

# QUESTIONING THE PHYSICAL FORM OF ARCHITECTURE

**Nocker Clemens**

Sapienza University, Institute of Architecture Theory, Rome, Italy, clemens.nocker@gmail.com

## **Título del resumen: El cuestionamiento de la " FORMA FÍSICA " DE LA ARQUITECTURA**

Para definir la "Forma de la arquitectura " tenemos que hablar de la utilidad del diseño puro en relación con el vivir en un entorno urbano. La mayoría de los edificios recientes diseñados por arquitectos famosos, o los llamados arquitectos "estrella", son "iconos culturales" como teatros, bibliotecas y museos. Estas formas arquitectónicas representan un porcentaje muy pequeño de la estructura real de nuestras ciudades. En cambio la tipología arquitectónica más visible en nuestras ciudades son los edificios residenciales. La mayoría de los arquitectos más destacados de nuestro tiempo no están diseñando edificios adaptados a nuestro hábitat. La razón de ello es el hecho de que los edificios residenciales tienen que ser funcionales y asequibles, lo que significa regulaciones estrictas en el diseño y en el uso de materiales. En la arquitectura de "vanguardia " de los últimos 20 años existe una gran brecha entre el diseño y la función del edificio. Las experimentaciones con la forma "deconstructural" durante los años 80 que empezaron con la exhibición del MOMA en 1988, llevaron a una excesiva complejidad en el diseño y en la tecnología. El sociólogo español Emanuel Castells explica en su publicación "El espacio de los flujos" que la arquitectura debe ser capaz de generar una interacción total entre el espacio, el diseño y la sociedad. En los últimos trabajos de Patrik Schumacher, socio del estudio de arquitectos de Zaha Hadid, encontramos una correlación con las publicaciones sobre arquitectura de Castells, pero sin recurrir al término sociedad. Schumacher se centra únicamente en el diseño de edificios elegantes y estéticos sin ninguna funcionalidad. Su teoría sobre la arquitectura se enmarca en la invención radical de la neo "Arquitectura barroca" de finales del siglo XX como respuesta al movimiento moderno y postmoderno. De alguna forma la arquitectura como profesión entraba así en una fase de producción global. El mercado asiático se hizo muy importante y muchos arquitectos abrieron allí oficinas regionales. Al mismo tiempo, sobre todo a partir de la crisis financiera iniciada en 2008, la producción de Europa y América del Norte disminuyó radicalmente. El teórico norteamericano Sanford Kwinter es uno de los pocos teóricos de la arquitectura que está criticando la excesiva fascinación hacia las nuevas tecnologías y hacia el estatus de culto del objeto y su producción capitalista. Kwinter en su obra se refiere a la arquitectura como a una arquitectura de "formalismo pobre" sin ningún tipo de "sentido profundo", totalmente narcisista y con pocas cualidades funcionales y contextuales. Kwinter estaba fascinado por el pensamiento marxista en la arquitectura, especialmente por el movimiento de Tendenza de la escena Italiana, liderado por Aldo Rossi y Manfredo Tafuri en la Universidad de Venecia, con una postura de izquierda radical autónoma. Según la perspectiva de Kwinter este individualismo produjo objetos globales que no están relacionados con ningún identidad propia de un lugar y en condiciones urbanas. Este trabajo analizará desde una perspectiva crítica la producción capitalista global de principio de siglo XXI.

