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IDA

IDA: ADVANCED DOCTORAL RESEARCH IN ARCHITECTURE

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ANÁLISIS Y PROYECTOS
AVANZADOS

ANALYSIS AND ADVANCED PROJECTS / ANÁLISIS Y PROYECTOS AVANZADOS

REM AT BOTH SIDES OF THE MIRROR
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Abstract: *"Rem at both sides of the mirror"* is framed on a research an investigation on architectural media, its influence in the architectural production and vice versa. We try to discern if communication and architectural production collide and converge, if the message and the means used acquire the same qualities. The "communication in architecture is understood, not only as the *ultimate expression* of the architectural act, but also as an *agent* integrates in all the phases of the creative process, from the very beginning.

With this intention, the research focuses on one of the most relevant examples of its development, which is Rem Koolhaas. Through his figure, the thesis addresses the evolution of his communicative dimension and the successive transformations in the field of architectural communication, in parallel to his conceptual evolution along his career. The research makes a comparison between his most relevant publications, starting with *"Delirious New York"* (Oxford University Press, 1978) and *"SMLXL"* (Ed. Taschen, 2004).

Next, I focus on "Content" (Ed. Taschen, 2004), raising three hypotheses: the existence of a convergence between the visual and conceptual language, the application of a language based on a *communicative congestion* and the consequent maximum *transformation* of the codes of communication in architecture. In short, the thesis puts in value the role of communication architecture in the creative process.

Key Words: Rem koolhaas, Content, Research, Architectural Communication, Congestive communication.

1. General Context

The main goal of the research is, in short, to deepen in the "Content Universe" (one of his more relevant publications regarding its intellectual position and however, one of the less explored) and investigate thoroughly the *communicative strategies* that are promoted, in order to extract conclusions and verify if they could be extrapolated to the world of *architectural media*. Therefore, my research was developed around communication in architecture, understood not only as the *ultimate expression* of architecture itself, but as an essential agent that is integrated into all the phases of the creative process, from the very beginning.

One of the architects who has developed this aspect more clearly along his career is, undoubtedly, *Rem Koolhaas*. For that reason, the research is structured around his figure; not so much his architectural production or his theoretical construct (which have been analyzed in depth before) but the *communicative* aspect of his practice. This is the specific aspect the research is focused on. The main issue will be to demonstrate that, it is in this particular field, where his influence has been undeniable, where we can find his most *distinct* and *original* contribution to the architectural world.

All research starts from a few *hypotheses* (Fig. 1), which arise from a previous knowledge and lead to a few considerations that should be compared and verified. In this case, and in a very summarized manner, they are as follows:

1. In "Content" there is a *convergence* between the *visual language and the project*.

2. The language is based on a *communicative congestion* which is an application of Koolhaas' self-termed " *culture of the congestion* " in the book "Delirious NY". Congestive communication is based on three fundamental parameters: a revealing *graphic hyper density,* the *unplanned development* of the process and the use of the *technological progresses* of his time.

3. This discovery generates a *transformation* of the *communication codes* in architecture, which already began in "SMLXL", as it will be analyzed further on.
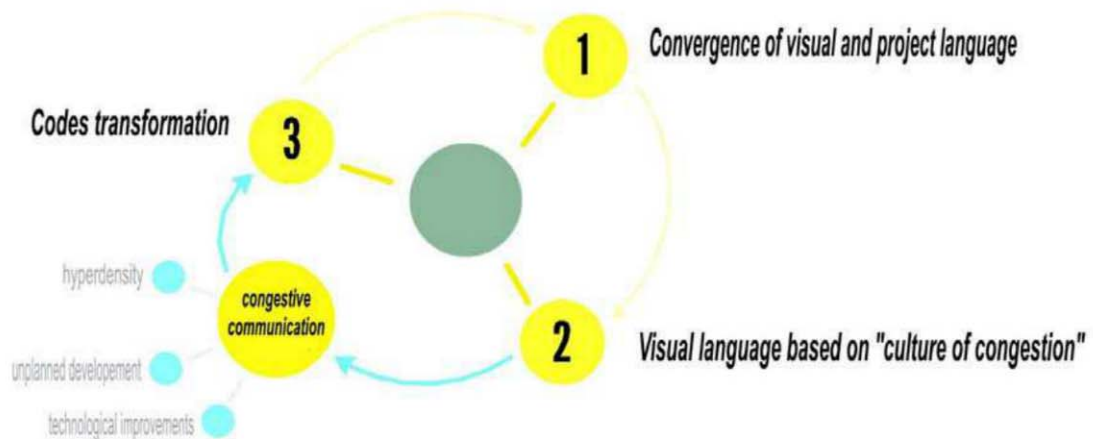
Fig. 1 Diagram of the hipotheses to develop. © Belén Butragueño

