THE RECONSTRUCTION OF THE CITY

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THE ARCHITECTURAL PROJET

The present book does not pretend to be a complete documentation of the exhibition "Rational Architecture" which we have organised in 1975 in London.

We rather want to outline, to sketch very generally a debate, which—with a growing precision and through drawings and written documents—concentrates on the renewal of Architecture in general and of the European city in particular.

"The new is no more new". This graffiti which could be read on the building site of the Centre Pompidou in Paris could well document the end of an era.

The sad results of an obsessive drive towards mere technical innovations leaves us today to contemplate the cut stones of a rue de Rivoli, or the masonry walls of a rural building with more interest and pleasure than the noisy structures of a cultural machine which tries to hide its social emptiness by an ephemeral and prestigious formalism.

The period of post-war construction appears today to have also been a period of intellectual stagnation.

After this darkest and most devastating period of European Architecture, the building crisis and the contemplation of the damages which have been caused to the city and necessarily to the country-side, seem now to revive the minds of the most progressive architects with a new breath which is both critical and optimistic.

In this crisis of construction, the architectural project has regained all its millenial dignity as a thinking instrument. It becomes now clear that the architectural reflection can at this precise moment only be undertaken through the practical exercise in the form of a critique or in the form of critical project.

The Charter of Athens

One can say that in the post war years, the European cities have been more destroyed both physically and socially than in any other period of their history, including the two world wars. Our generation is both witness and victim of a cultural tragedy to which there is no precedent in history. The radical commercialisation of urban land becomes now even a menace to the architectural profession. The architects as servile executors of grand speculation and the large building monopolies have lost their traditional credibility as creators of a better tomorrow. Building, once a promise, constitutes now a threat for the collectivity.

When the cultural models of the modern movement as formulated in the "Charter of Athens" found their way into legislation, they became instrumental in the process whereby urban space and the city as a whole became commercialized, became included into the cycles of profit maximisation.

It is true that in the pamphlets, manifestos and other expressions of modern architectural culture, no notion has been so much stressed as "space", "total space" (Mies van der Rohe) "espace indicible" (L.C.). The escape into vague and confused formulations has historically coincided with the loss of precise urban space as, the street, the square, the colonnade, the arcade, the court, etc...

The obsessive emptiness of modern urban spaces (Plaza of the Three Powers-Brasilia), their isolation from any urban fabric is probably the best illustration of the profound character of parlementary democracy and in general of the destruction of the public realm in a totally administrated world.

The over stressing of the historical centres through peripheral growth and the following breaking up of their structures by the mechanical means of transport (as a result of zoning) have enforced the decomposition of the city as a complex spatial continuum.

"The city as a system of spaces is being replaced by a system of bodies" (J.F. Geist, "Passagen"), whose order is solely regulated by administrative prescriptions. The Inspector General of the German army has commented on this state of affairs with a biting irony. "Today, discipline is no more measured on the formal level, but purely on the functional level" (Der Spiegel, 9 July 1969). Adorno has compared the autonomy of bureaucratic procedure with that one of bourgeois art, in that its motivation is no more dictated by Reason, i.e. utility, commodity etc... but that it
perpetrates itself according to its own dynamic.
The endless reports and regulations on isolated technical problems—real orgies of quantitative thinking—have been accompanied by a generalised decay of our environment. The overloading of the architect with mountains of technical data and apparently value free cultural models, finally his confrontation with the chaotic products of the building industry, confuse the architect as much as his potential client.
The brutal class character of this cultural promiscuity, is once more demonstrated by the latest experiments of the English building industry in the new city of Milton Keynes. The fact to call “city” this confusion of town and country will remain a mystery as long as anyone of his inhabitants will remember what the country on one hand and the city on the other used to promise. It cannot be by a mere chance that the name of the greatest capitalist economist should resound so conspicuously in its name.
Here the loss of the last bit of cultural autonomy has turned the architects into the ruthless executors of the building industry.
The merchandise character of these housings is no more disguised, but disgustingly displayed by the architects. The schools have well prepared the last generation of architects to their ideological roles. It seems now that a radical change could only be instrumented in these schools.
Against this overwhelming reality, the XVth Triennale in Milan organised by Aldo Rossi represented the first major alternative position from the ranks of the profession. The projects exhibited and the theoretical implications gathered in the book “Architecture Razionale” confirmed in the words of Massimo Scolari a new architectural tendency.
This tendency included architects from Europe, the U.S.A. and Japan but also the renewal of the historic centre of Bologna etc... the catalogue which I present here also includes projects already shown at the Triennale. In this case however, the exhibits were not chosen because they are particularly representative of their author’s work, but because, as seen together, they represent a new architectural movement, a critical attempt at the Reconstruction of the European city. For this very reason I have not included in this catalogue works by the New York Five, Venturi, etc... who—although present at the Triennale and however brilliant their artistic œuvre—would rather confuse the typological and morphological discipline which are the central themes of Rational Architecture.
In Italy; it seemed for a moment that the conservative critique under the leadership of Bruno Zevi had achieved to lower the discussion to a mere level of style, ignoring demagogically the complex arguments put forward by this new movement.

