PARTICIPATION AND INTERACTIVITY IN CONCEPTUAL ARCHITECTURE

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Abstract: Modernism, the defining style of twentieth-century architecture, entered a kind of moral crisis in the 1960s. From an ideological point of view it could no longer meet the demands of architecture and keep pace with the changes that were taking place in society. Thus the emergence of various trends critical of modernity. However modernist theory and design is fond of invoking anthropocentrism, it is in fact driven by technical efficiency. As a counterpoint, postmodern thinking begins to think differently about the host community and the relationship with it. This new approach has led to the emergence of conceptualism in the visual arts and very similar endeavours in architecture. By examining the characteristics of conceptual works, a set of criteria could be drawn up, with the central element being the involvement of the community - either as recipients, on a mental level, or by actually putting them in an active, creative position. This also entailed a questioning of the traditional institutional framework of architecture and a redefinition of the role of the architect. The aim of this paper is to analyse the levels of community activity and summarise their impact on conceptual architecture and design methodology through theory and case studies.

Keywords: conceptual architecture, interactivity, participation, community, design

1. INTRODUCTION

The dominant architectural style of the twentieth century, modernism, came into a kind of moral crisis by the 1960s. While the technology, the need for mass construction and the positive aspects of comfort and hygiene that modernism offered were of course still important, from an ideological point of view it could no longer meet the demands of architecture and keep pace with the more recent changes that were taking place in society. The 1960s saw the rise of critical voices and various trends responding critically to modernity. These focused on the universalistic approach, personal and autocratic behavioural control, hierarchical organisational principles, monumentality and geometric repetition, as features that could only be perceived from a bird's eye view. Cultural differences, the misunderstanding of the human-environment relationship, the oversimplification of the human factor and the limitation of design based on the form-function relationship are all aspects when it comes to criticising the modern. To sum up, although modernist theory and design is fond of invoking anthropocentrism, it is in fact driven by technical efficiency. [1]
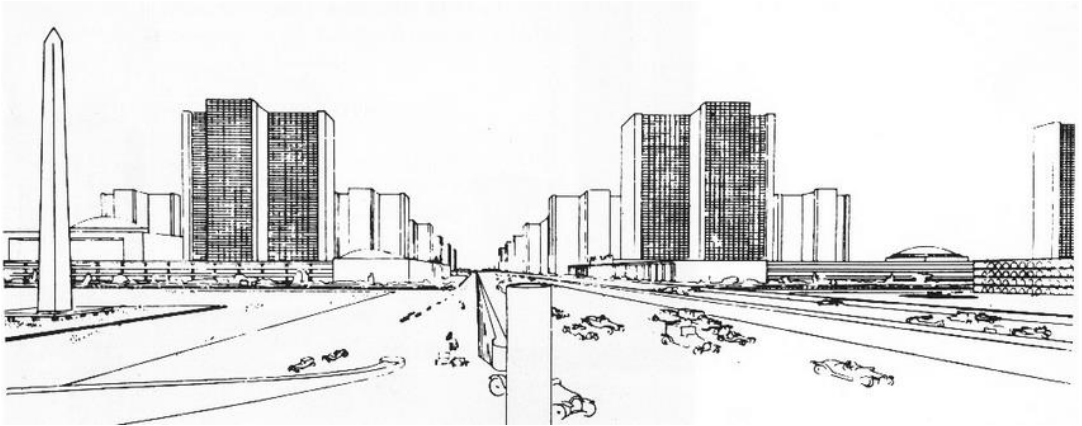
Figure 1 Le Corbusier's centre of La Ville Radieuse showing the tower blocks and the highway

By the second half of the twentieth century, the ecological and psychological aspect of the inseparability of man and his environment was becoming apparent. By the modernist era, man had seemingly become independent of natural influences, apparently capable of transcending the environment for his own ends and freeing himself from a vulnerable position. In the second half of the twentieth century, this illusion began to dissipate, and by the turn of the millennium it had become clear that the institutional framework and technology, were in fact the source of the problems, not the solution for them. These points of view alongside the matter of the object-user relationship were also key issues of philosophy in this period. Jean-François Lyotard, Gianni Vattimo reflects on dissolution in the experience of plurality, and instead of metanarratives, a fragmented, ephemeral and temporary viewpoint is emerged. Paul Virilio emphasizes, how technology separates people from real time and space. Gilles Deleuze questions originality - this aspect will be later really important in visual arts and architecture, too - and approach relationship between designer and objects from a contextual approach. Jacques Derrida announces deconstructivism and interprets design as a context, a framework for everyday life. And last but not least, Jean Baudrillard states end of primacy of function, recognising that users are not satisfied by a simple functional object anymore, but they need the power to interact and transform them. [2]

