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THE CONCEPT: A MAP FOR GENERATIONS

Abstract
The concept features as a vital element in architectural protocol and its vocabulary. If architecture and philosophy are defined as creation of concepts, then they are the *terra nullius* shared by both disciplines. By distinguishing the architectural concept from its philosophical counterpart, this paper analyzes the former as an entity that animates and directs a project as the documental prefiguration of an architectural object. In a more radical move, we consider architecture itself as a concept, that is, what makes architecture what it is and what this discipline can become tomorrow. In addition to decisively participating in the process of generating an object yet to be constructed (the *fetus* of a building), on a correlative level, the concept has an essential role in theoretical self-thematization of architecture and guards the future of the architectural profession as an autonomous intellectual discipline.

In the radical reflection on the institution of architecture, a principal question whose answer – here without any prescriptive intention – determines its further development and changes, as well as its disciplinary *preservation*, consists of what architecture really is. Is there an aspect of architects' work not discursively communicable or didactically transferrable from one generation to the next? Does the essence of epoch-defining, or at least authoritative architectural objects manifest primarily in their material objectivity which transcends any attempt of reconstruction of their project genesis? If this claim is true, then the force of architecture resists any propaedeutic. Perhaps there will always be a part of architecture that «cannot be put into words» (Tschumi 1996: 84). Yet, such an epistemological observance still does not mean that the element of the architectural object not entirely verbally comprehensible ought to remain beyond the theoretical. The experience of space can cause expressionless awe, but «where there is silence, there is most to be said» (Libeskind 2008: 16). In order for architecture to continue its life, not everything connected to it should

remain unspoken, despite the architectural object dealing with the silent and the unspeakable.

Architects themselves, not least the already mentioned Daniel Libeskind and Bernard Tschumi, have employed verbal means to draw the limits of linguistic expression when speaking of architectural works. Their statements testify less about the powerlessness of verbal language, and more to the potential of architectural form. A deficiency of words that occurs and spreads before an architectural object on account of the impressiveness of its structure, additionally and decisively legitimates its status as a work of art. «The ineffable or the immeasurable gives a sense of wonder that forms the difference between building and architecture» (Libeskind 2002).[1] Although what is at the heart of the ineffable can never be gleaned in an absolute way, what is it that drives this reaction before a building *qua* architectural work? «Concept, not form, is what distinguishes architecture from mere building» (Tschumi 2012: 41).[2] On the one hand, the concept as the differentiating criterion of the architectural object from mere building (as a physical shelter, place of dwelling); on the other, the category of ineffability, both in contrast to the same member of the pair. Assuming that both statements melt into one point, one goal, and attempting a single conclusion starting from these two observations, should we speak of an ineffability of the concept or the concept of ineffability? Which of these two directions, two ways, leads to comprehension of the essence of architecture? Some will undoubtedly say neither, given that architectural reality in totality is the world of *effata*.

The conceptual side of architecture does not only cover the field of theoretical debate, an otherwise vital segment of its disciplinary being in which the architect uncovers the figure of philosopher within. Today, conceptual reflection is equally important in architectural practice, in the aspect of this activity that refers to intellectual, rather than manual, dimension of object design (to what Plato would refer as that through which the hand passes without stronger resistance).

If architecture and philosophy are to be defined as creation of concepts (Vesnić 2017: 1122) then concept is a *terra nullius* shared by both disciplines. Yet, the given definition that unites the two disciplines, inspired and drawn

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[1] In Ancient Athens, the experience of wonder (*thaumázein*) was seen as the beginning of philosophy, in particular by Plato (*Thaet*. 155d) and Aristotole (*Met*. 982b). It is indicative that Libeskind connects this experience with emancipation of architecture. Plato's very next words in the *Theaetetus* say that philosophy deals with things that cannot be firmly grasped by hand, with actions, generations and everything invisible as partaking in being (155e) (Plato 1995: 299), while Aristotle, in the relevant passage, claims that theoretico-philosophical thought – wondering at the *génesis* of the universe – is not reducible to its practical utility (Aristotle 1997, I: 7). It remains a matter of debate how much these characteristics can also be applied to the art of architecture.

