



21st Century Architecture: Search for the Concept

21. Yüzyılda Mimarlık: Kavramın Aranması

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ABSTRACT

The contemporary architecture has been focusing on the creation of concept before giving attention to the context. It is seen that architects are making their designs related with the created conceptual background before thinking on functional necessities. Today is the era of seeking to interrogate relationship among reality, symbols, and society as Baudrillard referred on his simulation theorem. Most of the converging objects of the life from 1980's till today, can be seen as the piece of "a great scenery" of the modern life, created by the authorities. During the period in between 1990's and the 2016, it is seen that the capital market has been formulated under the effects of neo-liberalist economies. The rise of the multiculturalism is started and thus, alternative media is born. These years are the years of having many spectacular buildings of star-architects on the praxis field. Thus having a direct link to this formulation in the architectural field, it can be said that, the importance of the projects are not formulated according to the basic guidelines and architectural principles, however it is focused on concept research on architectural projects, which would be the best-sellers on the market. Bjarke Ingels and his Copenhagen-based firm BIG is disproportionate number of the profession's rising star from the north side of the world contemporary architecture. Thus, the paper will have the critical overview to the architectural fiction on the 21st century, while it will focus on the important projects of BIG from all over the world.

Keywords: Architecture; concept; context; neo-liberal economies; simulacra and simulation.

ÖZ

1980'lerden beri güncel mimarlığın bağlamdan ziyade önce kavrama yöneldiği bilinen bir gerçektir. Mimarların fonksiyonel ihtiyaçlardan ziyade, tasarımlarını yaparken kavramsal bir arka plan kurgusuna yöneldiği görülmektedir. Günümüz, Baudrillard'ın simülasyon teoreminde referans ettiği üzere gerçeklik, semboller ve toplum ilişkisi arakesitinin sorgulanmasına yönelik bir çağdır. Bu bağlamda, 1980'lerden bu yana, günümüzün yaşantısı ile ilişkili pek çok şey, otoriteler tarafından yaratılan büyük modern hayat senaryosunun birer parçası gibi gözükmemektedir. 1990'lardan 2016'ya kapitalist pazarın neo-liberalist ekonomilerin etkileri altında şekillendiği görülmektedir. Çok kültürlü bir döneme girilmiş ve böylelikle de alternatif medya doğmuştur. Bu yıllar aynı zamanda bir çok etkileyici yapının da yıldız mimarlar tarafından praxis katıldığı yıllardır. Böylelikle, bu formülasyona direkt bağlantılı bir linkle projelerin öneminin temel tasarım ilkeleri ve mimari prensipler doğrultusunda, kavram merkezli olarak oluşturulduğu, ve önemini çok satan projeler oluşturmak olduğu görülmektedir. Bjarke Ingels ve Kopenhag orijinli ofisi BIG mesleğin yükselen kuzeyli yıldızı olarak güncel mimarlık alanına girmiştir. Bu bağlamda, makale BIG'in önemli projelerine odaklanarak 21. yüzyılda mimarlık kurgusunun bir kritiğini yapmayı amaç edinmektedir.

Anahtar sözcükler: Mimarlık; kavram; bağlam; neo-liberal ekonomiler; simulacra ve simülasyon.

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Introduction

"It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change".

C. Darwin¹, 1859

The metabolism of the free market and therefore the "producing" of the money, or with another words the re-born of the capital, has changed its economical formulation, and also it is seen that the formulating of the sovereign political fiction started to be changed during the transition phase on the 21st century, during which, the capitalism, as one head legendary romantic dragon has been changed into the neo-liberal economies, as the unbeaten monster dragon, which has multi heads. Neo-liberal economies can be defined as having a mythological romance at the first sight, tries to give us a life, which we have a desire to live, however on which we will be burn by the fire coming from the multi-heads of the monster dragon. More-over than this, we all pay the bill of burning on this "hell" as volunteers, as soon as possible, with all of our hearts. This is what multi faced neo-liberal economies do to us, as just seeing us as bodies rather than citizens, make us give the cash by our will to the "burning" products. As architectural piece of examples can be also defined as produced spaces, they can take a place on the list of these "burning" products. Thus, it can be said that BIG Architects are one architectural team that can be defined as one of the best players on the market with their star architect identities.

Rising of the Neo-Liberalism

The Keynesian² economic politics were formulated to give a new order to the system just after the 1929 crisis. Therefore, Keynesian economic politics have been lived almost without any huge problem till the end of the 1960's, just then becoming the high rate of the accumulation of the capital over the investment and by the decreasing of the rate of the profits,, "overdose" living of the machinery life style has been pushed up, and increasing on the rates of the unemployment has been began. Thus, a new crisis has happened on the capitalist economic system. Thus, a new research has been made for finding a new way for the new productions to make the system consistent by the authorities.

The basic characteristic of Keynesian city lays on the formation of the production and not only the political but also the socio-economical life of the city is framed by a debits

financed production.³ The spirit of massive consumption is intended on the society by creating an effective demand mechanism and thus, the stability, which is searched for the capitalist economy is formulated. The existence of the international capitalist competition and the born of the free market on this period started to formulate a speculative economic atmosphere, whereasthe existence of the 1970's economic crisis across the world had some dynamics, which created a formulation base to the happening of the globalization. Thus, industrial investments have been decreased while speculative economic accumulation has yet risen up.

The Market Has a Paradox

The power of the government on the economic base of the social life becomes much broader than before as Keynesian economical politics shows during the end of the 1970's. The brand new problems impel the economists, such as, deficit spending, high tax burden, inflation and etc.. Finding of the new results and denouements according to the economical soul of the decade come through on the daily life of the decade. With respect to Keynesian theory -which predicts the stabilization of the balance on the praxis of the work field- if the rising of the unemployment on the society has happened, the government follows up the growth-oriented monetary policy. Thus, according to the point of view of the government the economy could have two optional ways, either war or piece formation on the civilization pursuant to the position of the needing of the government. Therefore, the relationship between the economy and the capital money occurs among the rates of the interest. The mobility on the money supply reflects to the money market, and then the interest rates first. Thus, the mobility of the market influences all of the investments. The government of the central bank as the sovereign power of the market, or with another word the financial authority, provides the money supply, while the monetary policy affects the prices.

Between the end of the 1970's and during the 1980's the world was the platoon of the scenery, which belongs- Margaret Thatcher and Ronal Reagan, who can be seen as an ideological soul-mate. Almost all of the inputs of the daily life were given as the codes of the social life style. Thus, people started to be similar pairs of a big chess table.

Just after the end of the Cold War between USA and Russia, with the beginning of 1990's, the capital market changes the hand by the neo-liberalism. Yet in the 1990's activists used the world neo-liberalism for the global market liberalism known as the capitalism. It is known that neoliberalism is often used interchangeably with globalization. But global free trade and free markets are not

¹ Unlike many of the other Darwin misquotations circulating on the Internet, this one does not seem to be in any way mischievous or malicious; it's just wrong. Darwin never said any such thing. But Bijarke Ingles took this quote as the beginning inspirational point of his book Yes, is more.

² Keynesian was one of the well-known economy theorists by 1970's with his macro-economic theory and his pupils came after him on the economy style known with his name as the school of Keynesian economics.

³ Harvey, 2012, p. 56.

new, and this use of the word ignores development in the advanced economies. The analysis here compares neo-liberalism with its historical predecessors. Neo-liberalism is not just and only the economics: it is a social and moral philosophy; it is a life style.

During these years, inter connected networks, known generally as the internet, which will be the new space of human relations without sensations but with digital senses. And yet the post-modernism is born, as the touch of the God to Adem, by the touch of the Steve Jobs and his firm Apple Computers to the market. Culturally, the period of 1990's is characterized by the rise of the multiculturalism and alternative media. And by the engage ceremony of the first MC Donald's restaurant with the Russian economy in Moscow, the capitalist free market economy moves toward adopting elements of western culture to the vast and sometimes even empty points of the world. It is seen that a new life style, which pushes up to the other corners of the world by USA, is started to affect the rest of the world. Thus, the theorem of Baudrillard,⁴ simulacra and the simulation yet started to take its place on the daily life.

According to one of the well-known economy critics Crouch's thesis,⁵ the outcome of the battle among the market, the government and the public life of the huge companies, has given us a politics, as well as an economics, dominated by large firms. The growth of corporate power was a familiar complaint, even before the financial crisis, from assorted anti-globalizers who saw large, trans-national corporations as the incarnation of all evil in 2010's. Crouch⁶ does not indulge in his claim that, in the conspiracy theories of the anti-globalization left, as he does not view big private companies as inherently malignant. But he does worry that existing analyses of the state-market nexus fail to appreciate how influential they are, an oversight, which allows some big firms to get away with bad behavior. The key problem is that political and economic theorists often assume a neat dividing line between state and market. However, big corporations upset this balance. They exist in the realm of markets, which they are frequently able to dominate because of their size. But they also use their importance in the economy and indirect leverage over growth and employment to manipulate politicians.

After the strategies of the Chicago School have been changed on the market, it can be said that, a new economic era yet begun. Instead of insisting that efficient markets should comprise a large number of small firms, neoliberals of the Chicago School argued that the public interest could be better served by allowing a few large firms to gobble up the rest. Neo-liberalism, as an abstract meaning, is a set

of economic policies that have become widespread during the last 25 years or so. Although the word is rarely heard in the beginning in the United State, the effects of neo-liberalism can be seen easily; the rich is getting richer and the poorer is getting poorer. In neo-liberal economies, although consumer choice might thereby be diminished, the welfare of overall consumers could be enhanced by the obtained efficiency gains. The owners (shareholders, who were themselves also consumers) in the dominant firms would benefit from these efficiency gains as well.

In architecture, to gain well topic new concepts as actors of a big scenery find shortcuts to themselves, passing through the cat-walk of simulacra and the simulation.

Architecture in the Post Modern Conditions

According to the father of the theory of the post-modern conditions, Lyotard,⁷ post-modernism is a condition, which is the condition of knowledge in the most highly developed societies. The word post-modern is in current use on the American Continent among sociologists and critics while Lyotard was inditing his theory formula. It designates the state of our culture following the transformations, which, since the end of the 19th century, have altered the game rules for science, literature and the arts. Thus, his theory places these transformations in the context of the crisis of narratives.

Postmodern knowledge is not simply a tool of the authorities: it refines our sensitivity to differences and reinforces our ability to tolerate the incommensurable. Its principle is not the expert's homology but the inventor's paralogy.

Lyotard⁸ says that, "science has always been in conflict with narratives. Judged by the yardstick of science, the majority of them prove to be fables. But to the extent that science does not restrict itself stating useful regularities and seeks the truth, it is obliged to legitimate the rules of its own game. It then produces a discourse of legitimation with respect to its own status, a discourse called philosophy". And it is known that he used the word of modern "to designate any science that legitimates itself with reference to a metadiscourse of this kind making an explicit appeal to some grand narrative, such as the dialectics of Spirit, the hermeneutics of meaning, the emancipation of the rational or working subject or the creation of wealth".

And also he defines the word postmodern as "incredulity toward meta-narratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. To the obsolescence of the meta-narrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it".

⁴ Baudrillard, 1981, p. 40. ⁵ Crouch, 2013, p. 52. ⁶ Crouch, 2013, p. 53.

⁷ Lyotard, 1984, p. 80.

⁸ Lyotard, 1984, p. 80.

According to Jameson,⁹ “what is most striking in Lyotard’s differentiation between storytelling and scientific abstraction is its unexpected modulation towards a Nietzschean thematics of history. In effect, indeed, for Lyotard the fundamental distinction to temporality, and in particular formal properties become magnified in prosody and in the rhythmic features of traditional tales, proverbs, and the like, is here characterized as a way of consuming the past, a way of forgetting: as meter takes precedence over accent in the production of sound (spoken or not), time ceases to be a support for memory to become an immemorial beating that, in the absence of a noticeable separation between periods, prevents their being numbered and consigns them to oblivion”.

Here, it is needed to be pointed out the French post-structuralism, which invited us- not excluding the earlier works of Lyotard himself- however, the moment in which aesthetics gives a way to ethics. In this point of view, the problem of being postmodern lays on the fundamental attitude toward the new social formation, and thus, it is named as *The Postmodern Condition* by Lyotard. Again according to Jameson, Lyotard’s affiliations would be a bit of *Anti-Oedipus* of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, who also discussed that the schizophrenic ethic was not at all a revolutionary one, but a way of surviving under capitalism, producing fresh desires within the structural limits of the capitalist mode of production. In this point of view, architecture can be defined as a praxis which has its own schizophrenic ethic, creates its new forms on a way of surviving under capitalism, moreover than this being a part of the neo-liberal economies, producing fresh desires as using new architectural concepts within structural limits of the capitalist mode of production. Without any doubt today there is no structural limit at techniques and technologies of the architecture.

The dynamic of perpetual change is “not some alien rhythm within capital” as Marx showed in the *Manifesto*, however is “a rhythm specific to those non-instrumental activities that are art and science, but rather is the very permanent revolution of capitalist production itself” according to Jameson.¹⁰ “The exhilaration with such revolutionary dynamism is a feature of the bonus of pleasure and the reward of the social reproduction of the system itself. The moment of the truth, in this respect, comes when the matter of the ownership and control of the new information banks- the profitability of the new technological and information revolution” says again Jameson. According to Feyerabend,¹¹ the dystopian prospect of a global private monopoly of information weighs heavily in the balance against the pleasures of paralogisms and of anarchist science. Jameson here declines that, the monopoly, like the

rest of the private property system, cannot be expected to be reformed by however benign a technocratic elite, but can be challenged only by genuinely political action, which is neither symbolic nor protopolitical.

1970’s was the time period during which the architecture began as a continuation of styles created by well-known famous architects as the result of the symbolizing capitalist economy. Several of them were in a competition to build the tallest building of the world, early in the decade. Experimentation has been brought in geometric design with thanks to technical and technological developments, such as post modernism, early de-constructivism during this decade, as well.

Modern architecture was increasingly criticized as the decade went on postmodern architects, who advocated a return to pre-modern styles of architecture and started to run after creating the conceptual background of architectural projects before functional needing and with the incorporation of pop elements. This is also another simulation on the construction field. Furthermore other architects advocated the pursuit of form for the sake of form and drew on semiotics theory for support. It is also known that having an orientalist style of life on Europe with an extravaganza point of view the use of open spaces and groundbreaking geometry of far-east architectural examples found a place on west architectural styles, as the symbol of one another simulation. This decade brought further experimentation on the love between glass and steel construction. Although like many buildings of the time, the experimentation was flawed and glass panes fell from the facade.

High Tech architecture moved forward soon which is generally characterized by simplification of form and an absence of applied decoration. Moreover than this, with efforts to reconcile the principles underlying architectural design not only with rapid technological advancement, but also with the modernization of the society, early modern architecture began at the turn of the 20th century. It would take the form of numerous movements, schools of design, and architectural styles, also some in tension with one another.

As the result of fast developing technics and technologies on construction field during the period in between 1980’s and 2015’s, architects started to give attention to concept more than context.

According to Baudrillard¹² during 1980’s that a new intelligentsia across the world has been coming up, as having necessities on a simulacra and simulation background, now on 2000’s the ownership of a property, which has new meanings more than being on a space and use it. It is a

⁹ Jameson, 1991, p. 15. ¹⁰ Jameson, 1991, p. 15. ¹¹ Feyerabend, 2011, p. 38.

¹² Baudrillard, J., 1981, p. 34.

platform on where people would like to make a cat walk of their Hollywood stylish life styles and show their executive brands designed bags and shoes. The concept and the context love has been totally cracked up, however more over then this, their meanings and characters have been totally evaluated into something else on super modernity of 2000's. Thus, a new actor is now, on the catwalk of architecture, the concept.

It is seen that, changing on the context of architecture during the last two decades on the continent of America and across Europe, brought forward to the formation of the spaces, which is not only restricted in corresponding to personal necessities, but also determine prestige, statue and moreover than this, a personal identity. Pushing up of the consumer culture inside the neo-liberalist economies, the meaning of the personal ownership is also changed. Almost the social role and the identity of the owner of the property have started to be formalized according to the conceptual touch of the architecture. Also, the location of the ownership is a social symbol, more than being a cartographic data on the life of its owner during 2000's.

During the 21st century, one basic thing is coming up, the questioning of the concept, which is an abstract idea or mental symbol denoting all of the objects in a given category or style of entities interactions, phenomena or relationship between them. The index list of architecture includes it under the impact of economic power re-constructed by modernization and globalization on the era of neo-liberal economies.

Thus, the architectural creation and construction process started to include the concept creation.

Concept is a fundamental category of existence on a metaphysical and especially ontological point of view. It is known that when the mind makes a generalization of the concept of some data/ input, it extracts similarities from numerous examples. In contemporary philosophy, the concept can be defined as mental representation as abilities and/ or as abstract objects. If the last one is tried to be understood from architectural point of view, it can be told about the constituents of propositions that mediate between thought, language and referents.

Early modernity had functional modular designs staying far away from ornamentation-based culture. Within the period from 1920's till today this design culture has been changing; things learned from Las Vegas in 1980's and every solid has been vaporized before 2000, and thus a new design world has been formatted. Whereas the concept architecture of 2000's, has design forms of group of cognitive ideas as final architectural structures. In other word, the final product as a summary is an architectural structure, after the design process, which has formulated by cognitive ideas. On the world of neo-liberal economies, it

is seen that the architectural concepts generally include a relationship with luxury life and its' it objects on this field.

There is an extravaganza in every new answer of the contemporary architecture. Thus, it is seen that architectural context, which is related with paradigms, architectural conditions and requirements, is also changed dramatically according to the thematic architecture of the era. Therefore, the tabula rasa is fully filled of themes that are everyday created by former architects. Theme gives "a new born": a new born, known as the interaction phenomena or relationship among every object, known commonly as the concept. Day by day the concept becomes to have more or less the same thing with the simulacras on the theorem of Baudriillard,¹³ which is simulacra and simulation. Architect creates his architectural design with a unique concept, which shows his motto. Thus, his architecture becomes a structure/ space, which is used by us, people using that space. The context is feelings, ideas, experiments and relations that we have either with each other or between space and us. According to Deleuze,¹⁴ "there is no simple concept. Every concept has its own components and is defined by them. Thus, every concept has a code. Even if every plurality is not conceptual, it is a plurality. There is not any concept having no component: even first concept, which is the starting concept of a philosophy, has lots of components...every concept refers to another..." Architecture concepts are abstract in that they omit the differences of every detail in a building or a space, as if they were identical. To have an architectural production, is needed. Different architectural concepts can give different identities, which can also named as new themes of the field on contemporary architecture, with new born unique architectural styles.

Being Big

Bjarke Ingles, who was the ex-practical trainer of Rem Koolhaas, founded his office BIG (Bjarke Ingles Group) in 2006, is the actor of the brand new contemporary architecture with his innovative and ambitious designs and projects, it is felt that his designs have two basic characteristics; they are created as if a boy either plays with his lego models or plays his digital computer games. Also many of his buildings defy traditional architectural conventions and dimensions, and are often highly photogenic. He uses the camouflage point of view of his master Koolhaas and more he uses the advantages of the digital technology to formulate his influential designs. He also published a book Yes, is more.

It is quite sure that, Ingles has impressively renewed and expanded architectonic language. By "staging" the book on the market, Yes, is more, the Ingles' architectural

¹³ Baudriillard, 1981.

¹⁴ Deleuze, & Guattari, 1994, p. 97.

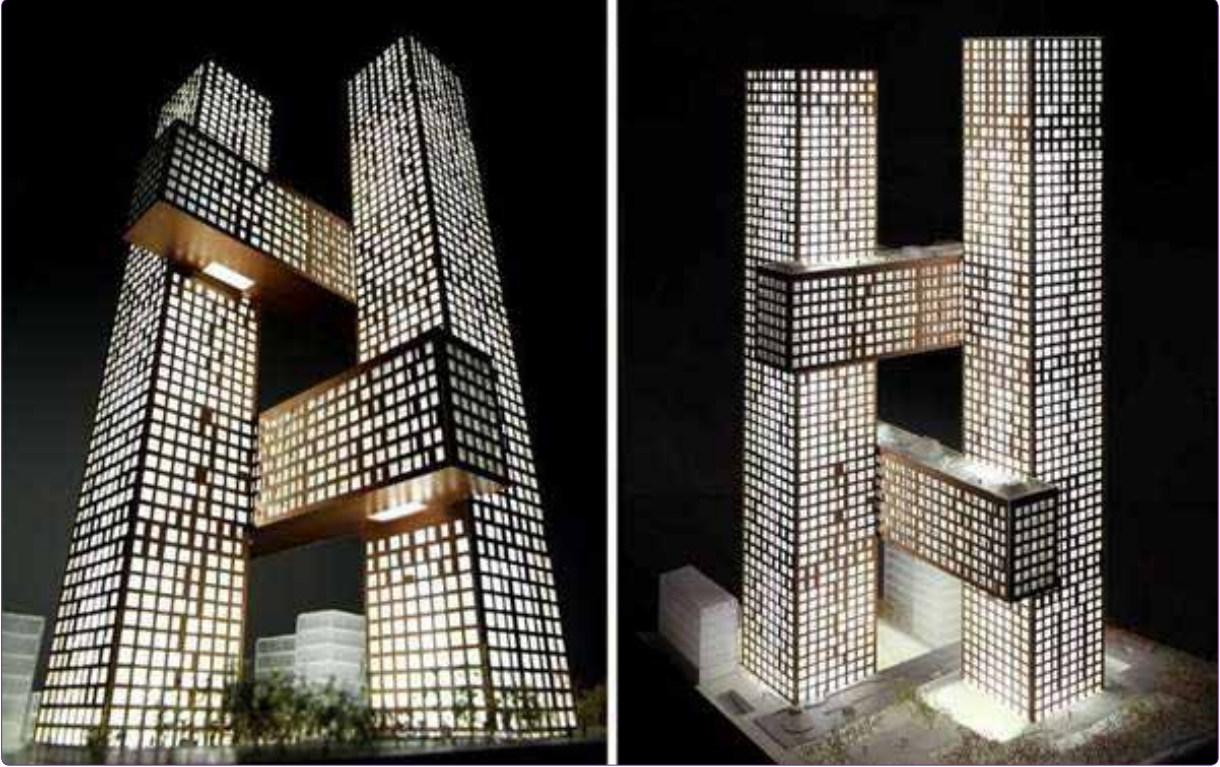


Figure 1. The cross towers project proposal by BIG.



Figure 2. The cross towers project proposal by BIG.

style makes him soon one of the most successful and innovative architectural figures of the world. Ingles' architectural style can be defined as playful, controversial, cool and cheeky, innovative and provocative. Ingles's architectural office has in the space of a few years created prize-winning projects, a long list of innovative buildings and an

international reputation, as well as taking an active part in current debates in the northern architectural circle. Thus, it can be said that, starting out from a vision aiming to free architecture from tired clichés, choosing instead to see modern life as an inspiring challenge, Ingles has made a major contribution to the renewal of the northern archi-

tectural tradition. His latest important projects are below:

The cross # towers project proposal by BIG for the Yong-sang Master Plan is the future development, to be situated in Seoul, Korea. The towers, with a total surface of 21,000 square meters will stand at 214 and 204 meters tall, respectively. Since there are building regulations in place at the future building site, the excess building mass will be concentrated in a set of bridges, to connect the two towers at 140 and 70 meters respectively (Figs. 1-3).

According to the architect of the project and the former partner of BIG, Bjarke Ingels, the resulting # shaped structure will definitively alter the Seoul skyline and signal “a radical departure from the crude repetition of disconnected towers towards a new urban community that populates the three-dimensional space of the city” (Figure 4).

The People’s Building is a project by JDS Architects and BIG Architects, which is located at Shanghai, China. JDS Architects submitted it to Architecture News Plus (ANP) with a master project program including 2 buildings of hous-

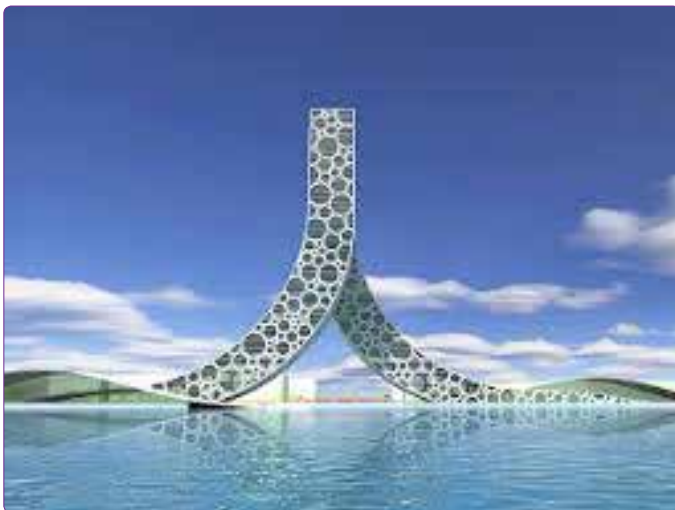


Figure 3. The People’s Building, by BIG.



Figure 4. The People’s Building, by BIG.



Figure 5. The Master Plan of the Zira Island, by BIG.



Figure 6. The Zira Island, by BIG.

ing sports center, water culture center, conference center and 1000 room hotel. The building is also known as REN Building in China. Interesting constructional thing about the building is that it is conceived as two buildings merging into one. The first building, emerging from the water, is devoted to the activities of the body; it houses the sports and the water culture center. The second building emerging from the land is devoted the spirit and enlightenment; it houses the conference center. The two buildings have a cross structural part on where is a 1000 room hotel located, it is a building for living.

Zira Zero Island, on where the 7 peaks of Azerbaijan projects of BIG Architects will be constructed, has a 1,000,000 m² master plan for a carbon neutral resort and residential development along the Caspian Sea. According to Rienmann,¹⁵ the Group Market Director of the Ramboll “As a young post-soviet democracy, Azerbaijan is rediscovering its national identity by imagining Zira Island as an architectural landscape based upon the country’s dramatic natural

¹⁵ Rienmann., 2014, p. 15.

setting. Located within the crescent shaped bay of the capital city Baku, Zira Island includes the 7 Peaks of Azerbaijan which is envisioned by its designers BIG Architects and the engineers Ramboll to be a sustainable model for urban development, and an iconographic skyline recognizable from the city's coastline. The vision of Zira Island is to create a new development that is entirely independent of external resources – in other words a self-contained island. By combining the best of the traditional Azerbaijani building tradition with the newest technology, Zira Island will provide excellent living spaces for people, with a minimum usage of resources" (Figs. 5, 6).

Conclusion

As the results of fast changing neo-capitalist globalization, it can be said that contemporary architecture in the concept project stage is proof to the limitlessness of human imagination. Especially, the scope of architecture from micro-scale to macro-scale has been also changed during the last 20 years. The general suppose of the globalization is to feel and to see all of the color variants of different cultures all around the world. All ideas can be structured by improving of all new technologies, and more than this, having new building materials give a huge platform to create those new ideas due to modernization and globalization in 21st century. Therefore, it can be said that there is a limitlessness period on architecture. Having no limits in architecture, as the projects have not been formulating according to neither to vernacular, nor to the traditional architectural yet today, principles and guidelines are not the same than before, architectural projects are focused on searching of the concept to create the best sellers than before to be focused on the constructional principles. Thus, architecture, which was located next to traditions and necessities, has

a new platoon to create simulations on the praxis field. Thus, architecture became a chess game, which has new rules on the neo-liberalist economies. The game flew on a transcendental filter, and thus, instead of breaking existed rules, players of this chess game recommended new games with new rules. Today, there is no game and there is no new rule, just as in the contemporary architecture, there is only some simulations as concepts of projects that are lived on the world of neo-liberalist economies.

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