

Casa da  
Arquitetura

-  
Lars  
Müller  
Publishers

POWER

VARCHI

TECURE

# POWER/ ARCHITECTURE

Jorge Carvalho

Pedro Bandeira

Ricardo Carvalho

When we began organising the book *Poder Arquitectura*, we thought that there was a place in the contemporary debate on Architecture for reflecting on the meaning of the powers that influence and constrain its activity today. Perhaps that is why one of the first diagrams we drew turned out as a set of lines which contain the various powers acting – from the inside out and from the outside in – in the field of Architecture. The result is a system of overlaps, clashes and mergers and deadlocks, the likes of which we find, for example, in the diagrams of a city's underground railines. On the one hand, this sort of diagram reflects a real, tangible geography, a systemic desire and a circuit; on the other hand, the diagram is an abstraction that reinvents a certain cartography. *Poder Arquitectura* is also a mental map, rhizomatic rather than systemic in its final version. It is this map what guides us in the relations between the works presented in the book, and a given reality that they transform.

Outside its domain, Architecture is traditionally perceived as a practice which above all represents an institutional Power – or, in the contemporary world, the Power of the global financial system – which tends to render relative the specific and the concrete and, instead, place value on a global uncritical action. But the field of Architecture has always been the one coming up with necessary syntheses so that, even when working for and with a specific power, it was able to critically transform a certain reality – to project is to anticipate a reality with various degrees of limitation. In this sense, the idea of critical transformation calls for another notion of representation. This is the sense of *working with the projects* that the book addresses.

Architecture, we know, is not just the expression of a single power. It reflects, and works from, various powers. We have therefore decided to isolate those powers who help clarify this complex cartography. Thus we have collective, regulatory,

technological, economic, domestic, cultural, media and ritual powers. They were all present in the history of civilization and are still determining forces in the course of events on a global scale. In the long struggle between Man and Nature, Culture and Technology, these powers exerted influences of variable intensity in the production of architectural artifacts and in the design of the city and the territory. Today, faced with a political impotence that excuses and validates decisions that harm the public good and the meaning of communities, there seems to be room for a new reflection on power against impotence. Or, to put it another way, about the various powers in the face of widespread impotence.

*Poder Arquitectura* presupposes another notion of representation, which requires us to immerse ourselves in the architects' work and interpret their relationship with the brief, regulation, and social and ideological contexts. Before the design process begins, much information is drawn *a priori*, a fact the book tries to make apparent. Working the complexity of the various powers present therein does not presuppose a denial approach. A power is in itself neither negative nor positive. Sometimes powers cancel themselves out, sometimes they create synergies, sometimes they instigate counterpowers.

This book is also a document that stimulates a reading of the consensuses that create a certain work of Architecture. This process is usually excluded from a work's ultimate understanding once it has been delivered to its community or residents. The process, however, radically configures the outcome of a project. In this way, a work of Architecture represents the various actions of internal and external actors in a process, that is, it represents a way of functioning of the world, and in the world.

The selected works seek to reveal, in their absolute heterogeneity, this complexity of performance of architects and multidisciplinary teams. Working from very different contexts (from the social, geographic and economic point of view), points of contact are created between practices and issues, and it is this book's aim to lift the veil on them, as it were, and make them known.

To that effect, we favoured works to the detriment of authors. It seems more operative to reveal in the chosen works – with a multiplicity of functional programs –, forms and modes of overlap and convergence, unexpected encounters, dialogue

with the various actors present, the richness of the work process; and the analogy, synchronous and diachronic, with other works and processes. Perhaps that is why some of the chosen works can be read in the context of various powers and not just the one they're attributed to. We always understand the book in this sense – an open narrative, a process. It is also intended to bring together works and authors that do not usually appear side by side – hence the novelty of this cartography of powers.

The book's structure corresponds to a desire to work on the overlaps between powers and the theme's complexity. The introduction to the theme set of powers is made by a set of essays of several guest authors. The graphical content offer a solid atlas-like structure that contains drawings, images and references.

