

13th Meeting of Heads of Schools of Architecture
Learning for the Future:
New priorities of Schools of Architecture in the era of uncertainty

Host: Center for Mediterranean Architecture
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In the last years from the debate in the framework of our Meetings of Heads of European Schools of Architecture it became evident that we are entering an era in which our capacity to envisage and define the profile of the future architect becomes increasingly diminished and ineffective. This condition has direct consequences on the way we have to structure the future of architectural education, as it is always directed by a certain conception of the ideal profile of an architect. Educating architects for an unstable, transformable, changing, adapting, fluid, sometimes hybrid, and more or less unpredictable profile, urges schools of architecture to redefine their educational strategies, to reformulate their curricula and to re-establish their principles and values related to their social role and mission. In this new educational environment new priorities for schools of architecture emerge which could be classified on four major axes:

Values: New priorities emerged by the new values (to be) established in architectural education environment

Context: New priorities related to the context in which architectural education is offered

Competences: New priorities related to the competences of the graduates of architectural education institutions.

Content: New priorities regarding the content of studies

The meeting will develop on four main sessions each one of which will cover one of the above axes.

Session 1

New Priorities, new values

Priorities are emerging from values. Schools of architecture are increasingly dealing with a new set of values emerging from the contemporary debate on architecture, the architectural avant-garde, the broader cultural framework, the state of the art of the profession, the national and international political and institutional environment. Transparency, flexibility, adaptability, quality, openness, creativity, innovation, mobility, experimentation, diversity, compatibility, comparability, parametricism, employability appear to be already established values which demand new strategies, new actions and new approaches to the structure of school curricula in order to respect the contemporary definitions of the quality in architectural education.

How do schools of architecture define what is in our days quality in architectural education? How different is this definition compared to those given some years ago? Which are the main strategies our

schools implement in order to reach it? How easy is to move towards this new version of quality in the existing institutional framework? Do some schools consider that their reforms adapted their curricula in a way to achieve a high quality education?

Session 2

New priorities, new context

In the twenty first century new expectations and demands are imposed on European Schools of Architecture and more generally higher education institutions are mounting rapidly, as social and economic development are geared around the concept of a Europe of Knowledge. European policies appear to ask for strong, autonomous, responsive and inclusive institutions providing research-based education and learning in order to meet the many challenges ahead. These social, and economic challenges are generated in particular by the increasing speed of globalization, the demographic transformation of Europe into ageing societies and the rapid pace of technological change. In this context of an unpredictable future, it appears as necessary condition for schools of architecture to become more open and collaborative and to establish strong partnerships with public authorities, professional bodies, graduates' associations, and of course partnerships and consortia with other schools of architecture at local, regional, national and international level to provide attractive and relevant curricula. Our schools are asked to embed concepts of widening access and lifelong learning in their institutional strategies; to provide education and learning to a diversified student population; to adapt they curricula in a way to ensure that they are designed to widen participation and attract returning adult learners; to provide appropriate guidance and counseling services; To strengthen the relationship between research, teaching and innovation in a perspective of lifelong learning; to consolidate reforms to promote a flexible and creative learning environment for all students.

How ready are our schools to implement actions toward the fulfillment of the above objectives? Which are their priorities in view of this new situation? How difficult is to implement all these necessary changes? What is the 'cost' of these priorities? Are there interesting paradigms of good practice to share with the participants of the meeting?

Session 3

New priorities, new competences

The architects we are educating today will arrive at their professional establishment at least after ten years. Is it possible to preview their necessary profile now? More and more such a prediction becomes difficult taking into account the fact two years ago it was not possible to predict that one out of four architects will be unemployed today. This is why schools of architecture are actually rethinking the more or less fixed profile they tended to create during the past years.

If there is a question of a new, unpredictable, profile of the future architect what has to be our strategy for the learner of today? Which are the most significant competences that this architect has to fulfill in order to be able to adapt in the fast evolving society? What is the fundamental knowledge and skills she or he has to acquire from the education in order to become a competitive and successful architect? Which are the strategies of our schools of Architecture regarding this major issue?

Session 4

New priorities new subject areas

In the fast changing world we are experiencing significant transformations in all the cycle of production of the built environment, which affect the structure of the content of our studies. The strong

specialization tendencies in the professional practice have significantly transformed the curricula of our schools. For the specialized curricula existing subject areas of architectural education obtain gravity or completely disappear, while in the general education curricula architectural design is under serious pressure to assure time for a big number of other subject areas, which will in turn assure the generalist character of the offered degree. In a broader view we can detect a progressive reduction from the contemporary architectural curricula of the urban studies, social sciences, basic natural sciences, mathematics, structures etc. On the other hand we can easily recognize a progressive raise of the gravity of subject areas related to the environment and sustainability, an the emergence of new subject areas like scripting, computing, biology, construction management etc.

To what extent do these changes affect the profile of our graduates? How easy is it to be updated on the new trends and directions of the local and international dynamics? To what extent are our schools affected, influenced or depended upon the existing centers of (so called) excellence in the contemporary extremely competitive environment of mobility and quality?