Common Space
Politics and the Production of Architectural Knowledge

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Propositions

I
The common is the collective faculty to transform and organize the world by producing it.

II
The common is not universal. Its history is written in letters of blood and fire. The common is an ever-changing, contested ground: capital and the state parasite it and separate it. For this reason, there can be no architecture of the common, in the sense of a direct way to represent it in built form.

III
From the point of view of the common, architecture is the set of languages, knowledges, codes, affects, images, practices and institutions that organizes life forms by accelerating or deferring encounters in space.

IV
The architecture of good intentions of sustainable settlements, self-built houses, participatory urbanism, community gardens and spontaneous slums is an inadequate tool to seek the common in architecture.
V

Concepts such as “projective” or “networked” practice, “design intelligence,” “multidisciplinarity,” “holistic approach to problem-solving,” rather than presenting supposedly post-ideological alternatives describing the present reality of production, are more ideological constructs to conceal such a reality—an ideology of the common.

VI

By common space we mean not how architecture can be useful for politics, but the politics of the production of architecture itself.

VII

The Renaissance sprezzatura, the 18th-century monster, Riegl’s Kunstwollen, Rossi’s collective memory and the 1970s linguistic turn are instances of the common in the history of architectural knowledge.

VIII

Architecture has never been autonomous. Only architects can construct their autonomy as workers.

IX

With Deleuze and Guattari, against architectural Deleuzo-Guattarism.

These propositions are regarded as opposable and defendable, and have been approved as such by the supervisor Prof. Ir. M. Riedijk.
Propositions ix
Het gemeenschappelijke is het collectieve vermogen om de wereld te transformeren en te organiseren door haar te produceren.


Vanuit het perspectief van het gemeenschappelijke gezien is architectuur de verzameling van talen, kennisvormen, codes, affecten, praktijken en instituties die het leven organiseren door ruimtelijke ontmoetingen te versnellen of te vertragen.

De architectuur van goedbedoelde duurzame bouwprojecten, van zelfbouw, gemeenschappelijke tuinen en andere vormen van stad-
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sparticipatie zijn geen geëigend instrumenten bij de zoektocht naar het gemeenschappelijke in de architectuur.

V

Concepten zoals “projectieve” of “netwerk” praktijken, “design intelligentie”, een “multidisciplinaire, holistische aanpak bij probleemoplossingen” in plaats van dat ze post-ideologisch zijn, functioneren veeleer als ideologische constructen die de werkelijkheid van de huidige productie niet beschrijven maar verbergen- zij vormen een ideologie van het gemeenschappelijke

VI

Met gemeenschappelijke ruimte willen we niet aangeven hoe architectuur nuttig kan zijn voor de politiek, maar is bedoeld de politiek die geïmpliceerd is in de activiteiten van de architectuur zelf.

VII

De sprezzatura van de Renaissance, het monster in de 18de eeuw, Riegl’s Kunstwollen, Rossi’s collectieve herinnering en de linguistische omslag in de architectuur van de Jaren 70 van de vorige eeuw, zijn uitingen van het gemeenschappelijke in de geschiedenis van de architectonische kennis.

VIII

Architectuur is nooit autonoom geweest. Alleen architecten kunnen als producenten hun autonomie construeren.
IX

Met Deleuze en Guattari tegen het Deleuze/Guattari epigonisme in de architectuur.

Deze stellingen wordenopponeerbaar en verdedigbaar geacht en zijn als zodanig goedgekeurd door de promotor Prof.Ir Michiel Riedijk
Today we are familiar with definitions of architecture as an integrated, multidisciplinary “networked practice,” which takes its cognitive potential from a “diffused design intelligence.” These definitions were introduced to counter an individual, authorial approach to design which allegedly characterized modern architecture since its beginnings. This thesis aims to overcome such a distinction, showing that, on the contrary, a diffused, collective intelligence was at the core of architectural production since its invention in the 15th century. Renaissance sprezzatura, the monster in Enlightened France, Alois Riegl’s Kunstwollen, Aldo Rossi’s collective memory and the 1970s debate on architectural language are taken as indexes of a Western tradition of collective intelligence in design. Moreover, this genealogy shows that by embracing “collective intelligence” and “projective” practice architecture does not necessarily surrender to constituted political powers and to the forces of the market. On the contrary, this thesis shows how such a practice can be an instance of a positive and constitutive political force—in other words, able to produce the common.
Tegenwoordig zijn wij vertrouwd met definities van architectuur als zijnde een multidisciplinaire netwerk praktijk die haar kennis ontleent aan een “diffused design intelligence”. Deze definities zijn bedoeld als afwijzing van een individualistische benadering van architectuur, geconcentreerd op de maker ervan, een benadering die kenmerkend zou zijn voor de modern architectuur vanaf haar begin. Deze dissertatie is bedoeld om dat onderscheid te overstijgen, door te laten zien dat een collectieve intelligentie altijd al de kern vormde van de modern architectuur, sinds haar ontstaan in de vijftiende eeuw. De renaissance notie van de Sprezzatura, de figuur van het monster in het Frankrijk van de Verlichting, Alois Riegls Kunstwollen, Aldo Rossi’s collectieve herinnering en het debat in de jaren zeventig van de vorige eeuw over de taal van de architectuur worden in deze dissertatie gezien als uitingen van de genoemde traditie van collectieve intelligentie in de architectuur. En niet alleen dat. In deze genealogie wordt geprobeerd te laten zien dat juist door het centraal stellen van noties als collectieve intelligentie en projectieve praktijken de architectuur zich niet hoeft over te geven aan bestaande politieke machten en aan de werkingen van de markt. Integendeel, deze dissertatie laat zien hoe de architectuur een uiting kan zijn van creatieve politieke machten die in staat zijn om het gemeenschappelijke te vormen.
Introduction
Towards Commonspace

If until the late nineties public space had been seen as a potentially engendered species, in the last years the debate was on the contrary revived by a large amount of studies, which have showed a more nuanced understanding of its transformations in the contemporary city, responding to a variety of questions sometimes distant from each other. On the one hand, the hegemony of neoliberal economic theory has posed a direct attack to public space as a state-driven welfare equipment. On the other hand, the transformations of productive activities have blurred the distinction between work and non-work time, private and public life. What is the status of privately-owned collective space, such as shopping centres, museums or theme parks? What collective memory should define architecture’s monumentality in a society which is composed by various and contrasting cultures and collective habits? How is public space perceived, and how does our body react to it? Is there still a possibility for a public architectural knowledge, in terms of a typology of historically and politically charged forms, or is architecture destined to become a performative device to well accommodate flows and interactions? Certainly, public space is not dead. But perhaps its definition seems today more elusive than in the past.1

All these questions address public space through its superficial appearance: the modes of its representation or its architectural formalization, the way in which individuals live or experience it,

1 For an overview on the current debate on public space see Tom Avermaete, Klaske Havik and Hans Teerds (eds.), Architectural Positions: Architecture, Modernity and the Public Sphere (Amsterdam: SUN, 2009).
or how individuals are politically excluded from it or struggle to reclaim it. Public space is taken as an already constituted object in which already constituted subjects act in it. But what are the conditions for the existence of public space? How is public space constituted? And, more importantly, is it possible to think outside the public/private dichotomy? As Marxist philosopher Paolo Virno has pointed out, the distinction between public and private, which seems natural and undisputable to us, “had been forged through tears and bloods” in the long and violent history through which the modern state form has been established. But perhaps today those certainties are crumbling, and a new conceptual grammar should be introduced to describe the contemporary political space. In this sense, I would like to introduce the concept of common space to address a mode of thinking architecture outside the distinction between private space and public space. Like public space, common space it is not just a physical space, but it is rather made of collective knowledges, habits, languages, memory and affects. Common space is not alternative to public space, nor they are mutually exclusive. Rather, common space is a necessary condition for the existence of both private and public space, but whose autonomous existence has been rarely pointed out.

Modern political thinkers from the 16th century onwards saw the construction of a public sphere as the fundamental act of the constitution of a state. The public sphere is not natural, timeless feature of human life, but on the contrary it is constituted when a group of individuals deliberately decide to exit their “state of nature.” This act is traumatic, since individuals are faced with a fundamental dilemma: whether to be free but insecure, or to be

2 As the most advanced example of this approach, see George Baird’s phenomenology of public space: George Baird, *The Space of Appearance* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003) and Id., *Public Space: Cultural, Political Theory. Street Photography* (Amsterdam: SUN, 2011).

in chains and safe. Exiting the state of nature, a loose multitude of individuals becomes a people, a unique body politic, made of citizens. In this way, and for the first time in history, the modern man acquires a double life: on the one hand, he is a civil, public man, a member of the state, obedient to its laws. On the other, he is always bound to fall back on his natural condition of private individual, following his exclusive personal interest. For Jean-Jacques Rousseau, private property, instituted through the social pact, is the solution to this dichotomy. The social pact gives answer to the following fundamental question: “find a form of association which will defend and protect with the whole of its joint strength, the person and property of each associate, and under which each of them, uniting himself to all, will obey himself alone, and remain as free as before.” Following Rousseau’s definition, the public and the private are not mutually exclusive domains. Rousseau showed that in the modern state one is a necessary condition for the other, and that both are constituted together by the same act. The social contract, through which a public, civilized sphere is constituted, transforms a forceful act of appropriation—which can always be revoked by an encounter with a greater force—into an unalienable civil right: private property. “... when the community receives the possessions of individuals it does not in any way despoil them, but instead ensures that their ownership is legitimate, changing usurpation into genuine right, and enjoyment of use into property.”

Public and private, thus, are not two mutually exclusive domains, but rather they are the outcome of the same act of the constitution of a state, representing two faces of the same histori-

4 “Forced to combat either nature or social institutions, you must choose between making a man and making a citizen, for you cannot do both at the same time.” See Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Emile, or On Education, trans. Allan Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1979), 39.
6 Ibid., 62.
cal development of the bourgeois state. In this sense, in modern times, “private” architecture has never been separated from public architecture. Since the beginning of the modern state, architecture is called to mediate the private and the public, the house and the street, open and enclosed space, constructing a field of possible ways in which bourgeois citizens—private proprietors—should appropriately relate with the space of the city. Three examples are taken to illustrate this condition.

In 16th-century France a new type of architectural treatise start to appear. No longer a collection of drawings of ancient monuments, the new treatise, epitomised by Pierre Le Muet’s *Manière de bien bastir pour tout les sortes des personnes*, collects examples of contemporary houses “for all sorts of people.” A new problem for architecture arose: the necessity to define the correct way in which the houses of private citizens should relate and appear in the space of the city. For the first time, the city is defined not as an archipelago of magnificent, collective buildings, but rather from the architecture of the street. Using a musical metaphor, the street should work like a composition without melody, a pure line of *accompagnement*: as a continuous, rhythmic sequence of facades minimizing their impact on the city. In other word, the public image of the city is no longer produced by the virtue of great monuments, but by *bienséance*, the bourgeois moral of acceptable public behaviour.7

Precisely in the interstices between public and private space, Marxist geographer David Harvey has showed the possibility for a critique of the “political economy” of public space. Taking Haussmanian Paris as a case study, Harvey showed various levels of interdependence between public interventions and private in-

terests. First of all, public works were addressed to boost private interests as an antidote to the 1847-49 crisis, as an anticipation of a Keynesian strategy. Public interventions had various effects on private interests: directly, in terms of private companies and owners directly involved in the public works, and indirectly, as a result of the rise of land rent. But at the same time the Second-Empire public space is an exclusively bourgeois public space, which access is excluded to other classes and social groups. Finally, the architecture of the boulevard provided the conditions for the new spectacular mode of production to emerge, and not only its theatrical stage. The space of the metropolis, with its emphasis on the spaces of circulation and its porosity between public, commercial and private activities allowed for the possibility of the encounter between flows of money, commodities, machines, bodies, allowing the construction of a public of receptive individuals, as well as the repression of political dissent.8

If in Hausmannian Paris public space boosted private interests through operations of exclusion, neoliberal public space seems to work through a strategy of selective inclusiveness. Whereas Parisian boulevards were apparatuses for the control and repression of organized dissent, it seemed that, at least in the period between the neoliberal expansion of the 1990s and the crisis of the late 2000s, parts of autonomous and radical memories were included in shaping the construction of the public sphere of cities. This happened both at a local and a global level. On the one hand, the presence of autonomous initiatives such as squats, underground clubs and art galleries is an effective device for enhancing the peculiarity of certain urban areas and facilitating processes of urban renewal, often pushing the original inhabitants out of the places that they

have contributed to make marketable.9 On the other hand, Harvey showed how the economic boom of cities such as Barcelona was made possible through the instrumentalization of those “collective symbolic capitals,” collective memories, languages and radical political history which made the city so unique, especially its propensity for political autonomy, its antifascist heritage, and the idiosyncratic language of Catalan modernismo. The series of public works promoted by the socialist city council—especially those related to the 1992 Olympics—materialized and made profitable that specific heritage.10

The three above-mentioned examples show the role of architecture in the mediation, in the attempt of taming the “natural,” private side of men into a civilized subject. In the case of the ancient régime Paris, by giving the form of private property into the space of the city through the construction of a specific bourgeois morality. Then, as in the case of Haussmanian Paris, by putting at work libidinal forces and perceptive capabilities into the celebration of commodity-fetishism and at the service of the new spectacular mode of production, and excluding the rising working class from the political scene of the city. And finally, as in the case of the neoliberal urbanism of Barcelona, valorizing and making productive a radical history of dissent, with the contradictory result of neutralizing its specificities. Public and private space, in

10 David Harvey, “The Art of Rent,” in Spaces of Capital: Towards a Critical Geography (London: Routledge, 2001). At least in the last decade, the obsession with public space in academic, activist and administrator’s discourses, together with the uncertainty in its definition, has made public space a device capable of producing agreement between conflicting political and institutional subjects: planners and architects, administrators and citizens, radical movements and urban speculators. We are not interested in a critique of this phenomenon here, but it must be noted that architects should be aware of the dangers of this ideology of public space (together with the parallel and complementary ideologies of sustainability and participation).
these cases, are instruments to incorporate, to control and to make productive, for both state and capital, knowledges, affective capabilities, collective memories and languages, whose establishment is autonomous from the development of state and capital themselves. But do these capacities, memories and languages always need the state to take a form? Is there a possibility for these forces to self-organize and acquire an institutional form outside the control of the state? In other words, is it possible for these forces to construct autonomous non-state public spheres? We call this possibility common space, or simply—the common.

The “discovery” of the common is recent, and it emerged from the two-fold critique of the end of the Fordist “mode of production” and the crisis of the state and liberal democracy, in the writings of a group of militant Marxist intellectuals commonly referred to as the post-Autonomia, or the post-Operaist movement. Far from the postmodern temptations of the “weak thought” and the nostalgia of the institutional Left, authors like Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt and Paolo Virno among others saw in the crisis of Fordism, in the crisis of representative democracy and in the transformation of everyday languages and habits an opportunity for radically questioning the bases of Western democracy and capital. The end of the productive regime of the factory was seen as a fulfillment of a controversial prophecy by Karl Marx. In a fragment from the

notebooks known as the *Grundrisse (Foundations for a Critique of Political Economy)*. Marx saw in the development of science and technique the possibility for machines to progressively overturn the role of labour in the production of value. Marx foresaw the increasing importance of the production of knowledge—what he called the general intellect—in capitalistic development. Interestingly, Marx saw in this process the possibility for the implosion of capitalistic exploitation due to its inner contradictions. But in its postfordist historical fulfillment, this process did not mark the end of capitalistic exploitation, but rather it expanded its domains. Knowledge, according to post-Operaist thinkers, is not productive only when it is stored in machines but as a generic capacity of individuals taken in their social dimension. The capacity to produce knowledge, as well as to affect and to be affected by others, cannot be organized in a factory, but can only develop autonomously from capitalistic control. Capitalistic exploitation happens only after this production has taken place, through a series of institutional and technological devices: patents and copyrights, surveillance, evaluation and assessment in education, debt and precarity in working conditions, are some indirect ways through which cognitive and affective capacities are controlled and made productive. Out of the factory, the entire metropolis becomes a continuous, productive environment. Beyond the traditional nine-to-five working schedule, the time of work and non-work becomes indistinguishable.\(^\text{12}\)

The rise of the postfordist metropolis paralleled the end of the “city” as a body politic, as a representative political entity of a

well-defined group of citizens. As we saw, modern citizenship was defined through the right to private property: but what happens if these proprietors are transformed in a multitude of indebted individuals? What political unity can be constituted when the only security provided by the state is no longer to its body of citizens but to protect the interest of financial speculators? Evidently, the material bases for keeping the modern man’s duality between a producer and a citizen could no longer be sustained. The possibilities to isolate any “state of nature” from a “civil state” are less clear, and their borders merge. For this reason, the borders between our private and public life are today blurred. The common, in this second sense, is the possibility for the constitution of a political subject beyond these modern dualities, the possibility for the constitution of a non-state, public sphere composed by a multitude of free individuals and not by a people of represented subjects.

The role of architecture, emerged to give a form to a people, a unique body politic represented by the modern state, has probably come to an end. How can architecture express this new condition? In a more or less direct way, many currents of the architectural debate are addressing these problems. Recently, a growing interest around the theme of the common seems to be found in architectural publications and exhibitions, to the point that the common has become a fashionable term. On the one hand, a more politically-oriented side of architectural critique turned to the idea of the common (or, most times to the commons) as a form of direct participation to the making of the city. Another tendency emphasized the opportunities opened by the end of the traditional political role of architectural critique, and turned to the space of the communal, diffused and networked “design intelligence” favoured by digital technologies as a supposedly egalitarian space for

the production of architecture. The first tendency had the merit to emphasize the political aspects of contemporary urbanization, especially introducing in the architectural debate important contributions of Marxist theorists such as Henri Lefebvre, David Harvey, Negri and Hardt. Yet, it avoided to address crucial architectural issues. The quality of the architectural result—good architecture—is overlooked in favour of an emphasis on the processes that produce architecture’s subjects, dismissing the specificity of architectural methods in favour of forms of analyses borrowed from social sciences.14 On the other hand, besides the questionable translation of digital architecture into a specific architectural “style,” the tradition of digital architecture has produced important theoretical contributions in terms of a rigorous account of the formal issues of architecture, in particular after the reception of Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy. But the reception of such a theory in this context was quite selective, dismissing the French philosophers’ Marxian and political side.15 Deleuze and Guattari’s critique of the institutional Left, actually related to the specific political conjuncture in which they were intervening, was taken as a rejection of politics tout court, to be substituted by the supposedly “creative” and “immanent” forces of the market, ultimately transforming a radical philosophical and political project into a profitable corporate ideology.16

14 See, for example: Rem Koolhaas, Stefano Boeri, Sanford Kwinter (eds.), Mutations (Barcelona, Actar: 2001) or Stefano Boeri (ed.) USE: Uncertain States of Europe (Milan: Skira, 2003), and, more recently, Tahl Kaminer, Miguel Robles-Duran, Heidi Sohn (eds.), Urban Asymmetries: Studies and Projects on Neoliberal Urbanization (Rotterdam: 010, 2011).


16 For an overview of the reception of the philosophy of Deleuze and Guattari by architects in New York, see Simone Brott, Architecture for a Free Subjectivity:
This thesis will address common space from a the point of view of architecture. It will not attempt to give prescriptions on how the contemporary metropolitan common space should look like. The construction of common space is not an architectural, but a political problem. Common space cannot be designed but it is constantly produced by the organization of metropolitan movements, workers, urban dwellers and migrants. Rather, this thesis is limited in defining architecture’s own common space: architectural knowledge, ie. the methods, the languages, the habits, the subjectivities and the institutions through which architectural production occurs. Rather than looking at how architecture can be useful for politics, this thesis attempts to focus on the politics of architecture.

This attempt is made through the isolation of five episodes of the political history of the city as five episodes of the history of architectural knowledge, tracing the parable of rise and fall of architecture as a discipline, and of the architect as its deus ex machina.

The first chapter deals with the beginnings of architecture, and its specific form of knowledge, institutions and subjects. The author, the place and the date of this invention are well known: Filippo Brunelleschi, Florence, 1419. But at the same time, this invention stemmed from a multiplicity of various factors: a political situation of turmoil, new emerging political powers and subjectivities, new technological inventions. The genius of Brunelleschi was organizing the encounter between them. The project becomes then the instrument of mediation between autonomous and conflicting powers in seek for a precarious equilibrium in the attempt of the

construction of a new form of state, after the demise of the old feudal institutions. The common is approached here as an attempt to answer the question: is it possible to think of a commonwealth beyond the state, and architecture as the instrument to shape it? The Renaissance, as the prehistory of the modern state, is taken as the testing ground for such an hypothesis.

The second chapter deals with the rise of the modern, representative state as we still know it today. The absolutist and democratic variants of French state, separated by the 1789 revolution, share the attempt to acquire a pacified equilibrium between the social forces composing it through the creation of a normalised public sphere. Architecture contributed to shape this public space, and its forms were codified into the state’s academies in the 18th century, becoming the depositaries of the “correct” architectural knowledge. Yet, the academies’ taxonomies were constantly put in crisis by forms which could not take place in the official classification, individuals constituting species on their own: we call this particular individuals “monsters.” Through the overlapping between natural and architectural history, the chapter takes the study of monsters, and the attempt to “tame” them, as fundamental operations able to disrupt and reformulate the equilibrium of states and the order of knowledge. This allows also to understand institutions not only as apparatuses for the representation of the interest of the state, but mainly as collective habits, repeated behaviours, which are nevertheless capable of modifying and innovating themselves through monstrous encounters. Beyond the construction of a well-ordered common as an adjective—such as in the expressions “common language” or “common forms”—the chapter attempts to find the monstrosity of the common as a noun, as the political process through which architectural forms, political subjects and institutions are shaped.
The third chapter tries to give a rigorous definition of art and aesthetics as one of the forms of these collective habits, through an analysis of the aesthetic theories of Alois Riegl, in particular his concept of *Kunstwollen* (literally, will to art). Against the simple materialism of the followers of Semper, which put material necessities as the origin of style, and against the idealists, who saw art stemming from symbolic meanings, Riegl saw art as the product of an aesthetic will. This will is not to be seen in a subjective sense, but as an impersonal drive, a collective organ of sense capable of selecting and organising aesthetic experience. Riegl never referred to the art of his own time. Yet, Riegl’s contemporaries appropriated his concepts and employed them in the debate over the political significance of art production in the modern capitalistic metropolis. Tracing an alternative genealogy for the rise of modern architecture, the chapter attempts to delineate a political economy of perception and metropolitan art. Riegl’s *Kunstwollen* allows to introduce the common in the sense in which it is understood today, a collective capacity to produce and shape reality, which is at the same time the source of the production of value in capital, and the possibility to overcome it.

Whereas the third chapter deals with the collective faculty of perception, the fourth chapter deals with the collective faculty of memory. Whereas the third chapter deals with issues of space, the fourth deal with issues of time. Through the reading of the Bergsonian urbanism of Marcel Poète and Maurice Halbwachs, Aldo Rossi attempted a rigorous definition of the role of collective memory in the production of the city. Retracing his unfinished project *La Città Analoga*, the chapter deals with the collective temporal dimension of the city, attempting a definition of the common dimension of history, beyond historicism and all instrumental uses of history for political purposes.
Finally, the last chapter interprets the transformations of architectural knowledge from the “linguistic turn” of the late sixties until the “digital turn” of the late nineties as an emergence of a completely new mode of production for architecture, which marked the passage of the subjectivity of the architect from the “public intellectual” to the “precarious worker.” Against the interpretations that see architectural language as a pure textuality devoid of any relation to reality whatsoever, the chapter attempts to see language as a means of production. Again, the commonality of architectural language is not seen as the sharing of a determined amount of forms: architecture, like language, is common because both are collective faculties, which allow humans to shape and produce the reality in which they live.

Despite relying on historical accounts and data, this is not a historiographic piece of work. It does not try to rewrite the history of architecture, or monumentalize it from the point of view of the working classes. The chapters are arranged chronologically only for the sake of clarity. There is no linear cause-effect relation, or historical continuity between them, even if certain topics and voices resonate throughout them. Of course, many other examples could have been provided. But their choice has been driven by the fact that the periods selected are moments of crisis for Western culture, marking fundamental historical and political discontinuities and epistemological breaks, in the timespan between the rise of modern state and capital in the Renaissance, and their crisis in the 1970s and 1980s. Each chapter makes use of specific authors and theoretical references taken from the historical context. The choice of those authors is not motivated by a pleasure in methodological eclecticism, but in the attempt to retroactively trace a “tradition” of the common in Western thought’s radical materialism. These theories, and the examples presented, rather than constituting a continuous narration or a unified picture, must be seen as the isola-
tion of some architectural concepts in order to build up a political theory of architecture. A theory is not a doctrine or a law, a set of rules or recipes for their direct application in practical cases, but an ordered archive of past cases not to be mechanically copied, but to be creatively translated in the present.
Despite bearing a single name as its author, this research is a collective piece of work. The function of its author was to organize in a readable form a multitude of references, memories, and information which not always could be traced back to their sources. However, there are a few people I would like to thank directly, which had a special role in the time in which this thesis was put together.

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This thesis is dedicated to my parents, who provided the unconditional love and support that made all this possible.
For just as those who paint landscapes place themselves in a low position on the plain in order to consider the nature of the mountains and the heights, and place themselves high on top of mountains in order to study the plains, in like manner, to know the nature of the people well one must be a prince, and to know the nature of princes well one must be of the people.

Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, dedication letter¹

When he introduced his political manifesto to Lorenzo di Piero de’ Medici, grandson of Lorenzo “the Magnificent,” the sixteenth-century humanist writer Niccolò Machiavelli employed an optical device widely used at the time, but it was used to produce an unexpected effect. The painter’s perspective was not employed as a tool to establish a universal subject and vision, but rather to displace it. In order to know himself, Machiavelli suggested, the prince needed to assume the point of view of those “of very low and humble condition.” Conversely, those who aspired to achieve their freedom, such as serfs and peasants, required a prince willing to destroy the old feudal privileges of the lords, the guilds, and the church. Of course, Machiavelli dedicated his book to the new rulers of Florence in hopes of again acquiring a public office in the administration of the city, which he had lost with the end of the Florentine Republic. But instead of praising the Medici and assuming their new authoritarian point of view, Machiavelli criticized the

strategy of the new rulers, which was based on an alliance with the traditional landed nobility. The new state, according to Machiavel- li, should be seen from the point of view of the new urban subjects who were emerging at the time.

Machiavelli’s idea of the state, presented in his treatise published in 1532, was far from the concept that emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, which in its absolutist, liberal, and democratic variants achieved and maintained a dominant position that has endured to the present day.² In Machiavelli’s project, no political unity or pacified order could be sanctioned once and for all in the construction of a well-ordered apparatus of political representation. The people did not seek representation in the figure of the king, nor, at the same time, could the prince represent anyone apart from himself. Only temporary, class-interested alliances could be sanctioned.³

Although Machiavelli’s concept of the state was eventually defeated by the irresistible rise of the modern representative state, his insights inspired the organization of various revolutionary theories throughout history and inaugurated a lineage of “minor” or “alternative” modernities.⁴ The political, literary, and artistic move-

² Respectively, with the work of Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau.
³ For Machiavelli, the best historical example of this kind of state organisation was the Roman republic, which he called a “republic of the tumult” (repubblica tumultuaria). According to Machiavelli’s medical analogy, the Roman senate and the Roman people constituted two conflicting physiological lymphs (umori), which strove for their own supremacy. The Roman republic did not ban the tumult from its order. On the contrary, it became institutionalised through the office of the Tribunes of the Plebs. See Niccolo Machiavelli, Discourses on Livy, trans. Harvey C. Mansfield and Nathan Tarcov (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1996).
⁴ Filippo del Lucchese introduced the concept of “alternative modernities,” referring to the “anomalous” political philosophy of Baruch Spinoza in his Conflict, Power and Multitude in Machiavelli and Spinoza: Tumult and Indignation (London & New York: Continuum, 2009), 1–5. The acutissimus florentinus influenced not only Spinoza, but generations of other political thinkers and revolutionary movements, from Denis Diderot to Antonio Gramsci and Louis Althusser. More
ment typically referred to as “the Renaissance”  5 has often been seen as the seed of modernity, but modernity did not develop as a linear, unitary plan established without frictions; the prehistory of modern state is a battlefield of many conflicting and contradictory projects. In the highly fragmented environment of the Italian Renaissance, this battlefield was the city, and, in this sense, Machiavelli’s perspective enables an approach to the emergence of new architecture from the point of view of struggle and turmoil. This does not mean that the Renaissance city was the product of “the people.” The architects who will be analyzed—Brunelleschi, Alberti, and Palladio—were not revolutionary heroes; their architecture was made to fit the desires and needs of princes and popes. Yet Machiavelli’s perspective allows one to see the will of princes and popes not as an absolute or totalitarian power, but as one force working in conflict or alliance with others.

The Renaissance city can be seen, therefore, less as a grand representation of a mighty political entity and more as a framework for the violent and oscillating relations between old and new political subjects. In other words, here, Renaissance architecture will appear less like a totalitarian device to subjugate the masses, as John Ruskin argued, nor as an esoteric tool of cosmological knowledge, as in Rudolf Wittkower’s interpretation. Machiavelli’s perspective enables the reframing of the whole picture in which “those of humble origins” are no longer mere victims, but active agents capable of shaping the form and the institutions of the new city and state.

recently, the crisis of representation of the so-called democratic institutions and the tumultuous form of contemporary uprisings (as opposed to the modern idea of revolution) led many theorists to re-read Machiavelli’s theory in the light of the present political conjuncture; see Augusto Illuminati and Tania Rispoli, Tumulti, Scene dal nuovo disordine planetario (Rome: DeriveApprodi, 2011).

Renaissance architects and artists were the first to present themselves as avantgarde within the context of an artistic movement; they were conscious of the manipulation of formal materials devoid of any specific symbolic meaning or content. But, as Italian philosopher Roberto Esposito has argued, “there can be no form without a force that vitalizes it; similarly, every force, in order to act productively, has to acquire a formal determination.” Therefore, any tumult during the Renaissance can be understood not only as an optical device that brought a different perspective to the city of the ruling classes, but also as a constituent force that gave that city its life. From Brunelleschi’s projects, which accepted public struggles as building parameters, to Alberti’s—which fostered the coexistence of aristocratic knowledge and bourgeois pragmatics, heretic fervor and existential pessimism—and finally to Palladio’s territorial project, which defined a common framework for the construction of a new nation, the architecture of the Renaissance is an index of the capacity of the tumult that results from the production of form and organization.

*  

Now then is the time, not only to liberate yourself from them, but to become so much superior, that they will have more causes of grief and fear from you, than you from them.  

A wool carder speaking in Histories of Florence and of the Affairs of Italy, III, 12–18  

The apparently purified, abstract language of Filippo Brunelleschi’s architecture has a humble beginning, dictated by the

6 Roberto Esposito, Pensiero vivente. Origine e attualità della filosofia Italiana (Turin: Einaudi, 2010), 55.  
need to respond to the deeply practical concerns of Florence, the city that would become indissolubly linked to his work as a public architect and engineer. The implementation of public works programs, as well as a basic welfare structure (during political and economic turmoil and in the absence of proper material support) greatly influenced his approach to designing for the city, especially because Florence was in the midst of an upheaval which witnessed the decay of the old communal institutions and the simultaneous emergence of a market-capitalist organization.8 In 1378, the Ciompi wool carders, the poorest and most exploited workers of the powerful arte della lana (guild of wool), revolted against the ruling oligarchy of the guild and even managed to “occupy the Republic” for some months before being bloodily repressed.9 Out of this unstable political situation, the Medici family emerged as the de facto rulers of the city.

Brunelleschi’s invention of a supposedly ahistorical, logical, and pure language of architecture can be understood through exactly the violence, economic crisis, and political instability that marked the end of the city’s feudal regime. In order to reshape the social and physical urban landscape of Florence, Brunelleschi developed a building strategy that did not question the limitations imposed by the crisis; he strove to transform a harsh reality into conditions that could redevelop the city’s decaying republican institutions. The architect needed the opportunity to directly con-

8 At the beginning of the fifteenth century, Florence was experiencing the consequences of a century-long period of economic depression and social unrest. By 1427 – partly as a result of the plague of 1348 – the population of Florence had decreased from a peak of 90,000 inhabitants to about 40,000. While manufacture production was decreasing, financial speculation, public debt, and the production of luxury goods flourished. The political administration of the city, which for centuries had been administered through a communal organization, was progressively centralized into the hands of few patrician families, most notably the Medici. Such an authoritarian turn was legitimated as a guarantee of political stability in a situation of deep turmoil.

trol the physical development of the city away from the crumbling knowledge and capacities of the guild structure. Thus, it was not only necessary to reform the organization of the building site; a new architecture and a new way of looking at the city had to be invented. While Brunelleschi’s architecture was largely misunderstood by subsequent generations of architects and historians, the development of the city of Florence has, for centuries, been profoundly influenced by his interventions.

Brunelleschi’s invention of linear perspective had an inherently projective purpose; it aimed to solve a problem of architecture. Linear perspective was never meant to function as an instrument to reproduce or represent reality. As the art historian Giulio Carlo Argan noted, when Brunelleschi built his optical devices to verify the method of perspectival construction, he was not concerned with finding a “general law of vision,” but with “setting the law of the correct vision of buildings.”10 The twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the heyday of the communal era, were characterized by a tactile architecture, in which surfaces played a fundamental role in the definition of objects that were articulated as a juxtaposition of relatively autonomous parts. Brunelleschi, on the other hand, developed perspective to encourage an optical understanding of the relations between things. Perspective, in other words, was a tool not necessarily to control objects in themselves, but rather to control what existed between them. Instead of designing “things,” Brunelleschi, with this discovery, posed the operative basis for the design of space.

