

café

Toward an Architecture Policy for Canada

2019-2020

CANADIAN ARCHITECTURE FORUMS ON EDUCATION
FORUMS CANADIENS D'ARCHITECTURE SUR L'ÉDUCATION

PURPOSE & PRIORITIES

ABOUT CAFÉ

The Canadian Architecture Forums on Education are part of a year-long outreach project to discuss and debate the role of architectural education and research in shaping Canada's future.

The knowledge and ideas mobilized through these forums will inform the development of an architecture policy for Canada. The forums enable students, educators and academic researchers to play meaningful roles in shaping the policy's priorities, ambition and depth of vision.

This CAFÉ initiative is led by the Canadian Council of University Schools of Architecture (CCUSA), representing all CACB-accredited architecture programs in Canada, with the support of a Connection Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC).

The national architecture policy initiative – to which these CAFÉs contribute – is jointly led by the Canadian Architectural Licensing Authorities (CALA), the Royal Architectural Institute of Canada (RAIC), and CCUSA.

Five forums are planned at five schools of architecture across Canada during the 2019-2020 academic year.

WHAT IS AN ARCHITECTURE POLICY

A national architecture policy is an aspirational document. Whereas a building code sets minimum standards, an architecture policy sets forth ambitious goals and calls to action with compelling arguments, images, quotes and case studies. It shows how well-designed settings can enhance social, cultural and environmental well-being, and provides guidance to politicians, professionals and the public on how to achieve more sustainable, equitable and engaging communities. An architecture policy empowers people to pursue positive change and sustainable growth. It would inform public debate, influence legislation and inspire Canadians to create more meaningful and resilient cities and rural development in view of climate change, rapid urbanization, vulnerable lands, threatened heritage and other 21st century challenges.

CAFÉ CAUSE

The Canadian Architecture Forums on Education will bring vigour, rigour and long-term relevance to the process of creating an architecture policy for Canada. Meaningful involvement of the academic sector is crucial to ensuring that any future policy is informed by current research, robust with fresh ideas and relevant for future generations of architects.

QUOTES QUESTIONS PROVOCATIONS PURPOSE & PRIORITIES

Words are not enough.

– Justice Murray Sinclair

Truth and Reconciliation Commission, Ottawa, June 2015

To orient CAFÉ conversations, participants are encouraged to provide feedback on four themes – **PLACE, PEOPLE, PROSPERITY & POTENTIAL** – and the following general **QUESTIONS**:

- When considering the future of architecture in its broadest sense – as impacting society and the planet – what is most concerning? what is most exciting?
- How might an architecture policy help address these concerns and opportunities?
- If Canada develops a policy, what should be its priorities? its calls to action? its scope?
- What examples best demonstrate architecture's role and value for society?
- What strategies would improve public understanding of architecture's value and potential?
- How do we inspire future generations of citizen architects?
- Other comments?

For more information on the **café** initiative – including a detailed schedule; call for manifestos; other ways to participate and further resources – visit the website: www.architecturecanada.ca

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PLACE

In its broadest sense, architecture includes not just buildings, but all inhabitable spaces between them and virtually every aspect of our interactions with the built, natural and social environment. Architecture is also interconnected with value systems, world views, language and history. As such, architecture has a profound role to play in the construction, preservation and experience of place. Architecture always exists in a particular location with unique characteristics, some of which are not visible or immediately apparent. Meaningful place-making requires genuine understanding and sympathetic dialogue with a site's tangible and latent conditions.

CONTEXT AND SCALE

Architecture participates in natural and human ecosystems that precede construction and extend far beyond the footprint of any building. Regardless of a project's size or location, design always involves seeking balance and harmony with complex interdependent conditions, including topography and microclimates; plant and animal habitats; soil and water conditions; local resources and infrastructure; cultural practices and heritage; regional history and customs; ambient atmosphere, and more.

LAND AND RESOURCES

Canada covers a vast, awe-inspiring and heterogeneous terrain, rich with resources crucial for wildlife, biodiversity, sustainable ways of life and vital industry. The Canadian landscape is also saturated with cultural and spiritual significance, place-based knowledge and long histories of use by Indigenous Peoples, whose rights to land, territories and resources must be recognized and renewed. Good design involves careful and creative responses to local geography and materials, but also deep respect for vulnerable natural and human

ecosystems, and Indigenous rights.

CULTURAL HERITAGE AND VITALITY

Architecture is integral to culture. Like art, music, drama and poetry, it is a creative medium of expression, yet it is grounded in particular places and purposeful for multiple communities. Architecture and building practices embody and preserve cultural values over time, while enabling change and renewal. Diverse multicultural and multi-lingual populations support Canada's unique pluralistic identity. First Nations, Inuit and Métis are original and vital agents of this cultural richness.

FORGING COMMUNITY

Architecture shapes the physical environment, which in turn shapes social experience and potential. Buildings and public spaces influence daily routines and provide frameworks for social gatherings and public life. Architecture can enhance a community's connection with place, but this requires meaningful dialogue and inclusive collaboration, mutual recognition and respect, listening and openness, honesty, accountability and trust.

