

The Politics of Managerialism

The Performative Turn in Typological Thinking and its Post-Critical Instrumentalization

Prologue: The Return of Typology

The subject matter of this article is the return of typological thinking in the area where one would least expect it to happen, in the circle of post-critics. The most pronounced demonstration of this is Alejandro Zaera Polo's essay *The Politics of the Envelope: A Political Critique of Materialism*, which is now ten years old. Here, Zaera Polo, of Foreign Office Architects fame, outlined a new theory of architecture anchored in the performative range of the building envelope and its ever-expanding technological sophistications. His classification of building envelopes according to their performative capacities is a case in point, being the most exhaustive post-critical manifesto in existence, yet Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting's idealization of the Bentham Panopticon as a template for architectural operativity also deserves mention.

This article attempts to chart this new territory with a critical eye to the ethical and aesthetic consequences of the performative and post-critical turn in typological thinking. In what follows, the themes of instrumentality and managerialism play leading roles in parsing Zaera Polo's reinterpretation of typology under the aegis of performativity. This takes us from a discussion of the roots of post-criticality in panopticism, via discussions of function, form, and organization in *The Politics of the Envelope*, to a consideration of the role of the city and the question of performativity in post-critical type formation. But let us first briefly revisit the historical background for any contemporary discussion of typology in architecture.

Themes in Typological Discourse since the 1960s

Typological thinking has been one of the hallmarks of the discourse on architectural theory, history, and criticism as it has taken shape since the 1960s. Unlike the post-critics, who regard this intensification of architectural theorization as a historical anomaly to be rectified, anyone acknowledging both the growing compartmentalization of knowledge since the Enlightenment

and the transformative power of new technologies and media under modernity would be inclined to accept the rise of theory as the logical counterpart to these drastic restructurings. This is no less so in the context of architecture. When Karsten Harries comments that we should „expect that works of architecture, too, as opposed to merely functional buildings, today need the aid of theory if they are to give us a full satisfaction,“ he summarizes this crucial impact of modernity, the condition of which is somehow hubristically nullified by post-critics.¹ „Art and architecture of the modern period have become intrinsically theoretical,“ Edward Winters comments, and this condition is here to stay.²

1 Harries 2009: 87.

2 Winters 2007: 52.

This vast theoretical field is well-traveled territory in terms of retrospective historiographical and critical travelogues, and therefore I will only provide a few historical points of orientation necessary for characterizing the performative turn in typological thinking brought about by the post-critics. The importance of the concept of type came to the fore with Giulio Carlo Argan's rediscovery of Quatremère de Quincy's definition in the latter's *Dictionnaire Historique d'Architecture, contenant dans son plan les notions historiques, descriptives, archaéologiques, biographiques, théoriques, didactiques et pratiques de cet art* (1832):

„The word 'type' presents less the image of a thing to copy or imitate completely than the idea of an element which ought itself to serve as a rule for the model. [...] The model, as understood in the practical execution of the art, is an object that should be repeated as it is; the type, on the contrary, is an object after which each [artist] can conceive works of art that may have no resemblance. All is precise and given in the model; all is more or less vague in the type“.³

3 Quatremère de Quincy 1977 [1832]: 148.

While imitation of a model requires resemblance, Quatremère's introduction of the novel idea of type allows for a more profound but also more open-ended kind of imitative process, anteceding the possibility of the model and its precision. In Quatremère's *Dictionnaire*, the new emphasis on type serves to bolster his belief that all architectural making ultimately plays out as metaphorical imitation of nature.

In Quatremère's original context, 'type' has a decidedly idealistic character, typical of the search for givens and irreducible origins prevailing during the Enlightenment:

„At the same time, we see that the imitation of types is nothing that feeling and intellect cannot recognize, and nothing that cannot be opposed by prejudice and ignorance. [...] In every country, the art of regular building is born of a preexisting source. Everything must have an antecedent. Nothing, in any genre, comes from nothing, and this must apply to all of the inventions of man. Also we see that all things, in spite of subsequent changes, have conserved, always visibly, always in a way that

is evident to feeling and reason, this elementary principle, which is like a sort of nucleus about which are collected, and to which are coordinated in time, the developments and variations of forms to which the object is susceptible. Thus we have achieved a thousand things in each genre, and one of the principal occupations of science and philosophy, in order to understand the reasons for them, is to discover their origin and primitive cause. This is what must be called 'type' in architecture, as in every other field of inventions and human institutions".⁴

