Claudia Battaino*

PRZESTRZENNOŚĆ PRZECIWIEŃSTW

SPATIALITY OF ANTITHESES

Chcąc uczynić widocznym to, co wydaje się niewidzialne, próbujemy urzeczywistniać „strategie dla pustych miejsc", pracując w „architektonicznych maszynowniach" i odkrywając potencjał „tła". Dlatego też koniecznie trzeba zmienić „rozdane karty": problemem jest zgłębić zasadę, w której brak jest czynnikiem generującym przestrzeń, w architekturze i we współczesnym mieście.

Słowa kluczowe: architektura, krajobraz, miasto, węzeł/sieć, prosty/złożony, pusty/pełny, mikro/makro

To render visible that which seems invisible, we are dealing with the implementation of a "strategy for empty spaces" working from the "architectural engine-room" and exploring the potential of the "backdrop". It is therefore necessary to change the "cards in hand": the concern is to probe the principle of absence as a generative factor on space, in architecture and the contemporary city.

Keywords: architecture, landscape, city, knot/web, minimal/complex, void/full, micro/macro

In this intense and contradictory world, ever more characterised by the rapid exchange and flow of products, news, ideas and people, architecture is increasingly asked to simplify the complexity and layers of "events" and unforeseen occurrences that may occur, in a variety of places.

Assuming the contemporary space (irregular, diverse, multicentric) as the backdrop of an architectural project - the uses and functions as required by its dimensions, the new and different methods of construction and realisation (unexpected and unpredictable), the project necessitates working in abstractions based on the method called "disappearance". To render visible that which seems invisible, we are dealing with the implementation of a "strategy for empty spaces" working from the "architectural engine-room" and exploring the potential of the "backdrop." It is therefore necessary to change the "cards in hand": the concern is to probe the principal of absence as a generative factor on space, in architecture and the contemporary city.

Federico Soriano uses "negation as necessary intuition" to describe the actual situation with new eyes, capturing our differences in respect to the modern tradition (Sin_tesis 2004). The six negations

* Battaino Claudia, dr, Università di Trento, Uniwersyt w Trydencie, Uniwersytet w Udine.

Collage net-city, in the background "Oblivium", the photo by David Maisel, 2004–2006 / Kolaż net-city, w tle fotografia autorstwa Davida Maisela pt. „Oblivium", 2004–2006
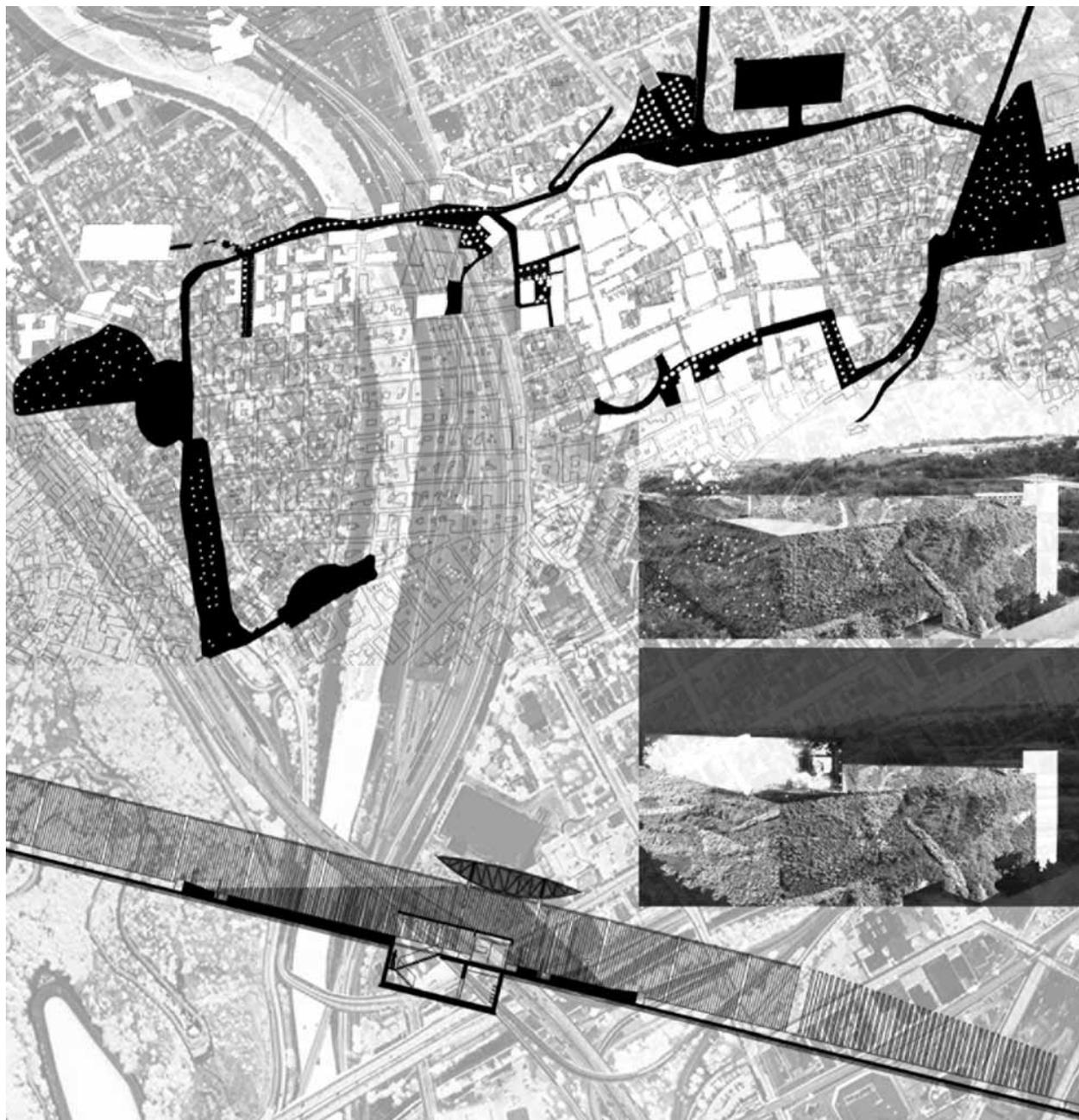
(without: scale – shape – weight – plan – detail – movement), construct a type of "fleeting theory of architecture", capable of being modified and corrected in an instant, because nothing is pre-determined. Making a clean sweep of common spaces from the architectural discipline – imprinted by a single unit, by the hierarchical articulation of their components by their permanence and by their anticipated duration – it is possible to fulfil the substance and matter of the space from new points of view. Soriano's argument is strongly tied to the expansion of fields of study including science, art and the use of computers to facilitate investigation of "other spatial relations" that have produced new configurations.

