

Le Carré bleu, feuille internationale d'architecture fulfilled a leading role to promote new ideas in the last 50 years of architecture. Due to the changing social circumstances, it deemed its first task to define radically new environmental and urbanism conceptions, (based on the tenets of Geddes); to bring to the fore the modernist architectural ideas, referring to the Finn architects' (founder of the periodical) and the TEAM X. projects; appreciating the revolutionary structural novelty within the new space frames (Yona Frtedman & D G Emmerich). LCB ceaselessly emphasized the responsibility of the architect regarding its social and environmental function. LCB has often proposed solutions, which sometimes couldn't achieve immediate agreement, only to be accepted in the long run. In this way, it assumed to become provoking in the field of architecture, to be the enfant terrible of the profession.

In the last 50 years, fundamental changes have occurred in our society and consequently in the field of urbanism and architecture: post-industrial society followed the industrial one; the importance of the service-industry became domineering; and the national economy is giving way to the world wide globalisation. Beyond all of these changes, next to the real space notion we started to think and work in virtual space, as well. Within these different circumstances, obviously new problems appeared: the gigantic, monstrous building blocs squeezed out nature of the city, and the immense car - traffic made practically impossible transportation. These grave changes ask for immediate responses. The LCB mission is - taking into account the presumably coming further developments – to reveal the expectable trends and elaborate some brave solutions.

LCB and its Friends' Society (les amis du carré bleu) has to undertake the same responsibility within the new circumstances, like it did in the past; struggling for the more human environment and taking into consideration the interest of the inhabitants.

Regionalism. In the second half of the XX century, abnormally dispersed regional cities (conurbanization, metapolis), have taken the place of the metropolis and the megapolis. The major characteristics of the traditional and the new cities became the phenomena of overpopulation, pollution and criminality. Nowadays the congestion of the mega-cities shows likewise meaningful failure as the isolation and solitude at the suburbs. However, the people don't want to deprive themselves of the better job chances and the abundance of amusement possibilities to be found in these huge cities, meanwhile they would love to maintain the healthier air of the greenbelt and the advantages of the private cars. This remains an insoluble contradiction.

Decentralized, manifold, multifunctional centres. Could offer better potentials instead of the one-functional zones. In the case of the regional cities, the widespread numerous centres could assure in a better way the possibilities of finding work, and could better satisfy the needs of the inhabitants for culture, studying and amusing. As for today, neither electronic communication, nor the accelerated transportation has responded well to the problems of distance and the streaming of traffic into the cities. The centres are unable to accept more activities, without being even more suffocating. Also, it became impossible to receive more dwellers, to increase the centres' capacity if we don't vote for the construction of the high-rises. On the other hand, even in the suburbs nature cannot locally satisfy the needs for people without the car. Internet-connections, e-mails may decrease the time for transportation but cannot substitute the direct connection among people. Improved mass transportation can contribute to tame the boisterous street traffic, but the real solution would be to bring nearer the workplace and the home.

We need a more flexible city-planning. In the wake of urbanization the city distinctively got separated from the environment. But today, instead of the traditional contrast of the city and the village it is the regional city and nature that become estranged. In order to hinder this trend nature should be resettled into both the traditional and new cities (green-belts, wind-corridors, forest, flower-gardens, etc.). These procedures have to be linked with the overall use of water, to refresh the environment. Public places, having the goal to offer peaceful rest, should be created in the way that they could become calm and more silent. In this way, people could come back to the city, avoiding the danger that it will be merely a museum. The loosening of the city-centres and the condensation of the suburbs can be the task.

The variety of the building blocs. The architecture of the last years has been characterized by the mechanical repetition of lifeless, empty forms and the concentration of huge city blocs. To day, the duty of the contemporary architect would be to create buildings of human size. Beside the reduction of the height we would welcome houses of various design and footprint, in which the apartments are individual. One should change the stiff system of continuity, the groups of houses could be placed in a more playful, looser way, making possible to let the larks breath. Instead of the houses, complemented with small gardens, larger parks could receive the building in which not the green belt surrounds the created objects but, to the contrary, the houses would be embedded in the nature.

