

Thirty Years of Archidoxioralia Universalis: Past, Present and Future of the GIRAS Group in Barcelona

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Thirty years of a PhD Program in Architecture

Thirty years ago the Spanish Government, at the beginning of a democratic regime, approved a new law in order to organize PhD programs in all Spanish universities.

Hundreds of programs arose and three different programs started in the School of Architecture in Barcelona, namely: Theory and Practices of Architectural Design, Urban Planning and Technology and Architecture.

Ten years ago, with a political move inspired by the Bologna Declaration, the Spanish Government had a brilliant idea to transform all these PhD Programs into Masters Degrees, and to organize the PhD students in Doctorate Schools, without courses, and with the PhD dissertations as the only academic work.

This brilliant idea pushed back twenty years the PhD programs in Spain and hundreds of PhD Spanish and foreign students, never finished their dissertations, without seminars, without academic help and without money.

In our case, the research group GIRAS (Research Group on Architecture and Social Sciences) survived, and, in thirty years, we have achieved 100 dissertations, published in the International Journal, ARQUITECTONICS, and a web www.arquitectonics.com.

Findings and Keepings

The basic assumption that gives our PhD program theoretical energy is to consider architecture and urban design knowledge as “Phronesis”, that is, as a special kind of virtuosity defined by Aristotle as: “practical wisdom”, common to architects, teachers and legislators.

In this way the work of architects is not only technical, but social and cultural, and the works by Paul Ricoeur, Joanni Pallasmaa or Mikhail Bakhtin are very relevant for this same reason.

We think that the PhD dissertations in architecture fail as they remain at the surface of the object of study as Jeremy Till has clearly shown; only the physical dimensions of the buildings are taken into account. In these circumstances, the theoretical frame of the dissertations is weak or often, inexistent, and architects keep attached to old philosophical paradigms without a deep understanding of them. Then, abstract art loses its power, buildings have no social meanings for users and geometry is a mathematical strategy without phenomenological energy. And finally architecture exists without context and without meanings.

Some Ideas for the Future

In diagram I and II we have organized the different branches analyzed in the group GIRAS as a framework for research.

In diagram III we uncovered a very strange quality of the profession of architecture. In contrast with other professions with a similar “practical wisdom” our profession has not a basic “OATH”, where our research is rooted.

In fact, in order to develop PhD dissertation in architecture today we must have a worldwide network of experts, as a consequence of the extreme variety of topics in diagram I and II.

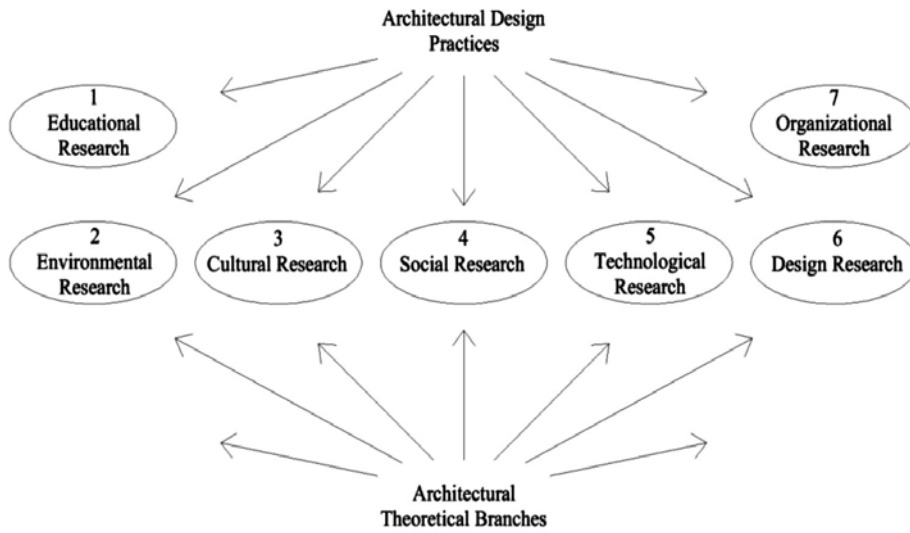


Diagram 1
Architecture and Research.
Basic Branches.

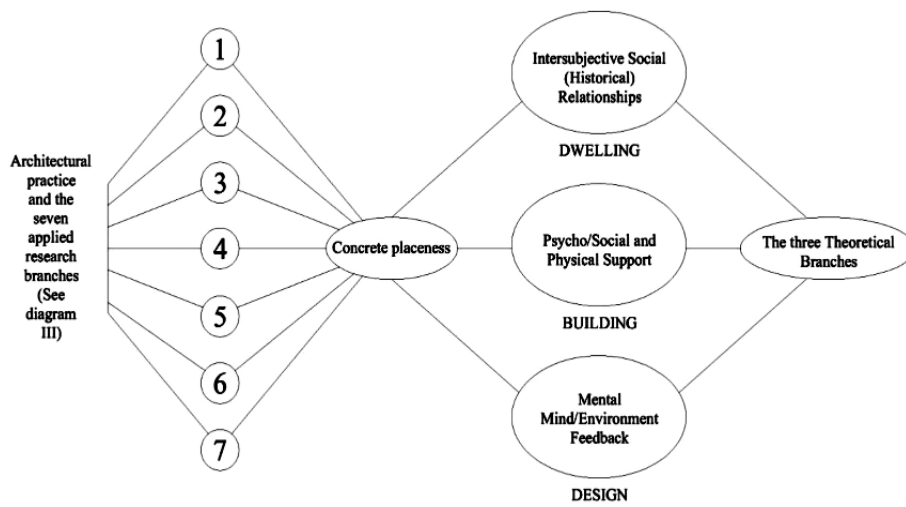


Diagram 2
Architecture and Research.
The Dialogical Structures.

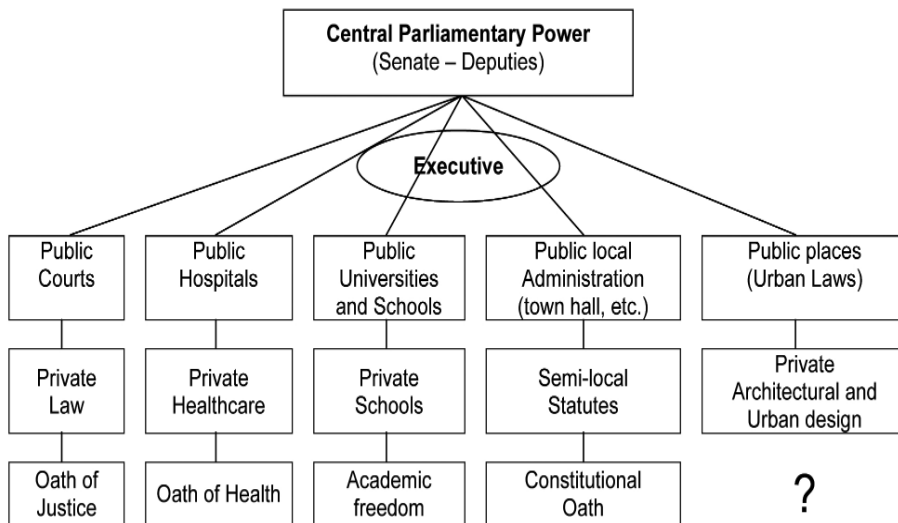


Diagram 3
The Inexistent Oath of the Architects.