Design Dialogue Journal

Alternative Moods of Architectural Ideology: A Critical Review

Eliz Erdenizci [1]*

[1] Eastern Mediterranean University, Famagusta, North Cyprus, Mersin 10 Turkey.

* Correspondence: eliz.erdenizci@emu.edu.tr

Abstract: Nowadays the abundance of ideas and information in our world makes it challenging to extract reliable meanings and to develop knowledge that is not influenced by the subjective bodies of its producers. This research seeks to understand the ideology of architectural design and its derivative power to shape the form of knowledge. Ideology possesses a commitment-driven nature that shapes its capacity to form and modify a set of ideas and actions that are directly related to human experience and their environment. Architectural ideology and the knowledge of the discipline are examined by looking at the alternative ideologies of the various architectural theoreticians in different times. The research observes the potential of alternative ideologies and reveals numerous relevant factors to put importance in architectural discourse. The findings of this study illustrate that contemporary practices demand pluralistic and participatory approaches in addressing the societal, environmental, and political challenges of today's world and incorporate strategies for social equity and inclusive design solutions.

Keywords: Ideology, Form of knowledge, Design, Architectural discourse.

1. Introduction

In today's world, architectural design goes beyond the simple act of creating; it represents the ideas that encapsulate the values, beliefs, and aspirations of society while multifaceted crises—social, political, economic, and environmental issues—confront our world, overlapping and challenging our understanding of the architectural practices [1]. These concerns require architects to examine their methodology and the ideological assumptions that underpin them, critically analyzing architecture's potential to address societal needs effectively and equitably.

Received: 23 October 2024
Revised: 04 December 2024
Accepted: 16 December 2024
Published: 24 December 2024

In line with these confrontations, it becomes increasingly difficult to derive reliable interpretations from the vast amount of ideas and information that pervade modern society [2]. The shifting ideologies in architectural design impede critical evaluation and the extraction of important insights required to address humanity's needs. Insufficient knowledge and ethical frameworks leave gaps that can lead to the misuse of architecture, undermining humanity rather than addressing its issues. As these concepts evolve, they present a precarious landscape for architectural designers, prompting questions about their ability to address tangible issues and devise inventive solutions for the built world we inhabit [3-5].

Understanding the nature of knowledge—its creation, preservation, and the motivations of its various creators—is critical for overcoming conventional constraints. According to Parsons (2009), knowledge is a commitment to a set of values and beliefs, produced by organizations in line with institutions, practices, and societies [6]. Knowledge can take many forms, including artifacts, language, images, contextual behavioural patterns and can

be modified by the actions of its organizers. The body of organizations can cooperate, co-exist, or compete within a society leading the various forms of knowledge [7]. Thence, knowledge may exist in altered forms and it is being contextually and practically determined, either being explicit or not, to reflect what is real. The particular body of knowledge should be assessed by looking at whose reality it is and what kind of commitment does it have.

This research seeks to investigate the complex relationship between architectural ideologies and practices, with a focus on how different ideological frameworks influence both the built environment and human experience and interaction. This study aims to reveal the various factors influencing design decisions and their societal implications by examining alternative architectural ideologies proposed by various scholars and practitioners throughout history. It questions how the ideological foundations influence architectural design practices in an ever-changing world by investigating major events in architectural history and theory, ranging from Tafuri's critiques to Somol and Whiting's projective methodology. How can architects balance the ideological demands of their profession with the pressing necessities of a constantly changing world? This study addresses the core question, viewing ideology as both a barrier and an opportunity for architecture to reinvent its role in society. "Ideology" in this context refers to the values, beliefs, and power dynamics inherent in architectural practices that both reflect and impact societal situations. "Criticality" refers to the ability to question established norms and assumptions, encouraging a reflective approach that examines prevailing paradigms. In contrast, "projective" techniques highlight proactive strategies that anticipate and meet changing societal and environmental requirements. These principles serve as the theoretical framework for this research, offering a coherent perspective on the convergence of architecture and ideology.

