

Chapter 4

Debate

Chaired by

David Willey,
Plymouth School of Architecture and Design
UNITED KINGDOM

Question from the audience

Regarding the reference made to the past with respect to the teaching objectives, the ACSA also has the guidelines or architectural directives that we have in Europe, so could you please clarify what you meant, particularly in terms of your concern with the cultural or identity factor. It seems to me that these guidelines can be quite helpful to us, and I do not see them as a threat to our losing our diversity. However, your opinion was quite definite, so, would you please explain why you feel that way?

Jean François Mabardi, Louvain-la-Neuve, BELGIUM

I said that we were afraid in 1992, '93 and '97 that the guidelines would be a threat, but we are happy to see that this has not in fact been the case.

I expressed some concern around the issue of identity linked to geography or culture, which is a big issue nowadays. In teaching students architecture and urban design, we sometimes enter into what I call "a quick sand area" because we put into the heads of young people the idea that identity is geography or culture, but I am not so sure of this. Identity is one thing -- the fact that we are "multi-identitarian" (multiple identities), yet we accept just one or make one identity more powerful and use it in the wrong sense to suit our purposes. I think that what is important is for me to know who I really am inside, not in reference to geography and culture. Of course, I have a lineage, but that is not my identity. It simply helps me to know myself better. I am an individual that accepts to participate in different groups, which is a role the multi-identitarian plays, and nowadays, with the means of communication available to us, this participation is constantly increasing.

I have been reading about the idea of "glocal", in Spanish, in terms of what it means today. I think it is an interesting word in asking ourselves how we can deal with the double aspect of "globality and locality" which is a problem in architecture, but the "global and local" is also a problem of identity. I believe that we started off being "glocal" as human beings, but through education we were strongly oriented towards one aspect of our multiple identities, as we are lots of things at the same time. But when we want to make a claim, we are partial to one particular identity. This happens when we design, for example, so that if I put on the hat of the pedestrian, cars are awful, but I also have a car, like you, and when as a driver you see a pedestrian in your way, you see the person as an obstacle. Therefore, our perceptions can change within minutes because of our multiple natures, and culture and geography can present problems if we tend to over focus on them.

Marvin Malecha, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

From my experience, we have the accreditation guidelines for ACSA for any AB National Architectural Accrediting Board, and there are about 37 points that schools have to address. I find that how a school responds is a function of its mentality. For example, a school can take this on as being prescriptive, which determines the behavior and response for each guideline in a class, or a school can take it on as a performance specification and, within their culture, they will address those 37 points. I find that the really good schools almost do not have to pay attention to the 37 guidelines because their own standards and ways of doing things address those 37 points, maybe not linearly, but they address the points. Those schools that choose that maintain their own identity. They maintain who they are about and why they are doing what they are doing. The schools that tend to want to respond line by line are the ones that give up their own identity. Therefore, I think there is definitely merit to having those guidelines and standards, but the school has to have confidence in its way of doing things if it is going to be a good school. Finally, what I would say to you is that there is just enough indication of similarity of ways of doing things in this document that, I think, people should not be paying attention to since it can be negative. Frankly, you do not go far from this document to having everybody thinking alike. It is, actually, a lot closer to everybody thinking alike than being "glocal," as was suggested earlier, because I do not see a different pedagogy operating here.

Tom Jefferies, Manchester, UNITED KINGDOM

This question is directly related to Marvin's presentation regarding the A / F kind of concept, which is an interesting concept, but the question I have is relating A / F to evidence-based assessment and evidence-based decision making. I guess, the latter (evidence-based decision making) obviously gives you a very strong position in an argument. The danger, of course, is that it turns into evidence-based assessment, which tends to concretize endeavor in some way. Could you just elaborate on the tension, I guess, between A / F and the evidence?

