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NEW URBAN DECORUM?
CITY AESTHETICS TO AND FRO

> *Soon the streets of the cities will shine forth as white walls. Like Zion, the holy city, the capital of heaven. Then we will have succeeded.*
>
> A. Loos, "Ornament and Crime"

ART URBAIN

Since the Renaissance, to make a beautiful city is a recurring matter in Western urban theory and practice. A to and fro topic, a recurring one. In the background of this problematics, we can place the big theme of urban decorum, "the 'fit' of expressible means to expressed content" (Tafuri 1968). Classical treatise writers[1] stated the main ideas for an organised and beautiful urban setting. Another manifestation of these ideas was the monumental use of sculpture in public places, by placing a statue or an obelisk at the centre of a square, a tradition that was adopted widely after the sixteenth century. While it was not the first, we can consider as paradigmatic the design of the Capitol Piazza (Giedion 1952; Mandanipour 2007) (Campidoglio) by Michelangelo on the Capitol Hill in Rome, which he was commissioned to design in 1537.

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[1] "The street that runs inside of the city shall come so beautifully ornate by two porticoes of identical design, and houses will be lined both sides and equal in height, besides the fact that it must be absolutely clean and well paved. However, the parts of the street itself where to apply the appropriate ornamentation are the following: the bridge crossing the square, the place destined for shows. The square is indeed a wider crossing; and the space intended to shows is nothing but a square surrounded by bleachers" (Alberti 1452: 349).

We do not intend here to trace the history[2] of the notion of Urban Decorum. Generally, decorum refers to the suitability of a design. In the past, designers had to articulate the significance of a building, defined in terms of use, social status, and physical location. Architectural decorum insisted that a design should agree with its purpose and be appropriately adapted to its audience, namely other buildings and the public at large. "Decorum was therefore a central feature of a broader idea of civic eloquence. Decorum pervaded architectural and urban theory before the nineteenth century" (Kohane, Hill 2001: 64). In any case, the notion of decorum has persisted over the centuries but taking on different meanings that we will explore.

Art Urbain (Urban Art) means building and planning the space of cities such as they were theorised from Quattrocento and, gradually, put into practice during the Renaissance, the Classical Age and the Neoclassical Period.

> [Art Urbain] Urban Art introduced in western cities the proportion, regularity, symmetry, perspective, by applying them to the roads, squares, buildings, and to the treatment of their relations and their connecting elements (arcades, colonnades, gates, arches, gardens, obelisks, fountains, statues, etc.) (Choay 1989: 84).

In this sense, in the late eighteenth century, Quatremère de Quincy specified that art urbain and urban composition, by means of their material forms, were creating possible buildings expressing intellectual qualities and moral ideas, or, by the agreement and the convenience of all their constituent parts, expressing their nature, their property, their use and destination. Quatremère added, "the more the decoration of a city contributes to the convenience of the inhabitants, the more it approaches perfection" (Quincy de 1788: 180). To some extent, this text shows that throughout the eighteenth century a certain shift towards considering the role of ornament in urban art started. The shift that will continue for over more than a century through the "Beaux Arts" training of architects. Moreover, in the early nineteenth century, different agents wishing to participate in the construction of the city adjust their interests and those of administration whose primary objective is the figurative control of urban space. A basis for these

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[2] "Decorum in Western architectural theory derives from the treatises of Vitruvius (*On Architecture*) and Alberti (*De re aedificatoria*, 1485). In Vitruvius, appropriateness (decor) binds form to function, so that the siting of a building, its approaches, aspect and choice of order are determined by its purpose. Alberti amplifies Vitruvius's concern with fitting dignity (*dignitas*), introduces the term *concinnitas* (from which the dignity derives) and makes the architect's judgement of decorum so decisive […]" (Gaston 2014).

operations is the deployment of various ordinances, regulations and laws in order to ensure that figurative control of space (Sabaté 1999).

However, throughout the nineteenth century, and in the context of the progressive introduction of the capitalist mode of production, modernisation of cities was based on advances in science and technology. This involved an intense focus on hygiene or urban health issues, concepts closely related to morality as Engels (1845) described it in respect to Manchester[3]. Engels points out "however inconvenient that is a hovel, there will always be a poor person who cannot afford a better one, being the only concern to obtain much profit as possible" (Engels 1845), noting the underlying problems of immigration, exploitation of labour and the desire for capitalist profit as the main reasons for this disastrous situation. The provision of housing for the lower class becomes the major problem that will endure, in different waves, throughout the nineteenth century until today. Moreover, at least from a theoretical point of view, the issue of decorum acquires new dimensions: that of "hygiene" (ventilation, sunlight…) and that of "social justice" that will have a huge impact on the procedures and methodologies of a new field of knowledge – urbanism – that comes to replace *art urbain* as an instrument of city organisation. While Cerdà's[4] proposals were not internationally recognised, the operations by Baron Haussmann[5] in Paris became an international "model". These operations consisted in re-articulating the city by breaking the old fabric allowing the connexion between the centre and the new railway stations. The transformation of the Parisian land and property market

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[3] "Such is the Old Town of Manchester, and on re-reading my description, I am forced to admit that instead of being exaggerated, it is far from black enough to convey a true impression of the filth, ruin, and uninhabitableness, the defiance of all considerations of cleanliness, ventilation, and health which characterise the construction of this single district, containing at least twenty to thirty thousand inhabitants" (Engels 1845).

[4] Although the work of Cerdà, as the "founder" of Urbanism, has not been widely recognised yet, his role in creating the discipline of urbanism has been internationally propagated by Rossi (1968) and subsequently by Choay (1980). However, his theoretical work is little known.

[5] Fabián Estapé – a brilliant Spanish economist, academic and promoter of the new edition of the General Theory of Urbanisation – presents this anecdote in his introductory writing. "During a visit of Cerdà and his wife to Paris, he showed the plans of the Barcelona's Eixample to Haussmann, the famous designer of the French city, who, along with his wife, had invited them because they heard about the Cerdà's Project. Well then, the hosts proposed to buy his plans for application to Paris. Cerdà, very surprised, replied »No, I cannot sell them, they are not for sale, I designed them for Barcelona and I wrote them for Catalonia«" (Estapé 1971: 291).

upset traditional notions of community as much as they upset the sociospatial structure, and transformations in financial structures and labour processes had no less an impact upon the material basis of class relations (Harvey 2003: 219).

The Parisian landscape, and subsequently that of many cities worldwide, following the Haussmann model, will change radically. Haussmann's team, led by Alphand and Davioud, introduces a new conception of the street design and furnishings changing the appearance of the capital, from now on characterised by its gardens and boulevards[6], constituting what I called the Alphand-Davioud-Hittorff paradigm of qualification of the city (Remesar 2007). The scenery of the ways of life and dwelling in Paris also changes

> We have given the measure of our architectural talent in the five-story buildings which make up the new Paris, where the population is stacked on barrack rooms: uniform buildings, inconvenient, whose prototype are barracks and the garnished hôtel the masterpiece (Proudhon 1865: 157).

