

# Public Spaces and the Reconstruction of the City: Learning from Barcelona and Berlin

*Béatrice Sokoloff*  
*Institut d'urbanisme*  
*Université de Montréal*  
*5620, Darlington*  
*Montréal, Québec*  
*Canada H3T 1T2*

## Summary\*

This paper reflects on the role of public spaces in two European experiences about the reconstruction of the city, those of Barcelona and Berlin. Both cases demonstrate in a specific way the strength and usefulness of an approach that stresses the importance of public spaces (streets and re-use of the perimeter block). In comparing them, the differences between their respective urban context has been taken into account. Despite the apparently opposed starting points, the principles that govern the choice of the kind of projects to be realized, are in fact complementary. The Barcelona and Berlin experiences are important milestones in the debate about contemporary urbanity.

## Résumé\*\*

Cet article présente une réflexion sur le rôle joué par les espaces publics dans le contexte de deux expériences européennes de reconstruction de la ville, à Barcelone et à Berlin. Ces deux cas témoignent chacun à leur manière de la pertinence d'une approche qui accorde une importance aux espaces publics (rues et redéfinition du "block"). Leur comparaison tient compte des différences de contexte urbain et montre la complémentarité existant entre les interventions menées dans ces deux villes, malgré des points de départ apparemment très différents. Les leçons de Barcelone et Berlin alimentent le débat autour de la constitution d'une urbanité contemporaine.

## 1. The Renewal of the Conceptual Thinking about the City

Since the 60's, new architectural and urbanistic trends have developed, dealing with the reconstruction of the contemporary city as a place for collective identification and for living. In North America as well as in Europe, a rather radical critique of the modern movement reassessed the importance of tridimensional representations of space

\* Some elements of the analysis of the Berlin case have been elaborated with Vito Ahtik, in a paper presented in July 1990 at the XIth ISA World Congress in Madrid. I want to acknowledge here his contribution. Vito Ahtik is professor at the University of Quebec in Montreal.

\*\* Pour le cas de Berlin, une partie de l'analyse a été élaborée en collaboration avec Vito Ahtik, dans le cadre d'une intervention au XIe ISA World Congress in Madrid. Je le remercie de sa contribution. Vito Ahtik est professeur à l'Université de Québec à Montréal.

in the urban planning approaches (Sokoloff, 1988).<sup>1</sup> Unlike what happened in North-American cities, the impact of the modern movement in Europe did not fundamentally disrupt the logic of the urban organization. However, during the 60's, some big projects imposed important cuts or foreign bodies on the traditional urban fabric. In many cities, some decaying areas appeared in the centre, due to the combined impact of the aging of the buildings, the outflow of industry, the building or urban highways and of modernist complexes. Moreover, many modern peripheries had been built very rapidly after the war, during the period of economic and urban growth beginning at the end of the 50's. Their poor architectural and urban quality, together with the under-equipment in public facilities were generating a specific kind of decay in these areas.

The reaction to this situation came from architects, who proposed to think over the "reconstruction" of the European city, introducing new theoretical analysis and tools to cope with its problems. An outstanding contribution to this approach was made by the Italian Rationalists, who impulsed the debates. Their concept of "urban architecture" put forward the historical layers of morphological and typological structures of the city as the new legitimating principle for their architectural statements, thus criticizing the autonomy of the building as an object, as defined by the modern movement. This position also questioned the basic principles of functionalist urban planning, especially its concept of urban system, while reassessing the necessity of reconstructing the urban form on a tri-dimensional basis. It also pointed out the importance of redefining the relationships between the built environment and public spaces.

Turning back to the analysis of the history of the European city became the motto of this approach, that was first documented by the important work of Aymonino (1965, 1975) and Rossi (1966). In *L'architettura della città*, the latter proposed the architectural type as the central element of urban composition. With this statement, Rossi contributed to the questioning of the plan as predominant tool in urban planning. For him, the monument rather than the plan is the core of the permanent features of the city, which constitute its "memory" and determines the character of the "locus", its particular sense of place. Therefore Rossi does not consider the layouts of urban morphology as structuring patterns, independent of the building type. In this approach, it is in fact the relationship between typology and morphology which is supposed to give to the urban locus its structure and signification. But the architectural type is for Rossi the ultimate matrix of the city, and morphology is subordinated to it.

Other theoreticians differ from Rossi on this point. Thus Robert Krier (1975) defined himself in the mainstream of Sitte's theses (1889), which state that the urban built fabric (the "solid" part of the city) is given its structure by the "void" of public space. The opposition between Rossi's and Krier's statements must be underlined here, because they are rooted in a divergent premise about urbanity, that may lead to various interpretations of the relationship between the private and the public space in the urban settlement.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Let us underline here that both the American Urban Design School and the European trend towards "reconstructing the city" also share the concern of an increased interplay between urban planning and architecture.

<sup>2</sup> We will develop further arguments about this point in the last section of this paper, when we will compare the basic principles that govern the Barcelona and the Berlin experiments.

Among the Italian Rationalists who made a significant theoretical contribution to the urban architecture, let us mention also Gregotti and Purini. Gregotti (1966) points out the necessity of a relationship between built forms and the natural environment, the topography of the site - an element of the urban landscape that has been largely ignored by the modern movement. Purini (1983) re-interprets the memory of traditional typologies within a contemporary architecture, caring much about the *genius loci* of urban layouts and the significance of traditional patterns of land use.

