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What does the Architecture of Democracy Represent?

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ABSTRACT

In the time of the crisis of democracy, new questions also arise in the field of architecture. Today architecture is asked about the content of terms that should be represented, symbolized and materialized. Meaning of many institutions, public buildings, architecture is redefined in political context. What influence does politics have on the functioning of buildings and what impact does architecture have on the functioning of institutions? What are the ways democracy and architecture relate to each other? What should the architecture of these buildings represent today? Contribution built on this theoretical basis will point out at several examples of political buildings as representatives of democracy in the structure of the city. The main role in many European capitals is often played by the iconic buildings of Parliament, the Government, the seat of the President, the judiciary, but it is also interesting to look at others - ministries, offices and so on. Their grouping or fragmentation also initiates the questions on concentration or distribution of political power. The paper will present the analysis of three scales of political power distribution – the scales of architecture, urbanism of city and the level of state.

Keywords: democracy, architecture, representation, ecclesia, politics

Introduction

At the time of the crisis in democracy, new questions in the field of architecture have been raised. To represent is one of the basic functions of architecture which is supposed to represent, symbolize and materialize the content of concepts. The meaning of many institutions, public buildings, architecture in political context is being redefined.¹ What impact does policy have on functioning of buildings and what influence does the architecture have on functioning of institutions? How do democracy and architecture relate to each other? What should the architecture of these buildings represent today? In present days, the architecture of buildings of political representation is in the background behind the political events and affairs. Is the architecture even interested to be part of a democratic dialogue?

In many European capital cities, the main role is represented by the iconic buildings, such as the seat of parliament, government, president or the seat of justice, but it is also interesting to take a look at the others, the ministry buildings, the office buildings, etc. Their grouping or fragmentation also raises the question of the concentration or distribution of political power.

Crisis of Democracy

Generally used phrase, **crisis of democracy**, refers to the other sub-crises in different fields and different parts of the world at the same time. It is not a coincidence that these events are cumulated and subsequently support and legitimate each other. Migration crisis was related to the conflicts in the Middle East; institution crisis, crisis of freedom of speech and crisis of public media, raising populism, etc. The theme of crisis also resonates in arts as well as in architecture. There are still more and more artists who label their works as political, not only in the states that find themselves in war conflicts, but this phenomenon seems to become more usual in Europe as well.² There is a significant decrease of artistic performances that could be categorized as “politically neutral” or passive in opinion.

The period of crisis in democracy, lasting from 2015, can be perceived as the initiating moment, the opportunity for change, a chance to re-evaluate even in the field of architecture. What is the architecture like during the crisis of democracy? The architecture is often more dependent on the public affairs than the other types of artistic output. The political decisions make an influence on the architecture and shape it very often. Could this relationship function reciprocally? Could the architecture have an influence on the political events, the quality of discussion, the democracy in public?

¹Anděl, J. 2014. *Mody demokracie*, DOX Prague, Czech Republic, 13-38.

²Downey, A. 2014. *Art and politics now*, Thames & Hudson.

Architecture of Democracy

I formulate the phrase “architecture of democracy”³ that could be considered as a neologism in English and in Slovak as well. In architecture, there is no category like this. However, phrases like Communist architecture or architecture of totalitarian regime seem to be more common. Other attributes and appropriate associations would emerge: terrorist architecture, populist architecture, security architecture, which would suggest a reference to a certain political spectrum. Therefore, the definition of the concept of architecture and the concept of democracy could be useful in order to find out the possible roots of the architecture of democracy.

In search of the meaning of the current concept of democracy that is frequently misused, it is interesting to follow the idea of the contemporary philosopher Bruno Latour. Etymology identified the same root for words *Demon* and *Demos*, these two words are more in war than in the sibling relationship.⁴ The word “*demos*” which forms part of the basis of the word “demo-cracy” has the same Indo-European root *da-* as the word “*divide*.”⁵ If a demon is so terrible that it causes division and damage, it is because it does not unite. A *demos* is such a welcome solution because it represents a community of diversities and singularities. Paradox? No, because if we are divided by our different interests and opposite opinions, we have to unite in our diversity to create common policy, to re-establish democracy.⁶

In western geopolitical region, the architecture is perceived as the design of buildings, the architect has the abilities, technical skills and qualities to solve the problem. On the other hand, there is the Eastern region approach, in which the word (T)asmin (design) is based on *tasmim* as “determining,” “making up one's mind” and “resolve”. Thus in linguistic terms “design” of architecture is an act of determination, of sorting out possibilities, and of projecting a choice. It has little to do with problem-solving as the architect/designer seems encounter choices, not problems, and to engage in judging merits, not solving problems. It is closer to the “decision maker.”⁷

Architecture of democracy perceived in this way would have the power within itself to initiate and influence, not only passively reflect. It would have the ability to create options and assignments, it could lead and inspire. Thus the architecture of democracy aims to open up the questions of current issues connected to the crisis of democracy by determining its values.

³Fialková, E. 2018. *Architecture of democracy*, UMPRUM, 122-125.

⁴Detienne, M. 2003. *Qui veut tendre la parole?* Paris: Le Seuil.

