

# BRITISH URBAN MORPHOLOGY - TIME TO TAKE STOCK AND REGROUP?

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## ABSTRACT

This article reviews the contribution of the work of the Urban Morphology Research Group (UMRG) to British urban morphological research. The group, led by Jeremy Whitehand, provided a focus for British research in urban morphology grounded in the work of M.R.G Conzen and the historico-geographical approach. The article reviews four core strands to this work: definition of the historico-geographical approach, morphological regions, the processes and people shaping urban landscapes and linking research and practice. The article also provides an overview of other areas of research into urban form within Britain beyond the UMRG, from scholars working in disciplines such as geography, architecture, and urban design. Two broad areas of work are focussed on, namely spatial analytical and configurational approaches and British urban geographical traditions. In conclusion, the article reflects on the future for British urban morphology following the loss of Whitehand as its long-standing figurehead and champion, suggesting that it is time to form a new network to replace the now-dormant UMRG to ensure the continued vibrancy and visibility of urban morphological research in Britain.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Britain has been an important centre for urban morphological research over several decades. For much of this time, the Urban Morphology Research Group (UMRG), based in the School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of Birmingham and headed by Jeremy Whitehand, provided the principal focus for British research in urban morphology, grounded in the work of M.R.G. Conzen and the historico-geographical approach. This ‘Conzenian’ tradition in urban morphological research has been identified as the ‘British School’ of urban morphology,<sup>1</sup> although this tends to downplay its non-British origins and the other British research traditions in urban morphology.<sup>2</sup> Vitor Oliveira identifies the Conzenian School as one of the four principal schools of thought in urban morphology.<sup>3</sup> Of the other schools identified, spatial analytical and configurational approaches also have significant research traditions in Britain, although typo-morphological traditions have been largely absent from British urban morphological research until relatively recently.<sup>4</sup> Earlier reviews of urban morphology research in Britain have provided broad overviews, including both the contributions of the Conzenian School and those from the other urban form research traditions with significant bases in Britain.<sup>5</sup> More recently an edited volume by Oliveira has provided a more focused review of the specific contribution of Whitehand and the historico-geographical tradition.<sup>6</sup>

The death of Whitehand in June 2021 left a significant void in urban morphological research globally, and particularly in Britain. Without its figurehead and guiding influence, the UMRG has ceased to be the hub around which urban morphological research in Britain has gravitated. British urban morphological research is therefore currently more diffuse and loosely connected than it was previously, with no established regional network to draw British researchers within different urban morphological traditions together. It is certainly an important moment to take stock and reflect on urban morphological research in Britain. This paper offers an overview of British urban morphology from the perspective of a former PhD student of Whitehand and UMRG member, emersed in the historico-geographical tradition and currently lecturing geography at a British university, with all the caveats that this positionality entails in terms of breadth of coverage. Firstly, the paper reviews the development of the UMRG and its key contributions to British urban morphological research. Secondly, it offers an overview of other key areas of research into urban form within Britain, specifically spatial analytical and space syntax traditions, and urban geographical research, reflecting on the limited interchange between these and other research areas of urban morphology. Finally, the paper reflects on future directions for British urban morphological research following the loss of Whitehand as its long-standing figurehead and champion.

## 2. THE URBAN MORPHOLOGY RESEARCH GROUP, UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

### 2.1 Foundations and development

Whitehand founded the UMRG in 1974, three years after being appointed to a lectureship in Geography at Birmingham. The basis for Whitehand's interest in urban morphology has been well-documented, the principal influence being his association with the geographer M.R.G. Conzen and his work whilst teaching at the University of Newcastle.<sup>7</sup> Here Whitehand began his interest in exploring the concepts and ideas developed by Conzen, firstly examining the urban fringe belt concept in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, beginning an interest in fringe belts that would remain a key part of his research throughout his career.<sup>8</sup> The UMRG's academic base within the (then) Department of Geography at Birmingham provided an important institutional platform for the group.<sup>9</sup> The UMRG's establishment provided a foundation for applications to major British funding bodies for projects and PhD studentships, and a formal basis for internal seminars and discussions based on the work of the growing number of postgraduate researchers and research associates. The UMRG Newsletter, published between 1987 and 1997 and edited by Terry Slater, Whitehand's urban morphological colleague at Birmingham, provided another important foundation for disseminating the activities of UMRG members and in forging links with other researchers both in Britain and overseas.

