THE URBAN HISTORY
OF CITIES

Athens 7 November, 2018

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Pour revenir aux sources, on devait aller en sens inverse.

“To return to the source of things, one has to travel in the opposite direction.”

René Daumal, 
Le Mont Analogue
how to
START MY SHORT LECTURE?
• the Acropolis at Athens and the Capitol in Rome showed forth the imperial majesty of those proud cities for the edification of subjects and allies.

• Aesthetic merit was considered desirable in public buildings, and, later on, in the palaces of plutocrats and emperors, but was not aimed at in the hovels of peasants or the rickety tenements of the urban proletariat.

• In the mediaeval world, in spite of a greater complexity in the social structure, the artistic motive in architecture was similarly restricted, indeed even more so, for the castles of the great were designed for military strength, and if they had beauty it was by accident. 

IN PRAISE OF IDLENESS
Bertrand Russell
“WHO BUILT THEBES OF THE SEVEN GATES?

In the books you will find the names of kings. Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?
Babylon many times demolished

who raised it up so many times?
In what houses of gold-glittering Lima did the builders live?
.... the evening that the Wall of China was finished

Where, ....... did the masons go?
Great Rome is full of triumphal arches...

Who erected them?
THE CITIES MENTIONED BY BRECHT, LIKE MANY OTHERS, HAVE NOT DISAPPEARED, BUT ..... IF, TODAY, WE COMPARE THEIR LONG HISTORY, WHICH IS A MIX OF BEAUTY AND MISERY, WE MUST CONCLUDE THAT THEY HAVE BECOME ENORMOUS AND VARIOUSLY SHATTERED, IN A VERY SHORT TIME
mine is a brief lecture from the
beginning of urban history,
and not a short narration of
those magniloquent architectures,
described in the history books, that
for a long time remained in "blessed solitude",
while the rest of the city has expanded
its surroundings, as long as the breaking
of "many" walls has given back
a real long story, full of contradictions
but also made of many beauties
INITIALLY
I WANT TO MENTION,
AS PARADIGMS,
THE URBAN DEGENERATION,
OF 3 HISTORICAL CITIES,
WHICH PARTICULARLY I LOVE,
RICH OF CULTURE
AND
MAGNIFLAMENT ARCHITECTURES
THE GRANDILOQUENT PAST!

from those places we don't see where are lodged the social needs of most of the inhabitants

NOW NOT EVEN SINGLE EVENTS OF BEAUTIFUL ARCHITECTURE COULD BE SUFFICIENT TO LIGHT UP THESE CITIES
ATHENS GROWTH: FROM THE PAST TO THE PRESENT
ROME'S GROWTH: FROM THE PAST TO THE PRESENT

Rome - 1st Century BC
ISTANBUL'S GROWTH: FROM THE PAST TO THE PRESENT
OBVIOUSLY,

IN EVERY NEW RICH OR POOR COUNTRY,

SO DEEP CHANGES HAVE BEEN GENERATED

WHICH COULD CAUSE SERIOUS INJURY

TO THE REGENERATION

OF A DIFFERENT URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

FROM EVERY POINT OF VIEW
"OTHERWHERE" IN THE WORLD, WITHOUT DISTINCTIONS OF STORIES AND GEOGRAPHY, THE CONTINUOUS URBAN DECADENCE HAS DEFINITIVELY TRANSFORMED ANY SMALL OR LARGE CITY, IN A STRESSED **SUBURBCITY** NO MATTER IF, AT BEGINNING, WAS BEAUTIFUL OR UGLY
ON THIS WAY WE CAN'T QUALIFY ANY MORE "CITY" WHAT IS «DEGENERATED» AS SUBURBCITY
OUR CITY IS WITHOUT CENTER OR ESSENCE,
ITS SUBURBS ARE INTRUSIVE AND SO UNCERTAIN,
THAT THE OLD CITY ALONG WITH THAT
OF THE LAST CENTURY IS BECOMING ALL SUBURBS!

