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Architectural Interregnums

Constantin-Viktor Spiridonidis, Canadian University of Dubai, UAE

Maria Vogiatzaki, Anglia Ruskin University, School of Architecture, UK

The authors are put alphabetically and have contributed equally to this publication.

Abstract

Architectural design has always been the laboratory where experimentation with ideas about the newness, and elaboration of forms and spatial arrangements take place towards architectural creations. Prefixes such as post-, de-, re-, neo-, appear as typical signifiers of the spirit of novelty representing the different shifts that shape the history of architecture and could be broadly summarized by the term 'meta'. Even if 'meta' is a kind of ontological reference to newness, implying its definition with what preceded, it always remains polysemic and, for this reason, ambivalent. Design is acting between the existing and the (be)coming, the established and the expected, the familiar and the xenon, the antipathy and the empathy. It is driven by the quest for a 'meta', known (or not) that since its appearance, it will lose its newness and will become commonplace. What type of novelty does it put forward through its creations in the contemporary interregnum? What are the primary formal or material traits that can attribute that identity to the new that can clearly distinguish it from the old? The paradox we are confronted with nowadays is that despite the unprecedentedly fast pace of changes happening in the sphere of the intellect, the sciences, technology, and the geopolitics of the globalized world, there are no apparent signs of novelty in contemporary architectural production.

Nothing is new, neither is anything old.

Robert Smithson 1

Keywords

Becoming; novelty; interregnum; architectural design; posthuman

I Architecture and the new

The ongoing repair of the old ship of Theseus, the wooden monumental object Athenians preserved to remember Theseus's great achievement to exterminate the Minotaur, raised a long-lasting philosophical debate about identity and persistence in changes through time. ² The question if the replacement of the parts of an object retains its identity and uniqueness was tackled by many philosophers such as Heraclitus, Plato, Aristotle, Plutarch all the way to contemporary philosophical contemplation. How can the question be answered if, instead of changing the parts to preserve identity, one changes the parts to transform the object into something 'other,' creating the new, the different, something that would follow, a 'meta'? Furthermore, if to transform in order to change creates the new, then how could this new jettison its oldness?

To be the same or to be different are profoundly rooted values in the human intellect.

To be different from what has preceded has always been the cornerstone of the edifice of architecture as a discipline since the Renaissance. Even though the value to be different from the obsolete conventional was always utterly important for Architecture, the definition of this value in architectural discourses is somewhat obscure. Prefixes like post-, de-, re-, neo-, appeared as typical signifiers of the spirit of novelty representing the different shifts that shape the history of architecture and could be broadly summarized by the term 'meta.' Even if 'meta' is an ontological reference to newness implying its definition about what preceded, it has always been polysemic and, for this reason, ambivalent, diffused into the ideas encompassed by the broader term 'avant-garde,' labeling practices for longer or shorter transitional periods. Architectural design has always been the laboratory where experimentation with ideas about the newness of this 'meta,' and elaboration of forms and spatial arrangements take place towards architectural creations. Design is always acting between the existing and the upcoming, the established and the expected, the familiar and the xenon, antipathy and empathy. It is driven by the quest for a 'meta,' known (or not) that since its appearance, it will lose its newness and will become commonplace. The meta stands for a new condition to be, formulated, structured, and completed. The pursuit of the new empowers architectural design to perform between the old and the meta, in an in-between state, a metaxu state, a fertile ground for change and continuous variation, an interregnum. ³ A place to investigate the becoming.

What is new in architecture? Why is architecture preoccupied with longing for the new. ⁴ Michael North (2013), in his studies of the history of the new, distinguishes two long traditions ruling our as-

1. Robert Smithson, 'Ultra-moderne', Arts, XLII/1 (1967), p. 31.

2. The ship wherein Theseus and the youth of Athens returned had thirty oars, and was preserved by the Athenians down even to the time of Demetrius Phalereus, for they took away the old planks as they decayed, putting in new and stronger timber in their place, inasmuch that this ship became a standing example among the philosophers, for the logical question of things that grow; one side holding that the ship remained the same, and the other contending that it was not the same.

