THEORY OF CITY FORM

SOME ATTITUDES TO / PRACTICES REGARDING / THE PAST

1) RESHAPE AS BEFORE
2) BUILD ANEW
3) MAKE AN OPEN SYSTEM TO ALLOW MEMORY TO BE ACHIEVED OVER TIME
4) LEAVE ALL OR FRAGMENTS BUT ADD NEW PROGRAM
5) CONNECT TO PAST URBAN TRACES
6) CREATE NEW TECTONICS BASED ON MEMORY FORMS
7) BUILD MONUMENTS / MEMORIALS / MUSEUMS
8) MAKE THE NEW AS CLASSICAL
9) CREATE PERMANENCES
10) LET CONTEXT MAKE THE PROPER ASSOCIATIONS

INTRODUCTION

Julian Beinart

The 1994 Jerusalem Seminar in Architecture, *Architecture, History and Memory*, invited architects and theorists to reflect on how contemporary architecture deals with the past, both as the accumulated building of the city and as inherited ideas about architecture.

Architecture comes about only in the context of existing places: buildings are restored, reconfigured, or replaced within already formed urban plans. Even isolated virgin sites possess a territorial heritage. Monuments, memorials, and museums are deliberate attempts to maintain memory, battles against the terror of forgetting. The artifacts of our cities give us biological equilibrium and cultural continuity by virtue of their stability. Since classical times, architecture has served to train individual memory; it is essential for our collective memory as well. "We may live without architecture, and worship without her, but we cannot remember without her," John Ruskin said.

The seminar speakers were encouraged to reflect on two methods of knowing the past, history and memory as interpreted in the following five comments:

(1) History exists only as long as an object is in use; that is, so long as a form relates to its original function. However, when form and function are severed, and only form remains vital, history shifts into the realm of memory. When history ends, memory begins. (Aldo Rossi)

(2) The collective memory is not the same as formal history. General history only starts when tradition ends and the social memory is fading or breaking up. So long as a remembrance continues to exist, it is useless to set it down in writing or otherwise fix it in memory. (Maurice Halbwachs)

(3) Memory and history are processes of insight; each involves components of the other, and their boundaries are shadowy. Yet memory and history are normally and justifiably distinguished: memory is inescapable and prima facie indubitable; history is contingent and empirically testable. (David Lowenthal)

(4) Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. History, on the other hand, is the reconstruction, always problematic and incomplete, of what is no longer. Memory is absolute, while history can only conceive of the relative. History is perpetually suspicious of memory, and its true mission is to suppress and destroy it. (Pierre Nora)

(5) Memory, in sum, is not only authentic, and radiant, and poetic. It is also hurtful and fragile and, in a sense, untransmittable. Therefore, it needs the fortifyings of history; the connections, the comparisons, the conclusions. Memory is color, history is line. (Leon Wieseltier)

Most of the invited architects preferred not to speak directly to knowledge constructs of the past but presented their work so that it might be open to interpretation. James Ingo Freed, however, answered directly, saying that he preferred memory to history because he preferred its authenticity and rich detail to the abstraction and consistency of history. Architecture, he acknowledged, however, could not survive without both. The critic Joseph Rykwert took an opposing view. Memory, he argued, is generated involuntarily while history requires active thought. Consequently, only history allows the architect to reconstruct the past in an accessible and rational way.

The subject of Freed's presentation, the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, is an attempt to preserve memory through architecture before memory of the Holocaust fades into history. But how to do this without using directly the physical environment in which the Holocaust took place? Freed's solution was through what he calls indirection and the discovery that the only way into a phenomenon as immense as the Holocaust was through both the tectonics of the Holocaust and the invention of a tectonics of his own.

To forget is as necessary as to remember. Stanford Anderson stressed the importance for oral societies of forgetting and even forgetting that one is forgetting. Rykwert described the current condition of Tiananmen Square in Beijing and Las Vegas in Nevada as places that—each in its own way—facilitate forgetting. Antoine Predock, on the other hand, in explaining a project of his in Las Vegas, saw the city in terms of its ability to inspire a kind of amnesia that allows an architect to forget specific context, and, as a result, to design a hotel that is purposely and extravagantly unforgettable.

