

The Collective and Aldo Rossi's *L'architettura della città*

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ABSTRACT

This text proposes a close reading of the concept of the Collective in *L'architettura della città*, (*The Architecture of the City*). Contrary to the development of ethnological discourse, Aldo Rossi stands as one of the protagonists of the antique notion of the object, arguably a position driven by his communist convictions. In an attempt to research the ways in which architecture serves as being able to mirror the Collective in Rossi's case, the paper begins by examining the role of Manfredo Tafuri in the architectural debate of 1960s.

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Tafuri: The Intellectual in Mediating the Collective through Autobiography and Anxiety

According to Manfredo Tafuri, the handling of artifacts was the main preoccupation of Torre Velasca, which was symptomatic of the Milanese climate in the late 1950s. Ernesto Nathan Rogers makes an explicit allegory of architecture and the archaeological field: it is only manipulation as an act of appropriation through physical intervention that makes the field historical.¹ Architecture, the field in question, consists of many legacies combined in a project reaching contamination. However, it was this impurity that made the “game of recognition possible”. Tainted by ancient artifacts, architecture recognized the legitimacy of its own tradition.² In referring to the Museo del Castello as well as to the Torre Velasca, Tafuri speaks about artifacts manifesting an anxiety as a mode of communication regarding the relationship between private and collective memory. “The problem was how to make the private memory of the intellectual speak – a memory considered, as if by consensus, the keeper and executor of all obligations to the collective memory.”³ Standing as a *homage* to Milan, the building was commenting lyrically on a disappearing urban corpus with the expectation that catharsis would emerge from the intentions hidden in the recesses of this single object. By “teaching people how to see”, the tower stirred public consciousness to take part in a collective *epoché*, to reconsider the new in the light of *temps perdu* of pre-World War II. It is in the sense of its implied meaning presented through the analogy of the narrator that the Torre Velasca, according to Tafuri, became the symbol of Italian architecture in the 1950s.

“In the great museum that is the historical city, it seems fitting to find a house that gives signs consolation for their alienation, that protects them from the future and reassures them of the validity of their moral stands.”⁴

Rogers, in his talk at the CIAM 1959 meeting in Otterlo, described the tower as a result of a technique and of a set of pragmatic decisions. The architect presented the work by stressing pure facts and providing short conclusions such as: “It is important to speak technically, because technique requires precise decisions,”⁵ “steel in Italy would be too expensive so concrete is used”, “the windows are of standard production”, “the panels between columns are prefabricated elements”, “the construction is a very simple one”, “it would be impossible to know who the occupants will be”, “two main colours were used” – a brick one from the Middle Ages and the colour of stone from the neo-classical period, yet neither of these were chosen due to sentimental reasons, but as “a technical approach to the vision”.⁶ And further, “We put the apartments above the offices so that might have better access to the sky, the cleaner air and in particular the splendid view.”⁷ Yet, the view is not toward any of the traditional modernist symbols such as greenery, traffic or exposure to the airplanes passing over the heads of The Children’s Home in Amsterdam.⁸ Instead it is a view

1. Manfredo Tafuri, *Storia dell'architettura italiana 1944-85* (Torino: Einaudi, 1986), trans. *History of Italian Architecture, 1944-1985* (Cambridge Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1989), 51.

2. *Ibid.*

3. *Ibid.*, 52.

4. *Ibid.*, 53.

5. Oscar Newman, *CIAM '59 in Otterlo* (Stuttgart: Karl Krämer Verlag Stuttgart, 1961), 92.

6. *Ibid.*

7. *Ibid.*

8. Children’s Home Amsterdam presented by Aldo van Eyck, see Newman, *CIAM '59 in Otterlo*.

toward the fabric of the historical city. The view perceived from the interior constitutes the sum of the human artifact in the same way as the view toward the tower intensifies the recognizable image of a familiar object. Additionally, the corners of the tower are chamfered with the windows placed in, thus dissolving the cubical volume of the building into a mere plane picture. In the tower, almost seen as a two-dimensional image of a city, the structural components of modern architecture actually serve to intensify the type components of classicism. For this reason, Rogers identifies Mies as the only modern architect from whom one could learn: as the language of Mies implies gentrification in the constitution of an object in a tradition of commonly recognizable codes serving as the background to the human. "He is the only architect modern in the sense that Palladio was in his time", for whom "the idea of plans and schemes was the idea of giving a model."⁹

9. Ibid., 96.

Trying to address his critique of the Torre Velasca with a bit more sympathy than Peter Smithson, Bakema pointed out that seen from "a certain distance there is something in the building's silhouette which suggest that it could have been there for fifty years."¹⁰

10. Ibid., 97.

For Tafuri, within this framework of the language of critical interpretation works such as those of Ignazio Gardella, BPR and Giancarlo De Carlo become comprehensible. Describing the atmosphere of Italian architecture in the fifties as Lukácsian, Tafuri points to the lost totality, the split between the self and the world, inside and outside and even soul and action. Nostalgia for totality and the effort to at least artistically represent what had been lost remained a legacy for the architecture of the 1960s. The effort to describe the situation by means of fragmentation lead toward the allusive forms created by BPR, Ridolfi and the young Milanese designers. Moreover, without such premises we cannot understand the formation of Guido Canella, Roberto Gabetti and Aimaro Isola, Aldo Rossi and Vittorio Gregotti.¹¹

11. Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture 1944-1985*, 56.

