

# TPOLOGY AS INSTRUMENT: from the grand hotel to a motel in Antumalal

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The presence of natural landscape is so powerful in Chile that to situate it as a determining factor of non-urban architectures has become the hegemonic interpretation. However, such an idea ignores the role played by architectural instruments – for example, typology. This text offers a new reading of an emblematic case, stating its shape is not determined by landscape but rather by disciplinary instruments.

Current interpretations have considered the Antumalal Hotel<sup>1</sup> as one of the most important modern buildings in Chile (Torrent, 2010), yet these have hardly analyzed the design strategies at both typological<sup>2</sup> and programmatic level to justify such assertion. Therefore, from the standpoint of design instruments, it is possible to reassess this case from a



...DONDE UD. VAYA  
HAY UN HOTEL  
HONSA!

SIEMPRE  
LA MEJOR  
ATENCIÓN...

**HONSA**

HOSTERIA ARICA	HOSTERIA CHAÑARAL	HOSTERIA LANAHUE
HOSTERIA TOCOPILLA	HOSTERIA CALDERA	HOSTERIA CALAFQUEN
HOTEL TURISMO ANTOFAGASTA	HOSTERIA VICUÑA	HOTEL PEDRO DE VALDIVIA
HOSTERIA MEJILLONES	HOSTERIA SAN FELIPE	HOSTERIA PRIMUJICO
HOSTERIA CALAMA	HOTEL PLAZA DE TALCA	HOTEL PUERTO VARIAS
HOSTERIA SAN PEDRO DE ATACAMA	HOSTERIA DE CONSTITUCION	HOTEL PEREZ ROSALES
HOSTERIA TALTAL	GRAN HOTEL CHILLAN	HOSTERIA ANCUD
	HOTEL PUCON	HOSTERIA CASTRO

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point of view that, until now, has been overlooked by canonical discourses. Beginning with modernity's reform of tourist facilities, materialized in a renewal of language and a programmatic redefinition, the Antumalal Hotel becomes relevant not only in its relationship with landscape – the dominant interpretation – but also in the way it proposes a new hotel typology, determined by a change in the way of accessing these tourist facilities.

Although the hotel itself – as program – involved an architectural typology that had emerged in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, one that “gave a stable form for the first time to buildings that were innovations and, once expressed in a concrete formal language, expanded and promoted activities largely disseminated by then throughout society” (Aymonino, 1966:4), deriving precisely from the massification of social practices associated with traveling, leisure and holidays; this same typology underwent important changes when taking on new conditions of scale, accessibility and program: something that can be clearly observed in the case of Antumalal.

**FIG 1** Hotel Portillo, Región de Valparaíso, Chile. Fuente / Source: *Guía del Veraneante*, Sección de Propaganda y Turismo de la Empresa de Ferrocarriles del Estado de Chile. Santiago: Talleres Gráficos, 1968:45.

**FIG 2** HONSA Publicidad / Advertising. Fuente / Source: *Guía del Veraneante*, Sección de Propaganda y Turismo de la Empresa de Ferrocarriles del Estado de Chile. Santiago: Talleres Gráficos, 1966:24.



**FIG 3** Richard Neutra.  
Hacienda San Pedro.  
California, EE.UU., 1955 /  
USA 1955. Fuente / Source:  
Koch, 1958:236.

### Modern architecture and landscape

There is nowadays a certain consensus in considering the Antumalal Hotel as the result of a landscape operation, where the design strategy is based mainly on the conditions imposed by a magnificent natural environment. An interpretation that is confirmed in various articles published on the subject. Fernando Pérez (2014) refers to the strategy of the hotel as: “both an architectural and landscape operation. Implantation decisions, including a major respect for the native forest, were as important as the shape and distribution of the whole complex.” This interpretation has been complemented by architects such as Mathias Klotz and Iñaki Volante, when they refer to such implantation conditions as: “a unique strategy of communion with the landscape to generate an extraordinary scenario, closing a circle of natural beauty and spiritual grandeur, represented in an unrivalled building” (Elton, 2005:64). From the same historiographical perspective, Rodrigo Booth (2005) affirms: “the architectural work was considered an object capable of sublimating nature into landscape.”

