

# REVISING THE POSITION OF A CITY BLOCK WITHIN THE MORPHOLOGICAL FRAME OF A TRADITIONAL CITY: CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

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*This paper investigates the basic theoretical concepts of urban morphology related to the phenomena of a traditional city and its constitutive elements, including the city block. The traditional city is not considered an absolute model, but a subject of morphological analysis, by which its characteristics are detected, classified and described, becoming a base for new synthetic models in the context of contemporary designing and planning. The paper provides theoretical support to further studies dealing with the practical application of theoretical knowledge and concepts of urban morphology in designing and planning. It points out that the key characteristics of a traditional city identified by morphological analysis are contained within the architectural and urban entity of a city block, which can, therefore, be considered a generative element of its urban structure. Given that the scale of a city block allows for morphological analysis, as well as providing recommendations for future urban development, these research results can be applied to the contemporary context of designing and planning. The paper fits into contemporary studies that link the fields of urban morphology and urban design.*

**Key words:** traditional city, morphological frame, city block, urban morphology, urban design.

## INTRODUCTION

Urban morphology is a wide field of study with an international and interdisciplinary framework comprising different theoretical and methodological approaches. Recent studies underline the importance of urban morphological knowledge in the application of theoretical concepts in the practice of architectural and urban designing and urban planning. The physical entity and urban form is a common focus of various urban morphology approaches and studies.

A traditional city has an outstanding place within various urban morphology approaches, primarily as the backbone within the comparative analysis of spontaneous and planned forms of settlements, which was the main theme of the earliest urban morphology studies appearing in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Since the 1960s, in the theory of architecture and urban planning,

special interest has arisen in investigating a form of the traditional city in response to problems identified in the built environment that emerged during the Modern movement. An important challenge for urban morphology is to investigate the possibilities of using the current and new theoretical concepts in the context of contemporary planning and design.

However, a well-established attitude among urban designers according to which urban morphology is oriented towards historical analyses and reification of traditional city-building types, as well as that its application in urban design can be seen primarily in the field of urban quality management based on traditional values, and not in a conceptual and experimental design, is one of the important constraints in the application of urban morphology research in the context of contemporary architectural and urban practice (Nasser, 2013). It can be assumed that the existence of the key concept in terms of defining the basic unit of urban growth and transformation which links professional

interventions at different scales provides some kind of a central focus contributing to the more purposeful application of urban morphology in practice (Kropf, 2011).

This paper investigates the position of a city block within the morphological frame of a traditional city under the assumption that the city block represents a key morphological concept. The research subject placed in such way further implies that previous urban morphological research and concepts related to the traditional city, out of which the Conzenian concept of the morphological frame stands out as a relevant and comprehensive one with which other relevant concepts can be connected, will be the main theoretical support in the present paper. Primary source material for researchers includes

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texts in the field of urban morphology, particularly the urban morphological discourse within the International Seminar on Urban Form (ISUF), available online as web pages, and in Urban Morphology journal issues published online. In addition, sources include scientific and professional literature in the field of the theory of architecture and urbanism dealing with the introduction of the concept of form in urban planning. The first section of the paper presents the phenomenon of the traditional city from the aspect of urban morphology. The second section describes the position of a city block in the morphological frame of a traditional city. The final section investigates the possibility of using the singled out concepts in designing and planning, namely the possibility of connecting theory and practice.

## MORPHOLOGICAL FRAME OF A TRADITIONAL CITY

The term 'traditional city' refers to a form of urban settlement which grew spontaneously in the period before planned forms of settlements emerged. The traditional city is a complex urban form which has affirmed itself as an important topic of research both for urban morphology and for the theory of architecture and urbanism. The urban morphological approach in the study of the form of a traditional city provides results in terms of key characteristics, concepts and terms typical for this morphological entity.

For a long time, urban morphology has been considered a discipline primarily oriented towards the historical analysis of traditional city-building types. In this regard, the research topic of a traditional city has been the backbone of different theories of and approaches to urban morphology, primarily within the comparative analysis of spontaneous and planned forms of settlements, which was a basic theme in the earliest urban morphological studies in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It later appeared as a concept which has connected three schools of urban morphology – the British, Italian and French ones (Đokić, 2007, 2009). The traditional city is analyzed and valorized as a paradigmatic model of city-building, whereby these analyses are used for the purpose of describing-explaining why and how cities were built, which is a primary focus of the British school, as prescriptions-recommendations for how cities should be built, which is a focus of the Italian school, or as influences of certain theories on a built environment, which used by the French school of urban morphology (Moudon, 1997).

