

From:

ANDRI GERBER, BRENT PATTERSON (EDS.)
Metaphors in Architecture and Urbanism
An Introduction

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Architecture and urbanism seem to be »weak« disciplines, constantly struggling for a better understanding of their nature and disciplinary borders. The huge amount of metaphors appearing in the discourse of both not only reference to their creative nature but also indicate their weakness and the missing piece strengthening their own understanding: a definition of space for architecture and of city for urbanism. But using metaphors in this field implies a problem – though metaphors achieve to bring opposites together, there remains the question how literal they can actually become in order to relate to these subjects properly. In this volume, several authors from various fields using different approaches discuss this question.

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Préface

ODILE DECQ

L'Ecole Spéciale d'Architecture est la première et la plus ancienne des écoles d'architecture en France, créée à l'initiative de Viollet-le-Duc pour réaliser une école qui soit différente.

Cette école s'est reconstituée et régénérée régulièrement tout au long de ses cent cinquante ans, et toujours aujourd'hui en utilisant son aspect « Spéciale ». Ce n'est pas une attitude d'opposition mais plutôt une vision positive de construction et d'imagination pour nous tourner vers l'avenir.

Aussi, lorsque Andri Gerber a proposé de monter un colloque sur le thème de métaphore, je me suis inquiétée du retour de la question de la métaphore. Je n'étais pas la seule car, et depuis que nous l'avons initié, j'ai reçu plusieurs e-mails m'enjoignant de ne pas relancer l'histoire de la métaphore alors que dans les années soixante-dix, c'est ce qui a créé le post modernisme. Ce serait donc terrible! A tel point que certains architectes revendiqueraient le refus de la métaphore tels que Diller&Scofidio, Bow-Wow ... Mais, pourquoi pas!

Et si, aujourd'hui, on pouvait reposer la question différemment ?

D'où vient cette crainte des architectes à propos de la métaphore ? Est ce la question de l'image, du symbolisme, de forme, de trivialité ou une peur de représentation et d'interprétation qui serait trop simple; une peur de faire comprendre au grand public des images trop faciles ?

Alors que, comme le dit Chris Younès dans son texte, la métaphore a l'avantage d'être suggestive, de ne pas tout dire et de laisser la part belle à l'imaginaire, à l'imagination, à la poésie, de laisser à celui qui l'énonce de ne pas tout dire et à celui qui l'entend d'en tirer sa propre interprétation. Dans ce cas, cela m'intéresse et je trouve cela passionnant.

Certains d'entre vous s'intéressent à la métaphore dans les jeux vidéo. Lorsque dans les jeux vidéos on représente la vie et/ou l'architecture, je n'ai pas l'impression qu'on soit dans la métaphore, mais qu'il s'agit plutôt d'une représentation très triviale de l'architecture et de l'urbanisme. Et cette représentation est une image un peu « Disneyland », une image un peu caricaturale de ce que serait la ville, de ce que serait l'urbain, de ce que serait l'architecture. C'est, en même temps, une image collective puisque c'est supposé être une représentation dans laquelle tout le monde peut se retrouver.

Image 1: Odile Decq



Alors, nous pouvons nous interroger encore une fois sur la peur de la métaphore chez les architectes. Pourquoi craindre l'utilisation d'un langage qui soit aussi facile d'accès pour le grand public que la métaphore ?

Il est vrai qu'il y a eu une grande lassitude de la post modernité et de l'utilisation souvent au premier degré de la métaphore lorsque l'image utilisée pour décrire le projet est devenue l'objet même du projet.

Qu'en est il à présent du fait que certains architectes utilisent aujourd'hui la représentation organique en reprenant de manière assez directe, on pourrait même dire au premier degré, des oranges, des fleurs et des fruits pour fabriquer la forme architecturale ? Sommes nous aussi directement dans la métaphore, et cette fois ci de manière très triviale ? Est ce grâce à

l'architecture paramétrique que la métaphore va revenir, ou est déjà revenue ?

Alors, dites moi, où allons nous ?

Odile Decq

Directeur Général Ecole Spéciale d'Architecture (2007-2012)

Introduction

ANDRI GERBER

“If you do not like metaphor, you do not throw it away, you dig into it to find out what it represses.”