A very similar process took place in the different genres of the visual arts, or fine arts, at the turn of the twentieth century. The first, early sign of change was the Fountain - Duchamp's ready-made, a one-of-a-kind offense to our traditional idea of arts, installed in 1917. From this point on, "fine arts" as a genre was hardly the same. Resulting in conceptual art becoming a significant visual art movement between 1968 and 1972, continuing some of the aspirations of neo-dada, fluxus and minimal art. Its central idea is that the concept, the thought is the essential element of the work, and that these works always reflect in some way on their own artistic existence, their own content or their position within art. The emergence and existence of conceptual art as a tendency can be linked to a more or less precisely defined historical period; and it contains, explicitly or implicitly, a critique of modernism, social dictatorships and late capitalism.[3] This is both a means and a result of breaking down the institutional framework of art and the art market, questioning everything that the global network of exhibition spaces, galleries and auctions has meant for art. These characteristics outline the definition of conceptual art, but it should be noted that to this day there is no clear academic consensus about

it. [4] The classification of individual works can be based on an individual examination of the above aspects, so it is not clear whether the period of conceptual artistic endeavour has ended or whether there are still works and artists that can be classified as such.

This introduction and understanding of the emergence of conceptual art is important not only because it implies the time and objectives of the development of conceptual architecture, but also because its diversity of genres and its indefinable nature foreshadow the difficulties of providing a precise definition of conceptual architecture. However, conceptualism in architecture was undeniably born and, after a delay of only a few years, flourished just as much as in the arts. Literature has consistently attempted to circumscribe and delimit the movement. [5] Although no professional consensus has been reached, a study of these writings and the works they refer to has identified the main criteria from which architectural projects can be examined. Some of these overlap with those presented in the context of artistic endeavour, but certain distinctive features of architecture have given rise to other, architecture-specific aspects.

2. ARCHITECTURAL REACTIONS

A key point and consequence of the thinking detailed above was that it bridged the gap between art, design, philosophy and society, offering a new, human-centred approach to replace the previous modernist (and even earlier feudal) approach. It should be noted here that, while the critique of modernity is part of these tendencies, they could not have come about without the first steps towards the democratisation of design that modernity has taken. Architectural reactions to all these changes were also immediate, which is probably also a sign of the internal tensions within the architectural profession and between architecture and society. The 1965 issue of Design Quarterly, entitled 'The Clip-on Architecture', made history, as it focused on intellectual content, quite similar to that of conceptual arts' ,and dedicated the whole issue for utopias like walking metropolises by Ron Herron and Bryan Harvey (Archigram Gorup), Computer city of Dennis Crompton (Archigram Group) or House of Future by Alison and Peter Smithson. [6] The term "conceptual architecture" however was not present in this issue, which attempted to situate these works in the creative scene of the time, citing as influencing factors the erosion of modernist megastructures on the one hand, and the London op-art and pop-art movements on the other.
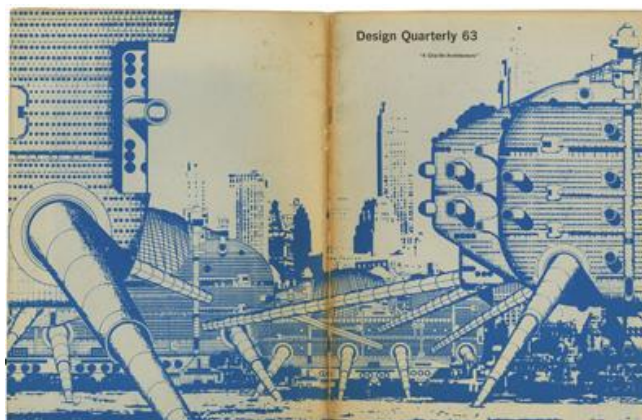

Figure 2 Cover of Design Quarterly, No. 63, A Clip-On Architecture (1965)

At the same time, the motivations, tools and creative approach of the utopian (sometimes dystopian) projects presented in this article show a clear affinity with the way conceptual art

has entered the art scene. The intellectual content, self-reflection, ambivalent relationship with modern consumer society and questioning of the genre frameworks and institutional systems that can fundamentally define conceptual art are also at the heart of these architectural projects. These concepts, which are mostly unrealised or exist only as 1:1 scale models or prototypes, create complex architectural visions without the constraints of the building industry or material reality. In addition to these initial forms of dematerialisation, new materials and media (plastics, prefabricated ready-made capsules, prosthetic bodies, complex mechanised cities), hitherto little used in the construction industry, were experimented with. Although many of these unrealised ideas were ironically reflecting on the relationship between man, city and technology, in a way, that seems to be still actual nowadays in the light of today's digitalisation, automation, artificial intelligence and 3D printing.

