

# Newsletter

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Professor David Langford, Honorary Life President ARCOM



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## Book Review

# ARCOM Newsletter

## 25th ARCOM CONFERENCE

ARCOM 25 was a celebration of interdisciplinary research, academic debate, **working together and... Fun.**

The conference venue, Albert Hall in Nottingham, provided an excellent focal point for the three day event. The food was outstanding, not a standard buffet sandwich in sight, and service friendly yet

Albert Hall Conference Centre:  
The Great Hall - main facility for  
the 25th ARCOM conference



## Editor's Letter

*Dr Milan Radosavljevic*

very professional. Central location made it an easy meeting point also supporting sustainable transport as delegates were able to explore the city on foot; spot Standard Hill (where the Civil War between King Charles and the Parliament commenced) and see Robin Hood (well, a statute of the famous outlaw).

Interdisciplinary research was a prominent theme in the papers presented. In total 118 papers were presented from delegates from the UK, Australia, Denmark, Ghana, Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nige-

ria, Seychelles, Turkey, South Africa, Sweden and the USA. The proceedings reveal real diversity and depth of thinking, evident both in the development of early ideas for research and in the findings/ conclusions of established projects. The papers are available for download on the ARCOM website.

However, importantly, although our 25th anniversary conference was attended by unusually large number of delegates, ARCOM maintained the fun atmosphere which makes it unique. Not only was the social programme much

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### Highlights

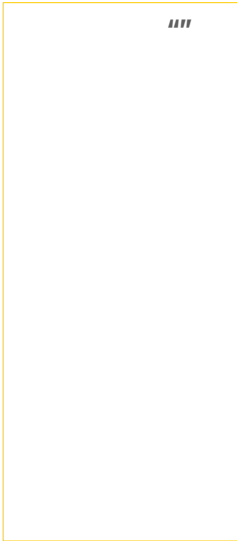
- > Book Review: Building a Discipline: The Story of Construction Management (page 3)
- > Australasian Universities Building Education Association (AUBEA), and ARCOM have sealed the first twinning agreement (page 10)

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## 26th ARCOM conference in Leeds



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## BOOK REVIEW

Designed as a celebratory text to accompany the twenty-fifth anniversary of the formation of the Association of Researchers in Construction Management (ARCOM) in the UK, this book serves as an essential read for both novice researchers who are wanting to get initiated into the field and established researchers who wish to be reminded of the roots of modern construction management. The book contains seven chapters that loosely cover four key themes, namely historical developments from ancient times (Chapter 1), shaping of a profession and discipline in modern times (Chapters 2 to 5), snapshots of the teaching and practices of construction management across the world (Chapter 6), and some speculations about the future (Chapter 7). Together, the book charts the chronological development of what Professors Langford and Hughes argue is a very broad discipline that “[spans] over several professions and conjoin with other disciplines (p. 1)”. Therefore, it is no mean feat to summarise the past, present and future of construction management in just under 150 pages.

Much of the book is unashamedly, if justifiably, UK-centric in coverage, especially in Chapters 2 to 5 and 7 when various British authors trace the developments of the discipline and professionalization of construction management. Moreover, whilst an attempt was made to broaden the scope in the brief country reports in Chapter 6, it is clear that the thinking and practice of construction management in the UK has been of significant influence to many countries further afield, including the Caribbean region, Chile and South America, former British colonies of Hong Kong, Singapore and Malaysia, and even Japan. As Professor Langford explains, this demonstrates the common histories and practices shared between the UK and abroad, in part because leaders in the field from the UK have, since the 1970s, taught many of the faculty members who would later set up educational and research programmes in their own countries. Still, as highlighted above, this book is intended to celebrate the accomplishment of the British chapter in the story of construction management as a maturing discipline. Nevertheless, the shortcoming of not omitting countries (especially the

large construction markets in Europe) was acknowledged and Professors Langford and Hughes suggested that further work will be undertaken in a future edition. Perhaps it would also be useful to get **an outsider’s perspective** from a scholar or practitioner who is not educated within the British system as well.