[2] This sentence was published in the accompanying catalogue to Tschumi's exhibition *Architectural Manifestoes*, held in 1978 in Artists Space in New York, in the document replete with the grammatical future tense (every manifest is an announcement, a promise, but also a «contract» the undersigned makes with himself or herself, as well as with society).

following the Deleuzian trace, is complemented by an annex according to which architecture is not only the creation of concepts. Rather, it makes use of them with the aim of generating other objects. This nuance demands a more elaborate thematization and a criterion for differentiation of the architectural from its philosophical counterpart is to be offered.

In the European vernacular tradition, terms directly connected with the Latin *conceptus* have not always and absolutely referred to the same thing. Separately developing in various humanist poetics, variants of the term in Romanic languages contain an important element or layer not reducible to signifying a purely logical act. Indeed, they indicate decisively the figurative moment of thought and the faculty of productive imagination. German differentiates between *Begriff* and *Konzept* – in architectural discourse this distinction becomes conspicuous in the work of Oswald Mathias Ungers – but predominantly, the first names a crucial instance in the codified philosophical vocabulary. Although similar in register, there is – as we shall see – a difference between them, that goes beyond pure etymology. When Nicola Abbagnano, in his *Dizionario di filosofia* gives definitions for the entry *concetto*, he is covering what German labels with *Begriff* (Abbagnano 1971: 146), and not the more original meaning the word previously carried in Italian culture. In any case, the polysemy of the lexeme, revealed in its linguistic plurality across Europe, inevitably influences the logic of functioning of architectural discourse. Indeed, it imposes the question of which is the more adequate and precise form of expression and communication of the concept, the abstract or the figural?

Conceptus literally means "fetus", entity conceived in the mother's womb, product of interior gestation. However, in late Roman times it begins to be metaphorically used to designate intellectual representation of something developing in the mind (Panaccio 2013: 164-165). The word later enters philosophical vocabulary, and in accordance with its etymology, in which *con-capere* [to take together] indicates a unification of a plurality in a common apprehension, it acquires the status of a term that epistemologically refers not only to the product or process of the mind's engagement, but a collection of a multitude of elements in a single perception.

The biologistic background of the idea of the concept as fetal creation of the mind has also found its way onto the space of architectural discourse. The maieutic image of the internal architectural process of generation of edifices is shown in *Libro architettonico* (1464) by Filarete. This text explicitly states that an edifice cannot be the deed of one individual and the architect is marked as a female figure. Drawing on the Ancient tradition of analogy between work of art and living organism allows for the claim that the edifices are generated in the same way as the human beings. Thus, the architect is marked as the mother of the edifice, «the architect is mother carrying this generation» [*l'architeto è madre a portare questo ingeneramento*] (Filarete 1972: I, 40). Before "giving birth", that is, produces a building, the architect must bear its conception for an appropriate

amount of time «on his mind». Hence, the "mother-architect" could be seen as a figure that ensures the perdurance of community life.

In *Del concetto poetico* (1598), Camillo Pellegrino also uses the kind of analogy previously found in Filarete. One side in the dialogue asks the question what is a concept, what is its role, and what is necessary for a work to have to be remembered and transmitted «ai futuri secoli» (Pellegrino 1971: 66). As one of the first tracts to be strongly influenced by the conceptualistic redefinition of art theory, the text appears at a time when poetics increasingly considers human life in light of vanity (quickly comes the moment when of man not even dust remains). Here too the *concetto* is described as the artist's act that produces in his head a model intended to become the real object. Indeed, the whole text brims with terms referring to the activity of procreation, bringing into the world what was formerly only imagined, such as «dare vita» or «parorire», «nascere» or «generazione». One of its central categories, doubtlessly, is *ingegno*, designating the artist's general faculty for production of new entities by unusually connecting sundry objects and phenomena, the root word of which also indicates the act of giving birth and production.

From here, the concept in architecture will be further developed along two lines, or perhaps put better, along a single *two-way* street. In the narrow sense, we will discuss and analyze the role and modalities of representation of the *architectural concept* as an entity that animates and conditions the project (the documental prefiguration of the future architectural object). In a more fundamental move, *architecture as concept* will be considered, that is, what is it that makes architecture what it is and what this discipline can be tomorrow.