ARCHITECTURE

We want to state very clearly that Rational Architecture is not concerned with the revival of the Rationalism of the 1920ies. It is, as Scolari explains, primarily to do with the revival of Architecture “tout court”. If its theoretical basis is to be found in the philosophical Rationalism of the enlightenment its primary concern should now lay with the re-creation of the public realm.
In a late capitalist economy however, every contribution to a complex theory of the city and its architecture must remain fragmentary, in the same way as the efforts to save the historical centres from physical and social destruction will remain fragmentary as long as the economic and social basis for a renewed urban culture are missing. A rationalist theory of the city and of its architecture represents for that reason a modest step in a society, which is more and more incapable of resolving its own contradictions in a creative way. If then this theory should not become reduced to a style, to a mere introspection of its formal principles, it has to be part of an integral vision of society, it has to be part of a political struggle.
The problem of Rational Architecture can therefore not be one of choreography. It cannot find its motivations in a “state of mind”, in the fictions of artistic or technical progress but in the reflection on the city and its history, on its social use and content. The revolutionary element of this new Architecture does not lie in its form but in the model of its social use, in its coherency, in the reconstruction of the public realm.
To clarify this radically new position, it is important to take a critical attitude in relation to Modern Architecture in particular and in relation to the bourgeois production of Architecture in general.

Le Corbusier

In this project for “Ville Radieuse”, Le Corbusier did sketch out in a lucide and artistic form the contradictions of an industrial society, of a desintegrating class society. “Zoning” becomes the basis of the urban composition, or rather of the decomposition of the city.
The separation of life, culture, is so to speak solidified in the new form of
the city. No return seems possible. Eternal human activities which were traditionally gathered within easy reach in the city are now distributed over large geographical areas. If however his model remains so different from a late capitalist reality by its tremendous cultural ambition, the reason does not so much lie in the ideological difference, but in the fact that the growing monopolisation in the building industry by speculation and petty-bourgeois ideology has freed itself from any cultural aim or even excuse.

The Bourgeois production of Architecture

19th Century architectural thinking has effectively consumed a few thousand years of previous cultures in a matter of hundred years. We are now paying the price for this wasteful and oniric festival. In its gluttonous greed for power and culture, the bourgeois did not only erode the complex codes of high culture but for the first time in modern history, popular culture and intelligence have been destroyed almost beyond the point of redemption. In the 19th Century architectural production, styles became the ideological system to bridge the alienation of intellectual and manual labour. Modern functionalism presented a radicalisation in this quick consumptive process. For Le Corbusier the giving up of styles was more of a moral upsurge against the previous excesses whereas for the building industry, it was a welcome step to get rid of a by then unnecessary cultural facade.

By the apparent giving up of styles without resolving the contradictions at the production level, these styles had necessarily to survive as kitsch and—leaving aside the acrobatics of high culture—kitsch is the most important and generalized phenomenon which has resulted from the industrial production.

Kitsch seems to be a trivial and desperate attempt of dressing up the social and functional impoverishment of the urban environment.

One has however to unmask all the pompous attempts of producing architectural meaning without a very clear political intention as a cultural travesty. It is at this point that the discussion about realism becomes crucial.

It is here interesting to note that the debate on socialist realism in the U.S.S.R. in the early thirties was not concerned with the organisation of production—this problem was merely left to technicians leaving aside the workers—but in a paternalistic way with style. In “Proletarian Culture in China”, Fei-ling has demonstrated in how far the fulgurant visions of the Constructivists and the prefabricated Renaissance facades of Shushev were part of the same revisionist process.

If in the 19th Century industrialisation could still be seen as a necessary condition for the liberation of mankind, the fading myth of technical progress is now causing a qualitative change in the nature of class struggle. The progressive destruction of popular culture in the 19th Century and the division of intellectual and manual labour in the production of Architecture and Building, went hand in hand with a radical erosion in the traditional dialectic of monument and urban fabric.

The ensuing crisis within the architectural culture was caused both by the increasing consumption and destruction of alien cultural codes and —more important even—by the functional and social decomposition of the city by the means of „zoning“ and in the end, zoning must be isolated as the cause at the root of the linguistic decomposition of Architecture and Building. The complex visual codes of the preindustrial European city articulated the intricate social body which the city represented. The destruction of these communities and institutions was necessarily to be accompanied by the destruction of their cultural habits and codes.

The concentration in clinically controlled and policed zones of housing, of culture, of production meant in reality the destruction of the dialectical nature of public and private, of individual and anonymous, architecturally of the street and square, of monument and urban fabric.

