

# *Another architecture – serving the others*

*Why should architects only serve the ones who have the means and the say?  
Why shouldn't we also serve those with little or no means, with little or no say?*

Cross-cultural exchange project between schools of architecture from across the globe  
focusing on the Sustainable Development Goals

Concept

by Henrik Valeur

Supported by the Danish Ministry of Development Cooperation

*"It is precisely this kind of commitment and thinking that is needed in order to engage many people in fulfilling the sustainable development goals."*

Ulla Tørnæs, Minister for Development Cooperation

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## 1. Recommendation

*“The 17 goals for sustainable development (the SDGs) along with the Paris Climate Agreement were the most important global steps forward during my tenure as President of the United Nations General Assembly. It is the crucial common Agenda for the World Community up to 2030. If we do not act now to implement the Global Goals, the peaceful and harmonious survival of mankind is at stake.*

*Architecture can play an important role in realizing the Goals. Therefore it is excellent that Schools of Architecture in many countries are determined to work together in Agenda 2030.*

*We need international partnerships that can create local engagement and activities in order to reach the Global Goals.*

*Thus, “Another Architecture - Serving the Others” is a highly relevant initiative: It is based on cross-cultural and local inclusive cooperation focusing on the Global Goals and some of the most deprived and vulnerable people in this world. Also, the project aims at broad dissemination via educational material, exhibitions, documentaries, conferences and seminars.”*

Mogens Lykketoft

President of the 70th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

MP, former Minister & Speaker

## **2. Objective**

The objective of this project is to probe the potential of cross-cultural collaboration in architecture and to discuss how architects can contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals through various approaches and practices, tactics and strategies aimed at serving the deprived rather than the privileged.

The project involves architecture students from around the world and the results will be used to develop educational material for Danish high school students in the subject of Design & Architecture. The results may also be displayed and discussed at the UN.

## **3. Project**

The project consists of individual studio programs conducted simultaneously at seven schools of architecture across the globe during spring 2018.

### **3.1 Focus**

Each studio program will focus on a limited number of Sustainable Development Goals (see notes p. 8) and the situation of a particular group of deprived people, for instance: vulnerable girls, street children, indigenous people, homeless people, slum dwellers, victims of trafficking, immigrants, poor rural population, refugees, ethnic minorities.

The Sustainable Development Goals concern all people of the world and in all countries of the world there are deprived people, thus activities will be carried out in countries ranging from the poorest to the richest.

### **3.2 Participants**

Each studio program will include one student from each of the other participating schools as well as 2-3 students from the school organizing the program, thus 8-9 students per program.

Students will engage with each other and with local people, activists, bureaucrats and experts.

Local architects with experiences in participatory and collaborative projects focusing on the deprived will be engaged as much as possible.

### **3.3 Programs**

Studio programs consist of field studies, analysis and workshops, presentations and discussions that last for about 3 months in total. The various programs will be conducted simultaneously with thoughts, ideas and experiences being shared between participants through on- and offline presentations and debates.

### **3.4 Work**

The work created in each studio program will include:

1. Personal experiences and observations, collective research and discussions conveyed through diaries, statistics, photos, videos etc.
2. Proposals for actions and interventions, including planning and design proposals, concepts, manuals and strategies, conveyed through concrete activities and physical constructions, graphics and animations etc.

### 3.5 Documentation, dissemination and discussion

The results of the studio programs will be documented, disseminated and discussed in the format of educational material for high school students and through possible events.

1. The educational material will include an information part (1), which will provide insight into the situation of deprived people in different local contexts and a number of Sustainable Development Goals, and an inspiration part (2), which will consist of a number of proposals for possible solutions.

It will be presented in the format of an i-book. The i-book will be accessible from the project website, which will also link to related social media platforms.<sup>1</sup> The website will initially function as a platform for communication between the studio programs, including live streaming of presentations and debates, and later it will be used to document the process and present the results of both the architecture students' and the high school students' work.

2. The events will include a conference and an exhibition.

The conference will consist of presentations by project participants and a panel discussion with experts representing development organizations and philanthropists. If possible, the conference will constitute a side event at the General Assembly of the United Nations in September 2018.

The exhibition will mix cutting-edge and "primitive" technologies and materials, sound and visual effects. It will include the work of all studio programs and, if possible, be on display in the Visitors Lobby at the UN Headquarters in New York.

## 4. Time schedule

### 4.1 Tasks

Planning July – November, 2017

Coordination with participating schools of architecture; development of project description and plans for additional activities; financial planning and fundraising.

Organization December, 2017 – February, 2018

Meeting with participating schools of architecture and possible local partners and stakeholders; discussing activities, sites, topics and making semester programs with faculty. Creation of website and planning of possible events.

