
President's Report

One year ago, we could not have foreseen the dramatic changes in world circumstances that would arise from the advent and accelerating spread of COVID-19. Throughout much of 2020 our global mobility has been compromised, requiring ISUF to adapt and to pursue new avenues for assembly and communication. This President's Report summarizes the collective efforts of ISUF Council and executive leadership to both continue implementing long-term goals and to respond to current challenges through new initiatives.

ISUF's long-term strategic planning efforts are guided by recommendations outlined in the 'Valencia Report', prepared by the Advisory Committee on ISUF's Future Development. Several of the report's recommendations prioritize strengthening relationships between research and practice. A summary of progress towards implementing key recommendations outlined in the report follows.

ISUF Council established a research and practice grant programme to encourage collaboration between regional networks and provide funding for joint projects. The first grant cycle, initiated in 2018, was concluded in early 2020 with the receipt of final reports from project coordinators. The Chinese and Italian regional networks completed a parallel study of select urban tissues in Nanjing and Rome. Polish and Serbian regional networks completed a comparative study of post-socialist change in Krakow and Belgrade. Encouraged by the success of the first round, ISUF leadership launched a second call in early 2020. The winning proposal entitled 'Urban disposal and regeneration: new policies for the project of the city' represents a partnership between PNUM and ISUF Italy. ISUF council intends to sponsor a third call in 2021.

To highlight manifestations of urban morphology research in contemporary design practice, Ivor Samuels chaired a committee to investigate the feasibility of an ISUF-sponsored awards programme designed to recognize practitioners who exhibit excellence in applying urban morphology to design and planning projects. This committee completed a feasibility study, recommending that the awards programme be financially sustainable and exhibit tangible benefits for ISUF membership. At our meeting of 31 August 2020, ISUF Council decided to form a task force to bring this worthy initiative to fruition. Nicola Marzot, who maintains both an architectural practice and faculty position, has

agreed to serve as chair. ISUF Secretary-General Vitor Oliveira will accept nominations of qualified individuals to serve on the 'Practice Prize Task Force' under Marzot's leadership.

Teaching urban morphology represents another important priority of the Valencia report. Vitor Oliveira received Council agreement to move forward with forming a 'Teaching Task Force' to explore possibilities for sharing resources and pedagogy. The task force will complete its work within a three-year time period beginning in early 2021.

At the Council meeting in Nicosia, a committee was formed to update ISUF's constitution. The committee's work was completed in late 2019 and approved by Council in early 2020. Noteworthy updates include a formal recognition of regional networks. Additionally, a network coordinator is formally recognized as an officer of ISUF Council. This position is currently held by Giuseppe Strappa of ISUF Italy.

In addition to following through with recommendations of the Valencia report, ISUF continues to adapt to new challenges. Foremost among them is a change in editorship of the journal *Urban Morphology*, arguably ISUF's most important legacy. Jeremy Whitehand, who has served as editor since the premier issue was published in 1997, retired in December 2019. We thank Professor Whitehand for his stewardship and steadfast dedication throughout his 23 years of service. The journal's consistently high citation rates and ratings among academic journals can largely be attributed to the impeccable standards set by its founding editor. We also thank Susan Whitehand for her significant contributions as assistant editor. Continuity of *Urban Morphology's* fine reputation is assured thanks to Peter Larkham's willingness to serve as editor. As evidenced by the first issue published under his leadership earlier this year, the transition appears to have been seamless.

During my tenure as ISUF President I have noted a need for a membership secretary to develop a directory of members and their corresponding research and practice interests. Council member Tolga Ünlü graciously accepted an appointment to both fill and further define the role. His preliminary report far exceeds my own expectations. Its findings will have many important purposes: they will help us to know who we are; they will inform ISUF's strategic planning and recruitment efforts;

they will enable members to identify colleagues with shared interests and to form networks around ideas.

The pandemic forced us to reshape ISUF's long-held tradition of meeting *in situ* to share perspectives on urban morphology. Until March of this year, planning had been well under way to host ISUF 2020 as in-person meeting in Salt Lake City. Both Brenda Scheer, the conference chair, and I were sincerely looking forward to welcoming ISUF members to Salt Lake City, the Mountain West and the United States. Additionally, the University of Utah College of Architecture and Planning and Salt Lake City community were poised to welcome ISUF participants to their historic and progressive city in person. This year's conference would have been the first to be held in the US since September 2001, another tragically poignant moment.