Marvin Malecha, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

I think that A / F is clearly an educational strategy. It is intended to develop an attitude between teacher and student or among students or teachers. The evidence-based is really intended to be working at the advanced levels of the discipline; so, when you are working in a studio, you can work with rigor and certainty on some objects, and you can also identify those places where you can work with rigor and certainty. So, how do you take those chances? It seems to me, you should be as informed, when you are taking a chance, as one can be and know when you are taking a risk. Of course, you cannot always know that, but, at least, when you are in the professional realm, you should be able to do that. However, I would say that the A / F is really what I would call an educational tactic. The evidence-based, design decision-making is what is fed to the process or is in-service to that process, which now defines the relationship between student and teacher. The teacher should be holding the student accountable for rigor, but the student should also hold the teacher accountable for rigor. We have a culture that each lets the other get away with a lot more than they should.

Ambiguity was one of Leonardo Da Vinci's favorite subjects. In fact, he even gave it a name, "sfumato" (to go up in smoke). I do not have anything against ambiguity, but it is the rigor part that you have just identified that I would like to see more of.

Jean François Mabardi, Louvain-la-Neuve, BELGIUM

I demonstrated one use of the word since at the time we were trying to communicate in a certain context, but in another context, I would say that each word is a "jeu" or play on words because of the different meanings or possible interpretations derived from it. This is very useful for the imagination and creativity, so, in another context, I will use words as a pedagogical tool, but not with that rigor or intention of wanting to communicate an idea or define my position in an argument, but as an exercise where we are both engaged in trying to be creative. The game with words is also useful in allowing the passage from one domain to another, sometimes through metaphors or analogies, and this is the creative aspect. What is interesting about using this imagery, at the moment of the exercise or session, is that it provides a universal solution with a context and precise definition.

Koray Gökan, Istanbul, TURKEY

Speaking of words, in the first presentation, there was a point where you talked about a change in society and changing the object of architecture while in the second presentation, we heard about the *transformation* of architecture. Although, I hope that I am not playing too much with words here.

Jean François Mabardi, Louvain-la-Neuve, BELGIUM

I think I should explain what I meant by the *object* of architecture. There seems to be an understanding that the *object* is the building, but I believe that with change, this object of architecture has adopted a wider meaning because we now speak of landscape architecture and urban architecture as opposed to urban design, which were not present before. Such changes in society like density, saturation and extension of the earth have contributed to changing the object, which architecture has had to take into account. If you make a historical comparison, you will

see that some problems were not objects of architecture because of certain features of the given society. The issues of today should be addressed by architecture, and to go back to the first intervention, if we go on doing architecture without the objects of the environment and sustainability, then we are not acting as responsible architects. We need to include this environmental aspect, which in turn changes the object. Therefore, the object changes in accordance with the different issues affecting society. This explanation clarifies what I meant, though I am not sure that it is the same as what Marvin had in mind.

Marvin Malecha, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

No, but your interpretation follows quite nicely, so, I see it as an extension of the idea about the artifact being important and after that relatively unimportant. What I was implying is that the artifact, to me, is always the result of the process, and where there is great transformation happening is in the way of doing things, the means and methods. In that transformation, there will be the change in the object. Now, buildings will have to be universally accessible, which will change our concept of how that building is entered. Buildings have to be sustainable. I was at a presentation an architect was giving to a client in Raleigh, where he said that he dealt with "determinate indeterminism." meaning that he has to answer the program that will be alive in the building for the first twenty years of its life, and if he makes the building well enough, then, that building will have another one hundred years of life, without him knowing its future use or function. Therefore, the architect has to make a building for "determinate indeterminism."

This changes the process and changes the way of doing some thing which in turn will change it. Therefore, much of what I see is the transformation of the tactics and logistics of architecture, even though I still value the cultural artifact that will send messages. So, this is where we come up against each other very well with Jean Francois's broader or global definition, and with mine being more a question of: "how do you make the thing?" or "how do you get there?" and "how do you make the decisions leading you along the path?" This is where I see great revolution and transformation.

