

Complexity and contradiction in Eduardo Souto de Moura's architecture: Some remarks on his creative process

José Cabral Dias

CEAU, Faculty of Architecture of the University of Porto, Porto, Portugal
ORCID: 0000-0002-8472-5062

ABSTRACT: The desire for a complete context for life implies considering poetry as a fundamental part of dwelling (Heidegger, 1951)¹. This idea is stressed by António Damásio, who claims that there is no reason without emotions (Damásio, 1995).

This chapter title stems from Robert Venturi's book *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1992), firstly published in 1966 by The Museum of Modern Art, New York. According to Venturi, architecture has always been ambivalent. Hence, both its adequacy and intangible dimension –symbolism, and emotions we feel amid spatial experience - have always been based on those two concepts.

On several occasions, Souto de Moura refers to Venturi's work as one of the most important books written since the 1960s. It is not a coincidence that he explores a *space* between reality and simulation. He feels that naturalness does not depend upon the truth. Together with the circumstances and adaptation - one of the words he appreciates the most - such paradox is fundamental for finding the proper solutions, which take place far beyond objectivity.

This article explores that context. Souto de Moura praises both tradition and symbolism in architecture. In summary, his work accepts complexity and contradiction as fundamental architectural concepts, which means he eventually puts authenticity into perspective.

Keywords: Emotions, Complexity, Contradiction, Eduardo Souto de Moura, Portuguese architecture

1 APPROACH

Firmitas, Utilitas, Venustas

Since Vitruvius, i.e., since Architecture is identified with the figure of the architect, this discipline - Architecture – ties the act of creation with emotion. The triad proposed by Vitruvius is a founding definition of Architecture in its essential features even today. Hence, we may say that Architecture implies that the individual who uses it has a spatial experience merged with different emotions.

In fact, if the first two words refer to objective concepts, the latter, *Venustas*, evokes subjectivity, which is always inherent to the concept of beauty since this concept depends on individual judgment.

Therefore, it is true that people play a central role in Architecture, both in the creative act and in the experience of space.

To that extent, beauty cannot be conceived without considering that it triggers an emotional reaction, as an objective to be achieved - while focusing attention on the creator's action – and as a reaction while people have an immersive experience in space. In other words, the poetics of space and the emotional reaction are closely linked: architecture matter is not totally coincident with measurable and objective issues.

If we go back to Greek culture, we can see that the columns of the Greek temples manipulate objectivity to achieve a visual effect that takes place outside reality. According to such idea, the subject plays, once more, a central role in this discourse.

The word Parallax stems from the Greek *pará-laxis*, which means “to change”: so, that concept refers to a change of perception. Who looks into the columns is at a time responsible for such a mistake and for correcting it, doing so with his/her own perception too.

Consequently, the archetype of perfection recognized in the Greek temple over the centuries does not exist by itself, as such perfection does

1. Heidegger develops this idea in “Building, Dwelling, Thinking, which was originally published from a lecture Heidegger presented in 1951 under the title “Bauen Wohnen Denken”. Cf. Heidegger, M. (1951). *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*. [Conference presentation]. [s.n.], Darmstadt, Germany. https://www.academia.edu/34279818/Building_Dwelling_Thinking_by_Martin_Heidegger_Translation_and_Commentary_by_Adam_Bobeck_

not totally rely on its features. Rather, it depends on the interaction between the object that it is in itself, with its own properties, and the one who looks into it: according to an emotional and spiritual way, the idea of perfection takes place outside architecture.

As such, architecture does not fully depend on reality. Actually, Architecture overcomes it, and it has always been just like that.

Even modern architecture, which is often seen as directly driven by the interaction within the binomial needs/form - *form follows function* – it is, after all, the result of the same type of conceptualization that does not entirely rely on quantifiable, measurable, and objective properties. Le Corbusier (1887-1965), one of the masters and ideologues of this historical period, allows a clear judgment on this theme if we consider how he defines his profession: “*L’architecture est le jeu savant correct et magnifique des volumes assemblés sous la lumière.*” In fact, both the wise, correct, and magnificent interaction between the volumes and their placement under the light as the subject of its own effects is nothing but a means to express a poetics that architecture must fulfill. According to Le Corbusier’s aphorism, Architecture is as much a sensory matter (since it depends on the human senses), as the arrangement of volumes between themselves and in space, in the context of architectural composition. Thus, light and composition cannot be understood in the scope of architecture if they are not considered intangible material that may contribute to characterize a precise environment. To that extent, light and composition take part in the set of features that, after the architect’s intentional action, are understood by people in the immersive spatial experience due to both their cultural framework and their senses. Therefore, it can be said that light and architectural composition transcends an objective and physical dimension. In both cases, we are talking about a sensory matter.

