

ISUF President's Report

The past year has been notable in the annals of ISUF for the hosting, for the first time, of a major conference beyond the confines of Europe and North America. As reported by J. W. R. Whitehand (2008), the conference in Ouro Preto, Brazil in August 2007 was the largest so far organized by ISUF and was well received in terms of its scientific contents. On behalf of the Council of ISUF I wish to congratulate the conference's Brazilian organizers. I must make especial mention of Professor Staël de Alvarenga Pereira Costa, who co-ordinated both the lengthy preparations for the conference, including the reviewing of over 400 proposals of papers, and the seven days of activities in Brazil, comprising excursions and a 2-day workshop as well as the 4-day conference itself.

Within Europe, the major events over the past 12 months have been organized by ISUF Italia, which has quickly become the most active of ISUF's regional networks. Two events have been noteworthy: a conference on Gianfranco Caniggia, held in Rome (see pp. 129-30) and a students' planning workshop which took place in Aramo di Pescia, Pistoia.

Twenty years after Caniggia's death, the aim of the conference in Rome was to consider the present-day significance of his thinking within planning typology studies. The conference's sessions were held in the Great Hall of the Valle Giulia Faculty of Architecture and in the Academy of San Luca. Both venues featured exhibitions: one on Caniggia's architectural practice and the other on his original drawings. Professors F. Purini, P. Marconi, G. Spagnesi, P. Portoghesi, L. Barbera, F. Tentori, I. Samuels and G. Strappa made major contributions on Caniggia's work. Several young Italian researchers from Italian universities in which Caniggia's line of thinking and methodology have been pursued delivered outstanding papers.

The planning workshop, set in Tuscany's pre-Appennine hills, was expertly organized and supervised by Professor A. Merlo. Lasting for a week, it featured three students and a tutor from

each of seven institutions (the Faculties of Engineering in the Polytechnic Schools of Bologna, Turin and Milan, and the Faculties of Architecture in Florence, Ferrara, Genoa and Rome). The theme was 'Planning in historical contexts' and the work produced by the various groups during the course of the week was exhibited on the last day and formed the basis for a seminar in which applied planning methodologies were critically appraised. Professors F. Gurrieri, G. Cataldi and G. L. Maffei analysed and debated how the findings could generate various initiatives in the future.

As it has not proved possible to hold the next annual meeting of ISUF in Morocco, as originally planned, the Council of ISUF has agreed that a smaller conference be held in Artimino, near Florence, from 21 to 23 November 2008. The theme is 'Landscape and urban form', and it is intended that the conference will present urban morphological research and practice from a number of international centres and cover several different disciplinary approaches.

The conference in Artimino will be the prelude to a major conference at South China University of Technology, Guangzhou, from 4 to 7 September 2009, on the general theme of 'Urban morphology and urban transformation'. It is hoped that the success of the conference in Brazil in 2007 can be built on in China next year.

Reference

Whitehand, J. W. R. (2008) 'Fourteenth International Seminar on Urban Form, Ouro Preto, Brazil, 28-31 August 2007', *Urban Morphology* 12, 45-7.

Gian Luigi Maffei, Dipartimento di Progettazione dell'Architettura, Università degli Studi di Firenze, Viale Gramsci 42, 50132 Firenze, Italy. E-mail: gianluigimaffei@libero.it

Thirteenth Biennial Conference of the International Planning History Society, Chicago, USA, 10-13 July 2008

Conferences organized by the International Planning History Society (IPHS) have, since the late 1970s, offered valuable opportunities to survey historical and contemporary urban planning concepts and strategies, and urban morphology old and new. Attracting more than 250 delegates from over 20 nations the Thirteenth IPHS conference drew together scholars from a variety of locations and scholarly backgrounds united by a common purpose of considering the make-up of the world's urban communities, and appraising themes relating to public and private planning past and present.

Opening with a plenary address by Neil Harris (University of Chicago), Carl Smith (Northwestern University) and Kristen Schaffer (North Carolina State University) on Daniel Burnham's 1909 Chicago Plan, attention was immediately drawn to the theme of environmental configuration. Demonstrating that by the early 1900s the future of the US was to be an urban one, and one guided by a calculated doctrine for arranging the urban layout – an issue likewise raised by Lise Summers (State Records Office of Western Australia) in her presentation on twentieth-century Australia – many significant points of interest to urban morphologists were quickly raised. As a case in point Schaffer drew much attention to aspects of culture in determining the make-up of the aforesaid city plan; a morphological idealization of a major US city. Such a process of enquiry also formed the bedrock of the keynote lecture by Helen Meller (University of Nottingham) on 'Imagining culture', an address rooted in the domains of both empiricism and prediction in order to explicate the fundamental question: 'how did we get to where we are now?'