Yet in order to control space, Brunelleschi needed to elaborate a mode for its production, and this could not be achieved without the destruction of the traditional organization of the building site. At the time, Florence’s building industry was still structured around medieval, corporative methods of construction. Building was not viewed as a profession in the modern sense, but as an art that was secretly communicated among the members of the guild of masons. But in the early 1400s, the city’s fragile economic situation could no longer support the continuation of such a model. For instance, the size of just the cupola of Santa Maria del Fiore, as Francesco Talenti imagined it, exceeded the economic and technical capacities of the guilds; constructing centering of that diameter was simply not possible at the time. Brunelleschi, however, understood that the cupola could be constructed without centering – one just had to look beyond the local base of knowledge.  

As a result, he invented the figure of the architect. The development of the architect as one central figure, in charge of all decisions on the building site, broke a century-long tradition in which builders with a certain degree of autonomy executed operations. Yet it was this shift that made the dome a re-

11 The constructive techniques used in the cupola are the product of different models of the past, taken from Roman and medieval architecture, and perhaps – as in the case of the herringbone pattern of the bricks – from the Islamic tradition, as supposed by Piero Sanpaolesi, *La Cupola di Santa Maria del Fiore: il progetto, la costruzione* (Florence: Edam, 1977). Sanpaolesi stressed the importance of eastern Mediterranean and Islamic influences in fourteenth and fifteenth-century Florentine culture. Perspective could not have been “invented” before Alhazen’s *Book of Optics* (*Ibn al-Haytham*), in which the Persian scholar introduced the modern conception of light and vision. Sanpaolesi also regarded Brunelleschi’s space is closer to the Byzantine models rather than the space of Roman architecture, especially in the centrally planned Sagrestia Vecchia and Cappella Pazzi. Piero Sanpaolesi, *Brunelleschi* (Milan: Club degli Editori, 1962), 17–20, 35–36.  

12 Mario Carpo has argued that the modern idea of authorship in architecture, started by Brunelleschi at the cupola’s building site and theorized by Alberti, has come to an end through the reorganization of the design process offered by digital tools such as Building Information Management (BIM). Mario Carpo, *The Alphabet and the Algorithm* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).
Perspective as a design tool for the control of space in Brunelleschi’s architecture.

1.1. View of the Portico degli Innocenti, Florence.
1.2. View of the interior of Santo Spirito, Florence.
ality. Through a series of machinations, which included replacing frustrated guild members (who did not wish to take orders from a single architect) with unskilled workers who were taught to do the same work for less pay, Brunelleschi transformed concrete builders into abstract laborers. In Marxian terms, this was a true process of architectural “primitive accumulation”: on the one hand, Brunelleschi liberated those builders from the “fetters of the guild.” On the other hand, he pushed them, now free men, into another form of dependence: salary. The emergence of architecture as a discipline – as a transmissible form of knowledge, autonomous from the act of building and from a specific local tradition – was a traumatic event, which Brunelleschi epitomized with cruelty.

Brunelleschi never sought to construct architecture as a pure language distilled from a selection of elements taken from Roman architecture. While it is possible to recognize his architecture from its limited vocabulary and compositional syntax, this is because it was the logical outcome of the elaboration of a simple method of spatial composition: a building must be the product of the logical relation among elements following the least number of parameters that are chosen arbitrarily. In this sense, all of Brunelleschi’s buildings can be seen as algorithms with a few input restrictions: the Ospedale of the Innocenti and Santo Spirito are almost completely determined by the module of the bay span; the Sagrestia Vecchia

13 According to Vasari, Brunelleschi’s maniacal control and high expectations over every detail of the building site caused a growing discontent among the workers, who started striking and asking for higher wages. They were all fired; “the following Monday Filippo set ten Lombards to work, and by standing ever over them and saying, ‘Do this here’ and ‘Do that there’, he taught them so much in one day that they worked there for many weeks.” In order to be hired again on the site, the builders eventually had to accept lower wages than before. See: http://members.cfn.org/~acd/vite/VasariBrun2.html


15 Arnaldo Bruschi, Filippo Brunelleschi (Milano: Electa, 2006), 64ff.
of San Lorenzo by the sides of the central hall and the scarsella; the Church of San Lorenzo by the nave and aisle spans, as well as the order and upper cornice heights. Almost every building is governed by a two- or sometimes three-dimensional square grid or by a movement of revolution along one vertical axis. Architectural elements and structures are always posed at the intersection of the axes. The walls in many of Brunelleschi’s projects nearly disappear as buildings almost coincide with their geometric diagram.16 Parietal decorations – highly simplified and “standardized” thanks to the soft sandstone in which they are carved – are only markers or placeholders arranged for the legibility of the spatial organization: the sliced corner columns that can be seen in the Sagrestia Vecchia or in the Cappella Pazzi are not errors to be attributed to the faulty execution of Brunelleschi’s successors, but logical consequences of the compositional method.17

The urban historian Leonardo Benevolo lamented the impossibility of Brunelleschi developing a comprehensive planning

16 This tendency is most emphasized in Santo Spirito, where the square grid clearly governs the interior and, as in the original project, the surrounding plain walls are augmented by the optical effect of the semi-cylindrical nicchie. Similarly, the lanterna of Santa Maria del Fiore acts almost as a wireframe structure, negating any superficial effect. Sanpaolesi, Brunelleschi, 62–71. See also the Eugenio Luporini’s polemic against the interpretation of Brunelleschi’s space as “cubic” and plastic as a necessary departure from the optical spatiality of the gothic, towards the recuperation of an idealized “classic” spatiality. Instead, Luporini locates Brunelleschi’s spatial innovation in continuity with late Roman space. Eugenio Luporini, Brunelleschi. Forma e ragione (Milan, Comunità: 1964), 57–91.

program for the city of Florence. Yet his architecture strongly influenced future developments of the city.\textsuperscript{18} Instead of establishing rules for large-scale interventions and normalizing the space of Florence, Brunelleschi’s buildings acted as locally intensive urban episodes, which triggered successive enlargements, doublings, and mirrorings, thus affecting the city at different scales. Palazzo Pitti was enlarged according to its facade modules. Michelangelo mirrored the Sagrestia Vecchia of San Lorenzo, and the Ospedale was both mirrored and expanded.\textsuperscript{19} Beyond the mass of a building, Brunelleschi was concerned with the spaces affected by those very masses, as in the case of Santo Spirito.\textsuperscript{20} The cupola, visible only from a distance and rarely from inside Florence (a significant exception being Via dei Servi and the Piazza dell’Annunziata), acts at a territorial mark, as Vasari noticed, analogically mirroring the hills that surround the city.\textsuperscript{21}

Brunelleschi’s urban strategies can be seen clearly in one of his earliest buildings: the Ospedale degli Innocenti contains all of the characters of his compositional method. Founded in 1419, the Ospedale provided a specialized, state-run (not religious) welfare service for abandoned children. According to Brunelleschi’s original intentions, the hospital’s architecture was meant to consist of two symmetric buildings, equal in dimension: a church and a nursing structure, which would have been separated by a porticoed cloister and service spaces.\textsuperscript{22} All of the measures of the elements in

20 In the original project, Santo Spirito should have been built in the opposite direction of the church, with the façade opening over a large piazza on the Arno. In this way, the church would have been a central focus point for those entering the city from the river. See Howard Saalman, \textit{Filippo Brunelleschi: The Buildings} (London: Zwemmer, 1993), 377–379.
22 Eugenio Battisti and Howard Saalman have attempted reconstructions of the original design of the Ospedale; see Eugenio Battisti, \textit{Filippo Brunelleschi} (Milan:
1.4. Hypothetical reconstruction of the original project for the Ospedale degli Innocenti. Ground floor plan.
the Ospedale were multiples of the column’s diameter: one Florentine *braccio* (about 58 cm).

The portico of the Innocenti was a machine – an ordering device that shaped and managed the circulation of the interior spaces of the hospital whilst absorbing further expansions without compromising the logic of the complex. At the same time, this very logic was multiplied in the next century in the other buildings around the Piazza dell’Annunziata. The relations among the portico, the Cupola, and eventually the whole city made the Ospedale a strategic hinge for subsequent urban developments, especially for the projects of Lorenzo il Magnifico.\(^{23}\)

Of course, the portico was also a theatrical stage. Elevated above the level of the Piazza, the loggia became the scene of a public performance in which a new kind of citizen of the republic was nurtured and educated. Through architecture, Brunelleschi turned a situation of crisis into an opportunity for the city. A foundling hospital, a place where poor parents shamefully abandoned the children they could not raise, was bluntly exposed and transformed in a Roman forum. Yet Brunelleschi’s use of the elements of Roman architecture went beyond the idea of an *instauratio urbis* – the restoration of the city to a supposedly mythical origin – to a continuity determined by the moral virtues of the ancients. Brunelleschi never tried to imitate Roman architecture; instead, he used the elements of ancient architecture to open the possibility of a new organization of Florence.\(^{24}\)


\(^{24}\) The idea of Brunelleschi as a restorer of antique architecture matured in the commentaries written after his death and was consolidated by Vasari. See Luporini, *Brunelleschi*, 10. Luporini argued for the specificity of Brunelleschi’s architecture against any attempt to compare it to the spatiality of antique architecture.
Therefore, it is not necessary for a prince to possess all of the above-mentioned qualities, but it is very necessary for him to appear to possess them. Furthermore, I shall dare to assert this: that having them and always observing them is harmful, but appearing to observe them is useful: for instance, to appear merciful, faithful, humane, trustworthy, religious, and to be so; but with his mind disposed in such a way that, should it become necessary not to be so, he will be able and know how to change to the opposite.

Il Principe, XVIII, 13

Brunelleschi was a public figure in the city of Florence and held institutional roles in the civic administration; despite its abstract character, his architecture became enduringly linked to the Florentine Republic and could not be translated outside the city’s environment. Conversely, Leon Battista Alberti was a courtier who worked for various political figures – ranging from the Pope Nicholas V to the Malatesta princes in Rimini and from the Gonzaga family, the rulers of Mantua, to merchant families like the Rucellai in Florence. Since the 1960s, historians such as Eugenio Garin have stressed the complexity of Alberti’s personality, which cannot be completely covered by the label of “humanism.” Alberti shared with Brunelleschi a sort of amoral pleasure in mockery and deceitfulness. Like a contemporary, self-employed “cognitive worker,” Alberti was a nomadic figure constantly searching for jobs. His appeal to the moral rectitude and values of the ancients can be seen as a tactic in competing for new commissions from princes eager to represent and legitimize their powers – acquired through violence and plunder – by finding continuity with the examples of great historical figures. His all-encompassing and sys-

26 Since the 1960s, Eugenio Garin has conducted a significant re-evaluation of the figure of Alberti in an anti-humanist sense. See Eugenio Garin, Rinascite e rivoluzioni: movimenti culturali dal XIV al XVIII secolo (Rome: Laterza, 1976).
tematic architectural treatise *De re aedificatoria* (On Building) can be understood as a manifesto to construct his own audience for architecture, rather than as a disinterested description of architecture per se. Like Machiavelli in later years, Alberti aimed to produce the “new prince” as the perfect client for his own architecture. In contrast to the Apollonian optimism of *De re aedificatoria*, other writings by Alberti present a rather pessimistic tone and a complete dismissal of the importance of authority and the virtues of the ancients. Alberti’s buildings present a duality similar to that found in his writings. On the one hand, they employ a wide range of historical references and analogies responding to the representative necessities of his wealthy patrons; on the other, his works introduce elements that destabilize the harmony of his compositions to convey unstable results. In other words, Alberti always carried out his own hidden agenda: like architectural Trojan horses, his buildings were always bound to be turned against the powers that commissioned them. For Alberti, history was not a repository of readymade values and virtues to be freely employed for current political uses, but a fertile ground of unexpressed and unexpected possibilities striving for organization.

One century before Machiavelli wrote and published *The Prince*, Alberti substituted for the opposition between good and evil the dialectic of *Virtus* and *Fortuna*. Alberti dismissed the inherent morality of the concept of Virtus, completely subordinating it to the almighty power of Fortune. Virtue could only help men

27 For an account on Alberti’s combinatory method, especially in relation to the method of rhetoric, see Anke Naujokat, “Ut rhetorica architectura: Leon Battista Alberti’s Technique of Architectural Collage,” *Candide* 2 (July 2010).

28 In the dinner piece “Virtus,” the eponymous goddess and her friends, including philosophers such as Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Archimedes as well as artists including Phidias and Polyclitus, are mocked and beaten by Fortune and his armed friends. Phidias and Polycletus try in vain to defend themselves with chisel and brush; when Cicero, the hero of moral rectitude among humanist circles in Alberti’s time, tries to save the situation through his renowned rhetoric
act prudently and know their limits. It helped to rationally comprehend the world, but not dominate it. Rationality and architecture itself, wrote Alberti, could provide only a temporary refuge to “ward off anguish” without being able to overcome it.\footnote{In \textit{Profugiorum ab aerumna libri III} [The three books on the refuge from mental anguish], Alberti told of one of his mental exercises to dispel anxiety: mentally composing very complex and magnificent architecture. Leon Battista Alberti, “Profugiorum ab aerumna libri,” in \textit{Opere Volgari}, vol. 2, 181–182.}

The dialectic between Virtus and Fortuna assumes a visual form as well as being an operative tool in Alberti’s aesthetic theory, particularly in volumes 6–9 of \textit{De re aedificatoria}, which address the issues of beauty and ornament.\footnote{Paolo Portoghesi has pointed to the close link between beauty, science, and ethics in Alberti. In this relation, the aesthetic theory is the central moment because it allows a direct and certain verification of our knowledge and of the consequences of our actions. Paolo Portoghesi, introduction to \textit{L’Architettura (De re aedificatoria)} by Leon Battista Alberti (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1966), xxix-xxx. Mark Jarzombek has also pointed out that, before Kant, ethics and aesthetics were not separated. Mark Jarzombek, \textit{On Leon Battista Alberti: His Literary and Aesthetic Theories} (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1989), xi.} In the beginning of the sixth volume, Alberti introduces his concept of beauty, which, he writes, has a persuasive effect on the viewer by inducing a sense of pleasure through a combination of \textit{pulchritudo} and \textit{ornamentum}. While \textit{pulchritudo} stands for a building’s “natural” character (i.e. its capacity to elegantly fulfill its purpose through the measured proportion among parts, economy, and appropriateness of means), \textit{ornamentum} is a “form of auxiliary light and complement to beauty” – “something attached or additional.”\footnote{Leon Battista Alberti, \textit{L’Architettura (De re aedificatoria)} (Milan: Il Polifilo, 1966), vol. 1, 2.} And yet, despite being an “added” beauty, ornament is the foundation of civilization and the activities of public life: “if all these institutions, without which man could scarce exist, were to be stripped of their pomp and ornament,” writes Alberti, “their business would appear insipid and
shabby.” Like human Virtus, ornament is a precarious foundation for civilization and always bound to dissolve in front of the potentially destructive historical forces of fortune. The order of beauty – and of a state – is based on a concinnitas universarum partium, a wise and controlled yet unstable “reasoned disposition of all the parts within a body,” architectural or political, “so that nothing may be added, taken away, or altered, but for the worse.”

The built work of Alberti provides a material parallel to his aesthetic theories, and his design method sought to make a critical enquiry upon the historical, political, and subjective stratification of every context in which he operated. For this reason, it has been argued that the tenth book of De re aedificatoria, “Restoration of Buildings,”, can be seen as a general manifesto of his design method. Alberti operated with the principles of restoration even when he was called to construct new buildings.

Alberti built the Tempio Malatestiano as a mausoleum for Sigismondo Malatesta, one of the less “virtuous” and most infamous princes of the Italian Renaissance, to lend a new look and meaning to a twelfth-century Franciscan church. In some ways, Alberti seemed not to care about the existing structure, which he wrapped in an arcade of piers and arches inspired by a Roman aqueduct. The conflict between the old and the new was further marked by the fact that his arcade bay differed from the more-or-less regular bay-span of the old church. Some of the old windows opened directly onto the new piers. In actuality, however, Alberti left the Franciscan church almost untouched, keeping an empty

32 Ibid.
33 In the satiric play Momus, Alberti himself confirmed that the “ornamental” character of public life has to be based on dissimulation: “Oh, what an excellent thing it is to know how to cover and cloak one’s true feelings with a painted facade of artificiality and studied pretence,” exclaims Momus after his formative journey amongst humans. Leon Battista Alberti, Momus, trans. Sarah Knight, eds. Virginia Brown and Sarah Knight (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press), vol. 2, 14.
34 Ibid.
1.5. Tempio Malatestiano, Rimini. Plan. The thick lines mark Alberti’s interventions.
space between the new facades and the old walls. Today, the logic of the medieval church, both physical and symbolic, is still legible even behind the Roman arcades, which highlight the dialectic and tension between the frugality of the mendicant order and the bloody rule of tyrants.\textsuperscript{35}

In Mantua, Alberti found a more politically palatable client in Ludovico Gonzaga, who was making bold attempts to win a popular consensus in the city for his ruling strategy.\textsuperscript{36} Gonzaga wished to revive the festivities of the ostension of the relic of the blood of Christ, a popular cult that had been almost completely abandoned by the end of the 1300s. Hoping to get the commission for the new church, which would have hosted the ceremony, Alberti wrote to Gonzaga promoting his project for Sant’Andrea, which he praised as magnificent, solid, cheap, and well suited for its purpose. He referred to this type of temple as \textit{Etruscum sacrum}: in an aesthetic inversion, the church, embedded in the urban fabric, would appear like an Etruscan ruin completely absorbed by the growth of a medieval city.\textsuperscript{37} While Alberti behaved like a good courtier, literally giving Gonzaga everything he asked for, the architect had an ulte-


\textsuperscript{36} Ludovico can be seen as a close approximation of what Alberti needed as a perfect patron for his architecture. At the time of the beginning of Sant’Andrea, the collaboration between Battista and Ludovico was already well established for the construction of the church of San Sebastiano. Ludovico used to personally supervise the work of Luca Fancelli, who was in charge of the direction of the building site.

\textsuperscript{37} Jarzombek, \textit{On Leon Battista Alberti}, 182–185. The reference to the Etruscans would have been particularly tantalizing for Ludovico, who was at that time commissioning historical studies to legitimize the alleged Etruscan origins of the city; he wanted claim an ancient and illustrious foundation, preceding even that of Rome. For Alberti’s urban program in Mantua, see Kurt W. Forster, “Templum, Laubia, Figura: l’architettura di Alberti per una nuova Mantova,” in \textit{Leon Battista Alberti}, eds. Joseph Rykwert and Anne Engel (Milan: Electa, 1994), 162–185 and Paolo Carpeggiani, “\textit{Renovatio Urbis}. Strategie Urbane a Mantova nell’eta di Ludovico Gonzaga (1444–1478),” ibid., 178–185.
1.6. Sant'Andrea, Mantua. Plan from the Napoleonic cadastre.
1.7. Sant'Andrea, view of the interior.
rior motive: Sant’Andrea was Alberti’s chance to promote radical ideas about liturgical reform. The design of the church’s undivided internal space was dictated by a desire to remove any obstacles in the sightlines of the relic during ostension ceremonies. Evidence collected in recent restoration campaigns reveals the presence of an apse in the space between the internal facade and the element behind the “umbrella” – the vault that surmounts the front pediment. Such spaces were open to the nave through a loggia and then connected to the crypt through a complex system of passages over lateral chapels and spiral staircases in the central pilasters of the transept. While researching the uses of internal loggias in other Lombardian medieval churches, the architectural historian Massimo Bulgarelli advanced the hypothesis that the internal loggia was used as a podium for the ostension ceremonies, noting that the big opening under the “umbrella” would have provided too much backlighting for Christ’s blood to be clearly seen from the inside. If Bulgarelli’s hypothesis is correct, Alberti – rather than providing the optimal setup for the relic display – would have been trying to impede the view of the relic. A rational man like Alberti would not have liked the noisy display of popular devotion triggered by such a ceremony. Even more, he would have disliked the fact that such superstitions were used as an instrument for political legitimation. Perhaps influenced by Bohemian radical groups like the Hussites and the Taborites, Alberti rejected the use of images in liturgy.

A similar “non-figurative” stance can be traced in Alberti’s work, in Florence, for the wealthy merchant and banker Giovanni Rucellai. With Rucellai, Alberti was able to more directly express his political allegiance with a rising bourgeoisie willing to impose

its presence on the institutions of the city. As a wealthy merchant family, the Rucellai were political opponents of the Medicis, who had come to control Florence, and their authoritarian position. But when Giovanni called on Alberti to build a new family palace, the architect did something surprising: he used the palace of the family’s arch nemesis as a main design reference. Palazzo Rucellai, however, was not without its twists: whereas Palazzo Medici was built as a unitary block after the demolition of several houses, Alberti provided only a new facade for his client’s already-existing properties.

While citizens had negatively compared the Medici palace’s massive presence and violent display of power to Rome’s Colosseum, Alberti’s “quotation” of the same Colosseum, when applied to this project, achieved the opposite effect. By superimposing a layer of columns and architraves to the tripartite bugnato of his version of the Palazzo Medici, Alberti literally put the Colosseum in front of this new palace. Instead of strengthening the magnificence of the building, this actually mediated the impact of the palace on the public area. By subdividing the facade into modules as an effect of the superimposition of the order’s frame, he constructed a system, a grammar able to resolve the threshold between public and private space, which could be repeated and virtually extended to the whole city (in fact, the facade was originally meant to be made of only five modules, but was later extended to seven). The

40 It is an error to portray Alberti as a revolutionary hero, but it is also wrong to read his Ten Books as a reactionary work, in which Alberti dismissed the social criticism of his other books in favor of an a-critical acceptance of the class structure of his time, subordinating the role of architecture to the interests of power. Both positions commit the fallacy of projecting ideas of social equality typical of the enlightenment on the figure of Alberti. See Paolo Marolda, *Crisi e conflitto in Leon Battista Alberti* (Rome: Bonacci, 1988), 127–133. Alberti saw architecture and technique in general as instruments to give a temporary composition to violent and opposed forces. Yet this can only be done through princes, since, as he specified in the introduction to the Ten Books, good architecture needs plenty of economic resources.
Prehistories of Common Space

carefully designed *non finito* look of the right side of the facade on either end of the palace strengthened the impression of the structure’s repeatability.\(^{41}\) The modules’ spans were not all the same, since Alberti had to find a way to absorb the irregularities present in the existing buildings, yet by applying the principle of *collocatio*, he was able to make them all look the same. The Palazzo Rucellai, for the first time, employed the repetition of identical elements not only to achieve a desirable aesthetic effect, but to also convey the cipher of the rising bourgeois ethic.\(^{42}\)

* Now, there has never been a time when a new prince disarmed his subjects. On the contrary, when he has found them unarmed, he has always armed them, because when armed those arms become yours: those whom you suspect become loyal, and those who were loyal remain so, and they become your partisans rather than your subjects.

_The Prince_, XX, 543

Despite Alberti’s didactic efforts to systematize architecture, his treatise — with no illustrations, written in its precious Latin — was beyond the utility of the architects of his time. *De re aedificatoria* was soon superseded by new types of printed and illustrated manuals.\(^{44}\) Of these, the *Four Books*, published by Andrea Palladio in 1570, were immensely successful in the dissemination of


\(^{42}\) *Collocatio* has generally been translated as “symmetry,” but the Italian architecture historian Mario Carpo has shown that, in Albertian theory, the term is synonymous with *coaequatio parilitatis*, and Jean Martin, the first translator of *De re aedificatoria* into French, significantly translated it as *egalité*. Mario Carpo, *Architecture in the Age of Printing* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), 138–139.


architectural knowledge. Interestingly, this occurred without the formulation of a general rule for architecture, which was the case for Vignola’s *Rule of the Five Orders*, or the presentation of a set of visual models to be reproduced and recomposed, as was the case with Serlio’s *Seven Books*. Rather, the *Four Books* are simply a collection of precisely drawn plans and elevations of specific architectural examples from the present and the past, grouped without a strict logic. Of these examples, the villa plans have drawn the most attention from generations of architects and historians hoping to unveil the unwritten rule that produced them.

The art historian Rudolf Wittkower, probably following the intuition of his student Colin Rowe, abstracted the geometry of Palladian villas into an “ideal villa,” which summarized the essential characters of these structures. Whereas Wittkower attempted an *a posteriori* definition of the ideal villa through the abstraction of differences into an “average villa,” the architects George L. Hersey and Richard Freedman attempted to codify the “DNA” of the species in order to computationally generate Palladian villas. For logical reasons, both of these approaches were destined to fail: in their attempt to draw the ideal villa, Rowe-Wittkower reduced it to another singular villa; on paper, the ideality of the general scheme implodes into yet another individual specimen. Their fallacy lay in the fact that an architectural “type” cannot be drawn, since a species possesses a nature distinct from that of the individuals that compose it.

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46 A species can be known only through the individuals that belong to it; nevertheless, even a large number of individuals cannot provide a full definition of the species; cf. Paolo Virno, “Angels and The General Intellect: Individuation in Duns Scotus and Gilbert Simondon,” *Parrhesia* 7 (2009), 58–67. Also see Manfredo Tafuri, *Venice and the Renaissance* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995), 127. It must be noted that Wittkower and Rowe redrew the plans of the villas as a wire-
Freedman, the formalization of the species – an algorithm written in code – was not the creation of another villa. However, they failed to recognize that no individual is the exclusive product of its genetic heritage: environmental conditions affect the genesis of beings as much as (or more than) their genetic code. The only way of understanding Palladio’s villas is to consider them from an ecological perspective, in close relation to the peculiar environment in which they originated and which they shaped and organized. Thus it is necessary to address the political and geographic context in which they were created.

At the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Republic of Venice experienced the most dramatic crisis since its foundation, as a result of a combination of many negative factors, including the War of the League of Cambrai, which limited the city’s supremacy over the eastern Mediterranean; the Cambrai coalition of Imperial, French, Lombard, and Papal troops also easily defeated the Venetian armies on land. In the 1509 Battle of Agnadello, the Venetian grid. Contrary to Brunelleschi’s architecture, Palladian plans are not based on a predetermined spatial grid, but are conceived as a sequence of rooms. This is clear in how Palladio redrew the plans of the villas in his *Four Books*, providing only the internal dimensions for each room, from wall to wall. For this reason, the thickness of the walls, which contributes to the arrangement of the rooms between each other in a coherent whole, cannot be dismissed in diagramming the plans of Palladio.

47 Gerrit Smienk and Johannes Niemeijer, *Palladio, the Villa and the Landscape* (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2011) attempted to reconstruct the site plans of the villas in their original contexts. Despite the unfortunate quality of the drawings, the book shows how the villas were not conceived as abstract objects, as we are used to see them after the *Quattro libri*, but in relation to the singularity of contextual features.

48 The supremacy of Venetian trade over the Mediterranean was threatened by the expansion of the Ottoman Empire. Furthermore, Turkish rule over the southeastern territories of Italy deprived Venice of its main granary. Most importantly, the emergence of a world market after the discovery of new commercial routes in the Atlantic progressively marginalized the role of Venice in global commerce, marking the decline of Venice as a maritime state.
tians, “in a single day… lost what had cost them eight hundred years of exhausting effort to acquire.”49

As a consequence of these events, Venice was forced to turn to inland to ensure military, political, and fiscal control, to produce food, and also to find new profitable business opportunities that would be favored by the inflationary tendencies that, at the time, affected the prices of agricultural products and the rents of farm estates.50 Through reclamation of vast marshlands, Venice not only increased its area available for agriculture, but also implemented a strategy to reconfigure the hydrography of its inland territories to ensure the stability of the Venice lagoon, which had been historically threatened by sediments transported by the rivers that ended in its waters.51

The further development of technical and institutional devices became essential to manage Venice’s manifold political, economic, social, and hydro-geological crisis. Moreover, the rising importance of the mainland triggered a dialectic between the interests of the stato da terra (domains of the mainland) and those of the stato da mar (domains of the sea), prompting new political subjects to emerge: on the one hand was a rapidly expanding landed gentry, willing to trade the freedom of the Republic for political and financial stability that favored the expansion of their businesses.52 On

49 Machiavelli, The Prince, 45.
50 For example, “in Venice the price of wheat increased by 90 per cent between 1575 and 1576 and again between 1589 and 1698,” Denis Cosgrove, The Palladian Landscape: Geographical Change and its Cultural Representations in Sixteenth-Century Italy (Leicester and London: Leicester University Press, 1993), 47. These inflationary tendencies might be seen as a consequence of the importation of large amounts of silver from the New World, especially because of the speculative behavior of merchants who artificially created scarcity by stocking grain and reselling during a time of bad harvest. See Silvia Federici, Caliban and the Witch: Women, Body, and Primitive Accumulation (New York: Autonomedia, 2007), 76.
51 Cosgrove, Palladian Landscape, 139–166.
52 After the defeat of Agnadello, the republic’s provincial cities refused to give aid to the fleeing Venetian armies and instead opened their gates to welcome Imperial troops.
the other, masses of exploited peasants who had been hit heavily by inflation were caught between the radical preaching of Anabaptists from the other side of the Alps and the project to constitute them as the people of the Venetian Republic.53

The control of territory was not, however, performed through acts of enclosure and exclusion. Despite being a profound connoisseur of military strategy, Palladio was never particularly interested in fortifications like his contemporaries Michelangelo or Antonio da Sangallo.54 While the traditional type of countryside residencies in Veneto consisted, up to the beginning of the sixteenth century, of fortified citadels, Palladian villas opened to the countryside on all sides with loggias and colonnades. Similarly, Machiavelli never trusted fortifications – or military technology in general – and, though he did not deny the utility of fortifications, he criticized the princes who trusted these methods to protect against the public’s frustration towards royalty. Rather than resorting to forts, he believed it preferable to arm and train peasants; to disarm people, Machiavelli wrote, was always a dangerous choice, since doing so only bred anger and discontent. Conversely, arming peasants could make them loyal to their prince and willing to defend his territories. The best defense wasn’t a fortress but a loyal people in arms.55

Alvise Cornaro, a patron of the arts and one of Palladio’s mentors, devised an example of this strategy. Unlike the aristocratic approach of Trissino’s Academy in Cricoli, Alvise Cornaro’s “court” resembled more of a bourgeois salon – open to the interplay between ancient and modern languages, encompassing the learned and popular, literary otium and business. As a Venetian nobleman exiled in Padua, Cornaro broadcast the ideology of

53 On the radical reformation in Italy, see Adriano Prosperi and Carlo Ginzburg, Gioci di pazienza: un seminario sul ‘Beneficio di Cristo’ (Turin: Einaudi, 1975).
55 Machiavelli, The Prince, xx.
1.11. *Plans of villas by Palladio, after the Four Books:* (a) Villa Repeta in Campiglia, (b) Villa Sarego in Santa Sofia, (c) Villa Almerico in Vicenza.
the “new” country life by depicting it as idyllic and virtuous. Of course, the opposite was the case. Yet Cornaro supported the art of Angelo Beolco – best known by his embarrassing nickname Ruzante – a talented playwright and actor of humble origins whose work satirized the literate, the clergy, and landlords through obscene and vulgar language. Cornaro commissioned Giovanni Maria Falconetto to design the Odeon specifically to stage Ruzante’s plays. Although the playwright might seem to have appeared out of place in the polite and learned environments of Cornaro’s salon, the wealthy patron’s dedication to this character reveals the modality in which power was implemented during this time: as Machiavelli posited, it is not possible for control to be exercised without a strategic alliance with the people.

A similar dialectic of high and low culture can be found in the architecture of Palladio’s villas. The use of pediments and classical orders is obviously a choice dictated by the will to represent the ideal and Arcadian rural life depicted by Cornaro’s writings. Yet the porticoed barns, which flank almost all of the villas, are of humble origin and reference a common building type of the area. Despite their refined order, Palladio’s reimagined structures were used by owners to store manure and agricultural paraphernalia. Here, Palladio was able to mix an elevated classical Latin with a popular and crude common language. More importantly, the

57 As Nobel Prize laureate Dario Fo noted, in some local vernaculars, the verb ruzare means to actively engage in sex with domestic animals. Cf. Ludovico Zorzi, preface to *Ruzante, Teatro* (Turin: Einaudi, 1967).
59 As Ackermann noted, Ruzante’s theatre can be seen as a literary counterpart to Palladio’s villas: “An early comedy, *La Pastoral* (1521), stages an uproarious encounter of Ruzante and a group of Arcadian shepherds whose declamations in exaggeratedly elevated triplets satirise the genre of Arcadian literature and are made to seem ridiculous in contrast to the peasant’s earthy, scatological outbursts.” Ackermann, *The Villa*, 120.
1.13. Site Plan of Villa Almerico
villas not only operated through ideological means; they acted as true apparatuses for a renovated perception and production of the territory. This was achieved through two tactics, embodied by the villa’s central core and the attached or nearby barns. Each of the villas contained a combination of both elements to different degrees. Certain villas, however, can be seen as purified paradigms of the two strategies—specifically, both the Repeta and Villa Sarego, which are composed exclusively of barn structures, as well as the Villa Almerico, which consists exclusively of a central core.

Villa Repeta in Campiglia (1557–58) was designed for the Repeta family but later destroyed. The building was simply made: three slabs composed into a U-shape, connected through a Doric portico that ran down the inner sides, while two dovecotes rose symmetrically on the external corners of the long edge. The family’s rooms were treated in the same way as the villa’s service buildings, revealing an ethic of moderation—not surprising considering the alleged Calvinist sympathies of the Repeta family. The building barely has a facade: only a small pediment marks the main axis of the portico.

Ten years after Villa Repeta’s completion, the Villa Sarego in Santa Sofia di Pedemonte, near Verona, echoed and extended the principles of the Repeta family home. In describing the site, Palladio emphasized the magnificence of the gardens and fountains around the villa. As in the case of Villa Repeta, the stables and the service buildings, posed in front of the main building, were afforded the same treatment as private apartments: all were built

61 Puppi, Palladio, 318–320.
63 Andrea Palladio, Il secondo libro dell’architettura (Venice: Domenico de’ Franceschi, 1570), 61.
around a U-shaped, two-story loggia with rusticated giant columns. Here, the loggia led to a second, closed cloister, and, on the same axis, another semicircular loggia closed the composition. Palladio designed the central cloister to intersect with a second axis, which led to a sequence of private gardens. Again, this villa has no facade, and it is, apart from villa Godi, Palladio’s only rural building with no pediment. The organizational principle of these villas – a grid of porticoed slabs housing any kind of living and productive activities – could be potentially extended to capture the whole territory, making it productive.

