4th ISUFitaly International Conference | Bari, 26-28 september 2018

READING BUILT SPACES

Cities in the making and future urban form

edited by
Paolo Carlotti
Loredana Ficarelli
Matteo Ieva

Politecnico di Bari

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PROCEEDINGS

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Presentation

The city is an "organism in the making", an entity in constant transformation, not a complex of immutable elements. The city represents the entire human experiential field of the world, considered as expression of a "fundamental movement of existence" in its completeness and historicity, expressed by the formative structure of tissues and building types, by the urban hierarchies, by the relations with the territory, by the social relations, and by the values and criticalities.
The conference's aim is to propose a dialectical comparison between scholars of Architecture, Urban Planning, Urban History, Restoration, Geography, on the theme of urban morphology with an interpretative perspective based on the concept of "operating history". Search for a multidisciplinary syncretism that eludes single analyzing techniques and aims to the complete reconstruction of the urban phenomenology in its totality and concrete essence, through the study of the changing and inflexible condition of 'fluidity' hinged on the world's events. An integrated thought based on the critical concept of 'making' that constitutes, phase by phase, the signifying element of each present, explained through the relationship between the before and the after: that is the research perspective of 'being' that announces the notion of transformational process.
Therefore, the projection in the future of the urban form is the central theme of the conference that proposes to stimulate the reflection on the issues as: recovery (not only of the historical city), re-use of existing urban spaces, regeneration, ex novo design in peripheral and peri-urban areas and natural spaces. All that, without neglecting the issue of sustainability, not considered with the strabismus of those who surrender to the "technique" pre-domain.

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Compose with the fragments

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Keywords: *Fragments, reuse and recycling, remix, cancellations*

The current urban scenario is imaginable as a continuous construction site in which both the contemporaneity of the construction and the historical time of destruction coexist in a simultaneous and conflicting manner; the ruins of yesterday but mainly the debris of today are no longer exceptional episodes in the urban fabric but are now the recognizable and structuring features of the city: on one side there is a whole series of unfinished and abandoned fragments, that is the waste of the city that is built (or tries to do so), while on the other hand there is the historical ruin of the city identified in archaeological sites, in the ruins of historical monuments or in the buildings of Late Modern Period.

In this contests it is still necessary the distinction formulated by Francesco Dal Co among the restorers, only guardians of the knowledge of some techniques able to scientifically solve the conflicts that every intervention of recovery involves, and 'creative' architects?. Observing the other artistic disciplines, music for example, it is easy to realize how in the reinterpretation of a preexistent song, the remix, the shape and the 'aura' of the original can be modified with growing level of alteration that, progressively, raises critics on the identification of the work and its authoriality.

This sort of operation, just like many other actions belonging to other cultural environments in which elements coming from different sources blend together, where the new coexists with the ancient, forms a kind of tie, a cultural glue, a virus, that informs and supports contemporary culture.

Introduction

Densities and rarefactions of complex spatiality, like constellations of different forms, unfold over the contemporary city which becomes an open structure in continuous evolution. The chaos of autonomous areas (infrastructures, functional territorial clots) makes difficult the intelligibility of each and their general meaning. Disused factories, hypermarkets, incoherent buildings, infrastructural spaces seem to be condemned to recite a script that has never been written. In this context, the actions of re-composition, which obviously cannot rely on the simplification of an entire cancellation and therefore a new beginning of composition, must deal with what they find in the field by constructing overlaps and overwriting. Faced with this scenario, it is evident the need to redefine settlement criteria that are no longer based on the tabula rasa, but on the need to recover the existing, the remains and discards, as well as the fragments of a new 're-compositive' geography, that can configure new space systems. Renato Bocchi suggests the search for re-compositional strategies in which fragments become the significant elements of a landscape-discourse to be over-written in the space-time of places that today appear rejected (Bocchi, 2013). In this context, the existing becomes the 'variation on the theme' of new settlement principles that, in the face of the dissolution of the order of history, can bring out a new order by exploiting the opportunities for enhancing the pervasive fluid of the postmodernity junkspace.

