



EVENT IN A WORLD AS JUXTAPOSITION  
Programmatic relationships,  
situations and reactions

Amadeu Santacana



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Amadeu Santacana Juncosa

arquia/tesis 43 (EN)

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## arquia/tesis 43 (EN)

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“No one should be interested  
in the design of bridges – they should  
be concerned with how to get  
to the other side”.<sup>27</sup>

## 1.2. PROGRAMME AND ITS EXPANDED CONCEPT

Programme is the tool that has the ability to activate situations that are inherent in a design and to reactivate the relationships with its external agents. It is the medium we use to achieve certain actions. It is responsible for activating the agents that participate and coexist in an architectural space. It is the set of architectural parameters that provide options for a real transformation of physical spaces, turning them into sites for participation in relation with more complex structures in which all the elements are interconnected. It transmits all the values of the physical conditions and is made available to the inhabitants of those places.

Programme is not limited to function or needs. It has a much broader and more far-reaching condition related to a use and a future activity. It becomes a support that is much more open – although not unlimited or infinite – with the ability to absorb different uses and functions, and to make multiple situations possible. Programme intrinsically includes these varieties and multiplicities, as well as their future adaptations.

This abstract condition relates it directly to what happens in architectural spaces. That is its goal and its potential, the capacity to activate and relate. No element that can take on this property should be ignored. The concept of programme is broader; it needs to be approached from sectors beyond just the habitual ones in architecture.

We need to accept that any material that can be absorbed by architecture and that is capable of generating that action is programme.

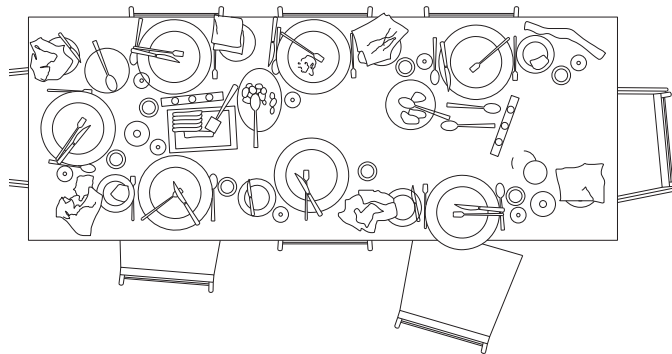
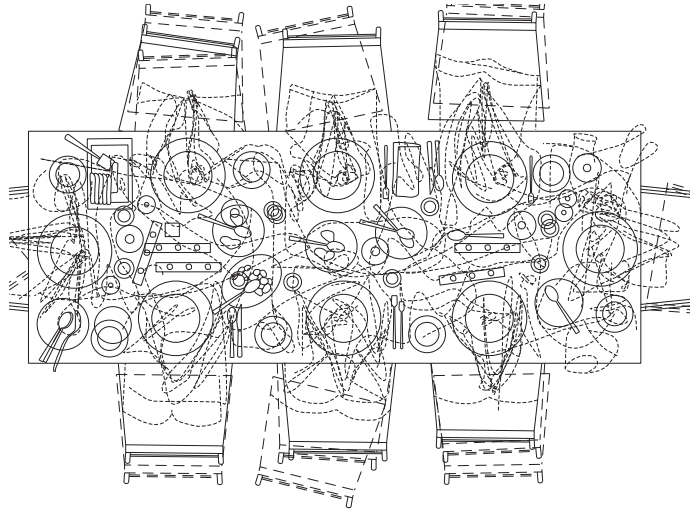
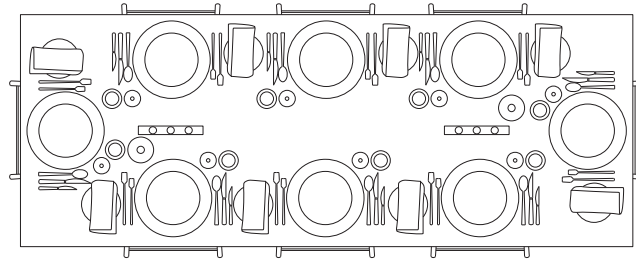
Programme can be the mechanism that makes it possible for spaces to possess the ideal properties for particular actions. Technology as an amplifier of new realities. Limitation as a regulator of certain evolving participatory layers to enhance the most effective ones. Time as the device that controls the intensities and rhythms

of the experiences in the spaces. Construction as the ability to provide maximum utility to the pieces that shape the architecture physically. Opportunity as a situation of intersection between place and action. Stimulation as an invisible drive that subtly transforms the dynamics of use in large collective structures, like cities. Measurements as physical shapers of spaces with programmatic value beyond their immediate utility. Education as a mechanism for connection and direct links between people and spaces. Graphics as a language of consensus that lets us activate familiar cultural activities in a natural way. Furniture as an element of maximum stability that ties people's activities to the spaces where they take place. Material as a physical artefact with specific properties that permit other realities. Participation as a tool for transmitting the values of decision-making to the user of the spaces. Programme, thus, encompasses, any mechanism capable of activating the action that is desired for the design.

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27. Cedric Price: *On Safety Pins and Other Magnificent Designs*.





Wigglesworth Till Architects. *The Meal*, 1997.  
Redrawn for *One Block a Day*, 2018.

## THE QUESTION AND THE FACTS

We are obsessed with the moral obligation of offering the right answer. We have always been pressured to provide a quick solution for a specific reality. But what is the question? A high percentage of architects have responded perpetually to mediocre propositions. Did they always offer the best answer they could give? Perhaps. But what is certain is that the questions were pointless or, at best, misguided.

