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STUDENT CHARTER

THE UIA 2014 DURBAN STUDENT CHARTER ON ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

XXV WORLD CONGRESS OF ARCHITECTURE
 International Convention Centre Durban South Africa
 3-7 August 2014

UIA2014 DURBAN
 ARCHITECTURE **OTHERWHERE**
 RESILIENCE - ECOLOGY - VALUES



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UIA 2014 DURBAN STUDENT DEBATE AND CHARTER ON ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

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FOREWORD	6
PREFACE	7
UIA 2014 STUDENT CHARTER ON ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION	9
CONCLUSION	14

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present this publication of the International Union of Architect's Student Charter on architectural education. The Charter is presented as guidelines to the institutions of architectural education around the world. This thematic publication is the result of the UIA World Congress 2014 Durban - 'Architecture OTHERWHERE' student debate on architectural education. The UIA Student Charter on Architectural Education is the compilation of the debaters' research, which took the three sub-themes of the congress using the three topics: architecture in an academic environment, architecture in practise and architecture as a catalyst for socio-economic development.

Preparing this publication has taken an enormous amount of time and effort. On behalf of the institutions of architectural education, I wish to warmly congratulate and thank the UIA chair of the local organising committee, Mr Hassan Asmal and his team, and also the president of student committee, Sinethemba Buthelezi and her team. Finally I wish to express my gratitude to the host, the City of Durban, eThekweni Municipality and its Mayor Councillor James Nxumalo.

It is my hope that all leaders of institutions of architectural education around the world, will take time after receiving copies of this charter, to read it and participate by contributing in the exercise of continuously improving the quality of education in Architecture.

Mthembeni Mkhize

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PREFACE

On behalf of the Student Committee of the UIA 2014 Durban, it is my pleasure to present to you the UIA 2014 Student Debate and Charter on Architectural Education!

The value and relevance of architectural education is becoming increasingly scrutinized in light of pressing socio-economic conditions, which demand OTHERways of engagement and transformation in the way we think about and practice, architecture. As education shifts are reflecting a need to address economic inequality and social stigma, the very position of architects, their industry and their contribution to vulnerable societies is being weighed and measured. Architectural education would stubbornly resist change to its own detriment and at the risk of becoming a redundant and inefficient past-time of those socially and financially positioned to take advantage of it. Globally, the rules governing how one becomes skilled and work-ready are changing and architectural education must change with it or risk irrelevance and ultimately, dissolution. Therefore, the question that should be addressed is what a contemporary path of architectural education is and what are its key components?

The new generation of architecture students is better positioned to give direction to the new path of architectural education by reflecting on their lived experiences of having undergone the current system of education. It is this generation that carries the future of architecture. They have the tools and means to question the status quo, in terms of relevance and are able to contribute towards redefining OTHERteaching and Otherpractice.

In the context of a rapidly globalising world where the gap between the developed and developing countries is narrowing, there is a need to facilitate collective thinking around the future of architectural learning. It is against this background that the UIA Student Debate is conceived as a critical starting point for engaging with architectural education. It presents an opportunity for students from various socio-economic backgrounds to engage with the very essence of architecture as a tool for social development.

Lastly, the UIA Student Committee is testament to the role of students, in informing the future of architecture. It is an initiative that should be supported and which has the potential of being perpetuated. This report should lay a foundation for future discussions and ultimately, interventions in architectural education. Fundamental issues are raised by this report. If architecture, as both an academic and professional practice, strives to be taken seriously, the student proposals made in this report need to be absorbed into mainstream contemporary debates.

The debate investigated three key issues architecture in an academic environment; architecture in practice and as a catalyst for socio-economic development. As such the event offered opportunity for architecture students to contribute to the debate on the future of architectural education in the hopes of inspiring an improved and OTHERway forward.

These topics, within the broader Congress theme of ARCHITECTURE OTHERWHERE, inspired a surprising outcome - one that challenged the concept of developing and developed contexts within which architecture students work. The Student Debate illustrated, instead of vast differences between the issues experienced by students and schools in these contexts, a great number of similarities and further to them - a common theme in the solution of these.

It was inspiring and humbling, to have had the opportunity to work with the academics, professionals and students who graciously gave of their time, their expertise and their energies in the coordination of an event and the enthusiastic continuing of a conversation so pertinent to the architectural profession today.

The Student Committee, thanks the UIA and the UIA 2014 Durban for providing the platform and the support in realising this event and to Karen Eicker and Hassan Asmal, for their support and guidance throughout this process, amongst others. We would like to express a deep gratitude to Professor Amira Osman, Mthembeni Mkhize and Bridget Horner, for their tireless guidance and collaboration on the Student Debate Brief; to Professor Ora Joubert, Jolanda Morkel, Hugh Fraser and Jhono Bennett, who presented arguments from the opposite side of the institutional divide and to the student debaters who brought a powerful voice to the failures and successes of architectural education globally. To Olumuyiwa Adegun, Daniel Attoye, Charles Bosumprah, Westin Conahan, Matteo Defendini, Marie Grützner, Cuan Hundermark, Mona Kuner, Onthatile Makgalemela, Peter Nguyen and Jaun van Wyk, your energy and ingenuity is inspiring and stands as testament to the unmovable activist of the architecture student.

