

CHAPTER #1.04

TEACHING PRACTICE AS RESEARCH. THE CASE OF THE 'DUTCH ACADEMY' IN THE 1960'S AND 1970'S

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Introduction: research teaching?

According to the International Union of Architects (IUA), the architect's education, and therefore the training of future professionals, constitutes one of the greatest challenges for the built environment and its environmental, patrimonial and cultural balance. Universities and training centers have the responsibility to improve the theoretical and practical training of future architects to enable them to meet the expectations of 21st century societies. Likewise, it strives for methods of training and learning that are varied, so that they enhance the cultural wealth and allow flexible study plans to respond to the demands and requirements of customers, users, the construction industry and the profession and being aware of the political and financial motivations that cause these changes. Therefore, it is convenient to promote debate, reflection and research of these issues among teachers and students of the most diverse institutions and schools.

Most of these debates are generated around the three spheres that form the activity of every school of architecture: profession, teaching and research. These spheres are usually associated in pairs. The profession-teaching axis links the classrooms to the real world of construction, which is increasingly a minority among younger professionals. The profession-research axis is conveyed in two ways: either with Chairs and the design of patents; or incorporating the organizational structures of the offices to the research groups. This does not occur with the teaching-research axis, or what could be called: "teaching practice as a form of research". The investigative dimension of university teaching staff is increasingly being promoted, although it is not always clear that their main task is to train. Thus, this axis could link teaching with various forms of parallel research. This leads

to the possibility of improving current subjects, formulating new ones, improving study plans, working on research projects of pedagogical studies cases, or organizing training seminars for future teachers.

Likewise, reflecting on the teaching of architecture and urban planning means starting from the basis that these disciplines are transmissible and theoretic. In addition, similarly to what happens with any research, teaching also complies with, from a background of objectives that through a methodology leads to conclusions, which in their case are verified with the understanding of certain skills. These processes inside and outside of the academic world must be regularized and planned, since in many cases they have been left out of the implied learning. Moreover, they should revert to a teaching practice capable of consolidating not only certain competences, but also promoting research that goes well beyond the classroom. The training thus understood can become an investigation on matters crucial to the discipline. The most celebrated teaching practices in the recent history of architectural education have been set forth in these terms, as laboratories for reflection and action on crucial issues for the practice of architecture, both related to the world of construction, as well as that aimed at theory, criticism and academia.

Recent publications

Apart from the publications exclusively dedicated to the education of the architect, such as *The Journal of Architectural Education*, in the last decades there has been an increase in the essays and texts that reflect on the pedagogy of architecture. Framed in this context is Peter Buchanan's article: "What is wrong with architectural education: almost everything", published in *The Architectural Review* (1989).

Thirteen years later, Buchanan takes up the speech again with the article "Rethinking Architectural Education", in a special edition of the same magazine, dedicated exclusively to educational issues. Surprisingly, the diagnosis of the state of teaching does not vary greatly despite the passing of time. Buchanan points out the disconnection of the academy and the profession as one of the endemic evils of the university. In the same issue interesting texts by Beatriz Colomina or Will Hunter can be found. Other journals specialized in architecture, but not exclusively in teaching, such as *Volume and Field*, also hold, on a regular basis, open debates about the training of architects of the future and their relationship with other areas linked to the transformation of the inhabited environment, culture and politics.

Along the same line, with the turn of the century, numerous publications have appeared that gather the traditional and didactic teaching on a global scale of several important institutions related to the training of architects. It is important to highlight the case of Yale School of Architecture (Hayes, 2007) (S. & S., 2016) or the Faculty of Architecture in the University of Porto (Faria, 2014). Other volumes gather the history of what was the regulated training of architects in North America, United Kingdom and *Architecture School: Three Centuries of Educating Architects in North America* (Ockman, 2012), *Radical Pedagogies: Architectural Education and the British Tradition* (F. & H., 2015), and *Architectures manifestes: Les écoles d'architecture en France depuis 1950* (L. & M., 2018). In a more global and contemporary character is *Educating Architects: How tomorrow's practitioners will learn today* (S. & C., 2014), with important contributions of teachers and professional from all over the world. In a closer context, Rafael Moneo's course plans from the 70's were recently published in the *Architecture School of Barcelona* (Moneo, 2017). The extensive volume, prefaced by Moneo himself, helps to understand what the teaching history of the ETSAB (Architecture School of Barcelona) has been.

