

Part 6

# OUTCOMES

## Epilogue and Conclusions

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### 13. FINAL SYNTHESIS

On the Emergence of a New Framework for Action

### 14. MANIFESTO: FINAL DECALOGUE

21 Operative paradoxes

Two flight trajectories (or "Bird intruding on an aerial exhibition").

Photograph: Ricard Cugat (in *El Periódico*, September 24, 2000).

The open logic we are concerned with here moves between the deterministic logic of rigidly "guided" trajectories and the random logic of merely chance trajectories: a certain conception of the idea of order as "dynamic agency", capable of orienting, relating and articulating different, not always harmonious, information in new, more irregular and impure dispositions.

## 13 FINAL SYNTHESIS

On the Emergence of a New Framework for Action

### I. A Framework for a Network, or Why do we need a new architecture today?

Throughout the previous chapter, we have defended the historic emergence of a new framework for action which is no longer identified with more or less localist or particularist customs, manners, inertias or models, but which is derived from a new common awareness related to a new capacity for informational exchange and interaction.

A global framework – translated, at the same time – into local research processes – aimed to respond, with a new conceptual and procedural tool set, to the new conditions of contemporary reality.

- A framework where, beyond identities and rivalries, references and competition, we can see a clear desire for proposal based on a profound change of perspective and a shift in concepts, concerns and formulations, which brings together shared attitudes and common goals, produced beyond the context, in varying cultural spaces.
- A new “framework for a network” defined more by the complicity among lines of research and experimentation than by the strict adherence to “dogmas” or specific models.
- A “framework for research” that can be used to propose a new way of understanding the old notions of order, form and organization; and, therefore, a new way of understanding architecture itself, among other disciplines.
- A “framework for exploration” connected to a period of social, cultural and technological change, intended to favor different approaches to new (and old) problems.

A framework for recognition that is not only intended to embellish “circumstances”. It is meant to take on the key elements that define contemporary reality honestly, with energy and precision, but also uninhibitedly.

Infiltrating it – becoming implicated in it.

13.1. The slide. Photograph: Bru Rovira (in *La Vanguardia*, August 20, 2000). Celebrating diversity. The old pyramid built by Enver Hoxha in Tirana, intended as an essentialist mausoleum, is now used by children as a slide.

Addressing the processes and the factors that determine it. Registering the data from the environment, without inertias or biases, and making the best inventive use of the new tools. Understanding “the nature of things” in order to act on them. – A new “framework for action” involved with a desire to reactivate not just the architectural discipline, but the social, cultural, economic and productive reality, which summons it and defines it at the same time, and which implies, as opposed to an acritical – and/or cynical – acceptance of a “milieu for fluctuation”, a desire for an activist implication to positively redirect the processes.

This framework for a network, its first intuitions and theorizations, its initial trials, its pioneering approaches to the notions of – conceptual and scalar – complexity and transversality and its design experiments, is what we have aimed to gather in this volume.

A new network territory where the old confidence in the trade as a transmitter of manners and methods will have given way to the need to generate transversal fields for research: proposing questions, offering responses. Possible hypotheses – and syntheses – of (and for) scenarios that are potentially more complex but not any less potentially qualitative.

That of a new “operative optimism”<sup>1</sup> that is less arrogant than the strictly modern doctrinal perspective (more ready to accept the logics of the surrounding reality and its implicit capacity for qualitative reorientation), which can be seen in multiple facets of contemporary exploration, interpretable as autonomous “elements” of a hypothetical shared joint action. The very notions of model (as a referential foundation) and discipline (as an autonomous and coherent body) will have fallen away, then, before the new challenges of a time of change and exchange. Old inherited habits will no longer be needed, but rather new approaches, both unusual and unexpected, as well as decidedly propositional, and which demand, in turn, the reformulation of old professional and pedagogical inertias.

The old configuration of structures and models will give way to the formulation of potentials.

The question, then, is not to continue trusting in “self-feeding” trappings, or to continue paying honor to hypothetical educational practices derived from “exceptional personalities”, but rather to value the emerging movements and dynamics associated with trajectories that are individual and collective at the same time.

As opposed to the usual “isolated trajectories”, we should be interested in possible “linking trajectories” with the potential to reveal the evolution of a (new) architecture that is proposed in relation with the conditions of its own particular time.

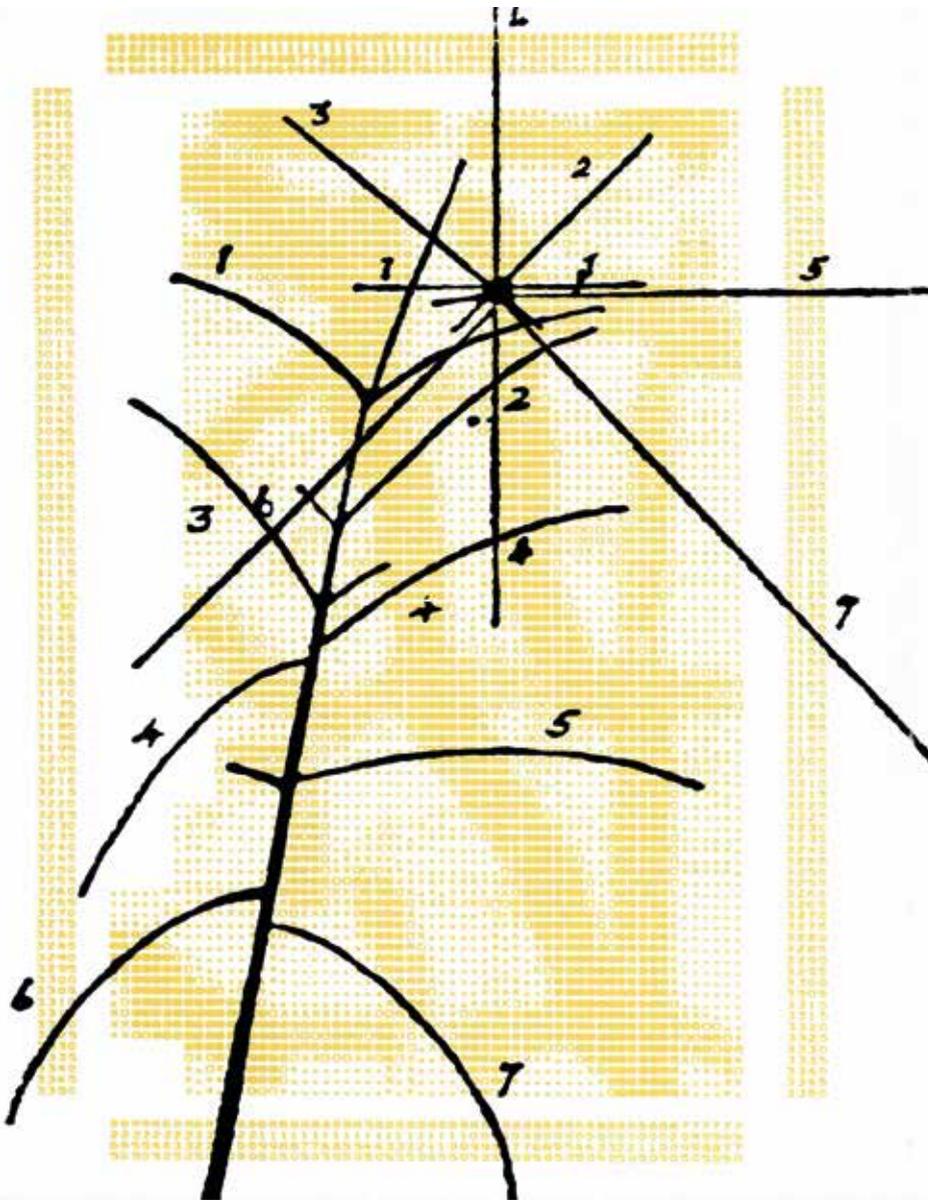
Conditions that would be approached through a probing gaze, focused on multiple phenomena, stimuli and demands, which are implicated in contemporary reality, and the agents that are called upon to manoeuvre in it and influence it.