On a similar basis, Mies Van der Rohe posed architecture a challenge, which cannot be solely seen as a physical objective: “*Less is More.*” Behind those simple words, he wanted to express a broader purpose, surely focused on architectural goals, a poetics based on seeking the essence of things. Summing up, his goal was to emphasize the architectural atmosphere and the clarity of form in itself.

This approach leads the arguments back to the emotional field, where every complex process of creation decisively occurs: it is about ordering reality according to a line of reasoning that implies being aware of reasoning itself, that is, being aware of intelligence (Damásio, 2020). In other words, emotions are inseparable from thinking. Man passionately follows his desires, which the human mind transforms into rational behavior: perception,

learning, memory, and intelligence are inseparable (Damásio, 1995). According to Damásio’s research and experiments, emotions are decisive to rational thinking.

This question can be seen both from a scientific and a philosophical point of view. According to Espinosa, we do not desire something because we think it is good, but on the contrary, we say that something is good because we desire it (Espinosa apud Camps, 2021, p. 109).

This complex context far beyond rationality expands itself in the scope of architecture. Idea and design are inseparable parts of the project, within a process with its own complexities and dialectics.

There will always be an argument constructed over a Platonic intuition, just as there will be intuitive moments in a rational response to a project argumentation... Thus, as it is neither a purely Platonic idea nor the pure application of a rule, we need to consider the relationship that is established between the idea for the project and the process of constructing it, as the process will be either the confirmation of the idea or the opportunity for it to manifest itself (Providência, 2016, 124).

Furthermore, a true Kantian thinker is a patient who suffered an injury in the prefrontal cortex, as Damásio himself suggests. In other words, solely a person without any type of emotions can experience any behavior completely driven by reason (Damásio, 1995).

In short, emotions form a fundamental feature within the two moments in which architecture can be divided: its birth – concerning the creation process - and its life - when used. Moreover, it can be inferred that there is a correlation between the architectural solutions found through rational means and the non-rational dimension of Architecture. The richer the former is, the much more intense the latter may be. This idea involves a proportional dimension between the use of reason and the emotional field.

This hypothesis leads us to Eduardo Souto de Moura’s creative universe. He is often considered a cultured modern architect because he praises the modern legacy and applies it to his work with pragmatism, intelligence and expertise. His architecture is eloquent, and that a significant number of his proposals have a simple and crystalline appearance, driven both by some known references (mostly Mies Van der Rohe) and the modern architecture principles. However, it is worth thinking about the intriguing pillar located in the living room of the house in Quinta do Lago (1984-2018). It can lead us to some remarks on the author’s work. By not touching the ceiling (thus, without any structural purpose), it gives rise to a doubt: is reality that simple?

2 MAIN IDEAS

In *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, Robert Venturi (1992)² shows how architecture has been thought, throughout history, based on multiple layers of meaning, overlapping elements, and contradictory effects or, in other words, on polysemy.

Framing architecture in the context of complexity he stands for, regarding a craft with centuries of history, Venturi says:

A building can include things within things as well as spaces within spaces. And its interior configurations can contrast with its container in other ways besides those of the Villa Savoye's. The circular perimeters of bearing wall and colonnade in Hadrian's Maritime Theatre at Tivoli produce another version of the same spatial idea (Venturi, 1992, p. 71).

The closeness that the author identifies between Adriano's Maritime Theater (in Hadrian's Villa, Tivoli) with its set of spaces within a circular perimeter, and the Villa Savoye (Poissy, 1928), by Le Corbusier (1887-1965), a house organized within a square boundary that includes a patio within its limits, shows an important idea: between the Classical Antiquity and the 20th century can be found a continuity. Venturi refers to an idea of architecture that defines itself with multiple layers, not competing with each other but rather converging towards a complexity that seems contradictory at first glance.

There are multiple examples in the book, but the one built in Portugal according to the Mannerist period in Tomar, in the 16th century, is eloquent concerning the same kind of ideas. The author focuses his words on *Claustro Grande* (the main cloister), in Convento de Cristo, by Diogo de Torralva (1500-1566)³.