If the Italian School inspired the revival of the conceptual thinking about architecture and the city in many European countries, its contributions have been adapted according to various regionalist traditions and specific urban contexts. In Barcelona and Berlin, Bohigas and Kleihues developed their own approaches, including very specific objectives. We will analyse further their original proposals, dealing with the problem of how to reconcile the historical heritage of the city with some progressive statements of the modern movement - an approach that Kleihues (1987) called a "critical" reconstruction of the city.

The reconstruction of the city shall be based on a renewal of the conceptual analysis, of the intervention strategies and of the planning tools. Let us summarize briefly its main underlying principles.

The return to historical analysis casts light on the evolutive patterns of each particular city. Generally speaking, however, the centre played in the traditional city the role of integrating the surrounding neighbourhoods from three points of view: as a condenser of the urban activities and functions, as the location of the major institutions and as the symbolic core of the city (Mumford, 1961). The modern city does no longer show this unified pattern. The urban growth resulted in a specialization of its parts. Each "fragment" of the city got its own identity, characterized by its activities, its population (with its particular social organizations and way of life), its physical structure and *genius loci*. Fostering the sense of "urbanity" in each fragment of the city therefore requires new strategies.

Together with a new definition of the conditioning factors of urbanity, the contemporary city needs a new approach to the relationship between its various parts. If each of them is viewed as relatively autonomous, the kind of totalization principle that was expressed in plans designed for the whole city is no longer valid. "Unity through diversity", including the respect of the identity of each part, becomes essential. The figure of the urban mosaic hence replaces that of the urban system. Consequently, the master plan (even if it remains a useful reference at metropolitan level) is no longer the basic tool to reconstruct this fragmented city. Plans designed at a smaller scale (a neighbourhood or even a block) are much more performing. Moreover, they allow a more accurate and detailed formalization of the urban fabric. Very closely integrated to this approach of planning, the "urban projects" become then basic elements in the reconstruction of the city.

The plans and projects related to public space appear to be the very heart of this new approach, which requires that the urban planners and the architects work hand in hand to achieve an urban fabric capable of sustaining the functional needs of the contemporary city, and at the same time of preserving the physical and social identity of each of its fragments. Mixed uses in public spaces are required to ensure an adequate level of liveliness and interplay between various people and activities. Thus the role of public space in fostering urbanity is twofold: as a structuring element of the urban fabric and as a condenser of public social life and of activities.

## 2. The Barcelona and Berlin Experiments

### 2.1. Barcelona

#### 2.1.1. The Urban Context

At the beginning of the 80's, the City of Barcelona set up an ambitious programme of urban projects, aiming at the enhancement of living conditions and at the consolidation of the existing urban fabric in all neighbourhoods. Under the leadership of Oriol Bohigas, a first phase was carried out till 1984; then the programme went on, with most projects completed in 1987. Bohigas (1983, 1985) elaborated a solid conceptual framework for a global urban strategy.

At the end of the Franco Regime, the population of Barcelona had stabilized. Previously, two decades of growth had resulted in the too quick building by developers and land speculators of a series of modern peripheries around the traditional consolidated neighbourhoods. In the historical centre, as in many of the older neighbourhoods, the major problem was the aging of important parts of the urban fabric. In some parts of the city, there was also a decay of former industrial areas. The traditional centre, as compared with that of some European cities of the same size, had suffered fewer significant negative impacts of modernization. The residential density had not decreased, the commercial viability had been preserved. The downtown still sustained most functional and symbolic elements of centrality, it enjoyed the pattern of a livable neighbourhood, while successfully accommodating the tertiary activities. Thus the most obvious problems in Barcelona were neither related to a loss of population, nor to an overall destructuring of the city. They arose rather from the very density of an aging urban fabric, together with the lack of public facilities and open spaces in traditional as well as peripheral neighbourhoods. They were problems of consolidation, not of growth or decline.

#### 2.1.2. An Urban Strategy Based on Public Spaces

The creation or rehabilitation of public spaces was clearly intended to be the basis for the balancing and strengthening of the various parts of the city, the urban form of which was highly heterogeneous. The underlying philosophy of the urban strategy was to foster the social and physical identity of each neighbourhood, as well as to reintegrate the fragmented parts of the city. In this perspective, public space - considered as a condenser of social life and a regenerator of the overall urban context - was given the major restructuring role.

Thus the reconstruction of the city was conceived as a reconstruction "from below", piece after piece, and not "from above", within the framework of an all including general plan, that would not have taken into account the *genius loci*, the variety of the urban fabric of each fragment, its proper activities and social atmosphere. The broad range of open space typologies that were used in the projects responds to very specific local contexts and social needs.

### 2.1.2.1. Squares

In the traditional neighbourhoods that had developed around the urban nuclei of the 19th Century, such as Gracia, Sarria, Sant Andreu, that actually form a belt at the limits of the Cerda Extension, several existing small squares have been rebuilt. They had often been neglected and many of them were used as parking lots. The squares of Gracia deserve a special mention for their careful and contemporary design. Other small squares have been created in the dense old fabric of some neighbourhoods. Plaça de las Navas, for instance, substitutes to an old intersection of little streets formerly used as parking lot; it now stands as a nice oasis built on three levels, including a promenade, a triangular esplanade and a sunken space for children's play. Plaça de la Mercè was created on the site of an old shabby block, which was torn down to give way to a more formal square ("place-salon") facing the facade of a church. Plaça de la Sedeta is another good example of a well designed new small square, created in the semi-open interior of a block, the corner of which has been rehabilitated; this former school building was recycled as a civic centre for the neighbourhood.

