

## TRANSCRIPTION OF FORMER ARCHITECTURE

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## ABSTRACT

Nowadays architectural practice deals with compromising the creation of new forms striving for self-sustainability, energy efficiency etc. and respecting the existing historical monuments that carry on the spirit that users identify with. The case study of this paper is a direct consequence of the physical appearance, through the objective reality that is being stimulated by the contemporary needs, articulating the demands of the new users. Those necessities transform the original architectural concept beyond recognition. This problem of sustainable preservation emphasizes the significance of architectural identity and develops new spatial needs of the actual users. The modernistic ideology lead by its strict apriority has no impact over forming social cohesion. Considering architecture is a communication medium, the method of transcription tends to strengthen the connection between the newly ingrained program and the community's requirements on a local scale. Generating architectural methods that complete the task of both constant sustainability and social cohesion sets the fundamentals for creating synergies as a collective awareness in a world of constant changes.

**Keywords:** concept, transcription, cohesion, typology, identity

## TRANSCRIPTION OF TYPOLOGY IN ARCHITECTURE

The origin of the noun transcription comes from the Latin word "transcript", meaning a written or printed version of material originally presented in another medium (Oxford dictionary). In Biochemistry the noun transcription makes an accurate copy of the information found within the DNA (or RNA) template so that the cell can decode the genetic information that allows it to be used in synthesizing protein, emphasizing the importance of accurate regulation of these events to ensure survival of the organism.

Transcription in biological research is concerned with the particularities of systems which are reproduced on the basis of metabolic process of synthesizing. Sociological research on this level according to Niklas Luhmann is concerned with the particularities of systems reproducing themselves on the basis of communication.

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Autopoiesis (< Greek: autos = self, poiein = to produce) means self-(re)production.

Social systems use communications as their particular mode of autopoietic reproduction. Their elements are communications which are recursively produced and (re)produced by a network of communications which cannot exist outside of such network (Luhmann 1986: 172-192). This research presents the basic discourse of the typological meaning, establishing the thesis that transcription in architecture is a comprehensive deductive process as an autopoietic system.

From the phenomenological point of view Nicolai Hartmann emphasizes the primarily expression of human self conciseness inherited in the notion of home. The phenomenon of dwelling in a house is build to last for generations, and therefore receive the character of Monument (Hartman 1979: 149). The architectural building is connected to real life resembling the unity in the collective. A building is not a singular unit but realizes itself as a part of objective reality, influencing it. By observing former architecture, its character is not worn out only by its purpose or formal properties and construction. It resembles the culture of building as well as the character, and community meaning established in its form during the generation of builders. That architectural form is not the result of a person, but developed gradually through long-lasting tradition. (Hartman 1979: 256)

This inherited meaning for Umberto Eco represent the “absent structure” the same as the present one, gives the possibility in a concrete historical process to preserve the reality creating the narrative of the communication of that period (Eco 1973: 301; my translation).

Dwelling in a house (co)creates the image of societal reality as a city. Beside its private domain, the house is public; it also reflects the societal reality. As long as a building is rooted in the taste and style of its time it becomes a part of the memory of that time. It becomes a sort of a Monument. The meaning of this ontology is in the spirit of the (pre)existence of form and a collective spirit which has communication with a historical perspective. The only reason of sustainability of the form lies in the relation with tradition that inherited feelings for that form. If a person tries to separate himself from the feeling with no reason at all and even tries to mimic a different one, that person could easily become disoriented and could wrongly understand somebody else’s form and confuse it with his own (Hartman 1979: 259). In the process of their recognition, cultural layers transferring the meaning of the natural world are consisted of presence or resemblance of that presence into the meaning from that cultural layer. In architectural language that presence is recognized through particular style encoded with particular typology.

By the notion of Anteriority, Peter Eisenman defines the resemblance of objective reality as a pre-existing idea, a presence before the design process (Eisenman 1999: 37-43). In the Modern Movement architectural form departed from the (pre)existing cultural presence in an attempt to create a (so) called New Spirit. Functionalist discourse of cause-effect relationship between requirements and form produced plenty of prototypes creating the Interiority, internal syntactic grammar, by producing and reproducing series of models without the need for the historical concept of type. Architectural theories connected with functionalism deliberately rejected typology. This abstractness and singularity as a failure of Modern Movement to use type in terms of a city became the motive for Italian architect Saverio Muratori’s writings. For Muratori, the type was not partially an abstract concept, but an element that allowed understanding the pattern of growth of the city as a living organism emerging primarily from history. (Moneo 1978: 35)

This “linguistic” approach announced the post-structuralism discourse in architecture. The language of Modern Architecture from the previous century failed resembling the memory of the “old” in communication. The buildings become singular structures without expressing any known type or potentially announce a new prototype. The communication reduces the

typology introducing the “type – image” as a recognition instead of a structural logic of the type. The type as an inner formal syntax structure has disappeared. The inherent characteristic of a type formerly responsible for coherent architectural language now become the value of “type-image” considered in its singularity – reflecting a fragmented and discontinuous reality. (Moneo 1978: 39)

