

PROCEEDINGS OF THE XXVII INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR ON URBAN FORM: CITIES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY:

AUGUST 31 – SEPTEMBER 4, VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

REFLECTIONS ON A VIRTUAL CONFERENCE

The XXVII International Seminar on Urban Form 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.

Ironically, the theme – Cities in the 21st Century – came roaring to life a bit 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.

Second, our first-ever virtual conference was a logistics 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, 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), which meant that all the sessions had to be cross referenced for time zone. The technology also demanded a new skill – the traditional moderator was joined by a “Host”, a group of young volunteer morphology scholars, recruited from around the world, who met and trained prior to the conference.

Third, 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 don't 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.

Which raises the question, how shall we measure the success of a conference? In the number of attendees? The new members to ISUF who are recruited? The quality of the paper presentations and the Proceedings? The connections established? The ideas explored and emergent? Because 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 honor 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 who 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.

As 2020 finally passed to its finale, 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!

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ABOUT ISUF

The International Seminar on Urban Form ([ISUF](#)) is the international organization of urban form for researchers and practitioners. It was inaugurated in 1994, bringing together urban morphologists worldwide. It seeks to advance research and practice in fields concerned with the built environment, especially the comparison of change and evolution of urban forms and building types over time and across space. Members are drawn from several disciplines, including architecture, geography, history, sociology, urban design and urban planning. ISUF organizes [conferences](#), publishes the [journal Urban Morphology](#) and provides an international framework for communication between members.

CITIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

The Twenty-seventh International Seminar on Urban Form (ISUF 2020) took place as a virtual conference from September 1 to 4, 2020. The conference was organized and sponsored by the College of Architecture + Planning at the University of Utah. The organizers invited participation in the Conference by interested academics and professionals world wide

As we focus on world-wide pandemic, it is appropriate for morphologists to reflect on the cities that are being built in the 21st century and analyze the extraordinary changes in urban form that characterized 20th century cities. The theme of "Cities in the 21st Century" will also look forward to the new morphologies of world mega-cities, which are decidedly unique in history, as well as responsive to burgeoning city populations. The theme has special meaning, in that there is a new urgency in developing and adapting sustainable urban forms for the growing majority of residents in cities.

The conference allowed researchers to explore the current state of evolving world urban morphology, encompassing the following subthemes:

- The evolving morphology of world mega-cities. Mega-cities arising in Asia and Africa are showing extreme and challenging new forms. This theme explores the analysis and comparison of these built environments, and will begin to collectively identify and assess mega-city physical characteristics.
- Legacies of the 20th century: repairing modern city form. The 20th century was particularly disruptive to the continuity and form of the city, birthing multiple new typologies and forms based on technological imperatives. Nevertheless, these cities require extensive change in order to meet new challenges of sustainability and rapid urban growth. What is the urban morphology of urban repair?
- Sustainability as an imperative and limitation in urban and regional evolution. The singular world challenge for cities is dealing with climate change in its many iterations. How does the urban framework and urban regional form respond to sustainability? Are there relevant lessons from historic cities and their forms?
- New building and neighborhood typologies in response to urban crisis. The crisis brought about by rising urban populations, climate change, and potential catastrophic events calls for new typologies and revisited old typologies that can absorb and respond to these changes. How could the mechanisms of typological evolution address crisis?
- Adaptation of historic cities: weaknesses and strengths. Cities are continuous forms that slowly adapt over time to new conditions. The characteristics of historic cities must be protected, yet adaptation still needs to occur.

- Utopian and ideal cities of the 21st century, including “smart” cities. Utopian cities of the 20th century influenced the actual form of many cities. As new utopian ideals arrive, what forms need to be retained and revered. Can we compare the ideal forms of previous eras to the issues of urban form today?
- Methods and practice of urban morphology as adapted to new city forms.
- The legacy of Gian Luigi Maffei. The passing of Professor Maffei in 2019 will be noted in a retrospective of his work and his influences. His proteges, admirers and colleagues held a celebratory reflection on his work.

ORGANIZATION OF THE PROCEEDINGS

The Proceedings encompass about 143 papers. In keeping with the general epistemological framework of urban morphology, the papers are divided into CASE STUDIES at three scales, METHODS of research; and THEORY.

Case studies dominate the field of urban morphology, as comparison is the primary epistemological framework for this burgeoning field. Comparisons of urban forms can be across time (diachronic) or across space (synchronic). Comparisons, in turn, lead to hypotheses regarding the formal elements of form, changes and change mechanisms, and the relationship of form to other elements and conditions of the city (social, historical, economic, environmental, etc.).