Apart from telling a story about the shaping of construction management as a ‘discipline’, there are three critical points that seem to emerge from the book, which are worthy of reflection. These three points include the professionalization and codification of knowledge about construction management, the role of the academy and professional institutions, and the vitality of human resilience. Firstly, I found the commentary at the end of each ancient period in Chapter 1 to be useful since it offered an interpretation of what humankind might have benefited from progress made throughout history. However, for me, the post second world war developments presented a very interesting explanation of how a critical mass of teaching and research interest on construction management grew in the UK

Building a  
Discipline: The  
Story of  
Construction  
Management  
*Edited by Prof  
David  
Langford and  
Prof Will  
Hughes*



## BOOK REVIEW (cont.)

(Chapters 2 and 3) and how codification of disciplinary knowledge on construction management became enshrined in the constitution of a multitude of professional institutions and associations (Chapter 4). Although the contributors of the brief country reports in Chapter 7 were given editorial freedom to identify particular emphases, it would also seem (rather seamlessly) that the formalisation of knowledge also featured prominently in the developments of the discipline in the various countries selected. So, whether this is manifested in the institutionalisation of building standards and codes, or the growth in professional representational bodies across the world, it would seem that the codification and explication of knowledge remains inevitable as time progresses. This connects very well with the second theme, i.e. the role of the academy. It is perhaps by no accident that there is now such a wealth of degree qualifications in what is a vocational (applied) field of study. After all, as Canadian philosopher Henry Marshall McLuhan noted, universities are huge repositories of (codified) knowledge. Yet, what value does this knowledge bring? In Chapter 5,

Mike Murray raised concerns over the growing chasm between the academic and practitioner communities. In particular, Mike Murray questioned the effectiveness of published material in influencing both industry practice and academic practice. As Professor Allan Ashworth indicated in Chapter 3 (and as the country reports in Chapter 6 illustrated), the role of the academy should be about engaging in scholarly research with the intention of educating faculty members and practitioners of the future. Yet, the tensions raised by Mike Murray and the struggles recounted by Professor Ashworth on the sustenance of degree programmes of construction management in UK universities demonstrate the dynamic power relations that disciplines go through to gain recognition. It would also have been useful if such struggles were also illustrated in the way professional institutions and associations are formed, disbanded and re-formed. It is thus apt that Professor **Atkin concluded “credible ownership of theory, principles and practices is needed to legitimise” any claim that construction management is a ‘discipline’.**

As mentioned at the start of this review, the book is celebratory in nature, especially with regards to the resilience of the discipline, whether this is the way ancient civilisations have combated against physical and natural obstacles, or the way reconstruction after the second world war has given rise to the birth of construction management, or the way the discipline will mobilise to tackle the challenges of climate change in the future. I have thoroughly enjoyed reading this book and I hope that the resilience of the discipline will mean another edition of a similar kind in twenty-five years time, and beyond.

*Dr Paul W Chan, University of Manchester*

**“the role of the academy should be about engaging in scholarly research with the intention of educating faculty members and practitioners of the future”**

## CONGRATULATIONS TO JULIUS FAPOHUNDA

Julius has been awarded a PhD for his work on an **'Operational Framework for Optimal Utilisation of Construction Resources during the Production Process'** supervised by Professors Paul Stephenson and Alan Griffith at Sheffield Hallam University. Details of the work are provided below.

The construction industry contributes a significant amount to a nation's Gross Domestic Product and National Income. The industry's products are enormously important to other organisational sectors, and provide a considerable amount of employment to the nation's populace. However, the industry is significantly under-achieving in terms of clients' and stakeholders' satisfaction. In addition, the resources in the industry are currently under-utilised. It is affirmed that resources' wastes management in the industry is far behind that obtainable in other organisational sectors. Thus, there is a need for re-assessment of the way in which the industry generates its products towards utilising the scarce and costly resources efficiently.

This research was grouped into three main studies. The first study evaluated the issues associated with site

managers' efficient performance, and causes of site managers' inefficiency in performances were identified. In this respect, the factors that will enhance site managers to optimally utilise resources were determined. Secondly, the scenarios of budgeting for resources' wastes were investigated, and factors

**"The first study evaluated the issues associated with site managers' efficient performance"**

that will reduce their effects on optimal resources utilisation were established. Lastly, the causes and modalities of averting resources wastefulness during the production process were investigated and ascertained. The success factor of these studies is the evaluation of the knowledge, attitudes, and perceptions, (KAP), of construction participants on resources utilisation. Based on these three main research studies and their sub-studies, an operational framework for optimal utilisation of construction resources during the production process was developed and validated.