The famous Villa Almerico – best known as la Rotonda – however, followed a different principle. Palladio designed the house to operate around a centrally planned object, positioned on a hilltop. Four temple *pronaos* complete its central square block, which is organized around a central circular domed space, thus ensuring enjoyment of the surroundings. Unlike the previously mentioned villas, there are no attached barns; instead, the villa exists as a self-standing object floating in and open to the landscape. Villa Almerico can be regarded as a figure-to-ground inversion of Repeta and Sarego, which both feature porticos on the interior side. The loggias of la Rotonda, however, project towards the exterior. While the former are organized around interior spaces, la Rotonda has almost no internal space. Further, Sarego has no pediment, but la Rotonda has four – one on each side. Although Repeta and Sarego fulfill organizational needs, Villa Almerico performed no agricultural function at all. In essence, Repeta and Sarego capture the landscape through the enclosure and partition of the land, which can be extended to the whole territory, while la Rotonda remains a discrete, finite, and punctual element on the hillside. At Sarego, land is organized through the rule of Brunelleschi’s perspective, a projective principle; thus the space and principles of Brunelleschi

extend beyond city walls in order to encapsulate the territory. La Rotonda, meanwhile, captures the land through the Albertian veil of the colonnades, framing the landscape through the gaze.\(^{65}\)

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The cruelties of the multitude are against whomever they fear will occupy the common good; those of a Prince are against whoever he fears will occupy his own good.\(^{66}\)

Discorsi, I, 58

Renaissance architecture was an act of destruction against the conventions and the technical possibilities of the time. Brunelleschi, Palladio, and Alberti were the first to transform a community-based collective building process into an individual act of design. In this way, they saw the architect as the only author of a project – a project that could be realized in perfect conformity to design, drawings, and models. To paraphrase Argan, the value of the new architecture could no longer be measured in its continuity with tradition, but in its destruction of it. And the architect assumed the individual responsibility for this destruction. As we saw, this transformation paralleled the violent rise of capitalistic modes of accumulation and the plunder of the communal institutions that had ruled Italy in the prosperous twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

In light of this historical situation, it might be somewhat counter-intuitive to interpret the rise of Renaissance architecture as a collective process while also assuming the urban multitudes of Italian cities to be active agents in this process. However, the


\(^{66}\) Niccolò Machiavelli, Discourses on Livy, 119, translation revised.
collective at stake cannot be defined in terms of community, but rather in terms of the common. The Renaissance can be seen as the historical movement that discovered original forms of commonality beyond the confines of any tradition and place, and it occurred without resorting to theology, but rather through the immanence of urban life and political organization. From this point of view, the concepts of authorship and individuality established during the Renaissance are something profoundly different from the idea of the individual artist-genius inherited from nineteenth-century art criticism.

The discovery of the common had begun in Europe during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. Its manifestation did not just take the form of a philosophical revolution; the development of this idea was also fueled by an unprecedented expansion of the powers of the working classes, which contributed to the end of serfdom and feudal bonds. Freed from the transcendence of the theological order of feudal society, and not yet tamed into the secular transcendence of the modern state, the construction of the individual became an open field of experimentation. From then on, modernity was characterized by the tension that existed, and sometimes erupted, between the powers of the common and those who attempted to subjugate and separate them.

Of course, the sudden loss of one’s identity can be a traumatic event. Ruzante’s play *Parlamento* tells the story of a peasant fighting on the front lines of the Cambrai wars, promised glory by the Republic. After the defeat of Agnadello, he comes back home and is unrecognized by his friends and betrayed both by his wife and by the promises of the state. But this traumatic event also en-

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67  Renaissance thought marks the “revolutionary discovery of the plan of immanence.” The terms “plan of immanence” and “the common” (as a noun) are almost synonyms; the former refers to an ontological and the latter to a political dimension. See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press), 69–74.
genders possibilities of liberation. It is no coincidence that the new architecture was born in Florence to serve orphans, children with no fathers, citizens without patria. Like orphans, proletarian workers were severed from any original, organic link to the land. This condition was not only the prerogative of the working class and peasants; it was a fundamental passage in the formation of the humanist, the artist, and the prince.

Manetti’s *Novella del Grasso*, in which Brunelleschi convinces a friend to be someone he is not, confirms the interest of the Florentine architect in the manipulation not only of formal materials, but also of bodies and minds. Similarly, Alberti’s *Momus* posits the necessity of the loss of one’s identity, embodied by the figure of the beggar, as a necessary condition for conducting a happy life. In this way, the individual must dismiss any moral value, any virtue. Machiavelli clearly theorized this passage in his dialectic between virtù and fortuna. Virtù is not a moral quality of the subject, but the capacity to take advantage of the propitious moment, to act wisely in the midst of manifold encounters, to be at home in the unpredictable fluctuations of fortune. The new prince is literally a man without qualities: the man of virtù has no virtues in the sense of values. Rather, he is a performative virtuoso, gifted with capacities that enable him to be the master of potentialities, to be at home in the domain of virtuality.

From this reconfiguration of the individual follow some logical considerations on the role of authorship. It is true that Brunelleschi and Alberti contributed the establishment and formaliza-

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68 The perfect inhabitants of modern architecture seem to be the those who are uprooted and nomadic. About Le Corbusier’s Cite de Refuge, Rem Koolhaas wrote: “Bums are the ideal clients for modern architecture: in perpetual need of shelter and hygiene, real lovers of sun and the great outdoors, indifferent to architectural doctrine and to formal layout,” Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York* (New York: Monacelli Press, 1994), 249.


tion of the architect as the only author and producer of buildings. But they did not define the author as a god-like figure infused with genius and able to produce architectural works in isolation. As we saw, the architect as an author is not only a producer, it is also the outcome of the same process. Brunelleschi meant his practical jokes and machinations not only to transform others, but also to construct himself as a specific figure in a specific time in the history of Florence. Alberti wrote under several pseudonyms and probably wrote an anonymous self-biography. Historians have struggled to interpret such a completely heterogeneous body of work as the outcome of the same individual. And the architect that we call Palladio was the creature of Giangiorgio Trissino, a wealthy Vicentine patron who applied a highly pretentious mythological name to Antonio di Pietro della Gondola, a humble stonemason from Padua.

In other words, the architect as an author, is a complex interplay of historical forces, not reducible to a specific person to which works should be attributed – as most present-day historiography pretends to do – but neither capable of being completely effaced in the attempt to define a “spontaneous” or authorless architecture, as today’s advocates of participatory architecture would.

Similarly, we can define the nature of individual works of architecture. A project of architecture is not the imposition of an abstract idea of how buildings should be composed or look, but an act of organization that, first, works on determinate social forces; second, is arranged by an architect performing its author function; and, finally, is always bound to a specific place and date. Yet, as Alberti and Palladio showed, artifacts from the past and the history of architecture can be used as a common repository of singular examples, which can be appropriated and charged with new meaning. From this point of view, we can define a positive role of the common in the production of the city. The idea of the common shapes the city, not only per via negativa through a series of appa-
ratuses for its capture, control, and separation, but also positively. Machiavelli knew this when he granted to the multitudes an ethical primacy over the prince: the state cannot endure if the prince limits himself in “occupying the common good.” Conversely, the prince must ally himself to the common, and learn how to produce from the multitudes. Machiavelli’s optical machine charts the necessity for the becoming-multitude of the prince. Equally, however, the inverse must occur: the multitude has to organize itself in order to become “prince.” As soon as this tendency is set in motion, the multitude can fully reclaim its creative role in shaping the city and its institutions.
This chapter attempts to grasp the common through what is the most uncommon and singular—monsters—in three domains connected to each other: politics, science and architecture. In modern times, the state—the commonwealth—has been always described as a monstrous entity, beyond the laws of nature and of humans. In the 18th and 19th century natural history, the study of monsters was the key for the redefinition of the concept of species and natural classification, pointing out to the common origin and organization of living beings. And finally, the architectural monster, the monument, as the singular architectural event among the regularity of private dwellings, is a key element for the organization of the collective life of the city. In any case, it seems that the most uncommon is the key for understanding what is mostly common, and that what the common can only assume a monstrous form.

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In a late 16th century allegorical engraving by Léonard Gaultier, king Henri IV is portrayed as Hercules decapitating the hydra. The use of the hydra in artistic representations was not new at that time: but in the 16th century such an iconography acquired a very precise political significance.¹ Henri of Navarre, after having survived the 1572 St. Bartholomew’s massacre and repudiating his

2.1. Henry IV as Hercules slaying the many-headed hydra of the Catholic League, engraving by Léonard Gaultier, circa 1600.
2.2. Frontispiece of Thomas Hobbes’ Leviathan, 1651.
reformist beliefs, is here portrayed as the victor upon the rebellious forces of the Catholic League. The hydra serves as an allegory of a decentralized, uncontrollable state body governed by many heads. By decapitating these heads, Henri establishes himself as the only head of the state, the only depositary of sovereign powers, and with an absolute, indivisible power in their exercise.\footnote{For an overview of the competing political theories in the context of the 16th-century French wars of religion, see Julian Franklin, Jean Bodin and the Rise of Absolutist Theory (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).}

The metaphor of the state body as a monster reappears in another famous etching, the 1651 frontispiece of Thomas Hobbes’ 

\textit{Leviathan}, by French engraver Abraham Bosse. In the central image, the enormous body of the sovereign dominates a walled city. On a closer look, the body is composed by many indistinct figures representing the subjects of the commonwealth. Instead of the mythological reference of Gaultier’s etching, Bosse’s image understanding of the nature of the state matches Hobbes’ mechanistic understanding of nature and human affairs. The commonwealth is “but an artificial man; though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended;” once the “artificial soul” of sovereignty is infused in it, the state works as an \textit{automaton}, a self-propelled piece of machinery which moves independently from the men who agreed to construct it.\footnote{Thomas Hobbes, \textit{Leviathan} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 7.}

The Leviathan, and the many-headed Hydra represent two opposite conceptions of the commonwealth. On the one hand, as a series of autonomous powers conflicting between each other, as in the Renaissance idea of the state. On the other hand, as a unitary, abstract body working as a well-honed machine of domination.

But the monster is not only a political category, but also a juridical and a formal category. The monster is at the same time a creature against the laws—natural or positive—and an anomalous form deviating from the regularity of nature on which we are used
to. As Georges Canguilhem has pointed out, the monstrous—as a juridical category—had primacy over formal monstrosity: in antiquity and the Middle Ages the birth of a monster was always attributed to an immoral behaviour of the mother.4 The modern state, as symbolized by Henry IV and even more in the Cromwell-like figure in the frontispiece of Leviathan, is nothing but the attempt to eradicate monstrosity by ensuring its monopoly: the sovereign is the mother of all monsters, the only one to whom laws do not apply. But the Leviathan is always bound to fall back into the Hydra: every moment of turmoil and revolution is marked by a free and uncontrolled proliferation of political monstrosity. Monsters are then fundamental moments for the destruction of old political orders, and the possibility to construct a new political order. The monster is the political event that allows new forms of commonality to emerge out of old political habits and institutions.

It is since the 18th century that Enlightened philosophers and scientists tried to approach monsters beyond theology and superstition, trying to explain the appearance of anomalous forms and behaviors through the instruments of scientific knowledge. The study of monster, i.e. the individual who diverges from the regularity of the species and goes against the classification, is a fundamental element for the revision of the scientist’s tools and classification, and to find the what is common to all living forms: it is only through the study of the most singular it is possible to know what is most common.

A key element for the reorganization of the order of the state and of knowledge, the monster is the conceptual figure through which the common can be approached in the 18th century in its relation between the realm of forms and the realm of power.

4 Georges Canguilhem, “Monstrosity and the Monstrous,” in Knowledge of Life (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 134-148. Canguilhem also points to the etymology of the word hybrid, which comes from Greek hybris, pride or arrogance.
But what is a monster in architecture? Etymology can help us to establish this link. The words monument and monster share the same etymology. Both they derive from Latin monere, to show, to warn. This origin correspond to their function in antiquity: monuments and monsters were signs, symbols or indexes of something else. The birth of monstrous creatures, that is, creatures whose form diverged from the regularity ensured by the laws of nature was a signal for an illicit behaviour, an evil miracle, and the prophecy of bad omen. Similarly, monuments were commemorative of important historical figures or events: they were cautionary tools which provided models of moral virtue to be followed. In the 18th century, both monsters and monuments assume new meanings and functions. As exceptions to the rules through which the private city is constructed, 18th-century monuments provide the civil infrastructure for the correct functioning of public life. No longer pointing to some moral order outside themselves, monuments become the elements for the reorganization of the order of the state and the city.

This chapter traces the 18th-century contradictory attitude towards monstrosity: on the one hand, the attempt to eradicate it for the construction of a well-ordered edifice of the state and of knowledge. On the other hand, the acknowledgment of the monster’s capacity to produce something new, and the attempt to tame it and to put it at work.

5 Also the word money shares the same origin. Money is the signifier par excellence.
7 Architectural studies have recently approached monstrosity, in various ways. See, for example, the monographic issue of Perspecta, 40 (Aug 2008). Marco Frascari. Monsters of Architecture: Anthropomorphism in Architectural Theory (Savage, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 1991), locates monstrosity in the relation between the human body and architecture, or, more precisely, in the way humans represent their body into architecture no longer through metaphors (as in the case of the Vitruvian theory of the orders), but through metonymy, i.e. no longer through symbolic links but through an embodiment of architecture. Fras-
Two parallel French controversies can be taken as a starting point. On the one hand, the early 18th-century controversy on monsters at the Academy of Sciences. On the other hand, the querelle of the ancients and moderns at the École des Beaux-arts of some years before.

The Mémoires of the Academy of the Sciences testimony the attempt of enlightened scientists to go beyond the traditional superstitious understanding of monsters (as in 1573 Ambroise Paré’s *Des monstres et prodiges* which mixed the observation of actual atypical births with creatures of fantasy) and legitimate their observation on scientific basis. It is clear that enlightened thinkers were attempting to remove the distance, to dispel the fear towards monstrosity, approaching it through scientific tools and a disen-chanted language. Nevertheless, in the first half of the century the discussion around monsters was still based upon theological premises. The real question at the Académie was: “Is God responsible for the production of such creatures?” Two main positions were represented: The providentialist position, advocated by Joseph Du Verney posited that God’s intelligence can produce regularity as well as irregularities. Monsters testify God’s will and power, even if we are incapable of understanding its meaning. Against this position, Louis Lémerie originated an accidentalist theory which argued that physical errors during gestation are at the base of anomalous forms, thus removing God’s benevolence to be re-

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sponsible for irregularities and suffering. The *Encyclopédie* (1751), in its attempt to systematize knowledge, rarely refers to monsters, which are dismissed as an esoteric object of knowledge for specialists. For this reason, the *Encyclopédie*, presents monsters as formal exceptions, as creatures against nature, which have nevertheless to be studied to advance our knowledge on nature and hone our taxonomies (d’Alembert entry “Système des connaissance humaine”).

While d’Alembert deemed monsters creatures against nature, other thinkers rejected any possibility for nature to go against itself. Diderot posited that “nothing is imperfect in nature, not even monsters.” Diderot opened a famous essay on art (“Mes Pensées bizarres sur le dessin”) stating that “Nature makes no incorrect thing. Every form, beautiful or ugly, has its cause; and, among all the beings that exist, there is not one which is not as it should be”.

D’Holbach excluded that “there can be no monsters, no prodigies, no marvels, no miracles in nature. What we call monsters are combinations of with which our eyes are not familiarised.” In other words, a form’s normality cannot be measured according to a universal nature, but only through its reproducibility, according to the regularity of its occurrence.

If scientists were trying to get rid of theological categories in the classification of living forms, architects were struggling on the authority of the ancients, in particular Vitruvius. The position of the “ancients,” which found its last advocate in Jean-Francois Blondel, believed that classical architecture, through its harmonic proportions could embody the true and beautiful essence of ar-

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9 Ibid., 32.
architecture. In a way is it possible to say that the ancients had a strong idea of the common, an ontological idea of the common which nevertheless proved unable to be defended after the scientific evidence provided by the “moderns” against this conception. The advancement of archaeological studies played a central role in this polemic. Archaeology is an attempt to detach the study of antiquity from the antiquarian knowledge of classical texts, in favour of a direct analysis of the physical evidence available to us. In 1682 Antoine Desgodets’s published his *Édifices antiques de Rome, dessinés et mesurés très-exactement*. The book, commissioned by Jean-Baptiste Colbert, Louis XIV’s Minister of Finance, was an attempt to dispel the doubts over the proportions of architectural orders in ancient Roman building. Applying all the most advanced surveying techniques, Desgodets’s book clearly showed the lack of consistency between the proportions of classical architectural orders. Édifices antiques de Rome inspired architect and anatomist Claude Perrault to publish his *Ordonnance des cinq espèces de colonnes selon la méthode des Anciens*. Adopting Desgodetz average measurements for each order, Perrault substituted the harmonic system of order, based on the proportions proposed by Vignola, with an arithmetic modular system. Proportion is not natural, it is an “agreement between architects.” Perrault believes that there is still a “natural and positive” form of beauty based on “commodity, firmness and healthfulness,” but the actual forms we use in architecture are a product of “authority and customs,” of a social contract. The *common*, natural beauty, unattainable, has to be

12 See Antoine Picon, *French Architects and Engineers in the Age of Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 47-98.
13 Ibid., 26-31.
14 Ibid., 28-29.
2.5. Pierre Le Muet, house of 12 x 25 feet, in Manière de bien bastir, 1681.
replaced and formalized by a universal, static order. In this sense, the idea of a natural common for architectural forms was replaced with an idea of an artificially produced common. Or better, the common was sought in the relation, or in the passage between human’s state of nature and their civilized state. In particular, it is possible to group these attempts in three tendencies. Firstly, as in the case of the theories of Carlo Lodoli, in the functional analogy between physiology and architecture. Secondly, through an inquiry on the relation between forms and the body, as in Le Camus de Mezières notion of character. And lastly, with an anthropological inquiry over the origin of the human dwelling, as in the theories of the Abbé Laugier first and later Quatremère de Quincy. As a parallel to the theories of Jean-Jacques Rousseau on the origin of language, it was possible for these authors to locate an original architectural “state of nature,” represented either by the primitive hut, or by Quatremère’s three fundamental types of the cave, the tent and the hut. The architecture of the civil state, like the language of the civilized people, is an abstract, symbolic and conventional departure from the evocative, literal elements contained in the original types.

But how are architectural forms chosen in the civil state? How to “dispel the anxiety” that is implied in the arbitrariness of these forms? The answer that 18th-century architects found was the institution of academies. Through the use the table, of classification, of typology, academies became the depositaries of the “cor-

2.6. Dissolution of the Baroque organic body in Ledoux’s projects for the salt-works in Chaux. Left, first project 1773-74. Right, second project, 1775.
2.7. Dissolution of the organic body of the city. Left, Plan of Padua, 1784. Right, plan of Milan with Antolini’s Foro Bonaparte, 1801.
rect” architectural forms, of an architectural law detached from its alleged “natural” basis.

The architecture of the classicism of the French ancien régime testifies this tendency to give a rational, simple and repeatable structure to the public space of the city. Interestingly, this did not happen only through the construction of public buildings, but mainly through the imposition of a series of rules on the construction of private houses. At the same time, a new type of architectural treatise start to appear. No longer a collection of drawings of ancient monuments, the new treatise, epitomised by Pierre Le Muet’s Manière de bien bastir pour tout les sortes des personnes (1681), collects examples of contemporary houses “for all sorts of people.”

A new problem for architecture arose: the necessity to define the correct way in which the houses of private citizens should relate and appear in the space of the city. For the first time, the city is defined not as an archipelago of magnificent, collective buildings (as the Rome depicted by Pirro Ligorio, or later in Piranesi’s Campo Marzio), but rather from the architecture of the street. Using a musical metaphor, the street should work like a composition without melody, a pure line of accompagnement: as a continuous, rhythmic sequence of facades minimizing their impact on the city. In other word, the public image of the city is no longer produced by the virtue of great monuments, but by bienséance, the bourgeois moral of acceptable public behaviour. No longer a set of examples, the new treatise proposes a protocol, an artificial formula, a rule for the composition of any kind of possible private dwelling.19

Since monuments are exceptions to this formula, the public space of the city could only be shaped through the codification of a private architecture. Like living monsters, which provide the framework and the reference point to the study of the regularity of natural forms, monuments provide the boundaries and the conditions of existence for private architecture to proliferate. Boullée’s public monuments contained in his *Essai sur l’art* epitomise this condition.  

Whereas private architecture was called to be silent, public architecture was meant to speak and communicate to the masses the values of collective life. Yet, the monstrosity of the new architecture appears not only in the relation between the public and private architecture, but also in the formal principles which characterize the new architecture of the enlightenment.

It was Emil Kaufmann who first defined the emergence of 18th-century architecture as the process of decomposition of the organic, unitary baroque system decomposes into an inorganic assemblage of autonomous parts. Kaufmann individuated this phenomenon in the break of the postulates of concatenation, gradation and integration prescribed by the principles of unity of the “Renaissance-Baroque system.” Kaufmann saw the birth of the new architecture in the passage between the first and the second project by Ledoux for the saltworks of the city of Chaux. Whereas the first project was based on a hierarchical system of spaces on a square plan, united by the Baroque enfilades, the second project presents a completely different plan based on the separation of the different programs in detached pavilions. The new logic of composition was based, according to Kaufmann, on the juxtaposition of autonomous forms, which were no longer united by the considerations of pictorial and perspective unity, and no longer arranged through a hierarchical system of relations, no longer as an organic

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blending with landscape, and imposing an autonomous logic over
the territory.\textsuperscript{21}

Kaufmann did not define the new architecture as formal
monstrosity. Yet, if a monster can be defined as a blend, a mixture
of realms (human/animal) or of species, of individuals, of sexes,
of life and death, then Kaufmann’s definition of 18th-century ar-
chitecture is the definition of a monstrous architecture. Patterns
of repetition involve the blending in the same body of different
individuals, while patterns of antithesis bring in a same individual
features taken from different bodies. Monsters emerge also when
past principles are applied to their extreme consequences. Jean-
François Neufforge’s \textit{Recueil élémentaire d’architecture}, takes Le
Muet’s logic compositional logic to such a degree of complexity
to make the ancient régime’s \textit{bienséance} explode. “With the zeal
of a fanatic” Neufforge combines simple forms from their elemen-
tary configuration to produce virtually endless magnificent monu-
ments.\textsuperscript{22}

Aldo Rossi extended Kaufmann’s intuition dealing with the
composition of the city, showing how the development of the eight-
eighth century city was triggered by the insertion of extraneous bod-
ies in the city. If the enlightenment introduced a organicist model
for the well-balanced functionality of the city and its flows, it also
set the basis for what Rossi calls a “pathological” model of conflict
between city parts, as exemplified by Canova’s temple in Possagno,
Prato della Valle in Padua and Antolini’s project for Foro Bonap-
parte in Milan.\textsuperscript{23} But this idea can be also extended to the whole

\textsuperscript{21} Unfortunately, Kaufmann’s most famous book has not yet been translated into
English. The Italian translation was used here, Emil Kaufmann, \textit{Da Ledoux a Le
\textsuperscript{22} Emil Kaufmann, \textit{Architecture in the Age of Reason: Baroque and Post-Baroque
\textsuperscript{23} Aldo Rossi, “L’architettura della ragione come architettura di tendenza,” in
\textit{Scritti scelti sull’architettura e la città} (Milan: Clup, 1973), 370-378. and Aldo Ros-
territory. Antoine Picon shows how for a certain period, engineers were honing their cartographic skills drawing imaginary territories produced as a patchwork of different, conflicting situations: the city against the countryside, designed gardens and sublime nature, rectilinear territorial streets and picturesque landscapes.24

Emil Kaufman interpreted this condition as the emergence of what he called “autonomous architecture,” paralleling Kant’s discovery of the “autonomy of the moral law.” In his Critique of Practical Reason, Kant posited the law as no longer based on an infinitely superior principle, but as a self-grounded, absolute form. In 1933, when Kaufmann wrote his classic Von Ledoux bis Le Corbusier, establishing a link between autonomous architecture, the rise of the bourgeoisie and liberal democracy was to express a clear anti-fascist position. Yet, despite his value judgment, the interpretation of the same phenomena given by reactionary art historian Hans Sedlmayr’s fits more the argument developed here.25 In fact, it was Sedlmayr, and not Kaufmann, who saw the new architecture explicitly as a form of monstrosity.26

24 Antoine Picon, French Architects and Engineers, 217-239. The concepts of sublime and picturesque are also attempts to tame and control monstrosity, to dispel the anxiety of the aleatory character of nature into a controlled aesthetic environment.
26 Referring to Ledoux’s house of the bailiff: “the design is in no way related to the purpose of the building, and indeed the whole thing seems quite insane, so much so there seems to be little point in entering into a serious discussion of this aberration. Nevertheless, this monstrosity does make it clear, as by a sudden lightning flash, that we are confronted here by the greatest upheaval architecture has ever known … it was first necessary for architecture to be equated with geometry.” Hans Sedlmayr, Art in Crisis: the Lost Centre (London: Hollis & Carter, 1957), 97-8. Or, in another passage on painting, in which the anxiety of classification of
rial, and even the same concepts employed by Kaufmann, Sedlmayr offered a distinctly pessimistic point of view on the architecture of the Enlightenment. Where Kaufmann welcomed the end of baroque organicism and the progressive autonomization of formal devices as a mirror to the emergence of the modern individual, Sedlmayr saw the “loss of the centre” as the loss of the human centrality as the beginning of a decline for Western arts and civilization into an undifferentiated chaos. Where Kaufmann saw the legitimation of the new architecture in nature itself, Sedlmayr saw the new architecture as a human alliance with inorganic life. If Kaufmann saw this condition as the emergence of the Man, Sedlmayr saw its dissolution, a drive towards less organized forms of life and inorganic bodies, by “dwelling on those borderlands where [human nature] merges into the pre-human and extra-human.” If 18th-century architecture can be defined as revolutionary, is precisely in Sedlmayr’s, not in Kaufmann’s terms: not in the substitution of a representative system into another one (from absolutism to liberal democracy) but as the possibility to undermine every system of representation: as the Marquis de Sade put it, as the institutionalization of anarchy and permanent revolution.

forms becomes evident: “The nature of its ordering becomes unstable and resolves itself into fragments; form disintegrates, becomes fluid and chaotic. In some cases man and his world are transformed by the rigidity of death; familiar things become strange and living nature becomes nature morte.” Ibid, 136.

27 See Emil Kaufman, *Da Ledoux a Le Corbusier*, 93. Especially following Rousseau’s idea of the state of nature. Contrary to Hobbes’ idea, Rousseau’s state of nature is a completely stable system, in which individual men, like Lucretius atoms, do not cross each other, and are self-sufficient “individuals without encounters”. It is only through catastrophic perturbation of this original order that civil institutions arise and the social contract is stipulated. See Louis Althusser, “The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter,” in *Philosophy of the Encounter: Later Writings, 1978-87* (London: Verso, 2006), 184ff.


29 Gilles Deleuze, following Jacques Lacan, has interpreted Sade’s philosophy as a consequence of Kant’s autonomization of the law. The only way to transcend the law with a higher principle, according to Sade, is to institutionalize its lack of origin: “The reign of laws is pernicious; it is inferior to that of anarchy; the best proof
Nevertheless, also the montage of autonomous forms was eventually subject to attempts of codification and control, in order to produce patterns of regularity capable to be reproduced. Besides his most famous *Essai sur l’art*, which contains a project of a metropolis through its public monuments, Boullée worked in his late years on a project for a *récueil* of private architecture.\(^{30}\) This work testifies the same approach found in Le Muet’s treatise for the standardization of the design project, but while in the 17th century the standardization was only mainly at the level of the façade, imposing a normalized interface between public and private, Boullée’s houses show little interest in the façades, reducing them to interchangeable stylistic exercises. In his most famous public works, Boullée seemed more concerned in the elaboration of a specific, individual *character* for each monument, each one adapting ancient political virtues to the new republican ethos. While the plans of his monuments present a certain regularity based on modular elements, it is with his work on private architecture that Boullée attempts to systematize architectural *symmetry*\(^{31}\) in the attempt to systematize the composition of the plans. It is for this reason that historian Werner Szambien had advanced the hypothesis that Boullée would have handed down the drafts for his work on private architecture to his pupil Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, who later elaborated his mode of composition by simplifying and

\[\text{of this is that all governments are forced to plunge into anarchy when they wish to remake their constitutions.” Gilles Deleuze, } \textit{Masochism: Coldness and Cruelty} \text{(New York: Zone, 1991), 87.}\]


\[\text{31 Symmetry should not be seen as in today’s meaning—the equality of parts along an axis—but in the Albertian sense of concordance between the individual parts of a building, Werner Szambien, “Notes sur le récueil,” 120.}\]
standardizing it.32 Whereas the public sphere of the new city was produced through private architecture, Durand injects the private architecture in the production of the new monuments for the city, as in the attempt to “tame” the monstrous qualities of public monuments, in order to control their production.

But the most clear way in which Durand tames architectural monsters is the way in which he re-interprets the architecture of Giovanni Battista Piranesi.33 One of the plates of the Récueil is dedicated to “Various public buildings, after Piranesi’s Campo Marzio.” Durand takes those buildings out of the context in which Piranesi has placed them and re-arranges them on the page according to the logic of the layout of the page. Moreover, Durand regularizes Piranesi’s plans according to his own idea of composition. Durand regularizes Piranesi’s plans by fitting them into homogenous grids. Yet, he keeps the “functional” relations between the parts composing Piranesi’s designs, not in the sense of the function they performs in terms of program, but in terms of the “order and connection” between parts, between the distributive function of structures and spaces. Durand does not keep the visible character Piranesi’s plans, he keeps their composition, the mutual organization between their parts. The possibility of correcting architectural errors and monstrosities was not a new genre in the history of architecture. Sebastiano Serlio’s Libro extraordinario, unlike the other books composing his treatise which were meant to transmit and reproduce the purity of the Vitruvian law, presents a series of monstrous portals, examples not to be followed. But as Mario Carpo has shown, the portals are in fact only monstrous insofar they are clad with unnecessary parts. The sound architect would have found the correct form through a conscious process

32 Ibid., 122.
of removal of the excessive decorations. For Durand, the taming of monstrosity occurs in a different way. First of all, Durand redraws plans, and not elevations. Then, the regularization of those plans occurs not through removal but through two main operation: topological operations of “folding,” and the substitution of “analogous” structures with others with simplified forms.

Durand marks a discontinuity in the history of architecture and architectural method. As Werner Szambien has noted, Durand’s method, and in particular, his rejection of the principle of imitation, can be compared to the shift in the epistemological paradigm brought forward at the end of the 18th century, and epitomised by the work of naturalist Georges Cuvier in Paris. Before Cuvier, the problem for natural historians, despite the differences of their individual approaches, was classifying species according to their visible characters. Foucault summarized the criteria of classification in natural history before Cuvier into the following: “the form of the elements, the quantity of those elements, the manner in which they are distributed in space in relation to each other, and the relative magnitude of each element.” Instead of comparing the visible forms of the elements composing plants and animals, the new paradigm implied the comparison between elements no

35 Actually, Piranesi had performed a similar operation, but with an inverse effect, by re-interpreting in a monstrous way French public architecture in his Pianta di Magnifico, Ampio Collegio, contained in his 1750 edition of the Opere varie di Architettura. Piranesi, as it was told by William Chambers, was challenged by a group of pensioners of the French academy in Rome, who doubted of his skills as an architect and saw him as a mere decorator. Piranesi, then, published a very complex design to prove his planning capacities. See Lola Kantor-Kazovsky, Piranesi as Interpreter of Roman Architecture and the Origins of His Intellectual World (Florence: Leo Olschki, 2006), 25. On the relation between Piranesi and French architects, see the catalog of the 1976 exhibition at Villa Medici, Piranèse et les Français 1740-1790 (Rome: Edizioni dell’Elefante, 1976).
36 Werner Szambien, Jean-Nicolas-Louis Durand, 93.
longer through their visible appearance, but through invisible relationships. This shift opened the possibility of explaining the emergence of monstrosity through a specific genetic process, and not as the fulfillment of a predetermined natural plan. At the same time, Durand’s method opened the possibility for relating the juxtaposition of formally independent elements into a network of invisible links: these are not purely “functional” relations, but also relations of transit, contiguity, and formal organization.

This methodological turn, both in natural history and architecture had deep consequences not only for the specific development of the discipline, but also as a way to look at the politics of the state and the city. In 1829-30, two parallel controversies on apparently very marginal themes shook the Parisian public opinion. The first controversy took place in 1829 at the École des beaux arts between Quatremère de Quincy and Henri Labrouste on the temples of Paestum. The year later, two scientist of the Muséum de Histoire Naturelle, Georges Cuvier and Étienne Geoffroy de Saint Hilaire confronted each other on the anatomy of mollusks. A parallel between these two controversies can be drawn since it is possible to locate a political allegiance between Cuvier and Quatremère against Geoffroy and Labrouste. Moreover, the two controversies shared the same language: terms as *plan, organization, composition, type, analogy*, etc. were used in both.

