

**Debate on the Presentations  
Second Theme, Part I**

*Chair:*  
Donal Hickey  
Dublin, IRELAND

### **Donal Hickey**

I would like to begin by posing a question to the people who have spoken. It is, I suppose, an issue of confidence, and I think that I would like to tie all the speakers together. My question is, who or what do we have confidence in? Our students, ourselves, or some sort of machine or programme that will allow the future to happen?

### **Nikolaos Panagiotopoulos**

Why is it necessarily a question of personal confidence? Yesterday Prof. Christiansen, I think, said that he would like to be a lighthouse, so that he could help students to navigate. My main question at that point was, is a lighthouse needed, or have things changed so much that lighthouses are no longer necessary and what we really need is traffic lights, or something like that. And I thought I would be glad if what we needed was traffic lights. There is no lack of personal confidence, if you get my drift, it is just that, like everybody else, I am a little bit at a loss as to how to cope with all the changes and developments; and that is natural, I think.

### **Ola Wedebrunn**

I think that we have to have confidence in ourselves, and we have to have confidence in the students. We live in a culture that is very much a child of the enlightenment. We believe generally in enlightenment ideas. We think about the nature of science, and we believe in nature – but what is nature, exactly? By nature do we mean unspoiled nature, something that we look back at, some archetype of nature that we think of as ‘nature’? But what is it? Culture is also a part of nature, or nature is also culture; and we have to have confidence in culture. We have to believe in the things we inherit, we have to believe in heritage; but we also have to believe that things will change, and we have to believe in changes. And so, inside ourselves, we have to form a core that we can believe in. We have to find a character in ourselves, and we also have to make this dialogue with the people around us. And we make that through this kind of medium, as perhaps I could call it, this idea of new technology or technologies, which are a way to integrate nature and culture. And we have to have confidence in that ourselves, and we have to have this dialogue with others to bring this confidence together somewhere.

### **Ole Vanggaard**

I believe that the apple will fall down, and we will have to have a new way of describing it.

### **Karl Christiansen**

I would just like to make a correction. I did not say that I want to be a lighthouse for the students: actually, I said the opposite, I want to work together with the students. What I said was that as institutions, both in education and in research, we should be lighthouses to light the way and not just do what the outside world demands of us.

### **Herman Neuckermans**

I would like to go back to the issue of IT. **Several speakers have shown how much information is available on the Net. I would like to say that, indeed, this is true,**

**but on the other hand it increases the need for critical judgement.** Of course, this is not only linked to the Net; it is also linked to what we saw this morning, the magazine *Detail* that shows details of architects, without criticism, which is their goal. But we, when we teach students, must teach them how to look at these things in a critical way. Students tend to copy things from the Web, or from a book, assuming that what is published, whether in a book or on the Web, is true. I have seen this in many cases. And there are plenty of mistakes, both in books and on the Web. So this is something that worries me.

### **Henk de Weijer**

I have a question which perhaps you could answer, and I would also like to give a reaction. Today we have been listening to a number of explanations and suggestions, and my feeling is that much of what we have heard seems to come from a linear way of thinking. I get the impression – and I would like to give a correction, although I may be entirely wrong – that the future is going to be an exploration of the past. And I get the impression that the computer is being watched like a machine that needs to be helped to emerge, instead of as a tool. It seems that what we know today is becoming more and more and deeper and deeper complicated; but however complicated it is, it may be predictable. It takes more time to think through, which the computer is better able to do. But when we talk about a new paradigm, then the future is not predictable. How do all the systems that you are thinking of deal with this unpredictability and, as I think Ole was saying, the question of who is going to be the leader? You said, I think, that you do not want to be the leader of a team. I think that what is very important is that there is a vision; and maybe part of the new paradigm, a part which may not be realised at the moment, is that the vision needs not come from the person who is in charge of form, who is in charge of synthesising things. The new paradigm may come out of the confidence of "I would like to be a traffic light". If the new vision is not just in the hands and minds of architects, if the new vision is in the whole group and in the solidarity and the competence of the group, then, maybe, even the new vision for new forms and new interactions may not come individually from any one person. I would like to give one example, and I think that many of you may also have had this same experience: when I am talking about a problem with two or three people and an idea comes to my mind as the solution, soon after I have thought it I find that someone else offers the same solution in his or her own words. For me this is an indication that if we are together, thinking about a problem or a way to deal with things as a group, the solution will come forward, and it does not matter who expresses it. So, please, could you give me some clues as to how you are thinking about it?

### **Donal Hickey**

How to deal with the irrational, the unpredictable, the soft, and the break with or continuation of the past? Would anyone like to respond to that?

### **Per Ola Wedebrunn**

First of all, you spoke of linear thinking, and I think that this is something that you could really question with the possibility of working in a network, because you have the possibility of returning and going further and returning and making a lot of

changes, and you get a lot of possibilities for modulation in a network situation that you would not get perhaps in the same way in real time. I do not want to get into what time is, because that would be very difficult; but going into a network situation you might question what time is, and that would be a very philosophical discussion. Turning to what you said about sources: we need sources, sometimes we need sources. Treatises in architecture are needed, not because they state the only way of doing things, but because we need to have something to work with; and this is perhaps the way that we should understand it. I believe that we can get the heritage from architectural treatises. But perhaps with time things change, so there is a linear reality that we are facing that will be related to culture. You referred yesterday, Dimitri, to Manuel Delanda. He introduces the idea of different technologies existing in parallel to each other, that will always be existing in parallel. We can ride a bicycle and talk on the telephone, and those are different technologies working at the same time. Geology is always there, too, as a technology – a technology of nature. So we have these kinds of different parallels of time that co-exist, and we can discover them and leave them and discover them again. And perhaps we could do the same with culture: we could return to some of the sources that we appreciate very much and discover something new in them. But it is really the time question that perhaps brings new technology in relation to heritage, which would be a very interesting subject to discuss a little, but I do not know if we have the time for that now.

