KOOLHAAS' REVISION OF FOUCAULT'S PANOPTICON; OR, HOW ARCHITECTURE AND PHILOSOPHY JUST MET

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1. TO ASK ABOUT THE INTERACTIONS BETWEEN PHILOSOPHY AND ARCHITECTURE

Architecture and philosophy have engaged with one other, directly, marginally, or just simply implicitly, in the works and discourse of academics, practitioners, and critics, most evidently in architectural modernism and postmodernism, but most intensively in the reactions to both. Philosophy has been avidly sought by architects to help question, disclose reveal, systematize, express, and expand the understanding of architectural works, the world upon which they intervene, the discipline itself, and the role of its practitioners and theoreticians. Architecture, in turn, has grown within philosophy from a passing example or an illustrative metaphor of some other matter, or a generally misfit artform within an aesthetic theory, into a topic in its own right—as testified by the recent development of a 'philosophy of architecture.'

The particularly acute multiplication and radicalization of interactions between philosophy and architecture throughout the 20th century produced a number of well-known cases in which an author, work, school, movement, or approach from one discipline had a direct decisive effect the other. Famously, Norberg-Schulz relied heavily on Martin Heidegger's philosophical writings to elaborate his own distinctive architectural phenomenological

theories. Kenneth Frampton, also well-read in the German philosopher's writings, was never shy about the effect Hannah Arendt exerted on him. At times philosophers and architects collaborated, such as in 1985 when Bernard Tschumi invited Jacques Derrida and Peter Eisenman to design a garden pavilion in Parc de la Villette (1982-1998), or when discussions between Jean Baudrillard and Jean Nouvel were published as the book *The Singular Objects of Architecture* (2002). Preceding them all is of course the philosopher who also briefly became an architect, Ludwig Wittgenstein in the design and construction of House Wittgenstein (1928).

These celebrated examples represent the epitomes of a still widespread tendency which, in diverse ways and to different degrees, shapes both philosophical and architectural works. And yet, seldom does either discipline take a step back to reflect upon the motives and methods of these interactions as a research topic in itself. How does architecture make use of philosophy? How does philosophy speak of architecture? Why does one turn towards the other? What comes about in their doing so?

We shall engage these questions by analyzing one particular case-study of such interactions: the potential influence of philosopher Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish* (1975) on architect Rem Koolhaas' Koepel Panopticon Prison renovation project (1981). This connection is far less well-known than the previously mentioned examples, as it is far more low-key. In fact, it is difficult to point out or even discern its existence. However, as shall be seen, this discreteness does not mean that there is no case-study, but rather that discreteness is one of its principal traits, and one which distinguishes it uniquely from the cannon of architecture and philosophy's interactions.

We shall begin by introducing the two protagonists of each domain and their respective contributions to the case-study: first, Foucault and the popular section of *Discipline and Punish*'s chapter "Panopticism;" second, Koolhaas' renovation proposal for the Koepel Panopticon Prison and the explanatory text *Revision* that came with it. Third, we will dwell on how the former's philosophical thinking may have exerted direct yet nearly imperceptible consequential influence upon the latter's architectural project. Fourth and finally, the distinctive characteristics of this case-study shall be brought before the broader questions of how philosophy and architecture can engage one another.

Michel Foucault has long been a recurring reference in architectural discourse. His writings on the socially marginalized, the power structures that set them apart from the mainstream, and the role of a certain conception of knowledge in enforcing this system have informed and influenced architectural concerns, generally—but not only—through the social sciences. His concept of heterotopia, for example, continues to sprout a rich variety of contradictory readings and reflections, while delighting the imagination for architecture researchers, practitioners, researchers, and even students, very much due to his original social critiques and the inspiring images with which he conveyed them. The force of Foucault's impact on architecture is rather surprising, though, considering that architecture is not a major Foucauldian topic, nor even a minor one, nor did he ever produce any literature whatsoever exclusively or even primarily dedicated to architecture. For example, the famous lecture about heterotopias "Of Other Spaces" (*Des Espaces Autres*), delivered to the Circle of Architectural Studies (*Cercle d'Études Architecturales*) in 1967, is in fact little more than a copy of "Heterotopias" (*Des Hétérotopies*), the 1966 radio broadcast on *France Culture* about utopia and literature, and with absolutely no intent to engage architecture at all—much like the concept's first appearance in *The Order of Things (Les Mots et Les Choses,* 1966) which also focused on literature. The closest Foucault came to addressing architecture directly, thematically and extensively was in "Space, Knowledge, and Power," a 33-question interview conducted by American cultural anthropologist Paul Rabinow, and published in the architecture and design journal *Skyline* in on March 1982. However, even there, architecture is not so much discussed directly as a topic in itself but rather as

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a gateway into topics that underlie it (e.g. knowledge and power) which actually interested him. It so happened that they interested architects too.

