

Twenty-Fourth International Seminar on Urban Form, Valencia, Spain 27-29 September 2017

At the opening of the conference, José Salvador (City of Valencia), Iván Cabrese (Director, School of Architecture, Polytechnic University of Valencia) and Vicente Colomer (Conference Chair), set an ambitious agenda for the conference with a call to combine a global understanding of the world with a local reading of 'place'. The first keynote speaker Giancarlo Cataldi (University of Florence) took us on a diagrammatic journey to set the stage for a general theory of urban morphology (Figure 1). He showed that urban morphology can be divided into four processes that should be seen as integrated parts: *reading* urban form, *projecting* new concepts, *materializing* these concepts, and *lived* space. The diagrams were intriguing, but at first sight so full of concepts and relations that few could grasp their depth. They reminded me of the diagrams published by Marshall and Çalışkan (2011) in which they mapped the theoretical contributions within the framework of urban morphology and design and made a distinction between recognition, design, construction, and making.

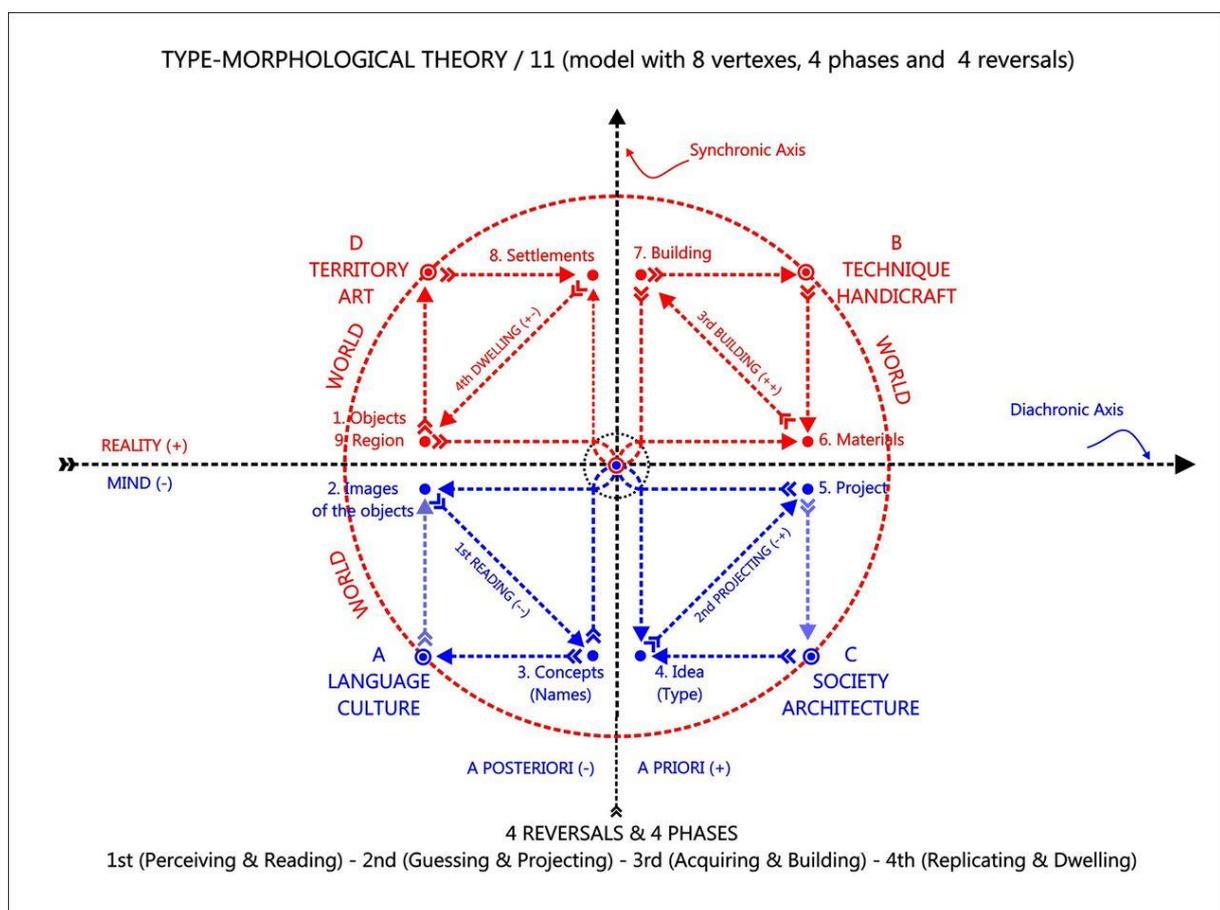


Figure 1. Cataldi's basis for a general theory of urban morphology.

The second keynote speaker, Joan Busquets (Harvard University and Centro Universitario de Diseño de Barcelona) addressed the secrets of 'good cities'. His hypothesis was that more regular cities are better for the future and the gridded city seems to be the answer, though he did not explore the performance of such patterns in comparison with less regular ones.

The third keynote speaker on this packed first day was Bárbara Pons, an architect and consultant in sustainable planning and landscaping. She presented the challenges our urbanizing planet is facing, from inequality to ecosystem stress. Anyone following my work must know that the two spatial issues she put on the ISUF agenda are important to me. The first was the problem of *scale* that she claimed needs to be addressed to enable inclusion of the environmental dimension in our work. In a way she

work on *Urban space and structures* by Martin and March (1972) and *The social logic of space* by Hillier and Hanson (1984). The presented work covered new measures of urban form (for example by Hanzl *et al.*, and Marcus *et al.*), GIS driven analytical tools (for example, by Vialard, and Iranmanesh *et al.*) and the development of typologies using advanced statistics (for example, by Stojanovski, and Fusco *et al.*). Often these sessions triggered lively debates in which the audience raised questions about the lack of qualitative methods and about how the work described related to earlier work within the various schools of urban morphology and, in turn, the impact it might have. These are relevant questions and should be addressed more frequently where comparisons between methods (such as Monteiro *et al.* presented), integrations of methods and relations to theory (such as Marcus *et al.* addressed) are ways to proceed and advance the field.

In the closing session, the new President of ISUF, Wendy McClure (University of Idaho), gave a striking view of where we have come from, referring to the first ISUF President Anne Vernez Moudon and the founding mission of ISUF 'to create a forum to accumulate, disseminate and share knowledge about urban morphology'. This inspiring conference definitely lived up to this mission.

References

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