The Social Meaning of Big Architecture, or the Sociology of the Monumental

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> "Buildings are treated as art, technical or investment objects. Rarely as social objects."
> *Markus 1993: 26*

> "Never in my life have I experienced the subtleties of such monochromy. The body, the mind, the heart gasp, suddenly overpowered […]. The feeling of a superhuman fatality seizes you. The Parthenon, a terrible machine, grinds and dominates […]. As by the violence of a combat I was stupefied by this gigantic apparition […]; dropping down onto one of those steps of time, head sunk in the hollow of your hand, you are stunned and shaken."
> *Corbusier 1987: 212, 217*

Introduction

Le Corbusier, as one of the principal authors of classical Modern Architecture, describes how architectural works can be "terrible machines", machines that induce affects such as fear, humility and pride, and provide institutions with substance and perpetuity. For this very reason, they attract the wrath of the people, the anger of the subjected. Within European history, the storming of the Bastille provides a case in point. It is in "the form of cathedrals and palaces that the Church and State speak to and impose silence upon the multitudes" argues the French social theorist Georges Bataille. And, he continues, architectural monuments themselves often arouse "real fear". They appear as the "true rulers". Thus the "enmity of the people", which ends in destruction, is not directed towards the buildings as a substitute, it really is targeting the architecture (Bataille et al. 1970: 15–18).

So-called monumental buildings are omnipresent in the archaeological context. On the one hand, they simply have the greatest chance of surviving the millennia.

On the other hand, archaeological cultures have a lasting fascination, precisely because of their big architecture. Admittedly, there are just as many counter-examples and signs of systematic destruction that bear witness, *ex negativo*, to the social power of big architectures. One example is provided by the successive destruction and rebuilding of the Mycenaean palaces (see e. g. Maran 2006, 2012). Precisely through the destruction and reconstruction of these artifacts, societies transformed themselves and new societies emerged – and this was concurrent, it did not occur in advance and it was not unrelated.

What is then the social and cultural meaning of (relatively) 'big' architectures, what are their social and societal effects – promoting inequalities and instituting society –, how do they impact on bodies, interactions, and institutional prestige? The paper traces the social meaning of architectures, using the term architecture to refer here equally to infrastructure, open spaces, and urban structures.[1] A specific sociological perspective is adopted whereby architecture is generally viewed more as a *medium of the social* or a *mode of collective existence* than just a mere expression of the same (Delitz 2010b; 2018). Thus instead of assuming that architectures symbolize, represent, or reflect social power or inequality, we understand architectural activities, artifacts, and perceptions as ones in which the social structures, institutes, and transforms itself.

The background of such a perspective is based on those traditions of sociological thinking that share an understanding of each society as being culturally instituted: social meanings, inequalities, and power relations are ultimately socially and culturally constructed meanings – they have no basis *in re*. We are therefore dealing here with imagined institutions, as Cornelius Castoriadis puts it – who is able to draw essentially on the structuralist theory of society developed by Claude Levi-Strauss (Castoriadis 1987; Lévi-Strauss 1969: XX; 1987: 21: "Mauss still thinks it possible to develop a sociological theory of symbolism, whereas it is obvious that what is needed is a symbolic origin of society"). This is also true of the meaning that we assign to economic inequalities. The categorization of individuals into classes or milieux, for instance, involves invented categories. They have to be repeatedly symbolically embodied, rendered perceptible, as it is only in this way that imagined meanings have *material* existence. They require vivid, perceptible bodies – also in the form of architectural and infrastructural artifacts. Thus rather than assuming a fundamental social structure in contrast to which all symbolic practices and artifacts are mere symbolic expressions – like Marxism

1 Here the term architecture is not aesthetically defined and is not dependent on a distinction being made to normal 'buildings' – it includes all architectural activity and its artifacts. See Cache (1995) for a formal definition of architecture of this sort that allows the inclusion of the architecture of other societies, architecture that does not fit with classical value judgments about 'advanced civilizations' – a definition that is thus not ethnocentrically conceived.

assumes economic inconsistencies to be the basis of social structure, or like the action theory that assumes society is based on individual actors –, the premise of this discussion of the effect of monumental architecture is as follows.

Every social meaning (including economic and political inequalities, which are often the focus when monumental architectures are discussed) is culturally or symbolically produced, and shifts are always possible – transformations of societies in the medium of symbolic, meaningful artifacts. Through imagined, societally specific meanings, individuals become specific subjects with specific desires, affects, and ideas; cultural, power relations are created and individuals are classified.

In other words, of course 'elites' or those holding hegemonic positions are the builders of concrete monumental architectures, and of course they 'represent' their power in large artifacts. This is similarly true for the craftspeople involved – they too are proud of the big architecture and use it as a demonstration of their social status, for instance towards the agricultural serfs of the High Middle Ages.[2] It is, however, equally possible to state that political, economic, religious, or producing 'elites', including the respected craftspeople and master builders, are only able to establish themselves in and maintain these positions, if they manage to present themselves as such through the artifacts – without which no 'power' exists. Furthermore, they too are subjects of their society, socially formed, and they too share the dominant self-concepts, world images, and desires of their collective existence.

Our concern here is twofold. Firstly, we pursue a sociological theory that is generally interested with the issue of collective existence, with the forming of subjects or the socially *constituted subject*.[3] Secondly, we are concerned with a sociological theory that understands artifacts as socially meaningful, as indispensible, as socially active. Architectures are, in general, modes to create or to institutionalize, and to transform 'power' and social disparities. The social institutes itself in the mode of architecture. Certain forms of socialization display monumental architectures – and others do not. And the answer to the question of what leads a society to invest enormous resources in architecture lies in their own existence. In order to classify, assign, and subordinate individuals, the hegemonic positions within a society always have to employ particular artifacts; and the unavoidable and ever-present architecture is one of the most impressive and most effective means – as can be seen, for instance, in the quotations initially mentioned.