In setting modernism as a mirror of the critical interpretation of the narrator, dialectic projects such as De Carlo's on participation in planning and Rossi's on *fatto urbano* and collective memory¹² can serve as markers in the attempt of an intellectual to speak with regard to the Collective. In this sense, though distant in their outcome, both were influenced by Roger's 1950s handling of artifacts as the architectural representative of the cultural climate in Italy. In turning the mythology of participation into an instrument of experimentation, De Carlo "sought to redefine the relationship between intellectuals and production and acted upon a single sector of a single case". Tafuri points to Matteotti's *village* where *procedure* as it related to the theme of the management of production uncovered *process* as the fundamental aspect of the relationship between the intellectual and the Collective. On the other hand, it is collective memory instead of process that is the basic characteristic of the same relationship

12. Rossi references to Maurice Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1950).

in the circle around Aldo Rossi.¹³

“Photographs of cities during war, sections of apartments, broken toys...I am thinking of a unity, or a system, made solely of reassembled fragments. Perhaps only a great popular movement can give us the sense of an overall design; today we are forced to stop ourselves at certain things...I believe that there can be no true compensation and that maybe the only thing possible is the addition that is somewhere between logic and biography.”¹⁴

Well rooted in the tradition of critical interpretation and the awareness of the lost totality, perhaps Rossi is the one who eventually summed up the long echo of intellectual regret toward the loss of the object known from the Greek *polis*. Thus, in *The Architecture of the City*, he refers to Marx's interpretation of Greek culture as “the normal childhood of humanity”. “There are ill-bread children and precocious children”, to which many ancient people belong. Yet the Greeks were normal children due to their lack of walls and exclusively sovereign institutions such as temples, their mythological relationship with nature and the development of social institutions. Still, all this was possible due to naiveté rooted in their immature social conditions and Athens remains the embodiment of what can never recur again.¹⁵ However, though the childhood is lost we have returned to it all over again. Even if *homo faber* was eventually defeated¹⁶ and the meaning of poetical dwelling remained impossible¹⁷ the city is still “a gigantic manmade object, a work of engineering and architecture, large and complex and growing over time” and “a definitive fact in the life of the collective.”¹⁸ From where does Rossi drive the loyalty for an object that is still capable of mediating the Collective? As can be sensed in the quote, there are two things left: biography and logic, throughout the following text driven toward the twin concepts of necessity and choice.

The Collective and Necessity: Constructing Land and House

The Collective is one of the most frequently used words in *The Architecture of the City*. Yet is it the Collective of an accumulated aggregate of different parts (collector) or the earlier version of the adjective describing people acting together (*collectus*)?¹⁹ Or is it the communist interpretation – serving as one of the sources of Rossi's formation²⁰ – where the Collective adopts an additional ideological meaning that is highly correlated with the functioning of states and issues of property.²¹ Lastly, the just vanishing neorealism in Italy has its own legacy of collectivism: the collectivization of the architectural and spatial experience through the identification with a community.²² As depicted in Tafuri's “Architettura e Realismo” (1985), architects together with promoters in cinema and literature acted as

pedagogues in an attempt to create a sense of community by using

13. Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture 1944-1985*, 121.

14. Mary Louise Lobsinger, “That Obscure Object of Desire: Autobiography and Repetition in the Work of Aldo Rossi,” *Grey Room*, no. 8 (2002): 39-61, quote from Aldo Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography* (Cambridge Massachusetts and London England: The MIT Press, 1981), 8.

15. Aldo Rossi, *L'architettura della città* (Padova: Marsilio Editori, 1966), trans. *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge Massachusetts, and London England: The MIT Press, 1982), 134, 137.

16. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

17. For an overview on the notion of the inhabitability of modernity see Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity. A Critique* (Cambridge Massachusetts London England: MIT Press, 1999).

18. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 29, 21.

19. collector - to gather taxes or other money, see Raymond Williams, *Keywords. A vocabulary of culture and society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976).

20. Pier Vittorio Aureli, “The Difficult Whole,” *Log* no. 9, (Winter/Spring 2007): 39-61.

21. *The Great Soviet Encyclopedia*. “Socialist collective.” Macmillan Publishers, 1979. Here the Collective has two functions—carrying out the immediate task for which it was created within society and the second a socio-educational function in ensuring that the interests of society and of the individual are merged through the development of the various abilities of the individual.