That being said: How does the reality we are referring to present itself? What conditions does it tend to abide by?

Probably, as we have pointed out before, those of a more heterogeneous and complex environment, that is more dynamic and atonal, more disperse and vague, more diverse and simultaneous and, nevertheless, more open to a plural interaction, i.e., to exchange, to contamination, to blending.

Recent decades have confirmed the evidence of a spectacular scalar leap in the definition of our own spaces for relationships and cohabitation – our habitats – tied in to the increase in mobility and communication from a distance, the delocalization of relations and the technological and material transformation of our environment, which has exponentially demonstrated the dynamic nature of cities, societies and territories.

And this “scalar leap” or transfer between scales is what we have focused on in these pages, as the first methodological approach to a new type of space that is more dynamic and ultimately “open” in its formulations.



## II. Logics of Interaction

The city, i.e., its multiple definition as a “metapolis”, its varied manifestations and its structural mutations, have been the object of particular attention in recent years, revealing the “new” nature of a complex organism in rapid transformation: a system that is dynamic and non-linear at the same time, associated with complex processes of operative interaction generated between “networks of connection” and “layers of information”.

A “multi-layer” structure that is progressively heterogeneous and irregular – in global and local interaction – which responds, with a growing level of complexity – i.e., with a larger degree of synchrony between different layers of exchange – to basic patterns of development related to the patterns that characterize most of the “space-time” dynamic distribution processes that govern our universe.

In recent years, these processes have summoned up an approach to the city and the territory formulated from new points of view that are proposed from beyond the paradigms of traditional urban planning (fabric, surveying, building, layout) and removed from the old desires for “disciplinary autonomy” that had characterized the final decades of the 20th century.

An approach that, on the contrary, attempts to combine cross-cutting influences and contributions from the spheres of physics and mathematics (chaos theory, fuzzy logic, etc.), computation (data processing, programming, etc.), biogenetics (patterns of evolution), thought (new literature, new philosophy, etc.), anthropology (interaction phenomena) and art (Land Art, New Conceptualism, Situationists), etc., not just to propose new possible aesthetics – other imageries – but to explore, above all, a possible – and new – transversal – interactive – condition between territories and scenarios.

Dynamics that allude, again, to a new definition of design as a relational device (*dispositif*), rather than as a mere compositional or positional response: an informational operation – a reactivation – with the ability to react in and with the environment and to “cause it to react” at the same time.

It is a new informational approach, which translates this new transversal (or “trans-territorial”) sensibility that is more open to promoting a greater multiplicity and simultaneity of messages, of the information generated in differential conditions that are not always cohesive, but rather “interconnected”.

And, therefore, to encourage a new type of “open logic” in the design approach to space, which has the potential to direct and articulate diversity in more heterogeneous and “impure” structures (i.e., structures that are more sensitive to an n-dimensional and differential interaction).

The foundation of this work has been to recognize – based on a variety of initial and intuitive proposals – this capacity to conceive new design spatial devices – strategies – and new linking trajectories between complex, distinctly dynamic systems and open, largely irregular structures – organizations.

We have referred to this need to promote the investigation of new strategies for intervention and design associated with this new type of relational logic, which is more sensitive to complexity and, therefore, to the capacity to generate varying interactions between simultaneous levels of information:

- Interactions between general systems (strategies) and specific events (trajectories), combined in flexible formulations, which are freer and more uninhibited in their movements (open dispositions).
- (Possible) interactions between diverse and variable generative systems, combined in mixed sets of evolution and adaptation.
- Interactions between said processes, their declinations and the context itself – or the environment – where they unfold.

- Interactions, finally, among processes, systems and higher meta-systems (cities, territories or landscapes, surroundings and environments, etc.).

This possible coincidence of interactions translates this break with the old purity (or coherence) in terms of a project’s typology, morphology, scale, or size, which is suddenly shown in new frameworks of informational intersection and exchange.

This possible interactive coexistence between information, relationships and cross-cutting interconnections calls together a new nature for contemporary design, no longer conceived as a productive (or reproductive) object, but as a co-productive, i.e., relational, environment – or field. Given this potentially interactive condition of the milieu (context and environment), our mission as specialists is not only to “create” forms in space, but to promote qualitative “relationships” in it, through the definition of developmental strategies with the potential to promote more open actions – and situations – in that they are “empathetic”, receptive, adapted to basic operative criteria and flexible horizons for evolution.

Actions understood as materializations of latent “fields”. “Fields of forces”, “fields of maneuvers” and “battlefields” at the same time; i.e., “open fields of movements”, in synergy “with” and “in” a real and vocationally more complex milieu.