⁵Lévéque, P. 1993. Repartition et démocratie á propos de la racine da-. In *Esprit*, 12, 34-39.

⁶Latour, B. and Weibel P. 2005. From Realpolitik to Dingpolitik – An Introduction to Making Things Public. In *Making Things Public-Atmospheres of Democracy*, Karlsruhe, Germany: MIT Press, 14-44.

⁷Mahmoud Keshavarz, M. 2019, Sketch for Theory of Design Politics. In *Para-Platforms*, Sternberg Press, 12-25.

Ecclesia

Does the architecture have the ability to embody social values and can it represent democracy in the structure of the city?

I mention one archetypal example. The Greek word *ecclesia*, with which Thomas Aquinas works and according to him, it means a church as a house as well as a community of believers that gather in this house. *Domus in qua sacramentum celebrates, ecclesiam significat et ecclesia nominator.*⁸ It is linguistically interesting that he uses the same term to refer to both, as some languages still do today: German (kirche/church - kirche/church), English (church/church) - church/church), Greek (Εκκλησία/church - Εκκλησία/church) and on the other hand some languages use different words e.g. Czech (kostol/church - cirkev/church). It can be perceived that the building and the people who live in it have the same or similar character, carry the same values, represent the same to society, represent the same to the city.

Nowadays, a similarly close relationship between the people who create the institution and the building in which this group of people gather, would be expected in the buildings of political representation. Today, it is politics (religion less than in past) that represents our attitudes and values. The symbolic meaning, the close connection between the visual and content sides of architecture do not seem relevant to us. For example, in Czech language, we rarely use the phrase "This is parliament." to describe the building and the community in it, instead we use "parliament is seated here" to clearly refer that the building and the institution which seated in it are two different terms, that the institution can be relocated in another building. The institution occupies the architectural shell but it is independent of it.

*Representation and Re-presentation*⁹

The question often arises as how to distinguish the buildings of political power from ordinary office buildings? In what way their statehood and the dignity of these buildings compared to others, ordinary office buildings, should be presented? And is there any significant difference needed at all? Let's stop at this moment for a while to clarify what the uniqueness and nature of architecture is. It is a **representative function** that distinguishes architecture from the common production of building culture. On the line of ancient philosophers, Karsten Harries describes, in his book *The Ethical Function of Architecture*, the importance of determining the difference between architecture and buildings: "*Architecture is the art of representation.*" Goethe notes in the text: "*Architecture is not the art of representation, it is an art in itself. At his highest level, however, he cannot do without representation.*"¹⁰

Eco states an example: "*Above all, the seat tells me that I can sit on it. As far as the throne is concerned, I have to do something more... one must settle a person*

⁸Harries, K. 2012. *The ethical function of architecture*, Prague: Arbor Vitae, 111.

⁹Harries, K. 2012. *The ethical function of architecture*, Prague: Arbor Vitae, 126.

¹⁰Harries, K. 2012. *The ethical function of architecture*, Prague: Arbor Vitae, 103.

with a certain dignity and confirm that his user "sits with dignity" - for example by various additional features that connote "royal power"... Connotations of dignity and royal power, it can gain such great significance in terms of function that the basic function - to provide a seat - can be pushed in the background or deformed... Providing a seat is therefore one of the functions of the throne, and it is only one of its meanings: the first meaning, but not the most important one.

Does this architectural work distinguish by this feature from an ordinary building, built only to serve - in Eco's words - the "primary utilitas"? So that it is not only functional and useful, but also symbolic and representative?

As Kant stated: "As long as the architecture only serves needs and it is only useful, it is just that and it cannot be beautiful at the same time. It can be beautiful when it gains independence from these needs. But it cannot become completely independent because by its very nature it finally comes into contact with these needs over and over again, it becomes beautiful only when it gains independence from itself and becomes empowered and freely represents itself at the same time."¹¹

Politicians are the representatives we have elected, they are representatives of our opinions. The concept of representative democracy directs us to an important realization of the principle of today's politics - it is us who through the representatives of our ideas - politicians, participate in policy-making. Political buildings represent our values. That is also why I believe that this feature should be strengthened in these buildings as bearers of democratic values in the structure of the city. And precisely because they are trying to deliver (our) value message.

How? The answer is not explicit. The all-glass façade is not democratic because it is completely transparent. And a big rational "box" will probably not be only an administrative factory and nothing more. The key is hidden in how the individual qualities relate to each other, in what contexts they speak to us, what they point to.

Protoarchitecture of Democracy

Regarding to the "ecclesial" relationship, as a prototype of the relationship of architecture representing the values of the community that resides in it. Churches, temples and synagogues can be considered as the first examples of the original architecture with added, symbolic, representative value. Until the 18th century, the church was considered to be a building as a sign of ideal residence due to the fact that it represented an ideal architecture - it refers to the heavenly Jerusalem. At the same time, it refers forward, to the ideal image, as well as to past ideals. In the Bible to the buildings inspired by God, to the archetypes - Noah's ark, the tabernacle of Moses in the desert, to the temple of Solomon, and many others.¹²

On this timeline, we could similarly ask ourselves today in the 21st century: what ideal image for the future and the past would the current political buildings – of parliament, government, and the seat of president - refer to? Could we agree on

¹¹Harries, K. 2012. *The ethical function of architecture*, Prague: Arbor Vitae, 127.

