic relationships (Batty, 2013), thus (albeit implicitly) acknowledging people's agency to shape their environments (e.g. Jones et al., 2017), as well as the relevance of agency in explaining what does or does not happen in an urban environment (Larkham, 2019). However, while allowing for diligent documentation of mundane physical structures, epistemology of urban morphology is yet to depict how plural dimensions of lived space are being spatially inscribed in urban form, as well as scrutinize normative notions and dynamics as regards the agents, practices and processes of the production of urban fabric (Viderman and Knierbein, 2018). Addressing this challenge would allow studies of physical urban form to address power asymmetries inscribed in urban form and reflect on the agents and processes shaping its transformation over time, including a self-reflection on the scientific production of representations of space (cf. Lefebvre 1991). At the same time these insights would provide to broader fields of knowledge on urban transformations a visual evidence for understanding the spatialisation of plural dimensions of everyday life, political struggle, cultural expression, as well as visible and invisible structural (pre)conditions. Urban morphologies could therefore be grasped not simply as an object, but as "recurrences of

otherwise unique events, *cycles* of reproduction and seasonal celebration, and wholly particular and unique '*moments*' in which all aspects of '*l'espace*', of consciousness and embodiment are unified in a oneness with an unfolding experience" (Shields 2013: 25, referring to Lefebvre 1959, original emphasis).

Seeing how an epistemology of urban morphology is shaped by clearly defined research traditions as regards the subject matter, approach and corresponding methods, opening it up to perspectives and empirical investigation of social notions of urban form presents a conceptual and methodological challenge. The project Emerging Perspectives on Urban Morphology (EPUM) integrated through pedagogic innovation different research and teaching approaches to urban form as an explorative means of developing a nuanced understanding of multifaceted spatializations of lived space within urban form, as well as materializations of urban form within lived space. In the course of three years, from 2018-2020, EPUM fostered knowledge exchange across different approaches to urban form analysis, specifically, the historico-geographical approach, the process typological approach, the configurational approach and the relational-material approach (Charalambous, 2018).

2. Urban morphological approaches and how they address social dimensions of urban space

The teaching of urban form analysis in higher education institutions across Europe has addressed contemporary cities from isolated perspectives (cf. Scheer, 2015). Various conceptions and schools of thought differentiate both the referents as well as the ways in which urban form is defined, approached, studied and analysed. Building on the field perspective of blended learning, EPUM adopted the view that cities are indeed a collection of material entities, but they are also a system of social activity, interaction, relationships and positioning (cf. Westin, 2016). This positionality allowed for resolving a tension between spatial analytical approaches primarily focusing on physical urban fabric including the materialities of urban routines, and relational-material interpretation of the making of cities engaging with heterogeneous rhythms and patterns of urban life which unfold within continuities and interstices of the changing social, cultural and political landscapes (cf. Viderman et al., 2022). Although this is neither a new nor particularly controversial idea, as it spans the work of social theorists from diverse backgrounds and approaches, such as Simmel (2004), Lefebvre (1991) and Logan and Molotch (2007), EPUM's contribution lies in exploring the methodology for systematically including different physical and social factors into a morphological interpretative analysis. Such an endeavour resonates with the current debates on urban morphology concerned with a mutually formative relationship between the organization of space and society, or more narrowly defined, between the physical form of the city and habitual ways of living, belonging and identification, which have the defining impact on social behaviours and structures, such as the reinforcement or diminishment of social differences and divisions (cf. Naik et al., 2015).

The four urban morphology approaches, part of EPUM, view the relations between social space and physical urban form differently. Each delivers its own focus, a scope of analysis and interpretations when it comes to the scrutiny of a city's physical features, the impact of agents and social practices that directly or indirectly shape the urban form, or relational dimensions of ties between people and urban space embedded in a

political and cultural context (Geddes, 2020). Through EPUM these approaches were superimposed to various degrees of integration, and in various combinations for comparison and for exploring methodologies to study urban form beyond the focus on an object, to embrace the processes, practices and agents of the production of the built environment, including multiple tensions between changing scales and material manifestations of political, economic and social relations.

