

Représenter la ville: international colloquium, Bordeaux, France, 15-16 October 2009

This colloquium was arranged to coincide with the official publication of the *Atlas historique de Bordeaux* and was co-ordinated by S. Lavaud of the Université de Bordeaux III and B. Schmidt of the Université de Montpellier III. The first day was devoted to portraits and representations of urban ports from the medieval period through to the present day. Presenters concentrated on either engravings or maps of their sample ports. G. Fournier-Antonini compared engravings of Barcelona, Genoa and Marseilles, noting how engravers used the same viewpoints, or the view from the sea, throughout early modern times, thereby crystallizing people's perceptions of these port cities, which survived into the nineteenth century.

E. Vagnon-Chureau examined representations of ports in the eastern Mediterranean in the later Middle Ages. Again, it was the longevity of, in this case, map representations which was of interest. Strategic viewpoints dominated these maps since it was for that reason that the first maps of the exemplar towns had been drawn. É. Jean-Courret provided the colloquium with a nuanced interpretation of one particular pictorial map of Bordeaux which had probably been drawn in manuscript in 1525-35 but which did not appear in print until the nineteenth century. The author argued that it presented a distinctive view of the city which was intended to impress the king of France. The map is important as the first plan of Bordeaux, but it requires careful interpretation if used to help reconstruct the plan form of the city.

The final two papers in the morning session, by P. Sahlmann and A. Grassmann respectively, presented the early modern engravings of the Hanseatic city of Lübeck and the sequence of historical maps which demonstrated the development of the port. In the afternoon further papers examined representations of port cities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. They included ports in the Baltic, Hamburg, Nantes, Bordeaux, ports of the Côte Vermeille and, more generally, of the Mediterranean. I explored the World Heritage city of Bordeaux, returning in time for the official opening of the beautifully mounted exhibition of maps which form the raw material for the historical atlas.

The second day was devoted to mapped representations and was marked by some exciting computer-generated cartography. K. Lilley gave a splendidly nuanced and finely illustrated account of a recent research project with textual historians. This aims to explore medieval Chester in text and map and present

the results of the study to the general public on an interactive website. Two papers followed on the well-funded ToToPI project, which is exploring the pre-industrial topography of the city of Tours directed by X. Rodier. The first gave details of the logic of the complex geodatabase which is being generated, and the second was an example of its use, based on the ecclesiastical precinct beside the cathedral, which developed out of the Roman amphitheatre. This ended with a very complex and, it seemed to me, almost uninterpretable, descriptive model of topographical change. The increased complexity over time reflected the increasing quantity of data, but we were still unable to answer the question *why* things changed.

S. Lavaud provided the conference with the context of the historical atlas of Bordeaux (the French atlas of historic towns currently consists of 48 fascicules) and why the decision had been taken to use a new model with volumes on the historical cartography, a historic buildings inventory, and the map itself. T. R. Slater reviewed the principal urban morphological concepts derived from M. R. G. Conzen's work and applied them to the development of the plan form of medieval Salisbury in the first decade of its development. F. Pirot explored some of the problems of using GIS data in representing historic towns, and S. Schoonbeart demonstrated how reconstructions of land holdings and land uses based on a particular source, land terriers, could be used in urban conservation.

The other paper in the afternoon session had been circulated in advance and I had feared that it would take me back to 1960s' model building. However, in the event I was impressed. B. Boissavit-Camus and D. Chaoui-Derieu have devised a computer-generated urban cartogram which encapsulates both chronological and topographical change. In its idealized form, which was presented first, it was meant to represent all possible forms of all kinds of town throughout history, and it seemed hopelessly simplistic. But, as the authors worked through the case study of Poitiers, I was almost convinced that a regional or national atlas of such urban cartograms might actually tell us something. It is always good to leave a conference on a positive note. The proceedings will be published in 2010 in Ausonius Éditions.

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Sixteenth International Seminar on Urban Form, Guangzhou, China, 4 - 7 September 2009

The ISUF 2009 conference was held on the campus of South China University of Technology (Figure 1). Co-hosted by Guangzhou Urban Planning Bureau, the conference took the theme of 'Urban morphology and urban transformation'.

Guangzhou was an exciting location for such a conference. It lies in the intense settlement concentration of the Pearl River Delta, which has a population of 55 million. Here the recent scale of development and urban change represents serious transformation. The adjacent city of Shenzhen has grown from a village street to a city of 14 million inhabitants in less than 20 years. In its transformation, China has of course attracted world attention. This is clearly reflected in the quantity of recent research focussed on China not just within urban morphology but as described in the journals of cognate disciplines such as planning, urban design and architecture.

Until recently the development of knowledge and understanding in the field of urban morphology had been largely drawn from Euro-American sources. The Guangzhou conference offered an opportunity to draw from the associated field of knowledge in Asia.