3 Interregnum was the term used in ancient Rome to refer to the moment of legal and political in-betweenness that followed the death of the sovereign and preceded the enthronement of his successor.

4. Theodor Adorno (2002:32) shifts the definition of the new to the desire for the new from its outcome. "The new is the longing for the new, not the new itself: That is what everything new suffers from."

pirations towards the new that have their origin in the beginnings of Western philosophy. The one starts from Parmenides and is further refined by Aristotle, who appreciates the new as the outcome of cycles of recurrence in which incremental changes happen to adjust, adapt or improve the development of these cycles. The underlying assumption on which this understanding is based is that “nothing is coming from nothing,” which transgresses all the history of Western philosophy and finds its more contemporary version in Wittgenstein’s statement “the effect is implicit in its cause”⁵ The second tradition starts from the atomist philosophers like Democritus, Epicurus, Heraclitus, and Lucretius, who understood the change as the outcome of recombination of the eternal minute and invisible elements that in their perpetual movement recombine themselves in various configurations. As everything flows (τα πάντα ρει), these elements are exposed to various random recombinations that stimulate changes in the existent. Lucretius used language as a reference when he argued that a small number of elements could provide a wide variety of recombinations⁶

Through the years, these two traditions formed different variations of how the new becomes a subject of contemplation in the sciences and the arts. Signs of these two traditions could be traced as coexisting or even combined, in the history of human-centered contemplations about the new and the transitional, from Darwin to Kuhn and from Wiener to the more recent debates on aesthetics and the arts. As opposed to the combinatory approach, the tendency to incremental repetition shifts the focus on being rather than on becoming, on unity than on multiplicity, on the similar rather than the different, the constant rather than the mutable, the purposeful rather than the random.

Similar signs of these traditions can be found in Architectural discourses and practices. Françoise Choay (1980) suggests two types of discourses as the foundation of architecture as a discipline after the humanism of the Renaissance. The one embracing the rule is introduced by Alberti. The other focuses on the model, introduced by Thomas More. The first advocates architectural novelty as a creative articulation of predefined rules, the implementation of which would establish the order of the new, while the other advocates novelty as the almost revolutionary implementation of ideal models defined as utopias. We can easily distinguish the attachment of the former to the incremental cycle tradition, as opposed to the alignment of the latter to the recombination one. Choay detects the coexistence of both of these two types of foundation discourses in the texts about architecture and the city produced by modernity after the 18th century. Extensions of the logic of the rule can be traced back to the participatory practices, the syntactic rules of the 1970s, the architectural deconstructivist approaches of the 1980s, or the parametric experimen-

5. Cited by Michael North (2013: 21)

6. “Therefore, the supposition that, as there are many letters common to many words, so there are many elements common to many things, is preferable to the view that anything can come into being without ultimate particles.” Cited by Michael North (2013: 32)

tations of the last twenty-five years. Similarly, model-based thinking is associated with all the utopias accompanying modernity, but also with its request for models, standards, ergonomics, as well as with interest in the typology advocated by the early post-modernity.

If the new, incremental or recombinatory is always based upon the old, then is the 'meta' a really new condition? Is what humans appreciate as new or else revolutionary or radical, finally an inventive revival or reconsideration and reformulation of the old? Is it possible for the new to exist when the future is circumscribed in the consciousness of the present? Is finally the human intellect what draws us towards predefined possibilities, and is the 'meta' nothing more than an alibi humans abuse to declare even more boldly their dominance on planet Earth?

7. Cf. Colomina, B. Wigley, M. (2017:9)

2 Spatio-temporalities of the new

If what we have created as humans constitutes the so-called Anthropocene, a new geological époque characterised by the human's impact on earth's geology, and ecosystems, then design plays a vital role in this rapport. Design, the way we use it today, that is to say, a professional practice that elaborates the form and the materiality before their construction is a pure creation of a human-centered appreciation of the world. Design is the most essential human outcome of post-Renaissance anthropocentrism. It is a stratagem through which human superiority was manifested on Earth. Design is the 'laboratory' where the new is created, tested, and offered to become old. Novelty was, has been, and always be the ultimate aim of design.

