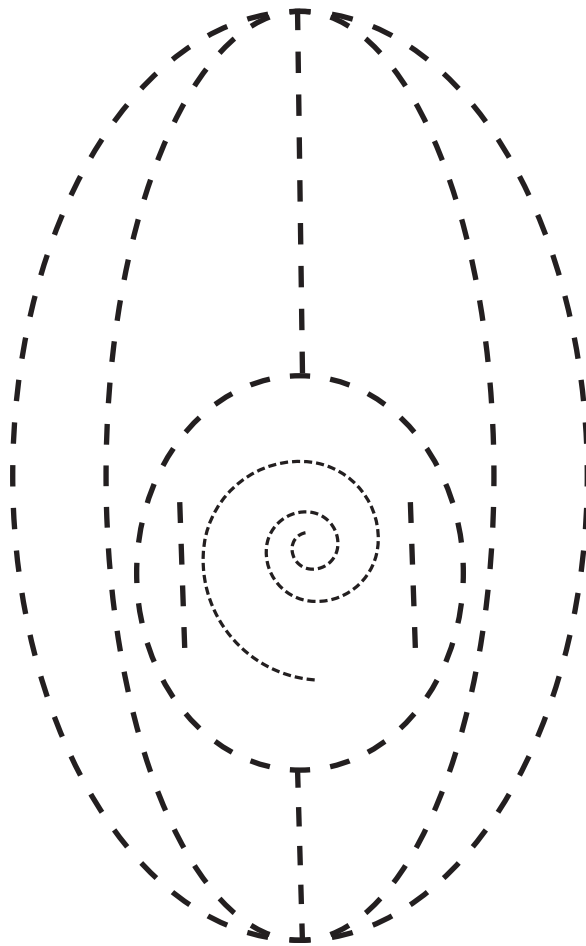# Architectural Collective Enunciation

## A Question of Forming Relays

# Architectural Collective Enunciation:

# A Question of Forming Relays

The reign of 'Starchitecture' is over. Good riddance. It has been buried together with the so-called neoliberal era that has dominated economic, political and social systems until (the financial crisis of) 2008. Uncannily, this turn roughly coincided with the cataclysm of our old faculty building. We uphold the hypothesis that the contemporary trends in architecture have emerged as an alternative to the (st)architectural positions dominant since the turn of the century.

To meet the ethical challenge of the Anthropocene the architect's role needs to undergo a fundamental change from that of a synaptic visionary (a psychological subject whose *private* meanings and *public* expressions are crucial to understanding her work and its effects) to a more humble yet audacious clinical/critical cartographer of the material-discursive realm. We propose to catalyse the transition by breaking the bad habit of representationalism. In the words of Deleuze and Foucault:

> At one time, practice was considered an application of theory, a consequence; at other times, it had an opposite sense and it was thought to inspire theory.
>
> …
>
> In any event, their relationship was understood in terms of a process of totalization. For us, however, the question is seen in a different light. The relationships between theory and practice are far more partial and fragmentary.
>
> …
>
> The relationship which holds in the application of a theory is never one of resemblance.
>
> …
>
> Practice is a set of relays from one theoretical point to another and theory is a relay from one practice to another.
>
> …
>
> A theorizing intellectual, for us, is no longer a subject, a representing or representative consciousness.
>
> …
>
> **Representation no longer exists; there's only action—theoretical action and practical action which serve as relays and form networks.** (Foucault and Deleuze, 1977)

Isabelle Stengers's strategy of forming relays saves us from the totalizing and hence fatalistic teleological temptations:

> The question can no longer be, then, one of commentary, rendering explicit what would have remained implicit, clarifying or elucidating.
>
> …
>
> **Rather it is about "consolidating" just a little more—always a little more—which is to say, forming relays.**
>
> …
>
> As it happens, in regard to thinking about life, it will be a question of forming relays in the manner that *A Thousand Plateaus* struggles against the nearly irresistible slope that would transform the "voyage" of thought into the destination, into the position of its final definition, and simultaneously assign an end, in the double sense of the term, to thought. (Stengers, 2017), pp. 325- 338 (329).

Finally, we rely on Karen Barad reinvigoration of the *diffractive* approach:

> As Donna Haraway suggests, diffraction can serve as a useful counterpoint to reflection: both are optical phenomena, but whereas the metaphor of reflection reflects the themes of mirroring and sameness, diffraction is marked by patterns of difference.
>
> …
>
> Haraway focuses our attention on this figurative distinction to highlight important difficulties with the notion of reflection as a pervasive trope for knowing, as well as related difficulties with the parallel notion of reflexivity as a method or theory (in the social sciences) of self-accounting, of taking account of the effect of the theory or the researcher on the investigation.
>
> …
>
> **Haraway's point is that the methodology of reflexivity mirrors the geometrical optics of reflection, and that for all of the recent emphasis on reflexivity as a critical method of self-positioning it remains caught up in geometries of sameness; by contrast, diffractions are attuned to differences—differences that our knowledge-making practices make and the effects they have on the world.**
>
> …
>
> Crucially, diffraction attends to the relational nature of difference; it does not figure difference as either a matter of essence or as inconsequential: "a diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the effects of differences appear" (Barad, 2007).

The exhibition diffractively relays five texts to eight diagrams:

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**Zaera-Polo**, Alejandro and Guillermo Fernandez Abascal, 'Architecture's 'Political Compass': A Taxonomy of Emerging Architecture in One Diagram', https://www.archdaily.com/801641/architectures-political-compass-a-taxonomy-of-emerging-architecture-in-one-diagram

**Zaera-Polo**, Alejandro, 'Well into the 21st Century: The Architectures of Post-Capitalism?', *El Croquis* 187 (2016), pp. 252-287.

# TEXT 1

## Axis thinking

Brian Eno

(An appendix from: Brian Eno, *A Year with Swollen Appendices* (London: Faber and Faber, 1996), pp. 298-302.)

> An axis is a name for a continuum of possibilities between two extreme positions: so the axis between black and white is a scale of greys.

I can illustrate this idea by applying it to the description of haircuts. [Diagram 1]

Rather than only being able to say of someone's haircut that it is, for example, masculine or feminine, we're as likely to want to say that it's quite masculine, or quite feminine, or unisexual – somewhere in the middle. When we do this, we acknowledge that the sexual possibilities of haircuts don't just fall squarely at one or another of the polar positions – masculine or feminine – but somewhere on the wide range of hybrids between them. In fact we would feel constrained if we couldn't make descriptions in these fuzzy, hybrid, terms.

If you were trying to describe a particular haircut, however, you'd probably want to say more than 'It's quite feminine', or some other comment about its gender-connotations. You might also want to locate its position along other axes – for instance along the axis *neat <–> shaggy* – 'It's slightly shaggy' or 'It's very neat.' If that then gave you enough descriptive language to say everything you could imagine ever wanting to say about haircuts, you could locate every example you ever met somewhere on a two-dimensional space – like this sheet of paper. So you could make a kind of graph – *masculine <–> feminine* on one axis, *neat <–> shaggy* on the other. On this graph, which is a simple cross in 2D space, any point represents a particular position in relation to the four polar possibilities:

*masculine <–> feminine    neat <–> shaggy*

I call each of these points a cultural address. I could equally well call it a stylistic address. It is the identification of a particular point in stylistic space, a 'possible haircut'.

Those four terms still constitute an impoverished language in which to describe most haircuts, and to describe a wide range of possible haircuts we would need several others: *natural <–> contrived*, *rebel <–> conformist*, *wild <–> civilised*, *futuristic <–> nostalgic*, *businesslike <–> bohemian*. Each of these polar pairs defines another axis along which any particular haircut could be located. And each of these exists as a 'dimension' in the haircut space, which now becomes multidimensional and no longer easily drawable on a sheet of paper.

We shouldn't forget that each of these poles has no absolute and for-all-time meaning but is also in its own slow motion, stretching the axis of which it defines an end-point this way and that. A really natural haircut, for example, is no haircut. But when we use the term 'natural cut' we don't think of someone with shaggy locks hanging over their eyes, but of someone who went to the hairdresser and said something like, 'Can you make it look sort of natural – a bit windswept?', as opposed to someone else who said, 'Can you do me a nine-inch beehive?'

And there is another complication: the resonances are quite local culturally. A man with very short hair in East London in 1985 would be assumed potentially dangerous and 'hard'. The same man in San Francisco would be thought gay.

And if we look more closely we see that many of the things that we would consider single qualities of hair are actually themselves multi-axial spaces. To describe hair colour, for example, needs much more detail than *dark <–> light*. It needs an axis of redness, an axis of greyness, an axis of colour homogeneity, an axis of shine.

What strikes you as interesting when you begin thinking about stylistic decisions (or moral or political decisions) as being locatable in a multi-axial space of this kind is the recognition that some axes don't yet exist. For example, with hairstyles, as far as I know, there is not a *dirty <–> clean* axis. That's to say, your hairdresser isn't likely to ask you, 'How dirty would you like it?' It's still assumed that there is no discussion about it: the axis has not been opened up. We would all want it 'as clean as possible'.

Peter Schmidt used to talk about 'the things that nobody ever thought of not doing'. A version of this happened in clothing fashion. There was recently a style – variously described as non-fit, un-fit and anti-fit (the name didn't stabilize) - which was to do with people wearing clothes that exist at the never-before-desirable end of the newly discovered axis *well-fitted <–> badly fitted*. These clothes were deliberately chosen to look completely wrong. This was way beyond baggy, which was a first timid step along that axis. Baggy implies the message 'These are my clothes, but I like to wear them loose.' Non-fit says, 'These are someone eIse's clothes' or 'I am insane' or 'I cannot locate myself' or 'I don't fit.'

With punk, a brand-new axis opened up: *professionally cut <–> hacked about by a brainless cretin*. As often happens, this appeared (and was intended) to be an anti-style style, and was shocking because we had never previously considered the possibility that the concept 'style' and the concept 'hacked about by a brainless cretin' could overlap one another. But, as usual, the effect was not to overthrow and eliminate the idea of style but to give it new places in which to extend itself. 'Hacked about by a brainless cretin' became not the death of hair-styling but the furthest outpost of a new continuum of possible choices about how hair could look.

This is a transition from polar thinking – the kind of thinking that says, 'It's either this or it's that', or 'Everything that isn't clearly this must be that' – to axial thinking. Axial thinking doesn't deny that it could be this or that – but suggests that it's more likely to be somewhere between the two. As soon as that suggestion is in the air, it triggers an imaginative process, an attempt to locate and conceptualize the newly acknowledged grey-scale positions.

I am interested in these transitions – these moments when a stable duality dissolves into a proliferating and unstable sea of hybrids. What happens at such times is that all sorts of things become possible: there is a tremendous energy release, a great burst of experimentation. Not only do the emerging possible positions on this new-born axis have to be discovered and experienced and articulated: they have to be placed in context with other existing axes to see what new resonances appear.

A good – and undigested – example of this process is the (apparently temporary) demise of state communism in Eastern Europe. It's extraordinary that when the Berlin Wall came down everyone assumed that the whole world was about to become one big market economy running on the same set of rules. What happened instead was that the old dualism *communism <–> capitalism* was revealed to conceal a host of possible hybrids. Now only the most ideological governments (England, Cuba) still retain their fundamentalist commitment to one end of the continuum: most governments are experimenting vigorously with complicated customized blendings of market forces and state intervention.

> An example of such a complicated blending is defence spending, which allows a government nominally committed to 'market forces' to have at its centre a completely intact command economy within which It can direct the flow of social resources.

The period of transition is marked by excitement, experimentation – and resistance. Whenever a duality starts to dissolve, those who felt trapped at one end of it suddenly feel enormous freedom – they can now redescribe themselves. But, by the same token, those who defined their identity by their allegiance to one pole of the duality (and rejection of the other) feel exposed. The walls have been taken away, and the separation between inside and outside is suddenly gone. This can create wide-scale social panic: vigorous affirmations of the essential rightness of the 'old ways', moral condemnation of the experimentalists, 'back to basics' campaigns, all the familiar signs of fundamentalism.

> Essentially, cultures wish to be able to control, or at least channel, such excitements and panics, turning what could be chaotic uncertainty into a power either for revolution or for consolidation. This is normally mishandled. Hostile propaganda campaigns are good examples of fundamentalism at work: they are designed to push the concepts of friend and enemy to extreme and unambiguous positions, and to cement a complete and unvarying identification between two different axes: *us <–> them, friend <–> enemy.*

Zones of Pragmatic Deceit are the social and mental inventions that exist to lubricate the friction between what we claim to stand for (i.e. simple polar pictures) and what we actually have to do to make things work (i.e. navigate over networks of axes). These two are often quite different, as situations change much faster than the moral constructions that are sup- posed to describe them.

