



## CIB NEWS ARTICLE

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in Building and Construction

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February 2007

### Around the Task Groups and Working Commissions

#### TG58 – Clients and Construction Innovation

## Report from CIB Commission Meeting - Clients Driving Innovation Workshop held in January 2007

by

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The question of whether Clients should drive Innovation came under close scrutiny at a workshop held under the auspices of the Task Group 58 of CIB in Salford University's futuristic 'Think Lab' (see picture) on 23 and 24 January 2007.



An invited group debated and discussed the issue as to whether clients impeded or encouraged innovation and what role they had to play, if any, in the innovation

process. The delegates represented a number of different perspectives including management academics and consultants, private and public clients, policy makers and institutional client forums.

The format followed a familiar pattern for Think Lab meetings. Papers are circulated in advance, followed by short presentations at the workshop and the major time given over to discussion and debate. The participants are then asked to revise their papers in the light of the discussions that took place and then submit for publication. In this case the papers will form chapters in a book to be published by Blackwells later in the year.

The aim of the workshop was to begin to develop a foundation of knowledge on this topic upon which researchers can build and investigate. Some of the key discussions involved establishing a satisfactory definition and taxonomy for clients as this seemed to vary across the various countries involved and the construction sectors from which participants came. The informed audience were able to provide very useful insights into these matters enabling knowledge to be established to which all researchers could contribute and build.

The motivation for clients to engage in the innovation process was perhaps the main stream of the debate and views varied considerably between participants depending on the sector from which they operate and the increased risk that clients perceive they incur through engaging in innovative practices. The clients present provided very useful insights into how they perceive innovation and what they expect from the

industry. Extreme views varied from believing clients should not have to get involved as it is the responsibility of the industry to innovate and for this they get competitive advantage to clients are in such a strong position that they can insist on innovation taking place. Most believed that these formed two ends of a continuum, with client roles contingent on particular circumstances which vary, for example, from project to project, and client to client.

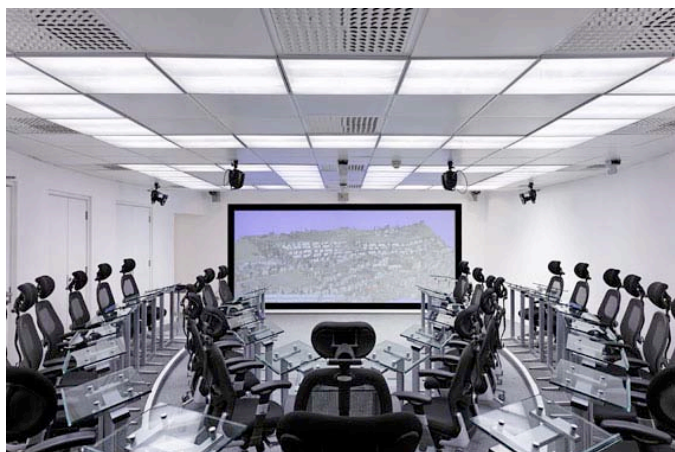
It was recognised that not all innovation is positive and indeed the question of whether it is positive or not depends on the time at which the assessment is made. Energy policies a few years ago no longer hold true today for example.

Practical examples of clients driving innovation were provided throughout the workshop (particularly from the Health Sector) alongside the developing theory which may allow researchers to provide a foundation for implementing many of the ideas presented. Good practice comes from good theory!

The final plenary session provided a summary of the debate and a desire to continue at another venue on another occasion.

Professor Peter Brandon is Joint coordinator of TG58 and Dr Shu-Ling Lu is a Joint coordinator of TG65.

Note: The book arising from the workshop will be available at the end of this year and will be published by Blackwell Publishers of Oxford, UK. There is a 25% discount available for CIB members.



## Additional Information

For additional information about the CIB TG58 meetings please contact the Coordinators:



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