

Zeitschrift: IABSE reports = Rapports AIPC = IVBH Berichte
Band: 999 (1997)

Vorwort

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Foreword

The development of civilisation can be characterised as the increased shaping of the environment through structures built from basic materials and different levels of manufacturing skills: earth, timber, concrete and steel. The last couple of centuries have seen the rise of the profession of structural engineering, which in recent years has experienced increasing specialisation around the aforementioned basic building materials, each backed by a lobby of professional associations and commercial interests. As a result, structural forms and performance have often largely been dictated by the adopted material, rather than by the functional requirements of the structure. Functional considerations, however, will most often lead to the choice of different materials for different parts of a structure, and to combinations of materials that exploit their individual qualities to produce advantages that are greater than the sum of the parts. This is the essence of Composite Construction.

The 1997 Innsbruck Conference is a joint effort of the main international professional societies in the field of structural engineering, and organised on their behalf by the International Association for Bridge and Structural Engineering (IABSE). The enthusiastic response to the call for papers (430 abstracts submitted) indicates the high level of interest in the subject.

The present volume contains the 180 papers accepted for publication by the Scientific Committee. This publication provides an excellent overview of the many aspects of composite construction, ranging from combinations of traditional building materials to more unconventional structural materials like fibre-reinforced plastics. The tone for the Conference is set by the Keynote Lectures presented at the four plenary sessions, included in these proceedings, while the latest developments are given in the papers and posters presented in parallel working sessions.

It is the hope of those involved in organising this event that the Innsbruck Conference will promote increased collaboration among professional engineering societies, and also lead to a more problem-oriented, less materials-oriented approach to the art of structural engineering.

Copenhagen, August 1997

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