Implementation March – May, 2018

Carry out activities: field studies, analysis and workshops, presentations and discussions, including video links and chats. Documentation of the all semester programs.

Dissemination Summer and autumn, 2018

Editing, production, marketing and distribution of educational material. Production and marketing of possible events.

Evaluation Winter, 2018

Reporting to participants, sponsors and others.

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<sup>1</sup> Architecture students may be attached to the high school program as on-line tutors.

## **5. Organization**

### **5.1 Steering committee**

Heads of the participating schools of architecture will form a steering committee overseeing the project.

### **5.2 Director**

The project will be coordinated, programmed, supervised and documented by Henrik Valeur<sup>2</sup> and his team in collaboration with faculty (programming) and students (documentation) from the participating schools.

### **5.3 Collaborators**

The educational material for high schools will be developed in collaboration with high school teacher of art, design and architecture, Kirsten Hyttel Larsen, Gribskov Gymnasium, and publisher Systime. The material will be promoted to high school teachers in collaboration with Bonnie Bay Andersen, adviser to the Ministry of Education on art, design and architecture at the ministry's official course in professional development in February 2018 and at regional meetings for the professional association of high school teachers in art, design and architecture.

### **5.4 Participating schools**

The following schools of architecture have confirmed that they are interested in participating in the project:

- Faculty of Architecture and Planning, Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (Bangladesh)
- The Royal Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture (Denmark)
- Ethiopian Institute of Architecture, Building Construction and City Development, Addis Ababa University (Ethiopia)
- School of Built Environment and Development Studies, University of KwaZulu-Natal (South Africa)
- Department of Architecture, University of Architecture Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)

2 more schools are being invited.

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<sup>2</sup> For information about Henrik Valeur, including CV, bio and portfolio, please see: [www.henrikvaleur.dk](http://www.henrikvaleur.dk)

## 6. Background

### 6.1 Development

While the UN Sustainable Development Goals<sup>3</sup> relate to “all people throughout the world” and it is recognized “that every country is a developing country” it is clear that the vast majority of problems relate to the situation in poor countries and the conditions of poor people and that relatively few problems are associated with the situation in rich countries and the conditions of rich people (even though it can be argued that most of the problems are caused by the actions of rich countries and rich people).<sup>4</sup>

This would seem to require a new approach to architecture in which architects begin to focus on the deprived rather than on the privileged. Deprived people, however, exist in all parts of the world.

### 6.2 Another architecture

Focusing on the deprived instead of on the privileged, architects have to deal with some *real* problems – social, cultural, environmental and economic – that cannot simply be *greenwashed* away or covered up by glossy renderings of alleged social idyll.

We have to critically yet also positively engage with the world in an explorative and experimental, open-minded and imaginative way in which we learn from “the others”.

We have to see the world through a kaleidoscopic perspective and to understand architecture as a complex and dynamic field rather than as fixed and autonomous objects.

Architecture has to be community focused rather than self-centered – and architects may take on the role as social and environmental activists and entrepreneurs.

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<sup>3</sup> The Sustainable Development Goals marked in grey-scale according to relevance for this project:

1. End poverty in all its forms everywhere.
2. End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture.
3. Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all at all ages.
4. Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.
5. Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls.
6. Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.
7. Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.
8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all.
9. Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation.
10. Reduce inequality within and among countries.
11. Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable.
12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.
13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.
14. Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development.
15. Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss.
16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.
17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.

<sup>4</sup> Quotes: David Nabarro, United Nations Secretary-General's Special Adviser on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, speaking at a public hearing of the European Economic and Social Committee, May 2016: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CMvWmIQYtXA>

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## 7.2 Co-evolution

The concept of co-evolution was introduced in architecture by Henrik Valeur as the curator of the Danish contribution to the Architecture Biennale in Venice in 2006 for which he conceived and orchestrated the project [CO-EVOLUTION: Danish/Chinese Collaboration on Sustainable Urban Development in China](#).

For half a year young Danish architects and architecture students, in collaboration with students, researchers and teachers from leading Chinese universities, tried to answer the question: "How can China proceed with its ambitious project to improve living conditions for its population without exhausting the very resources needed to sustain a better life?"

By creating a framework for collaboration between academics and professionals representing two distinct cultures, it was hoped that the exchange of knowledge, ideas and experiences would stimulate "creativity and imagination to set the spark for new visions for sustainable urban development".

The project was awarded the Golden Lion for Best National Contribution at the Architecture Biennale in Venice. Said the jury: "We salute the creativity, intelligence, and generosity of the Danish pavilion".



*CO-EVOLUTION: Danish/Chinese Collaboration on Sustainable Urban Development in China, The Danish Pavilion, The Architecture Biennale of Venice 2006.*