Indeed, in Foucault's writings architecture and architectural works only tend to appear as metaphors or as case-studies to illustrate and develop some issue other than architecture itself. And perhaps the most effective deployment of both strategies is found in the second section of the chapter "Panopticism" of his book *Discipline and Punish*.

Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison (Surveiller et Punir – Naissance de la Prison), published in 1975, is a genealogical inquiry into the emergence of the modern prison system, particularly in France, and a study of its disciplinary mechanisms' widespread presence in many other areas of society. The emphasis falls on the reformist disciplinary penal system developed since the late 18th / early 19th century which, though far more benign than the punitive system it supplanted, nevertheless constituted an intensive form of generalized social control. At the center of this kind of disciplinarity are surveillance strategies—as hinted at in the discrepancy between the book's original title (*Surveiller et Punir*) and its English translation (*Discipline and Punish*), where the French *surveiller* ("to monitor", in the sense of "surveillance") is replaced by "discipline."

To illustrate these disciplinary mechanisms, Foucault resorts to what he considers their most paradigmatic example: the panopticon, a building typology devised, curiously enough, not by an architect but by renowned the English philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832), inspired by his brother Samuel's organization of industrial labor compounds. In its simplest and most characteristic form, the panoptical typology consists of a cylindrical multi-story arrangement of partitions around a central observation house. The observers at the center have a constant unhindered view into every partitioned space; hence the typology's name from the combination of the Ancient Greek *pan* (all) and *optikos* (pertaining to sight), meaning "all-seen" or "all-under-sight." From within the partitioned spaces, however, it is impossible to perceive what happens in the observation house.[1] Thus, in a panoptical system, a small number of observers can monitor a large number of people at any given time; the prominent feature, though, is that those monitored, unable to verify when they are or are not in fact being watched act as if they always are. The prisoners thus become their own guards.

Foucault, like Bentham, regards the panopticon as an architectural formulation of certain Benthanian philosophical and social principles—in a way making it too a case-study of architectural and philosophical interaction—which Bentham celebrates optimistically in *Panopticon; or,*

*the Inspection-House*² (Figure 1) and Foucault denounces bleakly in *Discipline and Punish*. For both, however, architecture is only employed as a means to make a point, but is not the point itself. Foucault does not invoke the panopticon *because* it is architecture. In *Discipline and Punish* the panopticon is both a metaphor—the disciplinary power relations described throughout the book symbolized by th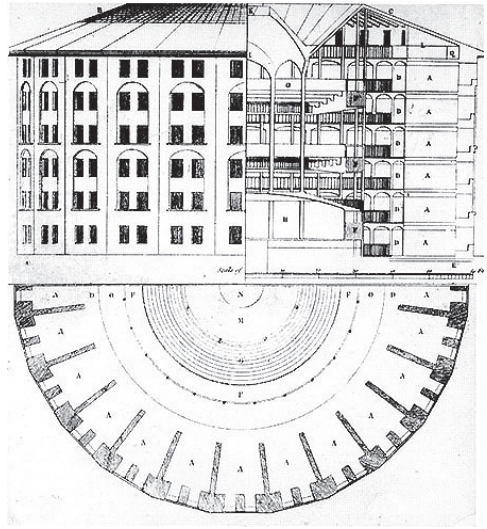e dramatic image of the archetypal surveillance techniques employed to enforce it—and a case-study: not just a representation but a paradigmatic operational mechanism that enables and enforces the power structures of which Foucault speaks. Throughout the "Panopticism" chapter, Foucault's interpretation and depiction of the panopticon ends up producing a philosophical description of an architectural typology, by expounding its historical origin, purpose, possible functions, modes of operation, formal characteristics, and societal role. Inadvertently, though, in doing so his reading also becomes an interpretation of the panopticon *qua* architectural object, albeit one grounded on his own understanding of architecture seen later in "Space, Knowledge, and Power," as an mere instrument of far greater underlying forces. Hence this is why, in his words:

