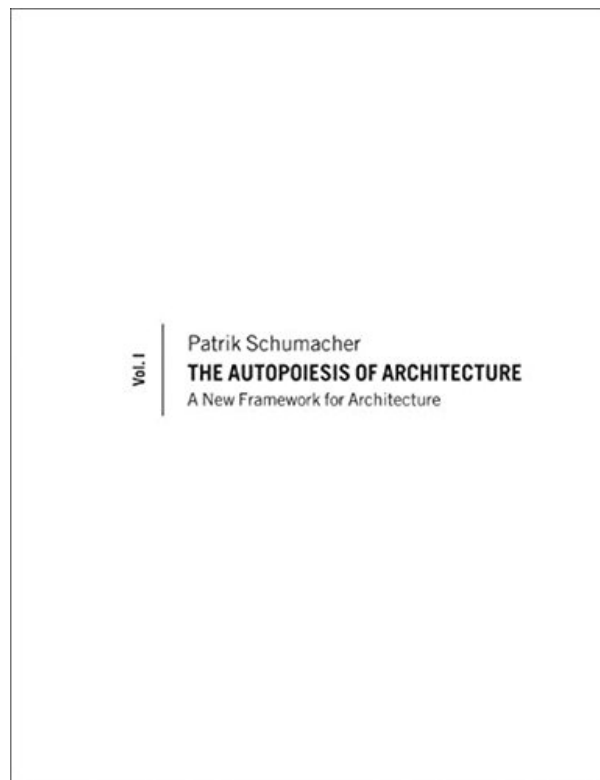
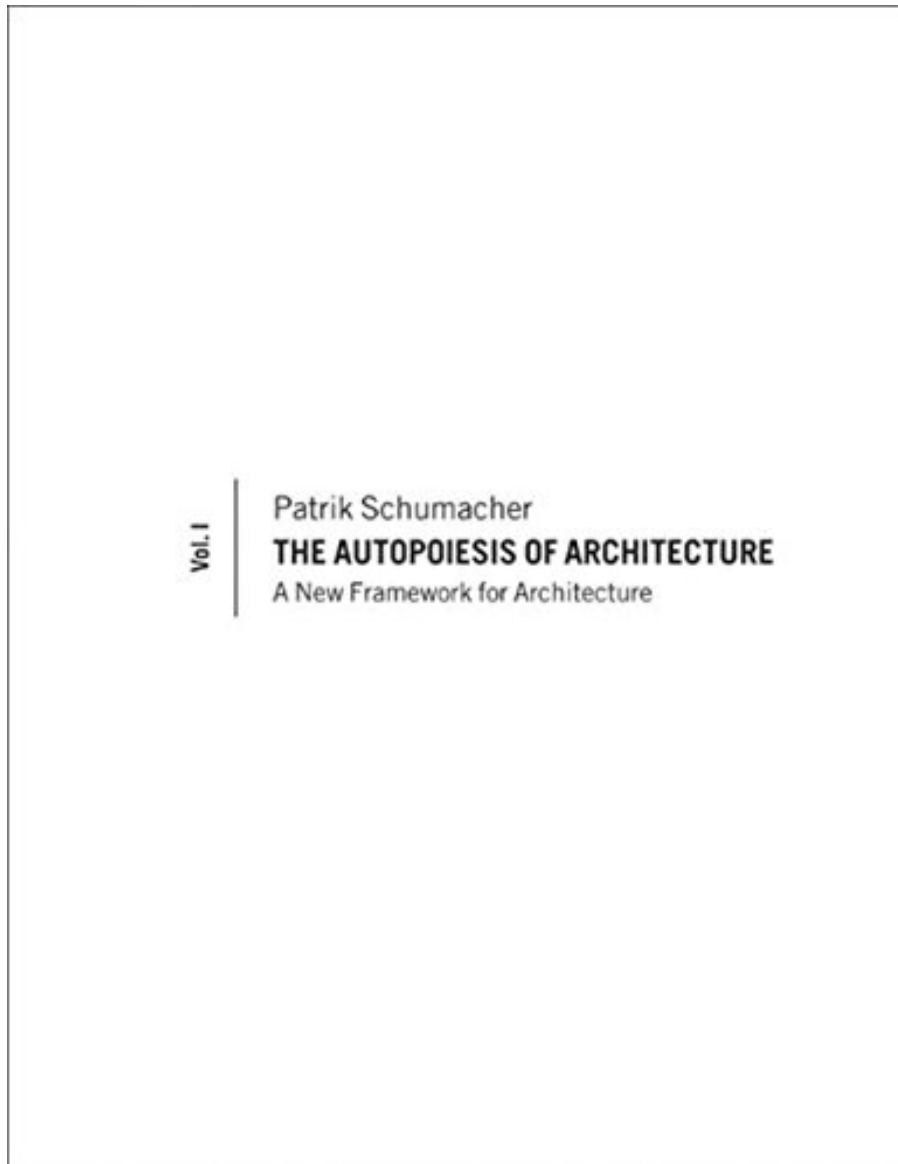


# **THE AUTOPOIESIS OF ARCHITECTURE: A NEW FRAMEWORK FOR ARCHITECTURE BY PATRIK SCHUMACHER**



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## Review

'...provides a wholly new approach and framework for thinking about architecture.' (Dezeen.com, February 2011). '...does well to relate new developments in architectural media to historical periods, with some fascinating passages on the design process.' (Icon Magazine, February 2011). '...a wholly new theoretical approach to architecture...highly unusual.' (Architecture Today, March 2011).

