FUNDAMENTAL ISSUES AND INDICES - AESTHETICS OF ARCHITECTURE

A B S T R A C T

The author asks the fundamental questions on aesthetics of architecture. Architecture, as the strategic dispositive of a building, and urbanism, as the strategic dispositive of a city, transform the spatial (geographic) and temporal (historical) condition into the dispositive of a form of life whereby we process ourselves as human individuals and communities of people in our spatiotemporal phenomenality at a given point in time. It is therefore necessary to politicise the different aspects of engineering-architectural and artistic-architectural practice. That means showing where the organisation of living space confronts the organisation of individual and collective forms of life. The politics of architecture is anthropologised and that means that architects/city planners work to orient architecture toward the object or relationship of objects that intervene in human life in its everyday flexible and complex intimate, private, and public appearance.

Miško Šuvaković

Singidunum University of Belgrade – Faculty of Media and Communications

KEY WORDS

ARCHITECTURE
AESTHETICS OF ARCHITECTURE
DISPOSITIVE
FORMS OF LIFE
PRACTICE

The traditional aesthetics, philosophy, and theory of architecture begin by asking the following fundamental question and searching for an answer: *What is architecture?*, in a conceptual, formal-morphologic, phenomenal, productive, functional, and user-based sense.

The conceptual sense of the question “What is architecture?” is realised by identifying the meaning of the concept and term that allow one to present, represent, identify, and explain architecture.

The formal-morphologic effect of the question “What is architecture?” is recognised in the technical/technological potential of the practice that transforms the contingency of nature into the planning of living space and the infrastructure of the human world. The contingency of nature *qua* event is confronted by architectural strategies and tactics of building a planned world. In other words, architectural practice transforms geological and natural soil from a *non-place* into a *place* and then into a place in terms of inhabiting or building a habitat, while habitation is embodied and made present by forming (creating, designing, shaping, engineering) and that means conceiving, presenting, and positing “productive living space” as a creative objective human world:

The problems engineers solve cut across economics, politics, science and art, affecting the lives of all men – on this planet now and eventually somewhere else as well.¹

It is therefore necessary to politicise the different aspects of engineering-architectural and artistic-architectural practice. That means showing where the organisation of living space confronts the organisation of individual and collective forms of life. The politics of architecture is anthropologised and that means that architects/city planners work to orient architecture toward the object or relationship of objects that intervene in human life in its everyday flexible and complex intimate, private, and public appearance. Politics must appear in architecture:

This is first of all because it encounters stakes that oblige it to turn away, to bend, to shift positions. Its path is curved because on each occasion it turns around questions, issues, stakes, things – in the sense of *res publica*, the public thing – whose surprising consequences leave those who would rather hear nothing about them all mixed up. So many issues, so much politics. Or, in the forceful slogan proposed by Noortje Marres: “No issue, no politics!” It is thus above all because politics is always object-oriented – to borrow a term from information science – that it always seems to elude us. As though the weight of each issue obliged a public to gather around it – with a different geometry and different procedures on every occasion.²

Therefore, every generation has its own architecture and within each generation there are different architectures pertaining to different classes or social strata, ethnic communities, political parties, professional networks, etc.

We live in buildings, we move along streets, we work in business spaces, we shop in shopping centres, we use bridges to cross rivers, we use tunnels to get through hills and mountains, we get buried in cemeteries, we pray in cathedrals and temples, we vie for power in parliaments and stock exchanges, etc. The mind of the “architectonic man” is a mind that is geared toward producing, appropriating, and inhabiting objects that are spatially distributed in the urbanisation of a place, region, country, continent, and the planet. Spatiotemporal correlations are important in recognising the effectiveness of the “architectonic man”, who is posited in the world, who builds, inhabits what he builds, observes and appropriates the objects he builds, abandons them and replaces them with new objects or constellations of objects, their urban networking and, to be sure, subjectification: “We now name that challenging claim which gathers men thither to order the self-revealing as standing-reserve: “*Ge-stell*” [Enframing].”³

The object⁴ (or item) is simultaneously the product and tool of production, exchange, appropriation, possession or habitation, etc., in other words, the direction of desire, which transgresses the givenness of nature or the human world. Therefore, architecture always concerns moving from being in the world to acting, and acting is the object(ive) of the human mind, which means man, in its individual and collective bodily complexity.