> the Panopticon must not be understood as a dream building: it is the diagram of a mechanism of power reduced to its ideal form; its functioning, abstracted from any obstacle, resistance or friction, [may very well] be represented as a pure architectural and optical system: it is in fact a figure of political technology that may and must be detached

FIGURE 1: BENTHAM'S PANOPTICON

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"ARCHITECTURAL WORKS ONLY TEND TO APPEAR IN FOUCAULT'S WRITINGS AS METAPHORS, TO ILLUSTRATE A NON-ARCHITECTURAL POINT, OR AS CASE-STUDIES, TO ILLUSTRATE AND DEVELOP SOME OTHER NON-ARCHITECTURAL ISSUE"

from any specific use.³

Discipline and Punish thus unwittingly offers a philosophical critique of an architectural object and, with it, an accessible way from architecture into Foucault's philosophical thinking.

Between 1979 and 1981, Koolhaas made use of both.

3. REM KOOLHAAS, AND THE KOEPEL PANOPTICON PRISON

The second protagonist of this story is a young Rem Koolhaas, renowned in the architecture world after *Delirious New York* (1978) but still seeking to establish himself as a practitioner. In 1978, his Office for Metropolitan Architecture produced what would become the first entry in their official list of projects: the Dutch Parliament Extension, in The Hague, Netherlands. Despite an *ex aequo* first place in the competition, alongside the Dutch architect Leo Heijdenrijk , the proposal was ultimately rejected along with all the others. However, OMA was granted what Koolhaas called a "consolation prize:" in 1979, the Dutch Government commissioned OMA to assess the possibility of prolonging the lifetime, by another 50 years, of a prison, built in Arnhem between 1882 and 1886. (Figure 2) The original building, designed by Dutch architect and engineer Johan Frederik Metzelaar, was known as the *Koepelgevangenis*—a conjunction of the Dutch words "jail" (*gevangenis*) and "cupola" (*koepel*), alluding to its distinctive large domed roof. Along the inside of its cylindrical walls were four floors of holding cells, around a guardhouse at the center from which guards could originally see into every cell without being seen. In other words, the Arnhem *Koepel* was a panoptical prison.

OMA's proposal adds a series of new functions and structures to the prison complex: outside of the original building to the east there is the entrance, lobby, reception area, porter's room, and meeting room; from here a visitor heads south, to the visitor's garden and visitor's room; to the north is the pavilion for difficult prisoners, a kitchen, and a patio in between, as well as a storage area; to the west is the guard's' canteen, guard's' cloak room, instruction department, shops, and more storage space, as well as the sports area, which includes a gymnasium, judo room, multi-purpose room, running track, sports field, and a pool. Inside the old Koepel dome is a library, barber, meeting room, shop, and an infirmary.

The original building undergoes modifications as well: two new satellite structures house living quarters, dining rooms, and bathrooms, enabling the possibility of dividing the inmates of each floor into two groups (of

sensibly 48 people each), or even more if the satellite is divided too; and the cells, no longer constantly translucent to the guards, offer privacy. The most significant change, though, is the replacement of the central guardhouse by two lower-level streets intercepting in a cruciform manner, containing several of the aforementioned functions and opening access to the rest of the complex. In *S, M, L, XL* (1995), Koolhaas alludes to this simultaneously metaphorical and practical gesture with two gruesome frames from Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dali's film *Un Chien Andalou* (1929), displaying an eye being cut: the crossing streets cut the all-seeing eye, the *pan-optikos*. In other words, Koolhaas removes panopticism from the panopticon.

FIGURE 2:
ARNHEM PRISON

Both generalist and specialized literature commonly assume that OMA's redesign of the Koepel Panopticon Prison was strongly influenced by *Discipline and Punish*, published just four four years before the commission, and by Foucauldian thinking in general. One of the earliest and most prominent examples of these texts was Anthony Vidler's article "The Ironies of Metropolis: Notes on the Work of OMA," published in *Skyline* in March 1982—by no coincidence in the same *Skyline* edition issue that included Foucault's interview "Space, Knowledge, and Power." According to Vidler, "[in the Arnhem prison project] we find echoes of a reading of Michel Foucault, whose studies of discipline and power have strongly influenced the politics and strategies of the generation of OMA.", and it is "in the space marked by Foucault after

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Nietzsche, that the project has been conceived." [4]

Indeed, the easily accepted assumption of Foucauldian influence on the Koepel renovation does not appear to raise any red flags that would lead us to question it. Until we do question it, that is: Exactly where is this influence? We ought to remember that the current inquiry does not merely search for a possible Foucauldian interpretation of the project, one amongst many that a critic may adopt to understand Koolhaas' project once concluded, but rather the actual Foucauldian influence during the design process that produced the project. Thus, instead of assuming the existence of a case-study, we must first ask if there really is a case *to* study.