22. Manfredo Tafuri, “Architettura e Realismo,” in *L'avventura delle idee nell'architettura: 1750-1980*, ed. Vittorio Magnago Lampugnani (Milano: Electa, 1985), 121-45.

motives through which inhabitants could “recognize” themselves.²³

As argued in *The Architecture of the City*, the contrast between the individual and the Collective is a fundamental element of the construction of a city. Construction is addressed as the most comprehensive way of analyzing the city as it represents the most definitive fact in the life of the Collective.²⁴ “The heath, the woods, the cultivated fields, the uncultivated zones, are related in inseparable whole, the memory on which man carries with him” becoming at the same time the natural and artificial homeland of man. Starting from Levi Strauss’s popular balance between the natural and the artificial within the city²⁵, Rossi ultimately leads the natural toward the life force of man: his biological labor in constructing his house²⁶ It is in this same sense of invested labor that there is no distinction between the city and the country as “all inhabited places are the work of man”. Only the wilderness is opposed to the land as the rest is a product of the labor of our hands. “Yes, a people must build its fields, just as it must build its cities”, is where Rossi recalls Carlo Cattaneo speaking of a city as a material physical thing.²⁷ In referring to his article “Agricoltura e morale”²⁸, Rossi points to his selection of the word agriculture (*Ackerbau*), implying construction before cultivation with the word being synonymous for both the art of building and art of cultivating. Cattaneo traces its root back to the German tribes witnessing Roman construction of bridges, streets, walls and the shores of the Rhine and Mosel into vineyards until finally deciding to embrace all those works with one name. Pointing to toponyms and linguistics as the true indicator of the Collective, Rossi keeps seeing in channels, dikes, bridges, fields and the foundations of the city, the managerial act of constructing investing within this collective biological force.

Arguing that the land serves as a fundamental criterion of the necessity of constructing the city, Rossi takes inspiration from Halbwachs’ argument on the detachment of expropriations from their actual cause of origin.²⁹ Be they accidental in the case of fire, normal in the case of obsolescence or artificial as is the case of the mechanism of land speculation, it actually does not make a difference. Independently of this, Halbwachs analyses the statistical information in a scientific fashion, taking only the final consequence into account: “tearing down or building up, pure and simple.”³⁰ Thus, “it is not so much the precise way that a general condition arises which is significant; a condition arises out of necessity, and the meaning of the condition does not change because it arises in one particular form, place and moment as opposed to another.”³¹ Yet, independently of the particularity of the case, the total action can originate “whenever a consciousness of a collective need takes shape and becomes clear.”³² Thus, the Paris of today appears as a composite photograph of “various plans of different parties, personalities and governments that are superimposed, synthesized and forgotten.”³³ The city is constructed above all through a “complexly structured system of

23. For the legacy of neorealism in Italy see Luka Skansi, “Manfredo Tafuri and the Critique of Realism,” *Serbian Architectural Journal* no. 6 (2014): 182–195; Manfredo Tafuri, “Architettura e Realismo,” in *L’avventura delle idee nell’architettura: 1750-1980*, ed. Magnago Lampugnani Vittorio, 121-45; Bruno Reichlin, “Figures of Neorealism in Italian Architecture,” *Grey Room*, no. 6 (2002): 110-133; Maristella Casciato, “Neorealism in Italian Architecture,” in *Anxious Modernisms. Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture*, ed. Sarah Williams Goldhagen and Rejean Legault (Cambridge Massachusetts and Montreal: The MIT Press and CCA, 2002), 25-53; Pep Avilès, “Autarky and Material Contingencies in Italian Architectural Debate (1936-1954),” *Footprint* no 4 (spring 2009): 21-34.

24. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 21.

25. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Anthropologie structurale* (Paris: Plon, 1958).

26. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 27.

27. *Ibid.*, 181.

28. Carlo Cattaneo, *Scritti economici*, 3 vols., ed. Alberto Bertolini, F. Le Monnier, (Florence, 1956).

29. Halbwachs, *La mémoire collective*.

30. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 141.

31. *Ibid.*, 143.