4 Quatremère de Quincy 1977 [1832]: 148–149.

In Argan's 1962 reception of this classic text, such Neo-Platonist motives have been tempered, if not entirely replaced, by a more Kantian sentiment where the relevance of typology lies not in its ideality but in its capacity for variation.⁵ „It is never formulated *a priori* but always deduced from a series of instances. [...] The birth of a 'type' is therefore dependent on the existence of a series of buildings having between them an obvious formal and functional analogy".⁶ It would thus be appropriate to consider typology a cognitive schema emerging from the procedures of perception, imagination, and conceptualization alike. Typology „is not just a classifying or statistical process."⁷ When Rudolf Wittkower, confronting Palladio's various rural villas in Veneto, "‘designs’ a schema that totalizes the villa type as the geometric-mathematical systematization of the ground plan," he is engaged in type formation.⁸

5 Moneo 1978: 36.

6 Argan 1996 [1963]: 243 (emphasis original).

7 Argan 1996 [1963]: 244.

8 Hays 2016: 209.

What Argan gains from this conclusion is that type „has to be understood as the interior structure of a form or as a principle which contains the possibility of infinite formal variation and further structural modification of the 'type' itself".⁹ Typology, then, is not static but a mode of operation adaptable to change and bifurcation. Neither is typology, according to Argan, chained by historical precedent:

9 Argan 1996 [1963]: 243.

„Through this reduction of preceding works of art to a 'type,' the artist frees himself from being conditioned by a definite historical form, and neutralizes the past".¹⁰

10 Argan 1996 [1963]: 244–245.

Already at the time of Argan's lecture, typology was becoming both an interpretative tool and a defining theoretical focal point for a number of Italian theorists, notably Saverio Muratori, Carlo Aymonino, Vittorio Gregotti, and Aldo Rossi, whose contributions all embody the notion of *continuità*.¹¹ They are usually collectively referred to as *La Tendenza*. Rossi's claims, in *L'architettura della città* (1966)—that architectural type formation is co-dependent on context and urban morphology, and that a building's type can outlast its function—catapulted typology to the forefront of architectural theorizing.

11 Forty 2000: 307–309.

If we accept Anthony Vidler's verdict, in his 1976 *Oppositions* editorial "The Third Typology," the impact of the Italian Neo-Rationalism meant, regardless of methodological variations between theorists, nothing less than the emergence of a new branch of typological thinking in architecture. For the first time in history, Vidler claimed, being sympathetic to the Italian move-

ment, architectural typology was derived from a synchronous relationship with the city, not from external sources of legitimation, such as analogies to nature (the first typology, typical of Enlightenment rationalist reasoning), or to the machine (the second typology, typical of Modernist technological determinism)¹².

12 Vidler 1976: 1–2.

From Vidler's theoretical vantage point, what is achieved with 'the third typology' of Neo-Rationalism is a form-centered „ontology of the city" where architecture has attained autonomy and no longer renders services, symbolic or otherwise, to society or technology. Even functionality is secondary, because it is subjugated to the conditioning effects of type.¹³ The appeal to Vidler of this 'third' view of type formation is understandable, since it neatly allows for both stability and variation. In giving up the Enlightenment rationalization of nature, which Vidler finds eminently expressed in the theory of the 'primitive hut' of Abbé Laugier, another Enlightenment idea—the autonomization of architecture—is gained as compensation. In that sense architecture can finally find its place, joining the ranks of the other arts that have become abstract, media-specific, and emancipated from representation, if one follows the train of thought of formalists such as Clement Greenberg.

