

**C O N
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Conjectures is a monthly journal published by students of School of Architecture at Florida International University (FIU). Its contents are opinions of individual contributors and do not represent those of the student body as a whole or the staff or faculty of FIU. **Conjectures** is a forum for the students to express their academic opinions and to improve their skills in written communication without the strict requirements of research thesis. To be published, these opinions, as approved by a panel of supervisory students, must have the following qualifications:

- Have clear purpose.
- Be important.
- Be professional.

Conjectures has the following sections:

- Original articles or rebuttals – should start with a statement of thesis.
- A semester long competition for projects in architecture, interior design, landscapes, and other design intensive areas such as watches, clothing, automobiles, and household items. Poetry and essays are welcome.
- Student-Staff Corner where students and staff voice their concerns relating to school-life quality issues.
- Notices / Ads.

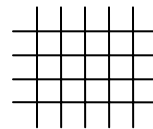
Articles:

Rebuttal to the speech given on March 6, 2007 by Mr. Marx Wigley, Columbia University GSAPP, Dean regarding Networks.

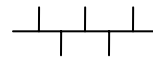
by: Mehran Azghandi.

Thesis: Mr. Wigley's speech lacked a crucial link between the schema of a network grid and architecture. In this rebuttal I will attempt to show this missing link.

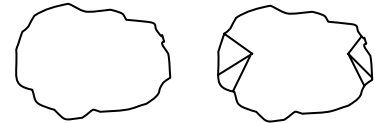
During his speech Mr. Wigley emphasized the role of network as a philosophical basis of architecture and used a grid as its schema.



Examples of such networked, or in general *connectivity* phenomena are telephony, internet, and highway system. A hundred years ago, such a schema would have been a line with nodes budding off to its sides representing the telegraph wire with equipment feeding into or off of it; or a rural road connecting several towns.

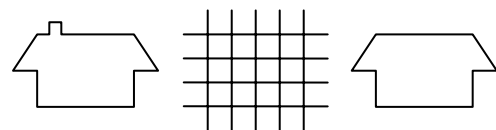


Today's children, being accustomed to cellular telephones and air travel, may schematize connectivity as an amorphous cloud representing the environment, which periodically polarizes into two points representing source and target. Therefore, the grid schema is transitory and represents the state of connectivity only contemporarily.



However, before we decide on the proper schema: line, grid, or cloud, we need to consider the very concept of connectivity and assess its relevancy to our lives and the architecture surrounding us.

Indeed such a question of relevancy is central to many architectural theories, i.e., why should any schema (grid in the above example), which is relevant in some context (telephony, internet, highway), be also relevant in architecture, the realm of spaces and buildings? And if it is relevant, then how literal should we adopt this schema in our architecture?

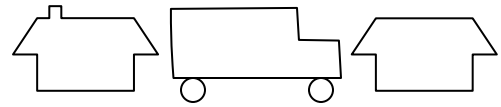


Kurt Forster argues this point in his article *Eisenman Unfolding* (AV Monographs, 53 (1995), Peter Eisenman 1989-1995, page 11):

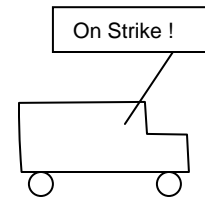
“Most of [Eisenman’s recent design] notions originate within the realm of recent science ... [albeit more like] science fiction. For it is obvious that a molecular compound, a singular crystalline aggregate, or, for that matter, a geological event ... have no more compelling connection to architecture than the shapes of leaves or sociological schema. What establishes precise connection between the idea of a certain building – which is yet to be designed – and a familiar scientific order – which has been analyzed and fully described – is itself a matter of conjecture.”

I propose that the significance of such schemas is in the cultural aspects they represent.

Consider for example the schema for a truck: A rectangular cargo space adjoined to a rectangular engine housing all on two circular wheels – viewed sideways. Now, will it be proper to use such a schema as the basis for architecture? Will we have a lecture given on the virtues of a truck and its use as a basis for architecture—after all, isn’t the truck just as much of hardware as is the grid of the network?



The answer is, whereas both the communication system and the truck are hardware, however, communication systems are more immediate to our lives and hence we have more cultural awareness of them. If telephone network or air travel system break down we immediately feel our environment shrink. In contrast we are oblivious to a recall of trucks to correct a mechanical problem – truck *drivers’* strike, however, is a matter of concern to us!



It is this immediacy of a certain system and its degree of impact on our lives that makes it a vital concern to us. For example, the first systems that an urban dweller comes to be concerned with are clock and the traffic light. Hence, these devices are concerns of every city dweller as are evident by the ubiquity of clocks and watches as well as our longing for the orderliness of traffic flow after a storm disables traffic lights.

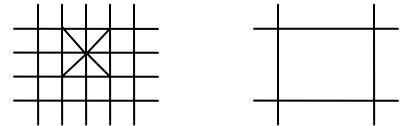
Now, to mentally manage a vital concern (e.g., connectivity), we conceptualize it into a visual schema (grid) that iconically captures its essence. Later we use this schema to organize our thoughts or to communicate it to others—advertisers routinely use them to influence us. Such a schema becomes so present in our psyche that we model our environment after it or with a strong influence by it.

However, the translation of a schema (grid) that reflects a certain concern (connectivity) into an architectural context requires more than just a simple step. The schema abstracted

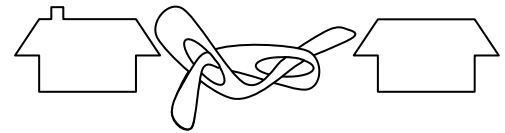
in a certain scientific or social order should go through a cultural interpretation and emerge as a schema in architectural language. In general:

The architectural schema is a form, visual or otherwise, produced by the impact of the source phenomenon on the target population's cultural psyche. Its architectural relevancy is commensurate to the strength of impact.

Hence, a communication network to an urban manager in New York is schematized by a dense grid with multiple links, whereas to a rancher in the Rockies it is rarified.



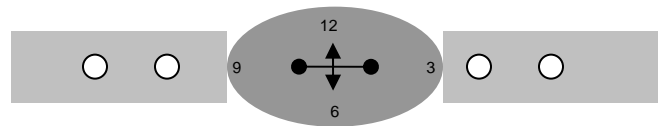
In translating a source schema (e.g., the network grid) to an architectural generator, the architect must take care not to become too literal. She must abstract the source schema's essential features (connectivity and multiplicity), morph it according to the target culture (speed, volume, density etc.), and create an architectural generator (openness, porosity, scale, etc.). Such a generator avoids being too literal, has essential abstract qualities, and is conditioned by the cultural mores of the target population.



Mehran Azghandi is a second-year graduate student at FIU's school of architecture.

Wrist-Watch Competition

Design his or her watch having a nautical theme—stay tuned for further details in future issues of Conjectures.



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FIU is constructing a Starbuck café in the lobby of the library. How about a Java-Bar in the covered area on the west-side of the SOA's courtyard?

What can we do to stop theft of laptops?



Notices:

Call for Articles: Please email your article in Microsoft Word format to Mehran.Azghandi@fiu.edu or to Andrew Santa Lucia at asant015@fiu.edu . Please include in the subject area: “Conjectures - Article.”

Invitation to join the Board of Supervisors of Conjectures: Students who are interested in shaping the future evolution of **Conjectures** should email Mehran.Azghandi@fiu.edu or Andrew Santa Lucia at asant015@fiu.edu . Please include in the subject area: “Conjectures - Board”.