Although it was the generation that emerged in the 1970s – among others Peter Eisenman, Tschumi and Jean Nouvel – that would strongly reactivate the institute of the architectural concept in the moments when architectural profession was facing its historical crisis and was demanding redefinition of its language, its proto-form is as old as architecture itself and will presumably last as long as this discipline. This observation does not mean that contemplating and comprehending of the concept in architecture has not changed over time, that its affirmation has not undergone ebbs and flows; on the contrary: its definition and recurrence in theoretical writing has shown considerable diachronic variability.

The phenomenon of conception of work of art, followed by gestation in the artist's mind prior to finally being realized, fulfilling its *télos* – the seminal drawing that precedes the material one – has assumed a significant, even decisive, place in artistic theoretical writing appearing in moments of institutional efforts of establishing architecture as an independent discipline to be as such studied at academies and not anymore as an art of mere building in craft workshops. Architecture's defense – in which the capacity of the artist for the act of ideation of his product had an inevitable legitimating role – unfolded on two levels: the institutional and theoretical, that is to say, the documental. In his *Trattato dell'arte della pittura, scoltura et architettura*, Giovanni Paolo Lomazzo writes about the

concetto «without which it is not possible for anything good to succeed» (Lomazzo 1584: 432). Federico Zuccaro, the director of the Roman Accademia, in his tract *L'idea de' pittori, scultori ed architetti* writes about «the concept formed in our mind to be able to know anything, and operate outside conforming to the intended thing» (Zuccaro 1607: 4). Zuccaro sees the professional term «concetto» as an element of primarily artistic vocabulary and differentiates it from similar technical terms, such as «intenzione», used by philosophers, or «idea», mined by theologians (Zuccaro 1607: 5). It is a concept from which begins all artistic production of a work as the discipline of the intellect and which preserves the just acquired and still fragile autonomy of the profession.

Within the body of tractatistics of metaphysical provenance that includes Filarete, Lomazzo and Zuccaro, the concept is considered above all as a mental object, content of the original intention in the consciousness of the architect, which subsequently acquires a direct material expression in the form of drawing and then building (Federico Zuccaro – it is said – writes that what the artists call *concetto*, the philosophers name *intenzione*).

However, if we were to remain exclusively in this epistemological position, a correlative yet significant problem emerges. Namely, the idealist premise about the logical and temporal primacy of the signified in relation to the act of its effective realization or exteriorization. Without material trace to verify not only the effectiveness of the conceptual intention, but its existence in the first place, the architectural concept itself, as an originally mental construct acquires the status of unspeakable architectural intention. In *Teoria del progetto architettonico: dai disegni agli effetti*, Alessandro Armando and Giovanni Durbiano describe the nature of such a procedural pattern, asocial and solipsist at heart, as «rhetoric of authorial unspeakability» (Armando, Durbiano 2017: 71). From the intersubjective point of view, the inner life of the impenetrable authoritative subjectivity of the architect, within which the concept appears, remains a transcendent space about which nothing can be known – a «black box». Instead of considering the architectural project a derivative or translation of an architect's original intention, the ontological autonomy is assigned to it by shifting the emphasis from its relation with the figure of the architect to the effect it produces in the world aiming to transform a given place.

Starting from a model of a simple, linear projection of the architect's intention, and not from measurable effects of the architectural project, leads to the appearance and establishment of an «unspeakable level of infinite hermeneutics» (Armando, Durbiano 2017: 377). This unending and uneconomical process would be thus generated by the *ineffabilità* of the architect's artistic expression. On the other hand and seen practically, this also means that there is always a risk of asymmetry of intention and its fulfillment, i.e. for the concept's material expression to be unsuccessful, partial or impoverished (a child the parents were not expecting to be as such).

A concept is more than a single idea and much more than a spontaneous moment of project inspiration. Alfonso Muñoz Cosme defined the concept as a complex system of inter-related ideas, carrying strength enough to launch the creation of the architectural project (Cosme 2008: 99-100). As product of intellectual effort, a designed network of ideas, it stimulates the architect's act of the construction of what is to come, and *facto ipso*, a still inexistent object. As part of the process of work on an architectural structure, before the creation of the main document that sublimates it, the concept is the main subject of the phase of ideation of a project.

Over time, however, there has been a shift in the interpretation of the concept from a purely mental object, a formation of the architect's psyche which originally remains within it, towards its de-psychologization and definition as a correlative of an architectural object that regulates and proleptically directs the action of projection.

