
ISUF Council meeting 2021

This report summarizes reports, discussions and decisions of ISUF Council at its online meeting of 25 June 2021 as reported to the ISUF General Meeting of 2 July 2021.

President's Report

Wendy McClure presented her final report as ISUF President. She marked the sudden death of Jeremy Whitehand just days before the conference, and the personal and professional loss felt by ISUF members. She extended ISUF's condolences to his wife Susan and their children and grandchildren.

She noted that, despite challenging global circumstances induced by political differences and a pandemic, ISUF has made significant progress towards achieving several goals outlined in the 2017 report on future directions. To encourage both collaboration between regional networks and to strengthen the relevance of urban morphology research to professional practice, ISUF launched a small grant programme in January 2018. To date, two grant cycles involving three separate projects and six regional networks have been awarded funding through a competitive, peer-review process. Each of these projects has featured comparative studies of morphological regions by participating networks. Their findings represent progress towards achieving collaborative research processes, however some aspirational goals remain unrealized.

The various local ISUF networks had received higher prominence through establishment of a coordinating position, as part of ISUF's executive leadership team. That position is currently held by Giuseppe Strappa. ISUF continues to encourage formation of new networks, and a North American network is under discussion.

Nicola Marzot had been invited to further develop the concept of a practice prize. He had recently provided the ISUF Executive Committee with a draft response, largely in the form of questions regarding scale and scope for prize eligibility and associated costs. This can now be considered further. Vítor Oliveira is leading a Task Force on Teaching Urban Morphology, which will report in three years' time.

The pandemic exposed both our vulnerability as an international organization, and our resilience. Brenda Scheer and Sergio Porta, and their teams,

had made heroic efforts in converting conferences to fully online delivery. Although our opportunities for face-to-face collaboration have been temporarily curtailed, digital outreach has widened the circle of engagement to include younger researchers and more diverse geographies. Most notably, Todor Stojanovski has been hosting two regular monthly coffee-house (or pub) style online seminars during the pandemic. Todor's efforts to keep us connected across multiple time zones, friendly to participants in both eastern and western hemispheres, are much appreciated. In recognition of a need to strengthen ISUF's digital presence, Alessandro Camiz has recently been invited to lead 'Digital ISUF', a task force charged with exploring issues such as improving our web presence, digital options for journal publication, and staging hybrid conferences.

She concluded by stating that as her term as president drew to a close, she wished to express her gratitude for the opportunity to serve the ISUF council and membership. The experience of working closely with dedicated individuals who have helped to shape ISUF into a vibrant, financially solvent, and resilient organization had been a privilege. Most of all, she treasured the opportunities for international friendships and collegial discourse that active participation in ISUF leadership provides, and was grateful to leave this post in good hands.

Treasurer's report

Michael Barke noted that ISUF's finances remain in a healthy state, although the overall surplus to be carried forward is notably less than the previous financial year. The main reason for this was that, unlike 2019–20, an award was made for research support to co-operating Regional Networks (Italy and Brazil). There was also a smaller conference income, inevitably given the problems and disruption of the Covid pandemic and a slight reduction in journal subscriptions. The final factor is that journal issue size and production costs have both increased. Whilst ISUF has a substantial surplus this is not a major problem, and journal production costs can be subsidized from general funds. This is justifiable as the journal remains overwhelmingly the predominant academic and public face of ISUF. However, this imbalance serves as a reminder that conferences as a source of covering costs remain

vital. As subscriptions have not been raised for over a decade, it may soon be time to review this in order to support our growing activities.

Finally, Michael gave notice that he would be retiring from the post of Treasurer at the ISUF 2022 conference in Poland. By then, he will have been Treasurer for an unparalleled 14 years, and believed that it is time for fresh input into ISUF's financial and broader general management.

Secretary-General's report

Vitor Oliveira confirmed the range of ISUF's business despite the ongoing COVID restrictions. An excellent conference had been organized, with thanks to Sergio Porta and his team. Local network activities, the journal, and the innovative online seminars showed a healthy organization. But he noted that the history of ISUF focused on learning more about the relationship between urban space and society. The future would rest with young researchers, and there were a number of challenges, including finding common ground amongst research traditions; communication; teaching urban morphology; research and practice; and ISUF's lack of coverage in Africa and Southern Asia. These would form the core of ISUF's future agenda.

