

Each chapter of this volume is accompanied by its own references that can also be regarded as invitations to explore, in greater detail, the topics brought into discussion. Nevertheless, this annotated bibliography has the role of showcasing and reviewing a diversity of books as resources to be used in the endeavour of approaching specific context-related topics that are of particular interest to each reader. The variety of theoretical, conceptual or applied perspectives presented in each of the titles listed below reflects the complexity of the parameters addressed both individually and in combination. Applied in specific contexts, the parameters translate into layers of understanding, through reading, analysis, synthesis and interpretation of the data uncovered, and they have the potential to lead to well-guided design outcomes. This bibliography reiterates some of the books referenced in previous chapters, which are considered fundamental and/or instrumental in architecture and urban planning analysis, and it also adds others that expand on certain dimensions and parameters or explore them through different lenses, emphasizing contextual relevance as a key requirement.

Some of the entries are adapted and translated from an earlier online version of an annotated bibliography on the topic of decoding context, published in Romanian under the title *Bibliografie Decodificarea contextului – scholarh 2024*, available at <https://www.uauim.ro/cercetare/scholarh/2024/tutoriale>.

[8] ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY



Anda-Ioana SFINTEȘ

1. **Amistadi, L., Balducci, V., Bradecki, T., Prandi, E., & Schröder, U. (Eds.). (2022). *Mapping Urban Spaces: Designing the European City*. Routledge.**

Based on ample research concerned with the psychological, sociological and aesthetic qualities attributed to the open spaces of European medium-sized cities, this volume approaches architecture as fluid, emphasizing experience and perception. The authors look at (physical and perceived) spatial connections and develop a rich discourse starting from a dialectic view of architecturally delimited spaces as interior (warm) and exterior (cold). Various ways of seeing the city and various parameters are introduced and related to mapping open space as not only a way of coding information but also as a subjective practice, dependent on the observer. The volume ends with a discussion on the problems of the contemporary city, thus highlighting the implementation potential of this approach.

2. **Carmona, M. (2021). *Public Places Urban Spaces: The Dimensions of Urban Design* (3rd ed.). Routledge.**

In this fundamental book, Carmona lists and extends a series of dimensions, distinguishing paths of decoding through specific criteria and through questioning and analysis of specific parameters. He provides an alternative lens through which to understand the dimensions of public urban spaces (some of which are also mentioned in the introductory chapter of this volume) and he also details them, thus revealing the importance of self-positioning, of logic and coherence, building on the core ideas of his book. While my approach in the introductory chapter of this volume aims to encourage a broader, more personal navigation through a less firmly established diagram, Carmona, by researching specific public spaces, exemplifies a more structured way of working with such an instrument.

3. **Carmona, M., & Wunderlich, F. (2013). *Capital Spaces: The Multiple Complex Public Spaces of a Global City*. Routledge.**

This volume discusses the design, development, use and management of the urban square as public space, taking London as a case study because of the social, economic and political complexities that define it. Thus, it becomes an example of thorough examination of particular contexts against a list of contemporary critiques. Typologies and types of spaces are related to both issues and desired conditions, contributing to a better understanding of a network of relationships between actors and parameters that must be taken into account in order to achieve public space transformations that truly meet the needs of the public.

4. **Day, C., & Gwilliam, J. (2020). *Living Architecture, Living Cities: Soul-Nourishing Sustainability*. Routledge.**

Sustainability has been, for many years now, approached as multi-dimensional. Almost anything can be regarded through a sustainable lens, as this volume proves by relating it to the city and urban life. This book, as well as others

mentioned here, points out the intricacy of city layers, connecting distinct parameters through analyses that lead to complex understandings of a context. The authors introduce a vast array of parameters spanning from issues related to the environment (as a main aspect of sustainability) to experiences, places, community, mobility, use, security, economic processes, etc. before concluding with an ample discussion on future-oriented aspects.

5. Dovey, K., Pafka, E., & Ristic, M. (Eds.). (2018). *Mapping Urbanities: Morphologies, Flows, Possibilities*. Routledge.

This collection of case studies applies mapping as a method of investigation in the attempt to understand aspects of urbanity through various corresponding parameters: from walkability (linked to permeability, safety, density, etc.) to rhythms (linked to densities, functions and urban morphology) or to graffiti that speaks of the character of an urban space (taking into account parameters like condition/state, visibility, spatial practices or even desires). Each chapter highlights the idea that the researcher must determine, in each case, a specific set of (possibly not that evident, but highly interconnected) parameters, discovering a path through a diagram like the one that accompanies the first chapter of this volume.

6. Farrall, P., & Jackson, I. (2024). *100 Site Analysis Essentials: An Architect's Guide*. RIBA Publishing.

This well-structured guide explains many of the basic parameters to be analysed in decoding context. It exemplifies specific contexts, offering keys of interpretation and reflecting on how the design could be built upon or how it could integrate conclusions drawn from researching the parameters set for the given situation. The book serves as a comprehensive introduction to the process of reading and analysing a context, being a valuable instrument especially in the first years of study. It encourages not only the thorough understanding of a context but also the transformation of analysis into an integral part of the entire design process.