The case studies here explore the application of well-tested and/or experimental methods. We have organized them simply by scale, although they could have been organized by time period or geographic location. **Part I – Building Types and Public Realm**, explores ordinary buildings as well as the spaces of streets and squares. **Part II – Neighborhoods and Centers** – takes the ensemble found in urban places that includes patterns of streets, building, plots and other paths. **Part III – Region and Territory**, takes case studies of a region, encompassing patterns at the scale of multiple smaller areas.

In **Part IV – Methods**– we explore proposals for new and evolving methods of urban morphological research, which nowadays often means digitally-supported analysis and comparison or the use of other new technology like drones.

Finally, in **Part V – Theory**, well-regarded theories supporting the research are exposed, expanded and explained, while new researchers propose new ideas about urban morphology theory.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ISUF wishes to thank and acknowledge the organizer Professor Emerita Brenda Case Scheer and her assistant, Dr. Pratiti Tagore, who was awarded her Ph.D about one month after the conference. The conference was sponsored by the University of Utah College of Architecture and Planning (Keith Diaz-Moore, Dean) with support from the American Institute of Architects Utah Chapter (Molly Robinson and Laura Smith, co-chairs of the Urban Design Committee). The conference is grateful for the encouragement and guidance of the members of the ISUF Executive Committee: Wendy McClure, Vitor Oliveira, Michael Barke, Guiseppe Strappa, and Peter Larkham.

SCIENTIFIC COMMITTEE

The conference committee was chaired by Professor Brenda Case Scheer and the following served as members of the Scientific Review Committee:

<i>First Name</i>	<i>Last Name</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Country</i>
Meta	Berghauer Pont	Chalmers University	Sweden
Adriana	Nascimento	Universidade Federal de São João Del-Rei	Brazil
Agnieszka	Wir-Konas	Northumbria University	United Kingdom
Anna Agata	Kantarek	Cracow University of Technology	Poland
Ye	Zhang	National University of Singapore	Singapore
Aleksandra	Djordjevic	University of Belgrade, Faculty of Architecture	Serbia
Alessandro	Camiz	Özyeğin University, -DRUM	Turkey
Chih-Hung	Chen	National Cheng Kung University	Taiwan
Dalia	Dijokiene	Vilnius Gediminas Technical University	Lithuania
Darren	Nel	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Hong Kong
Fei	Chen	University of Liverpool	United Kingdom
Gerhard	Bruyns	The Hong Kong Polytechnic University	Hong Kong
Shigeru	Satoh	Waseda University	Japan
Qingyu	GONG	Tianjin University	China
Gustavo	Fierro Obando	Universidad d	Ecuador
Hajo	Neis	University of Oregon	United States
Howard	Davis	University of Oregon	United States
Hua	Xiaoning	Nanjing University	China
Ivor	Samuels	Birmingham University	United Kingdom
Tze Ming	Leung	MI	Hong Kong
Juan	Colomer	Universitat Politècnica de Valencia	Spain
Yulia	Popova		Russian Federation
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Koichiro	Aitani	Texas A & M University	United States
Ayşe Sema	Kubat	İstanbul Technical University	Turkey
Karsten	Ley	Buxtehude University of Applied Sciences	Germany
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Maria Cristina	Teixeira	Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais	Brazil
Michael	Barke	Northumbria University	United Kingdom
Mohammad	Sarraf	Uppsala University	Sweden
Mujesira	Bakovic Ergun	Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University	Turkey
Nadia	Charalambous	University of Cyprus	Cyprus
Paolo	Carlotti	Sapienza - University of Rome	Italy
Peter	Larkham	Birmingham City University	United Kingdom
Pierre	Gauthier	Concordia University	Canada
Lian	Tang	Nanjing University	China
Teresa	Marat-Mendes	Instituto Universitário de Lisboa ISCTE-IUL	Portugal
Thereza-Christina	Carvahlo	Fluminense Federal University	Brazil
Todor	Stojanovski	KTH Royal Institute of Technology	Sweden
Tolga	Ünlü	Çukurova University	Turkey
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Jason	Gilliland	Western University	Canada
Vicente	Colomer	Universitat Politècnica de Valencia	Spain
Wendy	McClure	University of Idaho	United States

Vitor	Oliveira	CITTA, Universidade do Porto	Portugal
Wowo	Ding	Nanjing University	China
Karl	Kropf	Oxford Brookes University	United Kingdom
Frederico	Holanda	University of Brasília	Brazil
Luna	Khirfan	University of Waterloo	Canada
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Ole	Fischer	University of Utah	United States
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