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SYMBOLIC ARCHITECTURE

and the revival of marginalized spaces

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Shape interplay cannot be dissociated from the work of the architect. Such work has often served political or religious powers, to assert grandness long after the death of those who ordered it. This relationship is still true. However, it is more clearly combined today with economic, urban and societal issues (Venturi & *alii*, 1972), beyond the symbolic visibilization of authority, which characterizes architectural or urban projects. The ever-reasserted craving for modernity (Haëntjens, 2010) also applies to marginalized areas developing strategies for insertion into spaces or networks with strong dynamics.

Architecture, city planning and global competition

Architectural and urban-related elements are included into spatial competition reasoning. For local planners, the aim is to assert the prevalence of their territory while being different from competing spaces (Ward, 1998; Krueger & Gibbs, 2007). Within this framework, the goal is not only to assert authority or some golden age embodied in a work, but also to attract attention and… investment, if possible with the widest appeal in an interrelated world (Sassen, 2007). For instance, this is the case with the race for verticality yielding ever-higher buildings, such as the Petronas Towers in Kuala Lumpur, the Burj Khalifa Tower in Dubai, or Taipei 101.

Consequently, such works impose themselves as identity monuments in a city, or even in a country. This is not really new in some places but the phenomenon has grown in scale, and it now includes spaces with varying weight and rank. These spaces and cities, which are seeking visible and renewed modernity, are characterized by an almost permanent desire for avant-garde. The idea is to remain visible, to imprint collective memory by organizing or using events, especially those benefiting from a label (Olympic Games, international exhibitions, etc.). They wish to derive lasting fame by attracting visitors and investors and, above all, to provide urban and architectural evidence of those moments of consecration. In a wider manner, they express this will in various ways: either large-scale urban changes (Shanghai), or original projects and positioning as in Abu Dhabi.

Competition aspects: representation and monumentality at the intra-urban scale

Urban growth and its various forms have become requirements at all geographical scales so as to continue belonging to circles of development: that of global cities, that of European large cities, that of French and Spanish metropolises, etc. Such circles are

not defined in the absolute (which cities? How many?), nor do they have precise limits. And the logics of competition impacts several levels. Those cities which are considered to belong to a specific circle work to remain within that circle while trying to reach a larger scale, i.e. to join a network with more powerful cities. From then on, some representations tend to evolve; this is the case of Paris whose weight is not considered any more as a risk for the equilibrium of the French territory, but as a challenge for the rank of France in the world (Burgel, 1999), after years of refusal and attempts to reduce its weight in the name of Jean-François Gravier's doctrine ("Paris et le désert français") and that of his successors (Marchand, 2009). More widely, the current globalization situation differs from past reality in many respects (Grataloup, 2010). Among these, some really stand out: time acceleration, new spatial dimensions, sustainable development and the quality of life as multifaceted tools (in Vancouver or Copenhagen), social cohesion or symbolic architecture, be it more or less monumental.

Monumentality is not necessarily determined by the size of a building, even though it is frequently true when one considers its verticality or horizontality. It is more commonly a principle of reorganizing space through building one or several milestone works within the landscape. Reorganizing implies recomposing spatial balances: new centrality points, other centers of attraction and development. Modified space is variable-geometry space; it can be a monument per se, a block or a district. In the same way, projects often combine a number of current trends; it is the case in Copenhagen where the monumentality of some buildings (opera, theater, library) comes with a shift near the sea front (Chignier-Riboulon, 2010). In other cities like Montpellier, Ricardo Bofill's

Antigone district meets the challenges of asserting cultural history, of changing identity, and of providing visibility for the media while offering a conscious break symbolizing revival; the latter being the core elements. In the end, an "invented city" has been built, which was described by Jean-Paul Volle (Volle et *alii*, 2010). Complete revival symbolism. However, considering the extent of requested changes, the population and social players are quite often wary and even overwhelmed by the swift evolution that changes their way of life and of seeing (Lynch, 1969; Coignet, 2008; Jamot, 2009), faced as they are with an urban planning scheme which is far from Amos Rapoport's analyses (1982).

Even higher stakes for marginal spaces

Regarding marginalized spaces, the stakes are even more vital when they are meant to be included, or re-included into the dynamics of a fast growing area.

