

Rules versus Behaviour: in search of an inhabitable world

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In a message to the tenth CIAM in Dubrovnik, written at Roquebrune on 27 July 1956, Le Corbusier said:

'During these thirty years we have seen people coming to the fore who were born *in the atmosphere* [author's emphasis] of the present era: ... born around 1916 amid war and revolutions, just as a new war was stirring and in the middle of major economic, social and political crises. At the heart of the present era, they are thus the only ones who can intimately and profoundly *sense* the current problems, the goals to be pursued, the means of achieving them, the pressing urgency dictated by the economic climate. *They are right in the middle of things. Their predecessors are out of it, they are no longer directly affected by the climate.*' (1)

So the 'founders' had been replaced, according to Le Corbusier himself, by the 'builders', 'for tomorrow', the 'generation of 1956', that of Bakema, Candilis, Van Eyck, the Smithsons, who were to 'draw, express and even predict and *anticipate the times to come*' [Le Corbusier's emphasis]. (2) Although Le Corbusier did not go very deeply into the reasons for this handover, he did put his finger on a whole series of changes. And if the new generation appeared to be just as sensitive to these changes, it was probably because these young architects had already come to terms with the first findings of the social sciences, immersed in the cultural broth from which, initially in France, structuralism would one day emerge.

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It is commonly accepted that Team 10's identity was partly based on the ideas and findings of the social sciences. Other speakers will be addressing this issue later on today. *Identity, belonging* and *neighbourliness* are all notions inspired by the social sciences which, in a formal sense, were to boil down to the emblem of the *cluster*. Behind this emblem, something would remain of the somewhat desperate attempts by the members of Team 10, each in their own way, to create a synthesis out of the questions raised by their observations of the everyday life of their contemporaries. I say 'somewhat desperate attempts' because they each sought different ways of coupling these two distinct and at times even contradictory aspects: the findings and 'admonitions' of the social sciences on the one hand, marked by the somewhat rigid, highly formalised teachings of structural linguistics, and on the other hand that whole current of thought that sought to reinvest everyday urban life with poetry. After all, if ever a 'movement' were ridden with contradictions, this was it, trapped between theoretical speculation and the contradictions that each action generated, between its desire to be rational and scientific and the temptation to 'poeticise' or at least aestheticise the humdrum banality of life in European countries only just recovering from the Second World War. It is no coincidence, then, that urgency, plainness and the largest possible number were key concepts in the work of Team 10. Indeed, Team 10 was to be a transitional movement, born in the urgency of the post-war period and completing the bulk of its history and its activity in the regained euphoria of the glorious thirties and the consumer boom – a brief rally that even went so far as to indulge in fierce self-criticism until the

crisis of 1973 swept away the remnants of this fledgling guilty conscience.

The intellectual landscape in which Team 10 emerged in the mid-1950s was thus one of devastation rather than renewal – one whose functionalism fell into crisis the moment it had spread across the globe and its encounters with the political elites were proving surprisingly disappointing. In the early 1980s Henri Lefebvre, the primary critic of everyday life (3) and a distant ally of both surrealism and existentialism, recalled having met some architects at the time who were the ‘spearhead of protest’ [*Constant*]. With hindsight, he considered this a watershed period for the French intelligentsia:

‘The Bauhaus – whose achievements in the USA had been known for some time and which had long been held to be subversive – had turned out to be a form of theoretical and practical architecture and urbanism that was particularly suited to American capitalism. This was a major shock. ... As for culture, surrealism and the surrealist critique were fading into the background, although they were still influential. The existentialist fashion had already drifted into triteness. There was a void. Today we know this for certain, but in 1957 it was no more than a vague premonition. The scene was all set for something new.’(4)