Before entering the "*Content*" *Universe*, it is necessary to contextualize both his figure, and his career, but focusing solely on communicative aspects. The research puts in parallel his conceptual evolution and successive transformations that are taking place in this field, to make visible the interconnection between the two facets. First, we will contextualize briefly his *career*, focusing on the aspects that led him to be considered the great "communicator". Later we will carry out a *graphic analysis* of his more relevant *publications* (Fig. 2), travelling from east to west, up to the "Content" Book, that will be deeply analyzed. The investigation considers that it is in this publication, where OMA's most distinct communication strategies crystallized. Finally, we will study his *latest proposals* in the field of architectural communication to obtain truthful conclusions of the investigation.
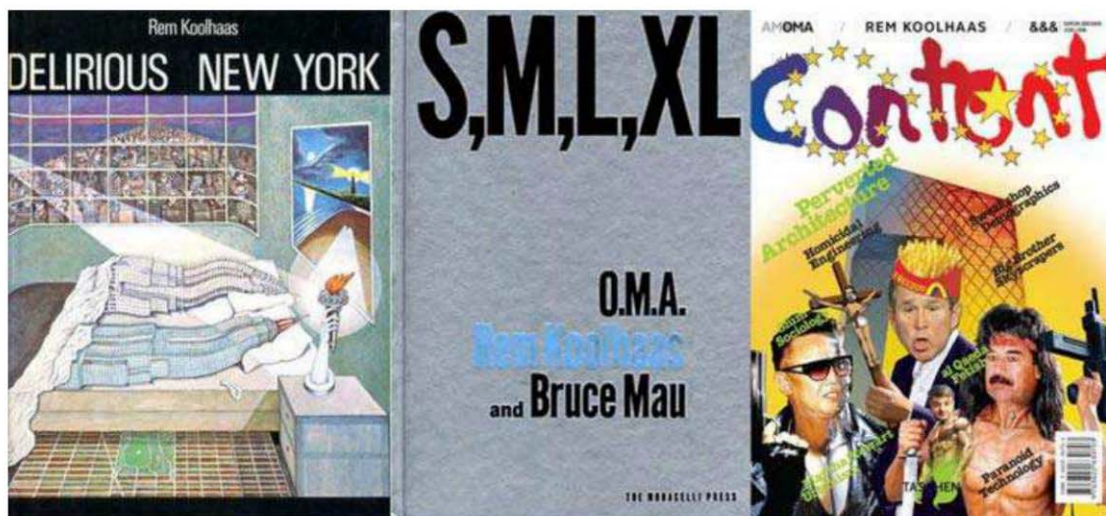
Fig. 2 Delirious New York (Oxford Un. Press, 1978); SMLXL (Monacelli Press, 1994); Content (Taschen, 2004). © OMA

2. Rem Koolhaas

Rem Koolhaas was born in 1944, in a Rotterdam devastated by the Second World War. He spent most of his childhood outside The Netherlands, in Indonesia, where he got in touch with the Asian culture; which will be essential in his subsequent approaches. He spent his childhood traveling, due to his father's profession, who was a journalist and a writer. Later he returned to a Rotterdam that has been rapidly rebuilt in an artificial way.

In 1963, he entered the liberal newspaper "Der Haagse Post", positioned clearly in favor of capitalism and the global market. Rem Koolhaas didn't hold an academic degree in journalism but, as he had declared "*in the 60 it was relatively easy to change of profession*". At that time, the newspaper was forming a team of young intellectuals belonging the European avant-garde, to give it a new perspective to the magazine. They advocated an aseptic journalism, free from prejudice, simply based on data without categorizing them, which was an ulterior reference principle in OMA (B. Lootsma, 2001).

During those years, he got in touch with Le Corbusier and Constant who, at that time, was a *conceptual* and *spiritual reference* in the Netherlands to some ideological lines, against whom Rem Koolhaas showed an open opposition in his newspaper articles. Therefore, it was not the contact with these two personalities what attracted him to the architectural world. His interest arised after attending a seminar on "Architecture and Cinema" held in 1966 where he met Gerry Ourthuys that was working with Rietveld. Together they carried out a study on Leonidov. He became fascinated by his figure and his architecture. He even travelled three times to Russia to meet the family and investigate his work.

In 1968, he enrolled in the *Architectural Association* in London, where actually he didn't have a high profile. However, two very important things happened that had a deep impact in his development: he got in touch with the avant-garde postmodern and pop art and he met Elia Zenghelis, who became his mentor and with whom he subsequently founded OMA. In 1972, he traveled to the *United States* with his wife, Madelon Vriesendorp, to attend an Ungers' Workshop at Cornell University. But as soon as he got a chance, he moved to Manhattan, city that has always fascinated him. He worked as a visiting professor at the IAUS in New York, whose chair was Peter Eisenman, a vital influence later on, in his career.