> A good example of a ZPD is the American consulate in Antigua, which has an elaborate system of deterring, or at least preconditioning, black people entering the United States by subjecting them to bizarre humiliations in theoretically routine matters such as getting a visitor's visa.
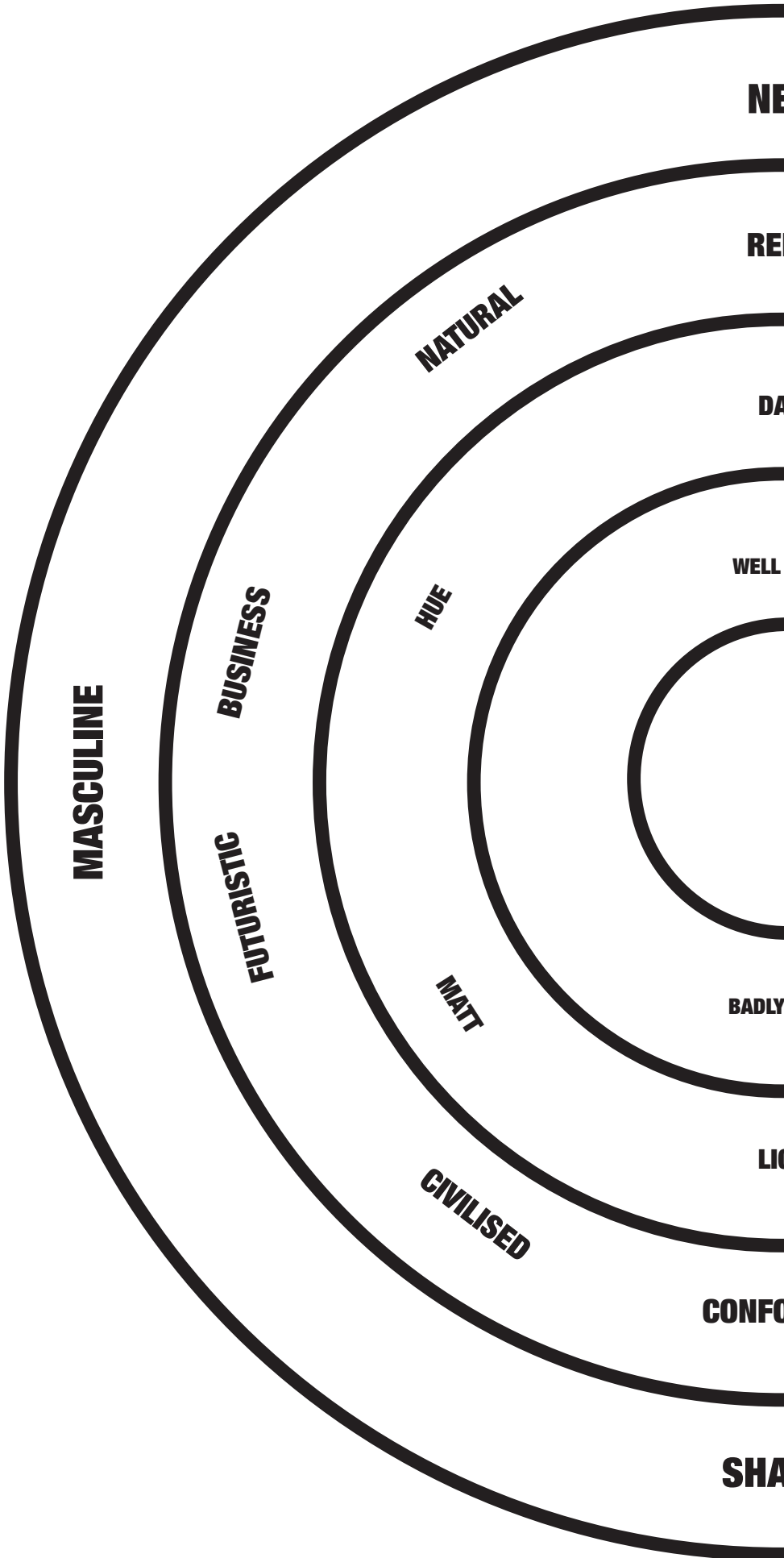
The machinery of this humiliation is highly evolved: after several hours' queueing, applicants are required to address the ever-sneering, never-interested staff through a thick glass panel which has a small hole 3 ft from the ground. Since the staff routinely feign inability to hear or understand what anyone is saying, shrugging their shoulders and making to walk away to rejoin the interminable conversation they were having before, applicants are soon forced to their knees so that they can talk up through the little slot. This induction into American society sets the right tone: instead of 'Bring us your poor, your sick ... etc.', it's 'On your knees and beg.'

This system exists because America – like Britain, which has evolved other forms of immigrant humiliation – is committed ideologically to the concept of open borders, but is increasingly worried by the prospect of huge immigrant communities, and has no new language (other than that of failure) in which to discuss a reassessment of position. This is the difficulty with polar thought systems: they offer only two possible options.

You could say that the evolution of culture is the gradual rethinking of the whole matrix of axes: the discovery of new ones, of course, but also the careful tailoring – trimming and extending – of existing ones. For instance, the axis of 'possible human relationships' used to extend from 'total slave' to 'absolute ruler'. Fewer cultures are now willing to accept either of those extreme polarities as part of their vision of civilized behaviour, so you could say that this particular axis has been effectively shortened – focused down – to a narrower range.

What characterizes fundamentalism is a set of extremely narrow axes that allow almost no movement, no experimentation. And liberalism is perhaps the attempt to keep the axes as open as possible without incurring complete social fragmentation. The importance of symbolic behaviours like art and religion and sexual fantasy is that they allow us to experiment symbolically with new and even prohibited positions on the axial matrix – experiments that may be inconvenient, dangerous and divisive in 'real life'. (1993)

NE

REI

DA

WELL

MASCULINE

BUSINESS

NATURAL

FUTURISTIC

HUE

MATT

BADLY

CIVILISED

LIC

CONFO

SHA

EAT

BEL

WILD

ARK

FITTED

GLOSSY

NOSTALGIC

FEMININE

FITTED

SATURATED

BOHEMIAN

GHT

CONTRIVED

RMIST

AGGY
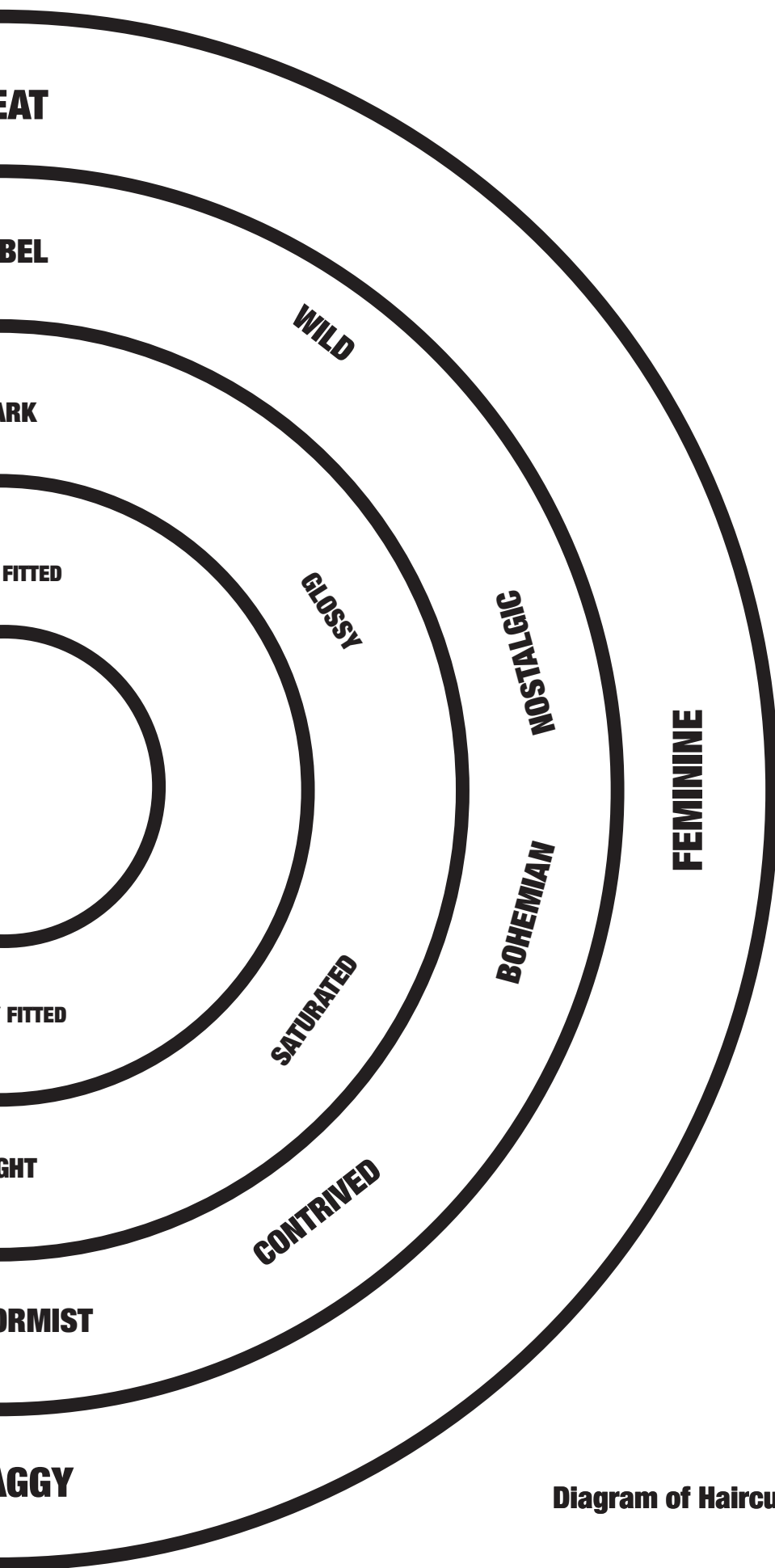
# DIAGRAM 1

**Diagram of Haircuts, based on 'Axis thinking' (1993)
by Brian Eno**

# TEXT 2

Architecture's 'Political Compass':

A Taxonomy of Emerging Architecture in One Diagram

Alejandro Zaera-Polo & Guillermo Fernandez Abascal

(An excerpt from: https://www.archdaily.com/801641/architectures-political-compass-a-taxonomy-of-emerging-architecture-in-one-diagram)

*Observing the architectural landscape today it's clear that the type of work which is currently ascendant, particularly among young practices, is very different to what came before the financial crisis of 2008. But what, exactly, does that architectural landscape look like? In an essay titled "Well into the 21st Century" in the latest issue of El Croquis, Alejandro Zaera-Polo outlined a 21st-century taxonomy of architecture, attempting to define and categorize the various new forms of practice that have grown in popularity in the years since—and as a political response to—the economic crisis. [Diagram 2]*

*The categories defined by Zaera-Polo encompass seven broad political positions:*

1) ***Activists***, *who reject architecture's dependence on market forces by operating largely outside the market, with a focus on community building projects, direct engagement with construction, and non-conventional funding strategies;*

2) ***Populists***, *whose work is calibrated to reconnect with the populace thanks to a media-friendly, diagrammatic approach to architectural form;*

3) ***New Historicists***, *whose riposte to the "end of history" hailed by neoliberalism is an embrace of historically-informed design;*

4) ***Skeptics***, *whose existential response to the collapse of the system is in part a return to postmodern critical discourse and in part an exploration of contingency and playfulness through an architecture of artificial materials and bright colors;*

5) ***Material Fundamentalists***, *who returned to a tactile and virtuoso use of materials in response to the visual spectacle of pre-crash architecture;*

6) ***Austerity Chic***, *a kind of architectural "normcore" (to borrow a term from fashion) which focuses primarily on the production process, and resulting performance, of architecture;*

7) ***Techno-Critical***, *a group of practices largely producing speculative architecture, whose work builds upon but also remains critical of the data-driven parametricism of their predecessors.*

*As a follow-up to that essay, Zaera-Polo and Guillermo Fernandez-Abascal set out to apply the newly-defined categories to the emerging practices of today with a nuanced "political compass" diagram. They invited practices to respond to their categorization in order to unveil the complex interdependencies and self-image of these political stances. For the first time, here ArchDaily publishes the results of that exercise.*

During the last decade, there has been a growing interest within the architectural debate about the possibility of a political re-engagement of the discipline, a subject which had been remarkably absent from the disciplinary debate since the 1970s, but which seems to be back in the spotlight.

Based on the political categories outlined in the text "Well into the 21st Century," published in *El Croquis* 187, and deeply inspired by the infamous diagram from Charles Jencks in Architecture 2000, we set out to make a synchronic map of contemporary emerging architectural practices.

We have selected 181 world-wide emerging practices, which we have located on a dial where the political categories were laid out, trying to set their adjacencies with some sense of continuity. Starting from the Techno-critical, we move clockwise to the Technocratic, then to the Cosmopolitical, then to the Austerity-chic, Activists and then to the Material Fundamentalists, Constitutionalists, Historicists, Revisionists, Skeptics and finally to the Populists.

## Methodology

We mapped the emerging architectural practices following their estimated political inclinations inside a circular field comprised in the dial. While there was an interesting adjacency between the different political categories, and we could place them nicely around the circular field, some of them had to be placed in less evident adjacencies.

The difficulties of locating the practices are evident: some of the practices were often bridging non-adjacent categories, so they were difficult to locate. Practices are not homogeneous and sometimes shift positions between projects and sometimes, between partners. We nevertheless tried to place every one of the emerging practices that we thought were significant on the map, to the best of our judgment, which is obviously limited. This is Version 0.1, so we will hopefully do later iterations where a different mapping technique could be used, further categories added or more precise information about the practices can be included.

Then we asked all practices for a self-assessment, so we could see the deviation between our estimated location and their desired one. We sent the practices a list of the political categories and the empty compass, deleting the names of the practices that we had located, so they could position themselves without being affected by the proximity of other practices, or by our own hypothesis about their location.

We asked them to position themselves on the map: the closer they locate to the outer border of the compass, the more orthodox they consider themselves in respect to the neighboring category; the closer they go to the center of the circle, the more hybridized they would consider themselves.

## Analysis of Data

1. 101 practices entered into the self-assessment (56%).

2. 50% of the practices placed themselves graphically. The other half seemed to be more comfortable with a verbal description of their position in respect to the categories.

3. 15% matched almost exactly our hypothetic location.

4. 20% located themselves close to our hypothetical location, mostly tending toward the center or toward neighboring categories.

5. 20% placed themselves in a different location, with a general tendency toward a more central, hybridized location, many of them pointing towards the "Cosmopolitical" category.

6. 10% set themselves in an opposite area.

7. 5% said that they do not fit into any of the categories, and proposed alternative categories for their own practice. "Utopian" and "Pragmatic" are some of the requested political grounds which were not available.

8. 5% wanted to be into two categories or in overlaps which were currently unavailable in the map.

9. <5% suggested different positions for each of the partners.

10. 5% asked for a change of their political location after seeing our full compass hypothesis.

11. <5% distributed their projects over the map saying every project has a different political stance and there is no overarching political stance in their practice, as it is related to the specific situation of the project.

12. <5% were happy with any location we gave them.

13. <5% described their practice according how they approach each category.

14. <5% provided specific coordinates of their location or suggested that a more precise geometrical diagram could simplify their answer.

15. 5% expressed interest but did not send any answer.

16. 5% showed gratitude for including them but refused to participate because of being extremely busy or because they considered the experiment inadequate to capture the profession, irrelevant, or they thought the categories were subjective, imprecise and disputed.


## Conclusions

There is a logical reluctance in the practices to accept our categorization. Given the current resurgence in politics in architecture, we expected emerging practices to have a more ideological stance to practice than the previous generation. Instead, we noticed a general refusal to take a clear stance. Perhaps our categories were not sufficiently varied. Some practices requested the category "Utopian" which was missing from the reference text, and the categories on offer. This was particularly true of those in the categories of the Activists and the Populists. We had excluded Utopianism simply because we do not believe any of the practices included can be considered truly utopian. We do believe there may be Utopian practices in architecture today but rarely within the selection of practicing architects which we have adopted for our analysis.