The architecture is a mimetic art of reality. The meaning of ancient noun for type represented the mimesis of nature. This method of transformation, transfiguration or transcription, resembles the art of the meaning of a word or a phrase into a different meaning. The Greeks used that translation to entitle a metaphor. According to Aldo Rossi one of the most successful architects in this attempt of expanding and varying the fundamental parts of his buildings by their meaning was Palladio. By simple displacement and substitution of their inherent meanings for other alternative meanings, he reconstructed the Greek architecture. He succeeds to translate the meaning of ancient architecture not mentally but as living history. (Rossi 1991: 8-16; my translation)

Architecture which in the past has been a mimetic art, a description of nature, now seems to be again, but this time imitative with architecture itself as a model, this time reflecting a fragmented and discontinuous reality (Moneo 1978: 39). Beside the claims that he learned about persistence of historical typology from Heinrich Tessenow, there is a subtle formal dissociation in certain works of A. Rossi where the unity of formal structure is broken. Rossi reminds us that certain knowledge of types exists but appears deliberately broken. It seems like that nostalgic feeling for sustainable dystopia emerges from this architecture. (Figure 1)



Figure 1: La Citta Analoga, 1973, Arduino Cantafora

Rossi’s work is deductive and lies close to metaphysical experience, especially to historical elements in the metaphysical painting of Carlo Carrà and Giorgio de Chirico. The legacy of great ancient history appears to be fairly strong in contemporary Italian architecture.

The same linguistic approach regarding typology was previously the case with Giuseppe Terragni’s Italian rationalism. In both Muzio’s and Terragni’s work we come across the idea of the city built with fragments, in relation to neoclassical order in Musio’s case, and a classical order in Terragni’s case. Their work focuses on the (re)composition/transcription of absolute form. The rules and elements that they adopt are (a) temporal elements of a whole no longer existing, and are explicitly related to a language that can be saved by using a different grammar. As M. Tafuri points out, each arrives at a metaphysical dimension in which buildings have no place and, in fact, no longer need one. (Schumacher 1993: 12)

The question which remains is does it make any sense to speak of type today? The classical meaning of notion of typology as Quatremere de Quincy presents, is less than the image that should be a copy, but more as an idea of an element which ought itself to serve as a rule for the model. Greater influence on contemporary thinking has C.G. Argan claiming that type is an idea no longer residing in nature but in building precedents and therefore in the history of

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architecture. A. Rossi accepted Argans definition of type as a principle that can be found in the urban artefact not only as a building but as a fragment of a city. (Lee 2011: 2) (Figure 2)



Figure 2: Fabio, *Antiquae urbis Romae cum regionibus simulachrum*, 1527.

From this brief overview of history of contemporary typology discourses in architecture on the edge of transgression from singular to plural societies, one can realize that the only sensation of reality left for architecture today resides in its history. The world of images provided by history is the only sensible reality that has not been destroyed by scientific knowledge or by society (Moneo 1978: 41). Opposition between the empiricism and rationalism of recent thinking becomes the question concerning architecture when building experience becomes relevant. The rationalist methods are usually referenced by scientific theoretical models of ideal conditions. On the other side architectural critics mostly practice the methods from applied sciences such as politics, sociology, cultural studies, architectural history and theory which ideal conditions from particular explanatory methods are checked regarding the conditions in the real world.

In former Socialist societies the discourse of dialectical materialism of Capitalism was the basis in the political establishment of the contemporary bourgeois. Emerging of Marxist learning wasn't the political option, but an attempt of establishing a new social and political entity of proletariat. Marxism was a pseudo science where theory of transgression of quantity towards quality was rooted only in its own postulates. Architecture becomes an institutionalized tool of propaganda with aura of social realism. Today in Post transitional society, composition of not just different parts but opposing ones, leads to a critical unity.

O.M. Ungers's concept of the archipelago, as a city made of radically different parts juxtaposed in the same space that compose the city, is meant to oppose each other and is thus bound to the dialectical principle that something is united while being separated (Aureli 2011:25). This architecture of singularity is not a mimetic one but an absolute form defined in its limits, quite opposite of image-typology relation.

## NEW HISTORICAL DIALOGUE

By preserving the singularity of Autopoietic system as an ideological institutionalization (style), one of the crucial aspects is the limits of architecture as a communication system. To sustain its' ideology a (pre)existing form relies on collective spirit which has communication with a historical perspective. Therefore sustainable preservation, based on a theoretical case defining architectural transcription as a method, should strive for a historical sequence inherited by that spirit.