We have found a limitation to this cartography of powers, however: The representation of counter-power. In *Poder Arquitectura*, we knew that the inclusion of counter-power was necessary, but an impossibility at the same time – because the curatorial act itself *is* already a manifestation of power. Counter-power may be understood as resistance or ridicule, thus we can hardly incorporate it into an institutional discourse. To include it in the exhibition would immediately cancel its value as real counter-power. We can assume that, in the face of the generalized imposition of the global market, Architecture itself can function as a disciplinary stronghold of counter-power, as opposed to the banality and lack of meaning of generic construction. Or perhaps we might conclude with a neologism by Antonin Artaud, that of the need for *l'impouvoir*, for powerlessness.

## COLLECTIVE POWER

Several imbalances undermine the sense of well-being in the *Westernized* world (an expression that globalization has made vague), albeit under an aura of privilege and *development* (another vague term).

The chaotic growth of cities, the precariousness of infrastructures or transport networks used to be major difficulties; today there are other problems, associated with a way of life based on consumption and waste.

As collective power, we aim to think the common purpose in the defence of collective well-being, both socially and ecologically.

In this regard, some questions arise:

Can public or private architecture be sensitive to energy consumption and climate change?

Can architecture contribute to biodiversity?

Can architecture promote processes of participation and social mixing?

## REGULATORY POWER

The practice of democracy is still associated with an idea of control and social regulation. A fair balance between individual freedoms and collective interests has never been easy. There are also added interests that find in the absence or in excess of regulation an opportunity to exercise their power. So often does political discourse contradict statistical values and blackmail by fear to validate its excessive control. In the name of order and security, architectural firms specialized in the design of barriers, shielding, video surveillance systems, etc. began to emerge. We ask: Can architecture lessen or reverse an oppressive idea of regulatory power? Is there an emotional security in architecture? Can ports of entry offer a sense of hospitality and warmth?

## TECHNOLOGICAL POWER

With the vague promise of making work easier, technology is transforming our daily lives: the relationships between people, between people and their activities, and between people and objects. Technology has become ubiquitous. In architecture, technology is radically transforming the methodologies of conception and representation of the project, but also construction itself, and the experience of the building. In projects, the increase of technological specialties mirrors this new reality, and seems to push Architecture into merely aesthetic issues, as if these were not ultimately achieved through a general coordination of the project. Expressions such as “smart home” or “home automation” have become commonplace and familiar, but, beyond any mercantile opportunism, how do the connections of power between architecture and technology reveal themselves? What are the relations between technology and form? What does Architecture require of robotization? Is there still room for low technology?

## ECONOMIC POWER

The economy and financial markets seem to have taken over the political space, calling into question the sovereignty of States. Complex cash flow systems shy away from tax and other fiscal responsibilities. But there seems to be no room for prosperity without credit or investment. The financial system made the words “debt” and “crisis” become part of our daily lives and made the economy extremely volatile. The real estate sector is symptomatic of mood swings in economic games, although it operates on the steady ownership and registration regimes provided by the States. How does Architecture participate in various aspects of the economy? What architectural specificities arise in the so-called *emerging* economies? How does Architecture respond to market dynamics? How does it currently shape workspaces? Can Architecture bring about other models of consumption, counteracting the uncritical repetition of corporate models and values?

## DOMESTIC POWER

Owning or renting a house is to delimit a tiny part of the world, expressing the need for intimacy and security and a specific idea of comfort. Domestic power is idealized as inviolable. There is a primitive essence of the house that seems timeless to us, even when the ancient place for fire is replaced by the television and the television taken over by Wi-Fi. But flexibility of work, changes in family structure, or simply purchasing power, alter the sense of permanence of the houses we inhabit. A house is no longer for life. What kinds of housing arise in the face of social mobility? What solutions allow us to think of collective housing as an accessible and shared space? How can we promote flexibility of use in housing? Does the house continue to represent shelter in the ever paradoxical relationship between humans and nature?