The historico-geographical approach engages with the socio-political aspects of the production of urban space in two ways: through the consideration of macroeconomics which influence the development of fringe belts and the role of agents directly and indirectly shaping the urban form. The concept of a fringe belt is central to historico-geographical research in explaining the cyclical, uneven and punctuated nature of city expansions (Oliveira, 2016). This concept assumes the establishment of certain land uses at the urban fringe during periods when the built-up area is stable or growing only at a slow pace. In subsequent periods of expansion these gaps might be filled in by high-density development (for example, be absorbed by residential development in the periods of growth), and the fringe develops at a new expansion boundary. Fringe belts remain visible in urban fabric and often include large open areas, public utilities and open land attached to institutions (Whitehand, 2007). J.W.R. Whitehand's (1977) analysis establishes the relationship between building construction cycles and the formation of fringe belts, thus linking urban economy to urban transformations. Within this tradition, the socio-economic context of development is taken to be the mixture of land uses and functions, while the interaction between human activities and the built form is restricted to the planning scale of the city rather than wider political issues. The agents of transformation of urban form are developers identified as a highly heterogeneous group, with architects acting as mediators between developers and authorities and having influence in the selection of builders and determining the character of developments (Whitehand, 1984; 1992). This approach recognises the tensions between the objectives of developers, the regulations imposed by planners and the views of architects: it sees the urban landscape as a product of the interactions between these agents but does not specifically deal with the views and roles of ordinary urban dwellers beyond indirect democratic representation provided by planning authorities.

The process typological approach originated as a methodology for incorporating built heritage in architectural and urban design, and developed as a method for interpreting urban transformations in the dialectics between the continuity, change and replacement (Cataldi, 2003). This approach views the evolution of form as a dynamic process of typological transformations – the reshaping of a particular social logic is expressed in the built form through various political and economic forces. The form of buildings is dictated by a shared historical consensus and modified through the experience of previous buildings, technological development and socio-cultural changes. From this perspective, the formation of urban tissues is a resulting outcome of the aggregation of building typologies (and properties), physical features at the territorial scale (grids, nodes, spatial structures such as plots, urban patterns etc.) and socio-political elements at the urban scale (such as historical connections between settlements and place histories). The production and modification of the urban form thus results from the interaction between a population's shared socio-cultural concepts and the act of construction. This means that the process typological approach synthesizes collective cultural and social

attributes, rather than engaging with individual user groups or alternative and conflicting views of spatial organization, to provide a methodology for interpreting how leading political, socio-economic and cultural conditions generate and modify urban form (Geddes, 2017).

The configurational approach engages with space away from its architectural features, analysing instead configurations of space systems. With the focus on networks of space, rather than the properties of built fabric, this approach seeks to model how humans perceive, view, move through and use space, thus “implicitly includ[ing] the relation between humans and physical form” (Kropf, 2009, p. 111). At the foundation of this approach is theorization that urban form is being driven by two kinds of social forces: micro-economic forces shaping the global structure of settlements and socio-cultural forces defining localized spaces (Hillier, 2002). Whereas micro-economic activity will seek to be inclusive and culturally non-specific to attract trade, the localized spaces reflect socio-cultural differences expressed spatially. In this view the production of urban space is driven by local(ised) processes, which means that the organization of space is related to the distribution of uses and functions, as well as social and cultural factors embedded in the spatiality of everyday life. Seeing how the relationships within such local(ised) space are largely mediated by movement and co-presence of people in space, the configurational approach emphasizes that urban space acts as a place of encounter and form is negotiated as an outcome of the relationship between spatial structure and behaviour. In fact, this approach is based on the fundamental idea that spatial organization is an intrinsic aspect of human activity and an expression of human society, which can be understood through the analysis of how spatial structures relate to people’s use and experience of space (Hillier and Hanson, 1984). In this context the approach somewhat neglects the influence of wider socio-economic or political factors on the processes of city development. However, configurational studies acknowledge the fact that the transformation of space is a response to changing circumstances and that space is transformed to address change (Hillier 2014). Moreover, they have often highlighted and assessed the impact of design trends and social ideologies on the production of the public realm (Hanson 2000) as well as the relationship between spatial segregation and social outcomes (Vaughan 2005).

