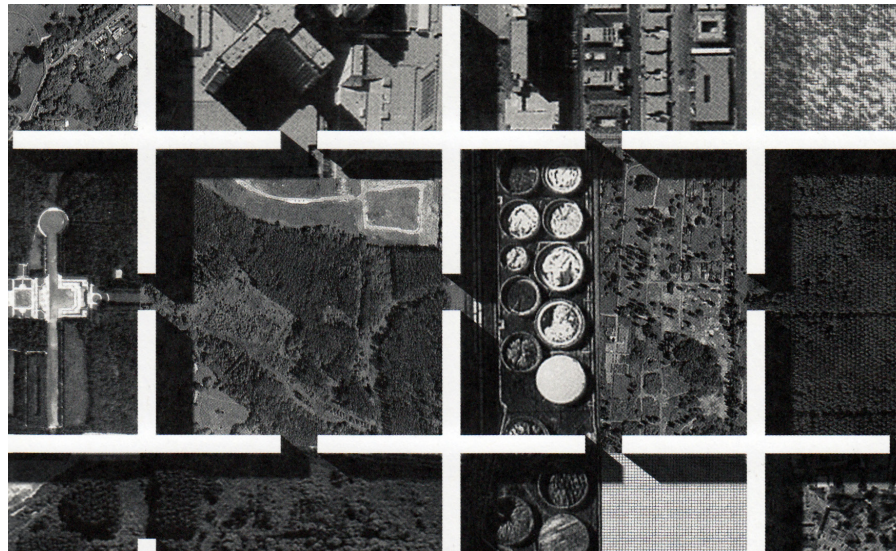


# TREATISES

A GENERAL THEORY



Gjorgjievski Nikola



# TREATISE

## PART ONE: A GENERAL THEORY

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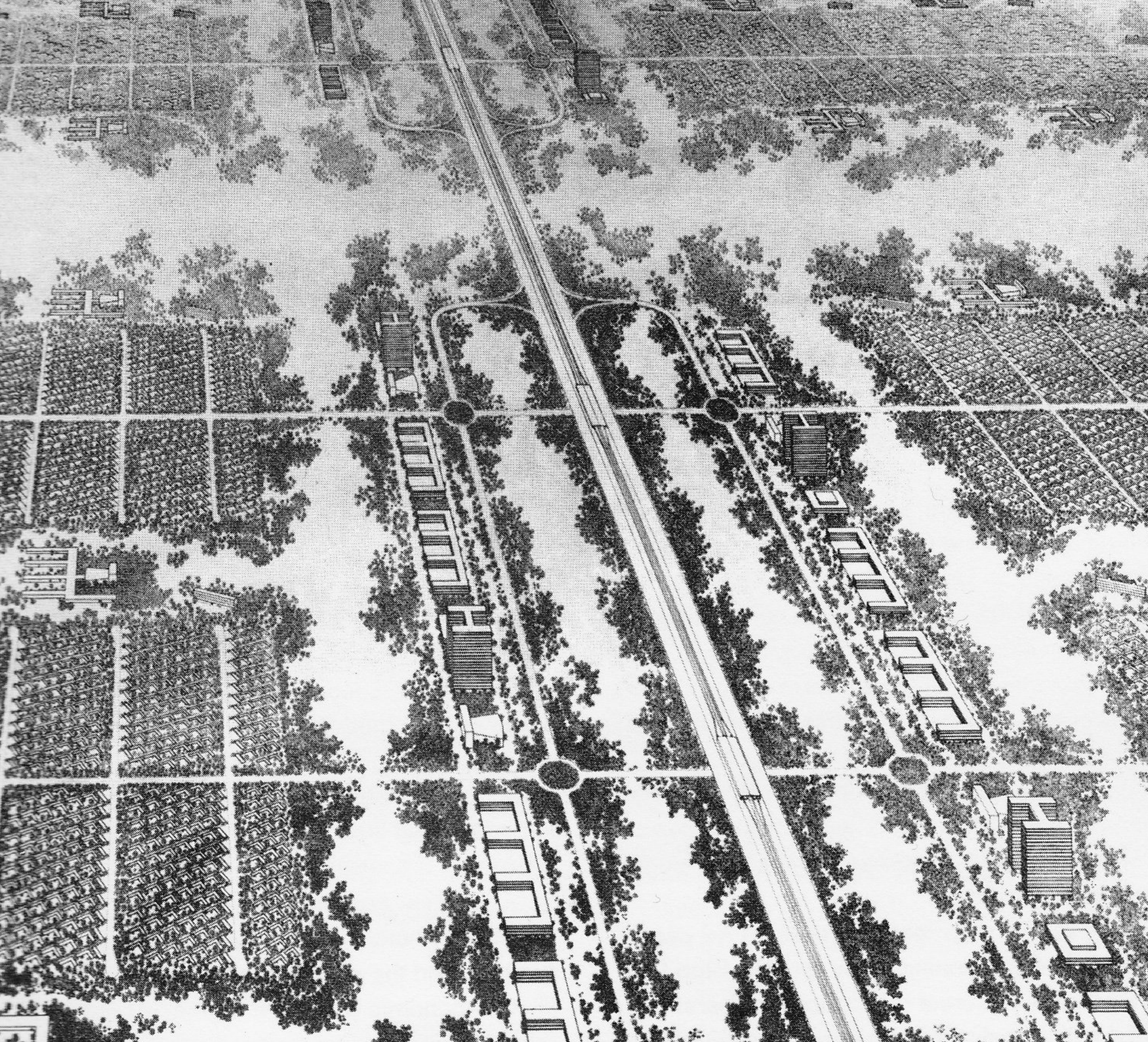
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Arkitektur- og designhøgskolen i Oslo  
The Oslo School of Architecture and Design

fall/ 2017







*"There are no cities, in fact, anymore. It goes on like a forest . . . We should think about the ways we have to live in a jungle, and maybe we do well with that"<sup>1</sup> - Mies van der Rohe 1955*



# CONTENTS

## **Introduction**

|                |      |
|----------------|------|
| Motivation     | ix   |
| Preface        | xi   |
| Thesis outline | xiii |

## **Part One: A General Theory**

notions about the regional metropolis

|                              |    |
|------------------------------|----|
| A subway chart of references | 15 |
| The Connector                | 17 |
| The Wall                     | 23 |
| The Ambiguous surface        | 27 |
| The Megaform                 | 33 |

## **Part Two: The Middle Landscape**

beyond built landscapes

|                           |    |
|---------------------------|----|
| Brief history of Skopje   | 43 |
| Elements of the landscape | 59 |