32. *Ibid.*

33. *Ibid.*, 142.

collective memory" driven by the development of the social groups of the city. Though economic factors fail to fully explain the final appearance of the city, specifically through the mechanism of expropriation, they do influence the formations of these social groups. The factor of necessity appears to be the *raison d'être* with expropriations recognized as a necessary condition and a decisive moment in urban development, "deeply rooted in urban social movements."³⁴ It is in this light that we can read that "it was the city that conferred the criteria of necessity and reality on single buildings,"³⁵ followed by the fact that "the key element in understanding urban artifacts is their collective character", and "that they are made by the collective for the collective."³⁶ Bearing in mind Rossi's sympathy for the decisive moment always attributed to a higher reality, it is easier to understand his critique of Hans Bernoulli.³⁷ In the first instance, he relays on his argument as to the harmful consequences of private property ownership, in which land becomes a speculative marketable entity, just like anything else. Yet, afterwards, Rossi criticizes the negative attitude by which Bernoulli addressed the consequences of the French Revolution on land redistribution. "Features that followed general economic laws that would have emerged anyway were actually a positive moment in development of the city. The breaking up of the land on one hand led to the degeneration of the city, but on the other, it actually promoted its development."³⁸ Thus, through various examples, including the Berlin 1853 Master Plan,³⁹ *Siedlungen*, the sanitary developments of industrial cities such as Barcelona, Haussmann's reconstruction of Paris, the development of a socialist city such as Moscow and even artificial ones such as Brasilia, land is always seen as mirroring the decisive moment of the Collective in constituting the artifact anew. In this sense, architecture as an act of constructing the city, is foremost a necessary urge of the manufacturer and then also a communist mirror of the Collective labor of workers.

"In *The Architecture of the City*, I spoke apprehensively, almost fearfully, of the remains of houses destroyed by the war. I saw pink walls, hanging sinks, tangles of pipes, destroyed intimacies; I so vividly imagined the feeling and the vague malaise of these destroyed apartments that a certain idea for a "project with interior" has followed me ever since. In designing the Venetian theater I knew from the start that this idea was the life or silence of the theater: the silence of the theater is like the silence of empty churches."⁴⁰

Tafuri will address the empty sign for the instrument of expression of the stream of thought of Max Weber, Ludwig Wittgenstein and Mies van der Rohe. Ultimately he will position Rossi within this continuum with "a sort of frustrated nostalgia for the structures of communication."⁴¹ Yet, contrary to Mies - for whom "the reification of the sign still occurred in

34. *Ibid.*, 144.

35. *Ibid.*, 53.

36. *Ibid.*, 57, 86.

37. Hans Bernoulli, *Die Stadt und ihr Boden* (Zürich: Verlag für Architektur AG., 1946).

38. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 154.

39. Rossi refers to Werner Hegemann's book *Das steinerne Berlin: Geschichte der grössten Mietkasernenstadt der Welt* (Lugano: Jakob Hegner, 1930): "For Hegemann, Berlin, a city which had a very large number of rental barracks owing to its unfortunate police code, was also a city which had within itself great possibilities for renewal." Further, Hegemann writes about the fearful consequences that the Berlin financial law of 1808 had for the city up to the notorious Master Plan of 1853 of the President of Police, "which marked the beginning of the famous Berlin courtyards", Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 153.

40. Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, 69.

41. Manfredo Tafuri, *La sfera e il labirinto. Avanguardie e architettura da Piranesi agli anni '70*, (Torino: Einaudi, 1980), trans *The Sphere and the Labyrinth. Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s* (Cambridge Massachusetts and London England: The MIT Press, 1987), 273-75.

the presence of the real, in direct confrontation with the “swamp of the cities” – for Rossi it is communication “that has nothing to speak about except the finite character of language as a closed system”. In Rossi’s work, the categorical imperative of the absolute estrangement of form appears as an attempt to create an emptied sacredness: “an experience of fundamental immobility and of the eternal recurrence of geometrical emblems reduced to ghosts”. This removal of the form from the sphere of the quotidian has, according to Tafuri, an explicit origin. It is forced continually to circumnavigate the central point from which communication springs forth, without being able to draw from that primary source. The “center” has been historically destroyed and the “source” has been dispersed into multiple streams, each without a beginning or end, leaving only the “revelation” that Rossi’s architecture seems to offer.⁴²

In a status which resonates Tafuri’s quote on Robbe-Grillet⁴³ – “The world is neither significant nor absurd... it is, quite simply. And suddenly the obviousness of this strikes us with irresistible force”⁴⁴ – it is not a coincidence that Rossi finds in housing the true opportunity to communicate about “mute things”. Since housing, aside from mediating the necessary urgency of postwar reconstruction, also relates to the repetitive patterns of home usage.

Housing and land have a special importance in understanding the city as a man-made object. Just as form is the principal for understanding the primary elements of the city, land is the crucial criteria for residential districts.⁴⁵ Both primary elements - monuments and residential districts - are urban artifacts. These represent the constituting events of the city, perhaps most accurately described as the first thing you see during a quick glance at a city plan. The inertia of the object and its resistance to easily modification is paradoxically explicit in the housing itself. That is the first reason why architectural treatises are important for Rossi: as a panorama of housing development that is as constant as possible. Again, the reference to Viollet-le-Duc⁴⁶ serves to promote the customs, tastes and usages of people as being best characterized in housing and changing very slowly only over long periods of time.⁴⁷ In “strongly denying that housing is something amorphous and transitory” Rossi leads the dwelling toward becoming a tool for studying the city, attributing it primary importance between the dwelling and its area.⁴⁸ Thus, the relationship between house and land becomes essential in satisfying elementary human needs and refers to the Collective through the instance of ritual.