## **Abstract title QUESTIONING THE "PHYSICAL FORM" OF ARCHITECTURE**

To define the "Form of architecture" we have to discuss the usefulness of a pure design in relation of a living in an urban environment. Most recent buildings designed by famous or so called "star" architects are cultural icons in form of opera houses, museums and libraries. These architectural forms are a very small percentage of our cities built structure. In contrast to iconic buildings the most visible architectural typology of our cities are residential buildings. Most of the leading architects of our time are not designing buildings for our habitat. The reason for that is the fact that residential buildings have to be functional and affordable, which means strict regulations in the design and in the use of materials. In the architectural "avant-garde" of the last 20 years there are big gaps (maybe there is a big gap) between the design and the function of the building. The experiment with the "deconstructural" form in the 80s initiated by the MOMA exhibition in 1988 was forcing an excessive complexity in design and technology. The Spanish sociologist Emanuel Castells is explaining in his text "The space of flows" that architecture should be able to produce a total interaction between space, design and society. In the last writings of Patrik Schumacher, the office partner of Zaha Hadid architects, we can see a interaction with Castells writing on architecture but without the term society. Schumacher is purely focusing on the design of elegant and aesthetic buildings without any strong functionality. His theory on architecture is part of the radical invention of neo "Baroque Architecture" at the end of the 20th century as an answer to the modern and postmodern movement. Somehow the architectural profession went into an extreme global production. The Asian market became very important in recent years. At the same time especially since the finance crisis started in 2008, the European and North American production declined radically. The North American theoretician Sanford Kwinter is one of the few architectural theorists, which are criticizing the excessive fascination of new technology and the cult status of the object and its capitalistic production. Kwinter refers in his writing to "poor formalism" architecture without any "deeper sense" totally narcissistic and with few functional and contextual qualities. Kwinter was fascinated of the Marxist thoughts in architecture especially the Italian (not italian) scene from the Tendenza movement led by Aldo Rossi and Manfredo Tafuri at Venice University, which its autonomical radical leftist position. In Kwinter's perspective the globalization of architecture is not referring to any place identity and urban conditions. The final paper should analyze and criticize the capitalist global production at the beginning of the 21st century.

## **THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

To define the theoretical background of this paper it's necessary to analyse the different architectural movements from the last century. If we start with Adolf Loos and his radical approach against the ornament and the whole aristocracy, then we can see in a quite simple way the starting point of modern architecture. For him the formal expression in form of ornamentation was an unnecessary production of architecture and the discipline should have been more simply reduced to the minimal form of functionality without any unnecessary decoration. Adolf Loos found in a city like Vienna, which is still very famous for its historical especially baroque architecture, a great inspiration for his provocation. After Loos the Swiss architect Le Corbusier became one of the main representers of modernity in the field of architecture. Le Corbusier was fascinated by the new possibilities in the beginning of the 20th century in form of mass production and technological progress. After the success of modern architecture in urbanism and urban planning at the middle of the century, a new discussion of the physical form of architecture started. It was a new revolutionary thinking of young architects, which developed their radical abstract way of design. Many protagonists of these young "wild" 70s generation became the leading architecture "avant-garde" of our time and their offices became big global firms. These shifts and the openness towards a "global" international architectural production, reduced the interest for a regional local place identity.

This fact can be linked to the task of critical regionalism, a term which is explained in the book "Architecture of Regionalism in the Age of Globalisation" written by Liane Lefaivre and Alexander Tzonis. For them the term defines the concept of place/region and its relation towards architecture. The main difference between regionalism and critical regionalism is that "does not support the emancipation of a regional group nor does it set up one group against another" (Tzonis/Lefaivre, 1990). To interlink Critical Regionalism, Architecture and Place Identity in an Globalized World Tzonis argues, "Whether this involves complex human ties or balance of the ecosystem it is opposed to mindlessly adopting the narcissistic dogmas in the name of universality, leading to environments that are economically costly and ecologically destructive to the human community" (Tzonis/ Lefaivre 2003)

Also Lewis Mumford wrote in his book *The South in Architecture* (1941) about the identity of architecture in the context of regional culture. "It is not a matter of using the most available local material, or of copying some simple form of construction that our ancestors used, for want of anything better, a century or two ago. Regional forms are those which most closely meet the actual conditions of life and which most fully succeed in making a people feel at home in their environment: they do not merely utilize the soil but they reject the current conditions of culture in the region." (Mumford, 1941) The creation of home identity is and very important issue for space, its perception and use. Cities and villages which were grown over a certain amount of time are producing a kind of natural harmonic composition. Regional cultures with their local identities and tradition are having a place identity were architecture is a big part of it.

