

Unit 10 Theory and methods in support of adaptable buildings

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Professor Stephen Kendall and Masao Ando selection of lecturers was excellent in supporting the units theme. The section explained what has been going on for many years, creative ways to dealing with adaptable buildings and how the methods have been downsized to the particular. Frans Van der Werf from the Netherlands was the first speaker. He gave a superb explanation on Open Building Theory with some case study illustrations from his own practice. He is very involved with community participation and his designs prove that adaptable buildings don't necessarily have to be rectilinear. They can also be achieved through organic forms. It was very interesting the way in which he experimented with new technology in the design of his own home with the help of his students. The results were: an alternative material for concrete made from clay and straw, the use of wood, natural paint, lime stucco and an easy to clean site after the construction was finished. He was asked why weren't there more adaptable buildings if the way was already there? To which he answered that "the technology is there but unfortunately the market is not."

The second speaker was Beisi Jia from Hong Kong who showed us how Open Building is interpreted by the Austrian firm Baumshlager and Eberle. This firm has no experience in Open Building and has never attended an Open Building conference. However, their work is a translation of Open Building through the use of:

- Space flexibility
- Sustainable building
- Regions craftsmanship
- Simple/compact/good price
- Architecture related to site

It was refreshing to see how the theory is related to good practice. The mass housing projects illustrated showed no relation to the poor quality examples we are used to see. It also shows that in the end the technology will find a way through the market.

The third speaker was Mark Gorgolewski from Canada who spoke about "Understanding how buildings evolve". He talked about why buildings become obsolete and stated that most changes are because of social obsolescence. He also stressed how a building should be composed of different layers and how we should be able to change a layer without affecting the other layers. As Croxton quoted "... if a building doesn't support change and reuse you have only an

illusion of sustainability...” He supports the Building Log Book, the writing down of how a building has changed from its first design to nowadays so that further interventions can be made on it. However, there exists an overload of information and how to sort this information should be considered for the future.

The next three speakers were from Japan. Shunji Funji research and implementation of “Improvement of building stock by converting adjacent tall-narrow buildings” caught my attention. He showed how the selection of appropriate technique, taking into consideration the place, could help change the building standards. His case studies were representative of this: in Ginza the conversion brought an increase in the lot value; in Shinjuku the conversion was used to improve fire safety; and in Osaka the results were an improvement of a city block. Mr. Funji’s speech was very concise and clear. His research is very ingenious and answers the question of what to do with this in-between space that seems to belong to no one but that could be used to improve space utility and quality.

Jun Yamada’s “Development of new building systems” seemed a bit futuristic. The main concept of the system is the building of platforms over small residential areas in Japan. This would bring renewal in the residential area that poses a threat in case of earthquakes.

The last speaker was Kenji Serizawa: “Development of prefabricated demountable infill system suitable for leasing and renting”. The goal is to regenerate the declining office areas with new infill for residential units. The technology and solutions are there. The refit can be done in 4 days. This shows a step up in the handling of infill. However, questions on how acoustics and height variety should be handled were left for further research.

As stated in the beginning, the lectures went from the very general to the specific. Some questions were left for future research. I am looking forward to the answers and to an increase in the Adaptable Building Stock for the next Sustainable Building Conference in Melbourne 2008.