The problem of the concept in architecture does not only encompass the theme of the architectural concept, understood as an entity with a generative and operative function directing the architectural project, but includes the topic of the essence of architecture, that is, the consideration of the very concept of architecture. In *Notes on Conceptual Architecture: Towards a Definition* (1971), Peter Eisenman insists on the difference between the perceptive and conceptual aspect of architecture. Eisenman is seeking the conceptual structure in the architectural object, by reducing its sensual attributes (Eisenman 2004: 10-27). That is to say that the concept is considered as the *eîdos* of the architectural object (one of Abbagnano's two basic natures of the concept [Abbagnano 1971: 146-148]). The object of architecture can have a physical and ideal form, but either way – continues Eisenman – it must have weight (as long as there is ground and gravity).

In a recent interview given in Belgrade, significantly entitled *The Last/Next Fifty Years of Architecture*, Eisenman expressed his unease that we do not know the direction of the future, and on what we will be *standing* and walking tomorrow. Due to this uncertainty, it is necessary to think the essence of supporting structures on which all else stands and on which this world rests. Ground is one such object. Yet it should not be understood only as a physical object, but simultaneously as horizontal, surface (or horizon) that represents the condition of construction of objective reality upon which and through which architecture will be practiced.

The ground is one of those issues, because while there is a literal ground, there is also an ideal ground, a conceptual ground, an abstracted ground if you want, that deals with what architecture is about today and in the future, that is the ground of the urban, the ground of the rural, the ground of any institution. As we build on this Earth, how, in what way, ground is conceptualized becomes important (Eisenman 2016: 251).

The reduction of the architectural object to its purely conceptual and imperceptible dimension is nevertheless only one phase or moment in the movement that leads towards the fundamental possibility of redefining the being of architecture. After all, the subject of conceptual architecture can also be architecture itself. It is possible to conceptualize within architecture by shifting the focus of reflection from the objects to architecture *itself*, returning in this move to the question of its disciplinary status and role. Self-thematization is one of the basic conditions of its survival as an autonomous discipline, and this capability implies reflection regarding the field and limits or architectural register. This method opens the space for determining «what is and is not architecture, what it has been and will be» (Bojanić 2015: 54). Thinking ontologically the concept of architecture means thinking about its future. When architectural discipline conceives and generates *something*, when it brings a potentiality from non-being into the space of social reality, the very same act inevitably must anew reconstitute its own being.

Consider the Acropolis Museum in Athens (2009), a project by Bernard Tschumi Architects. Note what the architectural concepts of transparency and reflection have generated and how they have left a significant effect. By nature, they correspond to the idea of a democratic institution wherein all the artifacts are presented and available as public goods. The generous use of glass in the museum's construction means that transparency is present, not only as an idea, but materially. The glass floors allow for visual continuity between its levels, in particular the archeological site found below its ground floor. At the museum's main entrance, on Dionysiou Areopagitou street, the large trapezoid glassless aperture also grants view to the excavation site at its base.

The building itself is divided into three clear parts. As the gaze rises, the building makes increasing use of glass. The peak of transparency is achieved in the uppermost gallery that houses the Parthenon frieze along with accompanying sculptures in their original arrangement. All four walls on this level are made of glass, without any solid vertical barrier to partition off its spacious and illuminated interior from the city spreading all around it. The visitor to the gallery's northwestern side has an unobstructed view of the temple to which this exposition space is entirely dedicated. The abundance of natural light further increases with the creative positioning of the top section as well as with the large central opening in the roof. Seen from the outside, the glass walls also provide a good reflection of the Parthenon. This confirms the concept of the Museum as a meta-image of the Acropolis and its famous main building. The reflection produces a spatial image of temporal duration and preservation of an invaluable civilizational location.

This realized projected points to a concept of architecture as *dialogue*. The building communicates vertically with Europe's past: it literally stands on the remains of an ancient city, draws together the records that historically constitute it, presenting them through chronologically arranged periegesis, but also preserves them for times

ahead. Parallel to this, the Museum is conducting a horizontal "conversation" with its given urban surroundings, respecting the found *genius loci*. The positioning of the building's base aligns with the grid of the Athenian neighborhood to which it belongs, further blending in with a contemporary appearance. In the interior, the sloped approach and stairs to the second level evoke climbing to the Acropolis. The uppermost elegant structure, with its tilted axis, form and dimensions corresponds to the nearby Parthenon, as an echo of its main referent. The Acropolis Museum is thus a dialogical object in terms of temporality and topography.