Kenneth Frampton another architectural theorist was analysing the term critical regionalism with the help of projects designed by architects including Jorn Utzon (Denmark), Mario Botta (Ticino Switzerland), J.A. Coderch (Catalonia), Alvaro Siza (Portugal), Gino Valle (Udine, Italy), Dimitris and Susana Antonakakis (Greece), Tadao Ando (Japan), Oscar Neimeyer (Brazil), and Luis Barragán (Mexico). Frampton insisted that the critical regionalism of these architects be regarded as not a style—"a received set of aesthetic preferences"—but a process, applicable to a range of situations and more or less independently realized in a variety of locations. (Egger, 2002) Critical regional architecture has the necessity to reinterpret local and cultural characteristics in combination with a modern ideology. To be regional and modern involved an extremely delicate balance. (Egger, 2002)

For Frampton the relationship between critical regionalism and modernism or postmodernism in architecture is very little. "The so-called postmodern architects are merely feeding the mediasociety with gratuitous, quietistic images rather proffering, as they claim, a creative *rappel à l'ordre* after the supposedly proven bankruptcy of the liberative modern project." (Frampton, 1987) This problematic of postmodernity and current architecture, is leading into the total "global" architecture without critical regional relations. Using contextual realities would bring a much deeper success of the individual architectural project. The production of global architecture is guided by private interest, economical profit and the fascination of higher technology. This ideology is making architecture very superficial and soulless, but can be seen nearly everywhere around the world.

Critical Regionalism in the Age of Globalization, an earlier publication, Tzonis and Lefaivre also maintain, "Critical regionalism should be seen as complementary rather than contradictory to trends toward higher technology and a more global economy and culture. It opposes only their undesirable, contingent by-products due to private interests and public mindlessness" (Tzonis/Lefaivre, 2001). They do not provide a checklist or a method to design a "proper" architecture in this mode, but they give a hint by naming the modernist technique of defamiliarization. (Zarzar, 2003) As Tzonis and Lefaivre are pointing out that the contemporary architecture avantgarde are more or less fascinated by technology and in "globalising" their design language around the world instead of trying to understand the local environment and its regional culture.

## **THE CRISIS OF MODERN/ POSTMODERN ARCHITECTURE**

Modernism in architecture was a very successful story after its invention. Architects like Le Corbusier, Mies van der Rohe, Walter Gropius and Frank Lloyd Wright became leading figures in the international movement and their projects influenced generations of young architects. Architectural schools like the Bauhaus became education

factories for an unconventional approach to architecture. The design of their buildings were a unique mix between materials, light and the flexible floor plan.

Modern architecture was applied rapidly to provide new forms of habitat in cities around the world. The movement into an urban century with massive city extension and the Second World War, with its extreme urban destruction gave a successful playground to modern architects and planners. Utopian visions like Le Corbusiers "Plan Voisin" or Ludwig Hilberseimer "New City" produced suburban realities. The crisis started with the gap between vision, drawing and the realized building. One of the critiques of modernism is its top-down operation with all the standardization, bureaucratization, elitism, rationalization and alienation. Within the guidance of the Keynesian state, Fordism, and the status quo in society and the economy modern architecture became a controlled rational built form. It invokes a reciprocal relationship between disciplinary developments in architecture and the broader cultural emergence of neoliberalism. (*Kulper, 2010*)

This rational built form defined by the rules of CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) was applied rapidly in many fast growing cities after world war two. The physical form of modern architecture is simple and geometrical, without any formal expression. Its aim was to create new settlements for the individual middle class in suburban areas. Very soon these settlements were considered to be very non-functional for its residents and produced a kind of negative image inside their cities. Maybe the most famous example for this reality and its failure in a socio- functional way is the Pruitt-Igoe housing complex in St. Louis/USA, which was built in 1955. These modern building blocks were created under the strategy of the United States Housing Act from 1949 and became at the beginning a typical middle class suburban neighbourhood. After some years the residential pattern changed and the blocks and its area transformed into a kind of "Ghetto" - segregated place within the city borders. The city government started to claim the architecture to create social tensions and decided to pull down some parts of the mega-block housing complex. The architecture theoretician Charles Jencks is dating this moment in 1972 to define the "death" of modern architecture.

For the representation of modern architecture, this event generated a very negative image for the building style and its application on the urban field. Modern architecture and urbanism is very detached from its context and any regionalism. The architecture is totally driven by its rational form and functionality.

