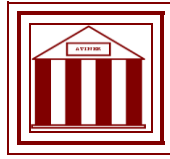


**Athens Institute for Education and Research
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**ATINER's Conference Paper Series
ARC2014-1341**

**The Changing Social Responsibilities of
the 21st Century Architect and the
Implications for the Profession and
Education of Architecture**

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The Changing Social Responsibilities of the 21st Century Architect and the Implications for the Profession and Education of Architecture

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Abstract

Today our cities are rapidly changing through the expansion of metropolis and the implementation of numerous big-scale urban redevelopment projects. These projects have immediate impact on our environments and cause remarkable changes in our daily lives. The redevelopment of urban districts is more and more discussed in academic and professional circles. Concurrently the problematic results of politically motivated urban policies are confronted with growing public recognition and reaction. The importance of the design quality of the built environment is higher in public's perception than before.

This paper points to the changing demands entailed by urbanization that necessitates enlarging the activity area of architectural profession and education. It attempts to redefine the widening social role of the architect in the design and redevelopment of cities. It underlines that, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, we need a re-appraisal of professional practice and education in architecture in relation to the environmental and social challenges that seem more pressing today. The paper starts with an attempt to define the profile of today's architect as it is discussed in professional and academic circles. This is followed by the discussion on the implications of the changing social responsibilities of the architect for architectural education through the themes of (1) the cultivation of values and a liberal education basis, (2) interdisciplinary education, and (3) community involvement. Discussion on the profession of architecture develops around the themes of (1) better communication and dialogue, (2) teamwork experiences, and (3) education and practice in a life-long continuum of learning.

Keywords: Urban redevelopment, architect, social responsibilities, architectural education, architectural profession

Introduction: Problems Entailed by Rapidly Changing Built Environment

(Figure 1 and 2) Today the expansion of the metropolis and the implementation of numerous big-scale urban redevelopment projects create immediate impact on our environments, paving the way to remarkable changes in our daily lives. The redevelopment of urban districts is a topic of interest for academicians, practitioners and for the public. The importance of design quality of the built environment is higher in the public's perception than before.

Figure 1. *Varyap Meridian. Project by RMJM Architects. Batı Ataşehir, Istanbul, Turkey. <http://www.rmjm.com/portfolio/atasehir-turkey/>*



Figure 2. *Zorlu Center. Project by Emre Arolat Architects. Istanbul, Turkey, 2008. Google Images*



The problematic results of politically motivated urban policies are confronted with a growing public reaction. (Figure 3, 4, and 5) These policies and projects are usually criticized for negating several reasons: that people's demand for green areas in cities is ignored; that the newly established settlements are not harmonious with existing urban context, but rather, segregate different groups of society through their displacement from renewal areas; that social and spatial variety are underestimated, etc.

Figure 3. *Photograph by Birol Kiraç. 'Crimes Against City' Photography Contest, organized by Fotopya and The Association for Supporting Contemporary Life (ÇYDD)*



Figure 4. *Photograph by Hatice Karakan. 'Crimes Against City' Photography Contest, organized by Fotopya and The Association for Supporting Contemporary Life (ÇYDD)*



Figure 5. *Photograph by Ahmet Tarimci. 'Mass Housing and Human' Photography Contest, organized by Republic of Turkey Prime Ministry Housing Development Administration of Turkey (TOKI)*



The problems entailed by rapid urban redevelopment have many interrelated causes. Urban residents who are most affected by the results of the issue are usually not included in planning and design processes. However, an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach is pressing due to the growing complexity of the built environment problems. Urban redevelopment processes should be designed and implemented as participatory processes in which diverse actors like the state, developers, local organizations, public authorities, professional practitioners and specialists from built environment disciplines are brought together in order to share their ideas and expertise. Noticeably, we can hardly ignore the pressures from clients, building rules and regulations, and constraints of capitalist economy that limit the role of the architects (Mayo, 1988). On the other hand, architects are expected to play active roles in the rebuilding of sections of cities entailed by rapid urbanization.

It is evident that the role and responsibilities of the architect both as a practitioner and an intellectual necessitates to be reopened for challenge today. Attaining an enhanced awareness of their responsibilities towards the society and the city, architects may act as a coordinator or conciliator between practitioners of the professions who play important roles in the creation of built environments. The architect may also play more active roles in establishing dialogue between citizens and politicians. The human factor should be a primary interest of architectural design processes. This necessitates considering

social and natural problems in the creation of human-centered environments, and contributing the development of a culture of living together.

