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Newspaper of the Holcim Foundation for Sustainable Construction for employees of the Holcim Group

Holcim Awards 2008: 5000 ideas for a more sustainable future



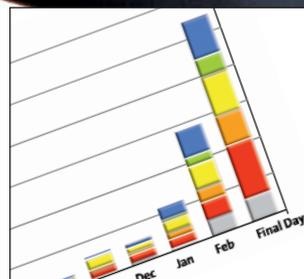
Even the greatest expectations were exceeded. In the second cycle of the Holcim Awards competition, architects, engineers, planners and students from over 90 countries submitted a total of 4774 construction projects and visions designed to prompt the different responses needed to make such a future achievable. That's over 50 percent more entries than in the first competition cycle held three years ago.

"We are greatly pleased that the Holcim Awards competition has already become so well established," says Markus Akermann. The CEO of Holcim is also Chairman of the Management Board of the Holcim Foundation for Sustainable Construction, which conducts the design competition for regional and global Holcim Awards. "The great success proves that sustainable construction is gradually becoming an established concept – to the benefit of everyone." But now the regional juries face an extremely challenging task. From a multitude of compelling projects, they must identify the best entries to determine the winners of prize money totaling two million USD.



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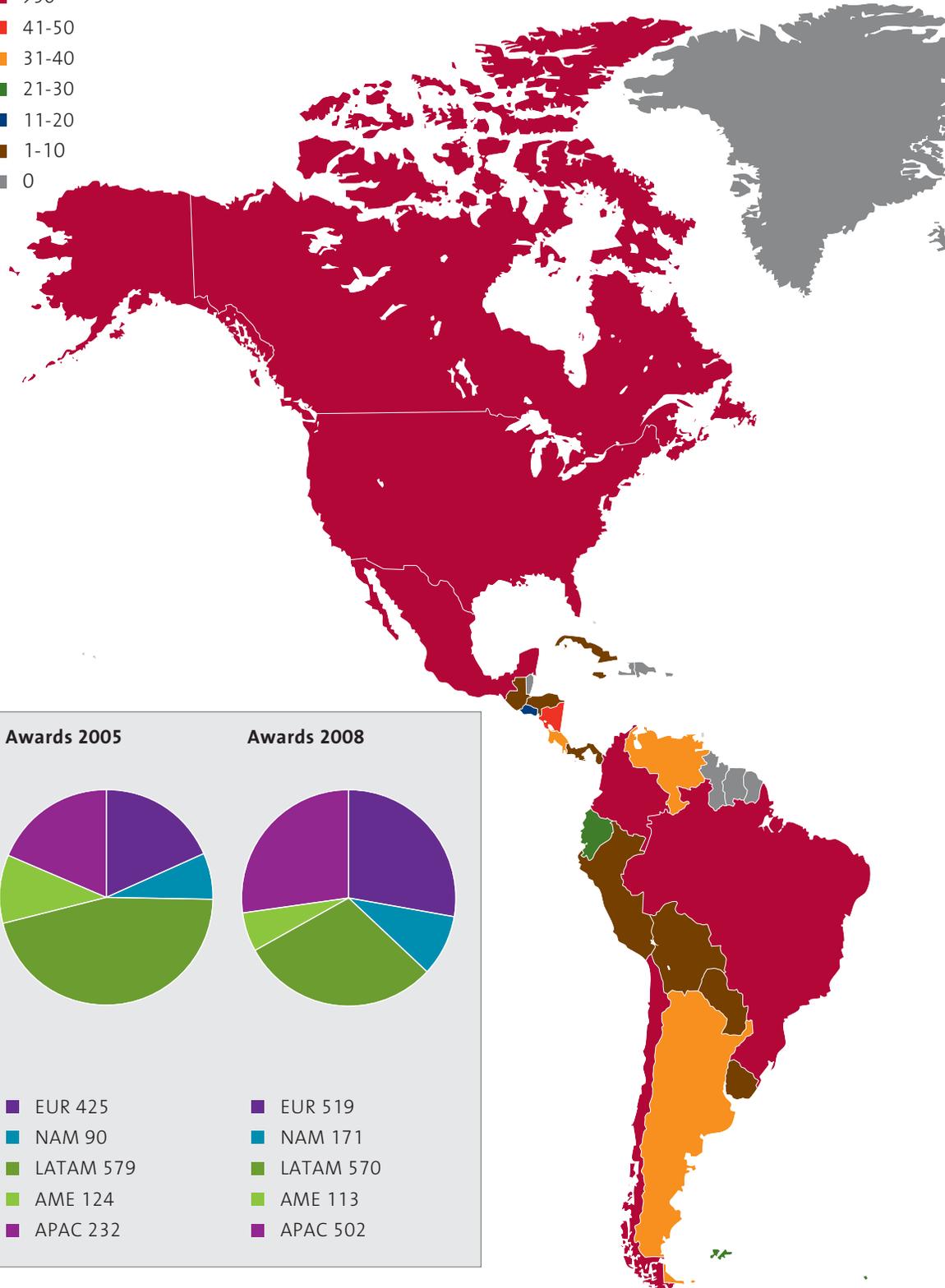
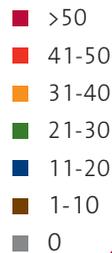
An urban imprint