In recently built peripheries, larger squares have succeeded in "dignifying" and giving a new sense of urbanity to formerly desolated surroundings of dull high modern housing slabs. In the middle of one such surroundings, Plaça de la Palmera, divided by a huge wall-sculpture by Serra, various types of spaces for promenade, rest, contemplation and active games are offered. Plaça Soler also combines a "place-salon", an elevated promenade that defines three of its limits, and a garden including trees, alleys, running water and a basin with a well integrated modern sculpture. The design of the square has created its own unity and formal coherence, that enhances the very heterogeneous surroundings and offers to the users a very much needed diversified open space.

On a larger urban scale, one must mention the Plaça de los Països Catalans - much discussed in many architectural reviews - located in front of the Sants railway station. Here again, the surroundings were very difficult to cope with. The site was a kind of *cul-de-sac*, bordered by traffic roads and very disparate buildings out of scale. The project, using high modern metallic structures to "sculpt" a self-sustaining space, has largely been recognized as one of the strongest and most innovative proposals carried out in Barcelona.

### 2.1.2.2. Urban Parks and Gardens

While many squares have been given a role of place definer and have often been designed as paved ("hard") places, even when they are bordered by trees, the urban gardens and the parks introduce the green in the city. It should be underlined here that several new parks have been located on former industrial or railway land. This is the case for the parks of Espanya Industrial, Clot and Pegaso. In the Pegaso and Clot cases, some parts respectively of the former industrial buildings and of the former railway station have been preserved - like pieces of a modern "archeology" - as reminders of the history of the site. In the Clot case, they even became central elements in structuring the design of the park. In the Pegaso park, there is an interesting treatment of two side limits; they have been built as an elevated passage punctuated by brick structures, turning its back to the park and linking adjacent street here and there by stairs. In the northern part of the city, on the slope of one of the hills (*túrrons*) that surround the city, the park of Creueta del Coll plays with the particular topography to differentiate the space for various uses.

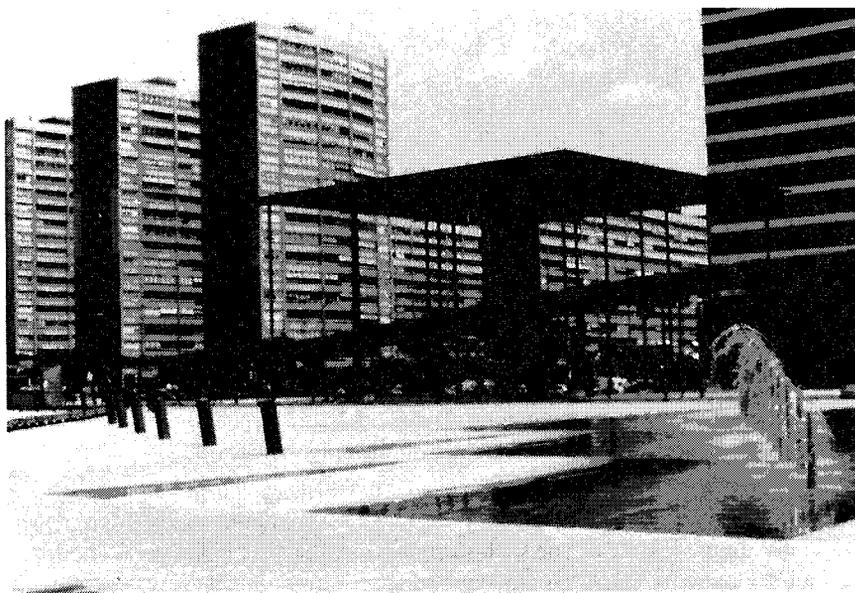


Fig. 1 Plaça de los Països Catalans, Barcelona (Helio Piñon and Albert Viaplana, architects) (Photo: B. Sokoloff).

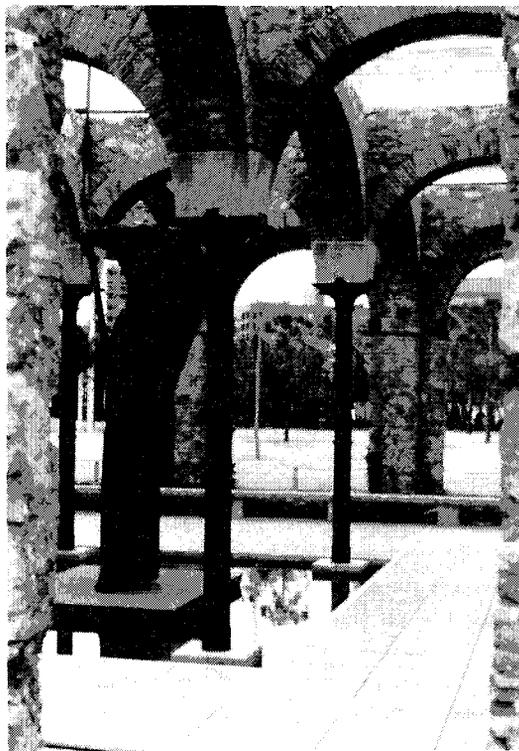


Fig. 2 Del Clot Park, Barcelona (Dani Freixes and Vicente Mir, architects; sculpture by Bryan Hunt) (Photo: B. Sokoloff).

Parc del Clot, Barcelone (Dani Freixes et Vicente Mir, architectes; sculpture de Bryan Hunt) (Photo: B. Sokoloff).



