

AN EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH IN VERNACULAR
ARCHITECTURE THROUGH 20TH CENTURY PERSPECTIVES
OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIOGRAPHY / SİVİL KONUT
MİMARİSİ ARAŞTIRMALARININ 20. YÜZYIL MİMARLIK TARİHİ
YAZIMI PERSPEKTİFLERİ İŞİĞİNDA DEĞERLENDİRİLMESİ

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Özet

Mimarlık tarihi disiplininin alışlageldik sınırları anıtsal örneklerden oluşan kanonik seçkiler ile tanımlanmaktadır. Bu nedenle, mimarlık tarihi yazımı, 20. yüzyılın ikinci yarısından önceki dönemlerde, değişik kültürlerin sivil mimari örneklerini hak ettikleri ölçüde kapsayamamıştır. Buna rağmen, mimarlık tarihi yazımında son altmış yıl içerisinde ortaya çıkan yeni bakış açıları sayesinde sivil mimariyi mimarlık tarihi disiplini içerisinde geçerli bir konu olarak ele almak mümkün olmuştur. Bu makalenin amacı yukarıda değinilen yeni bakış açılarını özetle ortaya koyarak bunların sivil mimari araştırmaları üzerindeki etkilerini değerlendirmektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mimarlık Tarihi, Tarih Yazımı, Sivil Mimari, Konut Mimarisi, Kanon.

Abstract

The conventional limitations of architectural historiography, especially before the second half of the 20th century, were generally defined by the canonical selections of monumental examples. Therefore, in the past, architectural history could not encompass vernacular architecture of different cultures to the extent that these vernacular examples deserved. However especially during the last sixty years, the emerging approaches and consequent new perspectives in architectural historiography have made it possible to regard vernacular architecture as a valid subject matter in the discipline of architectural history. The objective of this paper is to summarize and identify the above-mentioned transforming perspectives in order to evaluate the impacts of these changes on the study of vernacular domestic architecture around the world.

Keywords: Architectural History, Historiography, Vernacular Architecture, Domestic Architecture, Canon.

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1. INTRODUCTION

For several decades until the 20th century, vernacular architecture has been a field to which the architectural historians were unaccustomed. Indeed, architectural history, itself has been a nascent discipline due to the fact that there has been a very limited number of publications within the field until the end of the 1990s.¹ However, the new perspectives introduced to the discipline of architectural history during the last century have made it possible to conceive vernacular architecture of different cultures as valid subject matters for the discipline.

All around the world the material evidence of vernacular architecture becomes a valuable source of historical knowledge due to their strong reciprocity with the environmental factors such as geography, climate and material resources. Nevertheless, displaying such a deep environmental consciousness, vernacular examples have been out of the scope of architectural history and it has not been possible to interpret them within the conventional theoretical framework of architectural history. The strong connection between architecture and site in such rural and agricultural settlements is always pronounced straightforwardly.

The reason is that theorizing about the broad based reciprocity between the built and natural environments challenges the conventional object-oriented theory and canonical traditions of the discipline. Vernacular architecture and its integrity with natural parameters point to an obscure terrain for the conventional frameworks of architectural historiography.

Therefore, the development of architectural history especially during the second half of the twentieth century discloses that architectural historians had to refer to interdisciplinary frameworks to solve this problem of compatibility between their discipline and this specific field. Setting up legible disciplinary boundaries, the architectural historians needed, at the same time, to work within a relevant interdisciplinary interface which provides supplementary conceptual references that have already been established and matured in the related fields.

These theoretical transformations lead to the differentiation of architectural history from art history. This process has already been discussed in detail by another paper of mine:² Through its historical development in the West, architectural history was generally considered to be a sub-field of art history. However, especially during the last fifty years, the emerging approaches in historiography have made it possible to regard architectural history as a gradually differentiating and specializing discipline. The objective of this paper is to summarize and identify the above-mentioned transforming perspectives in order to evaluate the impacts of these perspectives on the study of vernacular domestic architecture around the world.

