

Architektur Raum Theorie: eine kommentierte Anthologie edited by *Andreas Denk*, *Uwe Schröder* and *Rainer Schützeichel*, Ernst Wasmuth Verlag, Tübingen/Berlin, Germany, 2016, 751 pp. ISBN 978-3-8030-0774-2.

The 1980s ‘spatial turn’ in the humanities and its tardy, heterogeneous acknowledgement in the architectural disciplines is the starting point for this endeavour of collecting, reviewing and commenting on 54 textual excerpts dealing with the issue of *Raum* (space). Spanning from the 1850s until today, the anthology comprises seminal contributions from within the architectural field per se as well as contributions considered highly influential to architectural creation.

The editorial proposition for a new discourse on space, which is made evident not only in the introduction of this anthology but also in the selection of texts, pinpoints the current arbitrariness and uncertainty in architectural production. According to the editors, this is reflected on the one hand in the continuing decay of physical spatial interrelation at architectural and urban scales, as well as, on the other hand, in an ‘anything goes’ mentality in theoretical matters, which stems from a blindfold extrapolation of Albert Einstein’s theories of relativity.

Consequently, the editors seek to foster a new architectural discourse by defining ‘space’ as the common denominator and by laying out its history as a philosophical concept in the last 166 years. Beginning with Gottfried Semper’s ‘Four elements in the art of building’ (1851), the anthology presents chronologically the development of a discussion that reflects on the enormous changes in both the societal and the scientific realms. Two more texts by Semper provide the basis for an understanding of architecture as a representation of society at a given time, and thus as a ‘manifest expression of human civilization’.

In the introductory essay the editors dwell on the contributions of a number of authors to illustrate their rationale. August Schmarsow’s differentiation of *Wahrnehmungsraum* (perceptive space) and *Orientierungsraum* (orientation space) from 1894 underlines a somewhat traditional dialectic between an inner and an outer space, just as it had been epistemologically postulated by Immanuel Kant in 1770. Both originate in the human conception of space, which at the same time surrounds any subject by certain physical delimiters. Architecture as the creator of these delimiters is ultimately a *Raumgestalterin* (designer of space).

Herman Sörgel conceptualizes architecture as *Raumkunst* (art of space), as opposed to painting as *Flächenkunst* (art of surfaces) and sculpting as *Körperkunst* (an art of bodies). Sörgel’s book culminates in the Belle-Époque discourse on space. Notably, its publication in 1918 coincides with dramatic societal change in the Western world, which obviously had also had an impact on the approach towards space and architecture.

With the developments of natural sciences and the triumph of industrial production, the four-dimensional concept of the physical ‘field’ eclipsed the traditional understanding of space as a ‘container’. As Einstein postulated, it became an order of physical objects in time. Accordingly, Paul Zucker, Theo van Doesburg, László Moholy-Nagy, and last but not least Sigfried Gideon pointed to an infinite understanding of space, and ultimately its dissolution in favour of the time-based architectural object. This became the theoretical blueprint for the functional city and predominantly quantitative approach that extended from the urbanistic repositioning of the 1920s to the bulk of urban construction and reconstruction after the Second World War.

Martin Heidegger’s early counter-position from 1951, in which he stressed the phenomenological and existentialist significance of space, found its echo in several contributions that are still underestimated today: Otto Friedrich Bollnow’s *Mensch und Raum* (man and space) from 1963, Christian Norberg-Schulz’s analysis of the *Genius Loci* from 1979, and later in postmodern essays and books by Rob Krier and Hans van der Laan.

Following the thread of their introduction, the editors not only highlight their motives for the anthology but also give a concise summary of the conceptual development of the notion of space. A slight drawback is that they do not expand as much on the more recent texts (14 since 1945). The focus of the introductory note is the nineteenth century (20 texts up to 1918) and the inter-war-period (10 texts up to 1945). Of course, the introduction must not be understood as a mere manual to decode the original texts: all the contributions considered in it have their own points to make. Highly readable brief biographical information and a precise contextualization within the overall literary corpus of the author, including further primary and secondary readings, complete the presentation of the texts.

Given that most texts (and presumably the discourse itself) derive from a German speaking academic community, all excerpts are given in

German, which limits the potential readership. However, similar to the growing necessity of considering multidisciplinary and transcultural approaches, linguistic diversity might stimulate the desire for reading texts in their original language, to avoid the increasing superficiality in some of our scientific discourses. In any case, the anthology invites its readers to discover or rediscover intriguing contributions, including some that they most surely will not yet have come across.

But why is such an anthology of interest to the urban morphologist? Within our own interdisciplinary positioning today, 'space' unfortunately plays a secondary role relative to the manifold other approaches. In this regard, urban morphology, similarly to today's architecture and urbanism, is often trapped in quantitative and procedural matters. So, ultimately the great value of the anthology lies with the dissemination of spatial thoughts, which are essential not only to the fields of architecture and urbanism, but to everyone dealing with the understanding and investigation of the quality of built forms.

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Rome: urban formation and transformation, by *Jon Michael Schwarting*, Applied Research + Design, Novato, CA, USA, 2017, 211 pp. ISBN 978-193-9621-70-2.

This book was inspired by the Cornell Contextualist School of Thought led by Colin Rowe at the Cornell University School of Architecture. The theory of urban 'contextualism' is critical of modernist urban designs, which are seen as disruptive for their break with the traditional city. Contextualism argues in favour of the harmonization of contemporary urban and architectural design with earlier urban forms. This study originated in research in Rome undertaken at the American Academy in Rome in 1968–70 and was further elaborated through the teaching of a summer history and theory course from 1975 to 1982, in which students from Columbia University Graduate School of Architecture conducted research and produced part of the documentation that is presented in this volume.

The research looks back at history through the prism of the discourse between tradition/stasis and progress/change, arguing that to achieve progress it is fundamental for architects to look back and understand tradition. Accordingly, any type of architectural research should necessarily proceed with a historical analysis of both formal solutions and social programmes. Progressive approaches will transform them to resolve contemporary problems bringing about change, while conservatives will seek to reconstruct tradition to maintain past orders. Further, the author considers that any progressive proposition seeking to alter existing paradigms will nonetheless inevitably have to address and confront traditional models to validate its argument.

Another fundamental concept is the dialectical relationship between the ideal/utopian and the 'real,' existing conditions. Whereas idealistic tenets can underlie and inform a specific design solution, the concrete reality imposes itself and dictates the transformation that this idea must undertake to be materialized. The concepts of *ideal* and *real* might appear as polar opposites, or even as contradicting each other. Schwarting, however, argues that they both share a dialectical relationship. On one hand, the *ideal* is transformed and adapted when reified in physical manifestations. On the other hand, the *real* informs empirical observations, and has the potential to influence and impregnate the normative theoretical formulations concerning itself. Thus, these two concepts, rather than existing in opposition, maintain a constant dialogue between the idealized and the pragmatic, induction and deduction, belief and truth.

To illustrate the possible synthesis that evolves from the dialectic relationship between the ideal and the real, that is the conceptual and the contextual, in architecture and planning, the author explores the Italian Renaissance and Baroque periods. These periods mark a revival or rebirth of classical culture, where the humanist study of the classical past awakes free thought and encourages curiosity and speculation, as expressed in 'acts of civic importance'. The medieval craftsman, for whom theory grew out of practice, became an intellectual in the fourteenth century: practice grew out of critical theory. However, limited by the scarcity of resources, these grand ideas essentially remained confined to treatises. For the most part, they only gave way to small scale interventions, focused predominantly on a couple of built types.

The city of Rome provides fertile grounds to explore the dialectical relationship between the