Architecture, as the ultimate inventor of design, is the protagonist in the accomplishment of this aim. Its social project was not only through design to glorify and manifest the superiority of the human intellect spatially but also to change the humans by making them believe in this superiority. To achieve this objective Architecture had to define itself as a design discipline and to produce its own toolkit in a way that both its disciplinary foundations and practices would be compatible and complementary with the under-construction new social, intellectual order. As disciplinary foundations, we mean the ways in which Architecture defines itself as a discipline according to a particular worldview and to a conception of the human into this world. Changes in the contents of the disciplinary fundamentals affect the design and how it is spatially manifested.

Always claiming to respond to the needs of the human, the ultimate aim of Architecture was to design the human ⁷ In the Renaissance, Architecture promoted the human figure that observed the world to appreciate its truths. The human was the curious observer, creative, eager, and thirsty for new knowledge and experiences. Hence, the

eye becomes the most vital human organ to serve the search for truth (Savignat, 1981) as knowledge is no longer theocentrically defined but becomes the outcome of the human intellect observing and revealing the requested truth.

The Renaissance human is conceived not only as intelligent but also as sublime. Its proportions reflect the natural beauty and harmony which design has to reflect in architectural forms. To substantiate this social project design needs a professional legitimization originated by the human intellect. This explains the division between contemplating an idea and its making, that attributed superiority to the intellectual tectonics of human-centered Architecture. Design became the hallmark of a professional practice that distinguished intellectual from manual work, attributing to design a political and an ethical dimension. Since then, Architecture's social project has been to manifest the sovereignty of the human spirit and culture onto the natural world and to create forms and spaces that reflect this conception and directly and profoundly affect the habits, the aesthetics and the intellect of those experiencing them.

The new understanding of the human is not only diffused in the design outcomes. The design tools and the design processes also have strong symbolism. The perspective, as a representation technique, is not only a consistent and accurate representation of what the observing eye can see, but it also incorporates in its construction the visible presence of the vanishing point as the meeting point of the parallel lines, the infinite, what for Christianity was defined as the divine ⁸ Renaissance Architecture takes the infinite from the sky, that is to say from the end of the Gothic spire and iconoclastically locates it into the perspective drawing as a vanishing point ⁹ The accurate depiction of form and enclosure prior to construction is an achievement of human-centered architecture that marks its development till present times. If what has to be built must be drawn in advance, then what can be built is what can be drawn ¹⁰ That means that the drawing with its techniques, tools, and means defines the context in which the architects are constrained to think and conceive form.

As for the design process, the architect-designer elaborates form and space, refined to the last detail, and employs the materials that can best fulfill the project, deterministically and linearly, following a top-down process. On the contrary, the builder works with the material idiosyncrasies of the building ¹¹ negotiates with it, acts on it, teases it, fights with it, reconciles and attunes with it to extract the expected form always moving in between forces, tensions, perfection, imperfections, and transitions in a bottom-up process ¹² In the former case, the authorship is assigned to the one who generates the idea and the formal qualities and meanings of the outcome ¹³, while in the latter to the one who masters the techniques and harnesses the materiality of the building.

8. Erwin Panofsky (1991), revealed the importance of this profoundly symbolic gesture to place the infinite in the center of the drawing board as a glorious manifestation of the liberation from the theocentric world view.

9. According to Whitehead (1911, 119), "the spire of a Gothic cathedral and the importance of the unbounded straight line in modern Geometry are both emblematic of the transformation of the modern world."

10. Cf. Savignat 1981: 25, Carpo, 2011: 31, 75.

11. Cf. Voyatzaki, 2018, p. 9.

12. Lars Spuybroek (2011) in the 'The Sympathy of Things' presents the building process of Gothic as a permanent condition of in-between, metaxy, using the term slider to express the continuous shift of priorities between construction, meaning, and continuity.

13. Mario Carpo, in his book 'The Alphabet and the Algorithm,' distinguishes the pre-Albertian times of architecture as autographic in lack of drawings to delegate to the builder the idea of the architect. Alberti sustained the distinction between the thinker and the maker, attributing to architecture its allo-graphic nature.