It was not long before the first attempts to define conceptual architecture were made. The first major written publication in this respect was in 1970, by Peter D. Eisenman, entitled 'Notes on Conceptual Architecture. Towards a Definition'. [7] This particular 'writing' is itself a conceptual act. Without a body of text, the paper is simply a series of references and footnotes, with which the author attempts to outline the concept of conceptual architecture. This article was published in the second issue of Design Quarterly, devoted entirely to what has come to be known as conceptual architecture. Eisenman's article launched the special double issue, with contributions from other designers and groups such as Ant Farm, Archigram, Archizoom, Francois Dallegret, Haus-Rucker-Company, Craig Hodgetts, Les Levine, Onyx, Ed Ruscha and finally Superstudio. [8] Looking back at the range of these artists and their activities, it is clear that conceptualism has become a matter of self-definition in architecture. Thinking about architecture and space has ceased to be an internal affair of the architectural profession, and it can be contributed to not only by artists from other fields, but also by the host community. It clearly pushed the boundaries of architecture as a genre, questioning all that the traditional institutional systems of the building industry.
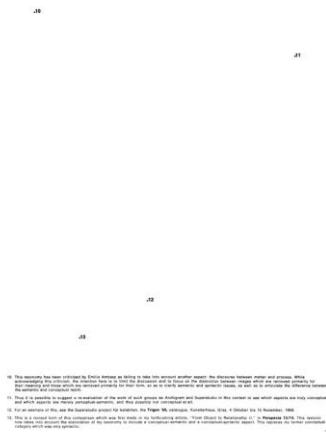

Figure 3 Peter D. Eisenman: Notes on Conceptual Architecture – page of the article

One of the pioneering early works that was physically realised was the Italian designer Gianni Pettena's Paper/Midwestern Ocean. It was created for a conference lecture at an American university, for which Pettena densely filled the entire room with suspended strips of

paper. The audience was forced to cut their own way through the maze to watch the lecture. The work, which thus takes on a performative character, is both a critique of the academic framework and a critique of the established ways of creating architectural space. After making the initial gesture, he left the fate of the installation entirely to chance, to the participation of the audience. As a creator himself, he only formulated the idea and provided a certain starting point for its construction, which, in addition to institutional criticism, also meant a reflection on his own role as a designer. The resulting space fundamentally questions how and by whom a concept is produced. [9]

Figure 4 Gianni Pettena: Paper (Midwestern Ocean), performance-installation, 1971.

In 1971, when this work was created, it was a revolutionary idea that the user could intervene so drastically in the shaping of the space they use. Today, when community participation, the more conscious use of space, is much more part of mainstream architectural thinking, it is perhaps difficult to judge what this meant more than fifty years ago, when modernist rationality, mechanised and controlled construction, had been the accepted way of building for some thirty years. The power and relevance of the work is shown by the fact that after its first "premiere" in 1971, it was repeated several times between 2009 and 2018, on different occasions, at art festivals and exhibitions. [10] Half a century later, it still raises topical questions about building and spatial economy!

Eisenman wrote a second paper in 1978, which took a more concrete stand for a kind of post-functionalism. Besides materiality, the other inescapable factor that has defined architecture for centuries is function. The modernist paradigm, which strips buildings of all ornamentation and derives its formal solutions purely from function, is a kind of culmination of this. It does not, however, go beyond function as an architectural paradigm, and that caused most of the later criticism of Eisenman's article from authors analyzing and attempting to define conceptual architecture. [11]

In the meantime, by the late 1970s the above architectural groups and practices slowly disappeared: some disbanded, others, such as Eisenman, began to separate from the theoretical work and the practical work that could be adapted to market conditions. The only one, to make

it to the eighties, was Rem Kolhaas and his firm OMA. Even in the 1980s, with his often provocative, yet meaningful counter-proposals to numerous design competitions, he continued to experiment with the disruption of architecture and its institutional framework. Very soon, a new generation of conceptually driven architects emerged. In this initial phase of globalisation and major international investment, even the so-called "starchitects" of the time were regularly producing works that emphasised conceptual ideas as opposed to mass production in response to market demand. Small-scale and low-budget, but all the more clever concepts appear even in the projects of highly-regarded architecture firms. Among others, Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio, Anette Gigon and Mike Guyer, Bernard Tschumi and Daniel Libeskind are the most prominent architects of this era.