The debate between Cuvier and Geoffroy was played on two different ways to explain animal structures. Whereas Cuvier approached the problem through function, Geoffroy approached it through morphology. Cuvier saw form as an outcome of a functional needs. Geoffroy, on the contrary, saw the emergence of form as an independent variable, prior to any function and need.38

The merit of Cuvier was to revive the study of anatomy, which was seen as a part of medicine, and to establish it as a methodology for natural history. By analysing the functional structure of the nervous system, Cuvier established four “plans of organization”: vertebrate, articulate, mollusks and radiates. The plans were for Cuvier absolutely separate, and no transition, no evolution between one plan and the other would be possible. For Cuvier, form followed function: whenever a new necessity to adapt to the environment would have arisen, God would have created a new organ specifically to address that necessity.39

Geoffroy, who was first a friend and a collaborator of Cuvier, soon started to take another position. In his treatise significantly titled *Philosophie anatomique* (1818) Geoffroy posited a unique, transcendental “plan of composition,” to which all organism referred. Together with his mentor Buffon, Geoffroy believed that classification, albeit necessary, was an arbitrary exercise, and that nature always exceed any classification, however accurate it might be.40 Species and genera have no clear boundaries, since they are transformations of the same plan. Instead of referring to the function of the organs, Geoffroy employed the study of *homologies* between structures, that is, the relative number, arrangement and position of elements between different species and between foetuses and developed individuals of the same species. Geoffroy noted that similar structures were present in different and very distant species, living in different environments and performing different functions.41

Whereas for Cuvier there’s a one-to-one relation between the environment and the organic structure—there can be no forms without the environment for which they were created—for Geof-

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39 Ibid., 4.
40 Ibid., 12.
41 Ibid., 4.
froy the environment acts somewhat antagonistically as a force upon the abstract plan of composition, inducing structural modification in animals—although not necessarily in terms of a transmutation between species. In this way, Geoffroy was able to explain the emergence of anomalous, monstrous bodies as a violent perturbation of the environment in which an embryo develops.  

Not only, these monstrous creatures, whether their anomalies were compatible with life, could have been at the basis of permanent transformations and the evolutionary emergence of new forms and species. In Geoffroy’s theory monsters are not only fully explained but also seen as hopeful transformations capable of the emergence of difference and evolution. But perhaps even more interesting is that Geoffroy did not study only examples of anomalous creatures, but actively tried to produce and “design” them, by leading “organization down unusual paths.”

When, in 1830 the controversy became public in a series of debates in front of the Academie de Sciences, the two positions were already layed out, but the public confrontation helped to spread the two position among a wider public: in this passage, it became clear that the dispute between the two naturalists was not only a theoretical dispute over the understanding of natural history, but it implied much wider political consequences. The escalation of political events in the spring of 1830, that eventually led to the July revolution, were not only the background of the controversy, but its very substance. Cuvier’s positions were those of a conservatory protestant: his theory of the four, separate embranchements and teleological development of organs in relation to the environment could have been seen as a naturalistic translation of the doctrine of predestination. Cuvier did not hesitate to support his theo-

42 Ibid., 126ff.
ries through theological arguments. God cannot be responsible for the creation of imperfect being, or of organisms that are not fully adapted to their environment. Cuvier believed in a direct intervention of God in the creation of specific organs and structure according to fulfill specific functional needs dictated by environmental conditions. Whether Cuvier did not explicitly admit it, his theories are in line with a theory of multiple creations: natural history is characterized by periodical catastrophes in which species are extinguished and new species are created. Conversely, Geoffroy was a late follower of the deistic doctrines of the Enlightenment, and his positions were comparable to the German Naturphilosophie. His theories implied a unique creation, after which God would have restrained from intervening in it. Whereas Geoffroy always refused this interpretation, his theories were seen as dangerous instances of pantheism, or, in the worst case, of materialistic atheism.

Despite theoretical differences, Cuvier and Geoffroy had very different attitudes and represented two different models of scholarship. Cuvier was seen as a career-oriented bureaucrat, and a cold calculator in the matters of academic politics. According to Cuvier, academic research should have been based exclusively on positive facts, and any sort of all-encompassing theory should have been avoided. Conversely, Geoffroy gained the sympathy of romantic revolutionaries with his bold attempts in the elaboration of a general philosophical theory that could explain all phenomena of nature, against any compartmentalization of scientific knowledge and professionalism. Similarly, his theory of transmutation between species was translated in political terms: if species are all based on a common plan, then also all social classes are virtually one, and transitions between one class and the other are not only

45 Ibid., 183.
46 Writers such as Georges Sand and Honoré de Balzac were among the guests of Geoffroy’s Sunday evening salon in the 1830s, ibid., 201.
possible, but also necessary and welcome for the evolution of society. In fact, Geoffroy’s teratogenic experiments were seen by Cuvier not only as inconsistent and unscientific, but also as potentially disrupting of the social order.\footnote{Evelleen Rychards, “A Political Anatomy of Monsters,” 382.}

In her account on the political consequences of the Cuvier-Geoffroy controversy, historian Toby Appel pointed out that the influence of that debate in the French society beyond zoologist was exclusively based on the metaphysical and philosophical points of view of the two parties, and the arguments over fixity versus transmutation of species, teleology versus morphology, separation of plans versus unity of composition, etc., were overlooked by commentators.\footnote{Toby Appel, \textit{The Cuvier-Geoffroy Debate}, 188.} This is not completely true if we compare the 1830 debate of the Académie de Sciences with the one that took place one year before the Académie des Beaux Arts. Instead, in the dispute between Quatremère and Labrouste we can trace striking similarities in the methods and the languages employed.

Art historian Paula Young Lee has observed that not only architects employed zoological terms, but also Cuvier and Geoffroy widely used architectural metaphors to explain their concepts. Geoffroy said that his principle of the unity of plan was suggested observing the variety of the buildings in the city of Paris, and he compared Cuvier to a mere stonecutter in his effort to classify and separate living forms into pre-constituted types. Cuvier employed a comparison between the rooms of a house and the organs of an animal. Two houses shared the same \textit{composition} whether they shared the same rooms, regardless of their connection. But if those rooms were reciprocally arranged with the same order and relations of connection, they would share the same \textit{plan}.\footnote{Paula Young-Lee, “The Meaning of Molluscs: Léonce Reynaud and the Cuvier-Geoffroy Debate of 1830, Paris,” \textit{The Journal of Architecture}, vol. 3, no. 3 (1998), 215.} Moreover, Cuvier’s
own house at the Muséum was said to grow according to the development of Cuvier’s theory, and each room corresponded to a specific function that would have arisen, representing the divisions operated by science upon the animal kingdom. Similarly, the very form of the Muséum was at the centre of a debate which encompassed not only the organization of a specific institution, but the whole order of the city and its organization.50 Yet, the relations between zoology and architecture go beyond a simple metaphor: the two controversies were sharing the same political consequences.

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As architecture historian Neil Levine has pointed out,51 it can be difficult today to understand why Labrouste’s reconstruction of the temples of Paestum had been so outrageous for the members of the Académie des Beaux-arts, to the point that Quatremère, as secrétaire perpetuelle, adopted a series of measures to ostracize Labrouste and his group of romantic pensionnaires from public work (Labrouste will be called to design the Bibliothèque St. Geneviève only in 1842).52 In the words of Viollet-le-Duc, Labrouste’s envoi had the effect to “undermine the foundations of family, property and academic religion.” By that time, Labrouste’s envoi was undoubtedly the most complete and precise ever delivered.53 Labrouste did not limit himself in surveying and recon-

52 An account of Labrouste’s work in relation to his other fellow pensionnaires (Duban, Duc and Vaudoyer) can be found in David Van Zanten, Designing Paris (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987).
53 Labrouste’s envoi was published fifty years later as Henri Labrouste, Les temples de Paestum: restauration exécutée en 1829 (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1877).
2.9. C.M. Delagardette, Parallèle des édifices de Paestum, avec ceux d'Athènes et de Rome, 1793.
2.10. Une architecture autre. Labrouste's reconstruction of Paestum's portico, 1829.
structing only one building, but instead he focused on three. As in the case of the Cuvier-Geoffroy debate, one cannot understand the Paestum controversy by approaching it only in archaeological and historical terms. Surely, it was not the issue of polychromy that shattered the academy: Labrouste’s reconstruction of the temples of Paestum were moderately polychrome compared to Hittorff’s reconstructions of Selinunte’s temples of the 1820s: nevertheless, the issue of polychromy was already digested by the academia, and in 1829 nobody was shocked by it. Comparing the Labrouste’s “heretical” temples to the “orthodox” reconstructions made some years before by Claude-Matthieu Delagardette, an old professor of the Academie, one can find only negligible differences. Rather, the scandal might be sought in Labrouste’s peculiar attempt to define a chronology of the temples. Observing a progressive lightening of the proportions of the columns approximating the alleged “correct” proportions of the Doric order, Delagardette made the hypothesis that the basilica was the first, followed by the Temple of Ceres, and finally by the Temple of Neptune. Delagardette presents this idea in a plate titled “Parallèle des ordres dorique,” in which he compares the proportions of the columns of the Paestum temples with Roman examples, supposedly embodying the most perfected and evolved version of the order.

Labrouste, on the contrary, does not rely on the ideal proportions of Roman architecture to demonstrate the chronological convergence of forms. Rather, he takes Greek architecture as a starting point for a divergent evolutionary process. Labrouste placed the Temple of Neptune first and the basilica last. Early Greek colonists, Labrouste argued, might have followed the customs of their motherland, reproducing Greek forms into the new

lands. But as they settled down, architectural forms started to be affected by the local environmental and cultural factors, thus differentiating themselves from their original Greek ancestors.\textsuperscript{56} Interestingly, Labrouste even refused to call those columns “orders,” that is to say, to refer a particular \textit{mode} of architecture imbued with symbolic meanings: Labrouste only presents a metric scale in his drawings, refusing to add the traditional parallel scale in modules. In the temple of Neptune, he refused to see the unusual superimposition of small columns on top of the main ones as two separate orders marking two different floors of the temple, but as a pure static device to solve the problem of the instability of the equilibrium of columns of such unusual height.\textsuperscript{57}

The basilica, which Labrouste calls the “portico,” is the most singular example, since it presents a row of columns on the main longitudinal axis, dividing the building in two equal parts. Labrouste underlines this anomaly by sectioning the building exactly on its columns, producing an unsettling graphic effect. Unlike Delagardette, Labrouste does not end the building with pronaos on the short edges, but with sheds, highlighting the tendency of the secularization of architecture.\textsuperscript{58}

Labrouste calls in fact the temple of Neptune and especially the Portico examples of “\textit{une architecture autre},” no longer belonging to a stage in the development of a universal architectural idea, of the idea of the “classical” Greek architecture.\textsuperscript{59} In other words, these temples are individuals representative of a species of their own: they are literally monsters, species of only one individual. Their monstrosity can be approached in two ways. On the one

\textsuperscript{56} Van Zanten, \textit{Designing Paris}, 12. Actually, As Levine Points out, Delagardette’s chronology is actually correct, but his explanation is wrong. Conversely, Labrouste applies a correct method of inquiry, but his conclusion is a “wishful act of distortion.” Neil Levine, \textit{ Architectural Reasoning}, 813.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 799.
\textsuperscript{58} Ibid., 796.
\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 815.
hand, as architectural historian Martin Bressani has pointed out, the temples of Paestum are the result of a hybridization of Greek and Etruscan forms, which were merged in a peculiar way in the specific context of Paestum. Bressani also paralleled this vision to a Saint-Simonian conception of history, which puts the emphasis on the so-called periods of decadence, in which cultures and forms mix themselves prefiguring the emergence of new developments. In this way, Paestum temples can be seen as monsters in the 18th-century way, as the result of a juxtaposition of forms which belong to different contexts and different species. But we can approach the monstrousity of these temples also from the 19th century idea of monstrousity. In the terms posited by Geoffroy, the temples of Paestum are an outcome of local modification on an architectural “embryo,” imported from Greece, been re-shaped by environmental conditions according to the principle of the connection of parts. Whereas Delagardette’s approach can be seen as a teleological development of forms towards a perfect ideal, Labrouste’s development takes as a starting point a common “plan of composition,” as the basis of the differentiation of architectural species.

It should be incorrect to say that for Labrouste architecture is a supple body which can manipulated accordingly to influx of the functional and environmental conditions. Labrouste’s architecture is still full of citations and references from classical architecture (see for example the arcades of the Tempio Malatestiano in Rimini on the façade of the Bibliothèque Nationale). During his six-year stay in Italy, Labrouste collected a vast portfolio of examples meticulously surveyed and drawn. Yet, the selection of his examples departs from the academic standards of that time.

Labrouste does not survey only monuments, but his interests deal also with urban form. A series of ground level plans of houses in Bologna show Labrouste’s interest in the relation between private architecture and urban space. Unlike the operations of redrawing by Durand, Labrouste does not try to regularize these examples, neither to restore them into an original state. Without indulging in picturesque effects, the city is approached as a stratification of various contributions of different epochs. The separation between monuments and the “minor” architecture is no longer there. The city is a monument in itself, taken in its totality and in its historical development. This can be seen in two perspectives of two fictitious cities: Labrouste employs reconstructions of monuments that he surveyed in Palermo and Agrigento and assembles them into complex three-dimensional compositions. Rather than completely imaginary or ideal cities, these are analogous cities, in which a process of historical stratification is reconstructed.

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Labrouste’s architecture autre recalls the definition that was given some years later by Isidore, son of Étienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire, in his Traité de teratologie (1832-36). Following the theory of the unity of the plan of organization, Isidore will be able to classify and to give a scientific definition of monstrosity, finally getting rid of all the remnant of superstition and the excesses of signification that still surrounded the emergence of irregularities, and arriving to conclusions which have significant ethical and political consequences. Talking about atypical creatures born from a woman, Geoffroy asked: are human monsters human? Are hu-

2.11. Henri Labrouste, Hospice des Alienée, Lausanne. First Project (1836-37).
man laws applicable to human monsters? Geoffroy's answer is still unsettling today, for a culture which is still based on the idea of universal human rights. Geoffroy posited that monsters born from a woman are not human, rather species on their own, who are to be subjected to their own laws, and who must enjoy specific rights. To consider them human, in other words, would have been to judge them according to a pre-constituted set of values, and to go against their own nature and needs. Geoffroy posited that monsters are not abnormal, but anomalous creatures: creatures which do not depart from a predefined type based on certain visible characteristics, but which merely depart from a statistical distribution. Monsters constitute another species, individuals presenting another kind of organization, species of only one individual.63

After Geoffroy’s and Labrouste’s work, every individual is longer seen as an instance of an idealized type, but as the outcome of a process of individuation involving both a common plan of organization and an exposure to specific environmental conditions. In this way, there is no conceptual distinction between the normal individual and a monster, since both of them are the outcome of their process of individuation: the “normal,” as the most probable outcome of such a process, is nothing but a particular specimen of monster, an imperfect monster, or a potential monster. As Gabriel Tarde will declare, “the normal is the degree zero of monstrosity.”64

The monster has finally become commonplace. It is through the acknowledgment of this irreducible difference that scientists could find the commonality of all forms of life: on a morphological level, in terms of the discovery of their common plan of organization. On a political level, to the discovery of a possibility of coexistence based not only on the construction of an abstract humanity based

64 Cit. in Georges Canguilhem, “Monstrosity and the monstrous,” 126.
on universal rights, but of a commonality based on the recognition of the inherent difference of every form of life. On the level of the city and its monuments, it opened the possibility to see architecture no longer as immutable and based on universal rules or fixed archetypes, but as a mutable form changing in continuity with the development of the civilizations and the forms of life that inhabit it.

Once the distance between normality and monstrosity has been removed, the monster ceases to be the object of scientific observation, and it becomes a goal to be produced. The science of teratology leads to the technique of teragogeny, the active production of monsters. Already Etienne Geoffroy Saint-Hilaire experimented with the incubation of bird eggs, in order to “lead organization down unusual paths,” but teratogeny was properly inaugurated by Camille Dareste in the mid-19th century. Similarly, Labrouste did not limit himself to archaeological inquiry, and after his Italian residency he became one of the most important architect of Paris, designing fundamental institutional buildings and infrastructures, in the moment in which the city of Paris was transforming into a metropolis. Labrouste approaches the design of public facilities through the design of unusual formal solutions, which are based on the transformation of existing typologies according to analysis of the programmatic requirements of the new buildings. In other words, for Labrouste the design of every building poses always new problems, which are irreducible to already existing solutions, and which have to be addressed with specific tools each time. Between the possibilities opened by the new “teratogenic” approach and its practical applications we can highlight many political ambiguities which will characterize the 19th-century approach to tame monstrosity.

The formal innovations of Labrouste’s architecture has been traditionally read—at least, after Siegfried Giedion’s recuperation 65 Ibid., 143.
of Labrouste’s work in the 1920s and 30s— as a response to the introduction of new building techniques, especially the iron construction. In fact, the necessity to solve the problems opened by the use of new construction materials, in particular in the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, actually led to original design solutions never seen before, in particular in the hybrid use of stone and iron. But the novelty of Labrouste’s approach are not limited to the novel use of materials and technology, but in particular to his approach to design and the singularity of the typological solutions he employed.

This is clear already in the early designs by Labrouste. In particular, two designs for two public institutions are important here. For example, in his 1836-37 project for the Hospice cantonal des Aliénés (a psychiatric hospital) Labrouste refuses the classic typology of the psychiatric hospital based on closed courtyards and centralized control devices—as in the case of the Albergo dei Poveri by Ferdinando Fuga—opting for a ladder structure made of parallel slabs, open to the landscape. The building act as a classifier, separating in each slab different kinds of patients, from the “furious alienated one” on the highest slab, the “calm alienated ones” in the slab in the middle, and the innocuous convalescents on the lower level. This classification is not based on the type of illness, but on the particular form of treatment required, on the specific form of life imposed on the ill inhabitants of the hospital. Even more clearly, in his entry for the competition for the design of the new the prison of Alessandria of 1839, Labrouste translates into

68 Pierre Saddy, Henri Labrouste, 27.
built form the penitentiary reforms introduced by Charles Albert of Savoy. As Pierre Saddy pointed out, the object of the competition was not only the architectural definition of the prison, but also the choice of a specific penitentiary system. Following the most recent trends in prison designs, derived from the recent examples in the United States, Labrouste’s prison is a hybrid mixture of various types of detention facilities. Against the panopticon model, criticized at the time, Labrouste aligns all the isolation cells for nocturnal detention in a linear slab. The daytime activities are concentrated on a radiocentric composition, which negates once again the classical panoptic configuration: the center is occupied by the prison’s chapel. A circular corridor leads to the four wings of the workshops. Each workshop has a two-aisle configuration, anticipating the layout of the reading room of the Bibliothèque St. Geneviève. But on the second floor of the central element, Labrouste manages to introduce an original solution, to stacking a circular array of twenty cells for “continuous detention” each one connected to an individually enclosed open-air courtyard.69

But Labrouste’s translation of social programs into built form are not only visible in his projects for disciplinary institutions. The Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève, completed in 1851, has been traditionally read in relation to the use of the steel structure of the reading room. Actually, the whole the whole distributive system and the representational hierarchy of spaces of the Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève is subordinated to its constructive system, to the point that the vestibule of the library, far from being a triumphal entrance space, is almost a residual space, carved between the pillars of the first floor of the library, which acts as a structural base for the upper floor’s reading room.70 The two-aisle solution of the read-

69 Ibid., 107.
ing room is quite unusual compared to the “normality” of classical distribution systems—which privileged an odd number of aisles in order to produce spatial hierarchy between central and lateral aisles. One possible archetype for this configuration would be the distribution of Portico of Paestum, but Martin Bressani pointed out that such a configuration was common to the refectory of monasteries. The reference to such a specific type is part of the social program which the library had to perform: the construction of a new type of public library, accessible for the general public, the rehabilitation of the university neighborhood. In fact, the library was meant to be open during the night—its integrated gas lighting, and atmospheric conditioning systems are part of the technological wonders of the building. The night opening was meant to remove young students from the moral corruption and the seditious temptations of the vibrant nightlife of the Latin quarter. The library—equated to the room for the collective gatherings of the monks in a monastery—would have provided the space for the construction of a student’s cenoby. The interest of Labrouste for collective life, and the influence of Fourierist ideas, is also clear in his involvement with philanthropic institutions which lead him to design the agricultural colony for orphans in Saint-Firmin (1845-48), and his appointment for the construction of the Seminar of Rennes (1853-1872).

71 Ibid., 174.
72 In particular, to that of the church of Saint-Martin-des-Champs in Paris, which had been transformed in the same period into a library by his close friend Léon Vaudoyer. Martin Bressani and Marc Grignon, “The Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève and ‘Healing’ Architecture,” in Henri Labrouste: Structure Brought to Light, 118.
74 Ibid., 110-115.
Labrouste’s buildings are anomalous forms, but no longer monsters. As Michel Foucault noted, the concept of monster, with its burden of moral and theological underpinnings, through its progressive redefinition in natural and social sciences, was substituted by a more neutral idea of the abnormal individual, or the individual to be corrected.76 Lausanne’s Hospice and, in particular, for the Prison of Alessandria are anomalous structures to host anomalous individuals. The anomalous form of the building adapts to the anomalous form of life that is meant to proliferate in those interiors: even more, as in the workshops of the prison of Alessandria, that form of life is made productive. But even the everyday life of the emerging metropolis needs anomalous containers, as the typological oddities of the two Bibliothèque Sainte-Geneviève shows. Labrouste’s view on architecture, heretical in 1830, in 1848 is an administrative tool, destined to discipline and realign anomalous forms of life to the “correct” and ordered life of the bourgeois city.

A young German philosopher exiled for during the same years in Paris pointed out the fundamental ambiguity of bourgeois revolutions. They are “short-lived, soon they have reached their zenith, and a long Katzenjammer [cat’s winge] takes hold of society before it learns to assimilate the results of its storm-and-stress period soberly.” Conversely, he described proletarian revolutions as difficult and nonlinear process of the construction of the common, as the institutionalization of monstrosity: “they constantly criticize themselves, constantly interrupt themselves in their own course, return to the apparently accomplished, in order to begin anew; they deride with cruel thoroughness the half-measures, weaknesses, and paltriness of their first attempts, seem to throw down their opponents only so the latter may draw new strength from the earth and rise before them again more gigantic than ever, recoil constantly

76 Michel Foucault, Abnormal: Lectures at the Collège de France 1974-75 (London and New York, 2003).
from the indefinite colossalness of their own goals – until a situation is created which makes all turning back impossible, and the conditions themselves call out: *hic Rhodus, hic salta!* 77

Chapter 3
Will to Architecture
Alois Riegl’s Kunstwollen and the Politics of the Grossstadt, 1896-1936

In 1933, under the pseudonym of Detlef Holz, Walter Benjamin published a review of the first volume of the yearbook Kunswissenschaftliche Forschungen [Research Essays in the Study of Art]. In this text Benjamin welcomed the emergence of a new type of art historian, against the dominant tendencies at that time of an art historical practice based on an anecdotal account on artist’s lives, and the temptations of an all-encompassing narration of “art history as universal history.” Such a program was explicitly stated by Heinrich Wölfflin in 1898, but Benjamin thought that the German master was unable to overcome consolidated academic habits. Instead, he saw in the work of Austrian art historian Alois Riegl the forerunner of the new approach. Benjamin quoted Hans Sedlmayr, editor of the issue, who pointed out that the new trend of art history were to be dedicated to the production of monographic essays on specific artworks, which were to be taken as self-standing entities, and as manifestations of some larger historical development: “Formerly a mere means to knowledge, a trace of something else which was to be disclosed through it, the artwork now appears as a self-contained small world of its own, particular sort.” Rather, it is the artwork itself that produces its own reality: “the formal incorporation of the given world by the artist [is] not a selection but rather always an advance into a field of knowledge which did

not yet ‘exist’ prior to the moment of this formal conquest … This approach only becomes possible through a frame of mind that recognizes that the realm of perception itself changes over time and in accordance with shifts in cultural and intellectual direction.”

Seen in this way, art is no longer a mere way to beautify life through the work of a series of outstanding personalities, but rather it is a way to transform it and produce it collectively. For this reason, the new art historian does not look exclusively to the works of the great masters, but especially he pays attention to the most insignificant details of the common artistic “industry,” which are able to shed light to the general cultural and intellectual “function” of artistic practice.

According to Benjamin, the most important achievement of this method were Riegl’s *Late Roman Art Industry* and *Dutch Group Portrait*, in which the Austrian art historian was able to dominate the object of his inquiry from the most trivial details to the general social conditions which have produced them.

But even more importantly, Benjamin saw in Riegl’s approach not only the example of a rigorous and scientific enquiry, but he noted the influence that Riegl had in the development of the art of his time: “sober and simultaneously undaunted research never misses the vital concerns of its time. The reader who reads Riegl’s major work today, recalling that it was written at almost the same time as the work by Wolfflin cited in the opening paragraph, will recognize retrospectively how forces are already stirring subterraneously in *Late Roman Art Industry* that will surface a decade later in expressionism.”

In this chapter, Benjamin’s suggestion is expanded, and the work of Riegl is compared to the crisis of the old perceptive habits of his time. While Riegl has always avoided to express opinions

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3 Ibid., 86.
4 On the concept of “function” of a work of art in Benjamin’s art criticism see Chapter 5.
of the art of his time, it is possible to read the transformations of the metropolitan landscape of Vienna through the aesthetic categories introduced in his works. Moreover, Riegl’s influence on the subsequent development of art was not limited to expressionism, as Benjamin showed. The idea of art as a form of organization of collective life was central to the development of modern architecture between the two wars, in its most politically radical forms. In particular, Riegl’s concept of the Kunstwollen, the will to art or artistic volition, is taken in this chapter as an attempt to define a political economy of artistic production, or the “artistic mode of production” through which a modern conception of the common starts to appear.

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Aloïs Riegl introduced the concept of Kunstwollen for the first time in his 1893 Stilfragen (The Problem of Style). From 1886 until 1897 Riegl worked at the Museum für Angewandte Kunst (museum for applied arts) in Vienna, and he was in charge of the textile section. The museum was modelled after the South Kensington Museum of London (today Victoria and Albert Museum), an institution which played a central role in the transformation of taste in the late 19th century, and always influenced Riegl’s interest for the “industrial” forms of art.

The first pages of Stilfragen present the concept of the Kunstwollen in a polemical way, namely, to counter the success of what he calls the ‘materialistic’ idea proposed by the followers (and not

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by their master) of Gottfried Semper, who affirmed the primacy of the technical aspects of the material over the development of artistic motifs. According to Riegl, no motif is bound to any technique. Textile art is by no means the first, original art, as Semper claimed: in fact, men used to decorate their bodies for no utilitarian reason whatsoever, before they started putting clothes on them. Similarly, Riegl rejects the possibility to locate the origin of art into symbolic content, as proposed by William Henry Goodyear in his A Grammar of the Lotus. According to Riegl this argument is only apparently different from that of the materialists, but in fact it commits the same fallacy, i.e. to put the origin of art into something else, something external to the motif itself. Finally, art does stem neither from the impulse to imitate nature, nor to represent it. Representation occurs often in art history, but it is only a subsequent development, a re-naturalization, it is not the origin of art, which lies in abstraction, in the invention of the line.

What is then the principle that produces art? It is the Kunstwollen. Three definitions of the concept can be extracted from Stilfragen: (i) an autonomous principle which is proper of artistic motifs taken in themselves, (ii) an unconscious drive of human psyche, (iii) a historically determined, voluntary, subjective act of artistic choice over the organization of human perceptions. The concept of Kunstwollen will be elaborated in Riegl’s subsequent production following these three lines. While Riegl employs categories that were common in art theory at that time, it is precisely
in the conceptual tension between the ontological, psychological and political characters of the Kunstwollen that Riegl’s theory can be considered a departure from nineteenth-century aesthetics.

Art responds to an artistic, creative drive which is immanent to the work of art itself (“einem immanenten künstlerischen Schaffungstrieb”). The evolution of art forms (motifs) develops through a logic that is the internal logic of the motif itself. *Stilfragen* elaborates an elegant theory of the evolution of ornament, based on principles immanent to ornamental forms themselves.

The notion of immanent forces influencing the development of artistic motifs was not introduced by Riegl. For Gottfried Semper the genesis of artistic motifs among the different material media is a complex phenomenon influenced by internal and external factors shaping the evolution of form over time. The external factors represent historical and geographical peculiarities, such as climate, topography, institutional organization of societies, local traditions, etc. But this external factors act over pre-existing artistic materials which embody certain a-historical, formal characteristics that prefigure their own field of possible evolution.8

Semper employs an organicistic analogy, translating the concepts elaborated by naturalists Georges Cuvier and Etienne Geoffroy de Saint Hilaire at the beginning of the 1800s. Comparing different organisms and palaeontological finds, Geoffroy noticed that,

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despite their different shape, size and function in different species, the mutual relations between organs (the plan that governs them) is constant. Unlike Cuvier, who maintained the existence of four different, separate and static plans de composition, Geoffroy advanced the idea of the existence of a single plan. The genesis of the form of the parts that compose living beings is the product of the action of external forces found in the environment that act over the plan de composition.\(^9\)

While Riegl employs an evolutionary approach to the development of decorative motifs, he rejects any organicist analogy. The development of artistic forms is not a natural, spontaneous process that harmonically evolves towards unity through rationally determinable laws. Rather, there is an antagonistic relationship between the objective artistic material and the subjective drive to organize it. Nature and material are rather “negative coefficients” that influence the development of form against the artistic drive. This drive is not only immanent to the work of art itself, but it is also what connects the subject with the work of art. In Stilfragen Riegl employs often the idea of desire (Trieb) as a synonym for Kunstwollen: ‘immanent drive to decoration’ (p.49) ‘pleasure in formal beauty’ (p. 40) ‘urge for adornment’ (p. 31, 50) ‘artistic desire for decoration’ (p. 33) ‘need for decoration’ (p. 49) ‘desire for adornment’ (Schmückungstrieben) (p. 5).\(^{10}\) Desire is how men project themselves into the world. In this sense, perception is not only a sensual, passive operation, but also an active, voluntary endeavour.

The centrality of psychological categories at the core of artistic judgement was a common topos in the aesthetic theories of

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10 Alois Riegl, The Problem of Style.
Riegler’s contemporaries. This approach emerged as a general discomfort grew towards the historical apparatus of Hegelian dialectics. Against the attempt to define the development of history as an objective supra-sensible law, late nineteenth-century art theorists sought to ground the act of perception onto the subject and the body.\textsuperscript{11} This approach was inaugurated by Shopenhauer, who undermined traditional metaphysics by replacing the rationality of God with the irrationality of the will as the transcendent principle of the world. Things are not the outcome of a harmonious development of affirmation of Spirit by the product of the egoistic, destructive forces of the will (\textit{Wille}). The will is inherently driven by negativity: the need to fulfill its lacks, hence in suffering. Radicalizing Kantian aesthetics, Schopenhauer excluded the possibility to know reality in itself. On the contrary, the only way we can relate to the world is through our representations (\textit{Vorstellungen}). But since every act of our body is directed by acts of will, it is only through the body that we can have a glimpse of the reality of the world. In this sense Schopenhauer’s metaphysics is declined in aesthetic terms: our cognitive activity can only manifest itself as a reactive force of the will through our body. Art is for Schopenhauer an attempt to suspend this reactive chain, but it results can be only temporary.

The return to Kantian aesthetics against Hegelian historicism favoured an approach which separated history, content and form in aesthetic judgement. According to Kant, Form is the complex of categories through which we mediate perception, it is the schema of perception, which is based on a priori ideas of space and time. Nineteenth-century formalism attempted to contrast the

idealism of Kantian schemata, and ground them into a scientific analysis of the body and its perceptions.

The development of psychology as a scientific discipline played an important role in this project. Already in 1824 Johann Friedrich Herbart defined the perception of art as a cognitive composition of simple elementary elements (lines, tones, planes and colours) stimulating subjective perception. In this composition the subject is able to form ideas, which are temporary and in a constant state of fight to persist against new perceptive stimulation. Robert Vischer distinguished between sensation and feeling: while sensation is a bodily response to external stimuli, feeling presumes a mental or emotional activity. At the same time, seeing and feeling can be immediate, or responsive, if a participation of the movement of nerves and muscles is implied. Konrad Fiedler and Adolf Hildebrand will give full autonomy to the domain of the perceptual, in terms of visual experience, from the conceptual realm. The latter is the form of knowledge of science, and it is based on abstraction, i.e. the isolation and the ordering of perceptual data. Conversely, “pure visibilism” is the the domain of artistic knowledge, which stems from subjective imagination. Art is no longer an imitation of nature, the attempt to seek the ‘beautiful’ in terms of its internal harmony, but rather it is nature that is perceived through art. According to Hildebrand, the problem of art is the representation of the three-dimensionality of the appearances of forms and space into the plane. In his The problem of form he will develop several notions on which Riegl will construct his typology of perception (visual and kinesthetic perception, near and far view, cubic and free space).

12 See Harry Francis Mallgrave & Eleftherios Ikonomou (eds.) Empathy, Form and Space: problems in German aesthetics, 1873-1893 (Los Angeles: Getty Center for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1994)
Riegl will build his theories on the categories developed by formalist theory, but at the same time departing from them. Firstly, in Riegl’s theory the modes of perception—and therefore subjects—are historical phenomena, but never related to any idealistic dialectical plot. Secondly, Riegl operates a disintegration of the subject, its diffusion and collectivisation.13

These concepts are developed in two posthumous manuscripts (1897 and 1898-99) published under the title of Historische Grammatik der Bildende Künsten (Historical Grammar of Visual Arts).14 In the introduction of the second draft, Riegl traces a historical account of the development of art history, comparing it to an edifice.15 After the aesthetic categorisations of the past proved too rigid to house the manifold of artistic phenomena, the proliferation of specialised inquiries has left the museum as an incoherent patchwork of different wings with no relation to each other, built with poor materials and unsafe foundations. The modern art historian finds himself in front of a ruin, which he has to interpret. His tool is the historical grammar. Riegl explicitly warns the reader that he uses this term as a metaphor. The grammar is not a set of rules through which art should be produced, but only a heuristic device in the hand of the historian. In other words, the historical grammar is not the principle of the production of art: in Riegl’s theory Kunstwollen plays that role. The artist does not ‘possess’ the grammar, neither the beholder needs it in order to enjoy art.

Only the historian uses the historical grammar in order to map art’s evolution.

