

KRZYSZTOF BIZIO*

THE HISTORY OF THE REVOLUTION

ZAPISANA HISTORIA REWOLUCJI

Abstract

The subject of the article is to discuss the role of manifestos, books and other publications in the creation of the radical architectural vision of the nineteenth century and the beginnings of modernism in the twentieth century. The theoretical basis of avant-garde architecture, which in time became mass architecture, was developed in the main part by theorists. During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries the nature of architectural manifestos has changed, and deviated from the formal description of ordinal architectural solutions towards promoting the idea of *cities of the future* associated with social issues. Particularly noteworthy is the increase in the importance of schematic idea diagrams and constant radicalization of the vision.

Keywords: Theory of architecture, manifesto, modernism

Streszczenie

Tematem artykułu jest omówienie roli manifestów, książek i innych publikacji teoretycznych w tworzeniu wizji radykalnej architektury XIX w. i początków modernizmu w XX w. Podstawy teoretyczne awangardowej architektury, która z czasem stała się architekturą masową, wypracowane zostały w głównej części przez teoretyków. W ciągu XIX i XX w. zmienił się charakter manifestów architektonicznych, które odeszły od opisu rozwiązań formalnych architektury porządkowej w kierunku propagowania idei miasta przyszłości powiązanego z zagadnieniami społecznymi. Na podkreślenie zasługuje wzrost znaczenia schematów ideowych i ciągła radykalizacja wizji.

Słowa kluczowe: Teoria architektury, manifest, modernizm

* Ph.D. Arch. Krzysztof Bizio, Department of Contemporary Architecture and Design Methodology, Faculty of Civil Engineering and Architecture, West Pomeranian University of Technology.

1. The written ordinal architecture and its disintegration

Writing about architecture, visions, needs and deficiencies has been part of the art world since the first ancient architectural treatises. However, a broad revival of theoretical thought occurred in the Renaissance and was continued in subsequent periods of modernity. The theoretical writings were formed by most prominent architects of different periods, who in addition to practical work were trying to formulate demands which usually exceeded the framework of existing conventions. This resulted in the creation of a separate written (and drawn) architectural trend, which anticipated the coming future.

A large part of the architectural manifestos formed until the early nineteenth century referred to interpretation of copyright rules in ordinal architecture. The classical form accounted for their creators' patterns, which could be studied and reinterpreted, but not denied.

The homeland of written modern architecture were the salons of Italian cities, where Leon Battista Alberti, Francesco di Giorgio Martini, Fra Giovanni, Giocondo da Veroina and in the following centuries Barozzi da Vignola Iacomo, Andrea Palladio, or Guarino Guarini proclaimed their treatises and manifestos. The need to express in theoretical architectural discourse soon also appeared in France, where, among others, Villard de Honnecourt, Jean Martin, Jacques Androuet du Cerceau, Jacques-François Blondel, Marc-Antoine Laugier proclaimed their works; in England, where, among others John Shute, James Gibbs, Robert Morris, Isaac Ware created; and in Germany with the statements of such artists as Hans Vredeman de Vries, Wendel Dietterlin, Abraham Leuthner von Grundt, Johann Bernhard Fischer von Erlach, and, summarizing these searches, Karl Friedrich Schinkel.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, at the same time as the developing architecture of eclecticism, theoretical trends were created and developed binding the architecture of the industrial revolution and social changes. The first proposals had in their genesis the dimension of provocation, criticism of the existing order, and in particular a response to the world of classical form. From that moment there were efforts to change the classical forms, which eventually resulted in their breakdown. A radical, dark vision of the world of the future was presented by Giovanni Battista Piranesi in his etchings. In his case antiquity was mixed with threats and uncertainties, which was a novelty and which created the iconography for the coming age of Romanticism. Diametrically different, optimistic in his vision, was Étienne-Louis Boullée. His world of abstract geometric forms, referring also to classical forms, expressed his faith in rationality. This belief was depicted in his book *Architecture essai sur l'art* and his most famous projects *Cenotaph a Newton* and *Deuxième projet pour la Bibliothèque du Roi*. Further development of the geometrical vision of architecture was promoted by Boullée's student Jean Louis Durand. In his book *Précis des architectury données Leçons d'à l'École Polytechnique* he created the idea of usable art, devoid of decoration, which also became the foundation for future modernism.

