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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

### IMPORTANCE OF THEORY IN ARCHITECTURE

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#### ABSTRACT

There has been always a strong debate between professionals of the practicing world of architecture and the educationalist and theorists in architecture about the importance of theory and its impact in practice as the young graduates find it very difficult to readily adopt to the world of practice even after professionally qualified as architects. In this regard research is being conducted and trying to identify the factors leading to this Gap. we are trying to "Rationale of Application of Theory Inputs in Architectural Practice". This paper is the first part of the study and is only a review paper based on literature review and perception of various architects in regard of what is theory in architecture and its importance.

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#### INTRODUCTION

Architects do not attain an outcome or finished product just by a sequence of validations, like a scientist, or through the historic ideas or beliefs. Nor do they reach them by dissolute perception, like a painter or a musician. They think of intuitive forms, and then try to rationalise them; this process is governed by what we call is theory of architecture, which can be studied in ethical and philosophical terms. "Theory is not like a pair of glasses; it is rather like a pair of guns; it does not enable one to see better but to fight better." Jose G. Merquior, 1985:85. When we sustain a theory, we also recommend its consistent implications. The educational content of any theory embraces a boundless unexpected nontrivial statement.

**The way of theory:** The traditional standing of theory has changed from the ages. It is no longer an intangible realm of defence that environs objects, shielding them from examination by puzzling them. Architectural theory generally foresees an encounter with the object itself. With theory backed projects coming into the scenario, all theoretical principles are loaded into the object, and the proposals are converted into designs rather than verbal abstractions. The word 'theory' comes from the Latin philosophies, that is

adopted from the Greek 'theoros', which means 'spectator, envoy'. In English it means "a conception or mental scheme of something to be done, or of the method of doing it, and a systematic statement of rules or principles to be followed". By the beginning of the seventeenth century, a clear difference between the theory and practice had emerged. At that point, theory was supposed to be "the department of an art or technical subject which consists in the knowledge or statement of the facts on which it depends, or of its principles or methods, as distinct from the practice of it" (SOED). By the end of the eighteenth century, the word comprised both the sense of 'an organized system of principles or theorems' and the sense of 'a hypothesis proposed as an explanation'. The definition of theory is broadly discussed as a process of dissertation facilitating design ideas, rather than a stand-alone notion prior to the governing design, and raised a number of theoretical issues relating to theory's domain. This leads a way to discussing a few specific issues concerning to the processes of mediation. Many were of an opinion that the theory revolution is degraded by being turned into an architectural commodity. It is not a profligate claim to say that theory as design-talk has attained a far higher standing varied dimensions of writing in architecture in the past few years.

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**Theory and Architectural practice:** Architectural theory at times, deceptively assumes a complete logic because of our inclination to coagulate life's events by isolating, identifying, naming, ordering, classifying, and sequencing, so that

intricacies may be more easily identified and comprehended. But these edifices are of little or no relevance to the world, of which the object is our attention. These criticisms are largely irrelevant to theory mediating practice in architecture, because the mediation proceeds no matter which stance we adopt. In other words, the outcome of any mediation will be independent of our way of interpreting a task, even though the outcome rest on our steering it into existence by our understanding. Buildings, once built, are detached from theory while rationalization is interesting. Mies (less is more), Kahn (servant spaces) have interesting minds and their theories illuminate their work. The precise relation between theory and practice is most intangible, though it appears to be with some relation between linking text and imagery, concept and percept. Vitruvius's *De en-Alumna* was first published by the Latin grammarian Fra Giovanni Sulpitius, but did not impact theory and practice until the first illustrated editions appeared around twenty-five years later. In the end of the eighteenth century, theory and practice were amalgamated in professional discourses that composed rule of mathematics, proportion, ordering, geometry, and classical history with empirical studies and improved mechanical and technological understanding. By the end of the eighteenth century, architectural studies included "the extreme statements of unrealizable projects reflecting the individual philosophies and ideals of the architects who designed them.

The thrust of architectural education orients towards the practitioner's priorities inevitable through certification of the schools primarily and succeeded through viability of graduates in the market. Even if those priorities are voiced, it might be a mistake. Rather than reflecting 'reality', they signify an ideology, a transformation of reality. The practicing architect often claims that graduates lack skills of immediate benefit-oriented production as 'units' in practice. While educationalists usually claim that they teach such skills, their major emphasis is always on the conceptual processes of designing.