“Today if I were to talk about architecture, I would say that it is a ritual rather than a creative process. I say this fully understanding the bitterness and the comfort of the ritual. Rituals give us the comfort of continuity, of repetition, compelling us to an oblique forgetfulness, allowing us to live with every change which, because of its inability to evolve, constitutes a destruction.”⁴⁹

42. *Ibid.*, 273-275.

43. Alain Robbe Grillet, *Pour un Nouveau Roman* (Paris: Gallimard, 1963).

44. Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth. Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, 273.

45. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 92.

46. Eugène Viollet-le-Duc, *Dictionnaire raisonné de l'architecture française du XIe au XVIIe siècle*, 10 vols., (Paris: A. Maisson Morel, 1854-69)

47. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 70.

48. *Ibid.*, 97, 72.

49. Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, 37.

In the introduction to the American edition of *The Architecture of the City*, Peter Eisenman refers to Rossi's metaphor of the city as a giant man-made house which comes into a being through a double process. The first element is that of production; of the city as a work of *manufatto* (manufacture) "an object literally made by the hands of man". The second process is the time required for the constitution of the Collective artifact.⁵⁰ With all caution in respect of any attempt at equalizing the city and the final enlargement of the house, in the process of the necessity of constructing the house we can rightly see the first point of the Collective. However, this point always stays bound in direct confrontation with its actual opponent, of the reality of the city. Thus, time is relevant as a binding element leading toward the second corner of the Collective that is the potential choice of the city. Here lies the first hope in answering Tafuri's question on how one should see the object: through the necessity of land and of a house unconsciously bound with the repetition of ritual toward its potential Collective force hoping for the logical rationale of choice. In this way, ritual actually serves Rossi as a first action to distinguish the house from the pure necessity of the Collective, moving toward the act of choosing collectively.

50. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 5.

It is for this same reason that Rossi's loyalty to Adolf Loos emerges as the only modern architect who "alone revealed the connection to the great questions: the Austrian and German tradition of Fischer von Erlach and Friedrich Schinkel, local culture, handicrafts, history, and especially theater and poetry." "My favorite book was certainly that of Loos and without doubt I owe to this reading of Loos the profound contempt I have always felt for industrial design and for the con- founding of form and function."⁵¹ Loos also serves as an alternative figure in understanding the origins of the Modern Movement where he (Loos) "shows us in a more or less systematic way the path of study." However, these "directions which at the first may seem compelling to follow, subsequently have often been forgotten" and "artistic investigations have diminished."⁵² In his article on Adolf Loos in *Scritti scelti sull'architettura e la città 1956-1972*, Rossi recognizes in the Moller House "il monumento di un mondo nuovo. " ... "Questa casa così razionalmente concepita, così chiusa nel suo volume di geometrica purezza, si inserisce ottimamente nell'ambiente." Yet, its exterior is not by any chance arbitrary but rather the expression of the interior by the tools of a perfect composition. "Per questo essa possiede all'esterno l'interiorità di un mondo privato e l'accento personale di ciò che è abitato."⁵³ Again, the fragmentary condition of Modernity allows the artistic articulation of the exterior by typological geometrical tools while allowing a non-orchestrated unfolding of the interior world.

51. Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, 46.

52. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 169.

53. Aldo Rossi, *Scritti scelti sull'architettura e la città 1956-1972* (Milano: CLUP, 1975), 103.

Recognizing in Rossi's attitude a neo-Enlightenment attempt, Tafuri argues that it can be understood as a mode of compensating for the irreparable act perpetrated in the eighteenth century: "the fragmentation of the *order of discourse*". According to Tafuri, only the ghost of that lost

order can be identified today and “the thread of Ariadne with which Rossi weaves his typological research does not lead to the reestablishment of the discipline, but rather to its dissolution.”⁵⁴