The relational-material approach engages in the analysis of the situational occurrence of spaces of everyday life (e.g. everyday routines, planning practice, materiality of design, contestations) by taking into consideration both bodily appropriations of space and often ‘hidden’ structural processes, such as poverty, exclusion, mobility or spatial displacement (Viderman and Knierbein 2018). It views urban form as continuously produced and reproduced through the multiplicity of social relations and interactions that manifest in urban space materially and discursively in a tension between changing scales (cf. Lehtovuori 2010). According to this, collective agency and individuals are entangled in the production of urban space through a series of spatial practices and encounters, which are performative of socio-politically ambivalent relations between majority and minority society as they deploy spaces of inclusions and exclusion (Hou 2010). As such, the relational-material approach considers institutions, non-institutional actors and multiple publics in the shaping of physical form and highlights how urban morphology results from socio-political struggles and, in turn, manifests and represents social hegemonies, hierarchies and power structures (Viderman and Knierbein 2018). For this reason, urban morphology has a major role in negotiating urban futures. Rather

than simply relating urban space to social and political factors, the relational-material approach aims at acting as a voice of plurality calling for enhanced capacity of research and planning to engage in emancipatory actions and stimulate change through involvement with communities and their spaces (Knierbein and Viderman 2018). The approach's methodology draws on thick empirical description to engage plural voices, including those that are often unheard, marginalized, contested or discriminated against. Figure 1 summarizes how each approach views the relationship between social space and physical form and deals with the political aspects, socio-cultural practices and agents of the production of urban space.

Approach	Focus	Relationship between social space and physical form	Agents	Socio-cultural practices	Political Aspect
Historico-geographical	Physical form: processes of city expansion and transformation.	Implicit as the socio-economic context and the pattern of functions and land use.	Developers, architects and planning authorities.	Tensions between objectives of agents.	Implied in role of macro-economics and agents.
Process Typological	Physical form: reproduction and modification of the urban fabric.	Implicit as the historical and cultural context.	Implicit in political and economic forces.	Collective cultural trends in intention and construction.	Implied in social, economic and cultural conditions.
Configurational	Spatial structure: growth and diversification of the street network and public realm.	Explicit in spatial perception, movement, encounter and space use.	Implicit in design trends and social ideologies.	Everyday use of space, cultural context, movement economy.	Implied in role of micro-economics, social and cultural factors.
Relational-material	Social form: production and transformation of space.	Explicit in spatial performance and encounter.	Multiple publics and non-institutional actors.	Ambivalent relations between majority and minority society.	Explicit in structural (pre)conditions and power relations.

Figure 1. How different approaches address social-cultural practices and political aspects of the production of urban space.

This overview shows that all the approaches, part of EPUM, draw (albeit only implicitly) on spatial experiences to develop multiple perspectives on the mutually formative relationship between social space and urban form. The transformation of urban form is (and probably can only be) explained through social dimensions of space, including, to various degrees, the considerations of structural factors, social agents, and the spatiality of everyday life and its routines. Using different methods of visualisation and (thick) description, the reviewed approaches have established that urban form is embedded in and is performative of societal changes and the fabric of social life. At a more conceptual level of consideration, studies of urban form aim to bring the largely subjective and contextual materiality of social practices and lived experiences into relation with a synthesis of various aspects of urban form. By drawing reference to Henri Lefebvre's (1991) theorization of the tension between the lived space of everyday life and a seemingly homogenous abstract space (of capitalist production), the association of humans and non-human elements in the process of the production of urban form can be contextualized within broader structural processes and conditions. In this line of thought,

the conceptualization of lived urban form emphasizes the notions of urban form as the location where social relations unfold, thus extending the analytical reach of studies of urban morphology beyond physical features to include social and experiential dimensions. Various approaches can be superimposed and combined to various degrees of integration to provide a baseline perspective to assess social change through transformations of the built environment, while a combination of methods from different disciplinary fields, such as sociology and ethnography, would grasp nuanced relations and tensions in an understanding of how people mould and appropriate urban form.

