EDITORIAL

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FRANCISCO DÍAZ

Editor revista ARQ
Profesor, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile
Santiago, Chile

IMAGINARIES?

One of the most accurate explanations for the present-day global political crisis is the emergence of 'single-issue voters', that is, citizens who are passionately mobilized by a very narrow agenda of interests, abandoning the possibility that a 'grand narrative' could meet multiple specific and divergent demands (Luna, 2016). Thus, any decision will have a small group of supporters and many detractors, and both will alternate according the subject until no one in favor of anything is left.

If we bring this notion to contemporary architecture, we can observe a similar process: an endless number of individual agendas makes it very difficult to draw a synthetic map of the current scenario. Perhaps that is why part of the discipline, maybe tired of the difficulty of reading the circuit as something coherent, is looking at a past that seemed simpler to understand with a sense of nostalgia.

A subject such as 'imaginaries' is exposed to the same difficulties: the impossibility of a single definition makes it hard to synthesize in editorial terms. On the contrary, it needs to be thoroughly analyzed, even in its own contradictions, in order to grasp what it is about and not be entangled by its seductive rhetoric.

Imaginaries, on the one hand, are not coherent and do not have to be. If in architecture we understand them as a kind of *boîte-en-valise* that each one brings (and which is taken as if it were a toolbox), its contents are inherently heterogeneous. Memories, interests, books, photographs or any other stimuli that each one bears are different, and therefore, coherence is impossible (unless, of course, we all had an identical biography). That is, from an individual perspective, there will be as many imaginaries as architects.

On the other hand, if we understand imaginaries as have been described by cultural studies, that is, as standardizing devices defining the range of possibilities, the task of an architectural magazine is threefold. First, 'to review' already existent or functioning imaginaries; secondly, to discover what new imaginaries may challenge existing ones; and third, to analyze how those imaginaries that we had not even perceived as such operate. In this issue of ARQ, the heterogeneous and incoherent nature of imaginaries is shown to its full extent.

The house by Fake Industries Architectural Agonism and Aixopluc, Beals Lyon's pedagogical proposal, the projects by Hevia and Urzúa, the house by Alarcón or Soffia's research explore the idea of the imaginary as a set of references. The revision of existing imaginaries and their impact on understanding the city, the territory or even the market is developed in the texts by Encinas and Tironi, Méndez and Ramírez, and in the one by Peliowski. The establishment of new imaginaries, on the other hand, is approached by Valenzuela's text as well as in the

proposals by Ferrando and Tudor, Brandlhuber+ Emde & Burlon, Izquierdo, Pérez and the one by Arancibia and Casals. Finally, the discovery of those imaginaries that go unnoticed is analyzed in the interviews to Metahaven and Lambert, as in the text by Alonso and Palmarola. This scope, however, does not answer the question of why do we speak of imaginaries in an architectural magazine, or what is at stake with such a subject from our discipline's point of view. In order to do so, it may be good to revisit the two perspectives from which the subject develops.

The notion of imaginary as a *boîte-en-valise* argues that design process always requires a starting point and that the collection of images inside the architect's head could perfectly be that projective trigger. The other, understanding imaginary as those representations that tend to define (and therefore limit) what is considered as 'the real' in a particular society, assumes that such representations are human constructs and, therefore, can be discovered, criticized, produced or reinvented.

Despite their different origins, both concepts incidentally meet today in schools of architecture. One comes from the realm of design – validating the possibility of an arbitrary basis for design processes – and the other from the intellectual sphere – with the inclusion of architecture as subject of analysis for cultural studies. Hence, when speaking of imaginaries, it is important to clarify their origin and scope, otherwise we would make the mistake of believing that we mean the same while in fact talking about different things. Therefore, when the notion of imaginary runs the risk of becoming the wild card that justifies any irrational preference is when we must double the effort to analyze the intellectual trajectories of the concept.

This year 2016 we have witnessed how, globally, populism has regained a political power we thought we were past, casting a shadow of uncertainty over the liberal democracy imaginary that we thought stable. We don't need to be very perceptive to observe that populism is based on demagogy, that the latter – enemy of both science and anything other than 'simple' – feeds on irrationality, and that both look with suspicion at the academic sphere deeming it 'too complex' (in fact, there already exist those who use the adjective 'intellectual' in a derogatory tone). Faced with this threat, and instead of making the mistake of avoiding complexity by simplifying the concept of imaginary, we believe that it is necessary to decompose it to understand its itineraries and possibilities, giving room to the seriously produced knowledge on its different branches and enabling a well-argued debate about it. If we don't do it, we will be giving up our responsibility to knowledge and yielding a space that is likely to be captured by irrationality. The care of that space is not only the mission of an academic institution, but also the editorial imaginary that moves us as a magazine. **ARQ**

REFERENCIAS / *REFERENCES*

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