At the same time a trend was created and developed propagating new social solutions through architecture. The link between formal ideas of reform and new social concepts was Nicolas Ledoux and his concept of Chau. Utopian social ideas were developed by Charles Fourier. His concept of phalansteries, which were ideal social organization, was directly linked with architectural solutions. Another social activist and writer on architecture was Robert Owen, who in *Revolution in the Mind* and *Practice of the Human Race* considered

the relationship between God and Man. In practice, the social ideas in his *Bournville* were initiated by George Cadbury.

2. A new form for a new society

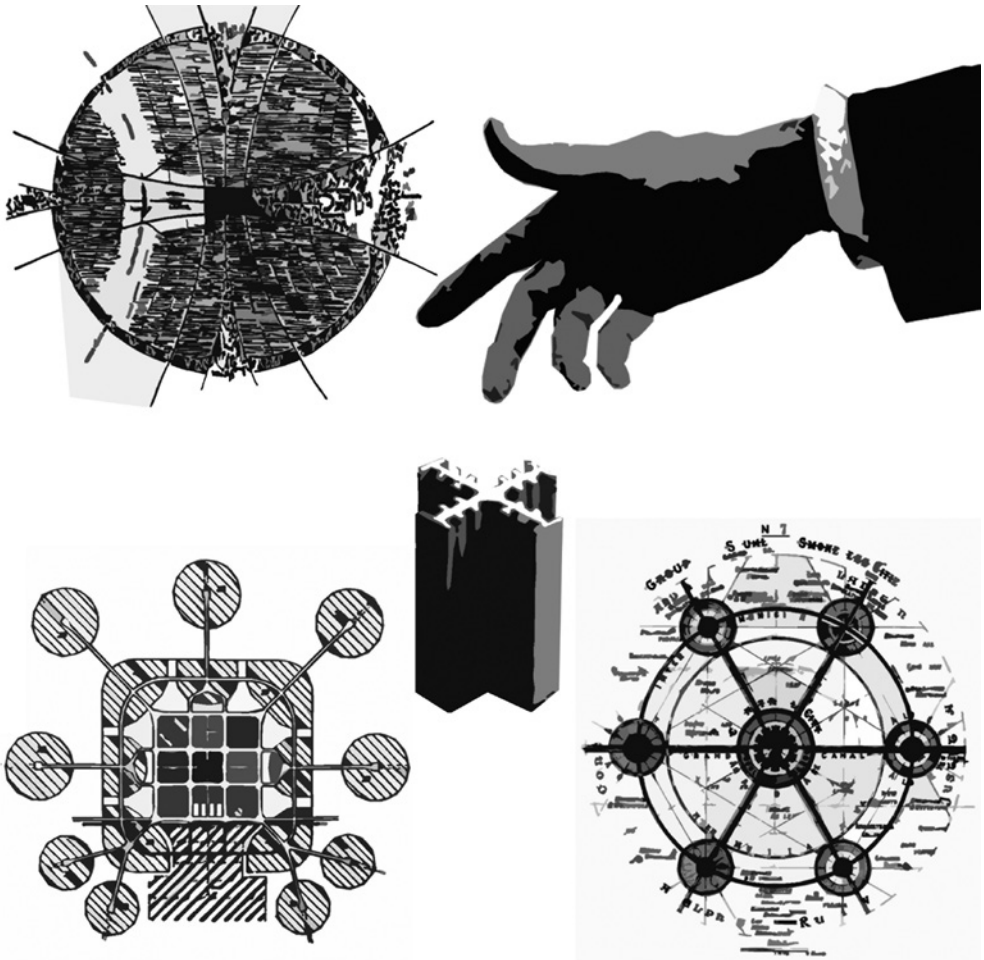
From the late nineteenth century we can observe further radicalization of theoretical statements. After dealing with classical architecture¹, unification of the revolutionary social ideas and new architectural forms followed. Both of these components became the foundation of twentieth-century modernism.

The new model of life constituted the essence of the fundamental concept for the development of twentieth-century architecture by Ebenezer Howard, who describes it in the *To-morrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*. This vision had followers all over Europe who adapted it to local needs. An example of these searches was the theoretical work of Hermann Muthesius, or the broad group of Polish architects working at the beginning of the twentieth century.

Cities of the future became a kind of architectural fetish, which is more a Platonic concept than real space, which through its materiality is full of imperfections. Its development and the discourse of the initial phase took place in the area of theories and manifestos. Following the path traced by Boullée with the elimination of restrictions and perfect geometric shape, Adolf Loos announced his *Ornament und Verbrechen*. The fetish of the vision of modernity was continued in his *Une Cité Industrielle: Étude pour la construction des villes* Tony Garnier. The futuristic city was described by Antonio Sant'Elia and Enrico Prampolini in his *Manifesto dell'arte meccanica futurist*.

