

Theoretical Evaluation of Pluralism Concept in Architecture

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Article Info

Volume 7 - Issue 2-
December 2022

DOI:

10.24017/Science.2022.2.4

Article history:

Received: 31/09/2022
Accepted: 17/11/2022

Keywords:

Pluralism, postmodern,
multivalued, inclusive,
multivalent, diversity,
intertextuality

ABSTRACT

Pluralism as a manifestation of the universe and nature that is felt and understood by all human beings is not a new idea, but rather it could identify as a divine principle and eternal, Pluralism applies in all creation fields, especially in architecture, this paper discusses the term of pluralism in different fields such as philosophy, linguistic, literacy, art, until it reaches to the architectural field, and discusses the effect of the term in architecture. The aim is to understand pluralism with its different branches and determine the indicators of the term in architecture. Studies that discussed the concept of pluralism are taken as case studies to reach the goal. As a result, it appeared that pluralism has several types, and each type is associated with indicators. In conclusion, these types are arranged under five levels and each type led to a specific feature in architecture.

1. INTRODUCTION

Pluralism as an architectural phenomenon, its roots appeared around the fifth century B.C., with three great philosophers named Anaxagoras, Achelous, and Empedocles that founded the Greek Presocratic philosophical school that would later come to be known as pluralism. Monism, the idea that nature's diversity could be distilled down to a single principle, was rejected by these philosophers [1]. Pluralism is a philosophical concept that may be defined in various forms. In general, the belief that there is more than one primary reality or principle refers to the idea that reality is made up of a wide variety of different things; this sets it apart from monism, which sees reality as a single entity or whole [2]. Pluralism refers to the state of society in which members of diverse ethnic, racial, religious, or social groups maintain and develop their traditional culture within the confines of a common civilization [3]. The Plural is a word that signifies multilateral, and the suffix -ism is used to make nouns that refer to social, political, or religious views, studies, or ways of acting. Pluralism is derived from the words Plural + ism [4].

After philosophy, the concept of pluralism in linguistics was introduced by De Saussure for the first time in the meaning of linguistics [5], which argued the relationship between signifiers and signified. As a result, according to De Saussure, the language has a plurality of meanings [6]. Based on De Saussure's theory, Jacques Derrida stated that "pure language" has a plurality of senses and that writings may include a variety of purposes that differ from one another or have similar qualities [7].

Also, Roland Barthes was one of the most influential structuralist philosophers of the twentieth century that developed Ferdinand de Saussure's ideas. Each text, according to Barthes, has several interpretations or pluralism of interpretations [8].

De Saussure's theories about pluralism in linguistics were also translated to art by Claude Levi-Strauss, that art might be studied using linguistic means [9]. Modern art was distinguished by its unpopular character—separation from the general public and dehumanization of the past and present. Postmodernism is explicit in its opposition to this separation, referring to its plurality, friendship, and democracy of taste [10].

After art, Christian Nordberg Schulz's work "Meaning in Western Architecture" introduced the term pluralism in architecture with the works of Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn. Le Corbusier's change from early 'white architecture,' influenced by De Stijl and Cubism, to more organic and tectonic works in the 1950s was regarded as a watershed moment for a more pluralistic language [11].

Also, The CIAM, which had a dogmatic grasp on the vocabulary of modernism, was broken in 1958 by these new emergent sensibilities, as well as the early work of Scandinavian moderns like Aalto. A new generation of modernists evolved due to this break, led by Corb and they inherited the history of humanitarian modernism and the benefits of pluralism [11]. However, the importance of this term appears through its appearance in any field that led to a radical change. Therefore, it became a motivation for this research to investigate this term more broadly in architecture and determine the indicators of pluralism. The research question is: Why is pluralism a critical idea in architecture?

2. METHODOLOGY

According to the studies discussed above the features of Pluralism started unintentionally in the work of Le Corbusier in France and Louis Kahn in America in the late 1950s. After that, the power of this concept has been demonstrated in postmodern architecture. However, to answer the research question, and to reach the objectives of the study which is clarifying and evaluating the concept of pluralism in architecture, previous studies about pluralism in architecture will be considered case studies which will be chosen according to the place of appearing pluralism and the period of demonstrating the concept which is mainly postmodern architecture, late of modern architecture, and deconstruction as secondarily. However, the studies are arranged chronologically from oldest to newest, using the qualitative methodology, which is an interpretive approach, to show how the concept is developing.

