

## W055 - Building Economics

W055 meetings always attract a substantial response and there were 36 participants from 13 countries at its 26th meeting in Cape Town on 9th September 1999, which was opened by the Coordinator Prof. Mariza Katavic.



The multiplicity of attractive events on offer was not allowed to interfere with the serious business.



Two of the main topics that had been discussed at the W055 Workshop were the following:

- **THE FUTURE OF BUILDING ECONOMICS** which is the subject of a survey being conducted by Prof. Ranko Bon, Department of Construction Management and Engineering, at the University

of Reading, United Kingdom.

Prof. Bon has presented preliminary results of the analysis of his CNBR-based survey of building economics professionals around the world. The objective of the survey is to discover what building economists really do, and how this professional profile is developing in different parts of the world. Prof. Bon is willing to share his results with researchers in this field, and it is expected that several papers will soon be written on the survey findings. For further information, contact Prof. Bon [r.bon@reading.ac.uk](mailto:r.bon@reading.ac.uk).

- HOW CONSTRUCTION IS DIFFERENT FROM OTHER SECTORS by André Manseau, Institute for Research in Construction, National Research Council Canada.

Construction differs from most other sectors in that there is a strong use of assembly on site, of project-based approach and in fact it is a highly fragmented industry. Construction also appears to lag behind most other sectors in terms of productivity, R&D investment and use of new technologies. However, innovation and changes are occurring in this industry. Major changes and trends include: trade globalisation, public-private ownership, sustainable development and life cost issue, and an increased use of information technology and systems for design, monitoring and electronic data exchange. These changes have not been well captured by traditional indicators. This stresses the need to develop new indicators for measuring innovation and changes in this industry. A Canadian study is being conducted for measuring innovation in construction with new indicators adapted to the sector, and including construction-related sectors that have a significant influence on construction activities and development.

The meeting heard a report by Prof. Randolph Thomas, Penn State University, USA on the Joint W055 and W065 Project Development of International Construction Labour Productivity Indices.

This is [documented](#) in detail with the other W065 projects.

Prof. Thomas presented the project's objective which is to develop country databases of selected construction activities so that benchmark indices can be developed. These indices will document how many more or less construction workhours are needed in one location compared to another. The research will require the acquisition of field data from multiple construction projects. All members of W055 were invited to take part.

### Future Meetings

Plans were outlined as follows:

- Year 2000: Reading, United Kingdom  
Prof. Bon reported that this meeting in the Year 2000, which will take place in Reading on 14th and 15th September would bring together W055 & W065 - Organisation and Management of Construction, Peter Barrett, TG31 - Macro-Economic Data for the Construction Industry, Les Ruddock, and TG35 - Innovation Systems in Construction, André Manseau. The information concerning Reading 2000 can be found on the CIB web page. Further information was available from himself. ([r.bon@reading.ac.uk](mailto:r.bon@reading.ac.uk))
- Year 2001: Wellington, New Zealand  
This will be in conjunction with the Triennial World Building Congress.
- Year 2002: Cincinnati, USA  
Prof. Peter Barrett, the W065 Coordinator confirmed that the proposal to have a combined W055 and W065 meeting had been accepted by all the members concerned. (More to be found [here](#).)

