# Education to Ecology and High Quality in Architecture

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# THE CULTURE OF DESIGNING

Massimo Pica Ciamarra

la follia dell'universo

dell'esistenza

del diritto

della politica

della comunicazione

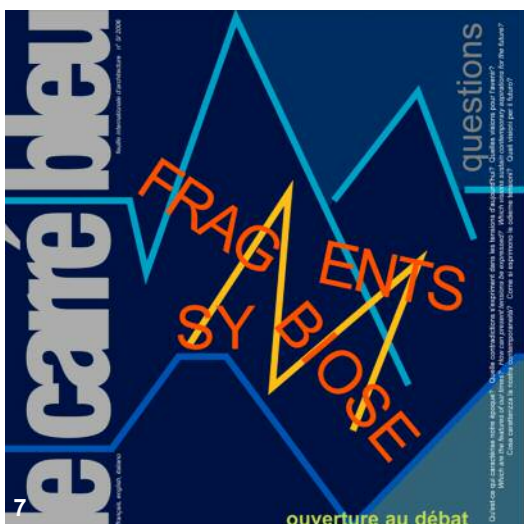della pubblicità

dell'impresa

dell'organizzazione

+

LA FOLLIA DELLE CITTA
E DEI TERRITORI



nelle periferie contemporanee, come in un tessuto neoplastico,
le singole cellule si sviluppano incontrollatamente, senza regole e senza ritegno,
avendo perso "l'informazione"
quanto le tiene insieme perché siano parte di un organismo vitale

Konrad Lorenz

"gli 8 peccati capitali della nostra civiltà"



Adolf Portmann

negli esseri primordiali  -trasparenti come le meduse-
i rapporti con lo spazio sono determinati dalla luce e dal buio,
forse anche da colori, calore e stimoli chimici

negli organismi superiori  -non più trasparenti, ma opachi-
la pelle determina possibilità relazionali, permette di stabilire rapporti
e compie le più diverse funzioni della comunicazione

nel mondo biologico,  l'evoluzione dalle strutture trasparenti e simmetriche a
quelle opache crea un nuovo livello di vita :
l'individuo non è più solo, è predisposto alla superindividualità

facile parafrasare questa analisi
trasporre "individuo" con "edificio"

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A. Almost one year ago -in another extraordinary wonderful place because of its landscape, poetry and architecture- a Seminar **(2)** on "madness" was held: madness of the universe, madness of life, of law, of politics, of communication, of advertising, of enterprises, madness of organization. Although it had been promoted by an INARCH past-President, in the Seminar the madness of the city and of territories was not included. There were 8 types of "madness", like "*Civilized Man's Eight Deadly Sins*" among which -in the '70s- Konrad Lorenz had included a clear and terrifying analysis of contemporary suburbs: **(3)** he compared the unwinding of the built on the territory to a myriad of cells that have lost what has to keep them together, "information", exactly as happens in neo-plastic disease. Not considering basic the relations between the individual buildings is inborn in the culture of separation, which has been working, for a long time, on classifications, distinctions, types, lots, enclosures and has focused on technologies and components of the individual buildings, identifying the quality of architecture with performances, technologies, styles and forms. In this way the cities, from wonderful expressions of human creativity, have transformed into expressions of madness.

