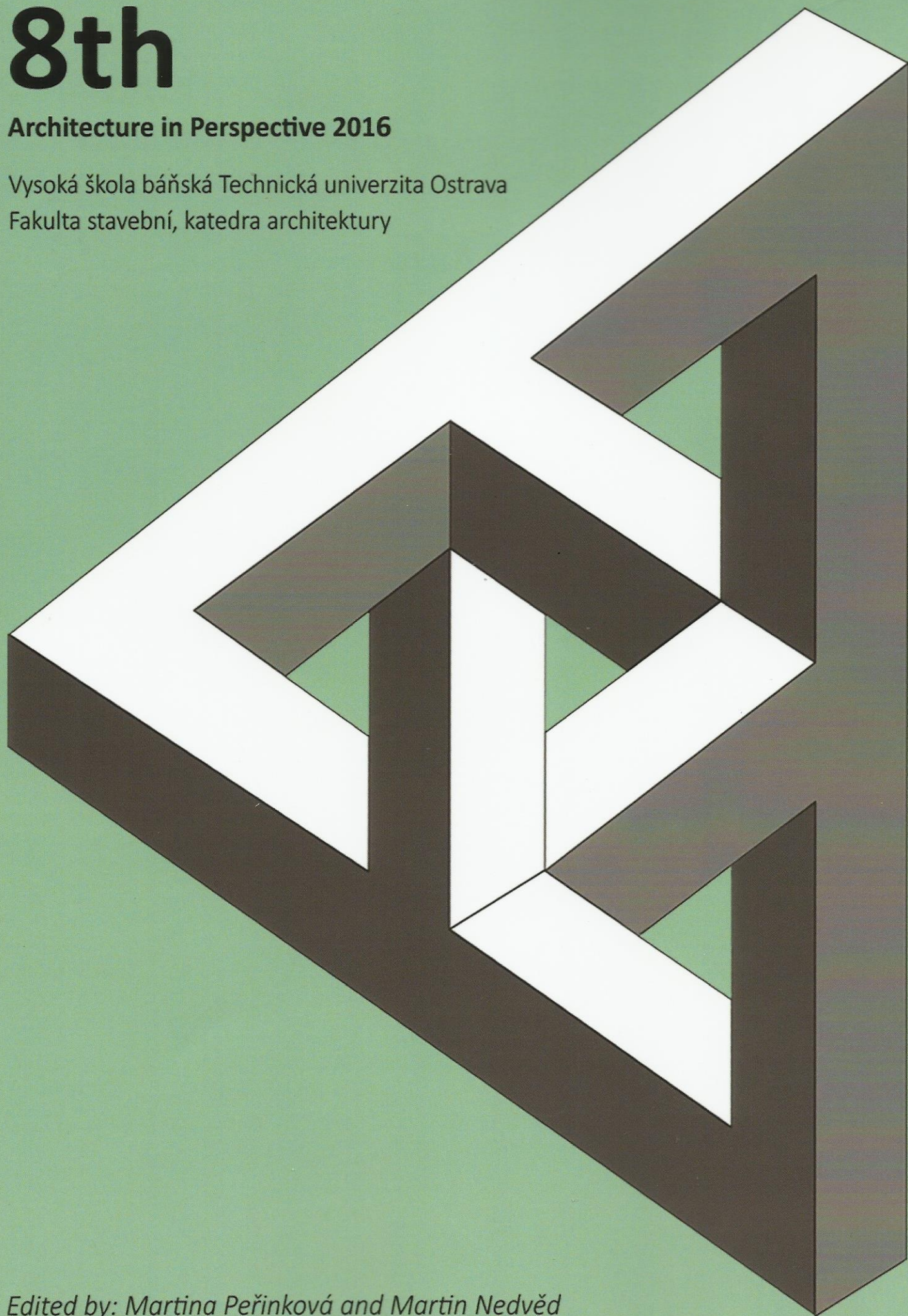


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RECYCLING IN DESIGN FOR SUSTAINABLE CULTURE: RESEARCH AND EDUCATION PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT: The paper investigates aspects and methodology in design research and education philosophy implementing the idea of establishing sustainable culture in societies, particularly in transition. Contemporary approach to sustainable design, architecture, and urban environment philosophy emphasizes the particular importance of the cultural context from which they emerge. In that sense, the notion of sustainable culture appears to be a necessary aspect of research in mentioned fields of design activities. Stressing this idea in the last fifteen years, a few authors proposed strategy for research and educational concepts, by which the core position should be the equilibrium between produced and natural environment. Emphasizing the necessity for being culturally responsible for environmental issues, there emerged even notions concerning *eco-literacy* as a form of behavior and permanent educational platform for future researchers and designers.

KEYWORDS: Recycling, Design, Education, Culture;

The most important idea in our discussion refers to the aspects of broader understanding what design as human activity should be. For instance, Wahl proposed that *design can be understood as the integrative process or activity that connects human actions and attitudes to their material and cultural expression in form of artifacts, institutions, and processes*, and by that he gave the fundamental position to the social and cultural aspects of design as universal conceptual and educational field of development and improvement in environmental issues.[1] The idea that created design, creates new reality, and by those new aesthetical and ethical values, is from higher importance in our recognition of recycling design activities, as basic social and cultural values. It is related to the way how we behave in the complexity of contemporary environment, and how we solve upcoming issues in regard to increase cultural and social diversity, interconnection of design and scientific fields, and particularly in cooperation of design enterprise and education. Recognition of these activities as particular social production activates the idea of sustainable culture as a valuable context for new development of education, research, and aesthetic values.