The natural limitations of the observing eye opened up the way to the invention of the microscope and the telescope, principal instruments to invent other 'Kosmoi' of other scales and other resolutions: the micro-cosmos and the macro-cosmos. The eye stayed tuned with these two entities giving sense to the continuity of scales, the transitions, the coexistence, and the resolutions, till the moment it became unreliable, not because of its limited capacities, or because the appearance does not always tell the truth, but primarily because it cannot be detached from the subjectivity, the values, the prejudices and the linguistic limitations that govern the human. This is the most critical point of the Enlightenment that changed the condition of anthropocentrism and introduced what Whitehead (1964) in his 'Concept of Nature' defined as 'bifurcation': The distinction between material nature and non-material minds, objectivity, and subjectivity, reality and appearance. Bachelard (2002) much later similarly defined it as epistemological obstacles and later on Althusser (1969) as an 'epistemological break'. Since then, nature became what the Cartesian radical dualist ontology defined as *res-extensa*, a real and inanimate entity devoid of any meaning or possibility of agency, producing its effects only through the power of its causes, opposite to the *res-cogitans*, a subjective and value-based substance but void of any reality ¹⁴. Science becomes the solid ground to reveal the hidden truth by attributing effects to causes, which in turn become new causes for new effects.

Changes in worldviews directly impact architectural design. The project of Architecture becomes now to design (for) the rational human. Not the polymath human of the Renaissance but the Kantian human of the Enlightenment; To design its material environment capable of hosting the objectively defined-by-science human needs. Designing (for) the rational human is no longer to prioritize aesthetics, memories, or cultural, social, and intellectual references but the needs of that species called human. The human is progressively pushed to the realm of *res-extensa*, to lose its face, its gender, its identity, and to become the human that is legitimized by its dimensions, proportions, anatomy, and ergonomics.

The shift of the conception of the human affects the design process but also the design tools. The building is conceived not to be seen but to function, to arrange spaces ensuring the functional rationalities of the activities to be hosted, far from any traditional habits, or unreasonable subjectivities. It has to work, just like Isabelle Stengers's (1997) 'medieval' clock ¹⁵. All its parts are arranged in a way that the whole will fulfill its ultimate finality, to host (a certain understanding of) the life of the human. This teleological thinking encompasses all parts in a top-down finality, which the genius of the architect has to organize, putting them together in place, composing, towards

14. Cf. Bruno Latour (2010: 481)

15. Isabelle Stengers (1997:11-13, 77-82) uses the case of the medieval clock as the efficient weapon against the Aristotelian thought used to metaphorically describe the construction of the Universe as well as later on the formation of the alive. This way, it introduces its machine-based understanding in the Enlightenment and its study through physics.

affirming what is true in the life of a human, namely the biological needs of the species. Designers no longer perceive but arrange and organise.

This new priority renders the arrangement and organization of the inner part of the building the starting point and the generator and the reflector of this organization in the built form's appearance, its elevations. This is entirely different from the eye-centered approach. This shift renders perspective a pointless and obsolete drawing tool ¹⁶ and alludes towards drawing techniques freed from the eye and its numerous practical and ideological deviations based on projective and descriptive geometry ¹⁷. The Euclidian visual cone is replaced by the geometric beam of parallel lines that depersonalize representation but also moves the human eye from the experienced world to the infinite, with all its insightful connotations and symbolisms ¹⁸.

The appreciation of the act of 'becoming' is based upon the appreciation of the state of 'being.' If there is a genuine intention to debunk the latter, then the design practice, even if it pretends to be looking forward, cannot avoid looking back to take the maximum possible distance from the past. This is the ground on which Bruno Latour (1993) argues that we have never been modern: In their effort to distance themselves from their past, the humans, almost religiously, believed that they had to abandon any connection and association to subjectivity, history, interpretations, towards establishing reliable objectivity, that is to say, to separate the Cartesian 'res extensa' from the 'res cogitans'. Under the labels of reason and causality, progress and, more recently, innovation, appearing as the motivators of what North (2013:16-19) presents as 'the pathos for the new,' the human 'produced' and created artifacts and conditions, the dominant value of which was that they would not be what they used to be ¹⁹.

