
Twenty-Fifth International Seminar on Urban Form, Krasnoyarsk, Russia, 5–9 July 2018

The Twenty-Fifth International Seminar on Urban Form was organized by the Siberian Federal University and chaired by Irina Kukina. Its theme was 'Urban form and social context'. There were 13 sub-themes: 'Urban morphological theory', 'Urban morphological methods and techniques', 'The evolution of urban form and social influences', 'Urban form and technology', 'Fringe belts and present-day influences', 'Historical urban fabric', 'Urban landscape: history and socio-cultural transformations', 'Architectural typology: history, development, trends', 'Urban identity', 'Urban regeneration and new urban designs', 'Tools of analysis', 'Post socialist urban form', and 'Teaching urban morphology'. There were 158 participants and 146 presentations. The Russian Federation and China were the most represented countries.

At the opening of the conference, Jeremy Whitehand, Pier Giorgio Gerosa and Alexander Slabukha were the keynote speakers. In his video presentation entitled 'Taking a long view: two centuries of urban morphology', Whitehand highlighted two characteristics of urban morphology: its multidisciplinary and its relationship to ecology. It is the multidisciplinary of urban morphology that has been one of the essential characteristics of ISUF, in which different schools of thought, notably Conzenian, Muratorian, Versailles, and Berkeley, came together. Whitehand described how this multidisciplinary was in the early years dominated by the fields of geography and architecture, but was later enriched by contributions from planning, history and archaeology. He showed that urban morphological research has been growing both in the number of papers produced and the number of journals in which that research is published. He related the early phases of urban morphology to the distinction between cultural landscape (Schlüter, 1899) and natural

landscape (Von Richthofen, 1883), emerging out of the concept of landscape put forward by Ritter (1865). He explored the potential of the fringe-belt concept in developing the interrelationship between urban morphology and ecology. Though it originated out of academic research, notably in the work of Conzen (1960) following the study by Louis (1936) on Berlin, Whitehand argued that the fringe-belt concept had relevance to planning practice.

Following Whitehand, Gerosa examined the changes in cities, such as Bellinzona, Lugano and Krasnoyarsk, through cartographic representation of urban form. In his presentation 'Society, geopolitics, icono-cartography, historical atlases and urban forms: thoughts from a case study', he argued that in the early-nineteenth century travellers tended to conceive of nature as a component of urban form in their drawings, whereas in later periods in their focus on the city centre they envisaged the city as a personality. He suggested that cartography might be interpreted as a means of representing paradigm changes in the socio-political context of society. The session was completed by Alexander Slabukha's brief examination of the evolution of the urban form of Krasnoyarsk.

Keynote speakers on the second day addressed changes in the urban form of Russian cities. In his paper on 'Spatial imbalance of urban development of settlements and ways of its solution in modern conditions', Mikhail Shubenkov focused on the changing role of cities associated with recent developments in technology. He defined cities as centres for the transfer of knowledge and the development of decisions and recommendations. He drew attention to the emerging need to find new ways to develop spatial policies to tackle the problems of changing societies and to sustain the continuous development of cultural heritage. In a presentation on 'A comprehensive view of the

evolution of the urban spatial structure of the largest post-Soviet cities in Russia', Galina Ptichnikova examined the changing structure of Russian cities with populations of approximately 1 million people in the post-socialist period. Changes in urban form in these cities are evident in the new high-rise residential and commercial developments, and in large-scale district-wide urban development projects. New projects give little or no consideration to the morphological characteristics of the surrounding environment. Cities that have hosted global events have been prone to more rapid changes. Ptichnikova concluded that the results of morphological analysis of the development of contemporary Russian cities could be used to predict the urban structure of future development.

In the last keynote of the second day, Elena Akhmedova investigated the urban development of Samara as an industrial city in relation to national policies for developing smart cities. 'The triad of development agents' aims to bring smart university, smart park-plant and smart city together to invoke a sustainable urban development not only in the Samara region but in the Russian Federation as a whole.

Among the keynote presentations on the third day, Andrey Bolshakov addressed a method to analyse the changing street network through identification of connectivity, adaptation, stability and variability. In his presentation on Irkutsk's downtown street network and quarters, he suggested a scientific basis for the strategy of reconstruction of the historical Irkutsk downtown in relation to aspects of sustainable development. Alexey Krashenninikov discussed the accessibility and connectivity of places in his presentation on 'Cognitive urbanism and urban design of the built

environment' and investigated the influence of this on the development of public spaces.

The closing session was the General Meeting, which included the reports of the President, Secretary-General, Treasurer, Webmaster, and Editor of *Urban Morphology*. Vítor Oliveira was welcomed as the new Secretary-General, following Kai Gu's very successful two terms in that position. On behalf of Nadia Charalambous and Şebnem Önal Hoşkara, Ayşe Sema Kubat provided further information about the next ISUF conference, which is to be held in the University of Cyprus, Nicosia from 2 to 6 July 2019.

In the course of the coffee breaks participants found a congenial atmosphere for discussion (Figure 1), and there were opportunities for closer examination of Krasnoyarsk in a half-day bus and walking tour of old Krasnoyarsk. After the conference, many participants took part in post-conference tours. These included visits to Divnogorsk, the National Park of Krasnoyarsk Stolby, and the historic city of Yeniseisk.

The Organizing Committee, especially Irina Kukina, deserve all praise for organizing this successful conference. In relation to the keynote presentations, while Jeremy Whitehand exhibited a concise framework for the development of urban morphology, other colleagues provided in-depth insights into the historical development of, and recent changes in, Russian cities. The link between urban morphological theory and practice was a significant matter of discussion, as was the teaching of urban morphology, and questions were raised about the relation of urban form to social context. Looking forward, this successful conference raised expectations about the ISUF conference to be held next year in Nicosia, Cyprus.



Figure 1. Conference participants in one of the coffee breaks (photograph by Tolga Ünlü).

References

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