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## **Fifth International Space Syntax Symposium, Delft, The Netherlands, 13-17 June 2005**

The Fifth International Space Syntax Symposium at the Technical University of Delft began with a series of workshops covering the basics of space syntax methods, as well as a workshop for teachers of space syntax and PhD students researching in the field. The organizers reported that the latter workshop, conducted by Professor Julienne Hanson (one of the originators of the field) and Dr Kayvan Karimi (a director of Space Syntax Limited), was particularly well attended and that this was an indication of the thirst of young researchers, sometimes working in remote locations, to find an opportunity to share ideas and methodological difficulties with their peers. This fifth biennial event (the proceedings are downloadable at <http://www.spacesyntax.tudelft.nl/>) demonstrated that space syntax, which emerged at the Bartlett, University College London in the 1980s as a theory and set of methods for researching the *Social logic of space* (Hillier and Hanson, 1984) has now grown to become a well-established field, with scholars and practitioners actively pursuing an astonishingly wide variety of research areas and design and technology applications.

Although many of the papers had space syntax methods at their core, it was evident also that researchers generally interested in a systematic approach to the study of the built environment had important contributions to make. A total of 96 long papers were presented, alongside 35 posters and short papers, by participants from about 30 countries. A number of themes emerged from the conference.

There was evidence that there is a broadening of interest in space syntax as a research area lying at the intersection of several fields, and that space syntax research was being undertaken in a wide range of related areas, such as architectural and urban design, anthropology, archaeology, urban history and urban morphology. Professor Jurgen Rosemann of TU Delft stated at the conference opening session that the symposium reinforces the importance of a scientific approach to research and the main driving force behind space syntax is a love of the subject, intellectual curiosity, a willingness to look closely and to listen to intuition. The latter idea was a recurring theme in several of the plenary sessions, where some fascinating discussions took place on the nature of research and the new challenges facing researchers at a time when computing and technology enable the creation of increasingly large and complex data sets. The importance of maintaining the idea of research as being about the setting up of questions was often mentioned.

The interdisciplinary approach offered by space syntax methods was evident in several presentations. One example was the paper co-authored by a biologist and cognitive neuroscientist who used the ability of space syntax to provide an objective description of space to study the relationship between the spatial properties of built environments and behaviour and perception (exploring isovist-based correlates of spatial behaviour and experience by Franz and Wiener). At one of the plenary sessions it was pointed out

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that space syntax has emerged as a major contributor to urban morphology in its ability to abstract the city map to a mathematical graph, allowing analysis of the map as set of relations between elements.

Not surprisingly, the theme of sustainability featured in many presentations, and there were several attempts to pin down a spatial definition to this sometimes amorphous concept. Irini Perdikogianni and Alan Penn proposed that both functional diversity and spatial intelligibility are vital for the urban sustainability of an area such as Clerkenwell in London (space syntax literature defines intelligibility as a feature of traditional urban villages, where there is a strong correspondence between local and global structures of space). A novel definition of sprawl was proposed by Ruth Conroy Dalton and Nick Dalton in their paper on 'American protopia: or peachtree city as an inadvertent, sustainable solution to urban sprawl'. By combining direct observation methods of patterns of movement in suburban Atlanta golf cart pathways with a rigorous mathematical modelling, the authors suggested that it is possible to plot a continuum from urban to suburban-like morphologies through statistical analysis of the numerical distribution of rings of circulation – the grid-like characteristics – of a series of areas in the UK and the USA.

The growth of interest in urban disfunctionality and social exclusion featured in a number of papers on poverty and crime, which covered a diverse range of geographical areas, from Chile, through the USA to both historical and contemporary London. One common feature was the growing use of GIS to provide an integrated environment for

analysing spatially precise social data.

In a session on movement and the urban grid, papers on spatial studies of cycling movement patterns (by Raford, Chiaradia and Gil) and London Underground movement patterns (by Chiaradia, Moreau and Raford) led to a discussion on why origin-destination data were not as strongly related to urban form as the standard space syntax method of sampling movement flows. It was suggested that this variance is due to the differences between stated preferences and revealed preferences. This led to a discussion on cities as complex systems, the conclusion being that the patterns of movements of large numbers of people in relation to each other are emergent phenomena.

The symposium ended with an announcement that the next biennial event will take place in 2007, at Istanbul Technical University. It would be nice to predict, if one may paraphrase Professor Jeremy Whitehand (2001, p.103), that the next symposium will reveal a closer integration between the fields of space syntax and urban morphology.

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## International conference on sustainable development research

The Centre of Urban Planning and Environmental Management (CUPEM) of the University of Hong Kong is organizing the twelfth annual conference on sustainable development research. This will be held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre, 6-8 April, 2006.

Offers of papers are invited from researchers and practitioners in the fields of sustainable development, sustainable cities, environmental policy and industrial ecology. Papers that critically assess the progress made in sustainable development research and practice in terms of

integrating policy studies and issues of governance and management will be particularly welcome. Papers may, however, address any relevant area: potential contributors may find guidance and further details at [www.hku.hk/sdconf06](http://www.hku.hk/sdconf06)

Abstracts of proposals, of under 200 words, should be uploaded to the conference website before 30 November 2005.

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