We are all extremists in our own single issue space

For years, the Western world has been weighed down by the yoke of neutralisation of every antithesis. You are no longer allowed to have an ideology, you are not allowed to be unambiguous, you may not make something absolute, you are no longer allowed to want to win a discussion, you may not cultivate just one identity, etc.

Instead, you should be politically correct, see the relativity of everything, adhere to the polder model in the country in which this article was written, respect the other as the other, be multicultural and postmodern, make compromises, accept hybridization, transgression and deconstruction, in other words seek out the social midfield for a nice career.

And behold, just as you were beginning to think that everything is suffocating in the wet blanket of moderation, the coin turns over, and apocalyptic views are again the order of the day, who is not for is automatically against, repression returns, decency has to be instilled again, good and evil are opposites again, everyone stands up for their opinion as clearly as possible, frontier justice receives royal approval, people talk again about crusades, the Age of Reason and the Jewish-Christian civilisation are back on the pedestal, the gates of Fort Europe are closed, your own people first, and so forth. The totalitarian temptation crops up again, and without a healthy form of extremism, you can forget your career.

The architectural and spatial order reflects the same reversal. For years, integral thinking was praised. There was a great belief in masterplans and overall scenarios. People used instruments that served to promote the 'general architectural climate'. In the built environment people wanted to create density, stimulate multiple use of space, mixed programmes, generous public space and all sorts of other design visions and design methods to promote social integration.

And yes, just like in the culture in general, this subsection of culture is experiencing the reversal to extremes: gated communities, corridors, divided housing environments, privatisation, personal initiatives, personal responsibility of individuals and local authorities, region-specific design. Or on the microscale the rise of sluices, tourniquets, and other safety systems and on the macroscale the ascension of all sorts of spatial monocultures, isolated from the rest of the world, because of the establishment of such a strong force, that the interests of a part can be implemented completely. No integral thinking of architecture as the soft sector. This is an age of effect measurement, performance contract and the setting of priorities. No grey zone belongs there, no overlap, no careful nurturing of possibilities and desires. This is the culture of results, of agreements, of necessities. Of single issues and their single issue spaces. Society as an island empire of subsidiary interests. And on the islands everything can carry on unambiguously.

Something that enjoyed a special popularity in the recent past was the nomadic expression of life. The idea that the journey is more important than the destination. Even there change has entered. Characteristic of the new island empire is that people can hardly move around in it. Too many strict borders, too much control, too much deterrence. Anyone wanting to go on an adventure can visit separate dedicated islands, the adventure islands. That is why Archis offers its readers a tour through the places where normal citizens would rather not be seen.