Those spaces are territories apart from central development areas. Their growth is not strong enough and they are progressively left behind, with a cumulative effect.

Being unable to adapt to new economic reality, they fall back on obsolete know-how and productions. Still, new production and competition trends rarely appear briskly. This is probably why local players do not perceive the risk, or they do not perceive it well, and they underestimate it. Yet, in this matter, modernity scarcely tolerates delays, outdated representations or conflicting political strategies. Missed opportunities, wrong choices and fear of change finally lead to spatial exclusion.

Sooner or later, such spatial exclusion often results in various forms of marginality, ranging from fatalism to political and economic Malthusianism (Chignier-Riboulon, 2007). When faced with such processes, players (few of them at the beginning) tend to adopt an avant-garde line. These avant-gardists are able to identify local needs and tell about them, while understanding which evolution is necessary to provide for the adaptation of their territories (Bloch-Lainé, in Parodi, 1998). The various steps of the evolution we briefly described here are nevertheless much more difficult to implement than to detail in writing, on account of many protean resistance factors.

However, these men are those who initiate territorial resilience movements. Such a notion, quite popular today among psychoanalysts and psychologists (especially by Boris Cyrulnik) is now used in other fields. Marie Anaut defines it as the ability "to continue envisioning the future in spite of destabilizing events" (2005, p. 34). It is "a dynamic process involving positive adaptation while facing significant adversity" (p. 47). Let us quote Pierre Mauroy, the former mayor of Lille, who said that "one must give back hope and strike imagination" (2003, 10). The case of Lille is meaningful (Giblin, 2005) because there and everywhere, the resilience process requires a strong and plural commitment. It means fortitude because one must be convincing at home in the first place; it means creativity and long-term involvement. It also means peculiarity and the ability to publicize. And finally, it means betting on the future.

In this respect, Bilbao is regularly presented as the very essence of success, at least in terms of visibility, with the Guggenheim Museum and its ripple effect. Thus, the derived strategy does not come down to some equipment sporting symbolic architecture; revival implies combining measures working on a long period of time. And so Roubaix added a free zone structure, a revitalized trade, and a VAL metro line to the redefinition of its downtown area, while turning its old art deco swimming pool into a Museum of Art and Industry. However, changing the urban landscape does not mechanically metamorphose a city, and Roubaix remains a poor community, in spite of social contrast (e.g. between l'Alma and Barbieux). Therefore, the process is not over. Should it be a success, it will entail some gentrification or, more likely, a new social and spatial fragmentation (Zukin, 1989; Authier, Bidou-Zachariasen, 2008; Lees, Ley, 2008).

Several types of papers are expected.

1| A new questioning of the concept of architecture or symbolic town planning.

What is it really? Should we limit ourselves to what is demonstrative? Doesn't the answer depend on the socio-cultural environment, in the end? And when does architecture or town planning become symbolic? What are the shares of the architect, of politicians and of urban marketing in this respect?

2| An analysis of the link between symbolic architecture and the revival process.

The point here is to stress the importance of the work itself with the revival phenomenon, or even to show parallelism between situations and, if possible, to appraise the transfer of know-how in terms of politics, social psychology, etc.

3| Enlightening monographs

Monographs provide actual instances emphasizing the various stages of revival, transitional periods as well as key player action. In the same manner, it would be interesting to show failure situations even when they involved prominent figures of the profession.

4| The label issue

This is another interesting subject. It allows mobilizing human and financial resources and to attract attention before, during and after some event. According to the European Commission, the "European Capital of Culture" label is an opportunity to regenerate cities while developing their visibility and enhancing their image. What is the real impact of this label? What happens to the new facilities, regarding more particularly space restructuring?

5| Urban resilience and social change

Revival is not neutral. Urban space changes and its return to stronger economic dynamics do have consequences. The city becomes attractive, at least in those labeled areas. Progressively, real estate gains in value there. Pioneer fronts appear… With this in prospect, what social and spatial changes will take place? At what scale? And, of course, what will happen to the less privileged population?

6| More or less transversal prospective elements would be welcome.

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The proposals (about 300 words, title, autor(s), abstract) are expected before September the 1st, 2011 : chignierriboulon@free.fr. **The papers will be published (book or journal).**

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