In 1975 he founded OMA, along with his wife and the Zenghelis' marriage, as a kind of urban observatory. The early years are marked by a very important theoretical activity, and domestic architectural works. Those first projects clearly showed the application of the paranoid-critical Method, as in the competition of the Parc de la Villette, which established him as a relevant theoretical figure, despite not winning the competition. In the early nineties, he started to manifest his obsession for *bigness*, and performed very conceptual competitions, that failed to materialize, as the TGB or Zeebrugge, until it arrives Congrexpo in Lille, that emerged as a great "exquisite corpse". In 1994, the greatest publishing success in the history of the architectural communication, came out: "SMLXL". A year later, Rem Koolhaas joined Harvard, as Postgraduates' Professor. With his students, he started to develop a series of studies that also derived in very important publications relating to Lagos, the phenomenon of shopping or, more recently, the fundamental elements of the architecture. 1997 marks the beginning of his more *iconic* period, influenced by the "Guggenheim Effect", as the rest of the architectural scene (L. Fernández-Galiano, 2011). In the year 2000, he won the *Priztzker's prize* (Fig. 3), which consolidates definitively his career in the American market. He started to build some of his large-scale works, such as the iconic Seattle Library, the "Casa da Musica" in Porto or the CCTV in China. This last project marks his conceptual step toward the east.

Fig. 3 Der Haagse Post (1964, © OMA); OMA Foundation (1975, © OMA); Priztker Prize (2000, © Pritzker Foundation)

All these transitions occurred approximately in the year 2003. That year is fundamental in his career, and it is where exactly "Content" emerged, as a product of all these movements. If the obsession of the 90 was *Bigness*, in "Content" is the *Junkspace* and the theme "Go East".

In recent times, he seems to turn his gaze to very different fields, although the generating principles are the same, as we will prove later. We are referring to concepts such as *Preservation*, *Generic* versus *Iconic*, *Countryside* versus *City*, or the *Foundations* of architecture as an archaic discipline (which was the leitmotiv of the Venice Biennale that he directed in 2014).

His entire career is surrounded by a series of publications that *register* his theoretical construct and enhance an exponential evolution of his thought.

3. Go West: *Delirious New York*

Destaca también el capítulo *posmortem*, que dedica principalmente a Le Corbusier y Dalí como los europeos que compartían esa fascinación por Manhattan y pretendían, en cierta medida *"salvarla de sí misma"*, cada uno desde perspectivas muy distintas: el *racionalismo* Lecorbuseriano frente a al

surrealismo Daliniano. From this point the research starts its own drift to the *East*: starting in USA with "*Delirious NY*", manifesto that meant his recognition as a theoretician in architecture. This book represents for Rem Koolhaas what "*Vers une architecture*" meant for Le Corbusier. It is a *Retroactive Manifest*, which means the imposition of a theoretical or philosophical construct to an urbanism that emerged spontaneously, apparently without a philosophical support. That organism called "*Manhattan*" arises from the combination of globalization with the *culture of the masses*, giving rise to what Rem Koolhaas called a *culture of congestion*.

The book contains a not always veiled critic to the modern movement, especially to rationalist projects such as "Ville Radieuse" from Le Corbusier, that pretended to erase the existing city to raise a new city of uniformed skyscrapers. In Rem Koolhaas' opinion, the existing remains are always the best possible starting scenario. Three of the obsessions of Rem Koolhaas have a special role in the book: *skyscrapers* (that represent the culture of congestion in height); the *elevator*, (which meant a revolutionary technical advance for architecture and urbanism); and the *globe* (obsession that arises from his admiration for Wallace Harrison). It's important to remark also the "*postmortem*" chapter, which is mainly dedicated to Le Corbusier and Dali as the Europeans that shared that fascination for Manhattan and somehow pretended to "*save it from itself*", each from very different perspectives: from the "Lecorbuserian" *rationalism* to the "Dalinean" *surrealism*.

3.1. *Structure*

The book is organized in *four* separated *blocks*: Coney Island, the Skyscrapers, Rockefeller Center and the Europeans. The four of them describe the different permutations of Manhattan since its foundation. The *fifth block*, the appendix, is a sequence of architectural projects that symbolize the conscious implementation of the culture of the congestion. They include projects such as "Éxodus" and "The City of the captive globe", from Rem Koolhaas and Elia Zenghelis, in collaboration with Madelon Vriesendorp and Zoe Zenghelis. Obviously, its "manifesto" strict configuration forces it to have a very conventional graphic structure, regarding typography, page formats, texts and margins location... However, there is a very important innovation with a great relevance afterwards: a *non-linear* reading system. This means that the information is inserted into conceptual packages tagged with a very simple concept, which allows the reader to group those packages by thematic and make a discontinuous reading.

