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*Kadri Asmer, Juhan Maiste*

## IN SEARCH OF THE UNIVERSITY LANDSCAPE

As one of the key words of European culture, *universitas* has two beginnings – one directs us to the universal idea of all possible knowledge, the other to the concrete facts, providing us with an opportunity to see the university and its buildings as a part of conventional history in its own right. The university is a mother – the *alma mater*, that feeds all of us. In one or another way the main idea of the topic – *In Search of the University Landscape* – directs us to the symbols of the past – to the image of the temple from which Plato and Aristotle descend – just like in the *Stanze di Raffaello* in the Vatican. When searching for visual metaphors for the university, both the scholar's stoa and the monastic chamber are suitable, combining both *ratio* (reason) and deeper metaphysical striving toward truth and light.

The concept of a university ensemble makes the invisible spirit visible by giving the buildings belonging to the iconological sphere their aesthetic content. The intellectual history of Europe is revealed to us both in the mental space and corresponding to its architectural semiosphere, where achievements can be traced from antiquity to the first academies, colleges and universities of the early Middle Ages. Just as the scholastic tradition brought nominalism to the spirit of gothic forms.<sup>1</sup> In general, the development of the university

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1 Erwin Panofsky, *Gothic Architecture and Scholasticism* (New York: New American Library, 1951), 14–15.

environment as a distinct building type has two fundamental beginnings; the first relates to the monastic tradition with its cloister-like architectural ensembles, and the second, to English colleges with their characteristic attempts to find a place for the university in a free urban space.

As an architectural phenomenon in its own right the university is not very old. Its architectural roots are in the early modern period, when the nobility that had established itself in the Italian merchant cities embraced the humanistic culture going back to the time of Dante and Petrarca, combining its commercial interests with educational aspirations. As in the Renaissance more broadly, the 15<sup>th</sup> century saw a new and deeper interest in the literature and art of classical antiquity; Greek rose to prominence alongside Latin authors and language, and with it, a new type of academy. On the model of the Platonic Academy, the university emerged as 'the Palace of Knowledge' (*Palast des Wissens*) of a new era<sup>2</sup>, what under the name 'Palazzo per la Sapienza' was first used by Giorgio Vasari, ensuring itself a place in the history of art and the history of the styles reflecting it. In Rome a new Athens was founded by the pope Julius II. That inspired humanity, learning, religion, jurisprudence where so many princes of learning were trained and schooled in virtue, fortitude, temperance and justice.<sup>3</sup>

What sets the university apart from many other types of architecture is its multifaceted and largely ambivalent nature. Its typical character traits are visible on its face, and its body and bloodstream are related to the cultural code and social parameters of its era. At the same time, it is a refugium of knowledge and sanctuary of beauty. As the equivalent of truth, the university has played an important role in the early university buildings where, decorated with the porticos and courtyards surrounded by arches and columns, it became the symbol of the Renaissance architecture.<sup>4</sup> The invention of a new

2 Jörg Stabenow, 'Die Universität als Palast? Zur typologischen Identität der frühneuzeitlichen Universitätsarchitektur in Italien', *Architektur für Forschung und Lehre. Universität als Bauaufgabe. Beiträge zur Tagung des Kunsthistorischen Instituts der Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel am 5. bis 7 Juni 2009*, ed. by Klaus Gereon Beuckers (Kiel: Ludwig, 2010), 57 ff.

3 Ingrid D. Rowland, *The Culture of the High Renaissance. Ancients and Moderns in Sixteenth-Century Rome* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 157.