13.3. Scot Vertex: expansion of trajectories in a medium.



### **III. Complexity and Impurity: Celebrating and Articulating Diversity**

Talking about complexity refers to the dynamic and heterogeneous conditions of an environment – a period, a culture, a technology – destined to multiply information and exchanges, while favoring a growing feeling – and freedom – of “displacement”, created on all levels and in all directions: in the movements, the relationships, the expressions and the spatial manifestations of the processes associated with them.

The notion of complexity alludes to this: the capacity to combine and merge – activate and interactivate – multiple and not always harmonious information into a single infrastructural framework of (inter)relation.

A defensive (or overly vigilant) perspective on architectural action – in fact, a more traditional one – would expect to work “from” complexity to limit its effect, to “essentialize” its manifestations: quieting movements, stabilizing trajectories, refining information. Foreshadowing and prefiguring its own heterogeneous dynamics – in order to control them.

A more optimistic and positivist vision of architectural action proposes working “with” complexity to mobilize – and maximize – its combinatory potential. Synchronic potential.

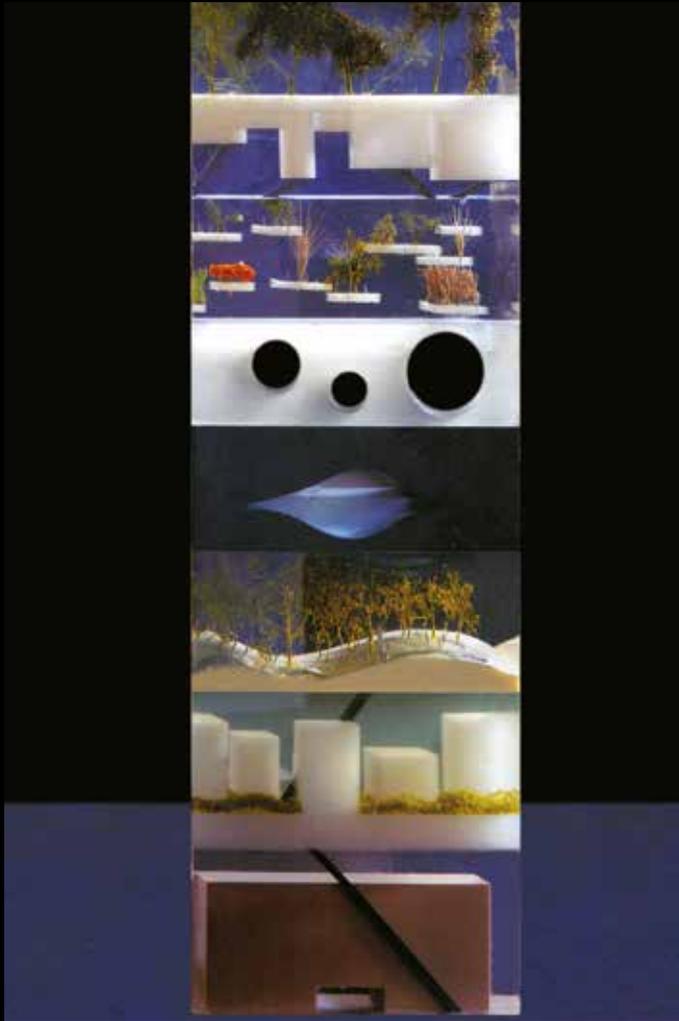
Throughout this text we have commented on this possible complex, open and interactive, nature of contemporary design. Its ability to “resonate” better with this “multiplied” and un-cohesive condition of our – informational – time by proposing, again, rather than object-architecture (essential, severe, rigid, static and/or mute), environment-architecture (systems, strategies, processes or operative devices) that are precise and open, capable of encouraging a higher degree of freedom, dynamism and mixture, recalling the contemporary “suspense” of what is simultaneous and “irregular”.

And in this celebration of the complexity of our time, we ultimately recognize a positive assumption of diversity (and the

irregularity linked to it), which lies at the very foundation of these potentials and the associated design strategies.

- 1– On the one hand, a diversity (or irregularity) that we could call combined – or combinatory – and that alludes to conjugated processes of agency – articulation, but also reassessment and restructuring, assemblage or intersection – among ensembles and/of operative codes that would be re-appropriated, reinterpreted and reformulated: morphological, technological or structural. A blended diversity that translates into a new “strategy of form” that is more vocationally operative.
- 2– On the other hand, a diversity that we could call “generated” – or “genetic” – and that alludes to the possible variable development (or evolution) – variations and variances – of a single pattern (or family) of evolving and/or infrastructural codes. A generated diversity that translates into a new “genetics of form” that is more voluntarily processive.
- 3– And, lastly, a diversity that we could define as “agreed upon” or “shared”, which might lean toward both at the same time, in co-participation.

While, in the first case, we would be dealing with strategies conceived using “maps of combined (or negotiated) data”, in the second case we would be looking at actions proposed as “maps of processed data”. Between both of these concerns – that of a new, more operative “strategy of form” and that of a possible, more generative “genetics of form” (i.e., between a reconciling and reformulating action that tends to promote operations involving combination, intersection and encounter among information and events; and a generative and processing approach that tends to maximize its morphologic (and morphogenetic) capacity, encouraging the development of processes of formal evolution and organization) – most investigations today fluctuate, associated with this new recodifying consciousness of dynamic processes and the



13.4. Smiling Face Building. MVRDV. LNW. New headquarters of the Ministry of Agriculture, The Hague, 2000.



13.5. Karl S. Chu (X Kavva). *Genetic Space-Phylogoon 1*.

structural diversity and irregularity that has occupied us throughout. Most probably, in a new moment of exploration and search, they will no longer need this epitomical exchange between project and city to justify or promote their own dynamics of configuration.

### **A – Strategy of Form and Action-Architectures** **Direct Logic and Strategies of *Détournement***

In a possible “critical negotiation with the real”, we recognize a new “incidental” intent: that of *dispositifs* which maximize their desire for (re)active intervention and intrusion in the milieu, through the explicit expression of their – implicit – strategic and relational will (or, if you prefer, synstrategic, synthetic, synaesthetic and strategic, all at once).<sup>2</sup>

In other words, through the reformulation and/or manipulation (variation, combination, permutation) of those mechanisms that emerge from the production processes taking place today, opportunely re-codified.