Cerdà himself harshly criticises these ways of city making that spread around the world.

In a few years, the model of Paris[7] is questioned as well as the "Beaux Arts" system to produce a "beautiful city"[8] because, although it was based on the classic parameters of "Art Urbain", it started to expand towards monumental eclecticism and ornamentation. Haussmann's model had not solved the housing problem or created a city for all – one of the ideals of Cerdà's Plan for Barcelona – and it had not respected the growing concern about the past of the city. The rupture of the

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[6] The programme developed by Alphand, with their elements designed first by Hittorff and later on by Davioud.

[7] A model that in Harvey's words can be summarised as follows; "Money, finance, and speculation became such a grand obsession with the Parisian bourgeoisie (»business is other people's money«, cracked Alexandre Dumas the younger) that the bourse became a centre of corruption as well as of reckless speculation that gobbled up many a landed fortune" (Harvey 2003: 118).

[8] In his classic work, Olsen (1986), analysing the case of the beautification programmes in London, Paris and Vienna, stated; "The three programmes shared a number of characteristics: they resulted from the initiative of central government, depended, for their success, on the attraction of private investment by speculative builders and developers; were intended to make royal or imperial residences more prominent; created public parks; mixed public and private buildings, ecclesiastical and secular purposes, residential and commercial uses; used architecture mainly in the classical tradition; put up monuments of national, imperial, dynastic, or cultural significance; built wide streets to facilitate traffic and to serve as fashionable promenades; and combined aesthetic with social and sanitary motives" (Olsen 1986: 83).

historic fabric of the city, with the consequent disappearance of "monuments", the frontage beautification of the city present in the Parisian boulevards, required a correction of the model and ways of addressing urban problems. This way, in Sitte's words, anyone who wants to appear as a street aesthetics champion should be firstly convinced that the current means of satisfying the traffic requirements are, perhaps, not foolproof and, secondly, be prepared to demonstrate that the needs of modern life (transportation, hygiene, etc.) are not necessarily obstacles to the development of the art of the street.

> It is precisely in the way of ordering cities, more than anywhere, that art has to exercise its educational influence as its activities are felt in every moment in the soul of the people, and not, for example in concerts or shows reserved for wealthy classes of the nation. It would therefore be desirable that the government provides to the aesthetics of the street all the importance it deserves (Sitte 1889: 145–146).

CITY AESTHETICS: ART PUBLIC-CIVIC ART-CIVIC DESIGN

Sitte's demand will be consolidated into the new century with the appearance of a diffuse movement that will take various forms, for example, that of the Art Public movement. In the late nineteenth century, cities faced the following triple problem: an urban problem (physical and infrastructural), a civic problem (social, cultural and symbolic) and a political problem (linked to the growth of participatory democracy). Therefore, the emergence of concepts such as *Art Public* (in the Francophone area), *Civic Art* (in the States) and *Civic Design* (in Britain) is not surprising as an empirical and theoretical way of thinking and solving the organisation of the City that is starting its road towards the metropolitan scale. These concepts revolve around the idea of the need for a "civic aesthetics".

> At first sight, giving this study the title city aesthetics, we seem to subordinate all to beauty, […] but […] I argued that industrial art workers would find in perfect harmony between the form and the use of objects (Buls, 1893).

Buls's activity as the mayor of Brussels facilitates the emergence of what we now call a think-tank focused on the issue of Urban Aesthetics[9]. A brief analysis of this trend will serve to clarify the thought on urban decorum. We have already

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[9] Through the l'Oeuvre Belge d'Art Public (Broerman 1898; Abreu 2006). An analysis of the work related to the International Congresses of Art Public organised by the Oeuvre Belge allows us to define the underlying idea, not limited to European cities

noted that in the nineteenth century the concept of urban decorum expanded into social and economic aspects, implicit in the hygienist paradigm, changing, in one way or another, the whole thought about the city. Now, the idea of *Art Public*[10] – *Civic Art – Civic Design* expands the basis of this concept to other dimensions, including social justice and the necessary *attractiveness* of cities for tourism[11].

only (Bohl, Lejeune 2009; Monclús 1995; Crouch 2002) but with a great impact on North-American cities (De W., BC 1900; Robinson 1904; Hegemann-Peets 1922).

[10] It would be necessary here to point out the concept of "Art Public", linked to the emergence of the Social Museum in France. "The Social Museum was founded in 1894, but more firmly rooted earlier in the social economy section of the 1889 Universal Exhibition in Paris, the Musée social was a republican think-tank that brought together reformers from diverse social, political, and ideological backgrounds. (…) In fact, the Musée social's reputation for expertise in social welfare and vigorous debate on all facets of the social question was enshrined in its unofficial title, »the antechamber of the Chamber«. Virtually every piece of social legislation proposed between 1895 and 1920 received ample scrutiny at the Musée before being presented to French legislators. Even the député Cornudet admitted that the 1919 urban planning law that bears his name was drafted within the halls of the Musée social because of its focus on public hygiene" (Beaudoin 2003: 560).

[11] In the nineteenth century, we witnessed an increase in what Veblen (1899) calls the "leisure class" and what Baudelaire (1859–1863) labelled with the terms "man of the world", dandy and "flâneur". "Baudelaire issued his manifesto for the visual arts (and a century before Benjamin attempted to unravel the myths of modernity in his unfinished Paris Arcades project). Balzac had already placed the myths of modernity under the microscope and used the figure of the flaneur to do it. And Paris – a capital city being shaped by bourgeois power into a city of capital – was at the centre of his world" (Harvey 2003). This increase comes from the growth of economic activity spurred by industrialisation processes, economic internationalisation and the development of the transport systems (rail, boats…) and generates a new social interest, which comes to replace the Grand Tour of previous ages: tourism. The gradual emergence of a class with available leisure time and economic resources, paralleled with a set of related activities oriented towards seeing the whole world (explorations, for example), entailed that the world could be known in just one place, the site of the International Exhibition. Since its inception in London (Great Exhibition, 1851), one after another follow until now. The BIE (Bureau of International Expositions) estimates that between 1851 (London) and 1900 (Paris) the total number of visitors exceeded 188 million people, not to mention the huge amount of people who travelled to international, regional or local fairs. This tourism, increasingly massive, needs material solutions, for lodging and transportation. Tourism, therefore, is one of the roots of concern about the aesthetics of the city. However, proposals for city beautification are also addressed to its own citizens. Citizens are increasingly interested in the enhancement of the history of the city – especially

Besides, the recurring topic of improving the city through art, especially by means of its beautification, these conferences highlight the need of: defence of historical sites and art heritage; defence of popular culture; defence of the garden cities; and, most prominently, the unfolding of arts education. All this in the context of providing housing for disadvantaged social classes.