**Theory and architectural criticism:** The critic has distinct responsibilities towards the art of his own phase. One must not only ask whether it represents a technical advancement or refinement; whether it adds a twist of style or plays dexterously on the nerve of the moment; but what it contributes to or detracts from the diminished reserves of moral intelligence. The critic's responsibility is to contain and limit pragmatism and keep alive the innovative values. The critic is the connection between people and buildings that make the public realm. The critic's opinion of the act of architecture must encircle the policy and the culture that are attached to it. It is the constant messages and small advances in the relationships that make a difference. There is a critical responsibility to keep an eye steadily on the values and quality that cannot be compromised. Critical work in the realm of building today can be done only to engage with the discount, engaging the architects with building to make object the site of all theoretical inquiry. Theory and architectural criticism are about its conceptual language and not about the language of architecture in the wisdom of building as a communicative medium. The language that aids to talk about architecture, that appraises theory, becomes the vocabulary of design-talk. When we discuss about architecture, certain terms are conventions and others are conceived for the discussion, which either becomes convention over time or is lost in time. Generally, words used from other disciplines bring with them their antecedent meanings but later begin to lose their former

identity in inclination of the new environment. For example, using concepts like 'selection', 'crossover', and 'mutation' from genetics to describe certain designing might define what a science researcher conceives certain processes to be without the fullness of their genetic history and usage. Such inaccuracy applies today to the inappropriate similarity between theoretical interpretation and architectural deconstructivism. Operative words from varied disciplines are carefully chosen based on their similarity to an architectural concept and context. Fashion, political scenarios influence and manipulate words and phrases. Once the fashion or compulsion has passed, they are fused into the language and leave behind just a trace, a habitual prior meaning, or occasionally, a new meaning. For instance, the push to change acknowledged negative connotations into positive connotations, to meet antidiscrimination laws, prompting an emergence of genteelism are to be accepted. For example, the 'aged' are now 'experientially advantaged', the 'disabled' are now 'differently abled' and so on. Words and phrases also arise due to emergence because of new events, and existing vocabularies do not suffice. In our search for methods of theorizing and talking architecture, words are often incapable to keep up with rapid changes occurring in current practice, thus mismatches occur. An assumed constancy of terms creates chaos with design-talk. According to the origin of the term, it might not mediate the exact meaning and end up as a drag on current architecture and asking to justify its original meaning in current scenario. Therefore, theory is trapped in the past just like history is trapped in the present. This impedance in fact could be a constraint that theory applies to practice, a natural conservatism. It also gives scope for discussion on, 'theory does not guide practice but practice paces theory'. To understand theory as mediating talk, it is required to have a dialogue with designing from a conservative position, and not based on prior prescription or a poster description.

**Theory as Architectural Myth Maker:** Everyone desires to determine their own parameters of behaviour. People are more interested in people and reality, rather than in mythical systems. A mythological concept usually consists of intricate network of myths that are: imaginal stories culturally important, expressed by means of metaphoric and symbolic expression, graphic imagery, emotional conviction and participation. Foundational track for aspects of the real experienced world and role of humankind with relative statuses are within it. Mythologies also convey the moral and political values of a culture that provide systems of understanding individual experience within a universal perspective. It is difficult to say exactly when the mythic content of architecture was recognized or when architecture was perceived as the content of myth. In architecture, theory becomes the script of both rule and myth, just as in science. It is impossible to import a new conceptual system that is outside the boundaries of science, religion, culture or other disciplines. The one thing architects can do is to invent their own mythic realms. Some opine that such dominions hold too much influence in students of architecture and should be removed as soon as possible on the contrary, as staying with them for as long as they serve to inspire also forms a good option.

### **Social Aspects of Theory**

**The Relevance of Social Concerns:** There is an intricate relationship between social theory and architecture.

**Table 1. Modernist Vs Post- Modernist**

Modernist	Postmodernist
Space shaped according to an overarching social objective	Space is independent and autonomous
Architecture and planning aim to integrate the metropolis	Architecture and urban design reflect the basic fragmentation of the metropolis
Imposes an external, utopian vision	Celebrates localized vernacular traditions
Commerce oriented	Market oriented
Geographically centralized	Geographically decentralized
Austere, inflexible	Playful, electric
authoritarian	Consultative
Rectangular, unadorned	Irregular, decorative

Source (Hannigan, 1995; theory of architecture-concepts, themes and practices by Paul-o-Alan)

Architecture could be alleged as means for intervention in social reality and is predominantly influenced by social theory. The relationship between architecture, society and theory is multilayered. Primarily, architecture is visible and tangible physical structure that has immense impact on people. Furthermore, given that investments in construction field are rather high, even before the building process starts a debate goes on among the experts about the material to be used, the style of the design, etc. Architecture plays a distinct role in creating the image of the city, making it unique and memorable. At the end of the 20th century, the processes of commoditization and commercialization of architecture were intensified. Then, from the early development of cities, the power of ruling groups was materialized in the built environment. During the 20th century, in addition to the state and the religious, multinational corporations appeared as parallel stakeholder, who expressed their power by colossal headquarter buildings.

