

Keynote Speech by

Dimitris Fatouros, Emeritus Professor

Presentation of the honorary guest by Constantin Spiridonidis

The fact that the Fifth Meeting of Heads of European Schools of Architecture takes place framed by this exhibition of the Greek Architecture of the 20th Century made us to think that it is a good idea to invite as keynote lecturers in this Meeting architects and professors of architecture from Greece. This is the case for this first keynote speech of Emeritus Professor of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, School of Architecture Dimitris Fatouros. You know very well that it is always difficult to present a keynote speaker. You have to condense in few lines a huge work, a very particular personality and a great offer to the domain. I felt this difficulty many times in the framework of the Hania Meetings. In this case, where I have to present my professor, the difficulty becomes even bigger and the problem is that I do not have only to condense a great personality, a very distinguished architect and an inspiring teacher but I have also to condense a personal experience, a personal life, if you want, for many years as a student and after as colleague in the same school. So, I find it very difficult to start speaking about him for all those reasons. On the other hand as professor, as my professor, he forbade me from saying a lot of words about him. I will be a little bit iconoclastic in this moment because I cannot avoid to say that for a lot of architects in Greece Dimitris Fatouros is something like a leader, a guide, a reference point, a kind of security, a kind of feeling of democracy, a kind of feeling of freedom, a kind of feeling of love for architecture. For all those reasons, which are invested by strong sentiments, and I would like him and you to forgive me for this strong sentimental approach, we invited him to be the first speaker of this event. So, I'm very glad to invite my teacher to speak. The person who was one of the main founders of our School. The Professor who was for years one of the leaders of the School, the leader of a lot of us. The teacher, who taught us about democracy, about architecture, about being socially aware. The former Rector of our University, the former Minister of Education the personality which represents a big part of Greek architecture. I'm really very proud to invite Dimitris Fatouros to give his lecture entitled 'Who cares?'

Who Cares?

Dimitris A. FATOUROS

Emeritus Professor of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, School of Architecture

Let me start saying to you «καλώς ήρθατε», soyez le bien venue, welcome. I want to say many thanks to Constantin Spiridonidis for all his good words for me. These good words are probably the result of the fact that I'm now running my 50th year from the date, the year, I graduated from the Athens School of Architecture. I got my degree in Architecture in 1952, only that.

Cher Président des Ecoles d'Architecture de l'Europe, Monsieur le Coordinateur du Network des Présidents des Ecoles d'Architecture de l'Europe, je vous remercie de votre invitation et je suis vraiment très heureux. Elle serait très importante si ma présentation était bilingue. Mais ce n'est pas le cas, c'est seulement jusqu'à ce moment que je parle en français.

Well, thank you, the Association of the European Schools, the Network and the Center for Mediterranean Architecture for this invitation. It is a good luck indeed the coincidence of this Conference with a new building, a new environment of architectural optimism. There is an optimism in the continuation of the space of the lecture hall to the sea outside.

This period following the instructions and the intentions of the European Union for architectural education is a difficult period indeed for architecture. Let me remind to all of us a comparison. The way of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris, the strong point of architecture for a long period, with a length of studies for at least seven or eight years with the three years proposed for today, and this is not an archeological commentary.

First of all I support and I emphasize the propositions of your previous meeting, the 4th Meeting, that is: five years or three plus two or four plus one. But I'm not optimist. I don't feel it will be easy to overcome the strong and compact intentions of the bureaucrats. From this point starts my question "who cares?". Who cares if architects get their degree with five, six, three plus two, plus and plus everything else? Who really cares from the bureaucrats, from the banking people, from the politicians even from a big majority of our colleagues?

I'll try only to discuss which strategy will be the best in order to achieve any scheme following your proposition. It is first of all important to establish some main axioms. We cannot start with the details, with the curriculum, with the subdivision of the architectural curriculum etc. We need to clarify and to fight for main targets. It will be very useful to establish a few, very few and very clear-cut axioms between us as well as between the Schools of Architecture and between various personalities in the world of architecture. We need a clear common ground of discussion.

First clarification: Far from any vocational attitude

There is to a certain extent a tendency for a character of vocational education underlying many propositions of the European Union concerning the reform of higher education. For the questions of architecture it is sure that any hint for vocational education is a

negative one. The education of the architect, an open one with a large spectrum of knowledge and the need for *longue durée* procedures for crucial sides for its curriculum is entirely outside from a vocational attitude.

Second clarification: The axiom of the studio

There is no objection and there is no doubt that our job is a complicated one and it gets more and more complicated and sophisticated because of the huge significance and the huge involvement not only of technology but as well of the new questions concerning the human condition. So there is no hesitation that a strong technological education is needed including the typical one on construction etc and the relatively new one on environmental conditions concerning the level of comfort, sound, light, humidity, etc. etc, and on the other hand crucial cultural, anthropological issues and the questions related with creative processes and mental attitude.

In this direction in order to cope with the multiplicities of the architect's endeavor comes up at least for the time being the first axiom: We need studios.

The studio, the atelier, helps a continuous creative repetition. We need to make sure that through personal work and continuous research the architect is trying to understand some very important relationships in order to clarify a double orientation of the quality of space expressed for example by Corbusier. Namely, on one hand what the person of "machine à habiter", Corbu, asked from the early twenties and on the other hand what the same person, Corbu, emphasized in 1946 insisting for the necessity of the "espace indicible"¹. The person so much accused even for an anti-human approach because of his statement on the "machine à habiter" in his text of 1946 later on emphasized that the main difficulty of architecture is how to find out "l' espace indicible", "the ineffable space" that is not the directly and explicitly described quality of the space. This approach gives the point toward an approach for the research and understanding of an ineffable system or what in other words we may call it implicit system. This is not metaphysics it is a description of a level of understanding and analysis of a yet not well clarified discipline of the complexities, relationships, priorities etc. etc involved in the quality of space. What a studio produces is the way to approach the ineffable that is what lies outside the conventional technical approaches of the coefficients, construction, comfort, light, humidity, geometry etc.