## **Part Three: EXPERIMENT**

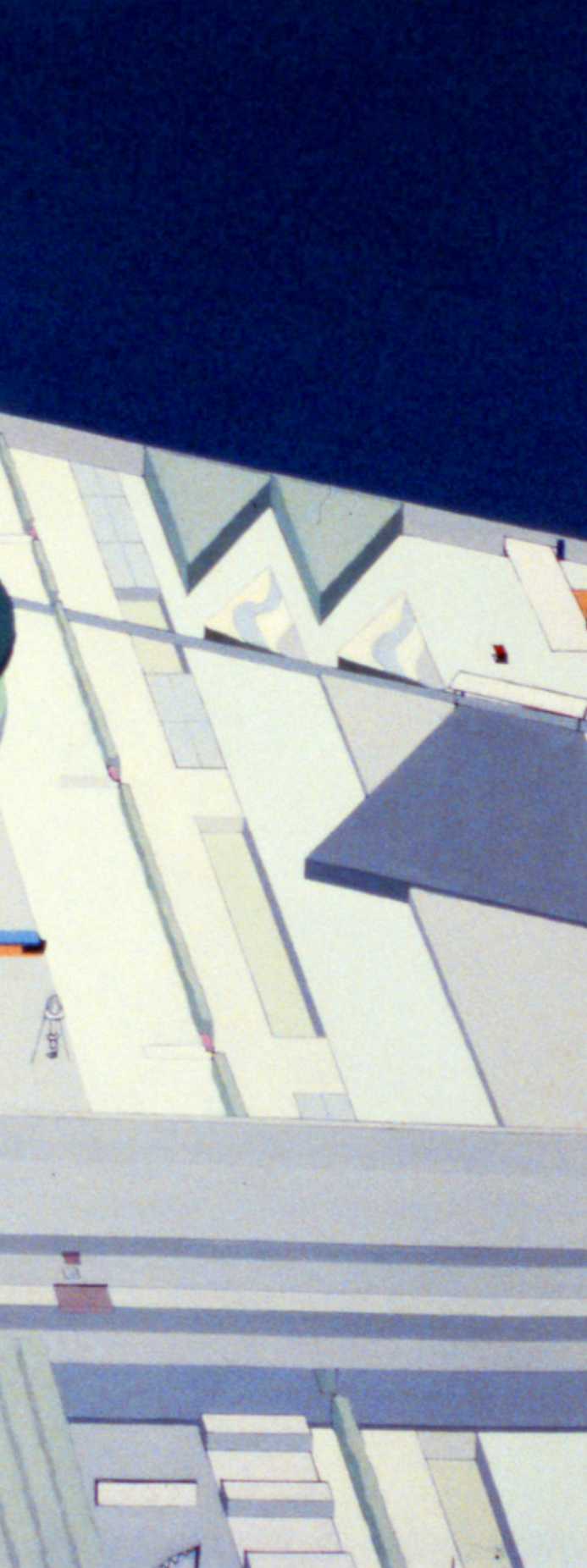
towards a neometabolism

|                                  |    |
|----------------------------------|----|
| The philosophy of Metabolism     | 77 |
| Claims and contradictions        | 81 |
| Investigation in collective form | 85 |
| Experiment                       | 89 |









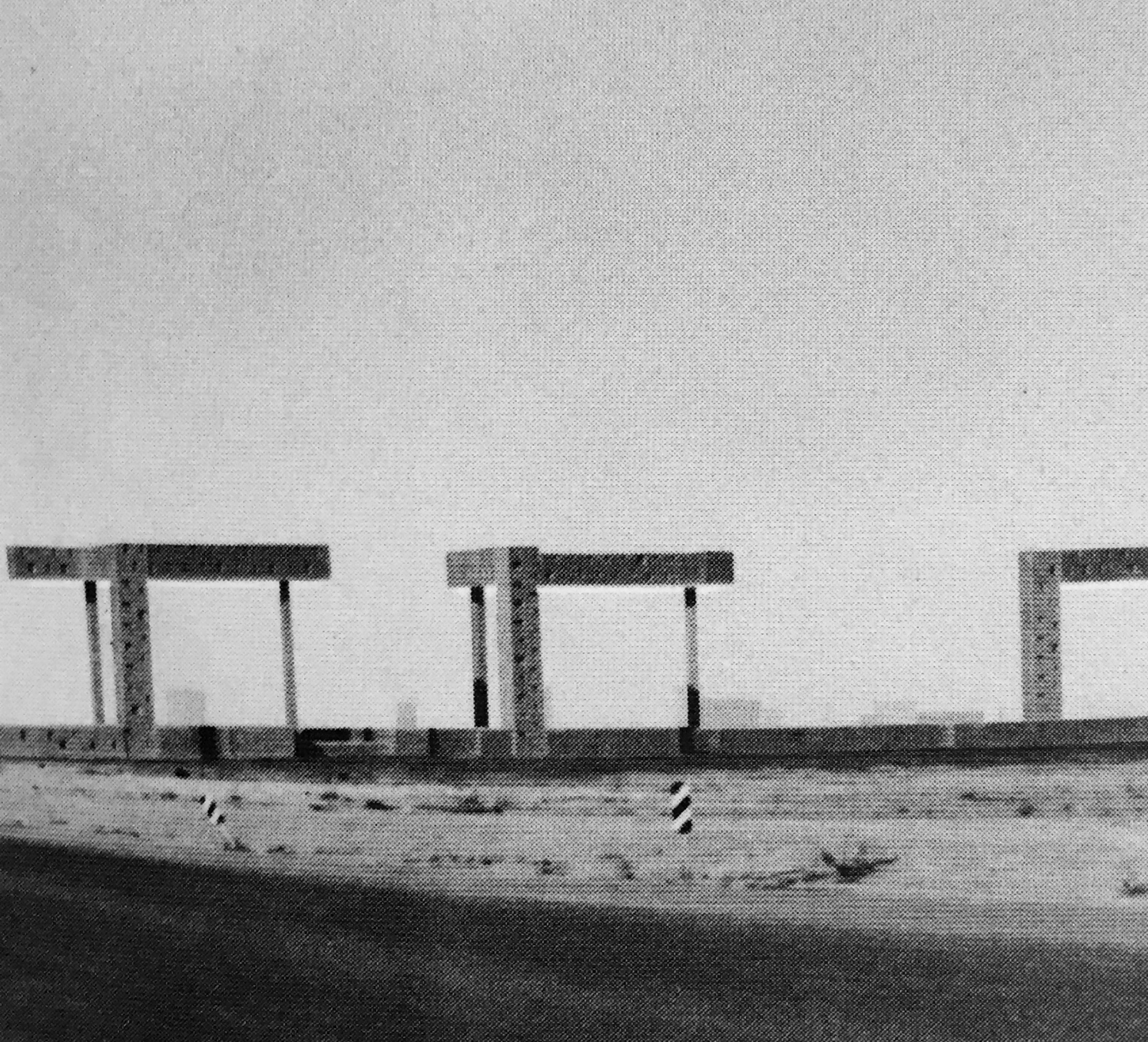
## MOTIVATION

In emerging times of inevitable urban transfigurations we must ask ourselves whether there is a new model and medium that has the capacity to withhold these constant mutations as the weighty apparatus of traditional space-making underperforms as we speak. Orthodox city planning has frequently failed to recognize the exclusively random and uncontrollable processes of the city and foolishly attempted to conclude them as endogenous plans of small interventions which in no way are justified by its administrative logic of spatial organization. The contradiction comes forth because traditional urban planning functions solely by organizing two dimensional surfaces, and as many art disciplines have transcended from the exhaustion of arranging and rearranging two dimensional forms and figures, it seems that general city planning still seeks to exist only through prisms of cubism. This also proves to be inflexible parallel to the rapidly transforming conditions of contemporary urban cultures. In an attempt to escape the predicament of uninspiring work in the domain of urbanism, I am truly motivated to explore **"landscape"** as an alternative to the "basic building block" as the **new urban form**.