Peter Eisenman¹

This publication is the result of a three-day conference that took place in November 2009 at the *Ecole Spéciale d'architecture* and at the *Centre de l'histoire de l'Art Allemand* in Paris on the subject of “Metaphors in/on Architecture and Urbanism.” The interest in the subject – to start with a personal note – arose while writing my dissertation at the ETH in Zurich on the subject of the “city as text” of Peter Eisenman (actually explicitly only called “architecture as text”) – as his work between 1978 and 1986 can be described. In the midst of my frustration at not being able to avoid the “theoretical swamps” of Eisenman’s monstrous structure of references he erected around his work – to use several metaphors – and not producing any new insight on his work, I turned my attention to the term “city as text,” realizing that this is a metaphor. After a search on existing literature on the theory of metaphors in architecture, I realized an almost total absence of such research, which, considering the enormous amount of metaphors used since antiquity in this context, appeared to me symptomatic and worthy of questioning. Paraphrasing Eisenman’s initial quote, this was more than a reason enough, to ask what metaphors mean in this context but also to understand why such an investigation has never been conducted in the past.

1 | Eisenman, Peter, Nieto, Fuensanta, Sobejano, Enrique, “Interview Peter Eisenman,” in *Arquitectura*, No. 270, 1988, p. 130

Image 2: Metaphors in/on Architecture and Urbanism, ESA Paris, 11.2009



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE 26 - 27 - 28 NOVEMBER 2009

METAPHORS IN/ON ARCHITECTURE AND URBANISM

History of urbanism... The question of the city... The city as a text...

Andri Gerber and the Berlin... The conference will provide an opportunity to discuss...

Global issues of adaptation... The conference will provide an opportunity to discuss...

DEUTSCHER FÖRDER FÜR BAUFORSCHUNG

GERDA HENKEL STIFTUNG

THURSDAY 26.11.2009 / ECOLE SPECIALE D'ARCHITECTURE... FRIDAY 27.11.2009 / ECOLE SPECIALE D'ARCHITECTURE... SATURDAY 28.11.2009 / CENTRE ALLIEMANO D'OPERE DE L'ART

I thus started my own investigation, which resulted in my PhD, a look onto Eisenman's "city as text" through the lenses of metaphors. While I constructed a theory of urban metaphors based on the one hand on existing metaphor-theories and on the other on Eisenman's "city as text" and his explicit references to metaphors, the desire arose to confront the issues with other people that had explicitly discussed the matter (such as Richard

2 | Gerber, Andri, Theorie der Städtebaumetaphern. Peter Eisenman und Stadt als Text, Zürich: Chronos, 2012

Coyne or Rosario Caballero-Rodriguez)³ or who I imagined, could be interested in discussing it in the context of their own work. This was because I realized that my position in the PhD had covered only one of many aspects that this subject calls for. The conference could thus become a truly interdisciplinary forum to open up different aspects of metaphors in the context of architecture and urbanism.

The problem with metaphors, to start with, is twofold. On the one hand they are negatively connotated because they are associated with a “vilified” rhetoric, which has since antiquity been incorrectly reduced to the art of speaking craftfully, forgetting the richness it once had. On the other hand, while acknowledging how, in particular in the theory of science there has been a re-evaluation of metaphors as cognitive devices, as a medium of exchange and as creators of models, we are still confronted with a multitude of different theories on how metaphors work. Thus there is in fact no single metaphor theory.⁴ Furthermore, metaphors depend on their context, as underlined also by Susanne Hauser in her essay, making their discussion context-dependent, architecture and urbanism being such contexts.⁵

In considering the first point it should just be mentioned how in the distinction made by Cicero in his *De optimo genere oratorum* (46 B.C.) metaphors would not only have to *delectare*, to delight, but also to *movere*, that is to impress, and *docere*, that is to teach. But the negative connotation of rhetoric and metaphors remained and can explain a general negative bias towards metaphors in general. Chris Younés in this regard quotes the critique of writer Le Clézio for whom metaphors divert from reality.⁶

As for the second observation, one can simply point to the fact, that the authors of the essays appearing in the following pages, almost never use the same reference to explain their position towards metaphors. Jakobsen, Ricoeur, Weinrich, Goodman, Blumenberg or Aristotle, to name just a few,

3 | Snodgrass, Adrien, Coyne, Richard, *Interpretation in architecture: design as a way of thinking*, London: Routledge, 2006; Caballero, Rosario, *Re-viewing space: figurative language in architects' assessment*, Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter, 2006

4 | Rolf Eckard counts 25 existing metaphor theories in total (Eckard, Rolf, *Metaphertheorien, Typologie, Darstellung, Bibliographie*, Berlin: Walter der Gruyter, 2005)

5 | See the contribution of Susanne Hauser, p. 105

6 | See the contribution of Chris Younés, p. 265

are all equally referred to, in order to explain how metaphors function and could be translated to architecture/urbanism.

