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Non-periodical fascicles on architecture

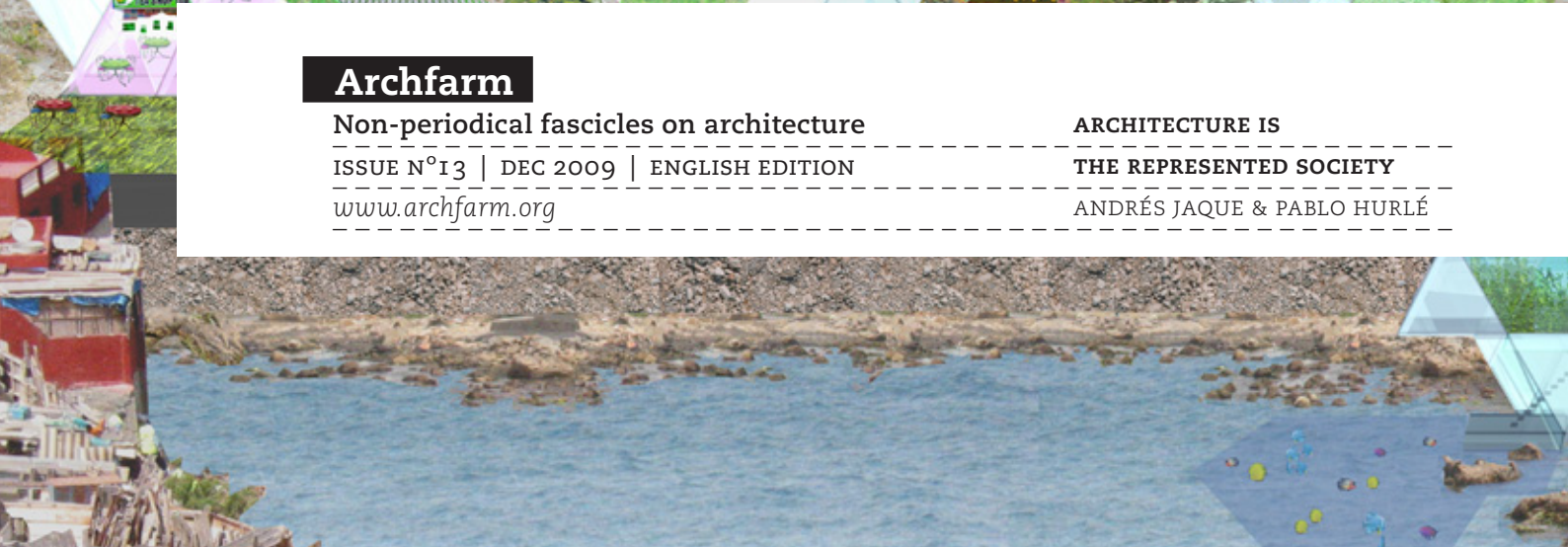
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ARCHITECTURE IS

THE REPRESENTED SOCIETY

ANDRÉS JAQUE & PABLO HURLÉ



1
Schmitt, Carl:
*El concepto
de lo político.*
Alianza
Editorial,
Madrid, 1999

2
Latour, Bruno:
“La tecnología
es la sociedad
hecha para
que dure”. In
M. Domènech
y F. J. Tirado:
*Sociología
simétrica.*
Barcelona,
1998

3
Jaque, Andrés:
“Políticas del
Daily Life.
Siempre es
verano en la
Teddy House”
(pp. 22-27,
*Pasajes de
arquitectura y
crítica* n°69,
Madrid,
September
2005)

I’m wondering if a Buddhist, tetraplegic woman educated in Madras, is as “represented” by the twenty four steps that lead to St Paul’s Cathedral as Prince Charles —a member of the Anglican Church, lover of the classical orders and polo player in his free time— is enough to create an idea of the political dimension of architectural decisions.¹

As the keyrings of the hotel “represent”, (like a deputy represents his voters) simultaneously, the ho-

tel director’s interest in avoiding the keys getting lost and the guests interest in getting out of the hotel quickly without annoying heavy objects in their pockets;² the architectural objects can be “parliaments” that, without the need to agree with the divergent criteria of the different affected agents, create frameworks, where the coexistence of sensitivities and interests on debate can be long-lasting and not too violent.³

