

Juan Luis Trillo de Leyva*

EMPOOLING VS KOMPOZYCJA

EMPOOLING VERSUS COMPOSITION

*Witruwiańska teoria jest próbą przeniesienia doświadczenia poprzez sprowadzenie rzeczywistości do pojęć trudnych do zrozumienia osobno. Artykuł odnosi się do pedagogicznej wymowy traktatu, jako podstawy współczesnego nauczania architektury. Jednocześnie publikacja umożliwia prezentację pracy autora – *Miasta nieskończonego* – w jego mniemaniu, jego ostatniego „empooling”.*

Słowa kluczowe: empooling, miasto nieskończone

*Vitruvian theory tries to convey an experience by simplifying reality into concepts that can hardly be understood in isolation. The article refers to the pedagogical nature of the treatise as the base of contemporary architectural education. Simultaneously the publication gives opportunity to present its author's work – *Endless City* – his last “empooling”, as he says.*

Keywords: empooling, endless city

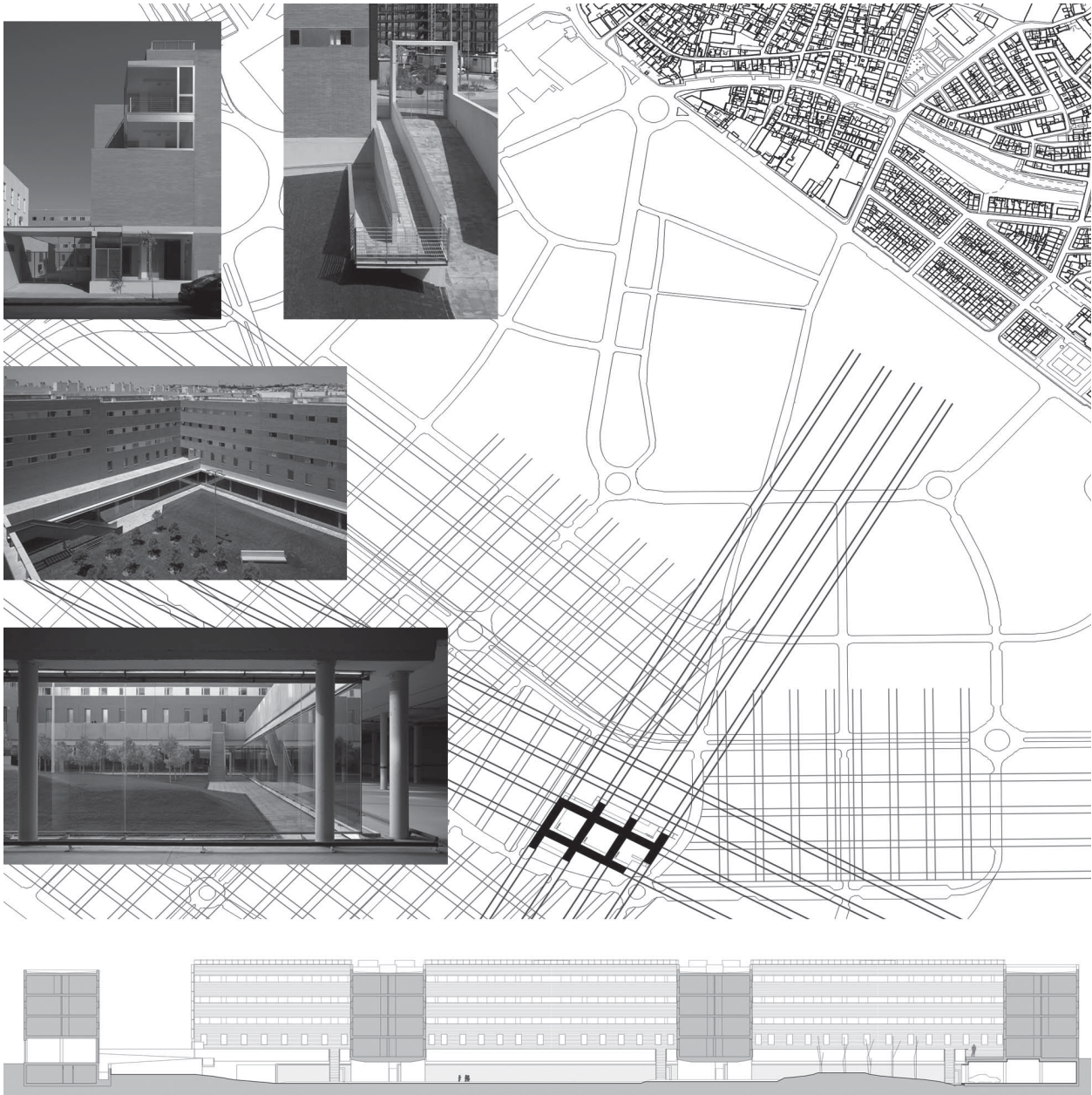
From the theory of the Roman Vitruvius we know its reissue of the fifteenth century, maybe the first text that after fifteen hundred years of existence is used as a manifesto of modern architecture. The Vitruvian text was colonized by the fifteenth century (1486), through its re-born became the editorial ideological basis of the Renaissance. As the twentieth century avant-garde manifestos, the Vitruvian text, illustrated with “modern” projects, served to publicize the new architecture, the base for the implementation of architectural “orders”. Critics have transformed this constructive manual and typological catalog in a Treaty, however in its chapters you can find a little of everything from tips to projects, like the best orientation of the temples to directions for making