Divisions imposed in the spirit of the Enlightenment opened up avenues for the development of a human, radically different from what it was before, as it was progressively detached from nature to create an englobing artificiality to live in. The lifecycle of this pursuit, however, was underestimated and ignored. It is becoming increasingly apparent that this artificiality was founded on a false appreciation of nature conceived as a passive and stable res extensa, without any agency attributed to its constituting parts. From the moment that the laws that govern nature became known by physics, humans believed that they could totally control it. As Bruno Latour (2010) states, humans designed their future but not their prospect on Earth, a frivolous choice that threatens their very existence as species.

3 The emergent newness

Since the mid-sixties, the philosophical, epistemological, scientific,

16. The Perspective could offer a reliable view of the building before its existence, but it was not equally efficient to assure measurability in the construction process. For this, architects had to do their drawings in projection so that measurements could be taken from them (Ackerman, 2001, p.29). The coexistence of these two ways to represent space indicates the need or the wish to combine, in the new profile of the architect, the artistic with the technical and to expose the creative work to aesthetic and rational judgments.

17. Architect Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, Professor at École Polytechnique in Paris, a prestigious institution founded by Gaspard Monge, founder of the descriptive geometry, just after the French Revolution, embedded principles of Descriptive Geometry into his architectural teaching. For a detailed description of the shift from perspective to descriptive geometry cf. Savignat 1981.

18. Cf. Spiridonidis 2018:23

19. Niklas Luhmann (2000: 199) characterizes novelty as 'ontological nonsense. Something is, although and because it is not what was before.'

and technological debates around the world questioned the ideas and the practices of anthropocentrism. Philosophical circles criticized the worldview and the respective conception of the post-enlightenment human trying to reveal its impact on our social, emotional, and political life ²⁰ They questioned the operational value of 'progress' as a concept that underlined the thinking and practicing of Modernity. They expressed concern about the impact of the exclusion of subjectivity from contemplation. Philosophy also questioned the construction of a worldview founded upon binary oppositions and polarities which biased human contemplation, language, habits, and understandings by imposing fragmented views and supposedly clear-cut distinctions which obscured the real and essential connections and affects between parts, particles, living substances, and materialities, through which an interconnected world could exist. Terms like assemblage, emergence, difference, agency, affect, immanence, sympathy, ecology, symbiosis to state some of them progressively immigrated to many other subject areas and spheres of contemplation, associating them through new ecologies, connections, and continuities.

20. Cf. for example, Braidotti (2013), Delanda (1997, 2016).

21. Cf. Stengers(1997).

At the same time, epistemology acknowledged the weaknesses of the key premises of the sciences of anthropocentrism and the effective repercussions that its fragmented knowledge had on the appreciation of the world. Supported by the philosophical debate, epistemology attempted to clarify the reasons for what was then called 'the war of sciences' ²¹, to reconsider the utility of what was up to that point considered to be useless, or at least secondary and to acknowledge the value of new terms able to open new perspectives to our appreciations of the world. How 'to arrange' and 'to mix' constituted different ways of appreciating the materiality of the world and the important information was gaining in the different constellations of human knowledge connecting them all across, while replacing the notion of the system as an inherent notion in modernity's objectivity.

In the scientific realm, the de-codification of the DNA did not only put information on the pedestal of life but also provided a valid model for understanding life as entirely dependent upon its environments, material, or organic, which are vital parts of its development and existence. At the same time, cybernetics and information theories claimed that the most basic level of this universe is composed of units that have a simple on-off function. Each unit has properties that are defined by the interactions it has with its environment(s), part of which are its adjacent units. The understanding of this interdependence assisted in appreciating the human impact on the environment and, more specifically, on climate, totally neglected in modernity. The catastrophic effects of our recent times not only are far from the promises of prosperity that modernity's progress would

bring about, but are, in fact, putting us under threat, in peril of our species, nearing extinction.