Anderson introduced the idea of tradition in contrast to memory. Despite its often conservative use, he argued, tradition, unlike memory, points forward rather than backward and can more easily be turned to progressive uses. The architects Balkrishna Doshi and Arata Isozaki in particular often referred to their buildings in terms of bringing their past into the conflicted state of their present culture. Anderson also distinguished between memory *through* architecture, social memory, and memory *in* architecture, which he called disciplinary memory. Early architecture did not divide them: Anderson argued that the many copies of the Church of the Holy Sepulcher outside Jerusalem are examples of an undifferentiated social and disciplinary memory, in contrast to later emulations, such as those based on Palladian villas, where only disciplinary memory is at play. He concluded that most architecture, in particular, the great works of Le Corbusier, Aalto, Kahn, and others, is an exercise in the use of memory rather than of history. And that this is precisely why disciplinary memory should interest not just architects, but historians as well.

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4.242J / 11.331J

Fall 1997

Advanced Seminar in City Form

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Memory and Form

Working Categories and Reading

1. Texts
M. Halbwachs, The Collective Memory, Harper and Row 1980
D. Lowenthal, The Past is a Foreign Country, Cambridge 1985
P. Nora, "*Between Memory and History*," Representations, Spring 1989
A. Rossi, The Architecture of the City, MIT, 1982

2. General
S. Anderson, "*Memory Without Monuments : Vernacular Architecture*," Unpublished Text
K.C. Bloomer and C.W. Moore, Body, Memory and Architecture, Yale 1977
C. Boyer, The City of Collective Memory, MIT 1994
J. Ellul, The Meaning of the City, Grand Rapids 1970
K. Lynch, What Time is This Place? MIT 1972
J. Ruskin, "*The Lamp of Memory*" in The Seven Lamps of Architecture, Farrar, Strauss and Giroux 1981
M. Quantrill, The Environmental Memory, Schocken 1987
S. Schama, Landscape and Memory, Vintage 1996

3. 1994 Jerusalem Seminar in Architecture
Papers by:
S. Anderson (also published as "*Memory and Architecture*", Daidalos, Dec. 1995)
J. Beinart (Introduction and Summary in forthcoming book on Seminar)
K. Frampton
J.Rykwert

4. Remembering
F.C. Bartlett, Remembering, Cambridge 1932
F. Davis, Yearning for Yesterday, The Free Press 1979
M.M. Grunenberg and P.E. Morris, Applied Problems in Memory, Academic Press 1979
D. Richter (ed.), Aspects of Learning and Memory, Basic 1966

5. Mnemonics
J. Spence, The Memory Place of Matteo Ricci, Viking 1984
F.A. Yates, The Art of Memory, Routledge and Kegan Paul 1966
A. Vidler, "*Postscript*," Oppositions 13 1979

6. Time
M. Eliade, "*Sacred Time and Myths*" in The Sacred and the Profane, Harvest/HBJ 1959 and
"*Indian Symbolisms of Time and Eternity*" in Images and Symbols, Sheed and Ward 1969
S. Kern, The Culture of Time and Space 1880 - 1918, Harvard 1983
G. Lipsitz, Time Passages: Collective Memory and American Popular Culture, Minnesota 1990
Y.F. Tuan, "*Time in Experiential Space*" and "*Time and Place*" in Space and Place, Minnesota 1977
E. Zerubavel, Hidden Rhythms, Chicago 1981

7. **Transience**
J. Beinart, "*From Olympia to Barcelona,*" Space and Society, No. 50, 1990
A. Falassi (ed.), Time out of Time, New Mexico 1987
J.J. MacAloon (ed.), Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle, ISHI Publications, Philadelphia 1984
B. Schwartz, "*The Social Context of Commemoration: a Study in Collective Memory*" in Social Forces, Vol.61:2, Dec. 1981

8. **Archetypes**
G. Bachelard, The Poetics of Space, Beacon 1969
M. Eliade, "*Archetypes and Repetition*" in Cosmos and History, Harper 1959
I. Progoff, Jung's Psychology and its Social Meaning, Anchor 1973
H. Rosenau, Vision of the Temple, Oresko 1979
J. Rykwert, On Adam's House in Paradise, M.O.M.A. 1972
F. van der Meer, "*The Basilica*" in M.C. Albrecht, J.H. Barnett and M. Griff, The Sociology of Art and Literature, Praeger 1970

9. **Monuments**
T. Crosby, The Necessary Monument, N.Y. Graphic Society 1970
K. Forster, "*Monument/Memory and the Mortality of Architecture,*" Oppositions Vol.25, Fall 1982
Harvard Architecture Review, Monumentality and the City, MIT 1984
W. Hubbard, "*A Meaning for Monuments,*" The Public Interest, No. 74, Winter 1984