We are thus faced on the one hand with the general and historically determined negative bias associated with metaphors and on the other with the absence of a theory of metaphors, which one could call a *metaphorology*, meaning that every discussion on metaphors – due to the very nature of metaphors – will remain on unstable ground.

Yet there have been some attempts to establish such a metaphorology, as was the case for German philosopher Hans Blumenberg and his *Paradigmen zu einer Metaphorologie* published in 1960. In Blumenberg's understanding, metaphors are something productive. They represent on the one hand what remains in the translation from *Mythos* to *Logos*, on the other they are also the indicator of something that cannot be translated to a literal, a proper condition. Something that cannot be translated in the realm of logic (yet architecture, to anticipate the following points, very likely, although not always, has a "literal," a built outcome). This is what he calls the "absolute metaphor." It implies that metaphors cannot be described through logic; that is they will never have a proper meaning. In his book, he discusses several key metaphors such as the light metaphor, the metaphors of truth, of power, of terra incognita, of the uncompleted universe, of the organic and of the mechanical, of the clockwork and of the book. Blumenberg developed the latter further in *Die Lesbarkeit der Welt* published in 1979, where he discusses the "world as a book"-metaphor: the world that can be read like a book.

Part of his theory of metaphors is thus based on the attempt to systematize metaphors, to establish a typology of the different kinds of existing metaphors. At the same time Blumenberg emphasizes how such a metaphorology could never be an independent discipline *per se*, but would always have to be part of a larger disciplinary frame. His project of a metaphorology is hence based on the shifting nature of metaphors which implies its very impossibility; a shifting between metaphor and concept, between metaphor and myth but also between the different disciplines that are necessary to get closer to an understanding of the nature of metaphors.

French philosopher Jacques Derrida, in his work on metaphors, discusses the need for and the possibility of such a metaphorology. And he too emphasized the impossibility of a proper meaning for metaphors. In his text

of 1971, “La mythologie blanche” he explains how metaphor implies – in the logic of his critique of logocentrism – the impossibility of a proper, literal, ultimate meaning.⁷ He calls for an analysis of metaphors in philosophy even though he admits that this would be the content of a life long work of research. Through the concept of *usure*, of consumption, he further explains how metaphors get corrupted, but he tellingly underscores, that in order to explain that, he needs another metaphor and this reveals how difficult it is to talk about metaphors without using other metaphors. To discuss metaphor thus implies always being inside metaphors, inside a process of skidding – as he calls it – that cannot be stopped. He came back on this position in a second text he wrote in 1978 – which was his presentation at a congress in Geneva on the subject of philosophy and metaphor and a reply to the attack by Paul Ricoeur (who himself had written a book called *la métaphore vive* in 1975 and who questioned some of Derrida’s assumptions). Derrida in reaction to the criticism of Ricoeur again underscored how metaphor means the impossibility of a proper meaning and that the relationship between this proper meaning and the metaphorical, cannot be stopped or held on; the only solution would be to completely suspend metaphors which is their annihilation. Interestingly in the same text Derrida uses an urban metaphor to describe this process.⁸ Yet in philosophical discourse, references to urban or architectural metaphors are quite common.⁹

If we now refer to the investigations into metaphors by Blumenberg and Derrida, they appear to open up two main interrelated topics that are fundamental for an understanding of metaphors in the context of architecture and urbanism: on the one hand the shifting and elusive nature of

7 | Derrida, Jacques, “La mythologie blanche, la métaphore dans le texte philosophique” [1971], in Derrida, Jacques, *Marges de la philosophie*, Paris: Les éditions de minuit, 1972

8 | “Metaphora circulates in the city, it conveys us like its inhabitants, along all sort of passages, with intersections, red lights, one-way streets, crossroads or crossings, patrolled zones and speed limits. We are in a certain way – metaphorically of course, and as concerns the mode of habitation – the content and the tenor of this vehicle: passengers comprehended and displaced by metaphor.” Derrida, Jacques, “The Retrait of Metaphor” [1978], in *Enclitic* Vol. II, no. 2, Fall 1978, p. 6

