

# Evaluation in the scenario of change of the architectural project

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## Abstract

*Starting from an examination of the legislative framework at European level, the contribution proposes a reflection on*

*the theme of the evaluation of the architectural project with particular reference to the Italian university context.*

The theme of "The evaluation of quality in architectural design" is intertwined with the reflection that has been made in recent years by the CUIA (University Conference of Architecture Schools) which culminated, about a year and a half ago, in a Conference organized with the National Council of Architects. On this occasion the quality of the training, and therefore the attention paid to enrolling in universities and leaving for the job market and the profession, and internationalization were considered decisive elements to outline the growth scenario of the Italian School of Architecture and Project in general. Reference was made to the European directives on architecture (from the EC directive of 1984 to Directive 2013/55 / EU) aimed at the mobility of professionals in the European market and consequently the recognition of academic and professional qualifications that intervene on the structure and duration of the architecture courses.

The 1984 CE Directive was justified, even in the debate that preceded it, by an element that was not always properly taken into consideration: the concept that architecture produces public utility. In reality, in the preparatory discussion of the Directive a more interesting concept emerged which justified that the Directive dealt with both architecture and medicine and pharmacy. In fact, he identified a subjective responsibility of the architect towards society and therefore the need for the training process to be guaranteed in

its fundamental elements in a sufficiently homogeneous way at European level as a requirement for the mobility of professionals. The Directive was not aimed at training, but at the circulation of professionals in the European market and therefore the attention of the European Commission was precisely that linked to the subjective responsibility that a professional architect has: responsibility towards the society. It is not only the responsibility towards the direct client, it is not the responsibility to correctly apply the current rules, but it is the responsibility towards the society, the author's subjectivity of the project for the cultural and collective dimension that the architecture has and which constitutes the quality of architecture.

Implicitly, therefore, it is stated that the architecture cannot be traced back to a simple technical artifact regulated by the current regulations. This perspective opens up interesting spaces for reflection: when the spaces of subjectivity and individual responsibility open up, it seems to enter an elusive terrain, as it cannot be measured quantitatively, and can only be judged on a cultural level and by those who possess similar instruments. We are therefore on a much more stimulating ground as it calls the architect to his primary responsibility: to guarantee to the society that the project meets a higher value, in addition to the simple technical value.

Directive 2013/55 / EU introduces another interesting ele-

ment for reflecting on the role of training in relation to the profession, which has however produced some agitation during the two years following its publication. In fact, many academic institutions, including Italian schools, wanted to express their opposition to the options indicated by the directive and, that is, that an architect's training course could be 5 years of academic training, one more year than to the previous directive, or, alternatively, to 4 years to which two of professional traineeships had to be added, thus entrusting the responsibility of training, not only to academic structures, but also to professional structures, suitably qualified and selected. Beyond the reasons that led to this innovation (a measure proposed and forced by Great Britain that at the same time cut public funding for the formation of architecture) is of interest the task, old and new, which relies on professional practice in replacing, or better integrating, the academic training of an architect.

This openness is part of the difficulty of Italian universities that enjoy relative autonomy with respect to European, Asian and Anglo-Saxon universities with which they will increasingly have to compete. Autonomy which in any case is not real and fruitful given the scarcity of resources in which they live. The resources are really scarce, they are at the limit of survival, not even sufficient to ensure the natural generational turnover, essential for research and training.

But this is only one side of the difficulty, the other is separateness, at the limits of extraneousness, of the university towards society. By this I do not mean that we do not have cooperation between universities and society, from the third mission to health, but the rules, the rules that range from entry guidance to scholarships, pre and post-graduate internships, to institutional cooperation with public administrations, for temporary mobility within the public administration, the participation of professionals in training (in addition to teaching replacement contracts), in the status of full-time and defined time, are all conceived according to a separate and corporative vision.

The Schools of Architecture have the fundamental mission of forming a ruling class that is able to respond, in the exercise of private and public profession, to the need of society for an architecture as a public good. I think that this situation of autonomy that becomes separateness, functional disconnection from society, has also become a separation of architecture schools from the profession in its diversity of activities and that this separation has damaged the architectural profession making it less effective in responding to the multiple needs of the society and its evolution and change. We know that a professional architect, private or public, must measure himself every day with real processes and their complexity and contradiction and that the University cannot and must not be implicated in the complexity of the operational management processes of transformation, but not he can even be happily separated.