Koray Gökân, Istanbul, TURKEY

So, it is not the architecture which is being transformed, but it is the product we are talking about.

Marvin Malecha, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

Well, ultimately, the architecture, of course. The best way to explain this is through what I tell students, which is that there is no such thing as a neutral computer program. The moment you go into a computer program and start to design a building, using a software package, you are accepting a way of thinking and decision making that will influence the outcome; so, my view is that we should be very high-touch relative to that decision process, whatever it may be or however we want to define it. If we take Jean Francois' presentation and embrace it, that will cause the building to be different. It will cause the urban design context, if we think about it in those terms, to be different, and it will make spaces for our time and place.

Jean François Mabardi, Louvain-la-Neuve, BELGIUM

Also, you cannot disassociate the second definition from the first. Finally, the ultimate aim is to create a certain order, but not in a military sense. This means that you have a fantastic studio where exercises can be done in terms of what is order, pattern and structure, etc. When you have or see a pattern or structure you recognize things. The object is what you apply something to. Therefore the order or element to which you apply the order is not the same as that of the Egyptian times or what has existed till now because it is a social factor influenced by changes in society.

Vana Tentokali, Thessaloniki, GREECE

I have a lot of questions on the presentations, but I will resist the temptation of asking them since I need more time for reflection. You have presented a new era in which the school, as an educational institution, is replaced by the enterprise, but I do not want to become like the human being who lived in England during the Industrial Revolution who wanted to earnestly destroy machines. I believe that we need to think seriously about all this. So, my question to the first presenter and, I will now ask, you, Jean Francois, my question. As far as I understood your presentation, considering that I was late, I should mention that I greatly appreciated the fact that it had a strong pedagogical background.

Also, you tried to avoid presenting definitions of culture, although towards the end you did provide one, to which I would like to add another one, and this definition of culture comes from Gramsci who stated that "culture is the self-discipline of the inner ego." When you referred to students you claimed that you try to activate or bring forth their creativity, etc, and, of course, I agree with you on that point. But, I wonder, what would you suggest we advise our students to do, would you say that they should maximize or minimize their own self-discipline or inner ego in the case where they come from different backgrounds and education? I agree that secondary schools are not the best examples of environments that develop creative students. However, my question is, what do you do with your students' self-discipline or egos; do you suppress or allow that to flourish?

Jean François Mabardi, Louvain-la-Neuve, BELGIUM

I am not sure that I have understood your question or opposing stance very well. The two definitions I gave, one being culture as a set of knowledge linked to the idea of what is useful for a person to think, judge, assess and develop one's tastes. The second definition was the discipline to develop certain abilities. :if I link this to autonomy, I have to show the person who I am, as means of setting an example, not for the person to follow, but as a way of making the person consciously aware of some characteristic or quality that lies within his or her own person and allow that to surface. Therefore, this does not mean that I promote mine and suppress the other person's characteristics.

Now, if I had had more time in the presentation, I would have added the idea of solidarity in the class. I see the students as individuals, but also as a group, with two types of tasks. The individual, at some point needs some kind of relationship, but the main element is the group. I can consider the group as passive, but that does not mean that they do not work together if I have not assigned them an exercise as team work. They are still considered to be a group I can also divide the group and get them to do team work. In this case, I need to reflect on what "team" means. In any case, I think we should promote solidarity, and Marvin mentioned, marvelously, how students influence one another; thus, solidarity needs to be learned. Each person is autonomous and has to elaborate one's own position and present it to another and so forth – this is our situation, where we learn from each other and not just from the teacher. That is important, so I do not focus on the actions of the individual as such because the person has to develop his /her own personality and that is solidarity in the group. This, however, always requires more time.

David Willey, Plymouth, UNITED KINGDOM

There was a little provocation to Marvin, at the beginning, about the nature of the future look at the end of the world. I think the technical term for those 19th century people was the Luddite, which is a very nice word.