## CULTURAL POWER

Cultural production and consumption are gaining increasing relevance in our society. Once seen as an elitist sector, culture has democratized itself, and today we can say that everything is culture, everything is art, everything is spectacle. “Cultural industry” or “creative industry” have become buzzwords that seem to give more importance to numbers than to letters. Culture has become an event and a tourist attraction. The formal exuberance of many cultural buildings is only compatible with special budgets. But there are other questions: how are new buildings created regarding a diversified contemporary cultural production? How can cultural interests be reconciled with mass tourism, and the latter with the environment? And, last but not least, how can Architecture preserve history and collective memory?

## MEDIA POWER

In the world we live in, the illusion that there only exists what is shown in the media grows ever deeper. As everything is published in social networks, the excess of information quickly gives way to indifference and ultimately forgetfulness. In the mass media, notoriety involves the notion that “a tree falling makes more noise than a forest does growing”. Mediatisation is the most visible part of the different powers, and a power in and of itself – in spite of being increasingly weakened by opaque relativism and subjectivity of the image. Architecture also presents itself on this stage, which benefits as much as it harms architects. Aware of the inevitability of media power we ask: is it possible to resist mediatisation? Is there an Architecture of image? Can the speed of the media itself be compatible with architectural time? Can these factors condition our perception of Architecture?

## RITUAL POWER

Religions have played a greater role in society. The world is filled with temples which for millennia have expressed the faith and effort placed in their construction. Apparently lacking that same power today, religious cultures have fractured into micronarratives that oscillate between love and, exceptionally, barbarism. The majority of Western countries are secular states. In Europe, we have the privilege of living in cities shared by churches, synagogues, mosques and other temples. Old temples are transformed and desacralized, but new temples rise. How has religious architecture been liberated from the old canons? What is the relation between the new forms of religious architecture and the religious essence? Can architecture approach multiple creeds? Can the temple go beyond sharing a ritual?

## COUNTERPOWER

Architecture is almost always the expression of power. Architecture is representative. This attribute often causes Architecture to fall victim to counterpower. Attacking architecture is a symbolic way of attacking power. But power rarely exists in a convergent fashion. It has become diffused. Power and counterpower coexist in architecture just as they do in society. The architectural project is the synthesis of the relationship between every micro power represented in the different aspects of the project brief, and in its different actors and means. The project is thus the field in which all counter-powers negotiate. The great power of architecture is to dream the unacceptable compromise. Then there are the exceptions, of course, but that's another story.

# Credits

## BOOK

Editors  
**Casa da Arquitectura**

Editorial Coordination  
**Jorge Carvalho**  
**Pedro Bandeira**  
**Ricardo Carvalho**

General Coordination  
**Jorge Carvalho**

Essayists  
**Alexandra Vougia**  
**André Tavares**  
**Andreas Ruby**  
**Guilherme Wisnik**  
**Ilka Ruby**  
**Ivo Poças Martins**  
**João Belo Rodeia**  
**Joaquim Moreno**  
**Moisés Puente**  
**Nuno Grande**  
**Yuma Shinohara**

Editorial Assistance and Production  
**Ana Pinto** (Casa da Arquitectura)  
**Maya Ruegg** (Lars Müller Publishers)

Iconographic and Bibliographic Collection  
**Magda Seifert**  
**Ivo Poças Martins**

Bibliographic support  
**Faculdade de Arquitectura da Universidade do Porto**

Translation  
**Angela Marquito** (p. 14-23, 32-37)  
**Anton Stark** (p. 4-11, 24-31, 78-257)

Proofreading  
**Scott M. Culp**

Graphic Design  
**Dobra**

Re-design  
**Décio Nascimento**

Printing and finishing  
**Norprint.pt**

No part of this book may be used or reproduced in any form or by any means without the prior written consent of the publishers.

Legal Deposit: 434111/17  
1st edition  
Printed on (paper) Gardamatt Smooth  
Typography: NB Akademie, NB Grotesk

ISBN Casa da Arquitectura 978-989-96790-6-1  
ISBN Lars Müller Publishers 978-3-03778-546-1

© 2017 Casa da Arquitectura, Portugal (www.casadaarquitectura.pt) and Lars Müller Publishers, Zurich, Switzerland (www.lars-mueller-publishers.com). All rights reserved.

