Abstract
Under the auspices of the Urban Morphology Research Group (UMRG – Univ. of Birmingham) and the ISUF, more systematic urban morphological and typological studies of Chinese cities have been carried out since the early 2000s. Morphological and typological ideas have been investigated in relation to Pingyao. The Caniggian thinking is the way in which physical structures, buildings, urban fabric become the basis for a new generation of buildings, a new “type” which contains, from its inception, features that in earlier buildings had been adaptations. This sequence is known as a “typological process”. Integrated typo-morphological analysis is to articulate the characteristic of urban form as the product of city-building processes. In recent years, much effort has been devoted to the application of urban morphology in area-based conservation planning in China (Whitehand and Gu, 2007b; Whitehand et. al., 2011). Based on an understanding of the dynamics of typological and morphological processes, morphological and typological studies also can support more effective and accountable urban design and urban development control. It is relevant that Urban Morphology Research Group has been established in South China University of Technology and in Beijing University, and that a number of PhD theses related to the cross-cultural application of Conzenian and Caniggian ideas have been prepared. In September 2009, about 220 scholars and practitioners from 26 countries attended the Sixteenth ISUF in Guangzhou. The success of the conference reflected the increasing interest in spatial analysis of urban form and its significance for urban planning and design practice. In October 2013, a preliminary meeting about creating a Chinese Network of Urban Morphology took place in Nanjing University, and it has been confirmed that this institution will host the 23th International Seminar on Urban Form in 2016. The expansion of the urban morphology research network and ISUF 2016 in China will further stimulate new morphological and typological research, which is deemed to contribute to more meaningful comparative studies and to the international expertise in urban landscape research.

Background
Chinese cities have undergone unprecedented growth and transformation due to the economic reforms, which initiated in 1978. This rapidly changing process is creating great challenges for both the comprehension and the management of the urban landscape. Not surprisingly, research on Chinese urban form has been burgeoning in the past 30 years. Associated with the increasing interaction between China and other parts of the world, a variety of Western architectural, planning and geographical concepts have been discussed in relation to Chinese cities. This is bringing new opportunities for cross-cultural comparisons and the cross-fertilization of academic ideas.

In particular, geographical urban morphology and architectural typology in China have been attracting increasing research interest (Chen, 2010; Conzen, 2011; Duan and Qiu, 2009; He and Henwood, 2012; Tian et al., 2010). The urban morphological approach, especially the one related to town-plan analysis, was mainly developed in the mid-twentieth century by M. R. G. Conzen (1960) in “Alnwick, Northumberland: a study in town-plan analysis”. The town plan was itself subdivided for analytical purposes into streets, and their arrangement in a street system; plots and their aggregation in street-blocks and buildings, or more precisely,their block-plans. By the development of a number of conceptions – such as plan units, morphological periods, morphological regions, morphological frames, plot redevelopment cycles and fringe belts – Conzen’s work, which has provided the foundation of the Conzenian school, has established a systematic conceptual framework for describing and prescribing the structure of the urban landscape according to its underlying formative processes.

The architectural typological thinking, especially the Caniggian school (Caniggia and Maffei, 2001), has developed primarily around the works of the Italian architects Muratori and Caniggia. Buildings and open spaces are classified by type: types represent different generations of building traditions, or variations within each generation. Types reflect the different socio-economic strata of the people for whom they were intended (Moudon, 1992, p. 342). Typological studies describe and explain urban form, and then suggest possible directions for future adaptation and change. Parallel to the Conzenian ideas, the Caniggian school has formed independently a dynamic approach to the study of building and urban landscape forms.