Fig. 3 Emili Vendrell Garden, Barcelona (Ramon Sanabria, Rosa Maria Clotet and Beth Gali, architects). View from the street (Photo: B. Sokoloff).

Jardin d'Emili Vendrell, Barcelone (Ramon Sanabria, Rosa Maria Clotet et Beth Gali, architectes). Vue depuis la rue (Photo: B. Sokoloff).



Fig. 4 Emili Vendrell Garden, Barcelona (Ramon Sanabria, Rosa Maria Clotet and Beth Gali, architects). View from inside (Photo: B. Sokoloff).

Jardin d'Emili Vendrell, Barcelone (Ramon Sanabria, Rosa Maria Clotet et Beth Gali, architectes). Vue de l'intérieur (Photo: B. Sokoloff).



Fig. 5 Via Julia, Barcelona (Bernardo de Sola and Josep M. Julià, architects; sculptures by Sergi Aguilar and Antoni Roselló) (Photo: "Barcelona, espais i escultures 1982-1986" (Ajutament de Barcelona), 1987, p. 64).

Via Julia, Barcelone (Bernardo de Sola et Josep M. Julià, architectes; sculptures de Sergi Aguilar et Antoni Roselló) (Photo: "Barcelona, espais i escultures 1982-1986" (Ajutament de Barcelona), 1987, p. 64).

The revival of the somewhat forgotten type of the urban garden offers the opportunity to enjoy smaller scale green spaces in some dense parts of the city. In the Cerda Extension, where the very strict block pattern includes few squares, many interior parts of the blocks will be dedicated to small gardens. One of the first projects carried out, the Garde of Torre de las Aigues, has preserved the existing structure of the water tower.

### 2.1.2.3. *Traffic Axes and Promenades*

In Barcelona, there is a strong tradition - that goes back to Cerda's planning - of a hierarchized street grid including a specific design for the section of the various types of ways. Among them, the urban boulevard has historically been largely used to make big traffic axes (such as the Diagonal, or the Gran Via) more attractive. The "rambla"

is another typically Spanish type of promenade. Projects for new ramblas have been carried out in the periphery and now represent major points of interest in the city, while improving significantly the public social life in several neighbourhoods. Without any doubts, one of the most famous examples is the Via Julia. In the same district of Nou Barris, Rio de Janeiro Avenue has also been turned into a pleasant strolling place for people living in a rather dense settlement of high modern housing buildings. In the northern part of Barcelona, on the other side of a series of hills, the Rambla del Carmel plays the same role, while connecting the second ring road to the tunnel of La Rovira, which passes under the hills towards the centre of the city. Along the sea, the well-known Moll de la Fusta is a piece of the maritime ring road transformed into a spectacular urban promenade, divided into two main parts - a broad esplanade planted with palm trees along the shore and a surelevated part including an underground parking and a belvedere with little restaurants, where the traffic and the bus lanes share the space with the promenade.

### 2.1.2. Overall Evaluation

The great variety of projects one may cite relies however on some basic principles that account for the success of the Barcelona experiment.

All districts have been addressed in the programme, but the imbalance between less favoured and better equipped neighbourhoods has been corrected. Quality of urban life has been improved by public spaces but also by other public facilities (sometimes integrated into them), such as civic centres, school complexes including sporting facilities, and municipal buildings.

The mixed uses of public spaces is an important feature. Modern public spaces are supposed to meet the actual needs of inhabitants. Thus contemplation or symbolic representation are no longer here the main functions of open spaces. Besides being places for rest or for strolling, they are also required to offer the possibility to practice sports or games, or to be places for gathering, for neighbourhood events or feasts. The symbolic dimension is not neglected, however; sculptures often confer monumentality to the public spaces.

The streets, the most usual and most vivid space as far as daily movement and passage are concerned, has been granted special attention. In almost every way, a balance between vehicular and pedestrian traffic has been provided.<sup>3</sup> A similar principle has led to include in the main traffic axes, such as the ring roads under construction, service lanes with adequate landscaping which will be linked properly to the urban and local fabric and the local street grid of the adjacent neighbourhoods.

Finally, the projects foster at various scales the dialogue between public spaces and the surrounding built environment. Their design may help consolidate some weaker parts in the urban fabric. From a stylistic point of view, many projects mix some historic references with more contemporary schemes.

The latter point rises the question of how far the projects carried out have been innovative and have developed a contemporary architectonic language. If they can easily be considered successful, as far as their use or the requalification of urban form is

<sup>3</sup> The actual norm fixes to 50/50 the respective proportion between the width of the traffic lanes and of the walkways.

concerned, some criticism has however been expressed about their styles and their cultural significance.

Ignasi de Solà-Morales (1987) questions the nostalgic revival of stylistic features borrowed from artistic movements of the turning of the century (as the typical Barcelonian "noucentism"). The same author also mentions that few architects who were asked to design public spaces had previous experience in this field. They therefore had to forge it little by little, and their first projects often reveal the peculiar "intimate" kind of style that is characteristic of Barcelonian architecture.

As a final remark, we will underline that the success of the Barcelona projects in reconstructing and dignifying the various neighbourhoods of the city has certainly proved the validity of the urban approach and the strategies on which they have been founded. Nevertheless, the consolidation of the urban structure as a whole requires additional integrated interventions, at the scale of the ambitious plans and projects developed more recently, together with the preparation of the Olympic games. In this second phase of reconstruction, the balance between large scale and small scale interventions will be a crucial issue.