Housing is not a monument

One of the failures of architects and authorities in the 20’s was to consider housing as the monuments of our time. However the highly repetitive nature of residential blocks did neither deliver the content nor the social purpose important, rich and expandable enough to inspire over a long period of time highly artistic results. The Karl Marx Hof in Vienna or the vast residential blocks in Moscow have to be seen as exceptional achievements in an otherwise rapidly declining system of social and formal values.

Fascist architecture?

City life with all its complexity and unpredictability became in the 19th Century the most powerful threat to the growing power of the industrial bourgeoisie. The very concentration of people in cities which was a condition sine qua non, for industrial production represented this threat. The garden-city as a loose concentration,
was the technical answer to the political explosiveness of the 19th Century city and it is not a mere chance that the main concern of fascist town planning consisted in widespread suburban settlements, in the ultimate disintegration of the complex structure of the city, in the dissolution of the political explosiveness of traditional working class districts into the evergreen peace of suburbia. It should be interesting to point out a fact which, for obvious reasons, has been largely forgotten, i.e. that the mainstream of nazi town planning as represented by G. Feder's “Die Neue Stadt” was more influenced by Ebenezer Howard and the English Garden City movement, than by the platonic ideals of Classical Antiquity or even of Prussian Neo-Classicism. Fascism is after all only an extreme form of capitalism. (It still remains to be studied in how far the vast suburban settlements in Anglo-Saxon countries have been instrumental in the bureaucratisation of class struggle and in turning these countries into basically conservative systems).

Today buildings for the Olympic games, world fairs or more recently the Centre Pompidou in Paris, try to achieve cultural aims which are very similar to the respectability of fascist monuments. Political or economical power veils itself for a short time in a cultural dress, which for a short while should persuade the visitor yet again of that ancient unity of technical and cultural progress.

Technical progress and industrialisation of building

In the 1920's the growing industrialisation of building was largely seen by architects as being the basis for a new architecture, for a new quality. However with all the disposition we have inherited from the 19th Century to believe in technical progress as the key to social progress, we can say now that modern building technology is still at the level of the experiment and an ephemeral progress leaves us today with a building technology which in many ways is more primitive than at any moment in Western civilization.

Industrialisation has neither created quicker building techniques nor a better building technology. Far from having improved the physical conditions of the worker, it has reduced manual labour to a stultifying and enslaving exercise. It has degraded a millenial and dignified craft to a socially alienating one.

Industrialisation has neither reduced the cost of production. Far from being socially economical in the long term, it has been the most radical means to include building into vast cycles of industrial production and consumption, its profound motivation having been the maximisation of profits. As the manual and artisanal culture of building became destroyed, the intellectual and theoretical corpus of Architecture had to collapse in a society, whose very base of existence, the artisanal production, became eliminated.

The failure to refund Architecture and Building in any other discipline than in its own history and in itself has been sufficiently demonstrated in the last 5 decades, it makes us now understand that the recuperation of a dignified mode of production, the reconstruction of an artisanal building culture will be the basis of any new architectural culture, of a new collective language.

The conception and form of a rationalist architecture will lie in the organisation of the building production. The vulgarity of late capitalist architecture is as much caused by the random profusion of building types as by the endless invention of building materials and construction systems; not an outcome of rationalisation but of maximisation of profits. I suppose that the restriction to a few building materials and the elaboration of an urban building typology will create a new architectural discipline of simple nobility and monumentality.

History of architecture—History of types

Against the anti-historicism of the modern movement we repropose the study of the history of the city. The narrow rationalism of modern architecture is expanded to understand the city in all its typological components. The history of architectural and urban culture is seen as the history of types. Types of settlements, types of spaces (public and private), types of buildings, types of construction. The bourgeois concept of architectural history—basically concerned with the monument—is extended to include the typological complexity of the urban fabric, of the anonymous buildings forming the flesh of the city, the skin of its public space. The buildings which are not so much the result of high art but of building tradition. The roots of a new rationalist culture are to be found here, as much as in L.N. Durand’s Typology of institutional Monuments.

A DIALECTIC OF TYPES

The physical and spatial unity of the traditional city is understood as a result of the maximal interaction of these types.

The dialectics of buildings and urban spaces, of solid and void, of private...
and public realm can no more be exclusively seen as the result of political, social and economical constraints, but as the result of rational intention of culture.

THE CITY WITHIN THE CITY

Urban life and the quartier

If we repropose a political choice the dynamism of urban culture as against the conservatism of suburbia, this has to be seen as an integral part of a democratic and socialist vision of society. The traffic problems which have been created by centralisation on regional and national scale can initially only be resolved on a political level through the new definition of the city within a rational organisation of the territory and finally through the reorganisation of the city into units of complex and integrated functions: quartiers, districts, homogeneous areas (Bologna), functional communities (E. Saarinen). Here work, leisure and culture are integrated into compact urban districts. The size of these districts is both a physical and a social one. It can only be checked on the historical model.