From a social perspective, this connection between society and architecture amounts to the buildings and cities being trophies of political power, cultural values and social attitudes. Looking from an individual perspective, buildings and cities amount to spiritual, ideological, or psychological statements. The individual perspective motivated the Modern movement, which presumed a social outlook as the individuals united and agreed to create a significant change. The critiques of the theory of modernism led to the emergence of a new movement – postmodernism – the theories of which rejected unquestioned progressive development of humanity and the belief that science could be a means for successful organization of social life. Urbanism and architectural practice were influenced by changes in social theory, which reflected the changes in social reality. Thus, architects rejected meta-narratives and, above all, rationalism of modern architecture.

#### **The social comprehension and assimilation of architecture:**

Many architects view the society where a group regulates the competition among its members. The struggle for symbolic trophies according to rules and regulations presuming that they are fair to all, through means of mutual understanding is viewed on. Any task that assigns a social role to architecture, leads to the theoretical concerns arising from the character, or the basis for a society to understand its style. This presumes a connection between society and architecture and the ability of style to amaze the society. Traditional societies with rigid social structures and firm values are inclined to have a style that is consistent and monumental. Inclusive and pluralist societies, with their highly generalized mores maintain the variety and individuality of their component sub societies.

Comparatively, in a homogeneous Western culture, there is an apparent modern substantial quality that began with the intricate combination of structure, color, surface and allusion in the work of architect or designer of the particular phase and style. It is unclear whether this integration is an expression of designer's inner self or whether it is an implied sensibility in which the society, structure, art and architecture are encompassed together. A more homogeneous society which demands compliance would not allow the presence of vast individual works. But the existence of many individual works suggests a tolerance of individuality and artistry. The obsession with textuality in architecture, probably to correct alleged intellectual deficiencies of the recent past, may be unnecessary, as the social understanding of architecture will arise only through consensus. Current scenario of architecture will mirror only those qualities which society agrees to pertain.

**Theory and Environment-Behavior Studies:** It is interesting to note that the demands for complying social concerns in architecture are paralleled by the increasing pressure to accommodate psychology in the built environment. New theories have originated for addressing the two different concerns from two directions in their respective fields. Firstly, from the mainstream professions of architecture and planning, later from the social sciences such as psychology and sociology. In the former, the concern is about understanding the impact of the designed environments upon people in order to improvise the design and in the latter, the concern is about understanding the role of the environment on the behavior of people so that their conduct can be well understood. This research is variously known as Environment-Behavior research, Environmental Psychology, and Man-Environment Studies. These offer knowledge that challenges the validity of the 'architecture as art' paradigm and help advance the theory base of the practice of architecture.

The outcome of this research has manifested in two different ways. Primarily, these have directed the development of new disciplines in Architecture which are out of its traditionally defined boundaries. Secondly, they have also led to re-orientations of focus within the disciplines in which the questions were raised. The vast body of knowledge developed within this field has helped in building theories that aid in understanding of these issues. Moreover, the research is happening which continues to refine this knowledge base. For example, the differences between people's perceptions and professional's perception has been established and there is an understanding of why these differences exist. Theories explaining personalization of designed environments, spaces with sense of identity in built environments or privacy in various contexts have been popularized. However, application of these theories seems to face major obstacles. On one hand, there is no consistency of such theories available in order to link them to the popular design processes and on the other, several data and information in regard to the theories are far too general to be directly applied to a specific situation. Other major concerns in practice can be accounted to programs or briefs for buildings which are simple lists of spaces required with floor areas and specific relations among them. The clients are not able to provide precise requirements and the task of producing briefs lie in the hands of the designers, but neither finances nor time is available to the designers to carry out complete research on other aspects prior to the start of design activities.