As early as the 1960s, copies of “Alnwick, Northumberland: a study in town-plan analysis” were available in China. For example, a copy of this book began being part of the geographical library of Nanjing University from 1964. Also, in the 1980s, several related publications (Whitehand, 1987; Whitehand, ed., 1981) became available to Chinese researchers (Xu, 2012, p. 167). However, before a more detailed introduction of geographical urban morphology in Chinese (Gu, 2001), the Conzenian school received little attention in China judging by citations in journals through the Chinese National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) (2012) (Xu, 2012, p. 167). Typological thinking began to be discussed among Chinese architects in the late 1980s (Shen, 1988). Central to this typological thinking is that the city and its architecture are products of
cultural consensus based on collective memory (Zhu, 1992; Ma, 1990; Wei, 1990; Shen, 1991). An interest has developed in its relevance to architectural design (Gu, 2005), urban conservation (Zhu, 2002) and the analysis of historical building forms (Pan, 1996; Zeng et al., 1997). However, in China insufficient attention has been given to the Caniggian ideas. For example, how the types of buildings constructed change over time – notably the concept of typological processes (Caniggia and Maffei, 2001) has received very little discussion.

Under the auspices of the Urban Morphology Research Group (UMRG) of the University of Birmingham and the International Seminar on Urban Form (ISUF), more systematic urban morphological and typological studies of Chinese cities have been carried out since the early 2000s. They include morphogenetic analysis of Chinese urban form, urban morphology and urban conservation, and typo-morphological analysis of residential forms. Morphological and typological ideas have been investigated in relation to Pingyao (Tao and Jiang, 2012; Whitehand and Gu, 2007a; Whitehand et al., 2011a), Beijing (Whitehand and Gu, 2007b), Guangzhou (Gu et al., 2008; Li, 2013; Whitehand et al., 2011b; Zhang, 2012), Shanghai (Whitehand et al., 2014), Nanjing (Chen and Thwaites, 2013, pp. 79-137; Xu et al., 2011) and Suzhou (Chen, 2012).

Morphological and typological research on Chinese cities has shed light on the wider significance of the concepts and methods, which were initially developed in Europe, in a different cultural region. Simultaneously, a timely contribution can be made to the search for solutions to the acute problems of urban landscape management faced by Chinese towns and cities. It is expected that the studies also provide a basis for comparison and integration of ideas with markedly different disciplinary and national pedigrees. Based on a review of recent research advances, this paper also highlights issues and challenges facing this new research frontier, in particular the poor understanding of sources of research information and their uses, the weak link between morphological and typological research and urban design practice, and the inadequate use of geo-spatial technology.

Applying Conzenian and Caniggian ideas in China

China has an urban history extending over some 3500 years (Dong, 1989, p. 7). Despite its lengthy existence as a field of interest among researchers, the study of urban form in that part of the world has hitherto been largely descriptive. The urban form study on the micro scale, particularly the plot scale, is rare (Whitehand and Gu, 2006). Part of the explanation for the weakness of analytical, especially genetic, urban morphology in China is to be found in Chinese culture and, inseparable from the nature of Chinese historical cartographic records.

Apart from the limited parts of cities mapped by Western surveyors from the mid-nineteenth century onward, most historical cartographic records, so important in research on the development of urban form in the West, generally contain little planimetric information. The majority of historical maps of Chinese urban areas generally show little more than street patterns and landmark structures. Cartographic endeavours in China in the past have been particularly devoted to symbolization, especially pictorial symbols, and the visual effectiveness of map design as an art (Chang, 1974, p. 1). Such procilities accord with Confucian principles and customs based on cosmology and the art of siting man-made forms auspiciously. They stem from studies of ancient Chinese civilization and philosophy, which have dominated research on urban form (Whitehand and Gu, 2006).

Over the past 15 years, true ground plans of a number of old towns and cities, which show not only streets and building block-plans but also plots, have begun to be produced to assist in the preparation of development control and conservation plans. For example, the city authorities of Beijing, Nanjing, Pingyao and Lijiang, have prepared true ground plans of their historical areas.
since the late 1990s. In the urban conservation plans for the 30 historical conservation areas within old Beijing, plot boundaries are clearly marked (Beijing Municipal City Planning Commission, 2002). The increasing availability of such true ground plans has greatly enhanced the prospects for undertaking morphological and typological research on Chinese cities.

