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Fundamental field Architecture
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HABILITATION THESIS

- ABSTRACT -

Projected Space. Produced Space. Perceived Space.
An approach to the architecture of perception and to the perception of architecture

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The structure of the habilitation thesis is based on three main chapters, which are followed by the career development plan. The first chapter, *Projected Space*, details the research that can be associated with the theoretical field of architecture. This part focuses mainly on publications - both articles and books - and on some case studies relevant to the topic of the thesis. The second chapter, *Produced Space*, explores the *practical* component of the research activity, presenting those projects, workshops or exhibitions that are directly related to the issue of perception. The third chapter, *Perceived Space*, mainly covers the teaching activity, concentrating on how we *perceive perception* - namely on how I found fit to explain, to present architecture to others; an architecture as I have experienced and *perceived* it for myself.

The first chapter of this thesis is dedicated to the theoretical research. Therefore, its subchapters detail, according to certain criteria, the research activity that I have been carrying out after defending the doctoral thesis. The studies that are presented were chosen so that they can highlight the coherence of a unitary path. What all these studies have in common is the interest in *the perception of space*, even if this interest is manifested in different ways. As theoretical studies remain, *par excellence*, in the world of ideas, this chapter is called *Projected Space* because it addresses some theories that will (probably) never end up having a practical purpose, therefore it evokes an eternal future, an eternal *project*.

The studies have been grouped into several categories, depending on their topic; thus the following subchapters emerged: *Building perceptions - the level of spatial fragments* (which presents theoretical investigations focusing on the alternative way in which various spaces can be perceived), *Reassigning perceptions - the problem of the monument* (a subchapter with a narrower field of study, presenting various researches addressing the theme and condition of the monument) and *Distorting perceptions - architecture and fear* (another subchapter with a limited area of interest, which approaches a rather rare topic, namely the relationship that can be established between architecture and fear).

The second chapter, which tackles the practical component of the research, follows those specific activities which attempted *to manufacture* perceptions, representations or, simply, ideas. This category includes practical activities such as workshops, competitions, exhibitions. In the background, beyond the actual result of the activity, each initiative was always based on a theoretical approach. All projects, which are detailed in this chapter, are constructed on a structured and coherent path of some preliminary notions that generated *the subject, the final goal and the means* of that specific action.

According to their type, all activities were divided into two subcategories. *Manufacturing perceptions* is the subchapter that details research projects carried out within the "Architecture. Time. Habitudes" Research Group [acronym ATH], of the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca. These include workshops dedicated to students, temporary interior design projects or, further on, direct participations in creative workshops. The second subcategory, *Displaying perceptions*, is mainly dedicated to exhibitions and to the organisation of competitions in the field of architecture in which I participated as an exhibitor (as a sole author or as a member of a group) or as a member of the organising committee.

The third chapter has a metaphorical title as well, *Perceived Space*, as, this time, through perception we define the personal way in which architecture is understood and passed on - *the perception of the perception*. In other words, this chapter is dedicated to teaching activities, namely those activities through which architecture is understood, filtered and passed on according to my own point of view, which will be, *par excellence*, a subjective one. However, one can only hope that this transfer of knowledge, from teacher to student, has the quality of being easy to understand, of being structured, relevant and necessary. These attributes have been a constant concern, ever since the beginning of my teaching career. Therefore, I took part in various activities that aimed at studying or at analysing the teaching process itself. Thus, the activities that are presented in this chapter are very diverse. However, they all have in common an interest in *how to teach, how to transmit architecture*.

Consequently, the activities of this chapter are divided into several subchapters. *Perceiving perceptions* is the title of the first two subchapters, which address some presentations that were held either in front of an untrained audience - the case of the first subchapter bearing the subtitle *discussing architecture* - or in meetings organised by teachers or by students belonging to the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning, of the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca - the case of the second subchapter bearing the subtitle *teaching architecture*. The next subchapter is entitled *Managing perceptions* and addresses, as the subtitle shows, activities of a predominantly bureaucratic nature, activities carried out under the title of *academic management*, in particular the activity of the “Projected Space | Produced Space | Perceived Space” Research Group [acronym ppp Space], which was set up in 2014, within the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca. The second-to-last subchapter, *Counselling perceptions*, details a special kind of activities, namely those associated with student *counselling* within the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning, TUC-N - an activity which I carried out as a *career guidance counsellor*. The last subchapter, entitled *Theorising perceptions*, outlines the teaching activities, highlighting the methods used in presenting and structuring the following courses: *Space perception and configuration*, *Basic Design Regulations 1* and *Basic Design Regulations 2*.

