

International docomomo Conference 2012 'From Coffe Cup to General Plan', Espoo, Finland

By Timo Tuomi



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How does good design affect our physical surroundings in all scales from coffee cup to plan? This eternal question seemed to be as topical as ever during the 12th International **docomomo** Conference in Espoo, Finland this August. This was evidenced by the amount of abstracts offered to the conference, 356 in all. The International Scientific Committee of the conference achieved a minor miracle in laboring out a selection of 78 to be presented as papers during three intensive days from August 8 to 10. A number of abstracts were also offered the chance of a poster presentation, and delightfully many grabbed the chance to be noticed in this way.

The conference was preceded by the International **docomomo** workshop held at the Department of Architecture at Aalto University's Otaniemi campus designed by Alvar Aalto. The topic of the

workshop was the campus area itself, because it is currently under enormous changes due to the merging of three universities (technical, business and design) in need for new buildings. The scale of the area will change as the results of a planning completion, still under way, will be realized.

Walks and excursions were offered before, during and after the conference, some of the most popular once being the longer ones east to Vyborg and Sunila and west to Turku all the way up to Aalto's Villa Mairea.

Tuesday the 7th was the opening day for the conference at the Espoo Cultural Centre, designed by Arto Sipinen in 1989 that completed the centre of Tapiola Carden City begun in 1952. Tapiola is an internationally known example of post-war Scandinavian town planning, and it proved to be a good choice for the conference as an excursion

destination on its own right. The opening night was highlighted by two Finnish keynote speakers, Juha Leiviskä and Juhani Pallasmaa. Leiviskä, who won the Carlsberg Architectural Prize in 1995 gave an unforgettably personal presentation on his design and underlined the use of light in many of his buildings. Juhani Pallasmaa spoke on "Newness, Tradition and Identity", convincing that newness in tradition means that each generation has to find their own way to connect with tradition in order to achieve timeless works of art.

Apart from interesting papers presented at three simultaneous sessions, an unforeseen success was a round table event on the Tugendthat house and its restoration on Wednesday. The space reserved for it filled over capacity but good humor prevailed. Wednesday's keynote was John Allan speaking about the evolution of **docomomo** and what might be the future for an organization that has achieved international credibility over the years.

Thursday was a traditional day for the International Council meeting where several new chapters were accepted and welcomed to the **docomomo** family. The Secretariat in Barcelona was approved to continue their good work with great applause and thanks for previous years. Thursday's keynote speaker was Mikko Heikkinen from the firm Heikkinen-Komonen, internationally known for example for their Finnish Embassy building in Washington D.C. Heikkinen gave examples of how many of their competition entries, both successful and not, were developed. Friday was the last day of

Figure 1. Ana Tostões, Chair of **docomomo** International, at the 12th International **docomomo** Conference.

Figure 2. Hubert-Jan Henket, first Chair of **docomomo** International and Honorary President.

Figure 3. Timo Tuomi, **docomomo** Finland, appreciates the commitment of Maija Kairamo and Ana Tostões.

Figure 4. Ivo Hammer and Ana Tostões during one of the **docotours** in Sunila.

All photos @ **docomomo** International



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the conference proper, and included a round table on the possible survival of urban design in some Northern cities. The afternoon was continued with design on an urban scale, as the workshop awards were presented on the most interesting proposals for developing the Aalto campus. The keynote was a short and dynamic paper from Anthony Vidler on "Learning to Love Brutalism". In the closing session, which was a family gathering of hundreds (around

350) of **docomomo** members, welcoming words were presented by the delegation of the chosen hosts of the 13th **docomomo** International Conference from Seoul, Korea. The next hosts delivered welcoming words in such a tempting way that left many booking the dates for 2014 already. After several eloquent thanks for everybody involved in making the Espoo conference happening, a special thanks was given to the grand lady of Finnish **do-**

comomo Maija Kairamo for her great work right from the beginning of foundation of the organization. And then there was food and drink and dance to a band and a general feeling of exhaustion and satisfaction due to a conference witnessing the necessity and importance of **docomomo** as a dynamic organization.

International docomomo Workshop August 2-7, 2012

Department of Architecture, Otaniemi, Espoo, Finland
Head instructors: Professors Aino Niskanen and Olli-Paavo Koponen
Observer/Reporter: Panayotis Tournikiotis

Is Aalto just a name for a brand?

By Olli Hakanen, Sirkkaliisa Jetsonen, Tommi Lindh and Aino Niskanen



Figure 1. Panayotis Tournikiotis reporting on the workshop results at the Docomomo Conference final round table discussion August 10, 2012. Photo by Tommi Lindh.

The Helsinki University of Technology got its present placement and layout in Otaniemi with Alvar Aalto's competition winning entry from 1948. Aalto's red brick buildings freely grouped in the middle of green revolving around the focus of a Greek theatre, the main auditorium, soon became landmarks of modern architecture. The group of buildings was complete to start as a functioning campus university in the mid-1960s with student housing surrounding the educational buildings.

The area has during the decades got additions and alterations but the main features have however remained fairly intact.

Today the situation has changed. Helsinki University of Technology is annexed into a larger unit of the Aalto University having joined The University of Art and Design Helsinki and The Helsinki School of Economics since 2010. The Department of Architecture was merged together with the University of Industrial Design into a new School

of Arts, Design and Architecture in 2012.

The Aalto University is planning to move a major part of its functions from Helsinki into Otaniemi, Espoo. A two phase competition to design Aalto University's Otaniemi central campus and its main buildings facing the present. The former main building is arranged of which the first phase has just finished. The floor area of the new complex is about double compared with Alvar Aalto's building.

The future fate of Aalto's buildings is unclear: their uses will change and many of them are undergoing renovations. The buildings have no formal protection status although the area itself is included in the inventory of nationally significant cultural environments. For example the rector has moved away from the spaces which Aalto had designed as a climax of his composition—the future use of these spaces is unclear. The leaders of the university have shown no real interest in the qualities Aalto's architecture—although masses of architectural tourists visit the area.

The campus is also finally getting a subway connection to the inner city but it means at the same a pressure to condense the area with housing and commercial activities. What will happen to the character of campus architecture or the green outdoors of housing areas? The planning of the totality is a fairly invisible process. There are several projects going on—the increase of residential and commercial building is significant, more than doubling the current amount in square meters.

These topical questions were the starting point of the workshop which lasted a week was arranged as part of the Docomomo 2012 Conference. Unlike the previous Docomomo workshops the participants were not master students but young professionals instead, as the organizers had wished a relevant contribution for a situation facing real dramatic problems. They worked for a week with the aim of trying to understand the possibilities and threats of the Aalto building and their surroundings and presented their outcome at the conference. Smaller presentations were made during the workshop.