Contemporary research in this issue emphasizes the importance of development of local society as the fundament for sustainable environment. In this process, it seems that the idea of recycling design plays an important role. Local culture is actually sustainable culture based on the philosophy of preservation of natural and build environment. That means that recycling design can be thought as the basic activity in defining sustainable environment and consequently sustainable culture. Diversity of meanings of the notion of sustainability is from particular importance in this process. This context asks for the reformulation of our usual understanding what recycling in design can be. According to contemporary theories the notion of recycling grasps the fundamental aspects of social and cultural behavior. We are in the process of turning back to traditional understanding of recycling as living philosophy and not only as a technological issue. Recycling design is equal to socially and culturally responsible design. The meaning of this is that recycling design is an overall social activity. It is not a part of our everyday life, but its fundamental principle. Among other aspects that involve general social issues as economic policy, ecology, education, among others, it reflects on *people's particular needs*, in other words, it employs fundamental everyday process of living activities. [2]

This indicates that the local level of developing recycling design activities based on the logic and processes of everyday life seems to be the most responsible approach to the issue. Only in this context, it incorporates three ecological principles transforming our understanding of contemporary recycling design: fluctuation, as a cultural and typically local activity; stratification, regarding social and cultural levels; and interdependence. [3]

Being mainly the local everyday activity, recycling design is in its basic logic traditional approach to creativity. It is asking for a participatory understanding of design, and is not appearing as a high artistic authorship. That way recycling design develops into an ethical issue, concerning and reflecting life needs of ordinary people. Instead of concern-

ing the high artistic and unique creative approach, the first question of recycling design is: who is the user? It develops the collaborative spirit of design activity, as a broader social issue. It activates all levels of society and all participants in economical, political, and the fields of practice. That way recycling design creates social and cultural activities, and not only material artifacts. As an ethical behavior it establishes social and cultural network, a living cultural practice. Actually, it develops *synergy between the activities of designing objects and of 'designing cultures'*. [4]

However, all what has been said does not mean that recycling design cannot be interpreted as a creative process. On the contrary; where social meanings emerge as the fundamental aspects of life guided design, and local cultural characteristics are dominating as expression of aesthetic communication, creativity flourish. Creating an open design approach, where participants can be involved, we can find the multiplication of experience, intuitive notion of sustainability, as a complex system reflecting on that what we call recycling design, among other aspects defining that issue. Basically, it is not far from the notion of that what some theoreticians are calling *strategic design and service design*. *It builds the so-called collaborative networks or initiatives in physical everyday life*. [5]

On this stage of our discussion we should emphasize one particular issue. The notion of recycling design should not be linked to the product design only. As the process by which we reach understanding of improvement of the conditions of peoples everyday life possibilities, it involves some other notions that broaden our views on the field. By this, recycling design involves also urban, architectural, landscape, and system network recycling activities. It brings us back to the notion that design, and by this, recycling design, means that we should develop concepts rather than final solutions for a particular issue; concepts that embody social and cultural aspects of recycling logic and sustainability. It should be affirmation of the creation as a means of defining, exploring and communicating ideas or issues. By this, it gives us *conceptual objects that reflect on directions for more sustainable, meaningful material cultures*. [6]

All what has been discussed indicates that through recycling design we are forming a social communication strategy, where artifact is not a constant value. It emphasizes the participatory process and social and cultural communication, as constant value in the development of designing activities. Probably, as the practice is showing, close to this activity, we can think about communication strategies, brand identity, design research, and urban and architectural recycling issues. All these activities reflect on the global and local creative potentials, and integrates them. That means that recycling design can be thought as a mean of cultural interpretation, and as a factor of social integration, which is a notion beyond the early modernist utopist idea of perfect society. Here, we are talking about real processes and attainable goals.

The process of education and research in recycling design and sustainable environment proves to be a very important aspect in development of ideas regarding the issue of sustainable culture. Generations of designers averred of discussed questions and issues as the primal factor for

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the continual development of sustainable culture and ideas regarding environmental protection. Therefore, a research and education philosophy adaptable to diverse local cultures, and their interactive relationship with industry should be developed and applied.

Education in design issues, particularly in recycling design, emphasizes the need for a permanent process of idea and concept development. Only that way the complexity of questions that are rising through interconnections between participants on all social and cultural levels in this process can be addressed. Design research as the fundamental approach to the educational process is in constant development, following the need for vitality in creative and innovative approach to design. [7] As an educational process, design research allows development of various procedures in idea and concept development, emerging from everyday issues regarding transformation of social and cultural needs of contemporary societies and all their levels. Concerning the issues of reality, research can provide an inside into the logic of problem solving. Particularly when the procedure is based on intuitive knowledge as a fundament for creativity and development of aesthetic sense, the environmental issues can be innovatively addressed. This way developed logic of problem solving, can be thought more as a link between global issues and local solutions, than as a matrix of universal values.

If design activity creates cultural meanings as part of aesthetic communication, than we are accepting innovation as an *idea implemented that creates value*. [8] Innovation in design is also a product of the process of anticipation, which, in educational system, can be developed and reached through the idea of collaborative design. That leads us to the necessity for permanent education of all participants in design as a cultural and social activity. This issue is particularly stressed in the field of recycling design as a complex cultural and social activity, where education for development of small enterprises builds potential local leaders in environmental preservation and recycling policy.

That way one of the results of education in design issues can be establishing of cultural leadership, particularly in strategic and recycling design. It would lead towards an understanding that recycling design is an anticipatory and intuitional activity, integrating social and cultural issues, mentality, tradition, local materials, among other. By this, design research education teaches how to develop multitude of approaches to recycling design issues, and how to reach innovative solutions as core for product development. Here we can think on product also as intellectual capital, potential for development of simulative creative energies of innovators, which will bring benefit for the society and economic development. It will teach us how local values can be integrated into global needs.

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