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4774 projects for 121 countries

Overall entries by country of project location

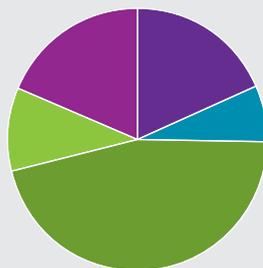
After excluding incomplete, non-English or duplicate submissions, 1875 entries meet the formal criteria and will be judged by the juries. These projects are situated in 121 countries. The “gray zones” on the Holcim Awards map – the countries in which no submitted project is situated – are becoming increasingly smaller.



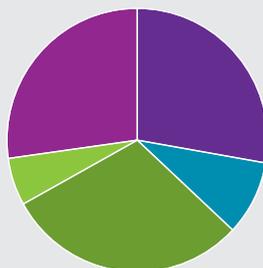
Overall entries by origin of author, per region

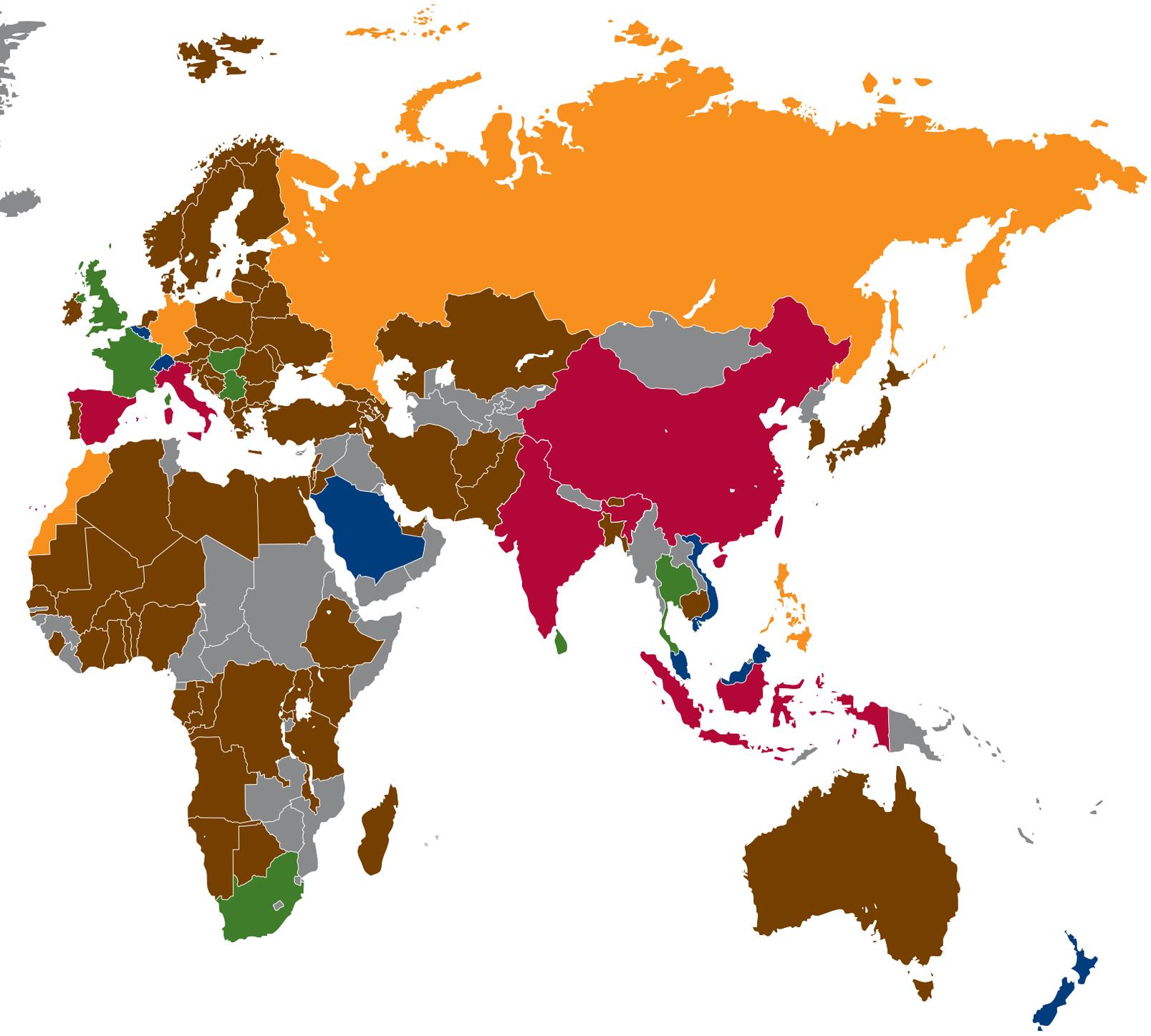
In the Asia Pacific region the number of the projects qualified for the competition more than doubled by comparison to the first Awards cycle – from 232 to 502. This is especially due to the large increase of entries from India, where Holcim established an active market presence only in very recent years. The North America region also showed a marked increase in the number of entries.