The task presents difficulties though. As it turns out, Koolhaas and Foucault actually met in what we could well imagine to be a pivotal event: Around seven years before the Arnhem commission, architecture student Rem Koolhaas had just arrived in Ithaca (New York, USA), where he would attend Cornell University from 1972 to 1973. In the fall semester of 1972, Foucault spent three weeks at Cornell lecturing at Cornell's Romance Studies Department. The celebrity French thinker and the promising Dutch pupil became acquainted during this time. The encounter itself, though, was not especially life-changing. Recalling the occasion in an interview with *The Cornell Journal of Architecture 8*: *RE* (2004), Koolhaas affirms that he "cannot claim any kind of significant intellectual influence"[5] from Foucault. Admittedly, the answer is disappointing, but not surprising, coming from someone who readily makes use of his formidably rich knowledge of his and other various fields in his works, but resolutely resists sacrificing his authorial originality to them. In 2008, in an interview for *Radical Philosophy*, the interviewers Jon Goodbun and David Cunningham noted how other architects of the same generation—Eisenman, Tschumi, and Libeskind—explicitly associated themselves with various philosophical trends while Koolhaas did not, to which he answered, after listing multiple philosophers he was acquainted with: "I don't think these influences or relationships necessarily need to be flagged up. But it's not an indifference to these thinkers."[6]

Indeed, any claim of an 'influence' upon Koolhaas must be cautious in its use of the word. Rather than a powerful force that invades and pervades his work, an 'influence' for Koolhaas seems more like an ingredient which he takes hold of, tinkers with, processes and mixes with others to produce something of his own. The original sources of these external contributions become almost untraceable. It is in this sense that we must understand an exceptional confession, made at an event hosted by ETH Zürich in 2011, regarding *Delirious New York,* published in the same year as the Arnhem

commission:

> [There is something which is generally not recognized,] that actually this book was a kind of French book, in the sense that it was profoundly influenced not only by Barthes, but also to some extent by Foucault, and particularly by somebody who had become my personal friend, Hubert Damisch.[7]

Could the same be said specifically for the Arnhem project, though? In 1981 OMA handed in the Arnhem renovation project to the Dutch Ministry of Justice with an essay called *Revision* containing an overall historical analysis of the Arnhem Koepel prison and its typology; the theoretical and conceptual framework in which OMA operated; and an objective programmatic and formal description of the project itself. The text was later published in *S, M, L, XL* (1995), a book traversed through and through by a cornucopia of words simulating a dictionary, and which includes three entries quoted from Foucault: 'exclusion', quoted from Foucault's 1970 address to the Collège de France under the entitled "*L'ordre du discours,*" translated by Alan Sheridan in 1972 as "The Archaeology of Knowledge & The Discourse on Language;" and, from *Discipline and Punish,* 'visibility' and 'power.'[8] We may, however, argue that these dictionary entries came after the fact, as a later recognition of an influence.

Nevertheless, *Revision* also contains other little (but more than coincidental) connections. For one thing, the text's description of the panopticon uses a series of words that appear in Alan Sherridan's English translation of *Discipline and Punish*, but not, for example, in Bentham's *Panopticon; or, the Inspection House* (e.g. referring to the panopticon's floors as 'rings' instead of 'circumferences').

More importantly, though, *Revision* echoes Foucault's bleak critical interpretation of the panopticon, resorting to similar reasons and

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description, so much so that we can even pinpoint *Revision's* similarities to the first two paragraphs, and perhaps part of the third, of the second section of "Panopticism." Once again, though, we may counter by noting that perhaps these similarities only suggest a shared intellectual context between Foucault and Koolhaas, with crossing issues, discussions, and approaches, like Vidler had noted so well. This was already the case at Cornell, for the same academic milieu that brought Foucault to campus, and that even pioneered the introduction of continental philosophy in the USA through the journal *Diacritic*, surrounded Koolhaas during his studies. It is no coincidence that Koolhaas had also read Roland Barthes, another renowned structuralist and later post-structuralist from the same Parisian intellectual scene as Foucault's before producing his "French book."