2. Ideology and Ideological Space

Jameson (2008) characterizes ideology as a concept that serves as a mediator, yet he highlights the challenge of the subject shifting due to significant historical data and losing its mediatory role [2]. The Oxford Dictionary also defines the word ideology as a set of beliefs and a system of ideas belonging to an individual or a social group [8]. In this study, "ideology" which refers to the values, beliefs, and power dynamics; can be understood as a framework that influences how people perceive and shape space, linking abstract thought with tangible actions in architectural practice.

According to Jameson (2008), ideology can shift directions, often influenced by the subjective values of individuals and their specific contexts [2]. He also highlights the historical contamination of the word ideology, stemming from its use in Marxist political practice. This illustrates how ideology can manifest in historical contexts, serving as a tool for identifying components and exerting power over knowledge.

In his work 'Architecture and the Critique of Ideology,' Frederic Jameson (1982) presented two distinct perspectives on the ideology of space [9]. To allow space to be ideological, he notably emphasized the perspective of phenomenology, which seeks the subjective experience of humans. He highlighted the use of human body and its needs as the essential measurements of space. Yet, according to Jameson, this type of measurement lacks the dimension of time since the body can behave as a social body being affected by the whole set of social experiences. The second perspective, known as structuralism, applies the principles of structural linguistics to the realm of space, evaluating the built environment using a system of signs and codes. In a sense, it presents its own set of challenges regarding the "experience" of any given space.

This dichotomy between phenomenology and structuralism set the stage for later theoretical developments. Bourdieu’s (1977) dialectic, for example, attempts to synthesize

these viewpoints by viewing them as indispensable yet insufficient on their own [10]. Similarly, French philosopher and Marxist sociologist Henri Lefebvre made a significant contribution to the concept of space by introducing his three axes: perceived space, conceived space, and lived space. These axes tackled the various features of space, particularly the relationship between perceived and phenomenological aspects of it [11]. Lefebvre's (1991) ideology posits that exploring and mediating space is a fundamental aspect of politics [11].

However, Manfredo Tafuri (1969) took a contrasting approach and rejected the political ideology of architecture, defining the capitalist system as a closed system and restricting its application to revolutionary or radically different projects [12]. He put forward an ideology of ideologies, accepting all aesthetic ideologies as equal and not interchangeable, being useless for social production. This rejection of architecture's potential as a social or political force starkly contrasts with Lefebvre's emphasis on the political dimensions of space. Tafuri's stance also provoked critical responses, such as Jameson's (1982) critique of Tafuri's perceived pessimism and his dismissal of the architectural agency. This situation was defined by him as the death of architecture, incapable of producing any utopian architecture or space [9].

Jameson (1982) criticized Tafuri's (1976) "Architecture and Utopia" from three perspectives. First, he explained the potential crises of history until the end of the 19th century by focusing on aspects of historiography. He held the belief that the narrative portrayal of history contains erroneous assumptions, as the interpretation and understanding of the past rely on its representation [9]. This is because most historical data is structured around storytelling. Thus, the reality of knowledge and its embodied meanings become relevant. According to Jameson (1982), historians should develop a concept of history instead of merely presenting representations of it [9]. On this basis, Tafuri's (1976) work constitutes dialectical critique, which produces a concept of architectural history. However, Tafuri's hopeless judgment of values and refusal to project any potential architectural manifesto create a pessimistic tone in his dialectical history.

Second, Tafuri's (1976) perspective operates within a Marxist framework (Parekh, 2015) [12-14], discussing how the global nature of capital destroys national situations, how mass culture and media impact the culture industry, how late capitalism expands as a form of resistance, and how the emergence of new forms of resistance are all considered characteristics of the capitalist system [9]. The main problem is that, with the defined features of the system, Tafuri created an ideology that there is no possibility of change or a social transformation by architects, resisting his pessimistic mood and hopeless attitude. Therefore, Tafuri's work actively pursues polarities, often presenting opposing viewpoints on the identified issues. This made Tafuri's negative dialectic functioned as a barrier allowing for freedom of expression and the exploration of alternative solutions (Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Assassination of Architecture by Aldo Rossi, dedicated to Manfredo Tafuri [15]