As architects, we have been asked to be able to provide “the” answer. There is a pressing need to see a result, to set ourselves at ease. An inborn haste to retrieve an answer, a quick judgment that justifies the action to be carried out without the need for further investigation. We don’t want explanations; we want an immediate resolution. Answers have been useful to us as good excuses, as guarantees that let us continue along the same path without diverging too far from the predetermined trajectory. They have served to justify the comfort of not asking too many questions, of forging ahead without taking notice of certain misfortunes. Answers, effective sedatives that they are, smooth over distorting realities and neutralise architectural investigation. They paralyse any extraordinary contribution of knowledge to the development of the objective. They are the opposite of an investigation, a path that leaves no traces, no tracks, capable of expanding and broadening knowledge on a subject. They promote prejudices – i.e., the vestiges that exist prior to the design – simply confirming them and perpetuating them continually.

**If we want to improve the condition of our planet, we must realise that it is not what we do that matters, but the questions that lead to our actions.<sup>38</sup>**

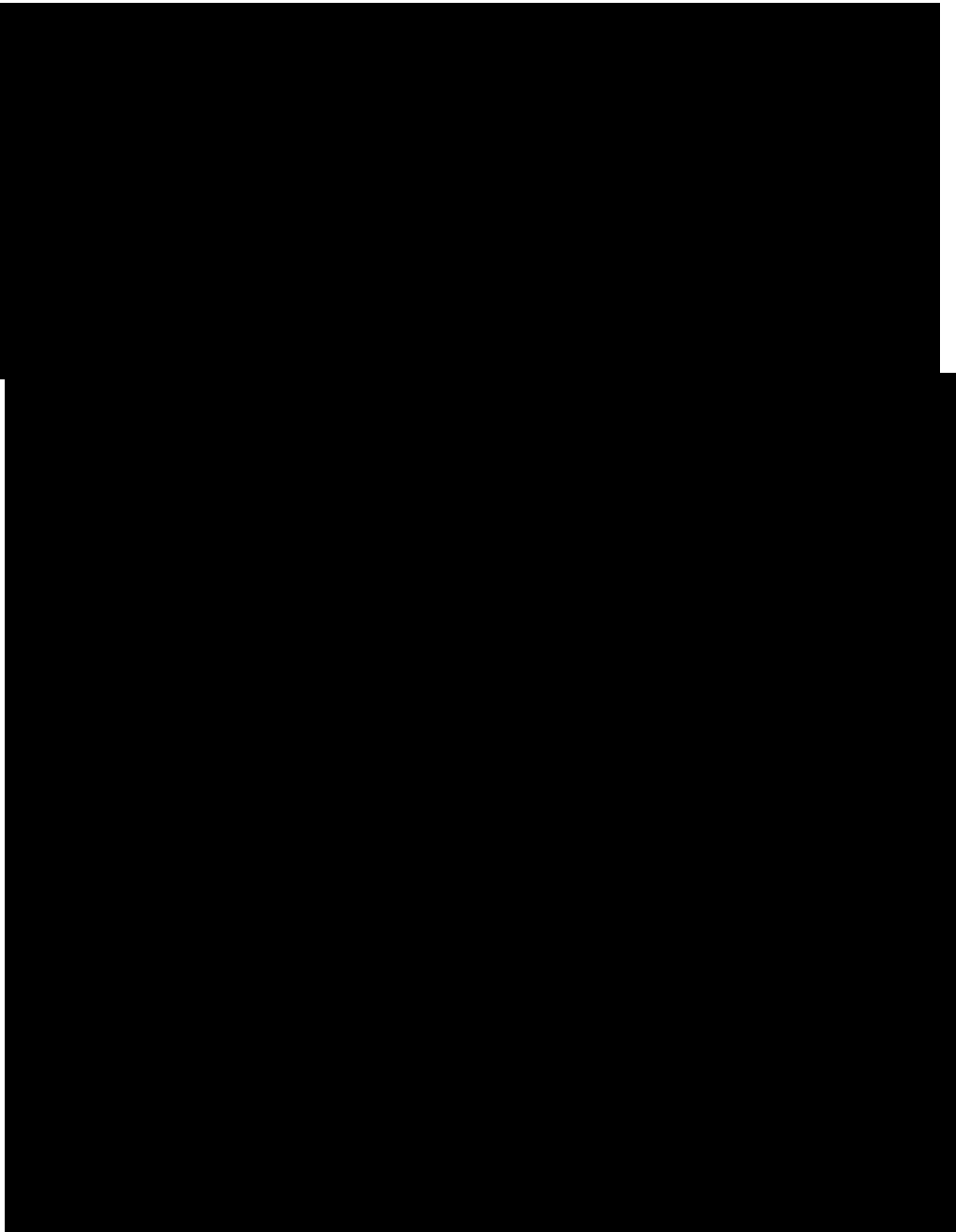
The pertinent questions are the ones that truly condition actions. Propositional queries

focus all their intentions and intensity on the questions. They direct and shape a clear stance with regard to certain reflections. They let us form ambitious aspirations and possible answers that are on par with the questions. Without the appropriate question, any approach lacks intensity, and its effectiveness is the product of certain coincidences with little probability of generating relevant effects in the context where the intervention is taking place.

The drawings for *The Meal* by Sarah Wigglesworth and Jeremy Till, redrawn here by One Block a Day, perfectly represent the variation in intensity between the question and the answer; whereas the latter offers visual and compositional tranquillity, the former shows us the action. The first drawing describes a table before the meal has begun. It is very indicative of traditional architectural design, which addresses questions of composition, the order of objects, static relationships, physical organisations and, consequently, the visual and perceptual configuration of the elements. The third drawing shows another static image, comparable to the first, but it has been structured by the actions taking place during the meal. The visual result is no longer as reassuring, yet it contains certain information that is a direct translation of what has taken place. The second drawing traces all the movements that have occurred during the meal. In it, we are able to read the actions that ensue: tensions, distances, interests, etc.