Morphogenetic analysis of Chinese urban form

Drawing on historical and current city plans and fieldwork, a research project has explored M.R.G. Conzen’s method of plan analysis in the ancient city of Pingyao (Whitehand and Gu, 2007a) (Fig. 1, 3 and 5). Situated on the gently sloping plain between the River Huiji and the River Liugen in central Shanxi, Pingyao became the capital of the County of Pingyao in the 5th century A.D. and has had a long history as an important administrative and market centre within its region. Following the opening of the first piaohao (an early type of bank) in 1823, Pingyao flourished as a major financial centre. After the Communist Party came to power in 1949, Pingyao was transformed into an industrial city, and the manufacture of textiles and agricultural machinery became of major importance. In 1986 it was added to the List of Precious Chinese Historical Cultural Cities (lishiwenshuamingcheng), and in 1997 it was designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO, triggering a dramatic growth of tourism and associated changes to its urban landscape. Components and stages in the genesis of the layout of Pingyao are established or inferred using Conzen’s method and concepts. Most components in the street plan of Pingyao and many of those in its plot pattern are products of

![Fig. 1 - The urban area along the southern stretch of the city wall, Pingyao. Sources: Zhu, 2006.](image-url)
a series of planned schemes. The historic-geographical structure of the city’s plan can be understood in terms of fixation lines (mainly lines of former and extant city fortifications), consequent and occupation streets, belts, present and former axial streets, the recurrence of an ancient street-grid module, rectilinear street systems in areas created since the fourteenth century, the influence of fengshui (especially on plot orientations), varying degrees of plot metamorphosis and repletion, and the incidence of communal residential work units (Whitehand and Gu, 2007a).

The plan analysis of Pingyao confirms the applicability of Conzenian concepts in a geographical area with a markedly different cultural history. In addition to breaking new ground geographically, the paper exemplifies the thinking, especially the types of conceptual inference that can be employed to advantage when confronted with the different, generally less informative, sources available in China. The main prospect of progressing beyond the inferences is through archaeological investigation – an approach that has hitherto been underutilized in the morphological study of the historical development of many Chinese cities (Whitehand and Gu, 2007a).

**Urban morphology and urban conservation**

M.R.G. Conzen (1966) first discussed the application of urban morphology in urban conservation in the 1960s. Based on the recognition of the problems in preservation planning, especially the treating of the historical urban landscape as a loose assemblage of special buildings without considering its coherence or context, he argued that instead of speaking merely of
preservation, it might be better to use the term landscape management as being less suggestive of restriction to physical preservation of particular and, in a sense, isolated landscape elements (Conzen, 1966, p. 59). Conzen indicated that the delimitation and analysis of morphological regions (M.R.G. Conzen, 1975) should be not only fundamental to understanding urban form but also a basis for urban landscape management. The idea of morphological regions has been applied in more recent studies in Beijing (Whitehand and Gu, 2007b) (Fig. 2 and 4) and Guangzhou (Whitehand et al., 2012).

Urban conservation planning in China developed from a focus on individual sites and structures in the early 1920s to a concern with entire historic cities and sizeable historical areas within cities by the end of the twentieth century. A major defect, however, is the absence of a sound theoretical foundation. The idea of morphological regions emphasises the historic-geographical environments in which historical sites, structures and spaces exist. Its application to the study areas in Beijing and Guangzhou for special conservation treatment allows the character of the different parts of the areas to be articulated. Emphasis is placed on the identities of the physical forms whose conservation is being considered and on how these identities are products not only of history but also of the ways individual forms relate to their surroundings. A hierarchy of morphological regions is recognised and forms the basis for proposals of conservation plans (Whitehand et al., 2012; Whitehand and Gu, 2007b).

This systematic integrated approach contrasts with the impressionistic approach of current conservation planning, in which individual sites and buildings are largely treated in geographical isolation, divorced from the historical processes of which they are an integral part. Plan analysis, as a
fundamental component of urban morphology, constitutes part of the basic groundwork for ensuring that conservation is undertaken on a sound basis.

