

In 2012, the International Society of Indoor Air and Climate (ISIAQ) reformatted the Healthy Building conference into two regional conferences to be hosted in North America and Europe. Healthy Buildings Europe 2015, the first of these two regional conferences, was held at the Eindhoven University of Technology, May 18-20th 2015, Eindhoven, The Netherlands. The conference hosted over 400 attendees with an overall aim of being “interactive, busy and compact”: 5 keynotes, 16 workshops and 24 oral presentation sessions; this was successfully achieved.

Marcel Loomans, the president of Healthy Buildings 2015 Europe, opened the conference on the Monday afternoon with the Mayor of Eindhoven, Rob van Ginkel, expressing a lovely statement during his opening address; “you are not just helping to change indoor air quality, you are helping to change people's lives”.

Following the opening address, a panel discussion entitled “from knowledge to practice in future buildings” comprised of a five-person panel. Pre-recorded videos were played, and each panel member commented from their respective research fields. The audience interacted by posting their comments and to Twitter and with screens positioned around the hall to allow everyone to observe the Twitter feed.

The keynotes covered a wide range of topics. Adrian Leamon, presented the opening keynote, highlighting a balance between well resourced versus deep planned buildings; discussing adaptive comfort, indoor environmental quality while still striving to meet the occupants’ needs. Prof. Wouter van Marken Lichtenbelt discussed the relationship between the thermal environment and a recent discovery linking “cold” temperatures to inducing brown adipose tissue development in adult humans. This tissue helps regulate the body's internal energy balance, protecting us from becoming too warm or too cold; bridging the knowledge gap between whole body human metabolic studies and links to overweight and type II diabetes. Dr. Severine Kirchner discussed “Different paths toward action” from the initial stages of procuring data, to the translating the information into knowledge, and finally generating action surrounding the implementation of legislation.

My oral presentation was scheduled for Tuesday afternoon in the “Energy & Sustainability” session and I was delighted to also chair this session. It also gave me the opportunity to meet you a fellow Irish researcher based in Queens University Belfast.

The conference dinner was a buffet in the Kazerne Gallary, where the world of art, design, knowledge and technique comes together with good food and drinks. After dinner, a “silent disco” (where everyone wears wireless headphones instead of loudspeakers) proved to be an excellent social mixer removing the normal formalities associated with conferences.

I found the workshops to be the highlight of the conference. They were discussion focused and had the benefits of hearing multiple viewpoints on the same topic. The workshops were very interactive; sharing a statement on powerpoint and every member of the audience voted. Holding up a green card represented agreeing with the statement, while holding up a red card represented disagreeing with the statement. This encouraged discussion from everyone in the room but also highlighted any controversial viewpoints.

Overall, the conference was an extremely beneficial experience and a successful networking opportunity.