Figure 5 Annette Gigon / Mike Guyer: Archaeological Museum and Park Kalkriese 1998.

It was also the first big wave of digitalisation of architectural design. Computer-generated forms and software-supported projects appeared, the end result of which could be linked to conceptualism by their associative appearance, but generally lacked a theoretical background, a meaning beyond themselves and a stance against the existing institutional framework. In his article, Jorge Silvetti listed the architectural trends that are spreading with digitalisation and globalisation, which, although associatively related to certain conceptual aspirations, remain at a superficial, formal level and do not really raise questions about the meaning of architecture. As he calls: programism, thematization, blobs and literalism are all working with metaphors, that our mind fill with meaning, however, they are not results of an intentional search for meaning and often result in nostalgic mimicing of visual appearance of the past or even future. [12]
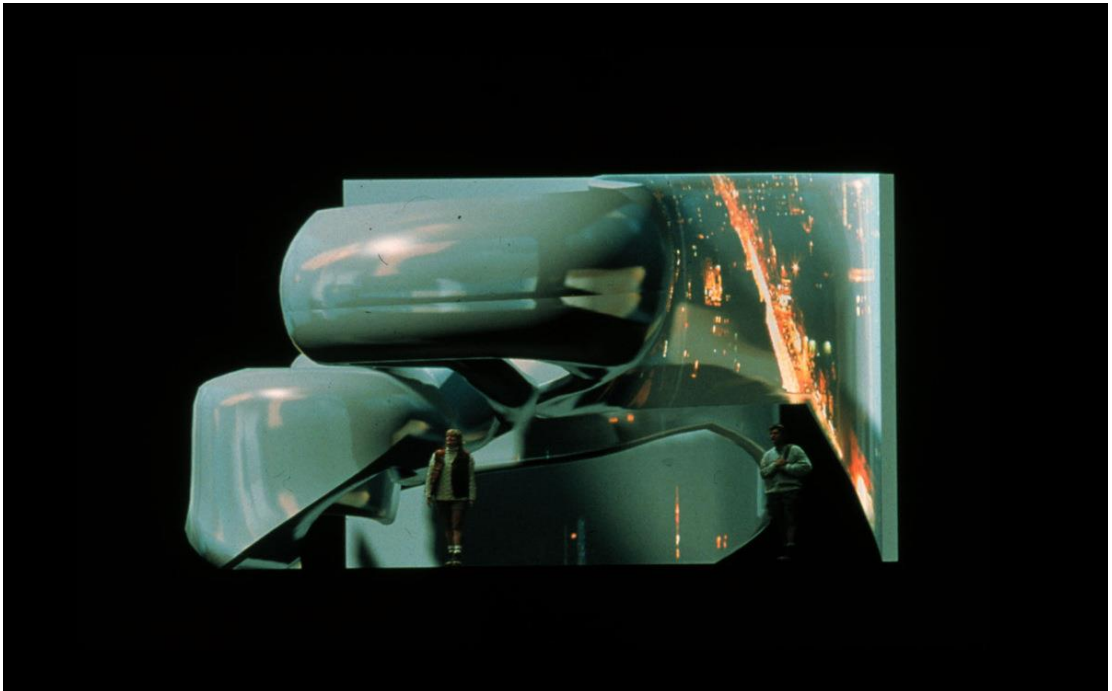
Figure 6 UNStudio: The Dutch pavilion for the Milano Triennal, 1996.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

As is clear from the above, conceptual architecture cannot be defined in terms of simple formal, stylistic or other characteristics. Like the arts, it is a complex, difficult to define and, presumably, a dormant movement that will remain in the mainstream for a long time, and even after the early examples of the 1980s, its practitioners cannot be clearly identified either. Consequently, in order to delimit and examine the scope of conceptual architecture, a back-and-forth iteration was necessary to identify its main characteristics. The starting point for this was a number of available sources on conceptual art, as well as the (already cited) Design Quarterly and Harvard Design Magazine issues on the subject. These sources record a number of characteristics that, if not in complete consensus, roughly describe the phenomenon. It was possible to begin to examine practices and projects along these characteristics and place them on the mental map of conceptual architecture. Among the characteristics of the works thus found, further commonalities could be discovered, allowing the criteria to be refined or elaborated.