13 Moneo 1978: 36.

Rossi's theory of the architecture of the city causes both a materialist turn and a mnemonic turn, yet also carries the imprint of Enlightenment reason which is particularly identifiable in Rossi's fascination with isomorphism between language and architecture. In the end, however, the ideas of 'critical reconstruction' and the recovery of types (and of their intrinsic collective memories) stand in the way of new type formation, hence, in his *Autobiografia scientifica* (1981), Rossi abandoned his former belief in the mnemonic programming of types. Rossi's original idea of the city „is one in which time seems to be frozen".¹⁴ When Rossi arrives at his typology at the expense of the urban lifeworld, which merely occupies his city of permanence temporarily, he does so in direct opposition to the Modernist project of channeling the very forces of urbanization and social dynamics into the design process.¹⁵ If for the avant-gardes of the 1920s, the type formation, if any, was to be guided by the immediate experience of modernity, such a search for immanence and topicality of form was entirely discredited by Rossi's approach, only to return again in new disguises. This idea of making feedback from the urban lifeworld itself the subject matter of architecture reemerged in the 1970s – in two competing versions – in the rival theories of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown and Rem Koolhaas, respectively. In reality, though, in many built works by Venturi and Scott Brown, architecture became its own hermetic model, its ironizing results being only decipherable and appreciable by connoisseurs.¹⁶ This retreat to the model was further radicalized in the diagrammatic practice of Peter Eisenman.

14 Moneo 1978: 37.

15 Tafuri 1976: 86, 96

16 Moneo 1978: 39–40.

The Panoptical Birthplace of Post-Criticality

The shortcomings of Rossi's theory, and of its architectural materializations, are exposed inadvertently when Vidler celebrates Rossi's 1974 project for

a new Regional Administration Building in Trieste for its invocation of an eighteenth-century prison. To Vidler, „the dialectic is clear as a fable“ as the motivic hybridization of ‘prison’ and ‘town hall’ results in a metaphorical effect of oppositions, creating a double code.¹⁷ Still, such ‘analogous architecture’ easily becomes semantically hermetic, as for its oppositional effect to set in, one has to identify two historical building types and their confrontation in the project.

17 Vidler 1976: 3.

The eighteenth-century prison again surfaces in the most unlikely of discourses, when Robert Somol and Sarah Whiting invoke the Benthamian Panopticon and Rem Koolhaas’s Downtown Athletic Club in Manhattan, idealizing these types as the raw material for a disciplinary reorientation of architecture toward the post-critical.¹⁸ Both structures are, it should be noted, imaginary to varying degrees. Although the Downtown Athletic Club did certainly exist and was housed in a particular skyscraper in Manhattan, Koolhaas’s reconstructive—and evocative—hedonistic narrative of a building replete with stratified social life forms is nothing but a historical interpolation.

18 Somol and Whiting 2002: 75.

Somol and Whiting’s choice of the Panopticon, immortalized through Michel Foucault’s emblemizing use of this project as the very mode of operation of disciplinary society, tells us even more about what the post-critical mindset’s reprogramming of typology entails. It is a bold move to ground a new movement in architectural thinking on a model mechanism for confinement, disciplining, and surveillance, even when this mechanism is filtered through the notion of the diagram and the celebration of creativity. Foucault concludes:

„But the Panopticon must not be understood as a dream building: it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; its functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance or friction, must be represented as a pure architectural and optical system: it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached from any specific use“.¹⁹

19 Foucault 1995 [1975]: 205.

Nonetheless, the Panopticon *is* actually a dream building. To begin with, its mode of existence was instructive and utopian, and it is thus not the product of type formation in Argan’s sense or in Rossi’s sense, since the Panopticon neither has a material precedent, nor derives from the repository of urban form. It belongs to a genealogy of utopian projects, some of which have been actualized, some not; and it is the unsurpassed *pedagogical* value of the Panopticon that prompted Somol and Whiting to exemplify the diagrammatic mode of operativity through Bentham’s original mind picture, and not via its particular offspring. Virtuality and instrumentality are the two recurring themes in the program for post-criticality, and the Panopticon is an optimum visualization of both.

Partial to the vitalism still popular in architecture schools today, Somol and Whiting’s polemical piece pits practice and performance against history

and theory, yet can only function with plentiful reference to history and theory. For unlike the two authors' de-historicizing treatment of the Panopticon, Bentham's ingenious 'Inspection House' belongs squarely to a particular épistémè if we follow Foucault. In spite of its impact, few buildings were accurately modeled after it, and Bentham's Panopticon remains a prime candidate for being the most ideal, abstract, prescriptive, and virtual project imaginable. When a prescriptive model for a disciplinary society is reinterpreted as an ideal catalyst for architectural operativity, it should not come as a surprise that at least some of the ethos of the original wears off on its architectural instrumentalization. Unless one believes in the blankness and neutrality of technology and its application, of course.