Reconsidering the Profile of Architect as a ‘Social Agent’

The 21st century architect is expected to:

- have a sense of responsibility for the broader social and ethical consequences of design;
- be aware of the social, environmental, economic and cultural realities of the urban context in which he/she operates;
- have an ethical responsibility of protecting and preserving existing urban values, and contributing to the creation of new ones through their professional and intellectual endeavors.
- aim at good architecture that respond to human needs and create more livable urban environments.

The profile delineated above points to the demand to enlarge the scope of architect's design activity in a way to address the physical and social problems of urbanism in order to improve the quality of urban space. A more comprehensive understanding of the built environment is essential. The concept of ‘total environment’ that was central to mid-twentieth century discourse is still highly relevant for today (Perkins, 1962; Bacon, 1961). Taking the understanding of ‘total environment’ as a basis of design activity, architecture needs to establish stronger links with professional fields that have direct influence upon the shaping of urban environment.

(Figure 6) It should be clarified that the profile of architect delineated in this paper does not refer to the modernist ideal of the architect as ‘the designer not only of individual structures but of the whole framework of life,’ (Bergdoll, 2010, p.7) or ‘a mastermind who designs everything from teapots to entire metropolis’ (Lepik, 2010, p.12). It is more akin to a ‘community architect’ who is expected to ‘attack on problems much more comprehensive than the individual building,’ and ‘deal with the whole environment in which his building is set, of which it forms a part’ (Stein, 1961, p.31). The architect can no longer conceive of himself/herself as ‘the designer of an individual building,’ but rather he/she should better see ‘the new scale of city building’ as ‘an opportunity for extension of professional service’ (Bacon, 1961, p.31 and p.33).¹ Equipped as a competent practitioner, the architect should act as a member of teams in which professionals from diverse disciplines share their expertise to head the problematic of urban redevelopment. The contribution of the architect to the design and renewal of the city should take as its basis the ‘promotion of social values,’ recognition of the ‘dignity of the individual and

¹Edmund N. Bacon (1961) points to an urgent need for re-considering the role of architectural profession in urban design, and he defines several new principles for practicing architecture.

his right to freedom of choice,' commitment to the 'principle of adaptability to change' and, 'a belief in the oneness of man and nature' (Perkins, 1962, pp.191-92). The architect should be aware of the human and social components of architectural design.

Figure 6. *Model of Le Corbusier's Plan Voisin. Le Corbusier, 1964. Google Images*



Subsequently, we can envision the architect as a practitioner of 'architectural praxis,' who 'attempts to re-define both the role of designer and the content of the object of architecture in a larger social context,' as underlined by Güven Arif Sargin (2010, p.25). When architecture is reconsidered as a form of praxis, the definition of the designer can be transformed 'from creator to producer, from individual and subjective to the interacting social agent' (Sargin, 2010, p.25). Within this framework, the architect becomes responsible to act as a 'social agent' cultivated with a vigorous civic interest assuming an active responsibility in shaping of the built environment.

The Implications for Architectural Education

The social responsibilities of the architect in the 21st century, as discussed above, have implications both for the education and profession of architecture. The challenges posed by professional practice and the responsibility of architectural education to respond to the current professional context is pressing for change. What is more, the ongoing paradigm shift in the field of higher education informs the changing profile of the architect as 'learner' (Spiridonidis and Voyatzaki, 2008, p.63).¹ The development of 'competences

¹The changing profile of the learner informed by the Bologna reform process, is the result of an ongoing paradigm shift in the field of higher education. As underlined by Constantin

for democratic citizenship and diversity' has a special importance within the framework of the overarching goals of higher education (Bergan and Damian, 2010, p.155). '[A] sense of social responsibility, ethical sensitivity, tolerance and respect to human rights' are defined among the attitudes and values that higher education programs are expected to cultivate in students (Bergan and Damian, 2010, p.156). Consequently, today a higher education institution graduate is envisioned to be an open-minded, socially responsive, ethically conscious member of a profession, of a community of learners, and of the society. In their article 'Architectural Education and the Profession: Preparing for the Future' David Nicol and Simon Pilling (2000, p.1) state:

'... [A]s a result of changes in society, technological advances and the rapid growth in information, those entering a profession are likely to have to update their knowledge and skills many times over a lifetime. All this is calling on architects to become more skilled in the human dimensions of professional practice and more adaptable, flexible and versatile over the span of their professional careers. Architectural education must respond to these changes: it must enable students to develop the skills, strategies and attitudes needed for professional practice and it must lay the foundation for continuous learning throughout life.'