¹²Harries, K. 2012. *The ethical function of architecture*, Prague: Arbor Vitae, 114.

a "heavenly vision", a "common Jerusalem", a "Noah's ark" of today's democratic society? This "ecclesial" relationship between architecture and the community or institution that resides in it had its roots in the symbols and visions that were discussed throughout society. It's probably that piece of each individual's interest in something in common.

In analogy with the predecessors of churches, to state some examples from the past, it is necessary to look back to the beginnings of democratic buildings; the arrangement of seated Greeks in an ancient semicircle - an equivalent settlement with good views and acoustics for each member of the audience; the first public meeting rooms - agora, or the first rhetorical corner (speaking corner) that also appeared in Athens.

The Constitution as a Society-Wide Agreement

In current political arrangements, as a society-wide agreement, a vision, an ideal are presented legislatively enshrined laws - valid for everyone, we are all equal before them. Their sum is written in the constitution that is supposed to unite us. Today, we perceive the imperfection of the constitution much more critically than it was at the process of national independence and the creation of the first constitutions.¹³ We are aware of many unwritten ethical and moral codes that are missing in it. There is also a lack of a visual prototype, a building that exists only as an aesthetic idea, a basic description for the architecture of state buildings.

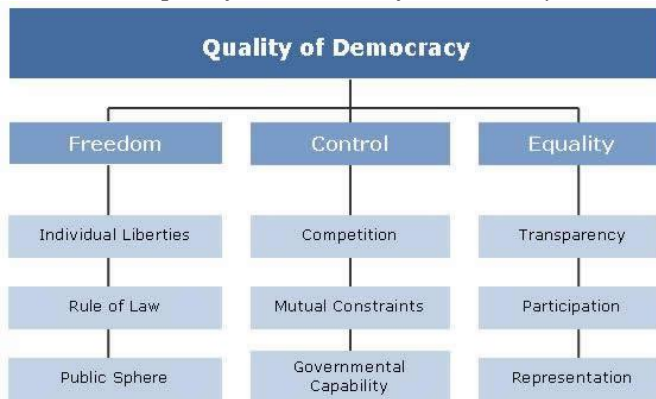
Diagnostics - Qualitative Features of the Architecture of Democracy

Concerning the features of architecture, we focus on those that could be described as democratic. The democratic nature of architecture as a material feature does not have to be measurable, quantifiable or qualifiable. All we have to do is move around the marked field where we will get to know the players and we will be able to notice their mutual positions and compare them. The Swiss sociological-political study *Democracy Barometer*¹⁴ aims to measure the index of democracy in individual states.

¹³Procházková Andrea, Respekt, Výročí ústavy. Stejná práva pro všechny. In *Respekt*. 9/2020. Czech republic. DOI=<https://www.respekt.cz/tydenik/2020/9/ustava-stejna-prava-pro-vsechny>.

¹⁴Department of Political Science, *Democracy Barometer*, Study. Zurich, Switzerland. DOI=<http://www.democracybarometer.org/>.

Table 1. *Graphs of 9 Features of Democracy Index*

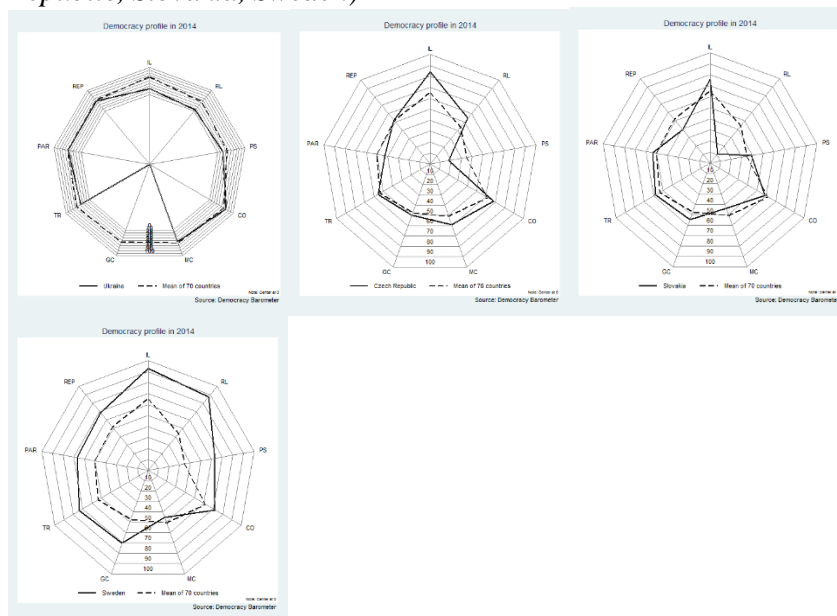


Source: <http://www.democracybarometer.org/>.