An architecture that is laid out, based on a resoundingly manipulative strategy (“destandardizing, as Frédéric Migayrou might call it, or “parastandard” for us, as a kind of disruptive strategy, infiltrated in reality)<sup>3</sup> intended to recodify the patterns of a certain prototypical (standardized) and prearranged (postmodern) routine, through a possible assimilation and perversion (or disturbance) of its working behavior, based on new reevaluative actions that can effectively combine “cause” and “effect” in possible *dispositifs* of collaboration and transgression, which are both decidedly “operative” and implicitly “provocative”.

Dispositifs that show up as “a continuation and a break at the same time, as strategies for exploiting and dropping the system itself”.

New actions of “détournement” – disturbance – intended to reinform reality operatively based on the strategic reappropriation and re-codification of its own production codes.

### **B – Genetics of Form Animation-Architectures** **Genetic Logic and Digital Development**

In this sense, and though they are related to many of the aforementioned considerations, other lines of investigation have preferred to delve more intensely into the “generative” capacity of these new *dispositifs*, maximizing their “procedural” nature and, therefore, the exploration of complex “systems” associated with the growing instrumentation of numeric and digital information – of information technologies – and their active participation in dynamic environments: a new “genetics of form” called upon to encourage programmed mutations based on processed information.

Technological advances let us think about this more animated and complex nature of architectural form and the movements that articulate it, made up of “real” experiences and “virtual” simulations produced in a universe of digital data, which is conveniently vectorized.

A new conception that, without denying the need for gravitational structures, would let us create new formal possibilities “beyond” them, linking those approached to evolving, multidimensional, fluctuating conceptions, fostered by the emerging use of computation and animation technologies.

A conception based on the definition of possible spatial “avatars”, of processes of synthesis and reprogramming defined using complex geometries of variation and which allude to this new “multi-generative” conception (that Frédéric Mygairou would have referred to as “non-standard”<sup>4</sup>) and whose practices are often determined within the realm of a possible instrumentation of flexible environments with a capacity for distortion, deformation and alteration; in a topological milieu intended to house (real or virtual) processes of interaction and (inter)change between conditions and information.

#### IV. Open Logic, Interactive Capacity

The new situation we have described in this text is centered on these trials and research: a more open conception of order, of form – and the associated action – with the capacity to articulate (and promote) the diversity of our times.

This brings up the need to work, today, with a new type of logic that can synthesize this transfer from stability to dynamism, from addition to combination, from to unicity to heterogeneity, which is characteristic of this search. A more “open” logic, which is no longer classical (compositional) metaphysical continuity nor modern (positional) functional objectuality, but rather contemporary (dispositional) strategic interactivity.

With the capacity to articulate and promote the diversity of our times.

Why have we linked this informational change to a possible, more “open” logic?

The term “open” effectively defines this relational potential of a new more “complex” architectural logic – defined in other areas as “advanced”, “transversal”, “reactive”, “interactive” or “informational” – intended to promote more effective frameworks of interaction.

- It is a “logic of complexity” that, in any case, refers to a more “open” conception in that it is “not closed”, not finished, virtually “evolving” (with the potential to evolve, to change, to vary, beyond particular states of configuration, in keeping with dynamic processes, which generate development).
- A logic that is more open because it is “unfinished”, more indeterminate (or less predetermined, less prefigured, in its form and its configuration). It is neither sealed nor confined, but also not definitive (i.e., incomplete and un-concluded).
- A more open, i.e., more relational logic. More empathetic and receptive. More permeable (and sensitive) to the demands of the milieu, of the place). More cross-cutting.
- A more open logic, i.e., lively and animated. In other words, substantially dynamic. Sensitive to variations. To changes and fluctuations. To mutations. Expansive and expanded.

- A logic, in any case, that is more open because it is more flexible (able to fluctuate, to deform, to adapt and transform, before and with the influence of information).
- A more open logic, as well, because it is more exteriorized and extroverted (able to “open” to “external” scales, conditions and/or dimensions and, at the same time, to express or exult (and also open) its own “internal” dynamics and movements.
- A more open logic that is more spontaneous and informal (in its evolutions) and, therefore, more cheerful (more relaxed and uninhibited, i.e., more expressive) in its manifestations. Less severe. Less essential and unambiguous. More impure and changeable, open to mixing, contamination and cohabitation. In other words, to exchange and interaction.

– A logic, in short, that is more complex, capable of combining and synchronizing events (complexity/simultaneity).

– A more dynamic logic, capable of making events evolve (Dynamicity/Evolutivity).

– A more diversified logic aimed at concerting plural and differential inputs (Diversity/Plurality).

– A more connective and transversal logic, capable of relating events, scales, spaces, programs, situations and trajectories (Transversality/Connectivity).

– A more mixed and impure logic, capable of hybridizing multiple events (*Mixicity/Multiplicity*).

– A more interactive logic, called to multiply the interchanges and the interactions between data but, also, information(s) (Interactivity/Interchange as Interaction).

– A more reactive logic, capable to engage new adaptable (and adapted) capacities in new responsive (technical and environmental) scenarios (Reactivity /Responsivity).

– A more generative logic, capable of inciting –and inducing events.

Ultimately, a logic that is more open, and more un-subjected (undisciplined decoded).

More self-assured and exultant. More bold and insubordinate. But also more cheerful and relaxed.

More unhindered.  
 More colorist than austere. More eloquent than elegant.  
 More expressive than severe. Extroverted. Communicative.

Poised to encourage signs and expressions of the period. New formulations no longer resulting from a new absolute order, but from new contracts of resonance and transference, intended ultimately to produce effective “interfaces” between us and the world.

Dynamic “environments” – rather than inert “objects” – for scenarios that are definitively more complex and interactive.

#### **V. Proneism**

Today, we can discern a new architecture on the horizon; beyond a conventional appearance or the fixation of an object, this architecture is positively committed to the complex nature of dynamic environments and, therefore, to the inter-active and space-time definition of the processes associated with them.

An architecture that is conscious of the new procedural dimension of a future time that is decidedly informational.

An architecture that, nonetheless, attempts to propose things about the present.

About daily life. About its diversity and complexity.

About its possible relational “distension”.

Providing not only “freshness” – as proposed by the critic Roemer van der Toorn<sup>5</sup> – to a new emergent daily life, but also “vitality” and, therefore, a new stimulating dignity to life that is less severe, more playful.