Indeed, skepticism over the existence of a case study at all seems reinforced by the fact that throught the entire text of *Revision* Foucault is not once quoted, mentioned, or even alluded to even though he explicitly references the evaluation by the governmental Jacobs Committee, the accusations launched by the 19th century Dutch Parliament member Wintgens, and prison typologies experimented with in Amsterdam and Maastricht. Other unnamed decisive forces may also have come into play. Four years before *Discipline and Punish,* Robin Evans published the article "Bentham's Panopticon: An Incident in the Social History of Architecture" (1971) in the *Architecture Association Quarterly,* while Koolhaas, an eager reader of these issues, was still a student at the school.[9] Evans, curiously enough, quoted one of Foucault's earlier publications in the essay, suggesting that not only was he acquainted with the French philosopher's work, but found him pertinent for the topic too. Their readings differed though: for example, Evans' focuses less on the role of authority—distinguishing his reading from Koolhaas' and Foucault's— but more on the panopticon's solitary confinement—like Koolhaas', but unlike Foucault's. This may explain certain particularities of *Revision's* interpretation of the panoptical typology: on the one hand its two main pillars are the all-seeing surveillance system and solitary confinement, not so emphatically highlighted by Foucault; on the other hand, it often omits critical components of *Discipline and Punish,* such as the panopticon's imposition of self-surveillance upon the surveyed, a fundamental point for both Bentham and Foucault.

An alternative possible explanation, though, comes from the same event in which Koolhaas admitted some degree of Foucauldian influence:

[S]omehow I have a kind of sense of reticence, or chastity, or perhaps

it is that I write in my own kind of mind more literature than theory that prevents me from mentioning all these sources. And also because I am deeply aware that I am the kind of result of very respectable influences but also very unrespectable influences and that everything is a kind of amalgamation of trash and high culture […].[10]

In other words, we should not expect to find a smoking gun of direct influence as it may be dissolved with other elements, or even not exist at all. The difficulty in confirming the assumption of a case-study is both due to the fact that because the links between the architect's and the philosopher's works are not explicitly demarcated, and also because these are irreducible to a single simple and uncorrupted instance, act, or event. The cause lies partially with Foucault's less than marginal interest in architecture, but mostly with Koolhaas' own attitude towards external influences. It is nearly impossible to pinpoint an irrefutable, straightforwardly Foucauldian effect upon the Arnhem design, or to determine exactly how much can indeed be directly attributed to Foucault, or how many links were consciously forged by Koolhaas. Notwithstanding, a reading of *Revision* shall come to show that, to a significant degree, the Koepel design does indeed deal with a Foucauldian approach to a Foucauldian representation and discussion of a Benthanian object, regardless of whether this was or was not deliberate. It is in this sense that we can claim the existence of a case-study.

" THE KOEPEL DESIGN DOES INDEED DEAL WITH A FOUCAULDIAN APPROACH TO A FOUCAULDIAN REPRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF A BENTHANIAN OBJECT, REGARDLESS OF WHETHER THIS WAS OR WAS NOT DELIBERATE. "

4. THE FOUCALDIAN 'INFLUENCE' (AND LACK OF) IN KOOLHAAS' DESIGNREVISION: KOOLHAAS FROM, THROUGH, BEYOND, BESIDES FOUCAULT

How does Foucault's and particularly *Discipline and Punish*'s influence appear in OMA's project for the Arnhem panopticon renovation? To better

understand the design process we return to the explanations given in *Revision*, whose seven small chapters may be split between a critical analysis of the old Koepel—from historical overviews to the broader architectural debates they provoke, and of the new proposal that follows—from its conceptual aim to its formulation as an architectural project.