These studies are criticized according to thematic criticism, which is a form of archaeology that excavates the layers of a text and compares that text with those found in other excavations: it is almost always comparative. The study used thematic criticism because it is situated within theoretical approaches such as modernism, deconstruction, postmodernism, and structuralism. It also focused on just one text and deployed in comparative work to create clusters of texts that can be discussed together [12].

The process of thematic criticism can be understood as a deconstructionist route into a text's deeper meaning, finding it more affluent and meaningful than it might otherwise be read [12]. Therefore, in this section, the original text that relates to pluralism is borrowed and then interpreted and criticized in a separate paragraph.

3. STUDIES ABOUT THE PLURALISM CONCEPT IN ARCHITECTURE

3.1. Learning From Las Vegas, Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, Steven Izenour, 1972

This study criticized the modern architecture in Las Vegas, which compared Guild house, one of the famous buildings of early postmodern architecture, and Crawford Manor. In the case of Guild house, it indicates that the denotation is singular, which is the primary meaning of the object. However, the connotation is the idea or the feeling of the object, and it's pluralistic, where the implied pluralism of physiognomic character creates the sense or the view of the building, which is the material in the Guild house example that connotes the entering of the building [13].

By ignoring historical architecture's denotative ornamentation and iconography, Crawford Manor is characterized by the study as an example of modern architecture that subtly illustrates the anti-pluralism of time and anti-identity. By ignoring or instead using the connotative expression, it substituted for decoration by limiting itself to strident articulations of the pure architectural elements of space, structure, and program [13].

The study, however, shows the irony as a technique that architects use to face and combine divergent and pluralistic ideals in architecture for a pluralist society, as well as to accommodate variations in values that develop between them. Social classes seldom come together, but if they can form temporary alliances in designing and constructing multivalued communal architecture, both sides will require a sense of paradox, irony, and wit [13].

Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, and Steven Izenour in *Learning From Las Vegas* indicate three types of pluralism indirectly: physiognomy pluralism, pluralism in materials, and arranging of physical elements that can refer to several connotations. Time pluralism, by simply referencing the present and employing pure architectural features, in this way it rejects the past and the future; as a result, it loses its identity and means of connotative representation. Finally, pluralism in architectural values treats pluralist societies, social classes, and multivalued communities by irony as a tool, which these types are characteristics of postmodern architecture.

3.2. Meaning in Western Architecture, Christian Norberg-Schulz, 1975

In this study, pluralism officially appeared in the 1950s and discussed its aim of it, which is to make the totality of significant human experiences potentially available again. As a result, history becomes a dimension of fundamental importance in the pluralistic world. Another goal is to analyze regional character not only in terms of physical considerations but also in terms of implicit way of life and historical and cultural context [11].

Pluralism does not conflict with functionalism, instead extends the idea of function beyond its physical dimensions, according to the research. While pluralism's architecture is new, it draws into account the past. The pluralist architecture of inclusion bears the risk of environmental chaos if it is misinterpreted. Only through grasping the concepts of "character" and "spatial organization" can this hazard be avoided [11].

The study shows that pluralism started with modern architecture in the works of Le Corbusier and Louis Kahn; due to the individuality in modern architecture, each architect is associated with a specific pattern of spatial organization. As a result, the pluralism of patterns of spatial organization is ever more felt. While the writer mentioned the primary aims of pluralism, the main objective is the identity of the building and understanding of the real character of each task, pluralism of time, by reliving the human experience in history. Also, the study mentioned that pluralism becomes chaos without understanding the concepts of character and spatial structure.

3.3. Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture, Robert Venturi, 1977

This study mentioned ambiguous relationships are a characteristic of postmodern architecture, and the conjunction "or" with a question mark can frequently be used to characterize them. Is the Villa Savoye, for example, a square layout or not? Therefore, this indicates that conjunction "or" refers that there being more than one possibility or pluralism of possibilities [14].

Also, this study criticized modern architecture under the principle of "either-or," which is selecting only one thing (monism). For example, sunscreen is probably nothing more, support is seldom an enclosure. In contrast to postmodern architecture, which is with the principle of "both-and" at the same time, both-and emphasizes multifunctioning building, which is complex in program and form. However, in renaissance architecture, there is pluralism in structure-function as structure element and aesthetic element [14].