Methodology

To the extemporaneity and the excess of the shapes that characterize contemporary architectural production, we add an urban and territorial reality characterized by a scenario defined by Augè as a continuous construction site in which the contemporaneity of construction and the historical time of destruction coexist in a simultaneous and conflicting way. The ruins of yesterday, but above all the ruins of today are no longer exceptional episodes in the urban fabric because they are now the recognizable and structuring features of the city. The idea of an idealizable city as an immense ruin, where the different levels of abandonment coexist and seek a relationship with the rest, generates a contradiction due precisely to the complexity and differences belonging to the parts that compose it. If on the one hand there is a series of unfinished and abandoned fragments, being the waste of the city that is built in the moment (or its attempt), on the other there is the ruin of the city of history identified in archaeological sites, in the ruins of historical monuments or in the buildings of Late Modern period. The interaction of historical ruins, contemporary debris and formal exceptionality, dissolved in the various declinations of continuous residual fluid - "nonluoghi", "terzo paesaggio", "junkspace" - forces us to search for tools and design actions able to recognize the positive potential of the fragment, of the rejection, of the waste and even the of the monument as if we were in an immense ruin to use, on which accumulate, overwrite the changing text of the city, exploit the error, the lack, the fragment, the inconvenience. The city is seen as the place of the praise of the fragment, where time must necessarily be "indispensable material of the project" (Di Domenico, 2014). Faced with this scenario, the need to redefine settlement criteria that are no longer based on the tabula rasa with a compositional action is evident; instead there is the need to develop re-composition principles that consider the existing, the remains and the waste, like the fragments of a new geography of the reuse where the space for the architectural design of the new century can be found. What we can do, Bocchi suggests, "[...] is to design a process (with all possible variability and adaptability) that constructs (spatio-temporal) relationships between those discarded fragments: a Dadaist Merzbau as Schwitters, rather than a cubist painting, where a re-compositional method is preferred to a dismantled method, where the becoming and therefore the temporal dynamics, the change, is carefully considered and incorporated and yet not so much in an "analytic" function but more properly in function "projective", "design" "(Bocchi 2013).

Essentially, it is necessary to search for a method that not only has the purpose of dissolving the traditional order of history, transforming it into a chaotic cluster of unrelated fragments, but that also arises a new order from these fragments; take those fragments, those scraps, those

ruins and give them meaning by exploiting the opportunities for enhancing the pervasive fluid of the post-modern "junkspace".

Forming process

According to Luciano Semerani, in the contemporary architectural scene, we can no longer talk of composition for the works of architects such as Bernard Tshumi, Rem Koolhaas, Elia Zenghelis, Zaha Hadid (representatives of second generation postmodern architects), intent on confronting the 'dissonance' of objects (the bigness) and, in general, with the dissolution of the urban form. The architectural star-system does not have time to insert itself into a disciplinary able to relate the different design experiences in a mutual relation, but it is focused on using in its favor the "common inventions" with which to meet the commercial and communication needs that the market requires (Semerani, 2010).

However, the definition of a fragment poetics has always characterized the research of many architects and is at the basis of contemporary compositional strategies of different disciplinary fields. Aldo Rossi uses elements from the repertoire of personal experience in a game of continuous overlapping between experience and memory by designing an imaginary city composed of the collage of projects, images and places he loves; he calls it *Città Analoga*, remembering with this title the combination of desire, dream and reason present in every authentic architectural project, "[...] my most important formal education was the observation of things; then the observation turned into a memory of these things. Now I think I see them all arranged like utensils in a front row; aligned as in an herbarium, in a list, in a dictionary "(Rossi, 1990).

