

LUMEN 2014

City Architecture as Cultural Ingredient

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Abstract

The article aims to bring into discussion architecture as cultural ingredient, and to investigate the current status of the consecrated or of the recently established heritage (patrimony) as well as to ask questions about the contribution that the experiments of professionals may have in the space of the city. If the architecture educates, innovates, launches questions and controversies, it continuously complements the in situ image of the place, city, or, at global level, of the conceptual, technological and innovative developments. Whether it addresses the town-dweller, the user, the tourist or the curious, architecture continually writes new expressions in city space, negotiating with tradition, arguing and reconstructing fragments of urban life. How much is it accepted, pleasant / loved or challenged - or how much it pleases the initial or subsequent demands, are sensitive discussions in the dedicated domain. Regarded at the level of the object or the ensemble, architecture can be a scenographic background for the city or a piece in the set, a point on a route - landmark of urban paths, or simply an unfolded surface which accommodates activities. From level of the area of discussion, architecture is also another space, the one of debates - from the principles in line with the problems of the world for which it strives to find an answer to the philosophical, the local and the ones related to the built application.

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Selection and peer-review under responsibility of the Organizing Committee of LUMEN 2014.

Keywords: architecture; city; culture; place; public space;

1. Introduction and subjects.

“Culture is not composed of elements which can be disassembled and re-composed: culture has to be lived. Cultures mature and sediment slowly as they become fused into the context and continuity of tradition.” (Pallasmaa,

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2007, pp.131) If city architecture is a cultural ingredient there is no doubt. But as always, simple and obvious affirmations are very difficult to demonstrate. That is why the article proposes a discussion on this subject and a correlated approach on this delicate matter regarding the delineation between the main streams of the domain: urban architecture and other fields that are directly implicated in this affirmation/ proposition.

Methods and subjects: After the general theorizing and investigating of terms, one of the methods of approach has been the professionals' perspective on the specific subject – taken from various sources of information – books, articles, academic and professional statuses. Another method of investigation has been the insight into the matter from outside the domain of discussion, namely the perspective predefined by other related professional fields which study user interaction with the chosen theme. An interesting subject of investigation consisted in defining the possible applications of the questions and discussions that the results of the inquiry may generate by comparison. General subjects are referring to the architecture seen as cultural ingredient in different variants of the understanding and from different positions. Discussion is based on notions as: architecture, heritage, culture, and tradition.

(City) architecture: Present architecture finds itself at the limit of contemporary and advanced notions. But it also redefines itself in experiments, installations, new theories and manifestos (Jencks & Kropf, 2006), reconsiderations and limits with closed domains, but also other fields. New status could be defined through creativity and innovation (Frankelius, 2009) by design, or in the use of architectural space as a tool to reinvent the (common) place. The notions state references from: dictionaries of architecture, tradition, heritage, memory, history, culture, policies, but also new inputs as experimental arts, threats and hazard, global markets and policies – for example experimentations as: Biennale di Venezia (Pagnacco & Sejima, 2010) or global exhibitions. Architecture could be understood as all its different types of manifestation through history (McCarter & Pallasmaa, 2012), all theories, manifestos, statements and function of domain, as science, art and craft. Architecture connects the in and out of the space to scenographic background, bonding together elements of decoration, texture, tradition (Adam, Hardy, & International Network for Traditional Building, Architecture & Urbanism, 2008) as thinking and habits which inspire.

Heritage: Among value and culture (Derer, 2007), heritage is an untouchable notion. For this notion the reference will be stated by the global and local law(s). Architecture is considered as default a part of material cultural patrimony, but the article will consider architecture as a sum of material and immaterial cultural patrimony (Ecobescu & Nitelea, 2006).

Culture: Present culture combines different kinds of space understanding. When graffiti is yet understood as urban culture or street artists could merge the time and space transforming and rewriting the built environment and its message, there are too many questions for culture to reconsider. Without an updated and connected global culture, a space cannot be anymore a place to coagulate the environment and make it function. Beyond its culture and tradition, sometimes there is a need to innovate something in order to activate and resuscitate. Culture inputs are referring to: humanity, anthropology, architecture, art, literature but also science, activated public places, state of local/global place. Cultural tourism has a strong connection with lecturing and resonating to this specific atmosphere, built as tradition and as a state of place, a sum between genius-loci and Zeitgeist. This sum can be understood as an overlapping, adding, weighting, etc. The construction of the city environment (Burdett & Sudjic, 2007) is a cultural problem, taking culture in the broadest sense of the word – that is, the focus of intervention for economy, art, science, thought, etc. “Culture is a driving force of the economy: creating products according to guidelines of the advertising market, directing them at the right people at the right time and in the right place and selling them at the highest admissible price (having invested what is needed for their production). Architecture is a product of our time. And the only way to be timeless is to be absolutely of a time: for buildings to reflect the hour and the minute in which they were designed and constructed.” (Gausa *et al.*, 2003, pp.142) “Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action.” (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952, pp.181)

Tradition: Tradition (Graburn, 2000) is a difficult term. It is somehow implicit but, at a closer look, it has many coordinates: as a habit of a space, as a pre-use or pre-understanding of space, meaning of things, or the typical manner to do, to express, to see etc. There is a tradition of every field, of any domain, this is clear. And this also

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