



## CIB NEWS ARTICLE

International Council for Research and Innovation  
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### Around the Task Groups and Working Commissions

#### W112 – Culture in Construction



### Introducing the New Working Commission

During its meeting in March 2006 in Ankara, the CIB Programme Committee established a new Working Commission W112 on Culture in Construction. W112 will continue with an extended scope from the work done by former CIB TG23 on "Culture in Construction". Dr. Richard Fellows and Dr. Wilco Tjihuis who were coordinators of the former TG23, have been appointed the Coordinators of W112.

#### Background

The former CIB Task Group, TG23 "Culture in Construction" was established in 1997. The Task Group has operated under two mandates from CIB which, through their complementarity, have also recognised the enduring nature of requirements for research into culture in construction through studies of appropriate methodologies and methods as well as the 'technical' subject matter.

Since its inception and initial meeting TG23 has produced two individual CIB publications and journals:

- Pub. 255: Culture in Construction - Part of the Deal published in 2001
- Pub. 275: Perspectives on Culture in Construction published in 2002

The Task Group's achievements and the new Working Commission's new goals will be presented at the forthcoming international conference in Dubai 26-29 November 2006 organised jointly with the research group concerning Innovation in Architecture Engineering and Construction. The initial call for papers attracted around 100 abstracts and special sessions for particular interest topics within the subject of Culture are being planned, including a 'focus session' in relation to China, facilitated through papers submitted by researchers from that country. The conference will be headlined by highly eminent international keynote speakers

Over the period of TG-23's existence, CIB, the academic community, governments and other bodies have overtly recognised the vital and basic role of culture. Indeed, culture is recognised as essential in the 'Revaluing Construction' initiative reflecting its central place in the conclusions and recommendations of major reports on the construction industry around the world. A further reflection of the importance of the subject has been the appointment of Richard Fellows, an initiator and joint coordinator of TG23, to the world's first Chair of Culture in Construction (at Glasgow Caledonian University, UK).

Culture – national and organisational – and its inexorably associated topics of ethics, organisational

climate, corporate social responsibility, and organisational citizenship constitute a cohesive and essential sphere of research (and knowledge) to underpin many other areas of research by CIB groups as well as being of prime importance itself. The methodologies and methods employed for such research have already enriched the work of many researchers. Within CIB, close and enduring links have been established with, in particular, W055, W065, W092, W107 and TG59. Beyond CIB, members of TG23 have been highly active in research, publications and presentations around the globe, reflecting the growing awareness of the importance of culture in its various levels and forms. Clearly, quantifications of advances in awareness and thinking etc. are very difficult but, from observation of topics in journal and conferences coupled with discussions and debate, the trend is unarguable.

The current major research towards the development of an international 'Inventory of Culture in Construction' continues to stimulate new participants in Europe, Asia, Africa, Australia, and America especially, lending further credence to recognition of the importance of the subject. Members of CIB's worldwide community are now active and enthusiastic participants in the production of this international inventory.

### Upgrade into a CIB Working Commission

W112 'Culture in Construction' is continuing and extending the work and achievements of task group TG23. The status of a working commission acknowledges the importance of research into cultural issues in the construction industry as being fundamental to the work of CIB through its task groups, working commissions and thematic initiatives. The research of this working commission is more extensive in nature, depth and scope of coverage to facilitate longer term ethnographic studies, as recommended to capture the dynamics and subtleties of cultures, and to address issues of national cultures, organisational cultures, organisational climate, ethics, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB). Such topics are inexorably linked, manifested in human behaviour and supported by values and beliefs – the essence of culture.

### Objectives and Scopes W112

Objectives and scope are dynamically inter-related. In cultural research it is vital to acknowledge that context to maintain 'healthy scepticism' and to remain current; popular topics may be transient but the basic psychological elements and behavioural linkages endure. Thus, the scope for W112 reflects the array of important business concerns deriving directly from underpinning culture – organisational climate, ethics, CSR, and OCB. The construction industry itself as field

of interest is considered on an international, national and local scales, focussing on the processes, (project-) experiences, and the parties involved. Given the dynamism, the scope is maintained under constant review.

The (provisional) objectives of W112 are:

- To continue to research National Cultures and Organisational Cultures relating to construction world-wide to maintain and extend the 'Inventory of Culture in Construction'.
- To extend the methods of research employed to encompass more longitudinal approaches to enable evolutionary aspects of culture to be included in investigations.
- To research into the related cultural topics of organisational climate, ethics, CSR, and OCB; and other related topics to provide a more comprehensive understanding of culture and its consequences.
- To enhance relationships with other CIB groups, and beyond, to disseminate findings and stimulate further collaborations and investigations.