The Cultivation of Values and a Liberal Education Basis

For schools of architecture the most important challenge is the need to re-design their curricula and pedagogical methods in a way to encourage the cultivation of human values and a civic interest in their students, along with the development of specialized knowledge and technical expertise. Balance should be achieved 'between the skills needed to promote effective learning in university and the skills needed in professional life' (Fisher, 2000, p.117). Values and attitudes can establish an ethical ground both for learning architecture, and for practicing of the profession in the years following graduation.

The characteristics of the new learner profile in higher education are topics of discussion on the demand for change in architectural education. The demand is not only for adding new courses to architectural curricula, but also for employing new teaching and learning practices that will encourage students to become more aware of the broader social and ethical consequences of architectural design. This also brings into discussion the task of educating the educators in order to 'build a culture of continuous self-scrutiny, experimentation and improvement' (Klemencic, 2010, p.158).

In his article entitled 'Environment and Education: Past, Present, Future' Sam T. Hurst (1964, p.36) notes '[t]he greatest failures of our educational system have to do with the cultivation of values which are relevant to the needs

Spiridonidis and Maria Voyatzaki (2008), the paradigm shift implied in the Bologna process is defined as a shift 'from conception of education as a technical issue of knowledge transmission to its conception as a project of creating a specific profile.'

of our time.’ ‘It is the interpretation of these values in terms of physical environment,’ Hurst argues, ‘which become our unique responsibilities’ (Hurst, 1964, p.36). One’s own relation to the built environment can be better understood through the lens of values. Values help students become aware of the environmental, social, cultural, technological and economic currents in which they live. Values play role in the recognition that architecture is not only an activity of form-making, neither the ultimate goal of a building is to fulfill the functional requirements of living. Design activity, when informed by human values, has the potential to result in environments that fulfill the sensory, emotional and social demands of people.

The discussions on architectural education today address the significance of a broader liberal education basis for developing a wide understanding of the society that architects are building for. It is argued that the goal of architectural education is to urge the development of students as a whole by cultivating in them critical and reflective habits of thinking and doing. Liberal education rests at the center of the discussions on the unity of specialized training and broad understanding. A 2002 report by the Association of American Colleges and Universities entitled ‘Greater Expectations: A New Vision for Learning as a Nation Goes to College’ points to the potential role liberal education can play in 21st century higher education to foster ‘integrative learning’ (Huber and Hutchings, 2004). Integrative learning environments aim at the development of students who are ‘intentional about the process of acquiring learning, empowered by the mastery of intellectual and practical skills, informed by knowledge from various disciplines, and responsible for their actions and those of society’ (Leskes, 2004, p.iv.)

The quest for a broader liberal education basis for architecture brings into discussion the role of theory in architectural education. Phoebe Crisman (2001, p.2), in her article ‘A Case for Pedagogical Praxis,’ underscores the contribution of theory not as ‘an inflexible grand narrative, but knowledge of how others have grounded their work, and a critical self-awareness of their own bases for action.’ Similarly, in her article ‘The Limits of Professional Architectural Education’ Nathaniel Coleman (2010, p.209) states: ‘[W]hat they [students of architecture] really ought to be learning, is how to develop a capacity for ‘critical and imaginative thinking about the issues that confront us as citizens and as human beings’ so that they will be able to engage in ‘reasoned and open-minded discussion of the basic values that are at stake in the various policies and practices that are proposed to address these issues.’

Interdisciplinary Education

A broader liberal education basis is important also because it helps establish a solid ground for developing mutual understanding and collaborative efforts between architecture and other built-environment disciplines. The complexity of the built environment problems necessitates a holistic approach to design and the effective collaborative working of specialists such as city and regional planning, urban design, landscape design, civil engineering, economist

and sociologists. Architects should be more concerned with questions of what city is, how it works, what makes it evolve either in positive or negative ways.

The importance of interdisciplinary learning is addressed in discussions on the changing responsibilities of architectural education. The initiatives realized by the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and European Research Area (ERA) promotes interdisciplinarity.¹ In Turkey, which a member country of Bologna process, the emphasis given to interdisciplinarity in architectural education can be re-situated within the context of the attempts to develop National Qualifications Framework (NQF) in Turkish higher education. In the National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey (NQF-HETR) document, to '[t]ake responsibility both as a team member and individually in order to solve unexpected complex problems faced within the implementations in the field' is defined as one of the 6th level (bachelor's) qualifications in any higher education program.²

Although emphasis is given to interdisciplinarity in higher education, and particularly in architectural education, the real challenge remains unsolved: how to develop interdisciplinary learning environments in our schools of architecture in which students learn from each other through dialogue and observation, and how to foster interdisciplinary teaching practices.

