— UNIVERSALITY OF ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

MODERATOR — REGINA LOUKOTOVÁ

Architect and teacher and the Rector of the first private international school of architecture ARCHIP (Architectural Institute in Prague) in the Czech Republic, that she founded in 2011. Her teaching career started at the Faculty of Architecture, CTU in Prague, where she was active together with her life partner and architect Martin Roubík (1949–2008), co-founder of the Norwegian architectural studio Snøhetta. She promotes her vision of architectural education in the Education Working Group for the Czech Chamber of Architects. She has been a member of the Board of Directors of theFulbright Commission in the Czech Republic since 2019.

INAKI ALDAY / Keynote Speaker

AN URGENT REVISION

Practice and education in architecture have increased in complexity in parallel with so many other areas of knowledge and professional practices in the contemporary world. On the one hand, the digital revolution, globalisation and the availability ofinformation and data have transformed architecture and practically all other human activity. On the other hand, humanity faces a combination of economic, political, and ecological crises that demand a profound change in the way we inhabit the planet and the physical and non-physical structures that organise life on it. We have finally discovered the limitations of our planetary resources, and we are beginning to understand the impact of the damage produced since the Industrial Revolution.

The complexity of the built-up environment cannot be effectively addressed from any one of its traditional disciplines alone. The architecture of objects does not usually go much beyond serving the market by providing the product demanded. The traditional urbanism of the master plan does not allow us to address the regional and metropolitan dimensions of a city of multiple metabolisms on multiple scales. Engineering has perpetuated the logic of industrial specialisation, designing mono-functional infrastructures that tend to solve one problem while generating three others (from urban highways to river channels or pumping systems). Each of these fields in themselves have compounded their complexity and the depth required in each knowledge niche, with specialities and sub-specialities, in fact, converted into fields of variable geometries that in general unintentionally overlap.

To the urgency and complexity of our planetary challenges, which go beyond the disciplinary tools of any profession, we should add the cultural, climatic, socioeconomic, professional competencies or social-perception differences in each region of the globe. The unitary concept of the practice of architecture and the rest of the professions of the built-up environment faces an infinite variety of essential or apparently banal circumstances (for example, the requirements for the professional license). Is it still possible to speak of architecture, landscape architecture, urbanism or the rest of the fields of the built-up environment as professions with a shared corpus across regions and continents? One hundred years after the emergence of the modern movement and, with it, the definition of the contemporary profile of the architect and urban planner with their regulated university education, architecture has undergone phases of flourishing and crisis. During these times, ambition, commitment, and a sense of relevance have wavered and, at times, almost disappeared. Does it make sense to think about a possible common architecture agenda at this historical moment? And if so, what is the role and transformative potential of the different professional fields of the built-up environment, their specialities and their areas of overlap?

This presentation briefly covers the evolution of the role and aspirations of architecture since modernity, raising some relevant aspects of the contemporary condition and synthetically proposes an objective, a tool and a fundamental path for architectural education that can be shared across diverse borders and contexts.

The presentation concludes by stressing the mandate for architecture: to solve problems – starting with providing shelter; and understanding that the new challenges have grown in scale and are the product of previous practices. The universality of the education and practice in our fields relies today in our shared objectives – the impact in an urgent planetary transformation, tools that are design focused to solve issues without artificial boundaries and methods as well as a continuous and accountable innovation mindset.

OVERLAPS ARE NOT ONLY INEVITABLE BUT ALSO NECESSARY... AND THEY CONSTITUTE THE MOST PRODUCTIVE AREAS FOR INNOVATION.

Iñaki Alday is a registered architect, landscape architect and urbanist. Together with Margarita Jover, he founded aldayjover architecture and landscape in 1996 in Barcelona. The multidisciplinary, research-based practice focuses on innovation. It is renowned for its leadership in a new approach to the relation between cities and rivers, in which the natural dynamics of flooding become part of the public space and the buildings. Alday is the Dean of the Tulane University School of Architecture since 2018. After teaching as Associate Professor at the Valles School of Architecture (UPC) since 1998, in 2011 he was appointed as Quesada Professor and Chair of the Department of Architecture at the University of Virginia. Both in academic research and in practice, Alday promotes a new attitude towards the transformation of our environment and how architecture can contribute to the inhabitation of the most challenged areas of the planet. The role of architecture and the architects, the integration of disciplines and scales, the non-traditional programmes as the hybridized infrastructures, of the social and environmental ethics are some of the challenges to confront with a global vision.