The project is based on the search for the scope of the concept of democracy. Using the three basic principles of liberal and participatory democracy, they evaluated nine features. Theoretically, these evaluations can be considered as indicators of the quality of democracy - cyclic graphs allow us to examine the mutual relationships. These features are:

- Freedom- 1, Individual Liberties, 2, Rule of Law, 3, Public Sphere,
- Control- 4, Competition, 5, Mutual Constraints, 6, Governmental Capability
- Equality- 7, Transparency, 8, Participation, 9, Representation.

Table 2. *Graphs of 9 Features of Democracy Index (from left Ukraine, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Sweden)*



Source: <http://www.democracybarometer.org/>.

The research is political-sociological, but it works with very close concepts for architecture. These characteristics could be reformulated into the language of architecture and urbanism:

1. *freedom - freedom of movement, public sphere inside the house, public space and the relationship to the city*
2. *control - public contract construction, transparency of the procurement process, form of security controls in the house*
3. *equality - the ability of architecture to be readable, representative.*

The criteria entered this way will offer us a kind of practical framework for looking at the democracy of buildings. This theoretical information can be used as a base for the analysis on several following examples.

Quantitative Division

There are two approaches that characterize the architecture of democracy. The first one is *top - down*, based on the principle that energy comes from politicians and state founders, and the second one is *bottom - up* that civil society is the initiator. The political architecture that will be dealt with in the following text, is perceived primarily as the one that is formed as an architecture of state power - *top down*. The political architecture in this way serves as a tool for the manifestation and legitimization of the political regime from above. What material footprint does political power have in space? This process takes place on several levels.

- 1, at the level of the house - in its expression, disposition, material nature
- 2, at the level of the city - relationship of public spaces and buildings in the structure of the city
- 3, at the national level - fragmentation of territorial units, distribution of power within the state

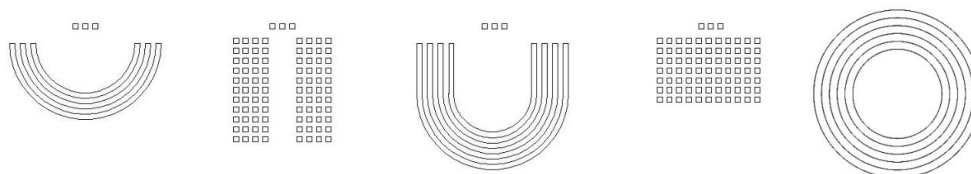
1st Level – House

The first phenomenon on the level of the house is the arrangement of the assembly point. At the Biennale 2014, a study of Austrian XML focused on the halls of parliaments as icons of state buildings. They chose a parliament and its seating chamber because it is the building where policy literally takes shape, where collective decisions are created in specific conditions, where relations between different political entities are organized through architecture. The architecture of political meeting spaces expresses political culture more than just in the abstract, it participates in politics.¹⁵

¹⁵Cohen de Lara, M. and Mulder van der Vegt, D. and xml. 2016. Parliaments. In *Mark* 61, 63-79.

They classified these halls into five typologies: 1, class 2, horseshoe 3, opposing standing benches 4, a semicircle and 5, circle, the least frequently used.

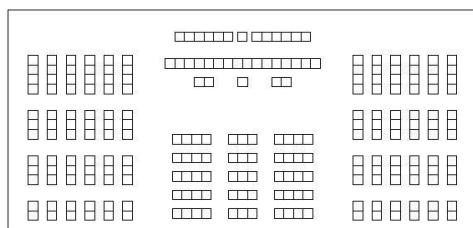
Figure 1. *Semicircle, Opposing Benches, Horshoe, Classroom, Circle. Study of XML on Biennale 2014*



Source: Inspiration from <http://parliamentbook.com/>.

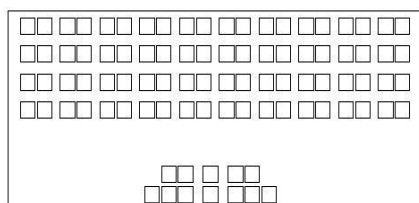
There is a conflict because many meeting rooms are not so clearly classifiable and we lose many interesting details by strict categorizing. See Czech Republic - where parliament is seated in a building that was built for another purpose (representative-residential palace). The main meeting room is located in the reconstructed theatre hall. The 2nd part of the parliament, Senate, is located in the reconstructed horse stables, so the shape of the room is restrictive and determines the layout of the chairs.¹⁶

Figure 2. *Assembly Hall of the Chamber of Deputies of Czech Republic*



Source: Author's Archive.

Figure 3. *The Assembly Hall of the Senate of Czech Republic*

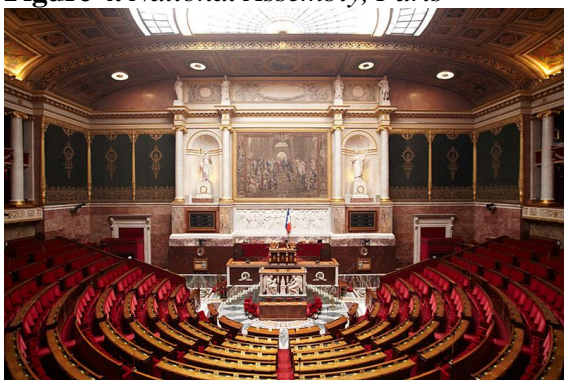


Source: Author's Archive.