All of these technical/technological elements occur in the transformation of settling space into appropriating space and of appropriating a given space into producing objects for private and public life (habitats, buildings, edifices, settlements, and cities). Production emerges as the practice of transforming human bodily work into machine work with a set purpose. Architecture is inevitably a technical-technological practice and the architects of modernity become technocrats.⁵ The technical/technological complex is not an autonomous domain of “human creativity”, but one of planning and implementing economic management, incorporating the spatiotemporal and living interrelations of human capital, financial capital, production capital, natural capital,⁶ as well as, let me add, the symbolic capital of culture, that is, identification capital of a nation, state, or corporate global network.

To be sure, architecture as the consequence of the practice of producing habitats etc. is an effect endowed with the function of, first and foremost, articulating and rearticulating human life and its visibility. However, articulations or

rearticulations of human life are not the expressions of simple functions but of the complexities imposed by the type of culture and its specific historical and geographical organisation. Finally, architecture is something that is functionally made open toward the user practice of inhabiting, living, realising different forms of social production, exchange, and consumption, that is, building upon life itself as the struggle for survival. The user levels of architecture and urbanism are determined by the sensory and behavioural division of human forms of life into the phenomenality of public (the square, business space, parliament), private (the home), and intimate (bedroom, bathroom) life *spheres*. For instance, the city may be viewed in terms of the complexity of planned, causal, and contingent relations of a complex and non-hegemonic community of people, i.e. its citizens:

The city is a related collection of primary groups and purposive associations: the first, like family and neighborhood, are common to all communities, while the second are especially characteristic of city life. These varied groups support themselves through economic organisations that are likewise of a more or less corporate, or at least publicly regulated, character; and they are all housed in permanent structures, within a relatively limited area. The essential physical means of a city's existence are the fixed site, the durable shelter, the permanent facilities for assembly, interchange, and storage; the essential social means are the social division of labour, which serves not merely the economic life but the cultural processes. The city in its complete sense, then, is a geographic plexus, an economic organisation, an institutional process, a theatre of social action, and an aesthetic symbol of collective unity.⁷

But let us return to the basic question: *what is architecture?*

Figure 1. Rem Koolhaas: Seoul National University Museum of Art, South Korea

Figure 2. Roman theatre in Aspendos or Aspendus, Turkey

The basic answers developed in Western history, theory, and aesthetics of architecture to this ontologically motivated question are these:

- architecture realises the material framework or, in much more complex terms, the stable and dynamic structure in and with which we *live our lives*;⁸
- if architecture is a *practice* of shaping, then architectural shaping or architectural production rests on the spatiotemporal *plasticity* of the human world, which is isolated and confronted to the natural world, that is, to the preceding shaping order of the human world, which gives rise to a new embodied *living space*;
- the *plasticity*⁹ or *plastic potentiality* of the human world, as the basis of architecture as a practice of shaping and producing, incorporates conversion between the plastic world and a graphically posited idea and that means between the image and sign, the body and inscription, the mind/body and object of habitation;
- architecture shapes the modalities of our individual and collective lives, as opposed to nature: materialised/embodied *forms of life* beyond and thereby *vis-à-vis* forms of life; architecture shows how natural spaces acquire their artificial equivalents, replacements, and, finally, antagonistically posited objects that negate nature;
- architecture is the form-giving practice of articulating and producing the “living space” of every culture, whereby architecture is viewed as the embodied and visualised space of culture, while culture is understood as the modality of organising the everyday, intimate, private, and public life of a human community; culture and architecture are symbolically and physically intertwined as the promise or realisation of the totality of the human world;
- architecture is human *infrastructure*, which realises the complex dispositive of a habitat, building, settlement, city, or megalopolis, that is, network of cities;
- architecture is a specific type of organising *forms of human life*, which transforms a non-place into a place, natural into cultural space, local into regional space, and regional into a global system, etc.; the paradox of architecture is that it emerges from our incessant working on organising space, which enables us to *organise*¹⁰ ourselves in the everyday routine of establishing and modifying forms of life.

The initial definition of dispositive (i.e. apparatus) is found in an old but important interview with Michel Foucault:

What I’m trying to pick out with this term is, firstly, a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid. Such are the elements of

the apparatus. The apparatus itself is the system of relations that can be established between these elements. Secondly, what I am trying to identify in this apparatus is precisely the nature of the connection that can exist between these heterogeneous elements. Thus, a particular discourse can figure at one time as the programme of an institution, and at another it can function as a means of justifying or masking a practice which itself remains silent, or as a secondary re-interpretation of this practice, opening out for it a new field of rationality. In short, between these elements, whether discursive or non-discursive, there is a sort of interplay of shifts of position and modifications of function which can also vary very widely. Thirdly, I understand by the term 'apparatus' a sort of – shall we say – formation which has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to an *urgent need*. The apparatus thus has a dominant strategic function.¹¹

As a dispositive, then, architecture is a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of a discourse, institutions, spaces, and architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions – in short, all that is said and unsaid. Such are the elements of this dispositive, i.e. architecture. The dispositive of architecture is the system of relations that can be established between these heterogeneous elements. Thus a particular dispositive of architecture can figure at one time as the programme of an institution, and at another it can function as a means of assessing or masking a practice which itself remains silent, or a secondary reinterpretation of this practice, open to a new field of rationality. In short, between these elements, whether discursive or non-discursive, there is a sort of interplay of shifts of position and modifications of function that can also vary very widely, across registers of social activities. *Dispositive* denotes a sort of – let us say – formation which has as its major function at a given historical moment that of responding to the *urgent need* of realising concrete forms of life in space and time. The dispositive has a dominant strategic function in the realisation of the plastic potentials of the human world – the space where public, private, and intimate life, with all the complexities and contradictions of race, nation, class, generation, gender, etc., comes to be.

Architecture, as the strategic dispositive of a building, and urbanism, as the strategic dispositive of a city, transform the spatial (geographic) and temporal (historical) condition into the dispositive of a *form of life* whereby we process ourselves as human individuals and communities of people in our spatiotemporal phenomenality at a given point in time. That last sentence is an unequivocal description of human subjectification through architecture. That is why architecture may be identified as a *human engagement* – an engagement that links work with production, acting with complex geographical and historical processing of dispositives of forms of life, in all their uniqueness and potential universality.

NOTES

- 1 Arthur Drexler, "Introduction," in *Twentieth Century Engineering* (New York, The Museum of Modern Art and Belgrade, Muzej savremene umetnosti, 1973), 5.
- 2 Cf. the general concept of politics in Bruno Latour, "An Object-oriented Politics," in *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 337.
- 3 Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays* (New York: Garland Publishing INC., 1977), 9.
- 4 Cf. the derivation of the concept of object and object-orientedness in Graham Harman, "Object-oriented Philosophy," (1999), in *Towards Speculative Realism: Essays and Lectures* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2019), 93-104.
- 5 William W. Braham and Jonathan A. Hale, "Why Rethink Technology?," in "Introduction," in *Rethinking Technology: A Reader in Architectural Theory* (London: Routledge, 2007), xiii.
- 6 Jerzy Kozłowski, "To Sustainability through Interdisciplinary Planning: A Planner's Perspective," *Ekistics*, Vol. 69 (294): 294.
- 7 Lewis Mumford, "What is a City (Architectural Record, 1937)?," in *The City Reader*, ed. Richard T. LeGates and Frederic Stout (Oxford, UK: Routledge, 1996), 93.
- 8 Edward Winters, "Introduction," in *Aesthetics and Architecture* (London: Continuum, 2007), 11.
- 9 Catherine Malabou, "Variations I," in *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing: Dialectic, Destruction, Deconstruction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 3.
- 10 Bruno Latour, "The Paradoxical Situation of Organization (org)," in *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013), 389.
- 11 Michel Foucault, "The Confession of the Flesh: A Conversation with Alain Grosrichard, Gerard Wajeman, Jacques-Alain Miller, Guy Le Gaufey, Dominique Celas, Gerard Miller, Catherine Millot, Jocelyne Livi and Judith Miller", *Power Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972–1977* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 194-195.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Braham, William W. and Jonathan A. Hale, "Why Rethink Technology?" in "Introduction," in *Rethinking Technology: A Reader in Architectural Theory*, xii. London: Routledge, 2007.
- Drexler, Arthur. "Introduction." in *Twentieth Century Engineering*, 5. New York, The Museum of Modern Art and Belgrade, Muzej savremene umetnosti, 1973.
- Foucault, Michel. "The Confession of the Flesh: A Conversation with Alain Grosrichard, Gerard Wajeman, Jacques-Alain Miller, Guy Le Gaufey, Dominique Celas, Gerard Miller, Catherine Millot, Jocelyne Livi and Judith Miller." in *Power Knowledge: Selected Interviews & Other Writings 1972–1977*, 194-195. New York: Pantheon Books, 1980.
- Harman, Graham. "Object-oriented Philosophy." (1999), in *Towards Speculative Realism: Essays and Lectures*, 104. Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2019.
- Heidegger, Martin. "The Question Concerning Technology." in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, 9. New York: Garland Publishing INC., 1977.
- Kozłowski, Jerzy. "To Sustainability through Interdisciplinary Planning: A Planner's Perspective." *Ekistics*, Vol. 69 (294): 294.
- Latour, Bruno. "The Paradoxical Situation of Organization (org)." in *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*, 389. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Latour, Bruno. "An Object-oriented Politics." in *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*, 337. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013.
- Malabou, Catherine. "Variations I." in *Plasticity at the Dusk of Writing: Dialectic, Destruction, Deconstruction*, 3. New York: Columbia University Press, 2010.
- Mumford, Lewis. "What is a City (Architectural Record, 1937)?." in *The City Reader*, edited by Richard T. LeGates and Frederic Stout, 93. Oxford, UK: Routledge, 1996.
- Winters, Edward. "Introduction." in *Aesthetics and Architecture*, 11. London: Continuum, 2007.

OSNOVNA PITANJA I ZNAKOVI - ESTETIKA ARHITEKTURE

Miško Šuvaković

U ovom radu autor postavlja osnovna pitanja o estetici arhitekture. Arhitektura, kao strateški dispozitiv zgrade/građevine, i urbanizam, kao strateški dispozitiv grada, transformišu prostorno (geografsko) i vremensko (istorijsko) stanje u dispozitiv oblika života, čime se razvijamo kao pojedinci i zajednice ljudi u našim pojavnim oblicima prostora i vremena u određenom trenutku. Zato je neophodna politizacija građevine – arhitektonska i umetnička – arhitektonske prakse. To znači pokazati gde se organizacija životnog prostora suprotstavlja organizaciji načina života pojedinca i zajednice. Politika arhitekture je antropologizovana, a to znači da arhitekta/gradski planeri rade tako da arhitekturu orijentisu prema objektu ili odnosu objekata koji utiču na ljudski život svojim svakodnevnim fleksibilnim i složenim intimnim, privatnim i javnim izgledom.

KLJUČNE REČI: ARHITEKTURA, ESTETIKA ARHITEKTURE, DISPOZITIV, NAČINI ŽIVOTA, PRAKSA

ESTETIKA I SHVATANJE MOBILNE REALNOSTI: ARHITEKTONSKA PERSPEKTIVA

Vladimir Mako

U ovom radu se raspravlja o mogućnosti da ideja mobilne realnosti iz teoretske perspektive nekoliko značajnih filozofa sa početka dvadesetog veka I savremenih arhitektonskih ideja budu komplementarne po dinamičkim karakteristikama estetske percepcije I iskustva. Ova, na prvi pogled čudna izjava, mogla bi se opravdati relativnom sličnošću filozofskih I arhitektonskih ideja početkom dvadesetog I dvadeset prvog veka, izloženih kroz njihove osnovne karakteristike. U stvari, dinamički estetski doživljaji su osnovne vrednosti avangardnog razumevanja arhitektonskog I urbanog dizajna, a ideja mobilne realnosti je jedna od njihovih osnovnih ideja. Ove ideje bi se mogle primeniti u različitim pristupima dizajna I dinamičkih estetskih doživljaja u savremenoj arhitekturi.

KLJUČNE REČI: ARHITEKTURA, MOBILNA REALNOST, ESTETIKA, PERCEPCIJA

ESTETIKA PREĆUTANOG: ARHITEKTONSKA FORMA I VIDLJIVA GRANICA JEZIKA

Vladimir Stevanović, Andrea Raičević

Stonborough House je kuća u gradskom tkivu Beča na čijem je dizajnu i realizaciji austrijski filozof Ludvig Vitgenštajn učestvovao zajedno sa arhitektom Polom Engelmanom učenikom Adolfa Losa, na predlog svoje sestre Margaret Stonbro-Vitgenštajn. U pokušaju da se Vitgenštajnova filozofija dovede u vezu sa njegovim radom kao arhitekta, kuća *Stonborough* često je imenovana 'vidljivom formom njegovih učenja'. Ovaj rad ima za cilj da pokaže da je prevodenje na zamenski jezik arhitekture dobilo smisao kroz bavljenje filozofskim pitanjima i da je kredo Vitgenštajnovе filozofske etike – uzdržavanje od izlišnog, pronašao artikulaciju svoje estetske vrednosti posredstvom arhitektonske retorike.

KLJUČNE REČI: ARHITEKTONSKA FORMA, JEZIK, LUDVIG VITGENŠTAJN, ALDOF LOS, KUĆA STONBOROUGH