Thus, from the *Art Public* perspective, the problem of city beautification is divided into various fields of municipal action covering the areas of Housing, Heritage, Museum and Arts Education, configuring at the same time new methods of intervention in the territory that will gradually shape the discipline of Urbanism/Urban Planning/Town Planning. In short, aestheticising the city is the articulation of certain measures (e.g. control of ugliness of advertising) but mainly involves the introduction of policies, usually municipal, able to articulate and promote the improvement of the physical appearance of the city alongside the preservation of its Heritage and Aesthetic Education of citizens. It could be "a new dream and a new hope. Within these is the impulse to civic art. Cities grow in splendour. There are new standards of beauty and dignity for towns" (Robinson 1904).

> However, the Art Public concept splits into two directions. The first one, represented by the Belgian trend, will focus on the issue of Arts Education and the enhancement of industrial and applied arts, heralding the emergence of the discipline of Design[12]. The other trend, represented by the French, partly by the Germans, the English and North Americans, will focus on problems in the process of planning and city making[13]. Before the First World War, several cities on both sides of the Atlantic and

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in situations when there is a conflict of identities. The reasons: on the one hand, the destructive role of the pickaxe producing the new city and, on the other, as Riegl says, because the modern spirit revolts against prisons d'art and it shows its opposition to: "remove a monument from its legacy environment, to which is attached organically, and be locked in museums" (Riegl 1903: 74).

[12] We should not dismiss the correlation with the Deutscher Werkbund approach founded by Hermann Muthesius in 1907 after his stay in England and strongly influenced by the Arts & Crafts movement. The Werkbund exerted an immediate influence, and similar organisations soon appeared in Austria (Österreichischer Werkbund, 1912) and in Switzerland (Schweizerischer Werkbund, 1913). We must remember that Gropius's Bauhaus (1919) is a division of Deutcher Werkund.

[13] "In general, then, it may be said that while the French or classical theory results in monumental effects for a city and establishes unity, the German preserves for an old city a homelike feeling and a pleasing variety. It is worthy of note, however, that the city planning has been undertaken by masters, whether in France or Germany, the two theories have been used as circumstances warranted. The magnitude of the movement of

beyond, initiated major processes of beautification based on different principles of *l'Art Public – Civic Art – Civic Design*. In this context, the implicit concept of decorum has once again expanded. Advances in analytical techniques (geographical, social, economic…) and of project representation allow a rational control of space and, gradually to erode the procedures of its figurative control.

Moreover, the necessary competitiveness of domestic products in an increasingly internationalised economy propelled several policies enhancing the relationship between art and industry. These policies, initiated under the Napoleonic Empire, had considerable importance since the "Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations" (London, 1851) and generated various artistic movements – Arts & Crafts, Industrial Art, Glasgow School, Art Nouveau, Jugendstil, Catalan Modernism… – that would define the artistic end of the ninetieth century. However, the different trends under the umbrella of *Art Public – Civic Art – Civic Design*, despite being influenced by these movements, do not line up with them. As Anatole France states, there exists a latent concept of "The art for all, in all and by all" (France 1913).

The expansion of the concept of decorum also applies to other aspects to consider in creating a beautiful city. The aesthetics of ruin, present in the Romanticism of the nineteenth century, gives way to a rational consideration of heritage. It starts musealisation of cities and of European cultural and social life. Thus, while the Museum device ensures the preservation of aesthetic and cultural memory of chattels, Heritage will do it in respect to real estate. Musealisation is one of the foundations of citizenship education through art.

We have already pointed out that the meaning of decorum in the late eighteenth century turned into an ornamental conception of design. Despite the importance of new meanings of decorum explored by the different trends of the *Art Public – Civic Art – Civic Design*, the issue of ornament, for and against, is the focus of discussion in the years before the First World War[14]. Largely due to the

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city planning in Germany is so great that literally hundreds of cities are now prosecuting schemes of systematic extension and development; and a school of city planners has grown up within the past twenty-five years, with such men as Gurlitt, Stüben, Theodor Fisher and Baumeister among its masters. A well-edited magazine, »Der Städtebau« (City Planning) is published; and in 1903 the first German Municipal Exposition was held in Dresden" (Burnham, Bennett 1909). Oddly neither the authors cited by Burnham, nor those mentioned in note 14, much less Cerdà, are referenced in the influential "The City in History" by Lewis Mumford (1961) and "Cities of Tomorrow" by Peter Hall (1988).

[14] "By 1900 appeared in France the »modern style« which advocates a certain baroque style […]. Soon, the modern style will be derided and replaced by the more

significant changes introduced by the artistic Avant-gardes in their practice and to the reflection on the Art and Architecture regarding the "excesses" of both Art Nouveau and Beaux Arts eclecticism.

Adolf Loos stated in his influential work "Ornament and Crime" (1908) that "cultural evolution is equivalent to the elimination of ornament in the common object". Although during the nineteenth century "style meant ornament" and "the ornamental epidemic is recognized and state-subsidized with government money […]. Soon the streets of the cities will shine forth as white walls. Like Zion, the holy city, the capital of heaven" (Loos 1908). A less known aspect of the work by Loos refers to the other dimension of decorum introduced in the early twentieth century: the social one linked with industrialisation. "The work of an ornamentist is no longer payable as it should. The ornamentist has to work twenty hours to achieve the same income of a modern worker who works eight hours". Generally, the ornamented object is more expensive, however, "the paradox is that an ornamental piece with the same material cost as that of a smooth object and that needed triple hours for its realization, when it is sold is paid the half of the other" (Loos 1908). The lack of ornament results in a reduction in working hours and a salary increase. In current terminology, reducing ornament increases productivity and contributes to social equity.

Nevertheless, the Avant-gardes not only question the "superficial" aspect (ornament) of objects but also challenge the essences of the representation of objects and of space. Referring to Cubism, Giedion) states:

> Like the scientist, the artist has come to recognize that classic conceptions of space and volumes are limited and one-sided. In particular, it has become plain that the aesthetic qualities of space are not limited to its infinity for sight, as in

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technical modernity, more »rigorous«, more stripped of the natural and without fear of sophistication […]. Modernity starts with what may be called the silent disaster. Let us recall the essential characteristics of this unique event. Around 1900 the core principles of social practice in Europe are crumbling and even collapsing. Thus ends what looked like definitely established during the heyday of the bourgeoisie, in particular space and time, representation and reality […] the sensitive space and the perspective disintegrate […]. From this shock, emerge the three »values« that will make modernity, namely the technique, the language and the work. […] The technique will gradually become mistress and queen […]. The work will become the rival of the technique, being the prerogative and the supreme value in socialism when technology points its discredit because it promises and probably allows its replacement. The discourse? Language? They will provide the superior values in Western societies, the replacement and substitution" (Lefebvre 1981: 48).

the gardens of Versailles. The essence of space as it is conceived today is its many-sidedness, the infinite potentiality for relations within it. Exhaustive description of an area from one point of reference is, accordingly, impossible; its. […] Cubism breaks with the Renaissance perspective and introduces "a principle that is closely related to modern life: the simultaneity" (Giedion 1941: 435–436).