3. Insights from EPUM

The EPUM project has brought together five international partners embracing and developing different morphological approaches (University of Cyprus, TU Wien, University of Porto, Sapienza University of Rome and Space Syntax Limited) in a network for developing learning platforms for exchange of knowledge, collaboration and dissemination of findings. The coming together of researchers, educators and learners from different geographical areas and disciplines has provided the basis for a multidisciplinary exploration and the opportunity to establish a common conceptual framework. Specifically, through 3 years of a continuous teaching and learning process of meetings, activities (on-line and on-site) and workshops, EPUM has aimed at i) comparing and improving the ways in which urban form and the agents and processes of its transformation over time, are taught; ii) comparing the theoretical, conceptual and methodological foundations of the different approaches, identifying their main strengths and weaknesses, and iii) exploring the possibilities for dialogue and combination. In the series of the events, two EPUM events are particularly relevant for conceptualizing lived urban form: EPUM's fourth round table "Social Life and Urban Form", which took place in July 2019 at AESOP Annual Congress in Venice, and EPUM's second intensive workshop, held in Nicosia in September 2019.

3.1 EPUM Polemics (Insights from the Fourth Round Table)

The theme of the debate was the relationship between urban form and social life, with the focus on how this relationship is approached in teaching practice. The debate pointed to the traditional distinction between urban form debates as being weak on social, political and cultural aspects of lived space, and on urban life debates as lacking more descriptive explanations about how social relations materialize in urban form and how the interaction between social life and urban form is settled. Different scholars emphasized the need for understanding the political, social, cultural and spatial dimensions, and therefore, contextual aspects of urban form.

Understanding the role of designers and people in shaping form, and challenging perspectives on how human action affects urban form are vital in refining interpretations of form, as is the understanding of the structure of the relations between economics, society and urban form. This is because form in all its meanings is socially produced and has a history to be studied, a present which is the most important confluence between urban form and social life in cities, and a future, as aspirations of utopian and ideal-type projections become inscribed in urban form.

The physical shape of the city, therefore, is infinite: there is never an 'end' to it and unfolds as a socio-historic process. Urban form thus never comes 'alone', it comes with

structure and function, and includes (the experience of) immaterial dimensions. Therefore, both research and conceptual approaches need to be enlarged with further qualitative interests and considerations of lived space. Bridging the gap between perspectives on physical form and social life means addressing the political question of power, ways and means of inscribing and maintaining hierarchies in urban form. However, a balance must be found between the use of human intuition, the use of technology and the rights to equal access to urban morphology, to understand the social, cultural and political aspects of form. As a greater range and variety of tools and techniques come on offer for teaching through blended learning, the material relation between society and form has not diminished: 'face-to-face' interaction within the urban context remains at the core of teaching and learning about urban form as an experienced materialized manifestation of how urban society changes.

3.2 EPUM Application (*Insights from the Second Intensive Workshop*)

The workshop took place in September 2019 in Nicosia. The city with a prolonged history of conflict, internal displacements, migration and tourist flows, economic fluctuations and cycles of rapid, often abrupt urban transformations served as a laboratory to explore, unravel, and question urban form and find ways for collaboration among the different schools of thought and methodologies. In the course of a very limited time of 2 weeks, mixed groups of students (from the five institutional partners involved in EPUM, from Nicosia, Porto, Rome, Vienna and London) engaged in an analysis of the urban form of Nicosia's historic core. The workshop faced a twofold challenge: first, despite preparatory courses and readings, most of the participants had very little knowledge of the local context; second, the participants were versed only in an approach studied at their home institution. Insights into the local context were produced from preparatory literature, guided walks, lectures by educators, practitioners, the local authority and major stakeholders, as well as, depending on each participant's preferred approach, individual and group explorative walks, mapping, observation and recording of urban patterns, informal conversations and short interviews with locals, planned and informal encounters in public space, diaries as a means of reflection on own experiences, and analysis of (historical) maps and planning documentation. During their work participants tended to stick with the approach they were proficient in. Yet by working together they identified limitations of each of the approaches in addressing the challenges of scrutinizing urban form, while also detecting an analytical area of the potential application of combined morphological approach in the analysis of form, which has led to unexpected findings and a different type of sensory knowledge about explored and analysed spaces.

