

Vol. I

Patrik Schumacher

THE AUTOPOIESIS OF ARCHITECTURE

A New Framework for Architecture



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Patrik Schumacher

THE AUTOPOIESIS OF ARCHITECTURE

A New Framework for Architecture

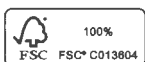
By presenting architecture as a discipline with its own unique logic, *The Autopoiesis of Architecture* provides a wholly new theoretical approach to architecture. The impact of this is far reaching. Architecture's conception of itself is addressed but also that of its development within wider contemporary society. Schumacher's innovative treatment of the subject enriches architectural theory with a coordinated arsenal of concepts that facilitates both detailed analysis and insightful comparisons with other domains, such as art, science and politics. The 'Autopoiesis' of the title refers to self-production: the term having first been introduced in biology to describe the essential characteristic of life as a circular organization that reproduces all its specific components out of its own life process. Once transposed into the theory of social systems, autopoiesis came to be understood as a system of communication capable of producing all its specific communication structures within their own internal process. It is this *autopoietic* system of communication that is being applied here to an architectural context. Architecture comprises various modes of communication, including drawings, texts and built works. These communications depend upon each other and combine to reproduce architecture as a specialized system of communication. The book explores how this system of communication forms a unique subsystem of society that co-evolves with other important autopoietic subsystems like art, science, politics and the economy.

The first of two volumes that together present a comprehensive account of architecture's autopoiesis, *The Autopoiesis of Architecture: A New Framework for Architecture* introduces the theoretical framework and traces the historical process of architecture's differentiation within its societal environment: its elevation above the craft of building, its emancipation from religion and politics, as well as its separation from art and science. On this basis Schumacher insists on the necessity of maintaining disciplinary autonomy and argues for its distinct demarcation in relation to art and engineering. Architecture's dependency on theory is emphasized and its internal separation into the avant-garde and the mainstream is explained. Styles are theorized as design research programmes that constitute architectural history as a progression of cycles of innovation that upgrade architecture to adapt to the ongoing evolution of society. This initial volume ends with the clarification of architecture's underlying societal function and *raison d'être*. The second volume completes the analysis of the discourse and further proposes a new agenda for contemporary architecture in response to the challenges and opportunities that confront architectural design within the context of current societal and technological developments.

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Vol. II

Patrik Schumacher

THE AUTOPOIESIS OF ARCHITECTURE

A New Agenda for Architecture

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Patrik Schumacher

THE AUTOPOIESIS OF ARCHITECTURE

A New Agenda for Architecture

This is the second part of a major theoretical work by Patrik Schumacher, which outlines how the discipline of architecture should be understood as its own distinct *system of communication*. *Autopoiesis* comes from the Greek and means literally self-production; it was first adopted in biology in the 1970s to describe the essential characteristics of life as a circular self-organizing system and has since been transposed into a theory of social systems. This new approach offers architecture an arsenal of general comparative concepts. It allows architecture to be understood as a distinct discipline, which can be analyzed in elaborate detail while at the same time offering insightful comparisons with other subject areas, such as art, science and political discourse. On the basis of such comparisons the book insists on the necessity of disciplinary autonomy and argues for a sharp demarcation of design from both art and engineering. Schumacher accordingly argues controversially that design as a discipline has its own *sui generis* intelligence – with its own internal logic, reach and limitations.

Whereas the first volume provides the theoretical groundwork for Schumacher's ideas – focusing on architecture as an autopoietic system, with its own theory, history, medium and its unique societal function – the second volume addresses the specific, contemporary challenges and tasks that architecture faces. It formulates these tasks, looking specifically at how architecture is seeking to organize and articulate the complexity of post-fordist network society. The volume explicitly addresses how current architecture can upgrade its design methodology in the face of an increasingly demanding task environment, characterized by both complexity and novelty. Architecture's specific role within contemporary society is explained and its relationship to politics is clarified. Finally, the new, global style of Parametricism is introduced and theoretically grounded.



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