The different descriptions of the project emphasize the land slope and the proximity to the lake as part of the design’s initial conditions; Germán del Sol (2004) states that “you enter [the building] following the rock floor and fly off the slab towards the lake,” or the architect Federico Elton (2005), who mentions that the project had to “stand before the water’s edge and before nature, without forcing architecture but rather integrating it to them.” At the same time, oversimplified allusions to Wright’s architecture, such as the Fallingwater house and its location, or the use of Neutra when citing the “landscape abstraction” strategy (Booth, 2005), have contributed to the construction of a

particular discourse on the work. It has been linked with architectural references where connections suggest the idea that, as in the cases above mentioned, the hotel's modern architecture considered formal relations with the surrounding landscape, without necessarily studying any further its design strategy.

In a more specific analysis of the architectural elements composing it, Miguel Eyquem – who collaborated in the design itself – establishes that the characteristic red pillar in the Antumalal Hotel's corner references “that which rests on the column of Marseilles, a tribute to Le Corbusier, the master” (Eyquem, 2015:51), even though he acknowledges that the *Unité* was built 4 years later.

Finally, the present analysis has been complemented with the singular data that builds its origin and history;



for instance, CORFO's particular support achieved after President Gabriel González Videla visited the existent coffee shop by the lake, prior to the hotel's construction<sup>3</sup>; or the close relationship between architect Jorge Elton and his client Guillermo Pollak, which implied a particular commitment to the project (Elton, 2005).

As we have seen above, the Antumalal Hotel has been described and outlined from a few design features, becoming – in Bonta's words – a meaning in itself. That is, the work is linked to the key notions of modern architecture and landscape, as if it were a single indissoluble operation. In turn, the hotel has

**FIG 4** Hotel Pucón, Región de la Araucanía, Chile. Departamento de Ferrocarriles del Estado, 1935. Fuente/ *Source* *Guía del Veraneante*, Sección de Propaganda y Turismo de la Empresa de Ferrocarriles del Estado de Chile. Santiago: Talleres Gráficos, 1962:128.

**FIG 5** Hotel Antumalal, Región de la Araucanía, Chile. Jorge Elton, Miguel Eyquem, 1950. Fuente / Source: *Guía del Veraneante*, Sección de Propaganda y Turismo de la Empresa de Ferrocarriles del Estado de Chile. Santiago: Talleres Gráficos, 1965:73.



been defined and reduced to “an ever smaller number of its features, which convey, in a certain way, its entire meaning”, while making the building “produce in time a stable signification” (Bonta, 1973:43). This shows that previous interpretations reproduce the relationship between landscape and building as the foundations of its design and justification of its characteristics, without breaking this significant whole.

Therefore, it is stimulating to understand the operation from another point of view: one that relates to the typological conception of the hotel, founded in the forms that tourism acquired in the years this project was developed. From the change in the layout and distribution of the hotel’s program to the scale of the operation, we propose a reading of the project related to its typological instruments.

### **From grand hotel to motel**

In the 1930s, along with reaching its maximum expansion throughout Chile, Ferrocarriles del Estado (FEE) [the State’s Railway Company] initiated a plan to publicize national tourism based on the promotion of travelling (in guides and magazines) and the building of facilities – like hotels. The first among these, namely Hotel Pucón, Hotel Puerto Varas, Hotel Antofagasta or Hotel Portillo (FIG. 1) had a large number of rooms and various associated services (Cortés et al, 2014). Although this conception adopted a modern language in its formal proposition and functional solutions, it was based mainly on the ‘grand hotel’ typology, developed in Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In most of the cases, these hotels were associated with the railway system and, as in the Chilean case, “were the central points of projected urbanizations, completing and adorning already defined settlements” (Farina, 2001:27). The type consisted of large volumes with spaces for socializing activities and additional programs such as bars, restaurants, swimming pools or thermal baths, which combined with services like beauty salons, allowed for a luxurious stay. There were other emblematic examples of this kind contemporary to those already named (not depending on FEE) like the Carrera Hotel, the Miramar Hotel or the Puyehue Thermal Baths, which circulated on tourist propaganda as symbols of national architectural progress.<sup>4</sup> In all of them, the architectural type was based on a compact block of rooms arranged around corridors originated in a central core for passenger’s circulation, accompanied by other services at the ends of the blocks.

It was not long since the construction of these first large hotels gave way to the concretion of smaller scale hotels, generally known in Chile as ‘*hosterías*’ [motels]. These were mainly associated with HONSA, Hotelera Nacional S. A. [National Hotels Company] (FIG. 2), which sought to give continuity to the notion of travelling throughout the national territory by placing smaller and strategically located establishments, in such a way that “it was more effective both in terms of number of investments as in the development of a hotel network in the north and in the south of the country” (Casals, 1999).



