

## Coming of age in Cincinnati

The year 2001 has been notable in the annals of ISUF in several respects. Remarkably, it is the first year in which an ISUF conference has been held in the New World. Hitherto, historically important Old World cities and their major institutions have hosted meetings, reflecting in large part ISUF's strong roots in Europe. This year the Conference was held in Cincinnati, Ohio, USA and, not surprisingly, it attracted a large contingent of participants from the North American continent. Held 6-9 September, the Conference ended so close to the copy deadline for this issue of *Urban Morphology* that most of the coverage of it, except for the associated business meetings (this issue pp. 102 and 112), must await the next issue. It is already clear, however, that the momentum generated in earlier conferences has been maintained, although the number of participants from countries outside the English-speaking world was much smaller than at the previous major conference, in Florence in 1999.

There has also been an increase in contributions to *Urban Morphology* from the English-speaking world over the same period. The increasing number of authors from the United States and the United Kingdom has brought the journal more into line with other international social science journals. However, for a journal publishing exclusively in English, it still has a relatively high proportion of authors for whom English is not their first language, and it is editorial policy that this should continue, with every effort being made to ensure the high standard of the English that ultimately appears in print.

As ISUF has come of age, not only in its conferences, journal and other activities, but in its organizational structures, so attention has naturally turned to the foundations for undertaking and expanding those tasks. Unlike fields of knowledge and practices that are supported by the institutions of an established academic discipline or profession, urban morphology to a large extent depends for both innovation and continuity on the energy and commitment of individual academics and practitioners scattered across several disciplines and professions. There are few recognized courses in, or sub-departments of, urban morphology. To the extent that training is available it tends to be provided in courses in which urban morphology is incidental to some other purpose, such as architecture, urban design, architectural history, urban geography or urban planning. Most relevant textbooks for students focus primarily on these other subjects.

In an era in which collegiality is declining and professions and disciplines are increasingly organizing themselves for self-promotion and survival in environments dominated by performance indicators and audits, fields such as urban morphology that largely lack institutionalized means of lobbying and reproduction are vulnerable. Despite ISUF's growing maturity, it is likely for some time to be little more than a token force in turf wars, most of which are likely to take place within individual institutions and countries. But it can speedily take action on at least one front: namely the co-ordination of research into the teaching of urban morphology. This is fundamental if the best of research and practice in the field is to be transmitted to the next generation.

On pages 119-123 of this issue Peter Larkham revives the idea of an international research project on the teaching of urban morphology, under the auspices of ISUF, and sets out an initial agenda for such a project. In Cincinnati this proposal received the unanimous support of the Council of ISUF. It promises to be a major initiative that ISUF is now better equipped to undertake.

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