Community Involvement

David Nasatir (1966, p.171) underlines the social role of the university by arguing that besides providing 'an opportunity for the development of abilities directly applicable to a career,' an essential goal of university is to provide 'knowledge about the society,' 'interest in community and national problems,' and a 'civic interest' in students. Rachel Sara (2000, p.65) reiterates the same line of thought when she states: '[i]f future architects are to be responsive to the needs of society, then there is a need for two-way learning between architecture students and the community.' Design pedagogy can play a key role in reinforcing such an understanding. Within the last decade, alternative design studio models such as 'community engaged design studio model,' 'community design/build model' and 'community residency model' are experimented in various schools of architecture (Russell, 2008). In these models not only the selection of design problems, but also processes of design are re-structured

¹In the 'European Qualifications Framework for Lifelong Learning (EQF-LLL)' (2008, p.13), emphasis is placed on to 'take responsibility for contributing to professional knowledge and practice and/or for reviewing the strategic performance of teams [interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary]' as one of the learning outcomes of graduates of master's programs.

²According to the 'Architecture and Building' qualifications, which are envisioned to be reference points through the implementation of National Qualifications Framework for Higher Education in Turkey (NQF-HETR) (2011) on architectural programmes, a graduate of a bachelor's degree program in architecture is expected to acquire the skills of having 'the ability on interactive interdisciplinary architectural design/planning/design' and using 'the knowledge, understanding and skills in the contextual interpretation of the data, the identification of problems, and the development of solutions for architectural design/planning/design decisions/projects that exhibits mastery and innovation.'

around a direct engagement of students with community problems. The students meet the clients to understand their particular needs and expectations, engage in building materials and construction techniques, or, for a short time 'live in a community of special interest while doing a design project' (Russell, 2008, pp.341-42). By bringing architectural education closer to physical realities of architectural practice, working on real life project, and collaborating with local communities and environmental organization, these alternative design studio practices foster a sense of social responsibility and a commitment to community involvement as guiding principles of architectural design.

The Implications for Architectural Profession

John Worthington (2000, p.24), in 'Changing Architectural Education: Towards a New Professionalism', points to an 'uncertainty about whether its [the profession's] prime role is social concern for the wider interests of society and the user, or whether it is primarily concerned with the particular interests of its developer client or the success of the practice.' In his view, an architect is responsible to 'balance the traditional professional concern for the underlying social implications (society and the user) with the managerial need to use resources effectively in the interests of the business' (Worthington, 2000, p.289). (Figure 7, 8, 9) Looking at today's professional practice, especially within the framework of ongoing urban redevelopment projects that are transforming our urban space, architect's influence seems very limited. In many cases, 'the particular interests of its developer client' dominates 'the wider interests of society and the user,' to use Worthington's words. Balance between the two is hardly achieved. In Graham S. Finney's (1998, p. 65) view, limitation of the authority of the architect derives, to a degree, from the architect itself who 'became subservient to interest indifferent to social improvement and socially meaningful communication,' leaving the arena of urban development to 'private investors,' 'developers,' and 'corporations.' Finney raises the criticism that architects do not adequately address the problems of urbanism and of public policy.

Figure 7. *The Sulukule Urban Regeneration Project. Fatih Municipality and Housing Administration of Turkey (TOKI). <http://www.elephantsociety.com/sulukule.html>; <http://sulukulegunlugu.blogspot.com.tr/>*



Figure 8. *The Sulukule Urban Regeneration Project. Fatih Municipality and Housing Administration of Turkey (TOKI). Google Images*



Figure 9. *The Sulukule Urban Regeneration Project. Fatih Municipality and Housing Administration of Turkey (TOKI). Google Images*