The contemporary urban morphological discourse developed within the International

Seminar on Urban Form (ISUF) is especially concerned with the topic of connecting theoretical research with the practice of planning, designing and building. In this regard, instead of classifying researchers according to which school and tradition they belong, the researchers strive to consolidate knowledge about urban forms and to identify those areas where different morphological concepts, terms and texts overlap, which has resulted in the development of different systems for mapping individual contributions to the study of urban form and synoptic charts of key terms (Gauthier, 2006). The Glossary of International Seminar on Urban Form compiled by Peter Larkham and Andrew Jones is a special contribution to this research aim<sup>2</sup>. It was developed on the basis of Conzen's own glossary and extended with terms found in other publications and theses. For each term, it is indicated to which group of terms it belongs – architectural style, planning, etc. In addition, a group of terms that belongs to the Conzenian terminology particularly stands out. In the context of connecting the theory of urban morphology and the practice of designing and planning, the Conzenian terminology gives a key contribution which stems from his approach whose characteristics include morphogenetic method, cartographic representation and terminological precision (Whitehand, 2007).

Within the urban morphological discourse, the term 'traditional city' is closely related to several terms defined in the Glossary. The first is 'old town' ('altstadt') defined as a formed medieval part of a town from which new parts of the settlement develop. It is equivalent to the term 'kernel' as a center of a town, formed from antecedent, most often traditional and medieval units. The other term is 'fortification' ('bastides') defined as fortified smaller towns usually on hilltop sites, most common in France. Similar definition also applies to the Conzenian term 'pre-urban nucleus' or 'urbs' defined as a plan-unit that pre-dates the development of a town. It usually comprises a church and often buildings of an ecclesiastical order or a fortification. All terms are marked as elements of Conzenian terminology stemming from his morphological analyses related to medieval settlements. Studying a medieval town, besides the processes typical for its growth and development, Conzen particularly analyzes the town plan and its complex form.

<sup>2</sup> The original explanation of all terms contained in this paper as elements of the Glossary of the Urban Morphology Journal, also including the term „morphological frame“, are available on the following website: <http://www.urbanform.org/glossary.html>

He analyzes the town plan of Alnwick at different urban levels to individual plots and buildings, using maps showing how the town plan developed, how it changed and how the relationship between different components of the plan was established. According to Conzen, the main parts of the plan are: town plan or ground plan (including locations, streets, plots and blocks), the building fabric (its 3D form) and land and building utilization. As main attributes of a complex urban form, Conzen mentions the resistance to change, which can also be called flexibility, adaptability; then, historico-morphological characteristics; and, thirdly, contribution to the hierarchy of units (Whitehand, 2007).

The term 'morphological frame' defined by Conzen in his analysis of medieval settlements represents an 'antecedent plan feature... exerting a morphological influence on subsequent plan development'. The pattern of development forming the kernel of a town is often a constraint to the formation of future development. Constraints can include natural structures – topographic elements, and/or built structures – plot and street patterns. 'Inherited outline' is a term equivalent to morphological frame, thus implying that elements of urban and physical structure are constants in development with high resistance to change. Insisting on constants in development indicates an important feature of the morphological frame as a concept which connects urban forms with processes. Conzen defines the term 'morphological priority' as permanent elements and characteristics of a complex urban form which survive in different 'morphological periods' and act as connecting elements of these periods. According to Conzen, street systems are one of such elements – 'morphological priorities' – with high resistance to change and when once formed, the morphological frame in the historical development of towns have remained unchanged until today, unlike that of land use and the function of architectural structures, which are characterized by high dynamics of change.

The traditional city emerged as a result of complex processes – primarily economic, social and political, while the rules and regularities between these processes and the form of a city can be noted in the development of its physical structure, which is one of the basic starting points of urban morphology. Conzen defines 'morphological period' as any cultural period that exerts a distinctive morphological influence upon the whole or any part of a town. The cumulative effects of different morphological periods on an urban structure make up its 'morphological frame' – which is yet another of the definitions of morphological frame by which

Conzen establishes a relationship between the type of process and the characteristics of an urban form.