The sense is that of shifting the aim of architectural projects, from the construction of "shapes" and their formation, to the prefiguration of possible "events" , including those in the future. We must think of architecture differently from the predictable, with the capacity of proposing new spatial relations, beginning with the contradictions and the negations, characteristic of the present day. Working on the complexity of "making space" (space, from the Latin *patère* – to show), Duchamp, Oppenheim and Fontana have made unusual spaces visible and Chillida and Otheiza have used the existence of empty spaces to construct "full" pathways from the solidity of air, or have liberated the space to reveal the possible physicality contained within.

The strategy of the "void", the absence of modern projectual processes as instruments of control, is proposed by Rem Koolhaas in an authoritative manner, beginning with his S,M,L,XL (1995). The affirmation, "where there is nothing, nothing is impossible, where there is architecture, nothing is possible", contains all the generating force of the principle of subtraction. His interest in space as opposed to objects and in empty that precludes full, is a powerful architectural idea, an instrument adaptable to the prefiguration of that which is unpredictable, or that which is waiting for an uncontrollable development. In this sense, architecture charts, conceptualises, "attracts" the relationship between the diametrically opposed necessity – opportunity, to facilitate their evolution, as in the theory of chaos, a dynamic system regarding the variables of time.

Beginning with the *Villette of 1982*, OMA has been proposing open projects and conceptual diagrams rather than schemes relying on ordered, precise outcomes: these concepts open up a range of possibilities in which "void " dominates.

These same instruments of negation and "removal of space" are also used by Bernard Tschumi in the transition from fixed space to that which is variable and precarious to "events"; from shape as orderly and predefined, to the possibility of the unfurling of situations, as he explains in *Architecture and Disjunction 1994*, and in *Event Cities 3: Context vs Concept 2005.*

In this sense, architectural projects are coming to resemble landscape projects, because of the imperatives of time and nature, of people and activities, of wishes and possibilities and of attitudes, both dynamic and subtle.

Landscape is therefore intended as a projectual form: the possibility for the project to assume different meanings from the conventional, whether in the city or country. This corresponds to the retrieval of *ethos* (from ethics), of the sense of architecture and of the motives behind the city, such as a study of the essential elements of its construction.

The contemporary architectural-landscape project must work with spatial relations and the connection between the city, its buildings and its public spaces. That is, of spaces that are configured as resulting from widespread irregularity, based on coincidental design solutions, on the uniformity of the urban installations, on the validation of the city and of the chaotic contemporary contexts, of the uncertainty of absolute overall options.

Given the increasing number of promoters involved in the formal design of the region, empty spaces are the only possible remaining places for such a project: Empty spaces that encapsulate. Building for "empty spaces", the new spatial relations means planning with density, complexity, with contradictions and antithesis, with elements of a different sense that are contradictory and seemingly mutually exclusive. The project must weave and hold together these elements, creating new potential for the juxtaposition of opposites.

To discuss the role of architecture in contemporary spaces, I therefore propose some diametrically opposed key-words that have been verified in actual case – studies related to theories and projects.

knot / web

In the *net city* the new dimension of urban spaces are integrated in and with the landscape and necessitate projects that are capable of creating ever more vast relationships with its environs (countryside, other countries, the planet), through interaction. A spatial –temporal acceleration of the idea of the "polycentric" city , made up of "layers" (G. Polesello, *Per un'architettura del policentrismo*), towards an "epicentric" city. Cities created for centres of events that unfurl, that regenerate: central, self-contained places that belong to the web.