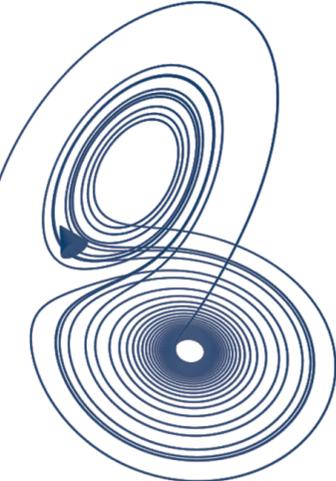
Seeing the inhabitants. These new forms should make the life of the people friendlier. The modernist architecture stripped brutally naked the traditional buildings. Postmodernism decorated these skeletons with ill-fitting ornaments borrowed from the past. These decorations, even if they intended to sarcastically quote the past, gave only superficial response to the bursting question: how to create a more human architecture. Also fabricated theories did not help. The eccentric gags of the Neo-Baroque could easily be weird marvels of a city but do not correspond to the complex requirements of our days. After these experiments society expects simpler but catching ideas.

The rich application of forms requires the use of varied constructions material. Like Alvar Alto, Louis Kahn, Team X have done it in the past. The new space forms call for natural, human-friendly materials that can assure a more intimate, individualistic ambience both for the inhabitants and the onlookers. In the buildings of Jean Nouvel, cold materials, as glass and metal serve this concept. Also Renzo Piano proves that high-tech can be poetic, that touches the people. Lucien Kroll is not afraid to apply all the elements of nature and blending them with artificial construction material. To employ, consistently the same kind of matter, reveals by Tadao Ando, that complexity can be achieved with mere concrete if smartly applied, as in his labyrinthic creations. Calatrava's exclusively metal structures allow flying his floating constructions. The above-mentioned architecture not only serves the useful requirements but cause true aesthetic pleasure.

The mission of the architect resides in the dwelling that corresponds to the human life-style. People desire free space; they don't want to live in straitjacket. They don't only want to be offered a ground to their lives, but to have a place, which calms and inspires them. We all recreate our life-conditions, since in the midst man also changes and transforms it needs. Nothing is more demanding for he architect than to understand this need and trying to find methods which could make possible changes and permanence at once.

The moral and social responsibility of the architect. In our contemporary polarized world we cannot neglect the inequality of distribution. One has to fight for a democratic procedure of distribution, to make attainable the apartments for the disfavoured, as well. Next to the economic points of view we have to think of the moral one, too. The architect has to share this social-political responsibility. With the explosion of the huge slab blocks, the reasons of the trouble didn't discontinued. The problems of these large building-blocs are not architectural but social. One cannot transfer from one moment to the other great masses to a different social and architectural milieu. The traditional customs, habits, cohesive forces have to be respected in order to maintain the equilibrium of society.

We cannot reduce the mission of the architect to the mere construction. Neither bringing to life the monumental housing blocs, nor palaces for the privileged will resolve the problem. The architects have to serve, in their manifold ways the requirements of society.



THE REVIEW When the Finnish founders (with André Schimmerling who was the review's editor in chief) started the cycle of the first fifty years of le Carré Bleu deciding in Helsinki to found this bilingual review (French, English), they laid the foundations of an international, essentially European, group.

The group, from 1958 to our days has produced some 170 issues of what originally used to be called a "Feuille internationale d'Architecture".

In 1958 the CIAM had recently disappeared. The most active members of the Team X, who were absolutely not responsible for that disappearance, were close to the groups who were at the core of le Carré Bleu; they took part for many decades in the editing council of the review, which opened up, more than once, its columns to the outcomes of their research work. Peter and Alison Smith attended the celebration of the 30 years of life of le Carré Bleu, at the Beaubourg in 1988. In 1998, at the Institut Finlandais, on the 40th anniversary of le Carré Bleu, Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre evoked (and extolled) the founding text of Shadrach Woods (Candilis, Josic, Woods) in the issue entitled "From Shadrach Woods to the New Generation". The text, entitled "Web", had already been published in 1962 in le Carré Bleu.

