

MORPHOLOGICAL RESEARCH OF THE HISTORICAL URBAN BOUNDARY. THE INNER FRINGE OF NANJING

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Lei, J. (2019) *Morphological Research of the Historical Urban Boundary, the Inner Fringe Belt of Nanjing* (Southeast University- Politecnico di Torino: Nanjing)

This book emanated from the PhD Dissertation by Jiang Lei, and Prof. Marco Trisciuglio, 2016/17, Politecnico di Torino, Italy. Predominantly, Chinese cities underwent vast urban expansion during previous decades. The study concentrated on Nanjing as a case study, which is one of the ancient capitals of China, and aimed to discuss the legibility of this historic city. In Nanjing, urban transformations progressed on surrounding areas and, moreover, inside the historic central areas. For instance, hybrid zones were formed and numerous traditional buildings were substituted, particularly, alongside the historical centre's boundary. The research essentially considered two aspects of the urban structure and the morphological units. Furthermore, the study contemplated the tendency to urban development.

After discussing the urban form and the legibility, subsequent to a brief introduction on urban expansion in China and their urban conservation plans, the author described the concepts and theories used in the research. Then specified the starting points and the methodology. The study initiated with Conzenian common theories and morphological components. The first notion "morphological period" is used to investigate the urban structure of the city. The second and third notions "fixation line" and "inner fringe belt" are used to localise the urban boundary of the historical centre. M.R.G. Conzen who is a geographer, mostly, used precise maps of individual lots and

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FORMA CIVITATIS: International journal of urban and territorial morphological studies (IJUTMS), Vol. 2, N. 1, 2022

buildings' ground plans. Furthermore, urban transformation took as a natural phenomenon in his research. In my point of view, Conzen's concept has few spiritual or humanistic observations. Therefore, a complementary theory is needed for this concept. This research implemented Rossi's main theories "permanence", "the locus", and "the collective memory" as a complementary concept. Aldo Rossi who is a scholar of Italian school, provided a comprehensive view of city form in his research. Rossi's concepts imply a spiritual observation of the urban landscape. Consequently, it can fill out the incomplete points of Conzen's theory.

In part II a different context for morphological research, the most interesting part of the book for me, the author enlightened the traditional urban planning ideas in China. She explained the points that cosmology points to for the ultimate city form and its characteristics. Additionally, she illuminated the role of geomancy or topography in such cosmology, and how the ultimate city form interrelates with certain topographies.

In part III, morphological periods and urban structure, the author began to classify the urban growths in distinctive time periods, subsequently to the urban structure analysis and the inner fringe belt's location identification, which is shaped around the historic central areas of pre-industrial era. In the establishment of the socialist stage, before 1949, urban development consists of two parts, the accumulation of large-grained units lengthwise determining a fringe belt and the industrial era formative process of the historical settlement. In this period, before the 1987's segregation of plots, and the 1990's dwelling privatisation, the buildings are mostly institutions with accommodations and facilities, and factories. These buildings are commonly low-rise constructions. The comprehensive replacements began in 1978, the buildings mostly product housing, and other real-estate expansions with services and facilities. These buildings are commonly high-rise and multi-story constructions.

In conclusion, in terms of urban structure, two districts, the areas lengthways the city wall, and the areas of the continuous inner fringe belt which is located on the south part of the old settlement, marked the historic urbanised areas. Moreover, in terms of morphological units, they can be characterized by evaluating their land arrangements. Contemplating the urban development, the research distributed the history into three phases, first, the formative process of the historical settlement, second, the accumulation of large-grained units, and third, the comprehensive replacements.