

Rainier Hoddé. What qualities are required for a consultation-based rehabilitation project? Lessons learned from the Cité du Petit Séminaire housing estate experiment (1976-1986). The article concerns the experimental rehabilitation of the Cité du Petit Séminaire, a housing estate in Marseille. The project took place in the late 1970s using an “ongoing programming” approach based on consultation with the residents of this estate comprising 240 very low cost rental units. The experience and the hindsight now possible provide a better understanding of the relations between architecture and its inhabitants. Architecture has a great deal to gain by being produced using a process involving those who will be living in it and by taking a more explicit political position, even though this has its own inherent risks. Architecture cannot exist in isolation; it is inseparable from the surrounding social world which gives it its value as a living environment.

Daniel Siret, Olivier Balaÿ. Ambience quality and the design process: example of the offices for the new Bordeaux law courts. The building’s concept of quality is based on the provision of ambience. Concentrating on the complex and highly symbolic environment represented by law courts makes it easier to stand back from a performance-based approach and question the divergence and even the distortions that exist between the programme, design and handover of the amenity. The authors demonstrate how the well-known transparency of justice, when transposed by simple analogy to the building within which it is located, is prejudicial to those using the building and the comfort of the prisoners. The “natural air conditioning” system is inevitably accompanied by a lack of comfort in terms of temperature and luminosity. Similarly, concerning acoustic insulation requirements, it might be better to let well enough alone when they are not fully adapted to the various uses made of the premises. The article explains that the quality of an ambience is difficult to create, even when the client has taken care to select a “high quality” architect. There is a need to develop a synthesis between the symbolic, technical and organisational expectations in terms of both ambience and use.

Caroline Lecourtois, What qualities are required from an architectural space? Using the hypothesis that the concept of “architectural quality” can be approached through a knowledge of the cognitive systems that contribute to an understanding of architecture, this article proposes adopting a philosophical or “architecturological” point of view. Through the study of empirical cases, the author questions the qualities that could or should be attributed to the architectural space. The comments collected concerning the Institut du Monde Arabe in Paris or the new law courts in Caen can thus be analysed as the expression of a cognitive activity that consists in re-designing the architectural space through perception. Relevance, reminiscence, readability, social representation and socio-cultural references combine to allow the concept of quality to be appreciated from the point of view of the individual, thus invalidating the concept of Real Quality, being a transcription of the architect’s intentions and proclaimed as such by his/her peers.

Christophe Camus. Recognising and formulating quality in architectural competitions. On the basis of research covering four architectural competitions, including the “Champs Libres” operation by C. de Portzamparc in Rennes, the author discusses the idea, commonly shared by architects, that architectural competitions represent a canonical system essential for the production of high quality architecture. The author begins by

demonstrating how the qualities set out by clients during competitions are given a symbolic and media oriented interpretation by architects. By questioning the way in which the proposals were perceived and identified by those involved in the project and in the media, he notes three quality levels developed in the presentation of the first consultation results. He explains how this first phase structures discussions and the final choice, given that these factors will apply to the three architects chosen to participate in the second phase of the competition. The author then examines the “obvious” nature of the finally chosen project. Finally, he looks at the issue of a selection that is based as much on the qualities of an architect as on the quality of the architecture.

Stéphane Hanrot. Relative evaluation of architectural quality: the players’ point of view. The author examines the possibility of objectifying the evaluation of architectural quality. He raises the hypothesis that this evaluation can only be relative to the points of view of the players (architects and others) who give their verdict, develop a critique and debate the issues. This means that it is the responsibility of the architectural discipline to understand how to compare these varying points of view. Consequently, this article bases itself on the capacity of architects to understand those objects that are of most interest to them, being constructed objects. To evaluate the quality of these objects, the author proposes a comparison model formed by two sub-models: the life cycle model that places the points of view held by the players within a time frame, and the comparison model itself. This model, which permits synchronic and diachronic comparison, raises interesting methodological issues, such as the analyst’s identification of what the author calls the depth of the points of view held by the various players, and the establishment of a scale of values to be able to compare points of view and interpret data. Finally, the author briefly presents a few research examples where the model has been successfully tested.