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38. Ranulph Glanville: “Cedric Price Precisely”.



Sergei Eisenstein. Sequence from  
*Alexander Nevsky*, 1938.

Clara Penín. Lady Gaga concert at the Palau Sant  
Jordi in Barcelona, December 8, 2010.  
*La Vanguardia* (9.12.2010).

The diagram offers an immense potential during the design process, since it contains a huge amount of information on all the parameters involved in the design. It is the graphic representation that relates spaces with moments in time. The diagram makes it possible to express graphically (re-present) the multi-information from the process of a project, whether it is musical, theatrical, economic or architectural. It is a multi-layered tool, without a hierarchy between its layers, which can be activated or deactivated, interpreted or ignored without a pre-set order. It makes it possible to dissolve the physical limits of the project and, while the same time, defining and expanding its results through non-linear applications – activating or deactivating layers – intentionally directed by the project's author. In the diagram, all intuitions take on value. It is open to interpretations, to interactions. It brings the different parameters into relation, but it is the designer who decides to emphasise one relationship or another by directing interests in a certain direction, which will ultimately condition the actions. The diagram is open to being read because it is written in an open way, interpretive but real.

**We are exactly what we dare to contemplate.**<sup>44</sup>

To create a diagram is to generate a visual representation of values. Those values may be economic, political, programmatic, ideological, relational, etc. The diagram contains the variations of those values and how they relate to one another. Variations generated by time, which give rise to a graphic representation that is not frozen in time – as is usually the case with cross-sections, plans, etc. – but open to transformations in a temporal sequence.

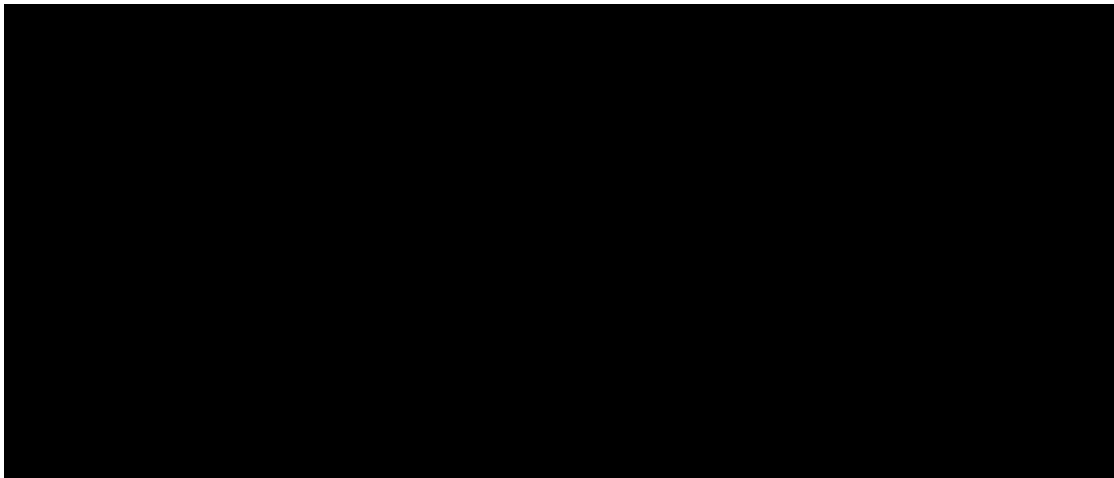
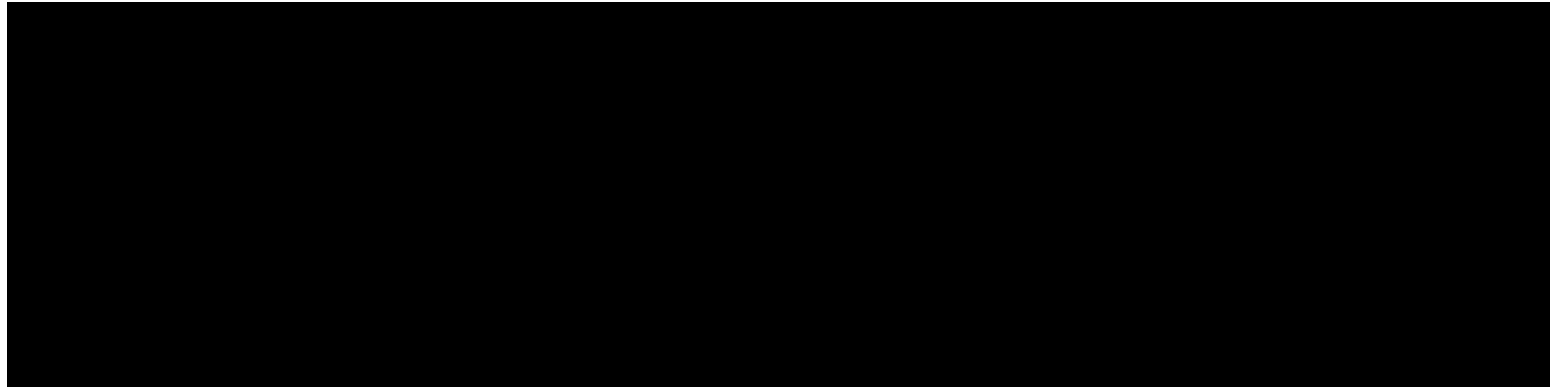
The diagram constructs temporal variations with respect to certain values. It also projects

and defines relationships. When designing, it is necessary to generate open documents that incorporate the value of time. We aren't interested in congealing the processes in each architectural document, as though we were preserving each of the movements of a body in formaldehyde.

In addition to being a tool for representation, the diagram is also part of the project. A project of construction and creation. The same goes for certain photographs that are not a representation of a place, but rather an invention-interpretation, a new project centred on that place. An intentional gaze is the invention and design of a new place. The diagram contains the design, with all its associated questions regarding the static as well as the dynamic, the visible and the invisible.