There were several requests for a "Pragmatic" label, as if Realpolitik was still alive and well within the emerging generation, despite the general claim for a more "engaged" architectural practice. We had deliberately avoided Pragmatism as a political option, as it was one of the most common claims of the previous generation of "neo-liberal" practices, and it appears to imply a lack of a strong ideological conviction as a driver of the practice. However, several practices appear to reclaim pragmatism as a political stance, even referring to authorities such as Latour, Marres, etc. Perhaps a difference should be made between ideological and tactical politics in further iterations of this experiment. Many of the practices tended to express a wish to move toward the center of the chart, to remain in a more ambiguous position, including those positions which claimed that every project develops its own political stance. Some of them even claimed that every partner has a different political stance, which is both probably true and interesting.

Other than the tendency toward the center, Activism and Cosmopolitical are some of the most coveted locations for emerging practices. Those located in the Populist area did not agree with their location and tended to complain of oversimplification of their position. This may very well be true, as populism is more of a style of delivery and we ourselves believe that, while it may be predominant in some practices, we can probably have populists among the Cosmopoliticals, the Activists or the Material Fundamentalists.

Those practices that we have located in the Material Fundamentalism or the Cosmopolitical tended not to respond to the experiment by a large margin. The same is true for the people we located within the Activist and Austerity proponents. That seems to be consistent with their political stance of prioritizing the actual building itself, the cosmos or the engagement with the community...

The Global compass was not as global as we had wanted: we did not manage to engage a sufficient number of Asian practices, despite their disproportionate weight in the global construction output by comparison with other regions in the world. The scarce engagement of Asian practices in the study may be an index of a general disbelief in architectural politics, or perhaps the reluctance to engage with a possibly too-Western political perspective.

80% of the contributors expressed a positive attitude towards the classification. Even some of the ones who refused to take part in the quest qualified the experiment as "nice," "intriguing," "amazing," "maniac," "genial," "funny," "great," "very cool," "super interesting," or "fascinating," and they appeared to like the fact that a magazine best known for monographs of established architects was willing to open this debate. To all those who engaged in the experiment, in whatever form, our deepest gratitude. We hope to continue the debate that was initiated here with all of them, to produce more sophisticated versions of this map.

**TECHNO-CRITICAL**

**POPULISTS**

**SCEPTICS**

H arquitectes

Atelier Bow Wow

Carlo Rati

Ecosistema
Urbano

THE LIVING

HHF

terreform one

Da

Gramazio
Kohler

Philippe Rahm

AWP

Territorial Agency

Selgas Cano

Benjamin
Dillenburger

amid.cero9

Andres Jacque
Office for
Political
Innovation

Achim Menges

Izaskun Chincila

Michael
Hansmeyer

Liam Young

X-TU

ZUS

Aranda/
Lasch

Archi-Union

Productore
EENSTUDIO
ENORME

A

Marc
Fornes

Lola

SOA

Junya
Ishigami

Heatherwick

Mass Studies

Sadar + Vuga

Ole Sheeren

SMAR

Frida
Escobedo

FREE

COBE

HWKN

PLAN B

SO-IL

El Equipo de
Mazzanti

Sou
Fujimoto

Tatiana
Bilbao

Elding
Oscarson

Rojkind

OPEN

Frundgallina

SeARCH

JAJA

Cadaval &
Sola-Morales

Lateral
Office

LOCALARCHITECTURE

BIG

Encore Hereux

WOHA

Hiroshi
Nakamura
NAP

Besler & Sons

Adamo
Faiden

JDS

Austin
Maynard

Tham and
Videgard

MAD

Manuel
Ocana

Arquitecturia

Studio
Weave

Arch
Studio

AZL

Bureau
Spectacular

REX

Supermachine

Anne
Holtrop

RAAF

Langarita
Navaro

MAIO

Go Hasegawa

KUU

Bittertang

SMS

First
Office

Jun
Iragashi

A21 Studio

onishimaki +
hyakudayuki

Seri
Archite

MOS

akihisha
hirata

BAST

AMUNT

Architecture 00

Bruther

Fake Industries
Arch. Agonism

Raumblador
Berlin

vid Kohn

Assemble

Carl Turner
Architects

Santiago
Cirugeda

Asif Kahn

HAT

AAA

Orkid
Studio

DAAR

**ACTIVISTS**

All Zone

Urko Sanchez

Made in Earth

TYIN
tTegnestue

A(n) Office

Anne Feenstra

Urban
Think Tank

Weizman/
Forensic Architecture

Elemental

MASS
Design

RUF

People's
Architecture Office

EA2

Holmer
Reuter Sandman

NLE

Dogma

Brandlhuber

Kere
Architecture

Anna
Heringer

Baukuh

De Vylder
Vinck Taillieu

Wang Shu

Li Xiadong

514 NE

LAN

ZAO/
Standardarchitecture

Vo Trong Nghia

NU

Building Building

Kasher
Mahboob

Chowdhury/
Urbana

Studio Mumbai

Christian Kerez

EMN2

Herbst

Raphael Zuber

GAFPA

Carla Juacaba

Ensamble Studio

a-practice

SAMI

Jose Maria
Sanchez Garcia

baukunst

CC Arquitectos

Gabinete
de Arquitectura

METRO

Office

Vector

Rintala
Eggerston

URA

Eduardo
Castillo

AGWA

Kuehn
Malvezi

dePaor

Smiljan
Radic

Plural

Pezzo Von
Ellrichshausen

Paolo
David

O - Office

TED'a

**MATERIAL FUNDAMENDALISTS**

Neri Hu

Arquitectura G

DRDH

NORD

Bosch
Capdefero

Johannes
Noorlander

FHV

Christ &
Gantebein

OOPEAA

Menos es Mais

Hail
McKnight

Clancy
Moore

Joao Mendes
Ribeiro

Johnston
Marklee

Adam Kahn
Architects

ARRHOV
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Duggan Moris

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Nameless

Barozzi
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**NEW HISTORICISTS**

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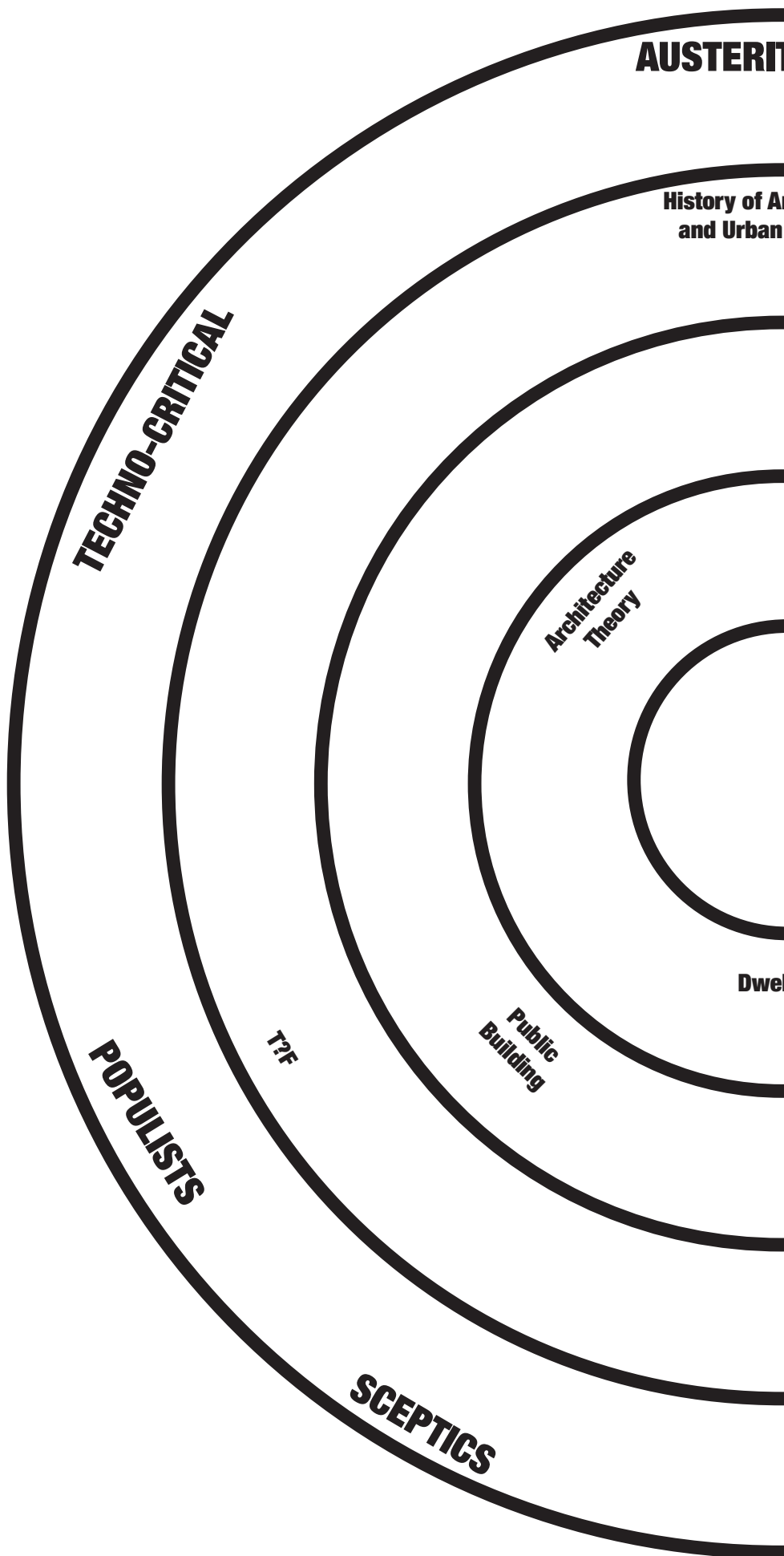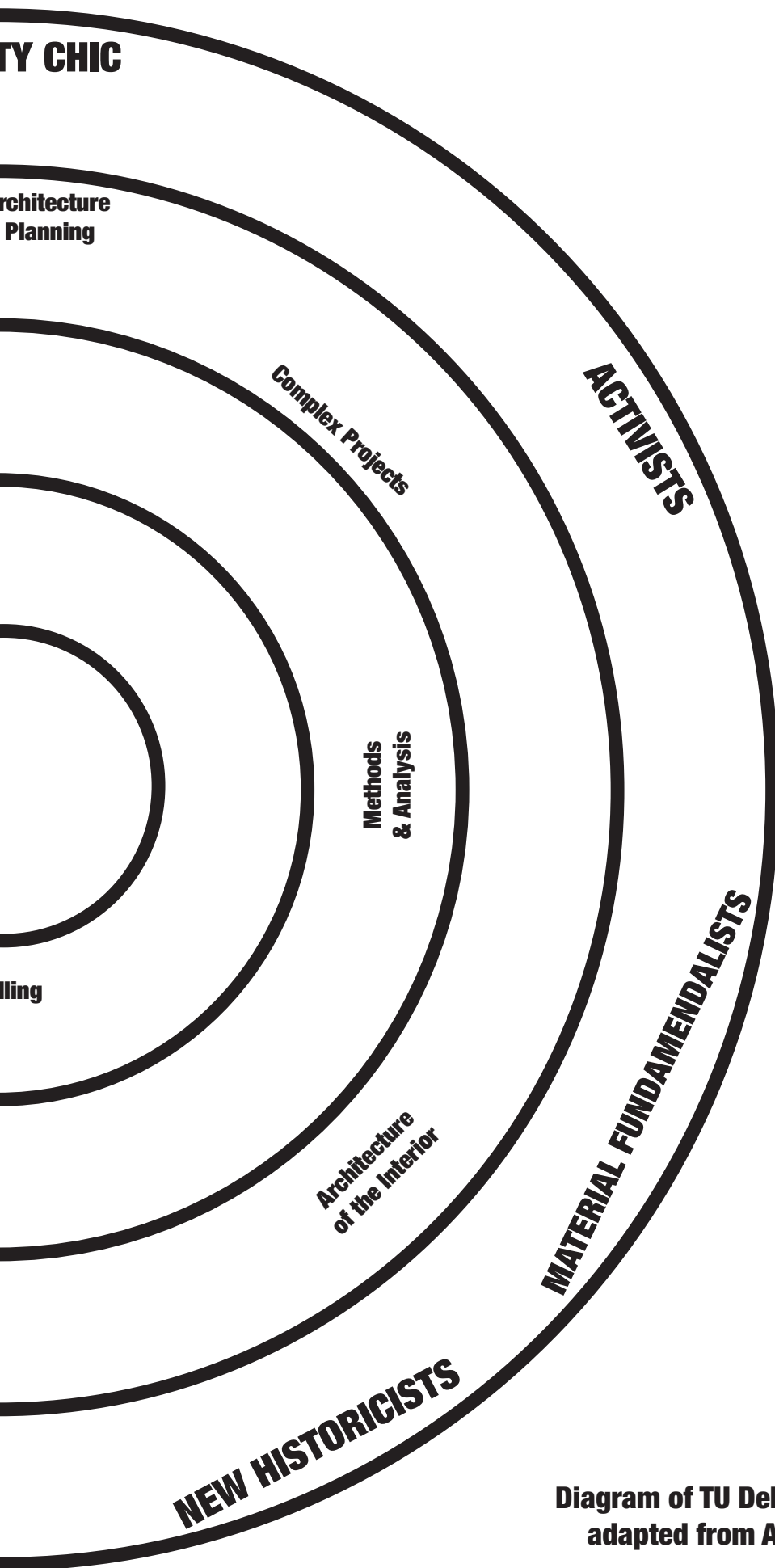Groarke

Andrew
Kovacs

# DIAGRAM 2

**Diagram of Architectural Landscape Today, based on
the 'The full political compass diagram' by Alejandro
Zaera-Polo and Guillermo Fernandez Abascal**

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NEW HISTORICISTS

# DIAGRAM 3

Diagram of TU Delft Architecture Department Chairs,
adapted from Alejandro Zaera-Polo and Guillermo
Fernandez Abascal's diagram

The Compass of Beauty:

A Search for the Middle

Lars Spuybroek


(An excerpt from the forthcoming chapter in: Maria Voyatzaki (ed.), *Architectural Materialisms: Nonhuman Creativity* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press)).


## Compass and Wheel


Before we move to the final stage in the development of a biaxial systemacy, in the form of Charles Hartshorne's Diagram of Aesthetic Values, we should take a brief look at the ideas on beauty of his primary influence, the Anglo-American philosopher Alfred North Whitehead. Like Hartshorne, Whitehead developed his ideas on beauty quite late in life, and not really until two of his last books, *Adventures of Ideas* (1933) and *Modes of Thought* (1938), published when he was in his seventies.