A NEW ARCHITECTURE FOR A NEW CITY
DECORUM AND MODERN MOVEMENT

These new concepts and new aesthetics will facilitate the emergence of New Architecture[15], in parallel to the evolution of construction techniques in the context of ordering of the metropolitan city, because of the need to provide affordable housing for working classes and, after the First World War, the reconstruction of cities. Sert (1930) understands that New Architecture: "is the only one that can fully meet the current needs of the individual (material and spiritual) using the constructive elements provided by the industry today"[16]. While recognising, along with his colleagues in the GATEPAC[17], that although "We are witnessing a new spirit state

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[15] New Architecture is not understood solely as a new way to conceive and construct buildings. The great change, as announced since the Art Public movement, refers to architectural thinking that anchors buildings in its urban setting. Hence, the importance of the experiences of the Viennese Hoff, of German Siedlungen, of the Bauhaus for the development of architectural – urban thinking that will gradually abandon the principles raised by the Art Public – Civic Art – Civic Design, eventually adopting the principles of functionalism.

[16] In this work, Sert, adds: "this does not mean that some traditional systems that tie in perfectly with modern construction cannot be kept, such as, for example, the admirable flat brick vaults of our land" opening the way to the modern movement which later will be called Critical Regionalism (Frampto, 1980; 1983). It should be pointed out that the relationship between the new, the radical, and the tradition was already highlighted by Gropius (1930). "The idea of traditi…) […] is in no way hostile or contrary to the idea of the radica…) […] It is easily possible that a man may act at the same time, radically and traditional). […]. Tradition, for us, has meaning and value only when we use the experiences of our ancestors with lively intelligence, when we add new experience to the already known" (Gropius 1930: 335).

[17] Since 1930 (and until the end of the War of Spain) G.A.T.E.P.A.C. (Group of Spanish Architects and Technicians for the Progress of Contemporary Architecture) is a movement that promotes the introduction of new approaches derived from Modern Architecture and CIAM in Spain. The main group is the Catalan G.A.T.C.P.A.C, based in Barcelona, that will disseminate its ideas through AC (Contemporary Architecture).

that cancels customs and traditions and that tends to be universal", Contemporary Architecture, "must agree with these characters" (GATEPAC, 1931). In this context, the residential model, a family house with a garden, introduced by the Garden City movement and assumed largely by the Art Public is in crisis and begins to be replaced by the construction of the city through large multifamily blocks. Before the First World War, housing needs were satisfied within the possibilities of production of manual workers, using materials from each country, obtained at low prices; construction methods were sons of tradition and secular customs. The change in the universal economic landscape requires banishing systems that have lost their effectiveness and proclaiming that the economy in construction can only be achieved through three cardinal conditions: a) Systematic standardisation of construction elements; b) Mechanical mass production of these standard elements; c) Dry assembly of standardised houses. Moreover, the Hygienist thought substrate of New Architecture reintroduces the discussion about keeping the fabric and the urban frame of the historic city, which they accuse of being the cause of the poor living conditions, the poor health and the poor hygiene of lower classes that still occupy the old buildings of these urban areas. No wonder, then, that this situation will again raise the topic of the role of art in the city,

> The function of art, is it necessary? Is it appropriate to deal with it a long time, as if it was a major problem? Indeed new materialist theories are propagated passing from the architecture to the composition of buildings and the city, and they tell us that the technique is sufficient to achieve beauty (Giovannoni 1931: 138–139).

The city of basic functions – housing, work, leisure and circulation – seems ready to end the topic of decorum. The beginnings of modernism in architecture and planning meant, "the eschewing of ornament and personalized design. It also meant a prevailing passion for massive spaces and perspectives, for uniformity and the power of the straight line" (Harvey 1990: 36). If the ideal of refinement resulted in fear of offending the laws of decorum, "the new trends considered decorum as the main enemy and the bourgeois taste as a term of opprobrium" (Gombrich 1990: 43). Thus, the concept of decorum all but disappeared from design theory because

> modernist thought was informed by an antagonism to the rhetorical traditions that underpinned decorum. Nevertheless, aspects of the idea have persisted in continuing debates regarding the social and representational dimension of the built environment (Kohane, Hill 2001: 65).

As Tzonis points out, the elimination of pre-rational ornament, either by defenders of structure as by advocates of function, resulted in the total exclusion

of rationality in the overall methodology of architecture. Architecture became appearance and surface decoration contained within a structural or functional packaging, converting structural and functional containers into decoration.

> The modern movement revitalized the visual order at the service of a false environment, not oppressive, using objects that caused an even greater oppression to humans […]. Henry Russell Hitchcock and Philip Johnson had a more sincere explanation of the Modern Movement than its own followers. They claimed that the visual order had been the main concern of this movement. Rationalization was only a façade, significant for a society that seemed being governed, in most of the areas, through rational decisions. Hitchcock and Johnson thought the result was not the conversion of architecture in science, but an alternative way to visually organize the environment, a new style, "the international style" (Tzonis 1977: 106).

Apparently, the abandonment of ornamentation involves another fundamental neglect in the practice of city making: the abandonment of the symbolic. Argan suggests that the ornament is functional

> with regard to an order of functions requiring the container be not only a container, but also, an object in connection with what the world it has to be. Only then, the object may exceed the limit of its strictly practical function and fulfil a symbolic function of an indisputable social importance (Argan 1961: 112).

PUBLIC ART IN THE SYNTHESIS OF ARTS

However, it would not be fair, following a slightly reflective stance presented in the analysis, to demonise the Modern Movement in relation to urban decorum. Indeed, I have argued that the Pavilion of the Spanish Republic[18] for the Universal Exhibition in Paris, 1937, was a "paradigm for Public Art" (Remesar 2013). As Giedion notes "Only in exceptional cases (Picasso"s "Guernica" 1937, ordered by the Spanish Loyalist Government) were creative contemporary artists allowed to participate in a Community task" (Giedion 1944: 557).

In 1943, Sert, Léger and Giedion publish "Nine Points on Monumentality" that might be considered a milestone in the rethinking of city beautification within the Modern Movement. As each of them came from a different discipline, the manifesto showed their concern about the relationship between art and public space, reflecting the possible collaboration among art, architecture and history.

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[18] Horacio Torrent (2010) holds the same opinion, "The Pavilion showed Sert's concern about the ways in which the architecture could relate to art".

People want the buildings that represent their social and community life to give more than functional fulfilment. They want their aspiration for monumentality, joy, pride, and excitement to be satisfied […] The fulfilment of this demand can be accomplished with the new means of expression at hand though it is not an easy task. The following conditions are essential for it. A monument being the integration of the work of the planner, architect, painter, sculptor, and landscapist demands close collaboration between all of them. This collaboration has failed in the last hundred years. Most modern architects have not been trained for this kind of integrated work. Monumental tasks have not been entrusted to them […]. Monumental architecture will be something more than strictly functional. It will have regained its lyrical value. In such monumental layouts, architecture and city planning could attain a new freedom and develop new creative possibilities. Such as those that have begun to be felt in the last decades in the fields of painting, sculpture, music, and poetry, the best known artists today have a good market, but there are no walls, no places, no buildings, where their talent can touch the great public, where they can form the people and the people could form them (Sert, Léger, Giedion 1943: 29–30).