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44. Rafael Argullol: *Visión desde el fondo del mar*.



Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano. Longitudinal section submitted to the competition for the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1970.

Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano. Construction drawings for the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1971. Cross section and plan.

## GEORGES POMPIDOU AND TEMPTATIONS

The Pompidou Centre takes up the interior as an open support for activities, promoted by Cedric Price in the Fun Palace and the Inter-Action Centre, along with the façade of the Maison de la Publicité (1932-1935) by Oscar Nitschke and Hugo Herder as a transmitter of information to the city.

**[...] the concept of a stack of clear floors that can be adapted to a variety of cultural and recreational functions seems to recall the [...] Fun Palace of Cedric Price and Joan Littlewood, even if the project was never as radical as the floorless Fun Palace or as casually innovatory as Price's Interaction Centre.<sup>77</sup>**

The design for the Pompidou insists on recreating an architecture that supports and enables human activity. A homogenising void as a support for both culture and the social masses simultaneously. An accumulation of stacked surfaces, prepared and conditioned to activate programmes that are indeterminate and variable.

**The Pompidou embodies the first built recognition of flexible spaces for temporary programmes.<sup>78</sup>**

In December 1969, the decision was made to build the Centre Beaubourg with the intention of gathering together the Musée National d'Art Moderne, the Centre de Création Industrielle, the Centre National d'Art Contemporain, a public library, and facilities for sound research, in order to offer the public comprehensive information on all forms of contemporary artistic expression, with their origins and their interconnections. The result of the international competition, with its concretion in the building by Richard Rogers and Renzo Piano, was of equal importance as the process of preparing the programme and the objectives and criteria prior to the competition, which clearly determined

the stance and attitude ultimately espoused by the Centre Georges Pompidou.

**The French Republic has decided to build, in the heart of Paris, a centre dedicated to public reading, art and contemporary creation. The originality of the project lies in bringing together, in one place, reading, visual arts, architecture, music, cinema and industrial creation.<sup>79</sup>**

The idea for the competition went through three stages: one political (the definition of the objective), another programmatic (the determination of the brief and the means to achieve it), and finally one conceptual (the translation into architecture translation).

The general programmatic study that resulted in the competition brief was developed by the programming team at the Ministry of Cultural Affairs. During the process of discussing the programme, a series of studies and subsequent reflections on the connections between activities internally, as well as between the centre's activities and its immediate urban context, were carried out. The search for balance between the activities, their relative importance and their connections formed the fundamental part of this initial phase of the programming.

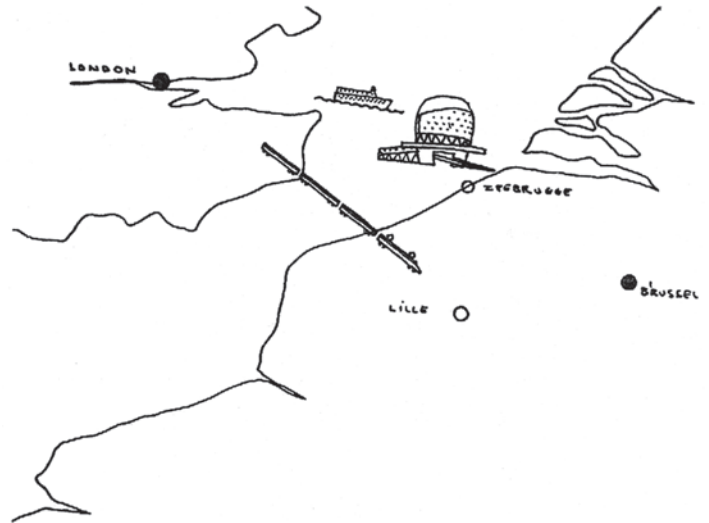
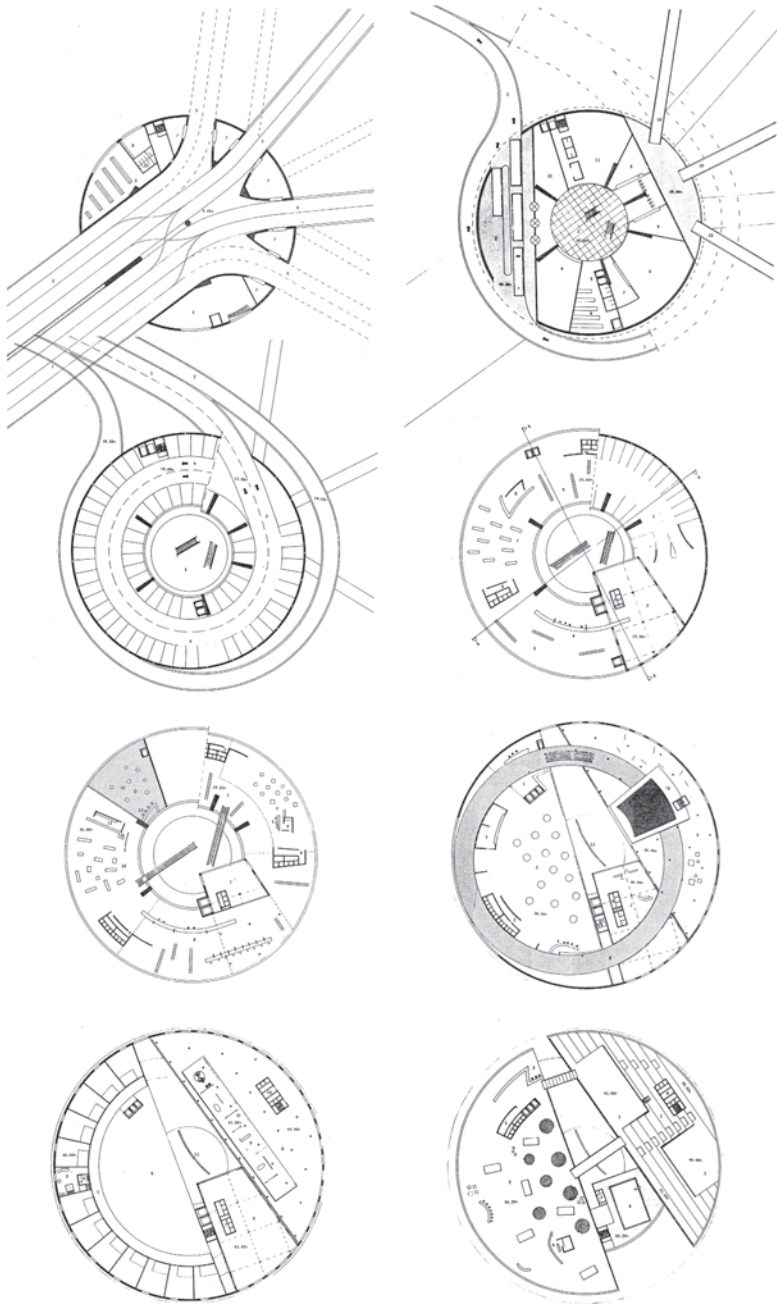
**In France, the commission defined architecture as "the art of organising space in order to allow the play of different social functions and ensure the development of humanity." Programme as a translation of demand, developed by means**