9 | For the urban metaphors in Descartes’ thinking, for example, see the contribution of Johannes Binotto, p. 33

metaphors themselves and on the other, the consequent impossibility of a proper, literal meaning. In reference to the first point, Benedikte Zitouni tellingly calls metaphors – quoting Evelyn Fox Keller – “vague, unstable.”¹⁰

The first point is essential in order to understand why metaphors are so often used in architecture and urbanism: by their very essence they mirror and express on the one hand the unstable disciplinary nature of architecture and urbanism and on the other the difficulty in describing the processes of these disciplines, that is, how these disciplines work. In fact, one has to emphasize that architecture is still struggling towards a “stable” disciplinary condition, oscillating between science and art, technology and artisan craft. Metaphors often served and continue to serve to underline the orientation architecture was aiming at: during the Renaissance, speaking of architecture as rhetoric or as music, served to support architecture’s claim to be elevated to the status of *artes liberales*. In contrast, particularly in England at the turn of the 20th century, metaphors coming from sculpture and painting served to oppose the incoming professionalization of architecture and the losing of its “artistic” status.¹¹ The extensive use of biological metaphors in the context of the current computational turn in architecture, in contrast, again underscores a convergence towards science that excludes consideration of the artistic aspects of design (if not by the evident sculptural qualities of many installations). In the case of urbanism, the situation is even “worse.” The discipline is not yet defined in its own terms and remains an “interdisciplinary discipline” with blurred boundaries towards urban planning, civic design and to those other disciplines – such as architecture but also engineering sciences, sociology and geography – that share its object, i.e. the city. Thus, the use of metaphors, which are themselves indefinite and shifting, mirrors the very indefinite and shifting nature of these disciplines. In detail, this means that metaphors also help us to understand the processes and instruments architecture and urbanism deploy in their very peculiar merging of theory and project, matter and idea, references and exterior discourses.

Yet this refers to another underlying problem: both architecture and urbanism have elusive and hard to grasp objects: space in the case of ar-

10 | See the contribution of Benedikte Zitouni, p.147

11 | “Architecture – a profession or an art? To the editor of The Times,” in *The Times*, Tuesday, March 3, 1891 p. 9

chitecture;¹² the “post-urban” in the case of urbanism.¹³ Metaphors appear thus in the discourse of architecture and urbanism not only when trying to establish the disciplinary boundaries, but also when attempting to grasp what is at the core of these disciplines, which can only partially be captured by language. In the case of space, one can refer to the extensive discussions at the beginning of the 20th century with German art historians introducing the understanding of architecture as space-production. Yet thus far, we lack, exactly because of its elusive nature, a theory of space for architects.¹⁴ The same can be said of the post-urban. Metaphors appear thus, when architecture and urbanism are seeking a language to speak of their very basis. One has only to think about the fascination of architecture for some of the usual suspects from literature and philosophy (Georges Perec’s *Espaces d’espaces* (1974), *La poétique de l’espace* by Gaston Bachelard (1957) or *Bauen, Wohnen, Denken* (1951/1952) by Martin Heidegger) and the exploding number of urban metaphors (city as network, body, bits etc...).

Therefore, architecture and urbanism are thus unstable, both as objects of investigation and as investigating/designing subjects (but this must not be considered simply in negative terms). The extensive use of metaphors both in the discourses concerned with architecture/urbanism and by architects and urbanists themselves, is a turnsole of this instability. In fact those who attempt to construct a theory of these disciplines are, as Manfredo Tafuri once described the architectural historian, permanently on the razor’s edge or funambulists exposed to the changing winds trying to make him fall.¹⁵ Again, metaphors are used to explain the metaphors of architecture and urbanism...

The second point opens a fundamental question: if architecture and urbanism in the end aim at realization into a spatial project, how literal can

12 | See: Brandl, Anne, Gerber, Andri, “A plea for spatial knowledge,” in *SpecialeZ* No.4, Paris: Editions Ecole Spéciale, 2012, pp. 66-81

13 | See: Binotto, Johannes, Gerber, Andri, “Narration/Non-ville/Description,” in: *SpecialeZ* No. 1, Paris: Editions Ecole Spéciale, 2010, pp. 32-39