Considering dialectical approach, applying the method of transcription presuppose creating a strong bond with an object's narrative (Robert, Desmoulines 2005: 27). The materials and techniques available in that time should be considered, with the advantage of knowing their

outcome in the future. Creating a historical sequence in the process of transformation must also rely on persistent program content. The redesigning strategy first of all presuppose verifying the historical identity of a building, which later on is a subject of modification and reconfiguration of new program and additional volume. In order to explain the method of transcription, two historical examples shall be considered. The exact choice of these two buildings primarily is made by inquiring the diversity while transforming architectural monuments from the past century.

The elementary school “Johan Heinrich Pestalozzi” (Figure 3.a) built in the late 60s in Skopje, Macedonia is designed by the Swiss architect Alfred Roth. The tectonics of the building represents Structuralism as part of the modernist paradigms. The architectural composition is generated by the strongly dissected volumes in the form of vertical pavilions, where each represents one program unit of classrooms. Through the clear correlation between different program units the school building receives a layout that is represented entirely and through its formal appearance. The concrete walls of a building express its brutality as a part of the Modern movement. The building is composed out of four main program units: a three-level tract course, a tract with two-level laboratory classrooms and one underground level, a gym and an aula with accompanying offices.



**Figure 3.a, 3.b: Elementary School “Johan Heinrich Pestalozzi” (Left, Model 1:100, by authors), Collective dwelling, Railway Workers’ building (Right, Model 1:100, by authors)**

The building of “Railway Workers” (Figure 3.b) is the prototype of collective dwelling in the city of Skopje. Designed in Early Modern style, it represents the societal and economical status/ conditions of the population in the City/Country from the period between the 1st and 2nd WW. and after the War. The architect Mihail Dvornikov, brings the spirit of Soviet avangarde on the territory of former Yugoslavia. The Ideology recognized behind the program structure represents the buildings’ concept as a social condenser. Beside the housing units as the dominant program segment, there are also common spaces that carry the idea of public and semi-public space upon them, including a cinema and a kindergarten. The design concept of leveraging the individual in a community is spatially enhanced by linking housing units through galleries that are orientated in a common inner courtyard which represents the core of a new collective form.

### ANALYSIS, CONCEPT

Today both buildings are still inhabited, without any major modifications in their appearance. The main problem rests in the new formal and program needs of the current users as a response to social changes, life style along with the buildings’ aging and inadequate maintenance. Those necessities are obvious through transformation of the buildings’ public or semi-public

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space into spontaneous program content. These transformations of each building modify their appearance beyond recognition, prompting a threat to their identity. Following the questionnaire results given to the current users of both buildings a conclusion was made that the method of transcription should tend to strengthen their original concepts, by means of further hybridization of additional program content as well as gaining interest among external visitors. (Zinoski, Daskalova, Gjorgiev, Dimitrievski 2018: 539-555)

The former architectural concept recognized as functional rationalism at the school of Heinrich Pestalozzi, sets a dialectical relation in shaping the newly added program units with the existing one. Additionally the new content, enriched with a physical connection between the separate units, rests on historical continuity in the use of materials and structural elements available in that time. The vertical communications follow the configuration of the old structure while the new spatial content is rotated 15° emphasizing the distinction between what appears old or new. By sustaining the native definition of school, the new concept upgrades the educational program toward a gymnasium- a proposal that underlines physical activity as a key assemble to a child's growth. (Figure 4)



Figure 4: Newly-ingrained Gymnasium

The building of the Railway workers' created as an ideal perimeter block typology appears as an absolute form. The newly ingrained structure as a transcriptional tactic reinterprets that absolute form with a discreet level of scale, leveled at a rotating angle above the old one, linked with vertical elements - two sets of staircases and elevators. The configuration of flexible and adaptable space with a variety of possible program and organizing scenarios attract external users as well as creating synergies in a place where collectivity comes first. This compound between the existing building and new levitated storey is recognized as a hybrid building transformed into a new generation of a social condenser. (Figure 5)



Figure 5: Levitated storey

**CITY ABOVE CITY**



Figure 6: Vertical aggregation of new Gymnasium, Model 1:100 (photo and model by authors)



Figure 7: Levitated storey over the Perimeter Block, Model 1:100 (photo and model by authors)

**CONCLUSION**

Since the city of Skopje is being consisted of historical and urban fragments created in a longer period of time, the method of transcription resembles another cultural layer. The question of

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ethics has a very wide meaning considering intervention on historical buildings. Since former architecture present living monuments of a certain period from one side but not museums from the other, it is understandable that they have to be sustainable and preserved. Through historical overview of rethinking architecture, this paper presents one possible approach, postulated on the transformation of notion of type. The question which remains is the architectural form and its language. The architecture as a communication system through the morphological syntax, characteristics and semantic meaning, carries an informational code from the past. The success of creating a coherent image from disparate entities depends on particularities of the cultural and social enclosure every autopoietic system has. The application of absolute forms and vital programmatic functions, resembling the original purpose of the building, gives a chance to survive and sustain over a longer period of time.

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