A case of study: the 'Dutch Academy' (1960-70's)

Scholarly context. Analysis and findings

There have been very few moments in history that were as productive in creating a collective imaginary on happiness as the decades after World War II (Wagenaar, 2011). In the context of western Europe, this imaginary was brought to life through the Welfare State, based on public policies of social protection that ranged from the health system to education and particularly, housing. The Dutch society was no stranger to this global trend, and during the post-war period, a change without precedent took place in quality of life standards as well as the perception of social and economic development of the country. The indicators left no doubt, the developmental optimism of the 60's predicted a population growth of twenty million by the year 2000 and the increasing motorization of the Dutch society meant an increase of 500% in the number of trips made in just one decade. The urgency in urban development in the Netherlands converted the housing sector which was very much industrialized and institutionalized into the spearhead of the Welfare State in the country and turned the architect into protagonists of the new consumer society.



Figure 1. New Faculty of Architecture by van der Broek & Bakema Architects Community (1970). Source: www.Broek&Bakema.nl

The architectural studies at the Delft School during this period differed greatly from the ones of today, both from a methodological and content point of view. Firstly, the building of the School was located next to the Oude Delft canal, in the city center of this university city. The facilities were not able to hold more than 40 students, which is why teaching was more personalized and was carried out from lectures and workshops led by long-term teaching staff (van Es, 2016). In the 1960s, access to higher education was widespread and social classes which were economically excluded from this type of technical training were now able to access architectural studies. As a result, the classrooms underwent a massification process and the university as an institution went into crisis.

During those first post-war years, the teaching team of the School of Architecture was divided into two ideologically opposed factions: on the one hand, the traditionalists, led by JM De Casseres (1902-1990) and on the other, the modern ones, with JH van den Broek (1898-1978) at the head. The so-called traditionalist architects took the first courses of the studies in such a way that the students did not encounter modern architecture until the third or fourth year. With the aim of breaking this dual dynamic in the teaching of architecture, professors such as Aldo van Eyck (1918-1999) carried out vertical courses in which students with different levels of training shared a practical workshop on current social issues. Although van Eyck came from the School of Amsterdam and had a critical position regarding the role of architecture in general and the architect, his vertical workshops were related to the social reality of the moment and implied a teaching model for revolutionary movements led by students in Delft at the end of the 1960s.

In 1968, two international events put the power centers of the West in crisis, on the one hand, the protests the Vietnam War in the United States intensified and on the other, the student uprising that took place in France in May. The Dutch university centers knew about this convulsion and international change, and these events sparked a revolutionary phenomenon that would later be known as the *Delft Spring*. On May 9,

1969, the students of the Technological Institute requested access to the General Assembly with the objective of forming part of the decision-making bodies of the university, from which they had been excluded (Radical-pedagogies, 2018). To date, decisions on architecture studies were taken by long-term faculty members through meetings behind closed doors. In response to this lack of transparency in the management of the university, the students took over the faculty. The students movement demanded the "democratization" of the university, but this democratization was not limited to the participation in the universities administrative structure on equal terms with the teaching staff, but it also revindicated the right to participate in the creation of study plan content, and in so doing made the academic careers and the training of future architects more flexible. To test these proposals, during the summer of 1969 and the following fall semester in the Delft School, numerous debates were carried out about the role of the architect in society. Workshops were organized based on the teaching model that Aldo van Eyck, who since 1966, had introduced in his vertical and transdisciplinary and social courses.

Pedagogical and researching approach

In March 1970, a group of students that belonged to the historic association *Stylos* published a 120-page manifest titled *"De Elite"* which analyzed the development of the teaching methods in the department of architecture in the Delft university as well as the architectural practices in capitalist societies. The manifest defended an architecture at the service of society, where priority was given to social issues instead of constructive ones. *"De Elite"* also criticized teaching staff members who were originally thought of as allies (Radical-pedagogies, 2018), like Aldo van Eyck or Herman Hertzberger, considered architect-artists whose designs distracted society from real problems. For the *Stylos* the Delft Spring was in vain since the movement for "Democratization" had fragmented a teaching model focused on self-realization and co-operation and the bourgeois principles of adaptation and competitiveness had not been overcome.

In this context of academic crisis, a mediating figure appeared among the traditionalists, modernists and revolutionaries, that took advantage of the socio-political situation to bring to architectural and teaching practice the democratic principles that formed part of his open society model. This figure of consensus would be the architect and professor Jacob Berend Bakema (1914-1981). Bakema was a professor in the Department of the Architecture School of Delft between 1963 and 1981. In his first lesson, titled "Towards an architect for society" (1964), Bakema put in crisis the reconstruction plans of the country that were carried out under the principles of the Modern Movement after the Second World War. For Bakema, teaching architecture did not make any sense unless the architect's responsibility for the impact of the built environment on society was accepted. The social themes were the focus of Bakema's teaching activity, but if one theme was to stand out in his professional, personal and teaching career, it was, without a doubt, his commitment to "social

