



McGill

School of
Architecture



Architecture
Students' Association

Report of CAFÉ Québec (Canadian Architecture Forums on Education)

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January 9, 2020 – On November 11, 2019, McGill students from both the graduate and undergraduate architecture programs had the opportunity to participate in CAFÉ Québec, the second of five installments occurring throughout the country aimed at gathering different perspectives on the future of architecture and its education in Canada. This initiative, spearheaded by Professor Lisa Landrum at the University of Manitoba and supported by the Canadian Council of University Schools of Architecture and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, aspires to gather valuable insight from students, instructors, and professionals towards drafting a national policy for architecture, one that would establish goals and priorities for its future.

Our delegation to the forum—several interested students along with Martin Bressani, director of the School of Architecture—gathered at the Université de Montréal to discuss current issues surrounding the built environment and the potential ways in which they could be addressed. After several presentations from leaders in the field, participants broke up into smaller groups to talk about specific problems threatening the field.

In one group, Professor Jean-Pierre Chupin at the Université de Montréal raised the issue of architecture's place in the private and public realms, and the question of how to balance potentially conflicting perspectives. Around the table, participants argued that we, as architects and future architects, have a crucial role to play, as arbiters responsible for balancing client desires and municipality regulations. Often, these conflicts delve into larger concerns surrounding gentrification, heritage conservation, and sustainable development.

In another group, the discussion addressed the current housing crisis impacting many cities across the country. Vancouver, Toronto, and Montréal are experiencing significant housing shortages, causing rent prices to dramatically increase. Consequently, many residents are being forced to relocate to more affordable sectors, questioning our role in ensuring social prosperity, and prosperity for whom. Participants addressed the many development projects in and around the city that are replacing low-income housing units with more lucrative residential and commercial buildings. Suggested solutions involved making architectural education more interdisciplinary, encouraging students to study economics, urban planning, and public policy to ensure the next wave of professionals play a more active role in providing equitable prosperity.

Beyond CAFÉ Québec, McGill students held a smaller forum in the School's exhibition room on November 15, 2019, to talk about these issues and their relevance at McGill specifically, discussing both successes and shortcomings of the current architecture curricula as well as the perceived importance of the built environment to the public eye. Students were eager to voice their opinions on the role of architecture in mitigating issues facing the country, from the carbon footprint of the built environment to the rise in housing costs affecting many neighbourhoods on the island. Three students as well as Professor Nik Luka will be heading to Winnipeg at the end of February to attend CAFÉ Prairie, where the discussion will be prefaced by panel of indigenous speakers discussing the potential ways in which a national architecture policy could advance the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada.

For more information on the CAFÉ initiative, visit: <https://architecturecanada.ca/> and <https://instagram.com/archcanadacafe/>
Call for Manifestos: <https://architecturecanada.ca/manifestos/> ; Online Survey: <https://architecturecanada.ca/engage/>