Alongside the activities presented in detail in the previous chapters, the twelve years of my career, within the Faculty of Architecture and Urban Planning, TUC-N, involved experimenting with very different ways of practicing *the architectural profession*. During this time, the most important thing I have understood - and also passed on to my students - is that *practicing architecture* is not restricted to *designing buildings*, consequently, this phrase can actually include a wide range of activities such as:

- *teaching architecture* - an activity detailed in subchapter 3.5.;
- *writing architecture* - an activity detailed in chapter 1.;
- *discussing architecture* - an activity detailed in subchapters 3.1. and 3.2.;
- *creating architecture* - an activity detailed in subchapter 2.1.;
- *exhibiting (about) architecture* - an activity detailed in subchapter 2.2.;
- *researching architecture* - an activity detailed in chapter 2. and, respectively, subchapter 3.3.;

as well as

- *browsing architecture* - study visits undertaken as part of the activities of some of the disciplines I have been active in over the years (Architectural Design Studio 1 - 1st year project -, Architectural Design Studio 2 - 1st year project -, Professional Practice 1st year, Professional Practice 2nd year, Elements of construction 1 - 1st year seminar -, Elements of construction 2 - 2nd year seminar -, History of Ancient Architecture - 1st year seminar -, History of Medieval Architecture - 1st year seminar) in Cluj-Napoca or in the vicinity;
- *guiding architecture* - as a supervisor of diploma projects and dissertation papers (beginning with the academic year 2015-2016);
- *judging architecture* - as a member of the different commissions (member of the Commission for the Evaluation of the Diploma Projects - in the academic year 2017-2018 -, member of the no. 1 Commission for the Evaluation of the Final Exam - in the academic year 2016-2017 -; member of the Commission for the Evaluation of the Dissertation Papers - in the academic years 2015-2016, 2019-2020 and 2020-2021), including the admission exam (member of the Admission Commission - in the academic years 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018 and 2019-2020), guidance commissions for doctoral research projects (an activity detailed in subchapter 3.3.3.) or juries (an activity detailed in subchapter 3.3.3.);

and, in perspective, also

- *guiding research in architecture* - the ability to supervise doctoral studies in the fundamental field of *Architecture*.

Therefore, the chapter entitled *Career development plan* presents the manner in which the activities detailed in the previous chapters can be carried on either by continuing along some already outlined paths, or by adjusting, transforming, branching out or replacing the research directions mentioned so far. Thus, any future endeavour, undertaken together with the potential PhD students, can capitalise on the teaching experience, research results and institutional infrastructure (the “Projected Space | Produced Space | Perceived Space” Research Group [ppp Space]) that are already available. Therefore, *the Career development plan* follows, in a condensed formula, a structure similar to the previous part, *Scientific, professional and academic achievements*.

Each space, in part, is connected to the others, it has its role, its reason for existing, depends on the others, and they, in turn, depend on each unit. This way of perceiving the world around me, acquired through my training as an architect, seconded by an appetite for investigation, is reflected in the organisation and planning of all the activities in which I have been, am and will be involved. Consequently, in the kaleidoscope of my career a new need emerged, namely the one of obtaining the ability to guide researchers - a new manner of *practicing architecture*, as mentioned above - so that the infrastructure created by the founding of the “Projected Space | Produced Space | Perceived Space” Research Group [ppp Space] can reach its maximum potential. My prior experience as a researcher has given me the opportunity to discover the benefits of working in a research group and I believe that by obtaining the habilitation certificate I shall have the chance to improve this type of collaboration - as a mentor/supervisor. I would like to have the opportunity *to initiate* doctoral students in the research work, *to instill* a passion for (architectural) investigation, and to strengthen *the team spirit*, as well. As it was exemplified in chapter 4, the potential research directions - both for myself, as well as for possible topics for future doctoral research projects - are multiple and could make significant contributions to the development of certain areas of research in the field of architecture, especially on a national level, but on an international level, too (*the study of spatial fragments, the study of the monument, the study of the relationship between architecture and fear* - as they have been outlined in the introduction).

An a conclusion, I consider this initiative to be an opportunity to strengthen, resume or initiate inter-institutional contacts with national and/or international academic or non-academic partners in the field of architecture or related fields, so that the infrastructure of the *ppp Space* Research Group is backed up by a network of collaborations, leading to high quality scientific results.

Secondly, the activity of potential PhD students, within the *ppp Space* Research Group, will mean a stabilisation and a (re)definition of the areas of expertise assumed by the current members of the group, leading to a more mature research activity and a sedimentation of the research methodologies in the field of architecture.

Last but not least, through a joint effort, the *ppp Space* Research Group will be able to involve itself in carrying out funded research projects and in initiating large-scale contracts with third parties.

On a (more) personal level, I believe that obtaining the habilitation certificate, beyond the fact that it will be an academic challenge, will have an important contribution in shaping the teaching component of my career - namely, the investigation, *the research* of education in the field of architecture at doctoral level. From the beginning of my career, I have been preoccupied with *the teaching methods* in the field of architecture, as I saw in this simply another way of *practicing architecture* - as it has already been shown in the introductory part of chapter 3. Hence, I believe that this endeavour will organically spring from the course of my career within the Technical University of Cluj-Napoca.