...the complex superadjacencies in the cloister facades at Tomar compose a wall validly containing spaces within itself. The multiple layers of columns -engaged and disengaged, large and small, directly and indirectly superimposed - and the profusion of superimposed openings, architraves, and horizontal and diagonal balustrades create contrasts and contradictions in scale, direction, size, and shape. They make a wall containing spaces inside itself (Venturi, 1992, p. 62).

Although Venturi considers that Mies Van der Rohe developed a simplification regarding problems and solutions (1966, p. 16-17), setting him apart from the given example - Le Corbusier and his Villa - both architects are not really that distinct. It can be said that the theme of complexity is also an essential subject in Mies' works. For instance, when we climb the stairs separating the street from the Barcelona Pavilion (with Lily Reich, and built in 1929), we feel surrounded by the walls that limit the water mirror. Are we inside or outside? And if we move and remain under the slab that extends beyond the limits of the interior spaces, staying amidst the planes defining the in-between spaces, which will be our precise location? Likewise, when we stand in the courtyard next to the Dawn sculpture (Georg Kolbe, 1877-1947), how do we understand the limits of interior and exterior spaces?

Those different layers of meaning refocus this theme on the interaction between author and users, considering a level of complexity in which reason is insufficient for understanding Architecture:

Contradictory levels of meaning and use in architecture involve the paradoxical contrast implied by the conjunctive 'yet' (Venturi, 1992, p. 23).

Summing up, Venturi states that "Both-and emphasizes double meanings over double-functions" (Venturi, 1992, p. 34)⁴.

Robert Venturi is not far from Aldo Van Eyck and his book "The Child, The City, and The Artist" (1962). Here, Van Eyck walks along the paths of ambivalence, polarities, and complexity as a way to explore ideas on spatial solutions based on multiple meanings and, thus, built upon richer features. One of his concepts, the *in-between realm* (Van Eyck, 1962, p. 54) - from the house to city-scale - refers to reciprocity, that is, the idea of reconciliation between conflicting polarities. For Van Eyck the *in-between realm* defines the interaction between the *twin phenomena*: part/whole; large/small; many/few; inside/outside; unity/diversity; open/closed; mass/space; change/constancy; motion/rest; order/chaos; individual/collective (Van Eyck, 1962, p. 61).

Aldo's concepts bring Mies Van der Rohe's spatial solution closer to the themes focused on in Venturi's book. Moreover, Mies Van der Rohe challenged the truth of materials, moving away from the objectivity commonly recognized in Modern Architecture. His pillars at the vertices of the

2. The book was published for the first time in 1966, by The Museum of Modern Art, New York.

3. Diogo de Torralva was the architect responsible for the works in Convento de Cristo, Tomar, from 1554 onwards, after João de Castilho death (1470-1552). *Claustro Grande* or Cloister of D. João III is considered Torralva's masterpiece. The works were finished after Torralva's death, by the Italian Filipe Terzi (1520-1597), which already took place under the domination of Portugal by the Spanish Crown (1580-1640).

4. Vd. Venturi, R. (1992). *Contradictory Levels: The Phenomenon of "Both-And" in Architecture*. In Venturi, R. (1992). *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (23-33). New York: The Museum of Modern Art; Venturi, R. (1992). *Contradictory Levels Continued: The Double-Functioning Element*. In Venturi, R. (1992). *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (34-40). New York: The Museum of Modern Art.

American skyscrapers are not the truth; they are rather a search for beauty. Nevertheless, despite their use as cladding elements covering concrete pillars, the bronze pillars are not mere ornaments. Instead, according to all visible structural elements, they simulate an order, addressing a desire for coherence and unity. Thus, despite losing their structural purpose, these metal profiles are conceived as devices for the architect to express himself. So, objectivity is overcome in favor of architecture matter itself⁵.

Souto de Moura refers to the pillar of Mies' Skyscrapers to claim that beauty should not be found in the truth, but rather in the perception of the truth: According to Souto de Moura, the German architect was also aware that Plato's maxim, which considers that *beauty is the splendor of truth*, has no possible application in architecture. Souto de Moura goes even further to state that the truth may be truly ugly.

Authenticity? No. I am more concerned about creating a system that seems to be authentic. I try to achieve a congruence that can be built. It could be the re-presentation of an authenticity, not authenticity in itself. Any architecture that strives for authenticity ends up producing a monstrous object. ...There should be congruence in the process, in the development of each project. If one decides to use stone in one way, we need to discover a consistent way to work with that material that makes sense. (Souto de Moura apud Castro, 2005b, p. 9).