In a Europe united by diversity, we start to see how the desire to participate with individual impulses, with personal cultures—even with the ones that can seem corny, tacky, twee or affected—, in building the collective sphere; that temple that, up to this date, was reserved for serious matters, for reasons of state and for the unmistakable wisdom of the experts, has reached an unprecedented public dimension.⁴ We have seen it when calling people to demonstrate against the allied participation in Iraq or in the quick success of existing supports for intimate exhibition —fotologs, flickr.

4

Giddens, Anthony:
Modernidad e identidad del yo. Barcelona, 1995

5

Wallace, David F: "Enibus pluram: televisión y narrativa americana". In *Algo supuestamente divertido que nunca volveré a hacer*. Barcelona, 2001

6

Fernández, Horacio y Jaque, Andrés:
Ciudad. PH05, Madrid, 2005

com or youtube.com—. Something is changing. Until very recently we learnt how to live like stereotyped thirty year old Californian men and women watching *Melrose Place*⁵ every week; now, between episodes of... let's say *Scrubs*, we tend to dedicate time to show, to an unknown community, our fake collection of Hello Kitty or how our taekwondo trainer's birthday ended. And this systematic practice of showing and spreading our daily trials, we create webs linked with idle cybernauts: affection webs, interchange, hate and conflict. All in all, we build the kind of things that, for a while, we have been calling "society."⁶

How to rebuild the architect's role and the protocols that define the post-illustrated Europe—that Europe which, instead of trying to homogenize the world based on a positivism and progress story, gets stronger by caring its resilience—This has been the aim of the work carried out in our architecture office for the past few years, starting from an interest in exploring architectur-

al channels, to allowing the diversity that constitutes reality, to have an effect on our daily life.

A possible transformation of the architect's role happens in the heart of the European Union. A transformation that, facing the modern project of establishing a unified ideological system run by an elite of experts, who have a privileged way of looking at reality and acting towards it, pretends to make public and represented the procedures which appear in our day to day. It's a role of the architect, who substitutes the starting up of the crystalline discipline perspective, for the creation of frameworks letting voices—many occasions marginal and necessarily contradictory and conflicting—enter into the city.

With this aim, the Oficina de Innovación Política Andrés Jaque Arquitectos has developed 20 patents. Through them, the role of the experts would change from being the science, reason and technology protectors to being the managers of permanent and represented

power making decisions. Managers of diversity and controversy, both elements being currently a part of the society as we live in. To sum up, taking the step from being the scientific architect to becoming the political architect.

PUNTO DE PASO OBLIGADO™

[Compulsory step point] Technological objects that—without unifying or attaching agreements—establish more or less enduring alliances between actors with different, contradictory or even opposite ideologies, expectations, interests, wishes, evolution times and aesthetic codes. The technological objects *punto-de-paso-obligado* are parliaments in which these actors are politically represented, and in which they become the privileged intermediaries, needed for implementing this association.

Example: the heavy hotel key-rings that simultaneously represent the hotel director's wish to avoid keys being lost and the guests' interest in getting out of the hotel

without worries and minor annoyances.

OBJETO DE ESCRUTINIO™

[Scrutiny object] Technological system equipped with automatic monitoring mechanisms that allow the continuous registration and evaluation of its operation. It implies a change of constructive paradigm: going from the exemplary object (prototype) to the lab object (uncertain object). And the architect's transition from being seen as an expert to acting as a risk manager/assessor. Examples: motorway networks or television audiences.

TRANSPARENCIA POLÍTICA™

[Political transparency] It is not the material transparency, nor the direct exposition of technological systems, but the attributes of those objects equipped with devices that allows people unconnected with their design and promoting a process to visualize its behaviour, to evaluate the implication that its function entails, and even to have access to its

transformation. Example: the windows interface of personal computers, which instead of exposing straight away visual aspects of circuits or lists of used software, they supply simple images allowing users to control them.

