

# Massimo Santanicchia | Rationale & Personal Statement

## RATIONALE

*Education is about healing and wholeness.*

*It is about empowerment, liberation, transcendence, about renewing the vitality of life.*

*It is about finding and claiming ourselves and our place in the world.*

Parker J. Palmer

I understand architectural education as a critical process of enquiry, as a vehicle to raise social awareness, as a tool for collective imagination, and as a collaborative project aimed at caring for and repairing the common good.

Together with my students we talk about architectures in plural, collaborative, heterogeneous, and intertwined terms. Architectures are common and shared; they are always in relation to communities and to people, and therefore always political. Recognizing these multiple purposes embedded at the core architectural education means recognizing the societal relevance that architects have beyond the important and un-disputed one of buildings' designers. Architects have therefore the responsibility to respond to the current grand challenges that humanity is facing—climate crisis, social inequality—and contribute to the design of how we can live harmoniously together in a more than human world. These are the imperatives that shape my current scholarship and my vision of what architectural education should respond to and therefore this is my vision of the development of academic teaching in the field of architecture.

As educator I work to empower each student to form his/her/their own agency in architecture and use it for the pursuit of social and ecological justice. Supporting each student with the knowledge, skills, attitudes, behaviours, and values necessary for educating concerned, committed, critical, courageous, confident, competent, creative, collaborative, communicative, and caring cosmopolitan citizens. Educating the cosmopolitan citizen architect means developing both a language and a pedagogy that celebrates diversity of beings and of learning by including different interests, perspectives, type of knowledge, and experiences in the learning process. Especially those from the most marginalised and silenced voices, their inclusion is fundamental to advance social and ecological justice of the design process. A cosmopolitan language in architecture develops a more inclusive and collaborative learning environment, receptive of the Other and capable of reconciling different positions often contradictory starting from the daily activities in the classroom. A cosmopolitan pedagogy transforms the classroom and the design studio into a social platform for collective imagination and activism, empowering students, and teachers to transgress the academic boundaries to disseminate their ideas in a clear way into a larger audience to help society making important decisions.

Educating the cosmopolitan citizen-architect is about understanding that the ongoing environmental crisis, social inequalities and spread of zoonotic diseases need to constitute the premise and scope of scholarly investigation; they must be part of educational discourse, form our individual and collective planetary consciousness and unite us as we move towards solutions. Becoming cosmopolitan citizen architects is a process which aims at completing us as humans in our ever-changing realities and connecting us with the world.

## PERSONAL STATEMENT

Architectural education is my scholarship and my passion. I started teaching at the Iceland University of the Arts (IUA) as part time teacher in 2004, I became assistant professor in 2013, associate professor in 2017, and full professor in 2022. I have been program director of the Bachelor Studies in Architecture since 2017 and today I am program director of the Master Studies in Architecture at the IUA. In 2017 I started attending the EAAE Annual Conferences and ever since I have been an active member. In 2020 together with my colleagues Pnina Avidar, Carla Sentieri Omarrementeria, Ugis Bratuskins, Mia Roth, Riva, Lava, Johan de Walsche, and Michela Barosio, have established the pEA, that is the platform of EAAE's Education Academy, with the aim of exploring contemporary challenges of architectural education. In few months I will also defend my PhD research titled "Becoming Cosmopolitan Citizen-Architects" a research that contributes to the discussion of how architectural education can be advanced to respond better to the current climate and social emergencies. My research scholarship focuses on understanding and advocating for the contribution that cosmopolitan citizenship education can bring to architectural education to advance its societal role by educating architects who are better equipped to deal with grand challenges. UNESCO explains cosmopolitan citizenship education as the acquisition of the knowledge, skills, attitudes, values, and behaviours necessary to become active promoters of more peaceful, tolerant, inclusive, secure, and sustainable societies and to form collaborative individuals who have sense of belonging to the worldwide community of human and more than human beings. This type of education emphasises political, economic, social, and cultural interdependency and interconnectedness that exist between the local, the national and the global and the shared responsibilities that each individual carries as a distinct yet equal citizen of a shared and common world.

Therefore, with this application I do wish to continue my research and teaching activity at the IUA. Contributing to activating the ambition that was at the base at the master's in architecture document which I co-authored in 2017. Which stated that:

*The goal of the MArch at the IUA is to prepare students for active citizenship in the Icelandic context, understanding the role and impact of their design solutions on our society and beyond, to foster understanding and ability to contribute to new perspectives and new knowledge necessary to face the grand challenges of humanity.*

It means educating students to become inquisitive-knowledgeable-self-reflective-critical thinkers capable of challenging the status quo and current assumptions. It means forming relational-empathic-collaborative-caring-socially aware beings, who are instigative of hope and have the generous imagination and courage to act in the now for the pursuit of a better world. It is with the spirit of collective care that I want to talk about architecture with my students apply for this job.

Yours sincerely,  
Massimo Santanicchia