Julius A. Fapohunda, PhD



## LIVERPOOL DOCTORAL WORKSHOP

The second ARCOM Doctoral workshop hosted by Liverpool John Moores University (LJM) was held on the 12 May 2009 and covered the subject of Qualitative Data and Analysis for Construction Research. This was a follow-up workshop to the highly successful workshop on Quantitative Data and Analysis. This second workshop on Qualitative research proved highly popular with over 80 delegates in attendance.

Following registration and a welcoming address from Dr Andy Ross, the first presenter, Dr Monty Sutrisna from the University of Salford, set the scene by addressing issues of research methodology in doctoral research. Monty explained that while many researchers adopt the qualitative approach and declare themselves as qualitative researchers, carrying out this approach is not an easy option. The nature of the research must first be considered, including research philosophies, the reasoning behind the research, and the research data itself. It is essential that researchers develop a robust understanding of the relevant issues surrounding their research to ensure that the right approach is identified and adopted.

With regard to specific approaches to research, Dr

Wendy Guthrie from Loughborough University provided an insight into the Glaserian grounded theoretical method to data analysis. Wendy explained that while many researchers claim to understand and use the grounded theory approach, those that achieve successful outcomes, tend to be few in number. Wendy explained that since grounded theory was first introduced, several variants of the approach have emerged over the years, and this has led to debates in the academic community as to what is legitimate grounded theory. Wendy illustrated that Glaserian grounded theory provides a useful approach for those engaged in construction management research owing to its emphasis on discovering patterns with data and other important issues that are not dictated by previous assumptions.

**Following Wendy's presentation** there was a diversion from construction management research with Kerry Woolfall presenting her research on the use of mixed methods in the evaluation of social work-based intervention. Kerry, a Senior Researcher and PhD student in the Centre for Public Health at Liverpool John Moores University, was able to give attendees an insight into her

approach evaluating 'Families First' on substance-use related issues in the North East of England. Kerry outlined the lessons learnt from the study in adopting a mixed methodological approach, particularly with vulnerable groups.

Dr Paul Chan then presented research in connection with the methodological challenges in uncovering hidden agendas in organisations. References were made to technocratic and interpretative approaches in addition to other methodological debates within construction management research. Various issues were also addressed on the acceptance of qualitative approaches, in addition to some reflections of a recent study into construction innovation and the need for deeper ethnographic research and participant observation.

Following the buffet lunch, Fiona Wiltshier from QSR, a leading supplier of qualitative software, provided a demonstration of Nvivo 8. Fiona provided a step by step illustration to indicate the powerful functionality the software has to offer. This included the creation of folders, memos, nodes and models, and the importing of several sources of data including text and pdf files, audio, visual and mul-





(cont.) LIVERPOOL DOCTORAL WORKSHOP

timedia data. Coding queries were also shown with the selection of specific data, and how data sources can be pulled together to **suit researchers' specific** data analysis requirements.

A practical application of the software was then presented by Obuks Ejohwomu from the University of Reading on incentivisation of innovation in construction supply chains - coping with QRS Nvivo. Obuks considered issues around content structure, communication networks and organisation analysis frameworks and the extent to which these influence innovation products and practice. Examples of how Nvivo was used as part of the research were illustrated and explained.

Patrick Manu from the University of Wolverhampton then gave an insight of his research application into sub-contracting vs. health and safety – an inverse relationship. Patrick provided a detailed account of his critique of literature involving assessment of statistics, trends and the causes of the inverse sub-contract - health and safety relationship.

The final speaker at the workshop was Vedran Zerjav from the Vienna University of Technology.

**Vedran's research is concerned** with the key characteristics of distributed design and engineering work based on an exploratory approach. The research utilises the use of qualitative case studies of work practices in order to investigate motivations, success factors and barriers for work sharing within multinational design and engineering organisations.

Finally, a plenary session was held with all the speakers which provided the opportunity for delegates to raise issues on the topics covered. This proved to be a healthy debate between speakers and delegates and provided a useful conclusion to the workshop. The workshop proceedings can be accessed via the ARCOM web-site.

