

A MORPHOLOGICAL APPROACH TO CITIES AND REGIONS

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Malfroy, S. and Gianfranco Caniggia, G. (2021) *A Morphological Approach to Cities and Their Regions* (Triest Verlag: Zürich).

A morphological approach to cities is a guidebook that clarifies the terminologies of the Muratorian urban school of thought by bringing several fundamental works and creating a homogenous structure of clarifying the essence of the morphological approach and its development. Reading the city means uncovering its history and its former composition. A metaphoric expression of an analytical approach that refers to an understanding of the city's growth and thus delivers meaningful architecture. The Italian architect Gianfranco Caniggia (1933-1997) who was a student and a devoted follower of the Italian architect Severio Muratori (1910-1973), the establishing theorist and pioneer of the typo-morphological urban school of thought, has worked on developing Muratori's work through his lifetime, establishing a methodological approach to understanding the urban territory. Throughout this book, Sylvain Malfroy explains the essential elements that unravel how the Muratorian school came into being and refers to its origins as a result of its scientific inspiration as well as highlight the level of sharp thinking and analytical observation required in the establishment in the typo-morphological analytical studies and the making of this morphological approach, which vitalizes the meaning of the city and reveals the intelligent progression it undergoes.

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Severio Muratori believed in the value of reading the history of a city, as it allows an understanding of the “substratum” or the hidden traces of the city’s past as an evolving organism to be further developed, which explains the Muratorian morphological approach’s aim in bringing relevant architecture, that cannot be determined solely by the current state of the city, but most importantly its history. The book represents an overview of Muratori’s school of thought, together with a couple of methodological works carried out by Caniggia, taken from his lectures on Florence and Como. Specifically, one of the milestones of urban studies within this theoretical approach is demonstrated in this book, a lecture given by Caniggia himself at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich (ETH-Z) in May 1984 entitled “Lettura di Firenze” which demonstrated a conscious observation of the morphogenetic built environment. The book conveys an in-depth explanation of some terminologies within this school of thought and elaborates on the theory’s origin and the metaphors it contains. The Muratorian philosophical approach aspired to solve several problems within the field of architecture and the city with a greater sense of credibility, along with a couple of detailed demonstrations of the major works carried out by Caniggia. These demonstrations are his signature diagrams showing the phases of the city’s development ranging from its structure to the planning of the new. The most significant works of Gianfranco Caniggia are manifested in this book, explaining the genesis of the urban organism, the formation process of the city, and the structure of human settlements throughout time, starting from a theory that undertook scientific analysis in reading the city, and identifying several terminologies, such as the notions of aggregation, type, and typological process and several other notions which explain the process of the formation starting from a large scope to a building type level. One of his main works also taken from his lecture in ETH-Zürich, is an analysis of the morphology of today’s urban fabric in the case of the city of Florence in Italy, as derived from the Roman ground plan and the development of houses types in a typological process of the Florence house from “Domus” to “Casa in linea” representing a manifesto in the evolution of building types and the topological process in the 18th century and the transformation of the row house to new distinctive building types, which affirms the importance of the previous type in determining the new one, strengthening the idea of the city as an organism.