

REPETITION FOR A DIFFERENT DESIGN TO BE BORN: D-GENE POOL OF COOP HIMMELB(L)AU

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Abstract - Because today's architecture is characterized by various concepts and numerous designs instead of an architectural style, it is heavily described by the identity of the architect. However, according to the d-gene pool theory of Karina Moraes Zarzar, this identity is in general inspired by the past experiences of the architect more likely by a precedent that affected him differently. After that, this precedent is repeated again and again as Deleuze explained in order to create different and new concepts. **Purpose:** This paper studies how the concepts of repetition and difference are used to create an architectural identity and search whether all the repetitions with mutations are associated with the context. **Limitation:** The research will focus on the architecture of Coop Himmelb(l)au since its foundation until today. **Method:** to study the identity of Coop Himmelb(l)au namely Wolf Prix as the founder of the firm, his concepts, basically the *cloud concept*, were analyzed regarding the "repetition and difference" theory of Deleuze.

Keywords: Identity, the cloud, repetition, context, d-gene pool, Coop Himmelb(l)au.

I. INTRODUCTION

Lefebvre in his book called *The Survival of Capitalism* (1973) stated that expression of repetition is a poor process [6]. Because it has to reproduce in order to present what was repeated as new but it actually represents something archaic. Deleuze from the other side, with his "difference, repetition, and becoming" theory aims to prove that evolution and developments are constructed as a process of repetition basically considered as a product of difference. [15] He defends the fact that repetition is a creative way to produce and encourages it because it allows for the production of variation and holds in it a positive power of transformation. To repeat means to rethink the same thing again but in a new and different way. Deleuze explained that repetition is produced via difference and not mimesis. [10] The produced repetition would be just a replication, but repeat with a difference is an infinite process that creates an eternal return, every end represents the beginning of the next. [3] He defined differentiation in his book *difference and repetition* as follow: "Difference, in general, is distinguished from diversity or otherness. For two terms differ when they are other, not in themselves, but in something else; thus, when they also agree on something else" [[3] p.30].

In the repetition with a difference, the relationship with the context is the subject questioned in this study. As Cohen stated (1987); "*contextualism proposes the establishment of physical continuities between adjacent buildings*". [6] It teaches respect to the designer, respect of the environment, to the past of the existing as being related to the context emphasize identity and difference. In today's architectural agenda, unfortunately, each architect creates his own context mostly forgetting the context in which design takes place. While the architect creates his

own context, he is also concerned about identity by repeating some of the precedents used in the previous projects.

The research that Karina Moraes Zarzar made about how the architectural concept created and chosen by the architect is based on the use of past information to generate new information. [18] This last resembles a gene that undergoes repetitions with mutations and through each repetition it changes and develops. According to Zarzar, architects should go back with their memory to the past and find a precedent that they can use it to fit their purpose. Once the architect chooses his precedent from his own d-gene pool it will, eventually, be able to be repeated and transformed. This d-gene pool, somehow, represents the identity of the architect.

Coop Himmelb(l)au represents the case research of the article that will be studied to understand the philosophy of the firm directed by Wolf Prix as the founder. The concepts used, basically, the *cloud concept* were analyzed regarding the "repetition and difference" theory of Deleuze and his own d-gene pool was analyzed in terms of the architect's identity.

II. The Design-Gene Pool of Coop Himmelb(l)au:

Architectural design is a complicated process that any architect passes by during his project conception. However, every architect, in general, precise for himself a key-concept that affected him the most and applies it in almost all of his designs in order to evoke different feelings, but not getting away from the context of the environment where the project is attached. Coop Himmelb(l)au's architecture has a remarkable concept that cannot be interpreted or understood to the naked eye. For this reason, the designs of Wolf Prix were chosen to be studied and analyzed in order to extract the precedents that affected him and bring up the coming-after concepts of his d-gene pool.