Editor's report

Peter Larkham also recorded his sorrow at the death of the journal's founding Editor. A special issue, vol. 26(2), would mark his contribution to ISUF.

He thanked all those who, through the difficult year of BREXIT, COVID crisis and lockdowns, have continued in many ways to ensure that we have managed to publish further high-quality issues and distribute them on time, and particular mention must be made of Henry Ling Ltd; and to the reviewers and members of the Editorial Board for reviewing papers and contributing suggestions for the development of the journal. Małgorzata Hanzl and Alessandro Camiz are joining the Board.

In terms of journal content, there has been little change in the types of contribution that have characterized the journal. However, Reports have decreased: while the number and diversity of online

events seems high, it also seems more difficult to report on a virtual event. The 'filler' news items have been discontinued: they no longer seemed popular with readers and consumed much editorial time. As in past issues, authors have been widely spread geographically – with only 3 of 31 from the UK. As has been the case throughout the history of the journal, the majority of authors of articles did not have English as their first language – 23 of the 31 authors in these 2 issues.

The review process has been slower than normal during the COVID crisis period: however, the time-lag has decreased significantly since last year because the number of very poor or irrelevant submissions, rejected within 2 days, has increased, to 21 such papers this year. We still reject over 70 per cent of papers, but the majority of those rejected are of very poor quality, many also being irrelevant to our specialist focus and often clearly not written with our journal in mind.

There have been several positive developments in the past year, including the use of ORCID author identification numbers, and the allocation of DOI numbers, for main papers and viewpoints. All content from 2007 to 2015 is now made open access, although more recent issues need to remain behind our paywall as a membership benefit for subscribing institutions.

Webmaster's report

Richard Whitehand reported that the number of website 'visitors' has stabilized at around 3000 unique 'visits' per month (a similar figure to last year). Almost three-quarters of visits to the site are made via direct links (such as links from other sites, libraries, personal bookmarks) and the rest originate from web searches (primarily on Google) where 'urbanform.org', 'urban', 'morphology', 'urban morphology' and 'isuf' are commonly-used search phrases. The online journal section continues to be by far the most heavily-used part of the site. Articles on public/open access each have between roughly 100 and 2000 initiated downloads over a 12-month period. The conferences section remains the most-visited non-journal part of the site (receiving around 500 unique views per month).

Concerns about the many shortcomings and ageing nature of the current platform/operation continue to grow. It is now a matter of urgency that the website is modernized, especially with respect to how the journal is handled.

Local group coordinator's report

Giuseppe Strappa reported that there were 9 active networks, and a North American network was being developed. Activities had been greatly constrained by COVID but had continued online, with an impressive list of local initiatives. The amendment to ISUF's Constitution was welcome in that it increased visibility of local networks, and there was now a dedicated page on ISUF's website. Future activities would consider not only research but the significance of teaching, and proposals for a summer school were under development; with the first likely to be in Rome in 2022. A number of regional conferences were planned for 2022 and would be announced via the ISUF website.

Membership secretary's report

Tolga Ünlü reported that he had been able to analyze membership data from the seven most recent ISUF conferences. This showed that 1389 colleagues had participated, although the average attendance per person is 1.32. The main reason for the dominance of infrequent participation seems to be the prominence of local attendance. That is to say, the attendees from the organizing country outnumber all other countries. However, this may benefit local networks, whether formal or informal.

It is notable that participants from China, Italy, Brazil, Portugal, Spain, the United States, Cyprus and Russia, Turkey, the United Kingdom, Canada,

Poland, Sweden, and Australia, covered 70 per cent of all participations in the last 7 ISUF conferences. There is a clear spatial imbalance. Formation of a robust and reliable database would make it more possible to get accurate results about the membership structure of ISUF and would help the work of the Treasurer and journal distribution. It would also facilitate a concise questionnaire to seek more data and opinions from ISUF's members.

Other business

Two teams presented proposals for future conferences: in Belgrade and Nanjing. It was felt that both were high quality and interesting proposals, so it was agreed to ask the Belgrade team to organize the 2023 conference and the Nanjing team to prepare for 2024.

