

President's Report

One year after my first President's Report I am pleased to report on further ISUF activities, especially the development of regional associations.

The ISUF conference in September 2006 was hosted in Stockholm by the newly established Nordic Network of Urban Morphology. The good attendance and the interesting programme of some 50 papers were testimony to the vitality of the Nordic Network. The success of this first major conference organized by a regional group of ISUF gave reassurance that the ISUF policy of encouraging the development of regional organizations is an enlightened one. The increased scope that it offers for disseminating research and practice at a local scale is consistent with ISUF's objective of stimulating communication between both disciplines and schools of thought. The vitality of regional networks is an important aspect of strengthening the international and interdisciplinary communication that is at the heart of ISUF's purpose.

At the conference in Stockholm, Michael Conzen was succeeded as Secretary-General by Nicola Marzot. The fact that Nicola currently holds posts simultaneously in Ferrara, Italy and Delft, in the Netherlands is in tune with the internationalization of urban morphology that is central to ISUF's aims. I am proud that a young Italian scholar has taken over as co-ordinator of our organization. At the same time I wish to express my deep gratitude to Michael Conzen for having held the reins of ISUF since 2004, fulfilling an invaluable scientific and organizational role at an important juncture in the development of our organization.

Following rapidly on the heels of the formation of the Nordic Network of Urban Morphology, I am delighted to report on the foundation of a parallel Italian group. The first meeting of ISUF's Italian network took place during the annual meeting of CISPOT (International Centre for the Study of Urban and Regional Evolution) in Artimino in November 2006. At the meeting there were representatives of the faculties of architecture of Milan, Turin, Bologna, Florence, Ferrara, Rome, Bari and Naples. At the end of a morning of lively debate, it was decided to hold an inaugural convention in Rome early in 2007. Giuseppe Strappa brought this event to fruition, organizing a conference at 'Casa dell'architettura', sponsored by the Architectural Association of Rome, 23-24

March 2007. It was divided into two sessions: first an interesting debate on 'the heredity of modern homes and future townscapes'; secondly, ISUF's Italian constituent assembly.

The first session included speeches by Professors B. Todaro, L. Barbera and G. Piccinato of the three faculties of architecture in Rome, Professor S. Poretti, who heads the Civil Engineering Department of the Second Tor Vergata University in Rome, R. Morassut, Town Planning Councillor of the Municipality of Rome, and administrators and heads of public and private building concerns. Reports by various speakers on surveys of the current condition of buildings constructed in the last decades of the twentieth century revealed a variety of problems: primarily the social conditions of inhabitants, building deterioration, lack of services and severe problems in the maintenance of our building heritage. Resolution of the problems entails either renovation to bring infrastructures up-to-date, or demolition and rebuilding in accord with current criteria and planning practices.

The Italian constituent assembly of ISUF was attended by approximately 40 university scholars and researchers, most of them having attended previous meetings in Artimino. After a lively, albeit somewhat quibbling, debate the articles of association were approved. Ways of devising and achieving collaborative working programmes were then discussed. It was proposed to set up inter-faculty research projects with a view to presenting findings at ministerial level. A variety of views are contributing to the organization of the Italian network. A steering committee is bringing these together and will shortly circulate to members a document setting out the way forward.

By the time this report is published the next major conference of ISUF, in Ouro Preto, Brazil, will be over. Organized by Staël de Alvarenga Pereira Costa, it promises to be the largest ISUF conference yet. At the business meetings to be held at the conference, plans for the principal ISUF activities over the next 2 years will be approved.

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Urban Morphology in the 'City by the Bay': Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers, San Francisco, California, USA, April 17-21, 2007

The 2007 Annual Meeting of the Association of American Geographers (AAG) was held in San Francisco, California, a city with many links to urban morphological work. The late James E. Vance Jr. was a faculty member at nearby Berkeley and Anne Vernez Moudon's in-depth analysis of the city's form was detailed in her book *Built for change*.

The association contains geographers of all stripes. Thus it was not surprising that discussions of urban form took place in only a small proportion of the papers presented: however, with thousands of papers in the programme even a small proportion results in many talks. Although the programme contained few mentions of urban morphology specifically, a more in-depth scouring of the abstracts revealed a contingent of presentations that had components of urban morphological theory, methodology or both.

Perhaps a fitting place to begin is with the analysis of land division and ownership in San Francisco by Kate Anderson (San Francisco State). She used historical maps and civic sources to reveal the changes to artificial boundaries within the city. These boundaries were mapped using GIS and reveal a visual account of the legacy of land subdivision. Another presentation using GIS for analysis of historical urban form was that by Mathew Novak and Jason Gilliland (Western Ontario), who examined the impact of hundreds of individual fires on the urban form of an early-twentieth century Canadian city. Moving from small-scale fires to recovery after large-scale disasters, Jacob Wagner (Missouri - Kansas City) considered the reconstruction of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina. He described the uniqueness of the city, partly attributed to its built forms, as 'Creole Urbanism'.

A prominent theme in urban form research this year was the impact of the built environment on the health of its residents. Among those researching this topic the term built environment is often used as an analogue of urban form. Many of the studies employ morphological measures, such as development density and connectivity. For example, Shawn Hoch, Gilbert Liu and Jeffrey Wilson of Indiana University compared different measures of the built environment such as grids, Euclidian buffers, network buffers and distance to nearest and three-nearest network locations.

