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CITYSCAPE ARCHITECTURE AS ORDINARY ARCHITECTURE

KRAJOBRAZ MIASTA JAKO ARCHITEKTURA ZWYCZAJNA

Musimy powrócić do pracy nad projektem urbanistycznym jako teorią architektury. Miasto jest bowiem przykładem syntezy sprzeczności i względnego kryzysu architektury, a równocześnie potencjalnym warunkiem jej rozwoju. Konieczna jest praca nad zwyczajną architekturą na szeroką skalę poprzez przywracanie jedności budynku i krajobrazu miasta oraz ogólnego piękna otoczenia.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura, krajobraz miasta, kontekst, projekt urbanistyczny

We have to go back to working on the urban project as a theory of architecture because it is the issue of the city which presents itself as the exemplary synthesis of the contradictions and relative crisis of architecture, as well as a possible condition of its improvement. It is necessary to work on ordinary architecture, in a multi-scalar way, by restoring the adherence of the building to the cityscape and the widespread beauty of the total environment.

Keywords: architecture, cityscape, context, urban project

For many centuries architecture has been civil architecture, i.e. it has generated *civitas* and *urbs*, it has been a theory of the pre-eminence of the urban project, in the sense of “the architecture of architectures”, and ethics have been a founding component of every project to produce a “totality of sense” which belongs to the art of constructing and the manner in which man inhabits the earth (Heidegger).

In the contemporary urban space, which is produced by many “capriciously different elements that generate the indistinct noise of uniformity” (Vitruvio), the civil significance of architecture has been given a lesser role because the attention has shifted from the “relationship between things, within and belonging to the city”, to singular objects and the way they are composed.

In the *society of the spectacle* (Debord), the theme of the physical context was abandoned, along with that of urban places as well as those relating to duration and construction. We were charmed by the descriptions of the *delirious city* and *shopping centers* as recognisable urban spaces, represented for this purpose as contemporary monuments (Koolhaas). The conceptualisations of cities as highly specialised *infrastructure* (Sassen) and the researches into the city of uses, of work places, of place of exchange, performances and tourism, served to negate the idea of a liveable urban space, as an ensemble of intelligible forms of spaces and buildings to provide citizens with a means of identifying themselves.

We can read the *Vitruvianism* (Irace) as an operational critique for the project, for its civil aim in

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the construction of urban spatial identities, against the abandonment of the global mercantile condition. We have to go back to working on the “urban project as a theory of architecture”, because it is the issue of the city which presents itself as the exemplary synthesis of the contradictions and relative crisis of architecture, as well as a possible condition of its improvement (Gregotti). We have to return to urban design as the relation between elements rather than a design of the elements themselves, which can “complete the aesthetic criteria along with the ethical ones” (Misiągiewicz, Kozłowski) because architecture should first of all be civil architecture, relational architecture and not the architecture of objects. It should be “architecture at work”, a tool for the construction of the city (Polesello).

Beginning from the architecture of the city (Rossi), i.e. an architectural theory founded on the critical dialogue between the essence of the field and the historical/physical context, every project is a form of modification of reality that must be founded on the legibility and on the hierarchy between components and possesses an “appeal within its identity” that is capable of surviving within the city.

According to this, the elements of the Vitruvian triad take on new goals and rules.

Firstly, the concept of **stability**, according to which “the building must be constructed in order to remain standing”. Even though we have innovative techniques and materials, and also the most sophisticated contemporary architecture which uses highly technological materials, our homes still crumble due to earthquakes! The stability related both to the ensemble of the urban artifact, its *texture* and its main feature which is residence in the continuity of urban spaces, and to its relationship with time and the history of locations constructed by man. In the city as a palimpsest, architecture is the project of the relationships between the different strata of the geomorphologic history of the site, a positive critique

of the physical context, a project of continuity and discontinuity of a given text.

Even the concept of **utility**, with regard to the “correct position of spaces” that correspond with their uses, should be extended. In *liquid modernity* (Bauman), in the space which is intended as a “place in movement”, which requires openings and flexibility, the principle of the relationship between architectures, as a part of different cities/territories, is pre-eminent. In the extended limits of reference to polar urbanised territories, the “correct position” consists in the spatial nature of relationship, in the city/landscape, and not only in the formal relationship between single components of an object/building.

Then there is the theme of **beauty**, in the “graceful and elegant unity” of the first two concepts. We do not often define as “beautiful” the parts of cities and landscapes which surround us because that which we perceive as positive and pleasant in historical cities is given primarily by spatiality of relationships. In these places beauty is “all around”, an “ordinary concept”, as architecture constructed according to Vitruvian concepts. For this reason it is necessary to work on “ordinary architecture”, in a multi-scalar way, by restoring the adherence of the building to the city and the widespread beauty of the “total environment” (Zumthor, De Botton). Today beauty is associated with the concept of sustainability: beauty is something which does not consume, which is economical and useful. This means not suffocating architecture with mere technological apparatus, but rediscovering the ethical beauty of a construction to respond to the necessity of living while respecting the earth (Duque).

All of this is possible starting from the project of residence, as an “urban artefact” which is pre-eminent in the composition of the city, the form of which is strictly related to the urban form (Rossi).

This is indispensable in reflecting on the quality of the residential urban space, both in order to preserve

extra-urban agricultural areas, and to reinterpret the city in terms of density and complexity and in accordance with strategies free from pre-determined by strict regulation constraints.

It is a question firstly of exploring the potential of transitional spaces, because in the issue of living, the theme of the “domestic space” fluctuates continuously in the problem of the urban space. Private and public become embroiled, individual and social spaces are flexible and open. As in a contemporary *plug-in city* or *living city*, the multiplication of the available levels, green spaces and roads, dwellings and parking spaces, work and sport, public and private spaces, services and principal uses, can exist “above and below each other, one on top of the other”, freeing up parts of land (Archigram). Playful and poetic spaces, as with Le Corbusier’s inventions, make possible the friendly interaction between the home and the city and are transformed into *events* which become part of a

larger civil event, which is the city itself. This signifies connecting architecture to mobility, flexibility and the landscape, and returning to the domestic space through the principles of variability, opening and continuity, while concentrating our attention on volume and the urban system, through services and accessibility as well as the form and quality of spaces, as with the Miesian plants-fabric or in the *machine a habiter* of Le Corbusier; experimenting with spaces for different uses and uses for different spaces, in their infinite combinations, instead of given types-uses – the residential use, in fact, is only a transitory condition required of a space, which in order to be fully alive, must also have other uses-; laying the basis of a credible sustainability of the architecture, which does not relate only to the materials of bio-construction or the relationships between structure, plant, shell, sources of energy, etc, but to the integration of these components in the form of the house and in the forms of the city.

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