

# ARCOM

ASSOCIATION OF RESEARCHERS IN CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT

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*Professor Hofstede at 'Culture in Construction' workshop  
Loughborough University, April 2011*

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# Culture in Construction



This workshop was organised in close association with the ESRC Seminar Series, entitled, 'Cultural issues for project organisations: Developing theory and practice', and was held on the day following the first of the seminars in the series (website: <http://www.project-culture.org/>). This joint

ESRC-ARCOM event hosted by Department of Civil and Building Engineering, Loughborough University on 20<sup>th</sup> April 2011. The workshop was attended by over 30 participants from a variety of universities, a good number of whom had attended the ESRC seminar on the previous day. Following a warm welcome to Loughborough from Professor Andy Dainty, Professor Paul Stephenson gave a brief introduction to ARCOM and the Doctoral Workshops before Professor David Boyd assumed the chair for the morning.

The first keynote presentation was given by Professor Geert Hofstede – the world's leading researcher on national and organisational culture. Professor Hofstede explained and discussed the conceptualisation of culture at both the national and organisational levels, clearly articulating the continuing analyses and developing understanding of the concepts. In particular, he explained recent work, in collaboration with others, using the global values survey and the addition of the sixth dimension of national culture – 'Indulgence versus Restraint'. Following his presentation, Professor Hofstede spent much time and care in answering questions from the participants, during which he offered more extensive and detailed explanation of his research, especially recent and current initiatives.

Professor Richard Fellows gave the second keynote presentation in which he extended the scope of concep-

tualisation with an overview of the main models in cultural theory and, through his work with CIB W112 'Culture in Construction', their potential for assisting better understanding of construction projects, whether domestic or international. He completed the presentation with a discussion of issues concerning research methods and their uses in investigations of culture in construction – here the emphasis was firmly on rigour to secure validity and reliability, from clear awareness of the ontology and epistemology (the research methodology).

As Professor Hofstede had given so generously of his time to the workshop, the lunch break was slightly shortened; discussion and networking continued unabated.

The afternoon session comprised presentations of five papers of current research, including four relating to current and recent PhD candidates. The subject matter was wide-ranging, including:

- 'An investigation of problematic issues associated with site management: The case study of great man-made river projects in Lybia' (presented by M. Al-Zohbi)
- 'Status effects on cooperation in construction' (presented by Dr A. Anvuur)
- 'Factors affecting the success of projects in the Libyan construction industry' (presented by M. Ali)
- 'Decision making in heritage practice in the UK' (presented by R. Purohit)
- Improving the culture of training in the UK construction sector through skills training strategies' (presented by E. Awe).

Such diversity of subject matter and locations of study proved very helpful in emphasising the importance of culture in impacting on the management and performance of construction activities – thereby lending practical support for the more theoretically-derived messages from the keynotes.



**(continued)**

Two generic research imperatives are clear:

- It is essential to capture both seminal and recent research findings in the search of theory and literature to ensure the foundations and relevance of the instant study.
- Research must be carried out with clear and demonstrable rigour to be valid and reliable and founded in expressly articulated philosophical positioning of ontology and epistemology to be coherent and useful to academy and practice.

The organiser wishes to thank to Professor Paul Stephenson for organising the workshop series for ARCOM, Professor David Boyd and Dr Ani Raiden for chairing the workshop session and to the staff of Loughborough University for arranging and administering the workshop and, of course, to all participants.

*Richard Fellows*

*Personal reflection by a PhD student*

Emmanuel Aboagye-Nimo is a second year PhD student at Nottingham Business School, Nottingham Trent University, studying the health and safety culture and informal practices of small firms in the East Midlands, UK. He attended the ARCOM workshop and sent us the following reflections:

*"The subject of 'Culture in Construction' is one area that I have found to be daunting as an up-and-coming researcher. The topic appears particularly intimidating because some literature on construction culture is ambiguous; the research findings seem to vary considerably. Upon hearing about a workshop on culture in construction from my research supervisor, I knew it would be a great opportunity to have some of my questions answered as well as a chance to interact with other researchers with similar interests. In addition, I knew that the papers to be discussed would have undergone extensive peer-review processes and hence I was expecting to see high standard work. I was particularly keen to meet the keynote speakers, Professor Geert Hofstede (well-known for Hofstede's Dimensions) and Professor Richard Fellows (noted for his thorough methodological approach in research as well as knowledge of culture in construction) since I was considering both their works for the culture sections of my project. This was to be a great opportunity to ask questions on issues that I found troubling.*

*In a nutshell, the workshop exceeded my expectations. The most appreciated part of the programme throughout the event was how new researchers were able to mingle with experienced researchers. We were able to not only ask questions but also discuss ideas that were not covered in the main sessions. Frequent coffee breaks and an extended lunch period ensured that almost all participants of the workshop had their chance to engage with each other.*

*The main message I took away from the workshop was perfectly explained by Professor Fellows when he stressed that the concept of culture in construction has been stretched beyond recognition all because some researchers fail to work 'hard enough' to define the concept accurately and concisely."*

*Editor letter....*

Greeting Construction Management Researchers!