The 1980s and 1990s were indeed a period in which the research activity of UMRG members was considerable, and the period when the Group developed as the principal centre for urban morphology in Britain, with a growing international reputation for work grounded in the historico-geographical tradition.<sup>10</sup> The networks and collaborations established by the UMRG played a key role in the formation of the International Seminar on Urban Form (ISUF) in 1994. The UMRG's international standing was cemented through its hosting of the first ISUF open conference in Birmingham in 1997, with a second ISUF conference (Glasgow) and symposium (Newcastle) organised by Whitehand and Michael Barke in 2004. Whitehand and other UMRG members have played key roles within the work of the ISUF, as council members and leaders of various working groups, but particularly through editorship of ISUF journal *Urban Morphology*, with Whitehand as editor from its foundation in 1997 to 2019 and Peter Larkham taking over from 2019 onwards.

### 2.2 Key research contributions to urban morphology

The range and scope of contributions to urban morphology coming from UMRG members is difficult to do justice to in one paper and one can only offer a brief summation of some of the core strands of that work. The essential underpinning of the work of the UMRG has been the application and extension of Conzen's key concepts and approaches in various urban contexts, both historical and contemporary, and the wider promotion of the historico-

geographical approach within urban morphology. The core strands of this work and its contribution are considered under four themes: definition of the historico-geographical approach, morphological regions, the processes and people shaping urban landscapes and linking research and practice.

### *2.2.1 Definition of the historico-geographical approach*

In 1977 Whitehand published an early call for theoretical development in urban morphology, which was followed by an important work drawing together Conzen's key publications, with chapter contributions of his own setting out the case for re-establishing consideration of Conzen's work in urban geography.<sup>11</sup> Subsequently Whitehand produced several publications setting out the history and origins of the historico-geographical approach.<sup>12</sup> American-based geographer Michael Conzen added to this body of work through the publication of a further collection of his father's work.<sup>13</sup> Other notable early contributions to 'scoping the field' were two publications, one of which collated work building on Conzen's approaches, and another which sought to showcase international developments in urban morphology.<sup>14</sup>

Another key strand of work by UMRG members has been consideration of terminology and rigour in approach in urban morphological study, and comparative work with other traditions and contexts. An important foundational work was the production of a glossary of urban form setting out key urban morphological terminology and providing an important foundation to further theoretical and terminological explorations (now hosted on the ISUF website).<sup>15</sup> Whitehand has discussed the key characteristics of the Conzenian School and the development and application of his terminology and concepts in several papers.<sup>16</sup> Building on this has been a considerable body of work by Karl Kropf considering terminological rigour and links with other key urban morphological approaches.<sup>17</sup> In a key paper in 2014 he provides both a critical analysis and unpackaging of concepts in the typo-morphological and Conzenian traditions and offers a creative synthesis of these.<sup>18</sup> Subsequent work has compared terminology and method between configurational analysis and urban tissue analysis and explored the ambiguities in the use of the term 'plot', highlighting an important issue in terms of tangible and intangible aspects of urban morphological study.<sup>19</sup> As urban morphological research has diversified and expanded, the need to establish an open, but coherent, body of terminology, theories, and methods for exploring urban morphology has remained central to the aims of the ISUF.

### *2.2.2 Morphological regions*

Geographical concepts of areas and their differentiation were central to Conzen's work in exploring the question of how to represent and articulate the structure of the urban landscape. He developed key concepts and techniques in morphological regionalisation for the identification and mapping of both

plan units, based on the analysis of the three-fold division of the town plan, and townscape units, incorporating the form complexes of building form and land utilisation along with the town plan.<sup>20</sup> These works have informed two important areas of UMRG research, namely the application of plan analysis to the study of the origin, form and change of historic towns and the application of the townscape unit idea to the work of conservation planning.