The "Art of Building Cities"
The "Art of Building Cities" has to find its way into legislation. The complex architectural scheme, precise types of urban space (streets, avenues, squares, arcades, colonnades) will have to replace the two-dimensional zoning spaces. A functionally complex and visually simple spatial continuum has to replace the contemporary system of disintegrated functions and buildings; inside a precise relationship of building-typology and morphology of urban spaces, we re-establish a dialectic of public buildings (monuments) and urban fabric. This relationship has been explored by architectural archeologists and is now becoming instrumental in the urban renewal of Bologna, in buildings and projects shown in this book. The method we are slowly elaborating is both precise enough to create built and spatial continuity and general enough to allow great functional flexibility and change. It is a method where time and memory become part of a dialectical composition.

Public realm and politics

In these new projects the form of the public realm is the prime concern. The public realm as a finite, unitarian, rational space. Place becomes the lieux where the individual identifies himself as a being with full cultural and political responsibility.

A collective effort—A political struggle

The rediscovery of urban history corresponds to a growing collective awareness. In the most advanced professional offices and in the most progressive schools, a new spirit can be felt. If a new generation is about to take over, we have now to take all the steps to prepare the ground in the administrations as well as at all political levels to bring about the necessary legislative changes. The method which we are elaborating is precise enough to create spatial and built continuity and general enough to allow a great functional flexibility. It is a method by which time and memory participate in the urban composition. In these projects the form and quality of public space are the prime concern of the project.

Public space as a finite and unified, rational and social space

We do not want here to make the apology of a movement, on the contrary we want to deliver a working document. Through the juxtaposition of projects and the inevitable confrontation of generations, we want to indicate alliances, we want also to point out differences.

We want to document a precise architectural position, we can therefore make no political compromise.

For that reason we have decided to organise this document not so much as a series of artist's portraits or individual "œuvres" but rather to formulate the great themes of this movement i.e.

— The physical and social conservation of the historical centres as desirable models of collective life.
— The conception of urban space as the primary organising element of the urban morphology.
— The typological and morphological studies are the basis for a new architectural discipline.
— The growing conscience that the history of the city delivers precise facts, which permit to engage an immediate and precise action, in the reconstruction of the street, the square, the quartier.
— The transformation of housing zones (dormitory cities) into complex parts of the city, into cities within the city, into quartiers which integrate all the functions of urban life.
— The rediscovery of the primary elements of Architecture, the column, the wall, the roof, etc...
If I talk here constantly of the *European city*, of the *traditional* urban block and street pattern, I refer to the pre-industrial city, i.e. to a city of mixed functions excluding the mechanical means of transport.

By ‘modern’ building block I refer to the nineteenth-century institutional and residential block as well as the twentieth-century perimeter block. I exclude from the discussion all contemporary residential typologies like Zeilenbau and tower block. I will thus only concentrate on building forms where a precise dialectic of building type, form of property and type of public space can be detected.

**General considerations**

I will attempt here a cultural and morphological critique of the strange agony of the urban block. After years of discussion and reflection I am convinced that neither purely economic nor technical reasons were the main cause for the fantastic trajectory which the urban block described from being the keystone of the urban composition to its complete dissolution in the advanced industrial city.

The changing methods of production, the changing nature of urban property, the growing importance of hygienic considerations are generally accepted as the reasons affecting the typical mutations of the modern urban block and causing its final destruction. It would, however, be possible to ask why, given the conditions of production and of landownership, the Karl Marx Hof in Vienna or the vast municipal perimeter blocks in Moscow could not just as well have been built as a multitude of small urban blocks with a familiar scale of streets and squares?

What I will try to criticise is an *historical tendency* illustrated by the fact that *larger and larger building programmes* (resulting from the concentration of economic, political and cultural power) have resulted almost *naturally* in *larger and larger building blocks!* The Palace of Justice in Brussels has the size of a medieval parish; the length of the Karl Marx Hof equals the diameter of the centre of Vienna from wall to wall: a single building gesture resulting from a single programme, executed by one architect.

My aim is, however, not just to describe an irreversible historical fatality but to establish an hypothesis: the social and cultural complexity of a city has necessarily to do with its physical and structural complexity and density. The size of an ideal urban block cannot be established more precisely than the ideal height of the human body. One can, however, deduce through comparison and experience sizes of urban blocks which are more apt to form a complex urban pattern than others.

My main affirmations as regards urban design will be: *urban blocks should be as small in length and width as is typologically viable; they should form as many well defined streets and squares as possible in the form of a multi-directional horizontal pattern of urban spaces.*

**Orientation**

Stübben recommends north-south orientation for rectangular blocks in
order to reduce north exposure to the smallest facade and to have east-west exposure for most facades.