In the 2017 National Conference document we have defined as osmotic the necessary relationship between University

and profession exercised by public and private architects that we should progressively build, a relationship that becomes increasingly necessary to give energy to the University and the profession. In fact, training, research and profession live together. In a time of change, the profession lives more and more of the university's ability to provide basic and specialization training up to the doctorate for competent and capable professionals, but the concrete experience of project practice feeds research and critical reflection. university. We need to recover this osmosis, not only of ideas and thoughts, but also of people and experiences. I think that in this scenario the evaluation has a very important role.

We are still immersed in a phase of transition from a prescriptive / descriptive technology to a performance technology. All the public apparatus still moves substantially in a logic of prescriptive technology, a technology that was born in France in the early 600s due to the need for rationality and expenditure control by the State. Public procurement is an administrative act of which the project is nothing but an attachment with a detailed description of what needs to be done (even if connected to a multidimensional database that breaks down the object into a detailed and complete catalog of identifiable and assembled components). The project is not the center of the administrative process. In a performance technology, designed to manage innovation, the aim is not to systematically describe the objects, but to design a solution that satisfies specific needs. The performance technologies move in an open and innovative design field and ask the designer to conceive relationships, interactions, behaviors and not objects of which the choice is justified. The architectural project follows this performance concept that is the basis of the quality of architecture.

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I think that the contradiction between a deterministic and administrative logic, proper to engineering since its birth,

and a performance logic, typical of architecture, must be made explicit and socially shared because the architectural project needs a dialogue with the place, with the needs, with the culture, with the material, with the construction, which cannot be solved before and separately and defined in every detail previously, but which must develop and grow in a progressive interpretation and ideation of which the architect leads a subjective, personal responsibility from which the value of architecture is born.

The subjective responsibility poses the problem of professional honesty which also includes the responsibility towards the society, because the Society must be guaranteed of reaching the objective with the resources that have been made available and cannot admit that that objective is not reached up. The role of evaluation is placed in this tension and contradiction.

I think that in the professional world and in the academic world most architects operate in full honesty, based on the fact that architecture has a very strong ethical component: we do not have the Hippocratic oath, but perhaps we should have invented the oath of Vitruvius, to make explicit the professional duty proper to the architect's action.

The culture of evaluation must leave the world of engineers in which it is relegated and measure itself against the systemic and relational, constructive and interactive nature of the project: the project has an "in progress" nature that arises from the interaction with people, communities, conditions, constraints, physical, architectural and social places. Consequently the approval, the satisfaction of the needs, the consent does not respond to objective parameters, but arises from many "subjective" elements that together contribute to a positive value judgment, which also assumes the synthetic expression of "beautiful". The evaluation must be measured against the real character of the architectural project.

The engineering culture of evaluation also raises another question: we are used to imagining the world as static stable, as a closed system, even when it introduces life cycle assessment, as a projection of today into the future accord-

ing to a conception of change linear and slow. Can we credibly accept that the life cycle of a building can be considered 30 years? A building, evaluated and built today, in 2049 will respond to the same needs, will it be evaluated in the same way? How will we evaluate a construction carried out today that in 10 years could be obsolete in its ability to respond to people's needs?

Perhaps architecture can help us respond. Over time, I think that the theme of evaluation can become decisive and part of the culture of architectural design, becoming a support tool for the design decision-making system, provided that it is capable of representing the interactive, performance and dynamic character of the architectural project.

The evaluation will have to set the objective of operationally defining the tools to identify and evaluate the fundamental and permanent qualities, the qualities that the construction will have to ensure whatever happens, that is its resilience, quality for example of monumental historical architectures, capable even today to respond to changes based on new needs.

The project time will change, from a static and instantaneous project as is the engineering /administrative project; the arrival of big data and the digital revolution will accelerate change and the company will require projects capable of negotiating and finding solutions in progress in relation to user behavior and changes during the time of the project. Perhaps for the houses the processes will be slower, but in other architectures as for public spaces, for example, the design will have to be measured with a negotiation and an interaction based on data that are updated in real time that will require a continuous elaboration of the project in relation with the user.

The area of evaluation must therefore aim at defining and testing tools to evaluate and govern projects that will be progressively less closed and deterministic, to respond to the qualities expected by the project, which, for the processes of digitization and production of data that will change the entire design, construction and use process will be dynamic and flexible over time.

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