Introduction
Trans-disciplinarity:
The Singularities and Multiplicities of Architecture
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Contemporary architecture culture – as discourse and as design – seems to oscillate between two opposing positions. The first understands architecture as a node of economy, politics, society, and culture, suggesting that these diverse forces generate the multiplicity of architecture's tools, procedures and performances; the second focuses on architecture as a singular object, aesthetic, formal, self-contained and irreducible to the conditions from which it emerges or the effects it stimulates. Attempts to bridge this dichotomy of architecture's multiplicities and its singularity can be identified both in design practices and in theory: while the majority of today's state-of-the art studios hover between practicing architecture as a derivative of a series of parameters and as a unique icon, contemporary theory similarly oscillates between conceiving architecture as an outcome of the multiplicity of contexts which overdetermine its production, and as a singular event expressing the individuality of the architect or the 'individuality' of the corporate client.

With this inaugural issue of 'Footprint', we would like to underline the negotiation between architecture's multiplicities and its singularity as a crucial undercurrent of contemporary architecture culture, as well as one of the driving forces of architecture's 'tradition of the present' - a lineage of discourses and designs which has provided since the 1960s, and continues to provide today, an orientation for architecture practices.

This negotiation has been pursued within the tradi-tion of the present by means of several strategies subscribing to alternating disciplinary definitions of architecture, and differing not just in the characterisation of the profession, but also in the understanding of the concept of 'discipline' itself.

One strategy, which emerged in the wake of the disappointment with the functionalist city in the late 1950s, consisted of interdisciplinary researches, practices and institutions; it embraced a diffused concept of the discipline of architecture, which it understood as a mediation between its social, economic, political, ecological, or aesthetic facets. The program of the Atelier d'Urbanisme et d'Architecture (A.U.A.), for example, the first and most important interdisciplinary planning practice in France, founded in 1961, was developed in opposition to the individualised 'artistic' architecture of the late-modernist masters and their followers, such as Claude Parent and Paul Virilio.

While the interdisciplinary approach attempted to preserve the profession's authority by means of understanding the discipline as a set of interdependent domains governed by rules in perpetual transformation, not unlike Foucault's concept of 'discipline' in his theorising of power, it was confronted with the second strategy, aimed at staking out the unique core of architecture. This strategy was exemplified by the positions of the Italian Tendenza and the lineage of Colin Rowe and his students, delineating the specificity of architecture by emphasising form and typology as the essence of the discipline,

autonomous from the social conditions of its production. The Tendenza was positioned as an alternative to the late modernist work of Bruno Zevi and his attempt to posit architectural space as a common denominator unifying architecture's multiplicities; these multiplicities, addressed as 'interpretations' in Zevi's 1957 'Architecture as Space', included politics, philosophy, religion, science, economy, society, technology, physiology, psychology and aesthetics.[1] Massimo Scolari, one of the members of the Tendenza, specifically defined its work as an architecture 'that refuses interdisciplinary solutions to its own crisis; that does not pursue and immerse itself in political, economic, social, and technological events only to mask its own creative and formal sterility'.[2] Scolari, perhaps paradoxically, postulated architecture's 'withdrawal into itself' as a pre-condition for a subsequent intervention in the multiplicity of these 'events'.[3] A similar approach was followed by Aldo Rossi, with his concept of architecture as the 'singular urban fact', preserving in a single monumental structure the richness of the urban phenomena.[4]

Thus, both strategies aimed at thinking architecture as a multiplicity and a singularity, while differing in the directions in which the arguments were developed: whereas the disciplinary definition of architecture looks for its singularity as the vessel for gathering and relating architecture's multiplicities, the interdisciplinary research perceives the singular performance of architecture in its management of the multiplicity of its conditions and contexts. In other words, in spite of the antithetical rhetoric and different points of departure, several significant trajectories and oeuvres of the tradition of the present were oriented towards a possibility of constructing architecture as a unique object, and a specific practice, which links the heterogeneous forces of the contemporary urban society. It is this intertwining of the disciplinary and interdisciplinary definitions of architecture which we call trans-disciplinarity.

The fragility and difficulties of a trans-disciplinary approach were exemplarily expressed in the splits between the philosophers and architects within the French radical groups of the 1960s, including the rupture within the Situationist International between Guy Debord and Constant Nieuwenhuis, and the split of the Utopie Group following Jean Baudrillard's disagreements with Jean Aubert, Jean-Paul Jungmann and Antoine Stinco.

These events, which coincided with the beginnings of the tradition of the present in architecture culture, can be understood only when situated within the context of the French debates of the late 1950s and 1960s, following the critique of the postwar functionalist city. Rejecting the self-proclaimed scientific and apolitical character of this architecture and urbanism, Henri Lefebvre, in his writings from the 1950s and 1960s, demonstrated that these practices were implicated in the general technocratic restructuring of French society and closely interrelated with the oligopolist economy, state planning, structuralist philosophy, and the idiosyncrasies of everyday life in the emerging *bureaucratic society of controlled consumption*. Lefebvre's analysis of the fragmented postwar production of space, both in design (the diffraction of functions in the CIAM urbanism) and in research (the specialisations of diverging academic disciplines), was paralleled by the introduction of interdisciplinary research into the institutions of urbanism in France in the mid-1960s and the emergence of interdisciplinary studios such as the A.U.A.