7. Hall, T., Hubbard, P., & Short, J. R. (Eds.). (2008). *The SAGE Companion to the City*. SAGE.

This companion is essential in understanding a broad range of themes that define the contemporary city, all speaking of various forms of inequality. It brings together perspectives that link sociology, history, geography, economy and politics with religion, culture or science, questioning issues of power, faith, memory, law, production and consumption, community and ethnicity, migration, civic behaviour, criminality and many more. This volume is a valuable resource that, beyond increasing awareness of such poignant themes, also encourages the active engagement of designers with various stakeholders. Thus, a specific mode of decoding a context can be viewed in relation to the changes the designer (architect, urban planner, etc.) hopes to achieve, or the urban dimensions it could have an impact upon.

8. Giseke, U., Löw, M., Million, A., Misselwitz, P. & Stollmann, J. (Eds.). (2021). *Urban Design Methods. Integrated Urban Research Tools*. JOVIS.

Urban Design Methods is a collection of current practices in designing urban space that are based on a thorough decoding of the context. Each method and tool is explained and exemplified with the aim of fostering a new interdisciplinary understanding of urban space culture and use. Some of the tools expand on the research and meaning of certain parameters or actors. Other tools apply to design, but they still highlight sets of parameters that must be considered together, thus being more useful in trying to decode a context while having in mind a specific objective. Contemporary understandings of the issues discussed open up various perspectives regarding research related to desired outcomes.

9. Henckel, D., Thomaier, S., Könecke, B., Zedda, R., & Stabilini, S. (Eds.). (2013). *Space–Time Design of the Public City (Urban and Landscape Perspective, Vol. 15)*. Springer.

In this volume, time is considered a key parameter that frames specific multi-layered understandings of urban life as it unfolds in public spaces of the city, thus leading to a space-time approach. Urban rhythms are followed through various processes that take into consideration daily life (as well as the night-time city), time schedules, walkability, services and events, etc. The research of various urban issues in connection to urban rhythms highlights even the most common daily practices as deeply connected to the processes that define a city. Concurrently, time-space as framed by cataclysms or other types of emergencies as well as by other temporary, short- and long-term, phenomena become of great importance in understanding the challenges of the contemporary city and their impact upon city life.

10. Jaffe, R., & de Koning, A. (2023). *Introducing Urban Anthropology (2nd ed.)*. Routledge.

This volume offers valuable insight into the city and its understanding from an anthropological perspective, following the changing nature of social life, urban space, flows (of people, money, things, ideas, etc.) and connections. Its chapters address specific dimensions and parameters that can be approached anthropologically, entailing, in fact, the exploration of interconnected phenomena and processes. From the much discussed urban places to urban economies or consumption and leisure activities and, last but not least, citizenship and politics, the authors bring together dimensions less frequently examined to an in-depth level in academic contexts. The specificity of their exemplifications highlights the need for understanding the broader context of any situation, with social, cultural, economic and political realities being of first importance.

11. Karp, D. A., Stone, G. P., Yoels, W. C., & Dempsey, N. P. (2015). *Being Urban: A Sociology of City Life (3rd ed.)*. Praeger.

Although the volume looks closely at American society and presents situations that do not apply as such outside of it, the discussion is valuable as a great

example of how research must not stop at the surface. The authors reflect on a series of subjects that manifest themselves in an urban context (like community, lifestyle, power, sports or arts in the city), proving that nothing is just as it seems and that the city is a gearing mechanism. Various historical, social, economic, political and other processes related to the topic must be considered in order to avoid forming an incomplete image and to reach a true understanding. While reading through the chapters, the relevance of specific dimensions and parameters to be researched depending on the topic becomes obvious, thus signalling to any researcher the importance of a deeper inquiry.

12. LaGro Jr., J. A. (2013). *Site Analysis: Informing Context-Sensitive and Sustainable Site Planning and Design* (3rd ed.). Wiley.

This fundamental guide to site analysis is more focused on professional approaches and practice. Various dimensions (physical, biological, regulatory, cultural and historical contexts) are explored through relevant parameters, their assessment being carried out both at a theoretical level and through case studies. Of great importance, in going from analysis to subsequent steps in decoding, are the chapters dedicated to synthesis and implementation, which encourage the development of context-sensitive designs. Last but not least, decoding instruments like mapping, the use of specific technologies and systems, and aspects of graphic communication are presented.

13. Lucas, R. (2020). *Anthropology for Architects: Social Relations and the Built Environment*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

Lucas builds his study on the acknowledgement that anthropology has much to offer to architects since architectural anthropology promotes a more human-centred and open-minded approach, challenging personal biases and preconceptions. He introduces the concept of “lifeworld”, which emphasizes that no aspect of social life can be understood outside a network of related dimensions, viewed across various scales. The aim of this volume is to inform context-decoding processes by offering a detailed investigation of particular situations like: the home, museums, marketplaces, routes, performance spaces and food establishments. The contemporary condition of each is examined through its history, precedents and discussions based on case studies.

