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At the end of the '60s, the architecture faculties, not just in Italy, were among those university faculties to undergo the most apparently radical questioning. They were often the weak link in university teaching, adhere the necessity for a profound revision of methods and procedures, if not the objectives themselves, was called for. Even now, fifteen years later, it seems that the faculties have only been able to take advantage of the effects of this possible renewal in a round about, not to sat weak, way. Or otherwise it seems to have reduced this opportunity to an empty shell of institutional engineering mechanics which seems to be the explicit manifestation of the recent university reform in Italy.

It is true that in general, wayward political conditions have in these years corrupted - in super - numerous and low-standard universities - that progressive vision of the school for the masses which promised a lot more revolutionary results that might have been realized.

It is also true that the social body of the architecture faculties (students and teachers) is especially complex and unstable, with a tendency to close itself off in complicated internal relations (despite their claims to the contrary) and in struggles for power in a continuously precarious state of balance. Yet these same faculties also enjoy a special position among the various university disciplines.

This special condition should enable our Universities to work, through the presence of their different disciplinary constituents, in an unprejudiced way; yet this very broad-mindedness has been misplaced and has brought about a shattering of interests in the departments who have difficulty in finding a centre and overall sense.

Some brilliant results have been obtained in several departments like history and urban studies for example, but they have also spent up an ideological segregation in their sectors such as the areas specifically devoted to design; or even abandonment, as in the case of structural geometry and drawing; or inexplicable weakening, as in the case of technical studies and restoration. Furthermore, the validity of complementary studies seems to have been all too hastily denied. Whether it is part of a political move, or whether it is the result of rushed decisions or carelessness, today it is necessary to again discuss its overall meaning. It is undeniable that after its period of expansion and fortune the teaching and research connected with planning are now going through a crisis of their identity and cultural function as well as of the relations with other fields with which they are inevitably connected.

On the other hand, in the area of design (or composition) the attempts of the last fifteen years have led to a reaffirmation of the disciplinary specificity which have leaned more on the tradition and history of the discipline that on an open-minded analysis of its present conditions and prospects.

In addition it must be said that the more interesting aspects of architectural production of the universities during the 60s, came out of the ideological separation if not isolation or often willfully antithetical stances with regard to contemporary architecture.

Often as fruit of special, sometimes completely autonomous, learning conditions, occasionally linked to the particular personality of the teacher, these results were distinguished by the particular quality of their negations; architecture became an act of critical research and knowledge rather than one of proposals. This has happened to some extent in all schools of architecture, leaving aside the details of institutional conditions themselves: from the large confused poor Italian schools to the restrictive rich American or German schools.

But in more recent years this situation seems to have changed at least at the level of will for resolution and direction of research, even though these indications seem to be a long way off reaching concrete results.

Above all it seems to have been weakened, running the risk of a considerable flattening, the radical opposition between architectural culture and the general culture of the faculty, both in terms of the requests for the kinds of learning from the student body and from that of proposed by the teaching body itself. Besides, in different cases, the school of architecture and public administration seems to want to start a new process of exchange, of contributions of ideas apart from information and working-out guidelines of frameworks, even if the party political malaise does not save the poisoning of many of these openings.

The faculties are no longer the only centers of architectural culture: it now takes place in different places and this probably will stimulate the faculties themselves to compete at the level of production of ideas.

Within the faculties it seems possible to plan in the short term a better cultural collaboration among the various components. We could even hope for an opportunity in which to develop the debate of ideas which has been dead in the faculties for many years, or reduced to personal tub-thumping.

Above all it seems that all sides feel the need to reconstruct the architecture faculties as real schools of architecture: founded on programme with definite aims, limited in number if not unitary, both at the didactic level and the general orientations of studies. It is difficult to say on what bases this reconstruction can take place, but what is certain is that this need is to be looked into with decision, overcoming the formal limits of the present reform and above all the complicated geography of the reciprocal adjustments that form the soft base of our faculties.

Finally, I would just like to recall a fine definition of Bernard Huet that I take out of this general context with which I am sometimes in disagreement: "Before being a product of an expression or an inspiration, architecture is a job"; our task in the schools of architecture is therefore to continually build and pass on the rules and practical and theoretical knowledge that enable us to act as architects.