Looking at the first project of Coop Himmelb(l)au, “The Wolke” (Fig.1), designed in 1968 as a flying cloud attached to the ground with a camion which contains a circulation arm to ensure a free movement to the upper volume. The resulted design was a floating habitation that provides a free displacement of the user away from the outside, made of air and dynamics. Starting from this first design, Wolf Prix and his partners (Wolf D. Prix, Helmut Swiczinsky and Michael Holzer (which leaves the group in 1971) created Coop Himmelb(l)au in 1968, in order to share their new ideas that support the new architectural style of deconstruction) chose the cloud as their initial concept, because they wanted to “Make architecture changeable like clouds”. [16] However, the prime cause of choosing this precedent by Wolf Prix was the Tower of Babel, since he aims to finish it by constructing the cloud that surrounds it. As the Austrian architect highlighted “*I think that as an architect, one should want to finish building the Tower of Babel.*” This is a complex confession from Wolf D.Prix, that continues to shape his entire oeuvre until today. And then he finished by explaining: “*we began with the artifact called the cloud. The cloud interpreted in 1968 as a pneumatic form could change depending on movement and emotional condition of its users (...)*” [[14], p47]

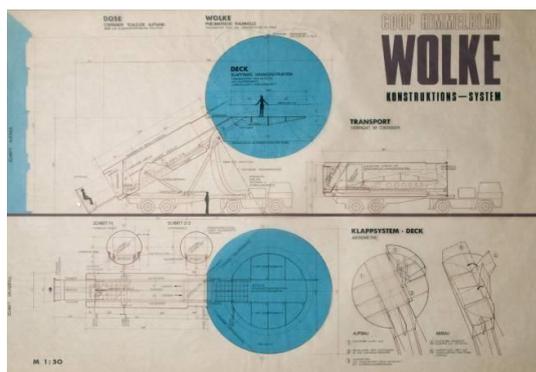


Fig.1: Wolke Project, 1968.

<http://www.coophimmelblau.at/>

Wolf Prix has chosen this precedent as his key concept because he was seeking for a dynamic concept that can repeat itself in a different manner in order to fit the global design of the project site, and the cloud was a perfect choice. In this context, to create such a form, Wolf Prix thinks that one has to deny several things precisely architectural traditional laws. From the other hand, the site, the landscape, the program, the climate, and even the selected technologies affect the primary precedent and final product is the mutation of the concept with differentiation. This last represents an intensive system continually undergoing change. However, by saying that the precedent is repeated with differentiation in his projects, one must think that it represents each time something new instead of something that resembles virtually. [10]

Again, Wolf Prix claims to build the cloud-like complex structures because the society needs complex solutions to face its complex problems. [8] So, the result of the designs, in general, resists interpretations due to the complexity of the form. Even though Wolf Prix repeats each time the concept of the cloud, but the differentiation of it allows for a new form to be born, a new formal ambiguity. This is exactly what Zarzar explained in her book that the d-gene pool concept system aims

to develop and reinforce the designs by repetitions. [19] However, these new repetitions call for creativity as Deleuze explained, new means innovation and novelty that have a positive power of transformation. [10] Wolf Prix wants to use this power to create futuristic buildings that from one side create a difference in the surrounding and from the other side holds his identity. As he explained,

“We want an architecture that has more. Architecture that bleeds that exhausts, that whirls, and even breaks. Architecture that lights up, stings, rips, and tears under stress. Architecture has to be cavernous, fiery, smooth, hard, angular, brutal, round, delicate, colorful, obscene, lustful, dreamy, attracting, repelling, wet, dry, and throbbing. Alive or dead. If cold, then cold as a block of ice. If hot, then hot as a blazing wing. Architecture must blaze.” [12]

Indeed, the cloud was not chosen just for its ability to be repeated with a difference, but it was also chosen for its characteristics. This concept helped Coop Himmelb(l)au to realize a free plan design conception. The space concept of Coop Himmelb(l)au completely gives up on traditionally recognized elements such as the wall, pillar, and roof, and tries new concepts with which an architectural space can still be created. He also works all of his designs with the eyes closed so that he can follow his feelings and live in the place. As Peter Zumthor stated in his book “*Thinking Architecture*”: “When I work on a design I allow myself to be guided by images and moods that I remember and can relate to the kind of architecture I am looking for. Most of the images that come to mind originate from my subjective experience and are only rarely accompanied by a remembered architectural commentary” [[20], p. 25]

This is exactly what Wolf Prix does in designing with the eyes closed that is he lets his feelings and senses to guide his hand through his drawings. He tries to express the space concept by analyzing space based on the three-dimension thoughts, rather than understanding the architectural space based on horizontal and vertical planes. This method helped him more to develop his d-gene pool.