When it became apparent that the global spread of the pandemic showed no signs of subsiding, in consultation with ISUF leadership the conference organizing committee contemplated cancelling ISUF 2020 altogether. After further reflection we realized that a healthy organization must be resilient. Resilience requires a capacity to adapt to changing circumstances. The conference organizing committee rose to the challenge by transforming delivery from an in-person forum in Salt Lake City to a globally-accessible online forum in just five short months. For an organization that treasures its tradition of face-to-face meetings, this was a bold leap. On behalf of ISUF leadership, we thank Scheer, her graduate assistant Pratiti Tagore and Alessandro Camiz for their willingness to experiment with building a virtual forum. The conference's digital delivery appears to have been

carried out masterfully, enabling a broad spectrum of participants to engage in formal and informal dialogue about urban morphology and the twenty-first-century city.

The sudden need to transform delivery to virtual forum in Salt Lake City, coupled with its successful execution, inspired Council to propose a new task force charged with exploring possibilities to strengthen ISUF's digital presence. Vitor Oliveira will receive nominations of colleagues with relevant expertise on the subject.

ISUF fully intends to resume holding place-based conferences, hopefully as soon as the summer of 2021 in Glasgow. As a global community of scholars, we value our capacity to transcend barriers as we pursue our shared interests in urban morphology. Unfortunately, we are not immune to global conditions that can interfere with our best intentions. While the global pandemic presents the most daunting and pervasive impediment to our global mobility to date, we must be prepared for the next inevitable challenge. The impact of our collective carbon footprint resulting from international travel in the era of climate change ranks amongst the issues deserving of our thoughtful consideration. Assisted by virtual technology, we can overcome many perceived impassés as they arise. Our proven capacity to steward collaboration between existing networks coupled with emerging efforts to construct new paradigms for dialogue throughout the year will enable ISUF to sustain a promising future.

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ISUF business notices

Meeting of ISUF Council

The next meeting of ISUF Council will take place during the ISUF Conference to be held in Glasgow, UK, in July 2021. Any matters that members of ISUF wish to bring to the attention of the Secretary-General, Professor Vitor Oliveira, should be communicated to him at the CITTA Research Centre for Territory Transports and Environment, Rua Roberto Frias s/n, 4200-465 Porto, Portugal. E-mail: vitorm@fe.up.pt.

Elections to ISUF Council

In accordance with ISUF's Constitution, elections to the Council will take place the ISUF Conference to be held in Glasgow, UK, in July 2021. There will be four vacancies for membership of Council, and the post of Secretary-General will also fall vacant. Nominations should be forwarded to the Secretary-General, Professor Vitor Oliveira, at the above address.

Twenty-Seventh International Seminar on Urban Form, Salt Lake City/online, 2020

The twenty-seventh International Seminar on Urban Form conference took place online in the Pandemic Year of 2020. Our international scholarly community was scheduled initially to return to the US for the first time since 2001, but it was not to be. Instead, we employed the relatively new meeting technology of Zoom, and gave up the in-person relationships and on-site tours that have meant so much to the development of scholars in this field. Ironically, the theme – ‘Cities in the twenty-first century’ – came roaring to life rather more tangibly than we could have expected, as we were driven to smart technology, to globalism, to reductions in emission-intensive travel, and to new forms of social engagement.

What did we learn? First, the virtual conference allowed people to participate who could never have afforded the cost to travel and register for the conference. More than 250 people registered and attended from 36 countries, an unusually diverse and international mix, with all but seven countries (China, United States, Brazil, Canada, Italy, the UK, and Turkey) having less than ten participants. Such a broad international distribution would not be possible in real life. Over half of the presenters were students.

Secondly, our first-ever virtual conference was a logistical and coordination nightmare: software to organize the program, papers and registrants, software to run the sessions, software to catalogue and store the recordings, software to communicate with organizers, software to keep track of moderators and hosts, and software to create a portal where all these could be indexed and found. Trying to make sure that no-one had to present their paper at 4 am (4:00) meant that all the sessions had to be cross-referenced for time zone. The technology also demanded a new skill – the traditional session moderator/chair was joined by a ‘Host’, one of a group of young volunteer morphology scholars, recruited from around the world, who met and trained prior to the conference.

Thirdly, the conference itself was a mixed bag of virtual pros and cons: the 60 sessions were held over 24 hours, enabling people to attend from different time zones, but making it impossible to attend more than a handful of them. Informal gatherings, meals and parties were missed, but more than 100 hours of sessions were recorded and are still available to conference registrants. A new

format, the ‘lobby session’, offered lively panel discussions, but we had no restaurants and bars to continue them informally.

Finally, after an invigorating session online, with one click it all disappeared and you were home alone. Virtual meetings cost less, enable more global participation, and are easier to attend but they do not allow you to make informal connections, or new friends. Not being *in situ* means that you cannot concentrate your focus: you may still have to teach or pick up the kids or make dinner. Meeting in real time virtually across the entire earth was thrilling and challenging, but also discouraging and sad.

