



The Times They Are a-Changin'

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To cite this article: Daia Zwicky (2021) The Times They Are a-Changin', Structural Engineering International, 31:3, 325-325, DOI: [10.1080/10168664.2021.1944532](https://doi.org/10.1080/10168664.2021.1944532)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/10168664.2021.1944532>



Published online: 26 Jul 2021.



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Bob Dylan's album and song title from 1964 could have been invented to describe the period that IABSE is undergoing. I'm tempted to add "and they do and keep doing so very fast".

Since the official starting date for the re-organization of the structure of IABSE's technical activities in 2017—with the unanimous approval of the modified by-laws by the Permanent Committee—many things have happened. The new structure¹ as such has been introduced quite smoothly and quickly, mainly consisting in the introduction of Commissions and Task Groups (instead of former Working Commissions and Working Groups) but also fundamentally changing their conceptual organization by referring to different "life" phases of a construction project from its conception to its end-of-life (instead of specific issues in structural engineering and materials), with some overarching issues added like basic requirements and sustainability. A few challenges were faced regarding the proper use of the new names and the definition of mission statements of the different bodies. However, we can call the transition a success: with almost 50 Task Groups, guided by 6 Commissions and created in these last 4 years, we are definitely on a good track. These Task Groups have since then produced SEDs, organized workshops, or worked on SEI issues, and have remained functional from their conception till their dissolution, as per the new strategy. Another change was, to join a Task Group, one does not need to be an IABSE member. The Task Groups² are "the" platform to discuss, decide, and disperse knowledge affecting the profession.

So, we got off really well and could have laid back and proudly watch growing up our newborn, but then came the COVID-19 pandemic and *the times a-changed*—very quickly. Many of us had to adapt to formerly unknown constraints in our daily professional and private life. Likewise, in IABSE's activities: suddenly, our meetings had to be held online only; our events went (and still go) virtual; there were travel bans, etc. But, our individual and collective members, National Groups, Organizing and Scientific Committees did not resign. Everyone converted this challenge into an opportunity. This was, and is clearly demonstrated by the successes of our 2020 conferences (formerly planned onsite), but also by the many online conferences, webinars and courses, promotion of IABSE activities in social media etc. since spring 2020.

And it does not end there—*the times are a-changing*—as we develop our association's activities further. We have brainstorming groups within the Technical Committee working on road maps for three essential topics: new formats for results presentation and their promotion of Task Groups outputs; modernized formats for IABSE events; and new approaches for attracting and integrating Young Engineers in IABSE. These strategic issues are immediately linked to getting the most out of our re-organized structure but are obviously also considerably impacted by the current pandemic situation.

And last but not least, we successfully applied a new procedure for nominating the Chair of Technical Committee. Instead of the Vice-chair automatically succeeding the Chair, this central position's nominations were opened up this year to "succession by merit and competition". The final result will be seen at the Annual Meetings 2021, with the election by the Permanent Committee.

In conclusion, I had very interesting, challenging but also satisfying times during my term as Chair of the Technical Committee. The new Chair will also have stimulating challenges ahead of her or him by transforming the developed road maps into strategies and operational activities—*the times keep a-changing*.

Daia Zwicky

¹Zwicky D. A solid foundation for a new flexible structure in IABSE's technical activities. *Struct. Eng. Inter.*, 2018; 28(2): 109. doi:10.1080/10168664.2018.1451047

²The topics are listed here: <https://iabse.org/taskgroups>.