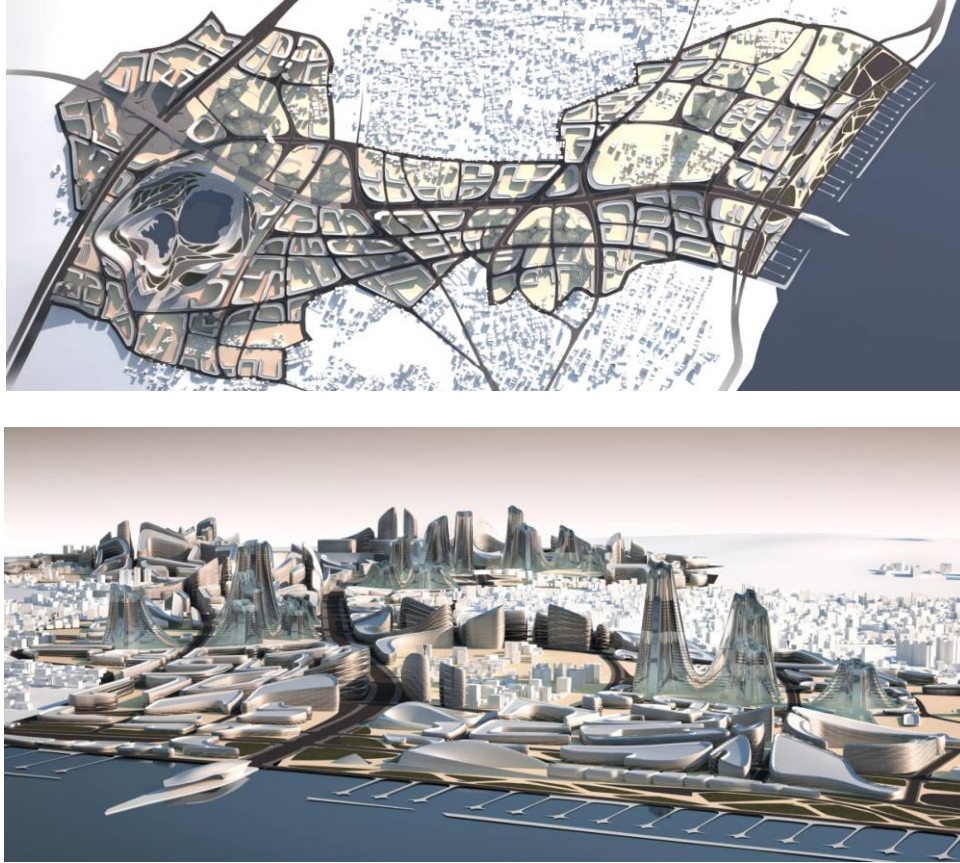


Another problematic that impinges on architectural profession is to repair the profile of architecture and the trust of the society towards the architect. As the level of the public's critical engagement with the built environment rises, people's demands from architecture rise, too. For Finney (1998, p. 69), it can be possible to enhance the perception of architecture and of the architect when architects realize 'their essential role in shaping ideas, experiences and aspirations of all of us who share the city and its future.'

Better Communication and Dialogue

The responsibility on the part of architectural profession to achieve a more active role in shaping of the built environment and to gain public confidence depends, to a great extent, on its success of establishing better dialogue with the society. Nicol and Pilling (2000, p.3) point to a growing demand of public from architects to 'develop a wider repertoire of design responses to the built environment,' to 'demonstrate greater sensitivity in their designs to the needs of building users and society,' and to 'become better at listening and responding to, and communicating with, building users and the public.' A ground for dialogue between architects and non-architects for sharing and exchanging ideas can make a great contribution to fulfill this demand.

Figure 10. *Kartal Pendik Masterplan, Istanbul, Turkey, 2006. Project by Zaha Hadid Architects. Greater Istanbul Municipality and Kartal Urban Regeneration Association. <http://www.zaha-hadid.com/masterplans/kartal-pendik-masterplan/>*



‘Participatory design’ or ‘participatory architecture’ that promotes the public participation to the design process deserves to be mentioned here. Such practices encourage dialogue and collaborative efforts between built environment professionals and citizens. Bergdoll (2010, p.9) underscores the influence of this paradigm of practice in the 1970s and 1980s, while arguing that today emphasis is placed more on ‘the *persona* “star architect”-a single designing genius’ (Figure 10). A more recent socially motivated design approach is New Urbanism, in which the aim is to increase public involvement to the planning processes through ‘participatory design.’ Emily Talen (2002, p.179) mentions that: ‘New Urbanism is committed to making physical improvements a public matter emphasizing participatory design and publicly rather than privately produced plans as an approach that is likely to increase social interaction and collaboration.’