The most inspired contribution in relation to orientation is Cerda's 45° rotation of the Ensanche grid in Barcelona in a northeast-southwest and southeast-northwest direction, thus avoiding any north facades. Furthermore, each facade is reached by the sun both in summer and winter.

The dialectic of building block and urban space

The building block, 'insula', 'pâté de maison' or 'ilot', 'Häuser-Block', must be identified as the most important typological element in the composition of urban spaces, the key element of any urban pattern. It belongs to a European tradition of building cities in the form of streets and squares. As a typologically fixed element it can generate urban space but it can also remain undefined and merely result from the order of an urban pattern (of streets and squares).

The three diagrams describe the three possible dialectical connections of building block and public space. These three polemical categories have all participated in the formation of the European City, either following each other chronologically or overlaying and transforming each other in the process. They hardly ever occur as exclusive systems but complement each other to form a highly differentiated urban environment.

The building block is either the instrument to form streets and squares or it results from a pattern of streets and squares.

But before coming to its specific urban characteristics, an insula has to be defined in a more general territorial and geographical sense.

The block is primarily a plot of land defined all around by a multitude of planned and unplanned paths, roads and streets. This is as true for the very large geographical blocks (including agricultural land, forests, mountains) as it is true for urban blocks.

Though the rural block need not be of any specific size, I want to stress that urban blocks ought to have well defined qualities of size, volume, orientation, typology, order and complexity in order to become urban. Although the size and nature of urban blocks vary enormously, I want to define a very limited range of principles not only for analysis but as a basis of urban design philosophy.

The size of a building block

In the European city, the smallest and typologically most complex building blocks are to be found in the urban centres. They tend to grow larger and typologically simpler towards the periphery before finally dissolving into single free-standing objects. This tendency is more obvious where the sections of the centre and periphery correspond to different times of construction (pre-industrial and industrial). One can conclude that: small blocks are the result of the maximum exploitation of urban ground caused by great density of activities, high cost of urban ground, etc; and that a great number of streets on a relatively small area correspond to the maximum length of commercial facade.
If the main cause for small urban blocks and for a dense urban pattern is primarily economic, it is this very same reason which has created the intimate character of a highly urban environment. Such an environment is the basis of urban culture, of intense social, cultural and economic exchange. If this hypothesis is true, the opposite is also true, i.e. suburban or peripheral areas or city extensions are generally characterised by vast urban blocks (Berlin, Barcelona, etc.) In pre-industrial cities the outer ring of urban blocks often included agricultural land, fields, large gardens. In the case of city extensions due to low cost of land, the blocks of the periphery often included large gardens, municipal parks, etc.

The high density large block
As the vast blocks of the periphery became more and more part of urban centres, the gardens were built up with residential premises or artisans’ workshops. It is this internal densification and exploitation of the urban blocks which lead to their final destruction and the savage criticisms by Le Corbusier and Gropius.

Building block, Form of property,
Form of street
The traditional insula, formed by an addition of urban houses, is characterised at ground level by a great number of entrances. The street is used not only as a space of distribution and orientation but as a space of economic and social exchange. There is a strict relationship between building type, form of property and the form of the public space, the street.

The twentieth-century perimeter block is still able to form streets and squares but it tends more and more to become an autonomous organism with its own system of distribution, corridors, rues interieures, access balconies, all competing with the streets.

The number of entrances on the street is not dependent any more on the number of residential units contained in the block. The relationship between building type and street becomes dictated purely by external legislations about fire, etc. The street is reduced purely to the function of access. The tarmac becomes more important than the public space.

The limits of the perimeter block
Perimeter blocks tend by their very nature to be very large, including gardens and even parks. However useful or beautiful they might be as isolated examples, as places of quiet green (Bahnhofstrasse, Zurich), if they are understood as a repetitive system, the street pattern they form becomes a spatial megastructure which is socially disruptive. The tendency to design these huge blocks into single architectural objects with one door is the very cause of their institutional barrack-like character (Karl Marx Hof etc.). Their courts usually degenerate as they require too much servicing. The large perimeter block was only the last step in the dissolution of the urban fabric.

The street and the scale of the building block
We have shown that towards the periphery of the city the blocks not only tend to grow larger
but they are also generally separated by wider and longer streets; this phenomenon seems to control both the development of planned city extensions and of incremental urban growth.

It is, however, not true that in the traditional city centres wide streets are necessarily lined by large urban blocks. If a street is to be important and lively within a multidirectional urban pattern, it has to be drained by as many streets as possible. In the history of modern urban planning there seems, however, to have existed an almost 'natural' tendency to front large urban spaces with large urban blocks.