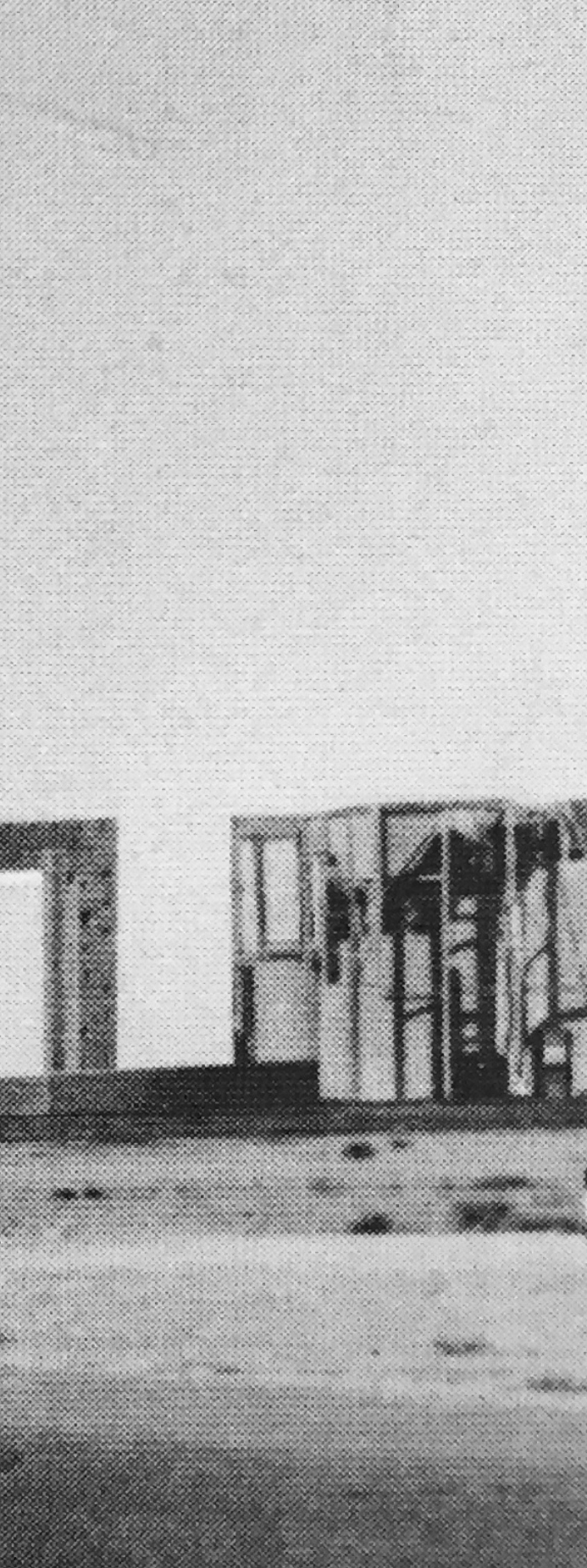
- Introducing landscape as urbanism
- Exploring field conditions across cityscapes and vast terrains
- Examining border conditions and new geographies
- From landscape to infrastructures to new ecologies

*"By playing close attention to these surface condition - not only configuration, but also materiality and performance, designers can activate space and produce urban effects without the weighty apparatus of traditional space making"<sup>2</sup> – Stan Allen, Mat Urbanism: The Thick 2D (2001)*









## PREFACE

This research gravitates towards an idea that defines landscape architecture as a territorial paradigm that seeks to deal with the temporal mutability and horizontal extensivity of the contemporary metropolis. It defines landscape as the new urban form attentive to the definition of space in transition trying to escapes the notions of populist environmentalism and the pastoral ideas of the landscape; the emergence of "landscape urbanism" as a discourse in favor of experimentation, speculation and play.

This volume is set to be an outcome of a collaborative work between AHO - The Oslo school of Architecture and Design, department of landscape & urbanism and the studio work of the urbanism department at Ss. Cyril and Methodius University - Faculty of Architecture in Skopje, following the series of work under the themes and concepts "Patterns of Growth".

A closer reading of part one of this volume explains a general exploration of the regional metropolis and the terrain beyond the built via treaties that examined, tested and predicted ways in which the contemporary city can grow and develop. The idea behind this is to primarily understand the "modus operandi" of these new urban zones with the potential extraction and re-adaptation of certain aspects and characteristics to the now-a-day era and society concerning contemporary territorial, geo-infrastructural, metropolitan, and environmental issues.

A laboratory is opened on the territory of Skopje to test future scenarios which will demonstrate a new directions of development, from the terminus until the edge. The research is set to counter urban sprawls, explore border conditions, introduce new life to infrastructures and infrastructure urbanism and deal with contemporary regional and environmental problems. As such, this ought to become first of its kind to explore Skopje in the frameworks of landscape urbanism both in practice and discourse.

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< - STEVEN HOLL, PAMPHLET ARCHITECTURE 13: EDGE OF THE CITY, 1991







## THESIS OUTLINE

Under the framework of the institute of Urbanism and Landscape at AHO- The Oslo school of Architecture and Design, the nature of this thesis is set to coexist between two boundaries:

1. Experimental and speculative, exploring new patterns for city developments borrowed or inspired by certain art forms and manifestos with a new life.
2. A project that takes up topics and issues that have high social relevance and proposes scenarios in speculative frameworks which would explore new realities for city planning and development.

.....

The diploma will explore Skopje, the capital city of Macedonia, and territories in close proximity to Skopje, from the city-center towards the peripheral edge in order to provide a case study for further developments, to explore certain field conditions and to provide a fresh outlook for the future. Therefore, themes as infrastructure urbanism, vast open spaces, local economies and industries, agriculture, new geographies and urban ecologies will persist to occupy the general thinking and discourse of this thesis.

.....

Furthermore, the thesis explores manifestos, literatures and projects in relevance and provocation of contemporary urban planning and landscape urbanism. In general, the volume is set to explore and understand the fundamental mechanism of the regional metropolis, test its failures and speculate the future. The "suburb mechanism" is divided in four chapters written in a style attentive to the definition of intertextuality.

1. The Connector
2. The Wall (edge)
3. The Ambiguous surface
4. The Megaform

The work also follows a case study which revisits the Metabolism movement in architecture and its instrumentalities. This is for the reason of exploring research questions that tackle the inseparable interaction between force, object and decay. Large interest is shown in exploring certain aspects to why the metabolism movement failed to meet its goals. The Nakagin Tower in Japan never changed a capsule. Therefore a "Mineral Metabolism". "Thick and nonreactive" provokes the idea of a neometabolism. From the crystallized towards diffused and ephemeral metabolism.

.....

The middle part of the research is devoted to depicting the story of Skopje, starting from the early 1960's, the post-earthquake metabolism masterplan, the rapid development in the 1990's and the contemporary metropolis of the last decade. The concluding part of the research will contain project(s) from the studio work by pre-diploma students at the Faculty of Architecture Skopje, working together with our institute of Urbanism and Landscape. An initiative to explore ground as the new figure in Metabolism.