QUOTES THEMES QUESTIONS PROVOCATIONS PLACE

This place may seem like the middle of nowhere to you now, but it will soon be everything you will be in search of later in life. It's who we are.

- Jake Chakasim
Recalling a story of his Mooshim (Cree for grandfather) about the Omushkegowuk People, *Unceded: Voices of the Land*, 2018

*Architectural form is eloquent only in context.
The act of siting betrays to us the tenor of human aspirations.*

- Arthur Erickson, "Weight of Heaven," *Canadian Architect* (Mar. 1964)

The ultimate purpose of architecture is community.

- Brian MacKay-Lyons, *Economy of Ethic*, 2017

PLACE is one of four themes - together with **PEOPLE, PROSPERITY & POTENTIAL** - orienting CAFÉ conversations. Participants are encouraged to provide feedback on the following questions:

- Regarding architecture's impact on PLACE: what is most concerning? and exciting?
- How might an architecture policy help address these concerns and opportunities?
- What examples best demonstrate architecture's impact on PLACE?
- What strategies would invigorate public understanding of the value of PLACE?
- Are any key issues missing from the thematic summary of architecture & PLACE?
- Other comments?

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PEOPLE

Architecture can enhance human life on many levels, potentially helping everyone to have enjoyable, engaging and meaningful lives. People are not passive users and consumers of the built environment; they are living, breathing, striving and thinking individuals whose diverse backgrounds and capabilities, occupations and aspirations, actively make Canada what it is. Architecture provides safe and suitable settings for people to live, work and play, while shaping daily life in ways that can foster social cohesion and cultural vitality, inspire personal and collective imagination, and stimulate wonder and respect for the complex world we must share and sustain.

HEALTH AND HAPPINESS

Quality of architecture is linked to quality of life. Well-designed environments foster physical and psychological health. Spaces with ample daylight, fresh air and pleasant views - and attuned to lived experience - not only improve productivity and reduce illnesses, but enhance emotional well-being.

MEMORY AND MEANING

What we build says something about how we live, what we value and who we are as individuals and as a society. Public institutions - like museums, libraries, theatres, schools, sports facilities, government buildings and places of worship - become symbols of shared values and aspirations; just as everyday places - like favourite markets, cafés, streets and parks - form meaningful settings for cherished experiences.

DIGNITY AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Architecture affects our sense of dignity and intersects issues of human rights. Where one lives, learns, works and plays becomes intertwined with personal and cultural identity. The built environment can help people feel

fulfilled and hopeful; or, conversely, neglected and demoralized. Good design accommodates everyone with dignity, enabling equal access and a sense of belonging. Serious problems, like poverty and prejudice, will never be solved by architecture alone, but design can ameliorate social inequities and foster pride and community.

ENGAGEMENT, EMPOWERMENT AND RECONCILIATION

People possess the power to influence the quality and direction of design in their communities. Informed participation by affected citizens can compel appropriate action, accountability, and better built environments. By fostering genuine inclusion and mutual understanding, architecture and its participatory design processes can become transformative vehicles of reconciliation. Empowering social agency and self-determination also means disempowering systems that obstruct necessary and desirable change. These goals transcend issues of design to implicate the political contexts, procurement processes and legislation affecting architectural services.

QUOTES THEMES QUESTIONS PROVOCATIONS



Architecture trades on its ability to touch and shape people's lives in profound and meaningful ways.

- Brigitte Shim
Reflecting on the 2007 Aga Khan Award for Architecture

All peoples contribute to the diversity and richness of civilizations and cultures, which constitute the common heritage of humankind.

- United Nations
Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2007

Architecture is a public concern.

- Canadian Center for Architecture, founding premise

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- Regarding architecture's impact on PEOPLE: what is most concerning? and exciting?
- How might an architecture policy help address these concerns and opportunities?
- What examples best demonstrate architecture's impact on PEOPLE?
- What strategies would invigorate public understanding of well-designed environments?
- Are any key issues missing from the thematic summary of architecture & PEOPLE?
- Other comments?

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Society is facing an increasing number of challenges in the 21st century. The human-induced climate crisis is threatening ecosystems, biodiversity and human settlements. Irresponsible resource extraction is causing catastrophic damage. Rapid urbanization is exacerbating social division and inequality, while deteriorating infrastructure needs urgent renewal. Architects must rise to these challenges by acknowledging the crises and designing with comprehensive sustainable strategies and social consciousness. Green technologies are not enough. A prosperous Canada needs political will and public care for collective well-being and the planet.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

Architecture impacts the planet's health. The energy to build, heat, cool and power buildings accounts for a significant percentage of greenhouse gas emissions; potable water circulating through every inhabitable space is a limited resource; construction waste and hazardous materials are accumulating in landfill sites and damaging ecosystems. Through informed design decisions, consultation with Indigenous Peoples, responsible leadership, legislation and investment, Canada could be an exemplar in environmental stewardship.