10. **Ruins**
R. Dalisi, "*Memory and Ruins,*" Space and Society, No. 19 1982
K. Harries, "*Building and the Terror of Time,*" Perspecta 19 1982
J.B. Jackson, The Necessity of Ruins, U. Mass. 1980
B. Stafford, Voyage into Substance, MIT 1984
B.N. Stanton, Revealing a Contemporary Ruin, MIT M.Arch Thesis 1987

11. **Preservation**
D. Appleyard (ed.), Conservation in European Cities, MIT 1979
G.C. de Carlo, "*ILAUD : A Project for Geneva,*" in Multiplicity of Languages vs. Eclecticism, Sansoni 1982
J. Fawcett, The Future of the Past, Thames and Hudson 1976
D. Lowenthal and M. Binney(eds.), Our Past Before Us, Thames and Hudson 1976
A. Riegl, "*The Cult of Monuments,*" Oppositions Vol.25, Fall 1982
B. Seronick, Retrieving the Past, MIT MCP/S.M.Arch.S Thesis 1984

12. **Cases**
a) Washington
J.L. Freed, Paper at 1994 Jerusalem Seminar in Architecture
S.A. Kohler, The Commission of Fine Arts, a Brief History 1910-1990, US Printing Office 1991
L. Wieseltier, "After Memory," The New Republic, May 3 1993

b) Jerusalem
D. Bahat, Carta's Historical Atlas of Jerusalem, Carta 1986
A. Elon, Jerusalem : City of Mirrors, Little, Brown 1989
M. Gilbert, Jerusalem : Illustrated History Atlas, Steimatzky 1977
G. le Strange, History of Jerusalem under the Moslems, _____
W.A. McClung, The Architecture of Paradise : Survivals of Eden and Jerusalem, California 1983
J. Wilkinson, The Jerusalem Jesus Knew, Thomas Nelson 1978

JULIAN BEINART: Leon Krier has argued very eloquently on behalf of walking-distance communities, but when I try to calculate how they would work I began to see why the history of attempts to establish communities based on walking distances has been what it has. Take my own situation as an example. I work at MIT, a small university as universities go; it has only 8,000 students, and it probably could not be any smaller than that and still have the kind of critical mass that is required to do the kind of research that it is doing. Add to those 8,000 students, probably 3,000 faculty, researchers, and staff, and their wives and children. They alone would comprise a 25,000-person community. If we all had to stay within this community, I would have no daily contact whatever with people other than those from MIT, and the market for a variety of things would be very small. It would also be too homogeneous. My son doesn't necessarily want to marry the daughter of an MIT employee. It would lack what Charles Correa, borrowing a phrase from Doxiadis, calls the "blue" people—the types in every community that defy categorization, the people who used to be thrown out of the tribe because they were too idiosyncratic. What would the density of blue people be in a 25,000-person universe?

Obviously, Leon Krier did not mean that this had to be the only community. He envisaged access by each community to a larger constellation. But the easier the access to the other communities in the constellation, the more intense the communication between them becomes. That in turn increases the size of the markets, which I think would be a beneficial function, but it would also, among other things, allow people to take jobs in other locations. When they do so, however, they will not necessarily want to change their houses, at least not at the same rate. If living in one community and working in the other is allowed—and I don't see how you cannot allow it in a democratic society—a lot of other things will have to be allowed as well. What if both spouses are in the labor force, do both have to get jobs in the walking-distance community? If they have children living at home who are also in the work force, do they have to leave home if they cannot work in that community? The whole thing unravels, and we end up very quickly with a modern metropolitan area.

I would argue that for many people the modern city has brought mobility and interaction that was never possible before. It promises to unlock people from the sectarianism and localism of ghettos and small communities in the developing world as much as in the developed worlds. The cost of that freedom may, in urban design or technical terms, be great, but it is naive to believe that it will be rejected out of hand on those grounds alone. As designers we must work to understand the tension between face-to-face communities and larger communities: mobility is a modern achievement, and we have to design for it, not despite it.

The United States has just gone through years of trying to use the metropolis to redress educational imbalances between black and white people by the system of busing that utilizes the entire metropolitan area, rather than the local community alone. The device of using the entire metropolitan area may have turned out to be unwise. Putting small children into buses and sending them all over the place, rather than putting all that energy into improving the local black schools, might also have been unnecessarily cruel. But the interplay between local control and the possibility of finding greater equity in the larger metropolitan area nonetheless remains a good example of precisely the tension I am talking about. It is a central tension in our thinking, and it is one that Leon has brought strongly to our attention.

4.241J / 11.330J Theory of City Form
Spring 2013