OBJETO DE CONCIERNO™

[Concern object] Object that incorporates in its constitution public concerns which can be activated by their production, use or transformation process. Example: the products supplied by Fair Trade networks, which help to improve economic conditions and to promote civil rights in countries in conflict or development.

TERMINAL DE RESPONSABILIDAD™

[Responsibility terminal] Object that has decision options allowing its users to modify the object's ethical behaviour in politically disputed issues. Example: the option to contribute to the maintenance of the Catholic Church when filling tax returns.

RED DE CALIDAD™

[Quality network] Technological system which has protocols to enlist its users as part of the system's evaluation and implementation community. This can occur, on the one hand, by incorporating users contribution to its design and update, and on the other hand, favouring the users daily lives that are reconstructed with the cultural capital contained in the system; while creating affective links between users. Example: Wikipedia.

COMUNIDAD DE EXPERTOS™

[Experts community] During the time that Méndez-Apenela family have been using their house, they have become experts in its use and handling. They know how long it takes for a swimming suit to dry on the clothesline, which is the first rose bush to bloom, or when will the fishmonger's van turn up. They use specific languages to name every zone of the house and garden, they use their own descriptions of the landscape near by and

Cover
illustration:
Peace Foam
City (Ceuta,
2005).
Andrés Jaque
Arquitectos

English
translation by
Elisabet Valle

Revised
by Eleanor
Moloney

also their own procedures to evaluate it. To sum up, they are able to mobilise their surroundings with their own mechanisms and associate with it creating suitable conditions for them. In other words, they have a privileged position which determines ways of linking with other agents, something, that can be called with some reserve the context, is possible. They are, and not the architects, the true experts in the Teddy House's design.

BANCO DE CONFIANZA™

[Trusted bank] It is not possible to make architecture alone. The work of an architect is necessarily an agreement between clients, builders, users, ozone holes and future generations. Each one of these agreements have unpredictable behaviours, which, when they occur, we can observe them, measure them and then try to intervene to correct our initial predictions.

Architecture is an experiment where the designer is an actor among others. An alliance that only

happens in a framework of opportunity and trust. Where certainty is not possible, trust is needed, but trust can be built. It can be built with transparency, translating into society, quality measures that are possible from the discipline itself and establishing those that can be developed in society. It can be built making possible that which belongs to a theoretical area could have a praxis corpus, placing what is promising next to what has been tested, showing how things that scares us work and connecting what is marginal and what already has prestige on the same level.

This trusted bank is all those things that architects and designers must gather to create trust in those agents who make the decision of contracting them. Examples: views of their critical position (articles, expositions, conferences), evidences (evaluated prototypes, buildings, patents), prestige (awards, recognitions, public positions), public guarantees (quality controls, indicators, guarantees).

COMUNIDAD DE DEMOSTRACIÓN™

[Demonstration community] Protocol for the social insertion of innovative products, based on the fact that users themselves are the ones who show the system's virtues to their friends, lovers or even unknown people in a word of mouth promotion model—which has proved effectiveness generating trust in products made for the construction of domestic reality—. The users themselves are the ones who enroll their friends in the city transformation process and become their tutors letting them to acquire the knowledge needed to participate in the design process.

Direct demonstration, between people that have some previous confidence, in festive settings, could do what publicity and direct marketing could not manage to do. Therefore, it is thought as an alternative to official strategic urbanism, based on demonstrative marketing experiences that were popular after World War Two and which have proved their efficacy as a dif-



Tupper Home,
2007. 1'42".
Andrés Jaque
Arquitectos.
Animation:
Karin Rangel.
Photos: Miguel
de Gúzman

fusion network, let's say pop, of reformist conducts guidelines. And that is how we have designed the Tupper Homes.

PERSPECTIVAS NO CRISTALINAS™

[Non crystalline perspectives] The increasing legal recognition of non human agents, the public dimension that the channels of prestige have reached (science for example is not only science anymore, it is science assuming its sponsors' interests and agendas) and the consequent dissolution of the expert's figure (of crystalline perspectives) as interpretation and placement of privileged action on reality, make current housing a political construction, where different analysis perspectives and even antagonistic ones need to coexist without claiming to be neither the only nor the best ones.