It is true that a building is a series of wordless metaphors; each element is linked to a larger class of symbolism. But in our case, Coop Himmelb(l)au uses metaphor and sometimes analogy in his conception because it adds more complexity to the building. Zarzar stated that metaphors contribute to helping the designer to find a new form of communication because it holds in it a hidden message. [18] As Collins Cobuild dictionary defined metaphor, by describing it as an imaginative way of describing something by referring to something else that has the qualities that you want to express. [19] So here, Coop Himmelb(l)au aims in its design to reach a level of obscurity that is extracted in the first place from metaphor. Wolf Prix, on the other hand, explained it as follows,

“When we speak of ships, others think of ship wreckage. We, however, think of wind inflated white sails. When we speak of eagles, the others think of a bird. We, however, are talking about the wingspan. When we speak of black panthers, the others think of

predatory animals. We, however, think of the untamed dangerousness of architecture. When we speak of leaping whales, the others think of saurian. We, however, think of 30 tons of flying weight. We will not find architecture in an encyclopedia. Our architecture can be found where thoughts move faster than hands to grasp it" [[11], p29]

The Dalian International Conference Center opened in 2012 represents one of the remarkable powers that architecture contains (Fig.2). The application of the cloud concept in this project took a different way. Remarkably, the created shell takes the form of a huge cloud that transforms in some places to fit the plans' functional ideas, and at the same time, preserve and represent the building's complexity opposite to the surroundings. As Wolf Prix explained: "We design back and forth, constantly checking out optimal solutions, to create a synergy between outside and inside. It's not function follows form, or form function, but how each shapes the other dynamically". [5] The buildings' part that represents the cloud is as well lifted from the ground plan at 7m, which gives it as well the appearance of a flying cloud. Even though the cloud concept can be read directly by the naked eye, here the comments of the architects and critics vary.

In this project, Wolf Prix treated the concept differently believing that the interior's function required the final appearance. The interior planification was designed urbanistically by conceiving the gaps as streets, avenues, and plaza. Completed with bridges, ramps, stairway and dead ends just like a real town. The forms that are stretched and pushed the building counter to the outside as explained by Wolf Prix, "you have the feeling the inside pushes on the skin". The building is an artistic complexity with forms that wrap and spaces that bend out of sight. Forms and spaces that are extremely interlocked through fluidity, continuity, and dynamism, as wolf Prix stated: "liquid, fluid, dynamic, continues spaces are the new space of our century." Still, the building is "complex without being complicated". [5] Here, the cloud metaphor is realized as a positive transformation increasing the design richness. Through the analysis of this project, it is clear that by the metaphorical repetition of the principal concept i.e. the cloud it is translated as a flying element enriching the principal concept. So the shell has been mutated without losing its originality. By changing some features, the aim is to revise the initial concept so it can suit the context.



Fig.2: The Dalian International Conference Center, China.
<http://www.coop-himmelblau.at>

The Museum of the Confluences realized in 2012 sits at the tip of a peninsula on one of the most spectacular sites in France, the confluence of the majestic Rhône and Saône Rivers (Fig.3). In this project, Wolf Prix has chosen a form sparks our curiosity and desire to learn. "Its clear, readable forms stand for the world in which we move each day. The cloud, by contrast, holds the knowledge of the future. What is known and what is to be explored are understood in the Musée des Confluences as a spatial experimental design to stimulate public curiosity." said Wolf Prix. [2] The idea of the design is the metaphor of the crystal and the clouds. These two elements respectively symbolize the known and the unknown, the clarity of the familiar environment we know today and the hazy uncertainty that the future holds in store. Wolf Prix expressed these themes by formal mutation, penetration, deformation, simultaneity, resolution, and changeability.