Elections to Council were announced. Vítor Oliveira has taken up the post of ISUF President, and Tolga Ünlü becomes Secretary-General. Vicente Colomer and Brenda Scheer stepped down at the end of their terms of office, and were thanked for their contributions. Anna Agata Kantarek joined Council representing the 2022 conference organization team.

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Some thoughts on ISUF 2021 Glasgow

(As with the 2020 Salt Lake City conference, it has proved difficult to find a 'reporter' to cover the bulk of the conference, as so many were digitally dipping in and out. Therefore these thoughts have been provided by the conference organizer on behalf of his team. Comments from participants have been extremely positive; for example, 'you managed to organise not quite an online seminar but rather a gigantic, incredible miracle. And you certainly did that with efficacy and efficiency but also with courtesy, friendliness, and warm affection'.)

This was a memorable conference, in many ways: some good, and one, indeed, very saddening for all of us. Just three days before the opening, Vítor advised us of Jeremy Whitehand's

unexpected death. A few febrile last-minute arrangements were promptly made to ensure that the conference reflected the radical change of mood that suddenly overwhelmed everyone. To some extent, this turned out to be a relief for many of us, who had a chance to 'process' the loss in a warm gathering of many friends sharing the same feelings.

Let me tell the story of this conference from my own point of observation. Urban morphology has always been a matter of great interest for me since my student years at the Polytechnic of Milan in the late 1980s. Urban morphology was central in the Architecture School in Milan in those years, with many great figures still actively teaching, such as Giorgio Grassi, Guido Canella, Antonio

Monestiroli, Maurice Cerasi, Mara De Benedetti and a significant presence of Aldo Rossi's first-generation disciples on the academic staff. I was as fascinated by that narrative as I was disappointed by the lack of substantial scientific contents behind it, until I understood a bit more of its genealogy, its branching out from an earlier different tradition that originated with Saverio Muratori in Venice and Rome, and was then brought forward by Gianfranco Caniggia and Gian Luigi Maffei in Florence. I reverted to those origins then, and that was the beginning of a long intellectual journey.

However, it was only in 2015, nearly 30 years later, that I dared to show up at a ISUF conference. I did it on purpose. I waited for a long time until I was sure I had something really innovative to show. That year, in Rome, my PhD student Jacob Dibble and I presented Jacob's first results of a large numerical study of the urban form of 50 neighbourhoods in the UK. Jacob had conducted an extensive survey of them from his desk in Glasgow: the idea was to put together an approach that would have allowed a complete and rich description of urban form based on data available from remote sources, in order to lay out a method that could, in principle, be scaled up limitlessly to cover potentially the whole world. We had always called it 'urban morphometrics', in recognition of our debt to morphometrics in biological evolution and development sciences. In that paper, Jacob and I presented some first evidence from the 50 UK neighbourhoods as well as the conceptual background of the study. And it was with great joy and some nervousness that we came to understand that Jeremy himself would be chair of our session, that day in Rome. Was that just by chance? I still do not know the answer to this question.

On the way out of the room, Jeremy wanted to talk to me. That was the first and last time I had the pleasure to exchange words with him face-to-face. He said that the avenue of research we presented was indeed very promising and worth any effort. But – he continued – there was no need to frame it in juxtaposition to 'traditional' urban morphology approaches. He maintained that quantitative methods had always been a core part of urban morphology since M. R. G. Conzen and even before him, and exploring those links would have made our efforts stronger and more sharply targeted. What he said was important, but *the way he said it* left an enduring mark on me: there was, in fact, no trace of defensiveness nor aggression in his remarks. I could feel only and solely a genuine drive to the scientific advancement of the matter, and

that was generous, it was indeed very generous of him.

When, four years later, we were assigned the organization of the 2021 conference, my first thought was of Jeremy's words. Studies in some way falling in a morphometric approach had grown considerably by then, and we wanted our conference to be characterized by the recognition of this fact of science. But it was quite clear to me that the grounding of emerging morphometric approaches in the core constituency of urban morphology as a discipline was paramount in order to make sense of them. This had to be reflected everywhere in the conference, from its title to its thematic structure, to the round table that I chaired entitled 'Urban morphometrics in urban morphology: disciplinary roots and new perspectives'. And it was essential to have Jeremy opening it, which he eventually did, with a beautiful, precisely constructed pre-recorded talk entitled 'The nature of urban morphology'.