4 Michael Kiene, 'L'Università nelle città europee: L'architettura universitaria', *Le Università dell'Europa. Gli uomini e i luoghi. Secoli XII–XVIII*, ed. by Gian Paolo Brizzi, Jacques Verger (Milano: Riunione Adriatica di Sicurtà, 1993), 27.

space for the university meant making a change from an introverted to an extraverted structure. La Sapienza in Pisa, Palazzo del Bo in Padua, Archiginnasio in Bologna and others.<sup>5</sup> Coimbra University with Biblioteca Joanina and Casa da Livrari, all comprised a turning point in the transformation of social structure and function, but also in the rhetoric of the architectural image. The new university landscape made it clear that the work of architecture gives meaning to every stone and corner, or as the Scottish man of letters, Henry Home, Lord Kames noted in 1762: ‘... every building has an expression corresponding to its destination.’<sup>6</sup>

According to Walter Rüegg, the history of universities can be divided into the old and the new.<sup>7</sup> The Reformation carried humanist ideas north beyond the Alps, providing an impetus for making the ‘republic of scholars’ – a place where the men of letters, gentlemen and citizens could congregate. The ‘scientific revolution’ of the 17<sup>th</sup> century meant the adoration of human wisdom, which as depicted on the title page of Francis Bacon’s *Novum organum* (1620), sent the priests of science in this new age through the Pillars of Hercules to the open sea in search of adventure. It contained an elaborate description of Solomon’s House (also known as the College of the Six Days’ Works), a centrally organised research facility where specially trained teams of investigators collect data, conduct experiments, and apply the knowledge they gain to produce ‘things of use and practice for man’s life’.<sup>8</sup>

Knowledge means power. The promotion of education was important to the courts of kings and princes. Following the example of Italy, the university model was developed in Germany. The idea of the *palazzo*, in the sense of the university auditorium or assembly hall (*aula*), shaped the development of the university of Tübingen and many other new universities for the nobility. It took decades, however, before the university would find itself a suitable architectural form. In

5 Stabenow, ‘Die Universität als Palast? Zur typologischen Identität der frühneuzeitlichen Universitätsarchitektur in Italien’, 65 ff.

6 Henry Home, Lord Kames, *Elements of Criticism*, vol. II, ed. by Peter Jones (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2005), 707.

7 Walter Rüegg, ‘Themen, Probleme, Erkenntnisse’, *Geschichte der Universität in Europa*, Bd. III. Vom 19. Jahrhundert zum Zweiten Weltkrieg (1800–1945), ed. by Walter Rüegg (München: Beck, 2004), 17.

8 Francis Bacon, *New Atlantis and The Great Instauration*, ed. by Jerry Weinberger (Malden, Oxford, Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2017), 109.

an architectural compendium that was published in 1720, Leonhard Christoph Sturm writes the following: ‘...no one had said how an academy (university) should be built. Which is even more amazing because the ancient Greeks had schools, and Vitruvius even speaks about them in Chapter XI of Book V.’<sup>9</sup> Sturm was the first to try and define the university in the architectural sense: ‘At the university (academy) young princes, counts, *Freiherren* and noblemen must be able to live in a manner that befits their status, speak their chosen language, deal with science and physical exercise. ... That is why suitable apartments must be provided, where in addition to a living room, there are also a bedroom and servant’s room. Along with auditoriums, the academy must also include stables, where the knights’ and school’s horses are boarded; as well as dance halls, fencing rooms. ... Obviously, all the sciences, from arithmetic and geometry to civil and military architecture, the organisation of fireworks and mechanics must be taught. Princely rooms must be divided into sections, as can be seen in Wolfenbüttel.’<sup>10</sup>

The drawings of Sturm’s knights’ academy (*Ritterakademie*) depict a large three-story building with baroque facades that has a central frontispiece embellished with opulent stucco decorations. The building’s roof is crowned with a belfry in the Dutch classical style. At the centre of the academy is a round ‘rondel’ that is surrounded by the physics and chemistry cabinets, guest rooms, library, and a large semi-circular auditorium with ascending rows of benches, and is identified on one drawing as the ‘large Solerne auditorium’ (*Magnum auditorium Solerne*). The central building of the university is called the manor house (*Herren Haus*), surrounded by a courtyard (*cour d’honneur*), the three sides of which form wings that Sturm compared to a French city palace, or, as Sturm called it, a hotel (*hôtel*) using the French word.