**(4)** In primordial beings -poor in interrelations, as transparent as jellyfish- the relations with space were caused by light and darkness, perhaps also colours, heat and chemical stimuli. In higher organisms -no longer transparent, but opaque- the skin makes relations possible, it helps setting connections and the most diverse functions of communication. In other words, in the biological world, the evolution of transparent and symmetrical structures into the opaque ones creates a new level of life: the individual is no longer alone but predisposed to super-individuality. It is easy to
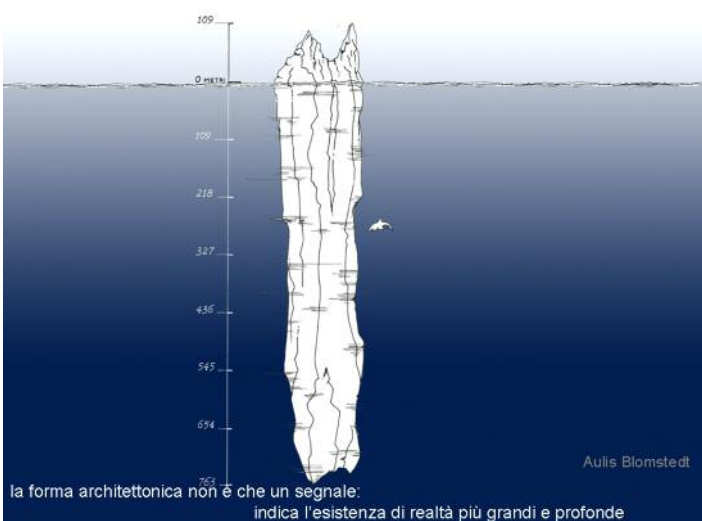
le città sono nate quando non gli edifici,
ma gli spazi fra gli edifici hanno assunto significato
e questo significato ha cominciato a prevalere
su quello dei singoli edifici

la superindividualità
è la condizione prima del costruire

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l'urban sprawl
- è nell'abbandono delle logiche di legame
- nell'assenza di prassi fondate sulle relazioni con paesaggi e contesti
- nell'affiancarsi di individualità sostanzialmente autonome

6    ormai coinvolge anche  centri  e memorie cariche di senso



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paraphrase this analysis, to replace "individual" with "building": what delimits it expresses its individuality, but above all its ability to participate in the urban scene, to relate itself to and communicate with what surrounds it.

Hence the interest in the city and the relations between the individual elements composing it, as is specific in our culture. **(5)** We come from the tradition which recognizes that cities are born when not the buildings, but the spaces between the buildings take on a meaning. Or better, when this meaning prevails on the one of individual buildings, e.i. when super-individuality becomes the precondition for building.

Nowadays, domotics tends to "intelligent" buildings : restricting oneself to the private, however, is "idiotic", in the etymological sense, from "*idios*" in Greek "private", from which *idiots* – the private man- the one who has narrow views, unlike the public man, and who does not grasp general issues, showing disdain towards contexts. **(6)** The madness of cities and territories lies in the abandonment of practices founded on the relations with landscape and contexts, in the senseless accumulation of basically autonomous individualities : the urban sprawl involves now also centres and memories full of meaning. Little is opposed to this way of acting, theorized and carefully regulated, unaware of the damages -not only social- produced by the loss of aggregation factors, by low density with waste of soil and resources; by compliance with unsustainable forms of urban mobility; by the under-estimation of contexts; by the prevalence of clients' selfishness and designers' narcissism. That's why this country -a case in point for having produced wonderful landscapes and cities by building, over centuries, interesting and pleasant places- yields to the comparison with other realities. While **(7)**, particularly where there is no room for ideal cities,

la forma architettonica non è che un segnale:
indica l'esistenza di realtà più grandi e profonde

Aulis Blomstedt



SERGE LATOUCHE

LA SCOMMESSA
DELLA DECRESCITA

Serie Bianca Feltrinelli

"crescere con arte"

each transformation is nothing but a fragment which can feed of relations and dialogues with what is pre-existent and with extraordinary stratifications, preventing summations of buildings which unwind on the territory with devastating results. One cannot only meet demands for transformation, it is also necessary to contribute to direct them **(8)** to reverse the direction of the forces bringing about the transformations in the living environment: in the balance between the powers from which they derive, political power and economic power ought to leave more room to the power of beauty, in its broadest meaning: the economic dimension of beauty ought to surface, as well as its social and civil power, the collective usefulness in pursuing it. Beauty is not only aesthetic quality: it involves sense, meanings and memories besides crucial issues for our survival : water, energy, active citizenship, participation, culture. **(9)** The most well-known icon of CB is the iceberg: form, what is visible, is nothing but a hint of bigger and deeper realities.