Rem Koolhaas pays special attention to the graphic documentation that provides: on one hand, we can find *unpublished photographs*, which are the result of a rigorous research in all kinds of entities and libraries in NY, and on the other, we find *postcards*, whose collection became an obsession for Rem Koolhaas. During his stay in Manhattan he got to accumulate up to 10,000 postcards and he even participated in collectors' conventions to exchange them. The rest of the artwork, is covered with the work of Madelon Vriesendorp and belong to a series called "The secret life of buildings", which the cover is highlighted under the title of "*Flagrant Delit*" and represents the romance between Madam Chrysler Building and Lord Empire State that are caught up "in flagrante" by Rockefeller Center. In short, the overall structure of the book can be compared with the *reticule of Manhattan*: extremely homogenous at a geometric level, but hiding enormous singularities that take place in each block.

3.2. *References*

If we focus on the drawings of Madelon Vriesendorp, we can find some very evident contemporary artistic references: such as the *surrealism* of Dali and his understanding of the famous painting "Angelus of Millet". On the other hand, his drawing of the Statue of Liberty transports us to the "*sculpturization*" of the human figure of Man Ray in the "Imaginary portrait of the Marquis of Sade". Finally, the uniformed characters of Magritte, watching through the window, they referred inmediatly to the humanized buildings found in the scene of the "flagrant delit," on the cover of "Delirious NY".

At a *conceptual level*, it has already been mentioned that *Leonidov* had a strong influence on him (Fig. 4). But many other personalities left a conceptual mark in "Delirious New York". We can highlight *Ungers* with the "Archipelago City ", *Robert Venturi* with "Learning from Las Vegas" (1972, publication that had a strong influence on Koolhaas, specially regarding the iconic dimension of architecture) or *Hugh Ferrys*, with his proposal of an imaginary and voluntarily vague urbanism in " The Metropolis of tomorrow". At a purely theroretical level, the most relevant reference is Dalí, with the paranoid-critical method applied to the architecture. This method can be summarized in this sentence: *"the subconscious supported by the crutches of reality"*.

Fig. 4 Ivan Leonidov, Lenin Institute (1927); Oswald M. Ungers, Archipielago City (1975); Hugh Ferris, The metropolis of tomorrow (1929)

4. In West: *SMLXL*

1994 is the year of the publication of "SMLXL", book that became the largest publishing success regarding architectural publications, up to date. This book is an extremely cared object in which the graphic designer (Bruce Mau) became co-author, reflecting the importace of the communication of information in the project. It was the result of more than three years of process and borns with a double purpose: to *equate the importance* of built and unbuilt (issue that represents one of the reasons to fund AMO, OMA's nemesis) and, on the other hand, to place each project within the *globalization process* in which it is involved.

4.1. *Structure*

4.1.1. *Graphic structure*

The book proposes a main structure that is clear, concise and simple: the information is compiled by sizes, from the domestic scale (Small) to the biggest urban scale (Extralarge). The mean supports the message to transmit and provides a new perspective on the story line of the architectural object, trying to transcend the text to reach the receiving public (J. Brough, 2008). Bruce Mau highlighted in subsequent interviews that *"what is fundamental is not to describe "the architectural culture" but to be architectural culture"*, that is to say, to advocate the coincidence between the medium and the message. Also, it is not a question of narrating the reality of urbanism, but he poses an environmental and experiential reading of that reality. In this way, the main differential fact is that each project is treated with an exclusive and unique *approach* to it, with the intention to provide the most accurate narration of the essence of the project. Despite being a book that presents so many different approaches, there are a number of elements that give graphic and *visual continuity*: on one hand, the use of an *only font* with slight variations in certains projects; on the other hand, the existence of a size macrostructure and the very specific *treatment of the images* are a constant. Finally, there is a fundamental element developed along the book, in the shape of an alphabetic "glossary" from A to Z, of the concerns and obsessions of Rem Koolhaas.