INAKI ALDAY

LADISLAV LÁBUS

NEW DIMENSIONS 2021

REFLECTIONS ON THE ENLARGEMENT OF SCALE AND OVERLAPPING OF DISCIPLINES IN THE PRACTICE OF ARCHITECTS AND URBANISTS AND LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS IN EDUCATION

Globalisation creates a global scale and format to problems on the macro and micro scales such as carbon footprints, global warming, water management, sustainable development of cities and landscapes and the 'development' of transportation etc. in ever more troubling and un-ignorable forms.

The increase in the scale of projects and plans is accompanied by the overlapping of the disciplines of architects, urbanists and landscape architects. At the same time, the required range and scope of knowledge, skills and abilities are increasing at an ever-faster pace, often evolving and changing in fundamental categories, sometimes even in their methodological paradigms.

How can we reflect this increase in the scale and overlap of disciplines in the fields of architecture – urbanism – landscape architecture and the increasing scope of knowledge required in current practice into education when specialisation is not common in the field of architecture and is not even permissible according to EU Directive 2013/55?

Architectural education was one of the few areas to retain its universality and comprehensiveness even in this recent period with its focus on specialisation in education and practice. In this era of the dominance of specialisation in education, architects became 'specialists in generality'.

The enlargement of scale and the overlapping of disciplines, in particular, require the strengthening and expanding of the generality of education as large projects cannot be managed by a specialist but rather by a personality possessing both general knowledge and overall awareness.

Also, the speed of development and change, and the resulting demands on qualifications, will reinforce the importance of generality in all areas of education, mainly at the basic undergraduate level. It would be a mistake for architectural education to change direction and swim against the stream, under the increasing weight of the knowledge required.

The tradition of generality and comprehensiveness in architectural education needs to be continued, yet careful consideration needs to be given to what to place on the shoulders of graduates as they navigate the ever-changing conditions of their practice.

Let us look not only to what is new and needs to be included in teaching, but instead let us also focus with equal seriousness on what does not change in architectural education and practice. We will be surprised to find that it is quite a lot, and this is nothing to be ashamed of. On the contrary, let us implement the new needs upon these solid foundations.

The development of architectural education, and the graduates themselves, will not benefit from making revolutionary changes every five or ten years, obeying the latest stimuli and strategies that change as fast as the knowledge and skills needed.

The more general the education and focus, not only on the analysis but especially on the resulting synthesis (the design), the easier it is to discuss what is necessary and to draw revolutionary conclusions from it.

In the exact and purely technical disciplines, this arbitrariness of interpretation is notso threatening because such significant and frequent questioning of existing principles, methods and themes for permanent changes in the study of the field does not happen.

When we realise that the field of architectural education makes these changes possible thanks to the generality of the study and that their effect is not as visible in our graduates as in the exact and technical disciplines at the same time, it is neither an incentive nor a reason for an even greater escalation of changes, but rather the opposite: for their thoughtful application.

ARCHITECTS MUST BE TAUGHT NOT ONLY ABOUT CREATIVE THINKING, BUT ALSO HUMBLE THINKING. EMPATHY IS GOING TO BE A VERY USEFUL FACTOR FOR FUTURE ARCHITECTS.

Architect and teacher and the Dean of the Faculty of architecture Czech Technical University in Prague (since 2014). After graduating from the CTU in Prague, he opened his design studio Lábus AA in 1991. He is well-known for his approach to the design of buildings in historical environments and renovations, as well as for his work in housing and senior housing. Ladislav Lábus work has won prestigious prizes, three of his projects were nominated for the EU prize for contemporary architecture – Mies van der Rohe Award. In 2013 he gained a prestigious award by the American Institute of Architects – the Honorary Fellowship.

THE DIRECTION OF OUR GAZE IN THE PRESENT LIES IN IMAGINING THE FUTURE.

Paola states that the question of universality is quite intriguing but also embarrassing at the same time, especially after dealing, for decades, with differences and specificity in culture, ecology and society. Through a lateral approach, she explains how architects and architecture have to reconquer a presence in the actual societal debate.