**Typo-morphological analysis of residential forms**

Though comparisons between the intellectual histories and methods of morphological and typological ideas have been explored in the past decades, the efforts of integrating the theoretical frameworks and related empirical investigations have been very limited. The concepts “typological processes” and “morphological periods” have been recently examined in two contrasting cultural areas – the Shanghai area and England – over the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the late-twentieth century (Whitehand et al., 2014).

Conzen emphasized how different building types are constructed in different historical periods and contribute to the character of the different growth phases that can be distinguished in a city’s development (Conzen, 1969, p. 127). At the core of Caniggian thinking is the way in which physical structures, notably buildings, are altered over time, for example by certain recurrent types of adaptation and addition. Such changes to existing buildings eventually become the basis for a new generation of buildings, a new “type” which contains, from its inception, features that in earlier buildings had been adaptations. This sequence is known as a “typological process”. Integrated typo-morphological analysis is to articulate the characteristic of urban form as the product of city-building processes.

Sequences of ordinary residential building types are recognized in the two conservations for the 30 areas around the interna della vecchia città di Pechino, are clearly contrassegnati i confini della trama urbana (Beijing Municipal Città Planning Commission, 2002). La crescente disponibilità di groundplan ha notevolmente migliorato le prospettive di intraprendere la ricerca morfologica e tipologica sulla città cinesi.

**Analisi morfogenetica della forma urbana cinese**


Le fasi di sviluppo e trasformazione della città sono stati stabiliti e/di detti con il metodo di Conzen. La struttura storico-geografica del piano urbano può essere schematizzata attraverso delle linee guida (si riferiranno anche alle vecchie linee di fortificazione della città) quali le strade e la loro occupazione, la fringe belt, gli assi stradali precedenti ed odierni, il ripetersi di un antico modulo stradale, i sistemi rettilinei utilizzati in aree della città create nel XIV secolo, l’influenza del fengshui e l’incidenza di unità di lavoro comunali residenziali (Whitehand e Gu, 2007). Il piano di analisi di Pingyao conferma l’applicabilità dei concetti Conzeniani in una zona geografica con una storia culturale nettamente diversa da quella occidentale. Oltre alla applicabilità del metodo in un nuovo contesto geografico, il paper esemplifica il pensiero riguardante i diversi tipi di inferenza concettuale che possono essere impiegati vantaggiosamente rispetto alle diverse fonti presenti nel territorio cinese. L’obiettivo di progredire al di là delle inferenze culturali è raggiunto con indagini archeologiche-tale approccio è stato finora poco utilizzato nello studio morfologico dello sviluppo storico delle città cinesi. (Whitehand e Gu, 2007a).

**Morfologia e conservazione urbana**

areas: historical series of terraced house types in England and historical variations on the lilong development unit in the Shanghai area. Periods characterized by different types and connections between those types are identified. The areas are different in both their building types and their periodization; however, commonalities in their processes of change, including those related to the spread of Western fashions, are found. What is not clear is the extent to which the forms that characterize a new morphological period are based on actual physical adaptations of the forms of previous periods as distinct from being grounded in mental constructs that spring more directly from those previous forms. The precise nature of the typological process remains elusive. Empirical substantiation, in the sense of demonstrating direct causality, is impeded in most areas by the limited quantities of the requisite data and the sheer practical difficulties of assembling those data where they exist (Whitehand et. al., 2014).

**Issues and challenges**

Despite the recent advances in morphological and typological research on Chinese cities, studies of this kind have faced a variety of challenges, among which those relating to sources of information have been especially pronounced. Reconstruction of detailed changes to the urban landscapes of cities in China remains far more difficult than in the large majority of Western cities. 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 generally show street systems and key

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*Fig. 3 - Plot boundaries and outlines of the block plans of the buildings in central Pingyao, c. 2000. Based upon an unpublished plan prepared by Shanxi Research Institute of Urban and Rural Planning and Design.*
landmarks. True ground plans showing streets, plots and building block-plans are rare in China over history. Although some true ground plans have become available since the 1990s, the constraint related to the accessibility to those cartographic materials limit the selection of study areas in China (Gu and Zhang, 2014).