We hope that this retrospective of the UIA 2014 Student Debate and Charter on Architectural Education, may inspire innovations in approaches to education, practice and the social relevance of our profession that will go to ensuring its ongoing relevance and capacity for the improving of peoples' lives around the world.

Samantha Rouche

UIA 2014 Durban Student Debate and Programme Coordinator



STUDENT CHARTER

THE UIA 2014 STUDENT CHARTER ON ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION

The UIA 2014 Durban Student Debate, set out to bring architectural students from around the world together, to discuss the current state of architectural education from a global, student perspective. Originally, it was envisaged that the combination of students from developing and developed countries would highlight a stark contrast between the practice and education of architecture in these very different socio-economic contexts. In fact and surprisingly, the debate accentuated the very similar issues, architectural students from around the world are facing today, regardless of their contexts. The differences it did bring to the fore, were the varying degrees of emphasis on the social agenda, inherent in curriculum from different countries around the world.

Student debaters presented a comprehensive scope of architectural education and the difficulties faced by students as they see them. The debaters also expressed very similar solutions to these problems and innovative directions that architecture, in education, practice and socio-economic development should move, in order to stay relevant and effective. These solutions - some immediately practical, others more long-term conceptual suggestions - were collated to form the UIA 2014 Durban Student Charter on Architectural Education.

ARCHITECTURE IN AN ACADEMIC ENVIRONMENT

1. We recognize that studio culture is integral to the value of architectural education, and that advances in personal computing and related technologies are having a dramatic impact on this culture. We propose that schools of architecture, must actively investigate ways of maintaining studio culture, without impairing necessary technological progress
2. Architecture is both process and product with the outcome not necessarily a built product or building. However architectural education is graded minimally on process and largely on product. We believe more value needs to be placed on process in the grading of architecture students' work
3. Architectural education should not be limited to the confines of the traditional classroom and should find ways of engaging communities in order to improve students' interpersonal and communication skills. Schools should facilitate the exposure of their students to OTHER cultures and disciplines through travel and local community engagement
4. Both students and instructors of architecture should make every effort to capitalize on available technologies, and their ability to foster communication and the sharing of resources. Modern practices of digital communication promote local and global engagement; the expansion of comprehensive knowledge communities; an appreciation of the educational potential beyond the confines of the academic studio and the ability of students to practice interpersonal communication skills across cultures and disciplines

5. Architectural education is, for reasons of cost and time, an exclusive course and becoming more isolated with further increases in fees – this needs to become more inclusive if architectural education is to remain relevant - we propose that governments commit to subsidise more fees for socially beneficial courses such as architecture

6. We recognise that architecture in practice relies on the knowledge of allied disciplines and suggest that architectural education should reflect this, in order to remain relevant to pursuing a career in the profession. A more person-centred approach to both practice and education is imperative. As such it is believed that architecture schools should diversify curricula, while encouraging the improving of students' individual interests and talents by offering the option to select electives from disciplines such as economics, business management, social sciences, engineering etc.

7. Architectural education needs to respond to the need for improved flexibility in terms of curriculum, location, cost and course duration and incorporate innovative ways of becoming qualified and registered without diminishing the value of the degree offered. Alternate routes to qualification should be established for those more practically and less socially and financially inclined

8. The study of architecture promotes complex, critical, and holistic problem solving skills incorporating multiple interest groups within the practice and in the social environment. It would therefore be a benefit to the profession and to the educational system as a whole, to advocate for architecture and design to have a more integrated presence in primary school curricula, developing these skills at a younger age and allowing more room for growth as students progress through their academic careers

ARCHITECTURE IN PRACTICE

1. It has been observed that many graduates in the field of architecture are largely unprepared for the realities of entry-level work in real practice. Curricula need to better incorporate and emphasize topics like practice law; business, presentation and public speaking skills; and understanding of associated professions, in order to remain relevant to today's professional environment

2. The frequent stand-off between practicing architects and academics is damaging to the quality of education students are receiving. It is recognised that a closer relationship between the profession and schools of architecture is imperative to adequately training students in a vocational field such as architecture. Schools should integrate more practical construction experience into the curriculum, with students working directly with firms while studying, as well as being mentored regularly, in studio by local professionals. Similarly, it is recognised that academic staff need more time in practice. It is suggested to limit the amount of time academic staff may be out of practice