14 | See the contribution of Gernot Böhme, p. 47

15 | “Il critico è colui che è costretto, per scelta personale, a mantenere l’equilibrio su di un filo, mentre venti che mutano di continuo direzione fanno di tutto per provocarne la caduta.” Tafuri, Manfredo, *Teorie e Storia dell’architettura*, 1968, p. 34. “La critica storica deve saper giocare sul filo del rasoio che fa da confine fra il distacco e la partecipazione. Tafuri, Manfredo, *La sfera e il labirinto*, 1980, p. 180

the metaphors that inspired these projects become? What is a text, a network, a body once they become built in space? They will obviously never really be a text, a network or a body, but are they still to be called metaphors? Has a metaphor always to be literal in the context of architectural and urban projects? And does literal mean figurative? This would mean an inversion towards the role of metaphor in language, where it can never be literal but only figurative. In language metaphors call for images, that are only possible in the realm of imagination, images that will never be true. But architecture and urbanism are forced this realm for reality. Roland Barthes gives an indirect confirmation of this necessary and problematic literality, when in a short text on the “city and the text” – which he unfortunately never developed further – he states that it is very easy to talk metaphorically of the language of the city, the true progress would be to speak literally of the language of the city.¹⁶

The models that metaphors create to understand the world, in architecture and urbanism, sooner or later will somehow become literal and “true” in their projects. And it is important to distinguish between metaphors as processes and metaphors as images.

This appears to be a fundamental implication for metaphors in/on architecture and urbanism. This problem is revealed in a commentary by Diller & Scofidio, who condemn any metaphorical interpretation of their “cloud” in Yverdon¹⁷ thus referring to a possible figurative interpretation versus an intended “literalness.” Furthermore, this commentary under-

16 | “La cité est un discours et ce discours est véritablement un langage: la ville parle à ses habitants, nous parlons notre ville, la ville où nous trouvons, simplement en l’habitant, en la parcourant, en la regardant. Cependant le problème est de faire surgir le stade purement métaphorique une expression comme ‘langage de la ville’. Il est très facile métaphoriquement de parler du langage de la ville comme on parle du langage du cinéma ou du langage des fleurs. Le vrai saut scientifique sera réalisé lorsqu’on pourra parler du langage de la ville sans métaphore. Et l’on peut dire que c’est exactement ce qui est arrivé à Freud lorsqu’il a parlé le premier du langage des rêves, en vidant cette expression de son sens métaphorique pour lui donner un sens réel.” Barthes, Roland, “Sémiologie et urbanisme,” in *L’architecture d’aujourd’hui*, Nr. 153, *Urbanisme*, décembre 1970 – Janvier 1971, p. 12

17 | “The media project must be liberated from all immediate and obvious metaphoric associations such as clouds, god, angels, ascension, dreams, Greek my-

scores the general negative bias towards metaphors addressed above which exists also in the context of architecture and urbanism and which can be imputed in particular to a certain post-modern architecture concerned with façade-architecture.

But here the subject is not only a question of the traditional negative bias towards rhetoric; it must be brought back to a general association of metaphors in architecture with plane images, with the simplest mimesis. Atelier Bow Wow's protestation against any summarization of the city as metaphors can also be read in this way.¹⁸ But it should also be brought back to the fact that here the term "metaphor" has been used in many different interpretations and, to some extent, also contrary interpretations. It is important to emphasize that few authors indeed made – even if only implicitly – the fundamental differentiation between metaphors and analogies, such as Peter Collins. In his book *Changing ideals in modern architecture, 1750-1950*, he identifies four analogies: the mechanical, the biological, the gastronomic and the linguistic.¹⁹ Collins explains changes and contiguities in the history of architecture through the influence of certain analogies, ruling out the possibility that these could be metaphors. Or Spiro Kostof, who in his *The city shaped*, talking about organic city structures, emphasizes how the biologic references are nothing but analogies, thus leaving tenor and vehicle separated.²⁰

A last point should be mentioned here, even though it is not possible to treat this point in detail in this book. Metaphors are also part of the very creative process of architectural design. In this sense, it is interesting to refer to the discussion between Cicero and his brother Quintus, on wheth-

thology, or any other kitsch relationship." Diller & Scofidio, *Blur: the making of nothing*, New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 2002, p. 325

18 | "In the 1980s there was a background of chaos affirming theory and Tokyoology, and the spatial expression of architectural works displayed confusing urban landscape as a metaphor. We strongly wanted to get away from the attitude that the city can be summarised by metaphorical expression." Kajima, Momoyo, Kuroda, Junzo, Tsukamoto, Yoshiharu, *Made in Tokyo*, Tokyo: Kajima Institute Publishing, 2001, p. 10