democratization" (Ibelings, 2000). Bakema was always a political activist in search of "true freedom" and "democracy" (van de Heuvel, 2017). In fact, he expressed the will to turn his students into agents with the power of decision making. His biographical background was testament to this commitment. Bakema was imprisoned by the German army in a deportation camp for trying to escape to England during the Second World War and lived in hiding with his family in his hometown of (Groningen) until the end of the war. For Bakema, freedom implied the right to choose a way of life and the ability to develop individual personal skills in society, in this sense, the built habitat could not be indifferent to this will. Democracy for Bakema was the political and social mark that accepted and integrated diversity (van de Heuvel, 2017). Ultimately, architecture and urbanism are related and as a result should give the individual the ability to choose, that is, it should include criteria of flexibility.

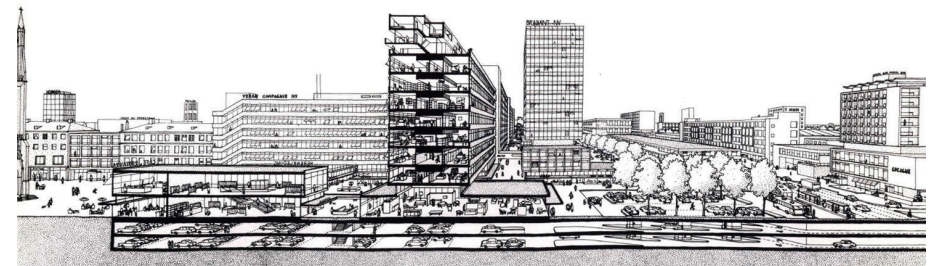


Figure 2. Centrumplan Eindhoven, van den Broek & Bakema (1967). Source: Beeldcollectie, Regionaal Historisch Centrum Eindhoven.

Bakema's socio-political ideals on democracy and freedom were not alien to his architectural work nor to his teaching practices. The office of van den Broek & Bakema was democratized becoming a "Community of architects", where there was considerable acknowledgement of the rest of the team members in an environment where the designers and builders, architects and engineers, worked together in a non-hierarchical way (Ibelings, 2000). At the end of the 60's coinciding with the Delft Spring, Bakema experimented with the concepts of diversity, flexibility and democracy in the Ordinance Plan of the urban center of Eindhoven.

The first proposal for intervention was based on a ten-story lineal superstructure measuring 400 meters in length that connected different public spaces and uses in the historic center and was rejected by different local social groups. In 1969, the office of van den Broek and Bakema began a participative process in the city with exhibitions and debates to educate on the objectives of the proposal in which a model scale of 1:20 and explanatory diagrams were used. Paradoxically, despite being approved by 20 votes in favor and 7 against by the Town Council, the minister of spatial planning declared it unfeasible due to the high level of flexibility of the proposal which made it unpredictable.

From a teaching point of view, Bakema promoted collaborative work among his students and his preferred way, in his regular classes and collaborations with other international universities, was in the design workshop. The workshop enabled him to deal with current themes intensively and in a short period of time. In Barcelona, he proposed the remodeling of the Santa Caterina Market, in the historic center. His presentations were very visual, simultaneously reproducing both the videos of his trips and slides and diagrams (van Es, 2016). He used the same materials in his television program on urban development "From doorstep to city" (1961-1963), addressing the Dutch laymen. Bakema's democratic social vision implied citizen participation in the design of the built habitat. In this way, the training of the architect and the society in general were aspects that centered the intellectual activity of Bakema throughout his professional and academic career.

Conclusions

In short, Schools of Architecture, with its shortcomings and contradictions, must be a university environment; being open to reflection, confrontation of ideas and contact between all those who aspire to broaden their point of view and increase their knowledge in that discipline. The Schools must assume, now more than ever, the role of the nuclei of cultural resistance since no other institution can fulfil this task. The School cannot be left out of what happens in the professional field. But, instead of accepting a subsidiary and limited condition to be an instrument of the professional framework, it must be constituted at a crossroads, in a space of debate.

It was precisely the building of this space that was one of the driving forces behind the important academic and educational changes in the 60's on a global level and especially in Europe and in centers such as the Technological University of Delft. At that time, the revolutionary social movements demanded a greater democratization and citizen participation on the spaces of power. In this sense, the practice of architecture and urbanism were not indifferent to these demands since they directly influence the built habitat. Thus, the democratization of architectural practice necessarily involved increasing the participation of the individual in the definition of their environment, but also by providing the architect with new design instruments based on adaptability and flexibility. The social sciences definitively entered the Schools of Architecture, where these democratic principles; from interdisciplinary, cross-cutting and co-operative design workshops were experimented. The workshops of architecture and urbanism then became true laboratories not only of teaching, but of research and social transformation.

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