From an organizational point of view, the conference was a solid success. We received 478 abstracts, of which 410 were accepted after being assessed by 78 reviewers via 892 individual reviews. We eventually attracted 380 paying delegates from 42 countries distributed across 5 continents, who animated 95 live sessions offering 298 presentations, 6 round tables and 4 keynote presentations.

The organization was led by a core group of five people: Sergio Porta, Ombretta Romice, Alessandra Feliciotti and Alessandro Venerandi of the University of Strathclyde and Martin Fleischmann of the University of Liverpool. I think it is fair to say that Alessandra and Martin covered a most prominent role in this group, and were key to ensuring the success of this complex operation. We also have to thank 12 students and former students of the Department of Architecture, some as part of the architecture students' society A131, who have been key in producing fantastic initiatives such as the five virtual walking tours and the exhibition 'Glasgow: a self-portrait', as well as all the media-communication side of the conference.

External contributions of different kinds came from the Scottish Government, the City of Glasgow, and the Glasgow Heritage Trust whose director Niall Murphy gifted us a stunning summary of the history of Glasgow's urban form in a mere 25 minutes. Finally, the University of Strathclyde has supported the conference in all possible manners, with competence and enthusiasm, in very difficult times.

Nothing of this would have happened in the way it did, if Jeremy had not felt the need to talk to me, six years ago at ISUF 2015 in Rome. His legacy, we hope, is with us and with our new Centre, restoring a link with the city of Glasgow that Jeremy had built up long ago in the early days of his life and work.

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Remembering Jeremy Whitehand

Several initiatives are already in hand to commemorate Jeremy Whitehand's life and work. Memorably, at the opening of the 2021 Conference itself, Professor Sir Jim McDonald, Principal of the University of Strathclyde, announced that it was proposed to name the first three inaugural scholarships of the newly-constituted Strathclyde Centre of Urban Policy, Planning and Technology after Jeremy Whitehand. The new Centre will launch a project named 'People make places: a living atlas of urban form in Scotland'. The project plans to generate a novel numerical description and classification of urban form types over the

national territory of Scotland as a base-layer for the construction of a digital analogue of the life of Scottish people and their communities. It is appropriate, given some of his earlier papers, that these studentships should be named in his honour.

Secondly, a theme issue of *Urban Morphology* will focus on Jeremy's contribution to ISUF and the development of urban morphology in theory and practice. This is currently planned to be vol. 26(2), September 2022. Contributions discussing, exploring and developing his ideas are invited, and prospective authors should contact Peter Larkham: peter.larkham@bcu.ac.uk.

The *U+D* study day: 'La ricerca di morfologia urbana in Italia; tradizione e futuro' ('Urban morphology research in Italy; its tradition and the future')

Online events facilitated by Zoom or similar applications have become the new normal during the past year. However, the meeting held by ISUF Italy on 14 January was unusual in that it ran for twelve hours (from 9am to 9pm Rome time) with a one-hour interval for lunch. Conducted in Italian, there were 43 presentations of 10–15 minutes each, which were divided into four thematic sessions – Schools, Theory and Methods, Instruments, and Research, with a final one-hour round-table discussion. Organized by the editorial team of *U+D urbanform and design*, the journal of ISUF Italy (<https://www.urbanform.it>), the day was chaired by Giuseppe Strappa, with the four sessions chaired by academics who are regular participants in ISUF – Paolo Carlotti, Matteo Ieva, Marco Maretto and Alessandro Merlo, with a five-strong editorial team directed by Annalinda Neglia. This diversity and the speed of delivery necessary to keep within the time limits enforced by the Chairs, together with the complexity of some of the presentations and the paucity of graphic support (surprising, given that all the presentations were by

architects), makes a detailed review very difficult: therefore this account will pick up those salient aspects considered to be of more general interest.