Awards 2005



Awards 2008

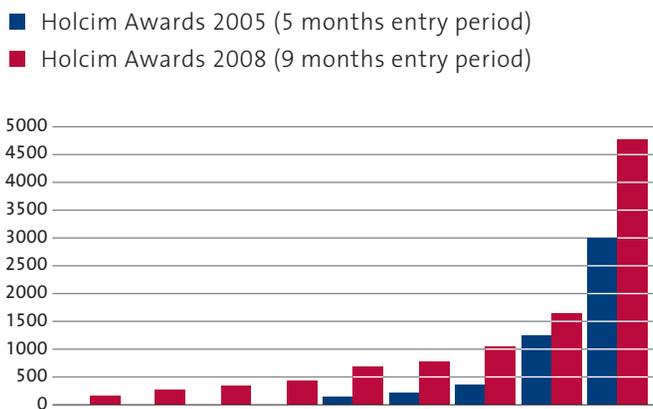




Holcim Awards: Facts and figures

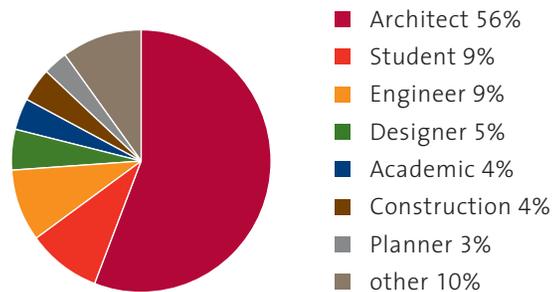
Overall entries

Impressive growth – from the start it became clear that considerably more projects would be submitted in the second cycle of the Holcim Awards competition. Ultimately the increase exceeded 50 percent.



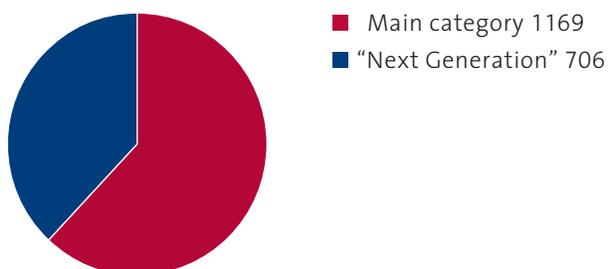
Profession of main author

In comparison with the competition held in 2005, architects are a slightly less dominant profession. The Holcim Awards is not a pure architectural design competition; it is for everyone involved in sustainable construction, and it aims to promote interdisciplinary collaboration.