¹⁶Bartlová, M. 2018. Vrátit českému národu hrdost. Rekonstrukce budov České národní rady. In *Retrospektiva - Vybrané studie k dějinám umění 12.–16. a 20. století*, UMPRUM, Prague, 326-338.

The vast majority of the oldest parliaments in the world, whose primary function from the beginning was parliament, use the archetype of the semicircle set by the Federal Assembly during the French Revolution as a scheme for many of the buildings that followed. Chronologically: France (1832), Spain (1843), Norway (1866), Austria (1883), Belgium (1886), etc. The roots of this form can be found in the ancient auditorium where everyone has very good acoustics and an equal view of the speaker in the middle, as well as good view of the sitters to watch the facial expressions and gestures. The former Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, Peter Pithart identified the interpersonal non-verbal communication as one of the most basic needs in the formation of democratic politics.¹⁷

Figure 4. *National Assembly, Paris*



Source: <https://www.places-of-power.org/>.

Another aspect is the layout of the building as a unit - **disposition**. The width of the corridors and the organization of public and private rooms determine the nature of the atmosphere in the building. The strict division or labyrinth of corridors mediates a different degree of formality for political discussion.

Politicians themselves often praise inter-line communication which is often a breeding ground for further political discourse. For example, the American Congress with an ancient dome where the hall is surrounded by a long corridor serving almost as a public street for lobbying, the media and public relations with politicians. It is precisely the place of political teasing and less formal exchange of opinions. In Washington, congressmen have 3 to 15 offices (the number depends on their finances) that are connected by underground passages with the main building of the Congress.¹⁸ Thus the building is able to offer different intensities of more or less official spaces. This informal but often initiating ground often manifests itself in the floor plans of the buildings, for example in the form of restaurants, atria, corridors, relaxation corners integrated in the buildings, and play a supporting role in policy-making alongside official grand halls.

¹⁷Pithart, P. 2018. Štát-stavba-hmota. In *Architektúra demokracie*, UMPRUM, Prague, 16-19.

¹⁸Smith S.S. and Roberts J.M. and Vander Wielen R. J. 2009. *The American Congress*, The Cambridge University Press.

Figure 5. *Lobbyists at the Capitol in Statuary Hall*



Source: <https://history.house.gov/>.

The material nature of a house can carry many references. Heidegger says that the material is supposed to represent itself, only this way it is re-presented. *By re-presenting the material, the architectural work reveals its existence. Representation here literally means re-presentation. The re-presentation lets the material speak.*¹⁹ The stone is heavy, the metal is shiny, and the glass is transparent.

Fulfilling the authenticity of a material should emphasize its properties. What we want to express with individual materials is specific to individual buildings, places and architects and, last but not least, the political regime. Therefore, working with the material can strengthen the expression even towards political symbolism.

I state as an example glass which is probably the easiest synonym for transparency in architecture. On the other hand, glass is also used as a material for physical separation, for the separation of the healthy and the sick in hospital waiting rooms, as a filling for the windows of police security checks to protect against an attacker, as a filter between the seller and the buyer. How an architect works with glass can support one of its features.

¹⁹Harries, K. 2012. *The ethical function of architecture*, Prague: Arbor Vitae, 130.

Figure 6. *Glass Dome in the Reichstag*



Source: <https://www.ourworldforyou.com/>.

The iconic reconstruction of Norman Foster from 1992, which is a legible gesture of the building's democracy, belongs among the realizations of politically important buildings. It allowed visitors to enter the glass platform over Members' heads during negotiations, a glass dome represent a symbol of transparency. Glass is trying to draw the observer to the centre of political dialogue.

2nd Level – City

The second level is the city. Significantly it can be seen in the capital cities where the major state institutions influencing the city's urbanism are located usually. Three basic principles can be identified: 1, government district - the principle of concentration of the institutions into an organized unit, e.g. Brazil and China 2, hybrid clusters - e.g. Berlin cultural-political cluster of institutions or 3, implementation of institutions in the structure of the city without more visible urban connections - most European cities, e.g. Prague, Budapest, London.

Government District

The first type, the government district, creates an organized comprehensive structure of state institutions in the city and concentrates political power in a specific area.

For instance, there is Three Powers Plaza, a square in **Brazil**, whose name is derived from the presence of three governmental powers directly in the square: the executive is represented by the presidency (Palácio do Planalto); the legislature is represented by the Congresso Nacional; and the judiciary represented by the Supremo Tribunal Federal. The square was designed by Lúcio Costa and Oscar Niemeyer as a place where these three forces meet harmoniously.²⁰ However, a strong concept fails most in its monofunctionality. Today, this place is considered to be an office district whose architectural icons are visited by tourists but ordinary city life is lacking.

²⁰Siembieda W. and Vicente del Rio. 2010. *Contemporary Urbanism in Brazil: Beyond Brasília*, University Press of Florida.

