



*Peter Cook tillsammans med Morten Lund under den internationella workshoppen för årskurs 3 som avslutades med ASAE03*

## ASAE03 Annual Symposium for Architecture and Education 2003

As part of the reform of the LTH architectural education a two-day programme of the ASAE03 was executed the 6-7 of September 2003. The ASAE03 is an annual, international event partly designed to be an integrated part of the education for the third year students but also addressing a much broader audience of local as well as international architects, teachers as well as practitioners, in the discussion about architectural education in a wide, international context.

The two-day programme consists of both workshops, student exhibitions and lectures where the panel debate, being one of the main activities, form the basis for an annual open arena with the purpose of finding and discussing possible ways of revitalizing the methods, aims and perspective of the education. New ideas along with new alliances might be the way to create a competitive and qualitative education at the LTH.

The founder of the ASAE03, Prof. Abelardo Gonzalez, opened the panel debate by expressing some of the visions for the new educational programme at LTH and the theme for the ASAE03, concluded in the words "experiment and excellence". Abelardo claims that in order to form a strong, competitive education the education in itself must attract external experts refreshing and strengthening the internal experience. Having a will to experiment, which reinforces the search for new knowledge within architecture, can only do this. However a basic knowledge about materials, constructions and technical systems will always be a requirement in order to educate architects that can strengthen the role of the profession.

Moderator Morten Lund also introduced the members of the panel to the task of the day; to reflect upon how to create an internationally competitive architectural education, no

financial or geographical limits given. What factors are included in such an education, both on an individual level and in the architectural context?

In order set the scene, the international members of the panel were given a few minutes each to introduce their personal background and to explain about their respective architectural universities when it comes to core-values, identity, and aim.

Svein Tnsager, representing the Aarhus school of architecture, explains that his primary wish when entering the first year of the architectural education was to design buildings. Coming in contact with architectural theories of different kinds during his first years however changed his perspective and focused his interest towards the borderline between architecture and corresponding sciences, both of technical and social kind. 20 years of teaching architecture has lead him to focus on the

relations between social, cultural and experimental components of architecture.

In Aarhus the methods of teaching architecture structurally follow the Bologna model with a strong thematic model in the first two years; all students work the entire year with a theme, for example "assemblage" or "Body, Mind Technology". Efforts are made to, at all times, keep all aspects of a problem together, always look at things as a whole, not divide the subject into smaller parts without relation. The ateliers are a result of this philosophy, where the fact that the students do not make houses; they make models of houses, is emphasised.

Prof. Bijan Youssefzadeh, representing the University of Texas, explains about the different educational systems in the United States, where urban design often is separated from architectural design. Usually the education consists of 10 semesters, where 2 are reserved for the thesis. Bijan mentions a few central factors for a high-quality architectural education, where one factor might be the library; the bank of images and knowledge where teachers and students have shared access and is encouraged to use it. Also the combination of drawings, images and the model making is central to create a physical interest and knowledge about materials and constructions. Precision and detailing is emphasised.

According to Bijan the combination of theory and practice forms the necessary foundation for a good architect; the theoretical idea trigger the search for technology and constructions. Also the will to experiment may start the search for traditions. Architectural educations that take a starting point in existing technical methods will not promote the will to experiment, but the technical knowledge must be available.

Prof. Peter Cook, Bartlett school, London, explains that he at an early age of 16 entered an art school; a very traditional way of teaching was used providing the students with different illustration techniques, that he still today use in his projects; the lack of creativity at least gave him some of the tools to express himself at a later stage when entering the AA

of London. An experimental education took a starting point and when finished as a student he continued engaging as guest professor, initially at the AA but soon with connections all over the world.

In an international perspective Peter Cook claims there are three major factors for a successful architectural education; Enthusiasm, Competition and Confrontation. Absolutely necessary for an architect is the strong connection to the practical reality; "Theory has interfered too much with practice for the last twenty years" he claims, even though he agrees that theory may develop the skill of an architect under the condition it is strongly linked to practice.

In terms of creating an internationally competitive architectural education Peter Cook claims the students must be willing to fight their way to the top; "the nanny-system claiming everybody can be an architect create crappy architects in the end". This requires the teachers to be strong individuals with an urge to trigger the best in a student using any teaching methods; playing bored, angry or pleased during the critique just to create a reaction and stress the student to improve his or her project.