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1. E. A. Ergut - B. T. Özkaya, "Mapping Architectural Historiography", D.Arnold, E.A. Ergut ve B.T. Özkaya (eds.) *Rethinking Architectural Historiography*, Routledge Yayınları, Londra, 2006.
 2. K. R. Kavas, "An Evaluation of the Changing Relations between Art History and Architectural History in the Context of the Research in Vernacular Domestic Architecture / Sanat Tarihi - Mimarlık Tarihi arasındaki Değişen İlişkilerin Sivil Konut Mimarisi Araştırmaları Bağlamında Değerlendirilmesi," *Akdeniz Sanat Dergisi* Sayı :4, Akdeniz Üniversitesi Güzel Sanatlar Fakültesi Yayınları, Antalya, 2009, s. 37-46.

2. TRANSFORMING PERSPECTIVES OF ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIOGRAPHY IN THE 20TH CENTURY

This part identifies certain new perspectives transforming the discipline of architectural history during the 20th century. The common point of these perspectives can be summarized as a gradually increasing focus on the integrity of vernacular architecture with culture and environment. Through these developments architectural history exceeded its conventional constraints and vernacular architecture received increased scrutiny.³ This brief overview will summarize these perspectives through ten headlines.

2.1. Towards a Cultural History of the Built Environment

Not being a recent phenomenon, the attempt to correlate architecture with its social context has been a conspicuous motivation of architectural historiography⁴. The traditionally prevalent connection between the social and architectural histories is built upon the Hegelian notion of historical evolution. This view summarizes the historical events of a period as a prelude to discuss architecture in order to impose on its canonical examples a preconceived developmental pattern conforming to the *Zeitgeist*. This viewpoint asserted that *Zeitgeist* (German term standing for “the spirit of the age”) is expressed by the architectural examples of each historical period⁵. Accordingly, history is a “progressive process” reflecting an underlying “evolving spirit,” which corresponds to prevalent formal, technological and constructional features in the architecture of each historical period.

The renowned theme of *Zeitgeist* has been prevalent in many related disciplines ranging from art history to archaeology. As Penelope Allison argues, the traditional archaeological interpretation of historical contexts forged the material evidence of architecture, for making the material evidence compatible with an already established evolutionary sequence and typological categorizations.⁶ Likewise, Nancy Stieber argues that instead of “construing the past as a series of stylistic waves” where the historian becomes the “taxonomer classifying visually, biographer explaining individual creativity, interpreter of monuments,” the discipline of archi-

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3. Certain examples to this mainstream are: T.C. Bannister, “The Contributions of Architectural History to the Development of the Modern Student-Architect,” in *the Journal of the American Society of Architectural Historians*, vol.2, no.2, April 1942, pp. 3-13; C. Meeks, “The Teacher of Architectural History in the Professional School: His Training and Technique,” in *the Journal of the American Society of Architectural Historians*, vol.2, no.2, April 1942, pp. 14-24; J. Maass, “Where Architectural Historians Fear to Tread,” in *JSAH*, vol. XXVIII no.1, 1969, p.4; D. Watkin, *The Rise of Architectural History*, Praeger Publishers Inc, New York, 1980; Morton, Patricia. “The Afterlife of Buildings: Architecture and Walter Benjamin’s theory of history,” in *Rethinking Architectural Historiography*, D.Arnold, E.A.Ergut and B.T.Özkaya eds. London and New York: Routledge, 2006, pp. 215-228.
 4. D. Watkin, *The Rise of Architectural History*, Praeger Publishers Inc, New York, 1980, p.183.
 5. H. Conway – R. Roenisch, *Understanding Architecture, an introduction to architecture and architectural history*, Routledge, 1994, pp. 38-39.
 6. P. Allison, “Using the Material and Written Sources: Turn of the Millenium Approaches to Roman Domestic Space,” in *American Journal of Archaeology* 105, 2001, pp.181-208.

tectural history should envisage “posing questions about the relations between objects, their makers and users and the relationship of all those to social processes”⁷.

As the following parts of this paper shall illustrate, domestic architecture provides the key for a comprehensive approach into cultural history of the built environment. As Talbot Hamlin argues, “an up-to-date history of domestic architecture” would inform us about “the life that went on in the buildings” and “the materials and economic considerations.” These points would have “a profound effect on our future dwellings, and these, in turn on our general ways of life”.

For Hamlin, the theoretical shift into cultural history would be “the climax of such a development of architectural history – a change from period considerations to functional categories,” which “would be found in a history of community planning” because “the final and greatest expression of building ideals must rest in community forms” and “to understand architecture, one must understand the community as well as the building.”⁸

In the light of the above mentioned theoretical examples, the defining features of these new streams in the discipline can be comprehended. When the gradually increasing focus on the social processes and agents giving life to settlements and architecture is taken into account, the paralleling shift of focus from typological / canonical categorization to cultural history can be better realized.