4.1.2. *Conceptual structure*

The main characteristic of the conceptual dimension is that its structure is coincident with the compositive one, with its journey from the domestic scale to the *inter-urban* scale. In each of them there is at least a *manifest* that defines the theoretical frame we are in (Fig. 5). Most of the built works appear in the first two chapters, while the "L size" assembles the main obsession of Rem Koolhaas in that particular moment: the "*Bigness*". This chapter comprehends the projects which dimension and scale allows them to be considered as a "*city*" themselves, as they continue its same dynamic and principles.
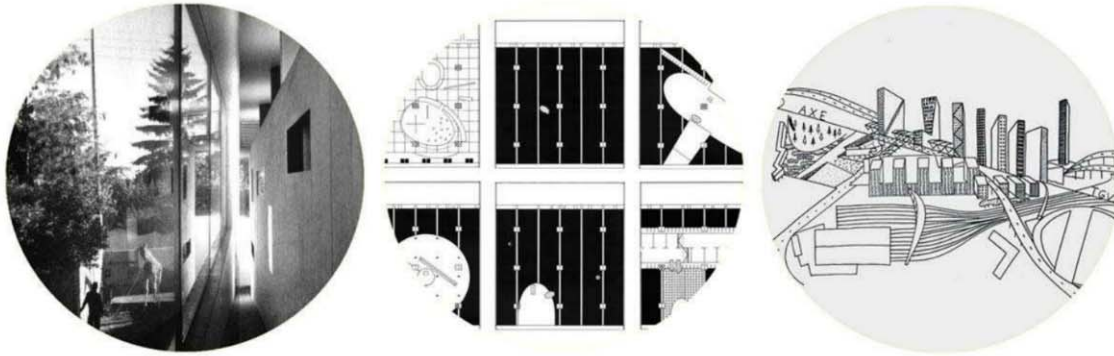
Fig. 5 SMLXL (Ed. Monacelli Press, 1994) Domestic and urban scale projects, © OMA

The *manifests* are equally ordered regarding a scalar structure: "*Typical Plan"* is, to some extent, a continuation of "Delirious New York", as it develops a review of the typical American plan confronted to the European, at downtowns' buildings. *"Globalization"* is a transitional text towards *"Bigness",* that represents the boundary between and "*What happened to Urbanism"* and the "*Generic City*" (essential manifesto for contemporary urbanism). All of them together establish the perfect conceptual frame to introduce "*Junkspace*" that represents, without a doubt, the great manifesto in "Content".

5. Go East: *Content*

"Content" arises in 2004 and it is the reflection of a transitional time in OMA, both at internal and external levels. In the editor's note, both Rem Koolhaas and the editor agree that the book emerges as a reaction to three transcendental events: the consecuences of the attacks of *September 11th* in New York, the phenomenon of *globalization* and the global market and, as a result, the establishment of a *new world order*. All these events generate a clear instability that challenged the system and had had a special impact on the world of architecture and urbanism. At the *domestic* level Rem Koolhaas is in a moment of maximum media ego: he was recently awarded with the *Priztzker* prize, he has already built the McCormic Tribune Campus Center in Chicago and the Seattle Library and the construction of the auditorium "Casa da Musica" in Porto is coming to an end. In addition, the office is focused in the works of the CCTV Headquarters in Beijing. This project represents an accurate expression of the conceptual and physical transition of the office to the east, since he priorized this project over his likely participation in the World Trade Center Competition, which invitation he declined. Likewise, OMA's nemesis, AMO finds itself in a burning moment, with a fluent and succesful relationship with Prada, and represents the spearhead of the theoretical conceptualization at all levels. As an example, we can mention the strong political involvement with the *European Project*: Barcode. On the other hand, it is reflected an exponential growth of the activity of the office in Asia.

Within this context is when "Content" showed up. This book has a deliberately ambiguous format, with a structure and a configuration of a magazine but with the thickness of a book. Its intention is to remain ephemeral, an element of immediate consumption, which arises from the extrapolation of the 80's and 90's publishers' phenomena with the male consumer magazines. Magazines such as Playboy in USA or FHM in London experienced a boom in record sales. This success was due to the combination of explicit sexual content with very rigorous research articles, that beforehand might seem inappropriate and unsuitable for their target but, surprisingly they had an enormous welcome among the general public. Rem Koolhaas intends to extrapolate this phenomenon to the world of architectural publications, to overcome the barrier of the professional audience and make them accessible for the great mass. With such intention, he counts on a young and inexperienced editor (Brendan McGetrick) and two of the artistic directors of one of the most successful magazines in UK, "Jack" (Simon Brown and Jon Link). Their role is to extrapolate the pop visual language of the magazine: attractive, direct, explicit...clear heir of pop art and post-modernity.

One of the self-impossed objectives is to try to exercise a critical external pressure over the office, forcing a process of reflection and also introducing synthesis criteria opposite to the strategy followed in "SMLXL" and previous publications. Compared to "SMLXL", whose content is internal, in "Content" they emphasize the need to incorporate external voices, which introduce parallel or tangent visions to OMA-AMO, so that the book combines both projects of the study, external inputs and less-related articles. Rem Koolhaas defines the book as a "*vehicle for the promotion of the CCTV building*" and a manifest of his emphasis on China, his abandonment of the West and his progressive turn to the east, which is explicitly shown from the same cover.