### First Meeting W112

The firm objectives of W112 will be determined at the first meeting of this new Working Commission – to be held during the International Conference in Dubai 26-28 November 2006.

A separate article on the conference is also published and can be downloaded [here](#).

## Introducing the W112 Coordinators:

### Coordinator's Statement



Dr. Richard Fellows

The Conversion of the Task Group (TG-12) into a full Working Commission is a most welcome development. Thanks to the support of Wim Bakens and the Programme Committee, the change has been a smooth and timely progression.

The conversion is of particular import to emphasise the acknowledged role of culture as an underpinning of the major CIB initiative 'Revaluing Construction'. It is through understanding of values and value systems that the role of construction in societies and the performance requirements can be appreciated. The conversion is especially timely to foster the research into culture, and the assembly of an 'International Inventory of Culture in Construction' to be launched at the Joint International Conference on Construction Culture, Innovation, and Management (CCIM) to be held in Dubai 26-29 November 2006; the conference theme is 'Sustainable Development through Culture and Innovation' (conference website: [www.buid.ac.ae/conf/](http://www.buid.ac.ae/conf/)).

This is a very exciting time for researching Culture in Construction. Not only are the topics of national and organisational Culture at the forefront of research topics, and increasing recognised as requiring in-depth investigation, but so too are the inexorably related issues of Organisational Climate, Ethics, Corporate Social Responsibility, and Organisational Citizenship Behaviour. Thus, the remit of W112 incorporates all of those topics and facilitates the pursuit of longitudinal and in-depth methods which are most appropriate for researching Cultural subjects.

My hope is that this important development for researching Culture in Construction will mean that, amongst members of the construction research community, Culture will cease to be used as an 'excuse' for why findings differ from expectations and so, through further research and understanding, will constitute a component of proper explanation.

### Coordinator's Statement



Dr. Wilco Tjihuis

After a few years operating as a Task Group TG23 ('Culture in Construction'), the conversion of this task group into a full Working Commission (W112) is a most welcome development. Thanks to the support of Wim Bakens and the Programme Committee, the change has been a smooth and timely progression. The new Working Commission will continue the title of the former TG23, 'Culture in Construction'. And in addition to that, the CIB decided to give the new working commission an obviously interesting number: W112. This indicates in my opinion at least two things:

At the one hand, 'culture' is being recognized as an important issue in construction industry research community, and the establishing of this new working commission emphasizes the continuing need for a thorough research and practice of the culture issues in construction.

However, on the other hand, compared to the often used phone number '112' in several (European) countries -representing the alarm-number as a solution for solving problems- the 'culture issue' itself should not just be treated as e.g. a 'black box' to solve problems in construction research and practice; it should especially act as a stimulating 'tool' for creating a better understanding and solution of specific problems/situations in national and international construction processes and projects.

Together with my colleague joint coordinator, Richard Fellows, I also welcome the coming 'Joint International Conference on Construction Culture, Innovation, and Management (CCIM)' to be held in Dubai 26-29 November 2006, which is the ideal event to officially present the new Working Commission. The conference theme is 'Sustainable Development through Culture and Innovation' (conference website: [www.buid.ac.ae/conf/](http://www.buid.ac.ae/conf/)).

My wish is that culture and its complexity still stay great challenges for stimulating construction researchers on researching the culture-issues, resulting into building a thorough dynamic body of knowledge and expertise, and that construction industry practitioners stay open and willing to help the researchers with gathering experiences and interpreting data, leading to better tools and understanding the culture-issues in both theory and in daily practice in construction industry. Therefore, by the activities of this new Working Commission W112, culture in construction should still stay 'part of the deal'.

### Additional Information

For additional information about the CIB W112 meetings please contact the Coordinators: Wilco Tjihuis at [w.tjihuis@sms.utwente.nl](mailto:w.tjihuis@sms.utwente.nl) and Richard Fellows at [fellows@hkucc.hku.hk](mailto:fellows@hkucc.hku.hk).

You can find more information on the activities of CIB W112 at [www.cibworld.nl/website](http://www.cibworld.nl/website) - section "Databases" - database "Commissions" - type W112 in the search field "Commission number".