The main concern regarding the status of the architectural concept is the problem of its evidence and materialization – in a word, its *figuration*. And although architecture and philosophy are activities whose common denominator is the production of concepts, it is necessary at this point to flesh out this thesis with the claim that there is nevertheless a difference regarding the way of realization of their *final* objects. The architectural concept implies a distinct materiality, although in itself devoid thereof (Tschumi 2012: 6-7, 741). Instead of words and sentences, marble, brick, glass, concrete…[3]

If the conceptual aspect of the architectural object is invisible, generally transcendent to the senses and irreducible to perception, how can the concept be fully grasped and comprehended? Given that the primary dimension of architectural form is material, the question is how we can reach what lies underneath the surface layer of the object. Is its formal structure better *thought* through a language model? Refusing intelligible transparency of words to the architectural object displays skepticism about the use of linguistic analogies.

While the aesthetic, perceptual, and sensual aspect of objects can be made secondary in language where the word-object is given sign or code properties, to shift from an aesthetic to a conceptual focus in architecture and art, where there is no agreed-upon sign system, would seem to pose a problem of greater difficulty (Eisenman 2004 [1971]: 13).

There is great weight to the underscored observation that «the concept can be expressed through various forms» (Cosme 2008: 100). Two basic modalities of its communication are the word and/or image. The members of this dichotomy further branch and encompass the drawing, diagram, map, model, description or narrative,

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[3] In "Margins of Architecture", Maurizio Ferraris notes that the conceptuality of the architectural object is today «apparently off-topic». Clearly, the adverb "apparently" indicates that this is in fact not the case. Still, in absolute prioritization of concept over work, there has been an evident two-sidedness of strategy, positive and negative: the architect ought to cultivate an intellectual dimension of their profession, to remain in touch with the epoch they live in (actually, to maintain and protect their profession); yet simultaneously, the physical architectural object can from this point of view be seen to be only «a trifling detail» (Ferraris 2013: 49–50). To paraphrase a philosophical *tópos*, it could justifiably be said that – in contrast with real building – one cannot dwell in the architectural concept. One lives and works not in the abstraction of the concept, but within the place of the concept's effect, that is, its material realization.

photo essay, collage… If the concept is not detectable prior to expression, then the action of its notation must of necessity obey the various laws of its potential signifiers. The process of conceptual generation broadly reaches the method of deductive reasoning and synthetic act of intuition. Whether the approach to this initial problem of creation will be more or less discursively structured is a matter of choice for the architect or group brought together in the studio.

The attempt to reconcile the extremes of these two positions in order to formulate and represent the architectural concept, cannot be conducted by applying the principle of equivalence that would neutralize the ontological tension between the visaul image and verbal sign on the assumption of the guaranteed identity of their contents. It is true that the efficiency of language resides in «its ability to be highly precise in some cases and completely vague in others» (Stapenhorst 2016: 149), but at the same time in this characteristic lies its weakness.

Helio Piñón protests sharply against the overemphasized role of the concept in architectural theory and practice. In *Teoría del proyecto*, he claims that the art of architecture is visual in nature and that the idea of ideal transparency is an attribute of electoral processes or banking systems, but that it is not appropriate for material reality of architecture. Since the concept is the instrument of reason, which as such is most adequately expressed via linguistic form, in the art of architecture can be spoken of a conceptual activity only metaphorically. In this manner ought to understand the statements according to which buildings or architectural projects are considered as living beings that can "speak" or "respond".

Conceptualism ultimately culminates in identifying concepts that have determined the architectural episode under consideration. It thus negates the experience of the work: to the extent to which it avoids the visual, it reduces the appreciation of art to the pure identity of rational nature (Piñón 2006: 76).

Idealization of the object would lead to the reduction of architecture to a conceptual activity. Due to this kind of proportional regression, it is important when taking into account such discursive argumentation not to lose sight of the role of the intuitive approach. The act of architectural projection must be considered a dialectic within which takes place the synthesis of the process of visual intuition and intellection.