Here we do not start from scratch : but, how can we get rid of usual practices and their pathological effects? Unlike elsewhere, in our territories needs for increases do not appear, there is instead a need for infrastructures, re-organization, new qualities. What is troubling is the absence of quality deriving from separations in the study sectors, from gaps between architecture and town-planning, between infrastructures and landscape, between spatial and a-spatial aspects, between space forms and human behaviour. **(10)** In the world scenario our contexts are now in inevitable "de-growth": we ought to translate it into "growing with art", and that requires communities able to ask smart demands for the transformation of their own living

environment. **(11)** Hence the need for diffusing literacy already in compulsory schools, shaping the clients of tomorrow, but actually everybody, above all politicians and administrators.

Education to ecology and to the quality of the transformations of the living environment is an essential step to improve the demand for projects, hence the quality of the habitat. It means supplying the basic tools to read the space, understanding its differences and alternative consequences on daily life. **(12)** In the same direction the project of "Declaration of Human Duties" as to the habitat and life styles was launched at the Palais de Chaillot for the 50th anniversary of CB : only by involving everybody can the utopia for a better world be sustained.

**(13)** For design, fashion, cinema, also for food, an easy comparison has made demand careful and expert; whilst the interest for physical transformations in the living environment is poor. Design and industrial products are supported by aware demands which are mostly absent for the built. Here -where each work is a prototype and lasting in time- quality will always be unlikely if the demand for project is not higher: more than experts able to answer wrong questions or to implement exciting monads, sensitive and demanding clients and citizens are needed.

Rightly asked questions feed good projects, in the long run they also affect education processes and all the factors of the production steps. **(14)** Acting on demand, improving it, making it aware and demanding is the root of the whole process: the wish for change is the engine of whatever transformation and the real designer is a diffused being.

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**B.** **(15) (16)** Diffusing literacy means supplying basic elements to understand: it is a first step towards knowledge, acutely defined "infinite resource" because unlike oil, soil and other resources, the more it is diffused, the more it grows; in giving it one is not deprived of it, it multiplies instead of being depleted. **(17)** "Education to Ecology and to the High Quality of Architecture" connects two themes. The former permeates by now the collective imagination: an organic set of knowledge is imbued in ecology and "education to ecology" accompanies to the principles of the science which studies the relations between man and the environment. The latter -the quality of architecture- in uncertain because the term "architecture" is blurred by formal and linguistic misunderstandings, it seems to be reduced to the form of the individual buildings and be loaded with Vitruvian recollections. Architecture is not perceived as the process of "transformations of the physical environment to contribute to improve the human condition". Architecture is not a matter of buildings: it includes infrastructures, landscape, town-planning, the built and the un-built. On the other hand, the quality of architecture involves opinions, critical judgements, assessments: any definition is partial, questionable, contradictory, not at all objective.

Together, ecology and the quality of architecture state that the quality of living environments rests first of all in the logics of relation, hence it cannot be restricted to the features of the individual parts. Both ecology and the quality of architecture outline a utopian direction, to be pursued.
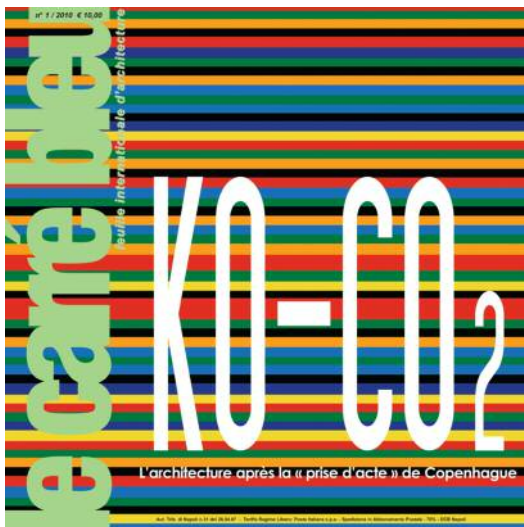
Are the present living environments the same as those we wanted in the past? Are they a conscious result or an unaware product? They derive from opposing actions urging them to strengthen the research line uniting us.