Plan analysis, using regularities and similarities in street and particularly plot patterns, has been a significant methodological advance. The concepts and techniques developed in Conzen's 1960 study of Alnwick have been utilised to examine the planning and development of medieval towns.<sup>21</sup> Work has also sought to link historico-geographical approaches with historical documentary research and archaeological evidence, for example in a comparison of processes of morphogenesis of the English cities of Worcester and Gloucester during the medieval period.<sup>22</sup>

The second strand of work employing morphological regions, incorporates consideration of analysis of the plan with regionalisations of the two other form complexes, building form and land utilisation. Whitehand carried out the first suburban regionalisation work in Amersham as an extension of his studies of suburban development (see below).<sup>23</sup> Here he utilised the term 'townscape units' to describe regions, drawing on Conzen's 1975 paper to highlight their potential usefulness in townscape management. A key paper in 2009 by Whitehand provides a comprehensive review of the work of UMRG researchers on morphological regionalisation and offers a comparative study looking at its application in other countries.<sup>24</sup> Other work has sought to compare region delimitation by different agents, principally comparing regions derived from academic study with those defined by planning authorities primarily for the purposes of conservation, exploring the challenges of boundary drawing.<sup>25</sup> Slater has also recently highlighted the problems of conflating plan unit and morphological unit terminology in research.<sup>26</sup> Work on morphological regions has continued to develop, with international comparative work stimulated by Whitehand, notably in China, and comparison with other approaches undertaken by Vítor Oliveira et. al.<sup>27</sup>

### *2.2.3 Processes and people shaping urban landscapes*

Another important strand of UMRG work, also employing geographical and historical research lenses, has been focussed on the processes and agents shaping modern townscapes, particularly in nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first-century urban landscapes. This focus on process has offered a significant contribution to urban morphological understanding and provides a wider definition of urban morphology than is perhaps evident in other disciplines.<sup>28</sup> In considering process, a long-standing and significant area of research has been the exploration of Conzen's fringe belt concept.<sup>29</sup> Whitehand has outlined the history of the fringe-belt concept, and in subsequent work over several decades he not only demonstrated the benefits of mapping fringe belts, but

also importantly advanced fringe belt theory by exploring both the relationship between fringe belts and economic impulses and urban construction cycles, and agency in the fringe-belt process, considering the interactions of agents, such as land-owners, developers, financiers, and planners in urban growth, decline and transformation.<sup>30</sup> Further research examining on Birmingham's Edwardian (or middle) fringe belt has extended work through a focus on the environmental character of fringe belts and the implications this has for urban planning, and through a focus on the ecological character of the fringe belt green spaces.<sup>31</sup>

This work on fringe belts aligns with another substantive body of UMRG research focussing on agents of change shaping urban landscapes. This work has been important in looking beyond impersonal mechanisms of urban change to consider relationships among the people and actors making decisions. Research focussing on commercial cores, low density residential areas and conservation areas has explored the role of economic factors in developer decision-making, the diffusion of architectural styles from the metropolis to provincial centres and their suburbs, the role of the stage in the family lifecycle for suburban change at the micro-morphological scale and the impact of conservation planning controls on development. Early research was effectively summarised in two books, both Institute of British Geographers (IBG) Special Publications.<sup>32</sup> The significant contribution of Whitehand within this strand of research on agents and agency has been recognised in a book dedicated to him: '*Shapers of Urban Form*'.<sup>33</sup> Other members of the UMRG researching medieval towns have also contributed to this body of work on agents and agency, focussing on the impact of landowners on urban form, including the Church and the monarchy and aristocratic families.<sup>34</sup>

#### 2.2.4 *Linking research and practice*

Running through much UMRG work has been a concern for application in practice, traced back to Conzen's recognition of the benefit of applying morphological regionalisation the conservation of historic townscapes.<sup>35</sup> Through several editorials in *Urban Morphology* and numerous publications Whitehand sought to encourage dialogue and collaboration between academics and practitioners.<sup>36</sup> He argued that whilst it appears evident that an understanding of present urban forms and their past development should inform urban development and conservation this was not often the case, with urban morphology and architectural and planning practice appearing isolated from one another.<sup>37</sup>