## 2.2. Berlin

### 2.2.1. *The Urban Context*

Since the end of World War II, Berlin has undergone three periods of reconstruction, each of them inspired by a completely different planning ideology. The first one was conducted under the Marshall Plan, and Federal programmes allowed to build large new housing estates in the outskirts, while most parts of the remaining inner city continued to decay. The 60's were characterized by a resolutely modernist approach, initiated by the Building Exhibition of 1957 in the Hansa quarter. A few years later, the Cultural Forum was started near the former diplomatic quarter. It was intended to become a new downtown focal point. A complex system of major urban highways was also planned. The result of this modernist approach was the outflow of former inhabitants from the centre of the newly built peripheries, and the inflow of numerous foreign immigrants in the central neighbourhoods, especially after the construction of the Wall. The mid 70's were a period of social strains and after the economic crisis, most of the large scale projects were abandoned. The Urban Renewal policies were stopped after strong protestation occurred. But significant parts of the dense industrial quarters built at the end of the 19th century had already been demolished when the Senate passed the Bill that created the new International Building Exhibition (*Internationale Bauausstellung - IBA*) in 1978, under the motto of "rescuing a clapped out city". Berlin had lost part of its population, but housing needs - especially subsidized housing - were still important. A smoother rehabilitation process had to replace the Urban Renewal policies. The designated areas included most of the problematic sectors along the Wall. The "Neubau" part of IBA led by J.-P. Kleihues developed an approach of "critical reconstruction" of the city; new buildings were to be erected in the large urban voids left over in the Southern Tiergarten and Southern Friederichstadt. Immediately to the east of this sector, in the traditional industrial quarter of Kreuzberg, the "Altbau" part of IBA under the responsibility of H.W. Hamer, was to be preserved and consolidated by a "careful rehabilitation" of the existing fabric.

### 2.2.2. *A New Approach to Housing in the Centre of the City*

In sharp contrast with former planning ideologies, IBA regarded the city's historical polycentric pattern as the basis for its architectural and planning strategies. Described in the Senate Bill as "many cities in one city", Berlin nevertheless suffered the loss of its historical centre, that had been cut out from the city by the Wall. Centrality became therefore a difficult issue. The commercial axis of Kurfürstendamm was not diversified enough to offer a sense of traditional urbanity. Moreover, because of its physical structure and of its history, Berlin as a whole appeared as a patchwork of highly heterogeneous parts, separated by large amounts of undeveloped land (rivers, lakes and green areas still represented nearly 30% of Berlin space).

In such a urban context, the philosophy of reconstructing autonomous fragments of a city seemed quite a realistic one. But it also implied that each of those fragments should sustain diversified activities and not only housing. That has in fact revealed the most difficult problem to cope with in IBA projects. This ambitious effort to make "living in the centre of the city" so desirable that it would maintain its remaining population and even attract new residents, was based on some basic principles.

As a theoretical as well as practical experiment, IBA Berlin can be considered an outstanding contribution to architectural and urban planning (at least at site scale). It has demonstrated a deep concern with and a sophisticated approach to the central issue of defining a viable type of housing within the centre of a contemporary city. The core of this issue lays in the relationship between the privacy of the home and its location in a building, which in turn is part of the city and therefore communicates with the public space.

A whole series of complementary aspects of this problem were taken into account in IBA projects. The intentions were:

- to improve family living conditions and provide for dwelling units of various sizes and internal spatial organizations;
- to build an extensive network of social and cultural facilities, which would be highly diversified and decentralized in order to respond to the needs of specific social and age groups, and to be at walking distance from home;
- to enhance the immediate local environment by providing for good quality public and semi-public open spaces, adapted to the specific habits and needs of the local population;
- to support mixed uses, local business, public facilities and even the existing small scale productive activities (especially in the "Altbau" parts).

The analysis of the history of the Berlin's urban fabric, closely related to the analysis of the socio-cultural patterns of traditional neighbourhood life, led IBA to offer a new interpretation of the perimeter block (a 19th century heritage) according to contemporary needs. The architectural and urban conception of such a housing block is founded on two postulates: 1) the family home is the basic cell of urban life; 2) the housing block and its immediate surroundings are the microcosm of the neighbourhood. Thus the relationship between individual and collective needs is defined within the relationship between housing and neighbourhood. The private, semi-public and public spaces are organized in a closely interwoven sequence.