As I have discussed on earlier occasions,[39] to define the nature of the two axes properly it is vital to understand Whitehead's argument, especially considering the history of aesthetic theories, which, by the way, both he and Hartshorne felt confident enough to omit. Beauty—"the teleology of the universe," as Whitehead phrased it[40]—consists of two dimensions, one of "mutual adaptation," the other of "patterned contrasts,"[41] or, in the words of Price, Hogarth and Burke, one dimension of smoothness and one of roughness. The axis of mutual adaptation (note the phrase's subtle evolutionary and environmental ring) indexes the necessity of harmonizing, that is, wholes harmonizing with other wholes; in short, the *synthetic axis* of smoothness, or extensity. The fact that it consists of an axis means that on the one end we find things that harmonize extremely, that are ultraunified, which Whitehead calls "minor beauty" or "the absence of a painful clash."[42] Meanwhile, on the other end, we find things that don't succeed in harmonizing, that is, things that are ultraplurified, what we call ugly. It is important to understand that the other term, contrast, is different from mere diversity, though. Things do not simply vary, they break away from each other. We see fractures emerging, sudden shifts and cuts (being literally *analytic*). Such contrasts and fractures often lead to layering and stratification with parts or groups of parts hiding behind one another, in what we often denote with "depth" or "profundity." Therefore, the effect of contrast is often expressed by magnitude, which is why we find the previously discussed greatness of the sublime on this axis, as well as the smallness of the cute at its opposite end.


This system allows every thing, every "occasion," every gesture to exist as a combination of smoothness and roughness, or in Whitehead's terms, massiveness and intensity. Here, massiveness refers to an index of coordination by gradual variation, and intensity to an index of the degree to which that coordinated whole allows its parts to be available to others. In themselves, there is nothing new in these remarks; we find them as readily in Uvedale Price or Edmund Burke. What is remarkable, however, is the fact that Whitehead does not put these on a single sliding scale, with massive, compact wholes on one end and loose, fractured ones on the other. Whitehead's doctrine is not just another take on Hutcheson's unity amidst variety. The parameters of massiveness and of intensity each have a uniform side and a diverse side; both are driven by variation, but each by a different type: one smooth, the other rough; one operating on adaptation, the other on contrast.[43] Though he does

not refer to prior aesthetic theories, which would have been helpful, nor visualize his system in the form of a diagram, which would have been even more helpful, he clearly views the system as a two-dimensional one, organized along two axes, each with minimum and maximum values at the ends.

Eventually, by combining Whitehead's ideas on beauty with Dessoir's little diagram, Hartshorne took the final steps in his development of a diagram of aesthetics, an effort which can be traced over many years, beginning in the 1970s with *Creative Synthesis and Philosophic Method*, where he published the first version of what he then called the Dessoir-Davis Circle. As a diagram, it was strongly influenced by Dessoir's example from the beginning of the century, but the philosophy behind it owes far more to Whitehead. The version Hartshorne published in *Creative Synthesis* was a still-crude version of what he later, in 1987's *Wisdom as Moderation*, finalized as the "Diagram of Aesthetic Values". [Diagram 4] In these diagrams, Hartshorne made two essential adjustments to Dessoir's model, based on his readings of Whitehead: first, he repositioned beauty, and second, he added the superb,[44] the neat and the commonplace.[45]

We should look at the repositioning of beauty first. It is quite clear that Whitehead's notion of beauty lies at the core of his process philosophy: things are only beautiful in their *striving* for beauty. Beauty is, above all, a teleological concept, since, as Whitehead himself said, "adaptation implies an end,"[46] and while things strive to harmonize they can only do so by freeing their parts, allowing them to break away. Beauty, then, is not simply a state but a vector, similar to Apollo's arrow at the beginning of our discussion: each extensive act carries the need for intensity. Beauty inherently lies at the center of all this, as literally the target of every arrow, merging target with trajectory. It lies where the two axes intersect, and not where Dessoir located it, at the rim. Even though Hartshorne was deeply influenced by Whitehead, to actually position beauty at the center of a circle with two axes was a masterstroke.[47] Thinking back to Plato's white and black horses, we can see how Hartshorne's model recasts the two forces as one striving for harmonization and the other for intensity. In Hartshorne's diagram, beauty is again firmly positioned in the middle, but the middle of a far more complex system that reconfigures Plato's monopolar, solar notion of beauty: "Beauty, in the most natural sense of the word, is the center, the *double mean in both dimensions*."[48] Beauty is not a simple, singular middle, but a middle trying to find another middle.

Along with his Platonic repositioning of beauty, Hartshorne added three new categories to Dessoir's six, one of which he called "superb"—an idea we have already come across in Burke, in the form of magnificence, as well as in Kant, in the form of the *Prächtige*—and the other two "neat" and "commonplace." The latter two are crucial additions: "neat," though not a wholly satisfactory term, has connotations of monotony and boredom, while the commonplace corresponds to the normal or ordinary. With these, Hartshorne completely rearranges—repairs—the top half of Dessoir's model. It can be no accident that these final categories were added in the twentieth century, the age of the media and the masses. Before then, the concept of the commonplace was known mostly in the form of vulgarity, which at best ended up being associated with the comic. But in its modernist form, it points to a blandness and a complete lack of qualities that is truly original. The neat, better known in the form of boredom, is far older and, as *ennui*, was even considered an art by the likes of Charles Baudelaire and Beau Brummell (who famously turned to his valet to ask which of two lakes he admired most.)[49] Andy Warhol, the twentieth-century champion, if not saint, of boredom, made an eight-hour movie of the Empire State Building filmed in real time over a single night, appropriately titled *Empire*. He also loved to spend his holidays in Sweden, because, as he said, "in a place like that you can get so bored."[50] The closest category from ancient history would probably be the decadence of the late Roman

Empire as described in Petronius's *Satyricon*. With Hartshorne's circle, the aesthetic spectrum seems to transform into a continent, a planet even, where the spectral lines of Kant, Dilthey and Dessoir form partial routes or complete equators. Hartshorne's addition of the neat and the commonplace created a "north passage" at the top of the diagram similar to sixteenth-century attempts to expand shipping routes from Europe.

With his Diagram of Aesthetic Values, we can finally go full circle: reading clockwise, we encounter the sublime, the superb, the neat, the commonplace, the pretty, the comic, the ugly, the tragic and finally the sublime again. We should make a few adjustments, however. The superb is not as convincing as magnificence; the latter has more historical roots that go deeper and wider than superb, which dates back no further than the Renaissance. The neat should be substituted with the boring; again, its history is just too powerful, as we saw above, to say nothing of the celebrated elaborations of Martin Heidegger and Erich Fromm on the topic. The other replacement should be for the pretty, which we should exchange for the cute, which is conceptually stronger, and more correct opposite the sublime. Hartshorne seems unaware of Dilthey's categorization of "trifling" coinciding with his own qualification of the pretty as bordering on the "too trivial," and how Kant's notion of the *Hübsch* preceded these. Oddly enough, Hartshorne never discusses any historical precedents or developments of the circle or its terminology. Therefore, the final circular lineup will be: sublime, magnificent, boring, commonplace, cute, comic, ugly, tragic, and back to sublime. Although Hartshorne never bothered to draw the actual axes and only indicated the four poles in additional captions, we should include these in the revised diagram as well: a horizontal axis spanning from sublime on the left to cute on the right, and a vertical axis from ugly at the bottom to boring at the top. [Diagram 5] Together they create the structure of a wheel or compass. It moves from the silent scream of the sublime to the exalted cry of the magnificent to the yawning mouth of boredom to the flat expression of the commonplace to the gentle smile of the cute to the outright laughter of the comic to the disgusted "ick" of the ugly, on to the weeping of the tragic, and back to the noiseless gasp of the sublime. We could play these facial expressions as an animation and we wouldn't be able to discern any jumps or cuts. And it all works *because* beauty has been taken out of the sequence: the relations between all these aesthetic values are wholly different than those between them and beauty. We have eight aesthetic categories that occur on the outer rim of aesthetics, connected by spokes of gradually decreasing value to the hub of beauty, which is in fact a ninth one, or the first, whichever one prefers. That the system in its final form looks like a compass reflects both meanings of the word: a limited, finite structure such as a planet as well as an *instrument* for navigating that planet.

Translated back into the color wheel, this would give us the standard hues at the outer edge of the circle, with more brightness mixed into each color until it becomes pure white light in the middle. (Plato's solar model of beauty was probably no accident.) Now we should also be able to find a place for every nameable aesthetic value on this circle, since feelings can vary in all directions, both rotationally and radially. We should have no problem finding positions that are located neither at the center or at the rim but occupy the as-yet-undefined area in between—the quirky, the quaint, the weird, the cool, the elegant, the vulgar, the melodramatic, the horrific, the gruesome, etc.—but that is an argument we will save for later.

When we fast-forward through the history of beauty, the first peculiarity that attracts our attention is that it started with Plato, who hated art, then developed through aesthetics, with indispensable contributions by artists, and then moved away from art again. For example, I think the Large Hadron Collider and the Saturn V rocket are more sublime than paintings of mountains, far more abstract and

far more violent. And football stadiums are more magnificent than Kant's St. Peter's, and when a wave performed by 80,000 spectators moves over the stands, we are overpowered and swept away—to use Longinus's terms—by sheer awe. General Tommy Franks also called his invasion of Baghdad a strategy of "shock and awe," leaving no misunderstanding about where we should locate the sublime in our own age. I think there is more terror and horror in the daily imagery of suicide bombings than in *Alien*, *Friday the 13th* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* put together. There is more of the commonplace and the ordinary in reality television, in the endless soap operas and in Facebook posts than in the street life of Baudelaire's Paris. And if you type "beauty" into your search engine, you won't find the work of contemporary artists but a zillion websites related to the cosmetics industry. And who is not cute today (though no society goes as far as the Japanese with their *kawaii*)? It seems that art is playing an ever-smaller role—and the media an ever-larger one—in the development of the diagram, and especially in how it organizes the distribution of objects. Was Plato right again? Permit me to leave that as an open question.

In any case, what becomes evident in the developments over the last fifty years is that they show the ontological nature of the diagram more prominently. It is also clear from these developments that we seem to be living in an era that is expanding the diagram at high speed while moving away from its middle with equal speed. We live in an age of design: not just the design of objects but of events, concepts and issues, of organizations and procedures, even of our own lives. One's own life has become a project. The number of things is growing exponentially, and growing exponentially further away from beauty. If the diagram concerns all things, not just works of art, we should realize that it concerns them through beauty. This is the true power of Hartshorne's Diagram of Aesthetic Values: only beauty can relate the vertical axis to the horizontal one. The two axes are not independent; they don't form a mere coordinate system. If they were independent, the diagram would not be a circle but a square, and we could simply combine one extreme with the other, which goes against the whole notion of a middle. A square is not an equation; a circle is. We should keep in mind that even the sublime in Hartshorne's diagram is plotted halfway against the vertical axis of harmony and coordination. The fact that the influence of each axis always needs to be mediated makes beauty more than simply the middle of a circular world: it reverses the roles and makes the periphery a derivative of the middle. Both areas are circles: a white one in the middle and a multicolored one at the outskirts.

I don't have to stress the fact that Hartshorne's diagram shares many traits with the cruciform structure of Heidegger's fourfold; the similarities are quite obvious. They share the same purpose: to divide Being according to two axes, one spanning the space between the unified (boredom) and the plurified (ugly), the other between the deep (sublime) and the shallow (cute).[51] Of course, Heidegger does not define the fourfold by the axes but by the four quadrants, which he identifies as sky, mortals, gods and earth. This is telling in a way, because by defining the quadrants he makes it impossible to view the axes as productive. The fourfold remains a static architectural system, a *Geviert*, and though he sometimes speculates about one quadrant mirroring the other, and even about a "round dance,"[52] it never attains the status of an ontological machine equipped with dynamic sliders. Viewing the intersection of the axes as a hub, and identifying that with beauty, causes the compass to take on the character of a wheel more than a cross. Heidegger's Being always takes an unmoving, neutral position, humming in the background, whereas Whitehead's and Hartshorne's beauty thrusts things forward into presence. From the perspective of the Diagram of Aesthetic Values, the four quadrants can never be primary because they are parented by two axes. All activity lies with the axes, and they are bound to one another, limiting each other's influence to a circular field of existence—what I earlier called the arena of presence. Heidegger strongly resented the notion of being as presence[53] and attempted to extend the phenomenal world to absence (e.g., the negativity of nothingness and the invisibility of *Zuhandenheit*),

to things happening without passing through consciousness. Certainly, no one would deny that things exist before they enter human consciousness, but that doesn't mean reality condemns things to roam around in darkness. On the contrary, it means *things can claim light and consciousness in their own right*: nonhuman thought and unseen light. Things think before we think them (how else could we understand things?), they are visible before we see them (how else would we see them?), and they affect their environment before we feel them (how else would we find them beautiful?). Again, the way the existence of things is constructed cannot be fundamentally different from the structure of our feelings; this is what the Diagram of Aesthetic Values teaches us.[54]

When we take a careful look at the diagram, we can better see how process and product not only are combined but are *combined symmetrically only in the middle* and asymmetrically everywhere else (though still equated). When we go back again to stand in front of St. Peter's with our faces upturned and our mouths open in admiration, it is the magnificent *structure* that overwhelms us. If we move from the basilica's position of magnificence vertically down on Hartshorne's map, we encounter figures such as Macbeth and Michael Jackson, obliterated by the tragic *events* they have instigated. At the position of magnificence, it is the massive structure that overwhelms us, and at the position of the tragic, it is the enormity of the events overwhelming their subjects: exactly the same magnitude in very different dimensions. This is why we recognize the top area of the diagram—the realm of magnificence, boredom and the commonplace— as the general territory of structures, or what Mikel Dufrenne called the spatial arts, and the bottom area—the realm of the tragic, the ugly and the comic—as the zone of events, or again in terms of aesthetics, the temporal arts.[55] That doesn't mean buildings "are" boring; it means that when time is stopped they become boring, as in Warhol's *Empire*, where the Empire State Building is boring because you are trapped in your seat. (If you are walking in New York, the Empire State Building is anything but boring.) Or think of the funny example of Heidegger stuck in a provincial railway station after missing a train.[56] Forced to wait for four hours, he started walking up and down the platform like a pendulum, hopelessly trying to restore time, like a panther in a cage. Inversely, the asymmetry of space and time means that the positivity of ugliness functions very well in plays, literature and movies but not in architecture. While in a gangster movie a character like Al Capone boosts the speed of events by bashing in heads with a baseball bat, an ugly building does not have the same positive effect on urban space. That doesn't mean a building can't be ugly; obviously it can, and a play can as easily be boring—that is not my point. In the specific case of a boring play, I think it exposes too much architecture, for example when it lacks development and has cardboard characters that move through the drama without changing. Similarly, a building is ugly when it tries to be funny or becomes too theatrical, since the chances are that we will encounter it more than once, killing all possible humor, or that we will experience it from more than one angle, destroying every illusion.

