

Welcome to the 2nd International European Architectural History Network Conference

After the first successful international European Architectural History Network (EAHN) conference in Guimarães, we are now gathering in Brussels for our second international meeting. If Guimarães was in 2010 preparing to be the 2012-Cultural Capital of Europe, Brussels of course has a more permanent claim to the title of 'European Capital'. Not only the EU has its headquarters in Brussels, also the NATO is permanently lodged here as are many other international organizations. As the capital of Belgium, Brussels is a city of negotiation. It houses the Belgian parliament and the Belgian king, as well as various regional institutions (such as the Flemish parliament). Since the North and the South of the country do not share the same language – North uses Dutch and South relies upon French -, and since there is a minority with a third official language (German), Brussels is a multilingual city. Brussels also has a large immigrant community and is home to many European bureaucrats, which makes it into a multicultural city par excellence.

Brussels' international and European character is matched by that of our conference. We have participants from 31 different countries, 22 European and 9 others (including Japan, Taiwan and New Zealand). Among these, the country with the most representatives is the USA: we have 45 participants affiliated to American universities (which is not to say that they are all American). The UK comes in second, with 21 participants affiliated to British institutions, followed at a distance by Germany, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada and France. As an association, the EAHN is very pleased with this international appeal. It proves that the organization fulfils a need and that architectural historians working in or on Europe are very eager to share the results from their work in an event that brings them all together.

This conference is the result of first a call for session proposals and then a call for papers. The first call resulted in 78 proposals of which 26 were selected by the scientific committee. These 26 session proposals made up the call for papers. Again the response was very significant – if rather varied for the different sessions. On average, session chairs received about four times as many abstracts as they could accommodate. Because of the wealth of good abstracts, the scientific committee decided to also organize open sessions. Hence we now have a conference with five slots of six parallel sessions, resulting in 30 sessions in total. These sessions are loosely organized in six thematic 'tracks': Early Modern, Representation and Communication, Questions of Methodology, Theoretical Issues, Twentieth Century, and Welfare State Architecture. We used these tracks as a way to ensure that, as much as possible, sessions that would appeal to the same participants were not scheduled in the same slot. Of course there are limits to this ambition. Given the very richness of what is on offer during this conference, participants will undoubtedly face multiple dilemmas in choosing which session to attend. Consulting the abstracts (available on a USB stick you find in your conference package) or the proceedings (also available) might help you in making the selection.

The venue of our conference is on a remarkable site, housing the Throne Building and the Royal Academy, both neighbours to the Royal Palace and very prominently located at the corner of the park connecting the Palace with the Parliament building. Our host is the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium (meaning the Dutch-speaking and independently operating wing of the Royal Academy, whose francophone counterpart is also housed in this building). The choice for this venue was proposed by the organizational committee that consists of members of many different Belgian

institutions. Indeed, if this conference is an example of European integration, its organization is exemplary of interuniversity collaboration. The conference was made possible by the active involvement of people from nine different universities and university colleges – a remarkable achievement in itself, but one which has worked in a very effective and fluent manner. Financially the event was made possible by several organizations: the Royal Flemish Academy of Belgium, FWO (Fund for Scientific Research - Flanders), the FNRS (Fund for Scientific Research – Wallonia), Visit Brussels, and the Communauté Française de Belgique. We are grateful for their support.

Next to the scholarly sessions, there are also multiple other events: a pre-conference workshop, lunch tours, special lunch sessions with book presentations and a poster session featuring researchers at Belgian institutions, a welcome reception, a conference dinner, and post-conference tours. Most importantly the conference offers you the opportunity to meet old friends and colleagues, and to make new ones. As we all know, communication, dissemination and scholarly exchange are extremely important in our field. At least as important is the human warmth and support that we experience in connecting with like-minded people who share our interest in architectural history and theory. Enjoy the conference, enjoy Brussels, enjoy the friendship.

Hilde Heynen

Conference chair