**High urban density and the modern critique of the building block**

High density and increased exploitation of urban ground have been wrongly identified as being responsible for the inhuman condition of the nineteenth-century city. Instead the badly lit light-wells, the polluted streets and the endless corridor spaces inside the vast blocks were in fact the result of a wrong typological choice: the large urban block.

One could easily demonstrate that even higher densities can be reached with smaller blocks without the disadvantage of light-wells and badly lit courts. Certain central areas of Manhattan or the 'Spanish Quarter' in Naples are good examples. The savage attacks of Le Corbusier and Gropius in the 1920s against the nineteenth-century block, an attack which psychologically prepared for the destruction of the traditional European city, used a global critique whereas only a technical criticism would have been necessary; a criticism which I will demonstrate in my project for west Berlin.

**The nineteenth-century institutional building block as functional and social labyrinth**

For quite different reasons from those mentioned in connection with residential blocks, the nineteenth-century institutional buildings formed blocks of unprecedented size. The Palace of Justice in Brussels, the Hospitals, the British Museum etc., often reach the size of a whole parish or an entire urban district.

**ULATION OF AN URBAN FABRIC INTO SEMI-PUBLIC AND PRIVATE FUNCTIONS.**

D) This pattern of solids (blocks) and voids (streets) becomes articulated into public buildings (monuments) and urban fabric.

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**THE RELATION BETWEEN BLOCK AND STREET**

**CENTRE**

A) As architecture became reduced to stylistic systems in the nineteenth century, it was capable of articulating virtually any large mass of building that resulted from functional zoning and concentration. Neither housing nor administration offices were socially complex and rich enough to suggest high artistic results over a long period of time. Architecture, as purely theatrical decor, could then be abandoned all too easily.

B) A first articulation of an amorphous functional mass occurs by reducing it to smaller blocks.

C) Functional mix is the basis for the articulation of an urban fabric into semi-public and private functions.
institutional monoliths formed veritable labyrinthine islands within the fine structure of streets and squares and they contributed to the explosion of the social and physical fabric of the traditional city.

Like castles, abbeys or palaces in the pre-industrial cities, they formed secluded organisms, using their own privatised system of distribution, corridors, cloisters, balconies, courts, etc. These semi-public "rues intérieures" became in Kafka the symbolic spaces of institutional repression, the building masses themselves became the symbols of usurped political and cultural power.

These buildings contain an alternative distributive system competing with the traditional street. The number of doors opening to the street is minimal, reducing therefore the street (the public space) to a mere access route. We find here a first and definite break in the dialectic between building type and type of public space.

In religious abbeys or royal palaces this seclusion from the city was quite conscious. Religious or aristocratic life isolated itself from the trading and manufacturing city. Instead, the design of institutional monsters was not at all a typological necessity. It had rather to do with the architectural representation of the new bourgeois power which, in the construction of extravagantly vast and overwhelming structures, symbolised its own aims.

We have shown that both the size of the nineteenth-century residential block and the twentieth-century perimeter blocks were not dictated by a typological necessity. The rooms of the Palace of Justice in Rome and of the Karl Marx Hof in Vienna could have been distributed without problems into a multitude of smaller urban blocks organised by public streets and squares and these could have found a close dialectical relationship with the existing city.

It is the centralisation of functions (of political and cultural power) and land which have resulted in a specific typological choice based on large building programmes. Historically, larger and larger building programmes have resulted in larger and larger buildings and

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**TOP**

A) THE VAST INSTITUTIONAL COMPLEXES OF THE NINETEENTH CENTURY ARE ORGANISED WITH AN AUTONOMOUS DISTRIBUTIVE SYSTEM OF CORRIDORS THAT COMPETES WITH THE PUBLIC STREETS.

B) EXCEPT FOR REPRESENTATIONAL PURPOSES THERE EXISTED NO REASON WHY THESE VAST LABYRINTHS COULD NOT JUST AS WELL HAVE BEEN ORGANISED INTO A SERIES OF SMALLER BLOCKS SEPARATED BY PUBLIC STREETS.

**BELOW**

THE BERLIN BLOCK WAS NOT WRONG BUT ITS MEASURES WERE WRONG. THE APARTMENT ON THE STREET WAS NOT WRONG BUT THAT ON THE COURT WAS WRONG. THE LENGTH OF THE STREET IS NOT THE PROBLEM BUT THE LENGTH OF THE BLOCK IS THE PROBLEM. CAR TRAFFIC SHOULD REMAIN IN THE EXISTING STREET SYSTEM. THE OVERTIZED BLOCKS SHOULD BE BROKEN DOWN INTO SMALLER BLOCKS BY MEANS OF PEDESTRIAN STREETS AND SQUARES.