On the product side, things have to be looked at in terms of how they relate to time; from the process side, they have to be looked at in terms of how they relate to space. Beauty is not organized by going from product to product nor from process to process, but from process to product and from product to process and back again. Ours is a jerking, jolting universe. If aesthetics operated within one dimension, a single line of variations and gradations would suffice. If it consisted merely of spatial encounters, things would simply shape each other from the outside and the synthetic axis would do all the necessary work. And if it solely consisted of events meeting one another, all would be pure development; the internal growth of things would never lead to them being born into the world. In the Diagram of Aesthetic Values, these two lines are bound to one another as axes, with both rather than one or the other exerting their influence on the final product. When things are formed, they are internally driven by a force occupying the analytic axis of intensity, while they simultaneously orient themselves in and adapt to an external world whose powers are expressed along the synthetic axis of the extensive, i.e.,

present themselves as forms. Things present themselves in one realm, but they cannot be explained through one dimension, only through the conflation of two dimensions.

Stand in front of a 400-year-old oak tree. Its structure—the branchings, the bifurcations, the random curvature—all this is pure process, pure time and growth. But does it present itself to us as time? Do we experience it as time? No, we experience it as sheer magnificence. All that was time is presented to us as beauty, and all that is beauty we experience in time, yes, but the second stretch of time is wholly discontinuous with the first. In this sense, beauty is purely Platonic, atemporal stoppage.

## Endnotes

39. Lars Spuybroek, "The Ages of Beauty: Revisiting Hartshorne's Diagram of Aesthetic Values," in: *Vital Beauty: Reclaiming Aesthetics in the Tangle of Technology and Nature* (Rotterdam: V2_Publishing, 2012), 32-60.

40. Alfred North Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas* (New York: The Free Press, 1967), 265.

41. Ibid., 252.

42. Ibid., 252.

43. The two dimensions of smoothness and roughness, or massiveness and intensity, correspond directly to Ruskin's organization of Gothic aesthetics in terms of changefulness and savageness, as I have discussed in the first chapter of *The Sympathy of Things* (2nd ed., London: Bloomsbury, 2016).

44. Hartshorne changed it from "magnificent" in 1970 to "superb" in 1987.

45. Hartshorne borrows the term "commonplace" from Whitehead. See: *Adventures of Ideas*, 261.

46. Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, 252.

47. Actually, the idea to take beauty from the rim and move it to the middle came from Kay Davis-Leclerc, one of his students at Emory University. Hartshorne mentions this in several of his books but gives slightly different versions of the story. In *The Zero Fallacy* (p. 203), he suggests that the diagram was a collaboration between him, Dessoir and Davis-Leclerc, but this can be true only in an abstract sense: Dessoir died in 1947 in Frankfurt and never met Hartshorne. Hartshorne most probably saw Dessoir's diagram for the first time in 1970, when the English translation of the latter's work was published. This assumption is supported by the fact that Hartshorne adopted the mistranslation of *Niedlich* as "pretty" in his own diagram. Davis-Leclerc was his student in the 1950s, but not by the time he published *Creative Synthesis*, where the diagram is presented in the final chapter.

48. Charles Hartshorne, *Wisdom as Moderation*, 2.

49. Carlo Maria Franzero, *Beau Brummell: His Life and Times* (New York: John Day Co., 1958), 71.

50. *The Philosophy of Andy Warhol* (Orlando: First Harvest, 1977), 72: "When you're in Sweden & you see beautiful person after beautiful person & you finally don't even turn around to look because you know the next person you see will be just as beautiful as the one you didn't bother

to turn around to look at—in a place like that you can get so bored that when you see a person who's not beautiful, they   look very beautiful to you because they break the beautiful monotony."

51. Graham Harman, *Heidegger Explained* (Chicago: Open Court, 2007), 132–5.

52. Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought* (New York: HarperCollins, 2001), 178.
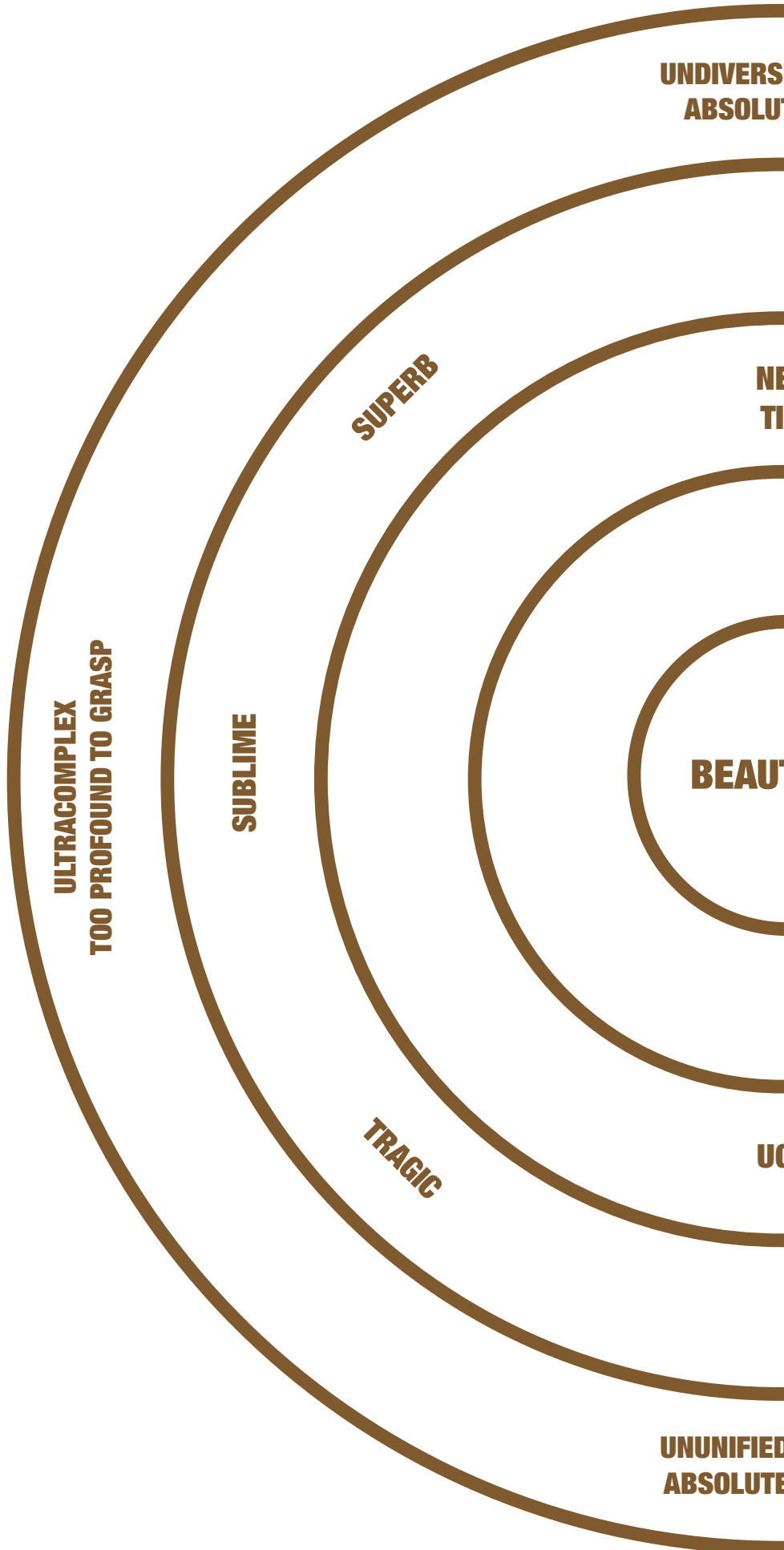
53. Harman, *Heidegger Explained*, 1.

54. To give an example: it means that I think a sunset is actually there, and beautiful, without anybody   seeing it—a thought that would horrify any (neo-)materialist.

55. Mikel Dufrenne, *The Phenomenology of Aesthetic Experience* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press,   1973), 239–48.

56. Martin Heidegger, *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press,   1995), 93.

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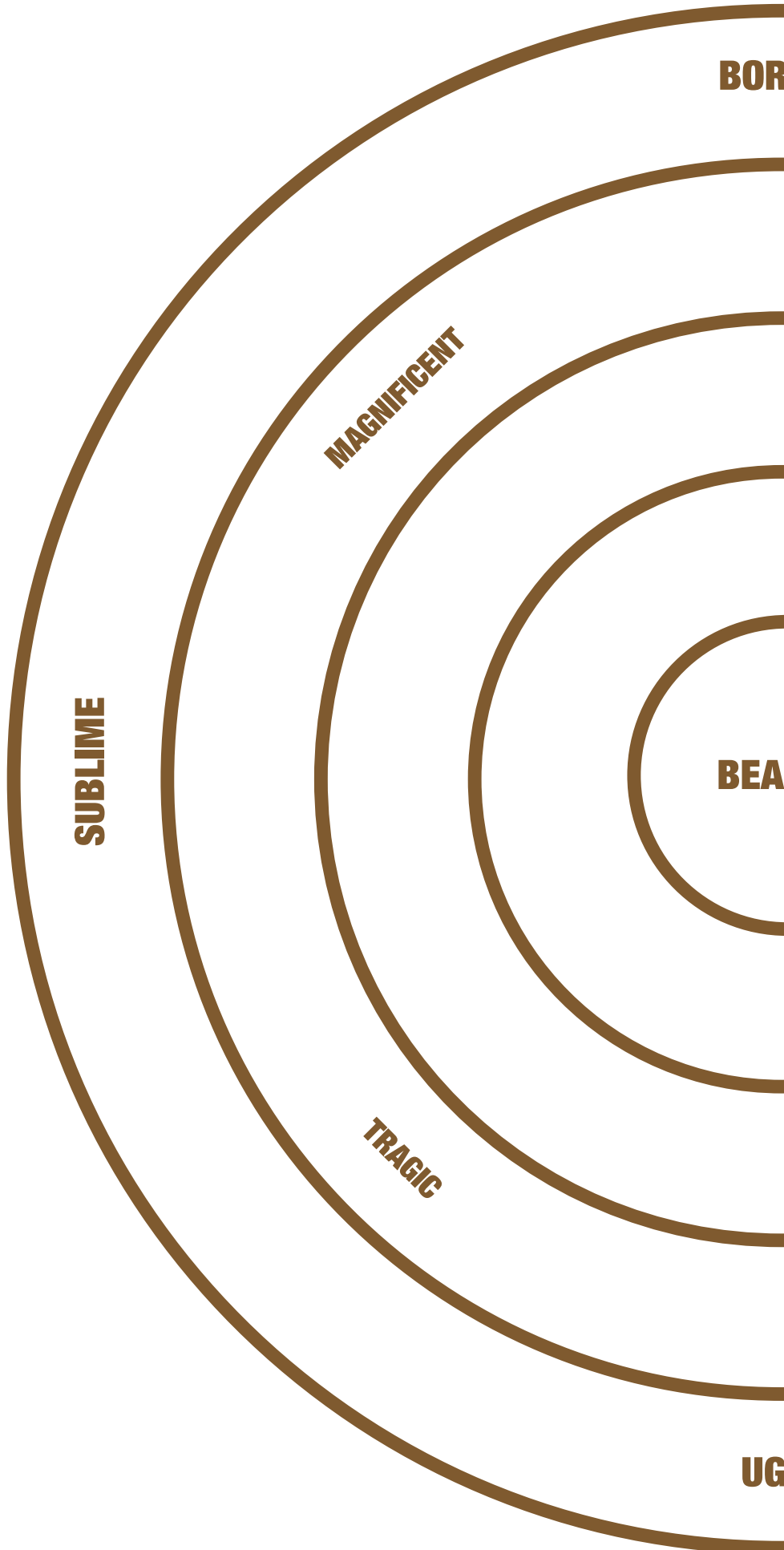DISORDER

# DIAGRAM 4

Diagram of Aesthetic Values, based on
*Wisdom as Moderation* (1987) by Charles Hartshorne

BOR

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COMMONPLACE

CUTE

UTY

COMIC

GLY
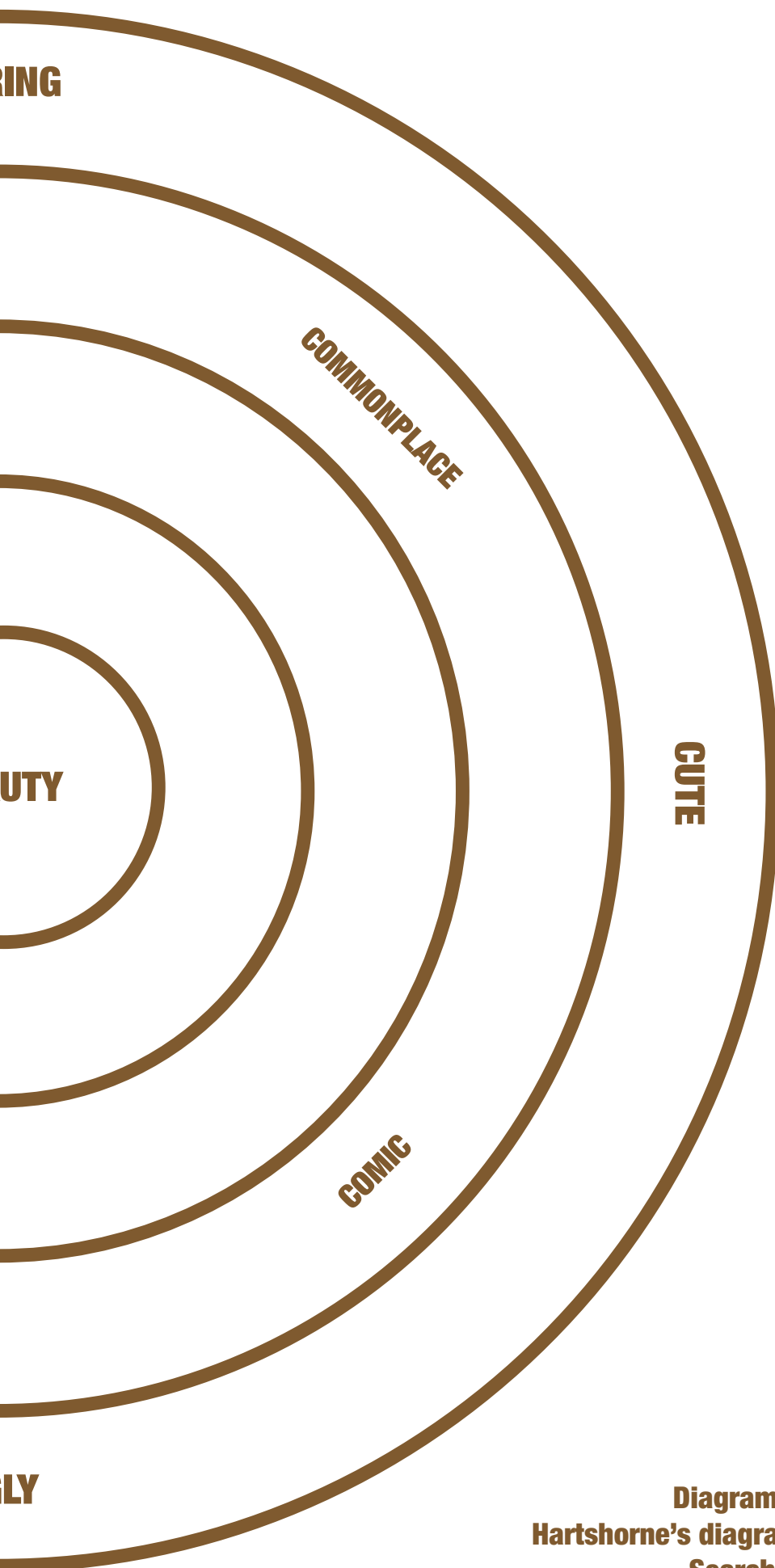
# DIAGRAM 5

Diagram of Beauty, based on adaptation of
Hartshorne's diagram from 'The Compass of Beauty: A
Search for the Middle' by Lars Spuybroek

Architectural Enunciation

Félix Guattari


(An excerpt from Félix Guattari, 'Architectural Enunciation' in *Schizoanalytic Cartographies*, trans. Andrew Goffey (London: Bloomsbury, [1989] 2013), pp. 231-239).