Riegl proceeds distinguishing three loosely defined periods characterised by their specific worldviews (Weltanschauungen): anthropomorphic polytheism, until the third century AD, Christian monotheism, from Constantine’s act until Italian Renaissance, and the natural-scientific worldview, which characterises our modern world. Again, the Weltanschauung should not be seen as an a-priori for the development of the Kunstwollen. The Kunstwollen runs parallel to the Weltanschauung, but none of them influences the other.16

Parallel to the Kunstwollen and the world view runs also a specific view of the subject and its relation towards the world. In polytheist antiquity subjects were seen as fully defined, well separated entities struggling between each other and against nature, moved by the only means of their own will. Christians subordinated nature and subjective action to the will to the monotheist god. The natural-scientific worldview, conversely, does not recur to a religious understanding of subjectivity: the subject does not have any relation to a higher entity, but is immersed in nature’s flow of cause-effect relations. The subject loses its coherence. Art must not “depict the individual, who no longer exists—or, more precisely, is a set of molecules too tiny to be depicted—but the universal connectedness of all natural phenomena.”17

Riegl’s emphasis on the dissipation of the subject into its surroundings must not be confused with Robert Vischer’s theory of empathy: nature is not another transcendent entity on which the

17 Alois Riegl, Historical Grammar, cit., p. 361
subject has to return. Rather, art follows the same formal principles of nature. For this reason, art is always an agonistic relationship of the subject with nature.18

The molecular scale is fundamental for Riegl not only to define the dissolution of the subject for the scientific world view, but also to define the Kunstwollen itself: like Etienne Geoffroy de Saint-Hilaire at the beginning of the 19th century, Riegl developed his theory of the genesis of form through an analogy to crystallography. A work of art is an emergent property of a series of interactions, which occur locally, between molecules. Like a crystal which shows global symmetries and regularities, the art work emerges as a formally defined entity.

This is most clear in certain periods of art history, the periods of the so-called “decadence,” which seem to be the periods which Riegl is most interested in, and which will be the subjects of his subsequent major work, *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* (*Late Roman Art Industry*), in which he declared that there is no such thing as ‘decadence.’

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The Kunstwollen is a collective sense organ. In *Spätrömische Kunstindustrie* and *Holländische Gruppenporträt* (*The Dutch Group Portrait*) Riegl develops a conceptual, historical map of different modes of perception and the space they produced. His insights on modern perception have been regarded as a theoretical basis for the art of Riegl’s contemporaries, especially the Secession.

18 Ibid., p. 51 and, especially, 288-9: For Riegl man is not *imperium in imperio*. Man “cannot transcend nature and world:” man is on the one hand bound to natural laws, and the way he deals with the world follows the same principles of nature. Andrea Pinotti, “Introduzione all’edizione italiana,” in *Grammatica storica delle arti figurative* (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2008), XXXII pointed out that *mimesis* for Riegl is not the act of imitation of the forms of nature (*natura naturata*), but the imitation of the laws through which nature produces (*natura naturans*).
3.2. Architectural space in Late Roman art. From left to right, negation of space, temple in Karnak. Tactile architecture with surface optical effects, Parthenon, Athens. Central cubic, solid space in the Pantheon. Dissolution of space into optical effects, St. Apollinare in Classe, Ravenna.
and as an anticipation of the themes of abstract art. But the relation between Riegl’s modern Kunstwollen and the form of the contemporary metropolis is usually overlooked. Despite his interest in architecture, which he regards as the art that expresses an epoch’s Kunstwollen most clearly for its lack of representational elements, Riegl rarely refers to the space of the city in his writings. Nevertheless, the formal grammar that he developed can be useful to read the transformations of the city of Vienna and its inhabitants were experiencing at that time.

The basic elements of Riegl’s formal grammar are “silhouette and colour on the plane or in space.” The perception of reality occurs through the senses of touch and vision. Through touch we can perceive surfaces as impenetrable material entities and perceive them as definite borders enclosing objects. The eye, on the other hand, is unable to distinguish outlines and perceives only different intensities of colours and shades. In both cases, our senses are able to directly perceive sensuous reality on the plane, and they are unable to perceive depth. The notion of depth, and therefore of space, arises as a cognitive operation, as an conscious organization of percept data. Riegl isolates three historical moments in which this cognitive operation is performed. The ancients were mainly concerned with the attempt to isolate individualities in a world which was perceived as chaotic. Therefore the antique Kunstwollen is mainly haptic: its use of vision is limited to a near sight (Nahsicht) and its manifestation occur on the plane, in the attempt to remove space. The Egyptian architecture is mainly Bildwerk, its purpose is the construction of borders, a celebration of surface without space (the pyramid) or of individual objects suppressing space (the hypostyle hall). Late Roman art, conversely, strives to conquer three-dimensionality. Surfaces recede and they are im-

mersed in light and shadow effects. Their perception occurs from far away, is completely *fernsichtisch*. But interestingly, late Roman space is still a well-individuated, cubic space, as centrally planned buildings like the Pantheon, or Tempio di Minerva Medica show. Longitudinally planned buildings are, according to Riegl, an evolution of peristyle courtyards which were eventually covered by wooden roofs. The temporary character of these coverings allows Riegl to affirm that basilicas were not seen as buildings, and therefore they do not contradict the drive toward cubic space of late Roman Kunstwollen. But at the same time, the spatial effect of the basilica prepares artistic sensibility toward the conquest of the free, unbound space of modernity.

Greek vision stands in-between Nahsicht and Fernsicht. Its *Normalsicht* allows the use of light and surface shadows effects—for example, the columns of a Greek temple—to reinforce the perception of individualized outlines.

The techniques of representation of cubic and free space in painting were dealt by Riegl in *Hollandische Gruppenporträt*. Cubic space is typical of southern European painting, and it is achieved by the use of linear perspective and a triangular composition of the elements, in a relation of subordination between each other. Cubic space is enhanced by the definition of figures through their outline, and a use of cast shadows. Conversely, Northern painting establishes a paratactic syntax, in which figures are organized through a relation of coordination between each other. Their outline is undefined, figures dissolve into space and light is used in atmospheric effects of *chiaroscuro*. Formal unity can be achieved internally, by means of subordination in composition itself, or by means of an action that takes place in the space of the painting.

3.4. Ringstrasse development, Vienna.
3.5. Free space in Vienna’s Ringstrasse...
3.6. ... and Camillo Sitte’s “cure,” from De Städtebau (1889)
Unity can be achieved also externally, requiring an engagement between the figures and the beholder.

Riegl delineates a historical typology of this engagement of the subject in its perception, distinguishing three attitudes: will (Wille), emotion (Empfindung) and attentiveness (Aufmerksamkeit). Will is the attitude typical of the Eastern ancient world, in which the subject is engaged in action in order to isolate objects in a world otherwise perceived as hostile and chaotic. Emotion is a distinctively passive attitude in which the individual is subject to the outside world, attracted or repelled by it, and it is typical of Indo-European peoples. Attentiveness is when the individual is open to the world “in pure, selfless interest.” Aufmerksamkeit, which can be translated also as ‘kindness,’ is “a joyful acceptance of external things, a willingness to assimilate them intellectually, as well as a selfless surrendering to the outside world.” While being a completely subjective attitude, the subject is at the same time dispersed into the flow of the outside world, which is perceived by the scientific mind as ruled by objective, cause-effect laws.

Let us try to employ these categories to read the transformations that the urban space of Vienna was experiencing during Riegl’s life. Until the mid-nineteenth century Vienna’s historical centre was isolated from the rest of the city by a wide buffer zone which still surrounded the city walls. In 1857 the Emperor proclaimed his intention to demolish the walls and to develop the surrounding area, against the cautionary advices of the Central Military Chancellery to preserve the fortification in order to defend the Imperial court from the threat of the proletariat in the suburbs (the echoes of the 1848 revolution could still be heard at that time).

21 For an account on the political and artistic situation of Vienna, see Carl E. Schorske, Fin-de-Siècle Vienna: Politics and Culture (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981). Diana Graham Reynolds, Alois Riegl and the politics of art history, locates the work of Riegl in the context of Vienna’s art historical institutional framework.
After the elections won by the Liberals in 1861, the Ringstrasse will become—a part from a highly successful speculative operation—the stage for the representation of new democratic institutions and the new bourgeoisie, as well as the laboratory for the construction of new forms of urban management. The 1860 leaflet promoting the Ringstrasse development shows, on the left, Vienna dressed by the Spirit of Art and, on the right, Law and Peace administering the city’s everyday life, in the “triumph of constitutional Recht over imperial Macht.” The spatial logic of the development follows principles different than those which governed Baroque planning. The Ringstrasse does not attempt to construct an organic composition of enclosed visual channels organized around a hierarchy of perspectival focuses. Even if the continuity of the Ringstrasse still works as a unifying principle, it is neither hinged on the individuation of focal points nor it has a clear start or end point. Instead of connecting the historical city with the suburbs through a coherent radial system of vistas or promenades, the side streets flanking the Ringstrasse serve almost exclusively the autonomous logic of the Ringstrasse itself. The single buildings are not treated as theatrical wings as in a Baroque perspective, but float in isolation in a space which is neither directional nor enclosed. The isolation of the buildings is further underlined by their idiosyncratic eclectic façades, which in fact envelope spaces designed to maximise the building’s financial performance. In Rieglian terms, while Baroque space is still a cubic, haptic space, Vienna Ringstrasse is an experiment in free, optical space.

Camillo Sitte harshly criticized this “craze for free placement,” advocating for a rigorously haptic urban composition. In his book De Städtebau (1889) he argues in favour of a return to an urban landscape made of a sequence of small, enclosed spaces, as found in the medieval centres of Italian and Northern European cities. Such picturesque spaces, in contrast to the bureaucratically
organized open spaces of the Ringstrasse, are supposed to fulfil the emotional needs of humans, and to foster their community life. The lost unity of life in the bourgeois city can only be recomposed through a Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk. The artist, like a tragic hero, is called to establish an alliance with the people’s reactionary forces, in order to “to weld man’s shattered values in the present into an image of a coherent future.”

While Otto Wagner too is concerned with the lack of a style for the present epoque, he will find different tools to achieve this unity. Wagner rejects any possibility to define the ‘style of our times’ through the use of a style of the past, recuperating the moral of the Kleinstadt and its Gesellschaft. Wagner criticized the Ringstrasse for its vain attempt to beautify the city, the result being an eclectic pastiche which offends the ethics of the hero of the Grossstadt, the bourgeois man. The style of today—the “modern” style—must stem from the lifestyle of the latter and his practical relation with materials and program. A building must be conceived from the inside-out: “It will always be regarded as a serious error to adapt or, worse, to sacrifice the required interior structure to a favorite exterior motif.”22 Yet, a building always plays a role in the urban space: “the scale of composition must be extended to include the total picture that will emerge; then the architect has the surely welcome opportunity to use his ability to influence and determine those things that will heighten the effect, prepare the view, create visual resting points, etc.”23 Therefore, the use of perspective drawings is important in the design process to determine the crucial vantage points from which the building will be experienced.

The sensuous apprehension of the impression made by a great monumental design, for example, can perhaps be explained

23 Ibid., p. 174.
in the following way. First the general image is indistinctly grasped, and only some moments later the eye and impression slowly concentrate on a point, during which time the silhouette, distribution of colour patches, border, and total arrangement continue to have an effect. The resting of the eyes has occurred. Only then does the need appear to apprehend the effect of the individual parts and details by constantly shifting the viewpoint.24

As Eve Blau noted, Wagner shows here his personal reception of Hildebrand’s categories of near and far view, as well as August Schmarsow’s critique to Riegl’s Spätromische Kunstindustrie: it is the whole body in its movement that perceives space, and not only a still eye.25 Therefore, a building must be conceived as a function of the whole metropolis, its slow and fast flows. This also means that a building is never complete in itself, it can never achieve an internal unity. Rather than a total, linguistic coherence of an urban Gesamtkunstwerk, Wagner’s metropolis acquires its temporary, external unity in the relations that objects establish with urban flows. The indifference of the modern beholder does not seem that joyful attentiveness of the Dutch regents, but rather that of the distracted blasé metropolitan type.

Wagner was in fact responsible for the organization of these flows during the whole duration of his career. In 1893 he submitted a competition entry for a new development plan for the city of Vienna (Generalregulierungsplan). It was based on the management of the flows of the city, in the design of its infrastructures as a key for the economic development of the city. A series of concentric arteries, of which the Ringstrasse was the innermost, was used as the infrastructural principle to support the growth of the city. As a consequence of the consensus gathered by this project

24 Ibid., p. 177.
on local authorities, Wagner was appointed between 1894-1908 as the chief architect for the construction of the city railway system (Stadtbahn), an overtly complex program that needed the construction of stations, viaduct, bridges, embankments, tunnels. In 1911, at the end of his career, Wagner presented his project for Vienna as a metropolis in a polemical pamphlet,26 in which he develops design and administrative strategies. Despite being in line with the policies promoted by the Christian socialist administration, the proposals contained in Die Groszstadt will influence the administrative experience of Red Vienna.27 According to Wagner, the administration of the city necessitates its division into wards (Bezirke) that must be autonomous and self-sufficient. Yet, they have to be connected by a pervasive network of infrastructure, and the municipality has to maintain a strict control over the development of the whole. The land already owned by the Gemeinde must be used as a resource to trigger public building programmes. The revenues from public land locations should be used to set up public construction material production facilities. Transportation would have connected these facilities with construction sites. These measures were intended to hit land monopolies and their unproductive use. The city is beautiful insofar it minimizes the obstacles to the circulation of commodities, capitals and people, when it facilitates business. Architecture is nothing else than the monumentalisation of these flows, through the infrastructure that supports them. The architect and the city administration has to remove the factors that prevents the city’s endless growth. It is not the concentration of capitals in the metropolis that determines its clashes, its frictions, and the unpredictability of its behaviour: on the contrary, they arise

from the insufficient concentration of those capitals, from the ini-
tial permanence of land rent and other forms of aristocratic privi-
leges. Rent is a parasitic, improductive residue of the past, which
prevents the progressive profits of industrial production to thrive.
The space the metropolis has to be free and smooth, to reduce to
a minumum the frictions to the movement of capitals and people.

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Wagner’s Grossstadt political premises are those of Karl
Lüger’s liberalism, based on the ideology of laissez-faire capitalism:
value production is seen as a result of “natural” relations between
demand and offer, and the city is the theatre of this market.

But actually Vienna never became a Grossstadt in the sense
Wagner wanted. Vienna was a large parasitic apparatus which
based its existence over the exploitation of the resources of a vast
empire, that it will soon have lost. The liberal democratic utopia
of the pacific unbound expansion of the forces of a self-regulating
market never managed to overcome the privileges of the the Hab-
sburg court and its rentiers. Moreover, the equilibria of the pax
liberalis were compromised by the “barbaric invasions” of disrup-
tive forces on the political scene: proletarian revolutionaries, move-
ments for national liberation, anti-Semite populists.

In this situation it is no surprise that Riegl’s contempo-
raries might have noticed many analogies between the decline of
the Roman Empire and that of Austro-Hungaric Empire, and felt
sympathetic with the “invention” of late antiquity. But it is pre-
cisely from this chaotic confrontation that artistic development
could arise: “[A] considerate reader will never forget that in such
a time of schism fas the fourth century AD, development was by
no means strictly uniform but moved by spurts of progress mixed
with moments of recoil. Though anachronisms abound—archaic
survival on one hand, radical anticipation with almost modern perceptions on the other—the development was unmistakable.”28 In this moments of crisis, in the so-called periods of ‘decadence’ the artwork is not produced as an “isolated, self-contained work” but arises as a product of a collective will, as an event.

Riegl’s theories, and the concept of the Kunstwollen, were at the same time the outcomes and the propellers of a new conception of history, which gave value to the so-called periods of decadence; of the dissolution between the limit of “high” and “low” art, and the possibility to link the development of civilizations to their apparently marginal, everyday production; and finally, of the dissolution of the individual inspiration of the artist towards a conception of art as the active organization of collective perception. It is no surprise, then, that after the Second World War many commentators have found Riegl as the more or less explicit reference for the development of modern architecture, in relation to the new political and economic question that the rise of the capitalist metropolis was opening.29

Yet, the influence of Riegl on architecture was not one-sided, and the translation of Riegl’s concept engendered very different, if not opposite conceptions, often leading to political ambiguities and ambivalences. For example, for the members of the Deutscher Werkbund, and in particular for Peter Behrens who used the con-

29 The role of Riegl’s theories in the development of modern architecture was first pointed out by Italian architecture historians since the postwar period. Riegl’s influence to Italian art historians was pioneered by art historians such as Ranuccio Bianchi Bandinelli and Sergio Bettini, who followed Riegl’s interest in late Roman and Bizantine art. In the 1950s it was Bruno Zevi who acknowledged Riegl as the first author to introduce space as an art historical category, and Giulio Carlo Argan who found Riegl’s (and Fiedler’s) formalism at the core of the Bauhaus’ formal pedagogy. In the 70s Riegl was re-interpreted on the light of the so-called “negative thought” by authors such as Massimo Cacciari, Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco dal Co. For an account on Riegl’s influence on Italian art and architecture criticism see Sandro Scarrocchia, *Oltre la storia dell’arte. Alois Riegl: vita e opere di un protagonista della cultura viennese* (Milan: Marinotti, 2006).
cept explicitly, the Kunstwollen was the autonomous drive to align aesthetics and industry into a program of national unity, through the creation of a national style as continuation of a specific German tradition.30 This reading is a conscious misunderstanding of Alois Riegls work, in which one cannot find any idea of “national” or all-encompassing style. In particular, Riegls intervention directly in the Arts & Crafts debate of the late 19th century in his 1894 book *Volkkunst, Hausfleiss und Hausindustrie* (Folk art, home crafts, and home industry). In the book Riegls rejected any legitimacy to recover the supposed purity of traditional folk art forms in the industrial age, since those forms belong to a form of economic organization—a home production meant to be consumed by the family, and as such devoid of any exchange-value—which, if ever existed, was now lost. Riegls saw the knowledge of those production simply of interest of the art historian. In a way that recalls the Nietzsche’s second *Untimely Meditation*, Riegls saw the production of art as something separate from art history: to be sufficiently free, the artist should consciously forget art history. Yet, a conception of art production based on historical laws could benefit the artist in his present work.31

Against the will to achieve the unity of the arts into a single style advocated by the Werkbund and the Wiener Werkstaetten, Adolf Loos proposed a radical separation of art, architecture and crafts. Rather than a synthesis of the arts, Loos points to a total separation of them, in particular the refusal of considering architecture as art. Instead of understanding the Kunstwollen as a sin-

gle, transcendent, historical force, Loos saw each human activity as characterized by its own rules, languages and tendencies. The role of the Baumeister is that of preserving and highlighting those differences: by radically separating material and cladding and refusing mimetic effects; by the separation of interior and exterior, in a way that the facade of a building conceals, rather than exposes the interior; in the interior, by the separation of fixed and mobile furniture, etc. If a general will or tendency can be extracted and enhanced, according to Loos, this should not be posited in terms of style and forms, but rather in economic terms. Loos refused the moralistic approach of the Wiener Werkstätte, which saw the return to craftsmanship as a return to a joyful form of labour, as opposed to the alienation of industrial labour. Loos strongly rejected this vision: joyful labour does not produce more value or better objects. Loos understood that in modern times labour is an abstract category, which can be expressed only in quantity, and it is independent from the qualities of the work produced. In this sense, no liberation of work can be given. A true liberation can be only from work, from the reduction of labour time. For this reason, he wanted the following inscription on his own tomb: “Adolf Loos, who liberated mankind from superfluous labour.”

The influence of Riegl in the architectural debate in the 20s and 30s is so pervasive, both in the German-speaking context and

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34 “The City of Vienna did carry out Loos’s design for his own tomb, but without the inscription Loos wanted. Perhaps it would have led to misunderstandings, given the disastrous unemployment of the 1930s.” Adolf and Daniel Opel, “Introduction”, in Adolf Loos, On Architecture (Riverside, CA: Ariadne Press, 1995)
in the Soviet Union, that it would be impossible to give a complete picture in this context. As Giulio Carlo Argan showed in the context of the pedagogy of the Bauhaus, the idea of art as a form of consciousness that can only arise in the practice—“a feeling of the reality that one acquires only by doing”—testifies a generalized assimilation of Riegl’s lesson.35 But certain authors were more explicit in translating Riegl’s concept into operative tools for the construction of a new theory for architecture and the city.

The work of Ludwig Hilberseimer is paradigmatic in this sense. In particular, this is clear in two articles of the early 20s, during a time in which the German architect was active as an art critic for several newspapers. The first of these articles is titled, Shöpfung und Entwicklung (Creation and Development), and it was published in Sozialistische Monatshefte in 1922, in which Hilberseimer exposes his idea of art.36 In an idiosyncratic and assertive tone, Hilberseimer declares that function of art is to produce ecstasy. This has always been true, but it has become clear only in recent times, thanks to the discovery and the comparison of distant and so-called primitive civilizations. Interestingly, Hilberseimer posited that these discoveries “led to the remarkable realization of the equality of all cultures side by side,”37 regardless of their historic development. In this sense, there are no forms of art that are more developed than other ones: they are only different, and they can coexist in the same moment of time. Art is an intuitive form of consciousness, and it always expresses a collective belief. “Barbaric” or primitive art expresses this condition in its clearest form. Civilization substitutes belief and intuition with education, “production with reproduction,” and its essence was diverted towards an idealistic conception of beauty. It was Renaissance art,

37 Ibid., 993.
according to Hilberseimer, that introduced imitation, choosing its references from the selection of a particular type of Greek and Roman art, disregarding the so-called periods of decadence like Hellenism. Hilberseimer credits the young Nietzsche with the merit of having shifted the interest from the Apollinean side of Greek art, discovering another, Dionysian side of it: “the world was shocked by the barbarianism that could be found in the supposedly “aesthetic” Greek art … A new aesthetic had found its way.”38 This new art is “tension brought to harmony;” the new aesthetic is based on dissonance. For Hilberseimer dissonant art is not devoid of an internal logic or organizing laws. Yet, these laws cannot be given a priori, they can only be experienced from the materiality of artwork itself. In this way, Hilberseimer brings two forces at the origin of the artwork, which he derives from Semper and Riegl: “The Kunstwollen is that volition that is not subject to development. What can develop is the control of materials, the Können: a matter of virtuosity and systematization, which has nothing to do with the pure artistic.”39 The Kunstwollen is an independent variable of creation. Since it is not subject to development, it is nonsense to posit forms of art more developed than other, or to judge art in terms of infancy and decadence. But without the capacity to put in form and matter such a will, it is not possible to realize artworks. In this way, also Hilberseimer sees creation as an antagonistic act between the disruptive force of the will and the stability of matter:

3.10. Raoul Hausmann, ABCD (selfportrait), 1920, Raoul Hausmann, collage.
3.11. Ludwig Hilberseimer, Project for a factory, 1922.
“Beauty wants to enjoy tranquility. But the Kunstwollen disrupts this tranquility. It is a constant threat to enjoyment.”

Architecture (and music), according to Hilberseimer, and again taking Riegl almost to the letter, is the art that manifests the Kunstwollen in its purest way. In particular, this is clear when architecture is not imitative, in the times in which there are no models (Vorbilder) to be copied. In this moments, architecture manifests itself as the purest of the arts, in its capacity to put life in form, to produce reality in terms of forms-of-life. “In eternal flux is life. But only through limits it can be truly comprehended. Artworks are borders of actuality, in its uniqueness, in its totality. Limitation is also form-becoming, conceivability, supreme reality. So, form-giving (Gestaltung) and limitation (Begrenzung) are identical.” In this way, Hilberseimer saw the end of the dichotomy between form and content in art, and between abstract and natural art. They are problems which are posed in a wrong way. There is no reality that comes prior to art which has to be represented into form: instead, the content of art stems precisely from this act of putting-in-form chaos. For the same reason there is no such thing than “abstract” form: all form is sensual, it has to perceived through the senses. But at the same time abstractness is “ultimately also an objectivity, a spiritual reality.”

The best example of the new barbarism of contemporary art was provided, according to Hilberseimer, by DADA. It was it was DADA that was able to liberate the genuine chaotic elements of modern times, through the exploitation of the everyday, banal production of the mass-media industry. As Hilberseimer wrote, quoting Raoul Haussmann:

41 Ibid., 996.
42 Ibid., 997.
Times of decay, of stagnation, are at the same time epochs of new stimulation to becoming. One breaks open the old to enable the new to be formed. We are suspended between two worlds. In these times the productive energy is inclined towards the grotesque and satirical, toward [as Hausmann says] “the laughing or ironic elevation of men over their no-longer-appropriate responsibilities. So, too, the tendency in art—the objectification [Gegenständlichkeit] will lose sense, so to speak, through the presentation of its refusal to correspond with the sense of events. By emphasizing the ridiculous, the senseless, the repulsive ..., through the figuration [Gestaltung] of the deficiencies of the world, we are allowed to anticipate a higher world.”

But Hilberseimer refuses to give a representation of this vital reality in terms of complex or chaotic architectural forms. Rather, the opposite is the case. The liberation of the essential elements of human desire, should parallel a drive towards the liberation of the essential architectural form. In “Schöpfung und Entwicklung” Hiberseimer defined the Kunstwollen as the desiring element of artistic creation. The year after, he defined “The Will to Architecture” as the tendency of all art to become architecture. If in the past the task of art was to create illusion, to copy and to create an idealized past. “Today it is no longer essential to simply paint paintings, sculpt statues, or create aesthetic arrangements. Rather it is crucial to design reality itself.” “Because the objective is to order the world and human relationships, to induce responsible actions, to regulate the most important and essential conditions of life.” Again, it is through architecture that this can be achieved more effectively, and this is why all art genres are connecting to

43 Ludwig Hilberseimer, Schöpfung und Entwicklung, manuscript, cit. in K. Michael Hays, Modernism and the Posthumanist Subject, p. 235.
46 Ibid., 283.
3.12. From the cell to the city, Ludwig Hilberseimer, Residential city (1923).
architecture. At first, it was Expressionism that attempted a translation of images in terms of surface. But according to Hilberseimer Expressionism was still bound to an idea of subjective emotion. It was Cubism that achieved a logical definition of forms in terms of their reduction to their “geometric-cubic” essence. But Cubism remained still too preoccupied with the problem of anthropomorphic figuration. Only the Constructivists were able to posit the problem correctly, abandoning the subjective will of the artist towards an “objective” or “typical” construction of reality.47

The essay is illustrated by three images, which are not referenced in the text. In the title page, a photograph of Dudok’s Bavink School in Hilversum (1921-22). Then, a photograph of Gellhorn and Knaute’s Fosterhof office building in Halle (1921-22) and, in the last page, a perspective of his design for a factory building of 1922. The progression of the images seems to point to the tendency for the liberation of the geometric essence of architecture, which only in the last case is totally achieved. In fact, Hilberseimer’s design, no matter if they are meant to be diagrammatic manifestos (the project for a Highrise City), or concrete proposals (for example, the entry for the Chicago Tribune competition), are completely devoid of visual, or surface effects: their facades are the brutal projection of the structural logic of the interior, and their volumetric articulation is the outcome of the spatial organization of the interior.

The needs of the modern metropolitan and the rise of new architectural programs—it’s residential, commercial buildings and factories—have no models: they have to be invented, and a process of industrial normalization of their production has not yet begun. Hilberseimer points out that this process has to occur through solving two concurrent problems: “the individual cell of the room and the collective urban organism. The solution will be determined

47 Ibid., 284-5.
by the manner in which the room is manifested as an element of
the buildings linked together in one street block, thus becoming a
shaping factor of the city structure, which is the actual objective of
architecture. Inversely, the constructive design of the urban plan
will gain considerable influence on the constructive formation of
the room and the building as such.\textsuperscript{48} The conceptual instrument
binding the totality of the city with the singularity of the cell, the
abstraction of type and the concreteness of metropolitan life is pre-
cisely the Kunstwollen.

But this does not mean that the city should be an object of
total design, and that everything should be designed “from the
spoon to the city.” Rather, for Hilberseimer the role of architecture
is somehow limited. This approach is clear in some of his most
famous projects. His first design addressing the cell and the city at
once is the project for a “Residential City” of 1923. Hilberseimer
addresses the problem of the satellite city for 125,000 inhabitants
as a lab test to formalize certain design problems connected to the
residence. The city is composed by 72 rectangular blocks, arranged
in four neighbourhoods separated by a cross—in the fashion of the
foundation patterns of ancient cities. The north-south axis is occu-
pied by a railway system of public transportation, and at the edges
of each East-West streets public facilities like schools and hospi-
tals are located. North-south axes are the residential axis, while the
East-west axes are occupied by two-stories commercial buildings.\textsuperscript{49}
The slabs are organized through a simple pattern of square-planned
elements, alternatively containing fixed facilities such as staircases,
kitchens and toilets, and elements with no fixed partition, which
could be subdivided according to the needs of each inhabitants.
What can be seen as a total design for an entire city leaves in fact

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 287.
\textsuperscript{49} Christine Mengin, “L’architettura della Grossstadt,” Rassegna, no. 27/3 (Sep-
tember 1986), 37-38.
many problems still open. Hilberseimer leaves unplanned spaces in the general design, and he does not address the problem of the inclusion of public, religious or leisure activities. The design is meant to set up a minimal principle of organization, and the real life of the city will act as a force to complete and modify the plan. The schematism of the design is even more pronounced in Hilberseimer’s proposal for a Highrise City (1924), which he presents in *Grossstadtarchitektur* as a response to Le Corbusier’s plan of a city for 3 million inhabitants. If the Residential city was meant to be a only a part of a greater metropolitan system, the Highrise City is a diagram of the whole productive life of the metropolis. Hilberseimer demonstrates that Le Corbusier’s project—by keeping separate the dwellings and the working spaces—was just a cosmetic re-design in geometric terms of the actually existing city, unable to resolve the contemporary problems of traffic and congestion. Instead, Hilberseimer stacked 15-storeys residential slabs on top of 5-storey tall office buildings. The need of horizontal circulation—which was nevertheless optimized by separating vehicular, pedestrian, and train traffic in a way recalling Henry W. Corbett proposal for New York as a modern Venice—was minimized by the use of vertical circulation. Here Hilberseimer is explicit in declaring that the design is neither an urban plans, nor an “attempt to normalize the city.” The city is too complex to be known or to be organized through architecture alone. What the architect can do is to abstract part of its functioning. “Only abstraction from the specific case is capable of revealing how the disparate elements that constitute the metropolis can be brought into an order of dense relationships.” The abstract plan, then, is nothing but an heuristic

53 Ibid., 131.
54 Ibid., 112.
device to comprehend the city, a diagram of its working, expressed in basic architectural notation. The city itself exceeds the architect’s capacity to describe it—“there is no such thing as the city as such.” But even when Hilberseimer translates in his proposal for the concrete case of the Berlin’s City in 1930, he will define only the minimal typological equipment for its development. The singularity of the site, next to Schinkel’s twin churches and theatre, will give life to the abstractness of the proposal.

The idea of the metropolis as an irreducible singularity is developed in *Grossstadtarchitektur*. The metropolis differs from the traditional city not because of its size, but of its nature, which is the outcome of the development of capitalistic industry. If the city used to be a self-sufficient political and economic entity, the metropolis is a node in a larger economic network even beyond the national economy, an element of the global capitalistic system. An unprecedented concentration of capital, people and scientific knowledge are the conditions for its development. As a result, an “excess of intensity and energy is achieved through extreme concentration and comprehensive organization.” Following the German sociological tradition of Georg Simmel and Max Weber, Hilberseimer points out that the aim of the metropolis is not only that of satisfy only existing needs, but to overstimulate human experience in order to produce new needs. Anonymity and a “collective psychic foundations enable the simultaneous isolation and tightest amalgamation of its inhabitants.” Therefore, all the elements that we have retraced in Hilberseimer’s theoretical writings and designs are a product of the intensification of life in the metropolis. On the one hand, the liberation of the most barbaric and impersonal vital human forces, in the form of a disruptive Kunstwollen. On the

55 Ibid., 131.
57 Ludwig Hilberseimer, *Metropolisarchitecture*, 86.
58 Ibid.
other hand, the tendency towards the abstraction of architectural form into their most essential and typical traits. The intensification of life, therefore, leads to a rarefaction of architecture. Architecture is not the representation of life, it is a tool to enhance it by its power of limitation. They are connected but they are of a different nature: the metropolis cannot be reduced to its architecture, but it is only through architectural form that one can comprehend its way of functioning.\(^{59}\)

At this point, it should be clear how metropolitan architecture and the Kunstwollen are related to the construction of the common. First of all, the destruction of the bonds and the morals that were ruling the small city liberated the possibility for the construction of human coexistence based on the construction of something profoundly different from the idea of community. If the possibility to return to a mythical communitarian origin was lost, as much as the hope that history was going in the right direction towards the better, the Kunstwollen provides an opportunity to organize collective life on a completely different basis. The common is precisely this condition, the construction of a collective existence carved out of chaos, in the immanence of the lived reality. Art, and architecture as its main form, show the tools for the realization of this possibility. In this sense art is always political, since it aims at organizing collective life.\(^{60}\) And finally, the capitalistic exploitation

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\(^{59}\) It is for this reason that critics such as Manfredo Tafuri recognized the specific character of Hilberseimer’s research among his contemporaries, in the sense that his laconic and bitterly lucid designs did not fall in the trap of producing a glittering ideology of the metropolis, yet preserving the possibility for an active engagement with its processes. See Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1976), 104-108, and Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1987), 219-22.

\(^{60}\) As philosopher Elizabeth Grosz has pointed out following Bernard Cache—this process is that of the construction of a territory, through the framing of a particular interval of chaos, in order to increment the probability of things to happen. As Cache has shown, the construction of a frame can be literal, as in case of a wall which distinguishes an inside or an outside, or by the construction of a floor by smoothing a piece of the earth’s surface, or by piercing a wall with a window.
of collective sensation is a form in which the Kunstwollen, intended as the common, pre-individual sense organ, has been put to work, and made object of capitalistic accumulation.

* In other words, the contemporary metropolis is an expression of the contemporary Kunstwollen. But it is only an inadequate expression. The elements that impede its complete expression have to be removed, either progressively, or violently overturned. In this sense, in the 1920s and 30s the Kunstwollen was at the center not only of art criticism, but especially the contested ground of political strategy.