The work in a different cultural context challenged both students and teachers to think differently about their established ways of doing research, but also built awareness that each perception of reality is incomplete, and that only the search for the plurality of realities renders research findings robust. Nicosia is also the place where the participants from the very early stages of the workshop are confronted with political, social and cultural aspects of urban space, as well as visible real practices (both spatial and social) involved in the production of such an urban form. By engaging with urban form as lived space, which encompasses physical form, its cognitive dimensions as well as practices of everyday life, they were able to productively engage in gendered, age-specific, ethnic and other dimensions of urban change. While building on systematic

reflection on the analytical work, the students also proposed strategies and concepts for conservation and/or transformation of the existing urban form in the area of Ayios Kassianos, adjacent to the Nicosia's buffer zone. An example of one group's analysis is shown in figure 2, with a proposal in figure 3.



Figure 2. Example of students' analysis (neighbourhood scale): How we see the city and its organisation is defined by the routes we take through it, the memories we relate to certain places and the myths we associate with unexplored areas.

Anastasia Psoma, Isidora Šobot, Nuno Gomes, Vasiliki Papatirou and Yara Rizk.

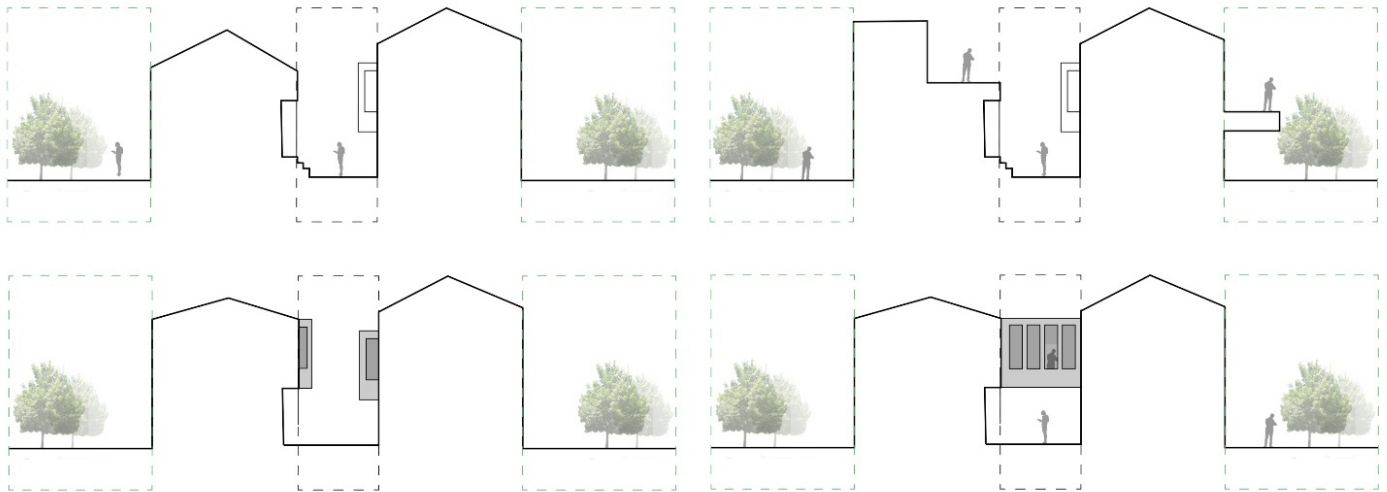


Figure 3. Example of students' proposal (neighbourhood scale) from the EPUM 2nd Intensive Workshop: Anastasia Psoma, Isidora Šobot, Nuno Gomes, Vasiliki Papatiriou and Yara Rizk.

What appears to be simplified graphics are part of a study which engaged with perceived and observed tensions in urban fabric of everyday life. The study emphasized that Nicosia is a city of contrasts in terms of its spatial, social, cultural and economic composition. With the focus on gendered space, the study asserted that spatial organization reaffirmed and co-constructed dominant gender norms, by making certain gendered practices possible and obstructing other ways of organizing the reproduction of society. The tangible examples were the location of childcare facilities (neither close to home or work), segregated urban uses and functions, or car-centred mobility in the city. The differences were engaged with within a textured grid of the city, to identify four 'building blocks' of a family-friendly city: housing, public space, amenities and routes. By finding a common ground in terms of the subject matter and a selection of analytical tools, this approach demonstrated that combining different urban morphology approaches could bring to light different aspects of a city's complexity at different scales and phases.