Eduardo Souto de Moura is much more concerned with a coherence that would give reality an understandable meaning. The meaning of reality itself does not concern him at all. He does not believe that he should submit himself to an ontological sense, for he recognizes that it is not enough for the architecture thinking, and it may be contradicted or denied by reality. As a result, Souto de Moura claims that buildings can look like something they are not: their form, space, and atmosphere should result from an idea instead of being faithful to the truth.

...Now that we have done away with the resistant wall thanks to Dom-ino structure – which is the system that is used – and we have replaced it with a skin –which, whether you like it or not, is the other condition that we work with – talking about authenticity makes no sense

...I do not believe that when we use stone, we necessarily have to build resistant walls. I don't like anti-natural solutions.

5. The cross shape pillar used, for example, at the Barcelona Pavilion and the Villa Tugendat (1928-1930, also designed with Lily Reich) has a similar meaning in this context. Its final appearance, made of polished stainless steel, covers the resistant structural elements.

...So I am not interested in the ethical problem of being authentic because I am not concerned about the authenticity of the object. I am, however, concerned about encouraging a simulation of the truth (Souto de Moura apud Castro, 2005b, p. 9).

Souto de Moura's words show he is concerned about the ambivalence that can take place between truth and simulation. For him, that space defines a founding problem in architecture, and to explore it appears to be fundamental to find the proper solutions.

Quoting the Portuguese professor and essayist Eduardo Prado Coelho (Lisbon, 1944-2007), the architect claims that "You can only imitate the inimitable because only the inimitable is distinctive and strong enough to be imitated" (Souto de Moura apud Morales, 2015, p. 27). And it is in both Mies' and Siza's works, whom he considers inimitable (Souto de Moura apud Castro, 2005b, p. 11), Souto de Moura finds possible answers. The search for perfection he identifies in the work of Mies Van der Rohe, which he calls "a life-long search for the perfect platonic form" or even an "archetype of architecture" (Souto de Moura apud Castro, 2005b, p. 11), does not depend on the truth. On the contrary, as Eduardo Souto de Moura asserts, it depends on simulation, false structures, claddings that give the buildings their real appearance. According to a suitable visual effect, Mies lied about his detailing, usually hidden underneath other materials (Souto de Moura, 2019, p. 502).

Souto de Moura also turns to Álvaro Siza to clarify his doubts. In Santiago de Compostela (CGAC, 1988-1993), Siza uses a covering made of stone to achieve the appearance of stone construction. When the cladding reaches the corner, the stone 'angles' simulate the stereotomy. However, diversely, when the cladding reaches the windows, Siza does not do the same, and one can see the real thickness of the cladding made of stone. At first glance, the difference seemed incongruous: he thought the real depth of the building should never be seen from any angle (Souto de Moura apud Castro, 2005b, p. 11). Nevertheless, he formed a different opinion after reading a book about Nietzsche: "the face that is telling a lie is saying the truth" (Souto de Moura apud Castro, 2005b, p. 11).

Referring to his own work, Souto de Moura reminds us of his action in Torre Burgo (1991-2007), according to similar principles:

...their theatrical effect was studied in depth. I assume that it is not true. Architecture doesn't have to be real. The Greeks were not real when they set their Triglyphs where the wooden beams were fitted, and then covered that with the entablature (Souto de Moura apud Grande, 2009, p. 15).

Due to his commitment to this debate, he turned his attention to Jean Baudrillard (Simulacres et

Simulation, 1981) and Italo Calvino (*Lezioni americane. Sei proposte per il próximo millennio*, 1988): “you have to confront complexity” and to accept “the manipulation of material condition or at least their perception” (Souto de Moura apud Castro, 2005b, p. 17). It is under these considerations that his architecture must be understood. For Souto de Moura, contradictions and complexities are as important as any other materials to build and produce strong architectural effects. His words provide a valuable insight that takes us back to the first part of this article. Souto de Moura is a modern architect because he carries the inheritance of a discipline with centuries of existence to the present (Rodrigues: 2013): in that condition, he works with contradictions and complexities to achieve the highest goals, like it always has been throughout history.

I trust the idea of continuity in architecture, an architecture that is not based on ruptures or big changes, but includes continuity, with issues that remain, what we might call ‘classic’ (Morales, 2015, p. 17).

