

Construir en lo construído: La arquitectura como modificacion.

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To cite this article: LACERDA, Manuel – *Construir en lo construído: La arquitectura como modificacion*. **Estudo Prévio** 3. Lisboa: CEAECT/UAL - Centro de Estudos de Arquitetura, Cidade e Território da Universidade Autónoma de Lisboa, 2013, p. 46-47. ISSN: 2182-4339 [Available at: www.estudoprivio.net].

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Even though it has been published for two decades, “*Construir en lo construído*” is still currently disconcerting, having managed to provide, before its time, a solid conceptual systematization, and somewhat instrumental on how to analyze the old city by reconciling the awareness of history with the contemporary architectural practice. In fact, although this work is not highly publicized, it has gradually been the main focus of many architects and urban planners who design on the consolidated city.

Based on the idea that building on what is pre-existent is equivalent to defining shape in a place that has already shape – in order for that action to involve change of the *locus* – the author draws on several working hypotheses that consider the possibility of building in the historical areas and the consolidated city according to and under the cultural and productive contemporary conditions.

In the first part of the book, the author claims that the references to the formal context should be provided at the same level as the notion of structure, distancing from the approaches referring to the environment (urban) and urban landscape. It also establishes the difference between an urban planning characterized by the expansive development of the city and an urban planning directed towards managing the consolidated city – perceiving it as a social good that should always have future



projection; in this sense, according to the author, the intervention in the consolidated city and historical areas, and the new architecture in these contexts, should be able to save and organize that future projection, accepting that the incorporation of a new architecture always implies a critical dimension. The author also raises the role of the modern movement in opposition to the integrating practice of the *Städtebau* (building in the city).

In the second part Francisco de Gracia, acknowledging the relevance of an order in building the urban form, suggests a more complex approach – and closer to the complexity of the city itself with its numerous relationships - fascinated by heteroclite - questioning the certainties of regular geometry, or the modular repetition, and the rhythmic and sequential repetitions, and referring to other realities in drawing options towards finding the multiplicity of apparently hidden relationships.

The book ends with a few conclusions and theoretical proposals surrounding the formal challenge of to build on what is built always implies, with a myriad of concrete examples (in fact the whole book is full of examples) illustrating a schematic and operational structure analysis in three areas – the intervention levels, the action patterns and attitudes towards different contexts – which diversity is a complex crossing of several alternative approaches.

Bibliography

de GRACIA, Francisco – Construir en lo construído, La arquitectura como modificacion. Madrid: Editorial Nereia SA; 323 pp.