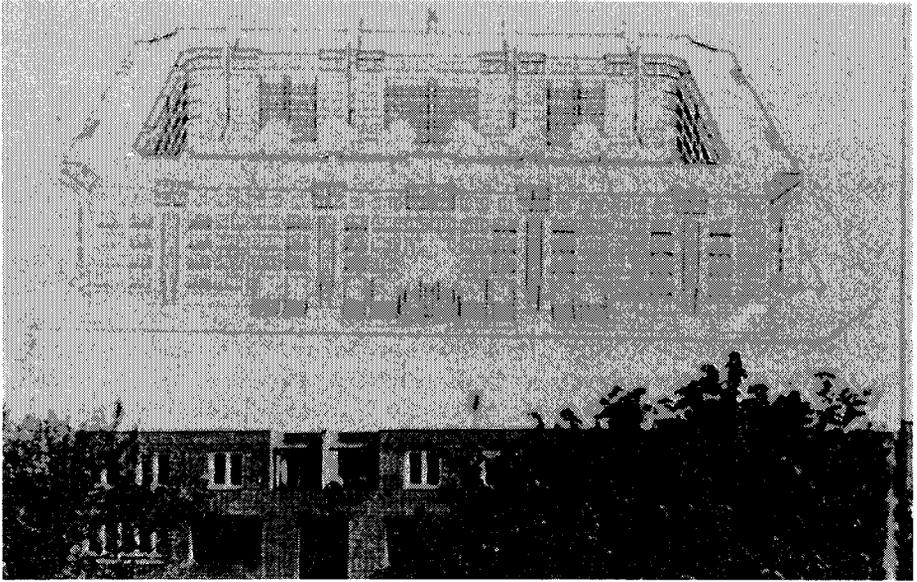


Fig. 6 Block 270, Berlin, axonometry (Johan-Paul Kleihues, architect) (Credit: Lotus, 1978, 19, p. 72).  
Block 270, Berlin, axonométrie (Johan-Paul Kleihues, architecte) (Tiré de: Lotus, 1978, 19, p. 72).

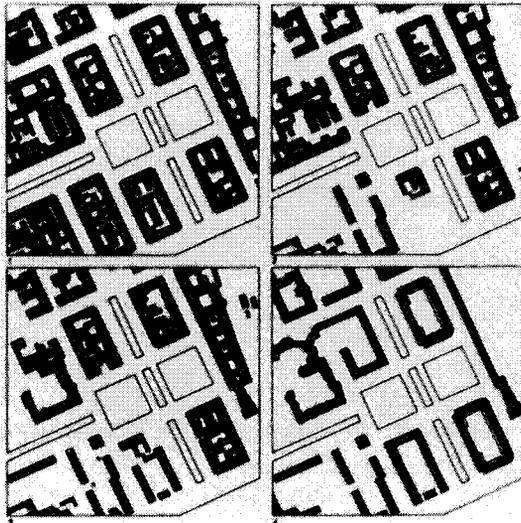


Fig. 7 Evolution of the Vineta Square. Top left: before the war; to right: end of the 50's; bottom left: end of the 60's; bottom right: beginning of the 70's, including the two blocks suggested by Kleihues (of which one, Block 270, was realised) (Credit: Architectural Design, 52 {1982} 11/12, p. 67).  
Evolution de la Place Vineta. En haut à gauche: avant la guerre; en haut à droite: fin des années 50; en bas à gauche: fin des années 60; en bas à droite: début des années 70, incluant les deux îlots proposés par Kleihues, dont l'un (Block 270) a été réalisé (Tiré de: Architectural Design, 52 {1982} 11/12, p. 67).

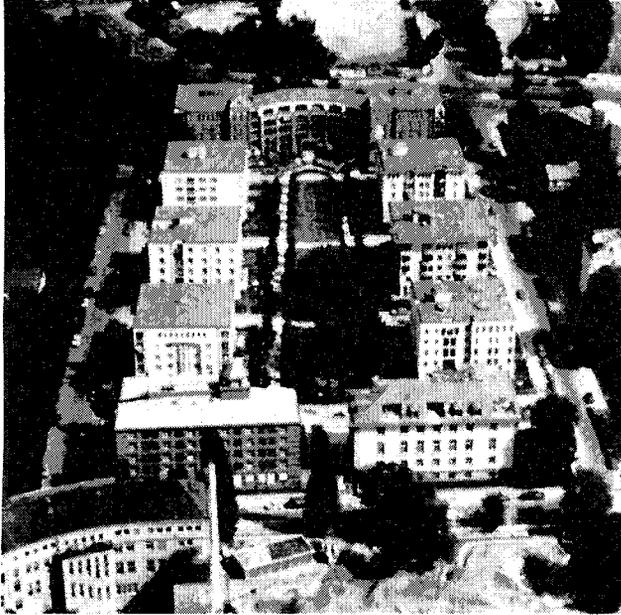


Fig. 8 The urban villas on Rauchstrasse, Berlin (aerial view from the West), built by various architects (among which Robert Krier, Aldo Rossi, Giorgio Grassi, Hans Hollein), following a plan by Robert Krier (Credit: "Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987, Projektübersicht" (Kleihues, J.P., ed.), 1987 (Berlin), p. 31).

Les villas urbaines de la Rauchstrasse, Berlin (vue aérienne depuis l'ouest), réalisées par divers architectes (dont Robert Krier, Aldo Rossi, Giorgio Grassi, Hans Hollein), suivant le plan de Robert Krier (Tiré de: "Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987, Projektübersicht" (Kleihues, J.P., ed.), 1987 (Berlin), p. 31).