For millennia and perhaps in imitation of crustaceans or termites, human beings have had the habit of surrounding themselves with shells of all kinds. The buildings, clothes, cars, images and messages that they endlessly secrete, stick to their skin, adhere to the flesh of their existence just as much as their bones do. There nevertheless exists a notable difference between humans, crustaceans and termites, which is that so far no one has detected corporations of architects, tailors or media 'professionals' in the last two species. Whatever the case may be, one observes that for a very long period of history it is to an ecolithical expression of the sort that builds ziggurats, demolishes the Bastille, takes the Winter Palace that we owe the delineation of social Assemblages. Except that recently, besides stone being hidden behind steel, concrete and glass, it is above all in terms of speeds of communication and the mastery of information that the division of powers is played out. Under these conditions, architects no longer really know which saint to pray to! What use today would it be to invoke Le Corbusier in a city like Mexico, for example, which is careering deliriously towards its 40 millionth inhabitant! Even Baron Hausmann wouldn't be able to do anything about it! Politicians, technocrats, engineers deal with this sort of thing by having as little recourse as possible to the men of an art that Hegel nonetheless put in first place. Certainly architects retain control of a minimal niche in the domain of sumptuary constructions. But we know that positions are expensive in this domain, and, short of accepting – like a postmodern dandy – the politico-financial wheeler-dealering that they imply at every step, their rare occupiers are generally doomed to an underhanded degrading of their creative talents. The paths of pure theory,[1] of utopia,[2] of a nostalgic return to the past,[3] remain. Or even that of critical contestation, although the times scarcely seem to lend themselves to it!


The object of architecture has been smashed to pieces. It is useless to hold on to what it was or what it ought to be! Situated at the intersection of political stakes of the first importance, of democratic and ethnic tensions, of economic, social and regional antagonisms that are nowhere near resolved, spurred on by constant technological and industrial mutations, it is irreversibly condemned to being dragged and pulled in every direction. However, nothing implies that one must take the eclectic side in this state of affairs, which on the contrary perhaps calls for an exacerbation of the ethico-political choices that have always been subjacent to the exercise of this profession. It is henceforth impossible to take refuge behind art for art's sake or pure science in good faith.[4] Reinventing architecture can no longer signify the relaunching of a style, a school, a theory with a hegemonic vocation, but the recomposition of *architectural enunciation*, and, in a sense, the trade of the architect, under today's conditions.


Once it is no longer the goal of the architect to be the artist of built forms but to offer his services in revealing the virtual desires of spaces, places, trajectories and territories, he will have to undertake the analysis of the relations of individual and collective corporeality by constantly singularizing his approach. Moreover, he will have to become an intercessor between these desires, brought to light, and the interests that they thwart. In other words, he will have to become an artist and an artisan of sensible and relational lived experience. Understand that I do not particularly intend to make him recline on the psychoanalytic couch, so as to make him accept such a decentring of his role. On the contrary, I consider that it is the

architect who finds he is in the position of having to analyse certain specific functions of subjectification himself.[5] In this way and in the company of numerous other social and cultural operators, he could constitute an essential relay at the heart of multiple-headed Assemblages of enunciation, able to take analytic and pragmatic responsibility for contemporary productions of subjectivity. As a consequence, one really is a long way here from only seeing the architect in the simple position of critical observer! [Diagram 6]

With the accent thus displaced from the object to the project – whatever the characteristics of its semiotic expression and semantic content may be – an architectural work henceforth calls for a specific elaboration of its enunciative 'matter': how is one to be an architect today? Which part of oneself is to be mobilized? In what way must one engage and with what operators? What relative importance will developers, engineers, urbanists, actual and potential users have for him? To what point will it be licit to compromise with the diverse parties present? It is a matter here of a highly elaborated transferential economy that I propose to examine from the angle of the two modalities of consistency of the enunciation of an architectural *concept*:

> one is polyphonic, of the order of the *percept*, inherent to the deployment of components contributing to its discursive setting into existence;

> the other is ethico-aesthetic, of the order of the *affect*, inherent to its non-discursive 'taking on of being'.

[…]

## Ethico-aesthetic ordinates

Architectural enunciation doesn't only involve diachronic discursive components. It equally implies a taking consistency of synchronic existential dimensions or levels of ordinates. Following Bakhtin, I will distinguish three types:[17]

> Cognitive ordinates, that is, the energetico-spatio-temporal coordinates that arise from the logics of discursive sets. It is in this register that the scriptural enunciation of architecture concatenates the first five types of Assemblage of enunciation previously listed;

> Axiological ordinates encompassing the ensemble of systems of anthropocentric valorization, as much of an ethical as of an economic and political order;

> Aesthetic ordinates determining the thresholds of consummation of an entity, an object or a structural ensemble, in so far as these start to emit sense and form on their own count. It pertains to these ethico-aesthetic ordinates to make the components of signifying enunciation and existential deterritorialization interface with other components. Thus the built, the lived and the incorporeal find themselves rearticulated with one another, although capitalist societies haven't stopped eliminating every trace of subjective singularization from their architecture and town planning, to the profit of rigourous functional, informational and communicational transparency.
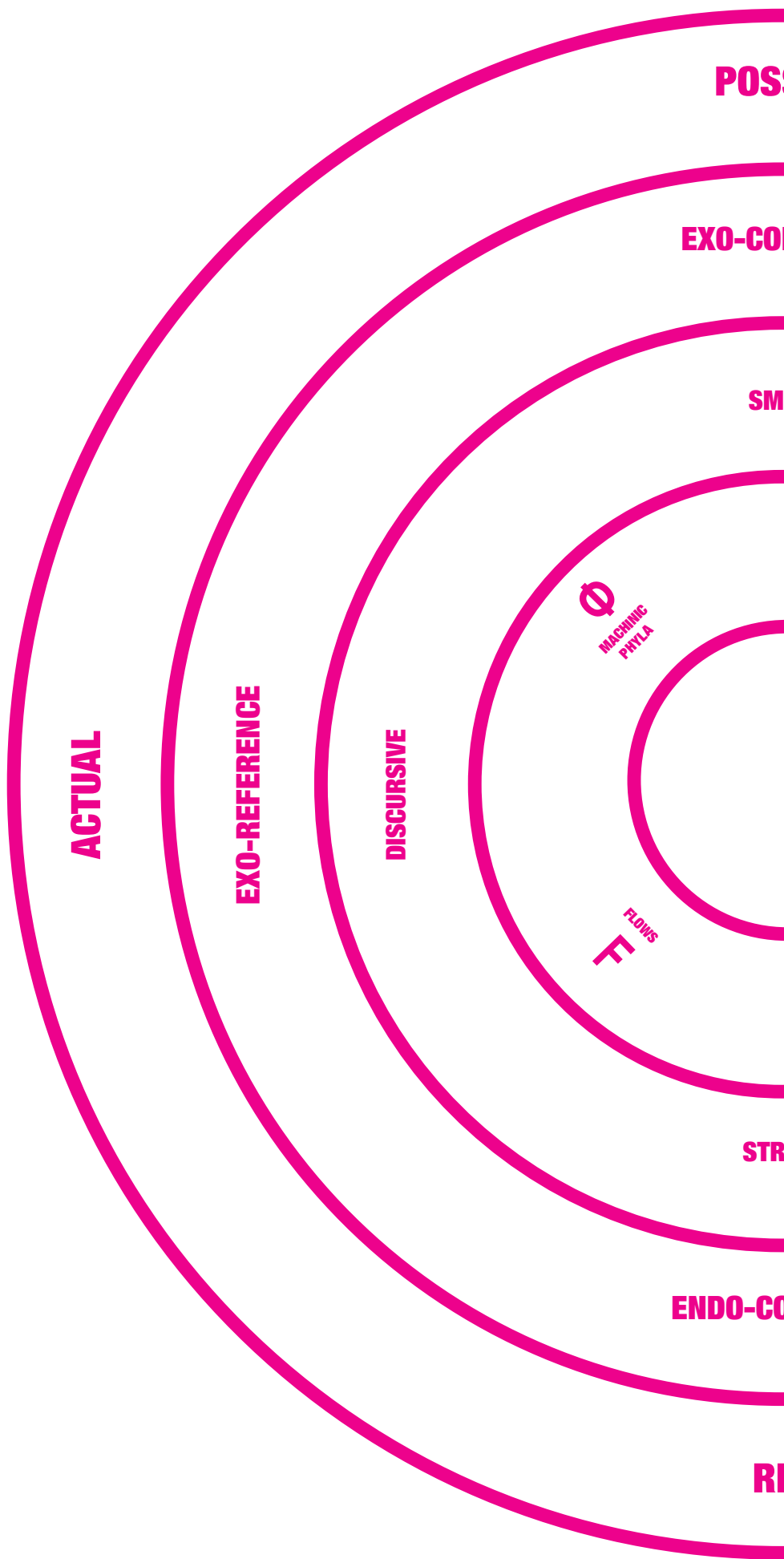
Don't misunderstand me: the singularization of which it is a question here is not a simple affair of 'spiritual compensation', a 'personalization' dispensed as a kind of 'after-sales service'. It arises from instances that operate at the heart of the architectural object and confer its most intrinsic consistency on it. Under its external discursive face, this object is established at the intersection of a thousand tensions that pull it in every direction; but under its ethico-aesthetic enunciative faces it holds itself together in a non-discursive mode, the phenomenological access to which is given to us through the particular experience of spatialized Affects. On this side of a threshold of cognitive consistency, the architectural object topples over into the imaginary, the dream, delirium, whereas on this side of a threshold of axiological consistency, the dimensions of it that are the alterity and desire crumble – like the cinematic images that Australian Aboriginals turned away from long ago because they found nothing of interest in them. On this side of an aesthetic threshold of consistency, it ceases to catch the existence of the forms and intensities called on to inhabit it.
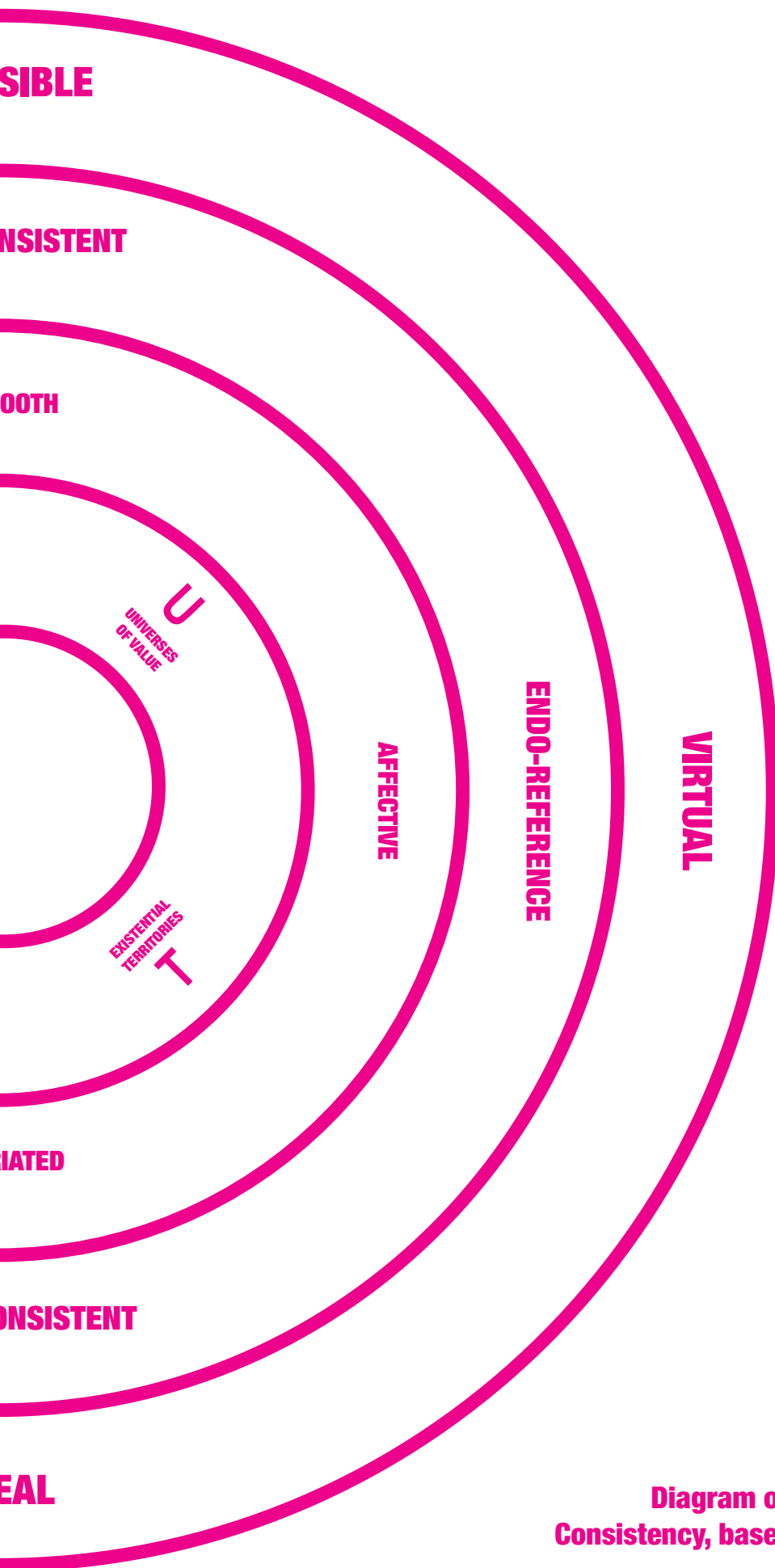
As a consequence, in the last analysis, the specificity of the architect's art would be his capacity to apprehend these Affects of spatialized enunciation. Except one has to admit that it is a matter of paradoxical objects, which cannot be located in the coordinates of ordinary rationality and which one can only approach indirectly, through meta-modelling, aesthetic detour, mythical or ideological narrative. Like Melanie Klein's part objects[18] or the transitional objects of Winnicott,[19] this kind of affect is established transversally across the most heterogeneous of levels. Not in order to homogenize them but, on the contrary, to engage them more deeply in fractal processes of heterogenesis. The architectural form is not called on to function as a gestalt closed in on itself, but as a catalytic operator triggering chain reactions at the heart of modes of semiotization that make us escape from ourselves and open us up to original fields of possibility. The feeling of intimacy and existential singularity connected to the aura exuded by familiar surroundings, an old residence or a landscape inhabited by our memories, establishes itself in a rupture with substanceless redundancies and it can generate proliferation and lines of flight in every register of the desire to live, the refusal to give in to the dominant inertia. For example, it is the same movement of existential territorialization and synchronic taking consistency that will make things as different as: a box for shoes and treasures under the bed of a child hospitalized in a medico-psychological boarding school; the password-refrain that he perhaps shares with some mates; the place at the heart of the particular Constellation he occupies in the refectory; a totem-tree in the playground and an outline [découpe] of the sky known only by him all 'work' together. It is up to the architect, if not to compose all these fragmentary components of subjectification harmoniously, at least not to mutilate the essentials of their virtualities in advance!