Starting from the premise that the concept, as intention of the architect, represents the absolute criterion of legitimation and verification of the architectural structure, it therefore follows that architectural practice is ruled by the law of desire or expectation.[4] Concepts that voluntarily animate projects cannot guarantee the level of attainment of final product.

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[4] In his criticism of the «architecture of ideas», Helio Piñón more than once uses the term *antojo*. In addition to meaning whim or fancy to have something not yet possessed (generally

Any observation regarding the quality of architecture is seen as impertinent before the eloquence of a discourse that is considered the guarantee of the specific formal legality of the work and its historical and social legitimacy (Piñón 2006: 84).

That the architectural concept is difficult to raise above the level of the sensory evident in the direction of purely intellectual activity can be gleaned from the theoretical reflection of O.M. Ungers who connects conceptual thinking to the world of perceptible reality, on which the visionary character of imagination is grounded. The architect is described as a *visionary*, as one who scrutinizes and creates analogies between objects where none other has *previously* seen any, who seeks relations between architectural and non-architectural entities that did not exist until moment they are invented and established (edifices based on images of human body, fish, birds, ships…). By forming and transforming various phenomena as their present themselves to the sentient experience, architects create "the visionary space of coherent systems" (Ungers 1982: 14). This is a reduced approach and what can be legitimately called "analogous" or "morphological concept," in the sense that it represents but one point on the map of conceptual territory.

Ungers posits three levels of reality, using them to design the order of architectural relations of the object, concept and idea. It is important to note here that the word "reality" [*Realität*] is not directly tied to the German verb *wirken*, which already contains within itself a moment of action, activity, effectiveness.[5] These three strata of reality are: the factual reality to which corresponds "the object" [*die faktishe Realitat – das Objek*], perceptual reality, that is, "the analogy" [*die konzeptuelle Realitat – die Analogie*] and conceptual reality, "the idea" [*die begrifiche Relitat – die Idea*] (Ungers 1982: 14-15).

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something of impermanent character), it also designates judgment based on insufficient insight. *Antojo* popularly also designates desire ascribed to a pregnant woman, as well as a birthmark on the body of a person, a sign of unfulfilled desire of his or her mother during pregnancy.

[5] The German language differentiates two types of reality, *Realität* and *Wirklichkeit*, and this distinction can be followed in Hegel's opus. While the first term designates reality in the sense of material things (matter), what is given, on which no action has taken place, the second describes effectual reality. It would seem that the latter term is more appropriate to the designation of the area of the conceptual of which Ungers speaks. At the very beginning of the section on architecture in *Aesthetics* (III, 1), we find the following lines:

> By making its content emerge into a determinate existence in the real [*wirkliche*] world, art becomes a *particular* art and therefore we can now speak for the first time of art *realized* [*realen*] and so of the actual [*wirklichen*] beginning of art» (Hegel 1975: II, 630).

The building attributes of mass and weight carry the danger of it being relegated onto the level of mere reality. However, given that architectural structures are a product of artistic endeavor, they cannot be characterized as mere things among things. Buildings are described as «mute» and «wordless» objects (Hegel 1975: I, 354; II, 636).

By structuring reality in three parts, Ungers puts the concept down below the level of ideas. The conceptual acting of the architect, directed by the mental power of imagination, is not so tied to the pure space of ideas. (At this point, Ungers and Piñón are of one mind regarding the emphasis on the primacy of the visual at the expense of the abstract approach in conceiving of the architectural object.) However, the roof element in Ungers' architectonics – the one corresponding to the highest type of reality – although it incorporates into itself or grasps the thing through its mental representation, has no potentiality for acting further in conceptualizing reality in the way that the *Konzept* does. Thus, instead of a hierarchical relation of the ideal over the conceptual plan, the inversion of the top two levels of reality in Ungers' schema should be demanded, or else placing them in a horizontal relation.