This study specifies three types of pluralism in different architectural styles. First, the pluralism of possibilities of forming relationships in postmodern architecture cause ambiguity. Also, pluralism is in function in modern architecture, so the term multi-functioning means pluralism of function or plurality in the program and form that led to the complexity. Lastly, pluralism in structure-function in renaissance architecture.

3.4. The Language of Postmodern Architecture, Charles Jencks, 1977

According to this study, postmodern architecture has a pluralistic language that includes traditional and modern features, vernacular, and high art meanings. To learn and use the particular architectural codes that prevail among the subcultures that persist in any large city, the architect of pluralistic language will have to be trained in four or five different styles and trained as an anthropologist, or at the very least a good journalist. Also, the architect will have to learn the particular metaphors and symbolic signs with short-lived potency and the slow-changing traditional characters. However, the multivalent and inclusive architectural language uses all of them with wit and accuracy [15].

Charles Jencks, in his book, proposes the term multivalent and inclusive, which means the pluralistic language that combines traditional and modern elements, vernacular with high art. However, Pluralism language contains several styles and codes that relate to different subcultures that led to interculturalism and contextualism in the city. Also, it relates to anthropology, which studies human societies, cultures, and their development.

3.5. Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective, Ihab Hassan, 1986

The study produced a catena of postmodern characteristics; among that catena, phrases like indeterminacy or indeterminacies relate to pluralism. Therefore, the study mentioned that fragmentation frequently leads to indeterminacy. Decanonization, as a postmodern feature, also applies to all canons in the broadest sense [16].

The study presented several terms associated with pluralism; for example, indeterminacy means the diversity of possible interpretations of given textual elements, in other words, there is pluralism of possible interpretations, but one cannot specify one of them; pluralism leads to indeterminacy. Also, the term fragmentation is the process of fragmenting elements to the pluralism of parts. As well, Decanonization, considered “literature” or “art” open, blurs the line between “high art” and “low art,” which means merging pluralistic types of art.

3.6. Deconstruction: *The pleasures of absence, Charles Jencks, 1989*

The study described the scheme of Parc de la Villette as a combination of opposed systems that are layered on each other; this layering of opposed systems so that they are randomized and discontinuous amounts to a formal Deconstruction. It was an interesting new landscape strategy that dealt with an overly complex and detailed brief. Bernard Tschumi divided the extended site plan into lateral bands of different activities and planting. These thin bands have small elements, or confetti sprinkled randomly over the site. Then comes a layer of essential details. Including the existing buildings, circulation, and connecting layers- thus, the superimposition of five separate systems results in a rich texture that copes with the complex program and its uncertain growth and funding. However, Tschumi’s plan, as mentioned, makes a fresh combination of previous formulae, which are acknowledged as historical: the layering of three systems points, lines, and surfaces [17].

The study discussed the concept of pluralism indirectly in the deconstruction style. It appeared that pluralism in deconstruction is associated with the idea of layering with multi-layers and systems combined to form a deconstructivist project.

3.7. *The Architecture of the Jumping Universe, Charles Jencks, 1997*

The notion of folding was discussed in this study as an architectural approach that may achieve contradictory traits reflecting a quick shift of direction, assumption, or attitude. In contrast, it can reconcile disparities uniquely from other architectural techniques to pluralism, such as collage. Also, the study discussed the pluralism of building types. In addition to social pluralism, the notable benefit is the intoxicating ambiguity: one is never sure what building type it is. The environment slips from one category to another, from house to workplace to church to museum to bazaar. This category of no-category or all categories is known in Postmodern poetics as the carnivalesque because it represents an escape from the habitual norms of control [18].

Moreover, the study discussed the concepts of diversity and variety composed of differing elements, qualities, or pluralist elements. And continuous improvement of these qualities without organization leads to future chaos and complication. Also, some techniques support diversity: collage, radical eclecticism, and superposition. Most building tasks are complex, not simple, and demand a mixed response that takes on the requirements of history, urbanism, pluralism of function, and tastes due to the composition of different elements or pluralism qualities (diversity and then this diversity becomes chaos). Because architecture is coded and experienced through an architectural language, the formal system bears as much responsibility as the content. As the environment’s public language, architecture should embrace a shared symbolism, which includes local and global, cosmogenic languages [18].