The Collective and Choice: Planning

The 1960s saw in Italy an echo of the “international utopia” of the establishment of “planning” as an autonomous discipline. According to Tafuri, this new work was caused by two factors. The first was the methodological crisis of instruments of “heterodox Marxism” of Lucio Libertini, Raniero Panzieri, Franco Fortini and Elio Vittorini. Thus, the attitude of anxiety among intellectuals towards cultural production was exhausted. The second one was “reality” again, but this time – contrary to the neorealism – one of rapid economic growth with convulsive urbanization and the diffusion of mass communication. With the aim of clarifying the relationship between analysis and intervention, ILSES (The Lombard Institute for Economic and Social Sciences) was founded promoting the theme of the city-region, with De Carlo as one of its main protagonist. “The attack that De Carlo and Quaroni had launched in 1954 against the Italian tradition in urbanism was turned into the working methodology.”⁵⁵ De Carlo made an appeal for a formal skeleton, “tribune design” with the points of many centers functioning as territorial unifiers that could not be fully designed, but rather served as a support for successive interventions. Thus, form was the first sacrifice of an attempt to insert intervention as infrastructure into a constantly changing reality. From the architectural point of view, “it was hoped that the supporting skeleton, the bony structure and brains of this magnetic field, would eventually become apparent”. On the other hand, new classes of cultivated people “now sought to give voice to the anonymous think tanks in which they were concentrating power.”⁵⁶ In the overarching debate in the pages of *Casabella*, the topic of the city-region, the large scale and new dimensions of the city, were seen as the origin of the division explicit in the positions of De Carlo and Aldo Rossi.⁵⁷ The Arezzo Urban Planning Seminar led by Ludovico Quaroni and organized by the Olivetti Foundation in 1963 served as a link in a chain of events in which actors regarding the issue of planning directly took part. In subsequent readings of Rossi’s works, his strong confrontation with the debate on planning was seen as the origin of his shift toward type.⁵⁸ By contrast to Giancarlo De Carlo, Paolo Portoghesi, the Smithsons or Aldo van Eyck, for Rossi there is no extension of the field of modern architecture where the planning is addressed from *outside* the city.⁵⁹ This was considered in Tafuri’s analysis as well, referring to Rossi as one who did not intend to dirty his hands with controversy: “His *poiesis* refused to compromise with reality, since the only way to return to the *ancient house of language* was by maintaining the attitude of surely indifference.”⁶⁰ However, though being definitively

54. Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth. Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, 22.

55. Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture, 1944-1985*, 76.

56. *Ibid.*, 77.

57. For critical analysis of debate see: Mary Louise Lobsinger, “The New Urban Scale in Italy. On Aldo Rossi’s *L’architettura della città*,” *Journal of Architectural Education*, vol. 59, no 3 (January 2006): 28-38.

58. See Aureli, “The Difficult Whole”; Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2008); also Aureli, “Intellectual Work and Capitalist Development: Origins and Context of Manfredo Tafuri’s Critique of Architectural Ideology,” in *SiteMagazine* no 26-27, (2009): 18-23.

59. See Baukuh, *Two Essays on Architecture* (Zürich: Kommode Verlag, 2013), 92.

60. Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture*, 135.

critical toward politics on planning in Italy, Rossi does not leave it out of the scope of the city. Bearing this in mind, we can actually ask: which kind of planning relates to Rossi's case?

In the hypothesis of the city as a man-made object and as a total masterpiece of art, planning is a relevant practice only when it considers a part of the city. A similar approach can be seen for zoning, an acceptable as well as a technical practice rather than an attempt to enlarge the field of work toward the constitution of a city as a totality.⁶¹

Referring to the Berlin *Siedlungen*, Rossi place it in between the actual structure of the existing city and an ideal vision of the new city. *Siedlungen* can be only understood as an attempt, "more or less consciousness" to mediate between two conceptions of the city rather than as an autonomous design in and of itself.⁶² Thus, the lost confrontation between the ideal and the real remains the main challenge of functionalist theory in its attempt to affect the city in totality. Any other planning attempts, varying from the planning of an American city toward socialist ones that actually translated decisive moments into the built material of the city – as a particular moment and a part of it – are actually proof of the superiority of the city. "I consider the plan to be the primary element, the equal of monument like a temple or a fortress." This is because "the plan is always but one moment of the city in the same way that any other primary element is".⁶³ Following Poète's⁶⁴ theory on the permanence of a city's layout and plan, Rossi comes to the concept of the plan persisting in different levels, though often deformed, but with a substance that is not displaced. Thus, cities tend to keep their initial development axis, remaining in their original layout and growing in line with their oldest artifacts. "The key element in understanding the urban artifact" – which is the plan as well – "is their collective character."⁶⁵ The plan relates to the Collective by "the collective memory in the works of the collective" up to its transformation "that is always conditioned by whatever material realities oppose it."⁶⁶

Thus, the plan stands as material that opposes the Collective in the process of transformation. Within this idea, the action of the individual certainly exists, as "not everything in urban artifacts is collective; yet the collective and the individual nature of urban artifacts in the end constitutes the same urban structure."⁶⁷ Departing from the role of the individual (architect) and moving towards Lavedan's⁶⁸ argument of offering a plan as an originating element for a particular change within the city, Rossi arrives at Sorre⁶⁹ in answering the crucial question: "how does the environment influence the individual and the collective" rather than the other way around?⁷⁰ Here, the relationship between fabrication and the Collective, it would seem clearly, for Rossi, starts with the former.

According to Rossi, the further answer can be found only in the Collective psychology of the city in all its totality. In this rather vague statement, we

61. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 65.

62. *Ibid.*, 82.