The conference proceedings opened on the afternoon of Friday 4th with introductory and plenary sessions (Figure 2), followed by three days of parallel sessions, each day commencing with a plenary. An impressive total of 154 papers were presented, from 29 countries. A very successful balance was achieved between papers focussed exclusively on China, of which there were 72, those focussed on other countries, and those dealing with international comparison between China and elsewhere.

Perhaps not surprisingly, the tendency for China to shed its traditions in the pursuit of internationally common urban form became a significant discussion topic. This was introduced by Piper Gaubatz in a plenary paper entitled 'Reconceptualizing the Chinese City: urban form in the context of rapid change', in which she interrogated the images sought by major Chinese cities, concluding that while China was pursuing convergence towards ideal international models, it was only one of many countries doing so.

The question of balance between tradition and development was in fact examined in a number of papers. An interesting paper by Ka Man Hui and



Figure 1. The Liwu Centre, South China University of Technology: venue for the conference.

Pui Leng Woo addressed this question by testing recent processes of urban change against the concept of permanence, suggesting morphological consistency as an effective link between heritage and renewal. It showed, with a case study in Kowloon, how sense of place can be maintained, when certain elements of the ground plan are permanent.

The continued pulse of expansion among Chinese cities has drawn attention to the interaction between urban edge and hinterland, and this relates closely to the current discussion among morphologists on the fringe-belt concept. Many papers addressed this topic, led by Michael Conzen's plenary presentation which extracted tantalizing relationships between the research on Pingyao by Whitehand and Gu, and recent work on the Italian city of Como. Similarities in layout, edge conditions and extra-mural land use were clearly readable. The performance of fringe belts in the context of a planned city such as Brazil's Belo Horizonte, detailed in a paper by Stael de Alvarenga Pereira Costa, was also comparable to that in a number of earlier-planned Chinese cities.

Another aspect of transformation is the embedding of settlements within an advancing urban edge. This field drew a number of associated papers, significantly one by Lin, De Meulder and Wang looking at the embedded village of Shipai in Guangzhou. The observations relayed in this paper were closely allied to those of a fascinating study of a similar process, described by Deleuil and Pham, taking place in Hanoi, with strikingly comparable results. Here, in the local ward of Giap Bat, the social impact of change at the interface between lane and plot frontage was analysed. In Shipai and Giap Bat the proposal to apply structure to an indigenous layout had very different principles. In Shipai, the structure was formal, to link it in scale to the surrounding infrastructure of Guangzhou, whereas in Giap Bat in Hanoi the proposed structure was organic, continuing the framework of the evolved layout. The results were very different.

Although there are underlying differences in tradition between East and West, similarities in the management of urban form at various periods were suggested by a number of papers. Some of these focussed on the concession areas in China, revealing the rich overlay of cultures in urban form which these areas induced. Hong Kong in particular was the focus of many papers. One, by Chung, Tieben, Woo and Yuet, analysed street patterns in the Shing Wong area. The ground plans presented in this paper showed a remarkable similarity to those shown by Michael Barke in his paper on Shieldfield, in Newcastle upon Tyne, England. Both, with similar cultural origins, had almost identical layout principles. What was fascinating, however, were the different directions taken by the development of each in the immediate post-war period, when they were then led by different cultures. By comparison, a third similar plan type with a similar cultural origin was shown to have developed in a different form in the city of Ahmedabad in India. This was illustrated in a paper by Jitesh Brahmshatriya which explored plan typologies in a transect of that city. The images were strikingly close to those of Newcastle and Hong Kong.

For those who visited Hong Kong, a paper by Li Hu and Beisi Jia was essential reading. This paper explored the emerging vertical-city concept where linked vertical circulation routes begin to bind the city in a three-dimensional urban frame. Here Hong Kong, with its escalator culture, begins to beckon the futuristic images of Fritz Lang's Metropolis.

An important paper by Huang, Zhan and Tian, illustrated, almost as a glossary of processes, the



Figure 2. The opening of the conference.

physical characteristics of development, both positive and negative, in the transformation of Chinese cities, using Chongqing as a case study. Chongqing also featured in a paper by Ning Yin that correspondingly gave a fascinating analysis of traditional Chinese street structure, introducing, among other types, the unique veranda streets of the region.

Prompted perhaps by the context of major transformation, a number of papers explored large-scale ideals and radical urban forms. Catherine Maumi's paper considered models on the Hyper Ville concept and there was a chance to see the ultimate modern utopia in a paper which described Lingang; the new city whose plan was the result of a worldwide competition won by Meinhard von Gerkan from Hamburg, representing a very broadly inspired modern plan for a completely new Chinese city. The plan draws on the visions of Soria y Mata and Ebenezer Howard. Also addressing Utopian transformation was a paper which reviewed the idea of a proposed new administrative capital for South Korea. This paper, by Hee Sun Choi, explored administrative models for such a city, drawing from case studies in Korea and Malaysia.

