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ARCHITECTURAL EDUCATION POLICY

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Abstract. The study focuses on the relationship between the political reality of the last decades and life of the domestic architectural school. The subject of analysis is the methodological perspective of transformation of the architectural education in an active factor of positive changes in the life of the professional community and gaining by it a meaningful position in society.

Key words: architectural education, self-repression, pedagogy of freedom, methodological thinking, super-schools.

1. Introduction

Consideration of architectural education in the context of political reality is vital for the Ukrainian architecture, which still has not overcome the effects of the social revolution of the early 1990s. Nevertheless, not just for it. Without such a review the entire social pathos of the modern movement would remain in the history as an irresponsible blather. The article presents three ideas born in this field of analysis, – the political nature of the preservation of old and of appearance of new taboos in a system of architectural education; removal of the ideological monism in the educational sphere; and the idea of the Policy-As-Management.

2. Taboo – old and new

The contradictory relationship between architectural and artistic education and the political reality of post-Soviet societies results in collisions that significantly distort the reproduction mechanism of the professionalism [1]. Due to the conservation of the old political and ideological taboos and the appearance of entire groups of new ones, the contents, essential for coordinate system of professional culture, are being washed out of education. The crucial social and political fracture has forced to introduce new ones and delete many old units of “educational material” due to, so to speak, “purely political” reasons. New systems of permissions and standards, which are normalizing the proper text behaviour, are imposed from the outside of schools – through TV, press, exhibitions, performances, and so on, primarily through artistic texts – drawings, projects, films.

However, in the contemporary art the cultural and creative sense of a sample is the most often found not so much in itself, but in the discourse, which accompanies the exemplary work. For the post-Soviet art schools, for its students and teachers, this meaning is practically inaccessible, because the accompanying discourse (“theory”, “concept” and so on) is either simply a foreign-language one or – what is even more difficult – other-philosophical, i.e. from another cultural world. This is already quite invincible for the Soviet and post-Soviet creative psychology. Hereof – wild rethinking and incomprehension of what is taken by a school as new samples and what is replicated in a so-called “learning process”.

Additional reasons for new taboos in the school are ignorance and poverty; such “beggars” taboos come just from the teaching staff (*faculty*), which has grown up in the old system, and now has neither desire nor vitality to relearn. A simple base of their pedagogic behaviour is claiming that “students do not understand”, that is, if I do not understand – my disciples the more will not. Therefore, everything is tabooed. In traditional societies taboo violations are punished by death or exile. Architectural and art schools are in the most traditional societies with the clan structure and tribalism customs. The only exception are schools of avant-garde art, as

Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris in the nineteenth century, Moscow Vkhutemas or German Bauhaus in the early twenties; today we have no such schools.

Of course, this is not good – from some external, abstract cultural point of view. If we look inside, due to the mechanisms of self-censorship and self-restraints schools retain their functioning and the possibility of at least a kind of reproduction – it does not matter, of what and how. The nature of new taboo is essentially different in different communities, situations and places; but since they are formed and operate in the channels of reproduction, they deserve to be identified and described. This is equal to their cultural burial and to liberation of an area in which the buried taboo acted. For the life of schools such an action is similar to a psychoanalytic treatment of complexes in relation to an individual.

3. Public policy and professional ideology

The removal of mandatory ideological monism was always perceived in the Soviet society as a tragedy. A striking example of this we saw in the late 1970-s, on the rise of Brezhnev's "stagnation" era. Then the aggressive frivolous postmodernism has jokingly destroyed the evaluation criteria system in the top architectural schools (which, by the way, was built over the years and was established with difficulties). Immediately from the "bottom", from faculties, there were cries about the need to invent and put by themselves above themselves a kind of a new professional and ideological standard, as far as those, who should do it, were unable to do it (i.e. the Union of Architects, the Ministry of Higher Education, finally, the ideological department of the Central Committee of the Party).