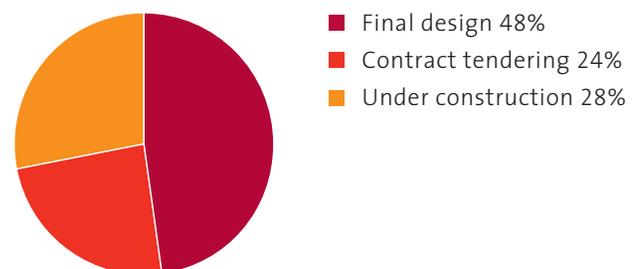
Entries by category

Over a third of the estimated 1875 entries accepted for the competition belong in the new category “Next Generation”, which seeks visions and concepts by young professionals and students up to 35 years of age.



Main category entries by project status

A change in the competition rules has perceptible consequences. The projects are notably further advanced than those submitted in the previous cycle, because this time projects were allowed to have started the construction phase not only after but during the competition entry period.



What's next?

The great number of projects submitted in the second cycle of the Holcim Awards competition is both an incentive and a challenge. It means a lot of work, because now the projects must be formally checked one by one and judged by independent regional juries in a laborious process. "Foundations" visited the team in Berlin, Germany, who are responsible for handling technical matters in the competition.

The Berlin-based company [phase eins] specializes in the management of architecture and urban design projects and oversees many national and international architectural design competitions. In the first cycle of the Holcim Awards competition the Foundation entrusted the specialists of this company to handle the technical matters. Already then Maja Kastaun was a member of the [phase eins] team; for the second cycle the



The countdown runs: Many participants worked on their submission up 'till the last minute. Half of all the entries were received during the final 24 hours of the competition.

31-year-old architect is now project manager. Under her direction, the specialists at [phase eins] are handling the entire competition from planning through to regional judging.

"The framework for the competition is set by the Management Board of the Foundation; we put it into practice," tells Maja Kastaun. For instance, her team collaborated with the management of the Holcim Foundation to decide how participants must present their projects, it served as the contact for participants during the submission period, maintained the helpdesk, and it is now formally examining all entries and processing them for the juries.

Engagement of Holcim Group companies is essential

The Holcim Awards have been a large part of everyday business at [phase eins] for months. "At times I was honestly a bit skeptical whether we would receive many entries," admits the architect. "Of course I know that competition participants always work on their projects up to the last minute, but that so many people would join at the end was a pleasant surprise."

The introduction of the "Next Generation" category contributed decisively to the increase of entries; well over a third of all valid entries are in this category, created to encourage

Regional Holcim Awards ceremonies 2008

Europe:

Madrid, September 25/26

North America:

Montreal, October 16/17

Latin America:

Mexico City, October 23/24

Africa Middle East:

Marrakech, November 13/14

Asia Pacific:

New Delhi, November 27/28

students and young professionals to publicly share their visions of sustainable construction. But the "Next Generation" category was not the only key to attracting new participant groups. Especially important for the Awards are the promotional activities of the Holcim Group companies.

For instance, in the first competition there were very few entries from India; this number has now ballooned. Three years ago Holcim was barely present in India. Some Group companies also assisted to translate the "Step-by-step" guide to entering the competition into local languages – a tremendous support in promoting the Awards and for authors completing

Categories and prize money for the second Holcim Awards cycle

Regional

In each of the five regions Europe, North America, Latin America, Africa Middle East and Asia Pacific, 270,000 USD in prize money will be awarded to winners in three categories:

Regional Holcim Awards

The three best sustainable construction projects of the region will be awarded. The projects must be at an advanced stage of design, but construction must not have commenced

before June 1, 2007.

Holcim Award Gold:

100,000 USD

Holcim Award Silver:

50,000 USD

Holcim Award Bronze:

25,000 USD

Acknowledgement Prizes

Three to six Award-worthy projects that come in just behind the winners will be recognized. Total amount: 60,000 USD.

