

EDITORIAL

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A new world

Recent political events that have shaken international politics have left architecture as a factor apparently outside the structural changes the world is undergoing. Changes reflected in wars, invasions, and occupations that, most of the time, have omitted or simply transgressed what has pompously been called the “world order”. The social optimism for a world that respected law and agreements between countries, protected by cumbersome international organizations, seemingly could transfer its solutions to architecture. A discipline that, in recent years, has never been more global, more varied, more lavish, and, in memorable cases, more discreet. This has occurred through a direct and simple link to technological progress, with new challenges posed by climate change, sustainability, new means of production, and, above all, the depletion of traditional energy sources, which has led to the search for new sources. These new explorations are now investigating new types of energy whose natural resources - lithium, rare earths – have awoken the most voracious political and economic appetites.

The poverty, hunger, and misery endured by a large part of the planet, especially in the least developed countries, were not enough of a scourge to imitate, adhere to, or simply live what we call “development”. On this side of the street, this picture was solidified over time. In other words, development was not achieved at the front of the train, but rather one traveled with a certain degree of custom and comfort in the caboose.

The usual, in fact schematic, division between a liberal pole and a socialist pole, which after the Second World War became a shared construct, seems, after seven decades, to be collapsing, a victim of its own drowsiness.

Democracy, the significant gain that emerged amid the social development of the 19th century and was consolidated in the 20th, had stood as a mast to cling to, a guarantor of a world perhaps more hopeful and optimistic about its way of navigating its course. Each country, one more, one less, had managed through good intentions, or sometimes with grimaces and perhaps with skepticism, to invoke its virtues to establish strategies and participate in moderate and continuous development. The Western world seemed to impart lessons to the rest of the world by validating everything as apparently better, since, for the rest, it was ours.

However, have empires returned? The forgotten practice of striking the table, of pulling away the tablecloth of the transactions of power, has come to define that there would no longer be two, but at least three diners who today are waiting to share the remaining cake. A message to the American and Russian powers - the Chinese are coming to the table. This is a guest about whom little is known, but with whom a lot is traded. Even so, everyone has a part in the meal, albeit with insatiable appetites. Their excessive actions justify those of the opponent, where “if you do it, I have the right to do it”. There is no opposition. There is just the marking out of the territory of action: “me here and you there, let’s keep negotiating.”

One way or another, dogmas are falling, and misinformation and confusion are populating the press.

Some methods that Western culture has validated have been defended. Architecture has become isolated in a separate place, which the heads of power have considered the “good architecture”, to the detriment of “other architectures”, surely easier to judge but more difficult to understand. If the world order has been defended, today it seems that something that never existed has actually been protected. This disenchantment has already become a heritage of the world.

Latin America has unwittingly been part of these new tensions. Its journey to the top of the pendulum, swinging from the left to the most extreme right, prey to pagans and saints, some dictators, and other egomaniacs, does not end up yielding to the stability that democracy promises. The invasion, a word seemingly forgotten in the past, has brought back a state of perplexity, anger, stupefaction, and bewilderment. No one has an assured seat, least of all a certain future. Architecture, in this environment, could easily come to reflect the lack of certainties and, even worse, shamelessness. That is a permanent risk. However, from *Arquitecturas del Sur*, the insistence on alternatives typical of architecture, a cultural mode extended by the territory and academia for the last four decades, continues to resist stubbornly. We are still there, in a new world.