Sylvain Kubicki, Jean-Claude Bignon, Gilles Halin. Quality and the building construction process. The article places emphasis on the challenge represented by improving the quality of cooperative processes between each player in the production of a building and throughout the entire period of the production system. Based on research and current experimentation, the authors present a coordination assistance tool that aims to improve the quality of cooperation on site. They begin by comparing the specificities of the building production process as well as the particularities of cooperative processes set up to manage the project. They then detail how to describe and model the cooperation context in order to provide players with a clear and intelligible representation of their environment. This is followed by an identification of the specific cooperation modes used during the site works phase, with detailing of their nature, challenges and current limits. In conclusion, they insist on the particularly important role of meeting minutes in the cooperation process, highlighting the key coordination concepts to be used during the site works phase to develop a new cooperation assistance tool called “Image. Site works”.

Eric Henry, Gilles Debizet. Qualities in design, competition and quality management. This article links the issue of a building’s design qualities to the various design organisation processes. The opposition between the sequential model and the competition model is well known. The argument set out in this article concerns a hybrid model that

would place quality management at the heart of the organisation and interfaces between players. Using the sequential model, the success of the project and the obtention of demanding and shared qualities depends, on the one hand, on the methods used to treat the interfaces and details and, on the other, the cooperation of players when it comes to the proposals made by the various involved parties. Competitive design, which has now become a rule for design in the industrial sector, has been successfully experimented in the building and public works sector but the system has not yet been generalised. In the hybrid model, to be found for example in quality approaches and in operations taking care to incorporate environmental management, there are two vital interfaces: the programming-design interface where the client and project manager must be able to simultaneously question the programme and the project, and the design-construction interface where the architect and engineers need to cooperate to develop optimised solutions.

Jean-Michel Léger. Designing abroad. Project translations and betrayals. The author presents two examples resulting from research on the import-export of housing architecture in Europe. He questions the effects of transferring designers recognised as being “good” in their own countries to a different cultural and operational context. The first example shows how a well-known French architect was able to offer prestige to an operation while allowing the Dutch client to maintain a negotiation relationship weighted in its favour, thus assuring that the design was best able to meet local requirements. This is followed by an examination of a reciprocal situation where Swiss architects worked for a Parisian social housing client using a housing typology that the author calls the “Basel layout”. While for reasons of experimentation, the client accepted this configuration, particularly uncommon in the French housing context, the project nevertheless underwent considerable modifications, especially in the way that the elevations were handled. Import-export, seen here through the “great names of architecture”, has the effect of revealing the tension between creative freedom and acceptance of the rules governing all operations.

Silvio Melhado, Ana Rocha de Souza, Quality and management of private housing projects in Brazil. Over the last few decades, the building sector in Brazil has suffered a large number of failures that have damaged its reputation in the country, leading to recent in-depth thinking concerning the way it operates. The acceptance that there is a lack of understanding between client, project manager and site coordination has resulted in new ideas being developed, especially, as examined here, concerning the nature and content of project management missions. The aim, in order to improve the produced quality, is to give greater importance to the provision of a detailed design which, lying just behind the architecture itself, anticipates all technical interfaces, provides resolved solutions upstream from site works and assures that the needed information is distributed to all those involved in the works phase. This is accompanied by a more or less agreed description of the project management missions, achieved through the definition of a sort of activities-skills referential. The latter, for the main design and works process phases, results in specifying project management tasks and providing the skills that these require. Project management and quality approaches demand a redefinition of professional practices and training, especially for architects and engineers.

Cristina Conrad. Quality vs quantity in the current production of social housing. This article attempts to list the causes for the lack of real architectural and urban quality in social housing within the context of its current design and construction process. For social housing clients, it would seem that the most important factor is one of finance. Having presented the general production conditions (considerable lack in the number of housing units built in the Ile-de-France region, reduced surface area of housing units, increasingly poor and badly adapted design, escalating growth of detached housing, insufficient fees for architects, housing essentially appreciated as an economic and technical product), the author details the constraints imposed on both clients and project managers. She then examines the consequences and relevance of legislative changes, especially insofar as demolition is concerned. She concludes by considering certain qualitative and quantitative conditions to be respected for future social housing within the current context of sustainable development, urban renewal and the increasing number of homeless and those living in poor housing conditions.