The book incorporates satire, irony, humor and sarcasm as working tools, which was not always welcome in China. To illustrate this issue, we could refer to the apoloy note that was published in OMA's website, regarding the "Content" publication, due to explicit sexual content of the images appeared in the alternative satiric covers shown at the end of the publication. The cover is the work of a new-yorker artist named Kenneth Tin-Kin Hung and follows the same lines. He uses humor and pop aesthetics to deal with controversial thematics, always related with the mass' culture, the comic and pop art, condition that shares with Rem himself. With the CCTV at the bottom, we can find a series of sensationalist messages such as "*perverted architecture*" or "*homicidal engineering*". In the foreground, we can find controversial personalities ridiculed in some way.

This magazine was the most important publication for the OMA since "SMLXL" (at least, so it was considered internally) and it was also the catalog for the homonymous exhibition developed at the end of 2003 at the Neue Gallerie of Berlin, building work of Mies van der Rohe, with whom Rem keeps a controversial relationship of veneration-confrontation.

5.1. *Composition*

"Content" has a much more *heterogeneous* than "SMLXL". It presents multiple structures, fonts, page settings, graphic formats and contents coming from many and very diverse sources. In addition, it keeps a much more journalistic style. Despite being very different, both publication have in common an organizational system. Both present a general *macro-structure* with multiple *micro-substructures*. At a graphical level, we can observe a progressive *"asiatization"* of the graphic language: the more toward the east, the projects present a much more condensed graphic and visual appearance, clearly influenced by the Asian fonts.

One of the differential facts that defines "SMLXL" is the use of *non-conventional narrative approximations* and alternative to the known scenario. This resource appears again in "Content", with the addition that each projecto's narration is developed through several micro stories that conform the general picture, through multiple approximations, opposite to the unique perspective that "SMLXL" provides to each project.

5.2. *Content's References*

We can find two different kind of references in the bool: those that are implicit but not manifest, and those that were explicitly referred by the editor of the publication Brendan McGetrick, in a previous interview regarding this research.

The *implicit references* that we can highlight these ones: *Chris Ware*, referenced due to his graphical experimentation, the use of innovative formats and the urban visions; *Oliverio Toscani* and his controversial campaigns for Bennetton or *Richard Hamilton* and the use of collage as a manifestation of the post modernism and the culture of masses. Regarding the *explicit references* (Fig. 6) pointed by its authors, the most relevant examples are: the sensationalist magazine called "Jack", the Dutch magazines "Kutt" and "Butt" with homosexual content, "Wired" (magazine that was object of study by AMO), "Volume" magazine where he also acts as invited editor makes regular contributions, several erotic graphic magazines with male homosexual content and Manga graphic novels with a congestive and explicitly "kitsch" style.

Fig. 6 Content's explicit referernces. Sensationalist and satiric magaxines with sexual and/or scientific content.

5.3. *Cases of study*

In order to analyse the "Content Universe" (Fig. 7) we have studied the internal dynamics existing inside each project, with the intention of defining the hypothetical internal order inside the apparent chaos that represents this publication.

We have already determined the existance of a geographical *macro-structure* associated with a progressive conceptual and graphical asiatization of the graphic language. Equally we have defined the existence of a *microstructure* organized in blocks of blurred boundaries. Generally, within each block, there is a main theme (a project or a manifest), which is configured as the nucleus of that block. Orbiting around this nucleus we can find opinion articles related to that project and some emblematic image or related illustrated reports from external authors. Finally, there are a series of tangential thematic that can be related to several projects. The combination of all these elements comform the map of this peculiar universe.
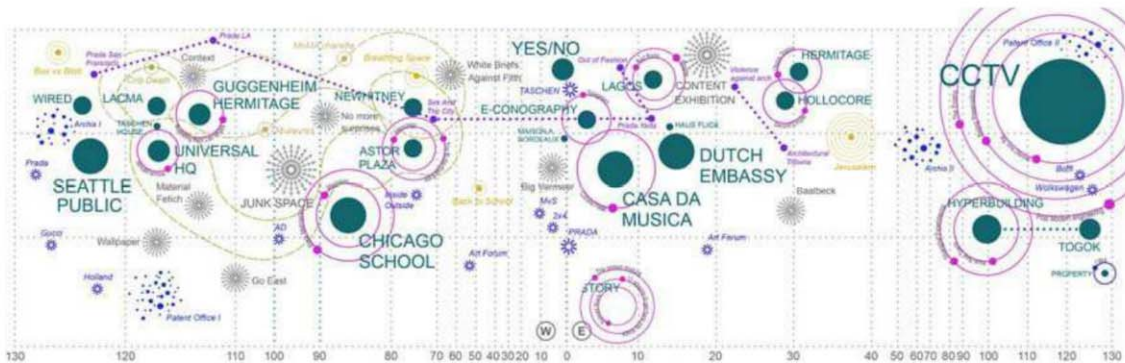

Fig. 7 Conceptual Diagram of" Content" Universe (2015 © Belén Butragueño)

The core of the research is formed by seven cases of study based on seven different communicative strategies that were detected along the investigation. Each case turns around a *project*, but consists of much more than the mere typological description. Hereunder we will proceed to briefly describe one of the seven cases of study: *Seattle's Library*.

