



9 The Interstitium

WORKS THAT ARE DYNAMIC AND BASED ON SYSTEMS IN these times of dynamism and systems . . . invite our participation in their lives.” Thus, architect Eduardo Catalano speaks of a great mechanical flower, *Floralis Generica*, that he designed for the Plaza Naciones Unidas in Buenos Aires.¹ The flower, based on the hibiscus, opens and closes giant petals with the days and seasons “. . . to integrate the creations of man with the creations of the earth.” The work is now a popular reality in a civic space where people of all ages gather around and are reminded of their connection to nature.

Catalano’s flower, by opening and closing daily, symbolizes a new vision for architecture. Traditional modes of sheltering corresponded with nature’s rhythms and, at the same time, evoked rich patterns of social behavior. A dynamic interpretation of solar-envelope zoning can advance the integration of such traditional methods and, at the same time, support the dynamism of a new architectural paradigm—one based on a dialogue with nature that will give architecture its identity.

The solar envelope has been earlier defined as the largest theoretical volume on a building site that does not critically overshadow neighbors, but the size and shape of the envelope need not be fixed. It may contract in winter and expand in summer while still allowing the same period of solar access to adjacent properties. Between the winter envelope and the generally higher summer envelope is an intervening space, a region of temporality that can accommodate seasonal adjustments to program and climate. Analogies drawn from nature have provided a name for this region: *interstitium*.

The term “interstitium” is borrowed from human anatomy. The interstitial space of the lung is that area of tissue between the