



**Comprendre et lire les environnements bâtis au Québec, La morphologie urbaine au service d'une démarche d'aménagement durable** edited by *François Racine* in collaboration with *Pierre Gauthier* and *Philippe Lupien*, Presses de l'Université du Québec, Montréal, 2022, 760 pp. ISBN 978-2760555723.

This book is rooted both theoretically and practically respectively into the field of urban morphology and into the built landscape of the Province of Quebec. As the result of a lifetime of teaching and research from the authors, the book contributes greatly to these two areas and will appeal to a general, international readership interested in the

of the morphology of the Province of Quebec.

The book is well organized and structured. It is clearly structured with an engaging style that is suitable for both students and professionals. The authors provide a comprehensive overview of the built environment in Quebec, from its historical roots to its current state. The book is a valuable resource for anyone interested in urban morphology and the built landscape of Quebec.

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character of and principles behind the creation of human habitats.

The book's contents span the continuum between thinking about and acting upon built environments, or between researching and designing them. It consists of three parts: 'understanding', 'reading', and 'planning/designing' (my translation of the French term *aménagement*) built environments. Part I, Understanding Built Environments, examines the history of theories and methods used in research on the form and design of cities. A detailed review of the various aspects of urban morphological research to include diachronic processes of urbanization (and what the authors call the humanization of the landscape), and the identification and use of levels in research and practice (the region, the built landscape or urbanized area, the plan unit or tissue, and the building). Borrowing from both the Italian and the British schools of urban morphology, and specifically from Caniggia and Maffei's work and from that of M.R.G. Conzen, the authors discuss the multiple aspects of building typological and plan-unit analyses. Theoretical constructs are illustrated with examples of Quebec's built environments, and with novel explanations of the transformation of street-blocks and buildings over time in the Canadian province.

Part II, Reading Built Environments, scopes out the history of settlement forms in Quebec, from pre-colonial times to today. It includes many case studies of places that are dissected synchronically into their different parts and diachronically over time. The case of Sillerby is particularly interesting as it depicts in detail more than 200 years of settlement.

Part III, Planning/Designing Built Environments, introduces some of the fundamentals of urban design (including areas of knowledge from which urban design practice depends, and the various processes of intervention into existing environments). It then presents urban design interventions in and near the City of Montréal in 4 phases: the modernization period (1950-70), the period of city recovery (*reconquête* in French) (1980-2000), the period of interpreting the real city (2000-10), and the period of integrating concepts of durability (2010-20). Each of the phases is illustrated with case studies of projects or neighbourhoods in Montréal. With a total of 12 such projects, the book's third part offers a rich presentation and analysis of prominent places designed over the course of the past 70 years.

Overall, the book is an excellent compendium of three subject areas: theories and methods in

urban morphological research; theories and methods in the practice of urban design; and a historical review of Quebec's urban and rural habitats. The theoretical parts will be useful in the academic realm, for both students and teachers, while the presentations of specific built environments are unique and useful to anyone wanting to understand the settlement history of Quebec. Significantly, the book offers a first detailed overview of urban morphological research to a francophone audience. This is a welcome addition to ISUF, where the majority of publications are in English (not by design but because fewer members of the organization have the necessary command of French to do this literature complete justice).

The book's design is both elegant and practical, with case studies presented on a grey background and theories, methods, and commentaries on a white background. It is beautifully illustrated, mixing historical maps and photos with original plans and drawings from the authors' research. If I had a choice in the details of the presentation, I would add a map of the location of the different case studies in the Quebec Province in Part II - a map already shows the location of the projects studied in Montréal and surroundings in Part III. I would also add a map of the City of Montréal's boundaries showing the extent of the built-up area. Original plans would also benefit from showing a scale even though showing individual buildings provides a 'sense' of scale. And, finally, I would also add an index of places. These are merely suggestions for if and when the book may be re-edited.

Thinking of a possible future re-edition, I wonder if a shorter, less voluminous, version of the book consisting of selectively extracted materials from the current book, would better attract a broad international francophone audience of both academics and professionals. Such a shorter version would help highlight the fundamental contributions of the book, which are a broad yet detailed comparative approach to theories and methods in urban morphology, urban planning and design and a first introduction to the built landscape of Quebec. Alternatively, a more portable version would divide the book into three smaller ones, one for each Part. Given the fact that the book grew out of years of research, which makes it a unique text for francophone students and students of French Canada settlement patterns around the world, it is worth thinking of ways to make this unique material more accessible.

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