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EVALUATING ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN:

A CASE OF THE 'OPEN JURY'

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Author: Bhavin Paresh Shukla

ABSTRACT

The profession of architecture is characterized by dualities. Contradictions between artistic autonomy and heteronomous practice are reflected in how architectural design is assessed in education and in practice. The issue of 'quality' is at the center of this assessment, and also the primary source of disagreement and contestation. The profession draws its legitimacy and command from this fundamental yet elusive aspect of quality. This thesis investigates the diverse notions of quality that govern the discussion and perception of design projects in architecture schools. This is done by analysing the context of an 'open jury', which drives interactions and discussions on quality. The study stems from the need to clarify the nature of subjective feedback and potentially create a shared framework within which architectural design quality is understood, assessed and taught.

The thesis addresses the following questions:

- What are the indicators of quality of design projects in an open jury?
- How is the jury influenced by the cultural context within which it is positioned?
- What is the role of subjectivity and power in defining notions of quality?

The case chosen for this investigation is CEPT University, Ahmedabad, India. The research method includes semi-structured interviews with tutors and students, and non-participatory observation of online juries from 3rd year and above. A student survey is used to select students to interview and also validate findings from the interviews. The interviews suggest that the quality of student design projects is not only understood in terms of the final product, but also in terms of the design process. The thesis plots 13 indicators of quality on a spectrum of implicit - explicit versus process oriented - product oriented qualities. It also discusses the influence of culture, power, subjectivity, mode of interaction and expectations from university and industry, on the perception and projection of quality in architectural design schools. Through this thesis, I hope to pave the way for better moderation techniques and evaluation methods through a nuanced understanding of quality.

Keywords: architectural design quality, open jury, subjectivity, power, culture