Lefebvre went on to speak of the ‘stark contrast’ between ‘rapid growth, miraculous prosperity’ and the simultaneous ‘radical protest, criticism and even hyper-criticism of the state, of everyday life, of art and learning, in short of everything that was held to be established.’ But, as Lefebvre acknowledges, in 1957 ‘these were only advance symptoms, recognised only by those with ultra-sensitive nerves and ears.’ Team 10 certainly had such ears, and for a wide range of reasons, including the Greek Georges Candilis’s political refugee status due to his early involvement with the communists, the personal friendship and comradeship between Van Eyck, Constant and the members of the Dutch branch of the Situationist International and the Smithsons’ links with the London-based Independent group, but all revolving around an initial *existentialist* approach to architecture that emphasised the need to keep a watchful eye on banal, ordinary objects, the objects of everyday life.(5)

All the intellectual currents of the time emerged from this decidedly heterogeneous, even contradictory, melting pot. The first, and not the least significant, of these contradictions stemmed from conflicting attitudes towards history – attitudes which Lefebvre (once again!) was to decipher very clearly a few years later. In *L’Idéologie structuraliste* he chopped Foucault’s *Les mots et les choses* (published in English as *The Order of Things*) into pieces, saying it was evidence of a shift from a ‘philosophy of freedom’ (Sartre’s) to a ‘philosophy of constraint’.(6) By the same token – and somewhat mistakenly – Lefebvre, who always remained true to Hegelian Marxism, reduced structuralism to the ideology of *technocrats* who denied mankind’s capacity for commitment and revolt – for making itself the Subject of History. In doing so, he contributed to the great rift which, from the early 1950s up to 1968, divided the ‘Sartrians’ from the ‘Structuralists’ and the ‘philosophy of history’ from the ‘philosophy of the concept’ and filled the pages of *Les Temps Modernes*.(7) And in the middle of the 1950s we can still see in Team 10 this complex and contradictory

approach to the study and handling of universals and archaisms – predominantly inspired by the early works of anthropology – as well as to an understanding of the urban fabric in terms of its constituent interrelationships rather than the history of its components, while always keeping an ear open for the sounds of the times and never abandoning the idea of modernism as a project-in-progress – the idea of a historical dialectic, of a history that is constructible and constantly emerging. This, for example, is probably the most accurate definition of Aldo van Eyck's *relativist* position(8) (historically as well culturally): his distrust of cultural and 'civilisational' hierarchy; his close scrutiny of the city and its relationships rather than any unifying principle, its relationships rather than the actual components; his deductions from the observation of both medieval fabrics and Dogon villages; his attempt to reconcile manual and industrial production; his fascination for the immutable, seeing past, present and future as points on a 'continuum', and his simultaneous rejection of 'any sentimental attachment to the past as well as any technocratic cult of the future', since both 'are based on a static and linear definition of time.'(9)

Any truly innovative urban development proposal must always start by thinking about habitation. This is the 'official' position of the Dubrovnik Congress, but it already served as the basic postulate for the grid prepared for the Congress in Aix-en-Provence (1953) to promote a 'new language of architecture generated by patterns of inhabitation'. In fact, the work of Team 10, their programme reviews, the battles they fought (and won) against the remnants of the CIAM all reflect the transition that took place in the 1950s. Take, for instance, the ambiguity of the Aix grid, which seeks to reconcile a scientific approach (the breakdown of functions and the beginning of serious reflection on the city) with social commitment (the drawings of the Golden Lane project) and observation of spontaneous and everyday practices and interactions (Nigel Henderson's photographs of children living in the East End). This was thus a period of overall transition, which saw the triumph of the figure of the – existentialist – philosopher who was able to comment instantly on any issue, while at the same time new forms of organisation of intellectual endeavour were quietly developing, and the expert and the sociologist were emerging in the background. As Pierre Bourdieu has noted, it is impossible to understand the intellectual landscape of the 1950s (at least in France) without constantly referring to the figure of Sartre who (like Le Corbusier for architects) was the pivot around which positions shifted and solidified in a process of opposition, contrast, reformulation or endorsement (10)... And in a singular position in the middle of this force field, which then very slowly reversed, emerged the figure of Lévi-Strauss, whose acknowledgement ushered in a decisive change of the relationship between philosophy and the social sciences.