2.2. The Emergence of Interdisciplinary Interfaces

The previous tendency parallels the call for interdisciplinary theoretical frameworks, where architectural history becomes the cultural history of the built environment. John Maass emphasizes the significance of interdisciplinary continuities by arguing that “Architectural history must maintain ties to other relevant disciplines; otherwise it could not claim a higher rank than pursuits like philately and the collecting of antique buttons.” He further argues that “Much writing of architectural history is locked in a number of boxlike concepts. If architectural history is to remain a vital discipline, it will have to break out of these rigid compartments which are not only out of date but historically unsound. Architectural historians must consistently link architecture to wider concerns.”⁹

Converging with these perspectives, environmental aesthetics is built upon “the rootedness of a building in the ground and its social function”¹⁰. The development of the field exemplifies the emerging awareness about the physical and social context of architecture and consequently “the increasing recognition of architecture’s social role and function”.¹¹ Berleant argues that the interdisciplinary nature of environmental aesthetics has gradually been realized, and “an awareness of the aesthetic aspect of environment has begun to permeate disci-

7. N. Stieber, “Space, time and architectural history,” in *Rethinking Architectural Historiography*, D. Arnold, E.A. Ergut and B. T. Özkaya eds. London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 172.

8. T. F. Hamlin, “Some Necessary but Still Unwritten Architectural Histories,” in *the Journal of the American Society of Architectural Historians*, vol.2, no.2, April 1942, p.28.

9. J. Maass, “Where Architectural Historians Fear to Tread,” in *JSAH*, vol. XXVIII no.1, 1969, p.4.

10. A. Berleant, *The Aesthetics of Environment*, Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1992, p.78.

11. Berleant, *ibid.*, p.114.

plines as diverse as architecture, cultural geography, psychology, art history, anthropology and philosophy,” and “areas of research such as ethics, preservation, sustainable development, and resource management”¹². These tendencies can be summarized as a general interdisciplinary extension of architectural historiography.

2.3. The “Environmental Conception” of Architectural History

In his famous architectural history survey book which deeply affected the course of the discipline in the last decade of the twentieth century, Spiro Kostof speaks of “an environmental approach which is new to architectural history.”¹³ Kostof attempts to adopt this new approach in his survey book which recognizes that “the building should be thought of in a broader physical framework” since it “derives much of its character from its natural and manufactured environment that embraces it.” Emphasizing what he calls “the setting of architecture,” Kostof defines his survey as “a compromise that tries to reconcile the traditional grand canon of monuments with a broader, more embracing view of the built environment”. He regards this as a reflection of the broader shift which transforms architectural history from a history of styles to a cultural history where “the interaction of buildings with nature and one another” comes to the fore.

What is important here from the standpoint of this paper is the fact that “an inclusive concept of the environment” enters into the terminology of architectural history by being paralleled by an incentive to “use nature as partner in the act of building rather than adversary”. Kostof argues that the past buildings should be regarded as “components of constant change” affected by “environmental sequence and experience of architecture” rather than “permanent bodies in vacuum.” This theoretical shift converges with the transition from the “object-oriented aesthetics of traditional theory”¹⁴ based upon “the identification of the art object as separate and distinct from what surrounds it and isolated from the rest of life”¹⁵ to the conception of the continuity of architecture and environment, or culture and nature. This thesis attempts to develop a theoretical framework by deriving appropriate conceptual tools from the conclusions of this “environmental” conception of architectural history.

2.4. Encompassing the “Humbler Stretches of the Built Environment”

As a consequence of this environmental conception of architectural history, Kostof infers “two important lessons for the history of architecture”: The first one is “solicitude for other buildings of any period and style.” The second one is “tolerance for the presence of humbler stretches in the built environment.”¹⁶ These two lessons constitute a fresh insight into architectural historiography by enhancing alternative ways to encompass the traditionally overlooked contexts.

12. Berleant, *ibid.*, p.3.

13. Spiro Kostof, *A History of Architecture: Settings and Rituals*, Oxford University Press, New York, Oxfordi 1985. p.10.

