

## Editorial comment

### The only thing that is constant is change

So said Heraclitus (approximately – translations vary). Benjamin Franklin said that death and taxes are the two certainties (constants). But world-wide events of the last few months have brought home to all of us the certainty, and speed, of change. The international responses to the COVID outbreak have resulted in lockdowns, cancellation of events, and the quick acquisition of skills in online teaching, meetings and even conferences.

We have seen not only massive behavioural change – with once-busy streets virtually abandoned, and now-quiet residential streets used for socially-distanced exercise, parties and concerts – but a wide debate about making changes more permanent, and the potential impact on the design of new urban places. More social distancing needs more pedestrian space and less vehicle space: but the total amount of movement space probably needs to stay much the same. People will still need to get to work, even if we work more from home; and, since we are warned of the dangers of packed public transport, private vehicle use is unlikely to stay low for long. So those who suggest that the pandemic will bring major changes in urban form are likely to be wrong. We may be using urban spaces in different ways, and there will eventually be impacts on form: but urban form, the morphological frame, has tremendous inbuilt inertia, and change is usually slow.

The changes brought to our communication while locked down have been tremendous, but more because more of us have been pushed to use existing technology than that new technology has quickly appeared. So video-conferencing is the new normal, and Brenda Case Sheer and her team in Salt Lake City have been working hard to ensure that there will be an ISUF 2020 conference – we will be able to exchange ideas and learn about others' new research, but the format will be very different. Even post-COVID it seems likely that more academic communications

will take this form and, subject to the availability of technology and bandwidth, more may be able to participate. Our thanks go to Brenda and her colleagues, and to the diverse group running the online COVID crisis call and (V)ISUF meetings (see pp. 239–41) for helping ISUF to make this transition successfully.

Franklin's saying has been brought home to the urban morphology community by the deaths (not COVID-related) of two academics, Bill Hillier and Ron Johnston (see pp. 224–9, 230–2 and 128). Both were prolific authors, generators of significant ideas, encouragers of students and colleagues to produce even better work. Both of their lives and achievements are worth celebrating.

In better news, the newly-upgraded Scopus citescore gives an interesting comparison for Urban Morphology with other journals (Table 1). Although small, and thus publishing a small number of citable 'documents', we seem to be effective at spreading the message (though this is not an 'impact factor'). A smaller number of citable documents (main papers, viewpoints, reviews) and a high citescore is good; a large number of citable documents and a low citescore suggests, possibly, less effective communication.

Further, both Urban Morphology and U + D (the journal of Isufitaly) have recently been classified as class A by Anvur (the Italian national institution for the evaluation of the

**Table 1. Citescore data 2016–2019**

Journal	Number of documents	Citescore
<i>Urban Morphology</i>	46	1.7
<i>Planning Practice &amp; Research</i>	127	2.2
<i>Journal of Urban Design</i>	185	2.5
<i>Urban Design International</i>	78	1.9
<i>Planning Perspectives</i>	142	0.9

quality of scientific research). This is a very important result, which has been long awaited. Our inclusion amongst the scientific journals of acknowledged excellence has great

academic value and is an important recognition for our research sector.

**Peter J. Larkham**

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