3. Based on precedents established in several of the world's large professional societies, the academy should also take an active hand in monitoring the work of students during their internships and other work experiences, ensuring appropriate treatment of student interns, productive and progressive skills training, and fair compensation for the work performed
4. There is a need to investigate ways of enhancing the expediency and efficiency of the process necessary to register as a licensed professional following graduation. It is suggested to establish ways that professional registration be achieved within the post-graduate curriculum
5. For commercial reasons, architectural practice needs to stay up to date with the latest design and technological advances whereas academia tends to fall behind. It is suggested that the closer relationship between professionals, academics and students will improve the topical relevance of architecture in academia
6. The past practice of working while studying part-time, produced technically and theoretically well-rounded students with extensive knowledge of both the industry and its theoretical underpinning. The value of such a system is recognised and it is suggested, that schools of architecture provide such flexible options to completing degrees
7. The specific tasks undertaken daily by architects, needs to be established that the skills required to perform these tasks effectively are built into the curriculum
8. We suggest a more specialist approach, that is tailored to the individual talents and interests of the student and toward the specific social and commercial needs of their context, be adopted

ARCHITECTURE AS A CATALYST FOR SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

1. The students recognise that it is not only pertinent to ask if architectural education is redundant but to ask the same of architectural practice. In response, it has been identified that in order to stay relevant - both architectural education and practice must become more sensitive of and responsive toward social issues
2. Both curriculum and outcome needs to be more regularly and rigorously reviewed to ensure education remains aligned with both practice and the socio-economic needs of the society within which it is practiced
3. We propose that the community/end-user that students are charged with designing for should be involved in their design process throughout each stage of the project - as time is limited for student projects, schools need to develop ways of facilitating these relationships between students and their local communities.

It is suggested that working closely with students and academics from disciplines such as anthropology and community development is integral to the success of such an initiative

4. If it is intended that architecture be responsive to social issues like poverty, urbanism, and socio-economic development, then it is imperative that architectural education include the study of topics such as sociology and micro- and macro-economics, as a part of the curriculum

5. Architects have an ethical responsibility to act with empathy and be mindful of the social context when working on project and this needs to be instilled at the academic level

6. Post-construction evaluations of buildings need to be more regularly carried out in practice, in order to learn as much from our mistakes as we publicise our successes

7. Culture is an integral to the creation of good architecture. It is suggested that cultural studies play a greater role in architectural education and in professional practice, most notably when working on projects abroad or within foreign contexts

8. Schools of architecture together with the profession need to develop time and cost-effective methods of community engagement in order to create an efficient participatory approach to the design of the built environment

9. It is recognised that in practice, architecture includes a team of officials, professionals and community members in the grading, approval and realising of built works. It is suggested that the grading of students' work simulate a similar process by including all relevant stakeholders in the project, including: government officials and regulators, academics, practicing architects, engineers and community representatives and end-users

10. Pro-poor architecture is undervalued and stigmatic - this needs to be addressed on both professional and academic levels

11. There needs to be more awareness around the ability of the built environment to improve people's personal circumstances. Pro-poor approaches to design should respect and be sensitive to existing social and economic structures in communities and aim to refine them as opposed to introducing entirely new and oftentimes, foreign concepts

12. Architects need to be trained technically, creatively and socially in order to respond more realistically to real-life situations. We as architectural students, recognise that we need to learn from others in associated professions and from society at large, in a humble manner, accepting that we alone do not have all of the answers, but acknowledging that we too have a valuable contribution to make to society

CONCLUSION

The UIA 2014 Durban world architecture conference, cast the built environment spotlight on a city on the fringe. In the focus of the architectural industry, Durban revealed itself as an eclectic space able to bring cultures, races, nations and ideas together in way that accentuates and augments their contrasting virtues, in vibrant harmony with each other. It was a significant moment in the history of a place that offers an alternate and distinctly South African African perspective on city-making. What emerged from the conversation on Architecture OTHERWHERE, was a startling and global consensus on the need for innovative thinking in approaches to the design and construction of the built environment. This sentiment also defined the parallel conversation on architectural education facilitated by the event.

The UIA 2014 Durban Student Debate and Charter on Architectural Education, brought students, practitioners and academics together, with the intention of unpacking the current status of architectural education; identifying the issues inherent in its practice and of defining an innovative course forward. The hope is that the guidelines to education, set out here, will ensure the relevance and value of architectural education and in turn of its practice. The conversation highlighted the similarities in the issues being faced by students, academics and institutions around the world and in many instances, offered more convergent approaches to their solutions than what may have been anticipated, from their divergent socio-economic perspectives. Students from both developing and developed countries presented comprehensive arguments on the need for the profession to commit to a more user-centred approach to design.

Within the physical context of a city like Durban, stratified socio-economically and in the temporal context of the current global socio-economic shifts; the emerging sentiment was one of a need to find a feasible commercial alternative to architectural education and practice - to 'rehumanise' it (to quote Hugh Fraser of Paragon Architects); to diversify it and to place the user at the centre of the design process. Perhaps the question is, how does the profession cater to the 'other 95%' priced out of the market for architectural services and who may benefit so considerably from the skills our education equips us with? The guidelines suggested here, propose a step toward an architectural education that is more closely aligned with the realities of practice and one that offers from the outset a more specific, contextual and socially conscious approach to design.

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