As previously mentioned, postmodern architecture has a double meaning or double coding, old/new, high/low, traditional art, and modern art jointly, so it’s pluralistic in all these aspects. Here the study indicates that folding is a technique that combines pluralistic, diverse, and diversity aspects like elements, languages, directions, and styles, in a smooth transition to create public language.

3.8. *Peter Eisenman: theories and practices, Kormoss, B. (2007)*

In this study, the author explains the folding process that doesn’t follow a single or uniform design pattern but that it should instead be conceived as a combination of methods, in which a series of essential elements (grids, diagrams, and volumes) are successively superposed, scaled, projected and folded. In this sense, the folding process is not an entirely new architectural strategy since it builds on a series of formal techniques like the superposition and scaling of grids, diagrams, and volumes, which were already used in earlier scientific projects.

It is clear from the definitions and explanations of Peter Eisenman that the concept of folding cannot be reduced to a strictly architectural process and that it should be rather conceived as a multi-layered strategic concept with multiple levels of implications and ramifications—not only in the field of architecture and urbanism but also in the broader field of philosophy, cultural theory, and media [19].

In this study, Eisenman's theories and practices have been discussed that in deconstruction, there is pluralism of processes that have several previous techniques combined by folding to create new architecture by earlier formal strategies.

3.9. Modernism and Postmodernism in Architecture an Emphasis on the Characteristics. Similarities and Differences, Niki Amiri, 2016

In this study, Niki Amiri stated that the Postmodern creates eclecticism and humor by combining past and present styles and one of postmodernism's ideas is to make an artwork using a combination of "multimedia" [20].

Jencks defines postmodern architecture as having characteristics of pluralistic, extremely eclectic architecture that embraces variety, differentiation, and otherness in praise of diverse styles and languages. A plurality of styles and a plurality of languages. The postmodern building has multi-aspects or multivalence. It is a blend of rituals, imitations, and ridicules and stimulates other structures to expand around it, implying it can have a wide range of meanings, in contrast to modern architecture with a single meaning or single aspect. Postmodern architecture is multivalent, nonexclusive, enigmatic, resonant, and symbolic. However, contemporary architecture with a worldwide purpose (i.e., international style) has stepped into the area while considering postmodern architecture and paying regard to the traditions of each race and nation. Modern architecture has a form of unitarianism based on a lack of historical awareness and globalization, yet we see pluralism based on tradition and contextualism in postmodern architecture.

Because postmodern architecture is a kind of plurality, the spirit of a postmodern structure is compatible with democracy. In contrast, the heart of a modern building is consistent with dictatorship [20].

The study indicates the term multimedia to describe the plurality in postmodern architecture, pluralism styles and pluralism languages, and multivalence which has multi meanings or pluralism of meaning, that all of these aspects led to democracy in architecture.

3.10. Intertextual Reading of Postmodern Architecture (Based on Historicist Postmodern Architecture and Deconstruction), S. Rahimi Atani, K. Bazrafkan, I. Raeisi, 2018

Depending on postmodern theories, architectural work is a mixture of all traditions; and recognizes multiple readings or interpretations of a text and values eclecticism rather than one method [21].

Depending on the observer of the postmodernism work, which has several interpretations. However, it believes in the necessity of a plurality of elements in contrast to modern architecture's lack of features or purity. It is transitioning from being single-valued in modern architecture to a multivalued discipline which means it has value pluralism; postmodernist architecture takes an intertextual approach, which seeks to reflect the existence of different users in the building. The most apparent form of pluralism in postmodern architecture is its openness to the past. Postmodern architects practice in a style called "intertextual architecture," which appropriates styles from different eras and combines them in a way that attempts to reflect the historical and social contexts of pluralism within which their buildings now have to exist [21].

The study indicates that the plurality of aspects can be combined in postmodern architecture through intertextualities, such as merging several cultures, traditions, and times in one text. Table 1 summarizes the previous studies that discussed pluralism in architecture according to the types and classifications of pluralism indicators used.