Marvin Malecha, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

I do not think that our colleague was referring to herself as a Luddite, who resisted technology and weaving machines. I must admit that I do not feel comfortable with what is happening either because of the fact that it threatens everything. What I see is that we have fallen into a pattern of doing things, and what I think we need to do which would bring an amazing amount of energy is for us to lean back and say "Let's try new ways of teaching." "Let's see if there are better vehi-

cles of delivering this information." "What is this new technology offering us?" We had a graphic design studio in the College last year where the instructor was in London. He never came to the United States; he taught the whole class from London. The students loved it and they all went on a summer trip to London and visited the tutor's office. It was marvelous! They met one day a week and they would web cast and it was just a wonderful experience.

So, basically what I am saying is that although I do not know where it is going, I want to go on the voyage, despite the fact that I may not be that comfortable with it. However, I think that there is great opportunity for us to maintain our position as educators and take the position Jean Francois has taken if we become more involved in the three-year period after conventional graduation. In fact, we can look at that two- or three-year period when students are becoming professionals, and completely vest ourselves there and deal with the issue of professionalism and professional behavior, because we have the opportunity in our structure to deal with the larger value system that Jean Francois mentioned. Right now, we are not doing or conveying any of that; we are merely turning them loose, whereas, I see that as a period of great opportunity to actually do a different kind of teaching with different kinds of instructors. In many ways it is like putting your hand in a black box without knowing what is inside. I appreciate your nervousness and am right there with you!

Josep Muntanola, Barcelona, SPAIN

With regards to Mabardi's lecture, I agree with almost everything, such as his definition of architecture and the main points on the new technologies and organization of the professions. Speaking of the new technologies, I participate in a European program in which 30 universities are trying to teach design on line, which is a big development. Also, as far as building documentation is concerned, this has failed so far since in Europe it is extremely difficult and complicated to approve a system for official documents. Nevertheless, efforts are being made and I have attended meetings for this purpose.

Marvin Malecha, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

I think the point you are making is an extremely good one. In my work with the large firms, the really good offices say that the first characteristic of an individual that they want to hire relates to what they refer to as "intellectual agility" which means people that can move from one place to the other and do it intelligently, people who embrace new ways of doing things, new technologies and can move across disciplines. In fact, one individual calls these people, "cross-over artists," that is, people who are comfortable in a room full of politicians, can interact with the engineers, etc. These are the people they need vitally to lead their teams. So, you are absolutely right and also very correct in saying that each part of the world will have to figure out how they are to interact with each other with these new technologies.

Again, technology is simply a series of opportunities, and the hardest thing is to get people who have become comfortable and powerful in their subject matter to let go of their comfort and their power. I always say -- and this is a criticism that I have of American universities, without of course implying that your schools have this problem -- that I refer to the typical curriculum inside an American university as a peace treaty. Among powerful factions of the university there is a peace treaty, where there are so many units of general education and that is negotiated with the engineers, who being more powerful have less liberal education, even though it may not serve their interest in the long term, but they have control over a greater percentage of the curriculum.

You have so many units of design studio because it is controlled by the practicing design faculty. The poor historian has got to cover 4,000 years of history in a 3-unit class. You get more credit to teach design studio than a lecture studio. Why is that? When you take a look at true grading of papers in history, that is, if you want your students to learn to write, which, by the way, is another requirement sought after by employers, I remember being very impressed with Ken Frampton I was with on the accreditation team at Columbia. The students would write in their

blue book on the right-hand side and Frampton would respond by writing more than the student had written on the left-hand side. Now, that was amazing, and yet in that structure the studio instructor got more teaching credit for teaching the studio than teaching a seminar. Therefore, I just think that if there is anything we can do here in a sophisticated, collegial way, it is to undo some of the peace treaties.