19 | Collins, Peter, *Changing ideals in modern architecture, 1750-1950*, London: Faber & Faber, 1965

20 | Kostof, Spiro, *The city shaped*, Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1991

er the capacity to create metaphors was innate or the result of a certain cultural context. It is undeniable, that architects invent metaphors in order to progress in design and to create particular unforeseen combinations.²¹

While the conference was divided into three distinct topics – metaphors as instruments of knowledge, metaphors in projects and metaphors in discourse – this tripartite structure seemed less useful for the organization of the texts in this book as most of them integrate all three aspects, often taking opposing standpoints on the matter. Furthermore, metaphors were discussed both in discourse and project, questioning the very possibility of separating these two aspects. Thus a new structure was chosen, dividing the texts into those which take a more general stance on the relationship of architecture/urbanism and metaphors aiming at a theory – an architectural or urbanistic metaphorology – and those which focus on the mediating nature of metaphors. But again, the differences are in most cases relative and minimal: all are contributions towards a better understanding of what metaphors in this particular context mean and what their use, both in project and text, implies. The impossibility of disentangling the different aspects was also announced in the title of the conference: “Metaphors in/on architecture and urbanism”.

Architectural/urban metaphorology

Building upon the notion of the symptom in psychoanalysis, described by Jacques Lacan as a metaphor, **Johannes Binotto** polemically extends this juxtaposition to architecture and urbanism. He does this firstly by questioning the sanity of le Corbusier’s urban plans, which he identifies as signs of a psychotic personality precisely because of the attempt to erase any symptoms of the city considered as a sick organism. Secondly, he proceeds by discussing the protagonist of Frank Capra’s movie *It’s a wonderful Life* (1946) who accepts the symptoms, revealed through the metaphor of the knob and is considered by Binotto as an example of a good architect. Metaphors are thus used here to identify the symptoms of architecture and its pathologies.

21 | For this aspect and the role of metaphors for design models see: Hnilica, Sonja, *Metaphern für die Stadt. Zur Bedeutung von Denkmodellen in der Architekturtheorie*, Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2012

In the second essay, **Gernot Böhme** identifies in the many metaphors architecture uses to justify its own disciplinary boundaries, an emblematic absence of a discourse on its own terms. Instead of discussing and defining architecture in terms of its basic element, which is space, the history of architecture is full of references to external issues and other disciplines – Böhme makes particular reference to Charles Jencks and post-modern architecture. Based on this assumption, he distinguishes two different applications of metaphors in architecture, the first being unproblematic – the use of metaphors in the description of architecture. The second one is the use of metaphors in physical works of architecture in projects. The latter results in being extremely problematic, because it causes architecture to become a language and thus its elements to become signs, renouncing to build space. Metaphors reveal an ambiguous attitude in particular in post-modern architecture, to renounce to a spatial approach and to reduce projects to signs, which in the understanding of Böhme goes against the very nature of architecture.

Philippe Boudon took his participation in the conference as a chance to explore the meaning of metaphors within his general theory of “architecturology.” He underscores that metaphors should always be considered in relationship to metonymy and never for themselves. His discussion on metaphors is furthermore based on the difference between metaphors in the perception and in the conception of architecture. While pointing out some inadequacies of the metaphor for the perception of architecture, referring to Roman Jakobson and De Saussure, he shows how the conception of architecture is always constructed around the duality *in absentia* – in absence – and *in praesentia* – in presence, which permits an understanding of the many relationships architecture builds to its context. This model thus should help us to understand the working of architecture and its relationship to the context.

In **Matteo Burioni’s** investigations on the use of language from antiquity to 18th century architecture, an interesting correspondence between language and architecture is revealed. The author highlights in particular those anamorphoses which appear between architecture and the human body and which are performed, consciously or not, by architects such as Alberti or Hugues Sambin.

In her investigation into the meaning of metaphors in architecture, with particular reference to architectural reviews and some exemplary case studies, **Rosario Caballero-Rodriguez** makes an important distinction be-

tween metaphors concerned with abstract knowledge and those concerned with visual knowledge, which reflects the twofold nature of architecture, between craft and art. Presenting an overview of the different kinds of metaphors appearing in architectural discourse, she furthermore emphasizes how metaphor is at the same time knowledge in all stages of the design for the architect, and also a necessary instrument for communicating the elusive nature of space, its core, and all the complexities related to its position inside society.