PUNTOS DE VISTA NO PRIVILEGIADOS™

[Non privileged points of view] Points of view or critical perspectives, from which the actors non

enrolled in the design but affected by it in one way or another describe stable supports, evaluate and modify the mentioned objects.

Example: Series of photographs of the Concorde, from the back gardens of Londoner suburbs by Wolfgang Tillmans. The critical perspective of users of those gardens has nothing to do with the one organized by the engineers who were involved in the design of Concorde.

REVIVAL DÉBIL DE LO MODERNO™

[Weak revival of modern things] Referred to the current use made of some typical artful devices of modern paradigms passed through a filter of impurity and ideological scepticism typical of what has been called weak thinking.⁷

EL MUNDO DE LAS COSAS QUE IMPORTAN™

[The world of things that matter] There exists a segmentation of social reality, the everyday sphere, which acts as reference system, measuring scale and testing frame-

work of knowledge developed in other spheres, like the scientific or the academic ones. The world of the things that matter, which is related to what Berger and Luckmann have described as the everyday reality⁸, points at the inefficacy of the verification channels which for a while have connected the architects' sphere and the ordinary social reality sphere.

The original notion was quite structural, and considered the existence of institutionalization processes in society, at a primary level, which allowed the emergence of autonomous social interaction fields, where the participants perceived as a 'second nature.' Nevertheless, it is not a revolution, it is simply enabling channels to connect which is in a second level with the first one. With that sphere in which things are visible and lots of decisions that matter are taken.

LOS MARAVILLOSOS SUPERPODERES DEL POP™

[The wonderful superpowers of pop]

Those techniques of experiential marketing for product design, democracy applied to objects, ecological equipment and the theory of political contemporary representation used to face the challenge that made us believe that it was possible to contextualize critically the architectural object —describe it, make it visible, measure it, evaluate it, advertise it— in a long conversation between pals. A challenge that makes recommendable trying to update a bit the architectural products and the critical context with which we equip them. We have a lack of own references for this adventure, but without any doubt, we count with the "wonderful superpowers of pop."

ARQUITECTURA DE PARLAMENTO™

[Parliament architecture] Probably, the new role of architecture will be to mediate contradiction, disagreement, interests conflict, generating situations more or less long-lasting in which, with certain public guarantees, the resulting diversity of in-

7

On this topic read: Vattimo, Gianni et al.: *El pensamiento débil*. Ediciones Cátedra. Madrid, 1988

8

Berger, Peter L. y Luckmann, Thomas: *La construcción social de la realidad*. Amorrortu Editores. Buenos Aires, 1968

dividualities could be built up without the need of a simplifying agreement. Enrolling the affected agents, from users to sponsors, from public administrators to the ozone hole in a quality network contributing to build up a varied society, represented in its technological and guaranteeing systems.

9

It takes its name inspired by the famous essay by Bourriaud, Nicolas: *Relational Aesthetics*. Les Presses du Reel. Dijon, 1998

10

Term was coined by Donald Judd. See *Complete Writings*, 1975-1986. Van Abbemuseum. Eindhoven, 1986.

ARQUITECTURA EUROPEA™

[European architecture] Europe has become the territory that aims to get itself built with little tests of always provisional results being contested.

The Schuman Declaration, for a lot of people the origin of the European Union, proposed the shared experience as a capital to create cohesion between European citizens. If we test our own lives among others, in a defining problem process, creating the critical framework in which they can be sorted out, using these frameworks and evaluating their evolution, we will end up creating links between us, we will build a common union. The 80,000

pages of normatives approved in the European Union since the creation of the Common Market in 1957, known as the *acquis communautaire* or accepted facts by the community, they could not be defined neither as an exciting manifest on the collective or individual search for happiness or as the definitive project of the emancipation of poor people in the world, or a protocol of redemption and saintliness. This accepted facts are the memory of a collective experience, and it is not an easy point to explain. An experience of different cultures, coexistence enlightened by what could be more or less called the empiric cessation of the ideology.