Not too differently, we can trace a new strategy of relationship between fragments and juxtaposed parts also in the modern transposition of the Piranesian views in their meeting point with the generic city of Koohlaas' trash space; a montage, a new art capable of making things and images, even dissonant, coexist without a chronological or dimensional order, but which finds its consistency and its harmonic form in the simultaneous and constantly changing presence of different elements, "[...] a palimpsest on which it continually cancels and rewrites itself but on which traces remain to build a continuity: traces of culture, geo-archaeological layers (even of an archeology of the contemporary) that represent our heritage for good or for evil "(Bocchi, 2013). Strategies capable of unprecedented narrative sequences that base the foundations on the multidisciplinary suggestions of Western culture, in which elements from different sources come together seeking a new meaning, where the new coexists with the ancient to the discovery of a new type of binder, a cultural glue, a virus, capable of informing and supporting all our contemporary culture; I refer, for example, to the analogy that Giovanni Cianci describes between the instantaneous flow of Joycian writing and Futurist painting, "in the impossibility of distinguishing interiority from exteriority - writes Cianci - the inside from the outside, the meanders of the soul are often found to coincide with the same labyrinthine itineraries of the metropolis "(Cianci 1974); and furthermore, the exaltation of dissonance where one can continually search for variations, anomalies, grammatical imperfections which, though minimal, represent in time a guarantee of the uncertainty of imperfection in which it is right to provoke the error, the stretch marks, the grammatical discrepancies from which it re-generates unity and uniqueness. Moreover, the need for the construction of a "harmony" through the skillful control of the anomaly or dissonance is already formulated by Plotinus, "[...] the battle of the disunited things comes from the only rational design of the world: for knowledge, it would be preferable to compare the rational design of the world to the harmony that results from dissonances and to research why dissonances fall within the laws of harmony "(Plotinus, Enneade, III, 2, 16). As well as in the introduction of the 'non-harmonic', on which serial music is based, Arnold Schonberg who developed the principles of dodecaphony that he named "the emancipation of dissonance", affirmed that dissonances cannot be considered an exception, but logical and linguistic elements of new structures capable of living an existence of their own without the need to refer to yesterday's prototypes (Schonberg, 1911).

Continuing in the analogy of the compositional processes linked to the logic of the fragment, it may be useful to reread the definition of "concrete music" elaborated in 1948 by

the musical engineer Pierre Schaeffer according to which composing with the fragments refers to a reverse procedure compared to the traditional one in which the music was conceived and written according to predetermined theories. In the composition of traditional music, the starting point was represented by an idea, then it passed to its expression and finally to its execution in a path that led to abstract realization from abstract thought.

In the "concrete music" the procedure is inverse: from the real sounds one arrives, through experimentation, to the composition of a piece. A fundamental criterion is the confrontation with everything that exists, with every kind of sound or noise, substituting sound objects for musical notes, with a procedure similar to the collage technique.

At the purely architectural scale, the poetics of the caesura, of the fragment, becomes a food for thought around which to develop another possible reading: in the work of Carlo Scarpa, for example, the use of light is aimed at dematerializing some elements in so that the accent falls on others; the action of opposing pairs aimed at breaking the linearity, exalts the attention towards the exaltation of contrasts. Scarpa is attentive to the effects of light / shadow and large / small to control the perception of the visual space, models the materials to direct the light through the space, studies the surfaces, the chromatic response of the various materials, experiments new finishes.

In a strictly compositional context, composing with the fragments translates into the search for strategies and figural systems that is divided into conflicting and non-linear directions, where the individuality of the figures no longer follows structural compositional hierarchies but is based on re-compositional logic that produce new complex and uncertain principles of order. The resulting form is the product of a concatenation of autonomous elements that do not recognize themselves in a total synthesis but retain their recognizability in a context in which different parts coexist, "everything is born as a fragment, grows as a fragment, transforms itself as fragment, changes its organic and formal condition as a fragment; the fragments are added, increased, they proliferate and give rise to other fragments or to other larger or smaller fragment portions. [...] The momentary nature and the ephemerality of the fragment are such that it is not allowed to constitute itself as a totality in their sum. The work, in this case, is nothing more than an addition of fragments that are transformed, that grow, that are flanked, that diminish, that disappear, that resuscitate [...] "(Donatoni 1982).