Hilberseimer, together with architecture critic Aldof Behne were among the regular contributors of the magazine Sozialistische Monatshefte, which was the main debate platform for the theses of Revisionismus, a political doctrine inaugurated by Eduard Bernstein and his 1899 text Evolutionary Socialism. While the orthodoxy of the Second International sought the establishment of socialism through the overcoming of capitalism through its violent destruction, revisionist positions preferred a progressive, slow and nonviolent strategy of realization of the socialist elements which were already present, and even fostered by the rise of mature capitalism: the end of aristocratic privileges, the end of a social organization based on closed bonds of race and community, internationalization of the markets and worker’s struggles, the liberation from labour time through mechanization, and the like. While the orthodox strategy put the primacy of political decision in the hands of the party, revisionism saw the party subordinated to the action of unions and bargaining. The reconciliatory horizon of a future

But the act of framing can occur in various ways, through repeated behaviours and the construction of habits, institutions, etc.
socialist society was alien to the rhetoric of the SPD.\textsuperscript{61} Instead the strategy of social democracy is a socialism in its becoming, a will to socialism, that perhaps won’t never find its final, harmonic state. In this situation, the politic of the party would have been one of accelerating the worker’s integration in the capitalistic process, and the party would have been reduced to its bureaucratic, managerial function. The problem of the capitalist metropolis is not that it is too much abstract, too much rational. On the contrary, it is \textit{not enough} abstract, \textit{not enough} rational. The bourgeoisie is unable to manage it, and private property is an inadequate tool to organize it.\textsuperscript{62}

Conversely, Walter Benjamin saw the Kunstwollen not merely as a tendency to be accommodated, but as an active political revolutionary strategy for in the hands of the proletariat.\textsuperscript{63} In the introduction to his classic essay \textit{The Work of Art in the Age of its Mechanical Reproducibility} he implicitly refers that Riegl’s theories are able to “brush aside a number of outmoded concepts, such as creativity and genius, eternal value and mystery,”\textsuperscript{64} which, at the present political conjuncture (Benjamin is writing in 1936), could be useful only for a Fascist understanding of the social function of art. Rather, Benjamin states that the concepts that follow in the essay are “completely useless for the purposes of Fascism. They are, on the other hand, useful for the formulation of revolutionary demands in

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\item \textsuperscript{61} Sergio Bologna, \textit{Nazismo e classe operaia} (Rome: Manifestolibri, 1993).
\item \textsuperscript{63} On the relations between Alois Riegl’s concepts in Walther Benjamin’s writings, see Katherine Arens, “Stadtwollen: Benjamin’s Arcades Project and the Problem of Method,” PMLA 122, no. 1 (January 2007): 43–60 and Giles Peaker, “Works That Have Lasted... Walter Benjamin reading Alois Riegl,” in Richard Woodfield (ed.), \textit{Framing Formalism}, 291-310.
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the politics of art.”65 Benjamin acknowledges that Riegl and Wickhoff were the first to discover that human perceptions are not only determined by nature, but also by historical circumstances. Benjamin calls this different way to perceive “modes of organization of perception.”66 But the Vienna scholars limited themselves to show the way in which the organization of perception affects the formal manifestations in specific historical times, and did not go as far as “to show the social transformations expressed by these changes of perception.”67 To Benjamin, the present transformation of art allows a much clear link between the modes of perception and the modes of social organization. Namely, Benjamin points to the fact that the destruction of the “aura,” of authenticity and originality brought about by the technical reproducibility of images liberates the experience of art from a theological cult of beauty expressed in rituals, and bases it on political practice. This is because whereas in the past the artwork was not necessarily meant for display, since it was the expression of a connection with a divine entity, the modern artwork finds its social function in being displayed. Benjamin points to the difference between portrait photography—which still preserved its function for the remembrance of the dead or the absent ones—to the topographic photography of Atget which around 1900 showed Paris completely devoid of human presence. Paris becomes then a “crime scene,” and photography a tool to present the “standard evidence for historical occurrences, and acquire a hidden political significance.”68

But it is cinema, and not photography, which according to Benjamin better exemplify today’s will to art, to the point that all other arts are influenced by the cinematic technique of montage. This allows Benjamin to avoid a technological determinism, since

65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., 222.
67 Ibid.
68 Ibid., 226.
he points out, in a totally Rieglian fashion, that there are “critical epochs,” the so-called decadent epochs, “in which a certain art form aspires to effects which could be fully obtained only with a changed technical standard.” In other words, it is the technical transformation which fulfills the artistic drive of an epoch, and not the other way around. Besides its technical aspects, montage has the capacity to produce a distance between the artwork, what it represents, and the presence of the beholder. Benjamin takes as example the difference between the stage player and the movie player. Whereas the performance of the former is adjusted to the various audience in front of him, and each performance is a singularity in itself, the latter’s relation with the public is only indirect, since it is mediated by the technical element of the camera. The classical unity of action, place and time are lost. The public cannot identify itself with the actor, and the actor can no longer identify himself with the character. For this reason the distance which is put between the artwork and the beholder, on the other hand, removes the distance between artist and public: the beholder, no longer immediately immersed in the artwork, can assume the role of a critic, of a movie expert. At the same time, since the aura of the actor is dispelled, it becomes a worker like others—a phenomenon more pronounced in Soviet Union rather than in Western Europe, in which the industry promotes the cult of the movie stars as a modern form of aura.

Cinema has also the capacity to remove the distance between art and science, because of its ability to highlight details of everyday life that were previously neglected. To Benjamin, this is a crucial point to demonstrate, since to him it is in this precise link that he can demonstrate the revolutionary nature of film. This has the effect of an unprecedented augmentation of our sensory ca-

69 Ibid., 237.
70 Ibid., 231.
pacities, and the impact of these transformations affect no longer a few beholders, but the masses. Moreover, this effect is achieved no longer through an attentive absorption of the work of art, but through a distracted, collective absorption of the work of art.71 Here, Benjamin translates Riegl’s concept of attentive subject of the 17th-century Dutch bourgeoisie, in the proletarian attitude of mass distraction. Whereas the attentive subject is immersed in an all-optical reality, the distracted subject knows reality through a tactile form of perception based on the construction of habits, of common worlds which can be achieved only through an active mobilization of the collective perceptive faculties of the masses. Against the fascist aesthetization of politics, communist art politicizes aesthetic.72

Recently, it was Antonio Negri, who retrieved the Kunstwollen as a form of political organization in the postfordist metropolis. During his formative years, Negri was exposed in Padua to Riegl’s thought, in particular through the influx of Sergio Bettini. During his period of detention, those references were central in his attempt to define a materialist theory of art, in the light of the transformations of the modes of production that were becoming evident in the late 70s, in a moment in which labour organization started more and more to resemble the organization of artistic practice.73 Negri defined the Kunstwollen as an “overdetermination of labour in art,” which nevertheless is constantly renewed and transformed by its singular instances and applications: “Kunstwollen animates industry and industry breathes in Kunstwollen.”74 The Kunstwollen, is in other words, the moment in which a subjective will and its objective result become indistinguishable. So, the Kunstwollen

71 Ibid., 240.
72 Ibid., 242.
is a form of intentionality, which is nevertheless not subjective but pre-individual. In this way, the concept of the Kunstwollen provided the possibility to give a new definition for the problem of decision and intentionality in political organization after the crisis of the representative institutions of the state. At the end of Commonwealth, Negri and Hardt oppose two manifestations of a political revolutionary process. One is based on the event, such as insurrection and revolt, and another is what they define a permanent “will to institution and constitution.” They define this will to constitution in analogy to Rieglo’s concept of the Kunstwollen: “the Kunstwollen accomplishes both the overcoming of the historical threshold and the organization of the exceeding, overflowing social forces in a coherent and lasting project.” As the Kunstwollen mediates the singularity of the artwork to the collective organization of perceptive habits, the Rechtswollen “articulates the singularities of the multitude, along with its diverse instances of revolt and rebellion, in a powerful and lasting common process.” Against the definition of sovereignty as the locus of decision in Carl Schmitt’s political theory, Negri and Hardt opted for the Kunstwollen as the “decisive choice” in a political organization devoid of a centralized sovereignty. What is a decision? “It is never a man like Hitler who decides. Every decision is literally determined by the capacity to absorb a mass of decisions, a mass of impressions and reactions. It’s a response to the great contradiction with which we are always faced, the question of how we can make the multitude into a singularity.” In this formulation, the Kunstwollen is the multitude’s faculty of decision, the possibility to construct the common and its institutions without a central subject of decision—be it the sovereign, or the party.

Especially after the 1973 Milan Triennale, the term *Tendenza* (the Tendency, with a capital ‘T’) started to be widely employed by architecture critics to refer to the “school” supposedly initiated by Aldo Rossi and his close collaborators. Indeed, the group appeared a compact collective deploying a common agenda. All the architects involved referred at least to a set of canonical historical examples, if not explicitly engaged in formalizing a common architectural language consisting of a repetition of a limited set of simplified forms. Actually, some of the architects involved in the organization of the exhibition explicitly used the term in this sense.1 Whereas this aspect might be present, limiting the analysis to it does not give justice to the complexity of the figure of Rossi. Rather than producing a set of universal rules and languages in order to define an architectural community, this chapter tries to read the work of Aldo Rossi as an attempt to define a method for the analysis and the production of urban singularities. Only through the theory of singularity, Rossi is able to define his approach to typology, i.e. to what is common in the production of artifacts.

From the close reading of some texts by Rossi around the theme of the analogous city, an attempt to retrace his implicit sources is proposed. In a similar way in which Rossi tried to excavate the compositional method of the architects of the Enlightenment, this chapter traces back Rossi’s methods not to reconstruct his personal

1 See, for example, Massimo Scolari, “Avanguardia e nuova architettura,” in Ezio Bonfanti et al. (eds.) *Architettura Razionale* (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1977).
“family album” or to point out to what he really wanted to say, but in order to extract a theory of the project in its full political potentialities.

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Rossi started using the term analogous city some years after the publication of The Architecture of the City and he introduced the concept in two articles of 1969, but he probably started thinking on it in the occasion of his 1963 project for the Teatro Paganini in Parma, where Canaletto’s Capriccio Palladiano is preserved.2 The first is titled “The Architecture of Reason as Architecture of Tendency,” written as an introduction for a catalog of an exhibition on the Enlightenment and 18th-century architecture of the Veneto.3 The second is the introduction to the second Italian edition of The Architecture of the City.4 Rossi starts both articles with a critical stance on history, theorizing the relation between scientific knowledge and power. Rossi believes that architecture should be approached rigorously through a scientific method. Nevertheless, he posits that scientific concepts are never neutral. There can be no science without a direct intervention on reality. And this intervention is based on precise choices that one has to make. Rossi took this conception of science and rationality from the philosopher of science Ludovico Geymonat.5 Geymonat’s work of the postwar period was directed

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5 Rossi does not quote Geymonat here, but in other articles such as “Una critica che respingiamo,” “L’ordine greco,” and “Risposta a sei domande,” all collected
toward a critique of the communist party’s humanistic positions, which were in continuity with the idealistic philosophical tradition of Benedetto Croce, who posited a complete separation of science and humanities, and which caused a backward and suspicious attitude of the party toward new sciences such as psychoanalysis, genetics and cybernetics. A member of the communist party himself, Geymonat’s project was to re-found Marxism as science. But to do so, Geymonat had to go beyond a universalistic and dogmatic vision of science, toward an idea of reason based on the possibility of achieving only partial and conflicting truths, mediated by the determinate historical condition in which they are produced.6

Rossi begins the article on the architecture of the Veneto by rejecting history, or at least, a certain type of history. The point of collecting the works of the 18th-century masters from Veneto is not reconstructing their chronology, ie, reconstructing the chronological succession of events through the exposition of raw archival data. Even less, the point is not to compile these chronologies in order to preserve this architecture. What Rossi is interested about is understanding the compositional principles and the logical construction which these projects have in common. Theory is more important than history. Or, in other words, what he calls the 
tendency
is more important that contemporaneity to show what these projects have in common. Finally, Rossi posits that this tendency is characterized by a mixture of “description and deformation, invention and knowledge” which “characterizes the best experience of modern art, which is here resolved in a common will to style.”7

Rossi does not define these terms. But it is enough to note that Rossi opposes here two sets of words, two semantic fields. Rossi opposes “history, chronology, and contemporaneity” to

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6 See Ludovico Geymonat, Studi per un nuovo razionalismo (Turin: Chiantore, 1945) and Id., Saggi di filosofia neorazionalistica (Turin: Einaudi, 1953).
“theory, tendency, will.” Whereas the first suggests a static understanding of the past, the second suggests a movement, a projection towards the future. Whereas the first relates only to knowledge, the second relates to “knowledge and invention, knowledge and action.” In the preface to the second Italian edition, Rossi develops even further this dialectics of knowledge and power. Knowledge and science are never neutral.

In architecture problems of knowledge have always been connected to matters of tendency and of choice. An architecture that lacks tendency has neither a field nor a manner in which to reveal itself. […] The absence of a tendency illustrates the gratuitous and ad hoc nature of many studies. The relationship between urban analysis and design is thus an issue that can be resolved only within the framework of a tendency, within a certain system, and not through neutrality. […] The construction of the real is an act mediated by architecture in its relationship with things and the city, with ideas and history.8

Rossi does not see choice and tendency opposed to science and knowledge. Choice and tendency are not irrational or simply ideological. Thus, the theory of the analogous city is an attempt through which Rossi tries to rigorously define choice and tendency as scientific concepts.

Rossi takes a painting by Canaletto as an example of analogous city. The painting shows an urban landscape with three buildings: the project for the Rialto Bridge, Palazzo Chiericati and the Basilica of Vicenza. The first one is a project, and it is depicted in the place for which it was designed on the Canal Grande in Venice. The others are objects which were actually built, but elsewhere. The result, even if is not the result of a direct, physical perception (those buildings are simply not there) is completely familiar, and

everybody would recognize Venice depicted there. Rossi calls this result an analogous Venice (*una Venezia analoga*). Rossi carefully states that the result is not unreal. Rather, the astounding result is that this analogous Venice is “real and necessary.” In this procedure, Rossi sees the core of the theory of the 18th-century masters of architecture of the Veneto.

The hypothesis of a theory of the architectural project where the elements are already given, formally defined, but where the meaning that stems at the end of the operation [of composition] is the authentic, unpredictable, original meaning of the research. A rational theory of art, in fact, does not want to limit the meaning of the work to be constructed; for if we know what we wanted to say, we do not know if we have said only that.

The elements of this architecture have to be taken as “pure architectural values.” For example, Rossi compares two buildings in Padova. On the one hand, the Caffè Pedrocchi by Jappelli is a pure collage of different forms deliberately juxtaposed as a formal exercise. A Grecian pavilion is juxtaposed from to a Gothic building which mocks the Palazzo Ducale in Venice. On the contrary, the Palazzo delle Debite by Boito is defined by Rossi as a rhetoric, moralistic and historicist building. The use of historical styles is used here to give dignity to bourgeois architecture.

10 Ibid.
11 Ibid.
12 Ibid., 370.
at history in order to find meanings in it. Conversely, the architecture of reason does choose forms for their meanings, but rather for their intrinsic formal qualities. The final result will eventually acquire meanings in its historical development, in the way in which it will participate in the life of the city.

The architect of reason does not seek meanings, but the monument. Here Rossi for the first time gives a definition. For him, the monument is not, as in the traditional meaning, something that tells you how to behave, that warns you, that gives you models of good behaviour to imitate. The monument is the total mechanism, the autonomous formal device [ordigno] in which all the relations between its different combinations have acquired their own autonomy.

Rossi makes several examples on how, since Palladio, the whole territory of the Veneto was produced in this way.

Whereas in this early texts the materials of the analogue city are “pure formal values,” Rossi will progressively become interested in memory and imagination as the constitutive elements of the analogous process. But this does not mean that Rossi was no longer interested in the “architecture of reason,” and that he resorted to some sort of irrational architecture. On the contrary, the project of the analogous city is to give a rigorous definition of the process in which an architectural project is made, and how the choice of architectural forms occurs.

In his 1976 text accompanying the exhibition of the Analogous City Plate at the Biennale in Venice, Rossi claims that the

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15 Boito, a follower of John Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc, theorised the necessity to develop a national style after the unification of Italian territories.
Analogous city is an attempt to give an answer to the problem of the distinction between reality and imagination.17

Rossi starts the article in a rather puzzling way. A text on imagination and fantastic references is introduced by something very concrete, and very political as well: the issues of the historic centres of Italian cities. Housing was in a very bad condition and congested. On the one hand, those who could afford it were progressively abandoning the historic centres. Progressively commerce started substituting housing, and the rents started to rise. In this situation, the interventions on historic centres followed the approach of “preservation” and “beautification,” with the restoration of the outer image of the centre to a sort of presumed “original” state. The issues of housing were not tackled at all. There were no projects on historic centres, and the procedures of intervention were basically bureaucratic. Their effects promoted the phenomenon of gentrification, which started in Italy precisely in that period. Rossi refers to activist movements, which were the only ones pointing to the necessity to keep housing as the main function of the centres by occupying empty buildings.

Rossi explains that these issues are not unrelated to the problem of imagination. Rather, he says,

There is no invention, complexity or even irrationality that is not seen from the side of reason, or at least, from the side of the dialectics of the concrete. And I believe in the capacity of imagination as a concrete thing.18

This is for Rossi the logic of the analogous city, “the capacity of the imagination born from the concrete.”19

18 Ibid., 5-6.
19 Ibid., 6. Manfredo Tafuri, on the other hand, saw Rossi’s architecture as a radical escape from reality: “Alla poetica dell’ambiguità, di un Johansen, di un Charles
In this dialectic of the imagination and the concrete that the city stems. Beauty is basically born out of contradictions, and not in the attempt to give a uniform image to the city as the councils for monument do.

Rossi provides only a very short description of the panel. The panel contains very specific references to a well-individuated geographical space and a historical time. The Alpine landscape of Lombardy during counter-reformation. But at the same time Rossi warns that there can be no explanation for the panel. The panel is an autonomous object, which has a life on its own. What Rossi is interested to point out is the process of this creation which stands in-between reality and imagination, between a past which is no longer historicised and a future which is not completely designed and determined. In this way, he goes as far as saying that the analogous city is a process which deals more with the construction of time, rather than the construction of space, and that this time has its own reality which cannot be separated from the reality of the city.20

Rossi rejects three ways of projecting: the one is the utopian one, like projecting the future without any relation with the concrete situations of the present. The other is the bureaucratic resolution of a problem through the imposition of a series of rules which supposedly will manage the concrete situation. And finally, he rejects the possibility of a historicist approach which finds in history a source of moral values and virtues to be imitated. In other words, Rossi rejects approaches which dwell exclusively in Moore, di un Venturi, Rossi risponde con l’affrancamento del discorso architettonico da ogni fuoriuscita verso il reale, da ogni irruzione del caso o dell’empiria nel sistema tutto strutturato dei segni.” On the contrary, Rossi’s abstraction, in Marxian terms, is always concrete and determined, and his virtual architecture is a mode of reality. On Tafuri’s interpretation of Rossi’s analogous city, see Manfredo Tafuri, “Ceci n’est pas un ville,” Lotus International, no.13 (December 1976), 10-13.
20 Ibid., 7.
the future (Utopian), in the present (bureaucratic) and in the past (historicist). The analogous city stands against these three detrimental forms of projecting. The technique of montage, and the collective faculty of memory are the conditions on which it is based.

The technique of the manipulation of time through the use of a montage of parts is a peculiarity of the cinema of the Italian neorealism. Neorealism is the emergence of a completely new conception of cinema, which goes beyond the apparent sociological description of a specific historical moment or the melodramatic content of its films. Of course, the Italian Communist Party tried to impose a “political direction” of literature and cinema, through a celebratory depiction of subaltern classes and the war of Resistance. Writers such as Italo Calvino resisted the attempt “to create the ‘positive hero,’ to give pedagogical and normative images of social conduct, of revolutionary militancy.” In fact, neorealism resisted becoming a “school,” and it was rather a cultural climate that arose in the postwar atmosphere. According to Calvino, after the war everybody had a story to tell, and personal stories merged together in a diffused, collective, anonymous narration. Instead of the construction of the morality of the revolutionary subject as imposed by party functionaries, neorealist authors attempted to express the potentialities opened by the traumatic loss of subjectivity caused by the war. A subjective narration was substituted with a detached, impersonal narration: child’s viewpoints and the use of free indirect discourse were privileged. In this way, the content was never detached from the formal devices through which it was

21 For a contextualisation of the planning debate in Italy in the 50s and 60s, see Mary Lou Lobsinger, “The New Urban Scale in Italy: Aldo Rossi’s L’architettura della città,” Journal of Architectural Education, vol. 59, no. 3 (2006), 28-38.
presented. As Calvino noted, “there were never such obsessive formalists as ourselves.”22 Similar remarks can be applied to neorealist directors as well. Rossellini, de Sica, Antonioni or Lattuada were not interested in a simple representation of a merely empirical reality. Rather, reality does not come before, but it is the unexpected outcome of a formal manipulation of series of visual and mental states. In this sense, the innovations introduced by neorealism can be considered a turning point in the history of cinema. Neorealist montage is something altogether different to the techniques the ‘old’ or ‘classic’ realism, either in their American or Soviet variants. Whereas in the so-called organic montage of the American school shots were composed to bind the single parts into a unitary development of the action, Soviet dialectical montage proceeded through oppositions and disjunctions of actions, images, and symbolic contents.23 Nevertheless, these two schools have in common the fact that montage manipulated the relations between bodies in terms of perceptions, affections and actions. The specific time produced through montage is therefore subordinated to these material, cause-effect relations between bodies, lights and movements contained throughout shots. Conversely, Neorealist cinema severed either the organic or dialectic links between bodies.24 As André Bazin pointed out in his classic What is Cinema?, neorealist montage, like the modern American novel,25 “distributes the

25  Bazin claims that “the aesthetic of the Italian cinema … is simply the equivalent on film of the American novel.” André Bazin, “An Aesthetic of Reality: Neorealism (Cinematic Realism and the Italian School of the Liberation), in What is Cinema?, Vol. II (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005), 39. Authors such as John Dos Passos and William Faulkner were known in Italy
fragmented realities across the aesthetic spectrum of the narrative, which polarizes the filings of the facts without changing their chemical composition.”26 In his analysis of Rossellini’s *Paisà*, Bazin points out the fragmentary character through which the narration is carried out. Not only the structure of the film resembles a collection of short stories, but even the montage is made of a series of fragments, which are separated by deep spatio-temporal gaps. The individual actions of the characters, their perceptions and imagination and the unfolding of historical events, do not show logical connections between each other, and the definition of these links is not the director’s concern. Bazin calls these autonomous elements of composition fact-images: “facts are facts, our imagination makes use of them, but they do not exist inherently for this purpose.”27 Facts exist before us, independently from any meaning we attach to them, and from any relation to other facts. “For Rossellini, facts take on a meaning, but not like a tool the whose function has predetermined its form.”28 The camera itself is detached from the affections of the characters, and limits movements and framing to the impartial report of facts. It is the viewer that is left to connect the fact selected by the camera, in order to interpret the new reality which emerges in the composition.

It is clear that Rossi’s constant appeal to the cinematic imagination of neorealism is not related to his sympathies to the socialist-realist imaginary.29 In some autobiographical notes, Rossi wrote that his formation as intellectual started through cinema, and through the translations of Cesare Pavese and Elio Vittorini, whose novels greatly contributed to the definition of the poetics of neorealism.

26 Ibid., 31.
27 Ibid., 35.
28 Ibid., 36.
29 See, for example Angelika Schnell, “The Socialist Perspective of the XV Triennale di Milano: Hans Schmidt’s influence on Aldo Rossi” Candide 2 (July 2010).
he became interested in architecture only later. Rossi’s allegiance with neorealist writers and directors should not be seen in terms of content representation, or in relation to the so-called neorealist postwar architecture of the two Ina-casa seven-year plans. Rather, Rossi tried to elaborate specific formal devices which were close to those of the neorealist literature and cinema.

Rossi tried in first person to experiment with the language of cinema with his 1973 movie for the Triennale of Milan, *Ornamento e delitto* (Ornament and Crime), co-authored with Gianni Braghieri and Franco Raggi, with the technical assistance of director Luigi Durissi. The film is a found footage movie, utilizing scenes from other films and architecture documentaries. The found footage genre particularly intensifies the autonomy of the shot and the fragmentary nature of neorealist montage, bringing them to their utmost logical consequences. There is no longer need to take original footage. Images are already present, they have only to be selected according to their “pure formal values,” severed from their original cinematic duration, and recomposed to produce new meanings. The most famous examples of found footage films from the period were the four films by Guy Debord produced between 1961 and 1978. In the Italian context, the most famous example

32 Actually, Rossi approached cinema through his interest in realism, rather than neorealism. Realism was a tendency through which militant directors, especially those affiliated with the Italian Communist Party, tried to inject neorealist temporality with a more explicit political and historical content, to actively engage in the present. Luchino Visconti’s *Senso* (1954) has been considered the first film of this current. See Mary Lou Lobsinger, “That Obscure Object of Desire: Autobiography and Repetition in the Work of Aldo Rossi,” Grey Room 08 (Summer 2002), 49.
of found footage film is Gianfranco Baruchello e Alberto Grifi’s *La Verifica Incerta (Disperse Exclamatory Phase)* (1965). The two artists bought 150 kilometres of waste film from American production companies back to life. With only 15,000 lire, they were able to produce a film featuring stars like Charlton Heston, Gregory Peck and Rock Hudson, and artists like Marcel Duchamp.33

Rossi’s *Ornamento e delitto* features scenes from Federico Fellini’s *8½* (1963) and *Roma* (1972), Mauro Bolognini’s *Senilità* (1962) and Luchino Visconti’s *Senso* (1945), as well as scenes from architecture documentaries.34 The choice of these films is particularly interesting. First, though in different ways, these films exemplify very well the techniques of montage of neorealist cinema. For instance, in these films all the characters have in common their inability to act. This is clear especially in *Senso*, countess Livia (Alida Valli) is consumed by the love towards an Austrian officer who takes advantage of her. Unable to control her feelings, she will betray the cause of national liberation that she was supporting. Nevertheless, the war of liberation will be won by the Italians, but no personal agency, no personal action or participation contributed to that victory. In *8½* Marcello Mastroianni interprets the role of a film director in his mid-life crisis, unable and unwilling to produce a new film. *Senilità* is a film adaptation of Italo Svevo’s novel of the same name, and his protagonist is the epitome of the inept character of all of Svevo’s novels. The protagonist is a man who starts a relationship with a young woman with the unlikely idea of being in control of its developments. And finally, *Roma* does not have any plot whatsoever, being a series of episodes taken from Fellini’s

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memories of his early years in Rome, first as a young journalist, and then as a director.

Secondly, the space of the city is central in all those films. But it is no longer the space of dialectical confrontation of the Soviet cinema, or the organic space of fluxes of the American school, neither the anthropomorphic space of German expressionism. It is a space which no longer supports movement. Hence, the metaphysical spaces of the Roman periphery in 8½, or spaces that are known through images as in the slide projection scene at the beginning of Roma, which are memories of memories, images of images, or the black, reflective floors of a metaphysical Trieste in Senilità, or the elevated point of views of Senso, which makes the characters float in a smooth space. But at the same time these space are still well individualised and recognisable, as in the appearance of Palladio’s Villa Capra in Senso. This spaces are fully individuated, singular spaces. Yet, through montage they lose their territorial connections, they are pure memories, or they are used for their pure formal values. In other words, these movies produce an image of the city which goes beyond its superficial appearance. The image of the city is also a mental image, the stratification of the past in the form of history, collective and personal memories. Trieste, Venice and Rome are not only passive backgrounds or a theatrical set in which the character move: the city itself is actively produced by the the characters’ mental life. But the operation of cutting and re-using sequences for these movies, and superimposing texts from Adolf Loos, Walter Benjamin, Karl Marx e Hans Schmidt, is able to construct an even more complex geology of signs open to be interpreted.

It must now be clear what cinema and architecture have in common, or what is their condition of existence. Both exist in virtue of repetition. Each act of repetition is never the same: repetition is an act of creation. Through repetition we are able to actualize something inactual, to make it possible once again. And in this
process, every repetition is a singular event, which is charged with its own uniqueness. Architecture and cinema are therefore able to create a zone of “indecidability, of indifference between a uniqueness and a repetition,”35 or the construction of a “uniqueness without aura.”36

It is clear then in which measure Rossi criticizes the functionalism of some currents of the Modern Movement. Instead of seeking for a repetition in terms of prototypes, of the technical reproducibility of the same, and of general, universal rules, valid in any place and any time. Rossi seeks rather for the repeatability of the unique. This is the meaning of his concept of urban artefact (fatto urbano): the more an artefact is defined in its singularity, the more it has the capacity to lose its territorial and contextual feature, and to be repeated again and again. With the terms of Scholastic philosophy, we could say that Rossi does not seek for a generic space, but rather as a space whatever, a space of tendencies, a “pure locus of the possible,” a “richness in potentials or singularities.”37

37 “Any-space-whatever is not an abstract universal, in all times, in all places. It is a perfectly singular space, which has merely lost its homogeneity, that is, the principle of its metric relations or the connection of its own parts, so that the linkages can be made in an infinite number of ways. It is a space of virtual conjunction, grasped as pure locus of the possible. What in fact manifests the instability, the heterogeneity, the absence of link of such a space, is a richness in potentials or singularities which are, as it were, prior conditions of all actualization, all determination.” Gilles Deleuze, Cinema 1, 112-113. On the concept of whatever being, see Giorgio Agamben, The Coming Community, translated by Michael Hardt (Minneapolis and London: Minnesota University Press, 1993).
For Rossi, collective memory is the faculty which make possible this process of repetition, the translation of urban artefacts into spaces of tendencies, and back into urban artefacts again.

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Architecture and memory have been always connected.\(^\text{38}\) But actually Rossi is able to give and altogether new definition to the problem and the procedures of the use of memory in architecture.

The ancients knew that in order to access memories one has to include them in a spatial structure, for examples, in the rooms of a buildings. Therefore, one is able to access these memory as if one remembers spaces through movement, through the body. One then is able to literally walks through memories, in the same way one walks through a building or the city itself. The theme was developed already by Aristotle and developed by Cicero in his *Rhetorica ad Herennium*. Cicero distinguishes between natural and artificial memory. The latter can be enhanced by referring it to places, which have to be selected carefully, in order to present a certain variety as well as regularity and readability.\(^\text{39}\)

This is a trick through which one form of memory is linked to another one for its fixation. Henri Bergson distinguished between a memory of the body, and the memory through recollection.\(^\text{40}\) The memory of the body is a habit, a memory which is acquired through the repetition of determinate movements: through repetition, those movements become almost natural for us and we can master them. For example, when one has to learn swimming, or when repeating

\(^{38}\) For an overview on the relation between the art of memory and architecture see Sébastien Marot, *Suburbanism and the art of Memory* (London: Architectural Association, 2003).

\(^{39}\) Ibid., 10.

a presentation. In English this phenomenon is called ‘learning by heart’, which underlines the fact that things are learned through the body. The same happens when walking every day in the same streets in the usual house-work route. The body learns how to move and to remember places through the repeated exposition to the same sensory stimuli. This memory is performative, and it is related to a specific duration in time to become imprinted in my body. The other form of memory—the spontaneous or instant memory—is, on the contrary, unrelated to a specific duration. For example, the memory I have of each of the successive repetitions of my lecture is “like a specific event in my life; its essence is to bear a date, and consequently, to be unable to occur again.”

Whereas the habit is linked to the whole series of repetitions, the memory of each repetition—what Bergson calls the memory-image—is autonomous and complete in itself. Whereas the habit implies a presence, the memory of each instance is representation. Whereas the first repeats, the latter imagines. While the first is projected towards future actions, the former dwells in the past.

The point of the art of memories of the ancients was to bridge these two kinds of memory, in order to make instant memories of the past available for their use in present life, by attaching memory-images to a spatial or sensory-motor structure.

But this can happen also the other way around. A building can be shaped in order to contain the image of the universe, to be shaped as the analogical double of the universe. This is the case of famous buildings such as temple of Solomon in Jerusalem, which had rooms arranged and connected in the same way of how all the parts of the universe were connected between each other. So by simply walking in the temple one could learn about the structure and the composition of the whole world. Another example of these

41 Ibid., 80.
42 Ibid., 82.
kind of buildings were the theatres of memory of the Renaissance, such as the one designed by Giulio Camillo Delminio.43

Buildings can be also shaped in order to trigger collective habits. I would call these collective habits institutions. For example, Boullée’s architecture is all about the construction of a framework for public events, festivities, in order to construct the perfect public citizen through the repetition of institutionalized public rituals. In this sense the Métropole is a church, but one that hosts metropolitan, secular rituals. The Stadium is the total panoptic device in which architecture becomes a mere framework: the spectacular monumental effect is no longer produced by the building but by the masses themselves. This spectacle and collective festivals might not only have a cheerful tone: the palace of Justice is where collective rituals of punishment are performed, and the spectacle is produced by the masses imprisoned in the building’s podium.44

In modern times, it emerged the idea that the city itself was the analogical image of the human mind. Whereas in a famous passage of Civilization and its Discontents (1930) Freud attempted the definition of the parallel between the city and the subconscious, French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, a student of Bergson, located memories outside the individual subject. The city itself, and not the brain is the framework for a memory which is not individual, but collective.45 Halbwachs, a central reference for L’architettura della città, saw the city as a product of memories, not as its repository. As a framework, which allows social groups and individuals to

reconstruct systems coexistence and production of meanings. In his late work *The Collective Memory* (1950), Halbwachs acknowledged that social groups and individuals institute links between memories and specific spaces of the city, but this should be seen as a practice that individuals perform, and should not be confused to the productive nature of memory.

The attempt of spatialising time, of the translation in spatial terms of memories, have induced a mistake: thinking that memories can be contained in something else, be it the brain, or the city, in the way a hard disk contains files. This misunderstanding is carried on also by Siegfried Giedion: whereas Giedion had the merit to point out that the understanding of space could not be separated to a temporal dimension, in his view time is not an autonomous, nor real dimension, but just the measure of a moving subject which can therefore experience space in a different way than the one implied in the static point of view of Renaissance perspective. Giedion’s idea of space-time was expanded by Bruno Zevi, but the Roman historian ultimately resorted to considering his otherwise promising concept of “temporalisation of space” as a mere stylistic trait, moralistically considering it as a necessary condition for the language of an allegedly progressive architecture.

