

## Editorial

# Material Oriented Ontology

## Lucas Muñoz

This year has set itself as the beginning of a new rhythm. Already it's repetition of twenty twenty, unique every century, made us cheer for a very special year, full of changes. And indeed it is, though not all the cheerful we would have chosen. This editorial note is being written from the "new normality", a term coined to designate the fragile period that came after the global pandemic we were confronted with last spring. A new normality that needs to be more "new" than "normal". The normality we were coming from led us to be shaken down by the wave produced by the very natural tides we were playing with. If we do not position ourselves in a new and different way, it will be the drag of that same tide that will pull us to more troubled waters.

The call for texts that detonated the compilation of thoughts and reflections that are here presented, was an invitation to define the coordinates and the consciousness behind this positioning - confronted with the previous normality and, now that they have been written, confronted with the new one. A call that was titled Material Oriented Ontology, sympathising from its very foundation with the thought of philosopher Timothy Morton and the ecological positioning of his school (Object Oriented Ontology). A call to create an open and multiple vision oriented to the materials, one that will suppose a study of the agencies and uses we (the people from now and the future, together to the planet from now and the future) do of them. It was intended with this call to understand, within the social and natural systems we create from, the co-responsibilities between the people that work with matter for a market use and the people that are the receivers of those works. This is a call for texts from an architecture magazine to create editorial work that will include us all.

As such, it has received a plural answer that, far from the surface, dives into some of the different depths we can find in the constructions we act within. What is being presented on following pages is a combination of texts that compiles thoughts about systemic thinking, architectural history, lexicon tricks used by the market and its green washings, the beautiful but insane architectural "sausages" and, in general, a compendium of multiple ideas that says that there is a necessity for a change; that the beauty we are working from must return to it; that we could do much if we were to be more conscious of which and where are the solid values to build upon, either materially or in some other way.

As a consequence of all the conversations that were shared during the gestation of this RA magazine issue, we have developed as well a document that has been called Manifesto for the Built Environment as an Agent for Sustainable Change (MaBEASC). This Manifesto is a compilation of possible ideas and directions to take within the built processes. It does not pretend to be a doctrine or a code, more likely a set of ordered and clear notes. As such, it is open to be extended, improved or implemented partially, since its intention is that of inspire, and ideally walk with, the change.

This document, developed together with Cristina Freire, Joan Vellvé Rafecas and Tomás Miranda, comes together to a poster that illustrates and resumes it in a more intuitive way. If it is the case that this poster will end up on your wall, or if it will happen to be present during the projection of your projects, dear reader, then it may serve as a guide or inspiration for those to participate of this "new" within the "normal". And perhaps be conscious and careful of the footprint they traced when the projects tread as, inviting to these lines the words of WB Yeats, the fragile tissue we walk on are the dreams and fortune of others.

"I would spread the cloths under your feet: But I, being poor, have only my dreams; I have spread my dreams under your feet; Tread softly because you tread on my dreams."

W B Yeats

## 01

# Matter and mutability

## Ignacio Borrego Gómez-Pallete

If we shift the discourse to the ontological level, as the approach to matter suggests in this edition, we must refer to transcendental properties of matter. If, in addition, in this intellectual distancing we introduce the contemporary consciousness of a circular economy, then we will have to consider the mutability and reuse of matter, which as we will see does not depend so much on its physical properties but on the way in which it is manipulated. This hypothesis will be tried to be proved through a more interdisciplinary approach to ultimately reach the field of architecture, and finally propose that the essence of the constructions is in its form, and not in the matter itself, which is substitutable, corruptible.

The importance lies in the systems and relationships between the different elements that set up a construction. Identity is not in matter, but in the information it contains.



The law of conservation of mass or matter, also called the Lomonosov-Lavoisier Law states that matter is not created nor destroyed, it is only transformed. In an ordinary chemical reaction, mass remains constant, that is to say, mass consumed by reagents is equal to the mass obtained from the products.

Matter is often a subject of study in science, and in the field of biology it finds an area where form and material configuration is essential. This is produced by means of growth, which is a natural process and is different from construction, which implies artifice and artisanal intent. Nevertheless, biology has, on occasion, forgotten this essential distinction, and assumed living bodies to be objects created with intent. Thus, the wings of birds are described as extremities meant for flight, when a more precise explanation is that they are not so much meant to perform this activity as that thanks to them, a bird is able to fly. Nature is formed casually, and it is the random lives of its individuals that support the solutions that are best suited to the surroundings. Natural matter evolves.

The scientist Jorge Wagensberg describes with clarity Nature's ability to replace its components, the atoms, to temporarily resist degradation produced by time.

"We left the city after breakfast. We stopped for lunch mid-way (the overheated Fiat Hispania celebrated by puffing like a whale) and we arrived in enough time to shop and prepare dinner. This was more than thirty years ago. The other day it took me exactly twenty two minutes to reach the residential estate that had engulfed that small village, the setting of those endless summers of my childhood..."

"... After four thousand metres my heart skipped a beat: there was the same semi-stagnant water of the stream, the same red earth of its banks, the same reeds, the same water plants, the same dragonflies, the same fig tree with the hole in its trunk - the secret place where my brother and I would stash all our secrets!, the same whiff of mud, the same sounds..."