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Conclusions and Recommendations of the Jury

The Schindler Competition «Access for All» received a positive echo amongst the European Architectural Schools: 78 universities throughout the continent – from Spain in the West to Georgia in the East, from as far north as Lund to Venice in the South – submitted proposals for the site in Saint-Gilles, Brussels. Roughly 280 students completed their projects, about half of them underwent an internal selection process at their respective university, the other half were selected by our pre-jury, under the auspices of the President of the Grand Jury, Prof. Thomas Sieverts. In order to guarantee the same opportunity for all participants, these projects were divided into regional groups and then selected according to the rules stated in the amendment of the Schindler Competition and published in newsletter 2 and on our web page.

Pre-Jury and Grand Jury convened in Brussels, September 8 through 11, 2004. From these intense four days, we drew the following conclusions and recommendations:

1. The same paths for all people, regardless of their abilities!

Designs which prevent disabled people from using the same paths and portals as their non disabled companions use, are proof that «Access for all» is not sufficiently embedded in architectural education. Only too often elevators and ramped access gates are hidden away. In the opinion of the jury, the apparent lack of profound solutions for this theme is less a consequence of the complexity of the given task, then that «Access for all» is not yet an integral part of the curriculum at many schools. Many projects still deal with the topic exclusively on a technical and normative level, thus remaining additive and external rather than becoming an integral design element.

2. Trying out movement restrictions of disabled people helps students understand!

A humanistic attitude towards equality can be stimulated and developed by the self-experience of practicing inabilities yourself; drive around in a wheelchair for some hours, use a blind folder or darkened eye glasses to simulate vision impairment. Plug your ears to experience how it feels to have a hearing disability. Promoting such experiences ought to become part of every architectural undergraduate program.

3. Experience of architecture for all and all senses!

All people, regardless of their abilities, should be granted an equal right to experience space and urban culture. Specific disabilities should be balanced by offering alternatives for the other senses these people are able to use. For vision impaired people, special audio events or tactile adventures should be conceived. Visual signage or even olfactory elements help hearing impaired people. Even the sense of orientation of mentally challenged people can be improved by harmonious sensual experiences. The teaching of Architectural Design must be broadened greatly in these aspects.

4. Conformity of norms – variety of designs!

The projects submitted to the jury bespeak the great variety between the building codes for disabilities and the vast differences between the norms and regulations applied throughout European countries. In the interest of disabled people and their freedom to travel, these norms and regulations must be streamlined and standardized. On the other hand, the variety of design applications thereof should be broadened and new applications encouraged. In this respect, the students' work we received only hints to the direction in which we must go further. Nevertheless they indicate ways, how disabled people may participate in the spatial, urban and cultural experience.

5. Implementing «access for all» takes patience, dedication and persistence.

The competition shows, that a long path still lays ahead of us, until we will overcome the deficits in education of the «Design for all». Competitions such as the one for the Schindler Award are a suitable means to get there. Brussels, Sept. 11, 2004, Thomas Sieverts, Andreas Binkert



The Jury: (back row) Gilbert Huyberechts, Miguel A. Rodríguez, Thore Garbers, Thomas Sieverts (Chairman), Luc Bonnard, Jean-Pierre Le Dantec; (front row) Pierre-Louis Grosbois, Joe Manser, Hans Jappsen; Not on the photo: Pierre Lallemand