For an anglophone attendee, perhaps the most striking aspect of the event was the number of participating institutions, from Turin to Palermo and Venice to Cagliari, with all the major schools of architecture between. It is doubtful whether any other country could muster such a wide diversity of university departments of architecture all professing a concern with urban morphology. This diversity was matched by the range of interpretations of the field, which went well beyond that of the Cannigia/ Muratori School, with which anglophone readers of this journal are likely to be most familiar.

To anglophones, another surprising aspect is that all the participants, without exception, were architects. This could be explained in several ways. The first is the number of architects in Italy. In 2014 it was reported that Italy had 1 architect for every 414 inhabitants, compared with 1,300 inhabitants in the United States and 1,880 inhabitants in the



Figure 1. Torre Velasca, Milan (source: David Orban, CC-BY-2.0).

United Kingdom (Quirk, 2014). It is not surprising, therefore, that many Italian architects have moved into adjacent professions, especially town planning, but also urban history and geography.

Complementary to this sociological explanation there are deep cultural reasons for the continuity of the involvement of Italian architects in their architectural and urban heritage. The modernism of CIAM and its adherents never had the impact on Italy that it had in other countries. Scant attention was paid to le Corbusier's injunction to kill the corridor street and to eliminate the urban heritage in order to provide a *tabula rasa* for the implementation of new urban forms. The twentieth-century Italian architectural debate fluctuated between modernism and tradition, and its impact on urban morphology and architecture was discussed in detail in two papers in *Urban Morphology* nearly twenty years ago by two of the authors presenting at the study day, Marzot (2002) and Menghini (2002).

A striking example of the concern for continuity is the Torre Velasca, completed in 1958, using modern construction methods, but replete with references to historic buildings and very conscious

of its place in the Milan skyline (Figure 1). A tower block of this configuration would have been unthinkable at that time in an anglophone context. The eminent British critic Rayner Banham (1959) wrote that it was an infantile regression. One of the architects of the Torre Velasca was Ernesto Rogers, a member of the practice BBPR. Pezzetti (Milan) quoted him as stating that 'things already made continue in us, thus establishing a tradition' – an appropriate rationale for this remarkable building. Falcidieno (Genoa) and Visconti (Naples) asserted that a consciousness of the historical context enriches the critical and creative processes of the architect. This dialectic between the past and present, and between tradition and innovation, offers a particularly relevant *modus operandi* to current architectural practice which, in the UK, seems to be divided between those who go back to an invented past which never existed (Krier) and those who ignore the context into which they insert their project (Hadid).

Menghini together with Argenti, although both architects, presented the urban morphology tradition of their School of Engineering in Rome. This was the only presentation outside a school of

architecture and raises the interesting question of the participation of engineers in urban morphology. They argue that they were very prominent at the beginning of the last century because of concerns with hygiene and infrastructure and, in many countries, were responsible for preparing the first modern urban plans. Engineers, particularly highway engineers, still have a major influence on urban form, where their imposition of quantitative norms has a defining impact on street design, yet they are hardly represented among the active members of ISUF.

In contrast to most anglophone academics, several of the contributors are active practitioners and they discussed some of their projects. Collotti (Florence) gave a detailed presentation of an implemented project for the rebuilding of part of the historic centre of Frankfurt. That was a very special case and it would be informative to learn about the work of other practitioners who have consciously incorporated concepts of urban morphology into their realised projects. They do not need to be exemplary projects – we can learn a great deal from what did not work. For example, the proposals of Cervellati for Bologna attracted a lot of publicity in the 1970s, but no evaluation of their impact on the city has been published in English.

In addition to discussing and comparing different schools of urban morphology, particularly Muratori/Cannigia with that of Aymonino/Rossi and the way in which they were interpreted and applied in several universities, a number of presentations suggested future research directions. For example, Trisciuglio's (Turin) comments on the need to consider the real estate market and property rights, both of which have a major impact on urban form and have been largely neglected in urban morphological studies. Another direction prompted by globalisation and the expansion of cities is what Arcidiacono (Reggio Calabria) terms

the shattered relationship between the landscape and the city which needs to be restored. This is a concern also emphasised by contributions from Gianfriddo and Messina, both from Catania. The COVID pandemic also stimulated some suggestions for future directions of investigation. For example, Russo (Reggio Calabria) noted that precautions such as social distancing could have an impact on urban form, with a possible reduction in the importance of large urban centres, resulting in an urban system no longer based on a hierarchy of centre and periphery, but instead one of self-contained small centres.

