

W55 - Building Economics

26 participants from 18 countries took time out to attend the 25th Meeting of W55 - Building Economics in Gävle on 10th June 1998.

In the Chair was the Coordinator, Professor Mariza Karavic.

As usual with W55 meetings discussions served to set in motion some potentially very interesting projects for the immediate future.

One such was to undertake a review of the future objectives of W55 and it was agreed that a very useful basis for this would be the Trend Report by the former Coordinator Dan Ove Pedersen in CIB Publication 211. It is intended to hold final discussions and hopefully to draw conclusions at the Symposium which will be held in Cape Town from 5th to 10th September 1999. (See also Page.)

International Productivities Indices

W55 also accepted as a Joint project with W65, a proposal by H. Randolph Thomas (Penn State University, USA) and Ivica Zavrski (University of Zagreb, Croatia) to develop International Construction Labour Productivity Indices.

Most efforts to compare the construction labour market across international boundaries are based on economic indices and cost comparisons. Little work has been done on comparing actual performance on an individual project.

Objective

The objective of this project is to organize researchers to assemble the necessary databases to compare the labour performance in one country to that of another or to a standard database. The methodology will permit the comparison of management performance once design influences have been excluded.

Overall Approach

Participating researchers in each country will select projects and construction activities, collect data, and organize databases detailing the construction labour performance in their country. These databases will be sent to Penn State where they will be assembled and analyzed. Each participating researcher will be provided with a copy of all databases for their own use. Periodic results will be presented at annual meetings and tri-annual symposia of the two Commissions.

Expected Results

Upon successful conclusion of the project, one will be able to assess the overall performance of a particular project activity and attribute various aspects of performance to design or management. If the management is deficient, the apparent reasons will be evident. Also, contractors working in international markets will be able to determine the relative difference in labour performance on particular activities and on overall performance.

Time Frame

It is expected that at the Joint Symposium in Cape Town in September 1999 the project can be initiated. From that time forward, it is expected that the project will last 5-6 years.

International Comparison on Transaction Cost in Constructing

The meeting received a report on behalf of Professor Jan Bröchner, who was unavoidably prevented from attending, on a pilot project in Sweden which involves a group of small building contractors in the Stockholm area. The goal is to test various measures of transaction costs in building projects. There are plans at Chalmers for setting up international home pages for "Sustainability and the Performance Concept". One possibility to be investigated is to set up a home page also for "Transaction Cost Studies in Construction" with useful links to bibliographies, conferences, abstracts available on the Web, etc. This could form a first step to a multinational comparative study.

Any suggestions as to how such a Web site should function (including web addresses suitable for links) are welcome as e-mail messages to brochner@mot.chalmers.se

Contact Address

Prof. Jan Brochner
School of Technology Management and Economics
Chalmers University of Technology
SE-41296 Göteborg, Sweden
Fax: +46 31 772 19 64
Tel: +46 31 772 584 92
<http://www.mot.chalmers.se/dep/be/be.html>

Workshop with Presented Papers

A part of the meeting was given over to a Workshop at which the following presentations were featured:

- o The Future of Building Economics: An Essay by Professor Ranko Bon - Head of Department of Construction Management and Engineering, University of Reading, UK
- o Building for Environmental and Economic Sustainability by Barbara Lippiatt, NIST, USA
- o Macroeconomic Information on the Industry and Construction Data in Europe by Les Ruddock: Research Centre for the Built and Human Environment, University of Salford, UK
- o Construction Data in Africa by Jorge Lopes: Instituto Politecnico de Braganca, Portugal
- o Construction Data in Asia by George Ofori, National University of Singapore

It will be noted that two Coordinators of Groups other than W55 appear in the above list.

Future Meetings

Plans for the future were announced as follows, (some of which of course are already known).

- o 1999 5 - 10 September, Cape Town, South Africa.
The 8th International Symposium on Building Economics
- o 2000 Provisional Dates 13 - 15 September, University of Reading, United Kingdom.
Combined Meeting with W65.
Ranko Bon has kindly extended an invitation.
- o 2001 New Zealand, on the occasion of the CIB Triennial World Building Congress
More info on the planned venue can be found at <http://www.wcc.govt.nz/wfcc>
- o 2002. A proposal has been made to organise a joint W55/W65 meeting in Cincinnati, USA