It's extremely scary to live in an open society; lack of conventional means of ideological repression in the post-communist world creates an increased demand for the means of self-repression. A new generation in this sense differs surprisingly little from the generation of their parents; and if differs, then is characterized by a greater conformism. Students, including those of so-called "creative" universities, seem not at all happy of pluralistic horizons, which have opened in front of them. They willingly give themselves to every carrier of a ready-made ideology – the more dogmatic, the better – (the so-called "parametrysm" rather successfully applies for the role of such ideology in modern architectural schools [2]).

It is difficult to evaluate system changes (and, perhaps, devastation), which numerous ordinary (not always ideological) educational innovations sow in the system of professional reproduction. Among them, for example, the rampant computerization, continuous history rewriting, regulatory restrictions of "Bologna process" and others. This is not only a local feature. For example, in many American universities programs of history for designers and architects contain more or less random set of historical episodes, without any attempts to build a generalizing consideration of the history of profession development. Based on these programs, life on the ruins of crash, on the socio-cultural dump is presented as a norm – just not to create any cultural or political confrontation in a school and to avoid any political situations.

The actual teaching experience demonstrates how politically immature student or ex-Soviet teacher, facing socio-political changes and their socio-professional and ideological consequences, either become extremely politicized (in a stupid Bolshevik sense of struggle for power), or (more often) fall into a complete political indifference. Culture and professionalism suffer anyway.

The focus of professional (and thus of educational) attention should be shifted from the question "how?" to "what?", "whom?" and "what for?". A future arts worker has to be done independent, that is responsible, – and socially lonely (implementing thus *chez nous* Renaissance individualism, to the establishment of which we are resisting so successfully already for six centuries, surprising the West). This means to make enter the future creators of human environment, moulders of opinion and feelings into the political society – humanistic, democratic and Christian one, – in short, into the promised open society with its cruel laws of competitive games, political struggle and legal regulation.

If in this society an antagonist can not be killed, then the motives of his/her actions should be recognized and taken into account, and a game should be led with an opponent according to the known rules. Among the motives one has to learn to distinguish:

- direct interest, economic or authoritative;
- effect of relationships and connections in which opponent or partner is included, i.e. what limits the partner, and in what he is weak;

- opponent's ideological background (professional, group, individual), how he/she will behave most probably;
- finally, the type of his worldview, that is what he would never step over.

All this requires from the student (and, therefore, from his teachers) fantastically rich possibilities of distinction, in principle – endlessly rich ones. Therefore, the idea, that it's always necessary to listen to the opposite side, which was heretical for the Soviets, becomes the guiding one. It obliges the school to present within any academic subject the entire available spectrum of opinions (especially if the difference of opinions is dictated by various professional and political orientations), that prohibits indoctrination, implementing the regulatory requirement of “pedagogy of freedom” [3].

4. Policy is to manage the future

In the current transitional socio-cultural situation, some specific expectations are linked just with the education of the artistic type. The fact that only for art education the human sense of future activities and the ways of socialization, coupled with the necessary moments of “*techné*”, are located in the substantive centre of professional activity. Here the construction of human sense is marginal– that is why art education in accordance with the level of its intellectualization serves as a model for the entire higher education and, therefore, for any education at all. (This may be compared with very unbanal English design-centric concept of education [4]. The latent defect of the concept was in the fact, that it was based on a socio-cultural model of the commodity market).

The embedding of education into the socio-culture of the “open society” should go through the Policy-As-Management idea. At the time, in methodology of education a lot was said about design as a necessary component of modern culture. In fact, implantation of political culture into the system of educational content is only the more general formulation of the same problem. In terms of the basic methodological idea of development, managerial thinking as thinking about development becomes the basic content of educational reform. Concretization of this idea is introduction of students into the world of programme, project, planning and other subtypes of managerial culture.