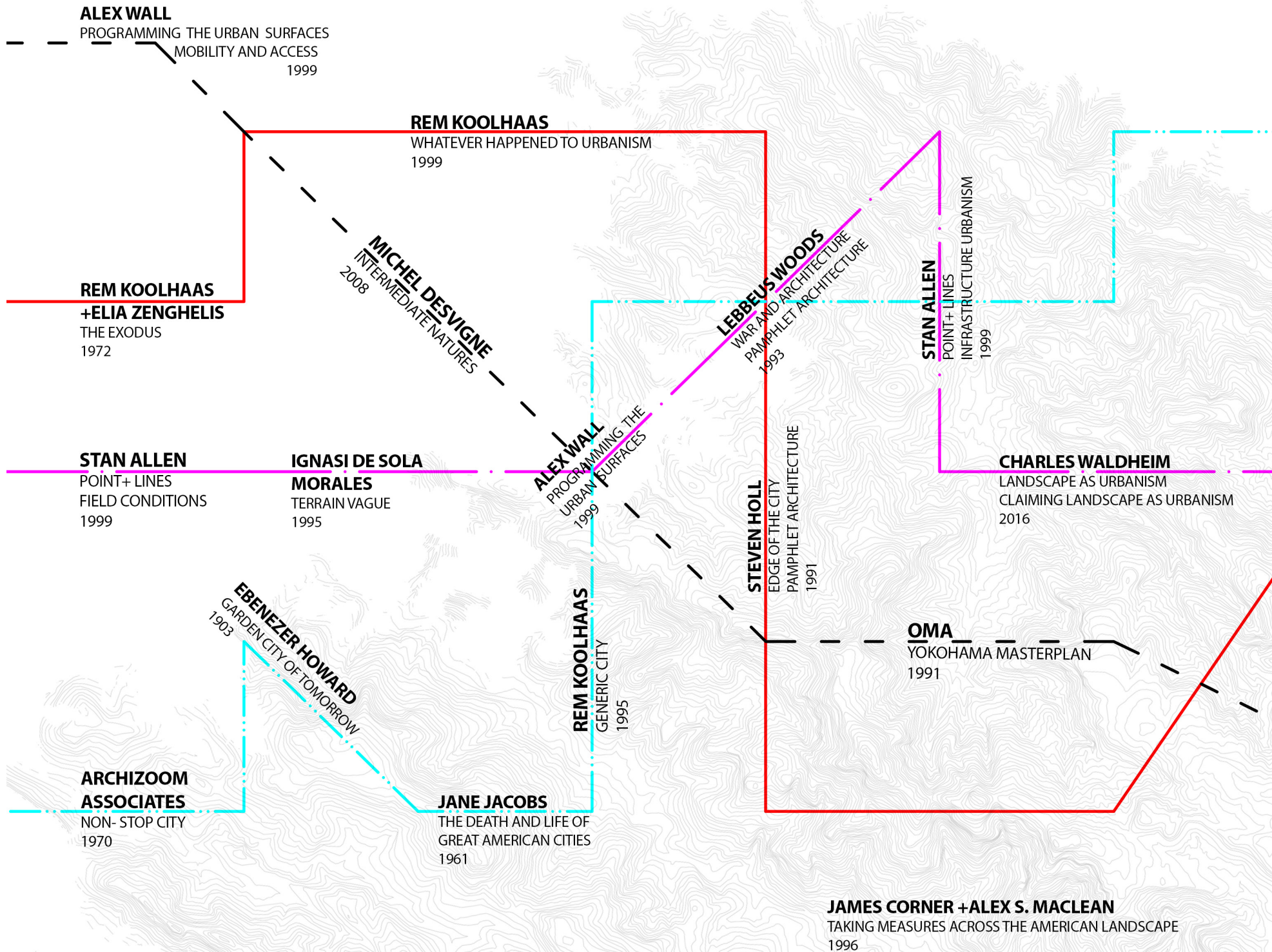
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Topic summary:

1. New expanding: A masterprogramme for the terrain beyond the built; *decoding ambiguous surfaces*
2. Re-exploring iconic manifestos in order to understand the vague *A metabolism in landscape architecture*
3. Skopje is ready for the future: *a manifesto for a new territory.*



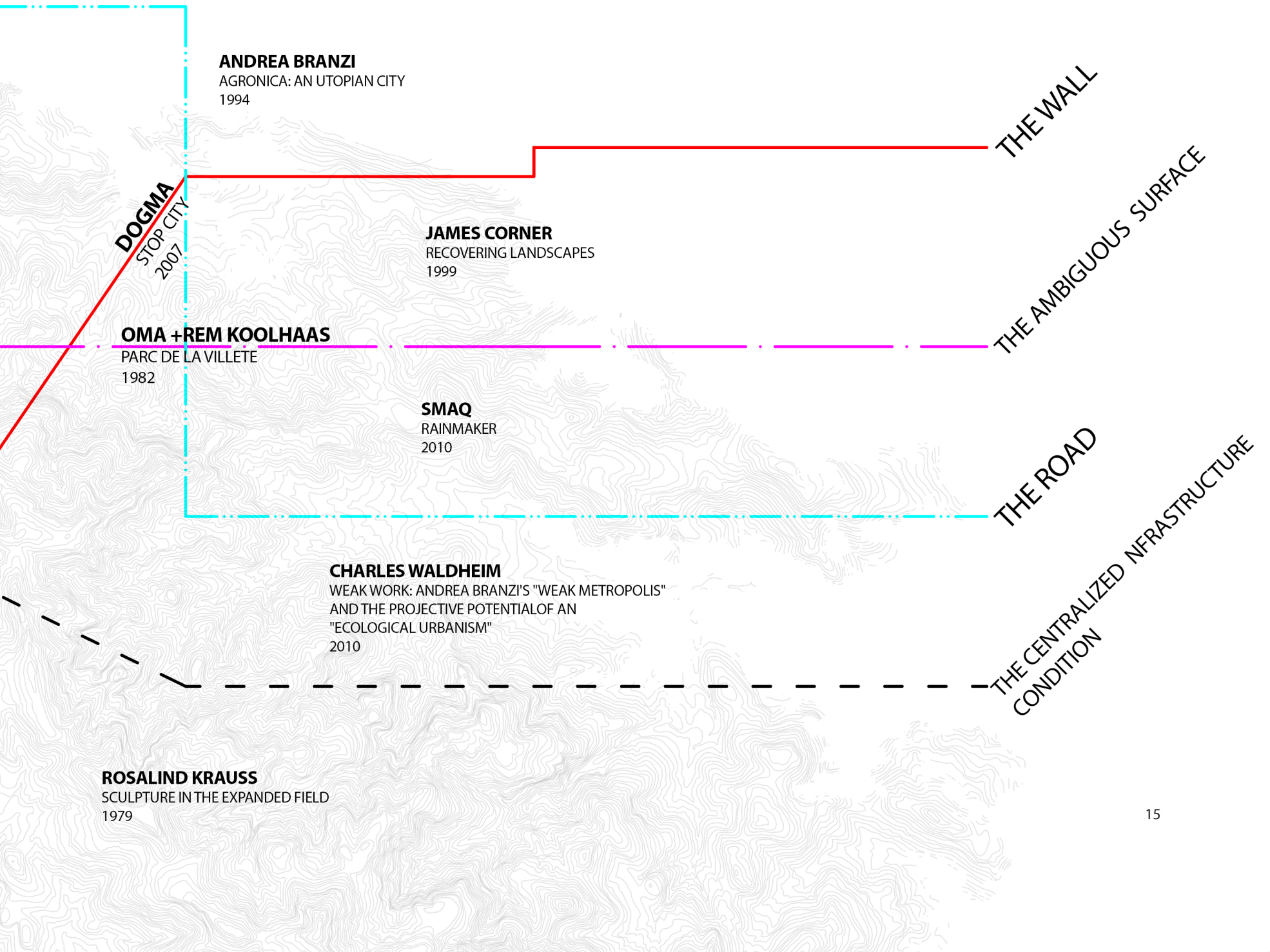
# THE BATTLE OF





# THE LANDSCAPES

## PART ONE: GENERAL THEORY SUBWAY CHART OF REFERENCES









## THE CONNECTOR

### exploring regional connections with the metropolis

**research topic:** *the regional city and its fundamental relationships with the metropolis.*

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The text “Non-stop city” written by Archizoom Associates examines the urban phenomena in the industrial system of the late 1960’s and the early 1970’s, naming it its weakest and most confusing point. In circumstances of industrial omnipresence, is the modern city a problem which has not yet been solved? Archizoom describes “the Capital” as the driving objective that formulates the creation of the architectural phenomena and inasmuch, a notion which can demystify the complex ideology of discussions and conditions concerning the form of the city. Additionally, if we corroborate the notion of “the Capital” with a definition where trade, commerce and consumption are the driving forces of the metropolis’ social structure, then, without the electronic media, it was logical that the city represented the center where these drivers materialized into spatial environments. The old city rendered the desirable market conditions, making for a natural equilibrium between opposite interests, between technology and nature. But now, the digital society has taken its turn on the urban praxis: artificial inducement to consumption infiltrated much deeper into the social structure and changed the notion of the market. Archizoom wrote: *“The future dimension of the metropolis coincides with that of the market itself”*<sup>3</sup>.

If the previous sentence is true then we can agree that the digital society no longer seeks the foregoing conditions of the city for the general market to happen.

*“In such societies, the managements of interests no longer needs to be organized on the spot where trade is supposed to happen”*<sup>3.1</sup>.