In the late 1960s, Jean Baudrillard merged the critical Marxist tradition with the structuralist methodology and the conclusions of the sociological research on postwar France carried out by Henri Lefebvre, his PhD supervisor, and formulated the consequences of these analyses for architecture: in his writings of that period, Baudrillard disclosed architecture as overdetermined by a series of economic, political and cultural forces; the autonomy of archi-

tecture was thus revealed as an illusion.[5] Criticising Lefebvre's 'naivety',[6] Baudrillard did not see any possibility of a residuum which would evade this determinism; even the 'lived' of architecture – the essential category in Lefebvre's critique of postwar urbanism from the perspective of an everyday experience – was counted among other products of the capitalist society and included in its system of signs. In other words, the structuralist claim about the death of the subject – its dissolution in its constitutive social forces – was paralleled by the death of the architectural object, a 'death' already announced by the avant-garde of the early twentieth century.[7] Consequently, the radical fight against the alienating society and its products in the course of May '68 must have been directed against architecture - not just against its institutions, as in the successful attack on the École des Beaux-Arts, but against the object of architecture itself, and 'every formal and symbolic practice'.[8] Thus, referring to 'objet, cache-toi', the May '68 slogan written in the staircase of the Sorbonne, Jean Aubert commented: 'we were the object, obviously… even if we had pretensions of thinking a little, just a little bit, we were makers of objects'.[9]

The splits within the radical French groups were symptomatic of a growing difficulty to reconcile architecture's singularity with the increasing awareness of its multiple conditions and consequences. The arena of this contestation was by no means limited to architecture or to France, but incorporated a variety of disciplines and took place in countries such as the UK, the US and Germany. Much of the debate in the UK was initially hosted and generated by the Centre for Contemporary Culture Studies in Birmingham, founded in the mid 1960s as an interdisciplinary institute with the objective of reconstituting a unified understanding of culture and society and headed by Richard Hoggart and Stuart Hall. A hotbed of structuralist and critical thought, the CCCS was torn between the dissolution of the author within the social and economic forces and

his reconstitution as an active agent. Stuart Hall believed that the solution to this dichotomy would be enabled by constructing a dialectics of a posthumanist, 'multiple' approach and a more traditional humanism with emphasis on 'the singular'.[10] Nevertheless, the CCCS ended up dismantling in its studies the singular aesthetic artefact, embedding it in its social context and circumventing traditional 'disinterested' aesthetic interpretations.

In parallel, European and American artists launched a wide institutional critique via works such as 'Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum Board of Trustees' (1974), by the German artist Hans Haacke, in which he inferred that the museum, its policies and preferences were determined by corporate interests outside the art world. This view was theoretically strengthened by the literary critic Peter Bürger, who in his 1974 'Theory of the Avant-Garde' exposed the idea of artistic autonomy as a middle-class ideology, thus delegitimising art's primary vehicle of a singular self-understanding.[11]

What is the relevance of these debates today? Clearly, the positions of Baudrillard, Foucault and other post-structuralist thinkers are still major references for architectural discourse. However, the significance of the rupture between the philosophers and designers of the SI and the Utopie lies not in it being a symptom of the 'eternal' opposition between theory and practice. Neither does the relevance of these debates depend on the critical potential invested in the project of architecture's disciplinarity, nor on the transgressive ambitions of the interdisciplinary research: in contrast to thirty years ago, interdisciplinary practices can no longer be perceived as rebellious; they have been widely appropriated by management and business, which currently prefer broad, 'horizontal' knowledge to specific, 'vertical' expertise;[12] similarly, architectural autonomy can no longer be seen as 'critical' or as a refuge from commodification - the status of ideology Bürger associated with artistic autonomy is easily

applicable to architecture as well.[13]

Rather, these ruptures manifest the difficulties in relating the multiplicities of architecture in contemporary society with the belief in its singularity. These difficulties are evident in Baudrillard's late 'Singular Objects of Architecture' (2000). In this dialogue with Jean Nouvel, Baudrillard suggests that the possibility of architecture's singularity stems from the breaches in the fundamental relationships between the architectural object and its determining conditions - the relationships traditionally referred to by such concepts as meaning, context, subject, object;[14] in other words, the condition necessary to theorise the singularity of architecture is its isolation from its determining multiplicities, an isolation explained within Baudrillard's postmodern ontologies.

Baudrillard's recent contribution reveals the negotiation between singularity and multiplicity of architecture as urgent, relevant, and unresolved. Accordingly, this issue of 'Footprint' postulates the concept of trans-disciplinarity in order to focus on the methods and techniques which enable rethinking the object of architecture as the framework in which the diverse forces relate to each other, compete or converge.