Teamwork Experiences

Nicol and Pilling (2000, p.99) underlines that ‘[de]sign in practice is a participative activity: architects need skills not only to work with other architects in practice but also to work with other built-environment

professionals to provide clients with a cost-effective and integrated service.’ ‘Development no longer meant only physical construction,’ states Finney (1998, p. 64), ‘but simultaneously economic and social intervention, and thus included the coordination of a wide variety of experts.’ The contribution of experts in social and human sciences, in civil engineering, economics, and politics is vital for interdisciplinary collaborative efforts to deal with complex built environment problems. However, it is hard to say that a culture of teamwork and collaboration exists today. First of all, willingness to work collaboratively for achieving comprehensive solutions is needed. This is followed by the requisite of ‘being aware of, and able to use appropriately, a range of teamwork methods’ (Fisher, 2000, p.116).

Better dialogue is needed also between the profession and education of architecture; two realms of activity that inform each other while also maintaining a critical distance from each other. From the perspective of architectural profession, architectural education heads ‘a disconnection from notions of how architects and architecture exist outside the academy’ (Burns, 2000, p.266). Schools of architecture are often criticized that their graduates are not well equipped ‘to assume the new roles required for the profession’ (Gutman, 1987, pp.24-5). Carol Burns (2000, p.159) argues that: ‘rather than working together in a mutual aid and support mechanism, education and practice have developed increasingly isolationist attitudes and an increasing lack of vision as to the interdependence of education and practice.’ Nevertheless, academic study and practical experience are two interrelated aspects of learning. Incorporating ‘work-based learning’ into architectural education programmes can be a good way of enhancing the dialogue between the profession and education of architecture. In her article ‘Learning in Practice. A Retreat, an Opportunity or an Imperative?’ Judith V. Farren Bradley (2000, p.159 and p.60) argues that: ‘[l]earning through practice, rather than just learning in practice, has considerable potential,’ since in this way, ‘the profession would have the opportunity to develop a learning culture and a recognition that practice is and must be a primary site for architectural education.’

Education and Practice in a Life-long Continuum of Learning

The establishment of channels of dialogue and collaboration can be better achieved when the issue is approached from a lifelong learning perspective. Professional learning is a continuous process. It is not limited to professional architectural education, but continues after becoming a member of the profession. ‘In order to cope with the knowledge explosion and the rapid rate of change in society,’ state Nicol and Pilling, ‘architects (like all other professionals) need to develop the habit of monitoring, evaluating and managing their own learning and of learning from practical experience’ (Nicol and Pilling, 2000. p.152). Because, architectural practice is a form of reflective practice, as underlined by Donald Schön (1983; 1992). “Reflection-in-action” encourages the practitioner to reflect on his action, generate knowledge out of

it, and continuously learn throughout the process of doing architecture.¹ Reflective practice has important implications for reconsidering the relationship of architects with the members of their profession, with clients, and with the larger society. It may help to develop a reflective conservation with different actors involved in the shaping of the built environment.

Conclusive Remarks

The notion of the ‘culture of practice’ helps delineate an insightful framework for the discussion of the changing social responsibilities of the 21st century architect, and of their implications both for the education and profession of architecture.

The culture of practice, as underlined in the August 2009 report of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), informs ‘the nature of interactions among members of the profession and with those who aspire to join it’ and the way that ‘the profession is perceived in a greater public arena’ (Sullivan, 2009, p.1). Culture of practice covers all stages of a person’s becoming of an architect and of practicing the profession as an architect. In the AIA document it is emphasized that ‘[t]he creation of a culture of practice is the creation of an omnipresent state enveloping education and practice in a life-long continuum of learning’ (Sullivan, 2009, p.2).

Today, the expanded field of knowledge, the advancements in building materials and technologies, the environmental problems such climate change and the diminishing of energy resources, and the changing social demands of the society call for the need to redefine the profile of the architect. Competence is needed not only in technical terms but also in ethical and social terms. Awareness of the broader consequences of architectural design is essential. Values gain much more significance for architectural practice and education as they ‘incorporate planetary concerns for a sustainable future, address social needs, address concern for our built history of note, support continuous learning and mentoring.’ (Sullivan, 2009, p.12). Civic and social responsibilities and a search for public good are among the major concerns of the culture of practice that should inform both the profession and the education of architecture.

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¹Waks (2001, p.40) explains Schön’s idea of reflective practice as ‘the form of thinking specific to e.g. professional practices, and it is learned in the thick of the professional activity, not at one remove.’

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