Ivor Samuels identifies two strands of planning and design activity to which urban morphological work has offered some contributions.<sup>38</sup> In the first strand, historico-geographical approaches have fed into urban characterisation work to inform historic environment management.<sup>39</sup> Latterly, Whitehand sought to encourage the use of historico-geographical perspectives in the development

and application of the 2011 UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) and the HUL approach to inclusive heritage management.<sup>40</sup> Within the second strand, historico-geographical and typo-morphological approaches have fed into urban design guidance, principally through Samuels' and Kropf's urban design practice connections.<sup>41</sup>

The key challenges in developing better integration between urban morphological research and architectural, town planning and design practice lie in their differing professional contexts and in issues of communication across terminological and methodological divides, with the need for academic urban morphology to demystify its seemingly 'coded' language and practice. Barke summarises the problem as '...academics reproaching practitioners for short-term, conceptually shallow 'solutions' to immediate problems whilst practitioners criticize academics for over theorizing and failing to engage with the 'real world''.<sup>42</sup> Tony Hall has also pointed out that the British planning system, with its focus on two-dimensional land use, was unlikely to be a fruitful field for the introduction of historico-geographical methods, although recent changes to embrace design in British planning have offered new opportunities for engagement.<sup>43</sup>

In seeking to address the challenges of integrating research and practice, the ISUF set up a Task Force to which UMRG members were key contributors.<sup>44</sup> The report contained four key recommendations for strengthening the relation between research and practice; preparation of a simple charter to communicate what urban morphology has to offer practice, the collection of information on how urban morphology is included in different taught courses within different countries, the collection of good practices of how and where urban morphology is being used successfully, and the preparation of urban morphology manuals.<sup>45</sup> From this have come the ISUF 'Porto Charter' and a series of key textbooks, including '*The Handbook of Urban Morphology*' (offering a comprehensive practical manual of morphological analysis based on Kropf's considerable record of publication and also experience in planning and design practice), '*Teaching Urban Morphology*' (including chapters by Barke on why study urban morphology, Larkham on the importance of field observation and Samuels (with Richard Hayward) on teaching the concept of urban tissue in urban design courses), and '*Morphological Research in Planning, Urban Design and Architecture*' (including chapters by UMRG members on urban morphology and planning and design).<sup>46</sup>

### 3. BRITISH URBAN MORPHOLOGY BEYOND THE UMRG

Focus on the work of the UMRG and the historico-geographical tradition in the discussion of British urban morphology has tended to under emphasise the contributions of those working outside this tradition. Two broad areas of work are focussed on here. Firstly, spatial analytical and configurational traditions, principally focussed on the work within the Bartlett Faculty of the Built

Environment (or The Bartlett) in University College London, and the Urban Design Studies Unit (UDSU) at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow. Secondly, British urban geographical traditions.

### 3.1 Spatial analytical and configurational traditions

Larkham highlights the application of computing technologies to urban morphological study as a major area of methodological advance, with the use of geographical information systems (GIS) in geography and planning and computer aided design (CAD) in architecture and urban design, linking with mathematical approaches to the study of urban form.<sup>47</sup> Quantitative, or more accurately geometrical, analyses of buildings have sought to develop a science of architectural form. Important in early British work in this area was the research of Philip Steadman who has explored geometry and architecture. His work has sought to explain why certain plans and built forms rather than others actually occur, illustrating how the process of generating multiple possible forms (morphospace) offered a tool that is useful in both architecture and design, and in helping to fill gaps in the historical and archaeological record.<sup>48</sup> Another key strand of spatial analytical work in Britain has been that stemming from the work of Michael Batty and the work of the Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis (CASA) at the Bartlett which he established in 1995.<sup>49</sup> Batty is also the editor of the journal *Environment and Planning B: Urban Analytics and City Science* which has been important as a publishing outlet for much of the work in the spatial analytical and configurational tradition. This work uses a range of methods and models, including GIS and remote sensing technologies, cellular automata, agent-based models, and fractals, and seeks to understand the spatial structure and dynamics of cities as complex, emergent phenomena in which global structure develops from local processes.<sup>50</sup>