The *Begriff* itself is tied to a more contemplative approach to reality, as opposed to the more creative approach through the *Konzepte*. Thus, instead of a representation of reality, the latter rather generates active change within it. The operation of analogy contains a more dynamic principle, a tension of seeking and establishing new relations that, once observed, the architectural gesture turns into what they *will grow* into. Conceptual thinking produces reality, not so much by analytically drawing in various objects, but by creatively delivering the products that result from a combination of certain of their aspects. Such thinking method is grounded on a metaphor: «The analogy establishes a similarity, or the existence of some similar principles, between two events which are otherwise completely different» (Ungers 1982: 12). This approach strongly resembles the aforementioned poetics of *conceptismo*, initiated by Pellegrino, where the *concetto* is more related to the productivity of imagination, than to the purely logical activity. The *Konzepte* here reconfigure the objective reality, and – in their potentiality – they are able to disrupt and complicate the suggested tripartite hierarchical structure.

If the difference between mute and linguistic architectural acts were hypothetically abolished, the question of the modality of the expression of the concept in architecture would become irrelevant. The concept of connecting architecture and verbal language, in which the relation of separateness disappears towards the possibility of their paralellity and closer intertwining in a metaphorical manner, only appears in tracts written in French during the 18th century. We find such theoretical considerations in Germain Boffrand and Jacques-François Blondel, both members of the *Académie royale d'architecture*. Where the first sets up a linguistic analogy in *Livre d'architecture* by claiming that elements of building are to architecture what words are in discourse (Boffrand 1745: 22), the latter describes architecture in *Cours d'architecture* as *muta poiesis* (Blondel 1771: I, 182). In these works, the parallel is sought in the existence of common syntaxic principle as well as on the semantic level. Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand will repeat Boffrand's axiom in his *Nouveau précis des leçons d'architecture* (Durand 1813: 29), but already in his previous *Précis*, he points out that there are certain

things in architecture that cannot be communicated and passed on discursively (Durand 1802: 91). It is thus suggested a potential limit of such analogies and made a disequilibrium between its members regarding the capacity to represent certain phenomena.

Writing in the journal *Oppositions*, Jacques Guillerme puts forward the opinion that attempts at analogy between language and architecture occurs in historical moments when there has been a crisis of the professional position of the architect. Comparison with linguistic forms of art (such as poetry) or the idea of architecture as a language system, are responses to critical periods of architects' socio-professional positioning, raising their reputation as architect-artist, as well as preserving their place and function in society (Guillerme 1977: 24). It would seem that re-affirmation of the term 'concept' in architectural vocabulary in the previous fifty years can also be justified following the observation that its application not only strengthens the position of the architect as crucial in the process of projecting objects, but also serves as an instrument or organ contributing to the overcoming of a specific crisis moment in the history of architecture.

The appearance of the trope of architecture as a language indicates the need to mark such encrypted phenomena about which otherwise there is no way to speak. «The fact is that disciplines that comment on man's creative activity always incorporate enigmatic vocabularies, whose role is to represent and to mask the inexpressible» (Guillerme 1977: 25) However, the legitimacy of analogy in the same article is shaken by the argument that architectural language lacks certain attributes of specificity and clarity. In other words, an all-encompassing codification of architectural signs is not possible, since their decryption is rendered incurably difficult through their diversity and richness, which is not the case with the performative effectiveness of verbal language. What kind of expression would then be most adequate for presenting the architectural concept? It is impossible to directly and unequivocally answer this question, since the realized concept is not absolutely reducible to either its visual figures or verbal signes, given that there are aspects of it that lend themselves to words, and others which do not.

Guillerme's thesis on the limits of what is called "architectural language" still does not lead to the conclusion that the architects should not discursively develop their discipline and verbally reflect on what they are doing, since it has been successfully done and will continue to do so. The phrase in question itself presents as very ambivalent and demands further parsing out. Does the architect speak more than one language? Is polyglotism an immanent property of architecture? If we were to accept the assumption of metaphorical application of linguistic elements onto non-linguistic ones, then the entire secret of architecture would lie in the capacity of the architects-polyglots to successfully balance and conduct the translations between the various languages, on which they are vitally forced to rely.

And in fact, in the past three or four decades, there has been a noticeable, if gradual, decrease in trust of architects' professional expertise, from both the profession itself and the public at large, caused by the inefficacy and difficulties regarding the determining and resolving urgent problems. Professional knowledge has become less capable to respond to the instability and complexity of current issues, appearing inadequate and limited in the face of the changing character of practice, leading to uncertainty for the future of the profession (Stapenhorst 2016: 40–42). The concept is the very integrative *órganon* or communication platform of the group that collaborates on a project and it is possible through conceptual framework to unify the contributions of various non-architectural disciplines with the aim of solving current pressing challenges of architecture's practice (Stapenhorst 2016). Otherwise, if the architect were to advocate a mono-disciplinary model of their own profession with no space for a living, continuous transfer of knowledge of other disciplines into the area of their competence, not only do they face potential marginalization, but it is not unimaginable for architecture to dissolve and disappear as an autonomous discipline, because it has not always existed as such throughout all of history of mankind.