The final round-table discussion provided an opportunity for several members of the audience, who had not contributed earlier, to offer observations on a number of the presentations. It rounded off a well-organized and carefully-planned event which had attracted over one hundred participants with a majority present for the whole twelve hours.

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Fourth ISUF–H Conference, Barcelona, Spain, 28–30 September 2020

The fourth conference of the Hispanic International Seminar on Urban Form (ISUF–H) was held in Barcelona, as a virtual event, on September 28–30, 2020. It was titled '*Forma urbis and metropolitan territories. Metropolis in recomposition. Urban design prospects in the twenty-first century*', and chaired by Carles Llop with Marina Cervera and Francesc Peremiquel (Polytechnic University of Catalonia [UPC]).

A stunning video presentation by Jon Tugores started the conference, allowing the 400+ participants from over 140 universities or public bodies of 20 different countries to fly over a range of metropolises. The 'trip' ended with a virtual landing in Barcelona where Carles Llop extended a welcome from the facilities of the Barcelona Institute of Technology for the Habitat (BIT Habitat). The six themes that structured the contributions, briefly

introduced by Francesc Peremiquel, drew a broad panorama to place the key approaches that, based on morphological analyses, are contributing to the transformation and management of cities and metropolitan territories. Vicente Colomer (founding president of ISUF–H) drew attention to the quantity and quality of contributions received and the need for knowledge exchange within the already consolidated Hispanic network. The participation in this opening session of municipal professionals, Josep Maria Carrera and Xavier Matilla, emphasized the willingness of the conference to contribute to the relationship between theory and praxis, perfectly exemplified in the city of Barcelona, frequently used as urban laboratory as Francesc Torres recalled.

Plenary sessions provided historical reviews of how different approaches have evolved and evaluated how they help to better deal with contemporary territorial realities. To this end, a retrospective and prospective explanation of some of the ‘schools’ of urban morphology – Dutch, French, Italian and Portuguese – was provided by eleven speakers in four different sessions.

In the first session, Horacio Capel and Antonio Font established a framework of needs and horizons to show how the renewed morphological analysis can be used to reorient planning, management and social practices. Joaquín Sabaté introduced the different morphological approaches, focusing specifically on the identity and coherence of the Dutch School of Urban Morphology and its relationship with landscape, territory and sustainability. In the session on the French morphological school, David Mangin and Pierre Alain Trévelo spoke about France and the Central European context. The first set out a retrospective vision, while the second presented a more contemporary perspective of how to use morphological analysis on a territory-wide scale, pointing out that the possibilities of transformation are implicit in the spatial organization itself. Mosé Ricci introduced a session about the legacy of the Italian school, reflecting that the relationship between form and function was not simplistic as the former should be seen as a process. Maria Chiara Tosi, through the morphological tradition of Venice, and Patrizia Gabellini, through the city of Bologna, proposed the understanding of inheritances to allow new ways of addressing the current multiplicity that is both physical, social, environmental and intellectual. Manuel Gausa closed this session reflecting on whether classical terms do fully respond to the current paradigm. Finally, within

the framework of the Portuguese school, Sofia Morgado showed an urban perspective through the city of Lisbon and Teresa Marat-Mendes spoke about the relationship between metabolism and urban form, amplifying its meaning, sense and scope.

The ‘book lunch’, a lunchtime book presentation session successfully introduced at Zaragoza’s second ISUF–H conference in 2018, was complemented here with a session on urban networks. Javier Monclús, Carmen Díez Medina and Ana Portalés introduced and moderated both sessions, insisting on the importance of knowledge sharing and networking, one of the ultimate goals of these conferences.

A session on urban agendas was another novelty that reaffirmed the necessity of establishing relationships between theory and praxis. As Vicente Colomer highlighted at the closing session, they are fundamental to articulate scientific production with urban practice and urban policy. David Lucas, Agustí Serra and Arcadi España, as representatives and professional staff of the Ministry of Transport, Mobility and Urban Agenda, the Generalitat Catalana and the Generalitat Valenciana respectively, presented the urban agendas of these organizations. The need for new instruments and guides to government action in our cities was pointed out, as well as the role of urban morphology in delivering sustainable and prosperous cities, including numerous agents, participation, transversality and inclusivity.

