

challenged about the government's record on planning and construction. Alan Mee (who spoke later about international planning models), asked the Minister to consider establishing a ministry of spatial planning, an idea that resurfaced at various times during the conference and was met with a mixed reaction. The CABE model in the UK was held up as a viable alternative - an inter-departmental group promoting quality of design, interacting with the existing government departments.

The conference ended on a pessimistic note, with an indictment of the current state of planning and housing in Ireland and little visible sign of change. Frank McDonald claimed that there is no support at Government level for policy change. Firmly rejecting comments from other speakers on the merits of un-planned building zones, he insisted the issue of housing is too important to leave to chance. Both McDonald and Shane O'Toole spoke passionately about the crisis in Irish planning, and the need for urgent action, rather than more discussion. It was unfortunate, given the vigour with which Frank McDonald spoke, that he was not on hand earlier in the day to challenge Minister Micheál Martin on his government's record in Planning and development.

The Des/IRE conference laid down its three aims in promotional literature in advance of the event:

1. To push forward the agenda in Ireland in making a case for an intermediary body between the government, developers and architects
2. To demonstrate that good design is increasingly a commercial necessity and
3. To highlight the need for greater design awareness through education and the involvement of the young in the creation of their built environment.

These aims were met with varying degrees of success. The primary aim, listed first, was challenged throughout the conference. The danger of such a body becoming a talk shop between like minded individuals, with little power to change policy or influence those in power was highlighted. No clear consensus emerged about the role of such a group, and as far as I'm aware no steps have been taken to establish this body. The second and third aims remained peripheral during the conference.

The National Sculpture Factory deserves commendation for establishing the conference and bringing together practitioners and theoreticians from many different disciplines. The conference was exceptional in the range of speakers involved and the high level of presentations offered. The short films shown during intervals were of a very high quality, and Gemma Tipton (chairing the event) organised the speakers and debates very well. I would like to see some of the suggestions from the conference brought together and presented to national and local politicians, senior planners and architects. If the suggested inter-disciplinary group is to have a realistic chance of success it will require the broadest possible support base.

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Encounter/Exchange/Experience/EASA

HUGO TAMONT AND JURRIEN VAN DUJKEREN



EASA as a temporary construct

We are proud to announce that EASA does not exist. EASA is a concept. No institution. No headquarters. No members. EASA is a practical network for architecture, communication and cultural exchange. Everything is provided for a metropolitan routine with minimal sleep, minimal comfort and maximal activity: a refugee camp for designers.

EASA as a body for cultural exchange

Living communally, sharing similar interests and bound together by architecture, there is a strange intensity to the minute-to-minute unfolding of the assembly. Random encounters over breakfast can lead to a decision to leave your job and go to work and live in another country. Collaborating with an inspiring tutor can convince you to go and study in their school. EASA is unrecognisable in comparison with a stillborn Erasmus programme - everyone is going into the unknown. Everyone is parachuted into a foreign culture.

EASA as a city within a city

EASA is the negative of the Forbidden City - everything changes, everything is open, everything is immediate, everything is temporary. This polis operates under the premise of a non-hierarchical collective collaborating through the media of workshops and discussions to produce a body of work that is representative of four hundred people from forty countries living together for two weeks under one theme.

Immediate EASA

EASA is about immediacy. The ankylosis that comes in everyday architectural life - both intellectually in the design process and physically during the construction period - is remedied through enthusiasm, rash decision-making, unmakeable deadlines and the ever-presence of a whole raft of critical voices. For two weeks, participants suck the marrow out of life.

Inexperience/Experience EASA

Inexperience is a defining trait of EASA workshops. Ideas are brought to the assembly from a bewilderingly diverse range of backgrounds and undergo mutations, discussions, arguments, enforced changes and willful moves from a similarly diverse chorus of participants. The realisations that emerge from this twelve-day pregnancy can be radically different from the initial proposition - sometimes these discrepancies are to the benefit of the workshop, sometimes they're detrimental. These rushed, teetering piles of experiences can be instructive, even formative.



No Catalogue

EASA is over-documented. Everybody brings a different experience back with them. EASA is an index of different encounters: work, talk, argument, competition, party, dinner, sport, lecture, sleep, wake. It is your entire college experience crammed into two weeks.

EASA is a collage. EASA is a Saturday Night Special. EASA is a 35 yard screamer. EASA is Glenn Kotche's drumming.

EASA [European Architecture Students Assembly] is an annual assembly of 400 architecture students which takes place over a two week period every August. The aim of the organisation is to encourage cooperation between students and young architects from over forty European countries through the media of architectural workshops, communal responsibility, lectures, debates and exhibitions. Ireland will host EASA for the first time from the 9 - 24 August 2008 in Dublin and Letterfrack under the theme Adaptation.

www.easa008.ie
www.easa.tk

Hugo Lamont is an Irish architect. Jurrien Van Duijkeren is a Dutch architect. They know each other through EASA.