Susanne Hauser investigates the multiple meanings and implications of the skin-metaphor in architecture, in particular addressing the transformation this metaphor and its associated content have undergone – from transparency to ambiguity. With reference to the discussion about metaphors as models, which stressed their creative potential and which developed around 1960, Hauser discusses in particular the creative potential of the skin metaphor in the context of architecture: it tackles the relationship between skin, space and structure implying not least a transformation also of the perception of architecture. Hauser furthermore emphasizes how the skin metaphor in its contemporary application, indicates for architecture a transformation of the relationship between technology and biology.

Bernardo Secchi, speaking of metaphors in the context of urbanism, shows how these appear in urban discourse, when the urban condition is transformed and shifting; that is, when the urban condition changes. This calls for new ways of description and thus for metaphors. They are an index of the impossibility of describing the changing conditions inside urbanity with an old vocabulary. Secchi identifies two types of metaphor, both referencing fields other than urbanism to describe it, the first a more concrete – i.e. biological or mechanical metaphor – the other more abstract, which he calls “conceptual”. But the most important aspect of Secchi’s investigation, is that metaphors should always be interpreted as indices of those ideologies, which lie behind them and are driven by the different parties that are involved in the development and transformation of the urban.

Caroline van Eck makes an in-depth investigation of the metaphor of the living building in the work of Gottfried Semper and his *Der Stil*, her goal being to emphasize the differences between Semper’s interpretation of this particular metaphor, which aimed at the animation of the inanimate, and previous as well as contemporary interpretations. Van Eck thus uncovers how Semper, using the metaphor of the living building, attempted to

create a literal metaphor that would overcome the metaphor as a means of language and the constraints of language itself.

Benedikte Zitouni investigates the potential of organic metaphors for an understanding of the processes of causality in urbanism. She does this by making reference to different authors and the ongoing discussion about metaphors in the life sciences and also by reflecting on the investigations of causality brought forth by historical epistemology. These highlighted the complexity of such processes and the need to overcome deterministic and mechanical metaphors. This different view is then applied to the processes of urbanization and on all involved actors, particularly those usually neglected.

Image 3: Metaphors in/on Architecture and Urbanism, ESA Paris, 11.2009



Metaphors as medium

Elisabeth Bronfen shows in her essays how the architectural metaphors of the “home away from home” and of the “ruin” are staged and central for the construction of myths and narration, in movies such as *White Christmas* (1954) and *Holiday Inn* (1942). In the former, stage, set, and image are overlapping in a complex construction revealing the heterotopic condition the film addresses: the coincidence of war and peace and of home and front – a condition that joins different semantic paradigms and is constructed by a juxtaposition of sites and realities. The very actor of this overlapping is the metaphor of the remains of war. Bronfen thus reveals how cinema consciously uses such metaphors to create its own myths.

At the center of **Richard Coyne’s** essay are two processes – tuning and calibration – that he reveals to be essential in order to understand both

the nature of metaphors – which work by aligning, calibrating and tuning models, but also by calibrating two different things that metaphors bring together – and the nature of the design process which is based on the calibration and tuning of concept and reality. He illustrates this overlapping by discussing mobile, portable devices and how these calibrate the user with places but also with the acoustic environment they unveil.

Jelle Feringa addresses the contemporary architectural computational turn and the consequent transformation of the architectural model, from a metaphor to a literal definition of the project. The model is no longer a mediation between intention, concept and the reality of the project, but becomes part of this reality; it is its very definition. This transformation of the nature of the architectural model reveals a deep epistemological shift of the model itself but also of architecture in the context of new computer technology. Feringa furthermore emphasizes how the first biomorphic interpretations of the computational turn ignored this shift of the model, realizing figurative instead of literal transformations of the concepts behind the projects.

Marcelyn Gow refers to the blending of technological and organic metaphors in the context of Japanese architecture in the 1960s. For the specific blending of these two metaphors she coins the term of “soft monstrosities,” underscoring the difficulty of negotiating between the implementation of the electronic and the biological paradigm, between image and performance, illustrating how her own work inside the collective *servo* should be seen as an attempt precisely to move on from images of technology and biology to projects that perform such metaphoric blendings.

Stephan Günzel investigates the nature of space in video games and emphasizes how the relationship between these and reality – understood not only as spatial but also as social reality – can be described as metaphorical and metonymical. Metaphor and metonymy are thus media which translate spaces and contents from reality to video game and from video game back to reality as is the case in the transformation of the movements between different levels from *Super Mario* to *Parkour* back to *Mirror's Edge*.