Interviews with clients and questionnaires addressing user needs may seldom be carried out but not in appropriate method and the findings of such research remain general and interpreted on personal bias. 'Standardized guidelines' help in articulating the briefs to some extent, but it is doubtful if such standards fulfill the requirements posed by the intricacy of man environment interfaces of the given scenario. Existence of Cultural variations, contextual specificities and situational differences make the use of any general guidelines less relevant. Very often, quantitative data on the sites, the users of the buildings are known to a considerably accurate degree, but qualitative information is hard to come by and difficult to be assimilated. It is necessary that environment-behavior research must become more relevant to the practice and that the bipolarity that exists between practice and research must be minimized. However, the practice of architecture must not give up on the creation of poetic spaces and its aesthetic theory base but strike a fine balance between the poetics of space and the people-environment, to enable the construction of 'theory of architecture' that is supported by environment-behaviour research as much as intuition.

**Theory and individuality: impact on society and architecture:** The puzzle of individual- collectivism or collective-individualism proposes that individuality can be a reciprocal quality, something to do with the relation between matters. It is well acknowledged that individual actions have moral, legal and ethical ramifications for society at large. These have been clearly defined in terms of responsibility and accountability. In architecture, the status of the issue of an individual action concerning collective action is not so clear, although individuality is believed vital to originality, without which there cannot be progress or no invention. Design is universal and unites the efforts of individual designers as well. The theoretical and practical concerns of the design fields have not changed much over time. They are still influenced by the same intentions, the same contradictions and insistent of the same calls for social relevance.

Many Architects are of the opinion that teaching shall include collaboration with various disciplines, vertical integration of studios, comprehensively structured design problem, design juries augmented by consultants, focus on interpersonal relations and negotiation and leadership training. These prescriptions are made in to seek complementary relation rather than opposition, thereby encouraging full emergence of both individual and community. The importance for design and conventional theory in the generalised meaning does not attach to architecture. It is a universalized thing that can be made specific only by finding a point of application. Certain distinctive features and characteristics shall be identified to animate the theory and declare methods to do so. In other words, conventional theory requires to particularize architecture related to its application. Since any uniqueness or identity in a situation shall pre-exist the application of the theory by being perceptible and thus must be declared. Such declarations must be in form of talk, words, or specifics, and therefore are themselves instances of generalisations. Hence, theory cannot be viewed as some comprehensive formula guiding practice but is a local and specific practice in the form of mediating talk. The social consequence is that, the architecture is known by design talk and it is the political strength of individual discourse that decides what society says of design and what individual architects find in society. Every country has its principal architects who have either written or been writing about their individual efforts.

Consequently, architects use writings of individual architects or buildings around the world, directly and indirectly to locate themselves in society. This assists in bringing distinction and identity to the points of application of their individual works.

**Theory and community: Social implications for architecture:** It is an interconnected reasoning that is leading to self- fulfilling fallacy to first perceive architecture as setting the physical limits that thereby define a group of people and set them apart from their surroundings. For instance, the much-criticized mega structure has been done for housing in many parts of the world. What architects have consistently misunderstood about community because of their emphasis on visual and formal indicators, is what planners have done with their consensual view of community as social and geographical solidarity. They have concluded that community is most decidedly not distinctive. It is a veiled edifice with geophysical boundaries which are incidental and does not define the communal limit. Understanding that the conventional theory as the course of design, intervenes on their behalf while designing has also set in. Architectural discourse still needs to evolve ways to mediate the social norms, dislocations, injustices, and imbalances that impinge on all designing ways to reconnect architecture to social and economic issues. A thorough reformulation of both theory and practice is required in order to avoid repeating the well-intentioned mistaken strategies used by modernist reformers.

**The Need for A Theory:** Discouraging and promoting a more responsive and responsible design pedagogy is need of the hour. This requires a critical discussion of a number of issues relevant to the potential of transformative and critical pedagogies, including the examination of knowledge consumption versus knowledge production, and the justification for introducing such a theory. The potential of transformative and critical pedagogies is explored through the identification of parameters that contribute to building a responsive theory for design pedagogy in architecture and its allied disciplines. The discussion emphasises on need for moving beyond the present practice of passive domain-knowledge consumption, i.e. inductive learning, in design teaching practices. It needs to be a student centric approach rather than a teacher centric approach as it will help to insist innovation and creativity among all. The prerequisite of shifting from a conventional content-based course to a learning-based philosophy helps to achieve and create the succeeding peers to adapt to the industry changes.

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