Conzen indicates that insufficient awareness of a city as a mosaic of urban forms is a widespread problem, where understanding of how these forms overlap and fit into each other is of crucial importance (Whitehand, 2007). The attitude towards history does not go further than dating and descriptions which, in planning, results in the fact that the administrative boundaries to which the planning guidelines are related too often intersect morphologically homogeneous areas. Thus, Conzen opens the question of defining the boundary of the area for which planning guidelines are given, which is still a topical theme and a problem question in the theory of urban morphology and planning practice. According to the Conzenian terminology, the 'fixation line' is an outer site of a linear feature, which is a line of fortification in a medieval town, while in recent settlements, it can take the form of physical features such as rivers, railways, transportation routes, plot boundaries, etc. He indicates that in the case of the expansion of medieval fortifications outside the town walls, the space within the town walls can be differentiated from the space outside the town walls even after the removal of a fortification. The differences in urban structure manifest themselves through a higher density and compact form within the walls and a lower density and open form outside the walls. Such a structure is a result of typical 'morphological processes' in a compact city, which, by their nature in accordance with Conzenian classification and explanation found in the ISUF Glossary, can be: 'adaptive' processes – they take place through a redevelopment of a plot, or series of plots, within a fixed street system; 'transformative' processes – changes are to a great extent brought about through the adaptation of the existing physical structure to the needs and purposes; or processes of 'repletion' – a gradual intensification of building density. In addition to these three morphogenetic processes typical of a compact city, Conzen also defines a fourth type of processes – 'additive' – the creation of new urban forms at the outer edges of an urban area.

The existence of boundaries determines transformations within them taking place under the principle of systemic balance. Thus, the system is an important concept in the analysis of the functioning of an urban form through detecting the elements and relationships between them, namely its structure (Levy, 1999). In the case of a traditional city, one of its charac-

teristics is clarity of structure. In addition to its importance for the functioning of a town, as well as the implications it has for sustainable development, the boundary which defines both the entity of a traditional city and certain entities in its structure provides a special quality to its legibility. Places have their beginning, an end and defined boundary, as well as a center of gathering and trade. Important public and religious buildings are the highest and the most imposing in a town. The parts of a town are clearly separated, not only physically, visually and perceptually, but also administratively, given distinct names (Moughtin *et al.*, 2003). The balanced concentration of the contents within a town boundary is an essential indicator not only of ecological, but also esthetical balance, thus contributing to overcoming the visual disorder. It is analogous to larger scale of urban landscape in which the concentration of a compact urban development is observed.

Within a morphological frame, there are 'morphological regions' – the areas with homogeneous urban form in terms of plan type, building type and land use. The cumulative effects of morphological periods manifest themselves and are read as a quality of urban complexity and multi-layeredness – 'urban sedimentation' (Levy, 1999). The visual effects of unity in diversity are achieved through interweaving different elements and sub-systems within a compact entity defined by city boundaries. Thus, we can speak about the picturesque qualities of a traditional city based on intimacy, urban space diversity, sequential visual contrast and the contrast between open urban green space and the negative volumes of squares (Perović, 2008). For Conzen, this is a 'historical expressiveness' – the term stemming from Conzen's understanding of townscape as a visual experience and, as such, a source of knowledge about social activities and processes (Whitehand, 2007).

### POSITION OF A CITY BLOCK IN THE MORPHOLOGICAL FRAME OF A TRADITIONAL CITY

The city block in a traditional city reflects the characteristics of a town on a smaller scale, which is a logical consequence in which its structure has been gradually formed. The principle of connecting different hierarchically positioned elements of urban structure is based upon the same genetic code of all these elements, due to which the growth of traditional cities is also often called organic growth, and cities are identified with living organisms. As a basic generative element and physically static element of a structure, the city block

represents a segment of urban tissue and a sample for studying the characteristics of wider urban entities. The generative elements and generic features of cities have a special place in morphological theories dealing with principles of the organic growth of towns, such as the typomorphological investigations of Saverio Muratori and Gianfranco Caniggia<sup>3</sup>. They analyze principles under which traditional Italian towns were built and develop a theory of urban design by looking to historical traditions as the operational techniques for city making. In his work, Muratori starts from two basic hypotheses: that an urban structure can be understood only through historical continuity; and that typology and built urban form is a basis for urban form analysis (Đokić, 2009). The definition of type is in accordance with the principles of consistency, specificity, generality, inclusiveness and coherence in the realm of architecture. Aldo Rossi shares the same perspective as Caniggia (Marzot, 2010), defining the typology as an analytical moment of architecture that can be easily identified at the level of urban artifacts. He cites the concept of the study area, which can be considered an abstraction in relation to urban space corresponding to a certain urban entity. From the standpoint of urban morphology, he defines an urban entity as a typologically homogeneous space determined by similar physical and social characteristics. In reality, he identifies such spaces as city quarters, emphasizing that by introducing the concept of the study area, it has become possible to study the city as a whole, which is construed as a structure of urban entities (Rossi, 2000).