63. *Ibid.*, 99.

64. Marcel Poète, *Une vie de cité. Paris, de sa naissance à nos jours*, 4 vols. (Paris: A. Picard, 1924 – 1931); *Introduction à l'urbanisme: l'évolution des villes, la leçon de l'Antiquité* (Paris: Boivin, 1929).

65. Rossi, A., *The Architecture of the City*, 59, 57.

66. *Ibid.*, 130.

67. *Ibid.*, 131.

68. Pierre Lavedan, *Géographie des villes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1936); *Histoire de l'urbanisme* 3 vol. (Paris: Éditions Laurens, 1926 – 1952). In referring to Lavedan, Rossi states that "when he speaks of the *plan* of the city, he means the *architecture*". Further, Rossi quotes Lavedan in: "whether it is a matter of spontaneous city or a planned city, the trace of its plan, the design of its streets, is not due to chance. There is an obedience to rules, whether unconscious in the first case or conscious and open in the second. There always exist the generating element of the plan", *The Architecture of the City*, 100.

69. Maximilien Sorre, *Rencontres de la géographie et de la sociologie*, (Paris: ed. Marcel Rivière, 1957).

70. Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*, 112.

read that this totality represents the clash of the real and the ideal city. Departing from simple statements in Rossi's argument we start from: "each relation between collective artifact and the individual is unique". Further, there are no buildings that are politically imposed "since the one realized are always those of the dominant class". However, architecture can be seen to unfold in a logical succession of principles detached from reality (being those of the dominant classes). "This city may be an ideal city of perfect and harmonious relationships."⁷¹ The artifact adopts this discrepancy within its development by resolving itself in: "its material", of the fabricator (architect) as an individual dealing with the *ideal*, "the succession of events that unfold around it" which is the real, and "the minds of its makers", that is a Collective of citizens. Thus the Collective cannot be understood except as standing between the dialectic of the ideal and the real within the time process of constituting an artifact. It happens between the sign of the physical presence of the material and the *event* of reality. At times when architecture is "capable of synthesizing the whole civic and political scope of an epoch, when it is highly rational, comprehensive and transmissible seen as a style, than transmission is implicit". In these cases, we can speak of a *civic design*.⁷²

71. Ibid., 113.

72. Ibid., 116.

"For this to occur, it is necessary that a moment of decisive historical and political importance coincide with an architecture that is rational and definite in its forms. It is then possible for a community to resolve its problem of choice, to desire collectively one kind of a city and to reject another."⁷³

73. Ibid., 114., 116.

Planning as a technique eventually concerns city's materiality in its the physical presence of the sign. In dialectic with this materiality, the Collective as a possibility of choice of citizens can resolve. In this sense, the sign is always seen as confronted with the event. Based on this conflict, the constitution of a city is possible in the first instance. With architecture acting as a distorted collectively, it is actually put *against* the Collective in order to become an artifact. Here lies its actual pervasive character and the hope for revolution; it is this that is the only opportunity for planning according to Rossi.

Further modifications and the growth of the city emerge through "the natural tendencies of many groups dispersed throughout different parts of the city" acting in a form of irrationally, through the clash of their "collective manifestations". In these confrontations, "only a correct coincidence of factors yields in authentic urban artifact, one wherein the city realizes in itself its own idea of itself and registers it in stone. There is as absolute and unambiguous a relationship between the element of chance and the element of tradition in artifact as there is between general laws and real elements."⁷⁴

74. Ibid., 162, 163.

Clearly enough, in between the *ideal* and the *real*, the sign and the *event*,

the *making* and the transmitting, the Collective appears, always as an implication of the event for the sign, of reality over the plan and through transmitting the Collective force of choosing through the process of making.