The entire accessibility of the territory shifts away from the concept of a “terminus city” and permits the emergence of progressive networks to act as organizing tools. But before we further explore Archizoom’s manifesto of the Non-stop-city, it should be noted how these so-called progressive networks have shaped the city prior to entering the new millennium. I will refer to an essay written nearly 30 years later by Alex Wall: “Programming of urban surfaces” in the book “Recovering Landscapes” by James Corner, published in 1999. The essay explores territorial surfaces in which the city has expanded as a mark of capitalism and rapid development. Wall states:

*“The traditional notion of the city as a historical and institutional core surrounded by postwar suburbs and the open countryside has been largely replaced by a more polycentric and web-like sprawl: The regional metropolis”*<sup>4</sup>.

This sentence from the chapter “The contemporary metropolis” agrees that the transformations of the city coincide with the accessibility and penetrability of its territory. These newly web-like systems create multiple centers which are serviced by overlapping networks of transportation, electronic communication, production and consumption says Wall. Such organizational models, infra-structural by nature, seek to exist from the flux of people, vehicles, goods, and information, or what urban geographers like to call: “the daily urban system”. If the traditional city emphasized forms of urban space then the new conditions of the city’s fundamentals celebrate processes of urbanization, vast networks across regional surfaces. A celebration of the car, the road and the digitalization (the unlimited access). This again implies to the movement from the terminus metropolis to the regional metropolis (new zones).

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< - REM KOOLHAAS + OMA, VILLE NOUVELLE MELUN SENART, 1987, COMPETITION ENTRY

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Archizoom associates describe these zones under the boundary of the bourgeois ideology. An ideology where ecological balance and social justices become part of the same battle. If that is true, then the city would only seek to formally materialize this equipoise. In city planning there becomes an attempt to neutralize the private and public interest. According to Archizoom associates, these two categories which are always taken as antithetical, contrasting and incompatible phenomena, open a problem of figuring out a two-dimensional net that would enable these two irreconcilable components to coexist. The traffic presents itself as the most general means on communication thus enabling a figurative scheme of the functioning of urban life. As written in Archizoom's text: "*The bourgeois metropolis remains mainly a visual space and its experience remains tied to the type of communication.*"<sup>5</sup>

I would like to suggest a linkage between what Archizoom describe as the "Bourgeois Metropolis" and what Alex Wall depicts as the "Regional Metropolis". In the essay "Programming of urban surfaces", Wall writes about the complex effects of urbanization out of which three are of particular significance. The first one describes the new kinds of urban sites, these ambiguous areas caught between enclaves, capable of constituting entire generic zones, much like the ones Archizoom imagined.

Wall names these zones as the peripheral sites, middle landscapes neither here nor there but highly pervasive as to characterize the domain in which the majority of people live. If the ideology of the middle class corresponds to the majority of the city's population, than it is safe to assume that these zones portray exactly the bourgeois. In contrast to this, Wall states that the old city centers, or places which were inevitable for the market to happen in the past, are increasingly becoming themed around tourism and entertainment functions. The shift from the central to the peripheral magnificently increased the dependence of transport, transport alternatives and the automobile. Therefore, it changed the lifestyle of its inhabitants which no longer live in a city that has static political and spatial boundaries but rather one which moves the formal paradigm of the city to a more dynamic one.

A shift from districts and squares to infrastructures, networks and ambiguous spaces designing a temporary metropolis attentive to polymorphous conditions and spreading rhizomatic structures. Fundamentally, it is the instrumentality of the traffic network that enables the regional city to function. The bedrock of suburbs and semi-suburbs.

Nevertheless, web-like networks of traffics which organize the urban settlement have become a necessity in orthodox modern city planning, planning theory and city architectural design resulting in urban sprawls: suburbs dignified as quiet residential areas. Eventually many of these brand new settlements will be engulfed in the expansion of the city and whether they fail or succeed will totally depend on whether they adopt to become city districts or not. When the periphery communicates within the city through means of traffic networks and only the automobile, then the only public element in such suburbs is the car, and paradoxically the nature of the car is private. Yes, it can take you to the center of the city or another nearby district but it does not allow any other public forms to take place within the suburbs. Centralize forms which the automobile can warrant are garages and parking lots which by themselves do not promote any dynamic public activities. An ubiquitous principle for a healthy, striving city district is its intricate and close-grinded diversity of uses that give each other constant mutual support, both economically and socially according to Jane Jacobs. In her book, "The death and life of great American cities" published in 1961, Jacobs states:

*"I think that unsuccessful city areas are areas which lack this kind of intricate mutual support, and that the science of city planning and the art of city design, in real life for real cities, must become the science and art of catalyzing and nourishing these close-grinded working relationships."*<sup>6</sup>

She compares the creation of suburbs and semi-suburbs with the medical act of bloodletting. In the late 1800's the medical establishment believed that bloodletting was the obvious way to cure patients from diseases. Such practices, even though illogical, were religiously used because the discipline consider them legitimate.

But sick patients needed nourishment and fortifying, not draining. The pseudo-science of bloodletting and inasmuch the pseudo-science of city planning have arisen on foundations of nonsense. Jacobs says:

*"The pseudo-science of city planning and its companion, the art of city design, have not yet broken with the specious comfort of wishes, familiar superstitions, over-simplifications, and symbols, and have not yet embarked upon the adventure of probing the real world."*<sup>6.1</sup>

She points at "The Garden city of tomorrow" by Ebenezer Howard as the biggest and most influential thread to city planning and planning theory. According to Howard, to deal with the city's function was to sort and shift out certain simple uses and rearrange each of these in relative self-containment. Garden city's central problem was the housing and everything else was ought to be subsidiary. But what Jane Jacobs argues against mostly is the way Howard envisioned the housing: suburban physical characteristics with small-town social qualities. Commerce was ought to be a routine, a standard supply of goods in a self-limited market. This would function in a ring-like chain of self-sufficient small towns where poor people can again live close to nature and earn their living. The garden city would be encircled with agriculture. Industry will be carefully positioned so that it does not mix, just as schools and other public facilities would be placed. Jacob says that for Howard good planning meant a series of static acts, each act must be anticipated and after being built must be protected against any but minor subsequent changes. A paternalistic approach, if not authoritarian. He was not interested in the aspects of the city which could not be simplified, extracted and applied in his Utopia. According to Jacobs these are powerful city destroying ideas and I would arguably agree that Howard's Garden city of tomorrow is one of my enemy projects.

Nevertheless, the belts of the Garden City use an idealistic pattern of traffic network systems and to a certain extent, not as gimmicky as in Howard's drawings, is how new suburbs communicate within a city boundary. Again we boil down to the road as the basic means of commuting.

By revisiting the concept of the road, or even better, the fusion line, a vector capable of creating flow, movement and speed and taking into consideration the power of this line to dissect the tissues of the city and the landscape, one could say that a force with such components can constitutionally change the way a city functions and expand its future realities to circumstances yet unprecedented. The road no longer solely serves the automobile for a "A to B" transfer but rather acts as a fundamental tool to transform, rearrange and plot the future of the city. The infrastructure of the new metropolis must strive to have a character of collective space because the failure of the amorphous connective web of roads lies in the fact that it has rarely been recognized as a collective space unto itself. As Vittorio Gregotti argues:

*"We are trying to return a positive morphological value of the road in an attempt to revive it as a component of the settlement event and by restoring the road to the architectural realm while forcing one's discipline to consider the problems it implies as its own specific ones"*<sup>7</sup>

One clear example the supports this notion is described in Antonio Font's "Edge and Interstices: The Ordering of the Borders of the new Barcelona Ring-Road" published in 1993. The second beltway of Barcelona, the northern arc, the Ronda de Dalt, completed due the Olympics in 1992 conceived to achieve the highest amount of distribution among local and regional transportation networks. By finishing the road there opened opportunities to change the local conditions of the landscape thus allowing new programs to happen in the open space. Without the motorway the vast open space would not be able to transcend into a higher platform. It is because of the road that new typologies begun to emerge between the landscape and the built. Ultimately, as Alex Wall states in the chapter "Mobility and Access: Surface as collector and distributor" it was not the spectacular engineering or technological achievement, nor the scenic and efficiency value of the highway that justifies its importance but rather its capacity to stimulate and support new forms of urban space. By introducing new life to concepts of railroads, motorways, parkways, tramlines and inasmuch vindicating them as filed conditions rather than just transporting morphologies it is more likely to create healthy coherent systems to an otherwise fragmented territory, both physically and metaphorically.