Soon after, in his 1944 paper, Giedion would add, "only the imagination of the real creators is suited to build the lacking civic centres, again to instil the public with the old love for festivals, and to incorporate all the new materials, movement, colour, and the abundant technical possibilities" (Giedion 1944: 559–561). It is not surprising that post-war CIAMs (1947, CIAM VI, Bridgwater, England; 1949, CIAM VII, Bergamo, Italy, 1951; CIAM VIII, Hoddesdon, England) faced topics as "Reconstruction of the Cities" (a logical subject after the war), "Art and Architecture" and "The Heart of the City. Towards the Humanization of Urban Life".

Nor is it surprising that on the periphery of the mainstream of the Modern Movement, emerged a new monumentality linked to the language of the avant-garde, such as the Monument to the victims of World War II created in 1935 by Brâncuși in Tirgu-Jiu, Romania, as well as the paradigmatic case of the University City in Caracas, classified by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site and a jewel of contemporary architecture and urbanism, designed and built by Carlos Raúl Villanueva between 1943 and 1960, a project in which he displayed an enormous production of works of art (murals, stained glass, sculptures …).

It would be a good idea to remember with Michel Rangon that, in the same way that lions should not be kept in zoos, paintings and sculptures should not be imprisoned in museums. The natural environment for wild animals is the jungle. The natural environment for artistic works is square, gardens, public buildings, factories, airports: all the places where man perceives man as a companion, as an associate, as a helping hand, as hope and not as the withered flower of isolation and indifference (Villanueva 1980: 231).

The 1950s marked the beginning of the misconfiguration of the city as it had been conceived since the eighteenth century, both the authorities (central, regional, local) as well as real estate developers applying the principles of functionalism: zoning, prominence of mobility – ending with the "donkey's way" as Le Corbusier (1925) had foreseen years ago – and residence in large and isolated collective blocks. Cities, on both sides of the Iron Curtain, grew thanks to large residential and industrial operations and articulating the territory through motorways. However, as pointed out by Sert, collecting some of the ideas raised in Nine Points, "architecture today must be more functional and cannot exist without a sense of plastic values" (Sert 1951: 35).

This approach allowed to bring contemporary art to the streets, as, more discreetly, was happening in some of the European operations of city rebuilding (e.g.: English New Towns, Reconstruction of Rotterdam, etc.), Sert, in this same work, stated three possible ways of cooperation between the arts. Artists and architects could work together when their work is related to the conception of the building. The other possibility was the "applied mode", i.e. a partnership in which the architect defined a specific site[19] so that the artist could develop his or her artwork. Finally, the arts can simply relate to each other, each working independently. Therefore, the Synthesis of Arts is possible. However, sometime later, Noguchi remarks "To say that my work has been a collaborative effort is not, however, quite correct. I think that what most architects want from a sculptor is an embellishment, not exactly a collaboration, each one making his own separated contributions" (quoted in Dean Hermann 2002: 56).

Certain sections and quarters of the city will receive the benefit of this programmatic approach linking architecture, urbanism and art, that is some urban operations, such as some Civic Centres, and not the city as a whole. Since the late 1970s, this practice has continued until today, except for some policies such as the Public Art Strategy for Barcelona (de Lecea, Remesar, Grandas 2004–2010). City aestheticising means carrying out flagship operations (university campus, historic centres, core business districts (CBD), big transportation infrastructure, new residential and corporate developments) such as the new buildings for the UN in

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[19]   Curiously, the problem of "site specific" will become one of the central themes of Public Art. "Site-specificity" is therefore a core argument in "antiaesthetic" approaches to Serra's work. As Krauss clearly states by taking site-specificity as its medium, Serra's sculpture moves in on a theoretical dimension also acknowledged by every other contributor of the October Files book on Serra" (Leal 2010). Although used in very different contexts, both concepts share a common definition: the spatial form that should determine the nature of the work.

New York or for the UNESCO in Paris along the Fifties. In any case, the Public Art[20] opted for the introduction of contemporary languages of art: "these works of art, usually abstract, i.e. non-figurative, have a role of extras: they look great in the »surrounding« space, a space that kills the environment" (Lefebvre 1974: 366).

However, this vision of a functional city, embellished occasionally by the hand of public institutions or large private companies, responds to a fragmented reality, to a city that, due to how it is made, introduces not only a structurally spatial segregation but also an economic and social segregation. A city without qualities. In his introduction to "The Image of the City", Lynch says his goal is

> to consider the visual quality of the American city by studying the mental image of that city which is held by its citizens. It will concentrate especially on one particular visual quality: the apparent clarity or "legibility" of the cityscape. By this we mean the ease with which its parts can be recognized and can be organized into a coherent pattern (...). This book will assert that legibility is crucial in the city setting, will analyse it in some detail, and will try to show how this concept might be used today in rebuilding our cities" (Lynch 1960: 2).

As noted, (Remesar, Esparza 2014) Lynch based his systemic analysis on the principles of Gestalt psychology derived from the idea of an interaction between medium and subject based on the concept of dynamic field, a structure where figure and background interact dynamically generating "form"[21]. Lynch

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[20] "The widely known assertion is that Public Art challenges the main assumptions of contemporary art theory because it dramatically challenges the autonomic conception of creative work. I am specifically reporting myself to the idea that public art cannot be merely thought as yet another available ground for contemporary art. That, on the contrary, public art has to adapt itself to the complex and demanding context of the public space, where artists should never be allowed to freely play their creative will" (Leal 2010: 37).

[21] Therefore, Lynch argues that an environmental image responds to an environmental configuration and has three parts: identity (must be a figure), structure (involving the background) and meaning (emotional or practical for the observer). The main aspects of the form are: "**Singularity** or figure-background clarity (involving sharpness of boundary; closure; contrast of surface, shape, intensity, complexity, size, use, spatial location); **Simplicity** (clarity and simplicity of visible form in the geometrical sense, limitation of parts) [...] **Continuity**: continuance of edge and surface (as in a street channel, skyline, or setback); nearness of parts (as a cluster of buildings); repetition of rhythmic interval (as a street-corner pattern); similarity, analogy, or harmony of surface, shape, or use... **Dominance**: dominance of one part over others by means of size, intensity, or interest [...] **Clarity of Joint**: high visibility of

introduces a concept of the environment that exceeds the notion of surroundings and is associated with a social and cultural context that is no longer a "universal type" as used by the urban theory at the time. Therefore, there is a need to reformulate the theory of urban form, since urban form goes beyond the limits of purely physical form and design has to be "the playful creation and strict evaluation of the possible forms of something, including how it is to be made" (Lynch 1981: 223).

Almost parallel is the influential "Death and Life of Great American Cities" by Jane Jacobs. The objective of the book is clear

> This book is an attack on current city planning and rebuilding. It is also, and mostly, an attempt to introduce new principles of city planning and rebuilding, different and even opposite from those now taught in everything from schools of architecture and planning to the Sunday supplements and women's magazines. My attack is not based on quibbles about rebuilding methods or hair splitting about fashions in design. It is an attack, rather, on the principles and aims that have shaped modern, orthodox city planning and rebuilding (Jacobs 1961: 13).

