Education, Design and Practice – Understanding skills in a Complex World

• Paper / Proposal Title:
The Transformative Use of Work-Based Learning in the Design Studio: Connecting Academia and Architectural Practice

• Author(s) Name:
Marta Masdéu

• University or Company Affiliation:
University of Girona (Catalonia, Spain)

• Abstract (300 words):
Historically, the pedagogical model of the Design Studio has played a fundamental role in architects’ training. This model has been redefined over time in order to adapt to the social, cultural, economic and productive changes. However, despite the adjustments, it has remained the core of architectural education and its fundamental structure has not changed over the years.

The Design Studio has always been a face-to-face and constructive learning space where the professional practice is reproduced by simulating a hypothetical situation. Nevertheless, it currently presents certain limitations that directly affect the training of students as professionals. The reason is that the architectural practice has undergone important developments in the past two decades. Architectural studios and engineering consultancies have reinvented themselves to adjust to the requirements of
the global society. As a result, new forms of professional practice have appeared and additional professional skills have been adopted.

In this regard, today there is a broad academic consensus on the need to reformulate the current pedagogical model in order to offer an education more appropriate to our time. Schools of architecture are carrying out an update of the traditional concept of the Design Studio adopting other pedagogical models such as Work-Based Learning. On the one hand, the essential characteristics of the Design Studio are maintained while different methods from other areas are assimilated. On the other hand, the Design Studio is also becoming a new distributed and collaborative learning space where real problems are addressed by academic, professional and social collaborators.

This paper studies the Work-Based Learning as a transforming element in the Design Studio. It reviews its pedagogical value in today’s education and evaluates the way it can turn the Design Studio into a transversal and reciprocal learning and research space. It also notes, with the identification and the analyses of several study cases, that academia and practice can mutually benefit from the heterogeneity of experiences, the realization of common projects, the distribution of resources and the transfer of knowledge.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Marta Masdéu graduated in architecture from the Ramon Llull University (2006). She taught as an associate professor at the same university (2006-2012). She has worked as a freelance professional and collaborator in architectural studios (2006). She has been member of the research group ‘Architecture, Representation and Computation’ at the Ramon Llull University (2011-2016). She obtained her doctoral degree with the thesis “The Transformation of the Design Studio into New Learning Spaces: A Study on the Integration Process between Academia and Professional Practice” at the Polytechnic School of the University of Girona (2017). Her pedagogical research activity focuses on the study, development and application of innovative educational instruments and methods in the teaching of architecture. Her architectural research work studies how teachers can prepare the next generation of architects to design and construct the built environment taking into account the new professional trends. She has participated in international conferences. She won the Young Architects AJAC XI Award in the category of Research and Theory of Architecture (2018). Currently, she is working as an associate professor and is member of the research group ‘Architecture and Territory’ at the University of Girona (Department of Architecture and Construction Engineering).