Henri Bergson had always fought these attempts to spatialise time. Bergson spent great part of his 1896 book *Matter and Memory* in demonstrating that memory cannot be contained in something physical like the brain, providing an impressive amount of evidence from the most advanced neurological studies of his time.

According to Bergson, memory and time cannot be expressed in terms of space and bodies, and vice-versa. Time and space, according to Bergson, present two completely distinct natures.

Already in his 1889 *Time And Free Will (Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience)* Bergson distinguished between extensity and intensity, space and duration.

Space is measurable, it has quantity. That is to say, is divisible into smaller units that are taken as a reference. Matter and bodies are extended objects, which occupy space. Conversely, psychic states and consciousness do not have extension. They cannot be measured, since they cannot be subdivided in smaller units without losing their own nature. These intensive states do not occupy space, but a certain duration. They cannot be expressed in terms of quantity, but they express specific qualities. Bergson then addresses our common misunderstanding: why do we normally perceive time as a homogeneous quantity, divided in minutes and seconds, as it is measured by the timepiece? Since our memory records several states (for example, every oscillation of a pendulum) we are able to dispose them into a series. In this way, we create a “fourth dimension of space, which we call homogeneous time.”

There is a real space, without duration, in which phenomena appear and disappear simultaneously with our states of consciousness. There is a real duration, the heterogeneous moments which permeate one another; each moment, however, can be brought in relation with a state of the external world which is contemporaneous with it, and can be separated from the other moments in consequence of this very process. The comparison of these two realities gives rise to a symbolical representation of duration, derived from space.50

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The same applies to our attempts to spatialise movement, which led to the famous paradox of Zeno. If we think of movement as a passage between subsequent positions in space, which can be divided an infinite number of times, we will get to a conclusion that Achilles will never be able to pass the tortoise. But Bergson points out that real movement is an intensive magnitude, which cannot be reduced to subsequent positions in space.\(^{51}\)

Whereas in *Time and Free Will* Bergson restituted time and movement to their full reality, in *Matter and Memory* he will be able to do a similar operation with memory. In order to go beyond the fallacy that gives a spatial form to memory, considering it in the form of a deposit, Bergson has to make a distinction between bodily perceptions, affections and actions and mental states, which are characterized by the operations of memory. Bergson has to start with a mental experiment, imagining two worlds in which matter and memory do not work together as in reality.\(^{52}\) The first is a situation of pure matter and movement, in which everything is present and not represented. In this extreme situation, our body is exposed to the world in the form of images. Bergson defines an image not as a representation, but as matter itself. In this purely optical universe we are able to isolate a specific image, which we call our body. Our body is exposed to the images of the world, but it is not affected by all of them. In other words, our body is affected only by some of them which it selects, and which in turn reacts upon. Bergson calls the images that our body is able to select *perceptions*, and the images which our body is capable to react upon, *actions*. Since not all the images that we perceive are being reacted upon, some of them are absorbed by our body. Bergson calls these latter images *affections*. In this way, Bergson is able to counter a mechanist interpretation of cause and effect. Between a perception and an action,

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\(^{51}\) Ibid., 113-115.  
\(^{52}\) Henri Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, 17.
there is an interval: the body becomes a centre of indetermination, the locus of choice.

After presenting a world of pure presence, Bergson sketches the opposite situation: a world of pure past, of pure memory. Pure past exists at once after, at the same time and before the present. After, since the past is made of presents which are no longer present. At the same time, since the past in its entirety is independent from the present moment. And before, because we can make the past present by substituting it to a perception, in order to perform actions. In this way, Bergson has to posit the past as pure memory, as another mode of the real. Bergson calls the past mode virtuality, and the present mode actuality. In this way Bergson is able to give a completely new formulation of an old metaphysical problem, that of potentiality and actuality, by giving a full reality to both of these modes. Our memory is the capacity through which we are able to pass from one mode to the other, to actualise the pure domain of potentialities of the past for its present use. This process of actualization, which Bergson calls “creation,” entails the production of memory-images, which are fragments of the past becoming present.

Bergson’s theory of memory is then a key for a rigorous definition of the analogous city. It seems that for Rossi past present and future coexist, and they are not mutually exclusive domains. Rather, they present different natures, and the emergence of one does not delete the others. The project for Rossi is a practice that has always to relate to the presence of an actual condition. The architect does not try to solve this actual problems through the determination of universal rules that are always valid, but through the active selection of past architectural images. These examples

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are selected through memory, which finds analogous situations in the past, in a sort of virtual architectural archive. This past coexists with the present, but in the form of tendencies, something that is not defined through what it used to be, but it might become. The analogous city is the active process which links the virtual with the actual. It is a map of tendencies in their becoming actual, in acquiring a duration, in the zone of indetermination between the no longer and the not yet.

* Rossi had never directly referred to Henri Bergson in his writings. Nevertheless, Rossi’s *L’architettura della città* is permeated by Bergsonian though. Not only Rossi employed Maurice Halbwachs’ concept of collective memory, but his historicist model in the study of the city was based on the work of the authors of the French school of geography, such as Marcel Poète, Pierre Lavedan and Max Sorre, who, in different ways, were all influenced by the philosophy of Henri Bergson in developing their theories of the city.  

57 Rossi referred, on the other hand, to the theory of analogy presented by Karl Gustav Jung in a letter to Freud, where he present “logical” thought as expressible in words, whereas “analogical” thought is unexpressible in words and based on the imagination. See Aldo Rossi, “An Analogical Architecture,” Architecture and Urbanism, no. 56 (March 1976), 74-76, but originally published in a monographic issue of 2C as Aldo Rossi, “La arquitectura analoga,” 2C Construcción de la ciudad, no. 2 (1975). But Rossi started to think about the Jungian theory of analogy and archetypes after some inputs by Vittorio Savi, who published the first monograph on Rossi. See Vittorio Savi, *L’architettura di Aldo Rossi*. Savi distinguished two “periods” in the career of Rossi: a first, “logical”, rationalist period, marked by the linguistic structuralism of *L’architettura della città* followed by a second “analogical” moment. We don’t think that these two moment can be separated, and the *Architecture of the City* is already permeated by analogical thought. Rossi himself, in the subsequent editions of *The Architecture of the City* will make this clear. See Aldo Rossi, “Introduction to the First American Edition,” in *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1982).
Marcel Poète, the initiator of the school of urban studies in Paris in 1919 (Ecole des Hautes Études Urbain, EHEU), explicitly stated his allegiance with Bergson in a 1935 article titled “Les idées bergsoniennes et l’urbanisme” and in a series of articles for the EHEU magazine titled “Paris: son evolution créatrice,” but Bergsonian ideas were at the source of the definition of the curriculum of the school since its foundation. Poète's reception of Bergsonian philosophy was motivated by a general dissatisfaction towards the deterministic and mechanicistic approach through which the city was approached at that time. Poète's foundation of the new science of urbanism would have followed a different path which was not based on reductionism, but on the general project, introduced by Bergson, of intuitive knowledge. Whereas Bergsonian philosophy was vulgarized as “irrationalist,” or “vitalist,” and it gave rise fascist interpretations (to which Poète contributed), the project of Bergson was to make intuition a true science, and it was on this methodological basis that Poète founded the new urban studies.

The “fundamental meaning” of this method can be stated in the following terms: “state problems and solve them in terms of time rather than of space.” For this reason Poète method implied the study of the city through a range of qualitatively different disciplines such as geography, economy, architecture, and natural sciences and various archival sources, constituted by literature, maps,
feuillettons, images, urban mythologies. Poète was in fact trained as a historian and archivist, and it was through the collection of a vast archival research through which he developed an idea of the process of evolution of urban space as a process of actualization of an ever-present but constantly evolving past. Rossi found in this approach a fundamental tool for the method of urban analysis and for the elaboration of his concept of type, especially in Poète’s theory of persistence, revised and extended by Pierre Lavedan in his theory of the “primary elements”: in the comparison of historical maps of a city, one can find elements which development is somewhat slower, which could be seen as permanent features structuring urban evolution such as monuments, streets, plans and regulations, and the structure of land property. But Rossi stressing not much the elements of continuity that Poète found in urban evolution, but rather the elements of discontinuous development, of conflict, of what he called the “pathological” effect of urban artifacts on the development of certain areas.

In particular, Rossi found in the French school’s reception of Bergson’s method outlined in his 1907 *Creative Evolution* a key to understand the emergence of urban singularity beyond a “simple functionalism”—the adaptation of forms to purposes—and beyond an essentialist, static idea of a complete autonomy of forms. In *Creative Evolution*, Bergson departed from the two main traditional theories of evolution, around which the scientific debate was still bound: on the one hand, the mechanistic approach, which posited that evolution was a necessary effect of a series of external causes, 

62 As an example of such a research see the fourth volume of Poète’s monumental opus on the history of Paris, in which he collected 600 images from local newspapers. Marcel Poète, *Une vie de cité. Paris de sa naissance à nos jours* (Paris: Picard, 1924-31).


64 Aldo Rossi, ibid., 34-7.
and the finalist theory, which assumed that the development of forms was immanent to the nature of each individual. Bergson saw that in fact the two theories were substantially the same, since they either presupposed or had as a consequence a deterministic direction in the course of evolution. Employing his previous researches on affection and memory, Bergson countered the two theories advancing his theory of life as the locus of indeterminacy between a cause and effect, and as the creative process entailed in the living beings memory. In a similar way, Pierre Lavedan’s introduction to *Géographie des villes* (1936) countered two finalist theories in the evolution of the city: “either this evolution is inevitable, driven by factors that are external to men, and on which man has no control. Or, that man has in his hand the entire destiny of the city.”

The genesis of the individuality of an urban artifacts is therefore seen neither as a product of impersonal forces, nor as the product of human will, but rather as a creative process, which is the same that is at the core of the production of an artwork. This does not mean, like Sitte wanted, that the city is an artwork exclusively in its formal character, for its stylistic traits. Rather, Rossi interprets an artwork like a specific method through which men organize reality and make sense of it, through a living aesthetic experience. Rossi takes this conception of artistic practice from French art historian Henri Focillon’s *The Life of Forms in Art* (1934). Focillon, deeply influenced by Bergson, defined the artwork as a perfectly individual entity with its own laws and languages, which nevertheless stemmed from a complex system of spatial and temporal relations, an “artistic landscape” capable not only to shape and transform space, but also its past according to present needs.

68 Ibid., 29.
69 Ibid., 57.
But Rossi’s primary reference for the development of his concept of tendency was Marxist thought, which allowed him not only to elaborate a method for urban morphological analysis, but to elaborate a theory of the architectural project. The concept of tendency is one of the most important methodological premises of Marx’s critique of political economy. Through expressing economic laws in terms of tendencies, Marx not only was able to describe the economic reality of capital, but to lay out a whole new type of science, a philosophy of history, and a philosophy of praxis. When Marx described the most intimate mechanisms of capitalistic relations, he referred to something that was completely marginal at the time in which we have speaking. Even in England and in the United States industry and finance were still marginal sectors in an economy which was still dominated by agriculture. But Marx used these very marginal points of extreme development to explain the mechanisms of capital in general, and to predict the development of lesser developed examples.\(^70\) In order to understand how history works, one has to read its most advanced parts, to understand where it is going: “human anatomy contains a key to the anatomy of the ape.”\(^71\) Like Bergson’s method, Marx’s science does not imply a deterministic conception of evolution and history. But whereas Bergson’s project stems from intuition, Marx’s method is based on organizational practice. The tendency is by no means a universal law, but it is always the expression of a very partial point of view, that of the working class. In other words, the tendency is an abstract construction, but it stems from concrete reality, and its validity has to be proven in reality itself. For this reason, the scientific “proof” of the validity of the tendency is revolutionary practice, the question of the organization of reality, in other words, with


the production of the common. The revolutionary par excellence, Lenin, was able to actualize the revolutionary proletarian tendencies which were completely marginal in a country that was almost completely still based on a feudal social organization. By isolating and abstracting certain advanced line of tendency he was able to produce forms of organization which were able to draw the whole country into a revolutionary course. In general we can define the revolutionary as the subject that does not define things for what they are, but for what they are becoming. The revolutionary is at home in the virtual space of tendencies, and she is able to produce organization in this very space.

Through the definition of architecture of tendency, Rossi was able to define his own revolutionary project for architecture. Like Tafuri, Rossi was aware that actually no revolutionary city, no revolutionary architecture is possible (like no revolutionary political economy, or law, etc.) since the construction of the city always implies dealing with constituted power and established class relations, and that the revolutionary project for architectural could have only be realized through a “historical project”, through a historical materialist practice. In fact Rossi, following Friedrich Engels’ critique of bourgeois reformers, excluded the possibility that spatial practices could affect the capitalistic organization of cities. Rossi deals with the problem in the last chapter of L’architettura della città: first of all, dismissing the importance of scale for the political organization of the city. The emergence of the metropolis is not related to the rise of heavy industry. Nor, the problems of the big city are different that those of the small city or the countryside. The big city makes those problems only more visible by increasing

their magnitude. The nature of those problems is rather related to the capitalistic organization of the city, and not to its size. Similarly, the issue of housing shortage cannot be addressed spatially, but only politically.\textsuperscript{74} Again, Rossi seems to point out that the city as a political entity should be approached not through space—which is made by quantities—but through its temporal dimension.

But bot Rossi and Tafuri, in different ways, attacked an “operative” use of ready-made historical narratives for a present political use, a view which saw history as a collection of values and static forms.\textsuperscript{75} Yet, whereas Tafuri and many other communist architects opted at a critical project based on writing, Rossi approached the problem through the redefinition of the project of architecture. Instead of simply becoming an “organic” intellectual of the party, or resorting to a simple socialist-realist architecture, Rossi was able to define his architecture against the universalistic approaches of utopianism, historicism and technocratic design, but on the antagonistic possibility of the construction of the singularities. Rossi does not seek generality in the production of universal rules for architecture, valid in any place and any time, neither in the construction of prototypes for the mechanic reproduction of the same forms. Rather, for Rossi the more an object is singular, the more it is individuated in its formal and historical characters, the more it has the capacity to become common, able to be repeated engendering new and unforeseen urban qualities. The maximum of singularity allows the maximum of potentialities. We could say that Rossi does not seek a generic space, but what we could call as a space whatever. A space whatever is not a space of indifference, or a space in which any-

\textsuperscript{74} Aldo Rossi, \textit{The Architecture of the City}, 155.
\textsuperscript{75} Cf. Manfredo Tafuri, \textit{Teorie e Storia dell’Architettura}, (Bari: Laterza, 1968), 165-198. In the same years, mythologist Furio Jesi was operating a comparable critique to the political “technicization” of mythological materials, an approach that was not only adopted by reactionary thought, but also by the institutional Italian Left. See, Enrico Manera, \textit{Furio Jesi. Mito, violenza, memoria} (Rome: Carocci, 2012).
thing goes. On the contrary, it is a well-individuated space, which has lost its territorial connections and becomes a space of possibilities, the pure *locus* of the possible. Only through the definition of singularity, then, it is possible to define the common.
Chapter 5
A Grammar of Common Space
Architectural Language in Peter Eisenman’s Work 1963-1984

The problem of architectural language, if well formulated, can be central to the definition of the common in architecture, and its relations to power structures and modes of production. Language is at the same time a historico-natural institution, an inherently human capacity. Yet, at the same time, different languages distinguishes not only nations, but also social classes and communities. In short, language have a contractual, conventional, public aspect, but also a common side which precedes its public dimension.¹

But is architecture a language? Of course, architects use language. Architecture is not only made of buildings and projects, but also as written text which sometimes are used as explanation of buildings and projects, but other time they are projects in themselves, and the architectural text acquires a certain autonomy. Architectural treatises since the Renaissance, the modern architect’s polemic manifesto, the “collected work” book, architectural theory essays are true literary genres, which can be approached through the tools of literary criticism. At the same time, architects use a specific language in architectural drawings. More precisely, architectural drawing is a code, a system of conventions which presents a high degree of standardization, in which each sign has a specific meaning, corresponding to a specific building element or structure.

This standardization is a necessity not only to allow the possibility to transmit and communicate a project with the least amount of ambiguities, but also, in the case of executive drawings, to ensure the least degree of uncertainties in the construction of a building.

But is architecture, properly speaking a language? Are its elements and structures like letters and words that we compose in on a white page to convey certain meanings? Is a project of architecture a piece of writing? Are there specific rules, is there a grammar for the composition of those elements and structures?

In the Sixties and Seventies, lots of contributions tried to address these issues from several points of view. Today, such a debate has been superseded and the “linguistic turn” of the Seventies has been replaced by what we could call an “affective turn,” with an emphasis of the nonrepresentative nature of architecture and its immediate data on the body: “architecture does not speak and drawing is not writing.” It is not our intention to re-open the old debate. Yet, in order to explore the common in architectural knowledge, and to understand the role of the common in the transformations of the modes of production of the 70s, a parallel between architecture and language seems useful. But we do not want to institute such a parallel neither through semiotics, nor through seeing architecture as writing. Rather, such a parallel can only be instituted looking at the nonlinguistic elements that architecture and language share, through their pragmatics and their politics. What is productive, and what is political in (architectural) language?

A similar methodological insight was developed by Manfredo Tafuri’s in his article “L’Architecture dans le Boudoir: The Lan-

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guage of Criticism and the Criticism of Language” first published on *Oppositions*, and then integrated in the last part of Tafuri’s *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*. The problem for Tafuri was not to define the status of architecture as language, which he deemed utopian after the failure of Wittgenstein’s project to establish a system capable to translate every aspect of the world in logical statements. Rather, for Tafuri, Architecture is a language only in a metaphorical sense: but this metaphor allowed him to shift his inquiry from the form of the commentary to the project of criticism. Whereas commentary is the attempt to find the origin of the meanings of the signs employed in a text, criticism swerves from that impossible task by making the “mortal silence of the sign” act, to “liberate all that which is beyond language” in language itself. In other words, “to grasp the structural relations between the specific forms of recent architectural writing and the universe of production of which they are functions.” Tafuri employs here the methodological insights developed by Walter Benjamin in a conference of 1934 titled “The Author as Producer.” Benjamin’s text was addressed to find aesthetic strategies to deal with the rise of Fascism. Rather than asking what is the position of a work of art towards the relations of production of his time (whether a work is progressive or reactionary), Benjamin saw the possibility to act directly within those relations. The role of the leftist author is neither that of an intellectual which sides with the proletariat just ideologically, nor that of a technician which is able to make use of the new techniques of production in order to produce a new aesthetic. Rather, “the au-

5 Ibid., 1.
7 Ibid.
8 Ibid.
9 Ibid., 288.
“Author as producer” is able to use those techniques as an instrument for proletarian struggle, not by simply transmitting and aestheticise them, but by transforming them.10

Tafuri’s answers to these questions are twofold. On the one hand, Tafuri rejected any possibility for the involvement of architects in the relations of production of their time: the linguistic turn of architecture, both in their European and American variants, appeared to Tafuri as a retreat into an imaginary space, sanctioning the impossibility for architecture to affect the real. On the other hand, he saw the role of such an architecture limited to the production of an ideology of pluralism suitable for an increasingly differentiating market.11 Similarly, in the specific case of the American neo-avantgarde, Tafuri attributed a purely ideological value to those experimentations, as a nostalgia or guilt feeling typical of the American culture.12 Whereas Tafuri’s answers are not satisfactory to us, we would like to take seriously his methodology and to confront such a linguistic turn in architecture with the transformations of the modes of production that were occurring at the same time in Europe and the United States. But we would like to operate a reversal of Benjamin and Tafuri’s methods. Instead of looking at the response of the architect’s to the relations of production, we would like to see in which way the experimentations, the “linguistic games” of the architects in the Seventies prefigured the transformations in the modes of production of architecture in the years to come. As a first approximation, we will assume architecture as a language only in a metaphorical sense, but at the end of this chapter this assumption will be verified and rethought.

The early works of Peter Eisenman are taken here as a litmus test for this methodology. Eisenman’s trajectory can be seen as a constant attempt, through contradictory and unstable results, to approximate (and constantly missing) the common in architecture, through a progressive removal of social, political and ideological structures which impede its free and unbound productivity. Eisenman’s case is particularly useful since his precision in describing the operations (the “tortures”) he performs on the body of his architectures, and the strict logic of development of his design and theoretical trajectory, in which every project is a response to a problem raised by a precedent project. Yet, the interpretation given to his work will swerve from Eisenman’s own intentions: not really as Eisenman’s own relation to the canonical works of the modern masters, based on a conscious and programmed misinterpretation, but more as a result of the nature of the work of critique: as Tafuri warned, critique has to do violence to his objects, to make latent elements emerge from the works analyzed.

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Eisenman started using a linguistic analogy already since his Ph.D. thesis, submitted in 1963 in Cambridge, titled *The Formal Basis of Modern Architecture*. In this book, Eisenman showed the limitations through which modern architecture was approached by the critics of his time. While on the one hand Reyner Banham defined the modern movement in historical terms, i.e. through its idea of progress, John Summerson, on the other hand, saw the unity of modern architecture in its relation to programmatic issues. Eisen-

man opposed these two visions, attempting a definition of the unity of modern architecture through an analysis of their formal content, by reading several canonical buildings of the modern movement which eschewed any reference to historical facts, iconographic interpretations and perceptual considerations of form psychology. By these conscious removals and self-limitations, Eisenman developed a method of inquiry based on finding the logical consistency of formal concepts internal to the buildings themselves, regardless of any historical, symbolical and subjective considerations.\textsuperscript{16}

In particular, Eisenman sought to make explicit the “formal grammar” underlying in development of modern architecture, in particular in Le Corbusier’s theory of the “four compositions.” This grammar, according to Eisenman is based on the geometry of primary solids, which provide the essence of every architectural form, beyond any style and period.\textsuperscript{17} For Eisenman, this formal grammar is not only a tool for a critical reading of architecture, but a real design system aimed at producing clarity and comprehensibility of the built environment beyond the personal expression which characterize the “Mannerism” of contemporary architecture. The system proposed “must necessarily give preference to absolute over temporal ends.”\textsuperscript{18} Having posited the primacy of formal, ie. atemporal values over historical ones, Eisenman starts characterizing the rules which compose the grammar. Form can be generic or specific. If specific forms refers to a particular response to a function or context, generic form is of a “transcendent or universal nature,”\textsuperscript{19} and it is defined in its ideal or Platonic sense. Generic form in architecture can be either linear or centroidal, and any Platonic solid can be read through these two categories. Moreover, each solid presents specific capabilities of formal devel-

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., 19.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 35.
opment, which are intrinsic in their generic nature, and transcend any specific, external characterization regardless to any programmatic or functional requirement. Then, Eisenman starts defining the properties of generic form, which are volume, mass, surface and movement, and their syntactic rules, providing examples of the development of architectural specific forms as transformations of an original generic form under the pressures of external conditions (vectors), but always in accordance to the syntactical requirements of the generic form.20 In particular, it is the property of movement that characterizes Eisenman’s approach to the genesis of form: movement should not be seen in perceptual or phenomenological terms as the movement of a beholder in architectural volumes. On the contrary, movement is what generates the specific form itself, through conceptual operations of translation and rotation of planes and volumes under the forces which are imposed on them. As a verification, Eisenman takes eight examples from four “masters” of the modern movement, in order to verify his method. The examples from Le Corbusier, Frank Lloyd Wright, Alvar Aalto and Giuseppe Terragni are selected because the various range in the approaches of the single architects, in order to distill the formal grammar of those buildings regardless of individual approaches and contextual differences. But it is in particular in Terragni’s approach that the syntactical system is more clearly visible and underlying the design approach. In Terragni, especially, one could find an approach to modern architecture which departed from mainstream modern architecture in the sense that neither a “nostalgia for a ‘simpler’ past,” nor a progressive idea of the future can be traced in his works.21 Moreover, Terragni’s compositions show no interest whatsoever neither in a direct translation of function into

20 Ibid., 57ff.
form, nor of the achievement of a continuity between interior and exterior, i.e. of the interdependence between façade and interior.\textsuperscript{22} In other words, Terragni was not affected by the social moralism of the modern movement, to the point that even Giuseppe Pagano was offended by the formalism of designs such as the Casa del Fascio.\textsuperscript{23}

Eisenman was influenced in his method of formal analysis from different sources. Eisenman’s thesis was supervised by architect Leslie Martin. Together with painter Ben Nicholson and sculptor Naum Gabo, Martin published in 1937 \textit{Circle}, a manifesto for the introduction of constructivist aesthetics in the UK.\textsuperscript{24} But in particular, Eisenman was influenced by Colin Rowe’s formal analysis. Rowe explicitly dealt with his method in a 1973 “Addendum” to his seminal article “The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa,” which was first published in 1947.\textsuperscript{25} This method was based on the close reading of artworks through an analysis of their visible formal structures as the main source of information. Rowe grounded this approach on the formalism of the Vienna School and of Heinrich Wölfflin, through his formation in the “professional” art historical milieu of the Warburg Institute, and as Rudolph Wittkower’s “only student” in the mid-40s. But Rowe’s formalism was probably more indebted to the “amateur” art historical practice of British authors such as Roger Fry and Clive Bell, who limited erudite consideration in their texts, making them accessible to a wider public than art

\textsuperscript{22} Ibid., 296.
\textsuperscript{23} Giuseppe Pagano on Casabella 1938: “some architects will do anything to make a name for themselves with meaningless formal inventions - architects of real ability who waste time on strange confections that endlessly explore subsidiary aspects of architecture...formalist indulgences that eat away like a woodworm from the inside, destroying the healthy principles of rationalist architecture,”
history specialists. Limiting historical, symbolic and iconographic references would have also the effect of making emerge in the works analysed some aspects which were not referring exclusively to a specific historical and geographical context, but which could be thought as universal. This was the task of “The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa.” The article starts with a famous quotation from Christopher Wren, in which the architect and mathematician, like his contemporary Claude Perrault in France, distinguished between two “causes of beauty—natural and customary.” If the latter is is contingent and based on habit, use or political choice, the former is based on universal principles and it is necessary. By comparing two distant examples, Palladio’s villa Malcontenta and Le Corbusier’s Villa Stein at Garches, Rowe sought to go beyond the contingent, historical elements that shaped the two buildings, in order to find the universal principles that governed their form. But Rowe never attempted to define the nature of such universals, and while the development of the formal method was extremely rigorous, it was still based on an idealist metaphysics.

While in The Formal Basis Eisenman tried to depart from the refined “connoisseur” method of Rowe by producing a specifically design-oriented theory, he could not answer the question of the nature of a-historical structures in architecture. It will be in his series of Houses that Eisenman attempted to ground the existence of an a-historical grammar of architecture on modern linguistic theories. Also, freed from the academic requirements, Eisenman’s texts became more openly polemic, and written in the forms of manifestos.

5.3. House I. Diagrams.
Whereas in the *Formal Basis* Eisenman proposed formal analysis as a method for approaching architecture, in the Houses series the formal method became an active instrument to destroy the historical and symbolic conventions haunting the practice of architecture.

House I, for instance, is an attempt to empty the meaning of architectural load-bearing elements, producing structural ambiguities. It is not clear which columns bear the ceilings, or if the house is structured on walls or columns. The beams run from column to column, but are isolated and clearly don’t have any load-bearing function. But in this sense, the columns and the beams are finally freed from their function, and can convey deeper meanings. Eisenman defines two types of architectural meaning. One is “iconographic and symbolic;” villa Savoye’s railings recall ships and the ideal of discovery and freedom inherent in the rhetorics of modernism. But there’s another aspect which conveys information, which is “derived from, and in a sense inherent in the structure of the form.” The first Houses were directed in the destruction of the first type of meaning toward the exploration of this second type of meaning. The “structure of the form” is the ideal form that generates the physical structure. If the symbolic, or functional meaning is effaced, the observer is encouraged to turn their attention to find the logic of the form. We understand such formal structure because there is another, abstract structure which we use—either consciously or not—to understand the perceptual formal structures. This structure is made of certain “primitive” formal structures—i.e. “solid and void, centroidal and linear, planar and volumetric.” The house is thus generated out of as a series of transformations from those primitive structures through different

29 Ibid., 16.
30 Ibid., 17.
transformational operators: “shear, compression, and rotation.” Such a generative process of abstract regularities constitutes the “deep structure,” or better—because it doesn’t have substantial existence—a description, a “possible model for an architectural deep structure.” Eisenman still sees these “primitive” or “deep” formal structures as universals, but he no longer refers to them in metaphysical terms as ideal or Platonic forms. Rather, their universality is guaranteed by the fact that they are structures innate in the structure of the human brain. Eisenman found in Noam Chomsky’s theory of the generative grammar the possibility of grounding the formalist method on a more solid scientific basis. Chomsky observed that language is only partially learned by humans. Analyzing the capacity of children to generate infinite combinations of new sentences from a limited knowledge of words and syntactical structure, Chomsky hypothesised that certain grammatical structures are innate to the human brain. The faculty of language, in Chomskian terms, amounts to the fact that humans biologically possess these structures as part of their genetic heritage. Eisenman paralleled Chomsky in assuming that humans possess an innate the capacity to read space, in terms of a-priori, categories which are biologically inherent to the structure of human’s brain.

House II performs a similar program of House I through a different means. Whereas in House I the attempt to make sign took the form of reducing the apparent structure to nonstructural elements, in House II a similar intention took the form of exaggerating the structure through an explicit, “nonfunctional redundancy.” For this reason there are two structural systems, a wall and a column one, and it’s not clear which one bears the loads. In House II signs are unloaded of their signification through their

31 Ibid.
32 Ibid.
5.4. House II. Axonometric.
5.5. Formal structures against social conventions.
Top, House III. Below, House VI.
over-proliferation. The redundancy of signs is an efficient strategy to produce spatial ambiguities and it is used in different degrees in all the houses.

The redundancy of architectural signs leads not only to structural ambiguities, but as well to functional and behavioral ambiguities. The architectural objects are turned against their users. In House III we can feel a pedagogical use of spatial difficulties: “interior finishes, the location and style of the furniture, or the installation of lighting’ are abolished.” But such ‘alienation’ from the environment is a temporary one: the owner of the house, at first an intruder, “must begin to regain possession—to occupy a foreign container. In the process of taking possession the owner begins to destroy, albeit in a positive sense, the initial unity and completeness of the architectural structure.” In a similar way to the estrangement strategies put forward in the Epic theatre of Brecht and Weill, House III attempts to “stimulate the owner to a new kind of participation in the design process,” to learn to see space through a virgin gaze, freed from social and linguistic conventions seems the program of House III. But such a spatial uncomfort will assume sadistic connotations in House VI and House X. In the former, Eisenman puts the dining table against a column, and separates the beds through a translucent slot. In the latter, similar functions are put in different buildings, and the space between them is carefully designed not to appear a connection or transit space.

Having demonstrated the authoritarian position of the architect, Eisenman needed to destroy its position. If form is an

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36 Ibid.
autonomous entity, then it is not enough to remove signification, functions, social conventions and hierarchies from it. Neither, it is enough that form is determined through a series of transformations, if it’s the architect that dictates them. To be truly autonomous, form has to stem only from itself, and not from the will of the architect-creator. House IV, for example, is generated by an iterative sequence of transformational operators which act on primitive formal structures—volumetric, planar, and linear elements. House IV is only one of the infinite forms that can be generated by such a process of transformation. It is only the product of the n-th iteration. Similarily, House VI is the product of n transformations. If House IV can be seen as a snapshot of the n-th iteration, House VI is a cinematic recording from 1 to n: all the transformation leave traces in the final object.

Eisenman elaborates even further this condition with the elaboration of the concept of the “self-referential sign.” which he saw as a further step in the elimination of another layer of signification in his architecture. The concept was elaborated in an article published on Opposition in 1979. In this article, Eisenman tries to read the architecture of Le Corbusier departing from the canonical readings of Rowe, which saw the architecture of the Swiss master in continuity to the humanist project of the Renaissance. What Rowe missed, according to Eisenman, was the true nature of the modernist project of Le Corbusier. Rowe still interpreted architecture as a representation of man and the human condition:

“it assumed physical structure and shelter to be absolute conditions of architecture, and when it considered signification it was in terms of a meaning which was extrinsic to architecture itself; that is, to ideas which related architecture to man, rather than to intrinsic ideas which explained architecture itself.”

To Rowe, modernity seemed “merely to indicate the new style of supposed abstraction and the symbology of the machine rather than to signal changes apparent in the notations of plan and section which might suggest a fundamental change between man and object.” Eisenman saw in the Maison Dom-ino the emergence of a completely new relation between architecture and its signs. Comparing it to the plans of Palladio’s Malcontenta, Bramante’s St. Peter’s and Scamozzi’s Villa Pisani, one can see that whereas the Renaissance plans are geometrical representations of a specific worldview (in terms of Wittkower’s famous analysis), the Maison Dom-ino notation is neither purely geometric or sculptural, but essentially the product of an architectonic intentionality.

Eisenman will apply his reading of the Maison Dom-ino in the design of House VI. Eisenman thought that the first houses, while having abolished functional or symbolic meanings, were still the representations of their own deep structure, conceived as an idea generating the spatial reality. Moreover, locating the universal spatial grammar in humans, Eisenman later realized a continuity of his early works with the Renaissance humanist project, while in fact he wanted to produce a break with it. The discovery of the “self-referential sign” was a way to remove the primacy of the idea over the architectural form itself. In this sense, House VI is also a point of departure from the “white box.” If in House I and II the notational system was directed to produce a “mental landscape, to
5.6. *House IV, transformation diagrams.*
5.7. House VI, diagrams.
suggest an alternative reality,” in house VI the conceptual system is derived from the experience of architecture itself.”45 In house VI, the superimposition of two nine square grids is able to generate a cross-shaped element in which the exterior of one grid becomes the interior of the other.46 That’s why, despite the frontal composition of the house, Eisenman regards this house as the first example of an attempt to have done with Euclidean geometry, and an experiment topological space, a concept that will be further developed in house Xia.47 The application of non-Euclidean geometry is also a way to contest the supposed universality of the Platonic, Euclidean solids on which Eisenman based his research since his Ph.D. dissertation. Geometry could no longer be seen as an a-historical trait of architecture, but it must have been seen as another layer of historical signification which had to be removed.

