

Connecting Morpho to urban vitality: the case of Moscow

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Abstract

This article aims to contribute to the recent efforts of ISUF to bring closer and ultimately integrate the academic research on urban morphology and urban planning practice.

Methodological differences between schools of urban morphology are a barrier to integration between research and practice. Qualitative schools focus on the historico-geographical approach of MRG Conzen and the process typological approach based on the work of Muratori (Oliveira, 2016)). Quantitative schools include Space Syntax (Hillier, 1996) and various spatial analysis methods primarily popularised by Michael Batty (2013). Each school brings its value to the urban morphology research, but even the academics may not always be able to appropriately select the methods according to particular problems they are trying to address (Oliveira and Medeiros, 2016).

There is a need for a unified approach to the study of urban morphology. Oliveira (2013) proposed such an approach (Morpho) on a street scale, later Oliveira and Medeiros (2016) demonstrated its application at the city scale.

Building upon the Morpho methodology this paper assesses the urban form in Moscow using seven morphological measures. It then explores the effects of physical urban form in Moscow on urban vitality (where “vitality is what distinguishes successful urban areas from the others” (Montgomery, 1998)) characterised by (a) intensity of use of urban space (through analysis of mobile phone data and locations of businesses) and (b) land value (through residential rental rates – Xiao (2017) explored links between housing market and urban morphology extensively, but only in relation to a set of Space Syntax measures).

Keywords

Urban morphology, physical urban form, Morpho, planning practice, assessment methodology, Moscow, intensity of use of urban space, land value