To work in this way for the recomposition of existential Territories, in the context of our societies devastated by capitalistic Flows, the architect would thus have to be capable of detecting and exploiting processually the catalytic points of singularities that can be incarnated in the sensible dimensions of the architectural apparatus as well as in the most complex of formal compositions and institutional problematics. Every cartographic method for achieving this is licit, once the architect's *commitment* – let us not step back from this old Sartrean concept, which has long been taboo – finds its own regime of ethico-aesthetic autonomization. The only criterion for truth that will be imposed on him will then be an effect of existential consummation and superabundance of being, which he will not fail to encounter once he has the good fortune to find himself carried off by a process of eventization, that is to say, of the historical enrichment and re-singularization of desire and of values.

## Endnotes

1. Léon Krier, for example, considers that faced with the 'holocaust that is all the rage in our cities (…) a responsible architect can no longer build today' Krier in *Babylone* 1, Paris, UGE, 1983 p.132.

2. For example, Daniel Liebeskind's work, or even the landscape compositions of Vittorio Gregotti, such as his Cefalu housing project, which has little chance of ever succeeding.

3. See in this regard the interesting position of Henri Gaudin on regional architecture, in *La cabane et le labyrinth* Brussels, Pierre Mardaga, 1984.

4. I refer here to the passionate analyses of Christian Girard in *Architecture et concepts nomads. Traité d'interdiscipline* op. cit.

5. On the sometimes decisive position of the planner and the architect in the modelling of psychiatric institutions, see the special issue of the journal *Recherches* 'Planning, Architecture and Psychiatry' *Recherches* June 1967.

17. I refer to the tripartite division of enunciation (cognitive, ethical, aesthetic) proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin in 'The Problem of Content' in *Art and Answerability* op. cit.

18. Melanie Klein *Contributions to Psychoanalysis* London, The Hogarth Press, 1950.

19. D. W. Winnicott *La psychanalyse* Paris, PUF, 1959. The French text refers to 'les objets partiels de Winnicott'. The reference however makes it obvious that Guattari meant 'transitional objects' [TN].

POSS

EXO-CO

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Φ
MACHINIC
PHYLA

ACTUAL

EXO-REFERENCE

DISCURSIVE

F
FLOWS

STR

ENDO-CO

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NSISTENT

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UNIVERSES
OF VALUE

U

AFFECTIVE

ENDO-REFERENCE

VIRTUAL

EXISTENTIAL
TERRITORIES

T

RIATED

ONSISTENT

EAL

## DIAGRAM 6

**Diagram of the Four Domains of the Plane of Consistency, based on *Schizoanalytic Cartographies* (1989) by Felix Guattari**

## Ecologies of Architecture

Andrej Radman

### Introduction

In a desperate attempt to catch up with forms of contemporary media culture, architects tend to perpetuate earlier notions of culture as representation rather than culture as forms of life.[1] Architecture has yet to break with culture as reflection still firmly embedded in its concepts of Utopia, Type, History, City, Geometry, Landscape and Ornament. To speak of the *ecologies of architecture* is to break with judgement for experience, to break with the propositional knowing-that for the impredicative knowing-how.[2] As the self-declared empiricist (i.e. pluralist) Gilles Deleuze put it in his book on Nietzsche, it is not about justification, "but a different way of feeling: another sensibility."[3] If to think differently we have to feel differently then the design of built environment has no other purpose but to transform us.[4] While engineering focuses on solutions, architecture dramatises the problem so that we may stumble upon a new emancipatory potential.[5] After all, problems always have the solution that they deserve.[6] [Diagram 7]

### Pedagogy of the Senses

Posthuman architecture ought to focus on the encounter between thought and that which forces it into action. While accepting multiple nested scales of reality, the ecologies of architecture challenge the alleged primacy of the 'physical' world. What we engage with is the world considered as an environment and not an aggregate of objects. The emphasis is on the encounter, where experience is seen as an emergence which returns the body to a process field of exteriority.[7] Sensibility introduces an aleatory moment into thought's development thus turning contingency into the very condition for thinking. Not only does this upset logical identity and opposition, it also places the limit of thinking beyond any dialectical system. Thought cannot activate itself by thinking but has to be provoked. It must suffer violence. Art and architecture may inflict such violence. They harbour the potential for breaking up the faculties' common function by placing them before their own limits: "thought before the unthinkable, memory before the immemorial, sensibility before the imperceptible, etc."[8] The eco-logical 'perspectivist' assault on the ego-logical representational thinking inevitably impinges upon the identity of the subject. Where Kant founded the representational unity of space and time upon the formal unity of consciousness, difference fractures consciousness into multiple states not predicable of a single subject. In other words, difference breaks with the differentiation of an undifferentiated world in favour of the homogenisation of a milieu or *umwelt*.[9] To speak of Whiteheadian super-ject is to break with earlier notions of sub-ject as a foundation.[10] 'Desiring-machines' connect, disconnect, and reconnect with one another without meaning or intention.[11] Paradoxically, actions are primary in relation to the intentions that animate them the same way that desiring is primary to volition. Individuality is not characteristic of a self or an ego, but a perpetually individualising differential. It is not the subject that has a point of view, rather it is the point of view that has its larval subject.[12] Deleuze explains: "[e]ach faculty, including thought, has only involuntary adventures," and "involuntary operation remains embedded in the empirical."[13] This constitutes his famous 'pedagogy of the senses'.

## Asignifying Semiotics

The ecologies of architecture rely on cartography to overturn the theatre of representation into the order of desiring-production.[14] The ultimate ambition is to debunk *hylomorphism* – where form is imposed upon inert matter from without and where the architect is seen as a god-given, inspired creator and genius – and to promote the alternative immanent morphogenetic approach that is at once more humble and ambitious.[15] There lies a (r)evolutionary potential in creating the 'new', defined as the circulation of de-coded and de-territorialized flows that resist the facile co-option by re-coding or capturing.[16] To speak of univocity of expression is to break with equivocity of the hegemonic linguistic sign. Action and perception are inseparable, as are forms of life and their environments. If the objects of knowledge were separated from the objects of existence, we would end up with a duality of mental and physical objects – bifurcation of nature – that leads to an ontologically indirect perception. By contrast, the premise of the ecologies of architecture is that perceptual systems *resonate* to information, where information is defined as a difference that makes a difference.[17] This 'direct realism' is grounded on the premise that, from the outset, real experience is a relation of potential structure rather than a formless chaotic swirl onto which structure must be imposed by cognitive process (sapience). The world is seen as an ongoing open process of mattering, where meaning and form are acquired in the actualisation of different agential virtualities.[18] Following Deleuze's argument, it is possible to assert that the genetic principles of sensation (sentience) are thus at the same time the principles of composition of art(efact).[19]

## Niche Constructionism

Architecture ought to reclaim its vanguard position within the Epigenetic Turn which embraces *tekhne* as constitutive of posthumanity, and not just the other way around.[20] Experience is not an event 'in' the mind. Rather, the mind emerges from interaction with the environment. The predominant homeostatic notion of structure in architectural thinking has to give way to the event-centred ontology of relations. The metastability of existence (formerly known as sustainability) is to be mapped in the very act of becoming. The Affective Turn in architecture concentrates on perception which occurs not on the level at which actions are decided but on the level at which the very capacity for action forms, the virtual.[21] If representation is a means to an end (to classify), schizoanalytic cartography is a means to a means (to intervene).[22] Teleology cannot be used as the sole design criterion because the freedom of action is never a de facto established condition, it is always a virtuality.[23] This proto-epistemological level of potentialisation (priming) is already ontological.[24] It concerns change in the degree to which a life-form is enabled vis-à-vis its (built) environment. Their reciprocal determination commits contemporary architecture to ecology in general and ethico-aesthetics in particular.[25] The psychotropic cry that "we shape our cities; thereafter they shape us" is to be taken literally. Only recently have biologists conceded the effect that 'niche construction' has on the inheritance system.[26] They confirmed that a life-form does not only *passively* submit to the pressures of a pre-existing environment (evo), but also *actively* constructs its existential niche (devo), that being the city in the anthropocene. The implications for the discipline of architecture, considering its quasi-causal role in the neo-Lamarckian *Baldwian Evolution* (evo-devo), remain significant and binding.[27]
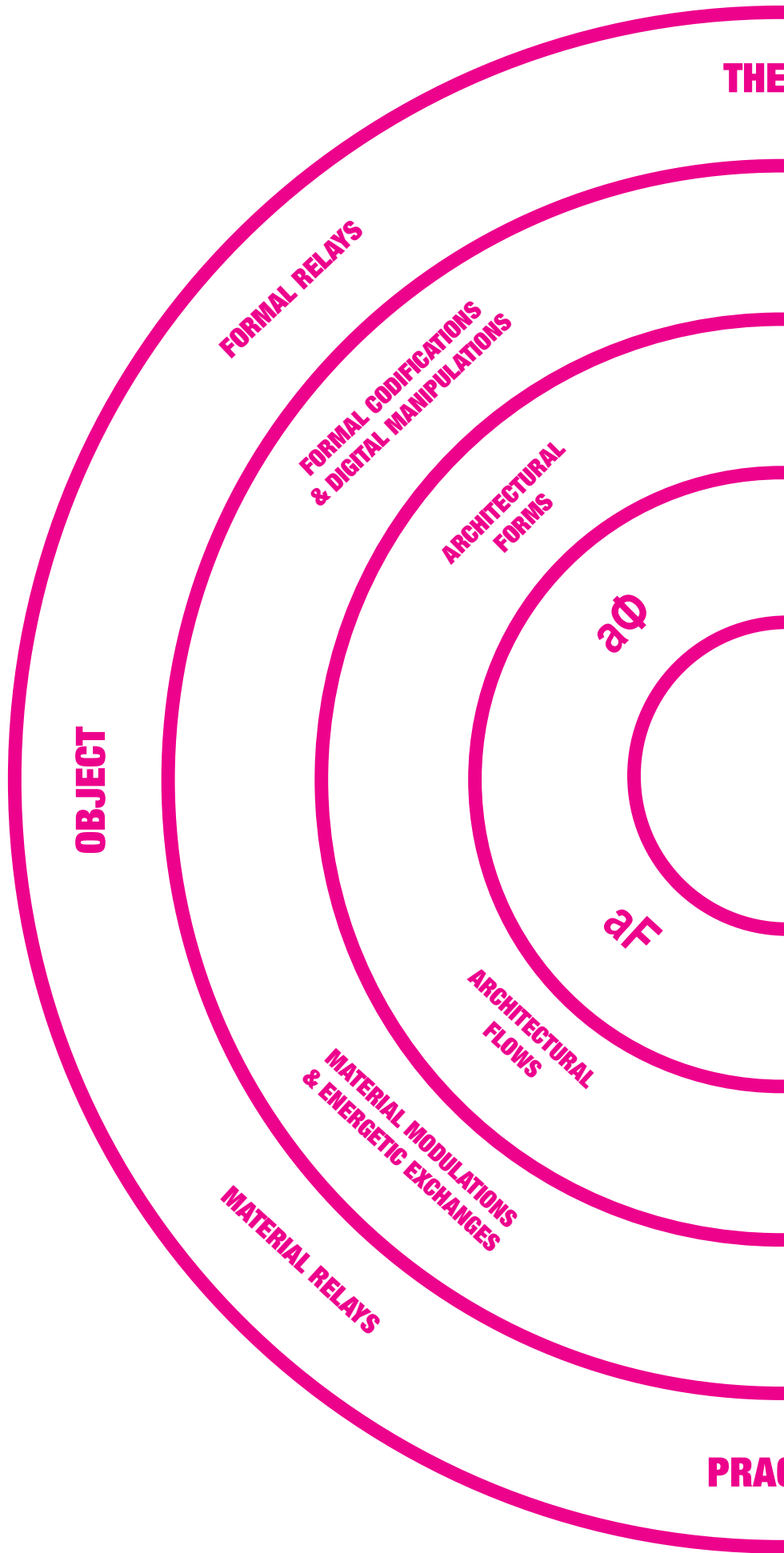
## Futurity