In this data collection phase, more than 300 projects - both realised and theoretical works - were examined, listed and evaluated according to the criteria developed. This database is, to the best of our knowledge, the most comprehensive list of conceptual architectural works, and even so, new projects are regularly discovered in the course of the research. The first and most important element of the criteria is that the given work must have a conceptual meaning or self-reflexive content that goes beyond its primary, utilitarian function and addresses some kind of problem, usually social or ecological. In addition, the disuse of materials, or material

experiments that select components from outside the established materials of the construction industry, for example, is an important characteristic. These sometimes contribute to the mediation of content to astonishing effect - for example, by using urban waste water, fishing mud or used oil drums.

Certain character traits, such as community realisation, or at least putting users in a position of agency, also imply a change in the role of the architect, as in the arts. However, in many cases, the works of art include some ephemeral, performative component, either on the part of the creator or the community. Multisensoriality, the recognition that human perception is never a single-channel, visual experience, is also often present in the works. In many cases, we can speak of temporary constructions, concepts that exist between genres, or only in drawing and/or writing. Occasionally the work radically defies or rejects established norms. In other cases, it reflexively draws on local character, vernacular or historical archetypes neglected in modernity. Finally, among the aspects, we come to the problem of function. Many projects, at least by design, have some kind of primary function in the traditional sense. In many cases, however, no such function can be discerned, and the sole purpose of the work is to convey a conceptual meaning. The question is no longer what is conceptual, but what is architecture?

On the basis of the studies carried out so far, it seems most appropriate to consider conceptual works, whether architectural or artistic, as a continuum, accepting that there is no clear, sharp line between the two. Some conceptual art also uses architectural means, and in the creative process the artist assumes the role of designer, not necessarily that of craftsman. In the same way, conceptual architectural works also borrow from the field of art, incorporating certain elements from its toolbox.

A very typical example of the outcome of all this is the work of Simon Starling, namely his 2005 work Shedboatshed (Mobile Architecture No.2). The artist created an installation for an exhibition in Basle, which was about thinking about architecture, its mobility and its forms of representation in the exhibition space or in reality. The starting point was a found 'object', a small waterfront shed in the Schweizerhalle, which the artist dismantled into its components, built a boat from its timber and, after a journey of some 8 kilometres on the water, reassembled it in its original form on arrival at the exhibition space - although the process of course left its mark on the structure. [13] This project has almost all the characteristics of conceptual art and architecture:

- recycles, re-thinks a kind of ready-made
- raises ecological questions around building or not building and the use of buildings
- transcends the institutional framework of both disciplines: the art project in fact encompasses the whole performative process, and although the end result is an exhibit, the true essence of the work is what is only indicated by the traces left by the circumstances of its creation. All the while, the permanence of architecture in general is called into question by the relationship between building and place.
- It focuses on a new way of thinking about material - in this case, the disembodiment is less pronounced, but ultimately, although it works with material and builds on its specificities, it also questions the relationship between architecture (building) and material, and conveys a message through the use of 'waste' materials transferred from there to art, which is more about the process of material, our schemata associated with material, rather than the planks themselves.
- the artist as a person is relegated to the background. Although he himself carries out the transformation and construction, his role is in fact that of an engineering designer.

The physical creation of the work could be carried out by any craftsman or carpenter, with virtually the same result, and without the need for any knowledge of artistic technique or training. The fact that the artist participated in it with his own hands was due more to its performative nature and the message it communicated, to the unpacking of the question "who are we in the world and what do we do with it?" than to the "artistic" form of the final result. [14]

Figures 7-10 Simon Starling: Shedboatshed (Mobile Architecture No.2), 2005.

At the same time, Sami Rintala's 1999 Land(e)scape project in Savonlinna, designed in collaboration with Marco Casagrande, is a project that stands on the border between architecture, concept art and action art, and is in fact unclassifiable. In their own words, "an architectural landscape installation". [15] Within Europe, the Finnish countryside showed the most rapid signs of depopulation at that time: its inhabitants abandoned their lives and moved to the outskirts of a larger city. The piece draws attention to this phenomenon with bitter humour and deep drama. Three traditional Finnish barns are 'brought to life' by being put on their feet to set off in search of their unfaithful owners towards the cities of southern Finland. These buildings, which had literally lost their ground, after losing their original function, have also become symbols of the whole region in their short life. The final moment of the work was the burning of the objects to ashes, performed by dancer Reijo Kela in a ceremony. [16] This action is particularly powerful in the local context, where warmth and light are much more

important symbols than in the south of Europe, and also refers to the Midsummer Night tradition, when Finns greet the shortest night with bonfires. The project has therefore been preserved exclusively in drawings, photographs and video documentation, which were presented on the Venice Biennale in 2000. [17] Besides dematerialization, as the architects reverse the building process into a complete annihilation, and involvement of time as a factor, its main focus is connection to the community and making a meaningful statement for them.

