

A manifesto /charter for ISUF

1. Why now?

ISUF has demonstrated over the last year an interest in the relation between research and practice, as witnessed by the number of Viewpoints published in *Urban Morphology*. We have now awarded four bursaries to evaluate the application of urban morphology in practice. One has already reported back at the conference in Brisbane, Australia in 2013 and we expect the other three to report their findings at the conference in Porto, Portugal in July 2014. In order to maintain this momentum we need to pursue the other recommendations of the Task Force. In particular we need to start marketing and branding it to a wider audience, particularly non-academics, since to date urban morphology has been dominated by academics.

2. Why Porto?

At the suggestion of its organizers, the ISUF conference in Porto in 2014 offers an opportunity to tackle one of our recommendations, that of preparing a manifesto. This is an appropriate location for a number of reasons. Recent years have seen a flourishing of urban morphological interest in Portugal and in the Lusophone world with the establishment of a new network and a new journal. These developments are happening in quite a small geographical area, with a number of institutions putting a lot of effort into the field – arguably the greatest density of urban morphological activity anywhere in the world.

Portugal is a neutral territory. It is not the home of a major founding school of urban morphology. It would therefore be an ideal location for such an initiative which would have to cross disciplinary and contextual boundaries.

The annual ISUF conferences represent a unique gathering of interests. The European ISUF conferences are the most accessible to the greatest number of interested parties, and Europe still represents the greatest concentration of urban morphological expertise.

3. How to do it?

We should not underestimate the difficulties of producing a manifesto or charter. The debates in the Viewpoint pages of the latest number of *Urban Morphology* show this. Those who have tried to devise manifestos for much more homogeneous groupings of interests in a far more limited range of contexts have found it difficult. It will be more difficult for the diverse disciplines and contexts represented by ISUF. However, our task force managed to produce an agreed report from this diversity so we should be able to produce manifesto.

Contributions to the Task Force suggested that a charter is most likely to be achieved by a small group producing a draft for circulation before the conference in Porto. This would be discussed at one or more sessions during the conference. Those charters with which we are familiar have been devised in this way; for example the charter of the new urbanism.

Given our heterogeneity, the composition of such a group to represent the diversity of ISUF would itself be a challenge. In order to make this as democratic and representative as possible and given that we are now connected in ways that were not dreamed of hitherto, even by the Futurists, we should make use of this connectivity to engage as wide a spectrum of those interested in making a contribution.

We are therefore inviting all those interested to make submissions which could range from proposals for a title (we deliberately have not fixed this as a charter or manifesto) to the points or headings that need to be included, or even proposing a draft manifesto. It has already been suggested that a manifesto be linked to the Morphopedia and we would welcome specific proposals as to how this might be achieved.

We are interested to hear from those who have ideas about the procedures we should adopt and/or how we can use new media to further the project.

We would also welcome those who would be prepared to commit themselves to become active members of a smaller group that would draft a document for discussion at Porto.

Contributions should be sent to <ivor.samuels @gmail.com> or Vitor Oliveira, who is the President of the Conference in Porto, at <vitorm@fe.up.pt>.

Ivor Samuels
Oxford, 1 December 2013