In fact, the work of the various members of Team 10 and their individual focus on everyday life may be summed up as an endless to-and-fro movement between the wish to lay down fixed rules – which recalls the teachings of nascent structuralism – and the wish to apprehend human behaviour. This contradictory dream of poeticising thought and conceptualising poetry, this oscillation between **rules** and **behaviour** becomes easier to understand if one

recalls the content of the other two branches, sensibility and subjectivity, a 'radical subjectivity' in which, paradoxically, we might find both Debord and Sartre at the price of what seems like a phenomenological reduction, an intuition of the essence of experience, a sense of 'back to basics', in order to arrive at a totality of life. This was the *existentialist* branch, that of the Smithsons (who read Sartre), of Henderson and Paolozzi (who visited the *Salon de l'Art brut* in Paris in 1948) the branch of Dubuffet and his – and Le Corbusier's – interest in the poetry of found objects and ordinariness in general, as well as in the perspective of children and lunatics breaking free from their straitjackets.(11) It was the *as found* aesthetic, to be developed by the Smithsons, the art of watchfulness, of gathering, choosing and then 'putting to use', the art of grasping in ordinary objects their capacity to revitalise an act of invention, in order to develop a 'found' architecture that was not formalised by academic straitjackets of any kind.(12) It was an attitude that was as much ethical as it was aesthetic. In short, it was the branch of *authenticity*, of frank, honest and 'raw' self-presentation, of a somewhat mythical transparency – *without rhetoric* as the Smithsons said – that ran counter to strict respect for conventions.(13) But there was also the *vitalist* branch of Cobra, of the Lettrist and later the Situationist International, of the journal *Forum* after 1959, of the first great Cobra exposition staged by Van Eyck at the Stedelijk Museum in 1949 or the manifesto *For a spatial colourism* (1952) which he edited with Constant(14), calling for the joint development of painting and architecture, of colour and space, for 'a sculptural reality organised at a superior level, where colour and spatiality are indissociable.'(15)

Once again, the route taken by Aldo van Eyck may well be the best illustration of that double hesitation (even if, in the final analysis, he never had much to do with what has become known as *brutalism*). (16) In his case, it may have been reflected in an eternal quest for a *childhood of architecture*, much as the surrealists sought a 'childhood of writing', as the members of Cobra used children's drawings to investigate creativity, liberated desire and playfulness, as the members of the S.I. subsequently developed and theorised their first inklings of a buried spontaneity, and as that of Van Eyck himself, who put a great deal of time and effort into creating playgrounds for the children of Amsterdam(17) and who, of all of them, was emotionally and intellectually closest to that stream of thought. However, *childhood of architecture* must be interpreted in two senses since, paradoxically, the architect was also engaged in a quest for universals and archaisms, for an *authenticity* like that of 'primitive' cultures, inspired – in Van Eyck's case certainly more than others' – by the emblematic Dogon and the teachings of anthropology.(18) This was the inspiration for his Otterlo Circles (1959) as well as for his research motto, the search for a 'labyrinthine clarity'. My home *is* my city, my city *is* my home: the Albertian dream of a 'city conceived as a home, made of homes conceived as cities, pleasing for its intelligibility and its chaos, both homogeneous and kaleidoscopic.'(19) The dream of a *positively* indeterminate culture in which each individual would be free to define himself in his own way, the dream of a 'counterform' with a human face, the dream of a universally understood architecture that would nevertheless continue to be a vehicle for the expression of difference.(20)

New attitudes and shifting of fundamental notions

These double, contradictory origins (a blend of scientism and spontaneity) and this constantly counterbalanced double hesitation also explain the shift in the course of Team 10's work of a whole series of notions previously held to be fundamental.