At the same time, the concept of trans-disciplinarity allows linking today's architecture culture to a series of contemporary debates. These include Jacques Rancière's recent efforts to embed the aesthetic object in its political and social context without dismantling its singularity; Rancière's aim can be described as a formulation of a specific trans-disciplinary theory of art and politics.[15] Similarly relevant are Bruno Latour's analyses of 'hybrids', or 'quasi-objects' - singular social actors being 'real as nature, narrated as discourse, collective as society, existing as Being', thus relating the multiplicity of social processes.[16] It is in this context that one should understand the recent inter-est in the work of Henri Lefebvre, whose theory of production of space can be described as a project of relating the Western-Marxist perspective on the social processes of production and consumption to the phenomenological analysis of the individual consciousness, perception and experience of space in the practices of everyday life.[17]

The articles included here offer a variety of approaches which relate the singularity and multiplicity of architecture; they range from a wide overview to a delineation of specific instances of 'trans-disciplinarity', sharing the perception of the late 1960s as the moment in which the current trajectories of architecture culture originated. Wouter Davidts examines architectural design and discourse as a condition for art; Michael Hays revisits the narrative as a form of understanding the object of architecture within the forces which it reflects and opposes, and from which it emerges; Patrick Healy explores the roots of architecture's contradictory singularity by reconstructing Max Raphael's project of an empirical theory of art and architecture; Mark Jarzombek questions architecture's singularity as a philosophical project; Ákos Moravánszky maps the relationships and interchanges between theory, design, history and education as the multiplicity of contemporary architecture; Jean-Louis Violeau traces the collaborations between architects and sociologists on architectural research in France since the late 1960s. Reviews of Eisenman's doctoral research and 'A Vision for Brussels' exhibition close this issue; the former belongs to the inception of the tradition of the present, the latter, with its explicit premise that architectural form is political, can be described as a recent example of the subsistence of this tradition. These diverse articles, while embedded in the tradition of the present, underline the question of trans-disciplinarity as one of the - multiple - horizons of today's architecture culture.

Notes

1. Bruno Zevi, *Architecture as space: how to look at architecture* (New York: Horizon Press, 1957).

2. Massimo Scolari, 'The New Architecture and the Avant-Garde', in *Architecture Theory since 1968*, ed. by K. Michael Hays (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2000), p. 131.

3. Ibid.

4. Regarding the subsistence of the Cologne Cathedral in the midst of the destroyed postwar city, Rossi noted that 'it is not the context or some illusionistic quality that enables us to understand a monument; […] only by comprehending the monument as a singular urban artefact, or by contrasting it with other urban artifacts, can we attain a sense of the architecture of the city'. Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, trans. by D. Ghirardo and J. Ockman (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1991), p. 124. See also Pier Vittorio Aureli, 'The Difficult Whole', *Log*, 9 (Winter/Spring 2007), pp. 39-61.

5. Jean Baudrillard, *The System of Objects*, trans. by J. Benedict (London: Verso 2005).

6. Jean Baudrillard, 'On Utopie', in *Utopia Deferred: Jean Baudrillard, Writings for Utopie* (1967-1978), trans. by S. Kendall (Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 2006), p. 29.

7. Comp. Manfredo Tafuri, *Theories and History of Architecture*, trans. by G. Verrecchia (London: Granada, 1980).

8. Baudrillard, 'On Utopie', p. 15.

9. Aubert quoted in Jean-Louis Violeau, 'Utopie: in acts…', in *The Inflatable Moment: Pneumatics and Protest in '68*, ed. by Marc Dessauce (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1999), p. 50.

10. See Stuart Hall, 'Cultural Studies: Two Paradigms', *Media, Culture and Society*, 2 (1980), pp. 57-62, and 'Cultural Studies', in *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*, Vol. 1, ed. by Michael Kelly, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 480-83.

11. Peter Bürger, *Theory of the Avant-Garde*, trans. by M. Shaw (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996).

12. See Richard Sennett, *The Culture of New Capitalism* (London: Yale University Press, 2006), pp. 97-98, and Luc Boltanski and Ève Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. by G. Elliott (London: Verso, 2005).

13. Tahl Kaminer, 'Autonomy and Commerce: The Integration of Architectural Autonomy', *ARQ: Architecture Research Quarterly*, 11, issue 1 (March 2007), pp. 63-70.

14. See Jean Baudrillard and Jean Nouvel, *The Singular Objects of Architecture*, trans. by R. Bononno (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), p. 15.

15. Jacques Rancière, *The Politics of Aesthetics*, trans. by G. Rockhill (London: Continuum, 2006); Jacques Rancière, *On the Shores of Politics*, trans. by L. Heron (London: Verso, 2007).

16. Bruno Latour, *We have never been modern*, trans. by C. Porter (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1993), p. 6.

17. See Lukasz Stanek, 'Space as a Concrete Abstraction: Hegel, Marx, and Modern Urbanism in Henri Lefebvre', in *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Henri Lefebvre and Radical Politics*, ed. by Stefan Kipfer and others (London: Routledge, 2007) [forthcoming].