Another example Zhongnanhai (Chinese: 中南海), a former imperial garden in the Imperial City of Beijing, **China**, near Forbidden City. It serves as the headquarters for the Communist Party of China and the State Council of the People's Republic of China (Central Government). Zhongnanhai is the seat of the General Office of the Communist Party of China (Chief Leader) and Prime Minister of the People's Republic of China. Since Zhongnanhai became the seat of the central government, it has been mostly inaccessible to the general public. Chinese maps of Beijing show Zhongnanhai as negligible greenery with large water areas. In contrast, the municipal government is prominently displayed with a communist red star.²¹ On the southern edge of this district, there is a free-standing monumental Great Hall of the People where only once a year all 2980 members meet at The National People's Congress of the People's Republic of China, the unicameral parliament of the People's Republic of China. The location of power in one place allows this area to be closed to the public and create an isolated inaccessible island of power on the city map, where an ordinary mortal cannot get or even where it is forbidden to park or stay near it for a long time.

Hybrid Cluster

The second typology is a hybrid cluster which seems to be a good solution in the city of the 21st century compared to the monofunctional government district. The location of the German parliament building in Berlin is one of the examples. The building is located in the cultural - political clusters and is surrounded by the second largest city park in Berlin, the Tiergarten, next to the Reichstag, it is the Chancellor's residence, opposite the Tipi am Kanzleramt Theater and the House of Culture.²² These players form an urban unit that does not suffer from abandonment due to the complementary day and night activities and the diversity of visitors. The park as an all-day leisure activity supports the pleasant context of the place, where visitors to cultural institutions, officials, politicians and people walking dogs or throwing frisbee have the opportunity to meet.

Implementation in the Structure of the City

An inconsistent distribution of state institutions within the city is the most common solution, at first glance. The state power is metaphorically distributed and its players have the opportunity of mutual control and freedom at the same time. In the second reading of the plan, we would probably decode the individual strategies that amplify the specific motif of a particular city.

For instance, the recurring motif of water, it can be seen in Prague, where the Vltava flows, in London, where the Thames flows, or the Danube in Budapest. In all of these three cities, the state institutions form adjacent beads strung on the

²¹"Introduction to Zhongnanhai CP Leadership Compound Schematic Map 02". 2018 drben.net. ChinaReport.com. DOI=http://www.drben.net/ChinaReport/Beijing/MapsofBeijing/XiCheng_District/ZhongNanhai/ZhongHai_NanHai-Schematic_Map02.html.

²²Niven, W. and Jordan, J. 2003. *Politics and Culture in Twentieth-century Germany*, Boydell and Brewer.

main river that flows through the city. The visual identity and topography of the city related to the morphology of the landscape created by the river, also play an important role. The individual buildings visually complement the views from key points and support the city skyline.²³ In Prague, this concept was implemented in the first half of the 20th century when most of the ministerial buildings were constructed. They face the water and many have main entrances towards the water, so the pedestrian can really feel the contact with the water. In Budapest, the dominant Parliament, the largest in the world, is further enhanced by the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Agriculture, the Government Office and the Prime Minister's Office that are part of one public space. Other buildings of the ministries, as well as the highly towering Budaj Vár castle, support the motif of the Danube which, like a ribbon, lines the city. In London, House of Parliament is again playing a leading role and other political institutions are in the second plan.

3rd Level – State

The layout of the institutions of political power is subject to the state organization of power management and is also related to the history of the state. This corresponds to the size of the territory, the nature of the division, the shape of the borders, the number of territorial-administrative units. Polycentralist states, e.g. the Federal Republic of Austria or Switzerland, have several control centres. If the state is centralist and its capital is the strong and dominant heart of the whole territory, it is indicated on other levels affected by it, transport services, employment, service density.²⁴ Therefore, there are often positive manifestations brought by the concentration, such as good communication of individual workplaces, economic benefits from operation in one place, clear infrastructure, etc. But the negative impacts seem to begin to prevail, the sudden issue of traffic services in the transport of employees, rising real estate prices in a given place, reducing the number of university-educated people outside the centre. In recent years, this disproportion has been solved by projects that seek decentralization. One of the tools is to relocate the offices more evenly across the country.

Regarding the structure of self-governing units, regions and municipalities, from the point of view of efficiency and economy, consolidated (defragmented) structures are a clear favorite. Several sociological and ethnic-cultural research points to a strong identification of the inhabitants of municipalities with their settlement units and the results confirm the importance of preserving fragmented structures.²⁵ It is the identity of citizens with the place, with the urban structures or individual buildings that is a strong principle of relation to the place and to

²³Rozmanová, N. and Gajdík, Z. 2015, *Principy a zásady urbanistické kompozice v příkladech*, Ministerstvo pro místní rozvoj, 22-25.

²⁴Conference *PŘESUN ÚŘADŮ Z CENTRA DO REGIONŮ: mezinárodní zkušenosti – česká budoucnost*, 1.4.2019 Czech Parliament, Prague.

