

Urban Morphology in Portugal: first conference of the Portuguese Network of Urban Morphology, Porto, Portugal, 8 June 2011

The Portuguese Network of Urban Morphology (PNUM) held its first conference in June 2011. The theme was *Morfologia Urbana em Portugal: Abordagens e Perspectivas* (Urban morphology in Portugal: approaches and perspectives). The conference took place in Porto and was hosted by the Department of Geography of the University of Porto, Portugal. It was organized by the PNUM Scientific Committee, comprising Vítor Oliveira (President), Jorge Correia, Mário Fernandes, Teresa Marat-Mendes and Paulo Pinho. Ana Natálio provided technical support.

The call for papers was one of the first announcements on the new PNUM website (<http://pnum.fe.up.pt/>). It was also disseminated through various universities, institutes and planning departments. In response, some 60 abstracts of proposed papers were received and 192 people registered to attend the conference.

The papers were organized into twelve thematic sessions, each of four or five papers. The themes were: morphological approaches; planning and urban management; urban form history I; trans-disciplinary perspectives; morphological techniques; urban form history II; urban form and sustainability; morphological elements – streets/infrastructure; morphological elements – streets; metropolitan scale; morphological elements – urban fabrics; and morphological elements – squares/public spaces.

These thematic sessions were preceded by an opening session to which contributions were made by Maria F. Marinho (Director of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Porto), Mário Fernandes

and Vítor Oliveira, the President of PNUM. The closing sessions contained contributions by Helder Marques (Director of the Department of Geography of the University of Porto), Paulo Pinho, Jorge Correia and Teresa Marat-Mendes.

The conference provided a much needed focal space for debate on Portuguese urban morphology. It was appreciated by those attending – researchers, academics, students and practitioners.

The 600-800 word abstracts of the papers presented at the conference are available on the PNUM website in both Portuguese and English. The general standard of the presentations was high. While a number dealt with the conclusions of research projects, there were also presentations that included research in progress by graduate students. Both types of contribution underlined the value of a ‘debating chamber’ of this type and the Scientific Council of PNUM is convinced of the merit of organizing similar conferences in future.

At the end of the conference, it was announced that the Second PNUM Conference – with the title *Morfologia Urbana nos Países Lusófonos* (Urban morphology in Portuguese-speaking countries) – will be held in 2012, in Lisboa, Portugal. Further information will be available on the PNUM website.

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Urban morphology and conservation – research and practice: University of Birmingham, UK, 13 September 2011

This one day workshop held in the M.R.G. Conzen Collection, University of Birmingham, was sponsored by ISUF in conjunction with the UK/Ireland Planning Research Conference, which was taking place in Birmingham from 12 to 14 September. The event reflected a growing interest and concern with the relationship between research and practice in the field of urban morphology and the opportunities and barriers that may exist to improving the exchange of knowledge between research scholars and planning and design

practitioners.

Karl Kropf (Built Form Resource Ltd, UK) started proceedings with a talk entitled ‘The pragmatics of urban morphology’, noting that the academic, ‘technical’ language used by urban morphologists was often a barrier to co-operation and suggesting that there was not necessarily anything to be lost in simplifying language and concepts in order to have a dialogue with non-specialists. Indeed it is pragmatically useful to have ‘loose’ concepts and ‘tight’ concepts in