



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.

May 2011

Forthcoming Meeting

Workshop on Construction Industry Reform at the CIB W055 and W065 Joint Conference



20-23 June 2011, Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Industry Reform Reviews

Around the turn of the last century, several countries undertook comprehensive reviews of their construction industries. Among these were Sir John Egan's seminal report on the construction industry of the United Kingdom, "Rethinking Construction"; the report of the Construction 21 Steering Committee in Singapore which was entitled "Re-inventing Construction"; the report of the Construction Industry Review Committee of Hong Kong, "Construction for Excellence"; and "Creating an Enabling Environment for Reconstruction, Growth and Development in the Construction Industry" published by the Department of Public Works of South Africa. Similar reviews were undertaken in Finland, the Netherlands and Sweden; and Tanzania published its "Construction Industry Policy". More recently, Malaysia has launched its "Construction Industry Masterplan"; and Rwanda has published its "National Construction Industry Policy".

In each country, the reasons for the major reviews were different. However, there were many similarities in the desired outcomes and the approaches towards attaining them. The intention in all cases was to realize improvements in the performance of the construction industry, although there were many different boundary definitions in terms of what constitutes the 'construction industry'. Another common feature was that, as can be surmised from the titles of most of the reports, the expected changes were to be achieved through a radical transformation of the construction

industry and its processes and practices, rather than incremental evolutionary developments. The rhetoric of business process engineering was repeatedly drawn upon, with little recognition of the limitations of such over-simplified change recipes. Even more remarkable was a recurring tendency to ignore the pre-existing dynamics of industry change. For the critical observer, many such reports served only to legitimize changes, which were already happening. For example, in the UK the Egan report's advocacy of 'lean thinking' can be read as a legitimisation of previously established trends of outsourcing and the emergence of the hollowed out form. It was notable that countries faced with very different issues endorsed very similar change agendas. There was seemingly little recognition of national differences in an increasingly globalised discourse of construction improvement. Specific recommendations were made, targets were set, and implementing mechanisms formulated. But frequently more is to be learned from the targets, which were not set, and the varying extent to which regulation was mobilized as a means of implementation.

A decade has passed since the first of the radical industry reviews was published. What have the construction industry change programmes achieved? What have been the constraints? What else remains to be done? What has been the impact of the adopted discourse of change on the way work is done in the industry? Can it be taken for granted that the impact of the various reports was necessarily positive? Whose interests have they served? What lessons can be

drawn for the local construction industry in each case, and for those of other nations?

Many of the above questions remain unanswered. There are also pertinent questions for researchers. What can researchers contribute to the development of construction industry change efforts in their countries? To what extent should researchers remain independent of the officially sanctioned discourse of change? What scope exists for international collaboration on research on industry development?

Workshop

A workshop on construction industry reform will be held at the W055 and W065 Joint Conference in Amsterdam on 20-23 June 2011. The inspiration for the workshop was provided by a current collaborative research study on the industry development programmes in Hong Kong, Singapore and the UK, and presentations on this research will form the tableau for the workshop. The workshop is organised by the Principal Investigators of the joint research: Professors Stuart Green, Mohan Kumarawamy and George Ofori.

The workshop is intended to shed new light on the construction industry improvement debate by drawing comparisons among the key features of the construction industry change programmes in different countries, and exploring the relationship between the proposed improvement initiatives and the realities of change.

The objectives of the workshop are:

- to review some of the major construction industry development initiatives around the world
- to learn lessons from the formulation and implementation of the industry development programmes in many countries, as well as the

achievements, problems and challenges of these programmes

- to explore possible collaborative research on construction industry development at both the regional and global levels.

Outline Programme

The outline programme for the workshop on construction industry development includes:

- Opening Address by Dr Wim Bakens, CIB Secretary General
- Presentations on Collaborative Study (on construction industry reform programmes in): United Kingdom, Hong Kong, Singapore
- Presentation by CIB TG84 Co-ordinator
- Presentations on construction industry reform in two countries
- Keynote Paper on Industry Reform
- Discussion

An Invitation

The organisers invite all participants in the CIB W055 and W065 Joint Conference to attend the Workshop on Construction Industry Development. Contact George Ofori at: bdgofori@nus.edu.sg to register to attend the workshop.



Additional Information

For further information about CIB TG84 contact the Coordinators:

- Roine Leringer roine.leiringer@chalmers.se and
- Scott Fernie s.fernie@hw.ac.uk.