“Next Generation”

This new category broadens the field for sustainable construction. Three visions or concepts by young professionals or students up to 35 years of age will be acclaimed. Total amount: 35,000 USD.

Global

The 15 projects that win a regional Holcim Award Gold, Silver, or Bronze automatically qualify for the global competition.

Global Holcim Awards

Holcim Award Gold:

300,000 USD

Holcim Award Silver:

200,000 USD

Holcim Award Bronze:

100,000 USD

Holcim Innovation Prize

Author of the most innovative project qualified for the global Holcim Awards competition will receive 50,000 USD.



format provides each project author with the same opportunities to impress the jury panel – the same space for texts, images and project rankings. All projects are presented at the jury meeting in the same layout, so within the diverse range of projects, the common format means that the project itself, and not an aesthetic presentation, must stand out.

[phase eins] is now conducting an extensive formal examination of the projects. Five professionals are screening the entries – checking the details, correcting obvious mistakes – such as backward images or the wrong country entered in the address field. This preliminary examination has no influence on the judging process. “We make no qualitative evaluations,” assures Maja Kastaun. All formally accepted projects will be presented to the juries for judging – printed out and arranged in alphabetical order.

Final verification by the TCC

Each regional jury, typically comprising nine members, will first split into three groups and each will screen a

the online entry form. Maja Kastaun confirms that “the influence of the local companies on participant numbers is obvious.”

Entries received to the last tick of the clock

When the submission deadline arrived on February 29 at 2:00 pm UTC/GMT, dozens of people around the world were still online transmitting their project documentation. Here and there technical problems had led to delays. In justified individual cases [phase eins] allowed – after consultation with the Holcim Foundation –

transmission of the very last documents to be completed by e-mail. “The great disappointment expressed by some who had missed the deadline shows how seriously the competition is taken,” says Maja Kastaun. People enquired about participating in the competition for several weeks after the deadline. No exceptions could be made for them.

Online entry process creates level playing field

In addition to enabling participation in the Awards competition from all corners of the globe, the online entry



The [phase eins] team is currently checking the details of every entry – but has no influence on the judging process. On the right is project leader Maja Kastaun.

third of the projects in the region. As a second step, the most interesting entries will be presented to the full re-

gional jury, discussed and judged. “This procedure ensures that no prize-worthy project can be over-

Heads of the Holcim Awards juries

In June and July 2008, under the leadership of the five partner universities of the Holcim Foundation, the independent regional juries will convene to decide the winners of regional prizes. The majority of jurors are experts from the fields of architecture or engineering.

Internationally-renowned Indian architect **Charles Correa** will head the jury for the global Holcim Awards in 2009. A complete list of all jury members and short profiles is available at www.holcimawards.org

Region Europe:

Harry Gugger, Architecture Professor, École Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), Switzerland.

Region North America:

Adèle Naudé Santos, Dean of Architecture, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA.

Region Latin America:

José Luis Cortés, Dean of Architecture, Universidad Iberoamericana (UIA), Mexico.

Region Africa Middle East:

Joe Addo, Architect, Ghana.

Region Asia Pacific:

Ashok B. Lall, Architect, India.

looked,” tells Maja Kastaun. Once the juries have decided by midyear which projects they consider prize-worthy, the Technical Competence Center (TCC) of the Holcim Foundation will investigate these entries in great detail. Is the indicated author correct? Did construction begin before the allowed date? Is it a real project or a “pipe dream”? Jury members or representatives of the partner universities of the Holcim Foundation will verify such issues locally. Because it is always conceivable that an apparently winning project might drop out at the final check, the jury also selects runners-up, which would be promoted in such a case.

The Awards ceremonies will take place between September and November 2008 (see box on page 5). Winners of the regional Holcim Awards will be automatically qualified for the global Awards competition. When the global ceremony is held in May 2009 in Switzerland, the second cycle of the Holcim Awards competition will come to an end.

A good thing gets better

The work of the [phase eins] team on the second competition cycle will end with regional judging. The jury for the global Holcim Awards must judge only 15 projects – the three Holcim Awards winners from each of five regions. They require no further technical support for that, so Maja Kastaun can already draw an initial conclusion. “All in all the competition went excellently,” she says. “We kept what worked well in the first cycle, and we were able to realize nearly every potential improvement. I would say it went very well – and next time it will be even better!”