It is my great pleasure to publish the second issue of ARCOM newsletter this year. I have initiated a feature called 'Perspective', which will provide a venue for you to air your opinions on current (and contentious) issues in the life of academics and researchers in construction management. The topic for this issue is research methods for master dissertation (see page 6). I would invite you to write your comments on this topic or any other topic for inclusion in the next issue.

This issue is also available in hard copy during the conference in Bristol for delegates to read, enjoy and critique!! I would welcome any comments, and am awaiting for your contributions to the newsletter. Please get in touch, by sending e-mail to [Robby.Soetanto@coventry.ac.uk](mailto:Robby.Soetanto@coventry.ac.uk)!!

*Robby Soetanto*



# Two years in the 'hot seat': Reflections on my time as ARCOM chair



It has been an honour and privilege to serve as ARCOM chair for the past two years. As I handed over to Charles Egbu in Leeds last year, I certainly felt a sense of relief – the chair carries a considerable administrative burden at conference time! – but also a huge

sense of satisfaction and pride at having had the opportunity to chair an Association for which I feel such warmth and affection. During my time as chair we have experienced many highs – especially the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary conference, which we celebrated in style at the Albert Hall in Nottingham. However, we have also experienced an enormous sense of loss with the untimely passing of our honorary life president and dear friend Professor Dave Langford. For me, both of these events brought the strength and warmth of the ARCOM community into focus, and it is this sense of community that has drawn me back to every ARCOM conference since 1994. In this article I would like to share some thoughts and reflections on my time as chair, and provide some food for thought in terms of where I think ARCOM can play a role in helping the construction management community thrive in the future.

## Building on a legacy....

Taking up the chair in 2008, I was acutely aware of what a difficult act I had to follow. My immediate predecessor was David Boyd, who had presided over an important transitional phase for ARCOM. During his chairmanship we had sought to professionalise our Association in an attempt to improve the services that we provide to our membership and to build a stable



structure and financial platform for the future. The challenge – as I saw it – was to keep doing the things that we do well, whilst attempting to continue David's professionalisation agenda in order to develop the Association for the challenges that lay ahead.

## Developing the Association....

There were essentially three agendas that I wanted to develop during my time as chair. Firstly, I wanted to improve our web presence as the key interface with our membership, both in terms of the ARCOM website and our conference management system. Will Hughes had already begun this process with a revamp of our main web pages and an expansion of our abstracting service. Farzad Khosrowshahi had developed our first conference website, which had revolutionised the way in which we managed the conference submission and reviewing processes. However, I now felt that we needed a bespoke conference management system that we could use as the basis for the administration of all of the ARCOM membership and conference services in the future. The new system was developed by my colleague Cath O'Connell, who designed the interface and system architecture based on a specification provided by our conference secretary Chris Carter. We owe Cath and Chris a great debt of gratitude for developing what I think is the best conference management system that I have used. We have now augmented this with an online membership and renewal system. This should make the administration of the conference and membership services much easier in the future.

A second objective concerned the outreach and connectivity of ARCOM with other organisations linked to research in construction management. The committee had debated for many years how we could better position the Association internationally whilst remaining a UK-based association. With a third of our delegates now coming from overseas, I saw it as crucial that we both recognised and sought to connect with international colleagues with similar objectives to our own. To this end I enlisted the support of Stephen Gruneberg, who subsequently became our Director for International Liaison. The passion and energy which Stephen has given to this activity has led to us 'twinning' and signing memoranda of understanding with many organisations including CIB, AUBEA (Australia), ASOCSA (Africa) and NCCEO (Scandinavia). We are also in discussions with many other associations about signing further agreements. These MoUs have already begun to lead to collabora-

(continued)

tive activities including international workshops and jointly badged activities. We have also signed an MoU and have run joint activities with the CIOB, who have been our principal conference sponsor for the past three years. I think that ARCOM can now genuinely describe itself as an outward looking Association and as a significant player in a global network of organisations seeking to promote construction management research.

