



## **EAAE**

### **PRESIDENT ADDRESS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

#### **HASSELT 28<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2014**

I am really glad to see you all. There are of course a multitude of reasons for this, one being however that we had a big dispute in the EAAE Council over whether we should launch a GA in Hasselt at all at this time of the year, 9 months after the last and relatively disputed GA. There was even a vote in the Council and the majority supported the idea.

I did support the idea, and seeing you all I somehow feel that I have won. We of course never saw the possibility of the majority of the members attending. This is by the way the reason that we dare to offer you excellent meals in good Hasselt restaurants for free. But a sufficient part of the membership has found its way, not to Leuven this time but to another of the medieval Flemish cities. To Hasselt, and I thank the University of Hasselt, the President of the university and particularly Koenraad van Cleempoel for inviting us here.

The Council that was elected in Leuven in June 2013 consisted apart from me, of Adalberto Del Bo, Milano, Herbert Bühler from the school in Münster Germany, Ferran Sagarra of ETSAB Barcelona, Ivan Cabrera from Valencia, Koenraad van Cleempoel who is our treasurer, Gunnar Parelus from Trondheim Norway, Zeb Zavarel from Prague, and our only female member Nur Caglar (Ankara). Ferran Sagarra did leave the Council in January because he stays in Australia all 2014. We are two Norwegians in the Council and Gunnar is leaving the Council taking a position as coordinator of EAAE networks. Lou Scholl is still for some months the EAAE secretary, we will celebrate her in due time. And since I had to stay on as Rector of The Oslo School of Architecture and design, the school has very generously provided the EAAE leadership with an international officer, Erling Solbu, to help us out.

As you know we were elected in a situation with great turbulence in the organisation. We were all elected as new members and we were elected as a group, as one body. We made some promises; firstly to answer the allegations from the former Council concerning EAAE organisation, economy and the relationship to ENHSA. Our report will be presented to the GA later today by Koenraad; secondly we scheduled an international and independent audit of EAAE economy and the management of EAAE economy. This will be presented by a representative of PriceWaterhouseCooper later today. Thirdly we presented the intention to reconcile the organisation, trying to bridge the conflict. And fourthly we wanted, as also I will remind you were the explicit intention of the former council, to modernise the EAAE.

As to the reconciliation process things are healing, but there has been and still is bitterness and mistrust in parts of the organisations. Quite a few people still feel personally offended. Things like this take time. We have to accept that, but somehow I do not any longer accept accusing long e-mails challenging what was done in Leuven in June 2013. This should be the past.

The modernisation of the organisation is of course the most important topic for the EAAE. A fundamental question that has been asked is if the organisation is needed. Has the EAAE become a dinosaur or some kind of all including metaorganisation that only can stay alive by using all resources to manage itself. Doing this creating no material of interest and having no impact. The Council has given itself two years to prove that this is wrong. The EAAE is needed.



This can empirically be proved. The EAAE is functional and operational on a very basic, relatively informal, random like and human level as an open network where people that share tasks and interests meet at a series of well-planned events.

At the same time the organisation has supported and still supports and organizes professional networks.

The organisation has developed in a situation where questions concerning the internal European market and the compatibility of schools dominated the agenda. We put a lot of effort into the discussions on how to adapt to the Bologna system and the consequences of doing this.

What we see at the moment is that:

- The global market for consultancy services, labour and education that we have talked about for two decades, by now is a functioning fact.
- European Economy is under stress.
- New differences between national and local economies in Europe seem to persist.
- Generally the market for services given by architects is very fragile.
- Architectural practice and the role of the architect are under stress.
- Universities are losing their funding. Architectural education seems in some part of Europe to lose its attraction and the amount of students is shrinking.

The EU decision of the acceptance of 4 years education + practice to call you an architect, contrary to the recently acclaimed Bologna principles, is for me a symptom that we have encountered a new situation. And this new situation also puts architectural education under stress and makes us focus on adaptation, changes and hybridization of professional masters.

When we a decade back visited schools of architecture around Europe and elsewhere on the globe, we somehow knew what to expect. The similarities were always much stronger than the differences. The output was also very much the same, in terms of knowledge, skills, interest and values.