4. RESULTS

After analyzing the previous studies, it appeared that most studies covered various types of pluralism directly or indirectly, while others appeared to only discuss pluralism's indications. As a result, each kind gave rise to significant architectural characteristics that became either specific or generic indications of pluralism, as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Pluralism types and indicators

Study Name	Pluralism Type	Specific Indicators	General Indicators
Learning From Las Vegas	Physionognomy pluralism	Material pluralism	Invisible
		Unusual elements arrangement	
	Time pluralism	Identity	
	Value pluralism	Irony Paradox	
Meaning in Western Architecture	Pattern pluralism	Chaos	Invisible
	Time pluralism	Identity	
	Tradition pluralism	Identity	
Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture	Shapes possibilities pluralism	Ambiguity	Invisible
	Function pluralism	Multi functioning	
	Structure-function pluralism	Multi functioning	
The Language of Postmodern Architecture	Traditions pluralism	Contextualism	Invisible
	Cultures pluralism	Interculturalism	
Pluralism in Postmodern Perspective	Interpretations pluralism	Indeterminacy	Invisible
	Parts pluralism	Fragmentation	
		De canonization	
Deconstruction: The pleasures of absence	Systems pluralism	Layering	Invisible
The Architecture of the Jumping Universe	Element pluralism	Variety	Invisible
		Diversity	
	Direction pluralism	Folding	
Peter Eisenman: theories and practices	Processes pluralism	Folding	Invisible
Modernism and Postmodernism in Architecture an Emphasis on the Characteristics. Similarities and Differences	Invisible	Invisible	Inclusive
			Multimedia
			Multivalence
Intertextual Reading of Postmodern Architecture (Based on Historicist Postmodern Architecture and Deconstruction)	Element pluralism	Impurity	Intertextuality
	Interpretation pluralism	Indeterminacy	Multivalued
	Users pluralism	Multifunctioning	

The analysis of previous studies indicates two main findings: first, many types of architectural pluralism exist. Second, each class is related to one or more indicators that are classified into two categories: specific and general indicators. Particular indicators are only associated with a specific type of architectural pluralism, while general indicators include all kinds of pluralism.

5. CONCLUSION

The study concludes by answering the study question that the concept of pluralism is a critical idea because it has a huge impact on the architectural field like the other fields and it works on five levels (form, design strategies, meaning, function, and regional) each level contains several types and each type has its indicators.

The first level which is the form level includes all the pluralities that relate to the exterior appearance of the architectural mass like physiognomy pluralism which relates to the plurality in virtual material features for example color and texture. Also, elements and qualities of pluralism contain plurality in architectural shapes and forms. however, fragmentation and De-canonization are considered pluralism of parts.

Also, pluralism works on architectural design strategies which is the second level, for example when more than one system is used as a layering system. Also, the folding technique by connecting that which is different in a smooth transition.

The third level, meaning, is when the architecture has more than one meaning or more than one interpretation, possibility, and value. However, these types of pluralism led to indeterminacy, ambiguity, and irony.

The fourth level, function, includes patterns of pluralism that become chaos without continuous thoughtful development. Moreover, user pluralism is when more than one type of user uses the building, or when a structural element has more than one function like resistance and aesthetic. also when an area in the plan is used for several purposes it is considered pluralism in the plan function.

The last level, regional, contains all the pluralities that relate to one specific place or regional area, like traditions, social, context, and time. these types create identity and contextuality in the specific region.

There are major indicators for pluralism that are applied to all the mentioned levels like intertextuality, multivalent, multivalued, inclusive, and, multimedia. However, it deserves to mention that each type or indicator of pluralism can translate architecture from one direction to the opposite direction.

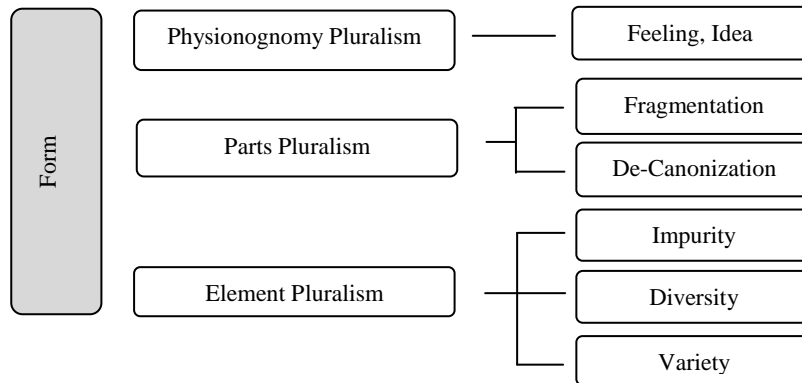


Figure 1: Level one of pluralism in architecture (Authors).