14. Berleant, *op.cit.*, p.37.

15. Berleant, *op.cit.*, p.13.

16. Kostof, *op.cit.*, p.10.

“The history of architecture at the progression-of-styles level, from an essentially nineteenth century perspective”¹⁷ has been conceived as a serious deficiency for decades. This is inextricably intertwined with an incentive to broaden the scope of architectural history beyond a chronology of “masterpieces.” In as early as 1942, Talbot Hamlin called for a “thorough, up-to-date history of domestic architecture” for “analyzing buildings in terms of human living values”¹⁸. As the cultural production process becomes the new point of focus¹⁹, “anonymous web of the urban environment” replaces the “isolated prestige buildings”²⁰.

Dana Arnold argues that the conventional canon of architectural history is based upon the need for “coherence of linearity” which is a “selective process that requires the exclusion of material and the imposition of a unity on a disparate set of historical events or circumstances”²¹. She claims that through this exclusive process, the historical narrative acquires a “built-in notion of progress”²². For Hayden White, historiography, by being built upon these assumptions, creates a narrative which “proceeds from empirically validated facts” but requires “imaginative steps” to achieve a coherent story”²³.

To open up new perspectives for architectural historiography, it is necessary to repudiate such an externally imposed “built-in notion” distorting the implications of the evidence. However, it is inevitable to acknowledge that the historical narrative cannot be accomplished without any unifying principle. Regardless of the context, historiography necessitates a mental construction that relates the fragments²⁴.

Likewise Conway and Roenisch regard history as “a dynamic process” affected by the changing perspectives of the day²⁵. Dana Arnold’s discussion of the nature of the historical narrative further sheds light on the “fictional element” organizing the empirical data. For Arnold, history is “a process of evaluation whereby the past is always colored by the intellectual fashions and the philosophical concerns of the present” because “it exists only in the present” although “it is about the past”. Since the historian’s task is seen as constructing the dialogue between the past and the present, the historical narrative “relates to the moment of creation as much as its historical subject”. Arnold’s statements point to the presence of the “fictional element” and implies the construction of the bridge between the immediate present and the disappeared past. Like Conway and Roenisch, Arnold emphasizes “the changing perspectives

17. Bruce Allsopp, *The Study of Architectural History*, New York: Praeger Publishers, Inc., 1970, p.86.

18. Talbot F. Hamlin, “Some Necessary but Still Unwritten Architectural Histories,” in *the Journal of the American Society of Architectural Historians*, vol.2, no.2, April 1942, p.28.

19. Nancy Stieber, “Space, time and architectural history,” in *Rethinking Architectural Historiography*, D.Arnold-E.A.Ergut- B.T.Özkaya eds. London and New York: Routledge, 2006, p. 172.

20. Watkin, *op.cit.*, p.185.

21. Dana Arnold, ‘Reading the Past: What is Architectural History?’, *Reading Architectural History*, London and New York, Routledge, 2002, p.4.

22. D. Arnold, *op.cit.* p. 4; Arnold refers to Hayden White to elaborate this “built-in notion of progress” Hayden White, *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth Century Europe*, Baltimore, 1973.

see also White, Hayden (1987) *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, Baltimore

23. Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, Baltimore, 1987

24. E. Fernie, ‘Introduction: History of Methods’, *Art History and Its Methods: A Critical Anthology*, Hong Kong: Phaidon, 1995, p.13.

25. Hazel Conway-Rowan Roenisch, *Understanding Architecture, an introduction to architecture and architectural history*, Routledge, 1994, pp. 29-31.

of the day” and she stresses on the “fluid status of the past” effected by the constantly “shifting perspective on the past”²⁶.

This requirement also applies to the search for constructing an architectural historiography of vernacular architecture as expressed by the title of this paper. However, in so doing, the objective should not be adopting any kind of determinism that implicates a “coherence of linearity” or any consistent developmental pattern. The organizing principle should not be “built-in”, it should rather flourish from the environmental field of interrelations within which the local traditional architecture is embedded. In the geographically introverted rural settlement underlined by “a geological pace of pre-industrial time”²⁷, one cannot expect successive period mentalities comprising a developmental pattern of historical change embodied by the architectural evidence. Instead, the incorporation of “the humbler stretches of the built environment” leads to the realization of an immutable and pervasive environmental mentality, which is certainly contextual, culture-specific, and site-specific. This mentality should be traced through a scrutinized analysis of architectural evidence.