We thought that the Bologna process in Europe might lead to a situation where the intentions of making schools compatible and comparable, erased out local peculiarities. The opposite has happened, schools try to define their own identities and tailor the specific character of their education. And the schools try to adapt to a possibly new labour market that so far really not has emerged.

- Options are different kinds of specialization. What used to happen after the 5 years is made a part of the basic master.
- Hybridization for example with the professional field of design that more than architecture has been able to adapt to roles in the European transition process exemplified for example with the market valued concept of service-design,
- Stronger research orientation in a group of economically speaking strong schools as a strategy of competition,
- And shifts of focus from the teaching of spatial relations, form, technology and the history of architecture, to process oriented knowledge where students learn to act and to economically survive in European transition process.

My point here is not to take a moral or professional stand to what is happening. The concept of architecture is culturally speaking alive more than ever, so is architecture as a discipline and field of knowledge. The



questions deal with the role, or the different roles of the future architects, and how this affects architectural education and research within the field.

For me it is important to repeat this arguments here today, i must admit on a rather superficial level, not to enlighten you, but to underline my opinion that that the transition is an argument in itself to put up the good work in the EAAE.

Then – what has been done by the Council during these 9 months of pregnancy before this General Assembly? Some has stated that we have been nearly invisible, and there might of course be something to it. But I will also confess that after the conflict we felt the need for the organisation to cool down a little and reflect on what did happen.

We have had 5 Council meetings:

- In Leuven after the GA
- In Milano in July
- In Chain in September
- In Barcelona in October
- And in Prague in January.

These meetings have been necessary both to sort out the situation and to make us into a strong working group. If the activity seems expensive, and it is, I can comfort you that our expenses are paid by the schools where each of us belong.

The network and project leaders in the EAAE was only invited to one of these meeting – the one in Chania. Some of the networks continue in a very active manner, some need to be put on track, and one network – the so called rural network – has informed us that they have cut the relationship with the EAAE.

As part of the discussion of future strategies there is of course a need for networks, working groups and the projects that EAAE should be involved in.

EAAE was, as we had said in the GA in Leuven, in 2013 not the co-organiser of the meeting of Heads in Chania. The reason for this was that money transfer between the two organisations had been put at the centre of the conflict. All other established cooperation between EAAE and ENHSA has continued during the year.

I would very much like to say a few words about the history of the EAAE/ENHSA relationship. Not about the economic relationship, we will come back to that later today. I will reflect a little about the professional relationship between the two organisations. Quite a few people in the audience know much more about this than me, I used to be very much on the fringes of the EAAE activities. My intention is barely to touch upon the principles in the relationship.

- Firstly ENHSA is a child of the EAAE. EAAE gave birth to ENHSA. I will of course not go into discussion the character of the conception. Some call ENHSA a love child some have seen it as a beast and a consequence of a rape.
- Secondly, the EAAE needed ENHSA as a tool to finance professional activities. This was a success. ENHSA, as a project grounded in the University of Thessaloniki, in a very competitive situation was able to establish professional applications and get substantial funding from the EU.



- Thirdly - this led to a situation where EAAE-activities to a very high degree leaned on ENHSA, the activities of the ENHSA coordinators and ENHSA funding. The coordinators did a remarkable job, very active, skilled and devoted. One could even say that what seemed to be the core of EAAE activities like the Chania meeting that most of us have looked forward to and enjoyed for years, in fact was ENHSA activities.
- Fourthly, and this is only an hypothesis from my side, EAAE was somehow deactivated and relied too much on ENHSA and in a situation where ENHSA is terminating in 2014 this becomes very clear for the Council. How to run the EAAE without the economic and pragmatic power of ENHSA?
- Fifthly, a discussion arose within the organisation about the priorities, tasks and qualities of ENHSA activities. These kinds of discussions are necessary and extremely healthy. But it might have been a problem that these discussions did not surface in the organisation and were not made open and operational, but in the end was channelled into a, speaking for myself, operational discussion on economic management.