A new type of “revitalizing optimism”.

Reactive and reactivating. Positive and pro-positive.

It is a road full of traps (personal vanity, *divaesque* behavior, *vedettism*. opportunism, even cynicism or avarice) but, at present, it only seems to rely on a new type of operative intention that is more positive and optimistic, more attentive and involved.

Trusting in a committed integrity, a proactive amusement and a

desire for qualitative collaboration with reality: called on to combine investigation and pragmatism; intuition and calculation; strength and effort; action and relation; as its own open (and interactive) nature demands.

A desire that demands action and a perspective that are attuned to multiple emerging phenomena and to the possible relationships between them.

An interrogative action and perspective.

With a combined drive for knowledge and proposal.

A restless desire where relational (direct and/or hybrid) strategies are more important than officiating specialties.  
 Dispositions rather than positions.  
 Maps rather than chronicles.  
 Interpretations rather than panoramas.  
 Transversal searches rather than one-way applications.  
 (Undisciplined) alternatives rather than (disciplined) inertias.  
 There would be no styles. No doctrines. No models. No formulas. There would be criteria for action. Criteria intended to synthesize possible combinations of hypotheses, logics and wagers.

Certain experiments undertaken in recent decades have worked within this – nearly paradoxical – need to coordinate knowledge and proposal, theoretical reflection and practical commitment, gaze and action.

The design and exploratory activity we are concerned with here moves in this ambiguous borderland between architecture and territory, construction and system, creation and logic, form and disposition, local dimension and global scale.

Between this attempt to relate diversity and the ability to articulate it in new environments (systems, logics, processes) that are more expansive and expressive, more precise and creative, more operative and – why not? – laid back.

And, in fact, we are talking about a more *inform(action)al* and extroverted architecture: a more cheerful and stimulating architecture that, as Van der Toorn himself has said:<sup>6</sup>

“[It] aims to coincide with reality. [...] It is a plea for acting and experiencing. [...] [A] utopian desire to connect with time and reality. [...] Intellectual pessimism would appear to have turned into its opposite – an optimism of action. Life is no longer thought of as a linear process, but as a complex totality that is full of contradictions.”

## VI. Id(rea)lism, or Toward a New Operative Optimism

We might imagine that there is something ambiguous and uncertain in all of this, at a time when the boundaries between innovation, cynicism, progressivism, skepticism and resistance seem increasingly blurry: poorly understood from the critical perspective of a suspicious left (that has – paradoxically – found a cautious collective model in tradition), looked down upon from the neoliberal logic that sees an excessively “alternative” tone in this attitude, however this new cross-cutting, innovative and qualitative adventure – characteristic of a more interactive and informational time – is the today’s greatest hope. Faced with the new cultural challenges of our hyper-present, it seems necessary to defend this disposition – both critical and committed at the same time – that has the ability not only to capture concerns about our environment, but also to set forth – and build – solutions for it. Suggesting questions, but also venturing responses.

We have often been interested in exploring this possible “experimental” nature of the contemporary spatial device or *dispositif*: that of a cultural action that maximizes its “proactive” desire, of active – and reactive – intervention in the milieu through the explicit formal manifestation of its own – and implicit – “transversal” nature.

A “projective” desire (re-informative and re-encouraging at the same time), which we have called “reactive” because of its relational scope and its active (and activating) character. Reacting to reality and activating it.

A desire that requires an action focused on re-codifying the guidelines of a certain prototypical (standardized and neo-modern) or accepted (evocative and post-modern) routine through the “assimilation/transgression” of its own operating customs. Based on possible approaches that are both qualitative and re-qualifying at the same time. As effective in their intentions as they are anti-typological in their manifestations.

Rather than a figurative (pseudo-aesthetic) vocation, what would emerge would be an un-subjected and un-prejudiced desire: that of qualitatively reorienting reality itself in order to direct its information (conditions) and potentials (latencies) directly, rapidly, instantaneously, and usefully based on synthetic (strategic) actions.

In other words, based on contextual operations of “intersection”: operative and contingent, functional and conceptual, operative and narrative, strategic and poetic, at the same time.

These dynamics are interesting because, in these operations, architecture and the place it is a part of appear condensed in decisions that are strategic and tactical, expressive, technical and programmatic at once.

Indeed, in a new scenario of encounters, collisions and crossroads, perhaps the biggest paradox of culture, art and architecture might be this dual desire to “coincide” with the surrounding reality and, at the same time, to develop a “critical” (alternative) perspective in and about it: resonating and destabilizing, infiltrating and distancing, again.

The major crossroads of the contemporary project lies in this double push to “resonate” and “transcend”, to “accept” and to “reject”, to “collaborate” and “intrigue”, to “harmonize” and to “distort”, in this need to free the creative framework, on the one hand, from representative structures that are overly codified (because they are driven by inertia, cliché, by default) and, at the

same time, to connect it, on the other hand, to an operative reality that is particularly prone to what is “accepted”, what is “codified”.

How, then, do we infiltrate reality while, at the same time, qualitatively distancing ourselves from it?

Probably – as we pointed out in Chapter 12 – by acting, jointly, by collaboration and transgression, by intrusion and projections, combined “unexpectedly”.

This is the potential strength of contemporary art and architecture, and one of the major challenges: producing new formulations proposed according to a new creative attitude born without prejudices, more uninhibited, i.e., more “un-subjected”; confident in the possibility of encouraging more positive redefinitions of a reality that is open, suddenly, to the collision of forces and references, and to the diversity of relations, flows and scales and, above all, scenarios and events as essential factors with the potential to construct the development of increasingly more multi-faceted organisms, in constant entropic evolution.

It is often necessary to explain how the interest in trying to “resonate” with the current developmental processes in contemporary reality (urban, social, cultural, productive, etc.) is not the result of a mere speculative instrumentation, but rather an activist intent: that of approaching and analyzing the on-going processes in order to conceive new operative proposals with better functional and cultural effectiveness, based on qualitative and alternative parameters of organization and/or restructuring, proposed beyond traditional “forms” and “modes”, but also beyond what have come to be understood as “spatial disciplines”. It is not based on pure opportunistic cynicism, but rather on a certain “propositional id(re)alism” – idealistic and pragmatic (realistic and pragmatic in its acceptance of reality; idealistic for its desire to provide it with a certain qualitative redefinition) – intended to move past the limits of the ambiguous “conservative progressivism” that has dominated Europe

since the late-1970s, particularly prone to taking shelter in the apparent guarantee of the establishment – experience or history as insurance, the discipline as a point of reference – as the foundation for a consensual and stabilizing order.