Typology Redux: The Politics of the Envelope

As we have seen, it is part and parcel of the post-critical incentive to value instrumentality above anything else. In Somol and Whiting's framing of the discipline, nothing else remains but instrumentality. With Zaera Polo's lengthier contribution, "The Politics of the Envelope: A Political Critique of Materialism," politics takes center stage in defining a post-critical stance. Furthermore, typology explicitly reenters architectural discourse.

Such an explicit combination of typology and politics is not entirely new, however. In response to La Tendenza, Vidler maintained that

„The distinguishing characteristic of the new ontology beyond the specifically formal aspect is that the city, as opposed to the single column, the hut-house, or the useful machine, is and always has been political in its essence. The fragmentation and re-composition of its spatial and institutional forms thereby can never be separated from the political implications“.²⁰

²⁰ Vidler 1976: 3.

Inspired by the holism of Bruno Latour's *Dingpolitik*, Zaera Polo proposes „a directed political ecology of architecture“ even, with an exegesis of the performativity of the building envelope as the shortcut to such achievement.²¹ Now ten years old, Zaera Polo's manifesto for architecture remains captivating for several reasons, but the following inquiry is mainly devoted to the themes of performativity and managerialism in *The Politics of the Envelope*.

²¹ Zaera Polo 2008: 101.

Advancing „a new political critique of architecture“²² can be accomplished, Zaera Polo argues, by shifting focus from architecture's criticality to its physicality, and by abandoning a representational view of politics in favor of a performative one. He singles out the building envelope as the privileged interface of architecture and politics, for the envelope has the potential of enabling representational, environmental, and territorial operations alike.

²² Zaera Polo 2008: 76.

Furthermore, the building envelope has the benefit of being an intuitive, basic, and archaic element on which a theory can be constructed, as demonstrated by Gottfried Semper's materialist account of the origin and development of architecture,²³ which is also referenced by Zaera Polo.²⁴

²³ Semper 1989 [1851].

²⁴ Zaera Polo 2008: 77.

This is where typology enters the picture, as the building envelope is finally bestowed with a singular classification of its own after decennia of neglect. More precisely,

„a general theory of the building envelope aims to draw a direct link between spatial typologies and political modalities or forms of political organization“.²⁵

25 Zaera Polo 2008: 81.

Suggesting the four types of flat-horizontal, spherical, flat-vertical, and vertical building envelopes as the cornerstones of his anti-formalist theory, Zaera Polo presents a new kind of typology in architecture: one derived from performative properties. Still, just like the former typologies of architecture, Zaera Polo's taxonomy too is neither based on exactitude, nor on resemblance.

Yet typology, in the traditional sense, endures a series of decisive losses in order to better serve Zaera Polo's political project. Here, however, I will deal only with the losses related to the internal workings of the building envelope, not with the losses bearing upon the relationship between building and city.

Typology Redux: The Politics of the Envelope

If we take Zaera Polo's explanation for the genesis of the spherical type of envelope as a typical example of his style of reasoning, we can detect a prominent functionalist tone:

„The lower envelope ratio that bubble buildings produce in respect to buildings of comparative volume is an index of the rarefaction of the exterior surface, perhaps as a result of increased security and energy concerns“.²⁶

26 Zaera Polo 2008: 78.

What is truly new in his typological reasoning is the notion that the strategic employment of certain material configurations in the envelope can *causally* trigger certain desired political effects. As Zaera Polo explains, his project is

„based on the hypothesis that the political possibilities of the envelope are primarily related to its dimensions, and that every dimensional type can trigger specific technological, social and political effects“.²⁷

27 Zaera Polo 2008: 81.

This strategizing of typology might have a forebear in Rossi's initial project of programming the city mnemonically and symbolically in order to recover lost layers of meaning—a conviction still popular with New Urbanists—but in Zaera Polo's fashioning, the instrumental impulse reaches new levels. In such a theory, there is no room for happenstance or absurdity of the kind celebrated by Koolhaas in his tale of *Delirious New York*; for instance, the aforementioned Downtown Athletic Club as a hypothetical 'social condenser'.²⁸ Owing mainly to the pioneering contributions by Koolhaas, Venturi, and Scott Brown, it was a major legacy of the theoretical debates and ex-