In House X, despite the strategies of demolition of signification, hierarchies, social conventions through the redundancy of forms are still pursued, a major methodological departure point is seen. If the method of houses I-VI was transformational, House X employs a method which Eisenman calls decomposition. This method operates on architecture seen as a “critical text.” A supposed “primary” structure upon which architecture is transformed can no longer be given. Instead of a single origin for architecture, one can only start a process of critique in terms of “an understanding of the unconscious repressions that exist in any of the internal mechanisms of a discourse.”48 Eisenman again developed the idea of the critical text in relation to Terragni’s architecture, but in this case with the analysis of the Casa Giuliani-Frigerio. Unlike

45 Ibid.
46 Ibid.
Casa del Fascio, in Casa Giuliani-Frigerio one cannot find a single primitive geometric object for at the base of the generative formal process, but as a “decomposition” of a “hypothetically prior, more complex entity.” \(^{49}\) Transformations operate over a primitive form to produce the final object through a linear concatenation of cause-effect relations. Instead, decomposition operates on “a state of ‘objecthood’ [that] exists, or pre-exists, independent of the process.” \(^{50}\)

This means that the architect has to work like an archeologist or a geologist, who retrieves ‘exhibits’ which might or might not have relations between them. “The only absolutely known relation they have” explains Eisenman “is that they were found together, and perhaps by the same individual. Of course, they also, inescapably, seem to be clues to the larger system or entity of which they are vestiges. And sometimes, when enough of them are found, the begin to cluster together, to suggest principles of order, ideas about their own nature.” \(^{51}\) The architect-geologist therefore digs deposits of architectural materials whose logical principles are lost, and tries to recognize patterns and relation between them. Such a method is necessarily heuristic, and works through trials and errors, subsequent approximations. “The architect-geologist, must attempt to explain the objects he uncovers and records. His art also consists in knowing how to dig and where to dig. He must speculate on the nature of unrevealed typologies—taxonomies perhaps as far from the traditional ones of an Alberti or Durand as from the plan types of a Wittkower or Rowe—which once uncovered might suggest an entire new range of possibilities consonant with a new man-object relationship. […] Since the object does not necessarily mirror, confirm, or deny the architect’s existence, it assumes a condition of parity with him. The new distance, then, is a parallelism or equiva-

\(^{49}\) Ibid.
\(^{51}\) Ibid., 31.
lence of existence: object and architect, two non-intersecting but interrelated entities.”52 In this situation of parallelism, the architectural sign doesn’t refer anymore to an ideal structure, neither to itself: “it refers outside itself, but only to that more complex pre-existent state which is still within the realm of architecture.”53 In other words, architecture can only be explained through architecture. For this reason, the project of House X can be explained only through other projects, that approximate the process of decomposition, called Schemes A-G. Scheme G is not the ‘final’ design but the last one of the infinite recombinations and approximations of the project.

If for House X the process of decomposition is still internal to architecture, since the house is a decomposition of other architectural texts, Eisenman still felt that those designs were still based on a geometry—no matter if Euclidean or topological—which was immanent and embodied in architecture. For this reason, Eisenman started to design urban project on actual sites, in order to find alternative conditions for the existence of architecture, in an attempt to move “from thinking to feeling, from the head to the body or to the ground.” Urban sites provided Eisenman such conditions in other types of texts, based on affective, or temporal dimensions.54 It is in this phase that Eisenman met Aldo Rossi and became interested in his theory of the analogous city and collective memory.55 The untimely elements of his theory, assume now the form of memories of which the city is made. The repressed conditions of the architectural text are now stratified in the geology of the city, as in the famous parallel between the subconscious and

52 Ibid., p. 33.
53 Ibid., p. 35.
5.8. House X, Schemes B and C, axonometric from NE.
5.9. House X, Schemes E and F, axonometric from NE.
the city of Rome in Freud’s *Civilization and its Discontents*. The first of these projects was an entry for the 1980 competition for the site of Cannaregio in Venice. To explain the project Eisenman employed three “texts” addressing, respectively, the absence of future, present and the past, selecting three moments of repression from the subconscious of the city. The “emptiness of the future” is symbolized by Le Corbusier’s project for the Venice hospital, which was designed just before his death in 1965, and abandoned some years later. The project’s grid is extended to the site on the south but in the form of square holes on the ground. The “emptiness of the present” is constituted by Eisenman’s self-quotation of House 11a. Designed for Kurt Forster, the house was based on the following minimal programmatic statement: “I want a house that when I am inside I feel like I am looking at the world from the outside, and when I am outside the house it is as if I am inside the house.” This condition was achieved through a topological transformation of the interior in the exterior, and vice versa. The interior of the house, with its rooms and living spaces is unaccessible, thus becoming the house’s outside, while the only accessible space was the underground part of the house. But in the project of Cannaregio house 11a present in three instances, one in actual size, one half-size and one double-size, with the idea of destroying scale and the human reference once for all from the composition. Moreover, each larger house, contains the other like a Russian doll in a self-referential recursive loop: a house meant to house only itself. And finally the “emptiness of the past” is produced by a cut in


57 Peter Eisenman, “Diagrams of Exteriority,” 175.
the ground resurfacing a repressed trauma of the history of the city of Venice: the execution of Giordano Bruno in 1600.58

The projects of “artificial excavation” were also another way for Eisenman to distance even further his research from Colin Rowe’s, in particular the approach he developed in *Collage City*. Eisenman rejected Rowe’s contextualism, based exclusively on the formal materials found in the actual condition of the site. In contrast to this contextualism of pure presence, Eisenman opted for a process more similar to Rossi’s analogous city, based on the “superposition” of different formal or historical layers to produce a result “that has nothing to do with whatever was there, or could be there, but exists only in the justaposition.”59 The critique to Rowe is clear in the project for Friedrichstrasse in Berlin.60 To Eisenman Berlin is the best example of a history made of failed projects and false starts, in which historical development is not linear but can be recognized only as a series of fragments. In particular, the site of Friedrichstrasse embodies most radically this condition: an site of exception in the 18th century city wall, where new typologies emerged, a central commercial hub in the 19th century, the bombing of 1945 with the complete destruction of the historical fabric, the construction of the wall in 1961. Eisenman’s project is to make visible those fragments of a past urban organization against a monumental or antiquarian historicist approach, but as the possibility to create something new. Eisenman called this approach anti-memory: “in the conscious act of forgetting, one cannot help but remember.”61 Eisenman transforms the site in an artificial archaeological site, in which he superimposes three grids—the 18th-

59 See Jean-François Bédard, *Cities of Artificial Excavation*, 119.
61 Ibid., 75.
5.10. Project for Cannaregio.
5.11. Project for Friedrichstrasse.
century grid, the Berlin wall grid and an abstract Mercator grid. Instead of considering the grid as a void in-between the solid volumes of buildings, Eisenman considers the grid as an object in itself, reversing Rowe’s grammar of figure-ground, interior-exterior and public-private.

In the projects of artificial excavation, Eisenman attempted to have done once for all with the concept of origin, in particular with the origin of language in humans. Rather, the process of creation is seen as the continuous negation and the repression of its conditions of existence, without the possibility of finding an immanant source for its development.

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The trajectory outlined above can be summarized as the attempt of finding some sort of “common” principle for architectural form in its linguistic aspects in the terms of an a-historical, universal dimension, and then denying its existence by founding the process of architectural creation on a negative basis. Yet, many aspects of Eisenman’s research could give us important elements for the definition of the common in architecture.

Mario Gandelsonas provides useful insights in approaching the potentialities of Eisenman’s work, beyond his own authorial intentions. In his 1971 article “Linguistics and Architecture,”62 Gandelsonas distinguished between an ideological practice of architecture, meant to solve specific technical problems, and a theoretical architectural practice based on a scientific description of reality. Whereas the former is meant to preserve the existing social systems by assimilating new ideas without changing the social structures of power and knowledge, a scientific practice is meant to explain

reality by unmasking the mechanisms at work in the production of ideology. According to Gandelsonas the work of Eisenman belongs to the former approach, since it does not take bourgeois ideology as its object of study, but at the same time, and beyond the intentions of the author, is capable to provide some useful instruments against ideology itself. Architects such as Robert Venturi limited themselves to update the semantic aspect of architecture by importing “new” meanings from the so-called popular culture, and at the same time they left the mechanisms of the production of architectural knowledge unexplored, or contributed to conceal them even more. On the other hand Eisenman, by suspending the semantic aspects and focusing on the syntactic structures of architecture, was able to open the possibility for a critique of the means of production of architecture. Gandelsonas pointed out that this critique was missed by Eisenman in the uncritical way in which he imported concepts from linguistics, without adapting them to the context of architectural work, in particular regarding the concepts of creativity, intuition and universal. Whereas Eisenman responded to Gandelsonas’ critique in the subsequent development of his work, the critical elements of his work remained unexpressed. This is due to the fact that the parallel between architecture and language has always been drawn by Eisenman in terms of analogy, bringing forward the similarities between the two disciplines in terms of a methodology, but missing what these two domains have really in common. Eisenman did not push the parallel between language and architecture too far, but probably he did it not enough.

Eisenman’s appeal to Chomsky’s generative grammar is important not for the appeal to a universal, biological capacity of humans to produce architecture. If Chomsky’s thesis is highly controversial in itself, Gandelsonas was right in pointing out that

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63 Ibid., 115.
64 Ibid., 118.
the production of architecture is more similar to the production of literature, rather than the production of common speech, since architecture is a learned activity performed by a few in a community. Nevertheless, instead of a universal capacity belonging to individuals taken in their isolation, architecture and language can be seen as common faculties that humans possess as a species. In this sense, like language, architecture can be seen as a neither completely natural, nor completely artificial construction. Italian philosopher Felice Cimatti and oncologist Giorgio Prodi defined language as “neither historical, because man certainly didn’t invent language, nor simply natural, because it is equally true that without the participation of the human animal, our language wouldn’t exist”. In our past there is “no moment in which there was a man without language who decided to invent one. That hypothetical man without language, but in all other respects similar to us, never existed. The human animal is what it is because it literally constructed itself around language.” Lacking a specific environment, human animals need to constantly re-create their habitat, and this is done through language: “the environment of the human animal is language itself, the human animal is adapted to language, is made for and by language.” What seems a metaphoric sentence applied to language, becomes more direct and even more explicit in terms of architecture: architecture, like language, is human’s “natural habitat,” their second nature, through which they compensate their lack of a specific environment. Architecture and language are then not universals, but historico-natural institutions. They are not “possessed” by individuals, but at the same time the human species could not be defined in their absence.

65 Ibid., 119.
66 Felice Cimatti, La scimmia che si parla (Rome: Manifestolibri, 2000), cit. in Christian Marazzi, Capital and Language (New York: Semiotext(e), 2007), 29-30
Secondly, when with House III onwards Eisenman started to contest the authoritarian position of architecture in its capacity to produce determinate behaviours, another nonlinguistic aspect of language emerges—namely, its pragmatic value, its capacity to perform actions and produce behaviours. In a book with the significant title *How to do Things with Words*, J.L. Austin developed the idea that language produces conventions not really through its communicative capacity to transfer meanings, but rather from the direct power of utterances to perform, to immediately produce real facts. Language does not have a really descriptive function, but it has a directly productive nature, which Austin called *illocutionary*. Speech acts such as “I take this woman to be my lawfully wedded wife,” “I baptize this baby Luke,” “I swear I’ll come to Rome,” were took by Austin as examples of this peculiar condition of language.67 Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari extended this idea not only to a particular class of utterances, but to language in general: language cannot be abstracted from its speech acts, since every utterance produce social obligations. Deleuze and Guattari call this condition the *mot d’ordre* (the order word), implying *order* both in the sense of a direction or an instruction, and of organization.68

With House III Eisenman departs from the idea of meaning in architectural language, focusing on its capacity of directly producing things, of constructing social obligations and producing social organization.

The illocutionary character of House III is still directed to a human “audience”. From House IV onwards, instead, the illocutionary is completely introverted into itself. No longer aimed to produce (or dismantle) the organization of life, the “design acts” of House IV are meant to organize only House IV itself. The perform-

The character of House III becomes in House IV what Paolo Virno has defined as an *absolute performative*. Whereas utterances such as “I take this woman to be my lawfully wedded wife” produces something outside the individual who is speaking, expressions such as “I speak” perform exclusively the fact that one’s speaking, and they “refer instead to its own utterance as the salient event which it produces by the mere fact of being uttered.”\(^6\) Virno locates instances of the absolute performative in children’s self-centered language and in the religious word, yet also idle talk displays the self-referentiality of speech, in which the faculty of language, *the fact that one is speaking*, comes to the fore at the expenses of *what is being told*, but at the same time liberating the virtual capacities of language: “idle talk does not *represent* anything, but precisely for this reason it can *produce* everything.”\(^7\)

And finally, the self-referential, automatic design processes of House I-VI are made to explode in House X, where architecture can no longer perform itself in a direct, active way, but like a Borgesian novel, it can only exist as a commentary on a text which probably has never existed. In this way, the “I speak” of the self-referential sign is displaced into an impersonal “It is spoken.” While this shift was interpreted by Eisenman through the transcendence of Derrida’s concept of *writing*, I would rather interpret such a condition through the concept of *free indirect discourse*. Free indirect discourse is commonly defined as the narrative technique in which the writer abandons for a moment his or her language, and assumes the language the character. It is the character that speaks, in third person, but without quotation marks, through the writer who suspends his or her subjectivity. Free indirect discourse is typical of modern literature.\(^7\) James Joyce, Virginia Woolf and Franz Kafka

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made great use of such a technique to give narration an impersonal effect, but their origin date back to nineteenth-century realist literature. In the Sixties, Pier Paolo Pasonlini expanded the notion of free indirect discourse not only finding it in modern literature, but tracing its origin in Italian literature since Dante’s *Divina commedia*. Moreover, Pasolini pointed out the political function of indirect discourse. Whereas for realist literature indirect discourse was the attempt of the bourgeois author to portray the working class through its own language, the modern novel’s interior monologue attempted to elaborate the crisis of the bourgeois subject. But it is since the avant-garde of the 20s, through the experiments of automatic writing and collage, that the indirect discourse becomes an attempt to make speak not subjects, but the relations of production themselves, dispersing human speech in a system of mechanic relations. Deleuze and Guattari will radicalize even further Pasolini’s stance, extending free indirect discourse not only as a style or a narrative device, but as a the fundamental trait of language. First of all, as its first determination, its beginning. Against Rousseau’s idea of the origin of language as a metaphoric, as a response to passions and human perceptions, Deleuze and Guattari localize the origin of language in language itself. In other words, language does not originate in order to communicate a perception to others, from a first party who has perceived something to a second party who has not, but from a second party to a third party, none of whom has perceived anything. It is for this reason that Eisenman has to employ Schemes A-G, since his House X has to stem from materials that are already linguistic, as an indirect reaction to them. Sec-

ondly, Deleuze and Guattari employ the definition of free indirect discourse to eliminate the speaking subject, substituting it with a pre-individual—thus collective—capacity of language itself. Who speaks is the architecture itself.

This impersonality is even increased when the techniques developed *in vitro* for the individual Houses are transposed to Eisenman first urban designs, when the signs of architecture are made reacting not only with other, precedent architectural signs, but with the historic, geometric, and memory signs found in the urban context in which Eisenman started to operate.

It is probably clear now that the relation between language and architecture goes beyond the mere analogy that we assumed at the beginning. Architecture is really a language, but only in a very specific sense, that is, insofar we look for the non-linguistic or non-semiotic nature of both, which we traced in Eisenman’s works in three concepts, namely: the biological “common places” of both language and architecture, which make human animals able to inhabit the world by constructing an artificial environment; the pragmatics of the linguistic and architectural performative statements, which make them instruments not for the transmission of information, but for the direct organization of life. As a particular case, we have isolated a particular performative function, the absolute performative, in which the message is language or architecture itself; and finally, the productive and collective aspect of the free indirect discourse, in which the individuality of the speaking subject is displaced in favour of a collective body of enunciation. In these non-semiotic aspects of architectural language we can finally locate the specific function of the architectural “linguistic turn” of the Seventies in the transformations of the modes of production.

The so-called postfordist condition arose in Europe and in the United States as an economy no longer based on the productive regime of the factory. The leading role of economy turned from
industry to the third sector, with an emphasis on the production of relational goods, such as information, images, and affects. Language played a fundamental role in this passage not only because of the fact that language and its transfer became one of the main products, especially with the rise of the communication industry, but because language became a fundamental mode for the production of every types of goods, be they material or immaterial. Whereas work in the factory was silent, work in the postfordist “factory” is noisy, and workers are encouraged to talk to each other. In this way, language becomes important for production neither for its capacity to convey meaning, nor its capacity to inform, nor for its individual manifestations as products, but rather as a faculty, a capacity that workers employ regardless of the individual tasks that they perform. And this faculty does not belong to individuals, but rather is a pre-individual, collective feature of humans as a species, which can be performed only collectively.

Architecture seems to have undergone a similar trajectory: the work of Peter Eisenman, among other, focused on architecture not as a product, condition of being a capacity of the human species to inhabit the world and transform it, pointing out the very basic, common features of its collective production. This happened through the completion of a cycle, started with the historical avant-gardes, of the removal of the author, the architect at the origin of the project of architecture. The experiments of the 20s and of the 70s, nevertheless, seem amateurish experiments compared to the contributions to the “death of the author” brought by the introduction of digital technologies in architecture. This process did


76 On the relations between postfordism and language see, Christian Marazzi, Capital and Language.
not happen without a cruel irony: in the 20s and 30s, the question was for the bourgeois architect how to actively betray their class of origin and to put his work in the hands of proletarian revolution. In the Seventies, as Tafuri mercilessly pointed out, bourgeois architects turned in the safe havens of the autonomy of the discipline as the last possibility for the resistance of bourgeois values. In the last decades architects have really become proletarians, precarious workers: the prophecy of the historical avant-gardes became true, but without revolution, without the emancipation of the proletariat. But it is from this point that the “war” can be reopened: not from the abstract autonomy of architectural language, but from the declaration of autonomy of the collective architectural mode of production.
A Grammar of Common Space   225
In 2011 the Royal Institute of British Architects published a report titled *The Future for Architects*.¹ The report, based on a series of interviews to developers, architects and students, was meant to map the situation of the architecture industry in the midst of an economic crisis that was increasingly perceived as permanent or, at least, to have permanent consequences on the organization of the discipline. In fact, despite some differences, developers, architects and students seemed to reject the traditional role of the architect as a creator of forms in space. Rather, they saw the architect transformed in a “design specialist,” a figure applying “design thinking” to different kinds of problems concerning the management of activities in space. In this way, the architect becomes less a specialist involved in the production of a design and, in some cases, in the supervision of construction activities, and more a non-specialized managerial figure allowing various specialists to collaborate on the same design process, not only in the phases of design and construction, but also in the post-occupancy phase. Moreover, the architectural practices that seemed more capable of surviving the crisis were those which were capable of sharing the financial risks connected to the building enterprise together with their contractors. For this reason, the report saw the traditional middle-sized architectural office as an engendered species. The future will be

polarized on very small practices, and very big consultancy offices, in which labour becomes outsourced in emerging countries.

But the crisis of the traditional role of the architect is marked by another crucial factor, which undermines the traditional definition of the architect as it was “invented” in the Renaissance by Filippo Brunelleschi and Leon Battista Alberti from their radical distinction between design and construction. As architectural historian Mario Carpo has shown, the introduction of digital technologies in architecture is producing radical consequences in the definition of the discipline, far beyond the initial infatuation with round and continuous forms. According to Carpo, digital fabrication tools such as 3d-printers and other computer numerical control (CNC) machines allow the designer to continuously pass from design and fabrication, removing the distance between prototype and final product. This is a consequence of the different conceptual nature between analog and digital fabrication. In analog production the design is translated into a mould or matrix to be physically impressed or cast into an indefinite number of identical objects. Conversely, in digital production, the design, which is expressed in a symbolic, numerical language, is directly translated into matter. This has important consequences. First of all, in digital fabrication there is no marginal advantage in the fabrication of identical objects: through the use of variable parameters, the same design can be translated in different built forms with the same production costs. Secondly, since the same code expresses both the design and the built object, the distinction between the design and construction phases collapse. If this process is today limited to small objects, there are no conceptual limits for the extension of this paradigm for the construction of building components and structures. In general, the digital paradigm already put into crisis the very idea of the autonomy of the architectural project, which dominated the idea of the Western city in the last 500 years, collapsing its tradi-
tional division of labour and paradoxically recuperating the medi-
eval figure of the master-builder.2

But probably, the digital technology that will have the most
pervasive consequences in architectural practice will be Building
Information Modeling (BIM). Computer Aided Design (CAD)
softwares were used by architects and engineers as digital substi-
tutes of drafting tables. For this reason, CAD did not change the
traditional role of the architect as the producer of drawing, which
were symbolic representations of physical building elements in
lines and hatches. Conversely, building information models manage
series of symbolic objects which do not represent only traditional
building elements in terms of two-dimensional parallel projections
or three-dimensional models, but they are multi-dimensional rep-
resentations of not only material characteristics of the objects to
be built, but also carrying additional information—climatic perfor-
mane of interior environments, programs and functions, building
and operational costs and financial data, maintenance information,
etc. In a way, building information models become “permanent,
interactive digital doppelgänger of each object of design,”3 allowing
the control of the architectural object far beyond its physical
consistency as in traditional architectural design. The advantage of
such a modeling technology is the possibility for various special-
ists to collaborate on various aspects of a same design through a
standardized protocol. Interestingly the definition of such proto-
cols is not imposed as proprietary software by private companies,
but through the work of national or international standardization
committees, and several open-source BIM platforms are being de-
developed by independent communities.4

2 Mario Carpo, The Alphabet and the Algorithm (Cambridge, MA: The MIT
3 Ibid., 125.
4 See, for example, community-maintained projects such as bimserver.org, open-
bim.org and osbim.org.
If in the various chapters of this thesis the common was disguised in other “conceptual characters”—the tumult, the monster, *Kunstwollen*, collective memory and language—now we can speak of the common as it was introduced by the contemporary critique of postfordism: the diffused, collective intelligence which is central in the contemporary forms of production and of capitalistic accumulation. The present situation of architectural production was the starting point for this research, but the necessary endpoint of this book. Apparently, the affirmation of the common as a productive force has effaced architecture as a discipline. On the one hand, we can see that authorship in architecture is disappearing, and the practice of the production of architecture is more and more diffused and networked, to the point that in a final design it is impossible to tell the role of individual contributions, and even less to distinguish the proper role of the architect from that of the other figures involved in the design process. Far from its strict disciplinary foundation, the role of the architect becomes progressively that of a figure using less their disciplinary skills, but rather their generic, or species-specific faculties, mobilizing language and affectivity to manage the human material involved in the production of architecture. Not only the architect becomes the mediator between different technicians—structural engineers, HVAC specialists, financial programmers, etc.—but also the mediator of various economic interests and the manager of social conflicts between

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land owners, inhabitants, developers and city administrations. This opens another paradox: while on the one hand the role of the architects seems to be simply technical and managerial, it becomes in fact more and more political in the sense that it has to employ tools and means which were in the past characteristic of political action.\(^7\)

The common seems to have finally triumphed, and its role finally resurfaced from the historical cloak under which it was concealed. But on the other hand, the transformation of the architectural practice towards a more collaborative organization paralleled a deterioration of labour conditions. Architects are often confronted with a harsh working environment characterized by long working days, precarity of employment, low wages or no wages at all.\(^8\) This condition is even more dramatic for students and newly graduated architects, who are often forced to work as poorly or unpaid interns, both as part of the study curriculum and as the possibility to build-up a portfolio of past working experience which is required for future employment. Moreover, for many students the only possibility of getting higher education is to contract debts with banks: for this reason their freedom to choose and rejects jobs is highly compromised under the threat of a debt which, under the present conditions of the labour market, becomes more and more difficult to be returned.\(^9\) Outside, and next to the organization of

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7 It was Paolo Virno who noted the progressive merging of the traditional Aristotelian categories (further elaborated by Hannah Arendt) of Labour, Work and Action in the postfordist mode of production. See Paolo Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (Los Angeles & New York: Semiotext(e), 2004).

8 The concept of precarious labour, has been at the center of political movements, especially in Italy since the 1990s, in the attempt for the recomposition of struggles in the fragmented productive labour market, in which especially young workers are confronting. For the translation of this concept into an international environment, see Brett Neilson, “Precarity as a Political Concept, or, Fordism as Exception,” *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 25 no. 7-8 (December 2008), 51-72 and Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2011), who popularized the term in the UK.

9 If salaried work is today perhaps less pervasive than in the past as a form of control and subjectivation, the dependence of individuals through debt is increasing.
the architectural office, architects more and more work as self-employed practitioners alimenting a specific sector of the architecture industry that has the characteristics of what in the past was the organization of the art market: besides traditional architectural competitions, architects are increasingly involved in a competitive environment of individual self-valorization, which is based on the possibility to publish in books and magazine, to exhibit their work and organize events.10 This part of industry is entirely based on unpaid labour, since the only reward for this kind of work is the visibility and the attention that one supposedly would acquire for taking part in these activities. This organization is also progressively being adopted by universities, both public and private, which no longer provide funding for doctoral research positions, sometimes even asking for tuition fees.

Confronted with this reality, concepts such as “projective” or “networked” practice, “design intelligence,” “multidisciplinarity,” “holistic approach to problem-solving,” rather than presenting supposedly post-ideological alternatives to cope with the present reality of production, appear more like ideological constructs to conceal such a reality—a true ideology of the common.11 In this situ-

See, for example, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Declaration (Self published, 2012) and Maurizio Lazzarato, The Making of the Indebted Man (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2012). Debt as a form of slavery, even more fundamental than that of the capitalistic wage relation, has been first pointed out by Friedrich Nietzsche in his On the Genealogy of Morality (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

10 On the competitive nature of the supposedly collaborative “culture industry” see Matteo Pasquinelli, Animal Spirits: A Bestiary of the Commons (Rotterdam: NAI Publishers, 2008).

Epilogue 233

One would be tempted to advocate the return to a disciplinary autonomy, to the possibility to salvage what is left of the body of architecture after it has been fragmented by capital and its perpetual crisis. But, as it was hopefully demonstrated throughout the chapters of this thesis, architecture has never been autonomous, and the architect has never been architecture’s *deus ex machina*; yet, this condition has never impeded the production of a specific body of knowledge, and the production of good architecture. In particular, the idea of a design practice confronting the problems of the reality “out there”, overcoming the traditional division of labour and disciplinary boundaries, the possibility to work collectively on a single design problem through various points of view, the possibility to remove the distance between teacher and student, the destruction of the division between design and building, and the standardization of the design workflow was in fact a radical project advocated in the 20s and 30s by Marxist architects and educators. Some articles by Hannes Meyer, written between 1928 and 1931—between his appointment as a director of the Bauhaus and his Soviet experience—seem today bitter prophecies, rather than the optimistic views of an ingenuous communist fanatic as they are usually regarded.12

Meyer was appointed as a director of the Bauhaus in April 1928 as a “temporary placeholder” in a moment of crisis, after the resignation of Walter Gropius and after Mies van der Rohe refused

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the position. Meyer acknowledged that the Weimar period was a revolutionary moment for the Bauhaus, but that moment was at that time exhausted, and the old revolutionary ideas were now established and institutionalized or, even worse, a “socialist cathedral” for the performance of a “medieval cult,” in which “the form of every teapot was made into a problem of constructivist aesthetic.”

Meyer advocated for a change, substituting what he saw as a personalist, formalist and theoretical exercise with a collective education based on the needs and the productive structures of modern society. “Do we want to tune-up with the necessities of the world out there, and collaborate with the formation of new forms of life, or do we want to remain an island in which personal values are cultivated [...]?” Meyer transformed the structure of the studios in an interdisciplinary practice based on the active collaboration of young and older students in the organization of the learning activities. The relation between students and professors, according to Meyer, would have been based not only on the possibility to share knowledge from the different backgrounds of the participants, but on a personal and affective relation: “I want to establish a spiritual connection to students [...] From now on, everything must change [...] this mutual understanding must be a living condition for all the members of the Bauhaus, be them students or teachers; and if misunderstandings arise, please address them through psychology, since only in that way they can be better solved.”

14 Ibid, 94.
16 Ibid.
the masters, and to experiment a new form of productive life: “for us, the Bauhaus is a place in which a new form is given life. Local politics wants a successful Bauhaus, with a magnificent facade and a distinguished director. From our point of view, we are increasingly satisfied with the anonymity of our collective work.”

The courses refused a strict distinction between technical and design disciplines. In particular, as he wrote in a famous article, construction was not seen as something separated from design, but as one continuous process of organization. For Meyer, there is no longer architecture, there is only construction as a collective process: “To build is the deliberate organization of the processes of life.” “To build used to be an individual business meant for a few (favoured by unemployment and scarcity of dwellings). Now it has become a collective enterprise of all the nation.” Or, as he wrote in another article, “building and design are for us one and the same / and they are a social process,” in which various specialists are called to collaborate. “The new house is […] an industrial product and a work of specialists: economists, statisticians, hygienists, climatologists, industrial engineers, standards experts heat engineers … and the architect? … he was an artist and has become a specialist in organization!” The collaboration between these specialists is ensured by standardization. Standardization is not only the mass-production of building elements to be assembled on site, but mainly the construction of a common working framework, a common language as a platform for collaboration. For this reason Meyer saw standardization as a collective endeavor, and not as a top-down imposition.

17 Ibid., 98.
19 Ibid.
22 See, for example Hannes Meyer, “Wie ich arbeite,” originally published in Russian in Architektura SSSR, no. 6 (1933), It. trans. “Il mio modo di lavorare,”
But the most radical element of his project was to see the school as a factory; students, professors, and even its director were considered its workers. In the two years of Meyer’s appointment, the school doubled the production of mass-produced, cheap furniture, and the settlement of Dessau-Toerten, with its 90 “working class” apartments, was completed. In the academic year 1929-1930, the administration was even able to grant a salary to the students. To Meyer, there is no difference between the labour of the architect, that of the student and that of the construction worker. His prophecy sounds today as bitter as it is lucid: “the increasing exacerbation of the crisis will suffocate the class-conscious architect, but from a political point of view, he will become more and more emancipated from his waiting state. He knows that, as an intellectual worker at the drafting table, he is a slave like his comrade—the construction worker.” For the militant architect, this is a desirable condition, the refusal of their bourgeois life, the process of becoming-proletarian. For Meyer the construction of the socialist architect does not pass through the construction of a different architecture, of the “socialist city,” but it is a process of the refusal of one’s own subjectivity which can be only performed in an active life of militancy, with the “life in common with the proletariat.”

It is striking that Meyer’s prophecy is completely fulfilled today. But the destiny of the proletarization of the architect did not affect only the “class-conscious architect:” it affected architects against their will, and often without them noticing at all. It is important to see that that later, especially after the 2008 crash, a number

25 Ibid., 120.
of architects turned to socially-oriented topics, often working in connection with urban political movements. But the new architect-activist is just another figure of that “reserve army” of free labour fueling the architectural industry of spectacles and events, if they fail to address the modes in which value is produced today in architecture. In other words, if they go on talking about social issues and political struggles of others—often in exotic slums of distant third-world countries—with the attitude of the external observer, without recognizing their own process of proletarianization.26

Historically, architecture seems to be the avantgarde, or the laboratory for the experimentation of the contemporary forms organization of labour, which are today pervasive in all the other disciplines. Today, the contradictions of such an organization still appear more pronounced in architecture rather than in other sectors. Recognizing such a condition does not lead to sad, or backward solutions, meant to restore the architect’s old bourgeois privileges or to advocate a nostalgic idea of architecture as craftsmanship. Instead, we should perhaps surf the current tendency, and realize that Hannes Meyer’s prophecy should be realized even further: that architectural practice is not collaborative enough, that our buildings are not generic enough, that BIM should be more standardized, that schools are not enough factories of knowledge, that the labour time is not enough completely merged with life. Therefore, a good agenda for architecture would be the removal of all those apparatuses that prevent the total collectivization of architecture: the

26 The world activism substituted the more traditionally leftist term “militancy” at least since the late 1990s, with the rise of the Seattle and Genoa movements, but the term had a longer tradition. For a critique of activism in the 1930s, see Walter Benjamin, “The Author as Producer,” New Left Review, I/62 (July-August 1970). For an idea of the new socially-oriented approaches in architecture, see Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider, and Jeremy Till, Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture (London: Routledge, 2011) and Did Someone Say Participate?: An Atlas of Spatial Practices, eds. Markus Miessen and Shumon Basar, (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2006).
anxiety imposed by debt and precarity on the life of architect. One of the most convincing proposals from political movements is that of instrumentalizing the present separation of work and income, by the introduction of an unconditioned, universal, and generalized basic income.\textsuperscript{27} By granting an income detached from the count of working hours, is to acknowledge today’s impossibility to distinguish labour time from life time, production from reproduction. In this way, the necessary mobility and flexibility of workers which is needed in the contemporary forms of production can not only be sustained, but also enhanced. From the point of view of the worker, the access to a fixed income, and the possibility to refuse unwanted jobs, is an incentive for the pursuit of quality, and the possibility for carrying on independent initiatives. Only in this way the collective, networked and anonymous elements of today’s architectural mode of production can be fully liberated and labour, life and architecture can finally become one thing.

\textsuperscript{27} See Andrea Fumagalli, “Ten Propositions on Basic Income (Basic Income in a Flexible Accumulation System),” 8th BIEN Congress (Berlin: October 2000), retrieved in December 2013 at http://www.basicincome.org/bien/papers.html.
6.1. Samples of job application rejections. Courtesy Marcello Fantuzzo, multitude.eu.


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