Architecture deals with specific problems (functional, technical, economic, constructive) but, at the same time, it should provide, by itself, a reflection on its own processes and methods as a discipline (Castro, 2005a, p. 24) – architecture will only be able to keep its social relevance as long as it will be able to update itself permanently.

Both by updating the principles of Modern Architecture (with the inevitable reference to Mies Van der Rohe - to Luís Barragán or even Richard Neutra, for instance) and also by deepening the disciplinary awareness, Souto de Moura is willing to anchor his design and thinking in the roots of the discipline itself. By doing so, he is updating architecture principles on a dialect basis.

We shall look into how he changes the pre-existing context in a sort of reinvented reality.

I often do that, it is a sort of manipulation that I implement in my projects. I alter the pre-existence to adapt it to what I want (Souto de Moura apud Grande, 2009, p. 21).

The conversion of Santa Maria do Bouro Monastery (1989-1997) is a significant example of how the architect sees pre-existing architecture. For him, it is available material for use or, in other words, for manipulation. The Convent was nothing but ruins before being transformed into a luxury inn. Somehow, Souto de Moura kept the appearance of the ruins. The new building (as the architect sees it) is covered by a flat roof on which spontaneous vegetation grows. Aiming to achieve similar goals, the detailing hides the frames, emphasizing the holes in the walls. The cloister remained uncovered.

“I didn’t make a building out of a ruin. I made a modern building” (Souto de Moura apud Grande, 2009, p. 21).

With pragmatism, the uncertainty he faced in the complex framework of specific problems led him to choose the 20th century as a temporal reference for the project. The overlapped temporal strata did not give him irrefutable clues about the building, which would allow him to deal with history with a different certainty. As he said, he designed a contemporary building using the old stones (Souto de Moura apud Grande, 2009, p. 22).

The ruins are more important than the ‘Convent’; they are the elements that are laid bare and ready for manipulation” (Souto de Moura, 2005, p. 28).

Such kind of approach, which is ambivalent, is a key factor in understanding the architect’s work and his insight into the disciplinary debate. He moves in the field of complexity, which means multiple meanings and overlaps. Souto de Moura does not see antiquity as an abstract entity. For him, an ancient entity is, in architecture, a succession of times and spaces throughout history, and contemporaneity is just another layer in that process (Souto de Moura apud Güell, 1998, p. 127). In other words, reality has several strata, and the architect does not need to confront them. “The intelligent thing to do is to convert complicated problems into simple ones” (Souto de Moura apud Güell, 1998, p. 127). That is to say, one should accept and deal with complexity. In that context, the tension between natural and artificial is another conceptual instrument of his work:

I always like to work in a double register: natural/artificial. mineral/vegetable (Souto de Moura apud Córtes, 2015, p. 269).

This leads us to another significant idea. As we all know, praising ruins is an aesthetic attitude that goes back to Romanticism. Ruins have that strong power provided by a balance between nature and the artificial world, which is real in the present and the future. The notion of time provided by ruins does not rely on any boundary between past, present, and future: somehow, the ruins crystallize the time.

In fact, the ruins embody the ideal of a symbiosis between built and natural. The small house in Gerês (1980-1982) can be seen as the paradigm of this statement, and despite being one of the architect’s first works, it systematizes part of his thinking. In the small house in Gerês, a concrete slab interrupts a granite wall as the passage of time would have been responsible for the decay. However, this is not only a theme that evokes the effect of time in architecture. It is also the result of his design. The ruin was

simulated by the way Souto de Moura altered the former construction. Through the “truth” he builds, Souto de Moura shows his way of seeing his profession.

I think of the fusion of art or architecture with nature in the sense that nature doesn’t manifest itself. A I already said in speaking about culture, nature, in global terms, is a whole tied to a certain kind of Pantheism. I am referring to nature as to a set of natural things, our envelope, which comprehends everything from the mineral, vegetable, or animal kingdoms to the very artefacts that have come to be emotional elements of our daily world. When these artifacts are natural, they belong to or form part of the legacy of the geography that surrounds us. This is the sense in which I speak of nature (Souto de Moura apud Güell, 1998, p. 137).