Unfortunately, our education is defenceless before politics in its most vicious, just Lenin's sense – as a struggle for power. Therefore, “complete depoliticisation” in the higher school takes the form of destruction of any possibilities of self-motion and self-organization. In Ukraine after 1991 the sign of modern times was the actual elimination of universities autonomy, which persisted even in totalitarian times, and a new wave of unification – though not of the standard of education, but of the training programs and of so-called “learning material”.

I prefer to consider politics, after Friedrich Hayek [5], not as a struggle for power, but as the work and game of the managerial decision-making and of decisions implementation within the limits of real possibilities. Then now, when management has ceased to be an exclusive prerogative of the centre, everybody, in principle, should be able to realise management by himself, or at least to take part in it deliberately. This is the way to sovereignization, decentralization, democratization, privatization and other attributes of the open social model.

Reforms require also a corresponding method of teaching that can not be anything else, than a practical work on mastering the techniques of political action. In the global pedagogical forefront this method, oddly enough, is being elaborated again in architectural and artistic education or somewhere nearby. We can enumerate, for example, a multidisciplinary design “studio”, conducted by D. Scott Brown and Robert Venturi at the University of Pennsylvania, similar design and research cycles by Ricardo Porro at the Higher School of Arts in Havana, participatory Kreuzberg's project in West Berlin in the late 1960-s – the first half of the 1970-s and many others. The content of all these pretty similar training and project cycles is that an artist (architect, designer) is deliberately trying to be a tool that mediates subtle, but cold-academic professional techniques and naive but genuine desires of “consumers” – of a rural community, urban communes, inhabitants of a street or a courtyard. Art action merges with a political one.

Religious wars, media industry, show business, Industrial Design, Haute Couture – all of them are significantly artistic, but also essentially political organizations. Things are presented here not by their objective characteristics, but as a content of managerial solutions and the corresponding communication.

5. Conclusion. Methodological prospect

Observing the actual situation of architectural and artistic education, it is necessary to state a certain paradox – recent decades have not brought any social and cultural change in artistic life and education. The years, that have broken the spine of the System, meant only socio-organizational, almost everyday life changes for the artistic life of the country; substantively artistic life has long been essentially separated from the Soviet society. But this just means the total dysfunction of the artistic sphere towards the whole public life. Statements about the genesis of this dysfunction in Stalin era do not clarify the current national-cultural problem.

The situation is generally favourable for the possible implantation of methodological thinking into architectural, artistic and design education. Though today there are no art groups like Bauhaus, that would teach while experimenting, but there appear the so called “super-schools”, intended to create new models of professional culture. Students and teaching staff of architectural and artistic schools are more educated and receptive comparing to many others.



Portrait of Herman Hesse

Perhaps the main argument in favour of the increasing interest to the topic is that the workplace in architectural and design education corresponds in the “style of life” to the prospects of professional methodology, artistically bringing together its image and importance with Hermann Hesse’s “Pedagogic Province” [6]. Coming out to the area of art and architecture is a natural stage after the game one, the stage, that assimilates the experience and value of direct subjectivation of senses, which were opened in organizational and activity games, and discovers the opportunities for paradygmatisation of this experience and its putting into the centre of methodological work. This is an important issue in real politicization – in its positive sense, – i.e. in the evident and commonly understandable structuring of the social life.

Image source:

<http://www.gahetna.nl/collectie/afbeeldingen/fotocollectie/zoeken/weergave/detail/start/0/tstart/0/q/zoekterm/Herman%20Hesse>

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ПОЛІТИКА АРХІТЕКТУРНОЇ ОСВІТИ

Анотація. Дослідження зосереджено на взаємозв'язках між політичною реальністю останніх десятиліть та життям вітчизняної архітектурної школи. Проаналізовано методологічні перспективи перетворення архітектурної освіти на активний чинник позитивних змін у житті професійної спільноти та набуття нею значущої позиції в соціумі.

Ключові слова: архітектурна освіта, самопригнічення, педагогіка свободи, методологічне мислення, супершколи.