

## The «International Association for Cultural Studies in Architecture» (IACSA) has been founded

We are happy to announce that on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008 was founded in Zurich (Switzerland) the International Association for Cultural Studies in Architecture (IACSA).

IACSA is a non-profit organisation with free membership. It is committed to the study and practise of cultural lifeworlds in the built environment.

It addresses scholars of all disciplines – scientific, practical and artistic – prone to contribute to an understanding of the creation and appropriation of built environment.

### The organisation

IACSA is an association according to Swiss law, founded on September 17<sup>th</sup>, 2008. In practical terms and pragmatically the association has three levels:

(I) *A Founding Advisors' Board*  
a group of personalities from different disciplines whose names stand for the field of Cultural Studies in Architecture.

(II) *A Working Board*  
which is open for everyone interested and willing to contribute to build the network.

(III) *A Network Editor*  
who maintains and stimulates exchange and prepares the information management.

### Members of the Founding Advisors' Board (in alphabetic order)

Prof. Pauline von Bonsdorff PhD, Jyväskylä Finland  
 Prof. Dr. Ingrid Breckner, Hamburg, Germany  
 Prof. Catharina Dyrssen, Göteborg, Sweden  
 Prof. Dr. Elisabeth Katschnig.Fasch, Graz, Austria  
 Prof. Angela McRobbie PhD, London, United Kingdom  
 Prof. Colette Pétonnet, Paris, France

### Founding members, first members of the Working Board

Lea Haller, Zürich; Gabriela Muri, Zürich; Johanna Rolshoven, Marburg;  
 Friedemann Schmoll, Tübingen; Justin Winkler (Network Editor), Basel

Everyone interested in Cultural studies in architecture can become member of the Working Board. No fee is collected, yet the members are expected to contribute to the qualitative extension of the network.

IACSA shall grow more in density than in size. The association is to be put in motion by network efforts on all three levels (I - III), but especially by the network editor and the working board members.

A learning dialogic organisation  
 As it starts without membership fees, the basis of IACSA is volunteer work. As it evolves, the association learns which needs have to be considered and satisfied. For some time to come, the association exists merely through intelligent «flashes» of electronic communication and serendipity.

For practical reasons the language for all IACSA transactions is English only. Refer-

ences to projects and events in other languages are very welcome, but should be complemented by English summaries.

#### Further development

The IACSA Newsletter (see page 3) is the first and essential communicational link between the members of the Working Board. It collects and lists periodically all issues and

sends it to all members. The newsletter exists exclusively in electronic form.

The establishment of a website, journal, conferences and book publications – the cherished projects of most associations like this – shall be achieved later, on the basis of future network capital.

## How to register as a member

If you sense that the idea of IACSA covers the field of your interest you are welcome to participate as a member of the Working Board. Simply write to

[iacsa@mobileculturestudies.com](mailto:iacsa@mobileculturestudies.com)

an informal demand. You will receive an electronic registration form along with an electronic copy of the bylaws. You are free to ask any question concerning IACSA which we will answer within the bounds of our capacities.

## What are «Cultural studies in architecture» ?

### 1. The field

«Cultural studies in architecture» is a field of empirical and theoretical scientific interest and application. It is explicitly not one more subdiscipline, but an open thematic realm explored and covered by many disciplines and practices. «Cultural studies in architecture» carry with them an invitation to theorise the built environment in ways that are not obscured by authorised ideologies or canonised practises.

Of the words that form the name of the association, «architecture» shall be discussed in the first place, because it defines the association's place in the world; «in» is a preposition that cannot be neglected; and «Cultural studies», although a set of methods and ways of theorising as much established as contested and varied, has to be rethought with respect to the present aim.

### 2. «Architecture»

We understand architecture as the built and managed environment, existing space *and* the production of space, static and process-like spaces. It may be considered as coinciding with a notion of cultural habitat. It expresses human interests and in turn acts on them, it is shelter and arena. And it is a constantly

renovated and re-designed archive, the hinge of transmission in time from generation to generation.

### 3. «In»

It is not indifferent if we had chosen for the name of the association the word «of»architecture instead of «in» architecture. With «of» we would assume the status of a discipline at the service of architecture in its narrow sense as the charge of construction and building as business. If we are placing cultural studies «in» an architecture which approaches «habitat» both as surround and as lifeworld, we assume an active stance within the field. It is thus possible to read the «in» as a «through», both spatially and theoretically: culture materialising from the ground.

The «in» also incites science, arts and applied disciplines to enter a common field so far and get into exchange with applied disciplines.

### 4. «Cultural studies»

The term «cultural studies» is found in the WWW approximately 8.5 million times. As we know, the definitions of the term vary through its history and by «region». We understand CS as by their very definition trans- and metadisciplinary. For us they are

an «ongoing intellectual project» which is concerned with the phenomenal world in its perceptual richness and functional complexity. In fact Empirische Kulturwissenschaft is the bridgestone for this venture from disciplines of cultural studies to the disciplines of the built environment. Cultural studies are thus fundamentally multiperspectival and use a methodology which fosters interpretive approaches, discourse analytics and emic

perspectives. Doing this they are basically open for new phenomena and new ways of inquiry. As much as their work is driven by theoretical interests they are bound to the question of the relevance of their approaches and insights for the lifeworld. Their knowledge has implicitly a political dimension in its original sense, contributing to knowledge, empowerment and action.

## CSA Taster Quote

«Do not judge people by the words they utter, but by their acts.» (Knigge, 1790)  
If we took this insight serious and acted according to this principle we would at last take account of the fact that in the midst of our everyday culture an unwritten culture is stored, huge with respect to volume and significance, in other words: that there is much more cultural speechlessness than we can consciously conceive. »

Cutting from Martin Scharfe, *Kultur als Oberfläche. Zur methodischen Not und Notwendigkeit, in die Tiefe zu gelangen*. In: *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Volkskunde* 61(110), 2007, p. 156. (Transl. JW)

## Coming up: CSA Newsletter

This announcement will be followed by an electronic newsletter offered to IACSA members.

We chose deliberately the newsletter instead of an electronic forum or blog, because it is a slower vehicle, more adapted to the pace of reflection.

By means of the newsletter the Network Editor will re-distribute all correspondence, ask for answers raised by members and communicate focal texts, projects or events of interest for Cultural Studies in Architecture.

We propose to start not with the question «What are CSA?» but by asking «Who is practising CSA?». Many are actually practising «it» without ever having thought of calling it CSA.

More «Taster Quotes» shall be offered: All Working Board members are invited to send quotes which point to the horizons where they think CSA's topics lie.

Constructive or radical critique and explicit consent are welcome. They have the capacity of guiding us around the many obstacles.

Justin Winkler, Network Editor