The first of these is the ubiquitous notion of **community**, also referred to as 'human association', 'human collectivity' or 'communal life'. Whereas the *family* had until then been a landmark notion to countless architects, and particularly those of the Modern movement (rationalists, productivists, etc.), Team 10 induced a semantic shift towards the notion of the *community*, understood as the locus of exchange and reciprocity. Put more simply, this is a shift from a biological (and moral) dimension to a socio-anthropological one. From now on, the *community* was viewed through the prism of structural anthropology. Among the Dogon, for instance, it was collective and communal rules that linked an individual to a network of dwellings in the village, rather than personal or family considerations, and as a result the individual found himself occupying a much more differentiated role in the community. Furthermore, the explanatory schemas inherited from structural linguistics (system of interrelations, pairs of contrasts, dichotomies, etc.) were spontaneously more applicable to a community nucleus than to a family nucleus. Finally, on another level, this idea of *community* was now and then projected onto a larger *network*, that of the European metropolis in the making in the aftermath of the war, for the *community* was perceived as a vital element of a 'total' complex, whose complexity varied according to the urban scale (cf. *Doorn Manifesto*, January 1954).

Another notion is that of **identity** – a fundamental one, given that one of Team 10's key phrases can be summed up as 'being somebody somewhere' (together with the idea of the *threshold* as the primary locus of contact between a human and humanity). The grid for the CIAM in Aix invited the members to reflect on 'urban re-identification'. From this moment on, *identity* was perceived as a weapon in the fight against the abstract idealism and the ideological functionalist generalisations of the CIAM. This notion lay at the heart of the work of Candilis, Bodiansky and Woods at the ATBAT-Afrique conference in Casablanca, with the Carrières Centrales plan (1953), the principles of which had been laid down by Michel Ecochard in 1950. (21) The same notion was seized on by Van Eyck in his search for each person's strictly individual dimension, revealing the complexity that lay beneath the appearance of simplicity (as when he visited the Dogon in 1951-52). Candilis, Woods and Van Eyck all then went on, in their different ways, to make what can be called an initiatory 'detour'. This 'detour' may well also explain Team 10's more general concern with issues related to what was then termed 'development'.

However, the notion of *identity* remains ambiguous, for if one accepts the assumptions of a 'structuralist' (or structuralising...) reading of identity, one is left with a series of questions. Are we talking about individual or collective identity? Does it imply equality or uniqueness? If the answer is uniqueness, we are getting away from the 'original' or 'rigoristic' structuralism that is primarily interested in the *invariants* of a structure, rather than the singularities

or *isolates*.⁽²²⁾ Nevertheless, *identity* allows an approach in terms of *place* rather than *space*. The concept of *space*, in which scale is admittedly blurred, still refers to its two dimensions: that of the *place* and that of the *occasion*; or, to put it even more clearly, the *situation* in its true sense, that is to say that of the situationists, comprising both the place and the distinct and singular interaction, in short the *moment* rather than the *time*, yielding a simplified trilogy of *place – moment – architecture* as a complement to Giedion's more abstract *space – time – architecture*.

Clearly, starting from this double, contradictory concept, Team 10 also shifted, in a sense, the foundations of the Modern movement. In general, the 'group' broke away from an abstract view in order to keep moving towards the materiality of space. What is striking, moreover, is the fact that at the same time, in the research programme (1954-1959) leading up to his *The Image of the City* (1960), Kevin Lynch performed a perceptibly similar shift with regard to space, especially by introducing the term 'cluster' which, of course, was the operative notion in the work of the Smithsons. The trope of the *cluster* reflects the influence of relational thinking and the wish to consider the relationships between the components rather than the components themselves. Although Lynch worked at MIT in the immediate vicinity of the linguist Noam Chomsky (23), he did not have any particular links with members of Team 10, and Donald Appleyard had not yet arrived when his programme began. Nevertheless, both of them displayed the same interest in a sequential reading of the city - a city henceforth cut up into 'perceptible sequences' that would counter functionalist uniformity. 'Perceptible sequences', not to say 'atmospheric sequences', which would lead us towards Debord, Jorn and *La Ville nue*, even though Lynch worked at MIT and his objective was not to get lost or drift around the city but, on the contrary to find his way around in the *light*...⁽²⁴⁾ All of this took place in the course of a parallel investigation of the partial identities of the city (neighbourhoods), of crossroads, landmarks and boundaries. Each neighbourhood, then, functioned within a 'relative autonomy', in interaction (and this brings us back to the relational thinking and the structuralist schema) with the city as a whole - continuity and discontinuity defined in a dialectic relationship and via dichotomies and contrasting pairs.