Another part of the Bartlett is the Space Syntax Laboratory, an international centre for the configurational space syntax approach which studies the effects of spatial design on aspects of social organisation, and the economic performance of buildings and urban areas. Space syntax is perhaps the most internationally significant area of urban morphological research beyond the UMRG and is widely employed in design and planning practice.<sup>51</sup> Space syntax was advanced by Bill Hillier and Julienne Hanson at UCL in the 1970s and 1980s to develop insights into the reciprocal relationship between society and space.<sup>52</sup> The basis of space syntax work is the idea that spaces can be broken down into components and analysed as networks of choices that describe the relative connectivity and integration of those spaces at a range of scales. Its concepts and analytical methods and techniques focus principally the street spaces and their accessibility, though some consideration is given to the spaces around buildings within a plot, commonly expressed via axial and convex space mapping.<sup>53</sup> Kropf observes that this mapping is intended to represent what can be seen by a human within a space, so offering an important insight



into the relation between humans and physical form, its use and perception. Space syntax work has provided important insights into how street systems can influence movement, social interaction, and the location of economic activities.

These mathematical and computer-aided spatial analytical and configurational analyses of urban form have developed largely in isolation from Conzenian approaches and vice versa, although some researchers grounded in Conzenian traditions have utilised GIS spatial technologies and digital mapping in research on medieval towns.<sup>54</sup> More recently there have been attempts to draw this work together. Sam Griffiths et. al. combine Conzenian and space syntax approaches in their study of the persistence of suburban centres in Greater London, whilst Ilkka Törma et. al. develop this approach, combining analysis of morphological change using historical cartographic sources with the use of space syntax to examine the relationship between accessibility and physical form, with the aim of exploring the susceptibility and resilience of two suburban centres to change.<sup>55</sup> Laura Vaughan applies the space syntax concept of the isovist, or viewshed or visibility polygon, to examine the visibility of synagogues in nineteenth century London, analysing historic Goad Fire Insurance plans to determine their visibility from the street.<sup>56</sup> Stephen Marshall (the only Professor in Britain with urban morphology within their title) suggests that the ‘mathematisation’ of morphology can help overcome language barriers between different traditions, and that abstraction can allow application in different urban contexts.<sup>57</sup> In a key paper in *Urban Morphology* Marshall sets out a detailed case for an area structure approach to morphological representation and analysis, which integrates concepts and devices from spatial analytical traditions on coding built form and architectural morphospace with urban syntax and generic structure which combines Conzenian and typomorphological interpretations.<sup>58</sup> More recently a key book has been produced on the mathematics of urban morphology, drawing together several quantitative urban morphological traditions, and including a discussion of the issues in combining quantitative and qualitative approaches in urban morphology.<sup>59</sup>

Another important centre for configurational work in urban morphology is based at the University of Strathclyde in Glasgow, which hosted the twenty-eighth ISUF Seminar on Urban Form in 2021, chaired by Sergio Porta, Professor of Urban Design and Director of the UDSU. Recent work here offers a slightly different take on developing the science of cities, drawing on morphometrics and taxonomy in life sciences to propose a method they term ‘urban morphometrics’.<sup>60</sup> In their paper, Jacob Dibble et. al. offer a quantitative, systematic, and comprehensive classification of a recognizable part of the urban tissue, termed a sanctuary area, within forty-five, mostly British, cities. Through the statistical definition and characterization of different types of urban forms (urban form taxa) within each sanctuary area they measure their similarity and look to infer ‘parental’ relationships between them. Their proposed method is designed to support further developments in areas such as remote sensing and big data as pertinent to urban morphology. This approach is

extended further by Martin Fleishmann et. al. who employ the geographic data science tools of the open-source Python ecosystem in a workflow to illustrate its capabilities in a case study assessing the evolution of urban patterns over six historical periods on a sample of parts of forty-two cities all over the world.<sup>61</sup> Other research has linked up work on urban morphometrics to the exploration of issues of sustainability and resilience in urban design.<sup>62</sup> Reference to concepts and insights in biology in urban analysis has also been a feature of work by Marshall.<sup>63</sup> Quantitative approaches, building on both geographic data science and urban morphometrics, were key themes of the ISUF Seminar on Urban Form at the University of Strathclyde in 2021.