In his essay, **Holger Schurk** reveals the similarities between the processes of design and the metaphorical processes in language, both being complex, interdisciplinary and wicked. He performs this through an analysis of the particular role of the diagram in the design process of OMA and of the plan in the design process of SANAA. Both can be described

as metaphors. The instruments and methods of design thus incorporate these metaphorical processes.

Georges Teyssot constructs a complex Möbius strip tied on to the theory of communication, cybernetics, and the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze in order to reveal the translating and thus metaphoric nature of art, in particular the art of landscape artist Robert Smithsons. Around the ambiguous nature of crystal and waste landscape, concepts such as entropy are translated into sensations and affects revealing the power of art and architecture to transcend language.

Chris Younès bases her discourse on the notion of the “living metaphor,” by Paul Ricoeur, who described it as something that makes reference to reality and that transforms this reality in part also because of its innate ambiguity, between concept and image or between model and poetics. This ambiguity is revealed also in the very nature of architecture and is of the order of “and...and” rather than “either....or” as postulated by Gilles Deleuze. Younès illustrates this overlapping of metaphor and architecture by a discussion of the metaphor of the living, emphasizing its importance for the contemporary discourse of sustainability and architecture, because it forces us to think about coexistences and liaisons.

The metaphor project

Didier Faustino, in his own professional “ambiguity” – as both architect and artist – somehow metaphorical, was asked to produce a project for the conference that would illustrate metaphors. The result, the *Hidden Pavilion*, is a narration around the blending of three archetypes that reveal the overlapping of architecture, body, space and myth.

Metaphors are interpreted by **François Roche** as the possibility of delving exactly into the suspension between two poles opened up by these. It is in this ambiguous limbo, that Roche situates his work, illustrated by his recent projects.

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*Image 4: Metaphors in/on Architecture and Urbanism,
ESA Paris, 11.2009*



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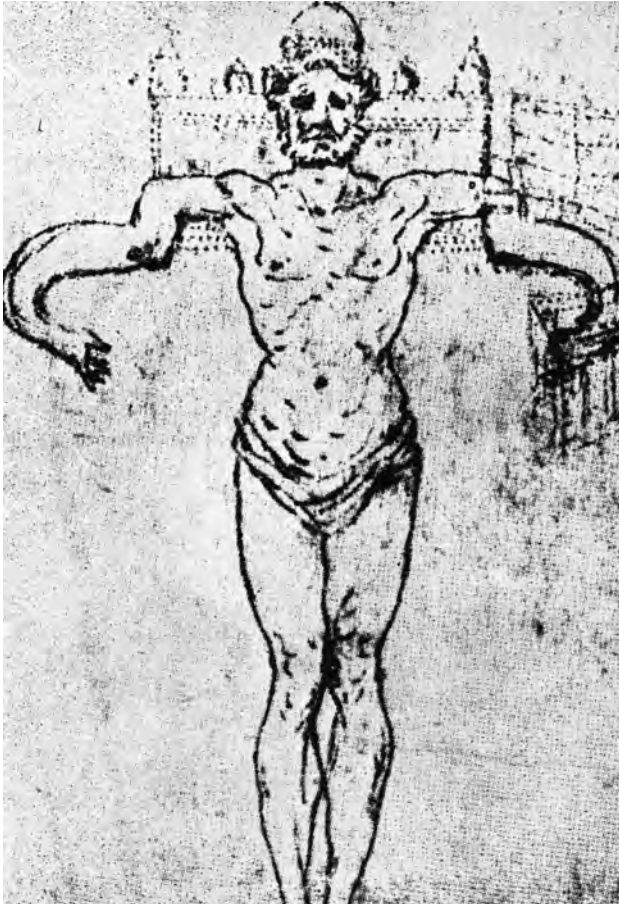
I would also like to thank Andreas Beyer, director of the *Centre Allemand de l'Histoire de l'Art* in Paris who agreed to host the third conference day at his wonderful location on the *Place des Victoires* and who was an inspiring interlocutor for the final discussion.

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Image 5: Drawing attributed to Bernini, Saint Peter's Square



As for the publication I am indebted to Hasty Valipour Goudarzy for the transcripts of some of the conference papers and Pauline Marie d'Avigneau and Marie-Hélène Fabre for editing the French texts. We decided in fact to keep the bilingual experience of the conference also by keeping some texts in French, as they were presented.

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This book is for Poul and Constantin