The cultural meaning of spatial design was a recurring theme of the conference. Kent Schuette, for instance, commented upon the habitual use of mathematical geometry in the architecture and landscape of the utopian community of New Harmony (in Indiana, USA), and David Pomfret (University of Hong Kong) explained that colonial vulnerabilities and the rise of moralist liberal ideologies were central to the instigation of socio-spatial ordering in late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century Hong Kong. Similarly the theme of social apprehension cropped up in many papers.

Timothy Mennel, to cite just one example, emphasized how the New York planning profession during the last century skilfully developed 'a language of perils' so as to incite worry and so generate opportunities to reconfigure the city's spatial form, thereby removing social 'threats' by means of planning practices.

In terms of analysis engaging with matters of spatial metamorphosis, many interesting case studies were put forward, including the description of Caracas, Venezuela, by Rafael Enrique Martinez Bellorin (Universidad Simon Bolivar) and the narrative of typological continuity in Sai Ping Yun, a central district of Hong Kong, by Hendrik Tieben and Woo Pui-Leng (Chinese University of Hong Kong). Papers by Shan Huang (Zhejiang University) and Bin Wang (Harvard University) in contrast focused on shifts in public policy to elucidate changes in present-day Chinese urban form. Wang explained such matters through the lens of institutional and social infrastructures created as part of the post-imperial nation building process, and in light of the forthcoming ISUF conference in Guangzhou in 2009 such papers offered a stimulating insight into the forming of reform-era Chinese communities and planning policies. In different vein, Caterina Teles Ferreira (University of Paris IV) offered a damning overview of failures in Portuguese urban design practices, and how they had led to territorial fragmentation rather than community development in Lisbon.

Thought provoking and deeply engaging, this IPHS forum was broadly heralded a success. The society's next meeting, in 2010, is to be held in Istanbul, a city of extensive urban and cultural traditions. IPHS events have traditionally revealed themselves to be of great relevance to those interested in grasping cities not only as physical structures but as expressions of civilizations. The Chicago event was in accord with this tradition.

Ian Morley, Department of History, Fung King Hey Building, Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shatin NT, Hong Kong, PR China. E-mail: ianmorley@arts.cuhk.edu.hk

Gianfranco Caniggia, architetto romano: conference held in the Facoltà di Architettura 'Valle Giulia' and the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, Rome, Italy, 9-10 May 2008

This long-awaited conference on the architectural and theoretical work of Gianfranco Caniggia was, for the academic community in Rome, in some ways an acknowledgement of a debt forgotten for 20 years. After Caniggia's death, just a few mentions of his work appeared in the architectural literature in Italy, with the remarkable exception of the observations of the distinguished historian Manfredo Tafuri: he pointed out that Caniggia was not proposing a regressive utopia, but a fertile, rigorous method of investigating the roots of a common architectural language that involved posing questions more than providing solutions.

Caniggia's research and didactic work were commonly suspected of proposing a sort of 'archaeology of city and territory' that was unsuitable for present-day conditions. A previous conference on Caniggia, held in July 2002 in Como, was well attended by ISUF members, but attracted few participants prominent in Italian architectural circles. The conference in Rome, in contrast, could be regarded as in many respects a turning point in the appreciation of Caniggia. A number of eminent architects and historians discussed the vitality and substantive contribution of his work.

Among the opening speeches, Bededetto Todaro's had special significance. As Dean of the hosting faculty, he pointed out to the many architects and students who filled the main hall, that Caniggia had provided an unusual way forward in contemporary architecture: the study of the city as a rational, continuous flow of transformations. This was, he said, an alternative to the current stream of spectacular designs without roots, which is the contemporary 'language plague', to use Italo Calvino's words.

The first session, chaired by Giuseppe Strappa, was held in the main hall of the Facoltà di Architettura 'Valle Giulia' and was devoted to the historical context of Caniggia's work. Giorgio Pigafetta provided important reflections on the philosophical meaning of the notions of 'process' and 'organism' in the Muratorian and Caniggian school, pointing out the innovative idea of considering modern architecture not as a rupture with the past (in the tradition of the modern movement), but as a progression of historical phases that became 'incorporated' in architectural work.

Paolo Portoghesi, Paolo Marconi and Lucio Barbera also made notable contributions. They emphasized how Caniggia was a gifted architect whose natural talent would have given him great success in professional practice if he had chosen such a career path. However, he devoted himself largely to the rational investigation of the basic principles generating urban tissues, producing architectural results rejected by contemporary critics accustomed to the appeal of 'invention'.