The third agenda I saw as crucial to developing ARCOM was to encourage the continued improvement of the quality of the scholarly debate and discussion at the conference, as well as to encourage high quality papers in our proceedings. To this end, we decided to diversify the format of the conferences by promoting more debate and discussion. ARCOM 24 in Cardiff was our first opportunity to enact some of these ideas, and the debate and special topic sessions turned out to be a great success. They stimulated a polarised and vigorous debate amongst the delegates and provided a format that we hope to continue in future conferences. Importantly, we now provide a critical forum for challenging industry practice, as much as we do for showcasing industry-relevant research.

#### **ARCOM 25....**

The 25<sup>th</sup> Annual ARCOM conference was a very special event for our Association. We celebrated our silver jubilee year in the stunning Albert Hall, Nottingham, in 2009. The 25<sup>th</sup> conference was our largest ever, with over 200 delegates. We took the opportunity to reflect on our achievements as well as to think about the future of our Association. A highlight for me was to chair a debate involving the past chairs of ARCOM, where we reflected on questions such as whether construction management was a discipline, what the global recession might mean for research and how we can make more of an impact within the mainstream business and management arenas. We also celebrated, in the city of his birth, the appointment of Dave Langford as our honorary life president in recognition of his 22 years service to the committee and, more widely, to the construction management community.

#### **Dave Langford**

And so that brings me to the saddest part of my chairmanship – the untimely death of our president, colleague and friend Dave Langford. As anyone who came in to contact with Dave will attest, he possessed a wonderful and unique combination of intellect, wit and warmth that touched everyone who met him. Dave was an academic in the best tradition. His strength was his ability to both enlighten and challenge our research community in equal measure, and

to do this in a way that never patronised those with whom he debated. But more importantly than this, Dave selflessly devoted his academic life to championing all that was good in construction management education and research. It is such a pity that we are now denied Dave's presence and contribution in the years to come, but his legacy will endure within the ARCOM community.

#### **The Future....**

And so, what does the future hold for ARCOM? Well, if the conferences that I have chaired are a good barometer of the health of the construction management field, then we are clearly a vibrant community. Much of the work with which we are involved is interdisciplinary in nature. It is also noticeable that our papers are becoming more inductive and provide more in the way of theoretical contribution. Perhaps most significantly, papers are increasingly connecting to wider debates within the mainstream business and management research fields. This is a welcome and necessary development and the Association must work to continue this trajectory. I hope that ARCOM will have an important role to play in shaping the development of construction management research in the future.

#### **And finally - thank you!**

Everything that ARCOM has achieved over the past two years has been a team effort. As chair you are often credited with the achievements to which many have contributed. My committee have been fantastic and have wholeheartedly supported every initiative that we have implemented over the past two years. I would also like to make a special mention of one non-committee member - Chris Carter - who acted as my conference secretary for the two years of my chairmanship. Chris' administrative prowess, his attention to detail, patience and good humour provided the glue that bound the organisational effort together. He has worked tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure the success of both the conferences and the wider improvements to the administrative effectiveness of ARCOM. We owe him a great debt of gratitude for his efforts over the past two years.

I am delighted to hand over the ARCOM chairmanship to my friend and colleague Charles Egbu. As anyone who knows Charles will attest, he has a passion and enthusiasm that I am sure will drive ARCOM to the next level. I am also delighted that Simon Smith will succeed him as chair in two years time. Simon has been a committee stalwart for many years and has ensured the financial stability of the Association in his time as treasurer. It is reassuring to leave the Association in such safe hands!

Here's to the next 25 years!

*Andy Dainty*

## PhD research in Urban Development



Mr. Wisnu Setiawan, a second year PhD student at the University of Salford, is currently researching "urban development response to diversity and potential conflicts in Indonesia". He is sponsored by the Ministry of National Education, Indonesia, and supervised by Dr. Monty Sutrisna. He is a lecturer at

Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta. Outline of his research is as follow:

The contemporary history of communal violence conflicts in developing countries has made Indonesia a unique case, particularly after its socio economic crisis in 1998. The spatial and time contexts demonstrate that there is a necessity for further study on 'relationship' within its society. Anecdotal evidence suggests a lack of understanding in social diversity within the urban planning practices in Indonesia with differing perception among the stakeholders.

The theoretical finding so far implies that an urban area presents symbolic economical, cultural, religious, political, and spatial differences which might lead to conflict; urban space became battlefield for legitimating power differences. Several practices on urban development have shown the examples of urban policy delivery to respond to social diversity issues and conflicts potential. It points at a number of relevant issues: a gap between community groups which exists physically and non-physically; the notion of difference that might become a trigger into physical conflict; and inclusive urban development as a form of urban policy which has the potential to promote social cohesion. Inclusive urban development provides people from different social and cultural group equal with opportunity and accessibility to the number of 'resources'. Social issues are thus embedded issues to economics and environmental development. In short, urban development should provide a 'neutral' strategy by applying social, physical, economic, cultural, and political practice to promote inclusive inter-group relationship within urban environment.