For this scenario not to happen, it is necessary to cultivate and preserve the invariant quality of architecture – without which it would go extinct, and instead of becoming a philosopher, the architect would become a *fabricator* or else an *ingénieur*. In the "Afterword" of his book *Architecture Concept: Red Is Not a Color*, Bernard Tschumi states, and therefore verifies, the idea which he held at the beginning of his career and which has been quoted in the introductory part of this article, that the concept is what distinguishes architecture from mere building. From here it can be concluded that without a concept as a means for understanding reality, architecture cannot be defined as a form of knowledge (Tschumi 2012: 741, 745). The only concept of architecture that could adequately answer time yet to come is the concept of discipline in constant dialogue with itself and other fields, producing its own concepts capable to collect and direct the plurality of demands emerging from different sorts of knowledge that architecture is to encounter and cope with.

The ambivalence of the future does not correspond to potential collective unpreparedness for it, because what is to come is not entirely controllable and transparent. Along those lines, Jean Nouvel understands the concept as a significant part of the architectural project in order to face «a place we are unfamiliar with» (Baudrillard and Nouvel 2002: 6). This still «unfamiliar place», as an event that oscillates between invention, the unknown and risk, can be faced by proper articulation of the architectural concept.[6] It therefore appears to stand as a basic

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[6] The very beginning of issue 19 of *Harvard Design Magazine*, dedicated to the conceptual aspect of architecture ("Architecture as Conceptual Art? Blurring Disciplinary Boundaries"), emphasizes the motif of transformational capacity of the concept for reshaping practice and experience of architecture. This thematization allows the possibility – to use a nautical metaphor – to «navigate

guiding principle in – to use a phrase by Armando and Durbiano – shaping architecture's *cartografia del futuro*.

The concept in architecture is not so much a goal in itself, as in the case of theoretical philosophy, from where it originates. Given that architecture is closely tied to the kind of activity that Aristotle included in the field of *dianoia poiētikē*, which leads into existence what was previously inexistent, the architectural concept also demands its effual realization in the form of a final product different from it.

If philosophy is the creation of concepts, architecture is not only the creation of concepts, but also creation with and through them. Architectural practice is always oriented towards the future, and what is projected at a given moment, more than to that moment alone, belongs to the coming time and space. Even if the project directed by a specific conceptual network never materializes in the form of a finished building, as a document with performative power it is always directed forward towards something that is not yet but can be, it acts as a pledge to future generations.

The architectural concept, as a mental registration of the architect, surpasses its notional or graphic representations exposed in a *concrete* project, since there can be a multitude of modal realizations of the same concept (for instance, the already mentioned concepts of transparency and reflectivity can be implemented in many spatial ways and with different goals). Consequently, the concept also outlives all of them in their contingency. It has the capability to redefine the field of architecture and transform its practice, opening the discipline to a permanently open future. In its projection, it is able to always anew configure the events of time and space. Therein lies the long-term responsibility of the architects who do not lose faith before the fact that they are dealing with something that is yet to come. On the contrary, they contribute that the entire community to which they belong has a future at all.

As the noetic correlative of the architectural object, yet also in itself *the first object of architecture* to which it provides the source and ensures status of an intellectual discipline, instead of being taken as a dead-end street, as a visually non-verifiable and abstract entity, non-autochthonous to the body of architecture, the concept serves for this profession not to go astray into a one such street, or else potentially as a guide out of it. Where exactly this street is to be found in a new city or unknown territory, the first travelers cannot know with certainty, but the maps they can project in their mind can show why it is better to choose one path out of many.

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new spaces». Concepts are described there optimistically as «the architecture of hope» (Kwinter 2003: 4). That this is a far from easy task can be understood from a universally valid sentence by André Gide who writes: «One doesn't discover new lands without consenting to lose sight of the shore for a very long time» (Gide 1955: 326).

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