The three-story academy designed by Sturm combined the astrological view of the world with the highest power, as well as an interpretation of Vitruvian iconography with the hermeneutics of

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9 Leonhard Christoph Sturm, *Vollständige Anweisung, Allerhand Oeffentliche Zucht- und Liebes-gebäude, Als hohe und niedrige Schulen, Ritter-Academien, Waysen-Häuser, Spitäle vor Alte und Krancke, und endlich besonders also genannte Zucht-Häuser und Gefängnisse wohl anzugeben* (Augsburg: [Jeremias Wolff], 1720).

10 *Ibidem*.

the Bible.<sup>11</sup> 'In addition to the Ten Commandments that God gave Moses on Mt Sinai, he also gifted his prophets with construction plans for the temple,' writes Nikolaus Goldmann in the architectural compendium published in 1699.<sup>12</sup> The university was designed like Solomon's temple, combining a house of God and a temple of the sciences, which rose above the city.<sup>13</sup>

The Enlightenment century required its own university and a corresponding new architectural form in which the idea of a 'Res Publica Litterarum', which had burgeoned during the Renaissance, combined nature, humankind and architecture. According to Professor Christian Cay Lorenz Hirschfeld of Kiel, the parks in Oxford and Cambridge, as well as Dublin, provided an example for the establishment of university gardens, which not only exceeded the size of public parks, but also their beauty: 'The students of the college, residing in large free-standing houses, could indulge in a solitary search for truth in the groves of trees established there. ... Many of the universities in Germany had public paths for strolling. ... The vegetation in the gardens is good-humoured and joyful; the well-tended groups of trees and groves alternate with beautiful varieties of trees, thick hedges and flower beds. ... In selected areas, there are garden libraries, with collections of natural resources, rocks and dried plants. Small pavilions are hidden between the trees. The sciences, and the men dedicated to them, have decorated their temple with allegorical ornamentation, monuments and memorials. ...the gardens also include bathing establishments, riding halls, and places for physical exercise.'<sup>14</sup>

The new idea of the university surrounded by a park landscape came into its own on the wave of the French Revolution. The university emerged as an inalienable human right to enlightenment and education, whereby Rousseau's call to 'return to nature' and Montesquieu's theory on the geographic environment gave impetus to the birth of a new phenomenon – the university landscape. The university, which had previously been closed off as a sort of place of refuge, now broke out of

11 Caroline van Eck, *Classical Rhetoric and the Visual Arts in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 11.

12 Nikolaus Goldmann, *Vollständige Anweisung Zu der Civil-Bau-Kunst* (Braunschweig: Heinrich Kesslern, 1699).

13 Georg Simon Klügel, 'Versuch über den Salomonischen Tempel', *Allgemeines Magazin für die bürgerliche Baukunst*, Bd. I, Th. I (Weimar: Carl Ludolf Hoffmanns Witwe und Erben, 1789), 15.

14 Christian Cay Lorenz Hirschfeld, *Theorie der Gartenkunst* (Berlin: Union Verlag, 1990), 203–205.

these restrictive frameworks, and impelled by a centrifugal force, burst forth into the surrounding landscape, thereby creating the preconditions for the birth of the modern university campus. While the ideas of the Enlightenment were embodied in the most modern university of the period, founded in 1734 by King George II of England in Göttingen, at the time of the Napoleonic Wars, when more universities in the West were being closed than opened, a new network of universities developed, away from the previously existing epicentre. The universities were founded in America and in the borders of the Russian Empire, and with their explosive emergence changed the cultural map by releasing the floodwaters of science and art. These former cultural peripheries, where innovative ideas were now springing up, sought the chance to put these new concepts from Kant, Schleiermacher and Humboldt into practice.<sup>15</sup> In terms of the architectural space, new university ensembles in Tartu, Kazan, Helsinki, Oslo, Virginia, and others, helped find a solution to an unresolved problem: how to assemble buildings with various functions and iconographic codes into a framework of an aesthetically well-designed *alma mater*.