The following section of the paper outlines the importance of architecture for the constitution of collectives, of social life, or of society in general. The second section then discusses the significance of 'big' architectures in particular – and

2 On the pride of the master builders in the construction of the cathedrals, see Warnke (1984: 128–145).

3 On this basic decision of post-structuralist thinking see Balibar (2003).

also the significance of an apparent lack of such artifacts and buildings. Four different societies are considered as examples: the Tuareg as a case-study of a nomadic society with mobile tent architecture (1); the Achuar as an example of architectural dispersal and non-concentration (2); medieval society with the cathedrals in the 11th and 12th centuries (3); and the archaeological case of Uruk as one of the first *urban empires* (4).

1. Architecture as a mode of collective existence

What is a society and, in particular, what is the basis of an unequal distribution of power – of social divisions? It must firstly be said that societies cannot of course be reduced to social classifications and inequalities – the genders, classes, milieus, and generations. Although this is a fundamental requirement of collective existence, societies also at the very least comprise imaginaries of collective identities, of solidarity-based relations and boundaries towards others; of specific relationships between nature and culture; and religious or politically and legally formulated imaginaries of the foundation on which the collective in question is based, which justifies its norms and values, structures the daily routine and much more besides. From the sociological perspective adopted here, all these social meanings are *inventions* – institutions that are based on nothing. They express nothing else, cultural meanings have rather an ordering function. Social divisions like the categorization of individuals in classes, races, castes, or estates are imaginary, invented, and culturally stabilizing meanings.

The starting point of such an assertion (by Castoriadis [1987] and other authors) is the belief that each social reality exists in constant change, in becoming. In reality subjects and interactions are incessantly changing; furthermore every society is unpredictable, changes can always transpire. The social is continual change:

> The perpetual selfalteration of society is its very being, which is manifested by the positing of relatively fixed and stable forms-figures and through the shattering of these forms-figures which can never be anything other than the positing-creating of other forms-figures (Castoriadis 1987: 372).

Each society must deny its becoming, and equally the unpredictability of its alteration. It must also deny its own contingency – the fact that each institution, its deepest commitments and holiest meanings and values represent a historical invention that was unnecessary. In this sense every society is an imagined fixation. It is based on the imagination of a collective identity in time. As every society is also heterogeneous, is divided, and does not constitute a harmonious whole, each also exists only as an imagined unity of members. And each society, or collective existence, is – thirdly and finally – only rendered possible out of the belief that it is based on a foundation that commits and justifies. Societies share the (again

hegemonic) imaginary that there is something unquestionable on which their own values, norms, and desires are founded. Castoriadis refers to the primary social meaning or the "central imaginary" (Castoriadis 1987: 129) – the ultimate meaning that can never be disputed and never be justified, but that justifies everything. Such imaginary "social significations […] denote nothing at all, and they connote just about everything" (Castoriadis 1987: 143). Thus the belief of being created by God or of owing life to a totem ancestor is based on an empty meaning of this sort. In the same way the idea of human dignity, to which democratic societies are dedicated, can be understood as an ultimate, foundational meaning of this sort – as a social basis or a founding outside.[4] Ultimate meanings are always presented as something that precedes the society, that lies outside it – as though they had created the society, rather than the opposite being the case. These meanings justify all others. Thus the imaginary 'God' justifies the Christian (Jewish, Islam) division of time, the structuring of daily routines around prayer times, hopes and fears associated with the life hereafter and contempt for this life, the way in which non-believers are treated, and so on (Castoriadis 1987: 129, 140). It should be added that every specific imaginary about the out-of-society foundation, the unity of members, and their identity in time is hegemonic – none is simply shared by all, each is disputed, and the particular positions and actors are always interested in determining society – in becoming the hegemon.[5] In short, societies are – on the part of hegemonic or ruling positions and probably never without controversy or dispute – imaginarily fixed, assigned a particular history. They are equally imaginarily unified, claiming an identity for their members. And their foundations are also in the realm of the imaginary.

All these meanings only exist as such if perceptible – they are only socially effective if they are symbolically embodied. Collectives have to portray themselves in symbolic practices and artifacts in order to become visible to themselves. The "social-historical is, or comes into existence as, a figure, hence as spacing, and as the otherness-alteration of the figure, temporality" (Castoriadis 1987: 219). The built form of a society is therefore not neutral or passive and is not a secondary shell of the social. Architecture is not just an expression, "neither adding anything nor taking anything away" (Castoriadis 1987: 118). It is rather the case that collectives constitute themselves *in the medium* of their cultural artifacts, their architectures, as this *specific* society with *these* categorizations of individuals, *this* relationship to nature, *this* history, and so on.

In a nutshell: architecture is one of the cultural or symbolic modes *in which* collectives incessantly create themselves. It is in this mode that power relations

4 See for the central imaginary as the 'founding outside' of a society Delitz/Maneval (2017).

5 As Laclau and Mouffe (1985) augment; see on their 'postfoundational thought' e. g. Marchart (2010).

are established, individuals are rendered unequal and 'territorialized' (Deleuze/Guattari 1987: Ch. XII), are organized and fixed on the ground. In comparison to other cultural mediums – here language and its lack of precursors should be particularly emphasized, architecture is characterized by its perpetual presence, its non-linguisticality, its affectivity. The social effectiveness of its impact on the body, its force, and its dimensions should not be underestimated. In this context one of Castoriadis' comments can be applied to architecture, gauging its social significance. "The 'dimensionality' of the social-historical is not a 'framework' in which the social-historical is spread out and in which it unfolds; it is itself the mode of self-unfolding of the social-historical." (Castoriadis 1987: 219)

In light of the cultural self-constitution of society, in light of the hegemonic assignation of the collective, of the power relations and subjections, it is difficult to exaggerate the social significance of 'monumental' architectures in particular, of large buildings and other large-scale building techniques,[6] that is, urban development and infrastructure. A distinct political, a specific 'power sharing', is established in the affectivity of the large buildings, the adulation that they command, the fear and awe, the affect of invincibility and permanence.[7] And it is just the same with artifacts that allow the infrastructural development of a territory. They 'furnish' the territory, structure it, enable the institution of interactions. "The wall is the basis of our coexistence. Architecture builds its space of compatibility on a mode of discontinuity", as Bernard Cache, for example, expresses it (Cache 1995: 25).