To sum up, it was the same problems inherited from the aporias of functionalism and its failing sensibility that each individual tried to resolve in their own way. One way was to seek analytical and research models in the social sciences and to draw lessons from the early findings of structural linguistics (semiology had not yet officially been born) and the other was to return to radical subjectivity in search of an urban poetry already explored by the early twentieth-century avant-garde. In between these two approaches was Team 10, seeking a complex and contradictory synthesis. Team 10 was probably the very first movement in architecture to really cultivate the idea of multi-disciplinarity (ranging in France from the preparatory work for the Mirail project to the highly systematic attempts of the 'germe de ville' type), all at a time when multi-disciplinarity (often expressed in highly obscure and equivocal terms) was all the rage in every branch of the social sciences, a time when multi-

disciplinarity, at the height of the structuralist programme, more or less became the slogan for an entire era in the social sciences. More specifically, whereas the Modern movement tended to juxtapose the various branches of knowledge, Team 10 sought to link them up, thereby reflecting the intellectual mood of the day.

Moreover, this confrontation with the reality of the concepts borrowed from the social sciences and the new ways of approaching the city and the various branches of knowledge, was to become almost an official rule, for example when planning new towns in France some ten years later. And when from 1962 onwards, Candilis tried – successfully – to rejuvenate the teaching programme at the sleepy Ecole des Beaux-Arts (25), this is precisely what he concentrated on, gearing the entire programme of work at the new *atelier* being geared towards reducing the gap between education and reality – truly the Achilles' heel of the moribund college. Interestingly, Candilis and Alexis Josic encouraged their students to go to Lefebvre's lectures at Nanterre. Taking a stand against the anti-intellectualism of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and in order to establish a 'workshop library', Candilis made his students use their workshop allowances to buy books rather than drawing materials, as had been the custom...

This novel approach inspired by relational thinking (relationship between urban tissue and domestic cells, the analogy between town and structure) and introduced by Candilis and others, produced specific results. For instance, Michel Macary, Thierry Gruber and Philippe Molle named their group 'Germe de ville' when they graduated together in 1966. And it was the same three – Molle (then president of the Grande Masse, charitable body of students and former students of the l'Ecole National Supérieure des Beaux Arts) with Gruber (elected to the Bureau of the Grande Masse) and Macary (the latter two were trained at the *atelier* of Beaudoin) – who went and asked Candilis to set up an *atelier*, thus dealing one of the first fatal blows against the 'beaux-arts system'.(26) After 1968, moreover, Macary was to be one of the Etablissement Public architects responsible for drawing the plans for the new town of Marne-la-Vallée. Molle was to become mayor of Champs-sur-Marne, a town whose construction he had personally directed, and later chairman of the Marne-la-Vallée urban planning board. As members of the GARP-team, together with Andrault and Parrat and also Zublena, the three produced the Evry I 'pilot project' (1970-1975)... This also explains why the Atelier de Montrouge also used the term 'germe de ville' for the new town of Vaudreuil at the turn of the 1970s, at a time when the 'urban structure', the generative approach and the network had more or less become commonplaces in France, equivalent to a dogma.