

A home is not a
house essay sample



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[1]Reyner Banham has been one of the widely recognised and influential writers on architecture and design. Raised as an engineer Reyner had a unique vision towards the contemporary modernism in the architectural design. His uniqueness was the result of the combination of the academic's rigour, the writer's lightness of touch and the fascination for modern technology. [2]Hence he often was perceived as a vigorous and disruptive in his critical statements. He pictured architecture not only by the image, but by the quality of experience in its space, construction, form, and material. Banham was certain that the theory of modernity in architectural design demanded a radical and constructive renewal.

[3]Nevertheless his colleagues architects believed that he was one of the few founders of architecture criticism that eventually opened the doors for other writers to pursue such profession. Indeed, Reyner had an ability to understand both the social and political involvement of visual arts in architecture and somehow his writing style had a way to be anything but cynical and descriptive.

[4]Since the very early youth Banham became very interested by the American pop culture. Reyner was attracted to this country as he saw the evidence of the opportunity to implement technology on a mass scale which would satisfy his goal to “ fit environments for human activities”.

Therefore this essay focally concentrates on his article “ A Home Is Not a House” published in April 1965, where he argued against the established structure of the domestic houses in the North America (NA), which were built poorly without a necessary protection from the climate changes. Such

housing structure required a specific maintenance such as widespread use of heating pumps, a general waste of energy that led to insufficient usage of natural resources.

[5]Banham stated that American houses are created as a very preserved vacuum that concealed and perpetuated the constant technological maintenance without making any room for environment. He believed the conventional buildings created a problem rather than a solution for human inhabitation.

[6]Further he reckoned that the proper use of relevant technological modification would make the houses habitable and defined “ home” as the integration of complex relationships between architecture and technological habits. Likewise, Reyner interpreted it as a coming inevitable mechanical progress which would threaten the long-established role of architecture as a creator of open spaces. The essay is aimed to review and analyse the article “ A Home Is Not a House” by Reyner Banham, primarily the main criticism towards the North American housing architecture and proposed solutions to enhance it by implementing the technological innovation.

[7]“ A Home Is Not a House” is a unique interpretation of Reyner’s point of view in relation to the development of contemporary modernism in the North America. The Reyner’s work has been published just in the period when Reyner was captivated in investigating the role of technical services in the modern architecture. The article might be perceived as a direct criticism towards the inhabitability of the housing architecture. Nevertheless one of the vital meanings of the article is a deep concern for the lack of

development of environmental sustainability. With this in mind, Banham suggested two ways of controlling the environment, the first solution would be to avoid the problem and hide under a roof or to interfere with the local meteorology for instance by utilising a campfire.

[8]In other words, Reyner believed that the architecture can't be held within the boundaries when creating a home for people. On the other hand it has to pursue "the freedom and variability" in all of its forms and shapes.

[9]Moreover, in the "A Home is not a House," Reyner analysed the history of the housing architecture by making interesting comparisons of domestic houses to a shell, which illustrated as useless to protect "...those inside from the environment..."

[10]Moreover, the article demonstrates a comparison between an American and European architecture, by showing the negligence of American architects to efficiently optimise the provided environmental resources. For instance, the author has directly made a statement that "...Americans do not monumentalise or make architecture", which is misleading the readers to assume that the American architects are incompetent to perform in accordance with the standards.

[11]Furthermore Banham openly criticised the priority need for Americans to "...pump more heat, light and power into their shelters than have other peoples." As the result the author describes the domestic houses as large volumes wrapped in flimsy shells which have to be lighted and heated in more generous and different way in contrast with the concept of cubicular European interiors traditions of domestic architecture. However one might

argue that the article leads to a subjective elucidation that the domestic housing architecture in its worst position and demanding the necessary changes to implement into the structure of the American architecture.

[12]Considering the aforementioned, Banham proposed a new solution to the domestic indifference. The author suggests to implement the idea of an “ un-house”, that would include the recent environmental technological innovations. The idea behind the creation was inspired by Fuller’s “ standard-of-living package”. Reyner presented a detailed description of how the house would look like, which definitely can’t leave anyone uninterested. The house would have a special setting of interference with local meteorology to create a space regulated in shape and dimension only by the “ direction and strength of the wind”.

