

Reporting on national French conference on responsible retrofitting of historic buildings

CREBA Conference, Strasbourg, France, 21st November 2019

Julien Borderon, Elodie Héberlé

Cerema

The poster features an orange header with the text 'Colloque CREBA' in large white letters, followed by the subtitle 'Approches et outils qualitatifs pour accompagner la transition écologique dans la réhabilitation du bâti ancien' in smaller white text. Below the text is a photograph of a narrow street in a historic town, lined with half-timbered buildings. At the bottom of the poster, there is a row of logos for various organizations, including Cerema, SITES & CITES, and CREBA. The website 'rehabilitation-bati-ancien.fr' is visible in the top right corner of the poster.

CREBA congress

Qualitative approaches and tools to support the ecological transition in the rehabilitation of historic buildings

To encourage and develop the professional skills of architects, design offices and craftsmen, and thereby promote a responsible approach to the rehabilitation of traditional buildings, a resource centre for responsible retrofitting was created in 2018 after 2 years of preparation [1]. It is called the

“Centre de REssources pour la rehabilitation responsable du Bâti Ancien”, short “CREBA”. A French version of the knowledge centre is available at <http://www.rehabilitation-bati-ancien.fr/fr> .

On November 21st, 2019 the second national conference of the CREBA was held in Strasbourg, France, in the auditorium of ENA (Ecole Nationale de l’Administration). 155 people attended the conference, mostly architects, buildings’ physics engineers, professional trainers, students and civil servants in local administrations. Unfortunately, very few craftsmen and construction workers. This point is a strong one to work on: How does one connect with craftsmen and construction workers? This is certainly something CREBA endeavors to do.

The topic of the conference in 2019 was “Qualitative approaches and tools to support the ecological transition in the rehabilitation of historic buildings”. The Grand Témoin of the day was Philippe Madec, the famous architect [2] which is one of the pioneers of sustainable development in architecture, taking the approach to consider the use of existing material during renovation projects, adding only a minimal amount of new fabric, thereby minimizing the carbon impact on the environment. The conference was supported by the “Sites et Cités Remarquables de France” association [3], the Cerema [4] and both cultural ministry and sustainable development ministry.

During the first session of the conference, the development of CREBA as a knowledge centre and discussion about the link and agreement between CREBA and local or national organisations, such as the “fédération des parcs naturels régionaux” (federation of regionals natural parks) have been presented. Following this, a round table discussion was held on the topic of management methods for responsibly carrying out retrofitting projects on buildings with heritage value. The architect representative was Pierre Lynde, one of his realisation is the school in Mulhouse that is a good practice example on the hiberatlas website [5]. The ways to build bridges between heritage professionals and designers of retrofitting projects, architects, technicians and construction workers were the main topic for interesting discussion and good practice examples.



The second part of the day began with technical presentations on tools, including technical guidelines such as the OPERA tools to assess the hygrothermal risks before insulation [6] and professional training methods. A larger debate amongst all attendees took place, examining the target of all these tools. The tools appear to be fit for architects, engineers and technicians, however, do not adapt well for construction workers and craftsmen, who are often alone on a retrofitting project for smaller or regular buildings.

Another round table discussion was held in the last part of the conference, concentrating on energy retrofitting of vernacular buildings. One heritage architect, president of the national association of heritage architecture, debated with an architect specialised in low energy renovation, the engineer in charge of one large building physics engineering office, and an engineer in charge of the support of the private owner for the retrofitting of their housing in the Grand East region. The discussions were very passionate around real cases with clear disagreement concerning respect of heritage! This proves we still have a lot of work to do concerning the responsible retrofitting of historical buildings!

[1] Burgholzer J., Héberlé H., Valkhoff H., Costes J.P., Borderon J. 2018. Development of a knowledge centre for responsible retrofit of traditional buildings in France. In proceeding, EEHB conference, Visby, Sweden, 2018. (<http://eehb2018.com/conference-report/>)

[2] <https://www.atelierphilippemadec.fr/philippe-madec.html>

[3] <https://www.sites-cites.fr/>

[4] <https://www.cerema.fr/fr>

[5] <https://www.hiberatlas.com/en/welcome-1.html>

[6] <http://www.rehabilitation-bati-ancien.fr/fr/espace-documentaire/outils-opera>