The house in Moledo (1991-1998) provides valuable insight into this issue:

Souto de Moura found there a landscape molded by terraces with 1.5 meters. The first action was to prepare the land with 3 meters levels (Souto de Moura, 2005, p 10). Proving the design rigor, when we approach the house, we believe that it was not the house that changed the whole landscape. Nevertheless, he built a completely new reality: a simulation of a previous state (according to the typical stone walls of northern Portugal) to which the house seems to be shaped for. Authenticity results there like in Santa Maria do Bouro, where the height of the different floors was changed to integrate the new installations. The stone arches’ geometry was then changed, decreasing their height, which is not noticeable.

A similar option took place at Museu Grão Vasco in Viseu (2001-2003). Souto de Moura defined a non-existent truth: he sought the true “vocation” of the building. He designed a new alignment for all the arches between the exhibition rooms, according to a geometric and compositional accuracy that the building had never had. Furthermore, the width of the stairs between the ground floor and the first level, which was increased, forced him to move the wall facing the courtyard: it was rebuilt with the exact same windows, a few meters away from the original position. Apparently, nothing has changed. As it can be seen, there is a seek for silence as a design strategy: no signs of the changes he drew up for the Museum can be seen.

In the Braga Municipal Stadium (2000-2003), the project was firmly aligned with contemporaneity as the quarry was already a landscape transformed by man. In conceptual terms, this is a key factor. The stadium merges with the quarry as if the concrete was a mirror of the stone itself. The natural line of water was integrated into the design process. The

topography was redesigned. Naturalness was sought with an overall but sensitive and skillful design.

On a different scale, the environment of the outdoor spaces in the Courtyard Houses in Matosinhos (1993-1999), as well as in the Dance and Music School in Braga (1980-2010), and also in the Conversion of Bernardas Convent (2006-2013) evoke that sort of naturalness. These examples also show a decision to reduce the tension between nature and architecture, merging them both in a singular architectural atmosphere: in fact, the greenery is a device used to work with architecture in a complete environment.

The stadium is the construction of a new landscape, which has a natural appearance. This ought to be a contradiction, given the violence the transformations pose to the mountain: as it has been said, everything seems natural.

I have discovered that the naturalness of things is the hardest goal to achieve (Souto de Moura apud Castro, 2005b, p. 18).

In the course of this argument, it is time to go back

to the first years of Souto de Moura’s carrier. The adoption of the neoplasticist codes took place for aesthetic reasons. An aesthetics based on the minimum elements seemed to him the proper answer amid the uncertainties found in the post-modern debate (Souto de Moura apud Grande, 2009).

When I faced with the debate and the adoption of post-modernism, I continued using that sort of language almost for pleasure, without any ideological meaning or desire for social construction of the modern project. I preferred a more visual and hence post-modern option. João Luís Carrilho da Graça, once quoted me saying that he was a post-modern, just like me. And I do acknowledge the fact that like him, I regard language as a grammar of everyday life (Souto de Moura apud Grande 2009, p. 9).

When he recalls the 200-meter walls he drew in that context, he justifies them with a romantic or heroic approach that he now considers ridiculous (Souto de Moura apud Cortés, 2015, p. 259). To justify part of the changes in his carrier, when he felt that the models he worked with could be exhausted and tried a more experimental phase, Álvaro Siza was called as a reference.

He is an infallible personality in his answers. He has a grammar that he refreshes on the basis of each situation, and that means being very contemporary (Souto de Moura apud Grande, 2009, p. 7)

Hence, a stabilized language does not concern him any longer. He is much more focused on the

method. It can be said that such kind of method should face each situation according to specific concerns, issues, and goals. "There are no universal languages, just as there are no universal places..." (Souto de Moura apud Grande, 2009, p. 19). The main theme that interests him the most is based on a simple concept: *adaptation*.

This is one my favorite words, because architecture is a problem of adaptation (Souto de Moura apud Grande, 2009, p. 19).

The superiority of time over the place, that is, the generalization of a type of architecture that, most of all, pays total attention to the spirit of the time, with less sensitivity to the particularities of the place, like the late modern architecture has done (Portuguesi, 1980), has no place in the work of Souto de Moura.

Though the attention to geographical contexts seems to be a pragmatic response, his architecture results from an intelligent and accurate ability to read a place. The syntheses he achieves, more or less authentic (even when the materials are imported and do not have local origin), show an architect who, as he says, seeks adequacy and accuracy.