Charles Jencks started to publish several articles and books on The Language of Post Modern Architecture. In the introduction to his discussion of Postmodernism, Jencks asserted that the demolition of Pruitt-Igoe represents the death of modern architecture. Similar to Rowe and Koetter which explained in their book "Collage City", the interlink of Pruitt-Igoe with the rationalist principles of CIAM, and the urban design principles of Le Corbusier. (*Bristol, 1991*)

Pruitt-Igoe was constructed according to the most progressive ideas of CIAM. and it won an award from the American Institute of Architects when it was designed in 1951. It consisted of elegant slab blocks fourteen storeys high, with rational "streets in the air" (which were safe from cars, but, as it turned out, not safe from crime); "sun, space and greenery", which Le Corbusier called the "three essential joys of urbanism" (instead of conventional streets, gardens and semi-private space, which he banished). It had a separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, the provision of play space, and local amenities such as laundries, creches and gossip centers-all rational substitutes for traditional patterns. (*Jencks, 1977*)

After his definition on the "death" of modern architecture Charles Jencks continued to publish writings on postmodern urbanism. Postmodernism and its relation to urbanism are based on the return of historical forms and the use of ornamentation and strong symbols. These symbols produced in many cities an extreme collage of undefined objects with a quite strange perception of the urban landscape. My ideal post-modernist, like Barth's, is fundamentally concerned with time-binding, with making clear the connection of past, present and future. One of the chronic problems of the dominant Modernism today, especially in its late phase, is its loss of memory and continuity, the way it is infantilised by the marketplace. (*Jencks, 1977*)

One of the main writings of the city. Brown and Venturi were amazed by all the different advertisements, street signs, buildings and their lighting's in its relation to the architecture of the city. Las Vegas became with that publication the most architecture has a very bad reputation among scholars and is for some architectural protagonists no "real" style in architecture.

## **DECONSTRUCTIVISM AND THE ARCHITECTURAL AVANTGARDE**

Deconstructivist architecture has its roots in the progressive avantgarde movements of the 60s and 70s. Many of its protagonists started their architectural production with artistic action-ism in form of installations and movies. Special places for this expression were based at Universities in Los Angeles, New York, London and Vienna. The aim was to create architecture against modernism and its regulated expression. Modern forms are defined by rectangular edges and clear geometric bodies. Deconstructivism means the destruction of this clearness and should open a free form of design and thinking. The key event for deconstructivism in architecture was a exhibition called "Deconstructivist Architecture" in the Museum of Modern Arts (MOMA) New York in 1988 curated by Philip Johnson and Marc Wigeley. The participating architects in the show were Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Rem Koolhaas, Peter Eisenman, Daniel Liebeskind, Bernard Tschumi and Coop Himmelblau (Wolf Prix and Helmut Swiczinsky). The exhibition took place in three galleries at the MOMA from June 23 to August 30 in 1988 and 56 years after the very influential international Exhibition of Modern Architecture in 1932. In both exhibitions Philip Johnson played a major role as a curator at MOMA from 1930 - 32 and 1946 - 54 and as a guest curator of

the show in 1988. Johnson was writing in the preface of the "Deconstructivist Architecture" catalog that the aim of the exhibition was for him and Wigley not to define a style like in the Modern Architecture show in 1932. Instead he articulated the exhibition as "a confluence of a few important architects' work of the years since 1980 that shows a similar approach with very similar forms as an outcome." Johnson went on to say in the preface that "the new forms of "deconstructivistic" architecture hark back to Russian Constructivism of the second and third decades of [the 20th] century." While Hadid explicitly referenced paintings by El Lissitzky, Kasimir Malevich, Alexander Rodchenko, and other constructivist, the link between Russian Constructivism and the projects on display in the exhibition was tenuous at best. (Hill, 2013)

Another very important role for the development of Deconstructive Architecture was the French Philosopher Jacques Derrida with his theory of "deconstruction" mentioned by Mark Wigley in his writing for the catalog of the exhibition. On the one hand, he has been directly involved in the actual design process through his collaboration with Peter Eisenman on a section of the Parc de la Villette at the instigation of Bernard Tschumi, who won the competition for the overall project. On the other, it was he who has coined the term "deconstruction", which has been associated—very problematically—with an architectural style. (Leach, 1997)

Finally somehow "deconstructivism" became a style for the architecture "avant-garde" and many architects in Europe and North America produced plenty of project with this formal expression. This "new" style became the strongest supporter to bring architecture back towards an artistic discipline and its protagonist architects started to teach this form of architectural design at leading universities in the US and Europe. At the beginning the design process was based on hand sketches, drawings and physical models. Later from the late 90s on the style was generated more and more with the help of special computer tools. The influence of the computer made the edgy forms more organic and the architectural design of most of the "deconstructivist" architects became more fluid and influenced by natural forms. It is already 25 years ago that this significant exhibition in architectural history took place and transformed the architectural discipline towards the future. But what would happen if a similar exhibition would take place today? (Hill, 2013)

Tschumi asserted that there is nothing today to battle, like postmodern architecture 25 years ago, but then he offered that a show now would be called "Iconism," addressing the obsessions of architects to make icons. With many of the today's icons designed by architects from the exhibition, this means that the battle will be against what Tschumi and his fellow protagonists have accomplished in the last few decades.