Even the choice of materials is socially significant and should be considered as such – as a *choice*. Each building material has its own logic. Each allows a different static construction, different forms and surfaces, determines the durability and aesthetics – the symbolic potential of the architecture (Simondon 2017). And it is just the same with the affectivity of buildings and the institutions brought into existence in them. From the perspective of affect theory, the artifacts themselves create aversion, fear, anger, or adulation, rather than just triggering an emotion that already lies in the subject.[8] Wood, concrete, natural stone, felt, and wool do not just lead to differing visual and acoustic perceptions, they provide the institutions with different qualities of power – and thus with differing inequalities

6 "Urban development is per se large-scale building techniques. For a dense mass of people, housing must be built closely together, connected by a mesh of street networks and protected by security architecture of walls and fortifications. From the very beginning there is a monumental strain thereby." This involves "the mass, the density, the multiplicity – and the concentration of power" (Popitz 1995: 117).

7 On this definition of the political – the division of power in state and anti-state societies – see Gauchet (1994, 1999).

8 On this relational affect concept – following Spinoza's Ethics – see, e. g., Seyfert (2011) on institutional theory (where the focus is, broadly speaking, on affects – institutionalized ways to affect and be affected), and the critical overview of the 'affective turn' in Leys (2011).

and subjections. And in this context it is not only big architecture that is of social relevance, but literally every architecture. After all, even societies that do not feature monumental architecture connect it with a particular categorization of individuals, a particular political. The apparent 'lack' of large, impressive architecture is also socially significant. Because this too is a way to classify individuals in the mode of architecture, a specific kind of institutionalization of power and inequality – one that takes issue with societies with monumental architecture and large-scale building techniques.

A note challenging (archaeological, ethnological, sociological) evolutionism

Before we begin to consider these contrasting forms of society (societies with and societies without big architecture), we want to put aside the evolutionary perspective which regards big architectures as always being characteristic of 'advanced cultures'. A lack of monumental architecture is often correspondingly understood as a sign of a more primitive, archaic form of society. The same evolutionary logic presents nomadic societies as ones that are pre-sedentary, not yet sedentary – as ones that precede fixed buildings and are 'simpler'. Structural anthropology in particular raises objections to such perspectives, ones that judge all forms of society according to their own image and assign to the others a 'lack', a 'not yet developed' status.

Countering this evolutionary and thus ethnocentric perspective, Claude Lévi-Strauss demonstrated the exceptional complexity of the institutions of apparently 'simple' totemic societies. They are just as contemporary as modern societies, they do not precede them, and they are anything but primitive. And instead of speaking of these societies as ones that lack something – instead of addressing them as 'societies without history' or 'without writing' – structural anthropology is concerned to use only positive terms when describing all societies. Societies that apparently have no history are of course also part of history. They too change. They 'have' a history – and are incessantly struggling against it. They are not without history; they are rather *opposed* to history. Lévi-Strauss writes in this context of "cold societies". Their aim is "to make it the case that the order of temporal succession should have as little influence as possible on their content. No doubt they do not succeed perfectly; but this is the norm they set themselves." (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 234) Totemic societies imagine their origin and identity in timeless myths; and they classify individuals through the ahistorical range of natural genera. In comparison, modern societies are those that are permanently oriented towards the new and tell themselves stories about historical events. They render the new the "moving power of their development" (Lévi-Strauss 1966: 234).

In the same way, now related to the political, Pierre Clastres spoke of societies that resist the state, that keep the state latent. They are, as Clastres expresses it, "societies against the State", instead of them 'lacking' the state. The apparently

neutral assessment that a society has no history or lacks a state apparatus is actually a normative judgment that renders other forms of society social 'embryos' – solely on the ground that they 'are not the occident'.

Primitive societies are societies without a State. This factual judgment, accurate in itself, actually hides an opinion, a value judgment. What the statement says, in fact, is that primitive societies are missing something – the State – that is essential to them, as it is to any other society: our own, for instance. Consequently, those societies are incomplete; they are not quite true societies. (Clastres 1989: 188–189)

When other societies are classed 'negatively', an 'ethnocentric' perspective is at play (Clastres 1989: 189; see also Delitz 2010a). Societies that exhibit no state are making constant efforts to avoid one: in this sense they have a state, but keep it permanently latent and prevent power from accumulating through their institutions. These societies are constantly working to prevent "any one of the sub-groups […] from becoming autonomous". They are "societies against the State" (Clastres 1989: 211).

It is appropriate to apply the same terminological strategy to the question of monumental architecture. Societies – like the nomadic – that exhibit no monumental architecture must rather be described as ones that defend themselves against monumental buildings and artifacts. Collective strategies are associated with this: the accumulations of power that accompany monumental and impressive architecture are to be avoided. The intention is to moderate social inequalities and hierarchies in the mode of architecture. For example, alongside the nomadic societies whose tent architecture is *per se* low and soft, offering little resistance (Delitz 2010a), we can consider the Kabyles who use building rituals and involve the entire village collective to always erect the same small buildings (Maunier 1926). The case is similar with collectives like the South-American Achuar, who institute a "residential atomism" in the scattering of their settlements and exhibit ritual rules governing the size and material of the houses (Descola 1994: 9). It follows that the archaeological classification of 'advanced cultures' should be revised: all cultures are advanced cultures, no society is primitive, and this is also true for those without monumental buildings. However, it is fair to say that the resistance against monumental buildings was probably more directed towards their physicality. Their symbolic and identifying function was deferred to other artifacts, ritual actions, or even natural landscape features, like e. g. mountains. In such societies these artifacts, rituals, and/or landscape features became monumental and their monuments, but they are invisible to the future and foreign scholar.[9] Active resistance against diversity and 'cultural riches' can be found in other ways. Reinhard Bernbeck (2010: 136–138), for example, argues in the case of Neolithic

9 For the concept of landscape as a monument see e. g. Tilley (1994) and Bradley (1998).

Tol-e Baši in Iran that the local people resisted the diverse possibilities of the pottery decoration of the surrounding area in order to remain a non-hierarchical, equal society.