28 Koolhaas 1994 [1978].

changes of the 1970s to undermine the old notion of 'honesty' and linearity of expression between functional program (interior) and façade (exterior). This attack on 'functional transparency,' i.e. 'form follows function,' was perhaps the biggest blow to functionalism. Only seemingly does Zaera Polo embrace this conclusion, for he reinstates the linear connection between interior and exterior; variously discussing the envelope as sometimes the outcome of program, sometimes the determinant of program. Either way, for Zaera Polo the envelope cannot be detached from the logic of program as it has a political role to fulfill, thus his objection to the Venturian solution.²⁹ Thus the outer shell a building has been recovered as the privileged place where the inner logic of the container is to appear, transformed:

„It is a boundary which does not merely register the pressure of the interior, but resists it, transforming its energy into something else“.³⁰

This deterministic streak in Zaera Polo's project provokes collateral implications. Form is now merely the byproduct of a self-sustaining envelope optimized for maximum efficiency of means and materials, and thus a central aim of the post-critics has been achieved: to make the case for the self-explanatory, non-representational work of architecture whose properties can be accounted for *in toto* solely by reference to the work's design rationale and process of creation. Post-critics have faith in „the isomorphic remapping of life and art“.³¹

Zaera Polo's determinism deviates from the account by Somol, who clings to irony and to catchy pop cultural metaphors rather than to arguments proper, and to whom form has simply been superseded by shape. End of story.³²

Zaera Polo argues rather that the patterns, tessellations, textures, and other effects of contemporary building façades (or rather: envelopes) have evolved, both in a macroscopic and in a microscopic perspective, as logical responses to particular technological and societal needs.³³ He is searching for

„a viable escape from the arbitrary deployment of shapes with neither binding relationships nor deliberate effects on the typological, organizational, or constructive nature of a building, the condition to which a large part of 'signature' architecture has been reduced“.³⁴

Envelopes without Organization

Because of its exclusivity of focus, Zaera Polo's typology has a hard time accounting for the internal organization of buildings and its variations. Across his manifesto, 'flow' is one of the most commonly found words, but even if one accepts his typology as derived from the experience of globalization and its erasure of any contextuality, his theory is unable to capture both the differences of spatial organization between buildings of the same sort, and the likenesses of spatial organization between buildings with entirely different building envelopes. Since Zaera Polo mostly stays 'on the surface' of the envelope throughout his analyses, his rejection of critique as outdated becomes a

29 "Despite superficial similarities, Venturi's populist manipulation of identities is the complete opposite of this approach, as the two sides of the equation remain aseptically detached at the façade line in both the duck and the decorated shed." Zaera Polo 2005: 84.

30 Zaera Polo 2008: 78.

31 Somol and Whiting 2002: 74.

32 Somol 2004.

33 Zaera Polo 2009.

34 Zaera Polo 2005: 84.

self-fulfilling prophecy since critique can only emerge from a thorough analysis of organization. Zaera Polo plainly claims that contemporary architecture no longer speaks through plans and sections.³⁵

Other contemporary theorists of architecture have devoted considerable attention to the inner workings of buildings and to the strategically unbalanced appeal to the senses achieved through mechanisms such as transparency. This is the case in Hal Foster's critical review of Lord Norman Foster's architectural strategy, within which glass walls are often installed inside buildings as a barrier permitting penetration by sight, but not allowing for substantial human interaction.³⁶ Furthermore, the insight gained from Foster analyzing Foster, pertaining to the discussion here, is the fact that many of Foster's buildings exert the same panoptical mode of operation, regardless of whether the client is a dictatorship or a democracy, and in spite of great variation of envelope design.³⁷ Such analysis is lacking in *The Politics of the Envelope*, and as to the panoptical principle, any mention of Foucault is curiously missing from a text otherwise replete with references to theorists of power, globalization, and politics. Similarly, Zaera Polo's theory goes amiss in failing to consider Office for Metropolitan Architecture's CCTV Building in Beijing as anything else but a formal reinterpretation of skyscraper typology on a monumental and maybe 'dictatorial' scale, when in fact the building's oppressive functionality is less to be found in its appearance than in its sophisticated internal compartmentalization of public and private accessibility.³⁸ The key to understanding such projects is not a theory of the envelope and its statistical 'flows' but a theory of the post-political nature of management that Zaera Polo seems to acknowledge.