²⁵Swianiewicz, P. 2010. Territorial Fragmentation As a Problem, Consolidation As a Solution? In SWIANIEWICZ, P. (ed.). *Territorial Consolidation Reforms in Europe*, Budapest: OSI/LGI, 1 – 23.

architecture, so that the self-governing units and the regional borders²⁶ are not only legislative instruments of territorial administration, but real mental, ethnic and geographical units in people.

Estonia and Norway can be mentioned as the examples of countries that have successfully decentralized.

Relocating the offices in Norway is based on the principle of equal employment opportunities throughout the country. Norway has a location policy which means that new offices are always and without exception established outside the capital city, Oslo. "The crucial decision was that in the capital no new office will be created," says the Ministry of Local Government and Modernization.²⁷ Thus, Norway, a very unevenly populated country due to natural conditions, manages to facilitate more even distribution of state institutions in the territory.

For many years, Estonia has presented itself as one of the most technologically advanced countries in Europe - mainly due to the fact that it allows anyone to become a citizen through the e-residence system, which has been already used by tens of thousands of people around the world. As early as 1998, all Estonian schools were connected to the Internet, in 2000 they declared the Internet connection to be a human right, and they are also very successful in digitizing public administration. "In Estonia, we have managed to relocate part of the offices and more than 830 official positions to the regions in three years since the government came up with the idea," the secretary of administrative policy at the Estonian Ministry of Finance said.²⁸ The relocation of offices must be linked to the digitization of public administration and the advanced use of Internet communication, as this will allow even the officials themselves not to be tied to the capital.

The Paradox of the Topic - Digitization versus Material Nature

By comparing different approaches, a huge paradox of our subject arouses. First, we were analyzing the symbolism of political institutions, their role in cities and states, and on the other hand we have the digitization of public administration and the "needlessness" of buildings in which the officials seat, because they have the opportunity to work literally from anywhere. It seems that even this paradoxical moment can be beneficial and get clearer answers. If all the buildings governing the state power have disappeared, if the architectural shells have disappeared, what would they hold them together? Probably without physical "face to face" politics, it would not be possible to practice it for a long time,²⁹ so we need some architecture. For the ecclesial relationship to work, the community must gather somewhere.

²⁶Pithart, P. 2015. Český, moravský a slezský volič 1996. In *Po Devětaosmdesátém: Kdo jsme*, Academia, Praha, 345-350.

²⁷Pergl, T. 2019, Farský: *Posilování regionů je v moderních zemích trendem/ Strengthening regions is a trend in modern countries*. DOI= <https://www.starostove-nezavisli.cz/info-a-media/tiskove-zpravy/farsky-posilovani-regionu-je-v-modernich-zemich-trendem>

²⁸Conference *PŘESUN ÚŘADŮ Z CENTRA DO REGIONŮ: mezinárodní zkušenosti – česká budoucnost*, 1.4.2019 Czech Parliament, Prague.

²⁹Pithart, P. 2018. Štát-stavba-hmota. In *Architektúra demokracie*, UMPRUM, Prague, 16-19.

We hear criticism about the price of state property management, the environmental impact of building new buildings and maintaining the old ones, and the redundancy of many state-owned premises. We pose a big question that resonates in the 21st century: "Where exactly does the border of digitization end and the need for a material representation of power begin?"

This relationship is not dichotomous. The digitization allows us to afford the redundancy of many office buildings, operational buildings, branches and dispensing windows. But digitization cannot replace the uniqueness of architecture. It is the ecclesial relationship that makes it possible to identify political buildings as representatives of specific social values.

Absence of "the Architect of Statehood"

Before concluding this text, I would like to point out one dilemma in the topic of the architecture of democracy, which arouses debate and uncertainty in today's society. The professional public is outraged at the bill: "Make Federal Buildings Beautiful Again" which came from president Trump's administration. The bill criticizes modernist architecture and suggests that "Washington government buildings and federal courthouses were designed in a neoclassical architectural style that has been preferred and defaulted." The White House is set to make changes to the Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture, in force since 1962.³⁰ The regulation states that the founding fathers erected the first large public buildings in the capital in the style of "democratic Athens" and "republican Rome" as for them it embodied the ideals of democratic self-government. According to the current Guiding Principles, federal architecture is supposed "to serve as an illustrative example of the dignity, entrepreneurship, strength, and stability of the American government." The proposed text states that brutalism and deconstructivism "do not meet these requirements and should not be used." The American Institute of Architects (AIA) has already objected to uniform requirements for federal architecture. "Architecture must be created for the specific community and serves it, and also reflect the specifics of the place, thinking, culture and climatic conditions of our rich country" the institute said. The White House has not yet responded to a request for comment.³¹

This discussion, not serious one in current professional discourses, points out also to some questions in European countries. We feel great empathy for historic architecture. We emphasize continuity and we point out the importance of national history and mental roots of the state. We prefer old, nostalgic and historical and we do not consider the context responding the current requirements of the institution.

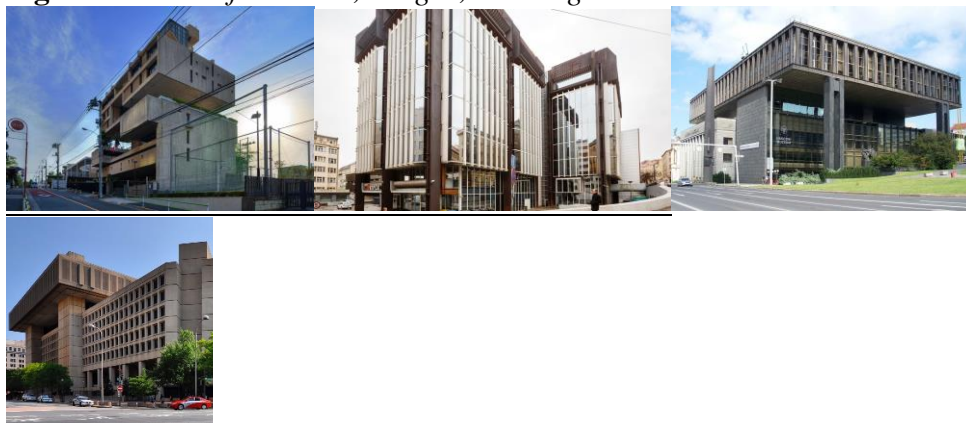
Or, on the contrary, we reject a well-functioning building because of its "ugliness," often associated with the time of its creation and its specific aesthetics.

³⁰Ferguson, A. 2020. Trump's Beautiful Proposal for Federal Architecture. In *The Atlantic*. DOI=<https://www.theatlantic.com/ideas/archive/2020/02/the-case-for-making-federal-buildings-beautiful-again/606829/>.

³¹Rogers, A. 2020. The Trump Administration and the New Architects of Fear. In *Wired* DOI=<https://www.wired.com/story/federal-architecture-neoclassical/>.

The whole wave of cases (especially brutalist buildings) around the world confirms this phenomenon: the Kuwaiti Embassy in Tokyo; in the Czech Republic the former Federal Ministry of Fuel and Energy Transgas, already demolished; or the former Federal Assembly marked as a "monster"³²; in America the F.B.I. building, Hubert H. Humphrey Health and Human Services Building and the former Housing and Urban Development headquarters, and many other non-political buildings (Robin Hood Gardens in London, Central Library in Birmingham, etc.³³).

Figure 7. From left: Kuwait, Prague, Washington



Source: web.

And since the issue of aesthetics, in other words the issue of a style that would set the directive how to build, seems in itself undemocratic, the question arises as: Through what tool to improve the quality of the state institutions' architecture?

We are surprised that the public also prefers a simplified "like/ dislike" and a minimum of information is enough to form an opinion. This time, we could take inspiration for a body assessing the quality of the architecture and urbanism of the state from the city level. Most large cities have a city architect, or an independent non-political body that covers a complex of related issues, not only an aesthetic commission. An architect of statehood?³⁴ State Institute for Development and Planning? This is exactly what representative democracy encourages us to, to look for experts to delegate social tasks to. It would be the architect, etymologically referring to the Arabic word *tasmim*, who practices architecture as the determining current topics, the projecting a choice, who determines the direction of architecture within three levels: house, city and state in relation to legislative, executive and

³²“Část Federálního shromáždění by se mohla zbourat, připustil pražský primátor/ Part of the Federal Assembly could be ruined, admitted the Prague Mayor” MAFRA. accessed July 28, 2018. DOI=https://praha.idnes.cz/budova-byvaleho-federalniho-shromazdeni-by-se-mohla-zbourat-rekl-svoboda-112-/praha-zpravy.aspx?c=A110304_133252_praha-zpravy_sfo.

³³Mead van, N. 2019. Brutalist buildings under threat – in pictures. In *The Guardian*. DOI=<https://www.theguardian.com/cities/gallery/2019/feb/27/mildewed-lump-of-elephant-droppings-brutalist-buildings-under-threat-in-pictures>.

³⁴In the Czech Republic, there is an Office for Government Representation in Property Affairs. As the name suggests, this office deals mainly with the economic, legislative and construction problems of buildings, but no with architectural challenges.

judicial powers. He initiates. His or her main task is to design and create assignment of public architectural competitions within these three levels.

Conclusion

We explain that the relationship between the building and the institution located in it is synergistic. On the example of the concept of ecclesia, I name it "ecclesial" relationship - the community of believers and the church are perceived as one mental representation under the concept of ecclesia – in the same analogy we can consider the parliament and parliamentarians making the policy. Through the representative relationship, we, the citizens, are part of the democratic system, that is why we would be able to generalize this ecclesial relationship to the relationship between the political building and the citizens of the state.

Consensus is important for the creation of a political architectural icon, what values the building should materialize. The value framework of a democratic society is anchored in the constitution. A representative function means a symbolic expression of a building. The symbol must be alive so that both the organism and the shell in which it resides are alive.

In the text I name three quantitative criteria for categorizing political buildings by size: 1, house level 2, city level 3, state level and qualitative features that characterize its democracy: 1, freedom 2, control 3, equality.

I also point out a few paradoxical phenomena of the topic. First of all, the balance between the digitization of state administration and the material nature of political buildings. I consider the absurdity of the area regulation of the building style in the context of the 21st century to be the second phenomenon.