2. Divergent architectural modes of collective existence: with and 'against' monumentality

The comparison between fixed, monumental architectures with foundations on the one hand, and apparently ephemeral, low architectures constructed from soft materials on the other hand, is revealing of both forms of collective existence. When considering the social significance or function of monumental artifacts it is worthwhile contrasting and comparing. As architecture is a non-linguistic mode of social structuring, as the buildings address the bodies and the eyes, as they are omnipresent and encompass socialization in its entirety, it seems methodologically promising to compare contrasting architectural modes of collective existence: how do societies that currently exhibit no monumental architecture function – how do they imagine their history, what social inequalities take hold here, how do institutions achieve legitimacy or affect?

In the following we pursue this end by discussing two examples that contrast to collectives with monumental architecture. The first is a nomadic society, namely the Tuareg with their low, small, and soft architectures. The other is the Achuar as an example of a society that has no monumental architecture and no large-scale building techniques, but that practices systematic architectural scattering and whose architecture consists of plant-based building materials that require periodic renewal. Only subsequently do we turn to two collectives that attract attention with their monumental architecture: firstly, the medieval European societies with large cathedrals; secondly the seleucid Uruk.

2.1 Nomadic architecture: dynamic, low, and ephemeral instead of fixed and cemented

The Tuareg are an example of a mobile, nomadic society. They exhibit *per se* no monumental architecture. Rather, they are familiar with low, mobile tents that fundamentally resemble one another in terms of size, ornamentation, construction, and function. Made of soft materials and always low with a single storey, this architecture does not suggest permanence nor does it establish social inequalities. On the contrary, it enables movement. And in fact the affect, the pride of the Tuareg is found in *speed*, in fast movement (Deleuze/Guattari 1987: 395–398), which is made possible by the tents and by the animals they ride. Tent architecture is a specific mode of collective existence. Such architecture gives the collective a

flat, soft, and mobile structure. It engenders acoustic and visual sensations and bodily movements that differ from those generated by fixed buildings – the visual divisions between the generations, classes, and genders are less and there are no acoustic divisions at all. Nevertheless there are strict divisions between the sexes, marked in the interiors of the tents; and there are divisions between status groups, which have become established since colonization. On the other hand, these divisions, these social positions are not regarded as absolute, and are not hereditary. The position of the individual is essentially as changeable as the incessant movement of the tents, and with them the demons of the desert (*kel esuf*, the spirits of solitude). Admittedly, social status only changes posthumously, on the scale of several stages of life. In brief, in a soft and mobile architecture of this sort, distinct kinds of interactions are established between the sexes and the generations, and between people and animals (the domestic animals are an integrated part of the human collective, whose lives depend on them); distinct imaginaries of 'identity' develop.

Figure 1: Tuareg leather tent, ca. 2000 CE (credit: http://arlit.free.fr/images/tente2.jpg)

Nomadic architectures like the tents give the collective not only a distinct 'structure' with distinct kinds of interaction and conduct. They also generate a specific, vivid, and physical *form*. Thus the Tuareg are divided architecturally into different groups. The Tuareg tribes of the tents of goatskins (the northern Tuareg – *Kel Ajjer*, *Kel Ahaggar*) contrast with those that use tents made from mats of interwoven

palm fronds (the southern Tuareg, *Kel Ferwan*).[10] The architectural form not only divides two different groups of Taureg; It also has effects on the imagination and divisions within society. Thus the northern Taureg tribes institute their collective organization – a tribal confederation comprising tribes with equal rights – by conceiving this society in terms of the tent: no part of the tribal confederation is superior to the other, their behavior to one another resembles the tent supports which are all of the same length and all carry the same load (Claudot-Hawad 2004; see also the portrayals of the Tuareg in Delitz 2010a; Delitz 2018).

As well as these morphological characteristics of the tent, the movement of the entire collective – including all the artifacts, living creatures, and other non-humans – is socially paramount.

> The nomad has a territory; he follows customary paths; he goes from one point to another; he is not ignorant of points (water points, dwelling points, assembly points, etc.). But the question is what in nomad life is a principle and what is only a consequence. To begin with, although the points determine paths, they are strictly subordinated to the paths they determine, the reverse of what happens with the sedentary. The water point is reached only in order to be left behind; every point is a relay and exists only as a relay. A path is always between two points, but the in-between has taken on all the consistency and enjoys both an autonomy and a direction of its own. The life of the nomad is the intermezzo. Even the elements of his dwelling are conceived in terms of the trajectory that is forever mobilizing them. (Deleuze/Guattari 1987: 380)

Such a society, such a mode of collective organization, is dependent on mobile architecture – it does not express itself in this architecture but emerges within it. In contrast to what accompanies monumental architecture (a 'striated space'), the low, small, weaved, or sewn architectures create a "smooth space" (Deleuze/Guattari 1987: 410)[11] that does not distribute and dispose individuals across the territory in a fixed and temporally constant fashion. It is rather the case that the territory that each tribe uses changes incessantly – it moves too. This is revealed, for instance, in the way that maps are drawn – with movement instead of taking a bird's eye view (Bernus 1988). The centre of the political or accumulations of power are therefore not urban concentrations. On the contrary, it is the – not-fixed – borders that are politically central. The goal in a 'culture of war' (Klute 2010), like that of the Tuareg, is the permanent expansion of these borders. Positions of status are not decided according to fixed center-periphery divisions here. The decisive points are rather who may first choose a site for their tent, and how far

10 On these two Tuareg cultures see esp. Bernus (1981) and Casajus (1987).

11 "The primary determination of nomads is to occupy and hold a smooth space: it is this aspect that determines them as nomad (essence). On their own account, they will be transhumants, or itinerants, only by virtue of the imperatives imposed by the smooth spaces."

and how quickly is movement away from the tent possible – thanks to the mounts. Given all this, the Tuareg actually do have towns (such as Timbuktu), which were constructed by Muslim traders. These towns have an economic and – in a culture of war – servicing function. They hold no privileged position in the collective imaginaries or the history of the Taureg. Over the centuries they will be simply forgotten (de Moraes Farias 2010).