An attempt must be made to transpose from the 1960's infrastructure urbanism to a now-a-day "elastic infrastructure urbanism".

In the book "Points +Lines", publish in 1999, Stan Allen introduces or, reintroduces the concept of infrastructure urbanism of the past. He urges a shift to the framework of the new era where the infrastructure instrumentality becomes a potential toolbox of new and exciting procedures. This does not imply to a simple return to the now discredited modernism. As Allen writes:

*"It is important to note that this newly called infrastructure urbanism strives to escape the notion of a master plan or the ego of the individual architect, it moves away from representational imperative in architecture! The goal of this new device is to avoid working solely with images or meanings, but to rather work (as ecology and engineering) with performances: energies, forces and resistances. Infrastructures are less concerned with how they look but more with what they can do".<sup>8</sup>*

"The new medium is geography"

Infrastructures are open to change, they are both flexible and schematic, precise and indeterminate. They don't progress but evolve and adopt with new circumstances. The social realm is not neglected, these new infrastructures understand and enhance the collective space of the new digital society. Even though they are morphologically static, their most important feature is operating with the flow, movement and exchange of forces, stresses and energies, they are the artificial ecologies of the city!

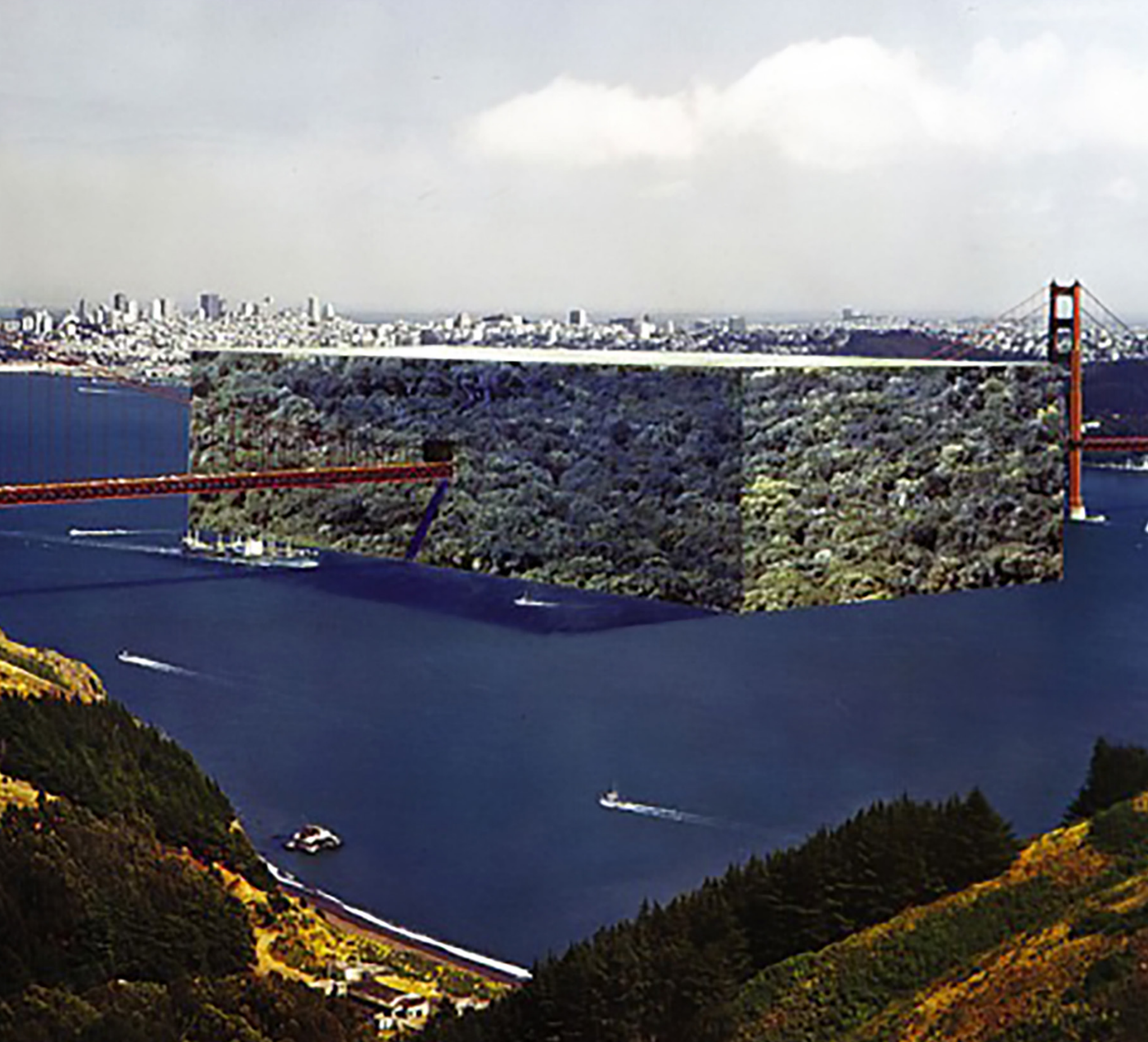
"In infrastructures, form matters but not as much the formation of the form but what it can do!"

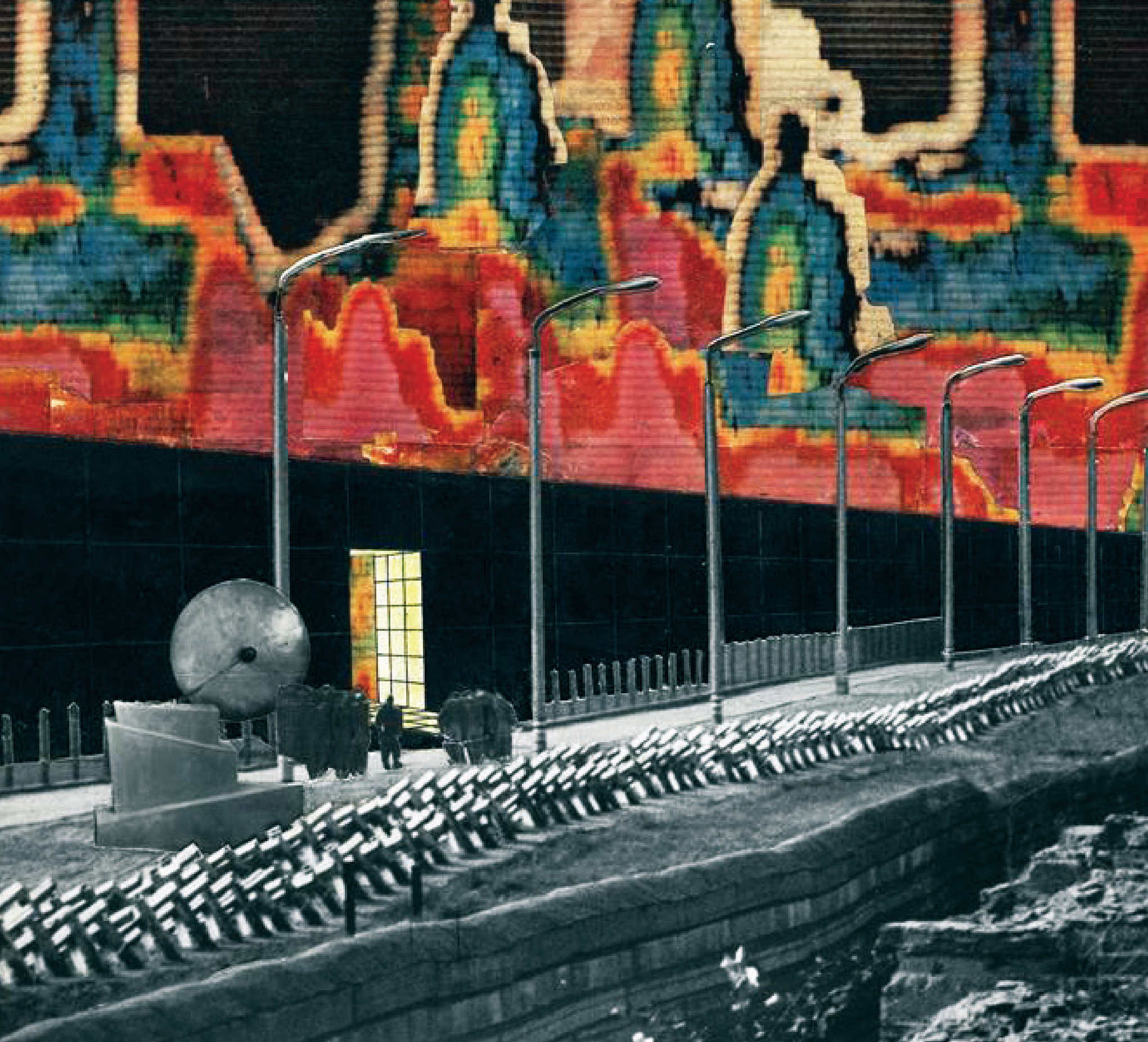
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SUPERSTUDIO, CUBO DI FORESTA SUL GOLDEN GATE, 1972 ->