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**TYPOLOGIES of ROOMS or CORRIDORS**

of cellular or arterial structures

*not to be confused EVER AGAIN !!!!! please*

**DOMINANT VOLUME & ROOM CORRESPOND**

parcels of one glance

**BUILDINGS AS LABYRINTHINE CIRCULATION STRUCTURES**

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**TOO LITTLE PUBLIC SPACE**

**TOO MUCH PUBLIC SPACE**

**TOO MUCH SEMI-PUBLIC SPACE**

**PUBLIC SPACE BOUNDLED-MUM IN THE STREETS**

**BALANCE OF PUBLIC SPACE AND GARDENS**

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this tendency reaches its apogee today in synthetic megastructures (the whole city has become one big programme, i.e. one building). The Berlin University, the comprehensive schools, Milton Keynes Town Centre etc., are characteristic examples of this tendency. Today we pretend that the specific typological choice of megastructural conglomerates against a multitude of building types is a stylistic one. In fact, a millenial culture of urban building types and spaces with precise measures is swept away and sacrificed to an obsession with building systems apparently designed to solve all the problems of the city by means of an industrialised kit of parts. The unavoidable result is the destruction of time and place, of Architecture and the City.

The size of the urban block and architectural language

The growth of the urban block had an immediate effect on architectural composition and on the architectural quality of the block. Nineteenth-century stylistic eclecticism was able to deal successfully with the large institutional monuments, managing to articulate these enormous volumes into single and recognisable artistic gestures. However, the highly repetitive and reductive nature of purely residential blocks caused by functional zoning had neither the cultural content nor a social purpose important enough to inspire highly artistic results over a long period of time. The Karl Marx Hof, the palatial facades of Nash’s terrace buildings as well as the ones of Schusheh in Moscow have to be seen as exceptional achievements in a rapid decline and extinction of formal values caused by the quick consumption of architectural styles.

The linguistic emptiness of the Modern Movement or the rhetorical Kitsch of industrial Pop culture were the necessary result of the extinction of formal values.

WEST BERLIN CENTRE

The study which I present here on the centre of West Berlin is the direct result of the previous reflection on the size of the urban block.

Prior to the political division of the city, what is now the centre of West Berlin was then a residential area formed by large urban blocks. The structure of vast streets and avenues was designed by the Chief of Police Hobrecht in the late nineteenth century. His intention was to reduce the surface of public spaces to a minimum, thus reducing the problem of police control. One of these new blocks could measure well over 100 x 300 metres, an area approximately the size of a medieval parish. It was therefore possible to urbanise a maximum of land at a minimum of public cost in paving, sewers, etc.

The problems thus created in residential typologies were enormous. It was then generally accepted that high density exploitation of those blocks was possible only through a system of courtyards. The best apartments would be facing the street, whereas the inferior ones would sometimes be three or four courts inside the block without any visual connection to the street. Eventually, the lack of light and orientation to the street led to the condemnation of the Berlin blocks by Gropius. The Zeilenbau then seemed the solution to high density housing.

Recently, the urban renewal projects of the last decades have transformed the cities into an urban wasteland, leaving much urban space undefined and vague activities. We know now that the cost of policing — let alone of landscaping — these urban voids is too high for the community and the dereliction of most of these espaces verts has been the sad result.

My first intention was to keep the traffic in all existing streets and to reduce the width of the roads to a technically defendable minimum (instead of maximum, as is usually the case) and to allow parking along the streets. The project was also a critique of the vast Hobrecht blocks. The derelict interior of these vast insulae would be cut by a number of wide pedestrian streets resulting in four, six or eight small blocks. In that way the run-down and poorest structures (which were always situated in the heart of the block) would be rebuilt along a series of intimate pedestrian streets and small squares. In this way all the flats would now face a street or a courtyard. The urban motorways would be transformed into tree-lined boulevards and the whole tertiary sector (light industries, offices and administration) would be concentrated along these traffic routes that form the boundaries and limits of the urban quarter. These urban quarters would constitute real Cities within the City with a maximum size of 20-30 hectares — approximately 10,000 inhabitants — and with a balanced distribution of mixed functions. This equilibrium of workplaces and living quarters would allow the majority of people to reach their workplace on foot.
THE URBAN BLOCKS ARE THE RESULT OF A PATTERN OF STREETS AND SQUARES. THE PATTERN IS TYPOLOGICALLY CLASSIFIABLE.

THREE TYPES OF URBAN SPACE

THE PATTERN OF STREETS AND SQUARES IS THE RESULT OF THE POSITION OF THE BLOCKS. THE BLOCKS ARE TYPOLOGICALLY CLASSIFIABLE.

THE STREETS AND SQUARES ARE PRECISE FORMAL TYPES. THESE PUBLIC ROOMS ARE TYPOLOGICALLY CLASSIFIABLE.