Caniggia's work should in fact be regarded as a set of principles for future generations. Portoghesi emphasized that Caniggia's theories are not outdated. On the contrary, they could be considered as an alternative to contemporary architecture, much of which was wasteful and a misuse of resources.

The second session, also hosted in the Facoltà di Architettura 'Valle Giulia', was chaired by Gian Luigi Maffei. It was devoted to the Caniggian school, unified both by the nature of its research and by a common tradition of study and teaching. Matteo Ieva, Nicola Marzot and Giancarlo Galassi presented their experience in maintaining the Caniggian didactic legacy within their institutions in Bari, Ferrara and Rome.

There are clear differences between some of the didactic methods proposed in the 1970s (such as Aldo Rossi's well known approach of the *città per parti*) and the reading of the city as an organism: the main lessons of the latter for students are the unity of structure and history and the understanding of city form as a rational and collective product. Interesting results of work with students in Bari were presented by Matteo Ieva: the sound basis and vitality of projects grounded in Caniggian methods were demonstrated.

Ivor Samuels recalled Caniggia's visit to Oxford. On that occasion the explanation Caniggia gave of the town-forming process was, to the surprise of his Oxford audience, based on 'designing' tools more than archaeological ones: he sought to demonstrate the planned Roman origin of Oxford rather than the commonly accepted interpretation of that city as being an Anglo-Saxon foundation. Samuels also presented some 'pragmatic', local interpretations of Caniggian thinking in a present-day context.

The final session was hosted in the historic main hall of the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca, one of the most ancient and prestigious cultural

institutions in Rome. Chaired by Franco Purini, the session was enlivened by the interventions of Gianfranco Cimbolli Spagnesi, Marcello Rebecchini, Giorgio Muratore, Francesco Moschini and Giovanna Regazzoni. Giancarlo Cataldi illustrated the continuity between Caniggian and Muratorian thinking, and Vezio De Lucia vividly described little known aspects of Caniggia's role as a town planner deeply involved in the rebuilding of parts of Naples after the earthquake in 1980.

Exhibitions of Caniggia's architectural projects and drawings were organized in the halls of 'Valle Giulia' and the Accademia Nazionale di San Luca.

Giuseppe Strappa, Dipartimento di Costruzione dell'Architettura, Facoltà di Architettura 'Valle Giulia', via Gramsci, 53-00197, Roma, Italy. E-mail: gstrappa@yahoo.com

Workshop on Heritage in Reconstruction / Heritage of Reconstruction, Birmingham, UK, 23 June 2008

This one-day workshop attracted about 40 participants from a number of fields and countries. The focus was largely on the UK in the post-war era, but the underlying issues, such as the place of heritage in reconstruction and the future of what is reconstructed, were far wider.

The complexity of the topic is apparent with only a modest surface-scratching, and the organizers, Peter Larkham and Joe Nasr, wisely limited the scope of the workshop to the near manageable. Nevertheless, issues emerged that it was almost painful not to be able to discuss, as the walls of the room resonated with a few central unasked questions. For example, scant consideration was given to the part that urban morphological theory can play in heritage conservation.

The workshop programme is available at www.asd.asd and much of the material presented is available on the Birmingham City University website (www.lahs.bcu.ac.uk). The presentations were all highly relevant and in different ways thought provoking.

Planning and conservation already present a challenging and by no means small range of issues to be faced. In the relatively comfortable context of much of Europe today one can sometimes forget that overarching political, territorial and cultural dimensions are ever present and define parameters and the scope for action. These dimensions were critical in the decades immediately following the Second World War. They remain so today and not only associated with 'developing societies' in faraway places.

From my own combined platform of architectural-anthropological research, heritage management and professional practice, the workshop suggested the huge potential of urban conservation practice and principles that embrace planning, its history, and the methodologies of documentation and analysis concerned with 'place' – whether the perspective is one of social-science recording and documentation or that of analytical urban morphology.

The workshop should be a fillip for future events that extend the topics of this workshop into a wider thematic programme of platforms other than those recognized by the conventional fields of planning, history and urban conservation. To remain relevant, the activity of protecting threatened assets in the urban environment needs to invite challenges by exponents of positions outside the field in which urban conservation has rather comfortably accommodated itself.

Peter Larkham, Joe Nasr and the excellent band of presenters are to be congratulated. I am sure that many of us would return to Birmingham with pleasure, if called again for a future event that builds on the success of this one.

*Amund Sinding-Larsen, Statsbygg, Oslo, Norway.
Address for correspondence: Stasjonsveien 35, 1365
Blommenholm, Norway. E-mail: Amund.Sinding-Larsen@statsbygg.no; amund@sinding-larsen.no*