A very finely crafted paper by Jing Zhao looked at the development history of Xian, tracing the changing relationship between street and urban block, looking in particular at the effects that changing street widths had on site structure, when differences in road hierarchy were introduced at

particular stages in the city's development. The principles of adjustment which occur when increased scale of use is laid upon a rigid urban structure have a universal application.

The conference was followed by a number of workshop excursions allowing participants to visit Beijing and Shanghai, or the closer destinations of



Figure 3. The Tianhe district from the International Finance Centre.

Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Guangzhou. Those who visited Guangzhou were enthusiastically led by dedicated guides and had the surprise privilege of viewing the city from the top of one of its recently completed high-rise buildings in the International Finance Centre. From here they were able to view in detail the new 'supertall', and indeed super dense, urban fabric of the Tianhe district (Figure 3).

The conference was superbly organized. A cheerful team of assistants was tirelessly on hand to ensure that all ran smoothly. Many participants opted to stay on campus, where the relaxed character of the University's landscape subdued the effect of the tropical heat. The optional intensity of Guangzhou was of course close by.

In 2007, the Journal, reporting on the Ouro Preto conference, referred to the momentum of interest in Brazil's urban morphology generated by that very

successful event, with the hope that this momentum might follow ISUF to further events. This hope was clearly realized at Guangzhou where no less than 20 papers from Brazil were presented. One might hope that the rich thought from China collected at Guangzhou might similarly follow ISUF to future events. In the broadening of comparative analysis in urban morphology, the Guangzhou conference will be remembered as a most memorable milestone.

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ISUF business meetings, Guangzhou, China, September 2009

Meetings of the Council and Editorial Board of ISUF took place on Friday 4 September in Guangzhou, immediately before the annual conference. A General Meeting of ISUF took place during the conference. This report summarizes the principal matters covered in the three meetings.

Secretary-General's report

The Secretary General, Nicola Marzot, reported that the President, Gian Luigi Maffei was retiring. Thanks were expressed for all the work Gian Luigi had done to promote the work of ISUF during the past 4 years. Michael Conzen was appointed by the Council as the new President. Teresa Marat-Mendes was elected and Giuseppe Strappa was re-elected to Council.

Nicola Marzot reported that Elwin Koster, the Webmaster, was intending to retire in 2010 and there was a need to find a successor for this very important position. Appreciation was expressed for the substantial and excellent work that Elwin Koster had done in setting up the website and running it for the past 12 years.

Treasurer's report

Michael Barke expressed his thanks to Keith Lilley

for his assistance in making the transfer of the Treasurer's office to Newcastle upon Tyne as smooth as possible. He reported on the sound state of ISUF's finances. However, the costs of production and distribution of *Urban Morphology* were increasing and it was agreed that there would be an increase in subscriptions to take effect from 2011. The annual subscription for individual members would increase to £25 and for institutional members to £50.

Michael Barke reported that the financial arrangements for the Guangzhou conference had worked well and thanked Kai Gu and Yinsheng Tian for their support.

Editor's report

Jeremy Whitehand reported that online access to *Urban Morphology* was freely available for issues published from 1997 to 2001. Approximately half subscribing libraries currently had online access to issues published from 2006 onward.

There continued to be a healthy flow of manuscripts submitted, although the quality of submissions was highly variable. Accepted articles were published rapidly. The average time-lag between receipt of revised manuscript and publication was a little less than 5 months for full-length articles published in 2009.

Ian Morley had taken over as Book Review Editor as from the second issue of 2009. Thanks were expressed to the retiring Book Review Editor, Piper Gaubatz. Since so much research in urban morphology was published in books it was important that the journal published a good range of both book reviews and review articles.

Webmaster's report

The Webmaster, Elwin Koster, reported that there had been few significant changes to the ISUF website during the past year: emphasis had been on routine maintenance. There had been a considerable increase in the number of institutions requesting online access: a maximum of five ranges of IP addresses was available to each subscribing institution.

The number of visits to the website had remained relatively stable at about 9000 per year over the past 3 years. The website was mainly used for conference information and access to articles in *Urban Morphology*.

In light of Elwin Koster's retirement in 2010 it was agreed that a successor be sought forthwith with a view to the new and retiring Webmasters

collaborating in the maintenance of the website during 2009/10.

Future conferences

It was confirmed that conferences would be held in Hamburg in 2010 and in Montréal in 2011. The Chairman of the Organizing Committee in Hamburg is Jürgen Lafrenz (e-mail: j.lafrenz@isuf2010.de) and in Montréal Pierre Gauthier (e-mail: isuf2011@alcor.concordia.ca). Belfast was proposed as a possible venue in 2012.

It was agreed by Council that two 'new' researchers be appointed, one in Canada (Mathew Novak, e-mail: mathewnovak@gmail.com) and one in China (Jian Zhang, e-mail: j.zhang@bham.ac.uk), to promote and organize the New Researchers' Forum to be held at forthcoming conferences.

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