It is evident that morphological and typological research needs particular reliance on other sources of information for complementing historical maps (Gu and Zhang, 2014). Those include historical documentary records (for example, gazetteers, travelogues, novels, poems and memorials), photographs and paintings. In the absence of historical planning and building applications in most Chinese cities, personal communication provides a means of obtaining specific morphological information.

In recent years, much effort has been devoted to the application of urban morphology in area-based conservation planning in China, especially in delimiting the boundaries of character areas (Whitehead and Gu, 2007b; Whitehead et. al., 2011). Based on an understanding of the dynamics of typological and morphological processes, morphological and typological studies also can support more effective and accountable urban design and urban development control. Extending applied urban morphology to urban design, and urban coding and planning, which are facing greater challenges in China, deserves more attention.

The use of geospatial technology, particularly Geographical Information Systems, is increasingly important for morphological and typological data analysis and synthesis. It enables precise field data to be assembled and, more importantly, has the potential for bringing together more effectively various research data sets for metrological and statistical analysis. Realizing this potential in the future research agenda will strengthen the technical basis for morphological and typological research.

Urban morphological and typological research and its network in China

Research on urban morphology and design typology seeks to advance knowledge of urban landscapes, through the study of their changing processes as well as of the agents and ideas involved in their creation and transformation. The recent research efforts related to Chinese cities include morphogenetic analysis of Chinese urban form, urban morphology and urban conservation, and typo-morphological analysis of residential forms. A number of research projects undertaken in the past decade have suggested the successful application of morphological and typological concepts and methods to the urban landscape and its management in China. As a result, a firm basis for further urban comparative research is being established. It is also noteworthy that an effort has been made to bring the findings of morphological studies of different cultural regions together. In particular, a morphological comparison between Como, Italy, and Pingyao, China (Conzen et al., 2012) has been recently completed through international research collaboration.

Morphological and typological research on Chinese cities, which complements the traditional mode of research on Chinese urban form, is making major advances. The Urban Morphology Research Group (UMRG) of Birmingham University has been most important in supporting the growth of morphological and typological research on Chinese cities. Since 2002, the UMRG has been continuously hosting the academic visit of Chinese scholars, most of them young researchers with backgrounds in architecture, planning and geography. Similarly, it is relevant that an Urban Morphology Research Group has been established in South China University of Technology and in Beijing University, and that a number of PhD theses related to the cross-cultural application of Conzenian and Caniggian ideas have been prepared.

