EL CONCEPTO DE LOW ROAD DE STEWART BRAND COMO FUNDAMENTO DE ESTRATEGIAS PARA LA ADAPTABILIDAD DE ESPACIOS EN LA VIVIENDA CONTEMPORÁNEA:
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HIGH ROAD AND LOW ROAD

Regarding this connection between inhabitant and space, Stewart Brand describes two categories, which can be taken today as a basic approach for mechanisms that may produce the adaptability of spaces. Those are the cases he calls High Road, which are “durable, independent buildings that steadily accumulate experience and become in time wiser and more respected than their inhabitants” as opposed to those he calls Low Road “quick and dirty, (...), their specialty is self-righting to their occupants. They are unexceptional, mercureal, streetmart.” In short, these are spaces that make it possible to delay and allocate two different ways to provide flexibility and adaptability to the built environment: “plus” and flexible space that can hold the most diverse functions and uses. In the same residential area, where all the houses have the same look and work in a similar way, the garages very often turn into places that host wishes, of what the residents want to do inside the space of the house, which absorbs the daily needs of the new ways of life, and the needs of its residents: hobby, work, storage, recreation, leisure, etc. It is not strange, therefore, that numerous productions of the consumer industry sensitive to the hints of daily life, have also perceived that potentiality and the garage and its surroundings are, moreover, those surroundings that restore the absence of shared and public areas in the suburb, where complexes take place, the one reintegrating a space for sociability. We can see how this space is activated when, at the weekends, in many of these residential areas, neighbours open their doors and offer their garages expecting random visitors or groups for chatting (figures 3. 4. 5).

The so-called Low Road spaces are, therefore, spaces characterised by their generic sense, without a marked design in interiors, which appear unfurnished, “raw spaces”, ample, adaptable and without pretensions, and just as Brand associates with qualities, “ellegant because it is quick and convenient,” these spaces, which avoid the over determination of design, which is frequently an enemy of the ability to evolve: “The over determined project excludes the imperfect planning of buildings, which allows recent companies and communities to expand and renew themselves. This texture is the result of vague structures, which leave space for different uses to dissociate from a programme, to change direction and evolve. (...) What is difficult and what is possible is to reintegrate a space for sociability. We can see how this space is activated when, at the weekends, in many of these residential areas, neighbours open their doors and offer their garages expecting random visitors or groups for chatting (figures 3. 4. 5).”

The field of Low Road geography, which has been the subject of this paper, is a sector of architecture that is undoubtedly of great importance to our time and future generations. The study of Low Road spaces, which have been described in this paper, is of great importance to the development of new building strategies and concepts. The Low Road approach is characterized by a focus on adaptability and flexibility, allowing spaces to evolve and change according to the needs and desires of their inhabitants. This approach contrasts with the High Road approach, which is characterized by a focus on permanence and stability, often resulting in buildings that are inflexible and resistant to change.

Stewart Brand’s concept of Low Road and High Road can provide valuable insights for architects and designers looking to create adaptable and flexible spaces. By understanding the principles of Low Road geography, architects can design buildings that are not only aesthetically pleasing but also functional and adaptable to the changing needs of their users. This approach can help create a more sustainable and inclusive built environment, where spaces are not just physical containers but also dynamic and evolving communities.

The study of Low Road geography is not just limited to architects and designers. It can also be applied to a wide range of fields, such as urban planning, policy-making, and even social sciences. By understanding how spaces evolve over time and how they can be adapted to changing needs, we can create a more resilient and adaptable built environment that can respond to the challenges of the 21st century.