The research focuses on three different cities where social cultural differences once occurred into communal physical clash during the economic crisis. It also studies a number of urban planning and development practices: the reciprocal effects of social diversity and urban development; urban planning process and strategy; urban planning elements and delivery. The research attempts to establish an urban planning and development framework in socially diverse communities, particularly in Indonesia.

## Perspectives:

### Choosing appropriate research methods for master dissertation project

Recent discussion in the CNBR mailing list raised the issue of appropriate research methods for master level dissertation project. Alan Mossman invited critique on his advice to a master student, who was considering using a web-based 'broadcast' questionnaire survey as a way to collect data (posted on CNBR on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2011). Few notable responses were later aired by David Dowdle, Richard Davies, Peter Edwards, John Rooke and Mohammed Abdel-Wahab. Alan suggested that the student should use more qualitative interviews with limited sample of respondents for the benefits of better learning from the experience. In response to this, Richard indicated that the choice of research methods (e.g. a choice of questionnaire survey or interview) should be governed by the research questions (further emphasised by Peter). John pointed to the failure of questionnaire to obtain understanding of research setting. Mohammed provided a good example of the use of questionnaire survey, and argued the need to set a reasonable expectation of Master level dissertation. David recommended the introduction of research methods modules early to give more time.

For students undertaking their first piece of research, they often face a major problem of deciding on the extent of research work (i.e. the methods/approaches adopted) that is permitted given the resources (time and money) available for personal research. The typical time for dissertation project between 5 to 8 months (on a one-year master programme) is rather short for the extent of rigour of a 'proper' research. On top of this, they often have to attend several modules at the same time. Understandably under this time constraint, a questionnaire survey seems to be an attractive choice, even more so, with the availability of mailing list/network and other facilities over the internet (e.g. survey monkey) for 'broadcast' survey. Also, the required access to respondents for interviews may discourage students to use of interviews.

Students can fail to discover appropriate research questions, and to make a connection between the questions and the appropriate methods. As this research skill is developed from the researcher's affinity to the subject and knowledge of appropriate research methods, which arguably would require longer time, this is an area where supervisors are expected to guide the students. On the expectation of quality, it is reasonable to say that master dissertations ought to demonstrate 'originality'. As there are potentially multiple definitions (or interpretation) of 'originality', obtaining and including 'new' data in the dissertation reports can provide a 'good case' for 'originality' (from student's point of view), and the most convenient way to obtain the data is by using questionnaire survey.

To take a balance view and work within the available resources, I always ask my students what they have learnt from their experience of undertaking this short research projects? The dissertation projects should prepare students with appropriate skills and knowledge for their future employment. This is the bottom line!! We have a responsibility and can play a significant role in this.

*Robby Soetanto*



## Profile: Professor Alan Griffith



*"The truth is that times change, things move on and now we are all frantically researching to deliver to business plans, to meet income targets, to hit publication output levels and its all got, perhaps, a bit too serious."*

Alan Griffith will be well known to many ARCOM members and readers of the Newsletter alike. His research work stretches over three decades from: the early days of the Science and Engineering Research Council (SERC) 'Specially Promoted Programme (SPP) in Construction Management'; the creation and early development of ARCOM; and a period of rapid maturity in construction management research both nationally and internationally.

Alan spent his early career in building and civil engineering quantity surveying, studying part-time at what was, in the 1970's, Teesside Polytechnic. It was not long before academic promise led him to Heriot-Watt University, Edinburgh, where he completed an MSc in 1982, rapidly followed by a PhD in 1984. An academic career followed, first at Heriot-Watt where Alan was a Lecturer in Construction Management, then at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University as Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor in Construction Management, and since 1995 at Sheffield Hallam University where he is Professor of Building and Construction Management.

Alan's research and scholarship has been prolific. Moreover, he believes greatly in the dissemination and communication of research, an aspect of his work which has, over many years, been recognised widely and prominently within academia and the construction professions. Among many written works he has published over one hundred peer-reviewed refereed journal and conference papers, eight UK and international award-winning journal papers and authored/co-authored thirteen books, four in the Macmillan Building and Surveying Series, three as part of the CIOB Education Framework published by Longman including one in both Russian and Chinese language editions, an EPSRC-endorsed award-winning research textbook published by Thomas Telford, one by Palgrave-Macmillan and two shorter books in the Association of Building Engineers (ABE) Professional Series.