Sleepless in Berlin

The participants had nine months to submit their entries in the Holcim Awards competition over the internet, but half of them waited 'till the last minute. Unlike in the first cycle, the servers withstood the peak load in the extremely hectic final phase – thanks to a small, highly professional IT company in Berlin.

If the Awards competition is a big steamboat – and in the figurative sense it is – then the engine room is located in the heart of Berlin, on the fourth floor of an impressive old factory building. Here the IT company Raecke Schreiber GbR rents space where design programs and extensive IT solutions for many demanding customers are created – since 2004 also for the Holcim Foundation.

“We do what is under the hood,” says Olaf Schreiber, one of the two company founders. IT systems play a central role in the Holcim Awards competition, which is conducted exclusively online. The thousands of participants who want to submit projects see only an attractive surface that must be filled. Behind this surface – or under the hood – is a highly complex, database-supported information system. It guarantees that all data is correctly processed, sorted and stored. It checks whether participants submit complete entries. And it guarantees equal opportunity,



Olaf Schreiber had 30 gigabytes of Awards competition data to handle.

because the IT solution for this competition is designed so that an architect from a country without broadband can participate just as well as an engineer at the best-connected university.

Comprehensive testing was impossible

Olaf Schreiber, Martin Raecke and their staff were also responsible for IT during the first competition cycle three years ago. The knowledge that they acquired then was worth gold during the second cycle, says Olaf Schreiber, because the Holcim Awards are a great challenge that can be mastered only with experience and special knowledge: “Many things cannot be planned. For example, we

didn't know how many people would participate in the competition this time. 500 or 20,000?” What's more, it was impossible to test whether the entire system would function under maximum load. “Of course we did tests and eliminated weaknesses beforehand, but many problems become apparent only when participants begin using the system.”

For instance, many people failed to understand that this time entries must be submitted in English; in the first competition, entries were also permitted in French, Spanish and Portuguese. “That's why we wrote a little program that scans the language and sends an alert if necessary.” Picture format was a source

of many problems. Each project description was required to include five to twelve pictures. “We had some very exotic data transmissions!” tells Olaf Schreiber. The chief problem was oversized graphic files. When hundreds of participants simultaneously transmit gigantic amounts of data, the servers are pushed to the limit.

No ultimate catastrophe

The submission period lasted nine months. “That means for nearly nine months everything can go fine – and only at the very end will we find out whether we have indeed done our work correctly.” The first competition cycle showed that participants use their time up to the last minute. Olaf Schreiber: “It is normal in architecture competitions that the number of submissions increases exponentially toward the end. But with the Holcim Awards the number increases super-exponentially.”

In 2005 the server was so heavily overloaded in the last hours before the deadline that it finally broke down. “That was the ultimate catastrophe!” recounts the IT specialist. Because it then became impossible to submit entries, the Holcim Foundation was forced to extend the competition entry period by five days. Olaf Schreiber: “We couldn’t afford something like that again this time.” Server capacity was therefore massively bolstered for the last days. Five large computers, distributed across Germany, were set up at the end to receive data from the competition entrants. During the final 36 hours Olaf Schreiber sat almost permanently at his PC screen, monitoring all activities, continually routing blocks of data from one server to another. “In between I would lie down on the sofa here in the office,”

Virtual renovation – new-look website on the Foundation

During the second Awards competition, the IT specialists at Raecke Schreiber GbR worked not only behind the scenes; in close collaboration with the Holcim Foundation they also developed and designed the Foundation’s new website. There is now one homepage for the competition and the website; the addresses www.holcimfoundation.org, www.holcimawards.org, www.holcimforum.org and www.holcimgrants.org all lead to one comprehensive and clearly laid out site. Despite the ever-increasing volume of information, finding

desired information is now easier than ever, especially with the addition of a full-text search. With plenty of white space for clarity and an array of impressive project images, the site is attracting thousands of visitors every month.



On the information superhighway, all roads lead to www.holcimfoundation.org

he tells, “but I couldn’t sleep. New problems arose continually.”

Where’s the “Continue” button?

