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ARKITEKTSKOLEN AARHUS Designskolen Kolding Det Kongelige Akademi

Abstract from Peter Bertram

The probing of complexity

It is problematic to import models of complexity developed in the natural sciences too directly. The scientific models and their techniques needs to be reformulated once they enter into the domain of architecture. A current example of the problem is the role that the scientific fase-portraits of the dynamics of nature play in the particular field of contemporary architecture that is concerned with computer-generated form. The portraits are often treated as pictures to be emulated rather than diagrams describing events in a complex system. Paradoxically the imagery seems to serve as a justification for a form-oriented expressionism.

A basic premise of a complex system is the fact that it emerges through the actions of simple operations in a complex environment. The emergence of complexity is always a question of how a given heterogeneous exteriority is approached. The complex system is never produced through the unfolding of a complex code or mechanism. There is consequently no decisive connection between complexity in the performance of architecture and the development and use of contemporary technology in its design. That is an illusion partly created by the importance of computer-simulated processes in the natural sciences and their uncritical import to architecture. It is therefore important to divorce the concept of complexity from the tight marriage to contemporary technology and focus on the fundamental premise that both methods and techniques must serve as probes of a complex environment. In this sense the morphological issues always carry an ethical dimension as its fundamental productive relation.