Le Carré Bleu has attracted and is still attracting a great number of very rich proposals, of all types, made by all kinds of personalities, who find in the approaches of the review the guarantee of a permanent faithfulness to the principles dear to their hearts.

It is impossible here to remember the whole of the editorial policy which was shaped by those principles. Some of them, anyway, can be evoked, such as for example:

- "architecture, the urban art, urban and territorial planning must be first of all attempts to solve essential social problems".
- "Le Carré Bleu has the task to denounce abnormalities, failures, injustice concerning training, teaching, research and practices related to the built heritage and the environment, to denounce, therefore, more than to propose".

The other declarations of intention, which are also commitments, are militant as well, and make Le Carré Bleu a peculiar and atypical review of architecture, which places itself midway between a review of ideas and the means of expression of an active group.

A DIFFICULT PERIOD Western Europe, where the Carré Bleu's network is essentially concentrated, and where it tries to play the role of permanently mobilized and accountable guardian (Patrick Geddes' Outlook Towers) has been a privileged geographical niche.

As a matter of fact, from 1958 to our days, in spite of colonial wars (Algeria), the collapse of the Soviet Union, the unification of Germany, extreme liberalisation (and what else?), the problems which appeal to our critical reflection and ask for solutions have not yet qualitatively changed, even though they have been evolving in the last decades.

It is easier to question this or that received idea or this or that criticizable or even unacceptable action when the context is stable, i.e. when the political and economic organization underlying society's life is clear and evolves slowly enough to permit adjustments.

It is thus possible to spot out dysfunctions, injustice and aberrations, since they are connected to the functioning of society.

Now that le Carré Bleu tries to take stock of itself, after fifty years of life, it has to realise that the structures of society, whose stability had always authorised its moods, framed and justified its impatience and its proposals, are faltering and definitely unstable.

The marks of likely upsets are clearly perceptible.

In the issue of June 2008 of the French review "Esprit" four articles were published, written by four philosophers, on the present acceleration of history, cases in point.

In the introduction to the four articles the review's editor makes some general remarks on the changes in progress, which directly concern us, such as for instance:

- 1) "Our era seems to be prey to speed, as if it were overtaken by its own rapidity, unable to govern its effects... it is a flight forward whose trajectory and above all whose rate we cannot govern."
- 2) "While we thought that the Western system, characterised by political democracy, was in its full right and market economy remained the only one to enter the lists, without any counter-model or direct competitor, we trusted the " present" and cherished the illusion that history could not catch us unawares". And also: "the tale of world history is still receivable when it is told by Europeans...as Europe lies at the periphery of a deliberately non-European world".
- 3) "...and we discover that the whole of world geography is changing, as the power of the countries now grouped under the acronym BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, China) affirms itself on the world scene"
- 4) "European countries are faced by a crisis of representation of the future, by the feeling that world history is developing outside Europe, without Europe, and that Europe cannot any longer earmark it".

THE FUTURE OF LE CARRE BLEU Even if le Carré Bleu keeps its European dimension, it is interested in globalization. As a matter of fact, it is impossible for the current changes, that we have just mentioned, not to have consequences of different types (unsteady banks – hazardous loans – crises – building with short-lived rules – uncertain legal provisions – de-localisation – unemployment – immigration – downsized programmes – uncontrollable oil price and life in

megapolises etc...). All that oblige le Carré Bleu , in a downsized and, at any rate, changed Europe, to revise its analyses and stances, with the necessary participation of philosophers, economists, sociologists, historians...

In fact, abnormalities of all orders, which hinder a correct and fair approach to the problems of the environment, of planning and of the built heritage, have no reason to disappear in this redistribution of power: it's just the opposite, as some economic forces are interested in their continuation. Against such abnormalities, le Carré Bleu has already rushed into the battles of ideas or more "matter of fact" fights. We must increase the pressure of our review, acting as an international group on the European plan in order to be more widely understood. As to globalisation, it ought to be for our review the opportunity to geographically enlarge its observations, its reflection and its contacts and to increase its impact; the opportunity also to open up to new ways of thinking and to enrich its non-conformism.