*Professor Paul Stephenson*





## POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Dave recently visited Zambia to attend the annual conference of the Association of Schools of Construction in Southern Africa. He delivered a keynote address on the theme of Poverty Alleviation and how construction could contribute to the campaign. This is a summary of the address. Whilst it is recognised that Poverty is not solely an **African problem**, Dave's remarks are focused upon the African interest.

The cause of poverty alleviation has been close to the social and political ambitions of progressive construction and consultant organizations for a considerable time.. Whilst some \$50 trillion have been spent on aid since World War II (much of this on

short term disaster relief) the long term solutions for poverty alleviation are still elusive. Why is this the case? In the context of the construction industry - provider of major infrastructure projects - the capacity and capability of construction firms in poor regions of the world are underdeveloped. However, there are signs of optimism; the inward investment into Africa in 2008 was greater than the inflow of aid money. Such inward investment provides an opportunity to build up local construction firms and professional practices.

The resurgent interest in the campaign which can contribute to poverty alleviation can be traced back to the early

1980's with Live Aid and building to the G20 summit in Edinburgh in 2005 and the Millennium Debt goals. But WHY NOW? There are three prongs of pressure.

Firstly, the role of advocates in history cannot be ignored. Certainly, the brusque approach of Bob Geldorf, the arguments of Bono and the dignity and gravitas of Nelson Mandela have acted as powerful advocates for poverty alleviation. The movement has been a remarkable piece of evidence for a thriving counter-culture. At a period in history when the **values of 'the market' were** dominant, if not all-conquering, the anti-poverty movement captured the imagination of so many who could see that an

**"...some \$50 trillion have been spent on aid since World War II..."**

## 25th ARCOM CONFERENCE (cont.)

enjoyed with art and culture at the Nottingham Castle, real ales in the oldest pub in England – Ye Old Trip to Jerusalem – and bullshit bingo at the Albert Hall, new research ideas and partnerships formed over coffee.

The committee would like to thank all our members for their support in the past 25

years. Extensive team of people led by Andy Dainty, the ARCOM Chair, and Chris Carter, the Conference Secretary, together with Pim Doeswijk, the Albert Hall Conference and Events Manager, contributed to the success of this annual conference. Many thanks for your hard work, flexibility and attention to detail.

In true style, ARCOM has turned a new leaf looking into the future of construction management research. We look forward to seeing all existing members and meeting new people in Leeds September 2010.

*Dr Ani Raiden*



## PLYMOUTH DOCTORAL WORKSHOP

The ARCOM Doctoral Research Workshop **'Sustainability in the Built Environment'** was hosted by the Environmental Building Group, University of Plymouth at the University on 16 November 2009.

### Workshop context

There are increasing global concerns related to climate change and sustainability in the built environment. Buildings contribute some of the largest environmental impacts. For instance, nearly half of total UK carbon dioxide emissions come from energy use in buildings, more than half of all public water supply in England and Wales is for household use, 32% of all landfill waste comes from construction and demolition of buildings, with 13% products delivered to construction sites being sent directly to landfill without being utilised. The UK Government published its strategy for sustainable construction in 2008, and has set a number of challenging targets for improving sustainability, e.g. reducing total UK carbon dioxide emissions by at least 60% on 1990 levels by 2050, with zero carbon new-build homes by 2016 and all new buildings by 2019 for England and Wales, and 50% reduction of construction, demolition and excavation waste by 2012 com-

pared to 2008. All these targets, coupled with the current economic recession, have challenged the industry to explore effective ways to achieving sustainability. Additionally, all present Government funding has sustainability targets attached. There is thus both a need and an opportunity for research in the disciplines relating to sustainability in the built environment and studies that for instance lead to a better understanding of the concept of sustainability and the measurement and management of sustainable construction.

### Workshop outline

This ARCOM workshop was focused on sustainability in the built environment with the purpose to help the researchers develop the area and highlight some of the research approaches being taken. Prof. David Coslett, Pro Vice-Chancellor of the University of Plymouth and Executive Dean of the Faculty of Arts opened the workshop and welcomed everybody to the City and the University. This was followed by a brief introduction of ARCOM and ARCOM workshops by Dr Paul Chan from the University of Manchester. Dr Chan highlighted the contribution of ARCOM to the research community, which celebrated its 25th anniversary



## BEST IS FIRST



Professor Rick Best of Bond University, Gold Coast, Queensland, Australia, signed the first twinning agreement with ARCOM. Representing the Australasian Universities Building Education Association (AUBEA), he sealed the agreement with ARCOM by email on the 25th September 2009. The Chair of ARCOM, Professor Andy Dainty, called the agreement, "fantastic news."