THE ZONING OF MODERN CITIES HAS RESULTED IN THE RANDOM DISTRIBUTION OF BOTH PUBLIC AND PRIVATE BUILDINGS. THE ARTIFICIALITY AND WASTEFULNESS OF ZONING HAS DESTROYED OUR CITIES.
LE BLOC - L’ILLOT - INSULA ET SA GRANDEUR SPECIFIQUE

The Building-Block as a complex typological construction forms the basic element of the urban composition; of the urban pattern.

From the comparison of different street patterns at the same scale one can generally say that the degree of urbanity of a spatial pattern can be measured primarily in the frequency of streets and squares. This frequency depends directly and basically from the size of the building block. This specific size can only be derived from the comparison of historical precedents.
THE CITY WITHIN THE CITY
LES QUARTIERS

A city can only be reconstructed in the form of Urban Quarters. A large or a small city can only be reorganised as a large or a small number of urban quarters; as a federation of autonomous quarters. Each quarter must have its own centre, periphery and limit. Each quarter must be A CITY WITHIN A CITY.
The Quarter must integrate all daily functions of urban life (dwelling, working, leisure) within a territory dimensioned on the basis of the comfort of a walking man; not exceeding 35 hectares in surface and 15,000 inhabitants. Tiredness sets a natural limit to what a human being is prepared to walk daily and this limit has taught man all through history the size of rural or urban communities. There seems, on the contrary, to be no natural limit to the size of a functional zone; the boredom which befalls man while driving a car has made him forget any sense of physical limit. The streets and squares must present a familiar character. Their dimensions and proportions must be those of the best and most beautiful pre-industrial cities. Simplicity must be the goal of the urban plan, however complex the urban geography and topography. The city must be articulated into public and domestic spaces, monuments and urban fabric, classical architecture and vernacular buildings, squares and streets, and in that hierarchy.
LES TROIS MANIÈRES DE CONCEVOIR
LES ESPACES PUBLICS

Les blocs résultent d’un tissu de rues et de places...
The blocks are the result of a street and square pattern...

Les rues et les places résultent de la position particulière des blocs...
The streets and squares are the result of the position of the blocks...

Les rues et les places forment des types d’espaces précis. Le bloc en résulte.
The streets and squares are precise spatial types. The block is a result.

THE THREE MODELS TO CONCEIVE
URBAN SPACES

La rue et la place sont les seuls et uniques modèles pour reconstruire un ESPACE PUBLIC et social. Dans ce contexte, nous soulignons la dialectique nécessaire entre la TYPOLOGIE DES BATIMENTS et la MORPHOLOGIE DES ESPACES PUBLICS, et à l’intérieur de cette dialectique, la RELATION CORRECTE ENTRE MONUMENTS (édifices publics) ET LE TISSU URBAIN ANONYME (édifices d’usage privé). L.K.

The street and the square represent the only and necessary model for the reconstruction of a PUBLIC REALM. In this context, we also stress the necessary dialectical relationship of BUILDING TYPOLOGY and MORPHOLOGY OF URBAN SPACE and inside that dialectic, THE CORRECT RELATIONSHIP OF MONUMENTS (public buildings) AND THE MORE ANONYMOUS URBAN FABRIC (buildings for private use). L.K.
Le plan de Rome, publié par Nolli en 1748, est extrêmement important car il présente la totalité des espaces publics (internes et externes). Les monuments et le tissu urbain forment les éléments dialectiques de la composition urbaine. Le plan de Rome est un tissu irrégulier dans lequel les monuments et leurs espaces adjacents forment des figures régulières. Les dessins analytiques du plan de Nolli montrent qu’aucun ordre urbain ne peut exister si la ville est composée uniquement de bâtiments isolés à l'échelle monumentale. C'est cependant la situation des Capitoles administratifs de Dacca et de Chandigarh. Des images poétiques certes, mais où l'urbanité n'est qu'idéale. En renversant le procès de décomposition analytique comme nous l'avons appliqué sur le plan de Nolli, nous avons trouvé une technique de composition urbaine qui n'est pas seulement applicable à Dacca ou à Chandigarh, mais qui pourrait constituer une méthode pour la réurbanisation des vides urbains qui ont résulté de l'application de la Chartes d'Athènes.
Cities have suffered a gradual but tragically consistent process of desintegration. Nolli’s map of Rome is extremely important in that it presents the totality of public spaces (internal as well as external ones). Monuments and fabric are interdependent elements in the urban composition. The plan of Rome is an irregular one, but the monuments are regular and also the adjacent external spaces; the analytical extraction shown in these drawings demonstrate the impossibility of urban scale only. This is basically the case of the government areas of Dacca and Chandigarh: beautiful even poetic images but not urban ones. In reversing the process of analytical decomposition, which could not only be applied to Chandigarh and to Dacca but could become a model to reurbanize the empty urban spaces which resulted from the literal application of the Charter of Athens.