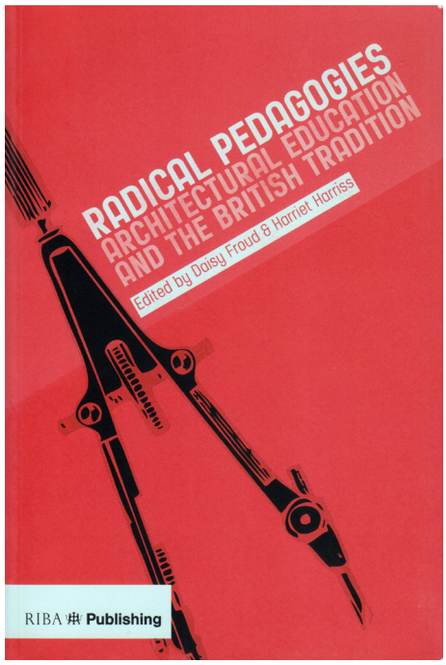

DAISY FROUD Y HARRIET HARRISS (EDS.)

Radical Pedagogies: Architectural Education and the British Tradition

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Splendid Isolation

Let's start at the end! The book *Radical Pedagogies* ends with the declaration that the book was "designed for immediate obsolescence". The book's editors wanted it to be seen as a "useful snapshot" in 2015, just before a point of transition, as the UK's architectural educational system was contemplating change in line with the so-called Bologna Process, whereby the educational systems in each country in Europe are made approximately the same in regard to the length of time studied.

Now, four years since the book's publication, it can be seen that none of the books contributors were able to foresee yet one more major turn of events: that in the year following the book's publication the UK would vote to leave the EU. And at the time of writing this review, it is still uncertain whether the UK will crash out of the EU with no deal — the so-called Hard Brexit option — or postpone the decision to a later date. Rather tellingly, the book gives only a few perfunctory references to Europe, and doesn't even refer to previous uses of the term "radical pedagogies", notably at the Lisbon Architecture Triennale (2013) and Venice Biennale (2014). The book's editors even state that schools of architecture in the UK — "with traditional British obstinacy in the face of EU directives" — may well stick with their own qualification structure, thus carving their own path in splendid isolation.

Radical Pedagogies is basically divided into four sections: 1. Historical critique; 2. The current system; 3. Forms of resistance; 4 Resistance in action — comprising a total of 21 individual essays. The editors deliberately set out to get differing opinions around the question of the 'crisis' in architectural education; e.g. the well-known divide between those who argue that students leave university without any useful skills for working in an architect's office versus those who argue that it is only in university that students really get to experiment and thus bring change to architecture — the students' greater expertise and experimentations with computer technology being one example. Indeed, a central pillar of the book's historical analysis is that architects in the UK never understood or fully accepted modernism and that the UK educational system reflects a critical and renegade attitude. On the other hand, other contributors write about the seeming naivety of architects as a profession in lacking business skills, and with only those in large offices making a decent wage. Indeed, in the UK more than 70% of offices have less than 3 architects and 50% of them consist of a single architect working alone.

Another traditional criticism is architecture students' lack of real involvement with communal political issues, and it was partly with this in mind that a few UK schools of architecture established so-called 'live projects', with real clients and sites. The editors themselves find fault with their book for its London-centric viewpoint, yet these issues figure prominently in two of the most interesting case-study chapters, dealing with sectarianism in Northern Ireland and alternative technology in Wales. Although students were worried about making mistakes that would have a lasting negative impact, taking ownership of the risks became an effective way to develop a professional work ethos, as well helping them understand their relevance as design professionals.

Another factor that the editors felt would soon make the book out-of-date was the imminent foundation in 2015 of a new UK school of architecture, the London School of Architecture (LSA). The LSA is supposed to be a school like no other. But what is the norm in the UK? The current architectural education system in the UK, in operation since the 1930s, is seen as consisting of three major parts, totalling seven years: first a 3-year bachelor's degree (part 1), followed by a year working in an architecture firm, then followed by a further two years studying for a post-graduate diploma (part 2), and then a final year in practice before taking the so-called professional exams (part 3) to gain membership of the Royal Institute of British Architects. In reality, however, many candidates take more than one year to complete part 3. Indeed, two particular statistics are mentioned several times in the book: on average, students take not 7 years but 9,5 years in total to qualify, but moreover that only 1 in 14 students (7%) actually qualify (to give a comparison, in Finland it is 75%). One of the plot twists in the book is that some of the authors do not see the low percentage of students qualifying as architects as necessarily a bad thing. 'Dropping out' should not imply failure. An education in architecture is seen as being wide enough to encourage students to go into other related design fields, and they may become sufficiently cultivated in their different chosen profession to still encourage radical architecture — put bluntly, they may become future enlightened clients of architecture.

Part of the major problem in architectural education in the UK is seen as the balance between gaining practical knowledge while maintaining creativity, and the foundation of the LSE is seen as one remedy to that. In the final article, the book's editors outline the LSA's then forthcoming radically different course programme. It will have no permanent home, no undergraduates and offer just a 2-year post-graduate programme for around 25-30 students. The radicality is that each student will simultaneously work in a leading architectural firm in London. The course is seen as "cost neutral" because the students are earning while studying. This already marks it out from other schools, which have compulsory annual fees, currently over 10 000 € per year, and the majority of students finish their studies in great financial debt. Though painted as a radical departure for the UK, the idea of working while studying is in fact far more common in 'continental' Europe.

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