The first few paragraphs contain OMA's interpretation of the panopticon *qua* typology, and of the Arnhem panopticon in particular. More than simply an introduction for the reader, this description reveals the architects' grounding interpretations of the site's pre-existing conditions, thus constituting the object upon which to intervene. For example, we could conceive of the Arnhem prison in terms of its urban situation, or of its distinct cylindrical form, or its colossal dome, the interior lighting, materiality, running costs, or environmental sustainability. Each different reading of the site's pre-existing conditions derives from different approaches, theoretical frameworks, priorities, interests, and many other factors which reveal and emphasize different aspects of the site and call for different responses

Koolhaas construes the Koepel according to "the Panopticon Principle, with its mechanistic ideal," as an application of "a universal principle of organization for situations in which a small group of supervisors monitors a much larger group of supervised." For Koolhaas, "[t]he Arnhem Koepel represents the principle in its purest form: a single, all-seeing "eye" is placed dead center in a circle of the observed." However, this principle, "[o]ne hundred years later, has become intolerable."[11] In these words we recognize a synthetic and superficial semblance to Foucault's reading of Bentham's description of the panopticon: the stress on its mechanistic character and the purity of an ideal put into an architectural form is even reminiscent of the previously quoted passage of *Discipline and Punish* concerning the panopticon's not being a 'dream building'. In other words, OMA's interpretation of the pre-existing object, upon which they, as architects, shall intervene upon, broadly coincides with a Foucauldian critical philosophical description of the panoptical typology.

Turning *Revision's* pages and moving towards the contents of OMA's own proposal, implicit reference to the philosopher, no longer limited to *Discipline and Punish,* persists. Consider, for example, Koolhaas' argument for programmatic flexibility, rather than ideal pre-determined architectural formal typologies (Koolhaas' real interest), as a manner of accounting for the inevitably incessant historically shifting ideologies and their social formulation (Foucault's real interest):

If prison architecture today can no longer pretend to embody

an "ideal", it could regain credibility by introducing the theme of revision as *raison d'être.* A "modern" prison architecture would consist of a prospective archaeology, constantly projecting new layers of "civilization" on old systems of supervision.[12]

A reader familiar with Foucault cannot help hearing echoes of the philosopher's own concept of "archaeology", as conveyed for example in *The Birth of the Clinic: an Archaeology of Medical Perception (Naissance de la Clinique – une Archéologie du Regard Médical,* 1963) and *Archaeology of Knowledge* (L'Archéologie du Savoir, 1969). Koolhaas' prospective archaeology both presupposes and builds from Foucault's archaeological method: on the one hand, it rejects trans-historical and trans-cultural absolute social and (consequentially) architectural models, embracing instead the constant transformation of what societies, or "civilizations" as the architect put it, regard as the best model in each period; on the other hand, it then turns this Foucauldian analytical tool deployed on the past for an understanding of the present into a generative design principle projected towards the future. Hence prospective archaeology, which does not simply create a new archaeological layer with the next prison typology, but rather builds on the fact of their inevitable demise and replacement. The Arnhem renovation project is founded on the thematization of prospective archaeology.

"Arnhem could be an experiment with a form of renovation that articulates programmatic and ideological change without destroying the building itself."[13]

Foucault's implicit presence as a reference understandably disappears as the design progresses deeper into architectural and technical territory. OMA's actual design gravitates around the surrealist-inspired metaphor of cutting the panopticon's all-seeing eye, executed by replacing the guardhouse

with the two sunken streets from which the rest of the project spreads out. While this gesture may act upon Foucault's reading of the panopticon, it certainly does not act according to him. In fairness, *Discipline and Punish* is mostly a descriptive endeavor, and thus does not offer prescriptive orientations that Koolhaas could follow. But would he, who so vehemently rejects external dominance over his work, ever agree to follow them even if he could?

In the end, the full weight and extent of Foucault's influence upon OMA's design process is measured not only by philosophy's presence, but also by philosophy's absence. While *Discipline and Punish,* Foucault, and philosophy in general do introduce decisive inputs throughout the design process, particularly in the initial interpretation of the pre-existing and in preparing an approach towards it, architecture is never sidelined as the dominating force. The Koepel renovation project was not meant as a mere literal architectural formulation, expression, or translation of philosophical principles, discussions, and ideas. Koolhaas meant to design, first and foremost, an architectural project—a seemingly banal yet radically simple approach within the larger architecture world's interactions with philosophy.

