

THE ARCHITECT AS A PLANETARY GARDENER***Ferdinand Ludwig, Daniel Schönle**

Our planet is not a technical system! Ironically, we needed AI to (re) learn this and refer to our planet in biological terms and see it as an open network. As architects we are process designers. Our work is embedded in this ecosystem and place and has to play a positive role in it. Any kind of built structure is an integral part of the ecosystem and plays a unique role.

This is the opposite of how architects understood their profession previously. Architecture had been an inert, closed box, in contradiction to the environment. Its tradition was to protect and separate humans from their surroundings, from nature. The mainstream understanding of ecological design was that something is ecologically valuable only if it saved energy. This is where the idea of houses as isolated boxes came from. Only when the time had come to tear them down and deal with the trash did we realize that it had no use. Because our environment is a system and we can't close the circle that way. It's not possible.

The integration of natural growth and technical elements in Bau- botanik structures is not only about solving this problem. When we started with our early designs back in 2005, the mainstream architects were mocking us: "This cannot be architecture, because this is not an object you have designed." Similar to the beginning of the 20th century when architects referred to railway stations as infrastructure and engineering. We were attacked by our colleagues for giving up too much of our knowledge and design sovereignty to the unknown. Like to a tree, that is designing itself and therefore out of control. Traditionally it was seen as a risk not to know how something would develop and perform over time. But in order to about optimisation, change, adaptation or control, you need a fixed goal to measure. So when we don't know the goals and the aims we want to fulfill in twenty years, architecture has to be an open system.

Thinking in fixed objects is much riskier than thinking in open processes. Fixed entities remove all possibilities for future change and are unable to adapt the past. It took us 30 years to shift our way of understanding and to find out that these systems, technically and ecologically, are nested within each other on very different scales of space and time. From a planetary scale down to the micro and nano. From centuries, to decades, seasons and seconds. All are interlinking and interacting in the feedback loop that connects the smaller and the bigger world. It is clear to us that a living, adaptable system is the only way to address the challenges of any kind of future, and to grasp the future is very difficult. We feel comfortable, not only as designers, that we cannot exactly foresee how a building and our cities will look in the future. In architecture, we have a tradition in systemic thinking when designing our cities, creating closed circles of material and waste, water and resources. An integral whole is created by the integration of nature and natural systems. These new developments are a representation of processes, of time, and of adaptations within design. As architects we are designing these adaptations and open systems. That is why we are speaking about the tree as our co-designer, moving us out of the center of the design process. Object-design is not the key point, as it will change over time anyway. It was hard work to flip this around.

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Putting the human out of the center and in perspective to other species that are inhabiting our built environment, helps us to think in much longer rhythms: not only until after the next election, but even longer than our whole life.

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