



CIB NEWS ARTICLE

International Council for Research and Innovation
in Building and Construction

Providing a global network for international exchange and cooperation in research and innovation in building and construction, in support of an improved building process and of improved performance of the built environment.

December 2008

Around the Task Groups and Working Commissions

W104 - Open Building Implementation

W110 - Informal Settlements and Affordable Housing



Report of CIB W104 and W110 Joint Conference on Education for an Open Architecture held in October 2008

Conference Themes and Purposes

Our idea from the beginning was a conference that would enable participants to work together on teaching methods for an open architecture. We also wanted to include special lectures and in-depth discussion of peer-reviewed papers from both CIB W104 Open Building Implementation and CIB W110 Informal Settlements and Affordable Housing.

We therefore organized a program consisting of public lectures by well-known practitioner-educators, parallel design exercises and paper sessions, and plenary presentations and discussions, as well as exhibits of the winners of the international student competition held as part of the conference. More than 40 educators and practitioners came from the US, the Netherlands, China, Taiwan, Korea, Japan, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia, as well as students from the USA, Japan, Korea, Singapore, and China came together for three days of discussion focused on the challenges to architectural education resulting from a new reality

that needs to be taken seriously: it is no longer suitable to design buildings for fixed functions.

What is "Open Architecture"?

The built field - bigger than any profession's contributions and following its own laws - embodies environmental patterns and social structures of influence and responsibility, where conventions, levels of intervention, and shared themes frame our individual efforts. Both everyday and exceptional places coexist in the built field, in which designing and invention are continuous processes.

Open Architecture concerns at least three main principles. The first principle is change; the built field is never finished and changes part-by-part. We thus find ourselves being invited to propose transformations to a built field that is continuous across time and space, proposals that are requested, approved and implemented by others, for buildings and places to be used by still others.

Second, the members are professionals, working on levels of intervention, such as urban design, building design, interior design and so on. These levels are not the creations of the professions, but are a reality to be reckoned with, in their own right. The idea of levels is familiar to those working on projects in which higher-level designs are made (by teams of experts from many disciplines) providing "capacity" for subsequent inhabitation, without the need (or usually the possibility) to specify the lower level decisions, decisions that are invariably made later by other actors.

Third, and linked to the idea of levels, we recognize that built environment comes into being and transforms by way of distributed design. This means that no one party designs everything. Except for the rare case, design tasks are distributed among a number of parties, including many specialists, non-professionals and also users. For example, when we design an office building, a number of experts are needed to complete the design of the core and shell, or base building. Later, tenant spaces are designed by still other teams. This is common in shopping centers, hospitals, schools, housing and other building use types, and is the way urban design works.

These three principles are very important to understand, especially when design professionals are given large projects to design – horizontal or vertical, newly built or involving the reactivation of existing buildings or built fields. When projects are small we can more easily hold on to the romantic idea of the master architect/builder. But in large projects, professional designers and their clients have learned how to conceive, partition, phase and coordinate the work of many players. In some cases we set the stage for others to play on (when an urban design plan, devised by many specialists working together, sets the "rules of the game" for lower level interventions to follow over time). In other cases we take part in an environmental game the rules or themes of which we were not asked to formulate but which we must nevertheless follow (or try to persuade others to change). We see an example of this when we fill in a tenant space in an office building designed by someone else, or design a house in a streetscape whose ecology and typology existed before we were born.

The problem is international in scope. Because little shared or explicit understanding exists about these principles, and because such large and complex projects are difficult for a single person to design, few are assigned in design studios. When they are, they are conventionally treated as just another large undertaking under single-handed and unified control, which makes little sense. Or, they are treated as so-called interdisciplinary student projects, in which confusion often is evident about the disciplinary

knowledge base from which students can connect to their peers in other disciplines.

Academic Paper Sessions and Lectures

Papers were peer reviewed in a double blind review process. Eighteen papers were presented and published in the proceedings, by authors from the USA, the Netherlands, Italy, Mexico, Brazil, South Africa, Indonesia, China, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Japan.



Keynote lectures were delivered by Dietmar Eberle, Principal of Baumschlager and Eberle Architects, and former Dean of the School of Architecture at the ETH Zurich; Paul Lukez, Architect and author of *Suburban Transformations* (Princeton University Press); Dr. Stephen Kendall, Professor of Architecture at Ball State University and Joint Coordinator of CIB W104;

Renee Chow, Associate Professor at the University of California Berkeley; Andres Mignucci, FAIA, Professor at the Polytechnic University of Puerto Rico, and Dr. Jia Beisi, Associate Professor, University of Hong Kong and Joint Coordinator of CIB W104.

Proceedings

The conference proceedings will be introduced via a separate CIB newsletter as soon as they are available.

Additional Information

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You can find more information on the activities of CIB W104/W110 at www.cibworld.nl/website - section Search under Databases/CIB Commissions. Click on Commissions and type W104/W110 in the search field.