The second-order cybernetics elaborated those capacities of a system of information transmission, which give it the capacity to process information empowering machines to develop artificial intelligence, artificial life, self-organizing systems, learning, and other forms of cognition ²². The acceleration of information technology and computation highly supported modernity's project to artificialize the living environment and life itself, as a sign of human superiority and sovereignty. Intelligent machines, digital devices, and applications formed a new artificial environment in which it becomes difficult to define the line of demarcation between the natural and the artificial, the organic and the inorganic, or the human and the non-human. Absorbed by a broad spectrum of human mental and practical activities and senses to make them faster and more effective but in the same time detached them from the body, affecting its capacities directly as it has now to remember, to calculate, to write, to see, and finally, to think exclusively alongside media ²³.

The breadth of questioning anthropocentric thought concerns not only other than the human species but also or perhaps above all, the sustainability of our planet entangled with its political and economic dimensions. It seems that we are already in post-anthropocentric times, in the so-called post-human era. In this transition, the emerging thinking dispenses the human from the center of intellectual preoccupations and replaces it with Gaia (planet Earth) conceived as a living organism. The concept of Gaia advocates the reconciliation of old polarities founded in anthropocentrism, as we have mentioned before, such as life versus matter, given versus constructed, mind versus body, human versus nature, immaterial versus material, humanities versus sciences. Gaia is appreciated as the declaration of the existence of permanent and necessary symbiotic relationships between these polarities which due to these symbioses, blur their lines and falsify their established identities. The human is no longer conceived as the dominant agent and controller of natural elements and artefacts. The human is now located within the natural and artificial environments it created, no longer acknowledged as the unique entity that can safely form and transform them (Voyatzaki, 2018, p.12).

Architecture is undergoing a long period of crisis and discerns as our world is progressively relocated from what takes time to die into what is not ready to be born as yet. What architecture is created in this particular interregnum, to use the famous phrase of Gramsci ²⁴? What type of novelty will it advocate through its creations, and what will be the main formal or material traits able to offer an identity to the new and to clearly distinguish it from the old? The paradox we

22. Cf. Hayles (1999), *How we became posthuman*, p. 243.

23. Cf. Hayles (2012), *How we think. Digital Media and Contemporary Technogenesis*. pp. 18, 60-62.

24. In his 'Prison Notebooks' Gramsci wrote in 1933 that "The crisis consists precisely in the fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this interregnum, a great variety of morbid symptoms appear."

are encountering nowadays is that even if tremendous changes happen in the sphere of the intellect, the sciences, the technological advances, and the geopolitical developments, we cannot 'see' either with our human eyes or with our mediated eyes, evident signs of an architectural production reflecting a radical and distinguishable novelty, or else the contemporary architectural 'meta.'

Architecture cannot yet produce its post-human face, while it is busy constructing its own intellectual tectonics. As we tried to make it clear in the first part of this essay, design as a creative discipline is a definite 'product' of anthropocentrism. We attempted to circumscribe design's intellectual framework briefly by relating its processes and tools with the worldviews at different historical periods, accompanied by the conceptions for the human and the appreciation of the nature of architectural creations and the social project that architecture undertook to accomplish. We curated these design directives in two different periods of architectural history: One characterized by the change of the dominance in human thinking (from God to the Human) and the other by the establishment of a different understanding of the dominant human. In both cases, the history of architecture suggests that architecture is always agile enough to offer in each period its Palladio's Villas or its Crystal Palaces as signs of a revolutionary recombinatory novelty. In a world identified not only by the importance of changes but mainly by their speed, the silence of architecture is at least bizarre.

Architectural design is made to serve the human and to redesign it. If there is a post-human era, the human in it is no longer, its dominant character, the prima donna. Gaia replaces it, and it is only a part of it alongside other material and organic substances, but certainly no longer the dominant transformer and reformer of Earth. This becomes a profound contradiction in the foundations of the established by anthropocentrism, architectural intellect.

Architectural design was registered as the glorification of the human intellect. It was the domain where human ingenuity manifested itself by creating either the ultimate beauty as the outcome of the thoughtful observer or the perfect spatial arrangement as the achievement of the rational scientist. It was tailored to create the beautiful body or the perfect machine. However, today a significant part of this architectural intellect is co-creating with machines or nonhuman entities, not as in the eighties and the nineties architect's assistant specialized in space representations, but as a competent collaborator participating in the decision making and often demonstrating unprecedented creativity. The skeptics could argue that the more the machine absorbs parts of architectural thinking, the more the architect thinks less, and the more the intellectual part of architectural creation loses its social and economic value. As artificial intelligence is very close to creating designing machines, a severe threat of the established profession is sensed. Signs of this fears are sites, which offer online low-cost architectural services from around the globe if the clients would request an open competition on their project.