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77. Reyner Banham: "On the Centre Pompidou".

78. Pedro Urzáiz: *Atlas visual de cincuenta y siete años de arquitectura*.

79. Excerpt from the competition brief for the Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris, 1971. Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers: "Le concours".



Rem Koolhaas, OMA. Design. Competition for the Zeebrugge terminal, Belgium, 1989. Floors plans and territorial axis.

Zeebrugge, located in the North Sea, is situated at an important intersection of marine routes in different directions, very close to high-density cities, such as London, Grimsby and Edinburgh. It is the most important fishing port in Belgium, one of the largest in Europe, and a main port in terms of industrial traffic. It moves 42 million tons per year in automobile goods alone.

One of the passenger transport companies tied to the industrial economic motor announced a competition for a building covering about 186,000 square meters, with the goal of competing with the connection across the English Channel (Paris-Lille-London axis) and to generate a logistic axis that could connect Brussels-Ghent-Bruges-Zeebrugge-London/Edinburgh, and connect with other continents.

**Its chosen theme, A Working Babel, reflects Europe's new ambition: its different tribes – the users of the terminal – embarking on a unified future. The original Babel was a symbol of ambition, chaos, and ultimately failure; this machine proclaims a functional Babel that effortlessly swallows, entertains, and processes the traveling masses. [...] The building crosses a sphere with a cone. The two lowest floors organize traffic to and from the ferries with maximum efficiency; four ships can load and unload simultaneously without interrupting traffic flow. A bus station is projected above this sorting machine; pedestrian access is through a separate external loop. Above, two floors of parking wind in an ascending spiral culminating in a great public hall, where the panorama of sea and land is revealed for the first time. Then the cone splits into vertical segments: a wedge of offices divides the sphere into hotel and promotional sections. The void between these two parts offers an upward view to the sky and a downward view,**

**through a glass floor, to the depths of the parking garage. On the upper level, under the glass dome, the two halves are again connected by a series of walkways.<sup>114</sup>**

The programme for the terminal included companies, transportation connections, bus stops and taxi stands, offices, customs, a hotel, three restaurants, bars, an area for exhibitions and advertisement, a cinema, a casino, a swimming pool, an auditorium, etc.

In the early 1980s, the programmatic organisation of Koolhaas's projects drew deeply on the theoretical reflections presented in *Delirious New York* (1978),<sup>115</sup> and the programmes were arranged in autonomous strips that incremented their overall effect as a whole. As in the case of La Villette (1982), the design proposes relationships between the programs that are flexible, but physically structured by strong geometric laws.