Figures 11-12 Sami Rintala / Marco Casagrande: Land(e)scape, 1999.

These two examples illustrate how conceptualism dissolved the boundaries between architecture and art. In many cases, conceptual art has borrowed tools from fellow arts such as architecture, and architecture has also discovered the abstract expressive power of conceptual art. What they have in common is that they place the viewer in an intellectual perspective, as they formulate their message on a conceptual rather than a purely aesthetic level. The work of art is not complete until it has triggered (at least) a mental response in the viewer, conveying to them the meaning of the works. However, there are conceptual works that rely even more heavily on the involvement of the host community, moving the participants from being spectators to being actors in various ways and levels. Sometimes unusual, or even provocative, the fundamental aim of these efforts is to move art and architecture out of being an end in itself and actively back into the life of the community. The following paper attempts to categorise and classify the different forms of user participation and to illustrate the functioning of each of these levels through examples in order to analyse the relationship between conceptual architecture and society.

4. PARTICIPATION AND INTERACTIVITY

One of the main aims of conceptual works is to seek a deeper relationship with the recipient or user. It does this in a variety of ways. All this is in opposition to the essentially behavioural-controlled, finished framework of the modernist paradigm, which gives strict possibilities of use, and to the traditional institutional constraints of architecture and construction. In the following, we attempt to categorise and frame the forms of user participation and to illustrate the functioning of each of these directions and levels through examples. Of the nearly three hundred works selected and classified as "conceptual" on the basis of the criteria already described, a significant number can be said to rely heavily on community participation.

Analysing the three distinct periods of conceptual architecture, we can also observe a significant increase in community activity over time. The table below shows the two main modes of participation in terms of the percentage of works examined. The first is where the community is actively involved in the process of making. The second is where the already implemented creation activates certain actions.

The data clearly show that community implementation has doubled from 18% to 37% for post-millennium works. But what is even more interesting is that this change has not been continuous, but has come in leaps and bounds: in the 1980s and 1990s, only 16% of works relied on the constructive power of civil society. A similar significant increase can be seen in the activities generated by the works in other ways, i.e. not in the process of implementation. While 47% of the first, early works relied on this element, 63% of the works from 1985-1999 invoked interactivity in some way, which increased to 80% for works after 2000.

Examining the works and analysing the means by which interactivity is expressed in them, the following types can be identified according to two sets of criteria. The first is the intensity of the community's involvement, the second is how the temporality of the community's interventions relates to the creation and/or usage of the work.

period	*community implementing*	*activating users*
1st: 1963-1984.	18%	47%
2nd: 1985-1999.	16%	63%
3rd: 2000-	37%	80%

Table 1 changes in interactivity in projects related to conceptual architecture. Own statistics after examining 300 projects.

Levels of intensity of community involvement:
- mental, intellectual level: by " decoding" the underlying idea and message of the work, the recipient becomes a participant in the piece. Visual aesthetics alone are not enough - sometimes they are not even a crucial part of the work. The intellectual, mental process itself makes the recipient part of the creative process, since without it the work is not 'finished'. It is, in fact, born in the mind in its final form. In the case of architecture, much of the early pre-1980 work, as well as the theoretical and drawing work, is essentially based on this.
- The user/recipient can experience the piece in a more complex way than mere contemplation. E.g. body implants in the early phase, are to some extent interactive, tactile spaces or works.
- The user/recipient actively participates or intervenes in the realisation. The creator or designer defines a framework, designs the work, but takes into account the activity of the community
- The creator or designer is almost entirely sidelined, taking on a kind of organizing or initiating role, perhaps providing the community with some mental or physical means, but the work is essentially shaped by the community.

The interactions can take place in various phases of the creation:
- at the time of creation or even before - even if not consciously by the community
- when the work is completed/published
- in the long term during the afterlife of the work

Most of the works fall into some combination of the above. In the following, typical examples are presented through a few case studies.