This voluntary agreement between ARCOM and the AUBEA represents a move to bring academics closer together by starting new avenues of communication. This arrangement was brokered by Stephen Gruneberg, who is the member of the ARCOM Executive Committee, responsible for international liaison.

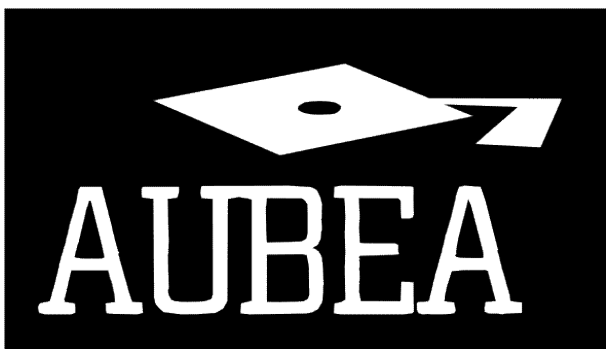
**"The idea of twinning," said Stephen, "is to find new ways of co-operating across borders." It is hoped that members of both ARCOM and the AUBEA may take advantage of this goodwill agreement, which can be used as a means of linking with members of the AUBEA for visits, research, joint papers, seminars and**

other projects, which ARCOM members may wish to engage in. Stephen said, **"We hope this will be the first of many twinning agreements and eventually, ARCOM will have formal contacts with like-minded organisations all over the world."**

The idea of twinning agreements is to encourage closer ties between academics in different parts of the world and to encourage participation in ARCOM events, such as the annual ARCOM conference and **ARCOM PhD seminars. "We see our twinning agreements as offering yet another way of making contact but we are not trying to compete with CNBR or the CIB," Stephen stated.**

Anyone wishing to make contact with the AUBEA or its members can do so by getting in touch with Stephen at [s.gruneberg@westminster.ac.uk](mailto:s.gruneberg@westminster.ac.uk). Contact Stephen in the first instance, as the point of contact in the AUBEA may change from time to time.

*Dr Stephen Gruneberg*



## Will's Column



**On the ephemeral nature of buildings**

Obviously, the urban environment has a certain permanence to it. "Bricks and mortar", "as safe as houses", "concrete reality", are example of phrases that reas-

sure us that the buildings are erected for decades, if not centuries. There are indications for designers and planners that buildings have life spans of upwards of 50 years. The land upon which we build is even more permanent, and the buildings that we add to land, if they are in the right location, make the land valuable (even permission to build will add this value to land). So it is clear that buildings have a certain degree of longevity and permanence, and that people engage with them for the long-term, right? Well, perhaps. I have not checked this for a while, but I recall that the average length of occupation of a dwelling in the UK was about seven years. In other words, on the average, people move house every seven years -- nothing permanent about that then.

I also heard a similar statistic for offices. There is a constant churn in the office market, not only in moving but also in refurbishing. In fact, fully half of the UK construction market is activity other than new building. One thing that really brought this home to me was the UK's Private Finance Initiative (PFI) in which public sector buildings were procured using private sector finance (largely from the banks). The basic idea is that a bank puts up the money for building a facility, then the private sector is paid a monthly or annual fee for operating the facility, from which they can repay the loan. This method of procuring public sector infrastructure has been very popular, and one unintended consequence is that the consortia who build such a facility, and operate it, sell it on to other operators. There is a healthy secondary market in completed PFI facilities, whereby an operator can buy the thing and run it. So, the idea of engaging the supply-side in long-term commitment has only resulted in yet another short-term engagement, as I am coming to expect with the construction sector.

So I have come to the conclusion that far from being permanent things, buildings are ephemeral. I don't mean the structure or the land. I mean our relationship with a building and the way that we define it and use it. Can we say that every part of the urban environment that we relate to is a constantly changing and ephemeral interpretation that is only temporarily ascribed to it? Does this help us to relate to the urban environment, or to interpret it?