In brief: it is not the size of the architecture but rather the intensity of the movement that is paramount here. Precisely because of this, in all attempts to contain the nomads, to hinder their movements, architecture becomes a political instrument. This calls to mind the Great Wall of China, built to halt the flood of Mongolian nomads; or colonial territorial policy and the dispersal of the Taureg across different nations where they form national minorities instead of holding a hegemonic position.[12]

2.2 Residential atomism – dispersed and transient, instead of concentrated and permanent

There are other societies that demonstrate no monumental architecture. This is true, for instance, of certain cultures in the South-American rainforests. The northern, historical Maya and other 'prehistoric' cultures of the Andes exhibit monumental architecture that impresses with both the size of the individual constructions and the number and expanse of buildings. But in contrast the Peruvian Achuar have a "residential atomism" (Descola 1994: 8). They scatter themselves in the mode of architecture and settlement patterns. They institute a "zero-degree" of social integration (Descola 1994: 9). Small villages are repeatedly constructed with a prescribed (small) number of houses and prescribed walking distances between the villages thus created. The materials are such that the architecture survives for about 15 years before a new house must be constructed on a new site – in the surroundings of the tropical rainforest the posts begin to rot after just seven years (Descola 1994: 116 f.). All traces of the architectures fade after only a few years. Archaeologically speaking, such societies are just as difficult to research as nomadic ones. The plant-based materials to be used for each building element are prescribed ('customary'). The dimensions and methods of construction are similarly set in tradition and convention (Descola 1994: 116–117). It is also instructive that the houses are conceived as organisistic. They lead an autonomous life and are thought of as analogous to the human placenta. They are also closely linked to origin myths; they form the terrestrial place that connects the heavenly world and the chthonic world underground (Descola 1994: 120–121). It is the owner of the

12 On the dispersal of the Tuareg in national states – their 'ethnicization' – see Claudot-Hawad (2014).

house that defines its continuity – not the longevity of the house itself (Descola 1994: 121). In contrast to what was reported about the Tuareg (where, incidentally, the tent is the property of the woman), the size of the house is decisive for status – the more guests the head of the house can host, the more esteemed he is. Rather than measuring about 15 by 12 m and 5–6 m in height, a house can then reach a size of about 23 by 12 m and 7 m in height (Descola 1994: 114). The differences are nonetheless moderate – there is no architecture that can be described as 'monumental' in comparison to the rest; the materials also remain the same, as do the forms and constructions used. In this architecture the collective is organized (on the village scale) into different families, and (within the house) into male and female individuals.

Figure 2: Achuar house, 1980s (Descola 1986: Cover)

The collectives maintain their small size through the relations of the villages to one another and the stipulations governing obligatory walking distances and the maximum number of houses. As Pierre Clastres wrote in the context of other South-American Indians – like the Guayaki in Paraguay – and other institutions – war and the symbolic and weak function of the chief – this has a political function. The accumulation of power is averted in the mode of dispersal, the state is refuted – this is a 'society against the state' (Clastres 2010a). A 'centrifugal' form of collective existence such as that provided by residential atomism, architectural scattering, means a genuine political mode of refutation of the state, of a 'centripetal force'. Architecture of this sort is thus in many ways opposed to a monumen-

tal, urban, and concentrated architecture that renders individuals unequal – not least in the question of the distribution or accumulation of power. For:

> What about the State? It is, in essence, a putting into play of centripetal force, which, when circumstances demand it, tends toward crushing the opposite centrifugal forces. The State considers itself and proclaims itself the center of society, the whole of the social body, the absolute master of this body's various organs. Thus we discover at the very heart of the State's substance the active power of One, the inclination to refuse the multiple, the fear and horror of difference. (Clastres 2010b: 107)

'Monumental' architecture only occurs here in the case of intertribal war. And it then primarily has a protective function, not that of generating inequality between the individuals within the society of the tribe. Here too there is a culture of war; in addition to the architectural dispersal this collective scatters itself through violence, through ritual war. During the wars, which last up to four years, the houses are enlarged so that they encompass the whole village, namely up to 70 persons (Descola 1994: 110). Descola describes the households (and thus the architectures) as the *central social principle*: the house determines the household, and the household constitutes the basic group or the "only effective principle of enclosure" (Descola 1994: 108). The families are set against one another and instituted in the houses, only held together by the superordinate tribes.

2.3 Monumental, fixed architecture: the example of the medieval cathedrals

As far as fixed, infrastructure societies with large buildings and urban concentrations are concerned, it is possible, firstly, to cite the many archaeological cases of classical antiquity that have always fascinated 'us' (subjects of European societies with fabled origins in Ancient Greece and Rome). Secondly, it is equally possible to turn to modern, present-day Western societies – for instance the current global competition about the highest skyscraper; the invention of high-rise buildings in Chicago in the 1890s; the monumental plans of the French 'revolutionary architects' and their historical precedents and contexts; or indeed the big architecture of the National Socialists, Soviets and fascists.[13] The medieval religious architec-

13 On a few of these architectures see the following, explicitly exemplary, sociological analyses: firstly Foucault (1977) on disciplinary architectures (even if the focus here is not literally on monumentality, Foucault's insight into the subjecting, addressing, and controlling effects of architecture is indispensible); for the competition between 'landmark buildings' (Jones 2009; 2011; also Jones 2016 on the state of the English-language sociology of architecture; and also Löw/Steets 2014); on colonial architecture which must – at least in its concentration and with the

tures of between 1000 and 1250 CE also formed large buildings. The "fundamental phenomenon" of central Europe from 1000 to 1250 CE was the "numerous large church buildings, whose dimensions were seldom exceeded in the following centuries" (Warnke 1984: 27). Substantial resources were invested in the large cathedrals, and materials and workers brought in from great distances. They developed their own particular effect. And they amazed even contemporary observers: why the enormous investment and why now?