The current breaks and upsets of the great geopolitical balances will cause the emerging of all sorts of future whose starting scenario is difficult to forecast. They will develop into suffering (wars, famines, genocides...) and, may be, at the same time, will give great happiness to some previously poverty-stricken populations....

The perspective of these great changes might even be idyllic notwithstanding the violence which is connected to them, were it not accompanied by a deadly threat, as we all know, to the survival of our planet.

The development of China, of BRIC and of other nations enable them to accede to the comfort and benefits of our Western way of living, which should be everybody's right. But we know that there is a deadly risk for the biosphere and that it is necessary to find a way to change the present development process, in order to survive.

The Stockholm Conference and the Club of Rome date back to 1972; the definition of "sustainable development" to 1980. The Bruntland Report which takes into account the real dimension of "sustainable development": a matter of war or peace conditioned by social inequalities and environmental disasters, was published in 1987. Agenda 21 was adopted at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. The Aalborg Charter dates back to 1994; Kyoto to 1997 (enforced in 2005), Johannesburg to 2002, etc....: as many extremely complex alarm signals.

No responsible person can ignore the vital risks for us all that listless states produce by ignoring the urgency to deliver.

What future, what planning, were it environmental, can be credible in this scenario of horror and catastrophes either announced or already occurred.

Le Carré Bleu cannot but commit itself. It will have to support with all its forces the efforts of those who have been working in this direction for more than fifteen years, who were able to start planning experiences, in the medium and long term, of eco-neighbourhoods, eco-cities, eco-regions etc...., and also of those who conceive and build "sustainable architecture" (see Pierre Lefèvre's books – coédition certu/puca).

Even though the pioneers of a fifteen years work are admirable, it is also clear that what they produce is jeopardized by those who, for more than fifteen years have been a dead weight and refuse, in a really criminal way, to take seriously the research of new sustainable energies and new ways of developing.

The commitment in favour of those lucid humanists and against those who jeopardize the future for short term interests must be our battle. A battle in 2008, in fact a battle of le Carré Bleu which has lasted 36 years!

Judge us:

The issue 3-72, devoted to the theme "For a global approach to the environment", realised by Francois Lapiéd, reports the conclusions of a meeting held in Aix en Provence, on July 9th 1972, in which Aulis Blomstedt, Georges Felici, Paul Nelson and André Schimmerling took part. The proposal was also signed by Edith Aujame, Georges Candilis, Philippe Fouquey, Lucien Herve, Francois Lapiéd, Henri Pingusson and Yonel Schein.

Starting from the text of July 1972 le Carré Bleu's line was drawn up that same year as follows:

LE CARRE BLEU'S LINE

- 1) The growth of the world population and of its industrial means is a heavy threat to the biosphere's fragile balance.
- 2) Man, an important factor in that balance, is obliged to re-think of its action to adjust it to natural constraints. Instead of letting economic, technical and demographic determinism –a set of growth factors – operate, we are to work out and apply an ethics of the environment within the framework of an in depth awareness: a global development policy for man.
- 3) It is high time to support all the movements in this direction and find our place among organisations, professions, communities who open up to a new man – environment balance at all levels : technical, educational, institutional. We must find our place in a movement for a better world.

We are... ... in favour of a coordinated planning... ...taking into account the preservation of natural balances".

Was it enlightened second sight or solid foresight? ...1972 ...2008....

2006 - 2008 La phase actuelle de la longue histoire du CB - le premier numéro, paru à Helsinki, date de 1958 - a commencé par la «*journée d'études du Carré Bleu*» à Beaubourg (*Mémoire en Mouvement* - Paris, janvier 2006) et par le n°2006 *Fragments / Symbiose* présenté au siège italien de l'UNESCO (*Confronti come metolo* - Rome, octobre 2006). Quelques mois plus tard, l'Arca - une des revues d'architectures ayant une grande diffusion internationale - a envoyé à ses abonnés plus de 7.000 copies du CB n°02/2006, en lançant l'«*ouverture au débat*» de la plus petite (par la taille, certes, pas par la qualité!) revue d'architecture du monde.