Alan has been the recipient of the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) 'Ian Murray Leslie Award' on six occasions including the 'IML Medal', the CIOB Hong Kong 'Building Award', and the premier CIOB '2003-2004 Innovation and Research Award' and 'CIOB Medal', all in recognition of an outstanding contribution to knowledge and communication within the construction industry through research and published papers. He has also been awarded the CIOB 'Silver Medal', CGLI 'Silver Medal' and CIOB

'Scottish Members Award' in recognition of his academic achievements. It is such a distinguished profile of research and scholarship that led Alan to be awarded the degree of Doctor of Science (DSc) in 2006, the first ever higher doctorate to be granted by Sheffield Hallam University.

*"Looking back, I was fortunate to have developed my career at a time when construction management research and postgraduate academic developments were really taking off. The SERC had formed the SPP in Construction Management, ARCOM was forming and many new interests within CIB were beginning to emerge. This presented numerous and great opportunities to pursue high profile research at an international level.....it also afforded the opportunity to work alongside and associate with some of the most knowledgeable and distinguished people in construction management research at that time and indeed since - Victor Torrance, Bill Biggs, Geoffrey Trimble, Rod Howes, Roger Flanagan, Tony Walker, Norman Fisher, Tony Sidwell, to name but a few....."*

*.....Someone said to me recently that perhaps the halcyon days of construction management research were left behind in the 1980's. The truth is that times change, things move on and now we are all frantically researching to deliver to business plans, to meet income targets, to hit publication output levels and its all got, perhaps, a bit too serious. I was lucky to have started out in research surrounded by great characters, when research was distinctly significant and meaningful yet a far more relaxed affair, when you carried out research because you had an enquiring mind and, most importantly, when research really was thought-provoking and fun!"*

Now, post higher doctorate, Alan still finds construction management research engaging and challenging if, occasionally, more pressured. He spends much of his time as Head of Research in the Department of the Built Environment at Sheffield Hallam, directing the PhD Research Studentship Programme. Alan is currently a member of the Editorial Boards of The International Journal of Construction Management (IJCM), Construction Papers (CIOB) and the Journal of Construction. He also serves as a referee for many of the leading journals in the construction management and wider built environment fields, and he enjoys external examining appointments both in the UK and overseas.

And, when he is not working, Alan is often to be found walking in the Dales around his home in the idyllic Peak District National Park and, more often still, frequenting the local hostelrys.

*Paul Stephenson*



## 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in the University of the West of England, Bristol



The 27<sup>th</sup> ARCOM conference introduces some exciting new developments to the regular conference programme. In addition to the popular keynote speeches, parallel sessions and social events, from 2011 Tuesday mornings will open with a Langford Memorial Lecture and a themed academic debate.

This year the conference will be held at the University of the West of England, Bristol, UK, Monday 5<sup>th</sup> to Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2011 and the theme for the debate is Equality and Diversity. Five distinguished panellist will engage in critical debate about equality and diversity issues with the audience. On stage we present:

- Dr Catherine Hakim, Sociologist, London School of Economics (LSE), UK
- Michel Brown, Deputy Chief Executive and Director, Policy and External Relations, The Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), UK
- Dr Paul Chan, Lecturer in Project Management, School of Mechanical, Aerospace and Civil Engineering, University of Manchester, UK
- Fred Rawlinson, University of Bolton, UK
- Prof Christian Koch, Institute of Business and Technology, Aarhus University, Denmark.

This is the first one in what we set out to become a stimulating series of events over the coming years. ARCOM committee welcomes suggestions for relevant themes in the future. Please contact Ani Raiden to discuss your ideas ([ani.raiden@ntu.ac.uk](mailto:ani.raiden@ntu.ac.uk)).



*The conference venue, R Block building, at Frenchay Campus of UWE, includes many innovative sustainable design features.*

## Date for your diary

**CIB TG72 / ARCOM Doctoral Research Workshop on Public Private Partnership (PPP)** - 12<sup>th</sup> October 2011, University of Central Lancaster, Preston, UK (contact: Prof. Akintola Akintoye and Prof. Mohan Kumaraswamy)

**Joint ARCOM/Association of Schools of Construction of Southern Africa (ASOCSA) Workshop** - October 2011 (TBC), South Africa (contact: Prof. John Smallwood and Dr Victor Samwanga)

**Construction Contracts (Legal Issues) Workshop** - October 2011 (TBC), University of Reading

**Finance and Funding for Construction Projects Workshop** - November 2011 (TBC), Dublin Institute of Technology

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