In order for architectural design to celebrate the human intellect, humans organized its processes in a top-down logic. The 'Idea,' this almost metaphysical term, the definition of which troubles architects and educators, is an absolute outcome of the human mind dominating the creative process, organising the formal arrangements, and their discursive legitimization. Designing for the Gaia cannot follow any 'Idea' as geocentric thinking demands a re-composition of its parts piece by piece. ²⁵ The ideological background of the design Idea is the prerogative that the designer, as a human, can predict to plan the future.

Architectural design is a tool to elaborate the predictable. The anthropocentric architect believed that the human mind had the capacity to extrapolate the randomness, the unpredictable, even if this attitude could lead to the imprisonment of the 'other' by the 'familiar'. For post-human thinking, the future is not a question with a predefined answer but an environment of possibilities and potentialities to emerge through a speculative process ²⁵. This shifts the emphasis from established design practices following predefined methodologies towards making decisions, to unstructured, open-ended, speculative approaches to design. The more we appreciate the loss of our assumed capacity to predict, the more we abandon our understanding of the present as a stratum to realize possibilities. We are now constructing a new consideration of the present as an environment to initiate possibilities and, to a large extent, uncertain virtualities.

Architectural design was aimed to impose an idea on matter appreciating the latter as a passive and obedient entity, prepared to follow commands. This understanding of materiality kept it in the periphery of the design process and, to a large extent, of design thinking overall. Post-human thinking reinstates materiality as one of its critical points of departure. The no longer debatable vitality of matter renders it as one of the catalytic agents in the formation of Gaia ²⁶ and requests different processes and manipulations towards constructing spatialities. Matter possesses morphogenetic capacities in all the spheres of reality: the geological, biological, cultural, social, and ethical. The world has to be recomposed as an assemblage of heterogeneities, through processes that give the possibility to heterogeneous elementary units to be composed.

Architectural design always targeted to create buildings that would exist forever. Even though logically, the life span of a building has been limited, it would be conceived as everlasting. This idea is totally inverted in post-human times. A building is not a machine but has life. It has a limited lifespan, and after that, it has to renegotiate the resources used for its materialization. The warnings emitted by all possible sources (scientific, political, and social) about climate change, the sustainable development of the planet, and the reasonable use of existing resources, calls for other design strategies. Buildings have to possess passports and to be part of a perpetual loop of upcycling: their strongest trait must be their ability to compose, decompose and recompose themselves in eternal loops. Design becomes the design of these loops.

The incompatibility of the established architectural design with the intellectual framework of the geocentric understanding of the world flags the emergency to re-design architectural design. Architecture's perpetual task is to redesign its own substance and ontology in each

25. Cf. for example, the *Compositionist Manifesto* of Bruno Latour (2010).

26. Cf. Manuel Delanda (2016:133).

27. Cf. Maria Vogiatzaki (2016) *The Vitality of Matter*.

major turn of nonlinear history 28. In our ongoing architectural interregnum, this becomes an imperative task.

28. Cf. Delanda's (1997) *A thousand years of nonlinear history*.

The paradox in the ship of Theseus's narrative lies in the emerging question 'would an object composed by more than one elements be the same, if gradually some or all of them were replaced?'. This question is nowadays pertinent more than ever before. As its answer is based upon the tolerance of the change or upon the belief of the continuity of the sameness, we can argue that both answers are as valid. Those who understand the new as an improved extension of the familiar will certainly answer positively. They would revisit existent theories of modernity to elaborate their updated version. Those who understand the new as a recombination of existing elements would answer negatively. They would reject an essential part of the established thinking and replace it with new arguments, hypotheses, and speculations. The 'meta' has more than one faces. Parmenides and Epicurus are still amongst us, or rather they never deviated from the orbit of our interregnums.

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