Le nouveau site web du CB - avec les documents les plus importants concernant son histoire, les tables de matières et les couvertures de tous les numéros à partir de 1958, tous les textes des numéros récents (les autres viendront par la suite) - a enregistré plus de 10.000 contacts par an de visiteurs de pays de tous les continents. Son édition actuelle comprend également «*la Collection du CB*» (composée jusqu'à aujourd'hui de 6 cahiers) et des «*annexes*» où le CdR (cercle de rédaction) a jusqu'à présent illustré le travail de jeunes bureaux d'architecture de plusieurs régions.

Depuis 2006 - sous le Haut Patronage de l'UNESCO - le CB a lancé l'«*Appel international à idées - une idée pour chaque ville*», ouvert aux jeunes diplômés des pays européens et de la Méditerranée, dont la troisième édition va bientôt commencer. Dans les deux éditions précédentes, l'Appel a enregistré la participation de plus de 100 groupes de 15 nationalités. Deux jurys internationaux différents ont examinés ces projets et 20 stages rémunérés ont été réalisés pendant six mois, dans des agences d'architecture européennes de renom.

Le n°4 2008 – «*Les devoirs des hommes*» - est dans la lignée du n°4 1998 – «*40 ans du Carré Bleu: de Shadrach Woods vers la nouvelle génération*» - et du n°2/88 - «*Le Carré Bleu à Beaubourg*» - à l'occasion des 30 ans de la revue qui correspondait aux 30 ans de la fin des CIAM (1928-1958); dans la série «*architecture / diapositives*», le CCI du Centre Pompidou publia, à l'époque, «*l'héritage des C.I.A.M. : 1958-1988*», où André Schimmerling firent le point sur l'évolution des thèses des TEAM X, texte qui était accompagné de diapositives d'œuvres d'architectes qui collaboraient avec le CB.

Le n°4 2008 - avec le projet de «*Déclaration des Devoirs des Hommes*» - sera présenté à la Cité de l'Architecture et du Patrimoine à Paris, au Palais de Chaillot où, au mois de décembre 1948, l'Assemblée Générale des Nations Unies approuva la «*Déclaration Universelle des Droits de l'Homme*».

Une revue, un groupe de tendance, ne promeut pas des initiatives qui relèvent de l'ONU. Le projet de «*Déclaration des Devoirs de l'Homme*» que lance le CB ne se veut qu'un instrument pour stimuler la réflexion sur les transformations du milieu de vie, une invitation à énumérer les devoirs de l'homme-citoyen concernant l'habitat, les styles de vie et la co-existence des diversités culturelles et idéologiques de tous bords.

Ce projet affirme que la question du développement durable, de la compatibilité avec l'environnement, est moins technique qu'éthique : un "credo" qui impose un changement de base et en faisant évoluer les esprits de notre temps. Donc, la recherche d'hypothèses et objectifs partagés, mais à concrétiser dans des formes différentes. Ceci par de multiples actions de chacun des presque 7 milliards d'individus, trois fois le nombre de ce qui habitaient la planète à la moitié du siècle dernier, à l'époque où «*quelques jeunes des CIAM, irrités par la sclérose dont souffrait le groupe dont ils étaient sortis, décidèrent de mener une action militante permanente de recherche des "vraies" questions brûlantes et des "vraies" réformes nécessaires pour les milieux de la vie humaine*». Avec la dissolution des CIAM commence le Team X qui, par le CB également, se lança «*in search of a utopia of the present*». Non pas une fuite du présent mais l'utopie comme démarche pour anticiper l'avenir: The Aim of Team X: ne pas théoriser mais construire parce que ce n'est que par la "con-struction" qu'on peut réaliser une utopie du présent. Ce sont cette mission et cette ambition qui, d'une manière ou d'une autre, ont toujours animé le CB.

Le projet de «*Déclaration des Devoirs de l'Homme*» renforce une attitude culturelle. Transformer les milieux de vie par des actes et des projets concrets demande de la constance et surtout de l'énergie, «*la force qui transforme ce qui est hypothétique en réalité*».

le carré bleu

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