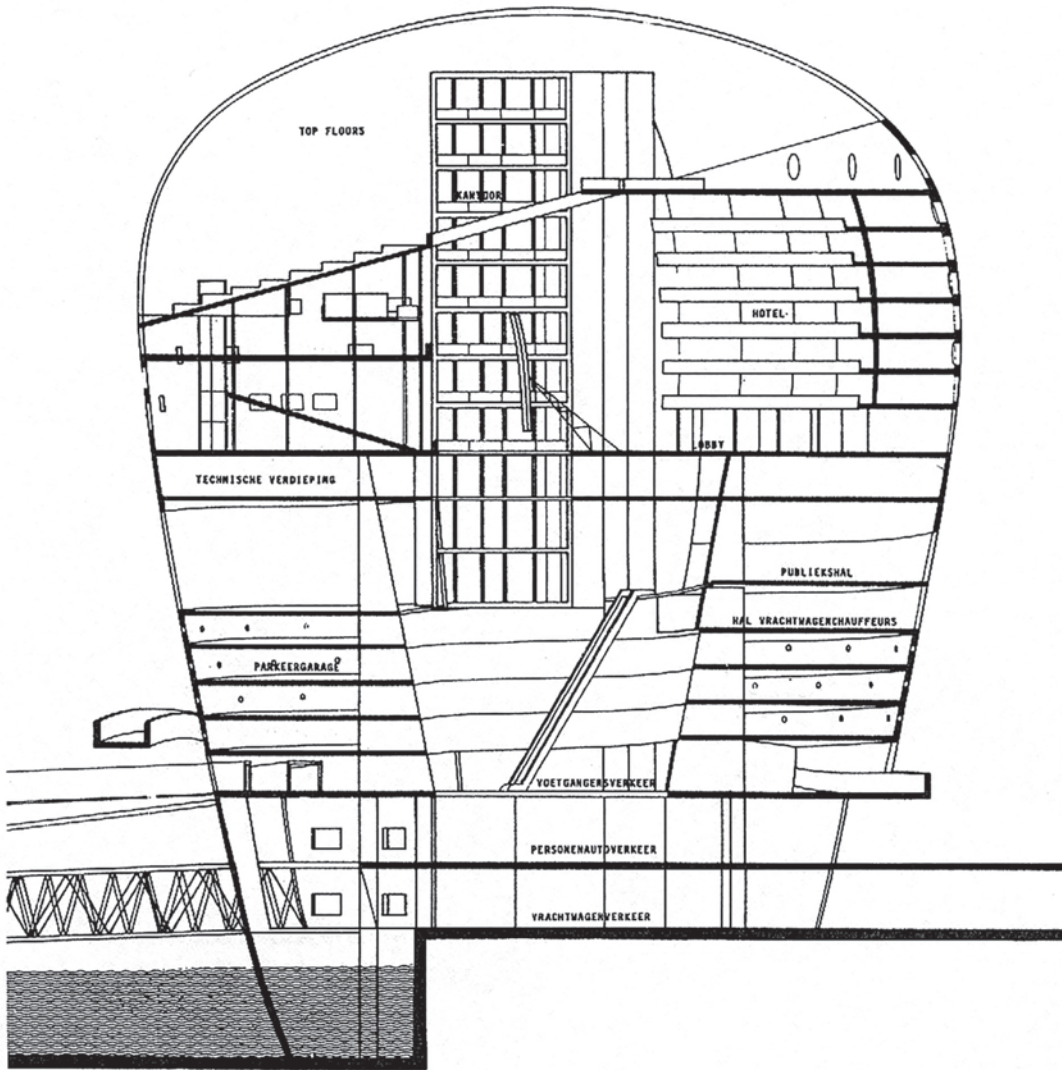
At the end of the 1980s, OMA began to propose new programmatic organisations with an aspect that was more volumetric and tied in with the void as a space. The programme was structured in three dimensions to generate unstable spaces that could relate to the rest of the spaces in a more vaporous way. This was the case with the competitions for the National Library of France (1989), the ZKM Centre for Art and Media (1992) and Zeebrugge (1989), with more interactions between the programmes generated by increasing their contacts in a situation of floating between the volumes, as though it were a Piranesian space.

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114. Rem Koolhaas: *Design brief Zeebrugge terminal*, 1989.

115. Rem Koolhaas: *Delirious New York*.





Rem Koolhaas, OMA. Design. Competition for the Zeebrugge terminal, Belgium, 1989. Cross section.

This reflection, which appears in the working documents for the competitions, culminated with the publication of the book *S, M, L, XL* (1995),<sup>116</sup> in which the same material is organised in overlapping layers that generate spaces of phenomenological transparency between the parts.

The condition of phenomenal transparency described by Colin Rowe is evident in the programmatic organisation of the Zeebrugge terminal, where activities interact in this Piranesian space and with the existing exterior physical context. These programmatic relationships intensely condensed in a single shared space, of a public nature, are what ultimately create the situations that will occur in the terminal. They are the basic material that configures the production of actions in the design. The reactions that are generated both on a territorial scale, in response to its condition as a node (point of connection), as well as the more internal leisure activities, are the result of the relationships among all the elements that participate in the project. Relationships make the scale of things disappear, generating different scales of connection depending on each activity. These scales, or the relationships between sizes and distances, are variable according to each activity. And time is the ultimate shaper of these activities. Time defines scales: geographic, internal, collective, personal, etc. The rhythms configure this opera of activity, like a large efficient organism in which specific relationships are constantly being woven in order to give rise to the most appropriate situations.

The relationships are closely tied to the combinations and exchanges between the different programmes, which are what ultimately produce the situations. Necessary combinations, like bringing together a passenger terminal and a strategic logistic point, create a hinge and an

alternative to the logistics of other axes more associated with the transport of people. They are opportune combinations that combine the wait time of business travellers with short-term recreational activities. As a result, programmes rooted in complementary support are constructed, which increase the programmatic autonomy of the building, making it more efficient and complete; passengers no longer need to leave the building because different uses are activated within it.

The broad programmatic range, characterised by complex and rich relationships, makes it into a large negative space, a support for a variety of activities, with a highly urban character, due to how its internal relationships are structured.

The programmatic compression reveals the relationships between programmes and presents some combinatory strategies absorbed from urban setting, which incite a powerful reflection on the architectural capacity for the production of actions.

**The whole history of science has been the gradual realization that events do not happen in an arbitrary manner, but that reflect a certain underlying order, which may or may not be divinely inspired. It would be only natural to assume that this order should apply not only to the laws, but also to the conditions at the boundary of space-time that specify the initial state of the universe.**<sup>117</sup>

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116. Rem Koolhaas: *S, M, L, XL*

117. Stephen Hawking: *A Brief History*

The elasticity of time capable of synchronising individuals' different simultaneous speeds with their spaces.

The management of the different times in a single space as a multiplier of effects, as a stimulator of events.

Compaction as an intersection of interests, as a synchroniser of times and as a support for the improbable. The condensation of relations to force programmatic contingencies in shared spaces and synchronous times.