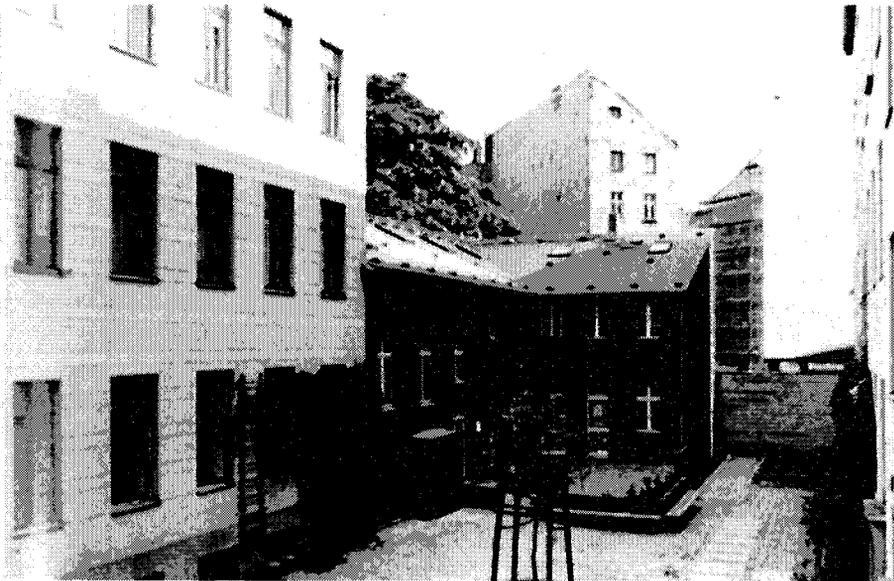


Fig. 9 New design inside a block in Luisenstadt, Dresdenstrasse, Berlin (Credit: "Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987, Projektübersicht" (Kleihues, J.P., ed.), 1987 (Berlin), p. 249).

Réaménagement de l'intérieur d'un îlot dans Luisenstadt, rue de Dresde, Berlin (Tiré de: "Internationale Bauausstellung Berlin 1987, Projektübersicht" (Kleihues, J.P., ed.), 1987 (Berlin), p. 249).

Kleihues (1978, 1982, 1987) played a prominent role as the main theoretician of the "critical reconstruction" of Berlin. As early as 1977, before the creation of the IBA, he conceived and realized a new type of project, Block 270 in Wedding, based on a reinterpretation of the traditional perimeter block. In this project, "all stairways have access from the street (house entrances) and also from the courtyard (side entrances) and the underground car park; there is ample living space in the apartments. All apartments look out onto the street or the square and onto the communal courtyard" (Kleihues, 1982, 87). The square mentioned by Kleihues is Vinetaplatz; together with the choice of the perimeter block, its presence became an important structuring element for the design of the project. The courtyard has openings on all sides and is thus in direct relationship to the street and to the square.

The modernization of the traditional perimeter block may be found in many IBA projects: the big size of the block has been reduced and its interior courtyard is no longer densely built, nor closed, as it was in Hobrecht's time. In some cases, particularly in "Neubau", the block may be largely open along one of its sides or at its corners. Plans for each site were always elaborated before the architectural projects, but most of them allow a broad range of architectural types.

In the case of Robert Krier's planning for the Rauchstrasse villas, for instance, the figure of the block almost fades away. The urban villas - five storey little towers - scatter the two longer sides of the block. One of its bottoms is closed, whereas the opposite consists in two wide buildings, strengthening the corners of the block. The green spaces between the buildings figure out an extension of the nearby Tiergarten.

In the "Altbau", architectural types are less diversified, because they have to adapt more closely to the former block structure. In some cases, the courtyard space has been widened and the inhabitants of the interior of the block have been resettled in additional flats, created in abandoned and previously recycled industrial buildings.

### 2.2.3. Overall Evaluation

In Kreuzberg, the "Altbau" programme largely retained the former residents. Among those affected by rehabilitation, 95% remained in the neighbourhood, 61% in their original flats (Davey, 1987). The largely applied self-help formula at the time lowered the costs, had a clear socially emancipating impact and produced a strong identification of people with their neighbourhood. The improvements attracted a new population of young people and even of yuppies. "Neubau" succeeded in creating an appreciable number of dwelling units, despite the impossibility to meet the initial objectives, due to the inevitable difficulties IBA had to overcome in carrying out such a non-conventional and innovative social housing programme.

If the relationship established between the private home and the semi-public and public spaces may be viewed as the most significant contribution of IBA, together with the intermingling in some projects of housing and public facilities, other aspects of the experiment may be questioned. First of all, the systematic re-use of the historical grid pattern defining the perimeter block has been criticized because it generates complex vehicular traffic problems (Rowe, 1984). This pattern does not foster the widening of street space, nor does it offer the opportunity for creating squares at an urban scale. The freedom given to the architects in the open competitions sometimes resulted in very attractive projects (such as the Kolhoff Ovaska project, "Living near the Berlin Museum"), but it also left the door open for what may be considered an abuse in

the diversity of architectural types within the same block, which produced what Rowe called "an architectural zoo".

Finally, as Bergman (1987) points out, the very rationalization of the urban fabric planned by IBA created a kind of distorting zoning phenomenon between commercial and residential streets. The fact is, as underlined also by Rowe (1984), that reconstructing the central city is a complex operation that cannot rely on housing only. A lively neighbourhood requires more than people's residences in a surrounding of nicely intervowen public spaces. Mixed activities, and therefore also the inevitable traffic of people and vehicles, is part of urbanity. Urbanity is clearly a quality of the city that may be obtained only when to some extent contradictory factors are held together in an acceptable balance. This is precisely the task that can be achieved when architects and urban planners unite their efforts. There were certainly many qualified in IBA, but maybe their planning proposals, largely focusing on the site scale, fell short of a broader perspective. Indeed, they should not be blamed for that, since they had not been given neither the power, nor the instruments to develop to its end a planning approach at city scale, although IBA philosophy clearly intended to deal with the whole - even if fragmented - city.

### 3. Barcelona and Berlin, Two Complementary Experiments

Beyond differences between the needs and the urban context in both cities, their common objective was threefold:

1. to consolidate the city on the basis of its existing fabric;
2. to make the city "livable", so that traditional central neighbourhoods would enjoy a good quality of life;
3. to foster urbanity in differentiated ways throughout the various parts of the city.