The design of this project started with the psychogram technique. As Wolf Prix explained it by saying: "the act of drawing the psychogram is "the first capturing of the feeling on paper". [9] It represents a special design method that Wolf Prix and his crew followed according to which they could draw with their eyes closed in order to channel emotional impact rather than pure, formal and logic once and they called it psychogram.[[1], p14 The first sketch and the resulted building are the same just like all the other projects that Coop Himmelblau designed. The idea behind the design of such special, rich and complex forms was not designed just by focusing on architecture, but by thinking about all the psychological sides of the surrounding in order to result in a functional and dynamic building. Therefore, all the shapes that are found in the building of Musée des Confluences are related to the content. [9] So this eye-catching building holds the signature of CH through the familiar concepts he uses in the design, and the most important is the mutation of the cloud concept. Of course, by looking at the building, we can't directly read the cloud, because this is one of Wolf Prix's intention, to create a non-forgettable mysterious building.



Fig. 3: The entrance to the museum through the Crystal form.
<http://www.coop-himmelblau.at/>

The Arvo Pärt Sound Cloud Project designed in 2014 is another example of how Wolf Prix mutated the cloud. (Fig.4)

In this project, the designer used the cloud again but this time a musical cloud form. The idea behind this shape was inspired by the song "Spiegel im Spiegel", by transforming the main sequence spectrogram of the song into the curves of a roof. This project holds another idea extracted from the design-gene pool of Wolf Prix. Basically, the cloud concept is applied with a different method, which is a group of musical notes that intend to house musicians in the middle of a forest. To provide a direct inspiration from nature, the designer kept the building open to the outside and chose to lift the building from the ground floor in order to give more privacy to the upper floors and connect the building with the surrounded trees. In this way, the mutation of the concept in this project was made by taking into consideration the users' actions. From one hand, using full opaque façade on the concert side which needs more isolation, and from the other hand, using full transparency in the classes and practice rooms.



Fig. 4: The Arvo Pärt Sound Cloud Project
<http://www.coop-himmelblau.at/>

III. CONCLUSION

Karina Moraes Zarzar has studied the origin of the architectural concept and came up with the d-gene pool system that allows for the architect to create his own identity by repeating the same concept but with mutations or differences. This concept is normally something that the designer was affected by and adopted it through his designs. In the design process, the mutations of the concept are applied mimetically, i.e. either analogically or metaphorically. In this article, the results of the analysis made about the architecture of Coop Himmelb(l)au has shown that Wolf Prix keeps on repeating the same design concept to create an identity. By using the psychogram technique, the architect designs through his senses and feelings before conceiving it as he wants to satisfy the users' need. This design process shows that repeating the same concept but with differentiation helps to enrich the principal concept as Wolf Prix explains. Every mutation does not go back to the previous project but to the initial concept which helps more Wolf Prix to emphasize his own identity.

To summarize, Deleuze definition for repetition in which he identified two types of repetition, one that is made by copying the same concept and the other by repeating with difference which he also defended when he explained the difference between the two of them: "The first repetition is repetition of the Same, explained by the identity of the concept or representation; includes difference and includes itself in the

alterity of the Idea... One is ordinary, the other distinctive and singular. One is developed and explicated, the other enveloped and in need of interpretation" [[3], p24] This last statement describes what actually Coop Himmelb(l)au is doing. As Deleuze defends the fact that repetition is a creative way to produce, as it holds in it a positive power of transformation. Similar to Deleuze, Coop Himmelb(l)au believes that each repetition represents a new idea for a different design to be born. The designed projects do not hold any similarity or resemblance but instead, the mutation of the repeated concept hides the actual concept, which proves that architects repeat their concepts to experiment, to reinvent, to transform and finally to have something new that also represents their identity. So Coop Himmelb(l)au takes every design as an opportunity to interpret the concept of the cloud as it explores a new idea that has its own context each time.

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