[13]In addition, the house would be habitable during the four climate seasons because the lightweight of the building, the floor would be invisibly heated by electrical elements and the cooling provisions would be structured in the surrounding landscape. All in all, in author’s imaginary the “ un-house” possesses a vast range of unique qualities, compelling with environmental freedom and diversity. Here it becomes evident that such theoretical conception is phenomenal to improve the architectural responsibility for better environment. The proposition enables the architects to deliver more sustainable orientated buildings and bring awareness to the population of the fading environment.

[14]On the other hand, some critics didn’t meet the Banham’s proposal with favorable review. Critics insist that the article “ A Home Is Not a House” lacks

the relevant ecological research to support the theory. The article gives an impression of technologically driven composition rather than the environmental one.

[15]Furthermore, Whiteley argued that the suggested house can be characterised as a “ controlled environment”. In response Banham stated the “ un-house” creates a favorable environmental condition for inhabitants to plan the behavior when dealing with different climate seasons.

[16]Nevertheless the work couldn't be completed without the crucial help of architect designer François Dallegret, who managed to effortlessly portray the Banham's ideas and perceptions, which were to “...demonstrate the hollowness of the fear of many architects that acceptance of the dominance of environmental machinery will be the end of creativity”. Reyner was eager to add an illustration to every aspect of his new idea.

[17]Each of those images incorporates a particular inspiration behind the presented unique proposal. In one such image called “ Anatomy of a Dwelling”, the reader is provided with the adequate representation and interpretation of the huge network of cables and tubes, an accumulating “ baroque ensemble of domestic gadgets” between the sky and the earth (Fig 1).

[18]Another drawing titled “ The Environment Bubble” shows Banham and Dallegret sitting peacefully in the technological “ Transportable standard-of-living package”, a mobile environmentally friendly habitat, equipped with solar panels (Fig 2).

[19]Next the article introduces the Transcontinental “ Instant Split-Level” trailer home U-Tility Life-Support pack (Fig 3). It can be described as a mobile home with the inclusion of a visual mechanical system, linked to the basic structure. Such a solution gives an advantage to be neatly packed together and movable without depending on static utilities, the mobile home could promise an ideal solution for people with a very functional life style.

[20]Likewise another addition is provided in the illustration of Transportable standard-of-living package (Fig 4). The idea has been introduced to add hassle free comfort. For the person, who is provided with different goods, a transportable standard of living package can propose a special way to enjoy a campfire without any smell, smoke, ashes and mess. The luxury is having a space, where the inhabitant could feel some consistency of being in the same place.

[21]On the other hand, the illustrations received the criticism in relation to the initial meaning of architecture. Various critics pointed out that the environmental bubble and the standard-of-living-package shift the “ architectural priorities from enclosure to building systems, from the monumental to the temporary.”

[22]Despite his subjective views, Reyner Banham is definitely one of the crucial architectural writers and critics. He had an ability to pay attention to a variety of details, landscapes, activities. It is obvious that he had the passion for technology and design orientated services. His criticism technique may seem harsh and direct, however he was certain in his ideas and wasn't afraid to experiment with technological innovations, professional

practices, and the necessity for energy conservation of daily use and maintenance. The article “ A Home Is Not a House” has its strengths and weaknesses, showcasing the writer’s goal to unveil the problem and find a suitable solution for a better sustainable future.

Likewise, Banham made an enormous influence on most of the current architects to incorporate a new innovative perspective on technological innovations when creating a project. Reyner’s ideas regarding the housing architecture in North America led to the notion of accepting and understating the environmental aspects in building the potential homes for inhabitants. It is also crucial for architects to work closely with the technological innovations which could enable to develop a new level of delivering comfort inhabitation. Nowadays modern requirements demand new approaches to the awareness of modernity that concerns not only detail orientated solutions, but also innovative ideas and opportunities based on advancements in technology.