



CIB NEWS ARTICLE

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Around the Task Groups and Working Commissions

W069 – Housing Sociology

Report of CIB W069 Conference held

25 February – 1 March 2007 in Port Elizabeth, South Africa

by

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Background

Following the W069: Housing Sociology Conferences in Helsinki 2004 and in Maribor, Slovenia 2005, Professor Gavin McLachlan of the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth, South Africa hosted the 2007 W069 Conference.

Approximately fifty participants representing seven different countries experienced a very successful Conference.



Professor Gavin McLachlan, professor Barry Hills, from Wales and MA student Norbert Mundl from Austria (during the break in front of the NMMU building), photo:Katrin Paadam

Conference Themes and Papers

The theme of the W069 Conference was Communities and the Frontiers of Housing. The W069 Group was

aware that a considerably different housing sociology situation would be encountered in South Africa than anything encountered within Europe. Clearly problems of urban infrastructure; social inclusion/exclusion; sprawl and sustainable housing environments; an overtly 'physical approach' to mass housing; and the background situation would be sharply different.

In this context it seemed sensible to focus on the issues associated with our theme which in turn was divided into sub-themes of

- social issues covering aspects of community, responses, urban integration, problems of extreme poverty etc.;
- architectural issues covering design approaches, social needs in the context of mass housing, new and creative responses, case studies, and future scenarios; and
- urban issues covering social processes and developments, the social logic of space, successful or problematic housing interventions in the urban context, and dispersed modes.



Professor Gavin McLachlan (opening the conference), photo: Sten Gromark

The key-note speech given by professor Katrin Paadam was followed by presentation of papers balanced over four sessions taking up two days, and as well as attracting a variety of theoretical and case study presentations from various theoretical perspectives as well as disciplinary approaches and cultural backgrounds was accompanied by a number of papers prepared by South African authors from academic, governmental, institutional and voluntary organizations.

The Ola Siksiö Memorial Lecture, which has been given since 1997 in the honour of the memory of our late Coordinator Dr Siksiö, was delivered by Professor McLachlan who examined urban housing problems in relation to a wide scale of local-global processes.

Conference related Study Tours

The meeting in Port Elisabeth followed the long-standing W069 tradition of combining the Conference theme with study tours, which introduced specific developments in the host country on various sites.

The first tour was in the nature of an orientation tour and covered mainly Port Elizabeth and immediate surrounds and was focussed primarily on the historical and current developments of the urban context of the area.



A proud little African girl in front of her home (on our study-tour to Port Elisabeth townships), photo: Katrin Paadam

The second study tour took place on the day following the final paper session and had an emphasis on housing issues in the city and townships. Both tours were provided with the expertise of the local academics and professionals.

Professor McLachlan and his colleagues had kindly offered to organise a post Conference study tour. In view of the size of the country this enabled members to see several different towns (in particular Knysna and Oudsthoorn) and a different city (Cape Town).

Although the post Conference study tour was separate from the Conference arrangements, most participants took part. Again a guide was provided and housing professionals made available for discussions and questions.

Proceedings

Proceedings will be published in 2008, envisaged in pdf format and downloadable via CIB website. When available it will be announced in a separate News article later.

Additional Information

For additional information about CIB W069 please contact the Coordinator:
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