We are dealing with a new paradigm of the contemporary context, the configuration of a virtually infinite web, free of hierarchy and of a recognisable, constant geometric design: an open Utopia, like Constant's *New Babylon* (1957–69), capable of welcoming and stimulating unpredictable actions at any moment. In this image of the city, the fundamentals for the continuation of the net are paired up: the crossing over between the local and global context: and the knots become the activators for this pairing. The projects take shape more and more as multidimensional spaces.

For the project of the Congress of 2007, new highway barriers were created as complex spaces, acting as "exchangers" between transport and people.

A highway tollbooth is a threshold that can be found, with little difference, in the infinite points of the constellations, that is the web: near enough to become connected to the automobile, as in a crossword puzzle.

The barrier is the beginning and the end of the separation: communicative with and perceptive of, that which surrounds it. Closely connected to kinetics- from the highway, the landscape passes by ever faster, becoming a moving cinematic image with which we can't interact, like viewers at the cinema – at least not in the immediate sense: it becomes a film sequence where communication is huge and fast, as that of web-design. The barriers and tollbooths mirror the functions of the pages of a hypertext, accompanying the journey with the double role of informing both locally and globally. They are singular blogs on the connective territorial net, architectural experimentations of opposites, repetitions and changes – screens for communicating the "here", together with the "elsewhere", specific imprints on the place transformed by the project.

minimal / complex

In the operational limits of the project, to guarantee the possibility of more complex, unpredictable or fixed actions, one at a time: absence as an opportunity to give space to the complexity, absence as attention, by means of silence, in context. The events, mechanisms of replacement, not visible, but of personal experiences and sentiments are planned, unleashed by open projects that appear in the marginal areas of cities: *I terrain vagues*, places of instability, the areas degraded or neglected, at risk of vandalism or of social "collisions", the areas of "friction between different zones which need to overcome the obsession of formal controls".

In the fortified landscape project of Tarcento in 2006, where the usual instruments of architectural composition had unsuccessful results, a minimum intervention using "found objects" working together as "event-producing machines", reactivated the site; a necessary intervention for a public space devoted to young people who have grown up with electronic games and thereby indifferent to the traditional aesthetic- symbolic paradigm of the city.

void / full

In the necessity of giving continuity to the "epicentric" city, to different ecologies, through the "void" of the net, to work with the void, and not on the void, according to logic of "roots" where the filled parts interweave without completely overlapping so as to capture the void that is a vitally necessary space.

The 2005 project for the peninsula of Cavallino in the lagoon at Venice demonstrates that it is fundamental to adapt the architectural project for a public city to create continuity of the web. The "webs" of green spaces, of services and of the infrastructure radiate through the city and the landscape like a percolating system that uses empty spaces to create public spaces that inter-relate. The voids are therefore seen as "full" in the fundamental structures of the planned area. The project corresponds to the invention of a new landscape, combining the natural and artificial, built as a work of architecture within the scale of the territory, through the strategy of void.

The composition and large scale is measured by architectural interest, which localises and is derived from architecture of existing and future relationships. Through the principle of attraction – an interpretive, synthetic process capable of finding the hidden links, the project proposes "corridors" that delineate a new "suit of armour" for the landscape: beginning with the construction of the voids, the dominant features of the lagoon's landscape. The connecting corridors between the lagoon and the sea constitute the profound archi-tecture of this region, a new infrastructure capable of holding together and integrating different realities.

micro / macro

In the projects of public micro-spaces, the reinvention of minimal urban realities and of more complex spaces. The further introduction of urban interventions as playful concepts, where life becomes interwoven with art, "situational" projects that concur, stimulate and organise the modes of "friendly interaction" between the spaces, the flow, the environment and the inhabitants.

Microspaces / macroplaces is this year's project for the city of Teramo, offering a new system of relations within the fabric of the city. The project is based on consequential actions operating by means of the use of vertical plant elements: the reconnection of the historic centre with the city outside the walls, the redefinition of some specific points within the consolidated fabric, the creation of a new urban ecology. The project concerns the perimeter marked by the ring road, not as a vehicular passage or a gap between two urban systems, but as a linear space along which some points can activate the relationship, actually latent or undervalued, between internal and external. With the same approach, it is possible to identify the appropriate spaces for the transformation processes and give new life to the city. Green walls, tree-lined avenues and hedges contribute to generating new micro-climates within the city and give form to changing spaces, thanks to which the usual perceptions disappear and are replaced by a playful aspect. Through the diversification of flows, the results are the replacement of the distance that, in the name of an apparent function, is actually producing friction and rendering the urban spaces illegible and chaotic.

A new architectural picture in which the microspaces connect all the constituent parts of that macro-place in a new way, that is the city.