In 1030 CE the Burgundian monk Rudolf Glaber looked back and commented that in 1003 CE almost everywhere on earth, but especially in Italy and France, people started to renovate church buildings; without there being any real need, every Christian community was eager to confront the others with a worthier church: *"It was as though the world had given itself a good shake, discarded the old and all around donned a shiny gown of churches."* (Warnke 1984: 20)

Warnke suggests there was a new "supra-regional level of aspiration", which, in the case of church buildings, was subject to a compulsion for "prestige". The enormous dimensions, the discrepancy between the large building and its surroundings, may be explained by a new pressure to demonstrate legitimacy that emanated from within the (estate-based) society. Those instigating the building work feel compelled to shore up their power by building in a way that is "superior to any comparison, thus inwardly dominating" (Warnke 1984: 21). At the same time there is a new "reference to the outside", new competition with positions beyond the territorial dominion. The sources reveal a supra-regional "differentiated comparative optic" (Warnke 1984: 21). There are new hegemonic constellations, hegemonic struggles between secular and ecclesiastical positions, and those of the citizens. In confronting them, the established rulers found themselves in the midst of a legitimacy crisis – regionally with those of lower formal status who had to be repeatedly stabilized in this position, and supra-regionally with actors of the same sovereign rank. Established rulers were thus forced to surpass themselves. This was not about expressing existing power, because the buildings would not have been necessary if the social and political position of authority had still been sufficiently secured through a system of established norms (Warnke 1984: 24). It is rather the case that the medium of the large buildings was necessary in order to maintain the "gap to competing power holders". This involved not only the building's size "but also its swift realisation" (Warnke 1984: 23).

What are the effects, what is the social meaning or impact? The 'growing large buildings' did not just express the hegemonic positions, nor did they consolidate them. Indeed, the end result was that such positions were rather 'withdrawn' and

new infrastructures – be viewed as comparatively monumental (King 2007); and generally on the theories and perspectives of the sociology of architecture e. g. the papers in Delitz/Fischer (2009); for classical and newer approaches also Delitz (2009).

'softened' by the necessity to involve more and more parties in the financing. The institutions of letters of indulgence and holy relics are paradigmatic illustrations of this development – as more people became involved in the endowment of the church, they claimed the right to be heard and the building had to become more public and generally accessible. In the form of God a 'fictive mandate' was invoked for the big architecture – the building was in his honor (not for the king's splendor). In this way the enormous expenditure could undoubtedly be justified. However, precisely because the architectures constructed by the bishops and territorial princes obscure their particular will, their "special rights" lapsed and the building served the *collective as a whole*: it created a fiction of a unified society (Warnke 1984: 66). The big architecture became necessary because of new social positions with hegemonic demands. The cathedrals did not just express an existing potential for power, they were to re-stabilize it. And the more thoroughly the costs of the building overran, the more individuals needed to be enlisted. This forced everyone to curb their own interests, at least to the extent "that they did not render one another incapable of action" (Warnke 1984: 153). In brief, in medieval big architecture "conflicting social forces" found a mode of cooperation – the productive binding of conflicts. There may have been other institutions involved. But none of them "required to the same extent the long-term amalgamation of all material, technological and intellectual abilities". In this sense the medieval sacred big architecture involved society "overcoming itself" – overcoming its estate-based divisions (Warnke 1984: 153).[14] This medieval society constituted itself as *one*; and it could do so (argues Warnke) *only in this non-linguistic mode*. In the buildings this society imagined itself as a collective unit, in the architecture it gave itself an unprecedented, visual form in which it transformed itself.

At this point it is possible to refer to much that we have previously touched upon – the generation of social disparities, the fiction of a collective identity, and the basis of an ultimate foundation (God); also the establishment of new elites such as master builders and architects as opposed to craftsmen (Warnke 1984: 128–145). Equally important were appropriate building materials, load-bearing homogenous stones, which could now – thanks to the monetization of the building trade – be acquired from long distances rather than a continuing reliance on local materials and labor (Warnke 1984: 94–95). Finally, also of note was the centralization of the building trade, the establishment of a public building industry. On the other hand, a number of points should be added – the subject-forming power of these religious big architectures, the daily physical generation of religious affects, and the practicing of specific body techniques in the

14 Warnke also construes worldly big architecture – the fortresses and princely residences – not just as instruments of a unilaterally adjudicating power, but as the result of a need for legitimization (see, for the example of the royal palaces [Warnke 1984: 83–92]).

interior[15], just like the impressiveness of the exterior. Later, anger was also relevant, directed against church architecture – the iconoclasm of the Reformation was an assault on the churches, on the interior architecture (see e. g. Schnitzler 1996).

2.4 Monumental religious and political buildings: the cultic topography of Uruk

In the High Middle Ages there was a differentiation between political and religious (church, institutionalized) power, including a built differentiation between different building types, the cathedral being only one of these (see Seidl 2006). However, in the society of Uruk there was a religious-political form of power division. Similar to the late medieval doctrine of the divine right of the king (Kantorowicz 1957), the hegemonic power here was clearly theologically formulated and legitimated, and the social structure was religiously based, sanctioned, and stabilized.[16] In the context of a society of this sort where the hegemonic division of power takes the form of an elite of priests around the 'man in the net skirt' (the priest-king), it is just as interesting to inquire into the meaning of religious architecture as into that of fortifications (city walls) and the architectural domination of the province from the centre. At least in these three respects – the construction of 'landmark buildings' (ziqqurats), of the city wall, and of infrastructure across the territory and its colonization – large buildings and building techniques are of immense significance – a mode of existence of this first urban and maybe imperial society.