ARQUITECTURA RELACIONAL™

[Relating architecture] Architecture is the device that mediates and stabilizes the relationships between actors with inter-related and contradictory interests. We believe in a professional practice which does not create meta-languages, which does not use fixed reference frame-

works in which the reality data must fit. It does not consider the rest of agents as informers but as actors.⁹

OBJETO NO ESPECÍFICO™

[Non specific objects] The specific object¹⁰ would be that autonomous object in its inception which used to claim being the centre of its own reality. In this moment we are currently aware that contexts are built up using devices in the same way that the objects we design. There is no divorce between object and context. In fact, scrutinizing political guarantees which contribute to create non specific objects designed by us is the way to take on today's biggest worries.

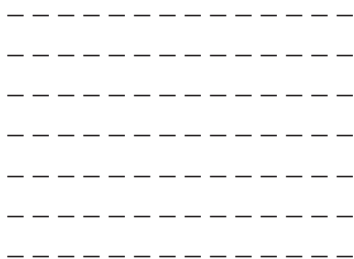
ARQUITECTURA RESILIENTE™

[Resilient architecture] Architecture composed by specialized agents, with partially redundant functions. So the crisis of an agent can be compensated with the operative inflation of another one with a similar functionality, allowing the adaptability of the architectural system

to transformations or catastrophes coming from the outside.

CIUDAD REPRESENTACIÓN™

[Representation City] the modern city was thought as the city of consummated facts. An autonomous object which used to have the keys for a predefined citizenship. And it is now when we observe new ways of citizenship that make us think about the city as a representation object. An object in permanent construction in which the statements of a large group of creative individuals are tested in real time, helping to build up an experimental and scrutinized day to day.



About the authors

Andrés Jaque is an architect and projects lecturer at the ETSAM, Madrid. As Tessenow Stipendiat, he has been an intern researcher at the Alfred Toepfer Stiftung (Hamburg)]. He has also been a guest lecturer at Universidad Javeriana de Bogotá (Colombia), Escuela de Arquitectura de Alicante, at Fundación Mies van der Rohe de Barcelona, at Fundación Marcelino Botín, at Escuela de Arquitectura de Valencia and at Universidad de Castilla La Mancha. He

develops a continuous critic task, has published a large number of articles in specialized magazines and has given conferences in academic and professional Spanish and European forums. Furthermore, he is also a permanent member of Young European Architects group (Rotterdam) and of Programa de Estudios Internacionales (Bogotá).

Since January, 2000 he manages Andrés Jaque Arquitectos office, and since 2003 Oficina de Innovación Política too. His work has been awarded in several competitions and has been published in international magazines like Domus, A10 or Le Moniteur d'Architecture, publications like Architecture Tomorrow or Emergence 4, and has been shown at the Hellerau Festspielhaus in Dresde (Germany), La Casa Encendida (Madrid), the 7 Mostra di Architettura de la Biennale di Venezia or the Bienal de Arquitectura Iberoamericana 2004 in Lima (Perú). His work Teddy House has received the award Grande Área to the best architectural project of 2005 in

Galicia and has won the award Dionisio Hernández Gil for Casa Sacerdotal Diocesana of Plasencia, which is part of the selection of the VIII Bienal Española de Arquitectura.

Pablo Hurlé is a sociologist by the Universidad Complutense de Madrid and journalist by the Universidad Carlos III de Madrid. He also has the qualification in university Specialization in 'Praxis de la Sociología de Consumo: Teoría y práctica de la investigación de mercados' ['Praxis of the Consume Sociology: Theory and practice of the markets investigation'] by the UCM.

He has also been educated in Institut for Statskundskab, Politics Science department of Kobenhavns Universitet, University of Copenhagen, Denmark, where he has treated issues and done investigations like 'Citizenship and Human Rights in a Multicultural Society', 'Party Organizations: What's Happening?' and 'Global Governance and Security'.

Since September 2006, co-directs the Oficina de Innovación Política Andrés Jaque Arquitectos.