4. Benefiting from multiple perspectives of space in urban morphology studies

Epistemology of urban morphology engages with the built form of the city and the social, cultural and political processes that produce them. These processes are explored and depicted from different perspectives, which are largely based on visual analyses and rational objectivity of behaviour-based approaches. While the EPUM project has aimed for development of an innovative system for teaching the built form of cities, which would overcome disciplinary and institutional barriers, it has also raised important issues of the social and cultural dimensions of learning and teaching traditions, drawing attention to different experiences of urban form and its representations. The proposed educational model aims to enable various institutions to work both independently and collaboratively, synchronously and asynchronously, eventually formulating an

international 'community of practice' connected through embodied practical experience and face-to-face learning as well as through digital space and blended learning approaches. The experiences from the EPUM project, including the round table discussions and intensive workshops, mirror the shared normative position, that urban form is an embodiment of a plurality of particular memories, cultures and experiences, which might be institutionalized, contested, discriminated against, marginalized or rather invisible. The project also identified the research and design practice as the powerful means which can foster or curb people's social, cultural and political agency to transform their living environments. This paper reflected on these insights to suggest that opening the existing urban morphology approaches to conceptual and empirical frameworks of other disciplines would allow for establishing productive linkages between analytical approaches to physical urban form and qualitative research practices engaging in social space, and thus prepare future generations of planners and designers to meet the diverse challenges of contemporary cities.

Urban morphology as a material dimension of the production of space contains sediments of past social struggles and desires. It also occupies a prominent position in negotiations on the current urban conditions as both a matter of concern and an aestheticized imaginary of past, present and desired future. A whole range of affects and bodily experiences is inherent to knowledge and perception of urban morphology. Rob Shields (2013: 160) reminds that "[...] representations may no longer be fixed measures of stable entities out in a neutral environment, but they participate together with their referents in a dynamically animated relationship". This means that unequal experiences of (representations of) urban form and the spatial dynamics of its production might add an important layer to epistemology of urban morphology, allowing it to sensibly and productively reflect on both, the spatial dynamics of constituting, negotiating and producing different urban forms across politically charged binaries such as centrality/margin, exclusion/inclusion, boundary/opening and others, but also on implications of this research practice on the fixed and non-fixed systems defining social differences such as class, culture, gender, ethnicity or age.

References

- Batty, M. (2013) *The new science of cities*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Cataldi, G. (2003) From Muratori to Caniggia: the origins and development of the Italian school of design typology. *Urban Morphology*, 7(1), pp. 19–34.
- Charalambous, N. (2018) Emerging perspectives on urban morphology: collaborative learning activities fostering combined approaches. In: *Urban substrata & city regeneration. Morphological legacies and design tools. Proceeding of the 5th ISUF Italy International Conference*, pp. 447-456.
- Davoudi, S.; Crawford, J.; Raynor, R.; Reid, B.; Sykes, O.; Shaw, D. (2018) Policy and Practice Spatial imaginaries: tyrannies or transformations? *Town Planning Review* 89(2), pp. 97–124.
- De Graaf, R. (2017) *Four Walls and a Roof. The Complex Nature of a Simple Profession*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Geddes, I. (2017) *Limassol as a social assemblage: a diachronic analysis of its urban form*. University of Cyprus.

