

## OASE #122: Ecological Pedagogies

Janna Bystrykh, Bart Decroos, Jantje Engels, Sereh Mandias, Elsbeth Ronner



While society continues to struggle with prioritising ecology over economic and political interests, at architecture schools a different wind is blowing. There, ecological principles are at the forefront of many projects, and lecturers, researchers and students are increasingly called upon to improve their knowledge of the relationship between architecture and ecology. In response to evolving ideas, teaching methods, positions and references are being questioned. Methods and formats vary between institutions and regions – some emphasise pedagogy and reform, some prioritise collaboration between schools and educators, while others conceptualise visions for education. However, the overarching educational programmes that provide the context in which these discussions occur are slow to change colour.

In the introduction to *Radical Pedagogies*, a book collecting postwar experiments in architectural education, the editors state: 'A revolution in education is by definition paradoxical, even ultimately a contradiction in terms.' They refer to thinkers such as Hannah Arendt, who emphasised the close relationship between education, authority and tradition, suggesting that a hierarchical system of knowledge transmission is inherently conservative. But isn't architectural education in need of reform? The building sector accounts for around a third of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and energy consumption, and with the world on track to exceed 1.5 degrees of warming, it is clear that fundamentally different measures are required.<sup>1</sup>

Traditional architecture education relies heavily on abstraction. Students develop their design skills through idealised scenarios, often following the Albertian model where a conceptual form is imposed on the material world through design drawings.<sup>2</sup> This approach ignores crucial factors such as material and construction costs, environmental impact and maintenance processes. From an environmental perspective, this isolated position is no longer sustainable. How can we introduce a more compelling reality into our educational institutions? Or, conversely, how do we bring education to the rapidly changing outside world? This issue of OASE aims to capture these developments and contribute to the growing body of knowledge in this area.

This issue also reflects on the historical link between OASE and education. The founders of the journal wanted to contribute to the contemporary architecture debate. To this end, they used material developed in the educational context for the publications. OASE 122 also wants to provide a platform for methods and projects that are developed in an educational context that deal with ecology. We want to understand the different ways in which ecology can be taken into account in current (and future) design education. This can take the form of historical or contemporary experiments in architecture education, innovative teaching methods or new pedagogical models. Looking for specific projects or teaching practices that are rooted in ecological considerations, we distinguish two levels:

### 1. What are the issues that schools of architecture address?

Assignments will increasingly focus on circular and biobased construction, building with recycled materials and respect for flora and fauna. In addition, ecology is by definition a matter of connections across disciplines and scales, making collaboration with biologists, climatologists, geologists, futurologists, sociologists and the like more important. What knowledge and design skills do schools of architecture teach? And how do their choices influence the knowledge that they mobilise? But also: How do they deal with architecture history and with theoretical agendas that largely embody a world that no longer exists? And, during this transition, what is worth preserving?

### 2. What are appropriate settings and methods for anchoring education in ecological considerations?

Teaching methods are affected by these changes and can therefore also be questioned. Current education is based on studio teaching supported by lecture series and working groups in educational institutions. What are the appropriate settings and collaborations for ecologically focused education? And in these settings, what specific teaching methods contribute to knowledge development and transfer? For example, how can we address practices such as recycling in a fictional educational context? What is the role of authorship, representation and use? Given that drawings, models, renderings and collages often aim to represent designs as objects, how do we represent relational aspects? And what are the implications for the assessment system?

We are interested in three types of submissions:

1. Reflective contributions: texts on historical or contemporary experiments in architecture education describing specific educational projects or teaching practices. Proposals must include an image and an abstract of up to 500 words.

2. Project contributions: one or more representative images of the outcome of an educational project. Students are specifically invited to submit projects. Proposals must include one or more images and a caption of up to 300 words that explains why the project fits the theme of the issue.

3. Assignments / course descriptions: short texts that present an assignment or course with a specific ecological approach. The focus of these contributions is on the description of an assignment or course, including pedagogical concepts, methods, tools and teaching formats. Proposals must include an image and a caption of up to 300 words.

Proposals must be submitted no later than 1 December 2024 via [info@oasejournal.nl](mailto:info@oasejournal.nl) together with the name(s) of the author(s), email address, professional affiliation and a biography of a maximum of 150 words. Proposals can be submitted in Dutch or English.

1 The building sector accounts for approximately 37 per cent of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and 34 per cent of total energy consumption (2022 Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction).

2 See, for example: Tim Ingold, 'On Building a House', in: *Making: Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2013), 47-60.