Loughlin Kealy, Dublin, IRELAND

Is pedagogy to be taken seriously? If we are going to take this seriously, how is this to be done? You could say, a workshop like this, is a beginning, but where do we go from here? What sort of dialogue should we actually try to have? In a way, the first book that was circulated here, to what extent was that a proposition as to how that should be done? Actually, you could treat it as a hypothesis that if you got people to describe what they taught and how they taught it, illustrate it with exercises and so on, that it would move the discussion on. One could respond positively to this and say that it is true. My feeling was that there were several missing pieces. I think the quality of critical reflection was missing to a large extent and the student voice was diminished [.....] I have a question that I would like to ask the panel. The people that I get to teach design in my school are people who I know are engaged in critical practice. What is critical practice in teaching and what do you understand that to mean? Can we move that on and how? I suppose that underneath that is the conviction, and if you like, I would appreciate having everyone's reflection on this, that is, my instinct is that unless we come to some understanding that we are actually disabling ourselves by teaching inefficiently, a lot of the times, and, sometimes, very [.....] not realizing how much we have to offer to other people and not being in a position to offer it very [.....] because we have not thought about it in that way. So, my question is, with this as beginning, how do we move on?

Marvin Malecha, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

I think what it amounts to is a person who writes on creativity in business management, Tom Peters, and his recent book, "Re-imagine" is one that I like very much. What he says is that you have to choose some champions, those are the risk takers on your faculty. You have to give those people the room to get something accomplished and then you have to use their successes or failures as examples to encourage new champions, and that you have to operate within the realm of encouraging people to step forward. I am a firm believer that this is the way to make change happen.

As a community of teachers you have to do this, but then take on a very specific strategy to ensure that the people who do this also have the opportunities to make presentations and make them in front of people who are experienced. Then the results of those interactions are published. So, it is the people who do the writing, presenting and reacting that become the champions. I think you have to build that culture into the discourse of an organization like EAE or ENHSA, but, ultimately, it comes back to people and those that are willing to take the leap off the cliff in order to do this. I really do not know of any other way.

Jean François Mabardi, Louvain – La Neuve, BELGIUM

I think I spotted (diagnosed) one or two diseases in architecture education. I will mention just one – the syndrome of specificity that will kill us – and as a remedy, we must open our windows and doors. We are talking about education and we have fantastic educators who think about education, not about architecture. Where are they? When consulting them, my plea is not for you to do as they say, but I would urge you to just listen and get what you want from them, but confront yourself with the best.

We know that we survive because we are enthusiasts and real people in the studio, and that makes a big difference even with a lot of scale in pedagogy. However, I would urge you to listen to the person who is the best in the field, and the different voices in that field, and extract what is better or more useful or helpful to you. This must not be perceived as following their rules of

pedagogy, but they do offer some principles which deserve our attention, so, let us listen to them and hear what they have to say. Therefore, let's leave ourselves open and not shut ourselves off from other disciplines on the pretext that ours is a specific or even special field. We should communicate and be communicative with other schools and faculties. After all, we lost a battle in the 19th century with the engineers because of our overprotective attitude towards our profession. All this, however, has to do with mentality, and if we can change this mentality among us, I think, it will be fantastic.

By the way, did we ever invite an engineer to talk about education through this Association? I, frankly, cannot remember. We are collectively to blame for our specificity syndrome!

Emel Aközer, Ankara, TURKEY

This is just an expression of excitement [.....] regarding the norms and this is quite significant for me because I could only grasp this really significant distinction after reading Lawrence Koverse [.....] and only then could I understand the difference between principles and diversity of cultures [.....]. I firmly believe that we need to go beyond these cultural normative systems [.....] in order to appreciate these cultural normative systems themselves [.....]. This is very difficult and a challenge to be educated in the cultural normative system of architecture itself. Perhaps there is no traditional architecture, but you have just talked about the discourse in architectural schools, and this is quite common for us. Would you please further elaborate on the ethical aspect of urban design and architectural design education because, for me, this is more important than the technical material or the cultural normative or the political ideology or legal dimensions since the teaching form can be built only on this basis?

