

## COMPETENCY

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Dear all, this is to notify you the *ARDETH magazine* Call for Papers: "COMPETENCY" curated by **Eunice Seng**.

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Deadline: November 5, 2021

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Abstract:

The etymology of competency (English), *competenza* (Italian), and *competence* (French) derives from the Latin word *competentia*, which means "meeting together, in agreement and symmetry". *Competens*, the present participle of the Latin verb *competere*, has been used to describe "sufficiency of qualification" since the eighteenth century. The Latin *competere*, from which competition also originates, is a compound of *cum* - "with, together," and *petere*, "to strive, seek, fall upon, rush at, attack". We may identify here the notions of making an effort together, achieving something with dedication, and having something that marks differences from others. In contemporary usage, competence is the quality of being competent, while competition is the act of competing. Competency is thus contingent on the conditions of competition in general terms. Yet, the overlapping of meanings is not limited to Latin roots. Competency, in Chinese translation, encompasses the meanings of the words 权 (quán, jurisdiction and limits of authority), 能 (néng, ability), 力 (lì, capability) and 艺 (yì, skillfulness and cleverness). In an empirical field, Bruno Latour's semiotic analyses of industrial practice at Abidjan reveal that the case for vocational training for the industrial worker is based on the production of incompetence. Within the governance of vocational training, workers learned the skills needed to carry out the immediate task but not enough to gain the complete competence to grasp the broader processes to enable competitiveness outside the framework of colonial industrialization and modernization.

Competency is inseparable from labor. In Peggy Deamer's analysis of architectural work, she interrogates architects' refusal to conceptualize their labor as work. She challenges positions that claim work is inherently not fun, creative, or aesthetic by exposing polemics about art and creativity that refuse to be divorced from work issues. The artistic and ideological foundations of the field justify architects' claim that they possess ecumenical proficiencies and knowledge, despite having witnessed how capital, nature, and politics have described, mobilized and ravaged the architectural and urban visions of the twentieth century. Global differential time scales of development see the reappearances of these projects in places with little resistance to their anachronistic implementation.

Nevertheless, the bureaucracy of labor sees that architectural practice produces an exclusionary framework by maintaining access barriers that require the systematic acquisition of codified knowledge, and to conform to built-in hierarchies, and standards. Professional accreditation as a framework for competency creates elitism. Those who could push back, intentionally set their practices outside of this framework.

Following such etymology, agency occurs when competence endows the performance of a subject. Agency in architectural practice embodies process, organization, business, conviction. Until recently, analyses of architectural practice and curricula have largely focused on the products of practice - the forms, styles, and uses of buildings. In professional practice, architects confront the dilemmas of dependence on commissions and an inadequate distinction between architecture and building. Architects grapple with the incongruence between ethical responsibility and accountability to the stakeholders, the constraints imposed on design practice by the size and complexity of architectural offices, and the lag between plans and their fully realized built form. Another dilemma is the provision of services that are not vital to people's health and welfare in the same sense that the professional services of medical practitioners, or even lawyers, are. How do architects harness our competencies in the expanded field to be strategically directed towards agency? How can the focus on technical and communicative skills be changed to contextual presence and interaction? How are architects' competencies equipping them to advance difference meaningfully, especially in moments of crisis? What competencies do architects need to be agents of social change?

Architectural institutions are reviewing modes of learning and practice of architecture to reflect the changing professional landscape. Schools confront the ever-acute tensions between critical thinking and the market. The training of architects who will likely be working in different contexts requires new frames of reference and paradigms. What competencies should the practitioner of architecture possess to bridge technical and managerial specializations in light of competitiveness and nuances of culture? How do the practices and performances of the profession take into account the hybrids and collaborations that define the broad scope of projects? With initiatives such as the New EU Bauhaus agenda to sustain simplicity and inclusion, how can accredited competencies be directed towards accountability in public decision-making? How can the environmental turn be assessed amidst radical political and social struggles? Grappling with these questions necessitates pedagogical discussions in the architectural curricula underscored by the climate imperative. These encompass the organization of design studios, core and elective courses, major and minor programs, general and specialized fields; teaching of technical, intellectual, communicative, and cultural skills; critical review of canonical subjects, precedents, and binary center-periphery and east-west narratives with decentered networked perspectives; and recuperation of inclusive histories and practices.

This issue of ARDETH seeks proposals that interrogate situations of competency within the crises of the politics and effects of global warming, health pandemic, trade war, mobilization of race and labor, new waves of nationalism, and militarization. The rethinking of the histories of architecture, practices, challenges with race, gender, rights, entanglements with money, pressures of continual innovation, and the operative role of contingency offers an opportunity to share knowledge and practices across and beyond national and metropolitan contexts. We invite scholars to explore the spatial, social, political, and environmental dimensions of competency through historical exegeses, theoretical argumentations, case studies, and fieldwork. These may include, but are not limited to:

- Curriculum changes and pedagogical practices, accreditation and licensure.
- Governance and impact on social discrimination, institutionalization and the bureaucracy of work.
- Reconfiguring and re-situating skills and capabilities towards empowerment, inclusion and social justice.
- Translation, transmission and dissemination of cultural, historical and theoretical knowledge, techniques and practices.
- New forms of cooperation to broaden new horizons for architectural practice as a tool for synthesizing complex realities.
- Virtual and online experiences made more visible during the pandemic, expanded from the means and models that create architectural products of interactions and transactions, challenging conventional interaction yet broadening the scope of architectural practice as a framework to synthesize complex realities.
- Discrimination, social and economic inequalities brought about by the use of spatial data and computation.

Kind regards, Ardeth Editorial Board

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