Technical questions from around the world were submitted to the helpdesk again and again. “It turned out that many participants were not so Internet savvy. Some did not understand that they could use their password at any time to access their entry and complete it; they re-submitted their entire project again each time they changed something – up to seven times. Others could not find the “Continue” button on the website and contacted us for assistance.” Everything came together: innumerable curious enquiries from all corners of the world, constantly new technical problems, the latent fear of hacker attacks, problems with data lines from Asia... When the entry deadline finally arrived and a total of 30 gigabytes of data was safely stored in the correct place, he was so exhausted that he thought, “Never again!”

Simplicity as a challenge

In the meantime Olaf Schreiber has recovered and is “super-relieved that everything ended perfectly. Nobody noticed how much work we had. And that’s good, because normally people notice us only when something goes wrong.” The system is now well under control, but “of course there will be surprises again next time that we had not anticipated,” he is convinced. “The big challenge is to keep the system as simple as possible.”

In principle it must be possible for anybody to participate in the Holcim Awards competition, including people who are not used to working with computers. “That’s why we can’t use a standard solution – we must reinvent and simplify many elements again and again.” Thus in the future one thing in the engine room of the competition remains guaranteed: excitement – even though the thousands of participants will never notice it.

An urban imprint

Foundations7 was dedicated to the second Holcim Forum, held in April 2007 in Shanghai. The contents of the Forum are now being developed into an attractive technical book entitled “Urban_Trans_Formation.” The book, to be published soon, is not only for building-trade professionals.

Andreas Ruby is an art historian and architecture critic, his wife Ilka Ruby an architect. Together they run the Berlin office “textbild” for architecture communication. They produce books and exhibitions, publish articles in technical journals, offer consulting for architects – and they recently brought two babies into the world. The first – and of course most important – is their son Theo Max, and the second is “Urban_Trans_Formation,” a book of nearly 400 pages.

Not a catalog – an advancement

“Our book is inspired and motivated by the Holcim Forum in Shanghai,” tells Andreas Ruby. It incorporates a selection of especially compelling presentations delivered at the Forum, but in modified form. Andreas Ruby: “We asked certain authors whether they would be willing to further develop their papers, and we also added to the book contributions by people who were not at the Forum. So our book is not a recap, not a catalog of the Forum, but a further development.” Cities change constantly, “so

we too must not stand still when we think about cities. And a lot of time has already passed since the Forum.”

30 contributions from around the world

Without exception, the Forum speakers were eager to be involved in such intensive collaboration. “They considered it an acknowledgement that their contribution would appear in this form,” affirms Andreas Ruby. 30 people from all continents speak on the city –

For all Holcim stakeholders

The Foundation sees significant value in making the book “Urban_Trans_Formation” available to a broad community of experts around the world. The book can raise awareness for topics related to the challenge of creating more sustainable cities and thereby underline the Foundation’s commitment to sustainable development and strengthen the reputation of the Holcim brand. The Holcim Foundation will make the publication available to Group companies for local use (for stakeholders from professional media to university libraries), present it at events such as the Holcim Awards ceremonies and publish it on the Foundation website.



The people behind “Urban_Trans_Formation” (from left to right): Elena Schütz (editorial coordinator), Andreas Ruby (co-editor), April Lamm (text editor), Leonard Streich (graphic design). Not pictured is Ilka Ruby (co-editor).

from architects to urban planners to local politicians – and place the concept “city” within a super ordinate context that extends far beyond building. This variety, wealth of ideas, and transitory nature of the urban environment are expressed in the design of the book. The individual sheets are not glued together with permanency under a cover like a usual book; the sheets are merely stitched together, giving the impression of a collection of papers – which indeed the scholarly contributions are.

Kaleidoscope instead of master theory

The whole thing looks and feels a bit provisional – which is deliberate. The attractive book, sponsored by the Holcim Foundation, disseminates no philosophy chiseled in stone or pressed between thick covers. Andreas Ruby: “Our book is just as unfinished as a city can be. We can only present a snapshot.”

Today it is no longer possible, and not even desirable, to develop a comprehensive urban theory. “Differing logics are at work in the city – and one must accept these different logics. Our book says that it’s not a problem that we have no universal theory. What’s important is that we all acknowledge the diversity of the city. The book seeks to encourage liberal thinking about the city – and to show why it is worthwhile to accept diversity and even to nurture it.”