In the case of Conceptualist architecture, the emphasis shifted from realization as material objects to the representation of mental meaning, many early works are preserved in a purely drawn and/or written form. Of course, these works were not intended to be executed, and in many cases, by their very nature, this would not even have been possible. One of these typically theoretical designs was the Archigram group's Instant City in 1970. [18] The idea, presented in a comic book-like format, in framed phase diagrams, was to 'enable a village to become kind of a city for a week' by delivering the cultural institutions of a large city in a 'transportable kit'. The critical overtones of this early work, published in drawings, were primarily concerned with issues of mass production and consumption, urban and rural life and the problematics of space and usage of it, regardless the location. [19] In its relationship with the public, it has a mental, intellectual character. The interaction takes place exclusively in the minds of the spectators, when they perceive and reflect on the concept and look at the lifestyle and social issues it raises from a different perspective. In terms of timing, it engages with the public after the project has been created and published.
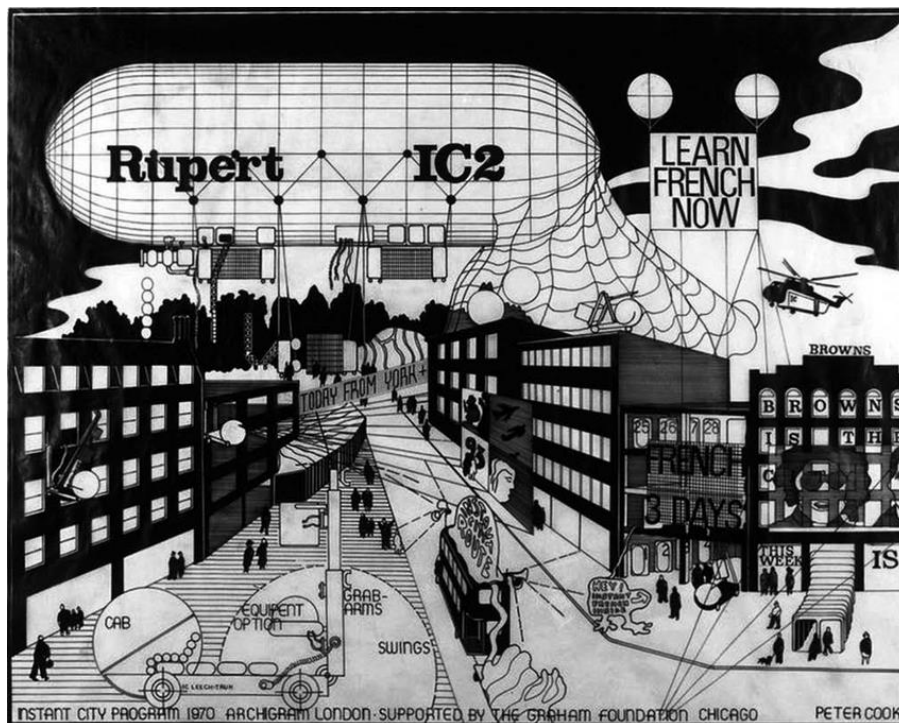

Figure 13 Archigram: Instant City, 1970 (Design Quarterly, nos. 78/79 [1970]; published by the Walker Art Center, Minneapolis, Minnesota)

In 1984, Elizabeth Diller and Ricardo Scofidio were commissioned to design the entrance installation for Art on the Beach in New York, which they called "Gate". They created two kiosks made of perforated steel sheeting with folding canvas shades. The starkness of the steel structure is given a touch of playfulness by the two windsocks painted black and white. Windows cut into the steel sheets separating cashiers and visitors, and a prism-shaped counter and change collection bowl, provide a meeting point between two people. However, their design and the safety glass in the bottom window separate rather than connect people. [20] During the handing over and receiving of money, limited visibility creates a sense of uncertainty, and it is only hands that can meet in this action. "Visitors proffering their cash confront a visual hypertrophy, the prism to the left or the metal cash bowl to the right, in which reflections of eyes, pebbles on the ground, safety glass, and particle board exacerbate the distance between them and the cashiers. It is as if the structure composed a film projection booth in reverse, animated by the gaze of the viewer. Joining these two surfaces creates an architecture that is edgy, literally and metaphorically, thanks to the formal bisection of the half sphere by the plane of glass where the transaction occurred. Gate suggests a raw yet sophisticated handling of materials and tectonic details that would emerge as a prominent characteristic of architecture by DS-R, together with an attempt to evade categorization." [20] The austere, steel structure is at once a building, an ironic gesture, and a questioning of the process to get access to enclosed space and pieces of art. The installation greatly influences and directs the behaviour of the community. The different sensory experiences, the operation of the structure, in this case, no longer acts on a purely intellectual level (although this aspect is still important), but interacts with people through their concrete actions.

Figures 14-15 Elizabeth Diller / Ricardo Scofidio: Gate, entrance structure for Art on the Beach, 1984.