The Low Road approach is not just about designing buildings that are flexible and adaptable. It is also about creating a culture of adaptability, where people are encouraged to think creatively and flexibly about how they use and interact with spaces. By creating a culture of adaptability, we can create a more vibrant and dynamic built environment that is better suited to the needs of the 21st century.
and Low Road, it is possible to develop some “learning” about the buildings and their way to adapt and “loose fit”, keys that can also be found dispersedly in the assessments of other authors. Like Brand himself with the functioning of his own office and studio inside a boat or a container (figures 8 and 9). The contrast, it values as a natural rich of spaces a certain degree of “misfit” with their function. This leads to the ability to adapt themselves to a higher or lower degree and to future unexpected situations, instead of designing hypospacescopic buildings (those which respond to what is thought with certainty will find its needs and situations in the future). If the size of the spaces is the result of keeping in mind coming events, circumstances or scenarios (probable or improbable), it would imply thinking of the spaces in the building not regarding their predictable future, but considering an unpredictable future. This means keeping in consideration the “adaptive” quality (as “potency”, possibility of assuming future conditions) instead of what is adapted (meaning existing conditions) and is not necessary to forget the necessity of architects and clients who want to control and predict everything that will happen in a certain space in the future (p.63). In the architectural project, spaces and their relationships are often designed according to the elaboration of a precise programme. However, the alternative proposal that Brand suggests is the strategy called Scenario planning (programming of hypothetical scenarios or situations), used firstly in the 1950s in military settings and later in corporations and companies, which had to foresee scenarios for possible and unexpected actions. Peter Schwartz, in his writing “The Art of the Long View”, establishes the definition and clarifications on this method: “Scenario thinking is about freedom. In Western societies, people are ostensibly free, but they feel constrained by the unpredictability of events. (…) Scenarios are a tool for helping us to take a long view in a world of great uncertainty. Scenarios are stories about the way the world might turn out tomorrow, stories that can help us recognize and adapt to changing aspects of our present environment. They help to identify certain possible or probable pathways that might exist for us to explore, and finding your appropriate movements down each of those possible paths. (…) Scenarios are a tool for prediction.” This way, it can be settled that, whereas a plan or project is usually based on a prediction, these type of strategies are designed to face unexpected changing conditions. Needs change and, as they do so, programmes and spaces become obsolete. Consequently, the programme must be open and organised according to the suggestions resulting from keeping in mind coming events, circumstances, or scenarios (probable or improbable). The planning strategy of the hypothetical scenarios or situations implies a methodology, which would start with an interview of the parties participating in the project to find a delimitation of the basic needs (major issues) as well as the most opportune programmes and spaces. The planning strategy of the hypothetical scenarios or situations implies a methodology, which would start with an interview of the parties participating in the project to find a delimitation of the basic needs (major issues) as well as the most opportune programmes and spaces. The planning strategy of the hypothetical scenarios or situations implies a methodology, which would start with an interview of the parties participating in the project to find a delimitation of the basic needs (major issues) as well as the most opportune programmes and spaces. The planning strategy of the hypothetical scenarios or situations implies a methodology, which would start with an interview of the parties participating in the project to find a delimitation of the basic needs (major issues) as well as the most opportune programmes and spaces. The planning strategy of the hypothetical scenarios or situations implies a methodology, which would start with an interview of the parties participating in the project to find a delimitation of the basic needs (major issues) as well as the most opportune programmes and spaces. The planning strategy of the hypothetical scenarios or situations implies a methodology, which would start with an interview of the parties participating in the project to find a delimitation of the basic needs (major issues) as well as the most opportune programmes and spaces. The planning strategy of the hypothetical scenarios or situations implies a methodology, which would start with an interview of the parties participating in the project to find a delimitation of the basic needs (major issues) as well as the most opportune programmes and spaces.
Followings these preliminary considerations, the essential procedure would start. The group who takes part in the project will initially and later lay out the “scenarios” the possible situations in the future. They most important condition of the method is that these scenarios, apart from possible, may be unexpected: probable, but also surprising. Of course, one of the main questions will be the foreseeable future, the “official” future of the building, but that will not be the only one. Along with it, from two to five scenarios (no more, according to Brand) will have to be imagined. Next, the group must come back to the base approach regarding the nature and the specific and fundamental use of the building to establish strategies, which will accommodate the different scenarios. The more this design strategy takes into consideration those scenarios, the better its future adaptability to any changes will be.

This process must be cyclic, the group has to come back to the proposed scenarios and review them. This way, a “support” will be obtained, a basic configuration of the building and its possibilities, which would correspond to the uncertainty of the future and its use in the most probable way.

This mechanism, although generic, can be extrapolated to the design of the house. In the domestic spaces the need for division or withdrawal implies several factors related to the family life-cycle, but also the very nature of that family and its interaction with the cycles (economic, social, cultural), which are usually different, if not impossible, to foresee. This need for expansion or decrease in a house is one of the most frequent and most human-inherent conditions. The logical cycles of life usually involve the need for changes, which usually begins with a bigger or a smaller space according to the increase in the number of members. Subsequently, when some of them depart from the house, it could need to decrease or change its use and functionality, bringing in new spaces for the introduction of work, leisure or guests. It may also need to be fragmented, separating one part of the house for rent. Thence, the dynamics of growth and decrease, expansion and retreat of the spaces of the house, often forgotten in any process of the architectural project, must regain main in the field of housing, a relevance which they have never had in the conventional developments, only solved through the inclusion of the static concept of typology.

This way, an adaptation of the method of the scenarios could systematise the inclusion in the project of these dynamics through the recreation of different situations of growth and decrease in the family, evolution of the users, new technologies and cultural and social needs that could affect the consideration of the future adaptability of the spaces. Thus, the method of the scenarios can be confronted into a mechanism and a tool for the project, which challenges the conventional concept of design openly. It may operate mostly with strategies spread like possible lines of behaviour, better with than formal, technical or constructive resources: with distinctive situations and “scenarios”, which make the project a playing field to negotiate agreements. A method can manipulate the results that may sometimes be obtained in the house, as we have seen, through the introduction of spaces related to Brand’s concept of Low Flow in order to avoid turning to ideal abstract notions about a “typical user”, he proposes using a designing methodology without detailed programmes, that is, a tool that may allow enabling or, which is the premise that the design must be the basis of this process, the design must not be constituted as a process of formalisation, but one of enablement. On the basis, when detailed information on the uses in the housing processes is lacking, and in order to avoid turning to ideal abstract notions about “typical use”, he proposes using a designing methodology without detailed programmes, that is, a tool that may allow