

INTRODUCTION

Peter L. Laurence

Many years in the making, the creation of this book spanned the years of a global pandemic, the MeToo and Black Lives Matter movements, social turmoil, political division, and even Constitutional crises in the United States. While none of these historical storylines, or their underlying causes, are in the past, being on the other side of some years characterized by distressing events has revealed things that were less certain in their midst. We have seen change and we have seen resiliency. Monuments have been taken down and buildings names changed, for example, in symbolic recognition of past wrongs. Meanwhile, the pandemic did not end urban life. The nation did not collapse despite an assault on the US Capitol Building. And educational systems did not abandon bricks and mortar in favor of “distance ed,” despite the Zoom revolution and its remarkable demonstration of nearly ubiquitous, high-resolution, real-time telecommunications. There was a moment, distinctly related to this book on architecture education, when it seemed that the studio, long a core of this educational model, might be a thing of the past. Similarly, it seemed that the stories of architecture education in this book might be regarded as irrelevant in this world of ever more atomized individuals. Neither of these things have come to pass. Despite issues of access and the tremendous costs of higher education in the United States, and some of the problems of studio culture, the loss of public life and “in-person” existence revealed their own significant costs. The roles of gathering places, buildings, and institutions have been effectively reaffirmed (for individual benefit, if nothing else), and so too the behaviors and habits, if not traditions, that connect us to the past, and the histories contained in this book.

Relevant to our recent experiences, this book is a collection of histories about social, technological, institutional, and intellectual change and how these changes impacted architecture pedagogy, culture, and practice. The book’s four parts reflect these diverse concerns, all of which are ultimately concerned with challenges to the status quos of education and practice. Part 1: Institutions is not just about the fixtures we call institutions but their origination and establishment. Some essays in this section examine the early years of the relatively young institutions of American architecture education, while others focus on geographic dimensions and the influences of European and more broadly

Western traditions on American architecture culture, but also vice versa. Part 2: Counter-Institutions is focused on twentieth-century challenges to the worst parts of those traditions, namely racism, sexism, colonialism, and various forms of elitism and professionalism. With varying degrees of success, these challenges were leveraged by using institutions as a tool for change, all ambitious undertakings that reveal the difficulties of instituting change and making it permanent. Part 3: Constituting the Discipline, Pushing Its Boundaries focuses on change at the pedagogical level. The essays in this section offer a series of case studies still relevant to architecture education today, particularly the deep relationships of architecture to the humanities and the sciences. Lastly, Part 4: Architecture Goes Beyond Itself examines more recent attempts to redefine the responsibilities and boundaries of architecture education. These essays ask questions about the architect's responsibility to community and city, and the forms of criticality and judgment appropriate to those roles. These concluding essays further inquire about architecture's relationship to the social sciences and its methods, about the architect as activist, and the role of the student in their own education. A brief but more detailed introduction accompanies each part of the book, offering further reflections on these themes as well as points of connection, continuity, and discontinuity between the essays and their historical protagonists.

Geographically speaking, while this collection does not touch on all of the many different regions that make up the United States, case studies of architecture schools in Alabama, California, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, North Carolina, Oklahoma, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, and Washington, DC, represent a good number of them. Ultimately, unique geographies and local circumstances define the character of institutions—who they serve and do not serve, how they understand themselves, and what they do in collaboration with or in contrast to neighboring institutions. The stories of the schools in this collection represent some of the characteristic geographic conditions of schools across the United States, from the concentration of institutions in the Northeast to the more isolated, rural schools of the less densely settled parts of the country. Even without touching down on every part of the land, among the observations that can be gleaned within is that while geography has a profound influence on biography, experimental cultures can grow in rural as well as urban environments.

As we know from *Architecture School: Three Centuries of Educating Architects in North America*, edited by Joan Ockman and Rebecca Williamson—a book that was an inspiration and impetus for this collection—the United States has remarkably strong, distinct, and diverse pedagogical traditions, including the Beaux-Arts, polytechnic, Modernist, avant-garde, and sociologically inflected approaches. It also has a wide variety of public and private institutions, and a diversity of well-developed institutional subtypes among public and private schools, from state-sponsored land-grant universities to Historically Black Colleges and Universities to small, experimental schools such as The Women's School of Planning and Architecture, not to mention the elite and privileged ones. Readers will certainly find histories of the educational traditions within which they still operate, for both better and worse. Relatedly, they will find that some of the pedagogical debates and institutional conflicts that are part of architecture education today have deep roots. And while the nature of architecture as historically a “gentleman's profession” will come as no surprise to some, today's students frustrated by the lack of representation of women, Black Americans, indigenous people, and people of color in the profession today may be shocked to learn

how recently it was, historically speaking, that issues of participation and representation received serious attention.

Although educational practices returned to a “normal” after the Coronavirus pandemic, it is fair to say that the US higher education system, of which architecture education is a part, remains in the midst of an even larger crisis today. While the shameless, legal discrimination against women and ethnic minorities preventing access to education during the time of many of the case studies herein is now gone, so too is government funding for the so-called “public education” that largely benefitted white males during the same decades. Among the consequences of defunding is that students in the neoliberal university system face unprecedented levels of personal debt and are increasingly forced to view their education through economic lenses. Meanwhile, the pressure of political regimes to justify diminishing state support requires faculty to divert their energies from thinking about teaching and the pedagogical innovations that would benefit students, professions, and ultimately the public to external funders, corporate interests, and utilitarian research products. A history of the architecture education of recent decades will likely have to account for this massive shift from pedagogy to “research,” as architecture sought to look more like a grant-generating discipline. Will future histories go on to explain how defunding led to a return to distance education because a Zoom license was far cheaper than building a building? Or how the threat of defunding led to censorship of such topics as environmental or design justice? Or how architecture became a purely STEM field as funding for the humanities evaporated? With such concerns in mind, it is hoped that readers will see architecture education as part of the larger educational system from which it is often isolated, but for which it can potentially be a model. It is hoped that the histories in this book can help reveal the changes still needed today and inspire new chapters in institution breaking and building.