In September 2009, about 220 scholars and practitioners from 26 countries attended the Sixteenth International Seminar on Urban Form (ISUF) in Guangzhou, China. Centred on the theme of urban morphology per la gestione del landscape urbano. L’idea di regioni morfologiche è stata applicata in studi piú recenti, nei casi di Pechino (Whitehead e Gu, 2007b) e Guangzhou (Whitehead et al., 2012). Il tema della conservazione urbana in Cina si è sviluppato nei primi anni ‘20 portando dall’analisi dei singoli siti e delle strutture, per arrivare ad affrontare i problemi di intere città ed aree storiche consistenti del ventesimo secolo. Tuttavia, l’assenza di una base teorica è un limite importante da considerare. L’idea di “processo tipologico” e “periodo storico” sono stati recentemente esaminati in due aree culturali diverse, cioè nella zona di Shanghai e in Inghilterra - facciamo riferimento ad un periodo compreso tra metà del XIX e la fine del ventesimo secolo (Whitehead et al., 2014). Conzen ha sottolineato come i diversi tipi di edifici costruiti nei vari periodi storici contribuiscano ai caratteri delle diverse fasi di crescita che possonosì distinguere nello sviluppo di una città (Conzen, 1969, p. 127). Al centro del pensiero Caniggiano c’è il modo in cui le strutture fisiche, in particolare gli edifici, sono alterati nel tempo, ad esempio nei casi di adattamento e addizione. Tale modifica agli edifici esistenti alla fine diventano la base per una nuova generazione di edifici, un nuovo “tipo” che contiene, fin dal suo inizio, caratteri presenti nell’edificio precedente. Tutto ciò è noto come “processo tipologico”. L’analisi tipo morfologico intuisce come la forma urbana sia il prodotto di processi di costruzione della città storica. Possiamo riconoscere in due diverse aree il tipo edilizio di base: il tipo di caso a schiera in Inghilterra e le variazioni storiche sull’unità di lilong nella zona di Shanghai. Sono inoltre identificati periodi caratterizzati dai vari tipi, presi singolarmente, e dalle loro connessioni. Le aree sono diverse sia per i tipi edilizi individuati che per le loro periodizzazioni, ma hanno in comune i processi di cambiamento, compresi i fenomeni di diffusione delle tipologie occidentali. Non è ancora chiaro come le forme caratterizzanti un nuovo periodo morfologico si basino sui reali adattamenti fisici di periodi precedenti. Resta ancora aperta la natura precisa del processo tipologico. In molte zone è impedita la fondazione empirica, il (neslo di dimostrare la casualità diretta) sia
and urban transformation, many of the conference papers presented recent developments in the study of urban landscapes. The success of the conference reflected the increasing interest in spatial analysis of urban form and its significance for urban planning and design practice. The Guangzhou conference, the first organized by the International Seminar on Urban Form in Asia, reflected the increasing research interest in Chinese cities at a time of their unprecedented growth and change.

In October 2013, a preliminary meeting about creating a Chinese Network of Urban Morphology took place in Nanjing University, and it has been confirmed that this institution will host the 23th International Seminar on Urban Form in 2016. The expansion of the urban morphology research network and ISUF 2016 in China will further stimulate new morphological and typological research, which is deemed to contribute to more meaningful comparative studies and to the international expertise in urban landscape research.

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Fig. 4 - The Zhishanmen area and its neighbouring environs in Qianlong jingcheng quantu.
Sources: Beijing Research Institute of Ancient Architecture and the Information Centre at Beijing Administration of Cultural Heritage (1996).


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For the quantities limited of data necessary that for the difficulty practica of assembling, in the case in which these data is new present (Whitehand et al., 2014).

Problems and challenges

With the recent progress in the study of morphological relations on the cities in China have had the forefront a series of challenges, as well as the analysis of the materials or to compare with the landscape in the cities which are the most difficult to get respect to the large majority of the cities in the world. The use of cartographic, in particular of map urban on large scale, is fundamental for the landscape urban, but the majority of the map and the traditional cities are monitored generally and the landmarks are most important. In fact in China there are rare the plannings that show straen, terrains, and the construction for the roads and the rivers. Also also to the 1990 is available the part of the material planimetric, the diocese of state relative to a small extent the cartographic, limit the selection of the areas cities to have better study (Gu and Zhang, 2014). E evidente come la ricerca tipo-morfologica necessita di altre fonti di informazione da integrare con le mappe storiche (Gu e Zhang, 2014), facciamo riferimento a documenti storici (per esempio dizionari geografici, diari di viaggio, romanzi, poesie, memoriali, fotografie e dipinti). In assenza delle cartografie storiche relative all'urbanistica e alla progettazione, la comunicazione tra persone è un mezzo fondamentale per ottenere dati ed informazioni valide. Negli ultimi anni è stata posta molta attenzione all'applicazione della morfologia urbana nella pianificazione di aree storiche cinesi, cercando soprattutto di delimitare i confini di aree con caratteri specifici (Whitehand e Gu, 2007b; Whitehand et al., 2011). Comprendendo le dinamiche dei processi tipico-morfologici, gli studi morfologici e tipologici sono in grado di supportare la progettazione urbana più efficace e responsabile e di controllare lo sviluppo urbano. Merita dunque più attenzione la sfida di estendere i metodi della morfologia urbana alla progettazione delle città. Nell'analisi morfologica e tipologica è il più importante l'uso della tecnologia geospaziale, soprattutto dei Sistemi di Informazione Geografica. Questo consente di assemblare dati molto precisi e, soprattutto, ha il potenziale di riunire in modo efficace i vari dati utilizzati sia per la ricerca metodologia che l'analisi statistica. La realizzazione di un sistema di dati analogo rafforzerà la base tecnica per la ricerca morfologica e tipologica.

