

Summary

CEZARY WAŚ/ Destruction as construction. Paradoxes of deconstruction in architecture

Scepticism about persistence and common importance of fundamental values of human culture evinced in philosophers and writers' works as early as in Greek antiquity, nevertheless it was not expressed so strongly as in the second half of the 20th century. Especially in Martin Heidegger's work *Being and Time* (although originated in 1927, still influential in all later philosophy) the following states were characterised: the state of losing the ground (*Abgrund*), being out of sight (*Unheimlichkeit*) and being out of dwelling (*Un-zu-hause-sein*) – as the basis of self-confidence of conscious being there (*Dasein*). The entire criticism of philosophy of home and dwelling draws the inspiration from this early writing of the German philosopher; it combines crisis of basic terms of metaphysics with social conditions which are dictated by life in large metropolis. The crisis of both metaphysical foundation and home appears to be similar to the situation of weakening the relations between a man and his dwelling in extensively expanding cities. Whereas philosophy, as well as many disciplines of social sciences, have diagnosed for a long time the destabilisation of fundamental ideas of Western culture and crucial changes in the ways of dwelling, architecture itself occurred to be “the last bastion of civilisation” (Jacques Derrida).

Among contemporary architects, Peter Eisenman and Bernard Tschumi were the ones who engaged most decidedly in the issues of critical analysis of architecture foundation and its social role. Both the architects noticed new formulas of contemporary social and individual existence, tremendously different from the entire history, and at the same time they affirmed lack of adequacy of architecture concepts to new situations. Both Eisenman and Tschumi used to describe the existing architecture as a tool for consolidation of highly integrated and hierarchised societies, as a discipline extremely uncoincidental with the current character of social life based on ideas of freedom and diversity. The means to transform architecture and make it factor of further social changes, was a concept that accentuated revealing its inner contradictions and considering them in the designing strategies.

Eisenman's activity, in regard of what has just been noticed, was focused on questioning the basic rules of traditionally comprehended architecture, especially the rule of purpose. The American architect noticed that the concept of architecture as fulfilment of the need of location, hides away the fact that the location has to be constantly reconsidered, and hence it is overtaken by change (dislocation). Therefore new concept of architecture propounded architectural activity to translocate the concept of location – more than before – but also to change its status perpetually. So comprehended architecture should claim, as its main purpose, the constant revision of this purpose and create itself anew permanently. Even Eisenman's earliest designs of houses nos. I–IV broke with such values as the sense of safety, closeness and familiarity, and just on the contrary they accentuated senses of strangeness, homelessness and loss of confidence.

The contradictions within architecture noticed by Tschumi referred to combination of intellectual and sensual values in architecture, when their non-appropriation was defeated by an additional condition, namely the way of experience based on pleasure of excess, marked by insanity. The features of folly were especially visible in his designs of gardens, where the order of planning was mixed with sensual experience introduced by particular elements (both the ones created by nature, and the buildings defined as *folies*). Parc de la Villette (designed by the French architect in Paris) put in question not only the common understanding of purpose in architecture but also the ideas of order and integrity, as its plan was based on the combination of independent layers with records of grids of points, various lines and planes. The architecture that collides inadequate elements with each other was supposed to be a kind of an event with no beginning and no end. The architecture treated as an event became a form of a space weakened articulation that maintains its diversity and lack of accordance of its elements.

The analyses of Eisenman and Tschumi's theoretical writings indicate how much the aims of architecture have actually changed; instead of supporting social persistence, the architecture at present is rather intensifying contradictions, and instead of providing people with the sense of safety, it is subliming danger. From simple acts of defamiliarisation, increasing the distance to itself and enhancing the role of theory, through discomfort, anxiety, not feeling at home, weirdness, excess, shock and violence, architecture reached the edge of stability and uncertainty, only to make an attempt at penetrating what is impossible and unutterable, and recording what cannot become the subject of any records.