Maybe the answer of Bernard Tschumi is proclaiming the need for a rethinking of "formal" architecture and its dynamics towards a new architectural avant-garde with 16 young protagonists. Usually new "avantgardistic" movements are always working against the previous ones to create the total opposition.

## **THE IMPORTANCE OF MATERIALS AND TECHNOLOGY**

Architecture is much related to technological evolution. The design of spectacular forms was 30 years ago extremely hard to realize. New technologies and materials in form of special concrete or glass fabrications made it possible to construct very complex architectural designs in a minimum of time.

For more than 2000 years the tools of architects were the same, a pencil, paper, lineal and materials for model building. In a way these tools were limiting the architect, constructors, engineers towards the same level of technical equipment but were separating them, with their individual capacity like creativity, spatial thinking and drawing talent. This basic limitation lasted until the new technology in form of computer aided design and fabricating machines came into the field of architecture.

After the invention of CAD drawing software's for two dimensional technical drawings, the first 3D simulation software appeared on the market. This new extremely innovative drawing tool was called Form-Z and gave a totally new repertoire to architects and designers. After Form-Z much other drawing software's appeared at the market and gave designers and architects endless possibilities in producing their futuristic designs.

One of the main protagonists in for a new generation of "computer architects" was the American architect Greg Lynn. He published in 1998 the book "Animate Form" which is a theoretical framework for the explanation for the use of new form generating software in architecture. If architecture is to approach this more complex concept of gravity, its design technologies should also incorporate factors of time and motion. Throughout the history of architecture, descriptive techniques have impacted the way in which architectural design and construction has been practiced. (Lynn, 1998)

Greg Lynn's office is based in Los Angeles and his work is very much influenced by the technological power of Hollywood with its movie production knowledge with all their special effects. Lynn based his theory on an animation software called "Maya" which was developed for the production of digital animations in the film industry. He is also known to be the inventor of the so called "Blob Architecture" which became the term for a generation of young architects, which are now obsessed with the use of the computer as their major design tool. The idea behind Greg Lynn theory is to define and generate form finding gravity forces for the creation of an architectural object. It was a kind of first theory towards parametric design. Lynn is describing the idea of a controlling geometry which is guiding the process of the design and which can adapt to different scales and geographical situations. Somehow a prototypical design language, which is made for a global world and adaptable to different sites and cities. Lynn's theory on prototypes is rooted on a geometrical logic which is guiding the design and the framework for an adaptive architecture.

Parametricist vs. Modernist Urbanism:

In his book "The City of Tomorrow" Le Corbusier defined his theoretical framework on Modernist Urbanism. He is glorifying the right angle and the straight line for conquering the nature from the perspective of the machine age. "Man walks in a straight line because he has a goal and knows where he is going; he has made up his mind to reach some particular place and he goes straight to it. The pack-donkey meanders along, meditates a little in his scatter-brained and distracted fashion, he zig-zags in order to avoid larger stones, or to ease the climb, or to gain a little shade; he takes the line of least resistance." (*Le Corbusier, 1987*)

Corbusier is looking to the order of historical settlements and it's picturesque as a problematic reality in architecture. "The curve is ruinous, difficult and dangerous; it is a paralyzing thing." Le Corbusier insists that "the house, the street, the town ... should be ordered; ... if they are not ordered, they oppose themselves to us." (*Le Corbusier, 1987*) For him there was a need to create a logic of regular geometries instead of uncontrolled organic forms. The German architect Frei Otto developed many theories on this kind of organic forms and its qualities of "self-organisation." Phenomena like the "donkey's path" and the urban patterns resulting from unplanned settlement processes can now be analyzed and appreciated in terms of their underlying logic and rationality, i.e. in terms of their hidden regularity and related performative power. (*Schumacher, 2009*) For Le Corbusier natural design logic is a matter of chaos without any effective form for functional architecture. "nature presents itself to us as a chaos ... the spirit which animates Nature is a spirit of order". (*Le Corbusier, 1987*)