In spite of every diligence, it was not possible to identify and contact all the rights holders of images. Any justified complaint will be taken into account within the usual procedures of Casa da Arquitectura.

Project dates presented are the completion dates for each project, or, in the case of non-built projects, the date of the project's design.

## EXHIBITION

This book accompanies the exhibition *Power Architecture*.  
November 17, 2017 to March 18, 2018,  
Casa da Arquitectura, Matosinhos.

General Commissioner  
**Nuno Sampaio** (Casa da Arquitectura)

Curators  
**Jorge Carvalho**  
**Pedro Bandeira**  
**Ricardo Carvalho**

Editorial Coordination  
**Jorge Carvalho**

Editorial Assistance and Production  
**Ana Pinto**

Exhibition project  
**aNC Arquitectos**  
**Teresa Novais**  
**Jorge Carvalho**  
**Joana Fernandes**  
**Inês Bastos**  
**Nuno Sarmento**  
**Beatriz Teixeira**

*Mapping Power/Architecture* Installation Design  
**Bruno Figueiredo**

Lighting design  
**Jorge Costa**

Structural Design  
**Ana Vale**

Exhibition Graphics  
**Dobra**

Exhibition Installation  
**Eurowire**  
**Outros Mercados**  
**Interface – Produção e Cultura**  
(*Mapping Power/Architecture*)

## CASA DA ARQUITECTURA PORTUGUESE CENTER OF ARCHITECTURE

**José Manuel Dias da Fonseca** President  
**Nuno Sampaio** Executive Director  
and Chief Commissioner

## ADMINISTRATION

Executive Commission  
**José Manuel Dias da Fonseca**  
President of the Board of Management  
**Nuno Sampaio** Secretary to the Administration  
**Fernando Rocha** Treasurer to the Administration

## Members

**Portuguese Chamber of Architects**  
represented by **José Manuel Pedreirinho**  
**Porto City Council**  
represented by **Rui Loza**  
**Vila Nova de Gaia City Council**  
represented by **Valentim Miranda**  
**Administração dos Portos do Douro, Leixões e Viana do Castelo, S.A.**  
(Management of Douro and Leixões Ports)  
represented by **Emílio Brogueira Dias**  
**Associação Empresarial de Portugal**  
(Portugal Business Association)  
represented by **Gonçalo Lencastre Medeiros, Carlos Guimarães**

## General Assembly

**Matosinhos City Council**  
represented by **Eduardo Pinheiro** President  
**Metro do Porto, S.A.** (Porto Metro)  
represented by  
**Jorge Moreno Delgado** Vice-President  
**Gonçalo Byrne** Secretary

## Executive Team

Coordination  
**Carla Barros**  
Production  
**Ana Pinto**  
**Alice Prata**  
**Claudia Rosete**  
Image & Design  
**José Pereira**  
Communication and Press  
**Margarida Portugal**  
Educational Service  
**Susana Gaudêncio**  
Collections  
**Ana Filipe**  
**Gilson Fernandes**  
Financial Department  
**Soraia Lebre**  
Funding and Partnerships  
**Joana Ferreira**  
Loja da Casa  
**Carla Sousa**  
**Filomena Rocha**  
**Rita Correia Pinto**  
Infrastructures and IT  
**Paulo Silva**  
Main Office  
**Natacha Mota**

Power and architecture are fundamental to the question of how contemporary society and architecture work together. Since power lacks an all-encompassing logic, coherence, and capability for instrumentalisation, the question concerns both the autonomous powers of architectural forms and a set of external powers represented through architecture.

The selected projects, based on current and extreme syntheses of comprehensive and complex world-views, enable mapping a network of powers that align, intersect, inflect, and diverge from each other: collective power, regulatory power, technological power, economic power, domestic power, cultural power, media power, and ritual power. The issue of counterpower, always implicit, is then explicitly discussed against this background.

Across eight essays developed by invited authors, along with eight visual dossiers, the book renders visible sets of entities, informal conventions, actors and means involved in the creation of architecture, that is, it expresses the dynamic of the collective that ceaselessly tests the architectural composition of the common world.