14. Lynch, K. (1960). *The Image of the City*. MIT Press.

The Image of the City is the most influential book written by Kevin Lynch. He links city form and city living through a series of defining elements: paths, edges, districts, nodes and landmarks. These five elements are commonly used as the initial parameters in decoding a context, but of great importance is that the author explores them through perception, establishing mental maps as essential tools for understanding how people experience city life. Mental maps reveal meanings beyond physical form or spatial configuration, thus enabling more nuanced and thoughtful analysis – a fact sustained by the impressive number of works influenced by this book in the over 60 years since its publication.

15. MacCallum, D., Babb, C., & Curtis, C. (2019). *Doing Research in Urban and Regional Planning: Lessons in Practical Methods*. Routledge.

This volume is a comprehensive guide that explains elemental methodologies and methods used in conducting site research. Starting with how to develop relevant research questions, it then discusses different approaches and multidisciplinary research methods (from literature review and text analysis to site auditing and interrogative methods). Unlike most titles in this bibliography, the book is less concerned with the selection and/or understanding of parameters and more focused on methods, tools and data interpretation. Thus, it is a great source for identifying the best modes of decoding context in relation to the specific aim of the research conducted.

16. Madanipour, A. (1996). *Design of Urban Space: An Inquiry into a Socio-spatial Process*. John Wiley & Sons.

The author looks at the processes that frame urban space, which makes this volume fundamental in understanding various parameters as part of the social reality that manifests itself in the city. The book is oriented towards intervening in urban space and promoting preferable changes. This entails a deep understanding of the complexities that define a city and its human and non-human actors entangled in political, economic and cultural processes. Of greater importance for us, in decoding a context, is the first part of the study where various dimensions of the city are explored, highlighting configurations of particular analysis. However, the second part, with its focus on the realities shaped by new developments and their impact upon urban space, makes one question links between parameters that can become relevant in a specific research context.

17. Madanipour, A. (2003). *Public and Private Spaces of the City*. Routledge.

This book delves deeper into the public or private status of city spaces, highlighting how a certain aim defined by specific parameters can activate a hierarchy of related key terms. Different actors and their places of action are taken into consideration, looking at the need for such a division between public and private – at how and why they are framed as such. Madanipour highlights perspectives and parameters that become relevant depending on the researched dimension (e.g. economic, political, social or cultural). The discussion shifts from micro to macro scales of understanding, ranging from personal space to public and private spaces of the city.

18. Picon, A. & Ratti, C. (2023). *Atlas of the Senseable City*. Yale University Press.

This volume presents a selection of works developed in the Senseable City Lab at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) – a research laboratory oriented towards the future of cities transformed by technological developments

and big data. Motion, connection, circulation, and experience are viewed as key parameters in decoding a city transformed through digital urban mapping, but also as instruments in the hands of various stakeholders. Thus, as technologies are now considered non-human actors, they frame a new reality and become instrumental in driving both positive and negative outcomes. Each parameter is discussed and illustrated in mappings created throughout history as well as from Senseable City Lab projects.

19. Plowright, P. D. (2020). *Making Architecture Through Being Human: A Handbook of Design Ideas*. Routledge.

Unlike other books recommended here, this volume is closer to the form of a specialised dictionary: it is a collection of concepts, notions, ideas and actions, explained and illustrated (addressing their architectural dimension) but also explored through their role in supporting human activity. This human-centred approach is what sets the book apart, as it shows how each term, materialised in various ways, is interpreted, used or experienced by humans. The same approach enables the appropriation of the terms as parameters of analysis, offering a framework for the decoding of specific contexts during any of its steps – from reading a context to evaluating the potential impact of the parameter upon that same context.

20. Shaw, R. (2018). *The Nocturnal City*. Routledge.

The Nocturnal City delves into a well-framed and confined theme – that of the realities that define a city during night-time. We do not often think of looking at the city through such lenses, at least not in such depth, or of following up on such a diversity of parameters. Thus, this book is also an exemplification of how a specific theme can be advanced, leading to new perspectives upon issues that are sometimes taken for granted. The author discusses changing perceptions of city limits, artificial lighting as a non-human actor, nightlife, night-time aesthetics and even domestic space at night, framing night as a time-space to be decoded by using a broad range of parameters.

21. Viderman, T., Knierbein, S., Kränzle, E., Frank, S., Roskamm, N., & Wall, E. (Eds.). (2022). *Unsettled Urban Space: Routines, Temporalities and Contestations*. Routledge.

In this volume, various authors (academics, researchers and practitioners from all over the world) expand discussions in urban studies by starting from a particular set of parameters – routines, temporalities and contestations. The theme can be regarded as an invitation to look beyond the apparent stability and safety of urban spaces and uncover marks and traces of tensions embedded in even the most common activities. These parameters can disclose specific conditions and nuances of urban experiences which resonate across various scales of social, cultural and political dimensions. An understanding of such often-overlooked processes can successfully inform change-driven, context-specific designs.