

W069 - Housing Sociology

First Time in Lithuania

The fact that the 19th Meeting of W069 was the first ever meeting of the Commission in Lithuania was a fitting tribute to the efforts of Augustinas Raginis since it was he who had initiated cooperation between The Lithuanian Institute of Architecture and Construction (ASI) and W069 when he first met the Group in Copenhagen in 1994.

Augustinas, who is now Deputy Director of ASI, ably assisted by his son Virgilius an engineer also working at ASI and Prof. Jurgis Vanagas from the Faculty of Architecture at the Vilnius Gediminas Technical University (VGTU), were jointly responsible for organising this highly successful event which attracted 19 participants from 9 European countries. Grateful thanks must be extended to the Lithuanian Scientific and Studies Department, Ministry of Education for the financial support, which was given to participants from Eastern Europe countries.

Lithuania, like its Baltic neighbours, Estonia and Latvia, is a country which is absorbed by the difficulties and challenges of its transition from a former Soviet state to a modern democracy with a free-market economy. While seeking to establish its own independent course as a sovereign state, it must also struggle with the legacy of the past 50 years, with the many implications which the Soviet system has had for the country's heritage, identity, infrastructure and governance.

Housing Renovation a Problem

Housing represents a major cause for concern in Lithuania, not least due to the fact that, after restitution of property from State ownership and shedding of State responsibilities, 97% of all dwellings are now in private ownership. This has severe consequences for the renewal and renovation of the building stock and an acute impact on those who are unable to gain access to adequate housing. Indeed, all citizens have seen their comparative expenditure on housing rise astronomically and those who are jobless, disabled or on a pension are living under conditions of great hardship. And, without significant improvements to the structural fabric of buildings, including energy-saving measures, housing costs will continue to spiral upwards from the current levels.

These and other aspects of the Lithuanian Housing Sector were described and analysed in presentations by representatives of various Government Ministries and experts from the Vilnius Gediminas Technical University. Commission members were able to join in a vigorous and productive discussion about these matters with the Lithuanian participants and, as a result, several bilateral contacts have been established to investigate further possibilities for co-operation.

The Meeting included excursions to the historic centres of Vilnius and Kaunas and a poignant visit to the Vilnius Television Tower, where unarmed civilians heroically defended the telecommunications centre against Russian tanks in 1991.

W069 Business Meeting

Coordinator Ivor Ambrose has kindly put together the following summary of the main points of the Business Meeting. The full Minutes are available from him by email: ivor.ambrose@tvd.be.

*** Update on Membership**

The Co-ordinator noted recent changes in membership, welcoming new members. Sadly, two long-

standing associates have passed away recently, each after a period of illness, Hans Kroes (The Netherlands) and Agnes Vajda-Babarczy (Hungary). Both were active in W069 for several years and contributed, in particular, to the consolidation of the group's work on housing quality and housing tenure in the late 1980's and early 90's.

*** Proceedings**

The Proceedings of the 17th Meeting will be edited and prepared for publication by Ivor Ambrose, Sten Gromark, Augustinas Raginis and Jurgis Vanagas. Papers from other W069 members and associates not present in Lithuania may be submitted for possible inclusion in the Proceedings. All papers - with photos and other illustrations wherever possible - should be sent in electronic format to Ivor Ambrose by 1st December 1999.

*** Work Programme and Cooperation**

Housing Quality and Housing Tenure were confirmed as the central themes of the Working Commission. A number of researchers have argued for the inclusion of Architectural Analysis and Interpretation, and the present and previous Meetings have certainly reflected concerns in this area. Added to this, Housing Innovations have also attracted interest, not least the issue of low-cost building and renovation, (which is also the concern of CIB-W063 Affordable Housing). At the next Meeting, focused papers will be presented, developing each of the above themes.

Commission members are co-operating in an EU-funded project on Social Exclusion and Housing. Possibilities for further co-operation within EU Socrates and the 5th Framework Programmes were also discussed. Proposals are envisaged in the areas of Exchange of Students (Socrates) and Confirming the International Role of Community Research. Contact person: Sten Gromark at Chalmers University of Technology, Gothenburg, e-mail: sgromark@arch.chalmers.se.

*** Future Meetings: 2000 and Beyond**

Barry Hills and Kevin Gilliam offered the Plas Coch Associate College of the University of Wales, Wrexham, UK, to host the Meeting in 2000. The suggestion was wholeheartedly accepted. The meeting will be held either in early September or early October. The theme of the meeting will draw strongly on rural issues in housing and communities.

Inara Marana and Sandra Treija announced that they would examine possibilities for a Meeting of W069 in Riga, Latvia in 2001 - the 800th anniversary year of their capital city.

Dusica Seferagic also announced that she would consider hosting a Meeting in Croatia in 2002.

The Meeting closed with warm thanks being extended by the Co-ordinator and all those present to the hosts, who had successfully created a positive atmosphere of co-operation and friendship, which greatly supported the work of the Commission.

Paper Sessions

The authors and papers presented are listed below.

Opening Session: Housing and Social Problems in Lithuania

- Mr. V. Jonaitis, Dept. Director of Housing and Regulation Department, Ministry of Environment. The Social Aspects of Housing Policy.
- Prof. Marija Burinskienė, VGTU, and Hans Skifter Andersen, Danish Building Research Institute. Sustainable Development of Housing in Lithuania.
- Prof. Ona Grazina Rakauskienė, Institute of Economics and Privatization. Medium-Term Economic Strategy of Lithuania till 2005.
- Ms. Rita Zemaityté, Ministry of Social Affairs. Social Policy and Housing Maintenance Assistance.

Paper Session 1. Housing Quality

- Dusica Seferagic, Institute for Social Research, Zagreb, Croatia. Rural Understanding of Housing Quality.
- Jurgis Vanagas, VGTU, Lithuania. Housing Standards in the SET of Life Quality Indicators.

Paper Session 2. City, District and Housing

- Katriin Paadam and M. Pavelson, Tallinn Technical University, Estonia. City - The Diversity of Social Space.
- Inara Marana and Sandra Treija, Riga City Council, Latvia. Mezciems - Large-Scale Residential District in Riga - a Space and Place for Challenges.
- Roode Liias, Tallinn Technical University, Estonia. Flat-Owner in a Large-Scale Block: his Priorities and Realities.

Paper Session 3. Local Features

- Judit Szekely, Hungarian Central Statistical Office, Hungary. Housing Conditions of Needy Families in Hungary.
- Ewa Kaltenberg-Kwiatkowska, Warsaw University of Technology, Poland. Our Polish Homes.
- Augustinas V. Raginis, Institute of Architecture and Construction, Lithuania. The Second Houses. Problems and Possibilities.

Paper Session 4. Social Relations and Transforming Housing

- Iwona Kutarba, University of Wroclaw, Poland. Inhabitants of Housing Estates - Territorial Aggregates or Local Communities?
- Graham Towers, University of Luton, UK. Transforming Multi-Storey Housing Blocks.
- Kevin Gilliam and Barry Hills, Plas Coch Associated University of Wales, UK. Social Exclusion, Social Relations and Habitability: the Less Mobile.
- Timo Tanninen, Finland. Housing Allowance in Finland in the 1990's: Results of the Cutbacks and the Evaluation of System Effects.

Ivor Ambrose

Two Important Proceedings from W069 have been published. See [here](#) for details.

