

This MA thesis takes its topic from the domain of the 20th century architecture and focuses on one of its less known currents. When designing, certain architects during this period have adopted a form that we define as cellular and agglutinative. This is supposed to mark that this architecture is composed of small, repetitive units. These units were then grouped in a freemannered and variable fashion, neglecting the classical rules of symmetry and, on the contrary, drawing the form from the internal logic of the building and its environment namely the climate and terrain. This principle is very ancient, we find it already in Çatal Höyük, the oldest known city ever, and it displays itself in various examples of the “spontaneous” “vernacular” architecture, or “architecture without architects”. Nevertheless, this thesis discusses the principle solely as a concept in modern architecture.

The author poses questions about the origin of this concept, how it expressed itself and what was its development. The research method is based on analysing particular buildings, then discussing the deeper theoretical and historical background. Gradually, three sorts of answers emerge. The first one lies in a profound interest for archaic cultures shared by certain architects, and also for what is still alive of these cultures, mainly in the Mediterranean. These were not only readers of papers and books about anthropology and structuralism (e. g. Claude Lévi-Strauss), but also adventured themselves to long journeys. There were also architects that lived and worked in Northern Africa themselves. Among others we focus on a French architect Roland Simounet.

A second motivation was an effort of younger architects to find an alternative in the terms of modern architecture, which had been showing serious problems during the period of the massive afterwar construction. The cellular structures offered them a way how to articulate the built mass and to keep the human scale and variety at the same time. Here, too, the parallels between natural and artificial forms are discussed. A third reason was a possibility given by cellular and agglutinative principle to create an architectural system incorporating change and polyvalence. Architects such as Herman Hertzberger or Moshe Safdie then created architecture being parallel to the processes in nature.