

Communication in architectural practice and theory with reference to city of Ekaterinburg

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Abstract. The aim of the paper is to formulate scientific foundations for the effective functioning of communication in architectural design practice. More specifically, communication is considered in the context of the architectural process. Current relevance. The need for establishing interaction or communication between the architect, the customer, the user and other participants of the architectural process has arisen due to the changes in Russian society and modern-day Russian architectural and building construction legislation. The nature of interactions between the architect and authorization agencies has changed, the number of participants in the architectural process has increased, customers in the architectural and building process have become more diverse, and the procedures for obtaining authorizations for the design documentation have changed. Research methods. The article reviews actual design cases in Ekaterinburg and demonstrates essential points of conflict arising in the communication processes. From the perspective of architectural theory, the authors formulate fundamental concepts of communication, communicative processes and communicative space of the architectural and building process. An interdisciplinary approach to the problem helps to formulate the basic vectors of interactions in the architectural process as a communicative space. Main conclusions. The article presents the distinctive features of communication in the design practice of Ekaterinburg. The basic fundamental concepts of communication in the theory of architecture are defined.

1. Introduction

The architectural process in Russia today presents a complex dynamic phenomenon. The concept of architectural process is inseparably linked with the modernity. S.P. Zavarikhin defines the architectural process as "a dynamic system of functioning of all social and professional phenomena and processes that determine the evolution of architecture during specific historical periods" [1].

The architectural community, architectural styles and directions, the economic context, the legal framework of architectural and building activity, the expectations of society, urban communities and initiatives, research conferences, creative competitions, educational seminars, public hearings, project presentations – all this variety of phenomena make up the architectural process. The functioning of the architectural process is impossible without communication, i.e. without interaction between its participants. The effectiveness of this interaction depends how competently the process of



communication is organized. Conflicts in the field of architecture and insufficient and inaccessible information on architectural events result from the lack of a space of communication for architects and the closed nature of the architectural profession in relation to other aspects of life in Russian society.

2. Communication in the Russian design practice with reference to Ekaterinburg

Ekaterinburg today is a city with a population of about 1.5 million, with a dynamic architectural and building process. New architectural projects often provoke major protests in the public. The mechanisms of communication in the architectural design practice between architects, city administration and residents in Ekaterinburg point to problems which arise in the course of communication during the design and construction of new architectural projects. This is confirmed by the stories of three large architectural projects that caused significant conflicts: the "Passage" shopping centre, the St. Catherine's Cathedral, and the central stadium "Ekaterinburg Arena".

The first architectural project. When the reconstruction of the "Passage" shopping centre was announced in March 2012, the public showed discontent. Two rallies were held by the supports of the reconstruction project and its opponents who acted under the slogan «Hands off the Passage». Because the project caused such public resonance, it was reviewed in the Public Chamber of Ekaterinburg and in the Statutory Court of Sverdlovsk Oblast concerning the use of the land in the square where the project site was located, and also at the federal Ministry of Culture. The dominant opinion about the new appearance of this architectural project was largely critical among the officials, experts, and residents.

The second architectural object. St. Catherine' Church, an orthodox cathedral built in 1723 (the year when the city was founded) and destroyed in 1930. In 2010, the Ekaterinburg diocese and the governor of Sverdlovsk region initiated preparations to rebuild the cathedral on its historical site. It caused protests in the public because the architectural ensemble of the official building and the space of the Labour Square in front of it presented a monument of Constructivist architecture and the square with the fountain were a favourite recreation site with city residents. Polls, petitions and rallies were held, and public hearings were organized. The project was reviewed at a meeting of the City Planning Council. Five years later, the project went through a second phase of reconstruction ideation, according to which the redesigned church was supposed to be erected in the middle of the city's lake. The initiative caused an even greater wave of protests. The project was discussed in various agencies, including the Administration of Ekaterinburg, the Sverdlovsk branch of the Russian Union of Architects, and the City Planning Council under the Governor of Sverdlovsk region. City activists organized discussions in the House of Writers and got organized into a social movement called «Committee of the City Pond». Many letters, statements and appeals were written, and people held rallies, exhibitions, tours, an «Embrace the Pond» public action, surveys, opinion polls and signature gathering. A year later, the idea of building the church on the pond was abandoned. The third variant suggests constructing the church in another site in the city.

The third architectural project. The central stadium is the city's major sports facility. It was constructed in 1953-1957, and underwent reconstruction from 2006 to 2011. In 2015–2017, another reconstruction was carried out according to the FIFA requirements for the 2018 FIFA World Cup. The stadium is a listed cultural heritage project and appears in the list of state's cultural values. In 2010, the city sent an application to FIFA with the project of the Central Stadium. The project design documentation passed all required stages of approval, including the City Planning Council, Glavgosexpertiza (the Main Expert Evaluation Agency of Russia), and was approved by FIFA. This reconstruction of the Central Stadium caused much discontent in the residents of the city. Irrational spending of money and the intention to destroy the cultural heritage building were the main arguments of the residents. Protests were staged, letters were circulated letters including to the Council of Europe, and meetings and publications accompanied the architectural and building process. However, the reconstruction of the stadium was completed [2].

The above three cases were a consequence of a lack of meaningful dialogue between the participants of the architectural process which led to conflicts in the architectural community.

Theoretically, the issue of conflicts in the architectural and planning process has been studied by foreign and domestic researchers: L. Virt [3], E. Bergess [4] (city conflicts), M. Castels (the conflict basis of urban space development) [5], K. Lynch (theory of social changes) [6], V. Glazyshev (in the context of co-participation) [7], E. Eshina (research into the democratic procedures in planning activities) [8]. E. Freidin came to the conclusion that «the planning conflict is one of the conditions of the town-planning situation» [9]. The publications emphasize the role of the public in city architectural and planning conflicts.

The concept of conflicts in architectural and planning activities falls within the concept of communication in the architectural process, which appears to be broader and more comprehensive from the viewpoint of the theory of this issue. Definition of the basic scholarly premises concerning communication in the architecture theory could allow conditions for effective functioning of communication in architecture to be identified.

3. Definition of the concepts of communication in the architectural process, communication processes and space in the theory of architecture

Different fields of knowledge give definitions for communication between people and participants of interactions [10]. Sociology, psychology, and philosophy consider communication as a way of interaction with relevant skills. In linguistics, semiotics, art criticism, it is defined as a means and channel of distribution of information among people. In journalism, theory of communications and pedagogy, communication is a means of supporting professional processes. Also, communication is considered as relationships between any objects of the material and inner world [10].

With reference to architecture, the notion of «communication» has evolved in the course of time. Traditionally, communications in architecture (at least in Russia) are understood utility lines and connection elements in buildings, stairways, corridors. Computer software was regarded as a means of communication in the Russian publications of 2005. During the same period of time, architecture was considered as a participant of mass communications or space of communicative processes (M. Vilkovsky, C. Jencks, A.V. Lobanov, U. Eco). By 2010, interest in professional communication in the field of architecture began to grow. Emphasis in the studies on communication began to shift to interactions between the architect and the customer, between the architect and the architecture consumer, between the architect and other architects (A.O. Akatyeva, I.M. Volchkova, E.A. Lazareva, S.A. Chesnakov).

In this study, communication is considered as relationships ensuring the functioning of the modern-day architectural process by means of information interchange between the participants of events and processes in the field of architecture. Such relationships and communications may arise at conferences, project presentations, public hearings, seminars and other architectural and planning activities.

3.1. Definitions of communicative processes in the subject fields of the theory of architecture

The architectural process consists of a set of various communicative processes which occur within subject fields – social, educational, regulatory and creative. Each of these subject fields has certain characteristic activities.

The social field involved public hearings and discussions of an architectural project. This field is indicative of the general level of organization of modern society and the level of culture accompanying public discussions on planning and design decisions proposed by the architect and the customer.

The educational field includes seminars, master classes, lectures of architecture professionals, basic education in the sphere of architecture and city planning, and transfer of knowledge to stakeholders. Within this field, it is reasonable to mention research directed at studying historical experiences in the sphere of architecture and city planning, its systematization, optimization of processes occurring in the modern design practice, and forecasting in architecture.

The regulatory field is a field of restrictions in the form of legislative and legal acts in architecture and planning. This field regulates architectural and building activities by means of building codes, health and safety regulations, event rules, regulations, decrees, the Civil, City Planning, Housing Codes of the Russian Federation, and activities of such organizations as Departments of Architecture, Planning and Land Use Regulation Administration, architectural and planning council, Russian Union of Architects and its regional offices.

The creativity field is a field of concepts and ideas of the architect. It unites factors influencing the architectural appearance, and consists in searches for new non-conventional architectural solutions and design proposals. It is in the creativity field that the architect's mind develops new concepts, styles, forms, construction methods, and design methods.

Thus the communication process is an exchange of information among the participants of events and processes in the sphere of architecture which occur in the social, educational, regulatory and creativity fields of architecture.

The communicative processes occurring in the above four fields of the architectural process can be primary and secondary. The primary communicative process is direct communication proper. Secondary processes are connected with discussions, distribution and evaluation of information received in a primary communicative process.

A communicative process is successful only if it is continued in secondary processes [10].

3.2. *Definition of the notion of "Communicative Space" in the theory of architecture*

Communicative processes can be considered as inner processes characteristic of the sphere of architecture. For defining the place and role of external factors influencing the architectural process, we should turn to the concept of communicative space. The concept of communicative space is considered in such areas of knowledge as sociotics, psychology, linguistics, communication theory (in the context of mass communication studies). Communicative space is understood as a rule as an environment or a scene of various interactions [11]. S. Datsyuk suggests understanding communicative space as the internal contents of communication [12]. G.G. Pocheptsov distinguishes between information and communicative spaces. The first represents a one-way process involving transfer of information to passive listeners. Communicative space is a two-way process in which all participants place active roles [11]. A.V. Lobanov introduced the concept of communicative space into architecture from the perspective of the environment in which the individual and his social group exist. An important property of such spaces is the variability of the environment depending on the individual being in it [13].

From the perspective of the architectural process, in defining the concept of communicative space it is important to allow for the spiritual and material conditions in the exchange of information takes place, because "successful relationships between designers and their clients are commonly based on socially oriented models" [14]. Thus, communicative space in the architectural process is the external environment of the communicative process. The spiritual conditions involve the design of the society, economic crisis, system of ideological and aesthetic ideals while the material ones include external real environment of communication: city, a hall with viewers seats, a projector and a screen. In the communicative space of the architectural process there are events, processes, phenomena which are not identical in scale and characteristics which are interconnected, interact and influence each other.

4. Conclusion

Thus, the article has identified issues in the sphere of the architectural and building process in Ekaterinburg concerning interaction between architects, customers and architecture users. The concepts of communication, communicative processes and communicative space in the architecture theory have been defined. Four subject fields have been identified in communication processes occur: social, educational, regulatory and creative.

Further study of communication in the architectural process on the basis of the proposed theoretical positions should allow certain laws to be revealed, variants of communicative decisions to be

systematized, conflict scenarios and schemes of effective communication to be identified for subsequent application in architectural practice.

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