

Viable Home Turf or Difficult Territory?: Architecture academics and the analysis of university buildings

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University infrastructure represents a significant niche in the market of architectural services. Yet sound criticism of university work is not something one comes across often in the architectural academy, particularly from those who work close to the structures under possible investigation. This form of institutional, almost self-imposed censorship deprives architectural scholars of an important category of disciplinary elaboration.

Stressing the paucity of technical debate on academics' own workplace serves to introduce the more general issue of the autonomy of building criticism in an industry – architecture – deeply enmeshed in networks of relationships that make it difficult not to risk threading on potential friends' toes when exercising scholarly disciplinary duties. What could be done to overcome the social barriers to contemporary building design scholarship that exist in academic practice? The answer, as examples will show, lies in treating building projects primarily as sets of data rather than vested testimonies of personal intent.

Biography:

Trained as an architect in Italy and the US, Paolo Tombesi holds the Chair in Construction at the University of Melbourne. The overarching concern of his work is the relationship between the intellectual dimension of architecture and the socio-technical aspects of its physical construction.