2.4.1. Challenging Eurocentricism

Challenging the conventional canons of architectural history is at the same time the questioning of the Eurocentric bias that “forms the basis of an unbalanced view of the globe”²⁸. Maass argues that “As Rudofsky points out, architectural historians virtually ignore all non-Western civilizations. ...the so-called “primitive” civilizations” which leads to “the assumption of white supremacy forms the basis of this unbalanced view of the globe”. Maass criticizes the architectural historical conceptualizations of “isolated buildings”:

Rudofsky argues that “Architectural History, as written and taught in the Western world, has never concerned with more than a few select cultures. In terms of space it comprises but a small part of the globe – Europe, stretches of Egypt and Anatolia – or little more than was known in the second century A.D.” He also states that “the evolution of architecture is usually dealt with only in its late phases. Skipping the first fifty centuries, chronicles usually present us with a full-dress pageant of “formal” architecture, as arbitrary a way of introducing the art of building, as say, dating the birth of music with the advent of the symphony or orchestra. Although the dismissal of the early stages can be explained, though not excused, by the scarcity of architectural monuments, the discriminative approach of the historian is mostly due to this parochialism”²⁹.

For Maass, “The historians of architecture still have not absorbed the fact that except in the abstraction of drawing or photography no building exists in a void.” Maass argues that except for a limited number of approaches such as Lewis Mumford’s , *Sticks and Stones* 2nd revised edition, New York, 1955, “Articles about separate buildings rarely project any “sense of place”; usually there is no reference to town or country, landscape or climate; the buildings

26. D Arnold,. *op.cit.*

27. Berleant, *op.cit.*, p. 85.

28. John Maass, ‘Where Architectural Historians Fear to Tread,’ in *JSAH*, vol. XXVIII no.1, 1969, p.4.

29. Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture Without Architects*, New York, 1965.

are described as if they stood on a library shelf. He states that “The architectural historians evidently leave matters beyond the individual building to other disciplines, geographers, city planning and landscape architecture. This narrow angle view of architecture is both obsolete and un-historical for in past centuries “where no sharply defined border lines existed between city planning and architecture, between architecture and decoration, between decoration and stage design, between stage design and landscape architecture.” He argues that “It is time for the architectural historians to close the gap which now separates them from the architects and from other scholars who study communities rather than isolated buildings”³⁰.

The above-mentioned problems of conventional architectural historiography lead to the necessity to embrace the humble structures of the cityscape and to envision the architectural object within an expanded field of urban or rural structures³¹. Patricia Morton refers to Walter Benjamin’s theory of history to discuss the relevance of the architectural historical canons. For Morton, “Benjamin overturned “history’s hierarchies of ‘genius,’ ‘masterpiece’, and ‘precedent’ by his insistence on the importance of non-heroic creations and the detritus left by the history’s dynamic” and by the challenge he introduced into enlightenment’s “universalist model of scholarship”³². Likewise, Nancy Stieber argues that the historical research invoked by these provocative reflections calls for a “thorough empirical investigation” which replaces “the traditional art historical approaches” and their “reductionism of stylistic labels”³³.

Challenging Eurocentricism has also been an underlying motivation through the emergence of environmental studies in architecture. As Arnold Berleant states, environmental awareness has grown “of the rich understanding of nature found in non-Western cultures and religions, and this has profoundly deepened the sense of the world for many whose horizons have been confined within the dominant beliefs of Western civilization”³⁴. Moreover, Berleant calls for a new theoretical orientation which is “not an extension of the main course of Western philosophy but the emergence of an entirely new grasp of the human world, one that recognizes connections rather than differences, continuity rather than separation, and the embeddedness of the human presence as knower and actor in the natural world”³⁵.

2.5. Encompassing the Rural Settlements

In order to illustrate this significant theoretical shift attempting to reconsider the rural settlements, I will once again refer to Spiro Kostof’s proposal of an environmental conception of architectural history. Kostof argues that “One further corrective should be offered in our thinking of the urban revolution. It is possible to make entirely too much of the city. It appears that in correlating urbanism and civilized history, we have imbued the city with positive qualities, the absence of which, at least by implication, has tended to downgrade other social

30. John Maass, *op.cit.*

31. John Maass, *op.cit.*

32. Morton, *op.cit.*

33. Stieber, *op.cit.*

34. Berleant, pp. 2-7.

35. Berleant, pp. 2-7.

organisms”³⁶. Therefore, “the term urban has turned into a value judgment; rural or pastoral, in contrast, carry with them a note of regression or conservatism”. Kostof gives his theoretical position explicitly by stating that “This bias is unfair. To hold that civilized life cannot exist outside of the cities belittles the genuine achievement of much nonurban culture and may distort the view of a total environmental order where the cities and the countryside are locked in mutually fructifying intercourse”.