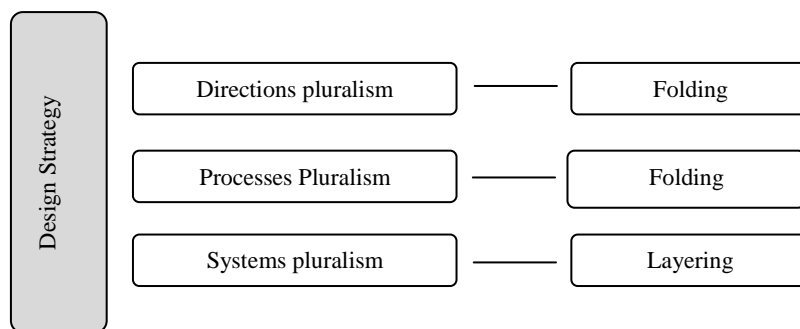


Figure 2: Level two of pluralism in architecture (Authors).

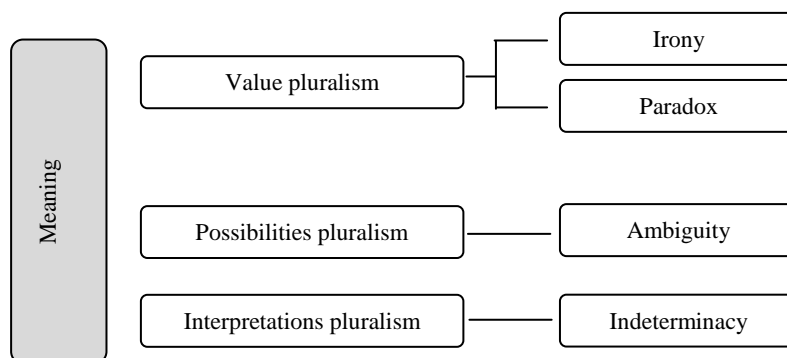


Figure 3: Level three of pluralism in architecture (Authors).

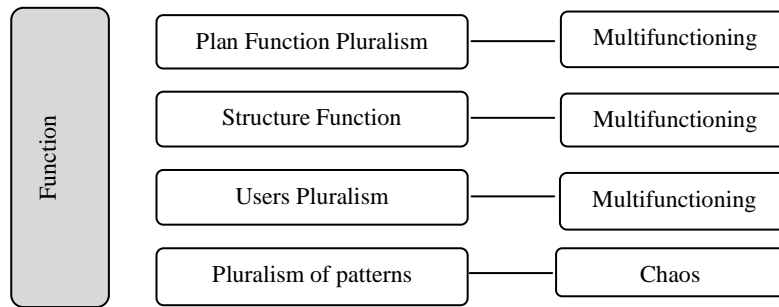


Figure 4: Level four of Pluralism in Architecture (Author).

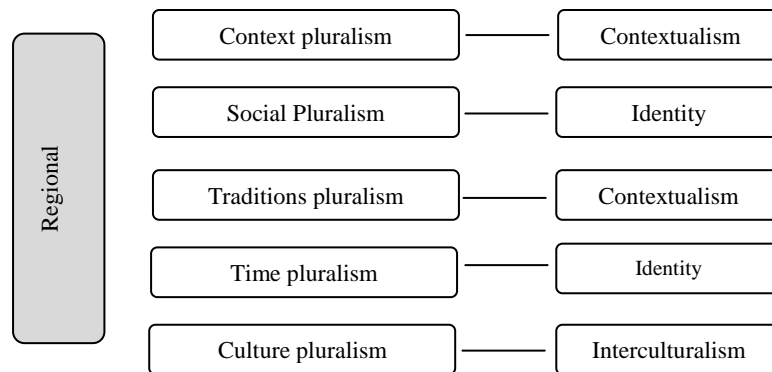


Figure 5: Level five of Pluralism in Architecture (Authors).

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