This change of scale of the hotels, however, can also be understood from a wider international perspective, which involves the modification of travelling by the introduction of the car. This new form of transport changes the primacy of the train, accelerates tourist displacements and introduces a greater number of detention points. Such condition is essential to understand the plan and spatial composition of the typology, that adjusted itself to this new kind of trip: the motel, or motor hotel; a new solution for the temporary dwelling on leisure trips.

The typological variation that this change introduced in the forms of travelling was clearly and pertinently displayed in a 1955 article in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, entitled "Motels in the United States." Reference was made here to accessibility conditions: "the increase of mass-production cars gave birth to a model of accommodation specially adapted to the motorist's needs: the motel."<sup>5</sup> Thus, the problems of functional layout both inside the room units and in their assembling were discussed, presenting a great variety of grouping alternatives and programmatic distribution depending on the arrival by car and its condition of temporary accommodation.

On the other hand, Alexander Koch's monographic book (1958) presented several examples, divided precisely between hotels, motels and summerhouses. The motel type grouped the blocks of rooms in a variety of ways, single, parallel, L, U, crossbars and in the alternatives allowed by the introduction of angles, responding to its less urban, expansive condition. In the cases presented, the projects operated on room provision, inclusion of public programs associated to access, and the articulation of parking lots for the guests (FIG. 3).

**FIG 6** Hotel Antumalal.  
En la actualidad  
Current condition  
© Pablo Casals



**FIG 7** Hotel Antumalal.  
En la actualidad  
*Current condition*  
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Likewise, George Candilis displayed a series of projects on the different ways of assembling the units – the vertical way preferably for hotels, and the horizontal way for motels – defining also the motel through the equation “hotel + car + limited stopover” (Candilis, 1973:109), which summarized the conditions imposed by shorter tourist trips as a fundamental difference to the kind of tourism that justified great 19<sup>th</sup>-century hotels.

### **From Pucón Hotel to Antumalal**

This typological change can be analyzed in the Antumalal Hotel’s own geographical context. The Pucón Hotel<sup>6</sup> (FIG. 4) had been built in Villarrica Lake over ten years earlier. It featured a symmetrical plan shaping a dense block of programs organized along central corridors. Its 97 rooms, arranged in an H-shaped volume, ensured the views on both sides of the bay: on one side to the main square while on the other to the lake. Gabled roofs crowned the compact volume, increasing the building’s height and shaping its imposing façade towards the lake. But most importantly, what differentiates it from the motel typology is the dominating monumental scale of the ‘grand hotel,’ associated to passengers arriving by train and to whom luxury and comfort – such as food, hygiene and entertainment – had to be guaranteed within the hotel itself.

As already anticipated, the Antumalal Hotel assumes the typological change from grand hotel to

motel in solving functional, formal and programmatic elements by reducing service surfaces and facilities which absorb complementary activities.

The project was characterized by an L-shaped solution, allowing for the possibility of separating the social meeting places from the rooms. It also introduced variants to the straight-row layout of the rooms by incorporating an angle, as well as other elements of formal continuity such as a stone basement or the upper beams.

Both the room blocks and the living areas outlined the level where the project was to be developed, suspended onto the slope and emphasizing the volumes' horizontal condition. Despite their connected interiors, the room blocks were completely independent from services and living spaces, accomplishing autonomy from both a formal and a functional point of view.

On the other hand, the access route for cars runs parallel to the rooms, allocating a generous space for car movement and parking. The car had a fundamental role in the general concept of the entrance, which reinforced the volumetric condition of the whole ensemble. Thus, it seems difficult to isolate the hotel from the motorized experience, a fact strongly emphasized by the way of accessing the building.

Considering the trip as the basis for the tourist activity connected to a scenic landscape, it is important to observe how this hotel was located in relation to its access road, that is, by building a route parallel to the main road – unlike the axial access characteristic of the grand hotel. This decision not only allows to protect the privacy of its guests but also to acquire a privileged location on the lake.

Although the hotel was not seen from the road, it was visible from the lakeside routes where, before the hotel, there was a small cafe. It is possible to assume that the project was also conceived from this perspective, designing the public places through the

**FIG 8** Hotel Antumalal.  
En la actualidad  
*Current condition*  
© Pablo Casals





**FIG 9** Hotel Antumalal.  
En la actualidad  
*Current condition*  
© Pablo Casals

significant extension that the hotel offered to the access from the lake.