- Geddes, I. (2020) Understanding the mechanisms and impact of growth on the urban form and functioning of cities: an application to the case of Limassol. *Athens Journal of Mediterranean Studies* 6(1), pp. 39-66.
- Geddes, I.; Chatzichristou, C.; Charalambous, N.; Ricchiardi, A. (2024) Agency within Neighborhoods: Multi-Scalar Relations between Urban Form and Social Actors. *Land*, forthcoming.
- Feng, J. and Hou, H. (2023) Review of Research on Urban Social Space and Sustainable Development. *Sustainability*, 15(22), p. 16130.
- Griffiths, S. and von Lünen, A. (2016) Preface. In Ibid. (eds.) *Spatial Cultures. Towards a new social morphology of cities past and present*. Oxon: Routledge, pp. xxi – xxxi.
- Hanson, J. (2000). Urban transformations: a history of design ideas. *Urban Des Int*, 5(2), pp. 97–122.
- Hillier, B. (2002) A Theory of the City as Object: or how spatial laws mediate the social construction of urban space. *Urban Des Int*, 7(3–4), pp. 153–179.
- Hillier, B. (2014) *Space syntax as a theory as well as a method*. Retrieved from <http://isuf2014.fe.up.pt/Hillier.pdf>
- Hillier, B., and Hanson, J. (1984) *The Social Logic of Space*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Hillier, B. and Vaughan, L. (2007) The City as One Thing. *Progress in Planning*, 67(3), pp. 205–230.
- Hou, J. (2010) *Insurgent Public Space: Guerrilla Urbanism and the Remaking of Contemporary Cities* (J. Hou, Ed.). New York: Routledge.
- Jones, P.; Isakjee, A.; Jam, C.; Lorne, C.; Warren, S. (2017) Urban landscapes and the atmosphere of place: exploring subjective experience in the study of urban form. *Urban Morphology* 21(1), pp. 29-40.
- Knierbein, S. and Viderman, T. (2018) *Public Space Unbound: Urban Emancipation and the Post-Political Condition* (S. Knierbein and T. Viderman, Eds.). New York: Routledge.
- Kropf, K. (2009) Aspects of Urban Form. *Urban Morphology*, 13(2), pp. 105–120.
- Larkham, P.J. (2019) Agents and Agency in the Urban Landscape. In V. Oliveira (ed.) *J.W.R. Whitehand and the Historico-Geographical Approach to Urban Morphology*. Cham: Springer, pp. 67–90.
- Lefebvre, H. (1959) *La Somme et le reste*. Paris: PUF.
- Lefebvre, H. (1991) *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Blackwell Publishing.
- Lehtovuori, P. (2010) *Experience and Conflict: The Production of Urban Space*. Farnham: Ashgate.
- Logan, J. R., and Molotch, H. (2007) *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

- Naik, N.; Kominers, S.D.; Raskar, R.; Glaeser, E.L.; Hidalgo, C.C. (2019) *Do People Shape Cities, or Do Cities Shape People? The Co-Evolution of Physical, Social, and Economic Change in Five Major U.S. Cities*. HKS Working Paper No. 061; Available at: <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2698292>.
- Oliveira, V. (2016) *Urban Morphology. An Introduction to the Study of the Physical Form of Cities*. Cham: Springer.
- Psathiti, C. (2018) A socio-spatial approach to morphological analysis of educational buildings in Cyprus. In: *Urban Morphology in South-Eastern Mediterranean Cities: Challenges and Opportunities. Proceedings of the CyNUM 1st Regional Conference*, pp. 247-260.
- Scheer, B. (2015) The epistemology of urban morphology. *Urban Morphology* 19(2), pp. 117–34.
- Shields, R. (2013) *Spatial Questions. Cultural Topologies and Social Spatialisations*. London: Sage.
- Simmel, G. (2004) The Stranger. In C. Jenks (Ed.), *Urban Culture: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*. London and New York: Routledge, pp. 73–77.
- Vaughan, L. (2005) The relationship between physical segregation and social marginalisation in the urban environment. *World Architecture*, 185(185), pp. 88–96.
- Viderman, T. and Knierbein, S. (2018) *Urban Morphology. A Relational-Material Approach*. Vienna: Interdisciplinary Centre for Urban Culture and Public Space, Fakultät für Architektur und Raumplanung, TU Wien.
- Viderman, T.; Knierbein, S.; Kränzle, E., Frank, S.; Roskamm, N.; Wall, E. (2022) Urban Space Unsettled. In Ibid. (eds.) *Unsettled. Urban Routines, Temporalities, and Contestations*. New York: Routledge, pp. 1-15. [online]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429290237> (Accessed: 5th April 2023).
- Westin, S. (2016) *The Paradoxes of Planning A Psycho-Analytical Perspective*. London: Routledge.
- Whitehand, J. W. R. (1977) The Basis for a Historico-Geographical Theory of Urban Form. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 2(3), 400–416.
- Whitehand, J. W. R., & Whitehand, S. M. (1984). The Physical Fabric of Town Centres: The Agents of Change. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 9(2), pp. 231–247.
- Whitehand, J. W. R. (1992) Recent Advances in Urban Morphology. *Urban Studies*, 29(3–4), pp. 619–636.
- Whitehand, J. W. R. (2007) Origins, development and exemplification of Conzenian thinking. *Papers Presented at the 14th International Seminar on Urban Form*. Ouro Preto: Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto.