ARCHITECTURE AS A TOOL FOR AESTHETIC AND POLITICAL THOUGHT

A B S T R A C T

Despite the usual approach of architecture in terms of conception, design and construction of the built environment in our paper we will argue that architecture can be used as a tool for aesthetic and political thought. To this end we will rely on definitions of architecture emphasising either its aspects of principle (arché) or construction either its relational character. In this regard, architecture will be used as a means for conceptualising and thinking issues at the intersection of the two pivotal notions of political theory – equality and justice.

Our main hypothesis will be that in the contemporary aesthetic regime the thought of aesthetics is indissociable from politics endorsing in that way the main aspects of Jacques Rancière's relevant contributions. In our analysis, we will first show the affinity between the political and aesthetic thought and then elaborate on aspects of architecture such as scale, type, form, diagram, history and hierarchy in order to show the functioning of architecture as a tool of thought. To this end we will provide a solid scheme and definitions of thought drawing from contemporary philosophy.

By establishing analogies between the process of thought and the processes of architecture we will eventually attempt to show that architecture can be used in an inverted manner so as to shed light on matters of aesthetic and political theory and practice.

KEY WORDS

AESTHETICS

ARCHITECTURE

DIAGRAM

JACQUES RANCIÈRE

POLITICAL THEORY

RELATION

THOUGHT

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Plato and Aristotle were first to consider a relationship between architecture and politics and ethics. Plato, although very critical towards art, believes that architecture is a form of art that promotes the social good. Aristotle, for his part, highlights two key competences that he considers architecture and design should be based on: *poiesis* (Greek: making, manufacturing, producing) and *praxis* (Greek: acting, behavior). *Poiesis* is more related to the knowledge needed for the production of art while *praxis* is associated with another category, that of *phronesis*: ‘a directive, true behaviour based on reason in the field of what is good and bad for the man’¹. Aristotle makes this distinction in order to demonstrate that the architect’s ability is founded on proper behaviour and this is why the architect knows what is best to be done even when the technique fails (*Nichomachean Ethics* VI, 1141b 20). Thus, according to Aristotle, architecture is ‘a supreme art of direction’.²

In Immanuel Kant’s thought, architecture holds a crucial role, different in many respects from that of Plato and Aristotle. Kant employs terms of classical architectural theory in his first writings, while in his first and third *Critique* he introduces the term “architectonic of reason”. The basic idea behind the “architectonic” is the connection between one or more individual elements and their relation to the whole. In the *Critique of Pure Reason* he emphasises the importance of architectural terms for thinking. Kant uses a series of architectural metaphors to define the limits of judgment and knowledge. The architecture will also be used by Kant for the description of the structure of arguments. In his attempt to organise and, above all, map the boundaries of thought, Kant approaches thinking in structural and morphological terms while at the same time he switches between architectural and territorial language in a way that we will again encounter with German philosopher Martin Heidegger.

In fact, Heidegger deals with architecture more in terms of space and thinking with the ultimate goal to arrive at an understanding of the fundamental structure of dwelling. In this regard, building secures dwelling by the permanence of construction. In Heidegger we have the quest for the essence of good life. Art provides man with a measure so that he could approach the essence of dwelling which is equivalent to the essence of good life. In turn, French philosopher Jacques Derrida, in conversation with Plato, Kant and Heidegger, finds a reason in architecture to consider the question of the foundations of thought, that is to ‘question the premises that ensures a foundation’.³ Derrida approaches architecture and the very essence of being an architect through philosophy. He states, in particular, that, ‘the architect is the one who is closest to the principle of *arkhe* (Greek: rule, principle, law) beginning and commandment in a way that

between the figure of the philosopher and that of the architect there are affinities which have at stake the questions of sovereignty and political decision'.⁴ More generally, Derrida's thinking on architecture revolves around the political in terms of the question of *Polis* and that of urban form. From this point of view, he will raise the question of a thought that is determined by architecture, or more specifically, the question of an architectural thought:

'rather we ask the question of a thought that would be specific to architecture, an architectural thought [...] That's why I do not wish to accomplish this gesture that would consist of taking architecture for something, a technique to which one resorts and which would be foreign to the thought and thus more able to be represented in space, to constitute the model of a rhetoric [...] I would rather raise a question that aims at architecture as a possibility of thinking'.⁵

In his major work *Sources of the Self*, Canadian philosopher Charles Taylor also draws on the terminology of architecture in order to approach questions of self-consciousness and identity in dialogue with Aristotle and Heidegger. He employs concepts such as "framework", "moral space" and "moral topography"⁶ in order to address the problem of disorientation and uncertainty in relation to the position in which one stands. Taylor poses the question: "What induces us to talk about moral orientation in terms of the question, who is we?"⁷ But to find an answer to this question we have to assume a space within which one should find his way and orientation. Taylor suggests that an understanding of our predicament in terms 'of finding or losing orientation in moral space is to take the space that our frameworks seek to define as ontologically basic'. Going back to Aristotle, we could import in Taylor's thought the architectural dimension by linking the ability to orient oneself to a moral space with an understanding of architecture as a "supreme art of direction". In addition, when Taylor identifies moral space as a space of questions, this means that by answering these questions we end up with the provision of 'a horizon in which we know where we stand, and what meanings things have for us'.⁸

More generally, by examining the ways in which architecture is interrelated with philosophy, we could say that there are two major tendencies: on the one hand, a philosophical approach to architecture based on the etymology of the terms "architecture", "architect" and others from the vocabulary of architectural theory. Architecture means that there is an *arkhe*, a principle that defines hierarchies of things, what is important and what is not, what precedes, what should be the order of things and who will decide and where he will draw the respecting knowledge. On the other hand, philosophy crosses the architectural

field in terms of space and in relation to this, thinking of space, attempt to demarcate, to find a position and an orientation within it. In both tendencies, there is an ethical dimension intertwined with a political one since the ethical space is also a political one, that is, there is always an interplay between the part and the whole, the individual and its broader frame of reference. To shed light on this, it is important to recognise the aesthetic dimension at play and its co-articulation with the ethical and the political. Following the contributions of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and especially Jacques Rancière, the political can be read in terms of its ability to establish and redistribute divisions of the sensible that is hierarchies of what can be seen, said or heard.⁹ It is exactly the architectural dimension of these hierarchies that specifies ways of seeing and the respective positions. Architectural thought can therefore be perceived as a tool for understanding the structure of ethico-political aesthetic spaces in order to provide an orientation or re-orientation, or to designate a position as a valid point of view for a situation or a problem.¹⁰

From these reflections on the aesthetic dimension it becomes evident that there is a primacy of visibility over the other regimes of senses. That is, there is a privileged nexus of connections between thought, visibility and architecture. We might talk of *architectures of thought*¹¹ as well as of architectures of visibility in order to point towards processes such as visualisation and visual (and/or spatial) reasoning, thinking and explanation. Our consideration of architecture as a tool indicates that there are problems or issues to be solved. This aspect of problem-solving will lead us to the domain of design, inherent to that of architecture. The consideration of design justifies our denotation of architecture as a tool of thought. The reason for that is that both tool and design as well architecture of course, can provide rigorous solutions in terms of form. Designing means shaping, but it also means making decisions. According to Otl Aicher, 'Design is a process of intellectual ordering, clarifications of connections, defining dependencies, creating weightings and requires the designer a special ability to see and fix analogies, connections and fields of references'.¹² According to Christian Gänschert Birkhäuser, the definition of design can be approached through three terms: "seeing, thinking, doing".¹³

Our decision to designate architecture as a tool of thought is based on the hypothesis that the process of form-finding and structuring of a problem is a crucial step in negotiating the problem at hand. Tools, by their nature, are highly formalised and this aspect inevitably activates a process of form-finding in order for the tool to be effectively used. Birkhäuser will resort to the etymology of the corresponding German word *Werkzeuge*, according to which the tool is

an object that “creates works”.¹⁴ For Vilém Flusser, tools do not only shape our concrete actions, but also our thinking: ‘We change our behaviour, and thus our thinking, feeling and wanting’.¹⁵ Tools provide a particular shape but at the same time, tools should demonstrate flexibility. This demand, evident or not, could be better understood by considering the nature of the design problems inherent in the architectural design process. In fact, the demand for flexibility along with a demand for structuring and finding a form for the issue or problem at hand could be understood by the *indeterminacy* that characterises the design process.¹⁶ The design problems are known as “ill-structured” or “wicked problems”, that is, ‘problems that are characterised by incomplete, contradictory and rapidly changing information or demands’.¹⁷ In this context, a point of intersection between architecture and design is the diagram which can be perceived both as a tool and a notion. As a diagram we mean, a representation of ‘causal or temporal relationships between parts of entities and phenomena’.¹⁸ A central hypothesis of our research proposal is that the notions of architecture, design and diagram are highly interconnected. In addition, given the fact that our focus will be on political and ethical questions, we are confronted with a novel constellation of elements that necessitates specific research actions which will be presented in the following section.

Given our approach to architecture we have legitimate reasons to speak of a critical reversal. Contrary to conventional approaches to architecture that focus on its material expression, architecture can also be considered as a way of thinking that can be systematised and take the form of a tool of thought.

One of the key challenges of our research proposal is to approach the domains of politics and ethics in relation to architecture. The relationship between politics and architecture could be considered as twofold. On the one hand, there is the question: What is political in architecture? On the other hand and by means of reversion, another question follows: How architectural thinking can approach political questions and issues? Our focus will be mainly on the second question which in turn leads us to two different sets of questions: What exactly is architectural thinking and how does it differ from other types of thinking? What are these other types of thinking and what is to be considered as the added value or contribution of architectural thinking? The second set addresses the question of content and form with regard to those ethical and political issues that could be the object of an architectural thought. It also addresses the question of the subject of architectural thinking: What are the assumptions or hypotheses according to which a subject (individual, group, institution or organisation) can resort to architectural thinking in order to deal with moral and

political problems? Through such questions emerges a further objective of our research: the necessity to update the concepts of politics and ethics through their mediation by the process of architectural thinking.

The consideration of architecture as a tool for thought imposes a second constraint alongside the requirement to focus on ethical and political issues. Tools serve a specific purpose and in this respect it is important to delimit that field of issues and problems for which architecture is appropriate as a tool of thought. However, in order to delimit the field, a new set of questions will have to be answered, such as: On what grounds is architecture as a tool of thought more effective in comparison to other tools of thought? What are other tools of thought that have been devised and continue to be used today to address ethical and political issues? Is there any potential for collaboration and for these various tools of thought to be complementarity? What exactly are the issues in which architecture as a tool of thought could have a greater contribution in the problem-solving process? It is also necessary to consider the very concept of thinking and especially in an integrated way that would unify architecture, design and the concept of diagram. Given the fact that a critical factor of optimal use of these tools is the experience of the user, it will be important with respect to the pragmatic value of our research, to search for ways in which architecture as a tool of thought will not be based solely on user experience, but instead on a method that could serve as a satisfactory approach to the problem at hand regardless of the user's experience.

Finally, another field of inquiry should be the use of architecture as a tool for ethical and political thinking with respect to the architectural aspect that already exists in ethical and political questions. In this context, we could not only consider conceptual approaches of architecture but also cases of built architecture. In this respect, it is crucial to focus on the concept of space and the ways in which architecture and design can define and redefine visibilities and ways of seeing. In relation to political and ethical issues we will try to answer or at least approach the following questions: How can the visibility and overall perception of an area be improved? How are blind spots produced and can these be mapped through architectural thinking and orientation in space? How to obtain a position that offers a proper or optimal visibility to a space that we consider to be of ethical and political importance?

NOTES

- 1 C. Birkhäuser, *Tools for Ideas: An Introduction to Architectural Design* (Verlag, 2007), 22.
- 2 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Praise of Theory*, trans. Chris Dawson (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 12.
- 3 J. Derrida, *Les arts de l'espace, écrits et interventions sur l'architecture* (Editions de la différence, 2015), 27.
- 4 Ibid., 12.
- 5 Ibid., 28.
- 6 C. Taylor, *Sources of the Self* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), 111.
- 7 Ibid., 28.
- 8 Ibid., 29.
- 9 J. Rancière, *Le partage du sensible. Esthétique et politique* (La fabrique, 2000) ; J. Rancière, *Malaise dans l'esthétique* (Editions Galilée, 2004) ; J. Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (Continuum, 2010).
- 10 B. Latour, "Visualization and cognition: Drawing things together," *Knowledge and Society: Studies in the Sociology of Culture Past and Present*, 6 (1986): 1-40; B. Latour, "Drawing things together," in *Representation in Scientific Practice*, ed. M. Lynch and S. Woolgar (MIT Press, 1990), 19-68; B. Latour and A. Yaneva, "Give me a Gun and I will Make all Buildings Move: An ANT's View of Architecture," in *Explorations in Architecture: Teaching, Design, Research*, ed. Geiser, Reto (Birkhäuser, 2008), 80-89.
- 11 A. Piotrowski, *Architecture of thought* (University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
- 12 O. Aicher. *The world as design* (Wiley, 1991), 101.
- 13 C. Birkhäuser, *Tools for Ideas: An Introduction to Architectural Design*.
- 14 C. Birkhäuser, *Tools for Ideas: An Introduction to Architectural Design*. 7.
- 15 V. Flusser, *Gestures* (University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 222.
- 16 G. Goldschmidt, "Design Thinking: A Method or a Gateway into Design Cognition?" *The Journal of Design, Economics and Innovation*, 3/2 (2017): 107-112.
- 17 H. Rittel and M. Webber, "Dilemmas in a general theory of planning," *Policy Sciences* 4 (1973): 155-69; C. Wrigley and K. Straker, "Design thinking pedagogy: The educational design ladder," *Innovations in Education and Teaching International*, 54(4) (2017): 374-385; G. Goldschmidt, "Design Thinking: A Method or a Gateway into Design Cognition?" *The Journal of Design, Economics and Innovation*, 3/2 (2017): 107-112.
- 18 F. Dogan and N. Nersessian, "Conceptual Diagrams: Representing Ideas in Design," in *Diagrams*, ed. Hegarty, M. et all (2002), 353.

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STEREOTIP LEPOTE I IZGRADNJE. ESTETIKA ARHITEKTURE.

Raffaele Milani

U ovom radu smo se bavili stereotipom kao otpornim modelom tipova stvorenih objekata, slikom proizvodnog procesa koja se ponavlja ili se može ponavljati i standardizovanim modelom virtuelnosti; drugim rečima, stereotipizacija daje formu stvarima unutar sistema objekata koji se serijski reprodukuju. Viševjekovna sinteza zanatstva i materijala se u našem vremenu transformisala u dizajn. Rekonstrukcija objekta podrazumeva praćenje tehnika koje su korišćene u nastanku istog, uključujući i one tradicionalne. U pogledu odnosa među tehnologijama, vodi se žestoka rasprava između onih koji žele da brane tragove prošlosti kao sećanje koje je značajno za budućnost, kao i instrument za harmonizaciju masa, i onih koji u potpunosti favorizuju novitete hibridnog stila koji je u modi posle faze modernizma. Ovi drugi podržavaju deregulaciju proizvodnje arhitektonskih objekata i nekoherentnu, improvizovanu organizaciju prigradskog okruženja. Tokom istorije su postojale značajne razlike u mišljenju o vrednosti čovečanstva, kvalitetu života, načinima razmišljanja i oblicima kulture i umetnosti.

KLJUČNE REČI: ESTETIKA, ARHITEKTURA, UMETNOST, JEZIK, STEREOTIP, ETIKA, LEPOTA

MULTIKRITERIJUMSKA PROCENA LEPOTE U ARHITEKTURI

Bogusław Szuba

Članak se bavi problemima lepote u arhitekturi koji se nalaze u raznim slojevima značenja koji se odnose na: (*) kreativnu ideju planirane investicije; (*) sposobnost da se odredi pravo mesto za planiranu investiciju, usklađujući arhitekturu u prostoru lokacije, sa posebnim osvrtom na prirodno okruženje; (*) komunikaciju i informacije sa okolinom; (*) poštovanje tradicije i običaja koji se poštuju u lokalnom socijalno-kulturnom okruženju, obraćajući pažnju na istorijski kontinuitet i koherenciju arhitektonskih oblika koji se koriste; (*) kreativnost oblikovanja prostora; (*) preciznost i inovativnost funkcionalnih i korišćenih prostornih rešenja; (*) partnerski odnos sa susedstvom; (*) široko shvaćeno učešće u procesu investiranja; (*) davanje značenja pokrećući filozofsku poruku i transcendenciju; (*) pravilno korišćenje i upravljanje; (*) postizanje socijalnih i kulturnih ciljeva; (*) sposobnost planiranja transformacije / revitalizacije postojećih arhitektonskih objekata.

Istraživačka metoda je analiza navedenih komponenti na osnovu izvora iz literature i primera arhitektonskih objekata ili urbanih kompleksa.

Razmatranja vode do teze: Lepota u arhitekturi je stanje harmonije estetskih i upotrebnih vrednosti oblikovanog prostora u odnosima kreativnog odgovora na široko shvaćene uslove lokalnog, prirodnog, socijalno-kulturnog i izgrađenog okruženja.

KLJUČNE REČI: LEPOTA U ARHITEKTURI, KRITERIJUMI LEPOTE U ARHITEKTURI, HARMONIJA ARHITEKTURE I OKRUŽENJA, FILOZOFIJA ARHITEKTURE, ESTETIKA ARHITEKTURE

ARHITEKTURA KAO INSTRUMENT ESTETSKE I POLITICKE MISLI

Thomas SYMEONIDIS

Uprkos uobičajenom pristupu arhitekture u smislu zamisli, dizajna i izgradnje izgrađenog okruženja, u ovom radu ističemo da se arhitektura može koristiti kao instrument estetske i političke misli. Zbog toga se oslanjamo na definicije arhitekture ističući ili njene aspekte principa (arché) ili konstrukcije ili njen relacijski karakter. S tim u vezi, arhitektura će se koristiti kao sredstvo za pitanja konceptualizacije i promišljanja na preseku dve ključne tačke političke teorije – jednakosti i pravde.

Glavna hipoteza je da se u savremenom estetskom režimu misao o estetici ne može razlikovati od politike čime se podržavaju glavni aspekti relevantnih doprinosa Žaka Ransiera (Jacques Rancière). U ovoj analizi počinje se sa prikazivanjem srodnosti između političke i estetske misli, a zatim se razradjuju aspekti arhitekture kao skale, tipa, oblika, dijagrama, istorije i hijerarhije kako bi se prikazalo funkcionisanje arhitekture kao instrumenta misli. U tom cilju prikazana je čvrsta shema i definicija misli u savremenoj filozofiji.

Uspostavljanjem analogija između procesa misli i procesa arhitekture, na kraju će se pokazati da se arhitektura može koristiti na obrnuti način tako da se istaknu pitanja estetske i političke teorije i prakse.

KLJUČNE REČI: ESTETIKA, ARHITEKTURA, DIJAGRAM, ŽAK RANSIER, POLITIČKA TEORIJA, ODNOS, MISAO

DODATA VREDNOST REGENERATIVNE ARHITEKTURE I FILOZOFIJE SAVREMENE ESTETIKE

Andrea Wheeler

Regenerativna arhitektura teži da pozitivno utiče na okruženje. Njen cilj je da proizvede objekte koji umanjuju degenerativne posledice ljudske aktivnosti, a koje pozitivno utiču na životnu sredinu. Da bi se dodala vrednost, u dimenzijama kao što je lepota, uključena u projektne pristupe regenerativne arhitekture i, na primer, *Living Building Challenge*, gde se biofilija i biomimetika postavljaju kao aspiracija, s druge strane, postavljaju se neka osnovna pitanja vezana za načine razmišljanja koji predstavljaju osnovu regenerativne arhitekture i discipline arhitekture. Instrumenti projektovanja sugerišu da se „više od karaktera“ može odrediti, čak i izmeriti u svim kategorijama, ali aspiracije takođe zahtevaju radikalne promene načina na koji posmatramo i razumemo život ljudi. Razumevanje estetike i primat senzorne povezanosti sa okolinom pitanja su koja nisu puno priznata u filozofiji regenerativnog dizajna izvan sugestije biofilije. Ovaj rad se bavi istraživanjem osnova estetike okoline: pričama, mitovima, snovima i značajem kreativne zamisli u shvatanju i ponovnom vrednovanju načina na koji posmatramo i razumemo ljudske živote i naš odnos prema izgrađenoj i prirodnoj sredini.

KLJUČNE REČI: ODRŽIVO, REGENERATIVNO, INANA, BOGINJA, ESTETIKA, FILOZOFIJA, ARHITEKTURA, TEORIJA, DIZAJN, FEMINIZAM

OD POZNATOG DO MISTERIOZNOG. ESTETIKA ATMOSFERA U DOMAĆIM PROSTORIMA

Elisabetta Di Stefano

Pojam „poznatog“ je nedavno postao ključan u debati koja je pokrenuta u „Svakodnevnoj estetici“ (*Everyday Aesthetics*). U ovom eseju ću istražiti ovaj koncept u teorijama Arto Hapala (Arto Haapala) i Juriko Saito (Yuriko Saito), a zatim ću ispitati pojam poznatog – i nekih antonimskih pojmova (tj. čudno, misteriozno, strano) – prihvatajući fenomenološki pristup. Pozivajući se na teoriju atmosfera nemačkog fenomenologa Gernota Bohmea (Gernot Böhme), moj rad poredi pojam staklene kuće, o kom je bilo reči u modernističkoj teoriji, i pojam kuće školjke, koji su iz različitih perspektiva posmatrali Valter Benjamin (Walter Benjamin), Gaston Baselar (Gaston Bachelard) i Juhani Palasma (Juhani Pallasmaa). Na kraju ću povući paralelu sa pojmom čudnog koje se možda pretvara u ideju misterioznog ili stranog, na primer kada se providnost stakla koristi kao alat za kontrolu ili kada je ono ugrađeno u digitalne ekrane hipertehnoloških domova.

KLJUČNE REČI: ESTETIKA ARHITEKTURE, SVAKODNEVNA ESTETIKA, ČUDNO / POZNATO, STAKLENA KUĆA, HIPERTEHNOLOŠKE KUĆE, MODERNIZAM