“war machines”. A text that tried to convey a practical experience on the construction of singular elements, it was adopted as a principle of authority and for dissemination of universal classical architecture.

The decent medieval craft based in the repetition of conceptual and manual activities was very difficult to encode as an universal theory. Always the transition from action to reflection result produces severe alterations of content. The Renaissance, and later a more pedagogical way the Enlightenment through the typological building, tried to codify an universal standards based on the existence of “compositional elements”. Even today there are subjects in our schools called Composition, Theory and History, or Elements of Composition, in memory of the decay

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The Endless City, Housing, "Puerta del Sur", Jerez. Antonio Martínez García & Juan Luis Trillo de Leyva



caused by the encyclopedism and by the other side, teaching specialization that polluter the Architecture: designers, structuralist, builders and installers.

The educational classification of an activity or group of objects is not harmless and introduces major distortions. As Borges says, there is no classification of the universe free of arbitrariness and conjecture. It is well known for everybody the classification of animals proposed by Borges himself:

Dr. Franz Kuhn attributes to certain Chinese encyclopedia entitled Celestial Emporium of Benevolent Knowledge. On those remote pages it is written that animals are divided into (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) trained, (d) suckling pigs, (e) mermaids, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in this classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a fine brush of camel hair, (l) others, (m) having just broken the water pitcher, (n) that from a distance resemble flies.

The action, the activity of a person, is multiple and complex, while unique and personal. An exhibition of the ego, claims of knowledge and personal positioning, identity synthesis. Faced with the more or less passive reception of data and sensations, the activity requires of a critical check of our physical environment. The activity introduces us to a careful vigil, between concentration and reflection.

The materials of a classification are not parts of it, they are dimensions that affect and comprise the whole, observed from a particular place, are particular versions of a totality. Sections of a unique reality that completely affect it but do not represent it in its entirety, they are the section of a whole. To claim that knowledge of a professional activity is acquired adding partial knowledge is so naive as to pretend to obtain a volume through a limited number of partial sections.

It is the activity provided it is done from the comprehensive and multifaceted vision of all subjects, the only way of obtaining knowledge, skills, critical

positions and skills on a trade. A kind of maturation that is produced through the reiteration of diverse actions but complete as to the professional dimensions that come into play.

There are no doubts about the pedagogical nature and distribution of this original Vitruvian theory, organized into ten books under the generic title of *De Architectura*, tries to convey an experience by simplifying reality into concepts that can hardly be understood in isolation. All concepts are hybrids, it is not possible to separate the structure of a building (*Firmitas*) from its beauty (*Venustas*), let alone function (*Utilitas*), which justifies the architectural activity and the presence of any of the other terms. The Renaissance interest to re-establish an order backed by a source architecture rooted in the history of Western culture, together with the elemental and authority of a classic Roman text lead to the development of a fundamentalist and partial critique focuses on discussing the architecture on compositional criteria.

From Vitruvian classification, *Firmitas*, *Utilitas*, *Venustas*, we question the composition and architectural aspects in isolation. We discussed the beauty, aesthetic pleasure is not passive contemplation but the ability to enjoy in the development of an activity that requires an interior space previously imagined, projected.

The current teaching of architecture also suffers from these simplifications that the Enlightenment period confirms in the present through the encyclopedic *Beaux Arts* and *Polytechnic* schools. The specialized subject classification remains the basis for teaching in our schools of architecture is a serious obstacle to learning a trade. Only the activity of projecting, to replace the specialized knowledge, structure, materials, facilities, construction can get the complexity and integration necessary for our profession. The "workshop" of projects or workshops in the field of multidisciplinary interests, seek to address the limi-

tations of this teaching encyclopedic. The Bologna directives also try to correct this secular error of classification and simplified architectural activity in relation to education, as contemporary architecture and architectural activity assumes a particular interpretation of Project Action, what we called the “idea” of project in the late last century.