World War I was a turning point in society and art which theorists of architecture also could not ignore. In this period we observe the duality of attitudes which translates into architectural rationalism and expressionism. Texts about inspired architecture were written by Bruno Taut, who published *Die Stadtkrone* and *Alpine Architektur*. The mystic Rudolf Steiner created anthroposophy and co-created the architectural concept of the Goetheanum, an architecture that would not have been possible without an innovative ideology. In the early twenties the bible of rationalist modernism in his *Vers une Architecture and Urbanisme* was announced by Le Corbusier. The ideas of the international style and *Neue Bauen* in *Internationale Architektur* is described by Walter Gropius and Henry-Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson in *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922*. One of the most radical visions of modernist architecture was described by Ludwig Hilberseimer in *Grosstadtarchitektur*. A characteristic element that defines the relationship between architecture written and its impact on the reality remains the fact that Hilberseimer a few decades later was able to accomplish only a small part of his conceptual framework.

¹ As an attempt to preserve the traditional values should be regarded *Der Städte-Bau nach seinen künstlerischen Grundsätzen* by Camillo Sitte from 1889. Renaissance of interest in his theories came with the advent of postmodernism and the search for solutions to ensure continuity in the cultural space.



III. 1. Schematic ideological diagrams *To-morrow: a Peaceful Path to Real Reform* by Ebenezer Howard, *Die Stadtkrone* by Bruno Taut, *the concept of satellite towns* by Raymond Unwin and a fragment of *Plan Voisin* by Le Corbusier

3. Process and schema

During the twentieth century a key element of theoretical expression became not the description of formal solutions, but the illustration of an ongoing process, in which architecture is only a part. The genesis of this attitude was introduced in his diagrams by Ebenezer Howard, who made a graphical shortcut of his ideas. Le Corbusier illustrated his text with collage and pointing the forms of architecture from the products of modern technology². This form of expression, in particular, influenced contemporary urban planning, which had to synthesize a series of processes. Examples of such synthetic vision are the ideological diagrams *Die Stadtkorone* by Bruno Taut, or the concept of satellite towns by Raymond Unwin, which was transformed from a small scheme into a complex reality, with all the consequences of such attitudes.

This method of imaging the design process was also taken up by successive generations of modernist architects. Kisho Kurokawa illustrated his visions of a modern metropolis contained in *Metabolism in Architecture* using sketches and ideological mock-ups. Nowadays Vincent Callebaut describes ideas of radical eco-metropolis through realistic visualizations and diagrams.

4. Word, picture, radicalization and reality

Radicalization of expression has become a feature of fun in written architecture. It manifests the essence of theoretical expression. Due to the lack of materiality, it can be deprived of the utilitarian consequences of its existence and express the Platonic idea of total architecture, to which the whole world is subordinated.

Some radicalization has become a deliberate provocation. Was not *Voisin Plan* just this? Corbusier's vision of Paris' reconstruction in the interwar years certainly brought dreams of a new world. World War II and its destruction have changed the provocation in reality. The *Plan Voisin* in its material form has become an integral part of the city centres of Rotterdam, Berlin, Warsaw, Gdansk, Szczecin and small, once quiet towns across Europe, where people had no idea about the life of Le Corbusier.

At that point the reading of written fun in architecture ends and the play becomes a reality. It would be a truism to say that its original architecture does not begin with the project, but with conversations, books, films and plays. This is where the values pursued by a given community are determined. Here are also determined the values to which architecture should endeavour to attain. A feature of the present is the principle according to which the time for changing the fun of architecture into real architecture is becoming increasingly shorter.

² The same rule, referring to Le Corbusier applied also in his *S, M, L, XL* Rem Koolhaas.

References

- [1] Banham R., *Rewolucja w architekturze. Teoria i projektowanie w pierwszym wieku maszyny*, Warszawa 1979.
- [2] Czyżewski M. *Trzewia Lewiatana. Antropologiczna interpretacja utopii miasta ogrodu-*, Kraków, 2001.
- [3] Gropius W. *Internationale Architektur*. München 1925.
- [4] Hilberseimer L., *Grosstadtarchitektur*. Stuttgart, 1927.
- [5] Le Corbusier, *W stronę architektury*, Warszawa, 2012.
- [6] Pevsner N., *Pionierzy współczesności*, Warszawa 1978.
- [7] Pevsner N., *The Sources of Modern Architecture and Design*, New York 1993.

