



European Network of Heads of Schools of Architecture • European Association for Architectural Education

Teaching a new Environmental Culture

The Environment as a Question of Architectural Education

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Hosts:

Frederick University, School of Architecture • University of Cyprus, School of Architecture • University of Nicosia, School of Architecture

In our fast changing world, one of the most significant shifts of contemporary thinking is our reconsideration of our conception of the relationship between humans and nature. Centuries of architectural production have been based upon a conception of the dwelling and the city as the protectors of the humans from nature, as the powerful tools and the efficient representations of their dominance upon the natural forces, laws and phenomena, as the asylum where the civilization, protected, will be able to flourish. Even if nature as the generator of the alive has always been the architects' source of inspiration, it has always been the competitive 'other' to be conquered, to be mastered and dominated. This architectural production of our civilization is usually defined as the built environment in distinction and implicitly in contradiction to the natural environment, the former expected to be naturalized as opposed to the latter, which had to be domesticated, that is to say artificialized.

Nowadays the line of distinction between the natural and the human made becomes increasingly blurred, and the differentiation between the real and the artificial appears unclear. The question: 'which environment for the humans?' appears to be one of the most significant decisions for our strategy for the future. Environmental sensitivity, sustainability, ecology, pollution, global warming, climatic change, greenhouse effect, are just simple terms emerging from the uncontrolled and aggressive coexistence of the built with the natural environment and of the human activity against nature. They also encompass and represent the imperative need of a new conception of the relation between nature and humans, between the natural and the built environment, the need for a new environmental culture.

Our growing sensitivity for environmental issues has taught us that buildings are the major causes for damaging nature. Pollution from heating and cooling buildings exceeds that from cars. Building industry, the second largest industry in the world, manufactures building materials consuming enormous energy, and exhaustible resources. Buildings and their construction account for more than half of the entire greenhouse gas emissions and energy consumption globally each year. The Building Sector is the key source of demand for energy and materials that produce by-product greenhouse gases. On the other hand, our houses, which are the largest lifetime purchase, are built more or less with the same way as they were built at least fifty years ago. The home that will literally define our lives for twenty, thirty, forty years in the future is designed only for today, based upon an implicit (and obsolete) conception that the future is just a repetition of the present.

Our society needs urgently new approaches in the conception theorization and implementation of architectural practices, which will generate architectural designs responsive to the new conception of the relations between nature and the humans where the latter are part of the former depending upon and determining it in dynamic and parametric relationship.

Is architectural education sensitive to this global demand for a new environmental culture? Do schools of architecture nowadays educate students, capable of taking action immediately towards new solutions and new conceptions of forms, materials and spatial arrangements responsive to this emerging environmental culture? How do they incorporate in their educational and pedagogical strategies environmental issues? Which teaching approaches do they implement in order to educate future architects?

The conference wishes to map the ways schools of architecture in Europe integrate in their curricula environmental issues. For this reason Schools of architecture are invited to present the structure, the content, the expected outcomes of the architectural education they offer in relation to the environmental issues and the teaching approaches they implement to assure these outcomes. More specifically, the conference will be structured upon four main topics, which will form the following four main sessions of the event.

Session 1

The environment as part of architectural curricula

This session will examine the way that environmental issues become part of a school; to what extent (in terms of time, credits and contents) the demand for a new environmental culture is represented in the structure of the studies? Do environmental issues structure autonomous modules? Are parts of other modules treating other subject areas? Are these issues treated as extensions, transformations or adaptations of existing modules? To what extent does environmental education constitute a recognizable body of knowledge and skills in the offered program of a school? How long has this specific education been offered in our institutions? Do we consider that we have to enrich it or reconsider it? Are there any conflicts with other modules, other attitudes, other value systems present or even dominating our educational framework? Are all the above enough to assure a new environmental culture?

Session 2

Pedagogic approaches to environmental issues in schools of architecture

The second session expects to map the pedagogic approaches implemented in schools of architecture in Europe in relation to the environmental issues and to inspect the values, the conceptions and the views, which direct the implemented educational strategies. What do we teach when we teach the environment? Why do we teach what we teach? What are the pedagogic approaches we implement? What do we want to achieve? Which exercises and assignments are we asking our student to prepare? How are we evaluating their performance? Is there any specific profile of the teacher of environmental issues? When do we teach these issues in the total duration of studies? What do we want to achieve, assure or obtain?

Session 3

Integrating environmental education in the architectural design studio

The third session focuses on the design education offered to students and investigates to which extent this education can contribute to the structuring of an environmental culture, knowledge and consciousness. How are environmental issues incorporated in design education? Should they appear in specific studios or in any studio? When do we teach such a studio? Is this design education part of the general education or should it remain as specialized design education? What are the contents of the design themes we are asking our students to work on? What do we want to achieve? What is the

gravity of the environment in these studios? How are we evaluating the results? What is the impact of the environmental education in the diploma thesis? How can new technologies and parametric design be articulated in the studio with the question of the environment? Are conflicts and contradictory approaches in comparison with other studios or other subject areas taught in our schools?

Session 4

New competences for an environmentally sensitive architectural education

The fourth session investigates the expected profile of an environmentally sensitive graduate of our schools. As this profile can be articulated by the generic and specific competences of the graduates, the session will open the debate on these competences, which will accompany the expected new environmental culture. What is the new profile of the graduate in an environmentally sensitive school of architecture? Which competences is this profile expected to fulfill? How can we assure these competences? How can we raise the environmental consciousness in our schools? How can we formulate new environmental values into the framework of the architectural education we offer? What types of pedagogical approaches and educational strategies do we have to implement in our schools in order to reach the objective of creating environmentally sensitive architects? How far are we from the achievement of such a pursuit?

We are inviting all schools and teachers of architecture in Europe to present their contributions to the creation of a new environmental culture by presenting the overall schools' curricula or particular modules they are offering according to the above presented themes. We expect that this event will give us the possibility for a fruitful and creative exchange of experiences, views and practices, which will enrich our teaching and nourish our efforts for a more environmentally sensitive and conscious architecture.

Teachers in Schools of Architecture teaching modules related to environmental themes presented above are invited to contribute to the debates by preparing a paper with their views, ideas, and pedagogical approaches. The program of the event will assure a significant time for open debates. An abstract of 600-700 words must be submitted by **May 5, 2010**. You will be asked to submit your final paper by the end of June 2007 for the publication of the proceedings, which will be distributed to all EAEE/ENHSA school members.

For any further queries please do not hesitate to contact us on enhsa-net@arch.auth.gr.

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