Somewhat paradoxically, the search for an identity for the new era meant a twofold relationship with historical time and surrounding space. Hopes for a bright future led the dreamers back to the past. The Platonic Academy loomed large in the imagination of scholars as a place where, according to the first professor of ancient literature and aesthetics of Tartu University Karl Morgenstern, 'in a small garden under shady trees, one can devote oneself to philosophy and teaching.'<sup>16</sup> Beside the classical past as advertised by Johann Joachim Winckelmann, movement toward one's own national identity – in both England and Germany – highlighted the rediscovery of the Gothic, the earliest impact of which can be noticed in the libraries and university assembly halls that were rebuilt from medieval monasteries and congregation churches after the Reformation (Strasbourg, Marburg, Heidelberg, Zürich).<sup>17</sup> Here, we can

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15 Notken Hammerstein, 'Die Universitäten in der Aufklärung', *Geschichte der Universität in Europa*, Bd. II. Von der Reformation zur Französischen Revolution (1500–1800), ed. by Walter Rüegg (München: Beck, 1996), 495 ff.

16 Karl Morgenstern, *Entwurf von Platon's Leben, nebst Bemerkungen über dessen schriftstellerischen und philosophischen Charakter: Aus dem Englischen übersetzt, mit Anmerkungen, und mit Zusätzen über Platon, Aristoteles und Bacon, versehen von Karl Morgenstern* (Leipzig: Dyck, 1797), 34.

17 Elisabeth Hütter, *Die Pauliner-Universitätskirche zu Leipzig. Geschichte und Bedeutung* (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau Nachfolger, 1993), 121.

speak about the two different styles of Gothic described in Diderot's *Encyclopédie* – the old massive style and a more modern approach to the Middle Ages, the latter being lighter and decorated with more abundant ornamentation.<sup>18</sup> During the Enlightenment, the university spirit combines the standardised form or idiom of antiquity with a romantic desire to be freed of prescribed rules.

Just as a university is an independent architectural phenomenon with its own rhetoric, gestural idiom and iconography, so it also has its own history, the general outlines of which, in addition to its universal cultural mission, are shaped by the character inherent to the identity of each individual place. A decisive role is played by the intellectual energy lines as well as the unique *genius loci*. In search of university landscape we have to consider both – universal and local, cosmopolitan culture and concrete spirit of the place.

Today we stand at a crossroads. *Quo vadis universitas?* What role will universities play in the ever-changing social context of the day, or as the architectural landmarks of tomorrow? These are questions that require the re-examination of various factors and sources. One answer to this could be found in history itself, which is only gradually revealing itself. Compared to different concepts such as monastic, urban, rural and even industrial landscapes, which have been studied for decades, the university as an independent architectural phenomenon has not yet been widely recognised. In his epochal work *A History of Building Types* (1976), Nikolaus Pevsner does not pay special attention to the university as a separate type of architecture.<sup>19</sup> Allan Braham, writing about Enlightenment architecture (1980) focuses on only one example – Jacques Gondouin's *École de Chirurgie* in Paris and its anatomical theatre.<sup>20</sup> In David Watkin's *A History of Western Architecture* (1986), Thomas Jefferson's University of Virginia is the only university mentioned.<sup>21</sup> Thanks to the research conducted by Paul V. Turner, readers have at their disposal a thorough history of the architecture of the American university campus,<sup>22</sup> and thereby

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18 *Encyclopédie*, 17 (Paris, 1757), 749 ff.

19 Nikolaus Pevsner, *A History of Building Types* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976).

20 Alan Braham, *The Architecture of the French Enlightenment* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1980), 137 ff.

