

Lecture 2: Theory, Criticism, and History of Architecture



Introduction

Theory is concerned with what is architecture, how it should be done, how to design it.

History is concerned with theories over time

Criticism is the record of response to the built environment.



The Demolition of Pruitt Igoe, 1970

Theory

Architectural theories are not precise like scientific theories, governed by laws derived from physical or mathematical truths. It requires no proof, and successful results cannot be guaranteed.

Science is part of architecture. Climate, structure, and sound are scientific subjects that are needed for architecture, but don't represent a theory.

Theories of architecture are hypothesis, because buildings and their users are too complex to be predictable. They are concerned with:

- What architecture is?
- What architecture should do?
- How to design?
- What are the design priorities?

Underground House, BCHO Architects, South Korea

Principles of Architectural and Environmental Design



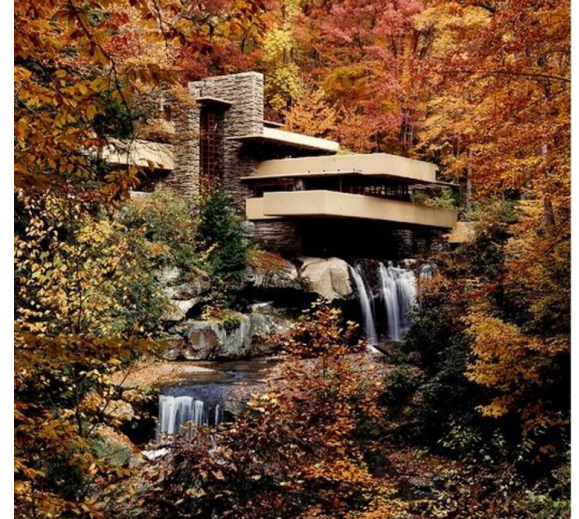
Theories of what is Architecture?

These theories rely on analogies to advocate their way of seeing architecture. These analogies help the architect to arrange the design concepts. From these analogies:

- Mathematical analogy: pure forms, and proportions.
- Biological analogy: organic, biomorphic.
- Romantic analogy: evokes emotions
- Linguistic analogy: grammar, expression, semiotic.
- Mechanical analogy: architecture is a machines.
- Problem solving analogy: reasoning and rational.
- Ad hoc analogy: using what is available
- Pattern language analogy: generating typologies
- Dramaturgical analogy: create the setting for the actors or controlling them.



Pure Forms: The National Assembly, Dhaka



Organic: Kaufmann House, PA



Romantic Expression: Einstein Tower, Potsdam



Linguistic Expression: Dullas Airport, Washington

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Semiotic: Longaberger Headquarter, Ohio



Machine: Villa Savoye, France



Eclectic Adhoc: Eames House, CA



Typology: Islamic Center, New York

Theories of what Architecture should do?

These theories are more concerned with the purpose of architecture. They identify goals the designer should satisfy.