The conference included 155 paper presentations, 35 of which were presented in six plenary sessions and 120 in parallel sessions. In addition, 26 ‘elevator presentations’ could be seen and commented upon during coffee breaks. All live sessions at ISUF–H 2020 Conference are now available on the UPC Commons repository (<https://upcommons.upc.edu/handle/2117/330720>) and proceedings can be found on the ISUF–H website (<https://isufh.org/>).

Carles Llop reminded participants at the closing session that this work in progress will continue physically on 29 September 2021, coinciding with the inauguration of the Barcelona International Biennial of Landscape Architecture. He also commented on the success of the Conference with its range of presentations. Mickel Donason, Estanislau Roca and Ramon Torra stressed the importance of the relationships between universities, administrations, companies and society, claiming the need to return to science as the basis for the development of our professional activity.

In this regard, Vicente Colomer highlighted the relationship between ISUF–H and universities, and its vocation to act as a bridge between city governments and urban practice. Iñiqui Carnicero pointed out that the promotion of exchange with universities and the professional sector is also one of the goals of the New Spanish Urban Agenda. In the same way that the conference began with a video approaching Barcelona from above, a new

video introduced participants to San Juan (Costa Rica), where the next ISUF–H Conference will be held in December 2021.

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Pandemics and urban form: first blended conference

2020 was an extraordinary year for all the countries of the world. The COVID pandemic has spread globally and has not ended yet, confirming that the world is dramatically changing. Scholars in the field of the built environment are increasingly discussing the relationship between survival and urban form, two concepts once closely linked. The pandemic has also brought us other questions: how can people get along with nature? How should we regulate social behaviour? Should we use science and technologies to improve the built environment? We have experienced unprecedented changes in our social behaviour since the start of the COVID pandemic. These changes, whether permanent or temporary, have made our cities different from those in which we lived one year ago. This new society includes a completely different retail pattern, a reduced use of public transportation, an increased and multipurpose use of residential spaces, the exploitation of online activities, a reduced use of public spaces such as offices, stadiums, museums, theatres, schools and universities, but also streets, parks and squares. Some scholars have recently been discussing these transformations, noticing that most were already ongoing, but had been accelerated by the pandemic, while others consider them to be completely new. In the medium or long term, substantial changes in the built environment will follow these new social patterns. Therefore, we should thoroughly investigate these changes to plan and design accordingly for the future, in order to mitigate the diffusion of new airborne diseases and to meet the new social demands.

This conference has been designed around three tracks: history as a mirror to analyse the present condition, the changes we are experiencing, and plans and projects for the future urban form.

The conference will provide a meeting-point for researchers on the urban environment and those who are considering new design and planning solutions. This first international conference on ‘Pandemics and the changing built environment’ (PUF2022) will take place in a blended form in April 2022 at Özyeğin University, Istanbul. We intend it as the first of a yearly series of meetings for scholars interested in pandemics and the transformations of urban form. We welcome proposals for papers and posters related to the conference topics. Abstracts of papers will be double peer reviewed by an international scientific committee before acceptance. We encourage scholars, planners, architects and city managers to propose their abstracts on the following topics.

Conference track 1: Learning from history

Historical plagues and urban transformations
Pandemics, territorial cycles and morphological periods

The Justinian plague and the collapse of classical cities

The black plague and the Renaissance

The Spanish flu and the modernist manifesto

Conference track 2: Shedding light on the contemporary world

The impact of the pandemics on the physical space
Changes in social behaviours and in the built environment

Smart working and new office spaces

Public health policies and their effects on the built environment

Virtual spaces/communications and the effects on real spaces

Climate change, pollution and waste treatment

Online education

Conference track 3: The world is waiting for us to take action!

The impact of the built environment on public health

Design and future solutions for public health

Technologies, design and smart cities

Architectural responses to COVID-19

Hospital design and COVID-19

Pandemics and open spaces, roads and parks

New housing and building types

Planning for health in the built environment

From global metropolis to sustainable small towns

Public transportation: airports, subways, train stations and bus terminals

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