### 3. SYNCHRONISATIONS

#### 3.1. TIME AND SIMULTANEITY

Channel Surfing and Fragments

The *Sample Lesson* and the Meaning of Relationships

The Seven Screens and Neddy Merrill

172,800 Frames and Compression

1/100,000 Fractions and Decompression

The Three Wise Men and Our Parents

Nancy Burson and Superposition

Temporality and the Scooter

#### 3.2. COMBINATORIAL ANALYSIS AND FOUR-COLOUR PROCESS PRINTING

Simultaneity and Space

The Casa da Musica and the Histories of Rome

Seclusion and Birds

Change and Constancy

The Ocean Liner and the Minivan

The Swimming Pool and Energy

Profitability and the Barbecue

Efficiency and Mortgages

Autonomy and Compaction

Compression and the Guest House

The Queen Mary II and the Airbus A380

“Both Aristotle and Newton believed in absolute time. That is, they believed that no one could unambiguously measure the interval of time between two events, and that this time would be the same whoever measured it, provided they used a good clock. Time was completely separate from and independent of space. This is what most people would take to be the common-sense view. However, we have had to change our ideas about space and time. Although our apparently common-sense notions work well when dealing with things like apples, or planets that travel comparatively slowly, they don’t work at all for things moving at or near the speed of light”.<sup>118</sup>

### 3.1. TIME AND SIMULTANEITY

**Architecture isn't a paradigm anymore (economic, cultural, or of power); it's a connection between individuals and program.**<sup>119</sup>

Architecture is a connection between individuals and programme, as Rem Koolhaas said in the 1980s. But this connection is not singular nor is it a simple link; it takes place within the context of time. It involves the synchronisation over time of individuals with the programme, not a single and independent synchronisation. Our current contemporary context demands simultaneous synchronisations between different time frames, the synchronisation of different speeds that are organised between the same individual and multiple programmes through the sum of a series of connections.

In OMA's Zeebrugge project, the architectural mechanisms are arranged to produce a series of actions based on the synchronisation of different rhythms:

- a) The rhythm of construction – dilating the construction process and synchronising it with human beautification efforts.
- b) The rhythm of waiting – speeding it up and making it more dynamic with recreational activities.
- c) The rhythm of proximity – through the physical link implying a reduction in travel time between Zeebrugge and the UK.

These synchronisations converge through the architectural design in suitable combinations that acquire the ability to activate these new situations in contemporary passengers traveling by sea.

Managing time at the very core of architectural design is absolutely essential in our contemporary culture. Time is one of the fundamental materials of architectural design. Not as a material with a

single measurement, but one that is fully elastic and malleable; its measurements are adapted in each case to suit the individuals in question and the programme. They are flexible measurements for generating connections. They are adaptable measurements for generating a relational field. This elastic nature of time is why it can be synchronised with other factors and agents in the architectural project. Its malleability is at the root of the potential for adaptation and synchronisation of the different elements that make up a project, in order to ultimately bring about the actions that are supported by the spaces.

In that sense, time has an intense potential as a material with the ability to synchronise individuals with architecture and its spaces through programme. Time is the ideal material to connect the different human dynamics with actions, to connect personal interests with the world's capabilities, our desires with its resources. We have to manage time and incorporate it as a design material, as a basic element to overlap different time frames within the same project. To generate a structure of overlaps in time, which is much more aligned with today's cultural dynamics. To set up correspondences between times and spaces through actions. In truly contemporary systems.

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118. Stephen Hawking: *A Brief History of Time*.

119. Rem Koolhaas: "El presente", in Pedro Urzáiz: *Atlas visual de cincuenta y siete años de arquitectura*.

“And yet there is so much life as we slide along the knife’s edge of the border! We are alive, alert, tense, vigilant, at the ready. Our brain, having abandoned easy living, travels at a much greater speed than when we trail along amid comfortable security. I am in a no man’s land, I am nobody. Worse: I am a prisoner of this police officer who is grimly examining my identification. I am no one, but, soon, the messy border makes me realise that I am immensely free”.<sup>206</sup>

## 5.2. THE NO-MAN'S LAND AND APPROPRIATION

This approach to spaces halfway between one place and another, between the city and the domestic realm, opens up the possibility of providing architecture with “in-between programmes.” Spaces which, programmatically, are neither one thing nor the other, which don't belong to a family of specific uses. Paradoxically, these spaces don't belong to anyone, but they can belong to many. Therein lies the potential of no-man's land spaces: in their undetermined capacity as a potential for open uses. When they are disconnected from one specific programme, they are enabled with multiple programmatic possibilities. Due to their programmatic specificity, the spatial configuration and furnishings of a bathroom hinder other uses unrelated to personal hygiene.

**What is normally considered negative space in planning is considered the space *par excellence* for intervening in the environment in a positive way, not with a facelift but a vital injection.**<sup>207</sup>

Spaces with a negative programmatic treatment, if they are properly connected to others, function as “in-between” spaces, awaiting intervention from the inhabitant.

**In fact, it would be interesting to recognise this combination *between* – between what is occupied, omitted and connected, between voids, filled spaces and links, between surfaces, points and lines – which comes into question in rhythmic spatial combinations.**<sup>208</sup>

**The architectonic and morphological civil richness of the city is that of its collective spaces. These are increasingly spaces which are neither public nor private, but both at the same time. Public spaces absorbed by private uses, or private**

**spaces used by the collective. A service area or a hypermarket on the city outskirts, a funfair or a stadium, a large car park or a shopping mall: these are the modern collective spaces.**<sup>209</sup>

In these no-man's lands, collective urban spaces are very frequent, acting as catalysts between the different programmes that surround them in the city. Thus, public or semi-public spaces also appear inside some buildings. Concepts traditionally used in urban planning are introduced into buildings, and exterior conditions are stimulated in the interiors to generate these catalysing spaces inside a building. No-man's land spaces allow for the action of human appropriation. Not in the sense of personalisation understood as a decorative act of personal identification, but in the sense of making decisions regarding the action that one wishes to carry out in a particular space.