Whereas from a conciliatory, distant, purist or resistant perspective, reality appeared as a conflictive, bastardized and antagonistic medium against which architecture had to take on a defensive or redemptive stance, based on the new desire for “active infiltration” we have analyzed here, architecture should promote more positive and propositional relationships with the environment: “openings” instead of “defenses”, intended to “locate” society in a real universe that is mutable, changing and surprising.

It is evident, then, that in this “collaborationist and critical” desire – reconciled and distant, resonant and transferent – we see many of the elements of the “critical pragmatism” referred to by Aaron Betsky<sup>7</sup> and the “pragmatopia” so aptly described by Andreas Ruby:<sup>8</sup>

“Situated in the no man’s land of the modernist dialectics between utopia and pragmatism, pragmatopia suggests an alternative territory of architectural operation. Thus it resists the escapism of the utopian which imprisons its vision in a no-place. At the same time it bypasses the automatism of the pragmatic with its tendency to kill the idea for the sake of sheer action. Pragmatopia instead rolls out a new plane of events in order to enable action (pragma) to take place (topos)”.

Sanford Kwinter, in an analogy that has become famous, compared the dynamic, slippery, both infiltrated and intrusive action of architecture and contemporary culture with the fluid, slippery reaction that takes place in certain sports like surfing or skiing, hang-gliding, skateboarding or snowboarding, based on the challenging of responding to fluctuating environments:<sup>9</sup>

“Sports that deploy the same fluid ‘streaming’ techniques combined with a rigorous ad hoc engagement of the surrounding milieu.”

Beyond the obvious cynical or “collaborationist” reading that has been used to interpret the metaphor by a certain number of critics – but also beyond the simple skill of the surfer – the most important aspect of this “*synstrategic*” – synaesthetic and strategic – desire lies in its capacity for combined intuition and innovation in order to try out new movements intended to explore conditions of action and negotiation, adaptation and fluctuation: feeling like a part of the wave not merely to sway or swing along with it, but to effectively “overcome” it, engaging in combined situations of synergy and boundaries.

And nevertheless, we would also quite agree with Alessandro Baricco in his new critical stance in the face of the exaggerated delight in the oscillation of surfaces which seems to define our times.<sup>10</sup>

Rather than the surfer who is carried on the waves, we are interested in the “incidental” image of the swimmer who enters into the waves and becomes involved with them. A swimmer who can combine crawl strokes with the butterfly and the backstroke during a single swim. Who can invert or manipulate styles and methods. Who can pass over streets and ropes. Who can use lenses and cameras. Who can “jettison dead weight” and “make an impression”. Who can move forward without failing to interact with the milieu, in the milieu: a flow within another flow, which takes it in, pushes it and re-encourages it at the same time.

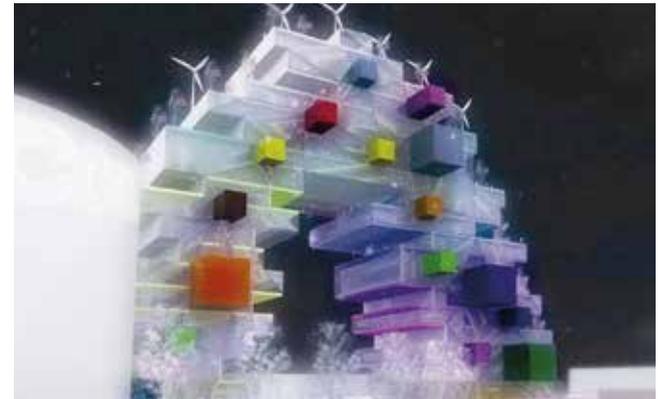
If the architectural debate at the end of the 20th century tended to emphasize the independence of the discipline (reinforcing the most endogenous aspects of form), it also ended up promoting the isolation of the architectural object itself – cut off and stranded, “disciplined” for “disciplinary” – with respect to the stimuli – and demands – emerging from the physical and natural – real or virtual – environment.

13.6. Nabito, Rainbow Tower, Ljubiana. Reactive architecture in an urban environment.

On the contrary, a reactive<sup>11</sup> intent that is synergetic and “syn-strategic” – derived from a relational vocation with the milieu – would require a positive interaction in and with reality, as a product of a more “open” and “empathetic” experience. In this intrusive, and paradoxically reactivating, infiltration of the “swimmer-vector”, we find the strategic dimension of architecture as it interests us here.

The question is not to dissolve into the milieu – or to stand out against it – but rather to “pro-ject” from and with the milieu itself. The distant perspective is replaced by a propositional attitude that can even incorporate sculptural artifice (not just mechanical or organic) as a working tool.

Flexible topologies as opposed to Euclidean geometries. But also incorporations and reinterpretations on the limit between the sophisticated and the elemental, the direct and the (re)evaluated: raw materials and manipulated materials. New dynamics of “cooperation” and “synergy” (through “infiltration”, “resonance” and “interaction”) between nature, architecture, and milieu, which are not without ambiguous “ecological” nuances (merging of potentials, taking advantage of





energies, recycling resources, integrating actions) directly related to the role of architecture in our time and its new relational and connective function in scenarios that are progressively congested by the production and consumption of objects, but also distinguished by the exchange and transfer between multiple and unbiased demands.

Fusing information and codes, contingently and carefully – virtuality and materiality, nature and artifice – into new specimens where certain genes combine with other to respond effectively to local situations and global flows, expressing this “on the edge” condition, “between boundaries, places and times.”

The acceptance of the “impure” – of impurity, of what has not been refined or purified, what is unpredictable and unstable – would be one of the major victories of the new logic that we have touched on here. A logic associated with – actually or virtually – dynamic processes, i.e., evolving, open to change, to mixture and to variation.

In this acceptance of interaction and mixture, of the exchange and intersection of energies, we detect one of the fundamental keys to contemporary culture, intended to replace the old notion of an essential, compact and monolithic identity of things – and categories – with a more vague and impure quality.

More hybrid: being itself and many others at the same time. No longer a one-way, univocal arrow, but rather a sheaf that is oriented and diversified – capable of fluctuating, whirling and changing (exchanging information) without losing its specific condition: not “impositions from” or “incorporations into”, but rather “interactions between”.

