

Applying Conzenian and Caniggian ideas in China: recent research advances and problems

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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 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 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.