

Zeitschrift: Werk, Bauen + Wohnen
Herausgeber: Bund Schweizer Architekten
Band: 88 (2001)
Heft: 12: Kontrolle als Raumpolitik = Le contrôle: une politique de l'espace = Control as politics of space

Werbung

Nutzungsbedingungen

Die ETH-Bibliothek ist die Anbieterin der digitalisierten Zeitschriften auf E-Periodica. Sie besitzt keine Urheberrechte an den Zeitschriften und ist nicht verantwortlich für deren Inhalte. Die Rechte liegen in der Regel bei den Herausgebern beziehungsweise den externen Rechteinhabern. Das Veröffentlichen von Bildern in Print- und Online-Publikationen sowie auf Social Media-Kanälen oder Webseiten ist nur mit vorheriger Genehmigung der Rechteinhaber erlaubt. [Mehr erfahren](#)

Conditions d'utilisation

L'ETH Library est le fournisseur des revues numérisées. Elle ne détient aucun droit d'auteur sur les revues et n'est pas responsable de leur contenu. En règle générale, les droits sont détenus par les éditeurs ou les détenteurs de droits externes. La reproduction d'images dans des publications imprimées ou en ligne ainsi que sur des canaux de médias sociaux ou des sites web n'est autorisée qu'avec l'accord préalable des détenteurs des droits. [En savoir plus](#)

Terms of use

The ETH Library is the provider of the digitised journals. It does not own any copyrights to the journals and is not responsible for their content. The rights usually lie with the publishers or the external rights holders. Publishing images in print and online publications, as well as on social media channels or websites, is only permitted with the prior consent of the rights holders. [Find out more](#)

Download PDF: 18.02.2026

ETH-Bibliothek Zürich, E-Periodica, <https://www.e-periodica.ch>

the Swiss armed forces outside and inside the visible settlement structure deals with artefacts intended to camouflage and mislead: artefacts of imagination.

1. "Building walls does not help" is the title of an article on globalization by the sociologist Saskia Sassen. She uses an architectural metaphor to introduce a future society to the art of survival. But this metaphor also casts a shadow back on architecture itself: building walls when faced with permanent visibility – thanks to electronic surveillance – for everyone who is totally walled in. Informed immateriality signals an attack on matter form and thus also on its content, architecturally defined space. This is all about the final phase of a cultural battle that started with the printed book in the 15th century, was continued by the press and television, and has now arrived at a crucial stage in the electronic media age. A battle by the media with architecture whose end even Victor Hugo foresaw: "ceci tuera cela". The front line of the architectural avant-garde does not seem to be particularly sad about this development. In their eyes, the disappearance of architecture at least makes room for a quite different way of handling space that is no longer impeded by mass and substance.

2. The question of space, the question about what space essentially is, has hitherto been of central importance to architects. But nevertheless it was never merely an intrinsic matter of architecture, it was constantly associated with abstract notions of space that went well beyond the bounds of architecture. So Geoffrey Scott wrote in 1914 in "The Architecture of Humanism" that architecture is a humanized pattern of the world. This formula applies as much to the classical and humanist view of the world as to the scientific world pictures of thinkers like Newton or Einstein. Architecture speaks in the first place through its ability to contain space, before expressing itself in the language of its formal elements. But abstract space as a reference for concrete, accessible space has become ever more complex, infinite and cold with the passage of time. It is difficult to associate anything at all with it that is drawn from expe-

rience. It was quite right that Einstein should have showered Giedion with scorn and mockery for his attempt to build a methodological bridge between the theory of relativity and the formal concepts of modern architecture. Even for astronauts, who experience the cosmos directly, "it is earth that everything revolves around" – in the words of the geologist William Anders, who circled the moon on board Apollo 8 in December 1968. Ultimately the view from outer space simply acts as a stimulus to phrase the question about space on earth differently, and to tie it more closely to the destiny of place down there.

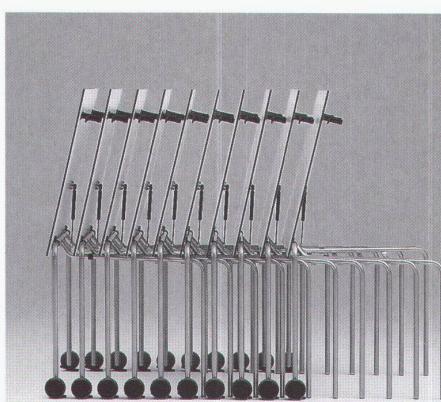
3. Globalization and miniaturization. Despite all this, it is not as easy to get rid of abstract space as everyday experience would suggest it is. Technical progress does not just make a contribution to conquering outer space, it provides direct access to abstract space here on earth. Globalization and miniaturization are current examples of how concrete space can take on abstract form, whose dimensions have either exploded or imploded. Exploded because of the world-wide linking of individual positions, which are endowed with global qualities in this way. Imploded because of nanotechnology thanks to which whole worlds are replicated in a single point. Even though globalization and miniaturization run absolutely counter to each other in terms of their real extent, they are in fact no other than two aspects of one and the same acquisition of abstraction by space. The "City of Bits" is so much closer to the crystalline structure of our brain that it would be impossible for it to be located anywhere outside our bodies like the conventional stone city. Globalization and miniaturization imply a technology of space that has nothing, but absolutely nothing, to do with conventional architectural resources. We can thus talk about a politicization of space, space no longer being about the formal representation of contents that are fixed before they become the object of architectural design, but about direct control and organization of spatial parameters.

4. The architectural avant-garde front drew its lessons from history. In the 18th century Beaux-

Arts architects generously left the building of bridges, streets, canals and institutions that were linked up with the new territorial networks to engineers, and thus were quick to miss the introduction of new thinking about space. It was not acknowledged until much later that architects themselves had sunk to the level of bombastic confectioners. The opposite applies to today's avant-garde: the spatial parameters for the new technologies are now directly declared to an architectural issue – if in this context it is possible to talk about architecture at all, rather than the technology of space. Any architect who wants to be up with the times today can only smile about Microsoft chairman Bill Gates, who felt that he had to hide his own products in his home, a wooden structure made of ancient Douglas firs.

5. Leibnitz has a crucial part to play in bridging the gulf between concrete and abstract space. The Baroque philosopher and mathematician saw the world as a gigantic organism in which matter and space are inextricably entangled. He sees space as liquid matter, extending from the extended universe to the smallest, unextended monad, and it can be subdivided at will. From this viewpoint, it is no longer possible to consider architectural design as a form-producing practice in which mass is kneaded in order to shape space. All the contrasts between inside and outside, space and mass, on which architecture had built hitherto, are now available again. It is as though buildings were more or less material condensations of space, and as though its liquid material were demanding new concepts and tools from architects so that the potentials contained within it can be developed. The crucial dimension of space is no longer its extent but the intensity with which matter – or better, the emptiness of matter – is fitted out.

6. "Design from within". A manifesto read by Sanford Kwinter, by arrangement with Jeffrey Kipnis, in 1997 at the any-how conference deals with the consequences of this thinking for architecture. Kwinter's view is that it is no longer important what one does today – the market



Der multifunktionale Klappisch S 1080 von Thonet ist rollbar und wird nie getragen. Eine neue Generation Möbelierung überall wo konfertiert, geschult oder gearbeitet wird. Mit einem Standardmaß von L 80 x B 80 x H 74 cm lässt sich der Tisch zu beliebig grossen Anlagen addieren. Nach Gebrauch rollt man die Tische in die Ecke und schachtelt sie zusammen. Unser Beispiel zeigt links: 10 Tische Grundfläche 6,4 m², rechts: zusammengestellt nur noch 1,4 m². Design: Häberli & Marchand Generalvertretung CH: Seleform AG, 8702 Zollikon/Zürich Fon +41 1 396 70 10, Fax +41 1 396 70 11 seleform@seleform.ch, www.seleform.ch

THONET