In architecture, the composition is meaningless when understood as an activity in itself, overlapping and not projecting resulting from an activity. Beauty is not a quality most of the way, an obtain goal, but a “side effect”, the feeling that comes from a clever and economic balance in the treatment of Space/Matter duality.

I have always admired to Peter (and Alison) Smithson as “outsider” of the modern movement, always creating alternatives and searching critically. In the last years of his life, I think in 1998, Peter Smithson gave two lectures in Andalusia (Seville and Cadiz). The conferences had the enigmatic title “Empooling”. When the conference of Cadiz was finished, I realized that the kind Peter Smithson was isolated by language, despite my poor English I dared to personally thank his suggestive lesson about the project, in my opinion with a great educational value. He explained me that architecture worked by arguments like “empooling”, adding that architects can be divided into “composers architects” and “not composers architects”. In the lobby of the College of Architects of Cadiz a poster announcing the next conference: an important and famous Spanish architect. Peter Smithson pointed out with a wry smile and said: *Yes he is a good composer.*

In all my projects I prefer to argue about reality and its complexities before composing, among many other reasons I do not believe that I could be a good composer. Every year I take the kind invitation of the Congress of Kraków to show my latest work with my professionals fellow Antonio Martínez. “City Without End” is our last “empooling”.

Endless City (Translation: Leilani Kenaona Fonseca)

The area for the new residential housing development is located in Puerta del Sur, Jerez in the province of Cadiz. Emuvijesa, a local government enterprise, selected us to design and construct a new public housing development for 175 families. In designing this housing project its location was strongly taken into consideration. Puerta del Sur is located in an underdeveloped area, on the city outskirts and is therefore faced with the disadvantage of being isolated and lacking security. It was therefore our goal in designing this new development to provide an area that emphasized control, protection, and isolation of collective spaces. Our initial desire to not have the buildings within a walled enclosure led us to the idea of designing a reticulated system that separated pedestrians and road traffic. At the public street level the pavement will measure 5 meters in width providing pedestrian access to homes and common areas. On the underground level, parking will be available and roads surrounding gardens measuring 30x90 meters to allow traffic flow.

To obtain a very low percentage of built surface area for common access led us to project a module in cross of eight apartments per floor. The housing type is a single bay with two private patios that provide cross-ventilation, an outside drying area for clothes, and the vertical distribution of network facilities. One basic criteria in establishing uniformity in this housing development is through repetition of shapes, sizes, bedrooms, kitchens, bathrooms and windows, all of which are serialized.

The main idea is to float the housing grill on a private garden, using the shade of the buildings as parking. The garden that is hidden on the underground level composed of large trees will allow good alignment of these bioclimatic yards.

The model constructed is just a part of an endless city in which the residential grid is suspended on a

new level of the city formed by interior traffic streets, parking and gardens. The gardens double its image through use of a glass- wall separating the gardens from the cars. The gardens are also accessible at the pedestrian level by means of inclines and stairs along with an area dedicated to sport and leisure activities.

The main outline for the residential building is very simple and appropriate for this day in age. To obtain quality and durability dark bricks and striped aluminum have been selected as building materials. The support base that makes up the lower level is set by structural concrete elements enclosed by ventilated glass screens. Our argument used to convince the property developers the economic viability for this project was to demonstrate equal budgetary costs between the concrete wall for the courtyard parking and the proposed ventilated glass facade that took its place. The plot soil was also greatly improved by removing a large portion of the pre-existing garbage dump.

For structure we used a concrete central wall which ensures the rigidity of the assembly and metal pillars embedded in the front facade perimeter.

The plot of land used to build part of this “endless city”, as any other peripheral plot, showed shape difficulties within its boundaries. For example, alignments with concave curves and forms linking reoccurring traffic roundabouts and the altered topography layers caused by the garbage dump. We were able to adapt to the shape of the plot through the use of car and handicapped ramps all which meet current urban construction regulations. This was achieved without the use of barriers or walls independent of the enclosure formed from the buildings.

It was our objective to obtain a well- equipped friendly housing development with an optimal landscaped area for community usage all below the budgetary limitations placed on Social Housing for Public Promotion.

TECHNICAL CREDIT

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