At some point of time somebody will be paid to evaluate both EAAE and ENHSA and maybe some intelligent young person at one of our highbrow research institutions will write their doctoral thesis on the EAAE/ENHSA relationship. But until then this discussion is only an historical backdrop with some consequences for the present situation:

- I am really looking forward to one of these consequences. I have a sincere hope that we will be able to gather in Chania for one more and maybe very last time to celebrate what we have achieved through the ENHSA project.
- Secondly the situation is extremely demanding. The support of ENHSA will no longer exist and the EAAE has to develop new strategies. And then we are back to the modernisation of the organisation. How to tailor the EAAE, how to further develop the organisation as a forum for discussions on architectural education and research, how to make the EAAE part of networks that are professional innovators, and how to make it into an organisation that in some kind of relationship to ACE – the organisation for architectural practice in Europe – can work towards the EU. This is a challenge.

As to membership the EAAE has lost some schools during the conflict, but not that many. Some schools are waiting out the situation, waiting for the Council to act and also for what is happening here in Hasselt. This is maybe the main reason that we felt the need for a GA this early in 2014. The tendency at the moment is that more schools are joining the EAAE than those that are leaving. The Council accepted 10 new member schools this morning, while 4 have told us that they are not paying the fees for 2014:

Those joining are:

#### New membership

- Fachhochschule Trier, Germany (cancelled in 2013) becomes member again
- Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University, Department of Architecture, Istanbul, Turkey

#### Requests for membership: to be approved in Hasselt, March

- ARCHIP, Prague, Czech Republic
- De Montfort University, Leicester School of Architecture, Great Britain



- Vysoka Skola Umeleckoprumyslova v Praze, Prague, Czech Republic
- Universidad de Sevilla, Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura, Spain
- Università degli Studi “G. D’Annunzio” di Chieti e Pescara, Dipartimento di Architettura, Pescara, Italy
- Università degli Studi di Catania, Suracusa, Italy
- Università degli Studi di Napoli, Italy
- Università degli Studi di Camerino, Ascoli Piceno, Italy
- Universidade do Porto – Faculdade de Arquitectura, Porto, Portugal

#### Cancelled

- University of Newcastle, Great Britain (GB-28) (no reason)
- Universidade de Beira Interior, Covilha, Portugal (financial problems)
- Queen’s University Belfast, Ireland (GB-39) (no reason)
- University of Ulster, Belfast School of Architecture (GB-40) (no reason)

We also see a tendency for stronger organisation between schools on a national or regional level.

The Nordic Academy organising the Scandinavian and Baltic Schools, is a good example. The EAAE has taken part in developing a Turkish network of schools and during the recent year also

(with Zeb Zavarel as an initiator) a network of south eastern schools. French, English, Swiss and Dutch schools are organised on a national level. There is an interesting option here for a more formalised relationship between the EAAE and these organisations.

Our intentions are the following:

- We will try to fill the gap after Chania with a new meeting of heads, with a high level professional program and a GA as part of it. The first of these will be arranged in 2015.
- We will restructure our networks and all project and network leaders will be invited into this process.
- We will give priority to a number of high profiled international conferences in cooperation with other organisations and networks. I will mention two conferences are in the making: A conference on housing at the school in Copenhagen in the spring of 2015. And a global conference on architectural research in cooperation with our American counterpart i ARCC n Lisbon in 2016.
- We are developing a new EAAE-web that will be presented to you by Ivan Cabrera tomorrow. This web will keep up the functions of our traditional home-page with the catalogue of schools. Our intention, however, is that the web might be developed into a more general homepage dealing with architectural education and research. Publishing information and advertising positions etc.
- The Council is suggesting that the EAAE will publish one high-end profiled and printed publication a year. The plan is to publish this book for the first time in 2015. This is a further developed from the earlier plans for an EAAE- review called 1 : 1.
- The Council works on possibilities for future finance and has initiated applications for funding from Erasmus +.



## Presidency



- And – as you will be confronted with tomorrow we are also trying to re-establish our relations to ACE, maybe reinventing the EAAE/ACE working party.
- And we are relocating the EAAE – secretariat from Leuven to Hassel from this summer onwards. We will still be under Belgian law but at another university and under the wings of another EAAE-secretary.

We all understand that there is a profound need, both for the discussion of the mission of our organisation and the strategies that the EAAE is going to follow. We start this discussion here in the Hasselt GA and have the intention to make decisions in our next GA.

Hasselt 28<sup>th</sup> of March 2014

Karl Otto Ellefsen

President EAAE