The New Materialisms in general, and the Affective Turn in particular, seem to be gaining momentum to such an extent that even some of the scholars of this affiliation have been urging caution.[28] However, as far as the discipline of architecture is concerned, this otherwise healthy dose of scepticism is not only premature but also counterproductive. In its history, architecture has undergone a gradual disassociation from the material realm and become an ultimate white-collar profession. The consequent withdrawal from reality (thesis of autonomy) has been variously seen as 'bad' escapism or a 'good' strategy of resistance.[29] The urge to ward off the givens and to continue to contemplate (possible) alternatives is praiseworthy. But idealist bracketing and messianic ambition come at a price. Architects might end up painting themselves into a corner of impotence by depriving themselves of the (virtual) means to intervene. After all, intervention has always been the main trait of (any) materialism. The best strategy of resistance seems to lie not in opposition but in (strategic) affirmation.[30] The recognition of the present-future relation provides a point of departure for an ecological account of anticipation and/or creation akin to Isabelle Stengers' thinking *par le milieu*.[31] What defines the concept of futurity is the inseparability of the event and its environment. Futurity is a condition of the present; it is the anti-utopianism of the ecologies of architecture *par excellence*.
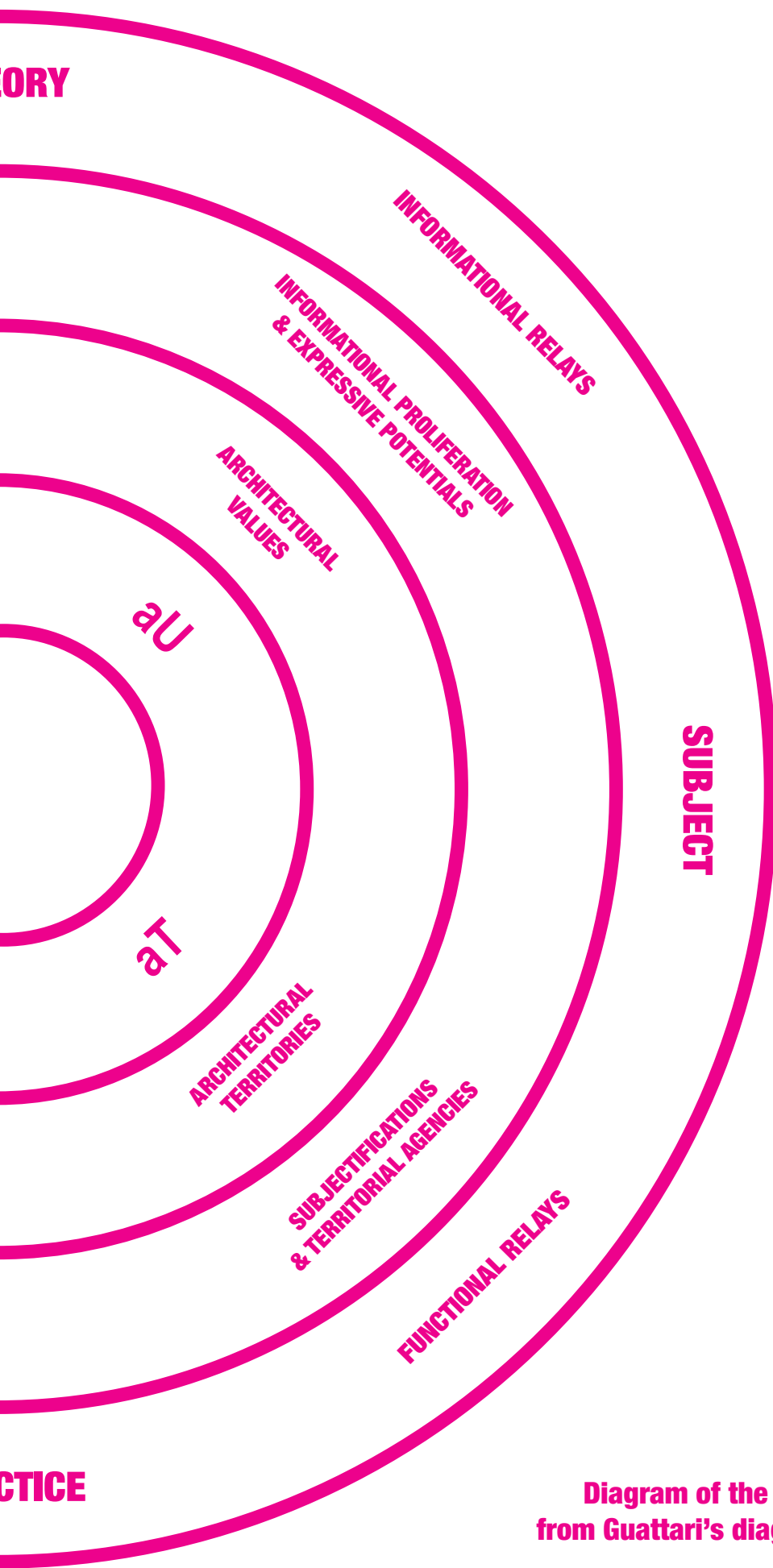
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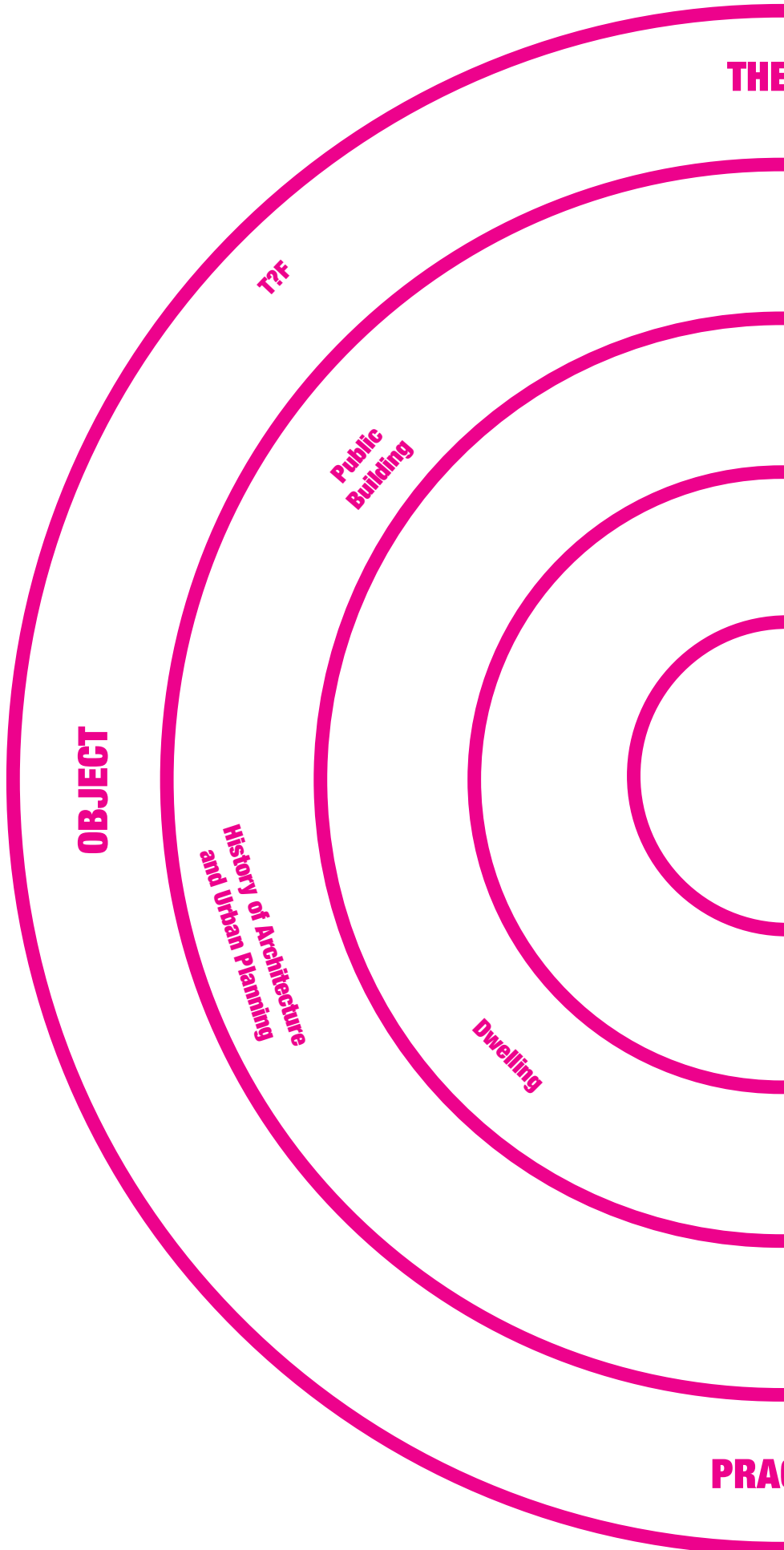
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THE

FORMAL RELAYS

FORMAL CODIFICATIONS
& DIGITAL MANIPULATIONS

ARCHITECTURAL
FORMS

∂Φ

OBJECT

∂F

ARCHITECTURAL
FLOWS

MATERIAL MODULATIONS
& ENERGETIC EXCHANGES

MATERIAL RELAYS

PRAC

THEORY

INFORMATIONAL RELAYS

INFORMATIONAL PROLIFERATION & EXPRESSIVE POTENTIALS

ARCHITECTURAL VALUES

aU

aT

SUBJECT

ARCHITECTURAL TERRITORIES

SUBJECTIFICATIONS & TERRITORIAL AGENCIES

FUNCTIONAL RELAYS

PRACTICE

# DIAGRAM 7

Diagram of the Ecologies of Architecture, adapted
from Guattari's diagram to include the biaxial system
and a revised terminology

THE

T?F

Public
Building

OBJECT

History of Architecture
and Urban Planning

Dwelling

PRAC

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Complex Projects

Architecture
Theory

SUBJECT

Methods
& Analysis

Architecture
of the Interior

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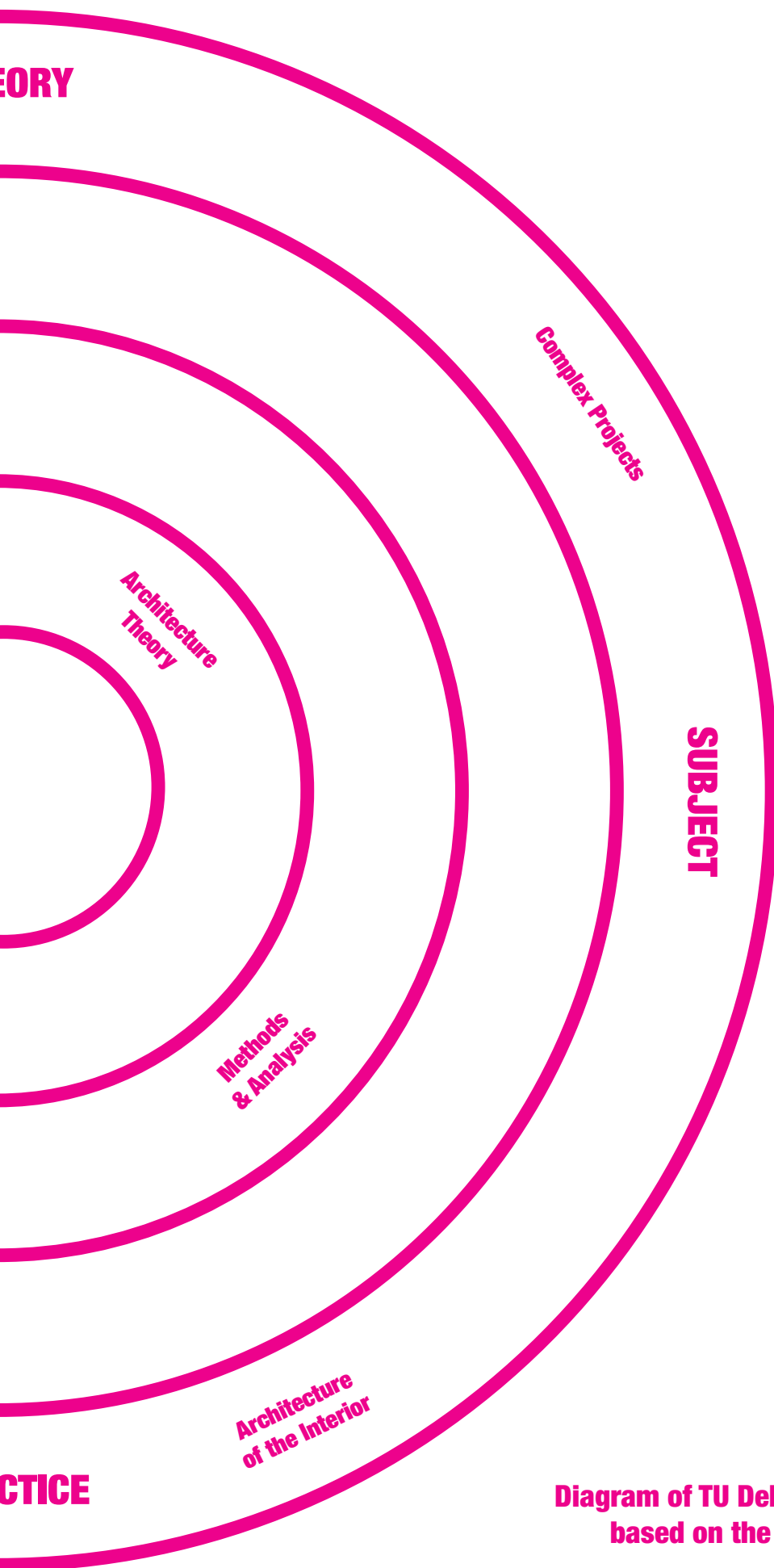
# DIAGRAM 8

Diagram of TU Delft Architecture Department Chairs,
based on the Ecologies of Architecture Diagram

Architectural Collective Enunciation:

A Question of Forming Relays


Corridor Exhibition 02-23 April 2018


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**TU**Delft

**Delft University of Technology**

# Architectural Collective Enunciation:
# A Question of Forming Relays

Corridor Exhibition 02-23 April 2018
Architecture Theory Chair © TU Delft

The reign of 'Starchitecture' is over. Good riddance. It has been buried together with the so-called neoliberal era that has dominated economic, political and social systems until (the financial crisis of) 2008. Uncannily, this turn roughly coincided with the cataclysm of our old faculty building. We uphold the hypothesis that the contemporary trends in architecture have emerged as an alternative to the (st)architectural positions dominant since the turn of the century. To meet the ethical challenge of the Anthropocene the architect's role needs to undergo a fundamental change from that of a synaptic visionary (a psychological subject whose *private* meanings and *public* expressions are crucial to understanding her work and its effects) to a more humble yet audacious clinical/critical cartographer of the material-discursive realm. The exhibition constitutes such cartography by relaying five texts to eight diagrams.