## THE WALL

### exploring edge concepts

**research topic:** *exploring border conditions of the regional metropolis and the liminal zone*

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This chapter explores the phenomena of an edge or a limit, and pursues to provoke thinking for new schemas concerning this liminal position. The threshold between the smooth and striated space. The line between the built and the agrarian. A motorway or a river. A fence or a wall. The limit, in my opinion, is much more than the demarcation of contrasts. Thus, in the spirit of intertextuality, I propose a perusal of the project treatise “Exodus or the voluntary prison of architecture”, 1972, initially written by Rem Koolhaas and later on developed with Elia Zenghelis and illustrators Zoe Zenghelis and Madelon Vriesendorp, the four of whom soon after founded OMA. The idea behind this perusal is with an attempt to destabilize the original understanding of this text, have the “exodus” structure been placed in the “terrain vague”. It, perhaps, may become curious to speculate scenarios if the functions of the “voluntary prison” were put in use to demystify the uncertainty and ambiguity of the landscape. Koolhaas begins this story by depicting an utter contrast in the city of London.

*“Once, a city was divided in two parts. One became the Good half, the other part the Bad Half. The inhabitants of the Bad half began to flock to the good part of the divided city, rapidly swelling into an urban exodus”<sup>9</sup>*

The project starts with a feeble physical boundary but due to the uncontrollable desire to seek refuge in the “good half”, the authorities were forced to build an impermeable wall. As Koolhaas puts it “*The wall was a masterpiece*”. The effect was instantaneous, people from the bad half could now only imagine what is behind the wall from an agonizing distance. This idea derives from author’s journey to Berlin to document the Berlin’s wall. Koolhaas was amazed by its ‘*heartbreakingly beautiful*’ nature: a psychological and symbolical masterpiece, which despite its absence of program had provoked a continuous narrative of events, behaviors and effects.

Two parallel walls are erected in the center of London. A strip that passes through various city-tissues and accordingly positions its programs and functions to provide the desirable contradiction to its outer surrounding. As Koolhaas writes, “*A devastating architecture but for the service of positive intentions*”<sup>9,1</sup> It must be noted that these totally desirable alternatives are made possible if there are metropolitan conditions behind either side of the wall, one being better than the other. But what would the story of the wall be if both or one side is confronted with the smooth space, the untouched territory or a deprived landscapes? Then, one must ask the question of ‘what is a total desirable alternative to a defoliated territory or to a land of flagrantly unrolled urban sprawls?’

Koolhaas uses the following verbs to describe the effects of the programless wall: *division, isolation, inequity, aggression, destruction*. Again, most of them are evoked by the dual metropolitan condition of the wall’s near surrounding. But which may be the appropriate verbs if the contrast itself proposed dialectic natures. In a depriving landscape, could the wall: *regenerate, restore, preserve, protect, assure, reason, or, perhaps, neutralize*? Or could the wall maybe coincide as a condition, in the question of urban sprawls, to: *stop, retreat, intensify, or fulfill*?

What if the prison was positioned in a different era and environment? Is this an opportunity for a programmed wall structure? If the “terrain beyond” exudes zero architectural influences, and if we agree with what Koolhaas says on this matter, “*where there is nothing, everything is possible, where there is architecture, nothing (else) is possible*”, then we must definitely encourage transition and reconsider the traditional praxis of urban planning and city growth.

By defining a territorial (imaginary) edge of a city and its field conditions, clever ideas for city expansion are highly possible.

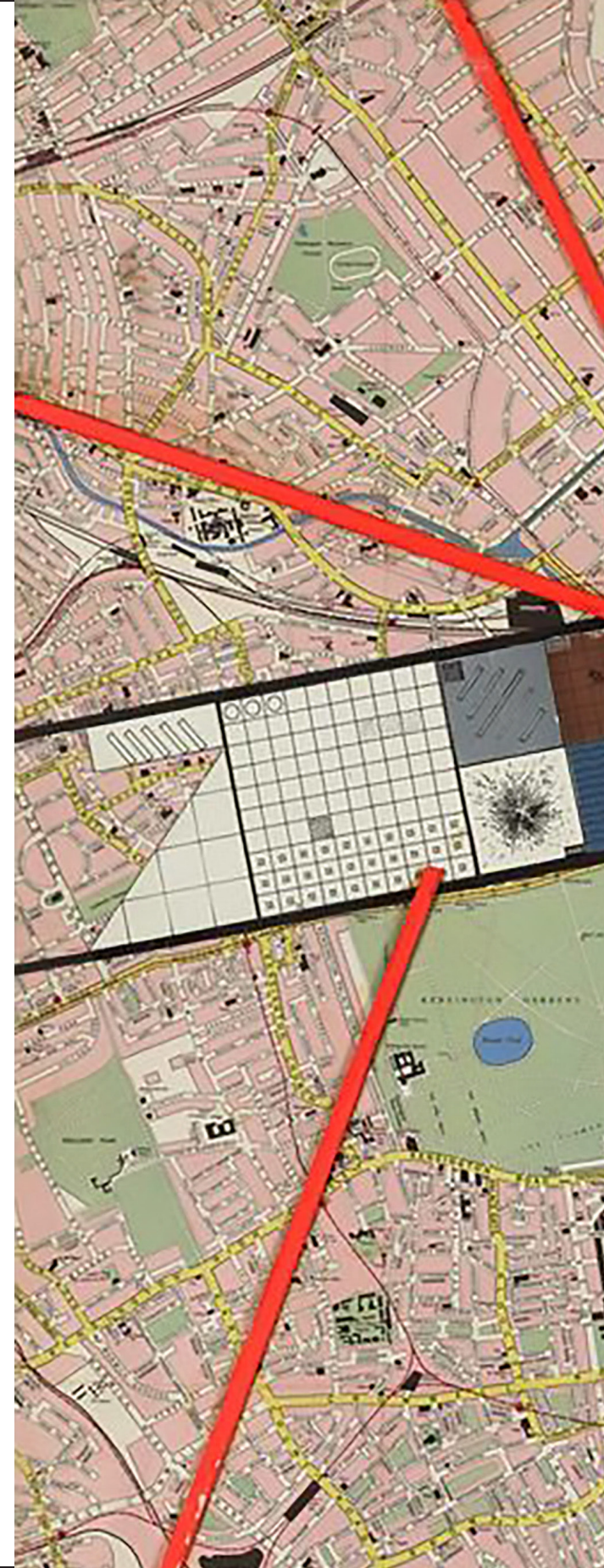
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< - REM KOOLHAAS + ELIA ZENGHELIS, EXODUS (OR THE VOLUNTARY PRISONERS OF ARCHITECTURE), 1972