Jean François Mabardi, Louvain-la-Neuve, BELGIUM

As far as how culture influences us in the normative manner, that is a difficult issue that requires lengthy research and I am not so sure that I can provide a quick answer to that since it requires reflection; nevertheless, I will try. I think that if you try to be honest with yourself in the search for who you are, will you be able to escape ideology? Perhaps, but it gets slightly more complicated than that because you will have to move into reason, ratio and emotion, the emotional reaction and rational one. Where is the balance? If you go too far into the ratio, you can rationalize that, but when you act, you will not be in coherence. But, the question of how to tackle the normative aspect of culture is a function of being conscious of what you are and not letting that slip into the subconscious. This consciousness involves recognizing that an architect is a mercenary, and although schools of architecture do not want to accept this, in the end, the professional will work for who pays and this is a reality that has existed since the beginning of times, whether we admit it or not.

David Willey, Plymouth, UNITED KINGDOM

I will ask Marvin to talk briefly about some of the issues I have underlined from your questions, this morning regarding the nature of change and what we are doing in terms of our teaching, and then we will draw our discussion, unfortunately, to a halt.

Marvin Malecha, Raleigh, North Carolina, USA

As far as the nature of change, as I mentioned earlier, change is happening and will continue to happen in the direction we have been discussing. Jean Francois is right in saying that architecture as a discipline or profession has always been in service at various times in its history to larger and smaller groups of people, but always to somebody who pays. There is a wonderful story from the book called, "The Feud that Sparked the Renaissance," which is the feud between Alberti and Brunelleschi in the way each could or could not manage their money or client, and many people say that it is in that feud that modern practice was born.

We know that change is always with us; it is proven. L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts and its practices in

drawing the profile of a building as opposed to the details of a building, and interacting with the trades in a particular way versus what we now see, where everything comes out of Frank Gehry's office completely knitted together. So you have a cultural normative standard operating in both situations. That is why I like to talk about transformation and evolution, and you can talk about revolution as well. Thomas Jefferson said, after he got done leading a revolution, "A little bit of revolution is a good thing for every generation." I think that is the reason I am a great admirer of his work and why I am intellectually comfortable with a bit of revolution in every generation.

This is getting at what you are talking about because it is challenging normative standards for ourselves. Rene Descartes also said more or less the same thing in stating that we should not accept anything as true unless you, yourself, can prove it as true, which brings us back to evidence-based decision making. Therefore, the university's role in that is a very interesting one and it is full of tension. Why? Because on the one hand, we have design professionals that are changing so quickly because their clients are changing, the money is moving and they are moving with it. On the other hand, we have all of the cultural tradition, the discipline of architecture to bring along, and we have young people entering the field that want to become leading practitioners, but who may have never been to a major city. I am not saying that this is true, but it is possible for someone to grow up on the island of Crete, decide to study architecture, but never yet been to Athens. So, if you are teaching in the school, here, one of the first tasks for those young people is to get them to Athens.

Now, that is a long way down from the kind of discourse we have had this morning because, first of all, unbelievably, they may not have even been on a big boat. I can tell you that in North Carolina, we have students who come to us as freshman, very bright young people, who have never been to Raleigh, North Carolina, let alone New York City or Chicago. They have grown up in towns of 500 to a 1,000 people and they may have seen specials on television about architecture. So, we have to bring these people along, and this is one of the fundamental responsibilities we have. Since we are a land-grant institution, we have a responsibility to the greater society of North Carolina. Prof. Macchi Cassia talked about the responsibility of the university to be a voice in that evolution of society.

So, all of that comes along and we have an incredible tension inside our faculties. One such tension is to preserve and transmit the legacies of culture, because if we do not do it, then nobody else will, therefore, it is our responsibility. On the other hand, we have to prepare people to be agile in their learning style because the normative standards are changing and we are in this tension, which is why I like being in university - it is much more fun. In practice the rules are simple. You get the job, and everything comes from that.