Likewise John Maass calls for an ‘attention to the anonymous architecture of early and rural societies’³⁷, and Carroll Meeks introduces the concept of ‘conventional monument’ to depict the anonymous architecture which she sees as ‘mature expressions resulting from earlier experiments’ and proposes a new history of materials and techniques to be ‘digged out from obscure sources’³⁸. From similar perspectives, Arnold Berleant argues that “the human landscape of culture and history is embodied not only in the forms of buildings and roadways but in the bucolic countryside as well”³⁹. For Berleant, “nature alone” is “a fiction” and “even in its wildest places, nature is always culture”⁴⁰. Therefore thought within the conception of a “cultural landscape,” nature has a “historicity,” and thus should be the subject matter of architectural history since its seemingly isolated and remote forms of vegetation; contours and natural processes are “influenced by the characteristic living patterns of the people who dwell in them.”⁴¹ The settlement patterns crucial for the cultural history of the built environment are not only peculiar to urban settings but also to the agricultural landscapes and communities⁴².

2.6. Incorporating the Domestic Realm and Everyday Life

New perspectives suggested for architectural historiography in the second half of the 20th century is underlined by the emerging consciousness for the relation between the forms of social structure and the forms of domestic space. The domestic realm represents what has been excluded from the canonical selections which conceptualize the “masterpieces”⁴³ associated with the highest strata of the society as the products of an individual genius⁴⁴.

Bruce Allsopp argues that “The history of architecture, as of any other art, must not be confined to masterpieces, nor is it primarily concerned with aesthetic evaluations which, in any case, are bound to fluctuate from time to time. The subject is much bigger and comprises all that man has done and is doing by means of building to shape his environment. It cannot be properly understood without knowing the forces- social, political, economic, ideological- which have influenced building.” Allsopp argues that architectural history would accomplish

36. Kostof, p. 44.

37. Maass, John “Where Architectural Historians Fear to Tread,” in *JSAH*, vol. XXVIII no.1, 1969, p.4.

38. Carroll Meeks, ‘The Teacher of Architectural History in the Professional School: His Training and Technique,’ in *the Journal of the America Society of Architectural Historians*, vol.2, no.2, April 1942, pp. 14-24.

39. Berleant, *op.cit.*, p.77.

40. Berleant, *op.cit.*, p.60-61.

41. Berleant, *op.cit.*, p.60.

42. Berleant, *op.cit.*, pp. 60-61; See also Berleant (1992) pp. 37-38; For Berleant, environmental aesthetics “exemplifies for “civilized” people, the importance of wilderness, showing us in fact the parochialism in much of what we take to be civilization”.

43. Allsopp, *op.cit.*

44. Allsopp, *op.cit.*, p.62.

its task if "...a very convenient and logical deduction was made from history....this had the advantage that all kinds of architecture began to be studied, even the vernacular".

Allsopp calls for a kind of cultural history which takes into account the commonplace and the everyday, the deep cultural continuities-rituals, symbolic associations rather than architecture as the legitimization of power and the "masterpiece" or the genius architect and a continuation of the political-military chronology:

"If architectural history were taught humanely in schools of architecture there might be less stress and fewer breakdowns and failures"⁴⁵. "From his privileged position of the hindsighted wisdom among the kings, cardinals and commanders, the historian had to descend to the slums and mix with the poor. ...this extension of the art-historical studies, is necessary and, I think, inevitable"⁴⁶.

The research on domestic space provides anonymous cultural constructs that are far more capable of reflecting the historical social context. The stress on the inclusion of rural space as a traditionally overlooked category has been another important motivation for the development of architectural history in the second half of the 20th century⁴⁷.

Generally speaking the motivations to think of architecture as a cultural construct and to embrace the humble, the vernacular, the rural, the anonymous, the autochthonous and the everyday are tendencies that converge and parallel the search for contesting Eurocentric bias, and coincide with the recent theoretical perspectives of architectural history.