“Social Democratic Illusions”⁷⁵ and The Collective: Neighborhoods and Community

“I love the beginning and end of things; but perhaps above all I love things which are broken and then reassembled...The beautiful illusion of the Modern Movement, so reasoned and moderate, was shattered under the violent yet definitive collapse caused by the bombings of the Second World War. And I sought what was left not as though it were a lost civilization, but rather by pondering a tragic photograph of postwar Berlin where the Brandenburg Gate was still standing in a landscape of ruins. ... What was left certainly did not belong to architecture. It was rather a symbol, a sign, at times a tiresome memory. Thus I have learned how to look at cities with an archaeological and surgical eye.”⁷⁶ Recognizing in Rossi’s work “the isolation of pure design”, Tafuri places it within the stream of thought of Massimo Scolari, the Kriers, Walter Pichler, Franco Purini, John Hejduk, and Peter Eisenman. “Those designs wish to resist the attack of time; they demonstrate in their absoluteness the sole possibility of ‘narrating clearly.’” Calling these texts in which the form lies inert and narrates its own factures, Tafuri recognize within them the “attempt to heal the radical rift that Le Corbusier had originally established between painting and constructing”. The task of their critical interpretation is to begin from within the work only to break out of it as quickly as possible in order not to remain caught in the vicious cycle of a language that speaks only of itself, in the “infinite entertainment” that it promises.⁷⁷ Yet the isolation of pure design than Rossi seeks for, before then expressing “critical communication”, serves as an attempt at initiating the sign for the confrontation of the Collective thorough the event. From this comes Rossi’s disobedience of planning seen in the light of communal, neighborhood and social values. This is due to their tendency to resolve the confrontation of the Collective and its architecture into the actual pacifying unity of the Collective as a social democratic attempt. Thus, “the Romantic Socialist, the Phalansterist and others who proposed various concepts of self-sufficient community” are criticized for their presumption that society can no longer maintain any common representative values that can be transcended apart from purely functionalist ones such as dwellings and services.⁷⁸ Even if their reference to the Enlightenment emphasis on plan is relevant, their “modern alternative to the earlier formulations” is what reduces the opportunity for confrontation originally rooted in the unpredictability of the Collective. It reduces it to the denominator of common functions which are the same for all. For Rossi,

75. Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography*, 82-83.

76. *Ibid.*

77. Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth. Avant-Gardes and Architecture from Piranesi to the 1970s*, 280-284.

78. *Ibid.*,126.

in all applications of this type of “so-called communitarian ideology”, the problem of housing as a relationship between the form of democracy of the local community and the spatial dimension as a moment in the social life of the group is particularly explicit. In no other examples - seeing the city as a whole – does this problem exist, as it becomes less visible compared to the constant confrontations with other functions.⁷⁹ Even in arguing his concept of the study area as a part of the city, Rossi does not leave space for the application of communitarian ideology. The analysis of the study area “does not involve a communitarian idea of the area nor any of the implications in the idea of community which relate to neighborhood”.⁸⁰ Rooted in his critique of naïve functionalism, this argument actually does not point toward any of the particular promoters of the concept. On the contrary, examples such as the Smithsons Sheffield residential complex, Unite d’Habitation, the development of Brasilia or planning within the socialist city are seen as referential examples as they as actual projects confronted the city in other ways, or, in a way, independently of the intentions of their protagonists. However, the real target of the critique remains the stream of thought on the expansion of the discipline toward the utopian ideal of planning as a holistic practice that excludes confrontation.⁸¹ The distribution of the role of the individual architect toward whether decisions of the community or institutions, causes an actual loss of the sign, the fact, and the material for the Collective to oppose. By the loss of the individual in the sense of the ancient builder of a wall⁸² and by blurred dialectic between the sign and the event, the Collective resolves as well. An attempt to adopt the Collective as a vehicle for contemporary democratic practices appears at best naïve and at worst to be guided by everything but the natural mechanism of capitalism.

Communitarian ideology appears extremely difficult for Rossi, as for him the Collective does not have a prescribed development of its own, but instead the somatic character of the unpredictable. It firstly relates to human existence as a given, by its pure condition of being among others without any intentionality of its own. It is in this sense that the first point of the Collective is necessity. However, it becomes a device for the city due to its accumulated potential force that stands against everything else. Here lies the second point when answering Tafuri’s question on how the Collective should see the object: it holds the possibility of choice by its potential revolutionary aspect. Between the natural condition of necessity and the house, on the one hand, and the action of choosing a different reality through transmitting the event of the city, on the other, the Collective reappears as timely all over again. Architecture manifests it without adopting the narration of it, but by confronting it: as *obicere*, something thrown against. Due to the subversive aspect of it, Rossi refers to type as a truly recognizable sign for confrontation. By contrast, when shared with the community, the physical outcome becomes unreliable, so that the dialectic quality of the sign and the event is lost and it cannot

79. *Ibid.*, 85.80. *Ibid.*, 64.81. See Eric Mumford, *The CIAM discourse on Urbanism 1928 – 1960* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2000).82. Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 194., 195. Referring to the Greek polis, Arendt states that “before men beginning to act, a definitive space had to be secured and a structure built where all actions could take place”, the space being the public realm of the polis, while the law acts as its structure. The wall and the law are made by the architect and the legislator as the builder of a city and a lawmaker. These could be commissioned from abroad and need to be finished before any political activity begins. “These tangible entities” – the wall and the law – “were not the content of politics themselves” but the space of appearance, where less tangible products such as action and speech can gain the reality of being seen and heard before an audience of their fellow man acting together. As such no architect or lawmaker is an actor but rather they are fabricators, providing the infrastructure for the gathering of the men sharing words and deeds.

serve as pervasive any more. Here lies the beautiful paradox of Rossi's Collective: in its aspects of necessity and the pervasive right to choose it is rooted in communism drawn from Greek materialism. However, instead of adopting the ideology of this, the Collective holds frozen the potential for revolution, thus making his protagonist a communist without a community.