La morfologia urbana e la ricerca morfologica in Cina

La ricerca sulla morfologia urbana e tipologia si prefigge di promuovere la conoscenza del passato urbano attraverso lo studio dei processi di cambiamento, riconoscendo gli agenti e le idee coinvolte nella loro creazione e trasformazione. Gli sforzi delle recenti ricerche relative alle città cinesi includono l'analisi morfogenetica della forma urbana cinese, e studi relativi alla morfologia urbana ed alla conservazione delle città ed analisi tipo-morfologiche delle forme residenti. Alcuni progetti di ricerca avvistati nel decennio passato, hanno confermato l'efficace applicazione dei concetti e dei metodi morfologici-tipologici rispetto al landscape cinese. Viene anche stabilita una base solida per ulteriori ricerche comparative con altri centri. Infatti è possibile notare lo sforzo per ottenere risultati negli studi
morfologici attuati in diverse aree culturali. In particolare è stato recentemente completato attraverso una ricerca internazionale, un confronto morfologico tra Como, in Italia, e Pingyao, in Cina (Conzen et al., 2012). La ricerca morfologica e tipologica sulle città cinesi, che integra ormai la tradizionale modalità di ricerca sulla forma urbana cinese, sta facendo grandi progressi. Il gruppo di ricerca della morfologia urbana (UMRG) della Birmingham University ha avuto grande importanza nel sostenere il crescente interesse relativo alla ricerca morfologica e tipologica sulle città cinesi. Dal 2002 il gruppo UMRG ha ospitato più volte le visite accademiche di studenti cinesi, la maggior parte dei quali sono giovani ricercatori con interessi nella progettazione architettonica e nella geografia. È interessante notare come nato un gruppo di studiosi di morfologia urbana anche nella South China University of Technology e l’Università di Pechino. Inoltre sono state elaborate numerose tesi di dottorato aventi come tema l’applicazione delle idee Conzeniane e Caniggiane. Nel settembre 2009, circa 220 studiosi e professionisti provenienti da 26 paesi hanno partecipato alla XVI Seminario Internazionale sulla forma urbana (ISUF) a Guangzhou, in Cina. Durante il seminario, centrato sui temi della morfologia e trasformazione urbana, sono stati presentati molti paper che analizzavano i recenti sviluppi nello studio del paesaggio urbano. Il successo della conferenza riflette il crescente interesse per l’analisi spaziale della forma urbana e la sua importanza per la pianificazione urbana e la pratica del design. La conferenza di Guangzhou, la prima organizzata dal Seminario internazionale sulla forma urbana in Asia, riflette il crescente interesse della ricerca sulle città cinesi, in momento in cui la loro crescita e cambiamento sono senza precedenti. Nell’ottobre 2013 si è tenuto presso la Nanjing University un incontro preliminare per la creazione di una rete cinese di morfologia urbana; è stato confermato che il 23° Seminario Internazionale sulla forma urbana sarà ospitato proprio presso la Nanjing University nel 2016. L’espansione della rete di ricerca di morfologia urbana e dell’ISUF 2016 in Cina stimolerà ulteriormente la nuova ricerca morfologica e tipologica, che si ritiene contribuire a studi comparativi più significativi e ad una esperienza internazionale nella ricerca del paesaggio urbano.


**Fig. 5 - View of Pingyao.**