The case of the graphic narrative of the *Seattle Library* (Fig. 8) is very paradigmatic. In the book, Rem Koolhaas chooses an angle far away from the magnificence of the building, focusing on the constructive details in the "raw" materiality and, on the other hand, in its most original conception. It is a building whose expression is *plastic, mutable*… depending on the perspective you are following. We can find absolutely antagonistic narratives, depending on the reference analysed. In the competition's Concept Book and in the book "Content", the graphic language used drink from the sources of pop art and may be related to their university projects as "Exodus".

On the other hand, the LMN's web page (the American partners of Rem Koolhaas) presents a much more orthodox and conventional narrative. On the other hand, OMA's web page makes an impact on the users' perspective. Finally, Seattle's Press raises an anatomical dissection that dislocates so much the composition, to enable an understanding of the routes, that its configuration turns out blurred.
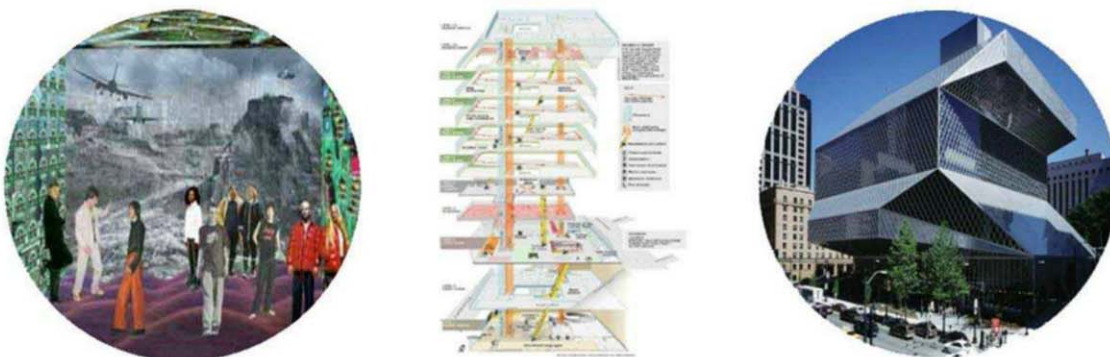

Fig. 8 Seattle Library: Concept Book (1998, © OMA) Esquema publicado en prensa (2000, ©Seattle Library); Fotografía página web de LMN (2002, © LMN)

It is, therefore, a *Polyform Communication*. The adaptation of the graphic language to very diverse circumstances generates such a huge distortion on the message, that the original project is hardly recognizable.

6. Go Countryside

Finally, the research concludes with an analysis of the current situation in OMA, defining the different phases through which the Office has gone after the publication of "Content". The *geo-political context* is yet more complex than it was at the beginning of the Twentieth Century, and the economic situation has considerably worsened, with a special impact in the profession. Among other circumstances, there is a rethinking of the urban planning and the situation of the cities, abandoning the idea of "regenerate cities by force of icons". Inside OMA there have been quite radical changes at a conceptual and organizational level: there is an apparent return to the *principles* of the archaic discipline of architecture, a deep revision of the *graphic strategies* in search of new experimental ways after the "maximum graphic congestion" (somehow "Content" generates a "burnt land" scenary) and a huge professional and emotional exhaustion in relation with the CCTV's project. All these circumnstances generate a *back to basics*, considering the "*fundamental as the most radical act*", in his own words. Summarizing, OMA's latest proposals have followed two *different strategies*, determined as follows:
On one hand, the use of *external perspectives*, either in the *message* (as it happens in "Project Japan", book based on a practical-theoretical study on the metabolistas, or "Venice's Bienal" approachr) or in the *means* (as in "Progress", a retrospective exhibition on OMA-AMO's work curated by a young group of architects named Rotor). On the other hand, in other cases they conceive a total *change of scenario*. In recent articles Rem Koolhaas is rethinking the abandonment of the urban scenario, that he considers to be ended. He advocates that it is in the countryside where he seems to find the opportunity's spaces nowadays, the place where friction and change are happening, and those are the fundamental ingredients needed in any creative process or experimentation. That is to say, the father of "*manhattanism*", the author of the theory of the culture of congestion, performs a 180-degree turn in his approach (Icon Magazine, 2014).