The subject of housing in a large city has been one of the major issues of urban planning thinking since the end of the 19th century. Contemporary research has again and again raised the issue of the relationship between housing and the city. The modern movement offered radically new solutions, some of which have been criticized since then; but others, dealing with the comfort and hygiene of the flat, are still a valuable contribution that cannot be rejected. As far as the city is concerned, one cannot either dream of returning to its pre-industrial morphology and typology because both are no longer adapted to modern urban requirements. However, after the *tabula rasa* proclaimed by the modern movement, some problems regarding the articulation of the new functional urban structure with the historical urban forms were left unsolved, or even untouched, because the modern movement did not care at all for the "remains" of urban fabrics that had been judged obsolete. Le Corbusier's *Plan Voisin* is very clear in these respects: the new city should have preserved only very few selected monuments of the past; all the remaining parts would have had to disappear and give way to the "city in a park".

But the practice forced architects and urban planners to face situations that revealed the weakness of modernism and to elaborate new statements. The new approach of urban architecture in the 60's opened the way to the experiments carried out a decade later in Barcelona and Berlin, when for the first time a new way of "making the city" was applied at a large scale.

The lessons from both experiments seem to us to be complementary, stemming from the same theoretical approach, but the starting point of their interventions is different. In Barcelona the fragment of the city chosen to define the scale of the projects is the neighbourhood. Public space projects are considered the privileged mean to enhance and reconstruct it. Although the comments about these projects have often focused on squares and urban parks, we think that the main element of the Barcelona urban space based strategy is the recognition of the fundamental role of the street. Bohigas (1985) underlines this fact many times in his analyses.

It is the street that sustains movement in the city. Throughout the historical evolution of the city, the more radical changes were brought by the modernization of the street. The modern movement indeed reduced the street to its functional role, while rejecting its multifunctionality and neglecting its urban character, its being part of a fabric. Thus the street became an isolated way; in fact what is called an urban highway no longer possesses any truly "urban" feature. The Barcelona projects are important contributions to the issues related to the street. They obviously include reference to urban planning principles that have already been strongly put forward by Cerda (1867) at the end of the 19th century, and by Unwinn (1909) at the beginning of the 20th century. In the Barcelona projects, the streets' multifunctionality is insured by both their layout and by an appropriate design of their section. They are at the same time spaces for efficient movement of vehicular traffic, links between the various parts of the city, spaces for pedestrian passage, but also the utmost vivid space of public intercourse, of informal social exchange. All these features make the street the best condenser of urbanity.

Such an approach of the street is lacking in the Berlin projects, which deal with the street grid as a mere structure sustaining the existence of the block. Their point of departure is the concern for good housing conditions. The choice of the perimeter block as a basis for the projects may also be referred to the 19th century tradition, in this case that of Prussian urban planning. Since the dense housing of that period has been fiercely criticized, it has been necessary to entirely re-interpret the architectural treatment of this basic morphological unit. The statements made in Berlin about the reuse of the perimeter block clearly refer to its urban qualities (as opposed to the modern row houses). They also open the way for architectural types where there is an interplay between the built parts and the voids within the block, in order to introduce a gradual passage from the "inside" of the private home to the "outside" of public space - a sequence that Bergman (1987) significantly calls a "syntax of slits". This approach had already been developed by Cerda (1867), when analyzing the relationships at a different scale between what he calls "ways" and "interways" - within the apartment, within the building, within the block and finally within the city. Cerda himself called the home the basic cell ("the sanctum sanctorum of family life") of urbanization and expressed many concerns about its quality and its privateness. Since then, other theoreticians, such as Max Weber or Georg Simmel, have dealt with the historical transformation of the relationships between the private and the public spheres and with the emergence of individuality as cultural value, with special reference to urban life. The Berlin approach towards housing is clearly situated in this mainstream.

If we compare the specificity of the Barcelona and Berlin experiments, we conclude that the questioning of the block must not be considered as theoretically opposed to the questioning of the structuring role of public space. As a matter of fact, we consider that the complementarity between both approaches must be better understood.

In this sense, to propose that the building type is the basic matrix of the city (Rossi, 1966), or that the city is rather structured by public spaces (Krier, 1975), an idea also expressed by Rowe & Koetter (1978, 62), appears as unilateral statements, because each gives precedence to one of the two basic elements of urbanization over the other. When architects and urban planners forget that their relationship is essential to define a "good city", they fail. The modern movement may well have left very sophisticated buildings, that were sometimes a response to new requirements for new uses, but its neglect of public space has produced cities lacking urbanity. However, its contribution to enhance the quality of the flat must be retained. The efforts to make the city "livable" should however not deal only with open exterior spaces, but also with the interior of the buildings. Urban housing is still an important issue in the contemporary city.

Thus, if we sum up the lessons of Barcelona and Berlin, they offer the complete set of elements that must be taken into account in the reconstruction of the city, from "rest" to "movement", from the private to the collective needs, from livability to viability.

The critical reconstruction of the city, which tends towards a new kind of contemporary urbanity, requires the historical analysis of the sediments of the traditional city, which in turn will be complemented by the elaboration of new types of public spaces and new architectural types. The reinterpretation of former urban patterns must be careful; if not "critical", it will not create new forms of urbanity, that respond properly to contemporary uses and express proper cultural values. Finally, the reintegration of the modern movement into history, through an approach that would be able to forge a contemporary urban culture, is the true theoretical issue of the actual debate about the city.

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