Le Corbusier is in his architectural visions extremely fascinated by the rationality of the industrial age and its basic functional expression. For him the Fordist system with all its regulations and industrial production was the best way to build up logic for architecture and urbanism. In opposition Schumacher's parametric theory is totally built up on the logic of natural structures defined by Frei Otto. (*Schumacher, 2008*) Schumacher's thinking about architecture are in many ways guiding to historical baroque architecture. A lot of Zaha Hadid's projects can be considered to be neo-baroque in their ornamentation and symmetry. Baroque architecture is including natural forms, different compositions and rules between their elements. Parametric design is based on computational technology in combination with natural formal expression towards a controlled geometrical architectural design. In its deeper scene these design strategy would be a very super flexible generator of architectural form which is adaptable to "all situations". The logic of continuous parameters which interact and relate to each other would give the possibility to create very contextual architecture in urban environments.

### **CRITIQUE ON CONTEMPORARY ARCHITECTURE**

If we look closer at the design of projects by so called "star" Architects and the other protagonists which have a similar design language, should discuss the usefulness of pure design in comparison of human living especially in an urban environment. Most of the buildings designed by famous or even "star" architects are cultural icons. The term "cultural icons" is explaining building typologies like opera houses, theaters, libraries and museums. These types are a very small percentage of our cities built structure. Residential buildings are far away the most built architectural form but nearly all the "avant-garde" architects of our time are not designing buildings for our habitat. The reason for that is that residential buildings have to be functional and affordable which means strict regulations in the design and in the use of materials. This fact shows us that the leading architects of our time are not able to design and built buildings for our basic needs. In the architectural "avant-garde" of the last 20 years are big gaps between the design and the function of the building. The experiment with the "deconstructural" form and its construction was forcing an excessive complexity in design and technology. This technological driven thinking of pure design strategies left many open questions on the fundamentals of architecture and its use.

Patrik Schumacher is referring in his text "The Notion of Elegance" to Leon Battista Alberti's definition of beauty: you can neither add nor subtract without destroying the harmony achieved. Except in the case of contemporary elegance, the overall composition lacks this sense of perfect closure that is implied in Alberti's conception. Alberti focused on key ordering principles, such as symmetry and proportion, which were seen as integrating the various parts into a whole by means of setting the parts into definite relations of relative position and proportion in analogy to the human figure. (*Schumacher, 2012*) For Schumacher beauty in architecture is very important. But the question is what is beautiful and how do you define beautiful.

Schumacher tried in his recent publications to link his theory on parametric design to the entire history of thinkers and architects like Vitruvius, Semper, Bernini and Le Corbusier. From a "deconstructivistic" architectural practice, without any theoretical relation towards a total interlink and comparison with the history of architecture. Schumacher is trying to defend his ideas and he is obsessed with preaching at public speeches about his ideas on the architectural physical form. For Schumacher everything has to be "parametric" and guided by a "post-fordist network society".

The prevalent institutions and communication patterns of society have undergone momentous changes during the last 30 years. Social communication has become dynamic, differentiated and intensified. The static organizing principles of Fordist mass society – separation, specialization, and mass repetition – have been replaced by the dynamic principles of self-organization of an emerging post-Fordist network society: variation, flexible specialization, and networking. Accordingly, modernist urbanism (zoning) and modernist architecture (serial monotony) have experienced a fatal crisis. (*Schumacher, 2010*)

Patrik Schumacher is referring a lot to the term "network society" which was theoretically defined by the Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells. This network society in the case of architecture would produce a total interaction between space, design and society. Those realities could lead into a kind of super adaptable architecture which is

following in every aspect Schumachers parametric logic. Total adaptable and interactive design would be able to adjust to each regional context with its physical form. In the case of design elegance the aesthetic appearance would change concerning its surroundings and functions.

