Ruptures and center of gravity

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Within the process of developing a project – whether in the early phases of a competition or during the planning of a building's execution – a point is reached at which the information that has been collected begins to become articulate. The entirety of the programmatic data, technical problems, economic and ideological parameters begin to form a new order. These components subordinate themselves in a structure that, up to then, was not yet formulated, it ascribes their roles to them and defines the tolerances and relationships among all the components. At this point the process of design becomes, to a large extent, intellectually comprehensible. More importantly, it moves from the intimate, nebulous realm of inductive creativity into the argumentative terrain defined by communication and reproduction. Thereafter, the design is located within a deductive process that determines the basis for and the categories regulating subsequent development.

The daily functioning of an architectural office necessitates the communication upon which the transition from inductive to deductive thought depends. In an academic situation, this kind of communication is not inherent to the design process, but is exercised as external critique, at the desk or in reviews. The limits and lengths of collaboration are dictated by the semester, a procedural affinity between student and professor may exist through fortunate coincidence but does not necessarily develop naturally in a longer-term working relationship.

This transition in modes of thought effected by means of communication, which exists and even recurs in the process of design, often is displaced by the application of borrowed formulae. The principles according to which decisions are made no longer arise as questions are asked, as in the former case, but are determined by flat at the outset: at the beginning stands an analytical proposition, a spatial theme, or narrative chosen in order to achieve a foreseeable product. With each repetition of the steps between initial choice and product, the process becomes a generalized recipe. Why do we only seldom conceive of the design as a means off expression? Don't we secretly want to grow, to learn to speak of that which moves us?

Students are rarely in the position to acquaint themselves with the entire scope of the design process, from the initial gathering of thoughts to physical realization. Why? Won't they be subject to it, sooner or later, in "professional life"? Aren't they looking for the objective criteria, perhaps to be found in it, with which to structure their own work synthetically? Is this not a prerequisite to the ability to consciously guide creative energy, to focus it in a vision? Perhaps a semester could be organised where students enter the design process "vertically", at a specific point along its horizontal development, rather than always moving from putative beginning to end product.

Empirical experience raises questions, reaffirms hypotheses, or creates disjunctions that clarify the dialectic cohesion – the relationship between inductive and deductive, between problems discovered and solutions proposed – in one's own development. We could, within an academic setting, consciously create such ruptures by means of practical experiments.

We can only begin to confront uncertainty and lack of orientation when we have found our own center of gravity. To base the foundations of our profession upon career opportunism or formal, stylistic concerns is, finally, inadequate. Our language is still located in the sphere of perception. It is dependent upon the laws of physics and geometry.

In my eyes, our discipline is still one of scientific precision, not of pedantic, idelogical maxims or graphic ability, or of accurate execution but, much more, of precise thought.