Before understanding universality, it is important to understand some of the implications of socio-ecological transition. The hypothesis here is that one fundamental shift we are facing is the way we look at territory. From a mere object, territory is becoming a subject; and this, with more and more evidence. Territory-subject (or the subjectification of territory) has some important epistemological and ontological implications in education, as well as very profound ethical and political ones. It is a process that is partially generated by the modification of our ecological awareness and gaze and partially generated by outer and inner dynamics (climate change for instance) which we cannot hide anymore.

The questions raised by this idea of territory-subject emerge today also in the education process and with a certain severity. The subject is individual, anthropological and political, but is also subjected and subjugated. It is a relational entity and not an abstract one. It has a materiality that exchanges with other materialities. It is also, and in any case, the result, the expression or the product of relations and logics of power.

The paradigm shift is entering via two dimensions with regards to education:

The first dimension is the epistemological basis of the transition. This is about how we produce knowledge. The role of design is fundamental for interdisciplinary research. The 'project' forms the central core of interdisciplinary research and is not a vague ambition, but one of the most powerful tools to open a dialogue with other disciplines and the rest of society ('transdisciplinary' knowledge). Often, the direction of our gaze in the present lies in imagining the future. This is why a new gaze, able to read territorial rationalities and rationalisation, is needed.

The second dimension is the ontological basis of the transition. It is the process of establishing the criteria of the existence of our reality. The ontological shift from the idea of Territory as a mere resource to be exploited to the idea of Territory-subject obliges us to explore value systems that do not coincide with current ones. This is a fundamental problem and a potential for education which can create conditions to systematically analyse and practice the set of 'paradigm shifts' required by design for ecological and social transition.

Architect and urbanist, Professor in Urban Theory and Urban Design at the EPFL (Lausanne) where she heads the lab-U and the new interdisciplinary Habitat Research Centre. She is also professor at IUAV University Venice. In 2013 she has received the Grand Prix de l'Urbanisme in France; in 2016 the title of Doctor Honoris Causa by the UCL; in 2017 the Flemish Culture Award for Architecture (Ultima Architectuur) and in 2018 the Golden medal to the career of Milano Triennale. From 1990 to 2014 she worked together with Bernardo Secchi. Since 2015 StudioPaolaViganò has been working on urban, landscape projects and public spaces in Europe and has won several international competitions.

SELF-CONFIDENCE IS ALWAYS A GOOD THING AS LONG AS IT IS A CAPACITY FOR ONE TO BE OPEN ABOUT ALL THE THINGS THAT WE DON'T KNOW YET, BUT NOT WHEN IT MAKES YOU FEEL LIKE A PERSON WHO HAS TO CREATE A NEW WORLD.

Johan splits his discussion into three perspectives:

— The first concerns how, as architects with respect to design, we sometimes do the wrong thing and continue in this wrong direction with a mind to correcting the bad design that resulted. It does not help to just make buildings sustainable when they are failing to achieve a sense of community on an urbanistic scale. If our interconnections with the world are changing fast, then it is a smart move to postpone a design until we are able to make that design. In other words, it is important to understand the situation (context), the available resources, take into account all the conditions and only then make a design.

— The second perspective concerns education. A group of architects was asked the question 'Do you wish you had studied something other than architecture?' More than 50% said NO. This leads to the next question that we ask ourselves – 'should we change the education system to cater to the small percentage that said YES?' The same group of architects was asked another question: 'Do you still use the skills you developed during your education in your current professional role?' A large majority said YES. This helps the education system gauge and understand how much the current curriculum has to be updated...or not!

— The third perspective is epistemological. How much do we know? How much have we borrowed from the past? What have we learnt from the present and do we have a plan for the future? The architect's modus operandi should be knowledge, conception and cultural performance so that a sensible space can be achieved with a doctrine of care and concern for context.

Engineer architect, trained at the KU Leuven, and currently full-time academic staff member at the Faculty of Design Sciences. His research interest focusses on design research methodology and architectural design education and its relation with research and practice. He is founding member of ISTT – international studies, territories in transition – an interdisciplinary design research studio on building culture in non-Western urban and rural territories in transition (Egypt, Morocco, Suriname, Nicaragua). Johan De Walsche is founding member of EAAE Education Academy and the ARENA architectural research network.