The adoption of forms by analogy – an *objet trouvé* –, is not contradictory to what has been said. It has to do with the adoption of languages for visual reasons – it is true – but it does not forget the idea of adequacy focusing on the figurative concept of atmosphere. For instance, the restaurants and other facilities for Matosinhos' waterfront (1995-2020), or even The EDP Headquarters in Lisbon (1998), in the north bank of Tagus river, are all projects which use the images of containers, cranes, or fuel tanks reproducing the maritime universe. Similarly, in the project for the Campus in the Middle East (2010-...), Souto de Moura used the image of aircraft carriers since he was not interested in touching the sand:

I was interested in the contrast between nature and artefact. I wanted to separate things: the desert is like a sea (Souto de Moura apud Morales, p. 17).

Summing up, the appearance is not a pictorial image that reproduces an exterior prototype, but an effective image that dissolves the real, to use Paolo Portuguesi's words (Portuguesi, 1985, p. 172). This argument leads this text to a central feature in this architect's work. The paradox is a major characteristic in Souto de Moura. He knows reality is based on polysemy. As such, it never allows simple interpretations. It is ambivalent, and so is architecture. Souto de Moura seeks proper solutions through an intense dialogue with reality. His architecture is complex, also ambivalent, and it is in the multiple strata of his own reality, sometimes contradictory, his architecture shows itself naturally.

3 CONCLUSION

The conversion of the Braga Municipal Market (1980-1984) into a Dance and Music School (1996-2010) could be the synthesis of these pages. It was not a refurbishment nor a restoration. Souto de Moura felt completely free from his previous work and conceived a completely new building using the pre-existing one. It provided him old materials to a new design:

We suggested the removal of the existing roof and its replacement with a garden, a street and the construction of the cultural program by reusing the remaining covered area.

The area sheltered by the former roof became a garden in which a few of the pillars supporting the demolished slab were saved as a testimony (Souto de Moura, 2005, p. 51).

In its very essence, the new project defined both the new architectural elements to be built and chose which ones, among the former ones, would be demolished or, instead, take part in the new building. The pillars that supported the roof remain on the site as ruins. The stairs that originally connected the ground floor to the upper floor were also partially kept in their place, like ruins too – they no longer lead anywhere since the new building has only one level above the ground. Hence, as parts of the project, pillars and stairs define a kind of evocation: their demolition was also designed.

The resulting atmosphere is complex. The different times and spaces (old and new) coincide on the site, and they are reconciled in the *in-between realm* (Van Eyck, 1962, p. 54). Reciprocity (Van Eyck, 1962) is the key to understand that process.

The conversion of the Braga Municipal Market could be seen as a metonymy of Souto de Moura's work: all the architecture of Souto de Moura reconciles polarities: it defines the place where those polarities can interact between them, and with Aldo Van Eyck's *twin phenomena* (Van Eyck, 1962), which they really are. Souto de Moura's built and unbuilt work is about those important architectural features whose meaning was systematized in Aldo van Eyck's theoretical work. Additionally, Souto de Moura adds them to the complex variable of time or, in other words, he makes a synthesis between what belongs to all the times and what belongs to the present (Dal Co, 2019, p. 484).

In Souto de Moura, diversity and complexity surpass the experience of creation: they expand their own meanings with the experience of space.

For Francesco Dal Co, Souto de Moura's sketches are both the expression of a free intuitive process and the expression of memory

(2019, p. 482). As such, one may say that they are not so different from Souto de Moura's design: they anticipate architecture itself, unifying space and time, which means complexity and polysemy.

It is always a great thing to discover similarity in different ways and to recognize real differences as variations of the same – as great as it is to experience a similar kind of occasion repeated in different places, and different kinds of occasions occurring in the same place. (This can happen anywhere, of course, in spite of architecture, but it can also happen because of architecture). (Van Eyck, 1962, p. 93)

Complexity and polysemy also mean the opportunity for identity, human identity. In other words, the closeness someone feels with a space within its atmosphere despite architecture or because of architecture.

Poetry is what first brings man into earth, making him belong to it, and thus brings him into dwelling (Heidegger apud Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p. 23).

Translating Heidegger's words into a deeper meaning to architecture, Christian Norberg-Schulz says:

Architecture belongs to poetry, and its purpose is to help man to dwell. [...] Architecture comes into being when a 'total environment is made visible' (Norberg-Schulz, 1980, p. 23).

As a direct consequence of Norberg-Schulz's statement, one may say that poetry, dwelling, and architecture are unified under a total environment. As such, they belong to the emotional field.

In few words, Christian Norberg-Schulz explains Souto de Moura's work: it is all about poetry.