The health determinants of the built environment can be grouped into two categories: exercise opportunities and food availability. Walkable neighbourhoods are one way in which urban forms can promote physical activity. Igor Vojnovic (Michigan State) looked at urban form in Michigan as a variable that has possible impact on pedestrian activity. Wendy Tao, of the University of California, Berkeley examined the behaviour of pedestrians crossing roads in Fushun, China, where major road-widening projects and increased traffic have affected pedestrian safety. In addition to walking, bicycles are another mode of transport that promotes active lifestyles. Greg Rybarczyk and Changshan Wu of the University of Wisconsin - Milwaukee used a space-syntax approach to predict bicycle and pedestrian volumes in Milwaukee. The interaction of vulnerable groups with the built environment was also studied. Using GPS and GIS, Gilbert Liu, Jeffrey Wilson and Shawn Hoch of Indiana University analysed walking patterns among adolescents. Kristian Larsen, Jason Gilliland, Paul Hess and Patricia Tucker of the University of Western Ontario also examined young people. They used GIS to identify walkable neighbourhoods in London, Canada, and validated the results by using questionnaires in the local schools. Anne Hurni of the University of Western Sydney also investigated neighbourhood characteristics, assessing their impact on children's health in Australia. Elizabeth Burton and Lynne Mitchell of Oxford Brookes University studied design characteristics for the elderly to help this vulnerable group enjoy the benefits of being active. These characteristics included guidelines for the design of urban form and the type of materials used in its creation. Equitable access to parks, a component of urban form, was examined by Christopher Boone of Arizona State University. Stephanie Campbell at Simon Fraser University investigated how built environments can assist in creating a 'liveable city' in parts of Vancouver.

Access to food is the other way in which the urban environment can impact upon health. Nik Luka of McGill University examined urban agriculture, its fit within the urban fabric, and the need for it to be considered by planners, engineers and architects in their shaping of the city. Healthy food options are not always evenly distributed across a city, and the built environment can impose

restrictions on their availability to some citizens, especially those who have limited access to automobiles. This was examined by Sukari Ivester of the University of California, Berkeley and Steven Garrett of the University of Washington, and Nairne Cameron, Karen Smoyer-Tomic, Carl Amrhein and Vladimir Yasenovskiy of the University of Alberta. Jason Gilliland and Kathy Tang (Western Ontario) examined a health-impeding element of urban form – the clustering of fast-food restaurants around schools.

Papers were presented relating to cities from all the continents – testament to the international scope of the conference. The spatio-temporal patterns of Chinese cities were monitored by Yifang Ban and others at the Royal Institute of Technology, using satellite data. Sharolyn Anderson of the University of Denver used night-time light imagery gathered by satellites to delimit the borders of urbanized areas in the United States, Mexico and Argentina. These novel data can also be used to estimate 2-dimensional population densities. Andrew Marton (Nottingham) looked at the impact of local institutional structures in China's lower Yangtzi Delta. He showed how local forces worked in tandem with global ones in shaping urban development. The outcome of interactions between planning ideas in Sophia's historical development was demonstrated by Sonia Hirt (Virginia Tech.). Finally, the fall of socialism in Warsaw was examined from a morphological perspective by Michael Niedzielski and Przemyslaw Sleszynski (Ohio State), who predicted dramatic changes, especially the sprawling of the city, once the road

network has been improved.

The ways in which globalization and the spread of neo-liberalism shape urban form was another common theme. Benjamin Kohl of Temple University and Juan Arbona of Bryn Mawr College considered how these policies physically segregate the rich and poor in Bolivia. Philip Lawton of Trinity College Dublin examined how public spaces across Europe have become standardized with globalization. Desmond Bliet and Pierre Gauthier of Concordia University examined how the landscape in a former industrial section of Montreal is becoming residential, and how patterns in the built form can demonstrate local variations in neo-liberal enactment strategies.

As evidenced by the papers discussed in this report, urban morphological research was present across a wide spectrum of presentations at this year's AAG meeting. This demonstrates the interdisciplinary nature of the field, and a meeting such as the AAG can be the catalyst for further collaboration. Perhaps a challenge for ISUF would be to increase awareness of urban morphology among those who are engaging in its techniques for other purposes, such as gauging the impact of the built environment on health. Next year's AAG meeting in Boston could be an arena in which to meet such a challenge.

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Approaches in urban morphology

The Proceedings of the New Researchers' Forum held in Newcastle upon Tyne during the 2004 ISUF Conference have been published under the title *Approaches in urban morphology* (ISBN 1861353294). It is available from Dr M. Barke,

Division of Geography, School of Applied Sciences, University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 8ST, UK. The price is £5.00 (plus postage and packing).

Relevance of traditional architecture

INTBAU will hold an international conference on 'Relevance of traditional architecture: housing rural communities and the urban poor', in Kano, Nigeria, 26-27 February 2008. The following topics are among those on which papers are invited: Settlement studies and New Urbanism in Africa; The need for regeneration in Nigeria; Traditional

building and regionalism; Lessons from traditional architecture and building; Modern technology using traditional building materials; Innovative technology using traditional building materials. Further information is available from <http://www.intbau.org/nigeriaconference2008.htm>