Here, the discourse shifts from Tafuri's pessimism to the more optimistic frameworks proposed by later theorists and practitioners. Contemporary architects like Alejandro Aravena (2011), for instance, have shown how projective methodologies can reintroduce agency and criticality into architectural practice [16]. This contrasts sharply with the Tafuri's ideology as Aravena, responsive architecture demonstrated how projective methodologies can address societal societal, political, and environmental challenges. He highlights the long-term importance of these ideas in solving contemporary difficulties and emphasize the participatory design as a form of criticality. He exemplifies how criticality can foster social equity in architectural practices by involving end-users in the decision-making process that challenges the traditional practices. His works highlight the need for forward-thinking methodologies that integrate environmental concerns into architectural ideologies, as well as serving as a model for the democratization of design processes.

During that era, there were also theorists such as Antonio Gramsci, a Marxist politician and theoretician, who held the belief that even minor changes could trigger social transformation [17]. His theory on cultural hegemony explained that there is no longer a single class dominating the other or the use of overthrowing power. However, there exists a politics of space that shapes alternative conceptions of space, the city, and daily life. Therefore, with his positive criticism, Gramsci (1971) emphasized the role of architects in the production of social relations and the ability to develop future conceptions for society [17].

By examining the works of various names and their positions towards architecture, it can be seen that ideology produces a body of knowledge that depends on the subjective experience and contextual conditions of its producer. Hence, a critical and in-depth analysis of ideology is essential to extract reliable and objective conceptions of space.

3. The plan of an Architectural Ideology

In his 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology,' Tafuri (1969) discussed architecture as a city object and investigated the evolution of architectural ideologies from the Enlightenment to late Modernism [12]. Tafuri focused on the political role that Enlightenment architects were assigned, specifically the experimental design of Piranesi's Campo Marzio (Figure 2), which aimed to balance the city's opposing forces. Tafuri (1969)

demonstrated the political role of urban design and architectural form by introducing new techniques for urban planning, such as regular grids that kept the city together [12].

Figure 2. Piranesi's Campo Marzio [18]

Tafuri's investigation into the relationship between architecture and capitalism revealed that the modern architectural movement arose from Romantic utopianism, which coincided with the rise of realism and forced the discipline of architecture to confront the consequences of its commodification. As a result, modern architecture has evolved the ability to use design to reorganize production and consumption within the capitalist city system. He viewed the modern movement as an ideological tool of capital [12]. Tafuri explained that the creation of urban ideology seeks to subdue architectural romanticism, resulting in an increase in artistic avant-garde projects that translate new ideals into concrete forms within architecture and urban planning. He defined architectural ideology as the one that underpins the plan. Thereby, Piranesi's Campo Marzio exemplifies how architectural representation incorporates these ideological conceptions.

The implications of this commodification, however, are far-reaching. According to Tafuri, the cycle of "production, distribution, and consumption" transformed the city into an instrument, leaving architecture superfluous and marginal in relation to capitalism's political and financial forces. He described this condition as the "shock" of urban experience, in which the city functions as a machine that extracts values from its inhabitants and provides a space for mass consumption. This process reduces individuality to abstract levels, causing distress across the metropolis and Tafuri transforms the public into a cohesive whole by reducing the experience's structure to pure objects.

In response to this chaos, architects sought to impose order and meaning through transformative visions of urban design. The key example of this transformation is Le Corbusier's 'Plan Voisin' [19]. Between World Wars I and II, many architects used Bauhaus techniques to transform buildings into mass-produced kits by assembling lines, standardizing parts, and aggregating cells in an open plan [20]. According to Tafuri (1969), cities evolved into a means of production and a social machine in which buildings functioned as individual cells rather than objects [12]. People began to think of architects as the designers of assembly lines and process coordinators. Corbusier (1923) believed that an architect is an organizer, not a producer, and he gradually tested this theory with his system of rational plans, i.e. plan voisin (Fig. 3) [21]. He

used the project to organize the urban environment, depicting it as an urban machine and using an urban unity technique to achieve city-wide wholeness.

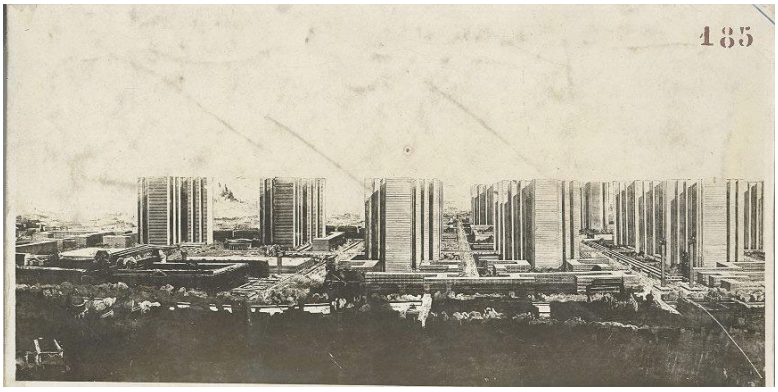

Figure 3. Plan of Voisin [22]

Yet, Tafuri critiqued this rationalistic approach as reductive, transforming urban textures into "useless machines" through repetitive, obsessive frameworks. For him, the chaos and irregularity of its features create a magnificent city. These shifting architectural ideologies resulted in a gradual separation of the architect's role from the creative process of architectural design, with architects serving as process managers rather than creators of the built environment. Technology also influenced the relationship between the architect and the building, reducing the architect's involvement in the process while emphasizing the importance of technological solutions to future problems. As a result, the architects' reduced involvement positioned them as stage organizers.

Rationalistic approaches of the architects and their ideology on the role of the architect underestimated the impact of the architect on the built environment and, of course, on the human. This critique resonates with later theorists such as Nikos Salingaros (2006), who argued that geometric simplification creates an artificial and abstract sense of individuality through the dehumanizing processes of mass production, mechanization, and modularity [23]. Salingaros's (2006) geometrical fundamentalism echoes Tafuri's concerns highlighting how abstraction and modularity contribute to dehumanization, reducing architecture's capacity to respond meaningfully to human needs [23]. Thus, architectural ideologies and their corresponding plans have profound implications for human life. They can either respond to societal challenges or create new problems, reducing respect and appreciation for the lived experiences of individuals and communities. This illustrates that the ideological system has the ability to shape and modify the architectural discourse, either autonomously or performatively.

4. Alternative Moods on Architectural Ideology

Undoubtedly, there is no single way to approach a problem since there is always an alternative. While previous ideologies, such as Marxist ideology, were based on critical concern, and examined architecture through the lens of critique, newer perspectives have sought to reframe the discussion. In their influential work "Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism", Somol and Whiting (2002) introduced a fresh alternative perspective on the practice of architecture [24]. They propose that the project of criticality absorbs the discipline of architecture, necessitating a new approach to transition from critical to projective, a concept they refer to as the 'Doppler Effect'. This framework repositions architecture to emphasize diagrammatic and atmospheric performance over dialectical or indexical critique.

Michael Hays (1984) described the Barcelona Pavilion as a "representation of pre-existing cultural values and wholly detached autonomy of an abstract formal system," with a continuously determined meaning and the potential for replication in its actual existence [25, 26]. Le Corbusier's Dom-ino gained acceptance as a critical architecture due to its ongoing potential for transformation and replication. The representations of the projects, such as the axonometric diagrams of the Dom-ino produced by Eisenman Architects, also illustrate the potential for building replication [27]. Somol and Whiting, however, expand this discourse by challenging the static nature of these critical projects. They draw on Rem Koolhas' Downtown Athletic Club to introduce their concept of the "cartoon theorem," a visual narrative emphasizing the behavioral patterns within spaces rather than the architecture itself (Fig. 4). This alternative moves beyond the oversimplifications of functionalist models, illustrating how social interactions can redefine the architectural discourse. The cartoon theorem not only critiques the limits of critical architecture but also provides a conceptual framework for thinking about the performative and social roles of buildings.

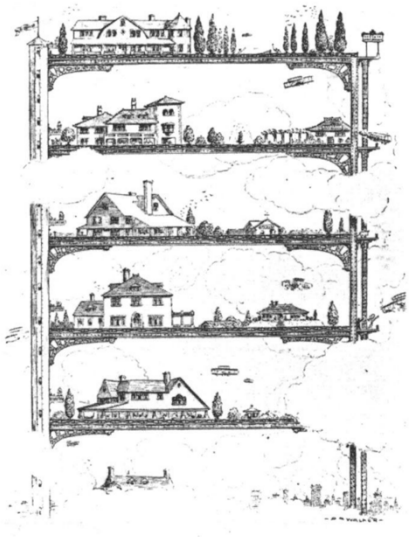

Figure 4. 1909 Theorem of Rem Koolhas [24]

From this foundation, Somol and Whiting (2002) identified this diagrammatic approach as a path for projective architecture akin to the dynamics of the Doppler Effect [24]. Projective architecture employs a similar understanding of the Doppler Effect, which is defined as a change in the frequency of a wave resulting from the relative velocity of the source and the receiver Gill, 1965) [28]. In architecture, the Doppler emphasizes the inherent diversity of buildings in terms of atmosphere, form, program, material, and other factors. The design process equally considers the building, individuals, and context, giving equal importance to both subject and object [24]. Above all, the Doppler ideology transforms the autonomous power of discipline into a performance, enabling multiple engagements between the architect and the user. This illustrates that the transition from autonomy to performance-based architecture is more responsive to human needs and the set of realities shaped by context and individuals.

A parallel perspective on engagement and materiality emerges in Jane Bennett's Vibrant Matter (2010), which complements the performative concepts proposed by Somol and Whiting [29]. Likewise, Jane Bennett's (2010) 'Vibrant Matter' also emphasizes the importance of engagement by illustrating the relation between context and the human [29]. She also endorses the performative concept, as she posits a complex network of discordant

relationships between the body and the building. She points out that humans are not autonomous subjects; therefore, materiality and atmospheric qualities have power over the individuals, being capable of producing effects or differing the course of events. Taken together, these alternative ideologies reveal architecture's capacity to chart new directions. By transitioning from autonomy to performance, architecture gains the ability to devise innovative systems and reimagine its relationship to human needs and societal realities. Whether through Somol and Whiting's Doppler Effect or Bennett's material engagements, these perspectives highlight how architecture can evolve to better align with the fluid, interconnected nature of human and environmental contexts.

5. Conclusion

This study has examined the complex relationship between ideology and architecture, emphasizing the significance of historical contexts in shaping modern architectural practices. By reviewing diverse theoretical perspectives—ranging from Enlightenment ideals to modern critical and projective frameworks—it becomes clear that architectural ideologies profoundly influence design and reflect societal structures and values.

The exploration of architectural thoughts from various perspectives—specifically, Tafuri's criticisms, to Jameson's dialectics, and Somol and Whiting's projective methodologies, shows how critical it is to understand the importance of understanding architecture not merely as a technical or aesthetic endeavor but as a cultural and societal expression. This highlights the importance of viewing architecture as a relational discipline in which human experiences and environmental settings interact dynamically. Such perspective calls on architects to look beyond traditional ideas of form and function, taking a more holistic approach that prioritizes people's lived experiences in built environments. Furthermore, it reinforces architecture's potential to address urgent societal issues through innovative and inclusive design solutions.

The discipline of architecture along with the role of the architect/designer, continue to evolve in response to shifting ideologies and the complexities of contemporary life. Given the diversity of perspectives, it is nearly impossible to have a singular, concrete approach to understanding architecture, as the world we inhabit consistently generates an abundance of ideas, information, and judgments, which either originates from objective or subjective experiences. Instead, today's architects face the dual challenge of being both critical and performative in their actions and thought processes. Addressing real-world problems—regardless of their scale or form—requires a foundation of human-centered design that empowers collaboration between architects and users.

Achieving this collaborative balance demands removing conceptual and methodological barriers that obstruct creative thought and prevent inclusive decision-making. Recognizing the importance of diverse approaches, contemporary architectural practices must incorporate strategies for social equity, inclusive design, and interdisciplinary collaboration. This balance is critical for managing the competing demands of global innovation and local contextual relevance. Finally, architecture's continual progress is based on its ability to generate shared agency, allowing designers and users to collaborate on creating environments that are responsive, equitable, and influential in a rapidly changing world.

References

[1] Goldberger, P. (2022). *Why architecture matters*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

[2] Jameson, F. (2008). *The ideologies of theory*. London: Verso.

[3] Lahiji, N. (Ed.). (2012). *The political unconscious of architecture: Re-opening Jameson's narrative*. London: Routledge.

[4] Kurnicki, K. (2014). Towards a spatial critique of ideology: architecture as a test. *Journal of Architecture and 4Urbanism,* 38(1), 80–89. https://doi.org/10.3846/20297955.2014.893642

[5] Bletter, R. H. (1981). Architecture and ideology. *Art Journal*, 41(2),199.

https://doi.org/10.1080/00043249.1981.10792472

[6] Parsons, A. 2009. Narrative environments: how do they matter? *Rhizomes*. (19).

[7] Harcourt, B. (2020). *Critique and praxis.* New York Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press. https://doi.org/10.7312/harc19572

[8] Oxford English Dictionary. (n.d.). *Ideology*. In Oxford English Dictionary. Retrieved October 17, 2024, from https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=ideology

[9] Jameson, F. (1982). Architecture and the critique of ideology. In Hays, M., *Architecture theory since 1968* (pp. 429-440), Cambridge: MIT Press.

[10] Bourdieu, P. (1977). *Outline a theory of practice.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[11] Lefebvre, H. (1991). *The production of space.* Oxford: Blackwell.

[12] Tafuri, M. (1969). Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology. In Hays, M., *Architecture theory since 1968* (pp. 2-35), Cambridge: MIT Press.

[13] Tafuri, M. (1976). *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

[14] Parekh, B. (2015). *Marx's theory of ideology*. London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315713816

[15] Rheomode. (2006). *The assassin: The critical legacies of Manfredo Tafuri*. Retrieved October 23, 2024, from https://rheomode.org/papers-and-publication/2006-the-assassin-the-critical-legacies-of-manfredo-tafuri/

[16] Aravena, A. (2011). Elemental: A do tank. *Archit Design*, 81: 32-37. https://doi.org/10.1002/ad.1235

[17] Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. London: Lawrence and Wishart.

[18] Allen, S., Piranesi, G., P. (1989). Piranesi's "Campo Marzio": An experimental design. *Assemblage*, 10, 70-109

[19] Arrhenius, T. (1999). Restoration in the machine age: Themes of conservation in Le Corbusier's "Plan Voisin". *AA Files,* 38, 10-22.

[20] Frampton, K. (2024). *Le Corbusier.* London: Thames and Hudson.

[21] Corbusier, L. (1923). *Toward an architecture.* London: Frances Lincoln.

[22] The Charnel-House, https://thecharnelhouse.org/2014/06/03/le-corbusiers-contemporary-city-1925/

[23] Salingaros, N., Mehaffy, M. (2006). *Theory of architecture*. Umbau: Verlag.

[24] Somol, R, Whiting, S. (2002). Notes around the Doppler Effect and Other Moods of Modernism, Mining Autonomy, 33, The MIT Press on behalf of Perspecta. 72-77

[25] Hays, M. (1984). Critical architecture: between culture and form. *Perspecta*, 21, pp. 14-29.

[26] Hays, M., K. (1998). *Architecture theory since 1968*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

[27] Sykes, K. (2010). *Construction a new agenda: architectural theory 1993-2009*. New York: Princeton Architectural Press.

[28] Gill, T., P. (1965). *The doppler effect: an introduction to the theory of the effect*. London: Logos Press.

[29] Bennett, J. (2010). *Vibrant matter: a political ecology of things.* Durham: Duke University Press.