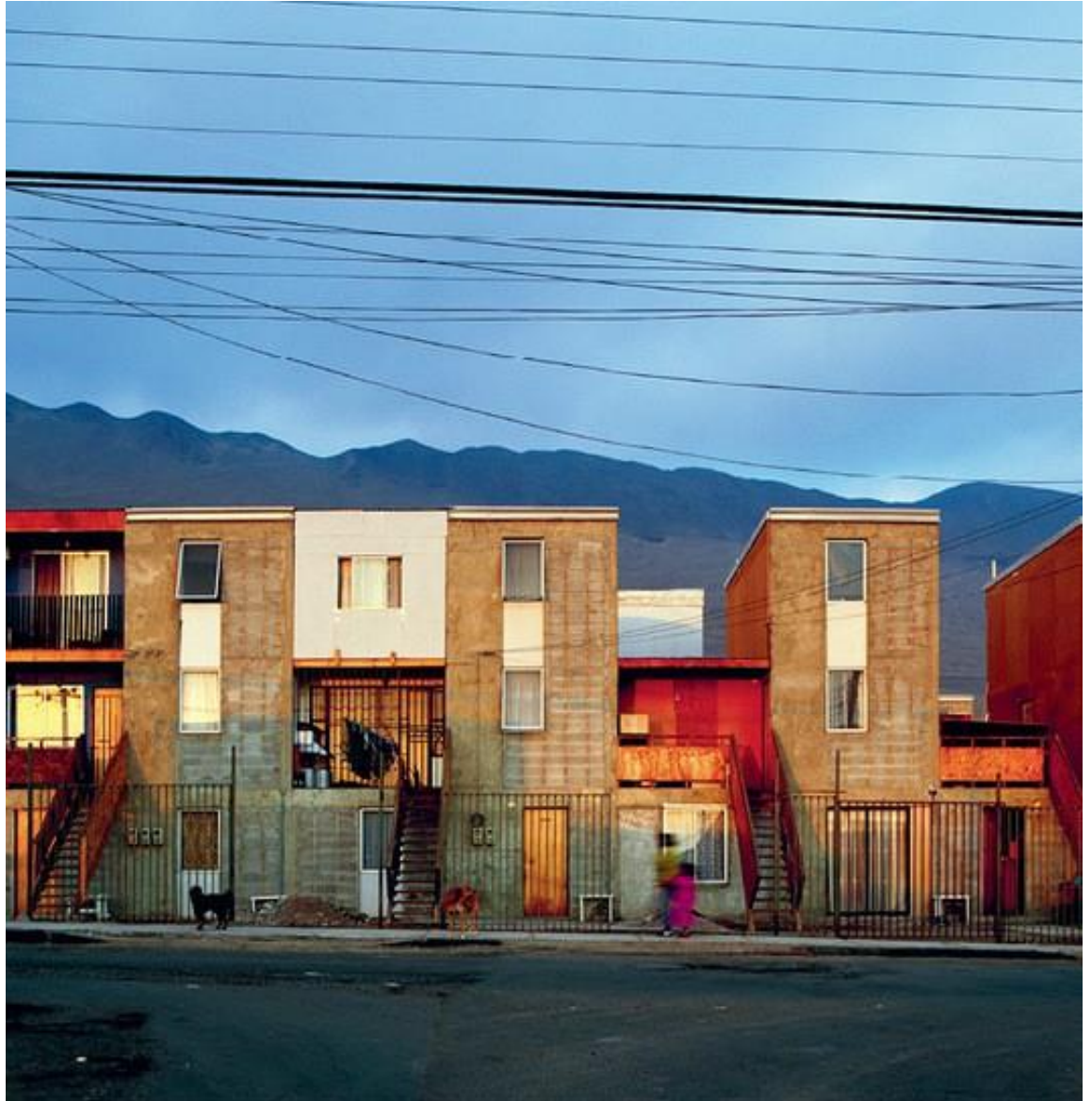
Goals:

- Vitruvius: Architecture depends on order, arrangement, eurythmy, symmetry, propriety, and economy.

Relationship with other phenomena:

- Technical: logic in structure, and production systems.
- Social: should fit the dynamic change of the way of life.

*Social Architecture:
Half finished Houses, Alejandro Aravena, Chile*



Theories of how to design?

These theories are concerned with the appropriate method of operation.

Staffing: Individual vs Team work. Architecture is too complex for individuals.

Procedures:

- Inductive: from the detail outward/ house drive way, service entrance location.

- Deductive: over all intention that is spread over. Library is a market/ books put on display rather than storage.



Free University Philology Library, Foster and Partners, Berlin



Theories of Priorities

Problems in architecture are typically complex. They are technical, social, aesthetic ecological or political. Some theories focus more on one issue than others.

Some argue that all of these issues should be studied together. But achieving quality in all issues is doubted.

Focusing on the Structure
Oculus, Santiago Calatrava, New York



Criticism

It is the record of responses to the built environment

Medium

Writings, photographs, cartoons, measurements. Some forms may be off record such as oral or verbal actions.

Method

- **Normative Criticism:** depends on a doctrine, system, type, or measurement.
- **Interpretive Criticism:** depends on personal vision of the critic, which might be more important than standards.
- **Descriptive Criticism:** depends on identifying the facts and challenges behind the building, to better understand it.

Audience

The group of people who understands the critical language, including clients, architects, historians, and the designer.

Paul Goldberger



History

it may be considered as sub category of criticism. what is important about history:

Content of Historical Treatment:

- Theories
- Events
- Design methods
- Buildings, and their related documents

Methods of Historical Treatment:

- Depictive treatment: looking for facts, and avoiding interpretations.
- Advocatory treatment: advocates the value of the historical artifacts.
- Expressionist treatment: allow for imagination and reflective writing.

Impact on Education: It is part of the formal training for architecture. Very important for point out subjects to learn from.

Santa Maria, Novella. Alberti



References

Snyder & Catanese, Introduction to
Architecture, McGraw Hill, 1979

Websites:

All images are from the internet, and used for
demonstration purposes.