Further critique of Zaera Polo's typology, in terms of its disregard for functional organization, could, for instance, proceed along the lines provided by Kim Dovey, in the latter's diagramming of power distribution in buildings.³⁹ Zaera Polo's disdain for anything remotely reminiscent of hierarchy and representation robs his theory of the capacity for organizational grasp. On the opening pages of *Learning from Las Vegas*, Venturi, Scott Brown, and Izenour made the point, still valid, that it is impossible to navigate a modern airport by spatial indicators alone. Wayfinding needs support from signage.⁴⁰ Such mixed situations, in part supported by space, in part by symbols, remain unaccounted for by a unitary theory of the envelope.

The Hegemony of Management and Instrumentality

A prelude to the delivery of architecture into the hands of managerialism can be found in Somol and Whiting's foundational text, where the discipline of architecture is part of a non-hierarchical cluster offering no guarantee that architecture is not in fact subsumed by management.⁴¹ Even more so, the fascination with management culture can be discerned in several polemical pieces by Michael Speaks where he recommends locating a replacement ethos for architecture in the world of business.⁴²

35 Zaera Polo 2008: 77.

36 Foster 2011: 48–49.

37 Foster 2011: 48.

38 Zaera Polo 2008: 91, 99.

39 Dovey 2008.

40 Venturi, Izenour, and Scott Brown 1977: 9.

41 "Projective Architecture: diagram of overlap of A (architecture) with P (politics), E (economics) and T (theory)." Somol and Whiting 2002: 75.

42 Speaks 2002a; 2002b; 2002c; 2006.

In Zaera Polo's work, we can find more substantial signs of a radical turn-over in the value system of architecture. His theory causes a paradigm shift, not towards politics, but towards management. 'Efficient,' 'effective,' and 'efficiency' are some of the most commonly found words throughout his text, and they signal a reorientation that goes beyond mere rationalism. „Efficiency is the first cardinal principle of managerial governmentality," Thibault Le Texier asserts.⁴³ The Modern Movement teemed with rationalist impulses and got its fair share of the technological determinism popular at the time, but the post-critical proposition differs from past rationalisms in its substitution of 'information' for 'theory.' Admittedly, the theories of the historical avant-gardes strategically accompanying and supporting divergent modes of design can be considered neither the last word about these movements, nor the truth about architecture as such. Yet theory, although not holding truth value, has the potential to enhance our aesthetic appreciation and understanding of art and architecture.⁴⁴

43 Le Texier 2012: 12.

44 "That is, in appreciating the work of the austere functionalists, for example, I am to consider the theoretical aspects of their work, not in terms of the truth of functionalism, but in terms of the contribution of the theory to the visual experience the work affords." Winters 2007: 55.

In spite of its ambition to bypass theory in the 'critical' sense, Zaera Polo's 'politics of the envelope' is no less reliant on theory than any other discursive corollary to architecture, past and present. However, if Zaera Polo thinks that his protocol for the revival of architecture is of a political nature, I beg to differ. His notion of politics is far more post-political than ideological, and the reason for this is that the purposiveness of architecture, which has historically been a matter of wide-ranging debate, is condensed into the single value of instrumental reason, or *Zweckrationalität*, to use sociologist Max Weber's precise term.⁴⁵

45 Weber 1978: 24–26.

In spite of a century of a 'hermeneutics of suspicion,' to paraphrase Paul Ricoeur, management has only recently grown into an object worthy of critical study and analysis. Because management is neither 'value,' nor 'ideology,' nor 'belief,' it goes unacknowledged and requires a measure of its own. Even Foucault's rich conceptual apparatus offers no path to confront the phenomenon of management, but by drawing on Foucault's intellectual legacy, Le Texier has recently opened a path of inquiry into managerial governmentality:

„Management is not state administration, it is not discipline, it is not religious authority, nor is it the logic of the market; even if it draws from these ways of thinking, it is a genuine way of conceiving power and society. Thus it asks for a specific understanding articulated around its own principles: not sovereignty, security, territory, population, or justice; not truth, faith, or salvation; not interest, profit, property, investment, or capital; but *efficiency, organization, control, and knowledge*“.⁴⁶

46 Le Texier 2012: 11–12 (emphasis original).

If elevated to a universal guideline, Le Texier explains, 'efficiency' tends to supplant other values. „In this perspective, words, objects and people are essentially the producers of effects“.⁴⁷ That is why all that remains in Zaera Polo's typology is the criterion of performativity itself. The next two fulcra of managerial governmentality, 'organization' and 'control,' form the common

47 Le Texier 2012: 12.

denominator between cybernetic and managerial thought. The exercise of control is neither disciplining, nor commanding; instead, it is either the imposition of standards to be obeyed, or the dynamics of accountability, arbitration, negotiation, and compromise. Principally, managerialism counteracts the declaration and confrontation of value systems, as any possible value is supposedly able to be absorbed into a procedural mode of reflexivity. Therefore, whenever one employs managerial logic, one engages, at varying degrees, with a particular suppression of values in the service of pure instrumentality.

Lastly, Le Texier mentions ‘knowledge’ as a vital component of management. In a managerial setting, knowledge is always instrumental in nature. Likewise, it is mainly quantitative—statistical, informational, computational. In fact, ‘information’ might be a better word than knowledge for the raw material of management. The proliferation of think tank offshoots of architectural offices in recent years is driven by a need for information (but not theory). Information is immediately tradable and exchangeable, theory is not. Theory entails a mode of reflexivity not activatable by mere informational circulation. When post-critics aim at replacing theory with information, they privilege practical (or instrumental) reason at the expense of value-oriented reason (*Wertrationalität*).

Apart from generalities, and except for environmentalism, the values driving the ‘politics’ of *The Politics of the Envelope* are never declared, for managerial governmentality operates precisely by supplanting all previous value systems. Managerialism is not politically directable, let alone malleable, since it always already precludes non-instrumental modes of thinking, including political, ethical, and aesthetic ones. Therefore, if one’s aim is to recover a particularly *architectural* version of politics, then an architectural typology built upon managerial concepts is a self-defeating proposition.

Epilogue: A Not-So-Performative Typology of Architecture

In a historical perspective, typological thinking in architecture has always nurtured an instrumental frame of mind. But it has also always contained more than that. Today, diagrammatic, nonlinear, and emergent modes of designing and projecting architecture hold the promise of a creativity capable of creating architecture *ex novo*, rather than merely reproducing what is already known. Supposedly, typology, being partial to the normative and the conventional, must yield to new methods of design.⁴⁸

48 Bandini 1984.

„But do dynamic systems models really guarantee the end of instrumental thinking? Only if their consequences are fully accepted, if every element of the equation is understood to be interrelated and changeable, from buildings and their contexts to the designers and their practices as well“.⁴⁹

49 Braham 2000: 3–4.

William Braham’s poignant question points the finger at what, in the context of this article, can be said to be the major shortcoming of Zaera Polo’s scheme,

namely that it is saturated with instrumentality and betrays little influence from the dynamic systems ideals that Zaera Polo otherwise admires. His initial choice of subject matter, that of performance, filters out any other concerns than instrumental ones. Can ‘performance,’ then, even be discussed in relation to architecture without automatically leading to architecture’s exhaustive submission to instrumental rationality, and to the voiding of the discipline?

50 Zaera Polo 2008: 80.

51 Le Corbusier 2007: 195.

When looking at Zaera Polo’s diagram of the four basic types of envelope,⁵⁰ it is hard not to be reminded of Le Corbusier’s ‘lesson of Rome’ where the monumental buildings of Rome have been abstracted into a typology of select Euclidean geometries.⁵¹ Because of Zaera Polo’s retreat to the object and the surface, however performative they may be, it is reification and objecthood, rather than performativity and relationality, that are foregrounded in his narrative. To Zaera Polo, performance is a matter of optimization, quantification, measurement, and statistics, rather than anything remotely associated with symbolization, such as theatricality, representation, or relatedness. Performance is merely regulating capacity, especially in an environmental sense, and this environment is exclusively the building’s own—it is not context, surroundings, site, orientation, atmosphere, or topography. Of Semper’s original four elements of architecture, only one remains in Zaera Polo’s narrow reinterpretation; and of Semper’s regional sensibility, nothing in fact remains. This emphasis on the insular building’s self-governing, ‘autopoietic’ capacity, together with the myopic focus of security concerns, makes Zaera Polo’s ‘intelligent’ envelope almost an heir to the panopticon so admired by post-critics.