SUSTAINABLE URBANISM

Arbitrary urban sprawl and profit-driven development is not sustainable. With municipal, provincial and federal support, planning and design strategies can foster appropriate density and diversity while enhancing quality of life for all. Sustainable cities require optimized infrastructure, mass transit systems and water supply, as well as pedestrian-oriented developments and affordable housing with access to public space, parks, civic institutions and social services. A holistic approach to regional

development, inclusive of environmental and social goals, is necessary and urgent.

EQUITABLE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Architecture can be a catalyst for equitable economic prosperity. The design and construction industries generate jobs in diverse sectors and stimulate private enterprise. Sustainable development and lifecycle costing can yield massive energy savings, and investing in design can revitalize neighbourhoods, strengthen community, enable self-sufficiency, inspire the next generation of city-builders, promote tourism and generate long-term socio-economic stability.

ADAPTATION

Architecture persists for generations. Good design considers resiliency of new buildings over time and creative adaptation of old structures to new uses. Demolition and rebuilding is costly and can be damaging to environments and social fabrics. Promoting adaptive reuse requires changing not only building practices but attitudes, embracing innovative renewal and the complementarity of new and old.

QUOTES THEMES QUESTIONS PROVOCATIONS PROSPERITY

There is no Wealth but Life.

– John Ruskin, *Unto This Last* (1860)

We could live in a country powered entirely by renewable energy, woven together by accessible public transit, in which the jobs and opportunities of this transition are designed to systematically eliminate racial and gender inequality. Caring for one another and caring for the planet could be the economy's fastest growing sectors.

– LEAP Manifesto, 2015

You are never too small to make a difference.

– Greta Thunberg, UN Climate Change Conf, Dec. 2018

PROSPERITY is one of four themes - together with **PLACE**, **PEOPLE** & **POTENTIAL** - orienting CAFÉ conversations. Participants are encouraged to provide feedback on the following questions:

- Regarding architecture's impact on PROSPERITY: what is most concerning? and exciting?
- How might an architecture policy help address these concerns and opportunities?
- What examples best demonstrate architecture's impact on PROSPERITY?
- What strategies would invigorate public understanding of long-term design value?
- Are any key issues missing from the thematic summary of architecture & PROSPERITY?
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CANADIAN ARCHITECTURE FORUMS ON EDUCATION FORUMS CANADIENS D'ARCHITECTURE SUR L'ÉDUCATION POTENTIAL

What is the future of architecture? And how does architectural design, construction and understanding impact Canada's future? These questions raise myriad concerns, enthusiasms and scenarios for the discipline, profession and built environment. The following sub-themes suggest four ways to consider architecture's potential.

CREATIVE INDUSTRY

A creative Canada needs creative architecture. Architecture provides the enduring infrastructure that showcases other arts, enabling diverse modes of cultural production to thrive. Buildings and neighbourhoods can serve as creative hubs, fostering innovation and collaboration. Architecture itself teaches creativity, displaying innovation and histories of human ingenuity. Architecture plays a key role in projecting Canada's creativity on the world stage: consider Expo '67, Canada's UNESCO World Heritage sites, the Manitoba Hydro Building, and other distinguished works by Canadian architects at home and abroad.

COLLABORATION AND LEADERSHIP

Architecture is a collaborative art, involving many trades, consultants and community stakeholders. With increased specialization and complexity, and renewed dialogue with Indigenous Peoples, inclusive collaboration is more important than ever. Listening to and learning from others is paramount. So, too, is responsible and visionary leadership. Where groups with diverse needs consider complex circumstances and desires, the architect's mediating role and interpretive and synthesizing skills are essential to discovering and representing the common good.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Architectural knowledge is hybrid: equally technical, ethical and aesthetic. It intersects the natural, social and health sciences, engineering, arts and humanities. Its research methods, metrics and topics vary radically: from micro to macro; material to social; local to global; quantitative to cosmopoetic. These factors make architectural research rewarding, but also challenging and undervalued, since innovation often resides between and beyond typical mandates. With strategic research agendas, alliances and support, Canada can thrive as a knowing global leader in environmental stewardship, sustainable technologies and design excellence in support of human rights, reconciliation, and culturally enabling place-making.

EDUCATION AND THE FUTURE OF ARCHITECTURE

Architecture schools are uniquely positioned to support experimental, visionary and provocative work. Mixing enthusiastic experts with optimistic and open-minded youths, academia balances real-world challenges with creative license, critical distance and historical perspective. Schools not only educate future architects, they are transformative crucibles where architecture's potential is holistically rethought and imaginatively renewed.

QUOTES THEMES QUESTIONS PROVOCATIONS POTENTIAL

To project architecture inherently means to propose, through the imagination, a better future for a society; it is inherently an ethical orientation, a promise.

– Alberto Pérez-Gómez, "Imagining a future" (2014)

The built environment has the potential to be a powerful agent for social and environmental change. As a profession, we need to make good on that promise.

– Elsa Lam, "State of the Nation," *Canadian Architect* (July 2019)

We have potential here in Canada to be able to transcend to a higher level of architecture.

– Raymond Moriyama, On establishing the RAIC International Prize, 2014

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