Professional teamwork

That the city is something different everywhere and presents different challenges everywhere is reflected in the publication. Attention to detail is noticeable on every page. Five people have worked on the project for half

a year. Andreas Ruby and his wife worked side-by-side as general editors, distilled the concept, set the framework, developed the contents with the authors and checked the texts. Architect Leonard Streich provided high-quality graphics. Elena Schütz handled editorial coordination. American April Lamm as text editor ensured uniform language and first-rate style.

“For city aficionados!”

Numerous events are planned for the introduction of the book this year, including one at the Architecture Biennale in Venice. “Urban_Trans_Formation” addresses not only a professional audience but “all city aficionados; books on architecture and urban planning are too often read only by specialists,” says Andreas Ruby. “But the city concerns us all. This subject is not restricted to an audience of specialists; it is for a res publica. That’s why we wanted to make a book that is also attractive to non-specialists.”

With its many illustrations, “Urban_Trans_Formation” is anything but a dry treatise; it is a stimulating kaleidoscope – as diverse and challenging as the modern city: an urban imprint.

News from the office of the Holcim Foundation

Kevin Jones, residing in Brisbane, Australia, has worked for the Holcim Foundation since its founding in 2003. Originally, he constructed and maintained the website; today he works as a consultant for nearly all matters of the Foundation, particularly the Awards competition. Kevin Jones recently finished several years of study at Queensland University of Technology, graduating with Master of Business, with a concentration of studies in public relations. Congratulations Kevin!



In the Holcim Foundation office Mia Knechtli is the main person in charge of the caring for Holcim Awards jury members and prize winners. This year, in addition to their normal duties, the other staff members will each coordinate the organization of a regional Holcim Awards ceremony in close collaboration with the local host Group company. Marrakech: Karin Kiss (media and Group company relations); Mexico City: Janine Riedi (administration and travel); Madrid: Philip Zumstein (website and online communication); New Delhi and Montreal: Edward Schwarz (management).

Foundations is the Group internal newspaper of the Holcim Foundation for Sustainable Construction and distributed to the readers of the *Holcim News*.

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More than financial support for Ph.D. students

Besides driving the Holcim Awards and the Holcim Forum, another activity of the Holcim Foundation is funding for research related to sustainable construction. The first five Ph.D. students to receive grants discussed their projects with members of the Technical Competence Center (TCC) of the Holcim Foundation in Zurich.

“With Ph.D. research grants the Holcim Foundation pursues the same goals as with all its other activities: to support sustainable construction and promote exchange among experts,” explains Holger Wallbaum. The professor for Sustainable Construction at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich) is a member of TCC.

Relevance in the local context

The TCC was responsible for distributing 200,000 USD that the Foundation provides during each Awards cycle for Ph.D. research grants. “Each of the five partner universities of the Foundation submits a shortlist of interesting projects,” tells Holger Wallbaum. When deciding which projects to support, the question of relevance in the respective region is central. “We could not put all the projects in one pot; we had to acknowledge regional differences. Sustainability does not mean the same thing everywhere, so research associated with it does not have the same focus as elsewhere.”

Supporting interdisciplinary work

The TCC sees itself also as a “critical sparring partner for the Ph.D. students,” explains the ETH professor. How the TCC interprets this role was perceptible during the three-day “research grant recipients contact meeting” held in February 2008 in Zurich.

The young researchers presented their projects to the TCC – and discussed the details of their projects with the experienced professors. “We do not intervene in the research concept,” tells Holger Wallbaum, “but we would like to closely follow the development.”

The research grants also offer an opportunity to gather tomorrow’s experts at one table – as at this meeting in Zurich. “Students usually work with an incredibly specialized frame of reference, but sustainability requires an interdisciplinary approach, which we must support.”

The grant money does not go directly to the students but is managed by the respective partner universities. Holger Wallbaum: “In this way we make it possible for universities to best accommodate Ph.D. research concerned with sustainability.”



The Holcim Foundation provides Ph.D. research grants and follows the development of the studies with great interest. Grant recipients from different parts of the world met for a contact meeting at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich).