DECONSTRUCTION IN ARCHITECTURE AND THE NEGATIVE RESPONSE OF EASTERN SOCIETIES

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ABSTRACT
Hardly ever has a critical theory involved the kind of anxiety and hysteria that deconstruction has driven since its beginning in 1967. This theory of philosophy and literary criticism forged in the writings of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida. In the 1980’s a new movement was born, the deconstruction in architecture, which was produced to replace postmodern architecture. The new slogan was “form follows fantasy” instead of the tradition principle pronounced by Sullivan “form follows function”.

Deconstruction turns over the Western metaphysical tradition. It represents a complicated response to a variety of Western theoretical and philosophical movements of the 20th century.[1] However, in Eastern Societies this architectural movement did not flourish in the same pattern as it did in the West. The reason of this rejection is related to several factors concerning the considerable differences between the two cultures.

This paper aims to address the problematic aspects of digesting deconstruction as an architectural theory by Eastern societies, and the factors that affects applying such theory in their contemporary architecture.

KEY WORDS
Deconstruction; Architectural Form; Architectural Space; Socio-cultural Values; Religious Believes; Response of Eastern Societies.
INTRODUCTION

Deconstruction In Literature
In literature, deconstruction is considered a school of philosophy and literary criticism, which was made-up in the writings of Jacques Derrida. The term ‘Deconstruction’ represents a particular kind of practice in reading and, thus, a technique of criticism. “Deconstruction is not synonymous with ‘destruction’. However, it is in fact much closer to the original meaning of the word ‘analysis’ itself, which means, ‘to undo’, a virtual synonym for ‘to de-construct.’ ... A deconstructive reading is a reading which analyses the specificity of a text’s critical difference from itself.” [2]

“Deconstruction can perhaps best be described as a theory of reading which aims to undermine the logic of opposition within texts.” [3] Derrida’s readings of philosophical and literary texts claim that, by revealing the internal contradictions, the text appears to be saying something different from what it seems to be saying. [4] The breakdown of composition is suggestive of the process of deconstruction. Derrida, in his literary critiques, often intentionally misreads texts to produce false logic, and thereby deconstruct.

In literary terms, deconstruction is essentially attacking and weakening the givens in an argument, consequently producing contradictions in the logic, and representing meaningless statements. Derrida used complicated language in his writings that seem to have been written on purpose to confound and confuse. [5]

Deconstruction In Architecture
Recently ‘Deconstruction’ has been applied to architecture. Many theorists concerned about the implications of deconstruction for architecture, have gone to great caution against what called ‘the error of misconstruing’, that deconstruction means the opposite of construction. Architecture that is influenced by deconstruction does not produce buildings that are falling apart, nor a scene of destruction, which is different from what most people think about deconstruction. “Deconstruction is not demolition, or dissimulation, which suggests a total breakdown.” [6] Deconstruction, is “a challenging of the values of harmony, unity and stability. A deconstructive architect is therefore not one who dismantles buildings, but one who locates the inherent dilemmas within buildings - the structural flaws.” [6]

Contrary to appearance, deconstruction is not an architectural image, it identifies a reflection of architecture, and it should be well thought-out at the whole process of design. A deconstruction from the beginning must deconstruct the construction itself, its structural, its proposals, its perceptions and its concepts. Nevertheless, it deconstructs the philosophical construction of the concept of
architecture. It can be said that deconstruction, an approach to building design, which attempts to perceive architecture in bits and pieces, and dismantles the basic elements of architecture. Deconstructive buildings may appear with no visual logic, and they seem to be made up of irrelevant, disharmonious abstract forms.

Jacques Derrida’s work was to have an enormous impact on deconstruction. From his work, comes the call to ‘deconstruct language, to attack the logic and social basis for language’, since it restricts choices. This approach has been utilized to the architectural language, and to respect the model of Derrida a little further in architecture, the major component that has to be modified is perspective, and thus, the purpose of Deconstruction is to alter perception.”

“One might also note the irony of deconstructionist theorists attempting to articulate an understanding of the meaning of deconstruction.”

**DECONSTRUCTION AND ARCHITECTURAL PROGRAM**

In architecture, deconstruction is motivated by the desire of the architect to break the bonds of the heritage of accepted methods of thinking in order to create new potentialities. Deconstruction of form highlights how the deconstruction of program can encourage new interaction among the users. The program always reflects the owner's needs relative to the purpose of the building. When an architect deconstructs the architectural program, he expands the idea of function to include the potential for new methods of interaction between various groups of users.

The typical functional needs in any architectural program focus mainly on the purpose of each individual space. In order to overcome the segregation between the users that results from applying this program through the design process, some deconstruction methods tend to adjoin all of the separated program pieces and reconstruct them in a way that encourages interaction between different users. “The Modernists argue that, form follows function, and that function in the efficient forms necessarily had a pure geometry. But their streamlined aesthetic disregarded the untidy reality of actual functional requirements. In deconstruction architecture, forms are distributed and only then are given a functional program.”

**DECONSTRUCTION AND ARCHITECTURAL FORM**

A deviation, from the typical structural order threatens the basic values of stability, harmony and unity. Usually, the qualities of these values arise from the geometry of purity, and formal composition. The adjoining of pure geometrical forms abides by rules that do not permit rejection between them in order to preserve harmony. Nevertheless, with deconstruction, “form is no longer pure; it has become contaminated by some sort of alien.”
This contamination creates a complex disposition between the ruined interiors of forms and the disorder of their contexts, this separation between the inside and outside results instability and more complexity, and interrupts the feeling of containment. “This is not freedom, liberation, but stress—not release but even greater tension. …, the wall is tormented, split and folded so that it no longer provides security by dividing familiar from unfamiliar, inside from out. The whole condition of enclosure breaks down.”[6] This is the situation in most of the cases of deconstruction.

Modern deconstructionists believe that people can no longer observe buildings, as simple containers hosting the desired functions, and that architects have to navigate beyond the traditional architectural ideas of form and ground, and should dump the traditional processes of the past, and adopt new ones.

DECONSTRUCTION AND ARCHITECTURAL SPACE
For the last four hundred years, architecture has centered itself on producing form, which helped increasing the value of the architectural form, while space was perceived as the left over. Nowadays, most architects respect space as the starting point for their designs, and then construct a series of spaces that neither are the outcome of framing grounds nor shaped from the generation of pre-existent figures. The product then, is the result of a design process to adjoin these spaces together.

Space and place encourages architectural theorists to investigate through philosophic debates and produce great amount of criticism about former theories within their discipline. Such criticism has always questioned assumptions concerning architecture and its relation to space.[10] “If space has boundaries, is there another space outside those boundaries? If space does not have boundaries, do things then extend infinitely?”[11] The previous queries raised by a deconstructionist about space were extremely philosophical, simply for the theory of architecture.
In the deconstruction theory, the architectural space is “critical, dangerous, disorienting, reorienting, full of potential, and traversed by energy and hope.”[4]

PHILOSOPHY OF DECONSTRUCTION
Detractors of deconstruction consider it as an anti-philosophical phenomenon that does not function with reality, so, it would look as if it has nothing to do with architecture. They identify this as contradictions, while the defenders of deconstruction describe that as paradoxes. “But, perhaps deconstruction is less properly regarded as a philosophical position that has something to say about architecture than a philosophical attitude that one brings to bear upon architecture.”[12]
The deconstruction philosophical process is the same as to dismantle a radio to see its components and know how it functions, without knowing how to fix it. Deconstructionists developed complicated methods concerning the design process, particularly the role of structure in modern societies. Their works influenced by Marx, Freud, Jacques Derrida and others, representing their beliefs about Economics, Sex, and Power. Deconstruction is the result of these contemporary philosophical ideas, regardless of its profession that its goals are unusual. Deconstruction does not seek new systems, “it is a critique of all systems and liberation from the domination of inherited constructs. That it is itself a construct is truly inconvenient, especially if one begins with premises that deny the possibility of evaluating the validity of all constructs.”[13]

This illustrates how it is impossible to form rational philosophical arguments, ontological, moral, or aesthetic, apart from the acknowledgement of its first ideology. It becomes obvious that deconstructionists wish to deny all established values of a centuries old discipline as architecture, for greater liberty in the service of modernism and expressiveness. Unfortunately, “Deconstructionists see what they do to be something relentlessly new.”[14] Peter Eisenman as a leading deconstructionist believes that the ‘metaphysic of architecture’ is the standard set of expectations that have traditionally and currently considered the fundamental interest of architecture, consisting of structure, shelter, durability, order, use, beauty, and meaning. As he perceives it, a deconstructionist architectural sensibility would seek a dislocation or displacement of this ‘metaphysic of architecture.’[9]

**PRINCIPLES OF DECONSTRUCTION**

The deconstruction conception is to develop designs that prove how buildings can be built without loosing efficiency and yet abide by the basic laws of physics, in a way differs from the fixed architectural principles. Most of deconstructive buildings appear as if separate parts of different buildings were gathered randomly together. These buildings turn out to be more abstract, and due to their considerable differences, it becomes obvious that architecture is not only an engineering discipline but also has artistic manners. It is the historical gap between architecture and its theory in particular, that is widening by the principles of deconstruction.

**Concept of Centricity**

In fact, deconstruction casts doubt on the hypothesis of Western ideas by switching or shifting the hierarchical ‘binary oppositions’ which create its root. “Derrida challenges the metaphysical premises that shape Western science and philosophy. Derrida argues that the ‘structure’ determining these discourses, always presupposes a ‘centre’ that ensures a point of origin, meaning, being, or
presence.”[15] This phenomenon, determines the metaphysical needs of truth, consciousness, and spirit that underwrite Western literature, theology, and science. Derrida believes that any trial to eliminate the center always produces a new center. In deconstruction there is always the trial of destroying the center, and thus, destroying the point of origin and the meaning.

**Singularity**

Singularity as a concept differs from individual expression as it absorbs the idea of repetition. It is unlike standardization, which is an identical mechanical repetition; singularity involves some differences that attached with the self-similar repetition. “In architecture, in order to preserve the singularity of objects, one must cut them off from their previous modes of legitimization, in function, i.e. that form follows function, or that architecture will always embody meaning.”[16]

Singularity also calls for the refusal of the traditional dialogue between figure and ground. Therefore, it is possible to visualize a figure-figure relationship, where the ground does not frame the object anymore, but on the contrary unites with the object itself. In order to achieve singularity there must be a new process that is not justifiable by form and function. This process apparently produces arbitrary and value-free origins, which could be found in deconstruction.

**DECONSTRUCTION AND PSYCHOLOGY**

The majority of architects try hard to accommodate function and symbolic meaning in their designs. However, in the case of public buildings, it can be perceived as if they accommodate society in some way. Peter Eisenman argues that, “this accommodation assumes that at any one time society is known and also in some way predictable and may be translated into some discourse.”[17] Obviously this is not true because, no one can recognize the condition of the society and how should architecture react to it at the same time. Therefore, architects have to go outside of architecture to address the question of “what should I do?”[17] The impact of their designs upon the users should be examined, not only from the physical aspects, but also from the psychological ones.

Most of deconstructionists do not have anything to do with the fixed and established metaphysic of the house. As well, the physical and psychological satisfaction connected with the traditional form of house and its symbolic enclosure.[18] In contrary, they aim to displace the house from its calming atmosphere and symbolic image of shelter to initiate a search for the potentialities that may have withdrawn by that metaphysic.
Normally the user of any architectural space feels relaxed and secured if only he/she can relate the shape of that space to his/her architectural memory, but if the shape of the space is unfamiliar or has no shape at all, the user will be psychologically uncomfortable and nervous. This is mainly the case in most deconstructive forms and spaces, where the user cannot establish such relation, and thus, cannot identify the space.

**DECONSTRUCTION AND SOCIO-CULTURAL VALUES**

Architecture is more than a history of form and style; it is a product of socio-cultural and environmental factors and an expression of the way people live. Today, societies suffer from deep indifference to the environment that architects create for them to live in. Whether this environment represents as a home, an office, a shop, or a public building, architecture appears to have lost its relevance. The architects are the ones to be blamed for such failure. Eventually architects have come to recognize that they are not building monuments or artifacts that the user can connect with emotionally or intellectually. “There is, however, wide disagreement as to what should be done to correct the situation.”[19]

The concept of value emerges to be vital and important in architecture, which attaches to the user by expressing a value. The architect enhances the nature of this value and produces it to the user’s perception. If the user connects with the value and considers it as his/her, then, a link is created and the work produces a meaningful and respectable value. However, there are two chances for failure, the first is to fail to create the desired value, the second is to fail to produce a value that the user can connect with.[19] The current problem of architecture is the complete failure to produce values. To overcome this, architects should seek a link to the past, because it has a clearer connection to the cultural value system. This philosophy suggests that architecture should be clear and stable in expression that results from traditional forms, and have a symbolic richness.