The architecture no longer follows the compositional logic based on pre-established settlement, typological and formal rules, as was the case in the tradition, but considers the elements themselves as the founding element of the compositional process.

Conclusion

Compounding, according to the logic of the fragment, therefore means something different from the application of the defensive formulas that have characterized the actions in the different urban areas; in our historical centers, for example, the traditional actions of substitution or of architectural restoration, now appear to be inadequate in terms of the need, on an urban scale, of more complex operations of regeneration of the existing that do not renounce the overwriting of the text, to contrast and which aim higher than the technical drift (which, for example, characterizes the discipline of restoration) in which we witness the coincidence between cognitive action and project. Similarly, in the outlying areas of the city, the re-use action, intended as the will to confirm the dominance of the existing values, clearly prevailed on the possibility of regenerating urban parts with respect of a recycling action in which the existing becomes useful material for a completely renewed project (Bocchi, 2013). The city, in all its parts, needs to define strategies capable of building and grafting relationships with the new signs of tumultuous mutation of the production processes of goods and services of the third city, according to the definition formulated by Giovanni Caudo, in which the project may no longer coincide with increases in quantity but rather with the emergence of a logic of disappearance, or of the demolition of its parts (Caudo, 2013). The starting point of an urban recycling project cannot represent the existing, precisely in those areas where it failed to define or maintain effective spatial configurations. It is necessary to look for new settlement principles that are able to regenerate the physical remains and the traces of the existing system modifying them into something new. To the

clearly defined categories, such as the renovation of buildings or groups of buildings – that aim at giving a new functional and formal content to existing building elements with confirmed and strengthened architectural value - we must replace categories of intervention that they aim at the construction of new urban scenarios through processes of building replacement that involve the demolition and reconstruction of those buildings that have exhausted their life cycle to allow the urban fabric to regenerate. According to this approach, the existing becomes an element, not necessarily foundational, that participates in the definition of a new urban system. But in order to do this it is necessary to evaluate what is appropriate to maintain. Vittorio Gregotti states that it is urgent to reflect on the definition of a theory of destruction in order to lay the groundwork for a correction of errors made in the past (Pedretti, 1997). The need for a theory that can orientate and regulate demolition operations is already traceable in the 2008 Venice Biennale in which Koolhaas, in the Preservation section, develops an argument on conservation issues; Koolhaas manifests the need for a map of the destructions on which to develop a thought towards the materials of the present and the remains of the past that today are in a state of abandonment. Koolhaas elaborates a reflection that recalls the need to overcome the dogma of considering the past as the only plan for the future and formulates a list of criteria that do not exclusively indicate what should be preserved but what should be demolished. A sort of reflective genesis on the judgment that regulates the demolition processes (often random and arbitrary) that compensates the already consolidated literature and culture of protection and conservation (Menzietti, 2017). According to this concept, extrapolating the different levels of abandonment from their conditions of use and context, for which they were conceived, allows to bring the existing to a condition of formal resetting, but also of disuse and discomfort, which makes possible the re-appropriation, the re-adaptation or the elimination of what remains. If the architecture in use sees the new project as belonging into a logic of functional implementation of the existing, the strategy of recycling can create new systems. Following these assumptions, ruins, rubble and fragments from abandoned architecture are reconsidered in a sort of dynamic vision of transformation regardless of historical and artistic judgments, but on the basis of physical consistency and current health conditions.

Figure 1. Markus Scherer, Walter Dietl, restauro del Forte di Fortezza (Bolzano), 2008/2013.

Figure 2. Oma, sede della Fondazione Prada, Milano, 2015/2018.

Figure 3. Carlo Scarpa, Cimitero Brion, l'arcosolium tombale, San Vito di Altivole (Treviso), 1970/75.

Figure 4. OMA, Taipei performing arts center, Taipei, Taiwan 2009.

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