Finally, Peter Cook summarizes the possibilities of any architectural education to become internationally competitive with the two factors of attitude (of the teachers and students) and the geographical position where the surrounding activities and resources are of vital need to create a network with the education in the node, using both internal and external experts and resources.

### **The Debate**

The moderator Märten Lund started out by introducing the members of the panel; professor and practicing architect Peter Cook, Barlett in London, professor and practicing architect Svein Tønsager, Aarhus in Denmark, professor and practicing architect Bijan Youssefzadeh, Arlington Texas, landscape architect Tiina Saarup, Alnarp in Sweden, professor Tomas

Hellqvist, Lund and professor Nat Chard, Copenhagen in Denmark.

Märten Lund addressed two keyword, experiment and excellence, to the panel and the audience as a starting point for reflecting about an ideal architectural education. The text below summarizes the following debate.

### **New ways of teaching**

One important question was initially raised by Prof Peter Cook and dealt with how to get the most interesting people to teach. He also pointed out an ongoing tendency to standardize and unify education and schools. A new and progressive education would be to bring offices into the school. Tiina Sarup urged schools to create a situation where both students and teachers are attracted. This situation may be demanding a feeling of excellence. She also pointed out that the universities could play a part in becoming a laboratory for architects in practice and that there is a need for teachers with experience of practicing architecture. One idea on how to success in bringing professionals into teaching was to evolve a regional approach where different schools could network and co-exist with offices. This though, demands a high quality regional transportation system of the kind that is presently evolving within the Öresund-area.

### **The notion of excellence**

The discussion in regards to the concept "excellence" came to deal with the necessity of excellence. Some of the members of the panel argue that it is crucial to create a notion of excellence within the framework of the education, among other thing, to be able to attract teachers. Others meant that it was doubtful to strive for excellence. Finally, the panel stated that excellence as a concept does not necessarily mean that you know all, rather that the important task of the education is to train the student to see possibilities, and that being experimental is a way of striving for excellence.

## Conventions or experiments

The growing interest in teaching experimental architecture was ascribed to the fact that today there are possibilities to conduct and construct experimental architecture that were not possible not long ago. Prof. Abelardo Gonzalez addressed the crucial challenge of balanceing traditional and experimental elements. Experimental education demands a lot from the teacher. Though the methods are conventional like models, drawings and sketching the result from the process is not. Prof Bijan Youssefzadeh pointed out that experimental way of teaching is not a predetermined process and that experiment cannot be arbitrary. It was also said that experiment is a way of creating space enough for students to find their own individual statements. This require the student to have confidence and courage, which hopefully can evolve from a bound of trust between the teacher and the student.

Prof Svein Tønsager argued not to separate experiment from the daily work by introducing specific experimental studios. Some meant that on one hand, experiments are needed to create creativity, and on the other hand, experiments exclude more conventional parts of the school. Prof Peter Cook meant that it is not a problem to exclude some. On the contrary you may never know everything, but it is important that everything exists. Thomas Hellqvist argued that it is important to bring personal experiment into a public arena so that other can understand. Some students meant that teaching by using the concept experiment, thus not providing any rules, is the same as not teaching. Nat Chard replied by telling that experiment is a way of open up possibilities. The role of the teacher is to help the student to find its way and to help develop the tools needed, not tell the student what to do literarily. Tomas Hellqvist argued that we don't teach rules in European schools. The society is changing fast and rules don't keep up with them. He meant that there's a connection between rules – tools – aesthetics, and that creativity is a notion of breaking rules. Therefore he argued that it is necessary to teach tools so the student can go and find his/her own rules.

## The future education?

Svein Tønsager focused on the effect the Bachelor system will have on the education, where he predicted less studios and more separate courses. This might generate less practice in complexity. On the other hand, contemporary architects works in many different fields. The new construction of the education might evolve to interdisciplinary humanity.

Some students asked about the potential of the architectural education in Lund. Prof Peter Cook thought it could be an advantage not to be located in a capital while still Lund is located in a rather expansive and interesting region. The location and the cosmopolitan atmosphere in Lund are strengths, however the staff running the school are the single most important thing, not the facilities or location.

Anteckningar sammanställda av Caroline Dahl, ledamot UNA och utbildningsledare Mattias Hedberg