The French school of urban morphology is characterized by placing a focus on the issue of the relationship between architecture and city, considering a city block as an urban level through which the historical development of physical urban space can be 'read'. Its most important representatives, Castex, J., Depaule, J. and Panerai, P., describe the evolution of a city block through historical periods and geographical expansion (Castex *et al.*, 1980). In their study, the traditional block represents an affirmative paradigmatic model of urban space

<sup>3</sup> The generative elements of a city are the backbone that connect the spontaneous and planned forms of settlements, as a basis of the morphogenetic method typical of any approach to urban morphology. These elements were first defined by Pierre Lavedan in his books *Geography of the Cities* (*Geographie des Villes*, 1936) and *History of Urbanism* (*Histoire de l'urbanisme*, 1957). He developed the idea about built-up areas and open spaces as constituent elements of an urban space, which later greatly influenced the morphological studies of many authors (Đokić, 2007).

which has, ultimately, been negated in modernist conceptions. Considering a city block as the inheritance of a traditional city which develops 'bottom-up', through a gradual growth from original cell-parcel, the 'top-down' approach has resulted in the loss of important morphological characteristics of the city block. In planning models and in relation to a compact traditional block, its front side gradually opens and differences between its front and backside side disappear, thus also 'elements of privatization of place' in the space inside the block. It can be concluded that the morphogenetic processes of a city block, as a concept, reflect the evolution of urban settlements, progressing through a gradual reduction of morphological elements and loss of urban layers. This has resulted in the emergence of the concept of the urban form of a city block in which the relationship between architecture and urbanism has been lost. This is a main impetus to the development of the contemporary discourse in post-modern theory of cities, which has primarily appeared in the form of criticism of modernism concerning the lack of human scale in architecture. The issue of architectural typology and urban morphology has become of decisive importance for the re-establishment of the relationship between architecture and urbanism, not only in theory, but also in the design and planning practice.

According to the Conzenian definition of the term 'morphological priority', street systems are one of the constants in development. The city block as an entity in urban structure bounded by street lines is an implicit unit following from the inherited historical urban matrix or from the urban matrix imposed by plan. Morphological concepts derived from the analyses of a traditional city – boundaries, compactness, systemic organization – are applicable to the city block. As a morphological entity, the city block has a quality of unity in diversity stemming from its complexity, multi-layeredness and the cumulative effects of historical development. Both the concepts of 'traditional city' and 'traditional city block' are related to the medieval period, where the latter is described as: 'a dynamic, with vertical contours, closed solid cubus in which houses bear resemblance to each other by the materials used, façades and way in which roofs were made. Public spaces and semi-public spaces inside blocks were connected through entrance halls of buildings or arched passages. The basic module for a city block is the urban house, the building which essentially differs by its appearance and spatial organization from other structures built on an empty terrain near the city' (Perović, 2008:82).

It can be stated that the city block is the

inheritance of the traditional city and the generative element of urban structure – according to the approach of the Italian school of urban morphology. In addition, it is an urban entity whose analysis depicts the evolution of urban settlements, or represents the relationship between physical and social space, according to interpretations of authors belonging to the French school of urban morphology. As an element of the town plan, in accordance with Conzen's approach, a city block is a morphological priority in terms of form and size. The assumption that a city block can be considered as an evolutionary, generic, structural and formal unit within an urban and physical structure is a theoretical base for investigating the possibility of considering the city block as a plan-unit.

### **THE POSSIBILITY OF INTEGRATING THEORETICAL CONCEPTS INTO CONTEMPORARY PRACTICE OF DESIGN AND PLANNING**

The contemporary theory of cities is related to the historical period of post-modernism. It has been developed since the 1960s primarily in the form of a shift away from modernistic theories of urban design and planning, which has resulted in a pluralism of approaches, a set of themes and thought models in other disciplines, for which a search for a new consistent urban paradigm is a common feature.