The programs' distribution and layout strategies can be observed in later examples as the Hostería de Chañaral, by Bresciani, Valdés, Castillo Huidobro, or the ones in Ancud and Castro by Emilio Duhart.<sup>7</sup> In all of them, the small scale of the facilities (no more than twenty-five rooms), the horizontal distribution of the rooms, the conformation of access cores and common spaces, among other similarities, confirm the typological variation that accompanied hotel development in the 50s and 60s.

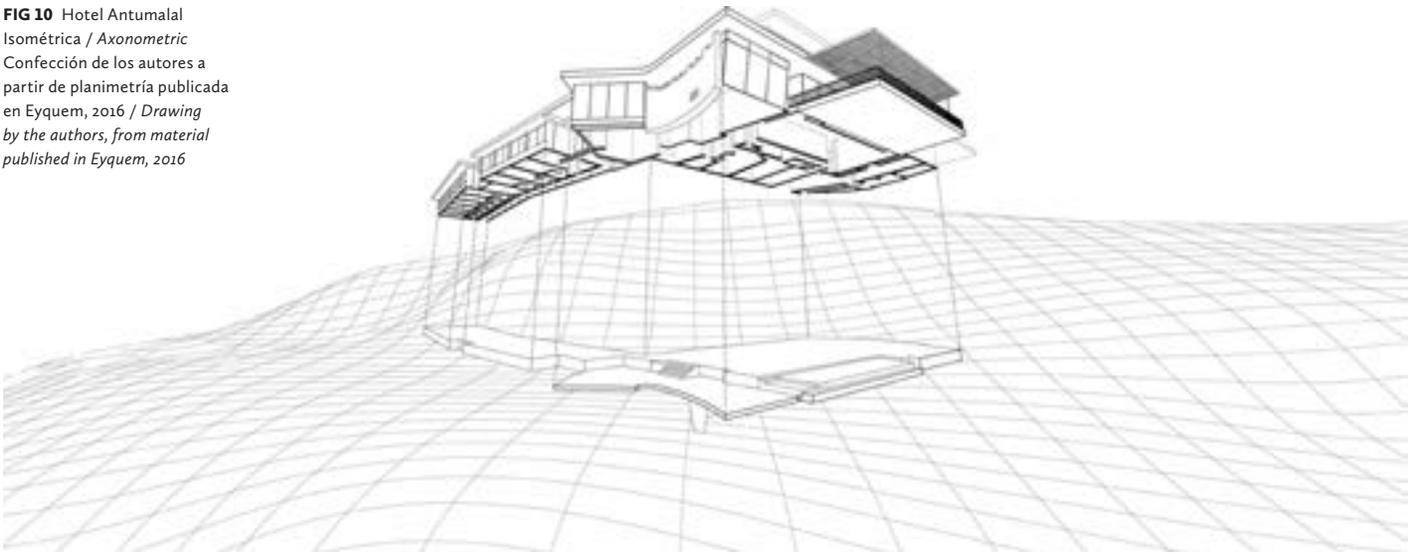
Some journals have described these facilities; “contrasting the prior expensive constructions to the small and cozy hostels today.”<sup>8</sup> In addition to the change in scale, these new hostels were “all born under the protection of CORFO, when the corporation acquired a leading role in the tourist activity by displacing the work of Ferrocarriles” (Cortés et al, 2014:44). As can be seen, this typological change was also supported by a transformation of the institutions behind the management and promotion of national tourism development.

### **Typology as an instrument**

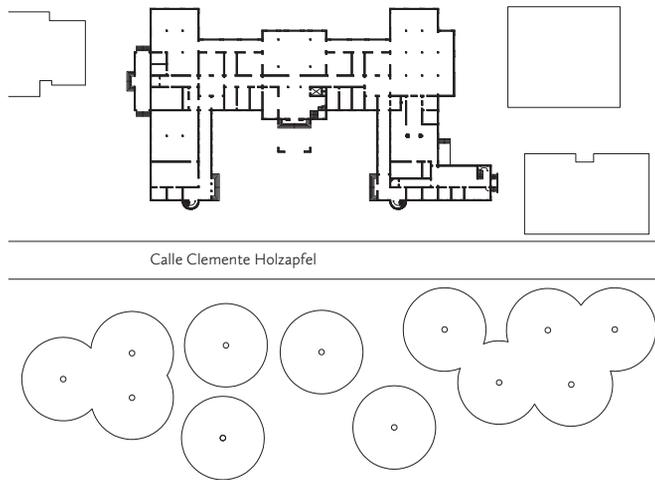
If changes in the form of the tourist trip – from train to car – involved a variation in program, size and typology of the hotel – from grand hotel to motel – it is hard to believe that such modifications had no effect in a country attempting to promote tourism from within the State, through FFE first and CORFO later, as a way of developing the territory in its full extension. From this perspective, we can argue that the Antumalal Hotel was part of a national and global transformation of tourist facilities, from luxury hotels to small-scale facilities such as motels and Chilean hostels.