7. Conclusions

To summarize, hereafter we raise a series of *conclusions* extracted from the research on communication in architecture and the importance of Rem Koolhaas' contributions in this field.

7.1. *The iconic dimension of Architecture*

In "Learning from Las Vegas" Venturi talks on the *"iconic and communicative dimension"* as an intrinsic component or architecture. He argues that modern movement has stripped the architecture off its communicative essential character, which, on the other hand, has been present in all historical periods (from the Egyptians to the Paleochristian basilicas or the Mayan temples). Moreover, he concludes that the architecture mechanisms of representation have not been explicitly analyzed after rationalism. During the 70's, groups such as Archigram or Superstudio start to develop a reinterpretation of the established conventions. Lateron, architects such as Peter Eisenman, Bernard Tschumi, Zaha Hadid and Rem himself, start to prove that it is possible to go much further, understanding that the *strategy* followed to give visibility to the content, results in the very essence of the architectural object, in its character and understanding.

7.2. *Architecture and representation as a communication whole*

Our perception of reality is based on the prior knowledge of the codes that enable the message's communication. There is no reality independent from its representation. In other words, it is possible to transform reality through the transformation of the codes. In this context, Koolhaas talks about "*design of information*" to express that both message and media are fundamental and they are interdependent. This fact implies that the communicative strategy must be present from the very beginning of the process in the architectural creation. In OMA's particular history, the *total convergence* between container and content actually happens in "Content". This concept is advance in "SMLXL", where the idea of "*being architecture's culture*" or "*generating a reality's experience*" and not just a manifestation of it is advanced.

7.3. *Concept materialization*

Rem Koolhaas and Mies van der Rohe, whose approaches differ in many aspects, however, they converge in an important reasoning: *"the architect must find a way to suggest a consistent architecture with the time in which it lives"*. Likewise, this axiom applies to communication in architecture, and that fact implies a necessary revision of means and strategies traditionally followed in architectural representation. In the last years Koolhaas has included the *"registration"* of every little document

developed in the office as a part of OMA's activity (B. Colomina, 2007). His continuous production of internal publications has exponentially increased since "Content", becoming a part of the creative process and they are a reference for current and further projects.

7.4. *Is "Content" the highlight of the communicative experience?*

If we define that "highlight" as the *convergence between the communicative strategy* and the concept, all the research followed leads to consider that it actually is. However, it is obvious thar "Content" didn't get the media coverage that "SMLXL" had at its time and didn't leave such a huge imprint in the collective imaginary, finding critic voices that consider "Content" as *a mere pamphlet, a peculiartiy*. Even Koolhaas has defined it as *"voluntarily ugly or bad"*. Actually, as we have developed along the text, "Content" tries to experiment on a phenomenon that comes from sensationalist magazines and extrapolate it to architecture, to generate a product directed to the general public. That is the *"strategy"* and the *graphic tool* is pop art and post-modernity, with no doubt.

7.5. *Future prospectives*

The transgression of the genre has been so dramatic that it seems unlikely to figure out any possible prospective. "Content" leaves behind a burnt land scenery that is difficult to overcome. However, even the external manifestations are quite different there are some conceptual continuities:

- The understanding of architecture as a *consumption object* for the general public.
- The need of *visibility*, of understanding of the architectural fact. This can be done either through the use of multiple approximations ("Content") or through the decomposition of architecture to its basic units ("Fundamentals").
- The constant extrapolation of *cultural phenomena* to architecture.
- The *dependency on external facts* that affect the creative process. The acceptance that the external facts necessarily affect the creative process.

His capacity to anticipate the future developments ensures that his future propositions will generate a deep reinterpretation of his conceptual principles and his environment.

7.6. *Verification of the initial hypothesis*

When initiating the investigation, three preliminary hypotheses were raised, regarding the architectural communication. The *first hypothesis* is based on the *convergence of project and visual language* in Rem Koolhaas / OMA-AMO's publications. This fact induces a *Bijective Exchange –communicate-desing*. The *second hypothesis* suggests that is in "Content" where we can find the so called "*congestive communication*", a direct application of the *culture of congestion*, generating a maximal visual hyper density and an "apparent" chaos. It is a planned and voluntary strategy that leads to a progressive fragmentation of the narrative, to generate multiple interpretations in the receptor.
The result is what we called a "*Trijective Exchange*": *design-communicate-record*, in which "registration" offers an extra dimension to the pair "design-communicate". A three-way permutation that enriches the message and leads to a high degree of responsibility of the receptor thereof. There is a code breakout and therefore, a transformation, appearing the concept of "*design of information*" and "*information registration*", as the third hypothesis advocates. In Bruce Mau's words: "*communication informs and transforms the architectural practice*".

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9. Acknowledgements