In setting forth different principles, Jacobs is interested in common, ordinary things, for instance:

> what kinds of city streets are safe and what kinds are not; why some city parks are marvellous and others are vice traps and death traps; why some slums stay slums and other slums regenerate themselves even against financial and official opposition; what makes downtowns shift their centres; what, if anything, is a city neighborhood, and what jobs, if any, neighborhoods in great cities do. In short, I shall be writing about how cities work in real life, because this is the only way to learn what principles of planning and what practices in rebuilding can promote

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joints and seams, clear relation and interconnection […] **Directional Differentiation**: asymmetries, gradients, and radial references, which differentiate one end from another […] **Visual Scope**: qualities which increase the range and penetration of vision, either actually or symbolically… **Motion Awareness**: the qualities which make sensible to the observer, through both the visual and the kinesthetic senses, his own actual or potential motion […] **Time Series** […] and **Names and Meanings**: non-physical characteristics which may enhance the imageability of an element" (Lynch 1960: 105–107). At the time when Lynch published his "Image of the City", Gordon Cullen (Cullen 1961) published in England the book "Townscapes" highlighting aspects of continuity of the urban landscape in relation to the movement of people (serial vision) and total perception of the environment, constructed and symbolic, i.e. the content of the environment. The approaches of Lynch and Cullen are mostly mutually complementary but derived from very different theoretical approaches and interests.

social and economic vitality in cities, and what practices and principles will deaden these attributes (Jacobs 1961: 13).

From my point of view, Lynch and Jacobs, raise serious objections to the postulates of modernism, assuming, first, the claim that city making cannot be the exclusive domain of one or two disciplinary fields (architecture and engineering). For them, the city is not only a matter of forms. It involves many actors and agents, from policy makers, through real-state agents to citizens engaged in processes of reclaiming their rights and demanding a greater participation. Also, they represent a multi- or interdisciplinary[22] approach that will take shape in later decades. This approach is appropriate because the city more than an object is a process, a *decourse* in the Lefebvre's terminology, which tends to overcome separations and dissociations between

> the **work** (unique, object carrying the mark of a "subject", the creator, the artist, and of a time that will not return) and the **product** (repeated, the result of repetitive gestures, so reproducible, leading at the limit the automatic reproduction of social relations). The aim would be therefore, on the horizon, in the limit, to produce the space of humankind as a collective work (generic) of this species, similarly to what was called and still is call "art" (Lefebvre 1974).

Finally, in both works there is implicit the need for a theory of urban decorum. The issue emerges again and it is no coincidence that Alexander in his "Notes of the Synthesis of Form" wrote the chapter "Goodness of Fit"[23], "It is based on the

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[22] "The City is a matter for more than one discipline but none of them is diminished in collaboration" (Brandão 2006). Professions appear as beneficiaries of the division of knowledge and as "administrators" of an operational discipline. "Taken in their technicality and specialization, knowledge activities have a greater gap between them that is filled by everyday life. Everyday life is profoundly related to all activities, with all their differences and conflicts and it's their meeting point, their unity, their common ground" (Lefebvre 1974). But this process is an evolution in which knowledge and practice interact by operating in a changing environment. This is what is happening in the field of Urban Design (Brandão, Remesar 2010). This way an interdisciplinary approach is indeed an "interdisciplinary collaborative and reflexive process, rather than an »established« formula, [which] gives new answers to new problems and new urban contexts, based on actors agreements" (Remesar 2000).

[23] "The form is the solution to the problem; the context defines the problem. In other words, when we speak of design, the real object of discussion is not the form alone, but the ensemble comprising the form and its context. Good fit is a desired property of this ensemble which relates to some particular division of the ensemble into form and context. (...) The rightness of the form depends, in each one of these cases, on the degree

idea that every design problem begins with an effort to achieve fitness between two entities: the form in question and its context" (Alexander 1967: 15).

If "The Image of the City" remains an indispensable reference to thinking about the city, "Good City Form" (1981) by Lynch, to my understanding, formulates a theory of urban decorum. This book is a major work where Lynch researches the connections between human values and the physical forms of cities, starting from a naive question: What makes a good city?

> The purpose of this essay it to make a general statement about the good settlement, one relevant and responsive to any human context, and which connects general values to specific actions. The statement will restrict itself to the connection between human values and the spatial, physical city, although that last is meant in a broader sense than is commonly intended [...]. I will take the view that settlement form is the spatial arrangement of persons doing things, the resulting spatial flows of persons, goods and information, and the physical features which modify space in some way significant to those actions, including enclosures, surfaces, channels, ambiences and objects (Lynch 1981: 9).

To develop his theory, Lynch argues that the study should start from intentional behaviours that unfold in a settlement form, "connecting values[24] of very general and long-range importance".

Lynch's and Jacobs's works give rise to a need that is not covered by the revisions of Modern Architecture in its CIAM, the revisions which were already announced by the so-called regionalist architectural practices. In terms of Lefebvre, it was necessary

> To restore a "code of the space", that is to say, a common language for the practice and theory, for the people, for architects, for scientists, can be considered tactically as an immediate task. Such a code it first will regroup the dissociated elements: the private and the public, the encounter and the difference in space. It would gather the terms dispersed for the current spatial practice and the ideologies that

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to which it fits the rest of the ensemble. What is true is that designers do often develop one part of a functional program at the expense of another. But they do it because the only way they seem able to organize form clearly is to design under the driving force of some comparatively simple concept" (Alexander 1964: 29).

[24] These values can be studied using five "performance dimensions": "Vitality", "Sense" – to avoid possible ambiguities of meaning in the use of the concept of urban aesthetic, Lynch prefers "to use a term like sense, it has a more precise meaning in terms of environmental form and is free from old controversial goblins" (Lynch 1981: 101) – "Appropriateness", "Access", "Control", and two meta-criteria "Efficacy" and "Justice".

justify it: the micro (the scale or architectural level) and the macro (assigned to urban planners, policymakers, planners), the everyday life and the urban, the inside and the outside, work and non-work (the feast), the durable and the ephemeral (Lefebvre 1973: 139).

