

**Resource Architecture – XXI World Congress of Architecture
22 to 26 July 2002 in Berlin**

Forum 1 Globalisation and Regionalism

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Since the end of the political separation of the world into a western and an eastern hemisphere, the simplified geographics of which corresponded to some forms of the competition between the two systems of capitalism and socialism, a new partition of the world in the shape of a splitting of our social reality into two layers is becoming apparent.

People are continuing to go about their businesses with both feet on the ground, living their daily lives in a sensorially perceivable environment, whose structural and spatial form is also marked by its topography and history, depending on its regional peculiarities. Over this layer of lived daily life with its day/night rhythms and acceleration and deceleration of human activities, another, immaterial layer of global information streams and decision-making processes is expanding and densifying with increasing rapidity. These processes are controlled from command centres in the large agglomerations and have a direct influence on life in the regions, the distribution of wealth and the conflicts between states, the local consequences of which are seemingly unforeseeable.

These information and exploitation processes are, in the last analysis, decisive for people's every-day lives and are leading the world over to a hitherto unknown flexibility in regard to lifestyles and to an existential uncertainty. The need for self-reassurance in a concrete form and collective identity formation is associated with their becoming lost to view. History having been forgotten for decades and as traditional attachments become universally dissolved, in architecture and urban planning this disposition is leading to a positive obsession with history, with a view not only to conserving what has survived, but also to regaining what has historically been lost by reproducing it. Traditions are revived

when they fall into disuse, regionality becomes a subject for discussion when it can no longer be lived and waves of modernisation are cloaked as folklore.

In the area of tension between the processes of modernisation, which are generally experienced as threatening, on the one hand, and the compensatory cultivation of tradition on the other, together the two terms "globalisation and regionalisation" define a dialectic in the structuring of our spatial environment which has been resulting in the most widely varying trends and currents in architecture and urban planning for over a hundred years. Allow me to simplify the analysis by presenting a brief review.

A future global culture was already anticipated in the period leading up to the second industrial revolution, around 1850. It was to have a "cosmopolitan structure" spanning all regional and national peculiarities, as we can read in the Communist Manifesto of 1848. On the one hand the simultaneous expansion and densification of the networks of economic relations between the countries and continents was associated with the spreading of industrial mass production and urban civilisation, including all the new opportunities afforded by telecommunication and electronic engineering, while on the other the emergence of the industrial society intensified national romantic trends which were translated into concrete form in many of the important public buildings of the 19th century, in a bid to safeguard collective identities.

As a move to counter the claims to economic power of Britain and the USA, from 1900 onwards the impetus for an extensive modernisation of the world of objects in terms of the design of industrial products came from Berlin, which had become a new centre of innovation. In defiance of all nationalistic aims and objectives, the foundation of the German Association of Architects, Designers and Industrialists (*Deutscher Werkbund*) set the course for the development of an International Style and cosmopolitan urban planning. In contrast, the movement supporting garden cities and the "Movement for the Protection of the Heimat" (*Heimatschutzbund*) created a balance for the costs of modernisation.

In regard to the first half of the 20th century in the other highly industrialised countries, it can also in retrospect be said that in contrast to the widely held vision of a modern era triumphantly gaining ground against antiquated and stifling traditions, it was the very interaction between the ideas developed by the Neues Bauen movement for a completely new style of building and the attempts to make amends by means of tradition-conscious innovation that characterised the building culture of the last century.

In the totalitarian systems of Fascism and Stalinism this interplay was frankly enacted in artistic form, for example in Germany, where the "Gleichschaltung" of lifestyles and the modernisation of communications in the Reich achieved by the ubiquitous propaganda that was broadcast with the aid of the "People's Receivers" and mass mobility achieved by building motorways were accompanied by regional variations in architecture created in accordance with "Reich Landscape Standards" (*Reichslandschaftsnormen*) and an impressive redesigning of the main cities of the administrative districts (*Gaus*). At the same time, Stalin was linking his policy of total subjugation of the republics of the Soviet Union under the centralist rule of Moscow with a demonstrative cultivation of national architectural traditions which was also decreed and implemented in the same manner in the eastern European states after 1945. This trend even reached Berlin, where in the new capital of the German Democratic Republic the entire Stalinallee ensemble was intended to document the continuity of the history of local urban architecture, in a direct attempt to create a contrast to the much-decried "cosmopolitanism" of American "cultural imperialism" in the West.

As a result of the political and cultural devaluation of tradition-bound models of architecture and urban planning in the decades after the end of the war the interplay between globalisation and regionality and modernisation and preservation of traditions was to a great extent abrogated by expectations that the building and construction sector would be industrialised until, not by coincidence, as a result of the global reflection on the "limits of growth" and the

emergence of the ecology movement, from 1970 onwards in the West a style of building oriented towards preserving resources and the existing fabric led to new forms of cautious urban redevelopment, which, after the phase of rediscovery, preservation, re-use and supplementing of the fabric of historical buildings

- on the one hand provided the rationale for forward-looking technologies of sustainable construction methods and some high-tech architectures and
- on the other hand paved the way for aesthetic strategies for adding to existing buildings and erecting new buildings along the lines of historical models.

The reversion to the designs of the vaguely generalised "European Town" of the 19th century with the intended dialectic between technological functionality and a nostalgic historical atmosphere is increasingly being combined with references to the global New Urbanism movement which promises the happiness of having local roots and a locally referenced identity formation in a world controlled by streams of locationless information.

In contrast to a revival of regionality reduced to an emphasis on folk lore achieved by reproducing specific forms of building or tight design rules, under the conditions of globalisation understood as a development of regional design potentials, building culture should be mainly oriented towards

- topographical features such as landscape relief, the courses of rivers, the borders of woods, etc.: "Urban development is the improvement of landscapes" (Emswiler 1929), and also towards
- historical development phases and characteristics (the ground plans and morphologies of towns, landmarks and building typologies)
- the urban context, interweaving open spaces that can be used and experienced in many different ways to strengthen socio-cultural qualities.

Only when towns and their landscapes, centres and peripheries, historical centres, new service institutions and industrial areas as well as their technical infrastructures are considered together can the characteristics of a region be

strengthened by simultaneous constructional innovation and conservation of the cultural heritage. New landmarks of globalised architectural production can also contribute to this, as demonstrated, for example, in Bilbao.

Finally, in an attempt to evaluate current trends in architecture and urban planning the polyvalence of new forms of regionality in the area of tension between

- the political positions of a nationalist right-wing populism,
- strategies of economic exploitation with the creation of images suitable for upmarket sites and
- urban cultural resistance movements,

is being discussed, taking into account the widely varying reactions to the consequences of globalisation processes, which, along with the third technological revolution of micro-electronics and the new communication technologies, are in any case beginning to effect a radical change in people's sensory perception and physical experience of space in this age of information.