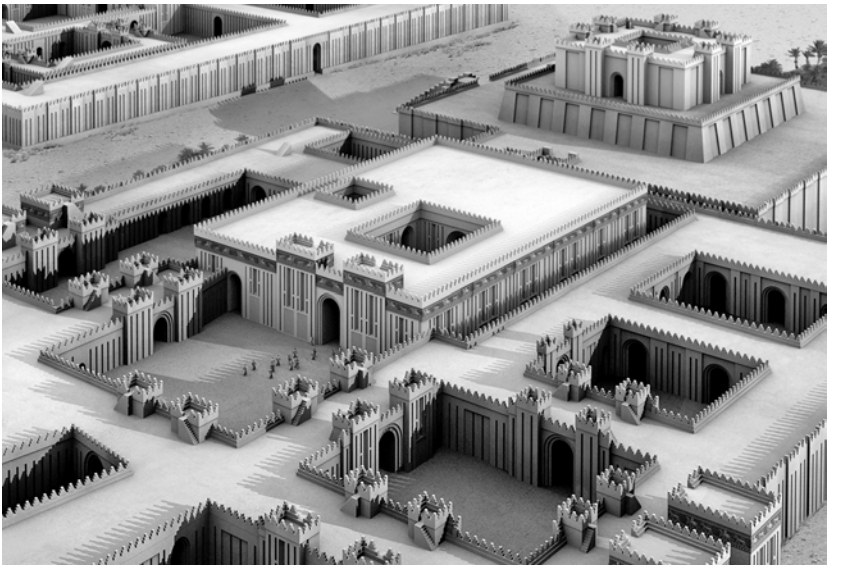
Of the various aspects of the structuring of society engendered in big architecture (all of which would be equally interesting), the following focuses only on the architectural restructuring of the *principal sanctuaries* and thus also the *urban structure* of Uruk in the Seleucid era (312–63 BCE).[17] This development had already begun in the Achaemenid period with the transformation of the Uruk pantheon and the relocation of the principal sanctuary from the Eanna district and the Anu Ziqqurat to the Rēš Temple and the Irigal Temple. This Achaemenian restructuring cannot, however, be archeologically verified. It seems certain that the old Eanna Temple, which in the Ur-III period (2112–2004 BCE) was found on the so-called Eanna Ziqqurat, was destroyed under Darius I (521–486 BCE) or, at the latest,

15 Here it would be appropriate to adopt the perspective of Foucault (1977) and the concept of 'pastoral power' which is concerned with 'inner truth' – the individualization of the soul (Foucault 1988; 2005). In historical, medieval church building it is also about – a specific – disciplining and individualization. See on present-day religious architectures Karstein/Schmidt-Lux (2017).

16 On the sociological interpretation of the imaginary God or the Gods, see – in addition to the aforementioned Castoriadis (founding outside) – especially Durkheim (2008).

17 On the development of infrastructure across the territory and the significance of the imperial artifact-culture of Uruk, esp. in the Uruk period see Algaze (2005; 2008).

Figure 3: Overview of the large sacred complex of the Bīt Rēš with the adjoining Anu-Ziqqurat and the Irigal (© artefacts-berlin; Material: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut)



under Xerxes I (486–465 BCE). Thereafter, the cult of the Eanna was only continued to "a very limited extent" (Kleber 2008: 344; Kose 1998: 187).[18] Consequently, in the late Achaemenid period (c. 375–300 BCE), the pantheon of Uruk was restructured. Anu now took on the function of the principal deity of Uruk (van Ess 2015: 471). The so-called "skewed tract" from which the Rēš Temple later emerged also dates from this time (Kose 1998: 12). The Seleucid governors Anu-uballit-Nikarchos and Anu-uballit-Kephalon permanently moved the cultic centre of Uruk from the Eanna district in a south-easterly direction in the second half of the 1st millennium BCE. Subsequently and in a very short space of time, enormous urban restructuring occurred in Uruk, which involved not only the relocation of the cultic centers. The 'old' Eanna Ziqqurat was also given a 'make-over'. The Irigal or Ešgal[19] Temple erected in the Seleucid period under Anu-uballit-Kephalos (the governor of Uruk under Antiochus III around 200 BCE) replaced the Inanna or Ištar Temple on the Ziqqurat in the Eanna district as the seat of the goddess Inanna/Ištar. Simultaneously the archaic Anu Ziqqurat was extended to form a vast temple complex,

18 There is, however, discussion about the extent of the destruction of the Eanna Temple under Xerxes, and whether the descriptions are perhaps not largely a symbolic 'rendering'. See here Baker (2014: 192) and Kose (1998: 273).

19 Space constraints prevent a detailed discussion of the name here, relevant references can be found in Kose (1998: 197, footnote 1282).

the so-called Bīt Rēš; the new principal deity Anu then moved here. In addition to the building of the Rēš Temple, the archaic Anu Ziqqurat was renovated and enlarged (Figure 3).[20] The Eanna district, which had been the most important temple precincts of the city since the Uruk period (c. 4000–3100 BCE) was, however, not forgotten. At the same time as the two temple complexes (Irigal and Bīt Reš) were constructed, covering 77.700 m², the Eanna Ziqqurat of the Eanna district was also renovated and considerably enlarged (Kose 1998: 157–168).