The contemporary paradigm shift can be interpreted based on an ambivalent condition, intrusive and reactive at the same time, capable of processing information and re-elaborating it, entering a field of forces and influencing it, fluctuating and relaunching, resonating and transferring.

13.7. *Surfing in a datascape*. Ramon Prat: poster for a workshop directed by Winny Maas (ESARQ-UIC, Barcelona 1998).

13.8. Swimmer in a fluid medium: the swimmer's head pushes the liquid membrane, which covers and surrounds the infiltrated body, illustrating a process of dynamic interaction between medium and mediator.



This puts forth the need to work with a new type of operative conception that can synthesize this transfer from stability to dynamism, from addition to combination, from the unitary to the definitively heterogeneous, characteristic of our time.

## VII. Environment-Architectures

The contemporary debate has settled between the small-minded defense of a resistant universe, that is still subject to fixed and stabilized parameters of order (what is “secure” as a guarantee of “order”) which are often not without a certain purist puritanism, and the desire to coincide with a reality that is permanently “open” to the intuition (and acceptance) of a complex, dynamic and informational universe – ultimately more “restless” and impure – associated with more flexible and permeable trajectories with the ability to combine variation and interaction, mixture and change, and therefore singularity and irregularity.

Our universe, our cities, our behavior, even our time, largely respond to these dynamic, non-linear processes.

The field of architecture still relies, however, on models of order based on essential, fixed, stabilizing structures. “Vigilant”, rigid, strict, or simply arrogant structures, in that they are “autistic”. However, these inertias no longer seem to effectively and flexibly respond to the fluctuation, variety and heterogeneity of the events that define our reality.

Its high degree of synchronicity and diatonicity.

Current research aims to take on the possibility of conceiving new logics, new structures and organizations with the ability to better resonate with the evolving potential of information, to better articulate diversity and to “orient” uncertainty, to blend heterogeneity and to celebrate complexity; founded on a strange paradoxical condition, half way between determination and indetermination, between order and change, action and reaction, contract and indiscipline, systematicity and contingency; rigor and fantasy.

Between collaboration and transgression, as well.

This need to promote a transversal interaction, in every sense, explains the interest to move beyond the limits of architecture understood only as objectual design, and to refer instead to architecture conceived as a “relational environment”.

An architecture that can propose the materialization of processes rather than the definition and delimitation of events.

That can operate, therefore, with flexible geometries and organizations, which are more like differential orders rather than absolute orders. Elastic and adaptable topologies rather than rigid and universal grids. Dispositional logics, rather than compositional models.

An architecture that can design its own movements, in expressing them, in addition to the varying demands that call for it and configure it. Capable of working beyond boundaries and beyond traditional dichotomies.

With the context and beyond the context.

With the place and the city. With the city and the geography.

With nature and technology. With concepts rather than ideas.

With strategies rather than planning.

With systems rather than imagination.

With trajectories (and environments) rather than objects.

With fabrications rather than constructions.

With synthetic recordings rather than analytical outlines.

With dispositions – and *dispositifs* – rather than designs.

With evolutionary processes rather than contingent events.

The design and exploratory activity we are concerned with here moves in this ambiguous borderland between architecture and territory, construction and system, creation and logic, form and disposition, local dimension and global scale. Between this attempt to relate diversity and the ability to articulate it in new environments (systems, logics, processes) that are more expansive and expressive, more precise and creative, more operative and – why not? – laid back.

And this more open conception (for non-predetermined, for more

direct, spontaneous and plural; for more relational and evolving, but also for more playful, lively and uninhibited) of an architectural action that can come to terms with the complexity of our times, is what a certain number of us would like to contribute, by encouraging the definition of a new scenario for interaction.

A large number of the disciplinary adventures in recent years have expressed this desire to reach new – singular and plural – operative formulations, in new environments and new spatialities; apart from the old morphological or typological obligations.

This is the true cultural dimension of contemporary design: its capacity to formulate – consciously or unconsciously – new and surprising formulations.

Trajectories with the potential to express complex developments emerging from overlapping information, but also capable of articulating the appearance of unexpected – “rebellious” – expressions. Adapted to contingent situations of reality (with a heightened ability to encourage a qualitative pact between the factors that determine it) and, at the same time, intended to break with their own – by default – attributes.

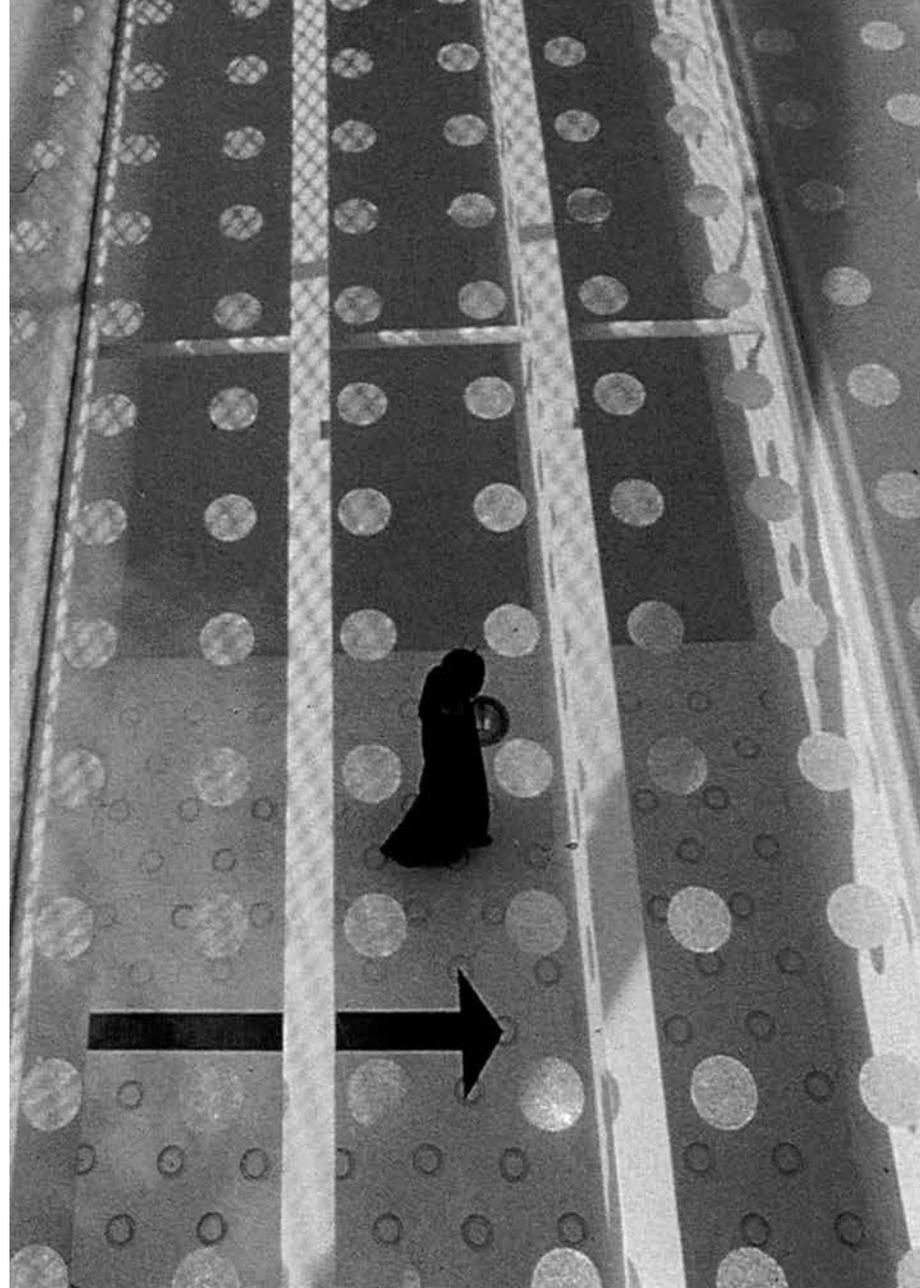
Formulations of possible “otherness”.