### 3.2 Urban morphology and British urban geography

Urban morphology is an important root of urban geography. Larkham outlines indigenous British traditions in the study of the morphology of settlements in the first half of the twentieth century, noting these were essentially descriptive ‘site and situation’ studies.<sup>64</sup> In the 1950s and 1960s Conzen’s work provided a significant development in British urban geographical studies, but whilst this was well received at the time urban morphological study remained a relative backwater in urban geography until revitalised by UMRG work.<sup>65</sup> Indeed, the detail, complexity and precision of Conzen’s work was viewed by some urban geographers as rather intimidating.<sup>66</sup> Beyond this, urban geographical studies of urban development and the ‘shape’ of the city became dominated by studies of function and land use, with buildings considered containers of activity, if they were examined at all.<sup>67</sup>

More recently, examination of urban form has re-emerged as a key strand in urban geographical research as urban theory has begun to pay more attention to the ‘materiality’ (physical form) of the city. The development of both representational and non-representational approaches to the analysis of urban forms has been a key part of human geography’s ‘cultural turn’.<sup>68</sup> However, as Larkham notes this work has followed a largely distinct scholarly path from urban morphological approaches, and there is a paucity of urban morphological work being undertaken within British Geography Departments, beyond that previously undertaken by the UMRG.<sup>69</sup> It is still rare to find reference to urban morphology in mainstream urban geography textbooks in Britain, with Tim Hall and Heather Barrett’s textbook one of the few to make explicit mention of urban morphological research.<sup>70</sup> Slater and Lilley also note the paucity of urban morphological work in historical geography in their conference review of the Sixteenth International Conference of Historical Geographers held in London in 2015.<sup>71</sup>

Representational approaches to exploring urban form by geographers have focussed on reading urban landscapes, interpreting the built environment as a sign and symbol embodying meaning, both for macro scale urban landscapes, such as housing areas, and individual buildings, such as skyscrapers or

shopping malls. These works have offered a more critical lens to earlier geographical work such as Conzen's which viewed townscapes as the reflected spirit of the society that produced it.<sup>72</sup> However, the British geographer Loretta Lees notes that two challenges exist for this work, the problem of reading the meanings of buildings which are multiple and contested, and a lack of attention to the consumption of architecture and how people engage with built forms.<sup>73</sup> Phil Jones et. al. offer some insights here in their study of Balsall Heath in Birmingham, utilising the concept of atmosphere and ethnographic techniques to explore how human experience of places can drive alterations to the built environment.<sup>74</sup> Additionally, critical geographies of architecture have extended to consider the contested production of the built environment and the role of architects in the transformation of cities through iconic build development in an era of globalisation, which can be seen to have parallels with the earlier UMRG work on agents of urban landscape change discussed above.<sup>75</sup> However, many of these geographical studies do not offer a consideration of the relational complexity of urban form offered by historico-geographical perspectives.<sup>76</sup> Whitehand acknowledged the need for crossing boundaries with this new architectural geography and also articulated the potential of urban morphological approaches to offer a more nuanced and informed understanding of the relational complexity of urban form and of embedded cultural value, linked to HUL's espousal of an inclusive landscape-based approach, with clear acknowledgement of the importance of non-exceptional landscapes which nevertheless are representative of collective memories and identities.<sup>77</sup>

Developments in non-representational theory also offer opportunities for urban morphological research in the historico-geographical tradition to reconnect with urban geography. Actor-network-theory seeks to decentre the (human) subject conceiving of agency as a distributed arrangement of both human and non-human actants.<sup>78</sup> In the context of considering urban forms, geographer Jane Jacobs uses the idea of a 'building event' to describe the ways in which a complex of things and processes 'become' architecture.<sup>79</sup> In a similar vein assemblage thinking has also influenced human geographical research with its consideration of the multi-scaled and multi-sited conjunction of different actants, both human and non-human, active in shaping urban change.<sup>80</sup> Barrett utilises assemblage ideas in considering the trajectories of urban change in the central conservation area of the English city of Worcester, where both conservation-decision-makers and the material frame of designated heritage assets influenced outcomes.<sup>81</sup>