In the contemporary urban morphological discourse, a question arises as to how urban morphology can provide a repertory of concepts for design and planning in the contemporary context, what types of interventions are appropriate and how an urban design can create a new field of research for urban morphology analysis (Kropf, 2011). Kropf notes that the common conceptual core of various sub-fields and branches of urban morphology focuses on the study of structure, diversity and genesis of urban form, which can further serve as an instrument in other fields and disciplines. In this regard, urban morphology is a service discipline trying to find its application in other academic fields, but also in the professional practice of city building, which emphasizes the need to develop and adjust the language to different applications in design and planning procedures (Kropf, 2009). Nasser speaks about „abstraction“, which implies the morphological reduction of the empirical reality of the physical environment using geometric shapes, dimensions, features and types. The abstract language of these elements becomes a common means of expression for urban design and urban morphology (Nasser, 2013). The use of historical predecessor is an important and useful

means for linking the urban morphology and urban design that is analyzed. Morphological characteristics, such as the configuration of a series of plots, distances, fronts, parking places and street landscape, are singled out and then varied and combined in a synthesis of new solutions which correspond to the contemporary context. McCormack cites the example of Versailles, which has become a frequent model for morphological research. He advocates the idea that knowledge about urban morphology should be linked to techniques of urban conservation, urban expansion and urban renewal, which is becoming especially important for peripheral zones in which the lack of clarity and coherence of urban form is pronounced. A critical attitude towards history is an important element of designing and city building methodology (McCormack, 2013).

Morphological analysis in urban design and planning is used for typological classification. The relationship between architectural typology and urban morphology is the most complex form of typological classification (Đokić, 2009). In that, urban morphological researches combine several methods: comparative analysis of examples of theory and practice, and corresponding research methods in urban designing and planning. Through comprehensive studies, elements of urban space are identified and examples with common characteristics are singled out and grouped for the purpose of their classification into the defined type. In addition to the definition of types, the identification of relationships between them through typological classification of open spaces is also important. In this way, by combining methods of architectural typology and urban morphology, the spatial and physical structures are simultaneously considered. A typomorphological approach provides an integrated framework for understanding urban and physical structures and the processes of their formation.

Kropf claims that there is a key concept in urban morphology which is adaptable to illustration, and which can provide a clear focus and linkage between different interest groups, and that is the urban tissue (Kropf, 2011). On the other hand, Tony Hall points to the 'perimeter block structure' as a necessary part of the design of new development. The approximate sizes of street blocks are largely pre-determined by the given context and should be incorporated in planning guidance (Hall, 2008).

Instead of paradigmatic models of urban forms, where the traditional city is considered to be such a model, the opening of a field of research for new synthetic models and free interpretations of formative principles, rules and regularities

obtained through morphological analysis, is emphasized. Thus, certain static definitions of urban morphology discourse become dynamic concepts. The traditional city and traditional city block as its representative segment have become a repertory of concepts which are translated into the contemporary context through analogies in design and planning. This lies at the basis of contemporary concepts of the generic city, the compact eco-city and a city as a project.

The position of a block as an inheritance of a traditional city in the contemporary concept of a city as a project is reflected in the recognition of an urban entity as a relevant entity for which planning guidelines and urban rules based upon the concept of urban form can be defined.

The compactness of a traditional city block is its main physical characteristic on the basis of which it, as a typical organization which can also be recognized in contemporary urban concepts, has been named a 'closed city block'. There is an unambiguous difference between the space inside and the space outside the block, which is physically manifested through contrariness between the front side, street front and backyard side, as well as the spatial difference between the front and backside, which corresponds to the division into the public and private realm. This principle of a clear differentiation between the 'two faces of a block' is also called the 'principle of double coding' (Castex *et al.*, 1980), which is an important instrument in contemporary urban design where the block perimeter and the space inside the block are subject to different codes and which function according different spatial logic.