If space of flows is truly the dominant spatial form of the network society, architecture and design are likely to be redefined in their form, function, process, and value in the coming years. Indeed, I would argue that all over history, architecture has been the "failed act" of society. (*Castells, 1986*)

## **THE HISTORICAL FORM OF URBAN ARCHITECTURE**

After the radical invention of neo "Baroque Architecture" at the end of the 20th century as an answer to the modern and postmodern movement, the architectural profession went into a global production. Most of the big architectural firms are working worldwide and are having many different projects at the same time. The Asian market became very important and many architects opened their sub offices on this continent. At the same time especially since the finance crisis started in 2008, the European and North American production declined radically. The architecture of the big global player or "star architects" and their work became geographically reduced to China, Middle- East and Russia. The North American European cities are in an urban architectural crisis and on the way to switch from an "iconic" architecture towards a more social, functional and contextual one.

The American theorist Sanford Kwinter is questioning the control of political regimes and powerful investors, which are creating our urban reality today. He is one of the few architectural theorists, which are criticizing the excessive fascination of new technology and the cult status of the object. Kwinter refers in his writing to "poor formalism" architecture without any "deeper sense" totally narcissistic and with few functional and contextual qualities. Kwinter was fascinated of the Marxist thoughts in architecture especially the Italian scene from the Tendenza movement led by Aldo Rossi and Manfredo Tafuri at Venice University, which its autonomous radical leftist position. Their writings and lectures were influenced by the criticism of Gilles Deleuze for focusing on Anglo-American theory to create a kind of independent autonomy of architecture. (*Furjan, 2011*) Citing Deleuze's collaboration with Félix Guattari as a crucial turning point, he states 'Architecture was no longer entirely wedded to buildings, but was becoming a form of knowledge, research, activism' (*Kwinter, 2010*) This research activism was driving the discipline into a self-expression of the individual form. The individualism was producing global objects which are not relating to any place identity in urban conditions. The city, however, is not this but rather a perpetually organizing field of forces in movement, each city a specific and unique combination of historical modalities in dynamic composition. (*Kwinter, 2010*) This specific composition which is based on the urban history and context of each city is missing in most of the projects designed by "global" architects.

If we look closer on theories about the History of Architecture then we have to refer to Manfredo Tafuri's theory of the architectural avantgarde. The word history can be derived into multiple meanings like historicism, historicity or historicisation.

'We must test the "historicity" of the anti-historicism of the avant-garde,' Tafuri says, and explains that the avant-garde's conception of history had parallels with that of some Tuscan humanists of the Quattrocento. It was architects such as Brunelleschi or Borromini who revolutionized the conception of history in architecture. (*Akcan, 2011*) For Tafuri the interesting point was how Brunelleschi and Borromini replaced in their work the history towards timelessness. . After that moment, 'history may contradict the present, may put it in doubt, may impose, with its complexity and its variety, a choice to be motivated each successive time'. (*Akcan, 2011*)

Also the Italian theoritian and architect Pier Vittorio Aureli is one of view architects of a younger generation which are beyond the recent architecture avantgarde with protagonists like Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid, Daniel Libeskind and among others. He is questioning in his neo marxistic writings, the scene of the scene of individualistic iconic anti- regional architectures, without local identity and social mission. For him the quality of an architectural project can be measured by the resistance to capitalism's, the recent architectural "avant-garde" and their approach to urbanization. These anti urban approach is showing a kind of ignorance of reality leading into a personal idealism. To define different "physical forms" of architecture it is necessary to include regional and historical aspects into the language of designing built space und it's functional use.

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## **Biography**

**Clemens Nocker** is an Architect/ Urbanist from Austria currently based in Rome. He studied architecture at the University of Applied Arts Vienna in the studios of Greg Lynn/ Zaha Hadid and received a degree in Urban Studies from the 4Cities programme which took place in Brussels, Vienna, Copenhagen and Madrid. In 2013 he received a PhD Fellowship in Architectural Theory at Sapienza University in Rome.

## **Biografía**

Clemens Nocker es un Arquitecto y Urbanista austríaco, que actualmente reside en Roma. Estudió arquitectura en la Universidad de Artes Aplicadas de Viena, siendo parte de los estudios de Greg Lynn / Zaha Hadid. Fue acreditado con el título de Estudios Urbanos del programa 4Cities, el cual tuvo lugar en Bruselas, Viena, Copenhague y Madrid. En el 2013 fue dotado con una beca de Doctorado por el instituto de Teoría de la Arquitectura en la Universidad de Roma La Sapienza.