

The variation of architecture identity in the age of globalization

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This research moves its first steps from the theory of Critical Regionalism by the British/American critic and historian Kenneth Frampton, who has been developing it from the 80s. Critical regionalism is an architecture attitude that resolves the placelessness of the International Style and proposes an alternative to Postmodern architecture, proposing an architecture rooted in the contemporary tradition, and, at the same time, in a specific geographical and cultural context, mediating the global and the local influences. Frampton stopped writing about this theory about a decades ago. The discourse of this paper follows a published conversation with the British historian happened in 2018 at Columbia University of NYC, about the last ten years: what emerged is that after the failure of regional Architecture schools, in order to promote an authentic local identity, it has been necessary to revisit the Martin Heidegger's concept of *raum* - a territorial boundary inside which a civilization manifests its presence - expanding the definition of region towards macro-areas of the globe, with an undefined elastic perimeter. So this research doesn't want to be a continuation of the theory, neither a second phase, but, fully conscious of Frampton's works, it aims to be a sort of new path inside uncharted territories, with the main goal of studying the permanence of specificity and locality in the globalized construction process of the current architecture panorama, focusing mainly on the last decade, with particular attention to the new technological developments in the building industry.

This critical perspective on the design practice aims to analyse the mediation phenomenon between local and global developments, under the economical, production, cultural and political points of view, picking up those designers who promote a sort of resistance without being regressive: in fact the identity is conceived, in this research, as something to cultivate with a view to the mutability, so it's something that changes over time and space.

The targeted architects of this research are those designers who can be called the "new locals", who mainly built from 2010-2020, and acted in the periphery of the megacities, facing the tension between the universalization of the construction process and a local architecture culture. These architects are picked up from different macro-areas of the world, that can be considered a finite set in terms of civilization, general culture characteristics and climate, and choosing young firms who have designed small/medium scale buildings in the periphery of this area.

In his last contribution to Critical Regionalism, during an itinerant lecture titled "Critical Regionalism Revisited", Frampton provided a list of architects, framed inside a new category, called "outsiders". These designers are defined by their sensibility to read the complexity of a specific place, its regional peculiarities, even if they come from a place which is far away from the design site. The production of a new cultural identity is in the hands of those who travels and lives in different places, and who gains the critical attitude to compare their own native identity with new ones. This Framptonian category responds to some new issues of the XXI century, for example the intense migrations fluxes which characterized our age.

This stage of the research evolves with new unexpected perspectives when it is compared with another theory, a very recent one, written by Nicolas Bourriaud in his book "The Radicant". Bourriaud states that the "...the immigrant, the exile, the tourist, and the urban wanderer are the dominant figures of the contemporary culture..." defining a new figure, which is very similar to the Frampton's "outsider", naming it "the radicant", which, according to Bourriaud's definition are "those plants that do not depend on a single root for their growth but advance in all directions on whatever surfaces present themselves by attaching multiple hooks to them, as ivy does.. With its at once dynamic and dialogical signification, the adjective 'radicant' captures this contemporary subject, caught between the need for a connection with

its environment and the forces of uprooting, between globalization and singularity, between identity and opening to the other. It defines the subject as an object of negotiation". Considering the emerging ideology of a multicultural society, encouraged by the digital revolution and its consequences in terms of globalization, heterogeneous vocabularies are usually mixed following a visual juxtaposition. In order to contrast this phenomenon, Bourriaud put forward a figure, the radlicant, defined as a semionaut, a navigator in the sea of the sign and inventor of pathways, who doesn't think in terms of aggregation, but who consciously translate meanings every time he compares his own identity with a different one. Young architects who mainly built in the last decade, and who opened emerging firms, are part of the so called "Erasmus generation", consisted in designers who travelled during their education and who are not familiar with an unique place. Those designers have the capacity to make their singularities enter in relation with others in order to trigger a meaningful translation process with their design practice.

Responding to the NAF/NAAR 2020 Symposium call from University of Oulu, the first chosen macro-area has been Scandinavia. Inside Frampton's and Bourriaud's theoretical frames, the research analyses Scandinavia as a cultural enclave, and the emerging young architecture practices as case studies, in order to research the permanence of a cultural environment, and the production of a new one, in the last ten years built-works. The methodology aims to expand three key-themes, topics that can be considered bridges between historical and present-day design practise. The first topic is the permanence of the construction culture and language, the second is topology, the attitude of conceiving the site as a layered entity result of human and natural gestures, and the last one is tactility, intended as the culture of a particular material dimension.

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The strategy consists in expanding a series of key themes, concerning the relation to some specific characteristics such as topography, climate, light and tectonics, topics that can be considered bridges between historical and present-day design practice. These issues are also tools in the hands of the designers in order to critically understand their own practice when they want to make site specific architecture with a qualitative design approach.

The methodology is based on some main topics, that will be at the same time analysing tools and reflection fields, both theoretical and practical, as the permanence of the constructing culture, is topology, the attitude of conceiving the site as a layered entity result of human and natural gestures, and the last one is tactility, intended as the culture of a particular material dimension.

Some chosen geographical area, some designer, and some specific building will pass through these topics, and they will be examined in terms of historical connections, evolution of the construction process, thanks to a comparative analysis. The areas are intentionally wide and not specifically defined: in fact, according to the necessities of the specific topic, we can consider them elastic perimeters, so that the study can be more adaptable to find remarkable relationships.

Keywords

Frampton
Bourriaud
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Bio

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The research is at 1/3 of its completion.

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