We need for the time being much more to learn on the core of the design fields in order to be able to teach without much personal involvement in the studio architecture. We need all the experimentation coming up from the drawing table of the studio. The period of repetition, of experimentation, of empirical approach is necessary. It would be very important if sometimes through well-developed research on the scientific approaches and the understanding of the whole architectural design we will be able to teach architecture without any moment of studio. There is good literature on this effort but for the time being it looks very far the day to erase the studio education.

At least from the 60s there is creative research on design principles, on the relationships between environmental conditions, and visual conditions about typical but crucial design decisions, about the movement, the geometries and the perceptual factors. What is

¹ Le Corbusier, "L' espace indicible", Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, 1946, Numero hors série, Avril.

important is that despite the fact that from this period a lot of conferences, periodicals and scientific journals, published material on design principles related with environmental factors etc. etc, nobody or almost nobody in his own professional activity, even in his teaching, is using these and only these design theories for the final acts of the design approach.

It seems that the thoughtful architect does not use research done in the various architectural theories. If you look at the main architectural periodicals, the old Architectural Design, Architecture d' Aujourd'hui, A.J., Baukunst etc, etc, you will see that there is no more than one per cent or one per thousand bibliographical dedications and architectural literature oriented to scientific research. It is only within a very small field of specialists that this kind of research is appreciated.

An autobiographical note will emphasize what I am trying to explain. I was very enthusiastic in the late '60s that through the scientific and typical experimental approaches it will be easy to put down the old stuff of studio work. It was a catastrophe. It was not possible to produce a final architectural object. I tried for years and years to concentrate on the design itself, on the problem solving involved in the concept of a project and to elaborate, establish and finish the design with only the stuff of the scientific architectural research. Not only a lot of the necessary notions and approaches needed for an architectural project did not exist but also for almost the 100 per cent of the students it was very boring. I repeat once more, I don't want to be misunderstood. Technology is absolutely necessary but it is not enough as well as the various techniques for the environmental conditions in order to comprehend and use many organizing relationships, it were not and it is not possible to achieve the final design "product", the total work with the existing research. So, we need this method of studio for sure. But as well apart of this may be, the studio procedures will stay forever a necessary tool.

The creative studio is a part, an absolutely necessary part, of the teaching methods and this takes time, needs a lot of time and let me emphasize that studio work needs as well reading and scientific knowledge in conjunction. This conjunction needs much more time than a typical non-studio or simply studio work. Studio is not necessary only for architects. In medicine the surgeon's insistence on specific knowledge is a studio work as well as in various degrees the chemistry lab-work, the writing etc.

Third clarification: The longue durée of the studio

Now more than twenty years ago the studio work is needed because with the machines of the computing facilities the architect is relatively alone in coping with the architectural questions. The studio, the atelier is a micro seminar's continuous situation, with micro discussions of two to three people working together, questioning each other, trying to use the same words, trying to think and design various interrelationships within the same moment. The interactive character of the studio is needed in order to keep in mind all the diversities and the diversity of the opposite view expressed at the same time by all the collaborating micro-team of the drawing table during the problem solving procedures.

It is important to remind that very few things are expressed in the architects' presentations and publications from the very crucial problem-solving phase of the architectural project. This shows that architectural presentations are more descriptive than problem solving oriented. The presentations by slides or by computing facilities they are often using

geometrical or visual information without any continuous and systematic problem solving approach.

The need to combine personal involvement, scientific approach, technological knowledge and the long duration for the appropriation of various not well established methods, organizing principles, and so on, leads to the studio axiom. Which means that it is not possible in two, three, even four years to establish an architect's curriculum. This is why I support the propositions for at least five-years degree. I know that there are opposite views but these objections are not related with a real architectural education. Even where a degree comes after a short period the architect gets his knowledge in the professional studios of John, Eleni, Jean, Gert etc. etc. So, I consider of main priority to incorporate studio in the main corpus, in the main curriculum of architects. As a result the five years are the minimum that we may accept.

Fourth clarification: The sub-divisions of the degrees: The axioms of the negative side.

The second axiom: Within this way of thinking it is not possible to divide the degree of five years in "small" sub-degrees of three or four years. These subdivisions establish and accept an architect of a secondary level that finally means a non-architect, a pseudo-architect with obvious dangers for the environmental conditions. The case of a diploma of three years is leading to ridicule situations such as "small" professional activities, for instance one or two storeys houses etc. etc.

The third axiom: The degree of a period of three years cannot have any connotation with the word architect or architecture. We have to be careful about the words.

The forth axiom: It is necessary to push the things up to the argument that since for the physicians, in medicine, the long length of studies is absolutely crucial the same is true for the architect. Could we accept in medicine after the third year a first degree for the surgery of one leg for instance? These arguments must be presented clearly in any official document.

Fifth clarification: Who cares?

And the final point. Dear colleagues, who cares about all this discussion? I started this presentation with the same question. Nobody from the decision makers cares. They face it as a problem of discussion between artists or between rivals or between antagonists and so on. Nobody cares from the decision makers about our question. So, we have to persuade the decision makers, the politicians, the bureaucrats, the bankers, the administrators, everybody. We have also to take care of our community a good maybe majority of our colleagues who they think with the same way. So, it is necessary to open a campaign of persuasion or better to try to persuade, to stimulate, our colleagues in all directions as well within the star system. Calatrava, Foster, Nouvel, Siza, Piano and many others. Their public view is necessary.

Thank you and good luck.