The principal issue is whether the architects’ interaction with deconstruction is a complete rejection of tradition. Even as this issue is related to all parts of society, it is mainly critical for architecture to realize.[20] “Deconstruction architecture inhabits the center of the tradition in order to demonstrate that the tradition is always infected, that pure forms have always been contaminated.”[6]

Some architects believe that, deconstruction is dangerous to moral health, and that its refusal of logical thinking is an excuse for avoiding social and political responsibilities.[21] Therefore, in their opinion, deconstruction is anti-social architecture and an architect should not adopt it unless he/she builds it for oneself or a known client.
DECONSTRUCTION AND RELIGION
From what was illustrated previously, it is obvious that the work of deconstructionists demonstrates the principles of frustrating architecture. They think that the values of the past are not sufficient for the new world of today, with the pluralistic, uncertain, and excessive societies. Deconstructionists try to reflect this in their work in order to communicate with the new era. They believe that there is no truth. Therefore, there work shows a composition that is intentionally uncomfortable and fragmented. It is so intentionally diffuse and fractured in its aesthetic that it utterly fails to connect in any significant way with the observer. So, is it useful to do such a thing, and is it probable to produce architecture that is generated from entirely no value at all? Without doubt, it is not.

Since Deconstruction is a Western phenomenon, its impact upon Western religion is crucial. However, until now no one can confirm that this phenomenon has any sort of impact upon Eastern societies, socially, culturally, ethically, or principally. One of the main reasons of the limitation of deconstruction in the architecture of these Eastern societies is the religious factor that protects their culture from the invasion of such Western ideas to refuse all the inherited concepts and believes that unconsciously rooted deep inside their civilizations. A religion always survives in the hearts and minds of its adherents because it calms their existential anxieties by making them become aware of their role in life, and this is the case of such religious societies.

DECONSTRUCTION AND EASTERN SOCIETIES
The architecture of Eastern societies is a true expression of their rich cultures. Their buildings often express the religious beliefs, social and economic structure, political motivation and visual sensibility of constant and unified traditions. Architects of these societies frequently claim that their work is based on Eastern standard, and that they cannot escape from the influence of such powerful and controlling ideas.

Although it appears that, there is resemblance between the architecture of deconstruction and the architecture of Eastern societies, in that they both hold their main features behind unrevealing exteriors, and do not change their forms easily according to functional demands, but rather tend to adapt functions to preconceived forms, which are the contained internal spaces. Eastern societies do not correspond to this phenomenon in their contemporary architecture.

However, several fundamental principals appear in Eastern society’s architecture that makes the gap wider with deconstruction. Such as “the ubiquity of patterns in time and space, the interchangeability of the same design, and the repetition of the same design on different scales.” In addition, the purity of forms, the
stability of structures, the unity of the architectural modules, the simplicity of its orders, the harmony of its components, and the geometrical symmetry of most designs, “symmetry is one of the basic principles of design, particularly in the Islamic world.”[25] All these ideas and more are imbedded in the memory of these societies and it is very difficult, almost impossible, to change these principals in order to digest the phenomena of deconstruction in their architecture.

**CONCLUDING REMARKS**

1- Deconstruction is not the taking apart of constructions. Deconstruction is architecture of disruption, dislocation, deflection, deviation, and distortion, rather than of demolition, dismantling, decay, decomposition, or disintegration. It displays the structure instead of destroying it.[6]

2- “Deconstruction in architecture is all about intentional ambiguity and arbitrariness, the criticism of an idea through analysis of the elements that present that idea.”[19]

3- Most of the buildings of deconstruction are not guided by any philosophical principles, but are simply a continuance in the mode of earlier artistic methods, that are controlled by a sense of timidity.

4- Deconstructionists abandoned traditional rules of composition and harmony, replacing them with an organization based on breaking apart the traditional components.[28]

5- In deconstruction, there is always the trial of destroying the center and achieving singularity. Basic Deconstructionist theory is always concerned with difference not unity, the void became greater than the solid, and form is no longer simply pure, it has become contaminated.

6- Deconstruction does not correspond with both physical and psychological satisfaction of the communities of Eastern societies.

7- “Deconstruction has nothing to do with style; it has to do with ideology.”[26] The architecture of deconstruction does not have a certain meaning inherent to its nature.

8- “A Deconstructive, anti-social architecture has as great a right to exist as the same tradition in art, literature and philosophy (as long as one builds it for oneself or a known client).”[27]
9- Architecture is a social act that cannot be separated from its culture’s setting within which it exists. The architecture of a society cannot lie about the belief structure that sustains it. Therefore, to understand the architecture of any society, one must understand the basic ideational structures of its cosmology, ethics, aesthetics, sociology, politics, and economics.

10- The religious factor has an enormous impact on the indigestion of the deconstruction phenomenon in Eastern societies.

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