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By presenting architecture as a discipline with its own unique logic, *The Autopoiesis of Architecture* provides a wholly new theoretical approach to architecture. The impact of this is far reaching. Architecture's conception of itself is addressed but also that of its development within wider contemporary society. Schumacher's innovative treatment of the subject enriches architectural theory with a coordinated arsenal of concepts that facilitates both detailed analysis and insightful comparisons with other domains, such as art, science and politics. The 'Autopoiesis' of the title refers to self-production: the term having first been introduced in biology to describe the essential characteristic of life as a circular organization that reproduces all its specific components out of its own life process. Once transposed into the theory of social systems, autopoiesis came to be understood as a system of communication capable of producing all its specific communication structures within their own internal process. It is this autopoietic system of communication that is being applied here to an architectural context. Architecture comprises various modes of communication, including drawings, texts and built works. These communications depend upon each other and combine to reproduce architecture as a specialized system of communication. The book explores how this system of communication forms a unique subsystem of society that co-evolves with other important autopoietic subsystems like art, science, politics and the economy.

The first of two volumes that together present a comprehensive account of architecture's autopoiesis, *The Autopoiesis of Architecture: A New Framework for Architecture* introduces the theoretical framework and traces the historical process of architecture's differentiation within its societal environment: its elevation

above the craft of building, its emancipation from religion and politics, as well as its separation from art and science. On this basis Schumacher insists on the necessity of maintaining disciplinary autonomy and argues for its distinct demarcation in relation to art and engineering. Architecture's theory dependency is emphasized and its internal separation into the avant-garde and the mainstream is explained. Styles are theorized as design research programmes that constitute architectural history as a progression of cycles of innovation that upgrade architecture to adapt to the ongoing evolution of society. This initial volume ends with the clarification of architecture's underlying societal function and *raison d'être*. The second volume completes the analysis of the discourse and further proposes a new agenda for contemporary architecture in response to the challenges and opportunities that confront architectural design within the context of current societal and technological developments.

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Take a theoretical approach to architecture with *The Autopoiesis of Architecture*, which presents the topic as a discipline with its own unique logic. Architecture's conception of itself is addressed as well as its development within wider contemporary society.

Author Patrik Schumacher offers innovative treatment that enriches architectural theory with a coordinated arsenal of concepts facilitating both detailed analysis and insightful comparisons with other domains, such as art, science and politics. He explores how the various modes of communication comprising architecture depend upon each other, combine, and form a unique subsystem of society that co-evolves with other important autopoietic subsystems like art, science, politics and the economy.

The first of two volumes that together present a comprehensive account of architecture's autopoiesis, this book elaborates the theory of architecture's autopoiesis in 8 parts, 50 sections and 200 chapters. Each of the 50 sections poses a thesis drawing a central message from the insights articulated within the respective section. The 200 chapters are gathering and sorting the accumulated intelligence of the discipline according to the new conceptual framework adopted, in order to catalyze and elaborate the new formulations and insights that are then encapsulated in the theses. However, while the theoretical work in the text of the chapters relies on the rigorous build up of a new theoretical language, the theses are written in ordinary language ? with the theoretical concepts placed in brackets. The full list of the 50 theses affords a convenient summary printed as appendix at the end of the book.

The second volume completes the analysis of the discourse and further proposes a new agenda for contemporary architecture in response to the challenges and opportunities that confront architectural design within the context of current societal and technological developments.

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It is a comprehensive analysis of architecture up to date. An interesting theoretic proposal for the analysis

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The Autopoiesis of Architecture is a spectacular intellectual achievement, ...

By Daniela Ghertovici

The Autopoiesis of Architecture is a spectacular intellectual achievement, and a very rare elaboration of a systematic, comprehensive, and unified theory for contemporary architecture. The writing is remarkably clear and accessible, while at the same time elegantly complex and distinctly articulate. This is a highly instrumental work that is immediately actionable for architects and designers in both analytical and generative contexts, cohering, connecting and ordering a huge network of complex discursive, professional and academic threads. It leaves no stone unturned, and is equally inspiring for seasoned professionals as it is for emerging practitioners and young students. The first volume is a comprehensive discourse analysis that constructs a rigorous, systematic framework for productive discursive differentiation, debate and evolution. The second volume systematically elaborates a comprehensive new agenda for architecture, culminating in a lucid reflection/projection on Parametricism, the contemporary style of architecture that emerged globally and evolved exponentially since the mid-1990s, across professional practices, design research collaboratives and schools worldwide, in response to the emergence of a global, functionally differentiated post-Fordist network society in the crisis and eventual collapse of Modernism in the late 1970s. Perhaps the most radical aspect of this treatise is its stark contrast to the exponential proliferation of fragmentary, multivalent, transdisciplinary and partial theories reverberating throughout the communications of architecture. The dearth of systematic and comprehensive contemporary architecture discourse addressing the principles, values and heuristics that inform design innovation today has surrounded the release of this treatise in a flurry of debate, and catalyzed a high level of engaged and polarized public architecture discourse. After two decades of disruptive innovations that have continuously converged on the territory of architecture discourse, practice, academia from cultural, cybernetic, economic, scientific, and political directions, this cohering and unifying architecture treatise is long overdue!

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