We do have art so as not to die from the truth. Maybe for that reason, despite everything, we keep doing architecture⁶ (Souto de Moura, 2019, p. 503).

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Assignment financed from national funds by the FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P., under the UIDB/00145/2020 project.

6. Author's free translation: "Temos a arte para não morrer da verdade [Friedrich Nietzsche quoted by Souto de Moura]. "Talvez seja por isso que, apesar de tudo, ainda continuamos a ser arquitetos" (Souto de Moura, 2019, p. 503). It is important to translate Eduardo Souto de

REFERENCES

- Camps, V. (2021). *O Elogio da Dívida*. Lisbon: Edições 70
- Castro, L. R. (2005a). The Invention of Problems. In Fernando Márquez Cecilia & Richard Levene, (ed.), *Eduardo Souto de Moura: the naturalness of things* (pp. 19-26). Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 124.
- Castro, L. R. (2005b). The Naturalness of Things. In Fernando Márquez Cecilia & Richard Levene, (ed.), *Eduardo Souto de Moura: the naturalness of things* (pp. 6-18). Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 124.
- Cortés, J. A. (2015). Operative Transferences in the Architecture of Eduardo Souto de Moura. In Fernando Márquez Cecilia & Richard Levene, (ed.), *Eduardo Souto de Moura: domesticating architecture* (pp. 259-281). Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 176.
- Dal Co, F (2019). Eduardo Souto de Moura: Apontamentos. In Dal Co, F., Souto de Moura, E., Moura, N. G. et al., (ed.), *Souto de Moura: memória, projetos, obras* (480–495). Matosinhos: Casa da Arquitectura
- Damásio, A. (2020). *Sentir & Saber: a caminho da consciência*. Lisboa: Temas e Debates.
- Damásio, A. (1995). *O Erro de Descartes* (7th ed.). Lisboa: Europa-América.
- Grande, N. (2009). Homecoming: a conversation with Eduardo Souto de Moura. In Fernando Márquez Cecilia & Richard Levene, (ed.), *Eduardo Souto de Moura: Theatres of The World* (pp. 7-24). Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 146.
- Güell, X. (1998). Interview with Eduardo Souto de Moura. In Mónica Gili (ed.), *Eduardo Souto de Moura: recent work, Revista 2G*, 5, 122–137.
- Heidegger, M. (1951). *Building, Dwelling, Thinking*. [Conference presentation]. [s.n.], Darmstadt, Germany. https://www.academia.edu/34279818/Building_Dwelling_Thinking_by_Martin_Heidegger_Translation_and_Commentary_by_Adam_Bobeck
- Morales, J. (2015). A conversation with Eduardo Souto de Moura: Domesticating Architecture In Fernando Márquez Cecilia & Richard Levene, (ed.), *Eduardo Souto de Moura: domesticating architecture* (pp. 5–27). Madrid: El Croquis Editorial, 176.
- Norberg-Schulz, C. (1980). *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. New York: Rizzoli.
- Portoghesi, P. (1985). *Depois da Arquitectura Moderna*. Lisboa: Edições 70.
- Portoghesi, P. (1980). *Dopo l'Architettura Moderna*. Bari: Editori Laterza.
- Providência, P. (2016). *Architectonica Percepta: texts and images 1989-2015*. Zurich: Park Books.
- Rodrigues, J. M. (2013). *O Mundo Ordenado e Visível das Formas da Arquitectura. tradição clássica e Movimento Moderno na arquitectura portuguesa: dois exemplos*. Porto: Edições Afrontamento.
- Souto de Moura, E. (2005). Conversion of Santa Maria do Bouro Monastery into a State Inn. In Fernando Márquez Cecilia & Richard Levene, (ed.), *Eduardo Souto de Moura: the naturalness of things* (28-52). Madrid: El Croquis, 124.

Moura's lively and vibrant words. They give full meaning to this chapter conclusion.

Complexity and contradiction in Eduardo Souto de Moura's architecture

- Souto de Moura, E. (2019). Eduardo Souto de Moura: Apontamentos. In Dal Co, F., Souto de Moura, E., Moura, N. G. et al., (ed.), *Uma Autobiografia Pouco Científica* (500–503). Matosinhos: Casa da Arquitectura.
- Van Eyck, A. (1962). *The Child, The City, and the Artist: an essay on architecture; the in-between realm*. [s.l.]: [s.n.].
- Venturi, R. (1992). *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (9th ed.). New York: The Museum of Modern Art.