In the context of this discussion (addressing the social significance of big artifacts and architectures), the individual steps of the renovation and restructuring of the religious landscape of Uruk are of less interest than the presumed intention and, more precisely, the collective, social *function* of this large-scale renewal project.[21] Particularly interesting is the social function or positivity of the architectural reconstruction: what were the *collective* reasons that motivated the renovation and enlargement of the old, partially destroyed ziggurat – and this although it clearly no longer fulfilled a cultic function? (And which political was favored by a 'relocation of the Gods' of this sort?[22])

The transformation of the urban system of Uruk began in the Achaemenid period in the time after Darius I, thus from the middle of the 5th millennium BCE, although there is little archaeological indication of this – most of the remains of this building layer had to give way to later Seleucid building (Baker 2014: 197–198).[23] Nonetheless, no fundamental change in the urban structure of Uruk can be detected for the Seleucid period (drawing on Kose's work on Uruk). There was rather extended, continued restructuring. This was associated with shifts in power and changes in the Uruk pantheon in the late Achaemenid period, supporting these changes and, first and foremost, rendering them visible and tangible, bringing them to 'power' (Baker 2014: 191, 197). Other effects include a change in the ritual processional ways, claimed by the 'Gods' for special occasions.[24] Subsequent to the relocation of the religious centre, a political identification of the population with the temple may have emerged (as Baker supposes). "It appears that in the second half of the 1st millennium BC we witness in Uruk an increased

20 However, it can be assumed that the Irigal and Bīt Rēš formed one larger unit together (Baker 2014: 200).

21 For a detailed analysis see again Baker (2014) and also Kleber (2008). On the distinction between individual motives or intentions and collective functions see, e. g., Durkheim (2002) and secondarily e. g. Delitz (2013).

22 On the social importance of a 'relocation of the Gods' for the – very different – case of post-Reformation, European societies see Eßbach (2014).

23 Although there is also evidence for late Achaemenid predecessors of the skewed tract, see Kose (1998).

24 Incidentally, Baker refers here to the need for a revision of Falkenstein's topography of Uruk (see Falkenstein 1941: esp. 45–49). These were also used by Kose (1998: 14, Figure14).

self-identification of the urban community with the temple itself." (Baker 2014: 204) Nevertheless, it does not seem possible to completely replace the old cultic principle with the new – the old Gods remained, collective identities and their religious sanctioning seem to have continued to exist. Generally, it seems necessary to recall the function served by creating a collective memory: tradition and collective memory establish themselves on the monumentality of the place and buildings, and thus on their perpetuity.[25] In the face of the relocation of the cult, the Eanna district remained the *lieu de mémoire* – a monument that established the collective. And even though the cultic architectures of Bit Rēš and Irigal were of considerable perpetuity, these buildings clearly did not achieve the significance of Eanna. It could therefore be argued that the hegemonic project of the architectural relocation of the Gods, the construction of a 'new place of power'[26] and thus a new political domination, was actually a failure – because of the architectural permanence, the continued social function of the Eanna district, because of its entanglement with the old elite and their regulation and division of this society.

Conclusion: The various social functions of big architectures – and the social function of a 'society against big architectures'

Of course the cathedrals of the High Middle Ages are a special case, less because of their enormous dimensions and more due to the specific social effects. This is not just about an overly generalized and repressive understanding of the exercise of 'power'. Not all big architecture, not every monumental building, generates the negative affects of anxiety, shock, and fear with which this paper opened. The cathedrals at least *also* had other positive affects – such as fostering unity (according to Warnke's interpretation). Furthermore, these medieval big buildings (including the comparatively small houses that stand in relation to them) certainly generate a 'territorialization' of individuals, situating them in a territory and ensuring their individualizing distribution. The corresponding large-scale infrastructure also carves up and centralizes the social space. In other words: the cathedrals are part of a general architectural mode of collective existence – the mode of fixed architecture of hard, mineral materials with firm foundations, which has its own distinctive social effects. There are many interesting examples of a *society with monumental architecture* beyond those mentioned here (including

25 On this concept see esp. the study on the 'permanently identical' holy places of Christianity (despite their actual incessant relocation) by Halbwachs (2008).

26 On the political philosophy of the representation of society in the person of the king as the central place of power – and its institutional emptying in the case of modern democracy – see Lefort (2006).

the Great Wall of China or the Fascist architecture of the 1930s). This is particularly true for the archaeological context (thinking of Babylon, Rome, or the menhirs of France, but also the 'rest' of Europe, etc.).

In none of the examples is it the case that social differences constituted in other ways are simply 'expressed' in architecture and big architecture. It is rather that these differences are incessantly created also through the artifacts – visually, tactually, in the movement and physical posture that the buildings compel or at least enable. This actually holds particularly true for non-monumental architecture – and for collectives that do not have big architecture. These should, in our view, be addressed as *societies against big architectures* rather than as societies 'without' big architecture. An instructive archaeological case in this context is that of Çatalhöyük – the architectural structuring of an egalitarian society where all the houses were built close together without infrastructure, all with the same dimensions and the same functions (Hodder 2006; Hodder/Pels 2010). Or we can think of the Göbekli Tepe, where an enormous collaborative effort was undertaken to erect the special buildings.[27] This achievement could only be accomplished by a mass of workers, many times the size of the local population, thus necessitating a combined effort by a number of settlements or even a trans-societal undertaking to construct the buildings. Perhaps the real 'Neolithic Revolution' lay in such collaborative activities – which in archaeological terms is too often associated with the path to sedentary life, along an evolutionary imaginary of social development that always progresses from nomadic to sedentary, architecturally fixed collectives, never the other way round (Childe 1936; Helwing/Aliyev 2014; Watkins 2010).[28] If this argument is pursued it is possible to conclude that the real purpose of the whole process of constructing large complexes was to create identity, independent of the ultimate function of the buildings. In contrast, we are dealing here with two different, mutually exclusive modes of collective existence. Sociologically, it is not only possible to identify different collective functions of big architectures – the absence of such architecture also comprises a social rationality. The refutation of the infrastructural development of a territory, the refutation of a power centre and of an affective, impressive, and awe-inspiring architecture, institutes a different, specific form of collective existence, of the categorization of individuals, of the relationing of nature and culture, of the narrative of origin and collective identity.

27 On these interpretations as a collectively utilized temple see Schmidt (2006); and on the function of collective building rituals the aforementioned Maunier (1926). For other interpretations of the special buildings of the Göbekli Tepe see Banning (2011).

28 See also Levenson (in this volume). Ian Hodder conceives the term Neolithic Revolution differently (2006) – as an increasing entanglement, quantitatively and qualitatively, of people, animals, and things; and as domestication, which was linked to the cult of wild animals.

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