This raises the question of how the success of a conference is to be measured. In the number of attendees? The new members to ISUF who are recruited? The quality of the paper presentations and the published Proceedings? The connections established? The ideas explored and emergent? Because of the nature of our fields, do we also have to add the hands-on ability to visit and learn about new environments?

As morphologists, we all love cities, but we are reminded by our research that cities are not just the people, just as conferences cannot be measured by the little Zoom boxes of virtual images. Cities are also buildings, plans, streets, landscape and other forms that bind us to those who came before, as they also bind us to each other. We recognize and honour the similarities and patterns that magically reoccur across the globe, creating a stronger sense of universal human conditions. We miss the smells and sights and excitement of our visit and, I can assure you, your hosts very much miss not being able to bring it to you.

As for the conference, we enjoyed almost 160 papers, many of which were case studies applying well-known theoretical ideas in a huge variety of contexts. Other papers challenged our methods, especially those that introduced computational models to explain morphological variance and patterns. Some new theories were proposed but many old ones were elaborated. *Proceedings of the XXVII ISUF Conference* will be available in the digital collections at the Marriott Library at the University of Utah and will be catalogued at World Cat.Org.

I wish to acknowledge the critical encouragement of the ISUF Executive Committee and to

congratulate my intrepid assistant, Dr Pratiti Tagore, who was awarded her PhD about one month after the conference.

As I write this, our pathetic 2020 is dragging to its finale, and our hopes are soaring for a new year, where we can perhaps hear the bagpipes in person and revel in the concrete evidence of our historic urban heritage. See you in Glasgow!

Brenda Case Scheer, University of Utah, Salt Lake City, Utah, USA. E-mail: scheer@arch.utah.edu

Owing to the unusual nature of the conference, as Editor I have collated views from several conference participants to add to the conference organiser's perspective. My thanks to those who contributed.

'I think the Lobby sessions were a means to try to make up for the lack of a real physical 'lobby' as a setting for informal interaction. And they worked splendidly. Short presentations provided the springboards for lots of good conversation and debate – all of it was stimulating and helpful. Many people at the sessions were engaged and had something to contribute. We should figure out a way to have such informal discussions even when we have 'live' conferences again – where the usual balance between 75% or 80% formal presentation

and 20% or 25% questions and discussion is reversed, favouring informal but focused discussion' (Howard Davis).

'The sessions I had the opportunity to attend have allowed me contact with new research concerning the study of urban form, from different parts of the globe (mostly from Asia, Europe, and Latin America). Concerns towards the pertinence of the study of change of the urban form related to various domains (such as political, social, economic, infrastructures, among others) emerged as a common thematic interface, which promptly promoted comparative analysis discussions in those sessions, which was very fruitful and positive' (Teresa Marat-Mendes).

'This was an exciting and very informative event. I am grateful for Professor Brenda Scheer's idea to have PhD students involved in hosting of the sessions. Now my students promote urban morphology among their peers, and it becomes quite a popular topic in our university. I missed the direct discussions (not to mention beer, etc), and I must admit that participation in many online events was exhausting. Nevertheless, still worth it. Thank you very much for this opportunity to visit SLC virtually (Małgorzata Hanzl).

Małgorzata Hanzl has also created an urban morphology YouTube channel, where some conference material can be viewed: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsxM_fHz2jjFdyxptUOyH8w

ISUF Council Meeting, August 2020

An online meeting of the Council of ISUF took place on 31 August, in advance of the ISUF 2020 Annual Conference, which was itself delivered online owing to COVID travel restrictions. This report summarises the principal business covered, which was reported to ISUF members at an online general meeting on 4 September 2020.

President's report

The President, Wendy McClure, welcomed members to the first formal online Council meeting. She gave a particular welcome to Jeremy Whitehand, as a founding Editor of *Urban Morphology* and a cornerstone of ISUF, and to Susan Whitehand for her support. The whole organization was grateful for their work.

ISUF had responded well to the challenges of COVID and other considerations of the new decade. More administrative business was being conducted effectively online. ISUF had also been able to move forward with a number of initiatives. These included a review of the Constitution, appointment of a Regional Network Coordinator as an Officer of Council, and appointment of a Membership Secretary. Final reports had been received on the initial two Research and Practice grants, and a second call had been launched. A Task Force on Teaching Urban Form had been agreed, to be led by Vítor Oliveira; and a Digital ISUF Task Force would be led by Brenda Case Scheer. The transition of editorship from Jeremy Whitehand to Peter Larkham had gone well.