In some sectors choices are made, the built space, on the contrary is received. How can we reverse this trend? **(18)** First of all by trying to open breaches in the mystery of quality. What to we mean by quality of architecture and of the living environment? Developers, producers, architects, engineers, economists, sociologists, philosophers, historians, politicians, citizens give opposing definitions of it. It is the confusion in objectives which produces uncertainty, or even leads to mistakes. In the industrial world, quality is tantamount to pre-set performances: thanks to prototypes studied step by step, its level is measurable, known ex-ante, before an element is produced. In architecture, on the contrary, -where each project is a prototype- quality is not measured. It is assessed through comparisons and critical judgements, often ex-post instead of ex-ante. The quality of architecture does not lie in its stylistic features or in the expressive language of a building, or in the technology adopted, or in any specific parameter. In architecture the definition of "quality" does not accept codes, but there is no community or individual escaping the conditioning which derives from the quality of the environment in which they live, or from the absence of quality. **(19)** Architecture affects wellbeing, safety, health, behaviour, economy, sociability, sustainability. There cannot be quality of architecture without ecology, but the ecological attention -by itself- does not guarantee the quality of architecture.

haut gaspillage d'énergie

la sostenibilità sostiene l'Architettura
*survival through design*

verso una rivoluzione dei modi di pensare e di sentire

BIO ARCHITETTURA

ALPHABETISATION DES CITOYENS

!! APPEL A LA MOBILISATION !!

a in arch

le carré bleu

"tavolo tecnico" finalizzato per

creazione di moduli didattici •
strumenti interattivi su Internet •
educazione alla partecipazione ragionata •
formazione dei "programmatori" •

2008 - projet de Déclaration des Devoirs des Hommes sur l'habitat et les styles de vie - 2011

? vuoi lavorare in questo ufficio          o in questo ?

? vuoi abitare queste case          o queste ?

PUBBLICITÀ COMPARATIVA

come per l'energia, ma non solo

? vuoi vivere in questa scuola          o in questa ?

LA SCUOLA È FINITA

C.

**(20)** A Conference without outcomes is useless. This meeting is expected to produce results, here more than elsewhere the territory is ravaged also by enforced rules, as demonstrated by the environmental disasters in the regions where illegal building is minimum. We need new rules -a different way of thinking of the transformation processes of physical space- which discourage any self-referential character in projects and ask for dialogues in the relation systems in which they participate.

**(21)** "Sustainability Sustains Architecture" : this motto is no longer sufficient. It actually concerned only the world of designers.

"Diffused quality" requires a substantial change in the conditions in which we work. We need citizens asking for demanding politicians, who want and know how to ask. **(22)** What are, then, the concrete consequences of this meeting? What commitments should we honour? Education to ecology and to the quality of transformations in the living environment can cause a revolution in the way of thinking and of feeling, but it requires targeted actions.

This meeting aims to set up a standing "technical group" to connect ecology and the quality of architecture. The quality of the living environment rests first of all in the logics of relations between the parts: individual buildings are nothing but fragments of a whole: they have to communicate with the environment, landscape and the "stratifications" characterizing each place. In other words -also through cooperation with agencies such as RAI Educational, Pubblicità Progresso, for example for **(23)** comparative advertising: "Do you want to work in this office (home, factory, school, hospital…) or in another one?"- it is possible to

create teaching modules (interactive video-lessons for the different age ranges) and Internet tools; a "reasoned participation" can be favoured; "programmers" can be trained, they are unknown in Italy, but are necessary to transform demand into "project programme".

This meeting is held under the aegis of the President of the Republic and of several Ministries, but our political class is actually indifferent to architecture, does not consider it as a resource for modernization. It was not so during the Unitary State, or in the Fascist period which -by founding new towns and through architecture- wanted to link its social programme to the administration of the territory. Republican Italy has never assigned value to architecture, it has never felt the need for representation, it limited itself to meet needs and emergencies. That's why the processes of transformation of the physical environment are practically out of control, unless one wants to maintain that the madness of cities and territories is a deliberate choice.

**(24)** The ecological challenge urges to act by favouring the relations between things, bringing therefore to a substantial change, because where relations prevail the individual objects loose their importance, almost effacing themselves.