QUALIFYING PUBLIC SPACE: FROM PUBLIC ART AND PLACEMAKING TO URBAN ARTS AND COSMOPOLITAN AESTHETICS

As Harvey states "(Jacobs defends) a different kind of urban aesthetic that focused on local neighbourhood development, and on the historical preservation, and ultimately gentrification, of older areas" (Harvey 2012: 10). In this sense, aesthetisation of the city is not a goal in itself – as could be interpreted from some tenets of *Art Public – Civic Art – Civic Design* or some of the proposals for the Synthesis of the Arts, but one of the means that will provide *quality* to the city that is nothing but its public space (Borja 1977). The street, ordering element of the Art Urbain, reappears with intensity in the sixties. Firstly, because people took to the streets (large demonstrations for Human Rights, demonstrations against the Vietnam War, French May citizen protests against dictatorships, etc.). Secondly, because the late sixties and the beginning of the next decade bring the worldwide emergence of the "urban question" (Castells 1972) and of the urban social movements (Castells 1973). New ways of thinking are required in order to improve the conditions of urban life and new actors (community planning groups, advocacy planning groups, organised neighbourhood groups […]) will reclaim their role in the decision-making processes of city making. Finally, as Gehl (1971) points out because life continues beyond the houses, industrial buildings or large "circulation pipelines" which have become urban arteries. There is an outdoor life, between buildings, a social and community life that must be defended and enhanced. As Jacobs has noted when outdoor areas are of poor quality only strictly necessary activities occur.

> When outdoor areas are of high quality, necessary activities take place with approximately the same frequency – though they clearly tend to take a longer time because the physical conditions are better. In addition, however, a wide range of optional activities will also occur because place and situation now invite people to stop, sit, eat, play, and so on. In streets and city spaces of poor quality, only the bare minimum of activity takes place. People hurry home. In a good environment, a completely different, broad spectrum of human, activities is possible (Gehl 1971: 13).

Public space is the setting for the public part of our everyday life,

> in every society there is a daily life and every person, whatever the place holds in the social division of labour, has a daily life. However, this does not mean in any way that the content and structure of daily life are identical for the whole society and for each individual (Heller 1972: 19).

The idea of public space is closely linked to the reality of the city, the values of citizenship and the horizon of civilization. The public space is the civic space of the common good, as opposed to the private space of particular interest

> In the city it becomes visible the implicit covenant that founded citizenship. The cities and their public places express very well the image that societies have of themselves. The city is a particular staging of the societies (Inneratity 2006: 112).

The goal of both theoreticians and policy makers is to provide public space to cities. Public Space would be the factor that allows the city to be maxed, isotopic or, as we say in European terminology, "urbanely cohesive"[25].

> A democratic urban policy has to consider as a priority to address social inequality and consequently produce an urban supply that improves the quality of life of the popular sectors in the form of access to housing, facilities and services, public spaces, security etc. (Borja 2009: 166).

Despite all the reflections made up for a new mainstream of thinking[26] about it, public space is not dead (Ricart, Remesar 2013). In any case as Sennett points

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[25] "The main lack of cohesion problems, we face today, is mostly related to: [1] a lack of physical connectivity mainly generated by phenomena of spatial and functional segregation; [2] hyper-specialisation and economic hyper-spacialisation of the urban structure; and [3] problems of social exclusion, marginalisation and loss of identity" (Pinto, Remesar 2012: 15).

[26] The idea of the death of public space comes in part from the analyses of the Geographic School of Los Angeles led by Mike Davis. Analysing Los Angeles, he says: "The universal consequence of the crusade to secure the city is the destruction of any truly democratic urban space. The American city is being systematically turned inward. The »public« spaces of the new megastructures and supermalls have supplanted traditional streets and disciplined their spontaneity. Inside malls, office centres, and cultural complexes, public activities are sorted into strictly functional compartments under the gaze of private police force. This architectural privatization of the physical public sphere, moreover, is complemented by a parallel restructuring of electronic space, as heavily guarded, pay-access databases and subscription cable services expropriate the

out, it suffers a constant and permanent erosion; "The atomizing of the city has put a practical end to an essential component of public space: the overlay of function in a single territory, which creates complexities of experience on that turf" (Sennett 1977: 221).

Public domain, social and collective use and multifunctionality defining public space, provides a clear territory for beautification processes, including the continuation of public art programmes, because it is appropriate for the "public space to have some formal qualities, the continuity of urban design, generosity of forms, image and materials and adaptability to various uses over time" (Borja, Jordi, Muxí, Zaida 2001). In Europe, the concept design of space, largely based on the so-called Barcelona Model carried out to keep alive the publicness of public space, is used to define the set of operations – political, legal, project-related, while in the Anglo-Saxon area the concept of placemaking was coined. Both, public space design and placemaking[27], refer to an overarching idea and a hands-on tool for improving a neighbourhood, a city or a region. However, the concept of placemaking emphasises both the settlement patterns and the communal capacity for people to thrive with each other and in our natural world (PPS 2014).

In any case, these operations of urban design must incorporate some rights and values. The Universal Declaration of Emerging Human Rights (2000) proclaims, among others, (1) The right to the city; (2) The right to public spaces, monumentality and attractive town-planning, which entails the right to an urban setting articulated by a system of public spaces and endowed with elements of monumentality that lend them visibility and identity and incorporating an aesthetic dimension and a harmonious and sustainable urbanism; (3) The right

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invisible agora. In Los Angeles, for example, the ghetto is defined not only by its paucity of parks and public amenities, but also by the fact that it is not wired into any of the key information circuits. In contrast, the affluent Westside is plugged – often at public expense – into dense networks of educational and cultural media" (Davis 1992: 195). Even before this description, Walter Soja (1989) noted "Truly public spaces were few and far between, as what the social theorists call »civil society« seemed to melt into the airwaves and freeways and other circuitries of the sprawling urban scene" (Soja 1989) Los Angeles is an "Exopolis".

[27]   We cannot deepen the discussion about the differences between the two. We can only note that the concept of placemaking takes on its full meaning when the initiative of action lies in civil society, as in the case of many cities in the States and many actions carried out by "communities" in Latin America. "Part of the ultimate cost which has to be reckoned in this destruction of public space is the paradoxical emphasis on community it creates" (Sennett 1974: 298).

to converting the marginal city into a city for citizens, which implies the right of everyone to live in qualified urban areas marked by centrality. On the other hand, the values (e.g.: those noted by Lynch) of the city and its public space might be considered a sort of "principles of urban decorum" (Brandão 2011) in the sense that the accomplishment of these values will determine the quality of Public Space or, as Alexander said, show the "Goodness of Fit".

These new trends of urban design and city anesthetisation take creativity (of people, of communities, of the city itself) into account considering it as a mobilising element for resources, ideas and actions that try to improve the urban environment and even the economic base of the city. In this sense, as noted earlier, the aesthetics[28] of the city is no longer considered an end in itself, but more importantly a means for improving the creative potential.

The possible concept of urban decorum no longer refers to the formal characteristics and rules that make aesthetically appropriate an element (current or historical) or an urban area (current or historical). It derives from the concept of process (artistic, social, therapeutic, communitarian [...]), of how this environment or element respects some fundamental rights and values. In addition, this new urban decorum will not refer only to what is static in space (houses, street furniture, urban spaces, public art [...]) but also to some dynamic and temporal aspects. Thus, the urban event will also become part of urban aesthetics considerations (fairs, concerts, festivals, parades, performances – whether public or advertising [...]). Finally, the manifestation of the collective willingness will become a value and an implicit right with an aesthetic dimension, either a demonstration or the implementation of an urban garden. It is not surprising that the concept of public art expands into the concept of Urban Arts or constellation of "creative practices", some of them institutionalised, others coming from civil society (NGO) or grassroots movements, others yet, as in the case of graffiti[29], on

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[28] "Great art makes great places, great places attract great talent, and great talent creates great jobs. Also, more than ever before, public artworks are stimulating and inviting active dialogue rather than just passive observation. By fostering social interaction in this way, public art installations can play a key role in a community's sense of identity and belonging" (PPS 2011).