## PLYMOUTH DOCTORAL WORKSHOP (cont.)



at the 25th ARCOM Conference at Nottingham in September 2009. After that, Prof. Mike Riley from the University of Plymouth welcomed all to the Workshop and started the scientific debate with a short speech on addressing sustainability using a systems approach. Then five papers were presented, each presentation lasting around twenty minutes followed by ten minutes discussion. A 'hot' debate was opened after all the presentations, and the Workshop finished with an informal networking session. Through this process, the presenters benefited from the feedback on their work and all the participants were provided with an insight into current sustainability research.



Around 30 people, including academics, researchers, dissertation students and practitioners, attended the Workshop. The Workshop was chaired by Prof. Mike Riley and Dr. Wei Pan, and coordinated by Dr. Wei Pan and Dr. Pieter de Wilde.



Workshop proceedings  
The Workshop Proceedings include the five papers presented and another two that were submitted but could not be delivered at the Workshop for varied reasons. In these papers, Paul Chan from the University of Manchester argues



that knowledge is presently incomplete in terms of what we know about sustainability, and outlines a salient review of the four capital dimensions of sustainable development, i.e. man-made, human, social and natural capital. Lee Davis from the University of Plymouth critiques that, despite many previous research efforts, supply chain management sophistication in construction is still at a very low level in comparison to many other industries. Davis proposes a Soft Systems Methodology (SSM) as a means for supply chain management practitioners to develop lean supply in construction holistically, taking into account the unique culture and fragmentation feature of construction. Jim Carfrae from Plymouth presents his research in establishing the boundary conditions that define a safe level of moisture content in straw bale walls. Carfrae develops an improved probe for measuring the moisture content of straw bale walls demonstrating that it is possible to get accurate measurements of the moisture content of a straw bale wall using a relatively simple home-made timber-block probe. Paul Murray from Plymouth argues that while there is a natural tendency for educators to focus on the scientific and techno-

logical aspects of sustainability and sustainable construction, this approach will not necessarily maximise the positive contributions professionals have to offer. Murray suggests that this is because it does not address the intrinsic motivations people need if they are to embrace the positive changes sustainability requires. He introduces a new initiative developed at the University of Plymouth for engaging learners directly with the sustainability agenda. Herve Leblanc from Glasgow Caledonian University presents sustainable refurbishment of the existing building stock as the most sustainable solution compared to demolition and new build. Leblanc argues that knowledge management systems are to be presented as effective tools to increase the sustainability level of refurbishment projects within the context of social housing in the UK. Maassoumeh Barghchi et al. from Universiti Teknologi MARA report on research in sports facilities development in Malaysia. Despite an increase in the amount of public money being spent on sports facilities construction, the existing facilities are under-utilized and not economic oriented. Barghchi et al. suggest that to guide the planning system to focus on the concept of sustainable development



## PLYMOUTH DOCTORAL WORKSHOP (cont.)

is a new approach to planning and design. They recommend further research in the physical, economic and social impacts of sports facilities development on urban development in Malaysia. Eugene Loh et al. from the University of Teesside emphasise that strategic selection of sustainable materials and building design prior to the building construction is crucial to increasing building life cycle energy performance. They argue that stakeholders involved in the early design process often have conflicting priorities for both building design and construction materials which makes decision making a complex task. Loh et al. develop an Environmental Assessment Trade-off Tool (EATT) with Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP) incorporated and highlight how this system can be used to inform the design of low carbon energy efficient buildings.

All of these papers, together, present a useful insight into the current research in addressing sustainability in the built environment. It is interesting to see the diversity of research covered in this fairly small-scaled one-day workshop. Possibly, such diversity is a reflection on the wide-ranging attempts to define sustainability and measure sustainable development. But the themes, around **technology, 'soft' institutions, and behaviours**, of sustainability research embedded in the papers of these proceedings will certainly contribute to the relevant future debate in the wide community.

*Professor Paul Stephenson*

## USEFUL RESOURCES

Zetoc Alert (provides access to the contents tables of the British Library's collection of 20,000 journals and 16,000 conference proceedings published each year; suggested by Professor Will Hughes)  
<http://zetoc.mimas.ac.uk>

Current Contents (provides access to leading scholarly journals and about 7,000 websites; suggested by Professor Will Hughes)  
[http://thomsonreuters.com/products\\_services/science/science\\_products/a-z/current\\_contents\\_connect](http://thomsonreuters.com/products_services/science/science_products/a-z/current_contents_connect)

Informaworld (provides access to all the Taylor & Francis and Informa journals and periodicals; suggested by Professor Will Hughes)  
<http://www.informaworld.com>

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## POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY (cont.)

end to poverty was possible. In such a climate, the second strand is brought forward by politicians and other powerful business figures, Blair, Brown, Clinton, Obama, Gates, George Soros and many others took up the cause. Thirdly, natural disasters evoke the compassion of humankind and propel the idea of equality.