### **Anders Gammelgaard**

This meeting is beginning to be a bit too academic for my taste. I cannot help returning to the presentation that Joseph from Dundee just made, which I think was the best presentation so far, because it managed to show what it is all about in a very direct manner. It is about architecture, and this meeting is about construction in architecture. And I think that we are overcomplicating things here. Joseph has showed very directly that, as the saying goes, 'there are talkers and there are doers'; and it is a matter of just starting to do. And with this very simple house that he made with the students, addresses construction and architectural problems on a very high level. I know that this is a terrible thing to say, and I run the risk of oversimplifying things, but I think that we are sidetracking at the moment. We are not staying with what is important. After all, we are here to discuss ways of teaching construction that can be helpful for all of us.

### **Herman Neuckermans**

If I could quickly make a comment on the time issue: I think that our perception of time and space has changed considerably due to the IT revolution, but the fact remains – and this what we call a *boutade* in French – that I will never sleep in my computer. I also have a short question for the people from Gazimagusa about your expert system: is it meant to be used by students too? And if so, do they use it as a black box, or do you explain how these different constraints and performance requirements act together and are put together by you?

### **Ozdeniz Mesut Birol**

As I explained in the presentation, we did a survey, we collected data from professional architects, and we input this data into the system as a default value. So inex-

perienced architects can use it and accept it, and it is a good thing for them to have. Experienced architects can change it according to their expectations and what they wish to achieve. So, yes, that is possible.

### **Sabine Chardonnet**

I do not agree with the position presented, because I think we need both situations. **The discussion about individualisation of knowledge, or individualisation of behaviour towards learning and doing things, is very true.** More and more amongst our students we have people from different cultures and different backgrounds, and they will take the same curriculum but in different ways; and we now have to face this question of negotiation – negotiations between the teachers and the students and negotiations between a future or collective approach and an individual approach. In my opinion, perhaps the best thing we can do, in order not to make mistakes when we teach, is to give students both experience of negotiation with an abundance of knowledge and tools with which to get close to it and to get it out of the black box, as well as one-to-one experimentation, because it is from the confrontation of both that they will understand in the end that they are not alone when they become architects. In the end you can experiment with your hands and be more clever than going to the black box and taking all the information that is around us. So I would really think that a school of architecture could be a place where you have one-to-one experimentation with time and areas and curricula, and also tools to self-conduct your road through education. For me this is what IT brings: necessity for validation in one-to-one experimentation and the question of going back to information.

### **Dimitris Papalexopoulos**

There are three short comments that I would like make. The first is on the question of the BS; I think we have hit on a very critical issue, which is that in the end the main problem seems to be not how to construct a building but how to describe a building. So the question is, how do we fragment a building, how do we describe it? In Greece, we have a database called ‘building memory’. The main problem was not informatics: rather it was in us architects – how to deconstruct a building and where to stand in relation to different theories. If you try to describe something, it is in a way like constructing it, like putting down the whole theory of architecture. So maybe this is an issue for us all to discuss in the future

My second comment is that I totally agree that we have to accept that there will be coexistence of different technologies – both the conventional and the high end – and that **our work is not to narrate the story of how we pass through a new era but how we may make the different things co-exist. We have to accept that things are changing by micro-changes, and someday we will have a totally new image; but they do not change by rupture – that is too Modern to happen.**

My third comment is for Joseph. I just wanted to say that I and two colleagues in Greece have for six years taught a class on construction, and what we found out is that it is not really a question of master-builders or of comprehending construction, but rather that there is a kind of process going on there for the first time in these students’ lives. They pass from an idea to the built form; they are condemned to pass or else they will fail, so there is a fear, a common fear, on the part of the teacher and on the part of the students. And when you finally succeed in passing and

constructing you are trapped, you are an architect.

### **Henk de Weijer**

I would like to come back to the academic problem. **I completely agree that it is very essential to be committed and to be not only a thinker, but to be a thinker and a doer at the same time. My concern is that if we think too much in terms of systems then we have to realise that any system, no matter how broad, will have limitations. And what we need to deal with is the unpredictability; we need to be able to have the freedom to step beyond any system that anybody can think of.** I know that what many of you have been doing is showing that any system of teaching construction can be dealt with in a completely unexpected new way. This is what I wanted to say about thinking in terms of systems; and of course we can go back to emotions and creativity and all these flowing parts that we all have, but again it is very important to realise that systems have their limitations, and I think that this is not an academic question at all.

### **Herman Neuckermans**

I just want to make a small comment on model-making, on real building-making. I think that there are several ways of experiencing architecture. One is the one you showed, by doing things; and what for me distinguishes this way of working from other ways of experiencing architecture is that you have the feedback, the immediate feedback from the doing to the thinking, which is not in the model when we draw. So, although there are some risks, which I do not need to go into now, I fully agree with you on that. The other way that I experience architecture is by watching others do it. I do not necessarily have to do what others do; I do not necessarily have the skills to do what other people can do; but maybe by watching very carefully I can experience it. In this case, though, you do not have as much feedback from the doing or making to the thinking. And if you go to the virtual models, I think that they still lose the battle compared to actually being in the space. Whatever technology you use it is not the same thing, and that is another thing that the real model brings.

And I have one last comment to make – forgive me for taking up so much time – on your model: I think that you did not solve the lateral truss, and I think that you did not see it because the roof did not weigh anything.