In the case of Serbia, there is also a problem related to the scant relationship that exists between different levels of design and planning, as well as to the need for new approaches and methodologies. In these investigations, physical structure is defined as a thought-conceptual projection of the built environment, a kind of meta-language that is used in analysis, research, shaping and proposing of urban concepts, and the development models which symmetrically depict the given urban reality (Radović, 1972). Issues of typology, topology and morphology are primarily related to more comprehensive investigation of the current state, according to the assumption that future urban development can be characterized more as a transformation of the existing urban tissue than as further expansion of territory, which corresponds to the tendency towards more compact, sustainable development (Milenković, 1994). For Perović, traditional city elements - urban block, street and

square - are major elements both in building new cities and in the reconstruction of the existing ones. They ensure the formation of a 'clear urban form', which is necessary for both technical functioning and visual legibility of urban entities. The city block is a basic element of urban structure which reflects the differences in structure of specific urban entities and represents the backbone of a comparative analysis of historical urban tissues and new, planned settlements. In dealing with the issue of historical urban tissue, Perović is guided by principles of urban reconstruction and an analysis of the current state, while new, planned settlements are considered in terms of identity, character and human scale. Reduced to the level of the block as a representative sample of urban structure, Perović proposes control instruments for growth, development and transformation - horizontal and vertical regulation, inner regulation, the treatment of plots and the way they are utilized, and a general balance of built-up and unbuilt areas of a city (Perović, 2008). In its emergence, formation and contemporary transformations of urban and physical structure, the central zone of Belgrade, its block structure and types of blocks typical for certain parts of urban tissues plays an important role. Contemporary transformations of urban tissue manifest themselves at the level of the city block, leading to deviations from recommended parameters of development, so it is necessary to reconsider the types of city blocks in Belgrade's urban tissue, models to which they should strive, the procedures in the form of interpolations in their reconstruction, and the ways in which guidelines are formulated and incorporated into plans (Marić *et al.*, 2010, Niković, 2013).

## CONCLUDING CONSIDERATIONS

A traditional city is a specific urban form which has emerged as a result of complex development processes. One of basic interests of urban morphology is establishing relationships between these processes and the urban form of a traditional city. This stems from an attitude according to which the reconstruction and protection of the existing forms, like the production of new urban forms, should be grounded on the knowledge and understanding of the existing built environment, its specific forms and previous development. The British school of urban morphology developed a glossary of precise terms and definitions which describe and explain the phenomenon of a traditional city. Conzen, the originator of the school, developed one of the key concepts - 'morphological frame' - describing the cumulative effects of different morphological periods on urban structure, and established a

connection between the type of process and characteristics of an urban form.

Concepts defined by Conzen, like that of 'morphological frame', 'morphological period', 'morphological region', 'fixation line', are important because, although derived from the analysis of already established morphological entities of medieval fortifications, they are concepts practically applicable to analysis of contemporary town plans, particularly in terms of the identification of the character of an area and definition of a boundary of the area for which planning guidelines are given. Conzen's approach differs from the approaches of other schools of urban morphology which are focused more on architecture (Italian school) and socio-cultural aspects of city formation (French school). The most important contribution of Conzen's work is the analysis of town plans and complex urban forms aimed at practical application for improving planning, and thus an important basis for a contemporary morphological approach to connect urban morphological research and planning practice.

'Morphological frame' is an all-embracing term defining a specific empirical reality of a traditional city. It is also a wider referent framework in which other relevant concepts and definitions can be accommodated, thus reflecting the permanent efforts of researchers in the field of urban morphology to consolidate the field of knowledge about urban form, in this case about the form of a traditional city.

Major elements of a morphological frame include boundary and structure, as well as systemic organization. On the basis of studies on the position of a city block in the morphological frame of a traditional city, it can be concluded that the city block is an inheritance of a traditional city which is a paradigmatic city-building model in urban morphology, as well as in the theory of architectural and urban design. The key characteristics of a traditional city, detected by a morphological analysis, are contained in architectural and urban entity of a city block, which can, thus, be considered a generative element of the urban structure. The adjustment of scale in urban planning by reducing it to the scale of a city block is a path leading to the re-establishment of a dialogue between designing and planning.

This research is in accordance with contemporary urban morphology discourse which tries to find free interpretations of city block models which are not determined by binding themselves to the paradigmatic model of a traditional block in which positive values are implied. Nor are they a negation of the open

modernistic block. They are only conditioned by taking into account formative principles, rules and regularities which are obtained through a morphological analysis. The city block occupies a new position within the urban morphological discourse – from the static position of a paradigmatic model in the sense in which it is an inheritance of a traditional city to the key concept which is applicable in terms of the transfer of knowledge between urban morphology and other fields of knowledge and professional activities.

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