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It all began in Lausanne

ROD HACKNEY
UIA PRESIDENT 1987–90

How many professional groupings are in a position to boast that they have a world-wide democratically elected representative organisation similar to the International Union of Architects? None of them can. The UIA is unique and the envy of engineers, doctors, scientists and other professional groupings.

When UIA was founded in Lausanne in 1948, it used to take the best part of a week to travel from Europe to New Zealand. It can now be done in less than a day. The fax machine, Internet & electronic mail were unheard of, yet today it only takes seconds for an electronic message to circumnavigate the globe.

Just as world trade is reducing political boundaries, architectural practice has also transgressed national boundaries and many countries are finding that the rules they applied to their own national members need to be seen in relationship to this new international reality. The UIA has become the appropriate forum for this discussion.

The first 50 years of the UIA existence have not diluted the reason for the UIA's existence. The retreat of the threat of all-out war has not resulted in more security within our cities or better environment. These realities, together with a quadrupling of the UIA's membership size, have strengthened not weakened the reason the UIA organisation exists. The next 50 years will see the UIA to concentrate on professional practice, education and the intellectual debate.

Professional practice: By the year 2048, the UIA will have become the United Nations of architectural prac-

tice. It will be charged with many important duties, including sending in task forces to areas of disaster. It will continue to provide an honest broker service to national architectural bodies who are in dispute with their governments as will the drive to reconcile individual variation in interpretations of architectural practice in the 100 or so member sections. It will interpret the GATT agreements with fairness and ensure that crossborder intellectual property rights are respected and professional standards enhanced.

Education: Our younger members of the architectural profession no longer see political boundaries as a bar to their practice of architecture. They want to work abroad and are not inhibited by nationalistic tendencies. The UIA will facilitate international practice and set up structures to make this work. This will include intervening in how architects are educated to ensure that quality comes before quantity. Standardisation of educational entry into the architectural profession must not mean the growth of an (International Style) which demands all buildings, wherever they are placed, to be uniform in appearance. A world-wide recognition of degree standards must not mean a carte blanche for despoiling rich and varied local or regional qualities.

Intellectual debate: The UIA will promote architects as providers of quality environments. By standing up and arguing against the ravages of degrading urban sprawl and exploitation of precious resources, the UIA will champion a debate which will educate the public in what architects can do to better their quality of life.

The triennial prizes including the Gold Medal will be more broadly advertised. Would it not be a good idea

to partner with the Nobel Foundation, with its proud reputation in promoting peace, literature and science, to promote a Nobel Prize for Architecture. Bad buildings can damage your health, good architecture can raise the spirits.

The UIA affiliation with the United Nations is a sound one. It is good that the UN is increasing its democratic set-up by trebling the number of countries represented on its Security Council. The UIA has already achieved democratic representation with a ruling council of over 30 members. The UIA General Assembly and concurrent triennial congresses are beginning to bring in much needed additional finances. These congress dues, as well as the finance earned by acting as the UNESCO approved agency for international architectural competitions, are reducing reliance on membership dues. This can only be healthy. Larger countries, who may be tempted to withholding their membership dues, will not be able to hold the organisation to ransom.

A financially stable UIA and the continuing support of the world's architectural profession, will allow it to fully engage in the debate on how to produce a better, kinder and more sustainable building environment. We might be good at our job as architects, but we need to ensure that those who are in power appreciate what we can do. To avoid the propensity toward the cheapest and the quickest, we need to take on those who persist in threatening our planet. The UIA is posed to engage in this debate. The next 50 years will show whether we have won the argument.

TOUT A COMMENCÉ À LAUSANNE

Rares sont les associations en droit d'affirmer qu'elles sont aussi démocratiques que l'UIA, qui est en fait le forum rêvé pour les rencontres d'architectes à l'échelle mondiale. Trois grands sujets vont ainsi dominer les cinquante prochaines années: pratique professionnelle, formation et débats intellectuels.

En matière de pratique professionnelle, l'UIA sera l'ONU des architectes en 2048. Elle enverra des contingents dans les foyers de crise, elle fera office d'intermédiaire entre les sections nationales et les gouvernements, atténuant les différences de vues. Elle défendra aussi la propriété intellectuelle et mettra au point des standards professionnels.

Au niveau de la formation, les frontières nationales ne seront plus un obstacle pour les

jeunes architectes. L'UIA s'appliquera en effet à faciliter les échanges internationaux, tout en veillant à maintenir le niveau de la qualité avant la quantité.

Enfin, pour ce qui est du débat intellectuel, c'est la qualité de la vie qui doit être mise en avant. L'UIA encourage le débat afin de faire prendre conscience au public des moyens dont disposent les architectes pour rendre notre environnement plus agréable à vivre. Pourquoi ne pas envisager dans la foulée un prix Nobel de l'Architecture?

L'UIA a grandi et à élargi ses bases financières, ce qui la rend moins dépendante des membres les plus influents et lui permet de montrer aux grands de ce monde de quoi sont capables nos architectes. L'UIA lutte contre le principe du moins cher et du plus rapide qui menace plus que jamais notre planète.

ALLES BEGANN IN LAUSANNE

Wie mancher Weltverband darf von sich behaupten, so demokratisch zu sein wie die UIA? Keiner. Heute, da die Grenzen durchlässig sind, ist die UIA das geeignete Forum für die globale Auseinandersetzung unter Architekten. In den nächsten 50 Jahren warten drei Hauptaufgaben auf die UIA: Berufspraxis, Ausbildung und intellektuelle Debatte. Berufspraxis: Im Jahr 2048 wird die UIA die UNO der Architekten sein. Sie wird Hilfskontingente in Katastrophengebiete entsenden, sie wird zwischen den nationalen Sektionen und deren Regierungen vermitteln und sie wird die Unterschiede zwischen den einzelnen Ländern ausgleichen. Sie verteidigt das geistige Eigentum und setzt professionelle Standards.

Ausbildung: Für die jungen Architekten sind Landesgrenzen kein Hindernis mehr. Die UIA wird den internationalen Austausch erleichtern und dafür sorgen, dass die Qualität vor der Quantität hochgehalten wird.

Intellektuelle Debatte: Es geht um die Lebensqualität. Die UIA fördert eine Debatte, die dem Publikum verdeutlicht, wie die Architekten ihre Umwelt verbessern können. Warum nicht auch einen Nobel-Preis für Architektur verleihen?

Die UIA ist gewachsen und hat ihre finanzielle Basis erweitert. Das macht sie weniger abhängig von den grössten Mitgliedern und erlaubt eine Politik, die auch den Mächtigen klar machen kann, was Architekten können. Das Billigste und Schnellste bedroht unseren Planeten. Die UIA kämpft dagegen.