#### 4. FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Despite the retirement of both Whitehand and Slater from the University of Birmingham, the UMRG remained active until 2020, with Whitehand holding an emeritus professorship and Slater, Samuels and Baker holding honorary

research positions at the university, and with the continuation of a regular series of UMRG seminars. Britain's Covid-19 pandemic lockdown put a halt to the seminar series in 2020 and these did not resume due to Whitehand's passing in June 2021. The UMRG website remains accessible but has not been updated since 2020.<sup>82</sup> Consequently, the connections between Birmingham University and urban morphology have grown thinner, and the period of dominance of the UMRG as the principal centre for urban morphological research in Britain has indeed ended. It was sixteen years between the ISUF Symposium in London in 2005 and the next ISUF conference to be based in Britain in Glasgow in 2021, and in that time the landscape of British urban morphological research had shifted considerably, with a relatively small number of contributions from British-based researchers evident at the Glasgow conference in comparison to the total number of papers.<sup>83</sup> Whilst Glasgow was a well-organised online conference, we missed the opportunities to talk and network, and had it been in person we might have been better able to consider and discuss the future of British urban morphology without Whitehand.

Since the 2021 Glasgow conference, British urban morphology has drifted along separate trajectories without a core such as the UMRG to gravitate around. It is time for British urban morphologists to take stock and think about what the future 'space' for urban morphology looks like in Britain. A key question is, is it time to form a new network to replace UMRG? If the answer is yes, then where/who will drive this and what should the focus be? Certainly, urban morphological work in other regions has benefitted from the formation of regional networks. In this post-Covid academic world, virtual seminars can helpfully facilitate attendance by disparate researchers, and a virtual network might be an initial first step forward to bring British morphologists together. Such a network needs to facilitate a broad membership and connectivity, as happened with the UMRG, linking the key disciplinary and professional contexts of urban morphology in Britain, particularly human/urban/historical geography and urban planning and design, continuing the cross-disciplinary and research/practice engagements and collaborations that Whitehand always considered so important and fruitful.

To use a Conzenian analogy from the burgage plot cycle, British urban morphology seems to have moved from the climax phase associated with the zenith of UMRG work at the start of the millennium to be in a recessive phase, although we have certainly not reached urban fallow yet! We just need some reorganisation of the plot!

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# A B S T R A C T S : S E R B I A N

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## URBANA MORFOLOGIJA U BRITANIJI - VREME ZA PREISPITIVANJE I REGRUPISANJE?

**Heather Barrett**

Ovaj članak daje pregled doprinosa rada Grupe za istraživanje urbane morfologije (Urban Morphology Research Group (UMRG)) urbanim morfološkim istraživanjima u Britaniji. Grupa, pod vodstvom Džeremi Vajthenda (Jeremy Whitehand), obezbedila je fokus istraživanjima urbane morfologije u Britaniji, zasnovanim na istraživanjima M. R. G. Konzena (M.R.G Conzen) i istorijsko-geografskom pristupu. U članku se razmatraju četiri ključne niti ovog istraživanja: definicija istorijsko-geografskog pristupa, morfološki regioni, procesi i ljudi koji oblikuju urbane pejzaže i povezivanje istraživanja i prakse. Članak takođe daje pregled istraživanja urbane forme kroz druge oblasti u Britaniji izvan pomenute grupe, poteklih od istraživača iz drugih disciplina kao što su geografija, arhitektura i urbani dizajn. Dve široke oblasti rada su u fokusu - prostorno analitički i konfiguracioni pristupi kao i tradicija urbane geografije u Britaniji. U zaključku, članak se osvrće na budućnost urbane morfologije u Britaniji nakon gubitka Vajthenda kao njene dugogodišnje vodeće figure i istaknutog istraživača, sugerišući da je vreme da se formira nova mreža koja će zameniti sada uspavanu UMRG kako bi se obezbedila kontinuirana živost i vidljivost istraživanja urbane morfologije u Britaniji.

KLJUČNE REČI: MORFOLOGIJA; BRITANIJA, CONZEN, WHITEHAND, GEOGRAFIJA, SPACE SYNTAX

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