

Preface

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The 26th International Seminar on Urban Form Conference, *Cities as Assemblages*, hosted by the Cyprus Network of Urban Morphology (CyNUM), took place in Nicosia, Cyprus, July 2nd – July 6th, 2019. Three Conference Proceedings' volumes include the written contributions presented during the four-day conference.

ISUF's 2019 theme aimed to explore the embedding of different theories and approaches within methodologies analysing the urban form; theories which provide a relational perspective for the analysis of the physical and social processes underpinning the shaping of the urban form, aiming at addressing the inherent complexity in the emergence of cities and processes of persistence, growth and change.

Relational theories, such as assemblage theory as developed by De Landa (2006) and Actor-Network Theory (ANT) as developed by Latour (2005), point out and discuss key issues as regards urban development, highlighting the mechanisms for the emergence, growth and transformation of urban forms. The need to assess the relationship between the physical and human components of the city through the analysis of the processes of urban development that shape the city as a social entity, is proposed by both theoretical approaches. The power of connections between social entities at different scales in shaping the city as well as the relevance of the urban form to the construction and negotiation of the social, are highlighted.

Such theoretical perspectives are in line with Hillier's and Vaughan's (2007) proposal of the city as one entity, comprising both the physical city and the social city, where '*the physical and social cities act conjointly to produce significant outcomes*' (*ibid.*, p.205). Relational theories conceive the city both as a material entity and as a system of social interaction and human activity. Such an understanding impacts to a great extent the ways we conceptualise and describe the emergence, growth and transformation of the urban form, as well as the ways we study the city, highlighting the need for methodologies that consider both the physical elements, and human groups and the connections between them.

However, despite the fact that the relevance of relational theories for the fields of urban studies and geography has been explored and discussed in a number of research studies, the theories have neither been reflected upon with great depth, nor have they prominently featured in discourses on their implications on the study of urban morphology (Charalambous and Geddes 2015).

ISUF2019 set out to explore and reflect on the potentiality of relational theories to provide a framework for the analysis of the physical and social processes that are involved in the shap-

ing of the urban form, opening up new avenues for the study of urban morphology and for the development of multidisciplinary methodologies.

These reflections have been particularly relevant to the conference venue, the city of Nicosia, the last divided capital of Europe, with a prolonged history of tensions, internal displacements, migration and tourists' flows, economic fluctuations and rapid, often abrupt urban transformations, serving as an ideal laboratory to explore, unravel, and question urban form development in uncertain and contested contexts. They have also been particularly relevant to the focus themes which related to the location of the conference; group formations and negotiations within cities influencing ethno-religious tensions, political movements, social segregation and urban conflicts more widely, as well as the particular status of port cities often in the past more linked to other port cities than their hinterland and, still to the present day, the first point of arrival of migrant groups and the city-location of choice for tourism.

48 parallel sessions of around 250 inspiring presentations addressed the conference's specific themes:

Theory 1: emergence, relational theories, the social sciences and urban morphology. Papers presented under this theme were about how cities come into being and transform. Subthemes included all elements of relational theories that relate to urban morphology: scales, historical processes, material and human components, capabilities and connections between components.

Theory 2: the scope and limits of urban theories. This theme was about the critique of application of relational theories to urban studies, fragmentation of methods, the attention to the particular and the need to bring specific research findings back to more general theories. Subthemes included the main theorisations of the city: cities as organisms, cities as artefacts, cities as machines, cities as systems of flows and networks, and how to take steps forward to build a more mature theory of the city.

Methods 1: embedding different approaches into the study of urban morphology. This theme was about the need to further develop multidisciplinary within urban morphology, layering different perspectives applied to fringe belt analysis: spatial, social, economic and planning, and filling in gaps when practically applying methodologies.

Methods 2: combining Conzenian, typological and space syntax approaches. This theme was key to understanding the development of urban morphology and the potentialities of combined studies. Papers presented under this theme described the latest research done in combining different approaches and suggested how further developments can be made.

Focus 1: urban conflict and divided cities and **Focus 2:** Mediterranean port cities in a global context. Both focus themes were strongly related to the location of the conference and both were extremely topical and relevant to contexts of increasing migrations flows within the Mediterranean. Subthemes of Focus 1 included issues of segregation and cohabitation, issues of public space use, comparative analysis of divided cities and a special subtheme dedicated to design and architecture on regeneration projects. Focus 2 was broadly about the Mediterranean as a sea of unity and division. Subthemes of Focus 2 included comparative analyses of Mediterranean cities and comparative analysis of port cities and a further special subtheme dedicated to design and architecture on waterfront developments.

The present volume includes 44 contributions from the themes: *The scope and limits of urban theories*, *Combining Conzenian, typological and space syntax approaches*, *Urban Design: Urban morphology, building typology and design* and *Urban conflict and divided cities*.

The papers within the theme of Theory discuss a number of urban theories in the light of urban development and regeneration, explore urban evolution mechanisms as well as urban and building typologies in various cities of the world.

Under the theme of methods, the papers highlight the potential of combining different analytical approaches, including a methodological comparison between Muratorian and Conzeonian urban morphology and Space syntax; transitional morphologies and the exploration of urban form through functional and configurational typologies.

In the urban design theme, the papers in this volume are varied and focus on issues of environmental performance, including soundscape, air and noise quality as well as urban health through the lens of urban morphology; participatory practices and integrated intervention design frameworks; and the relationship between urban morphology research and planning practice, politics and policies.

Finally, in the focus theme, Urban conflict and divided cities, most papers explore the local urban context of the divided city of Nicosia while one paper focuses on Palestine's Spatio-Temporal Fragmentation.

This volume presents the variety of issues, explorations, and insights pertaining to the field of urban morphology, that fruitfully inform timely discussions on the challenges and opportunities related to the study and understanding of the urban form.

There are a number of people who have made this conference possible and whom I would like to warmly thank: the International Seminar on Urban Form Council, and especially the President Wendy McLure and the Secretary General, Vitor Oliveira, for the support, guidance and advise during the preparation of the conference; the four distinguished keynote speakers who kindly accepted our invitation to share their research work with us, Prof. Wendy McClure, Prof. Ann Vernez Moudon, Prof. Alan Penn, and Prof. Giuseppe Strappa; the dedicated ISUF 2019 Organising Committee; and finally all the participants who joined us and who have contributed to the fruitful discussions that took place in Nicosia.

References

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