Particular thanks were offered to Brenda Case Scheer for rising to the challenge of organising an online conference, when cancellation had been a distinct possibility. A virtual event also could address concerns about widening participation and reducing ISUF's carbon footprint; although our tradition of face-to-face meetings and direct engagement with the places in which we meet remain valuable. Todor Stojanovski's regular 'virtual ISUF' meetings had been a welcome contribution to keeping our community in contact during the crisis period.

An extended version of this report is on pp 99–100 of this issue.

Secretary-General's report

Vítor Oliveira noted the new Council roles, and also proposed that Michael Barke be elected for a

further term as Treasurer and that Sergio Porta be co-opted as organiser of the Glasgow 2021 conference. He discussed revisiting the Morphopaedia project, and Teresa Marat-Mendes agreed to chair a Working Group to review it. The idea of a prize for good professional practice in urban morphology was reviewed, and Nicola Marzot was approached to reinvigorate this initiative.

A new Task Force on Teaching Urban Morphology was proposed, deriving from the Valencia conference's report on future ISUF activities. This would be led by Vítor Oliveira for a 3-year period starting in January 2021. Council felt that teaching is an important aspect of ISUF's activities.

Finally, he identified imbalances in ISUF's membership, including of Council, that might present a long-term threat. These included imbalances of gender, disciplinary and national representation. A different pattern of live and online meetings, forced upon us by the current crisis, might help to extend ISUF's reach.

Treasurer's report

Michael Barke reported that ISUF's finances were currently in a strong position; although journal production and distribution costs consume a large part of our income and will need to be managed. However Henry Ling Ltd do provide an excellent printing and distribution service. Extending open online journal access might result in a reduction in membership income, so again this would need careful consideration.

The financial position did allow ISUF to consider further support for a range of initiatives, including Research and Practice grants and the prize, and there is also the likelihood that improving the ISUF website will incur additional costs.

Webmaster's Report

Vítor Oliveira presented the Webmaster's report on behalf of Richard Whitehand. He discussed the traffic generated by the website, but drew attention to several issues that would require attention in the near future in order to continue, and extend, the online service to members. It was in response to this that the Digital ISUF Task Force had been proposed and agreed.

Editor's report

Peter Larkham noted the smooth transition of editorial responsibility, and thanked both Jeremy and Susan Whitehand for their ongoing assistance in the transition and in ensuring that the journal's quality was maintained. He identified a continuing increase in the size of issues, which responds to the number of good quality papers, and is supported by ISUF's healthy financial position. However, he noted the continuing high proportion of rejected submissions – approaching 80% – and the high workload that this places on the editorial team. He thanked reviewers for their work in providing prompt, detailed and constructive feedback to prospective authors.

He also felt that rising costs needed careful management, and acknowledged the excellent service and good value provided by Henry Ling Ltd. He also identified the need to place more issues online as open access (1997–2007 papers were currently open access, and extending this to 2016 would be desirable while still protecting a 'member benefit' for subscribing institutions). The current web platform could not extend digital access to every individual subscriber, and the online journal presence would be an issue for the Digital ISUF Task Force to consider.

Membership Secretary's report

Tolga Ünlü presented a preliminary analysis of ISUF membership, focusing particularly on attendance at the six most recent conferences and the lack of continuation of membership of those who join as a result of conference attendance. He identified the dominant countries of origin of 'active' members (Poland, Sweden, Turkey, UK and USA), and the implications of the patterns revealed by this analysis merit further consideration in terms of the organization's activities and profile. He concluded by stating that our membership database

is inconsistent and incomplete, being heavily dependent on how successive conference organizers collect information. Subject to data protection regulations, a member survey to update and extend this database would be helpful.

Regional Network Coordinator's report

Giuseppe Strappa presented an inaugural report on activities of the 8 regional networks. He felt that their Eurocentric focus might be problematic. A North American network was in early stages of development to extend this. The Nordic network was showing signs of resurgence after a period of inactivity. His goal for these networks was to fill the gap between annual conferences, and to encourage the study of urban morphology in unfamiliar areas. Possible developments could include monthly ISUF lectures, available on YouTube or a similar platform; and a Summer School.

Other business

The next ISUF conference will be in 2021 in Glasgow, organised by Sergio Porta and his team at the University of Strathclyde. The conference theme is 'Urban form and the sustainable prosperous city'. Further details are published in this issue, although arrangements will be flexible owing to the ongoing uncertainty about COVID-related restrictions. The 2022 conference will be in Łódź and Cracow and, for the same reason, the precise date and format have not yet been settled. The conference theme is 'Urban redevelopment and revitalization – a multidisciplinary perspective'.

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