Development.

Par Jacques Lucan. Le 31 mai 2006

In the conception of an architectural project, what architect has not dreamed of a process which would develop in an inexorable fashion from a few rules or a few principles, initially set down, the consequences of which would subsequently link and grow'

Such a way of conceiving the development of an architectural project has its roots in the processes by which natural organisms grow, mineral or living, vegetable or animal. In modern, contemporary architecture, there is no lack of organic analogies, even if architects do not always attribute to them the same meanings, from Frank Lloyd Wright to Louis I. Kahn, from Le Corbusier to Aldo van Eych or Alison and Peter Smithson. This eighth edition of *matières* returns to these analogies, seeking to understand the energy involved in the conception of a project as a structure possessing its own logic and integrating the time factor into its equation.

But this eighth issue of *matières* also formulates the hypothesis that such a way of conceiving an architectural project has a new life, notably because of the possibilities opened by the digital world. Actually, using certain programs, the form of a building can be understood no longer as a series of steps, with phases of "correction", at each one of which it is necessary to make a choice. Today, the form of a building can be the result of a process, its final step; or even as a "freeze frame"[1]. Sometimes, the end result or stopping point of a process would be different if only a few parameters were different initially or modified later.

These reasons explain the title of this issue of *matières*: Development.

Does conceiving a project as a process mean moving away from the procedures that make up the project or assembling parts distinct from each other to create a whole? Does a process establish a new relationship between the whole and its parts, the form of the whole taking precedence over its parts, where the parts themselves, in the end, are no longer distinguishable'

This way of conceiving a project seems without a doubt all the more radical when one imagines complex forms derived from algorithms, forms that have to be modelled to make them 'constructible', modelling for which computerised methods have not only become indispensable, but actually create possibilities. Through this lens, are we at a new era of relationship between architecture and engineering? The roles of the architect and the engineer now do more than just complement each other. The latter is not only the one who traditionally calculates the forms imagined by the former; he or she is also able to describe them, a condition which then makes

possible their effective realisation.

From this starting point, one asks the question of whether or not we are at a moment of paradigm shift, not only for the design of constructive structures, but more for that which is the conception of all complex forms, that is to say all forms that can only be described using Euclidian geometry.

To explore these questions in more depth, we asked Jean-François Blassel, Harry Gugger and Yves Weinand to answer some questions that we presented them, the last on this list choosing not to respond point-by-point but instead choosing to state his position concerning the nature of his work and research.

1

Has the development of new computer methods caused, as a consequence, a paradigm shift:

- in the design of structures

- subsequently, in the conception of architecture itself'

2

Can one oppose a 'traditional' conception, which aims at expressing how forces progress and their intensity; and a 'new' conception for which it is possible to create original forms'

3

Do these forms have the recurring characteristic of being continual'

4

Does the conception of these forms imply a different way of working (a different type of modelling), a different approach to the format'

L'éditorial en français.

matières' website.

Note

1 The original French uses "arrêt sur image" which can mean "pausing on one frame of an image" or a reference to a television show of the same name that analysed the images of broadcast programs in an effort to expose camera tricks which misled (intentionally or unintentionally) the viewing audience. [note from the translator]

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