As an alternative to Zaera Polo’s focus on a single architectural feature only, we might consider David Leatherbarrow’s more inclusive, less reifying approach to performative architecture where the aim—very much in attunement with Semper’s—is to unravel „how the building discloses itself through its operations“. In contrast to Zaera Polo, Leatherbarrow firmly rejects „that the development of new instruments and methods of predicting the building’s structural or environmental behavior will radically redefine the discipline’s practice and theory“. ⁵² Zaera Polo would probably agree that “the building is its effects, and is known primarily through them, through its actions or performances,” but Leatherbarrow’s account of performativity is able to accommodate a wider range of relational qualities which are neither predictable by the architect, nor subjectable to instrumentality,⁵³ for „to understand architecture’s performative character we cannot rely on transparent and objective description alone, or on techniques of quantification and measurement“. ⁵⁴

52 Leatherbarrow 2005: 7.

53 Leatherbarrow 2005: 10 (emphasis original).

54 Leatherbarrow 2005: 12.

As we have ascertained, post-critical typologies condense either into the panopticon or into the performative and responsive building envelope. Both are certainly ‘performative.’ Yet neither are equipped with the properties that can serve as an exhaustive foundation for architectural performance, for in the case of the panopticon, its disciplinary performativity—which asymmetrically reduces the citizen to the inmate—is only appropriate for a narrow range of institutional buildings; and in the case of the self-supporting building envelope, its mode of operation mainly furthers managerial ends. Furthermore,

the envelope theory cannot adequately account for variability of socio-functional program and spatial organization across exemplars of the same envelope type; it can only explain basic and generic modes of control.

In both of these conceptualizations of architectural typology, aesthetics and collective memory atrophy. What matters is entirely efficiency of operation, whether of the disciplining or controlling sort. A further similarity uniting these two instrumentalist understandings of 'type' is that both are substantially 'autopoietic' and inwardly oriented: both abandon the city as the locus of type formation. As a utopian and generic model, the panopticon can be reproduced anywhere and anytime, its effect being always the same; and as a loose principle for architectural design, the advanced building envelope can perform a variety of managerial functions, regardless of place and time. This is of course why the best examples of 'intelligent' building envelopes belong to the category of globalized architecture: airports, hotels, corporate headquarters, administrative buildings, with a minority of advanced envelopes being utilized for spectacular architecture sheltering museums, stadiums, international venues and expositions. Yet a lot of crucial urban infrastructure finds no place in the 'politics of the envelope'—subway stations, public parks, certain types of megastructure, new types of landscape urbanism—because it has no use for an envelope, and oftentimes eludes objecthood.

As we recall, the first candidate for a post-critical type was Koolhaas's vision of the multifunctional Downtown Athletic Club. Such stacking of functional programs was neither dependent on the panoptical principle, being rather an *escape* from such mechanisms, nor was it a function of the choice of envelope. In a fashion antithetical to Zaera Polo, who compacts Aristotle's *Politics* into the lesson of 'the tragedy of the commons,' Aristotle also surfaces in Leatherbarrow's text, but here as the definition that „architecture imitates human action and life,” and this wisdom „may be ancient, but it is still largely true“.⁵⁵ If Zaera Polo's proposal for a new typology seems to be unable to capture the Koolhaasian lifeworld, both in actuality and in spirit, it is precisely because its fixation with the envelope fails to register a large portion of both architectural potential and human interference. This indicates that both emergent typologies in need of familiarization, and conventional ones with an established symbolic value require a more inclusive framework which can accommodate relations, contexts, and typographies beyond the straitjacket of the envelope.

55 Zaera Polo 2008: 77; Leatherbarrow 2005: 8. See also Carl 2011.

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