21 David Watkin, *A History of Western Architecture* (London: Laurence King, 1992), 369 ff.

22 Paul V. Turner, *Campus: An American Planning Tradition* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1984).

of 'Revolutionary architecture'.<sup>23</sup> More attention has been paid to single university ensembles<sup>24</sup>, which considering the overall interest of the topic still falls a long way short of what might reasonably be expected. One of the first books to offer an in-depth discussion of the genesis of university architecture and its various manifestations from the Middle Ages to the Renaissance was published by Klaus Gereon Beuckers in 2010.<sup>25</sup>

Still, compared to the intellectual, cultural, and educational history of the university, about which considerable works have already been published, we are only at the beginning of a new path of discovery related to the architectural and spatial development of the *alma mater*. Paradoxically, those who built the universities and are building them today have not been enthusiastic about writing the history of their creations. Or as John Ruskin has said in regard to architecture: 'We may live without her, and worship without her, but we cannot remember without her.'<sup>26</sup> This is a truth that is just as valid for Venetian stones as for the university landscape. All attempts to try to define the architectural essence based on certain philosophies, principles and rules characteristic to the university as such remains, are still useless until we appreciate that the university, as a distinct aesthetic paradigm, has its own laws similar to philosophy and culture. Through art we not only learn something, but also become something. 'It is a divine power that moves you, as a "magnetic" stone moves iron rings. ... This stone not only pulls those rings, if they're iron, it also puts power in the rings, so that they in turn can do just what the stone does – pull other rings – so that there's sometimes a very long chain of iron pieces and rings hanging from one another. ... In the same way, the Muse makes some

23 Paul V. Turner, *Joseph Ramée: International Architect of Revolutionary Era* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

24 E.g. Kalevi Pöykö, 'Das Hauptgebäude der Kaiserlichen Alexander-Universität von Finnland', *Suomen Muinaismuistoyhdistyksen Aikakauskirja*, 74 (Helsinki, 1972); Christian Freigang, 'Architektur, Kunst und Kultur', *Göttingen. Geschichte einer Universitätsstadt*, Bd. II, ed. by Ernst Böhme, Rudolf Vierhaus, et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2002), 766 ff; Camillo Semenzato, *L'università di Padova, Il Palazzo del Bo. Arte e storia* (Padova: Erredici, 1999); Piero Del Negro, *L'Università di Padova. Otto secoli di storia* (Padova: Signum, 2002); William Whyte, *Redbrick: A Social and Architectural History of Britain's Civic Universities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

25 *Architektur für Forschung und Lehre. Universität als Bauaufgabe. Beiträge zur Tagung des Kunsthistorischen Instituts der Christian-Albrechts-Universität zu Kiel am 5. bis 7 Juni 2009*, ed. by Klaus Gereon Beuckers (Kiel: Ludwig, 2010).

26 John Ruskin, *The Seven Lamps of Architecture* (New York: Dover Publications, 2012), 178.

people inspired herself, and then through those who are inspired a chain of other enthusiasts is suspended.<sup>27</sup>

The idea of the anthology was born in Tartu in autumn 2016 at the international conference titled *The University Landscape in Light of the Enlightenment*. The focus was on the university as an image and nucleus of universal change in the interpretation of urban space within the context of humanist European education in the Enlightenment era. When writing about the university ensembles, we are writing, first of all, about humankind and its fantasies that correspond to the rules established by humankind in various histories. What these rules are is a question to which each era and each place must find its own answer.

Two special issues of the *Baltic Journal of Art History* include nineteen articles about the university landscape as seen through the analytical gaze of scholars, and through personal experiences in the academic space. The articles vary in style, from descriptive to fact-based, from essays to philosophical treatises. The uniting concept has been the 'university landscape' and its inherent iconography, which until now has only been sporadically touched upon and relegated to local history and empirical study. The book you are holding aims to take the first steps in researching the university landscape of the Enlightenment period as a whole – as an architectural, cultural, spatial and semantic phenomenon – and to provide a global context for the topic.

The editors wish to thank all the historians, and art and cultural scholars, who have shared their ideas on capturing the essence of universities.

**KADRI ASMER, JUHAN MAISTE: IN SEARCH OF THE UNIVERSITY LANDSCAPE**

**KEYWORDS:** UNIVERSITAS; PLATONIC ACADEMY; PALACE OF KNOWLEDGE; ENLIGHTENMENT; UNIVERSITY ENSEMBLE; BUILDING TYPES; ICONOLOGY

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<sup>27</sup> Plato, *Two Comic Dialogues: Ion and Hippias Major*, trans. by Paul Woodruff (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1983), 25.

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