[29] "The city is always messaging, always discourse, but one thing is whether you should interpret this discourse, to translate it in thoughts and words, and another if these words are imposed with no escape. Whether it's a celebratory epigraph of the authority or, a desacralizing insult they are always words that fall on you at a time that you have not chosen and this is aggression, is arbitrary, is violence". (The same is valid for the advertising inscription, no doubt, but the message is less intimidating and

the edge of legality or clearly illegal. Some of these practices are creative self-expression of individuals. Some others seek collective empowerment. Some happen indoors, in the private sphere, most are made public (Public Sphere – Media – Networks) and some others are unfolded in public space (Public Domain). They range from the clandestine graffiti to the tourist or "civic" animation (street entertainment); from educational programmes and art therapy, to Public Art or to major exhibitions at the Tate Gallery. In this world, ruled by an "aesthetics of diversity" everything or almost everything could be considered Urban Art.

> By exploring the realms of differentiated tastes and aesthetic preferences (and doing whatever they could to stimulate those tasks), architects and urban designers have re-emphasized a powerful aspect of capital accumulation: the production and consumption of what Bourdieu calls "symbolic capital" (Harvey 1990: 77).

Thus, a segment of cultural and artistic producers navigates within this constellation, works – actions – activities – processes, raising them to the status of Art. In the context where classical decorum is no longer possible, as Rowe and Koetter (1978) stated[30], the predicament of texture calls into question the object,

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conditioning. I have never believed much in the **"hidden persuasion"**, it finds us with more defences and anyway it is neutralised by a thousand messages of competitors and equivalents). "When the inscription is a statement or a bare denial that requires of the reader only an act of consent or refusal, the impact of coercion used to read is stronger than the powers set in motion by the operation at every opportunity, allowing us to restore our inner freedom from verbal aggression […]. Also in them (the walls) scripture retrieves its own irreplaceable place, when it stops becoming an instrument of arrogance and abuse: a confused noise that needs to be listen with great attention and patience in order to distinguish the rare and modest sound of a word that, at least for a moment, is true. It is fair, therefore, that the essay will finish with this invasion of writing »**from the bottom**«, characterized by an »unaesthetic« will, which is the most visible aspect for the assumption of the words, over a dozen years ago, by young and excluded; starting naturally from the famous inscriptions on May in Paris and the phenomenon of »signatures« in the underground of New York (which has particular characteristics and are reducible to an artistic intentionality)" (Calvino 1980: 105–106).

[30] "It is here proposed that rather than hoping and waiting for the withering away of the object (while simultaneously manufacturing versions of it in profusion unparalleled), it might be judicious in most cases, to allow and encourage the object to become digested in a prevalent texture or matrix. It is further suggested

while the "bricoleur" attitude questions the regulatory and scientific rationale behind the theory of decorum throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century. A new symbolic capital is kneaded, distinguishing marks accumulate, merged into the practices of good urban governance that can be defined as the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, plan and manage the common affairs of the city.

> It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action can be taken. It includes formal institutions as well as informal arrangements and the social capital of citizens (UN-HABITAT 2014).

Thus, the possibility of a new urban decorum may arise from the complex interrelationships of many factors that determine the actual urban life, as it is synthesised in the image. No matter if the material manifestation is a mural, a graffiti, a work of public art, a performance, an action or a process of citizen participation. To aestheticise the city today is not only to develop programmes leading to physical and performative events. To aestheticise the city today is largely a process of liberation of aesthetic energy of the city itself, which is not found in its stones, its buildings and its monuments, but in creative citizenship.

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that neither object nor space fixation are, in themselves, any longer representative of valuable attitudes […]. The »bricoleur« is adept at performing a large number of diverse tasks; but, unlike the engineer he does not subordinate each of them to the availability of raw materials and tools conceived and procured for the purpose of the project. His universe of instruments is closed and the rules of his game are always to make do with whatever is at hand: that is to say with a set of tools and materials which is always finite and is also heterogeneous because what it contains bears no relation to the current project or indeed to any particular project, but is the contingent result of all the occasions there have been to renew or enrich the stock or to maintain it with the remains of previous constructions or destructions. The set of the »bricoleurs« means it cannot therefore be defined in terms of a project (which would presuppose besides, that, as in the case of the engineer, there were, at least in theory as many sets of tools and materials or »instrumental sets« as there are different kinds of projects). It is to be defined only by its potential use [...] because the elements are collected or retained on the principle that »they may always come in handy«. Such elements are specialized up to a point, sufficiently for the »bricoleur« not to need the equipment and knowledge of all trades and professions, but not enough for each of them to have only one definite and determinate use. They represent a set of actual and possible relations: they are »operators«: but they can be used for any operations of the same type" (Rowe, Koetter 1978: 92).
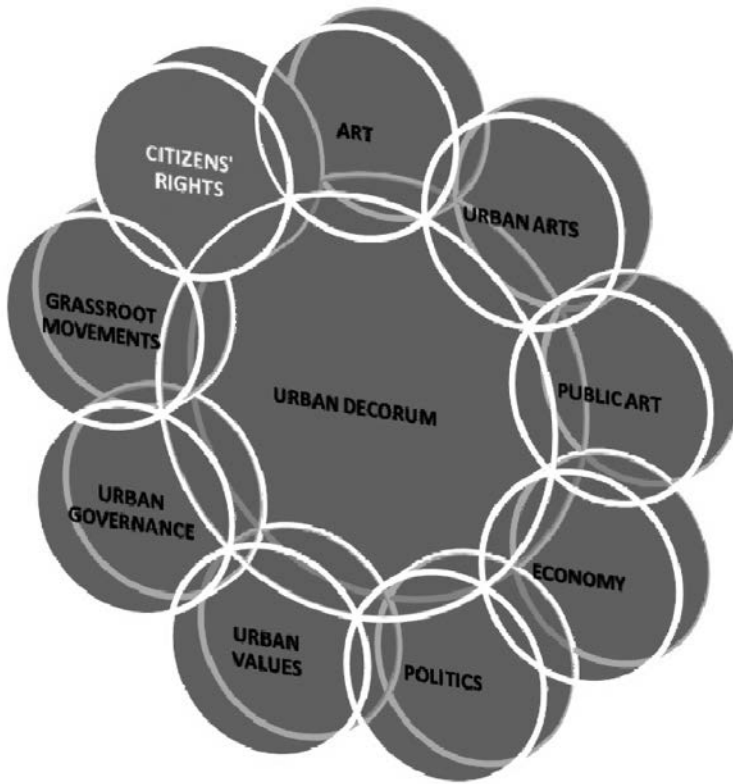
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