Trajectories generated within the “system” and “beyond” it.

Trajectories in which authenticity does not stem from some kind of essentialist foundation, but rather from this open process of plural – informational – exchanges and interactions called on to generate not just unexpected forms in space, but rather relations within space.

Processes rather than events. Environments rather than objects. No aesthetic images, but rather new and unexpected “trajectories” in the system.

Trajectories of change – and potential paradox – which, as a final decalogue – we will present in the following pages.<sup>12</sup>



1– See GAUSA, Manuel: *Operative Optimism*, ed. Actar, Barcelona 2005.

2– GUIHEUX, Alain: "Action," in V.V.A.A.: *The Metapolis Dictionary of Advanced Architecture*, ed. Actar, Barcelona 2003.

3– The term was coined by Frédéric Migayrou. The initial idea of dedicating two large exhibitions to the concepts of "Non-standard" and "Des-standard" has only been realized up to now in the first notion (Centre George Pompidou, 2003).

4– Migayrou delved into the key notions of a production that is differential and systematic and the same time in his concept of "non-standard" (Centre Georges Pompidou, 2003).

5– This architecture and art aims to coincide with reality. [...] It is a plea for acting and experiencing. It is inspired by a utopian desire to connect with time and reality, both being understood as fragmented. [...] Increasingly art and architecture are breaking free of representation as generated and maintained by the system. Priority is given instead to real presence. [...] It is no surprise then that the phrase "relational work" is on everyone's lips. [...] The new work of art is "relational"; its content is the interhuman experiences that it generates; every visitor becomes a spectator, discussion partner or next-door-neighbor." See Van der TOORN, Roemer: "Fresh Conservatism," *Quaderns* no. 219 (Reactive Architecture) 1998, p. 95.

6– Ibid.

7– "Critical pragmatism is a phrase used to describe a movement [...] in which the architect becomes a surfer on the tides of modern economic and social systems. She or he must try to maintain a balance, catch the latest waves of fashion and open a space in which a human being can live in the sea of commercially produced structures that makes up our modern landscape."

See BETSKY, Aaron: "Critical Pragmatism," in V.V.A.A.: *The Metapolis Dictionary of Advanced Architecture*, ed. Actar, Barcelona 2003.

8– See RUBY, Andreas: "Pragmatopia," in V.V.A.A.: *The Metapolis Dictionary of Advanced Architecture*, ed. Actar, Barcelona 2003.

9– See KWINTER, Sanford: *Architectures of Time: Toward a Theory of the Event in Modernist Culture*. MIT Press, Cambridge MA 2002.

10– "To relate with the world, we have to delve into it: today we just surf through it. [...] The words we use are very telling: 'search' comes from the Latin *circare*: 'to go around' an issue until you find the way out, the answer, the solution. [...] Nobody searches in life or in science now; they just surf through the experience of reality. Our way of understanding has changed: today wisdom means travelling across the surface of issues without getting tired, skillfully, surfing like on the Internet, moving along the surface of knowledge and of life, switching from one issue to another, but without and need or desire to delve deeper. For thinkers of my generation, surfing would be the height of stupidity; but today its the highest form of wisdom." BARICCO, Alessandro, interview with AMIGUET, Lluís, "La Contra," *La Vanguardia*, May 10, 2008.

11– As mentioned in Chapter 1, we use the word "reactive" here in the same terms in which it appears in issue number 219 of the magazine *Quaderns*. See also "Reactive architecture: proneist frame," in *Quaderns* no. 219 (Reactive Architecture) 1998, p. 5.

12– In complement, see also: GAUSA, Manuel: "Otro logos, otro locus," in CORTES, José Miguel: *En cualquier lugar, en ningún lugar*, ed. Centre d'art la panera, Fundació MARCO 2008.

## OPEN LOGIC, INFORMATIONAL LOGIC, ADVANCED THINKING FRAMEWORK CONDITIONS

### 7 PARAMETERS TO CHANGE PARADIGM:

- Complexity (Simultaneity)
- Dynamicity (Evolutivity)
- Diversity (Plurality - Combinatoriality)
- Transversality (Connectivity)
- Mixi(ci)ty* (Multiplicity)
- Interactivity (Interchange as Interaction)
- Reactivity (Responsivity and/or adaptability)

## OPEN LOGIC, RELATIONAL ORDER, INFORM(ATION)AL FORM

13.10. Computational flow diagram (Stan ALLEN: *Points + Lines: Diagrams and Projects for the City*, ed. Princeton Architectural Press, New York 1999).