5. PHILOSOPHY FOR ARCHITECTURE,, ARCHITECTURE FOR PHILOSOPHY

Despite two years of discussions with the Dutch authorities and, eventually, an approval for construction, OMA's proposal for the Arnhem prison was never built. Its indefinite suspension was not due to any particular conceptual or programmatic problems, but to an all-too-familiar reason for architects; lack of funding. The Koepel would eventually be renovated by Martin van Dort, of Archivolt Architecten BV, in a process that started in 1994- and only ended in 2005.[14] But the declining number of prisoners in the Netherlands led the classified national monument to be closed in 2016, and sold in 2018.

Nevertheless, OMA's Arnhem panopticon renovation project remains an exceptional, unique, and—design-wise—highly successful instance of a consequential interaction between philosophy and architecture. This outcome may surprise considering the two protagonists involved, the way they work within their own disciplines, and how they interact with the other's: Foucault's disinterest in architecture as a research topic and Koolhaas' almost indiscriminate appropriating, and critiquing of the vast

multiple sources he knows.

The result is a case-study as much about architecture and philosophy's interested interaction as concepts and topics become shared across disciplinary boundaries as it is about their disjunction. We do not find an authoritative philosophical imposition of ill-fitting, inadequate, and even just unrealistic principles, norms, and judgements upon architecture. Instead, Foucault works within his own concerns, but develops them in such a way that they offer themselves to appropriation. In an interview with the geographers of the journal *Herodote*, in 1976, Foucault, insistently confronted with the fact that he had not said much about geography in his writings, offers a reply that can just as well be applied to architecture:

> If I do the analyses I do, it's not because of some polemic I want to arbitrate but because I have been involved in certain conflicts regarding medicine, psychiatry and the penal system. [...] It's up to you, who are directly involved with what goes on in geography [or architecture], faced with all the conflicts of power which traverse it, to confront them and construct the instruments which will enable you to fight on that terrain. And what you should basically be saying to me is, 'You haven't occupied yourself with this matter which isn't particularly your affair anyway and which you don't know much about'. And I would say in reply, 'If one or two of these "gadgets" of approach or method that I've tried to employ with psychiatry, the penal system or natural history can be of service to you, then I shall be delighted. If you find the need to transform my tools or use others then show me what they are, because it may be of benefit to me.[15]

This is where Koolhaas comes in. Not, however, as the architect who obsessively attempts to

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> " KOOLHAAS DID NOT SIMPLY COPY FOUCAULT INTO ARCHITECTURE, BUT RATHER BORROWED HIS CONCEPTUAL AND TERMINOLOGICAL CLARITY TO DEVELOP AND BETTER EXPRESS HIS OWN ONGOING ARCHITECTURAL DISCUSSIONS "

translate philosophical concepts into architectural form as if there lay an unassailable absolute foundation for architectural designs, and much less to superficially legitimize his work with empty or misunderstood quotations of a celebrated philosopher. Koolhaas, both a brilliant theoretician and practitioner, respectfully instrumentalizes philosophy and, along with many other tools, takes what he needs as and when he needs it for the sake of the production of an architectural project first and foremost. His sources, almost impossible to isolate in a single moment of contact, may also very well arise from the sheer shared discourse between disciplines, which often includes influential literature like *Discipline and Punish* and, it would seem, seminal works of architecture too.

The Arnhem project thus shows architects how their designs can gain from resorting to philosophy without sacrificing architecture in the process. However, there are relevant insights for philosophers as well. While Foucault's study of the panopticon created a philosophical critique of an architecture object, Koolhaas' design in turn created a philosophically-charged architectural reaction to a Foucauldian interpretation of Bentham's panopticon—the conception of the pre-existing object upon which OMA intervened. The Koepel renovation project contains an architectural critique of the Benthanian utilitarian vision that originated the panoptical typology, and a critical conversation with Foucault's own critique of it. As such, it can be read in philosophical terms, even if the architect's action itself is not philosophy nor primarily philosophically motivated, for it does engage in a dialogue with philosophy even if through the distinct means of architecture. The Koepel Panopticon Prison renovation is therefore not just a case-study for architects, but for philosophers too.

ENDNOTES

1. Jeremy Bentham, "Panopticon; or, the Inspection-House." In *The Works of Jeremy Bentham,* 4:36–142. (Edinburgh: William Tait) 1843, pp. 40-41.

2. Bentham, 1843, p. 39.

3. Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* 1975, p. 205.

4. Anthony Vidler, "The Ironies of Metropolis: Notes on the Work of OMA," S*kyline*, March, 1982 p. 21.

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