**This place is not a place, but a taking place. A pure happening, public space only exists if it is being used, which means being crossed, since it can really only be defined as such: a way of passing through it.**<sup>210</sup>

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206. Rafael Argullol: *Visión desde el fondo del mar*.

207. Geer Bekaert: “The Hereafter of the City”, in Emanuel Christ, Stefano Munarin, Ivan Nio, Maria Chiara Tosi, Alex Wall, Geert Bekaert, Xaveer De Geyter: *After Sprawl*. Rotterdam: Nai Publishers, 2002.

208. Manuel Gausa: *Open. Espacio, tiempo, información. Arquitectura, vivienda y ciudad contemporánea. Teoría e historia de un cambio*.

209. Manuel Solà-Morales: “Public Space/Collective Spaces”.

210. Manuel Delgado: “De la ciudad concebida a la ciudad practicada”.



“There is no better example of the occupants’ nomadic way of living than their single carpet, which they move to different parts of the house when they want to make that particular area ‘home’. Nothing is set in this house, nothing is final about how it is occupied”.<sup>211</sup>

The Berlin Wall as architecture was for me the first spectacular revelation in architecture of how absence can be stronger than presence. For me, it is not necessarily connected to loss in a metaphysical sense, but more connected to an issue of efficiency. [...] Not only was [Berlin] beautiful, but it also had a programmatic potential, and the potential to inhabit a city differently represented a rare and unique power. The irony of course is not only that the architecture being built is not the right architecture, but that it is built at all. It’s a city that could have lived with its emptiness and have been the first European city to systematically cultivate the emptiness. Like Rotterdam where there is a lot of emptiness inside. For Libeskind, emptiness is a loss that can be filled or replaced by architecture. For me, the important thing is not to replace it, but to cultivate it. This is a kind of post-architectural city, and now it’s becoming an architectural city. For me that’s a drama, not some kind of stylistic error.<sup>212</sup>

Independent of the “in-between” spaces – in other words, intentionally deprogrammed spaces situated in contact with certain programmed spaces – there are also other spaces with a voluntary programmatic absence, without a mandatory connection with other connected programmes. The activating void, absence as a value. The antiprogramme. Indeterminacy as a programme. Space as a deprogrammed spatial entity that remains latent until a human being approaches. The void as a potential. A potential for the possible – as in the proximate – but also the improbable – as in the unknown. The void as an activator of the unknown. Spaces that don’t have a purpose, in that each does what it wants, but at the same time they regulate and release possible imbalances among other spaces that are

programmed in a more specific way. Maintaining and building spatial pockets without an assigned use fosters unknown programmatic combinations, but we can rest assured that there will be some kind of relationship and interconnection. The aim is to leave those spaces at the ready, waiting, so the inhabitants can activate the optimal combinations. Absence as a powerful programme.

The architect must therefore acknowledge the impossibility of totalized planning, and build in a degree of indeterminacy to allow for uncertainties in program, obsolescence and complete changes of use throughout the life of the building.<sup>213</sup>

The marginal sites that elude the clarity of designation and institutionalisation are especially apt to reveal that void which is not nothing, which common sense understands as the exclusive space of action, and which is the meaning of architecture. However, in some architectural designs, this space is revealed as infinitely dense while also impenetrable at the same time.<sup>214</sup>

211. Adrian Forty: “The Comfort of Strangeness”.

212. Rem Koolhaas: “Cultivating Urban Emptiness”.

213. Stanley Mathews: “Potteries Thinkbelt (PTb), 1964-1966: An Architecture of Calculated Uncertainty.”

214. Alberto Pérez-Gómez: “Espacios intermedios”.

## DISCREPANCY AND DESIRES

There has to be something excessive so that the phase difference operates between structure and programme, envelope and partition, anteriority and posteriority, needs and desires.<sup>215</sup>

The void as an element that gives meaning. Like in Western writing, where the spaces between words are what shape them and give them meaning. Without the spaces between the words, endless rows of letters would run together in indecipherable meaningless series, without any communicative utility. Series entirely devoid of linguistic capability. The void becomes an essential space to give writing meaning. This physical separation, this disjointedness, translates into architectural programme with a similar intensity. There are gaps that give programmes their capacity; absences that lend them meaning. Programme is also a lack of programme. And its disjointedness. In other words, generating detachments between different programmatic entities. Creating separations between them. Leaving empty spaces between them, spaces without content that become a fertile medium for relations. Disjunctions can also be generated between programme and other elements of the architectural design. Between the programme and the structure, between the programme and the envelope, etc.

**In order for this exciting phenomenon of overflow to work, the programme and the structure must be mutually independent.**<sup>216</sup>

In some designs by Lacaton & Vassal, the physical disjunction between structure and programme in the space produces a clear programmatic void that makes the resulting spaces into latent spaces that can come into play.

**Our quest for change is conditioned by the freedom granted to the user by the structure – his freedom to move about, to instigate an activity wherever he happens to be, to be alone somewhere. This suppleness comes from using**

**lightweight building systems with frames, from their independence with respect to the programme, their weak impact, but also through the hugeness of this structure.**<sup>217</sup>

In the work of Lacaton & Vassal, this disconnect is one of the main achievements of the architecture, which has the ability to absorb the desires of the inhabitant in a more direct and open way. They manage to maintain the spatial and programmatic qualities of the inhabitant at the same level of intensity. These imbalances, also resulting from spatial generosity, open the realm of configurations to the inhabitant, who is understood not as a being of minimums and homogeneous and hermetic behaviours, but as a more complex being who is changeable over time, both with respect to others and to him or herself.

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217. *Ibidem*.

215. Karine Dana: "On Lacaton & Vassal: An Attempt at a Voiceover".

216. Anne Lacaton and Jean-Philippe Vassal: "Structural Freedom, a Precondition for the Miracle"