Yet, poverty alleviation has to get beyond external support in order to set in motion the flywheels of local economies. This is where the international construction industry has such a powerful role to play. Much of the major infrastructure provision in the poorest parts of the world was designed and built by the construction giants who are domiciled in the USA, UK, Spain, France, Italy and China. The international construction industry has a powerful role to play in the provision of infrastructure which is so vital in kick starting the economic mechanisms for the alleviation of poverty. Consider the three basic infrastructure provisions in Africa and the Developed Countries.

This shows that Africans have access to 5% of the electricity, 16% of the roads and 60% of the water supplied when com-

pared to those in the developed world. This situation is ripe for remedy and the construction industry is willing and able to build the necessary infrastructure.

At the planning and design stage of an infrastructure project, a component of the project strategy needs to be aligned towards poverty alleviation. Whilst many infrastructure projects depend upon aid money to get going, assurance is needed to ensure that the project is financially viable. If it is, then less aid is likely. Aid money comes



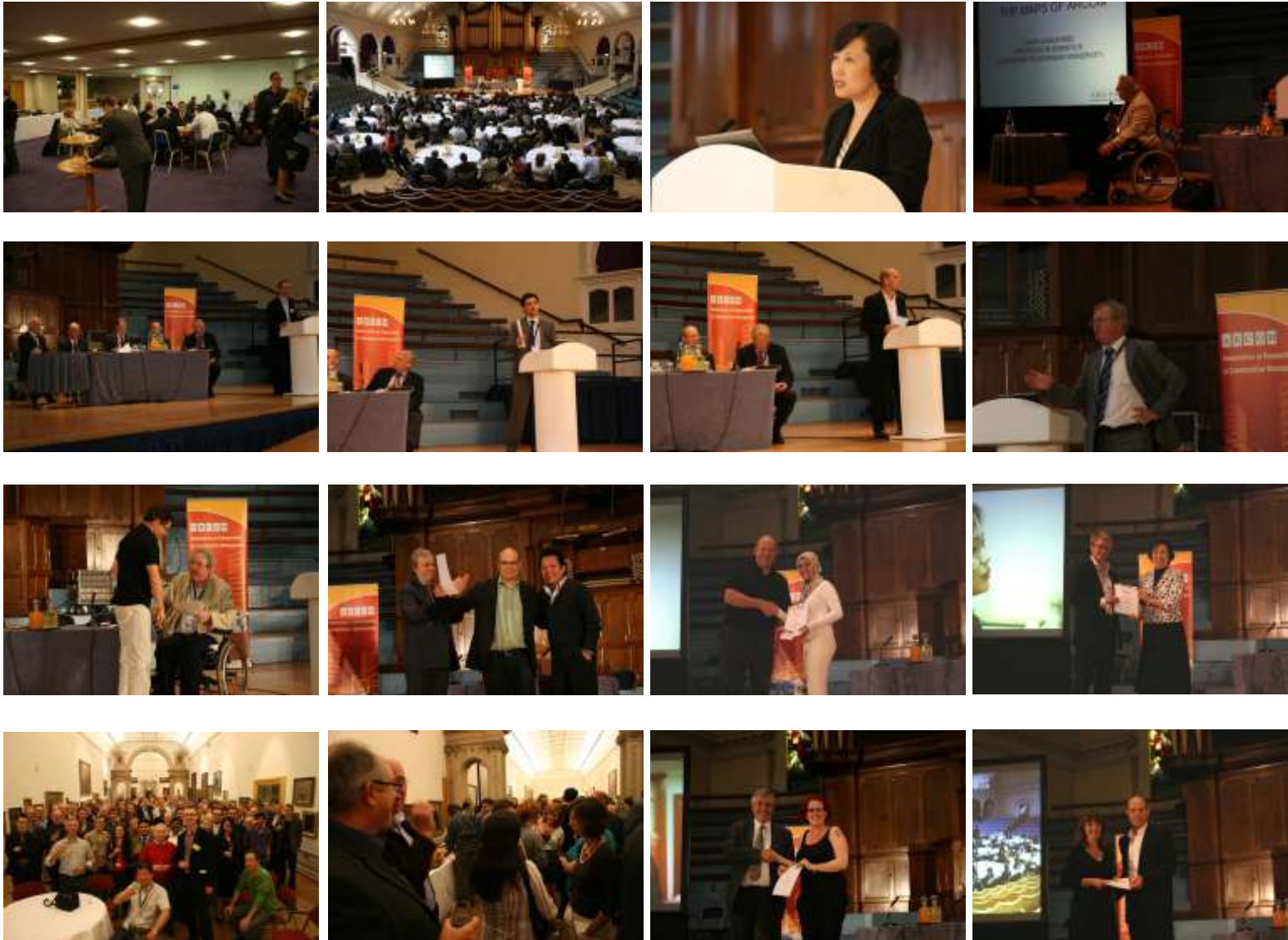
with ties linked to procurement clauses, political bonds and often the importation of foreign skills and supplies. Financially viable projects also give rise to secondary demands for goods and services around the delivery of a major infrastructure project. Works need not be driven by delivering the project in the shortest time but more to maximise the use of labour. One construction job

