

An architect?

Let's perceive architecture as a book. Some cities including Prague make it very easy. A city is a history book for those who don't particularly enjoy academic historical knowledge as you can notice a different zeitgeist rising from each building. A different age brings a different approach to every profession and we can trace the changes in the technical progress it has undergone each phase.

How has architecture as a discipline evolved? First of all I believe there has been a significant change in what the craft of architecture requires from the architect. Previously great architects like Antoni Gaudí, Michelangelo or Minan Sinan created buildings as a whole. They would design it, then calculate everything needed, personally oversee the construction and decorate it. However the range of an architect's work has shrunk remarkably nowadays, handing over some of it to civil engineers and craftsmen. This might have led to a decrease in respect shown to architects.

Even though architects were highly respected by their surroundings before, I don't think that is the case of the contemporary architects in the Czech Republic; however the reverence shown to architects differs according to the mentality and culture of a certain region. I believe this stance is caused by the huge competition and the fact that most people consider hiring an architect an extravagance.

Now this doesn't mean that there are not a few architects that have proved themselves to the public and gained a celebrity status, such examples are Josef Pleskot, Jan Kaplický or Eva Jiricná. Being able to hold on to this status cannot be achieved without keeping up with the public's demand and expectations.

Adjusting to the demand can be perceived as reflecting the spirit of the age. The question is: can architects shape today's generation? I believe that this possibility certainly remains, given that the development of mankind was enhanced through *inventions* that triggered progress. Therefore if a contemporary architect invents something revolutionary, he is bound to be followed. The issue in finding such an architect lies in the fact that from our standpoint we cannot judge whether he is shaping our culture since we cannot distance ourselves. As an example of how a new invention can shape activities can serve a study hall. The layout of a library's study hall can dramatically change the way that people study by changing the distance between the tables, adjusting the desks or adding sockets for laptops.

The Wikihouse project can be considered a revolutionary invention that can deal with architecture without the actual need of an architect. It makes design accessible to everyone by using certain modules. You can have it delivered and built in a few days. It is certainly an interesting idea; however I believe such a thing to be highly impractical. First of all you get a wooden empty shell no bigger than 18 square meters which is spacious enough for two people at most to live in by themselves comfortably, as if reflecting the isolation of today's society.

Another problem regarding the material and construction of such a house is adjusting to the regulations of areas with higher earthquake or fire occurrence. Moreover it would cause the architecture to stagnate as you are limited to using templates and also lead to a huge commercialization of buildings whose significance would drop to being internet machine produced commodities. Even though the idea of people designing their own homes is certainly interesting, by transforming a building to a simple product we lower its value.

An architect is a person that should be concerned about the architectural value of a building and try to improve it with inventions. I believe that Rogers's conclusion that "*raising architectural standards is just as*

important as raising standards in our schools and hospitals” is justified though a bit over overstated. As architecture is a vital component of a culture it requires to be constantly improved to go hand in hand with the society’s development, just like the educational system does. And this is exactly where the significance of an architect lies.

Besides that, an architect should be able to implement the wants and needs of the individual that keep increasing as development dictates the individual’s expectations. Especially in big cities the way that people work has changed dramatically leading to a considerable change to the image of an ideal home. And that certainly shapes urban architecture and at the same time it influences the individual’s perspective on architecture.

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