Thus, interpretations of the Antumalal Hotel can be seen from new angles that include its insertion in a

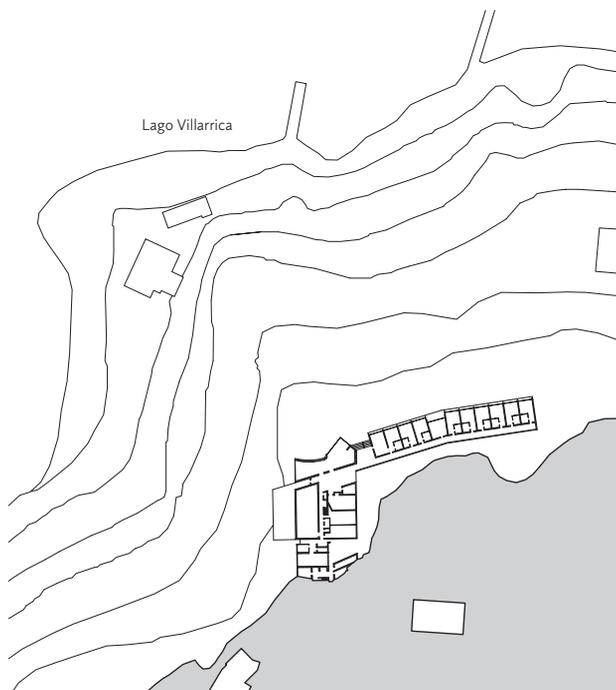
**FIG 10** Hotel Antumalal  
 Isométrica / *Axometric*  
 Confección de los autores a  
 partir de planimetría publicada  
 en Eyquem, 2016 / *Drawing*  
 by the authors, from material  
 published in Eyquem, 2016



**FIG 11** Hotel Pucón.  
 Planta primer piso  
*First floor plan*  
 S. E. / N. S.  
 Redibujo de los autores  
*Drawing by the authors*



**FIG 12** Hotel Antumalal.  
 Planta / *Plan*  
 S. E. / N. S.  
 Redibujo de los autores  
*Drawing by the authors*



wider cultural panorama, related to the colonization of the territory through tourism. From this point of view, the project's operation is inserted in an integral planning of tourism that crystalizes into a small-scale work with a deep search for a particular modern aesthetic.

The formal and spatial experimentation observed comes from its understanding of typology not as an anchor to tradition but rather as a design instrument that allows for variation and innovation, confirming “the importance acquired by the formal definition of new architectural organizations based on their function” (Aymonino, 1966:7). It is perhaps this possibility the one that has been overlooked in previous interpretations, which have assumed that the innovative formal solution of the Antumalal Hotel is due to its relation with the landscape, when in fact the product of a typological variation; that is to say, the Antumalal Hotel would be the product of an architectural instrument rather than an answer to something from outside the discipline. **ARQ**

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## Notes

- 1 Project developed between 1948 and 1952 on the road from Villarrica to Pucón by Jorge Elton, with the collaboration of Miguel Eyquem. See Eyquem, 2015.
- 2 Typology will be understood as: “the architectural form that, beyond the style or tendency characterizing it, is constituted ... by a set of elements (spatial, constructive, and compositional) subordinated to laws that define the system” (Colmenares, 1995:28).
- 3 As explained by the history of the hotel itself on its website, <http://www.antumalal.com/hotel-historia/historia.htm>. Visited 19 may 2017.
- 4 See “La Arquitectura Chilena” [Chilean Architecture], v1 Pan-American Architects Congress, Colegio de Arquitectos de Chile. *Arquitectura y Construcción* 11. Santiago (1947): 68-69.
- 5 *Tourisme et Loisirs*. *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 61. Paris (1955):30.
- 6 Design by the Department of Architecture, Ferrocarriles del Estado, 1934-5. See Booth and Lavin, 2013.
- 7 See the review of these works in a special issue entitled “Leisure”. *AUCA Magazine* 10, Santiago, (1966): 53-60.
- 8 “Hostería de Chañaral HONSA”. *Revista AUCA* N° 10, Santiago (1966):53.

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