can support up to nine other people. Performance measurements need to assay how the project contributes to poverty alleviation along with conventional measurements of time, cost and quality. The works need to be broken down into sufficiently small components to enable small, indigenous firms to participate in major developments so as to maximise local content. Participation enables **'know-how' to be transmitted; this combines the 'hard skills' of the technical tasks with the 'soft skills' of negotiating contracts, motivating staff and the other skills which make up the DNA of a business.** Engendering trust is especially important. **The 'know-how' can be seen as containing both 'technical skills' and 'market knowledge'.** Large construction firms, or indeed any firm, often seek to hide and protect these invisible assets. The cause of poverty alleviation demands that they bring them out into the open as part of their wider, corporate social responsibilities. This can be part of a strategy of creating local firms which have a life beyond a single major construction project. Such small firms will be part of a network of businesses and people which can learn from the multi-nationals who are skilled in getting

things done. Such networks are vital resources for the emerging firm. It is also important that tools and equipment are left behind to benefit emerging local firms.

One of the important elements of the intervention of international contractors will be to convey the importance of repair and maintenance of the facility being built. Many projects have become a burden to their community for the want of the skills to maintain the facility. An international project allows records to be collected such that the competency of local businesses can be catalogued and a data base of local subcontractors and suppliers can be formed for the benefit of maintenance work and subsequent projects. These actions enable capacity building for local suppliers and contractors which in turn enable the local firms to navigate their way through bidding conventions and building regulations. These actions should enable local firms to participate in international projects and build their competence through training and the absorption of **'know-how'.** Such training requirements need to be built into the contracts. Trade apprenticeships and professional indentures are part of the trade when mul-

## Highlights from the 25th ARCOM Conference in Nottingham



## POVERTY ALLEVIATION AND THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY (cont.)

tionals engage in infrastructure projects

One cannot leave this subject without referring to **'the elephant in the room' which is corruption**. This vice does not only affect developing countries. In a recent survey conducted by the Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB) 41% of the 1,400 respondents said that they had been offered bribes. (Corruption in the UK Con-

struction Industry, CIOB 2008). Yet, the perception remains that many of the poorest countries in the world are the most corrupt. The anti-corruption organisation, Transparency International, produce a Corruption Perception Index which measures GDP (corrected for Comparative Purchasing Power) and the perception of corruption. Countries with the lowest GDP have the highest perception of corruption. Eleven of the

lowest seventeen most corrupt countries in the world are in Africa. Hopefully, the recent establishment of the African Governance Initiative can improve matters.

The issue of poverty alleviation is not only a moral issue. For those who care about these matters, poverty alleviation has profound social implications. **In a recent book 'The Spirit Level' by Richard Williamson**

and Kate Pickett, the authors analysed 30 years of data to show that the more equal a society is, the greater the benefits which accrue to all; less crime, less stress, less drug use and better health. Poverty alleviation is not just a cry for help from **'them'**; it is to the benefit of us all.

*Prof David Langford  
Honorary Life President  
ARCOM*

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