Bernard Rudofsky argues that "architectural history as we know it is equally biased on the social plane. It amounts to little more than a who's who of architects who commemorated power and wealth; an anthology of buildings of, by, and for the privileged- the houses of true and false gods, of merchant princes of the blood- with never a word of the houses of lesser people..." With his renowned exhibition called "*Architecture Without Architects* (1965), Rudofsky tried to "break down our narrow concepts of the art of building by introducing the unfamiliar world of nonpedigreed architecture." For Rudofsky, "It is so little known that we don't even have a name for it. For want of a generic label," it might be called "vernacular, anonymous, spontaneous, indigenous, rural, as the case may be"⁴⁸.

The need for a stronger emphasis on the "ordinary" buildings is voiced by Talbot Hamlin who states that "We must strive, I believe, for a much broader view of architectural achievement in our future historical writing. We must see how houses, farm buildings, shops, markets, manufactories, local government buildings and the like, and less absorption with temples and churches and palaces". For Hamlin, the reason for this theoretical change is that architectural history should provide the society with the authority of historical knowledge usable in solving social problems of the future. For Hamlin, "It is necessary, of course to know masterpieces, But if the architecture of our own future is to be more and more directed to social ends- if, as we hope, the post-war world is going to be increasingly devoted to enriching the lives of all

45. Allsopp, *op.cit*, p. 89.

46. Allsopp, *op.cit*, p. 118.

47. Maass, *op.cit*.

48. Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture Without Architects*, New York, 1965.

human beings everywhere- then, surely, it will be useful to know how other cultures than ours attacked these common, “ordinary” buildings”.

Hamlin argues that historical dwellings should be seen as the keys to “analyze buildings in terms of human living values.” If the quality of so-called “ordinary” buildings can be improved in reference to the past experiences “we shall achieve perhaps more for humanity than if we build a masterpiece. And to prepare ourselves for this great task, we must know what can or cannot be done, what has been done that succeeded, and what has been done that failed”.

Likewise Arnold Berleant argues that “domestic architecture is the most clear manifestation of “an aesthetics of engagement,” through which “physical, historical and regional traits” become legible.⁴⁹ From this viewpoint conventional architectural historiography was based upon “a false and narrow aestheticism” which concealed “the richness of the ordinary, the small, the local”⁵⁰.

3. CONCLUSION

The objective of this paper was to present the new perspectives through which architectural history was transformed during the 20th century. These developments display a general emphasis on those stretches of the built environment which were “overlooked, unexplained, misinterpreted, or rejected as inadmissible.” Therefore exploring this obscure terrain aims to enlarge and deepen our understanding of these kinds of domestic or rural contexts. However, this inquiry is destined to encounter several methodological difficulties, as well as unexplored opportunities.

The most obvious of these difficulties is that, as Berleant reminds, “the tradition that honors monumentality and constructs edifices is what the popular mind associates with architecture,” and unfortunately, “this continuing tradition of architecture as edifice” still “continues to supply the paradigm to critics and scholars”⁵¹. Although a casual affinity is felt concerning vernacular architecture as a new subject matter, this connection has not been sufficiently articulated as a focus of academic scrutiny. The most remarkable difficulty is that “there is no tradition in relation to which environment can be examined and judged”, or “any written history of the critical discussion of individual environments”⁵². Therefore narrating the history of cultural landscapes is bound to be “history without tradition.”

Local vernacular contexts have remarkable effects on an observer of architecture, conveying a certain identity and distinctive character. These settings stimulate historical thinking by suggesting historical continuity. In spite of this, how to translate this primary experience to discursive thought by identifying, categorizing and conceptually ordering the data and formulating abstractions and explanatory hypotheses remains obscure. In spite of this, the distinctive cultural identity traced through architecture should be formulated and reflected in theoretical terms.

49. Berleant *op.cit.*, p.100.

50. Berleant, *op.cit.*, p.60.

51. Berleant, *op.cit.* pp.113-114.

52. Berleant, *op.cit.* pp.141-142.

This problem may be solved through a proposal of an empirically grounded theoretical framework not guided by preconceptions but rather by the material evidence of architecture. This approach should also be enriched by oral sources. The attempt to construct theoretical explanations for the vernacular architectural traditions especially in the rural settings is a crucial issue for this country. Turkey provides architectural examples of high quality and quantity for illustrating the traditional built space and the construction of a theoretical framework based upon the new perspectives of architectural history is an urgent issue because of the decomposition of the historical built environment.

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