Sami Rintala and Marco Casagrande's project "Birdcage" was expected to have an even deeper social embeddedness. Installed in 2001 for the Yokohama Triennale of Contemporary Art, the small pavilion forms a birdcage, or a cocoon, of wickerwork construction. [21] Each

day during the event, a weather research balloon was released to release a small wooden bird containing seeds and a kind message, asking the finder to plant them in a traditional Japanese ceremony. The interactions here took place on several levels, in space and time. Visitors to the Triennale are also participants in the project, as are all those who find the small packages months or, in extreme cases, years later. In this way, a network of links is established between visitors, creators and finders that spans time and lives on symbolically in the plants planted. An important mental component of the project is the hope itself that what we do will, somewhere else and at another time, but will create life, blossom and memories. And all this requires not only the act of thawing, but also that the reciepents understand, and even half-aware of what they are participating in, do what the artists have asked them to do through the bird.
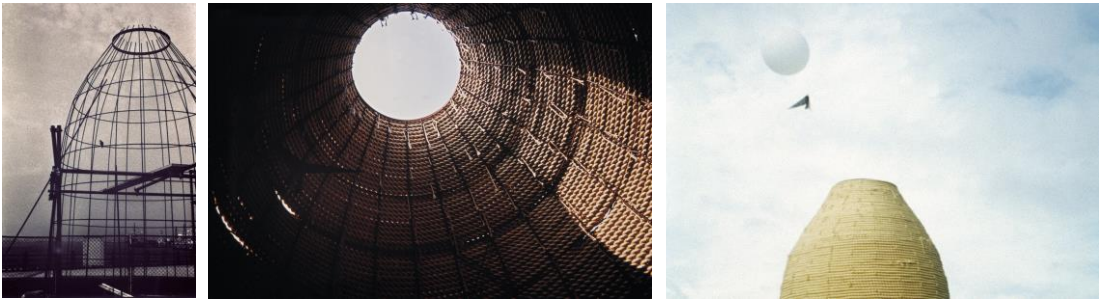

Figure 16-18 Sami Rintala / Marco Casagrande: Birdcage, Yokohama Triennale of Contemporary Art, 2001.

With the emergence of conceptual architecture, the environmental, social, ecological and architectural problems of the post-industrial period have become the focus of architects' thinking. A stunning example of this is Treasure Hill in Taipei. The matriarchal urban farming community had been operating illegally within the city for over 50 years, only to be brought to the brink of destruction in 2003 when architect Marco Casagrande visited and discovered it. By then, the city had ordered its demolition, condemning the self-sustaining community to death. Casagrande mobilised all possible forces to help the locals, and with the involvement of a local architect and around 200 architecture students, they started to clean up the area in three weeks. The vacant green space, already demolished, was put into cultivation, and the city council was persuaded that it was of greater value than an empty urban park covered with lawn. [22] The district has thus been temporarily saved, and is a good example of how architecture can transcend official boundaries and make strong statements about its relationship with society through projects of meaning and significance. This relationship is much less hierarchical and controlled than in the earlier modernist conception: it is more juxtapositional and modest in its means. And while it redefines interventions and projects in new ways, it also redefines itself and the role of the architect. In this case, the role was not even one of initiation, but merely of support: the planner did not 'invent' and 'dictate' how the inhabitants should live.

Figure 19 Marco Casagrande: Treasure Hill, Taipei, 2003.

5. CONCLUSIONS

Although the modernist paradigm still defines the way we think about architecture, and architecture as such, from the 1960s onwards there has been an increasing number of critical voices in the international discourse. In response to the pressing social problems of the second half of the twentieth century, pluralism and the need for user-object interactivity in architecture and design in general emerged. Conceptual architecture, like conceptual art, is rooted in the postmodern and responds to post-industrial social demands by confronting, at least in part, this paradigm. It is not postmodern in a formal sense, but its theoretical foundations are developed in relation to it, in fact along the lines of the problems identified by postmodern thinkers. There is no formal canon, all architectural means serve the message. In this way, stylistic pluralism is at its core, but in all cases it is shaped by local culture, the real needs of the people and their attachment to place, context and time. Conceptualism is placing new models at the centre of architectural meaning. This in turn fundamentally changes the position of architecture in our culture and society. Conceptual architecture today attempts to respond to the pressing social, ideological and ecological issues of our time through architectural means, breaks up the investor-official environment as an "institutional" framework, and goes beyond the aspects of economic interest. With the main aim to put the service of mankind back at the centre, interactivity and participation are two key factors in the changing social demands of the user-object relationship. The aim of this article is to explore the changes in conceptual architecture in this field from the last third of the twentieth century to the present day. To this end, it will be possible to trace the change over time by examining projects and to identify the different methodologies, which, when categorised, will provide an insight into the trend in a segment of contemporary architecture.

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