

EPUM

Emerging Perspectives on Urban Morphology

Emerging Perspective on Urban Morphology: Researching and Learning through multiple practices.

Contemporary cities are characterized by a variety of forms of sociospatial patterns and increasing social, economic, and political fragmentation strongly related to their urban form. This project aims to develop an innovative, open and inclusive system of teaching and training in urban form from a multidisciplinary perspective, which is capable of enabling the current and future generation of planning and design professionals to address comprehensively and effectively the variety of issues and challenges faced by contemporary cities.

Migration flows have had profound consequences for cities and city life and have created an increasing diversity of urban population opening up a discussion on how to deal with urban multiculturalism and diversity emphasizing the fundamental spatial components in determining the pattern of coexistence between communities. Internal displacement and the recent movement of refugees also have a substantial impact on cities and their public realm, which plays an important role in bringing disparate groups together and enabling cohesion of the society which they host. Needs analysis conducted by the partners of this project pointed out that urban life –encounters in the city streets or conversations in the public spaces – are the essential material of society and may well have integrative social functions.

Urban municipal authorities, policy makers, urban designers and scholars are all called to respond to such a potential and a variety of approaches on understanding urban form, both theoretical and operational, has developed. However, these are characterised by specific national trends and have seen the emergence of separate schools of thought. Each approach tends to be associated with a main research centre or with certain individual researchers and all have traditionally been applied in isolation.

An initial literature review carried out by the participating institutions highlighted that the teaching of urban form analysis in higher education institutions across Europe is also addressing contemporary cities' issues from often isolated perspectives based on the aforementioned different schools of thought, either reflecting specific national educational trends or opting for a globalized approach cutting the knots with local specificities. There is still a lack of learning spaces which foster a multidisciplinary thinking about contemporary cities' issues and which enable the participation of all relevant stakeholders in the debate about contemporary cities' problems and solutions.

Analysis of the urban form and education in urban issues has gradually become prominent in understanding urban life and social phenomena. Distilling the latest theories and methods in this area is not only essential to our understanding of the cities we live in, but a vital educational tool for enhancing capacities to address urban issues, social phenomena and design questions, as well as a useful way to bridge across research boundaries and between education, practice and policymaking.

There is an obvious need to establish a network linking the different approaches, developing learning platforms that foster the exchange of knowledge, providing opportunities for contact between members and encouraging the dissemination of findings both nationally and internationally. This coming together of researchers, educators and learners from different language, geographical areas

and disciplines will provide the basis for a multidisciplinary field and the opportunity to establish common theoretical foundations for the growing number of urban form studies in many parts of the world.

PUM is a transnational research project which aims at the integration of different, often isolated urban form research and teaching approaches through pedagogic innovation and Information and Communication Technology (ICT). It will provide the means to engage all stakeholders currently within introverted disciplinary, institutional and geographical boundaries, in a fruitful discussion through a collaborative open learning curriculum supported by a blended learning approach (seminars and conferences, international workshops, and collaborative on-line and on-site learning activities). Furthermore, the engagement of relevant stakeholders (learners, teachers, professionals, policy makers and local societies) with the project's activities will establish a dedicated community around urban form issues.

EPUM's objectives to bridge across disciplinary, research and institutional boundaries aim to address real and timely issues concerning cities by providing an interactive blended learning environment. The field is multi-disciplinary and the subject as multi-faceted as the city. Multidisciplinary urban form studies, research and innovative pedagogy have the potential to contribute to the understanding and management of urban development in a period of unprecedented change.