IN MEMORY OF PENTHESILEA
by ITALO CALVINO
“OTHERWHERE'S **SUBURBCITY**”

IS BROKEN

TODAY, MORE THAN THE PAST,

BECAUSE IS FRAYED

INTO MULTIPLES AND DISPERSED SETTLEMENTS

DUE TO:

✓ THE FRAGMENTATION PRODUCED
  BY ENDLESS URBAN DEVELOPMENT

✓ THE CURSED AND MONOFUNCTIONAL ZONING

✓ THE LACK OF CONTROL AND MAINTENANCE
  OF PUBLIC SPACES AND INFRASTRUCTURES
EVERYWHERE, WITH FEW VARIABLES, THE RESULT IS ALMOST ALWAYS "HOMOGENEITY AT THE DOWN"

THIS WAY "URBAN LIFE" IS SICK, SAD, UGLY, UNSAFE
THE **SUBURBCITY**

MANY TIMES

IS THE RESULT OF **TANGLES**, IN WHICH SOME **POLITICS**, OFTEN **COLLUDED**, HAVE ALLOWED **BENEFITS** TO **LAND OWNERSHIP**, TO **AGGRESSIVE BUILDERS** AND NOW, MORE THAN EVER, TO **GLOBAL TRADE COMPANIES** THAT THEY DON’T CARE ABOUT **CITY’S EXISTENCE AT ALL**
KUALA LUMPUR

SHANGHAI

TWIN PARTS: .... ETHICS AND AESTHETICS!
SAO PAULO & KINSHASA

SKYSCRAPERS & FAVELAS
SIDE BY SIDE
URBAN MOBILITY

BETWEEN NEEDS AND CONFLICTS
UNSUSTAINABLE AND IRRESPONSIBLE MOBILITY SCENE IS THE SCENARIO OF SUBURBCITY

“We come here every morning to work,” someone answers, while others say, “We come back here at night to sleep.”
TODAY, MORE THAN IN THE PAST, THE URBAN SPRAWL AND CONSEQUENTLY ITS NECESSARY MOBILITY SYSTEM REPRESENT THE MAJORITY OF:

- **SOIL CONSUMPTION**
- **WASTE OF ENERGY AND NON-RENEWABLE RESOURCES**

THAT IN THE SETS OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT THEY HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE UNSUSTAINABLE URBAN EXPLOSION
“SUBURBCITY” is growing continuously but always detached from the rest of the “pre-existing” (even close) old or new city.

- modern schools and new hospitals are confined in occasional urban vacuums while existing other public buildings have become obsolete, even hazardous, therefore unsuitable
- the old urban markets, were replaced by frantic shopping centers, outside old and new walls of city, acclaimed only by fools and idiots that still have not understand that the “malls” were already exceeded by alibaba, amazon, ebay and so on
THE FIRST SAD RESULT HAS BEEN THE "DESERTIFICATION AND/OR TOURISTIFICATION" OF THE HISTORICAL CENTER
WHOSE COMMERCIAL DESERTIFICATION HAVE CONTRIBUTED THE SHOPPING MALLS
THAT WILL BE SOON OVERCOME BY E-COMMERCE

AMAZON / E-MARCO POLO/ ALIBABA / EBAY
THE CRISIS OF THE SUBURBCITY is therefore WORLDWIDE

.... because consist primarily of a tendency towards the homogenization of lifestyles and an engineering and colonization of daily life.

(The right to the city - Henri Levebvre)
However, we cannot remain motionless but, as active and involved citizens, we must truly promote an inversion of urban development:

- to sew existing fractures,
- to stop desertification of the old city, I mean, reconnecting the city, as if were really one, the historical part and the immense one urban dispersion.
MOVE TOWARDS

A SUSTAINABLE and RESPONSABLE

FUTURE
WHERE

THE **QUALITY** OF SOCIAL LIFE

WILL BE

A NON-NEGOTIABLE COMPONENT

ALTHOUGH THE QUALITY,

“SIMPLY DECLARED BY LAWS”,

IS NOT ENOUGH
FROM OUR SIDE, AS ARCHITECTS, WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO IMPROVE OUR PROJECTS, ENCOURAGED BY THE ATTITUDE OF TAKING THE FINAL DECISIONS ALL TOGETHER, CITIZENS AND INHABITANTS, IN RELATION WITH EVERY HISTORICAL PERIOD AND TO THE EXCLUSIVE ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES OF ANY “OTHERWHERE”, BECAUSE
THE QUALITY OF THE NEW "STRATEGIES" IS CRUCIAL IN EVERY PHASE OF URBAN GOVERNANCE, I MEAN, IT IS ESSENTIAL TO REFER TO THE ORGANIC REUNIFICATION BETWEEN LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE OF "OTHERWHERE’’ AND THE METABOLIC SOCIETY THAT LIVES IN IT AT SAME TIME
THUS THE QUALITY OF ARCHITECTURE
• IMPROVES THE IMAGE OF LIFE AND
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CITIZENS AND
THE ENVIRONMENTAL LANDSCAPE,
  BOTH URBAN AND RURAL,
• CONTRIBUTES, EFFECTIVELY,
  TO THE SOCIAL COHESION,
• CREATES VARIOUS TYPES OF WORKS,
• PROMOTES CULTURAL TOURISM AND LEISURE,
ON THIS WAY,
THE EXTENDED SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
WE NEED VIRTUOUS ACTIONS THAT ARE THE
ETHICAL ROUTES TO IMPROVE THE FRAMEWORK
OF URBAN LIFE

• TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT
• TO CHANGE POSITIVELY THE RELATIONSHIP
  BETWEEN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE
  SUBURBCITY
• TO REGENERATE A NEW POLYCENTRIC CITY,
  REALLY METABOLIC, ALL OVER ITS FUTURE
• TO RECONNECT THE HISTORICAL AND THE
  CULTURAL HERITAGE, ALSO THE PAST ONE
  THAT REMEMBER US DRAMATIC STORIES
WE MUST ACT NOW TO
FERTILIZE THE CITY FOR A NEW LIFE,
AVOIDING TO CONFINE
SMART AND SUSTAINABLE
AMONG THE ABUSED SLOGANS,
THEN REGENERATE ITS SPATIALITY
WITHOUT FEAR,
RATHER THAN SEWED UP
THROUGH SPORADIC REUNIFICATIONS,
GOING, ON THIS WAY, EVEN OVER
THE ACTIONS OF FERTILE REDEVELOPMENT
THIS WAY THE PRINCIPLE OF URBAN “PALINGENESIS” WILL HAVE TO START FROM THE SPATIALIZATION OF THE OBJECTIVES AND THE RESULT MUST LEAD TO A VARIETY OF DENSIFICATION, I MEAN TO A NEW ”POLYCENTRIC CITY” MADE OF “URBAN VILLAGES” BASED ON:

• FUNCTIONAL MIXING
• VITALITY
• DENSITY / INTENSITY
• IDENTITY/ MEMORY
WE MUST ACT NOW FOR
THE POSITIVE HYBRIDIZATION
OF URBAN FUNCTIONS,
THAT SHOULD BE EXPANDED
WITHOUT
WASTE AND OVERUSE OF THE LAND,
BUT ONLY
THE MINIMUM REQUIRED
FOR THE QUALITY
OF THE CHANGING NEEDS
OF THE GLOCAL SOCIETY,
THAT CONSTANTLY WILL BECOME
“OTHER”, THEN UNIQUE
WE SHOULD OPERATE ALL TOGETHER TO CLAIM **THE RIGHT TO OUR CITY**

**AS EDUCATIONAL**

THAT PROMOTES PEOPLE’S PARTICIPATION,

WHICH RECOGNIZES

THE CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES,

THAT, AT THE SAME TIME,

COULD BE ABLE TO GENERATE

**A CONSTANT DIALOGUE**

BETWEEN THE PARTIES THAT MAKE UP

THE PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL SPACES
WE SHOULD BE AWARE THAT IN THE FUTURE OUR CITIES WILL CONTINUE TO ADAPT THEIR OWN METABOLISM, WHILE THE “URBAN-ARCHITECTURAL” MATTERS WILL BE INTIMALLY CONNECTED TO THE SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS OF EVERY “OTHERWHERE'S” TIME
THUS

THE CONTINUOUSLY REGENERATED CITY, TO WHICH, UNTIL NOW, HAS BEEN DENIED THE RIGHT TO THE FERTILITY, WILL BE SOCIALLY HEALTHIER, USEFUL AND GOOD, THEREFORE BEAUTIFUL FINALLY HAPPY!
Two days ago I went to Eleusis hoping to know much more about the misteries. I couldn't met the hierophant. I would have liked to ask if and how the desperation of Demeter (the Earth Godness) should reach the final victory over the unbearable arrogance of Hades (God of Underworld) who has abducted Kore (daughter of green growing). I will confess that I will be willing to do anything to help Demeter in the triumph of maternal love.
therefore
the colored flowers
will cover every lawn
and
the trees will grow tall
in the sky,
so the earth and the city
will be
more fertile
and beautiful
THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION

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