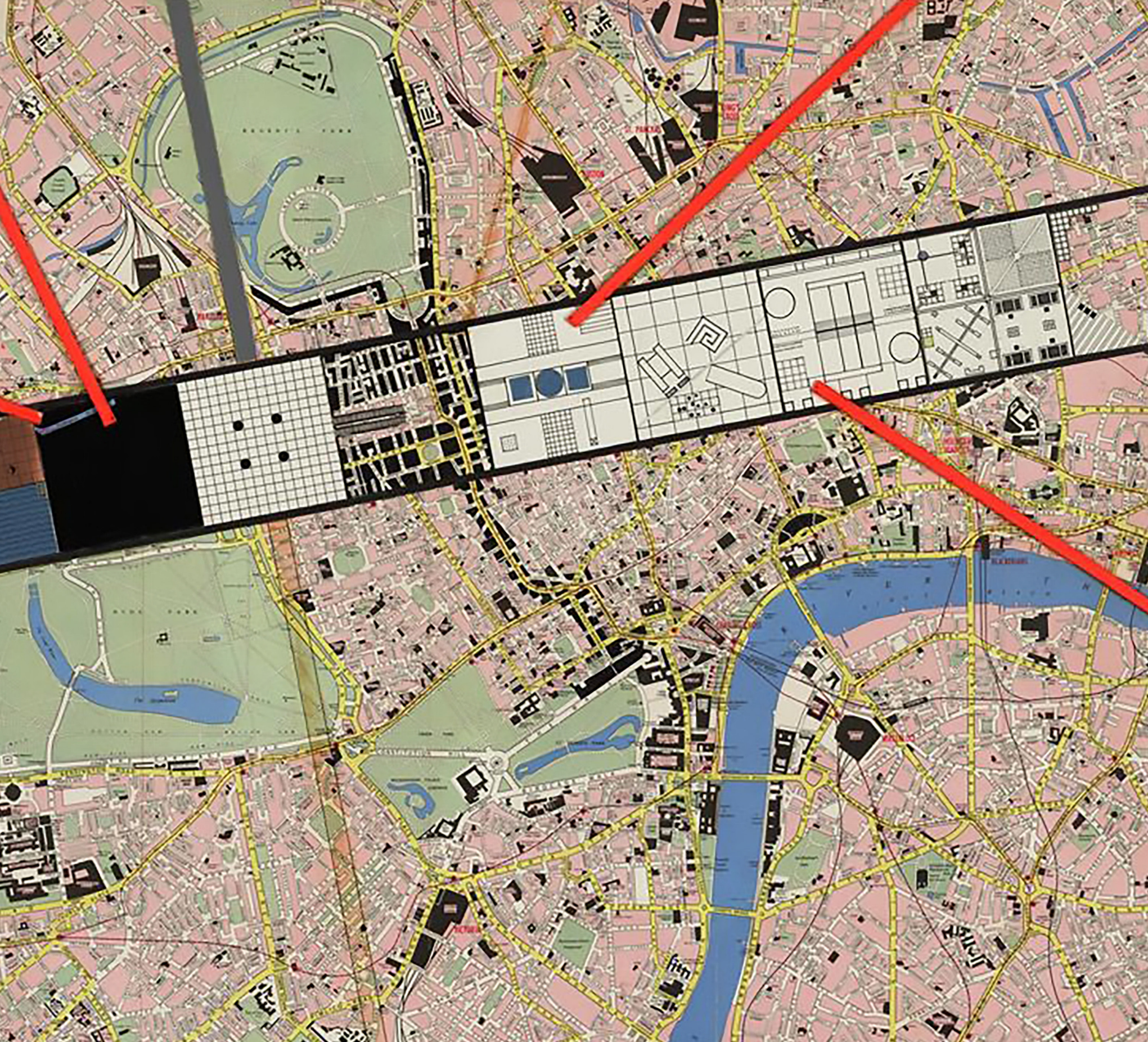
The idea of positioning imaginary boundaries in the vague initially emerges from the desire to counter urban sprawls in the regional metropolis and twist its circumstances to scenarios yet unprecedented. To imagine the boundary as a wall might be one version of events but what is interesting at this point, and what is lacking in Koolhaas' exodus is the potential thick 2D that can emerge at this very edge. If we compare this position as if it were a jungle and an ocean, the thickets biodiversity can be found right at their threshold. This line has the capacity to extract properties from both worlds. Considering this notion, the line between what is to be build and the landscape can provoke thinking for advanced developments. On the urban side, it calls for exploring and experimenting new typologies of buildings and interventions. On the other side, it calls for developing relationships with the close proximity of the terrain, thus, defining the kind of new urban zone parallel to the ambiguous surface. To define the edge is to define a radius of opportunities on both sides, one benefiting from the other and vice versa. The edge has the capacity to work with the territorial infrastructure and it is also, perhaps, an ideal position to incorporate local water systems, both artificial and natural. Additionally, it has the potential to react with the geomorphology of the terrain and create a unique relationship with the anthropogeography. It is also interesting to mention that there are no manuals for the ideal creation of the edge. The edge itself has a dialectic nature and should be approached with a "in situ" methodology. The enigma of the border and its countless interpretations must always be consider as a priority when we impose to introduce interventions across the terrain vague.

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REM KOOLHAAS + ELIA ZENGHELIS, EXODUS (OR THE VOLUNTARY PRISONERS OF ARCHITECTURE), 1972 ->











## THE AMBIGUOUS SURFACE

### terrain vague

**research topic:** *poetic, formal and programmatic understanding of the terrain beyond the metropolis*

---

There has been a myriad of definitions, depictions and explanations about the open field and its mighty vastness. Some strikingly optimistic and others considerably profound yet uncertain and indeterminate, as they quote the landscape itself. In this chapter I would like to pay close attention to a series of elusive treatises, when put together become perhaps a curious version of events in elaborating the image of the landscape. Inasmuch as to coalesce into an intelligent and logical albeit mysterious and provocative assumptions about the terrain beyond. From a poetic to a formal and programmatic apprehension.

*Beyond the built, confronted by imaginative linear caesuras, silently lies the enigma of the open landscape.*

A formatively allusive understanding about undetermined spaces has been given in the essay "Terrain Vague", 1995, written by Spanish architect Ignasi de Sola-Morales. It must be noted that this text informs us not about any figurative or formal methodological reading of the landscape but rather point towards a more philosophical understanding that such complex spaces ought not to be bluntly solved nor verified by a set of already existing tools with which urban planning performs. However, in the opening of his essay, the author briefly glimpses upon photo-montaging; fragments of photographic images that do not show a real landscape or a city but dwell the viewer into a specific realm of semiology. This speculates a more tool-like concept rather than a metaphorical conclusion. It gives light to a fundamental morphological comprehension that a landscape can be recognized through a series of elements, if we consider these graphical images as such. I shall later discuss about these signs coinciding with Greggoti's article "The form of the territory". Nevertheless, a poetic approach is essential to begin with because spirit of the pure meaning may dissolve when it passes through academic and multidisciplinary prisms.

Chiefly, de Sola-Morales depicts these fields as:

*"Empty, abandoned space in which a series of occurrences have taken place subjugate the eye of the urban photographer. Such urban space, which I will denote by the French expression terrain vague, assumes the status of fascination, the most solvent sign with which to indicate what cities are and what our experience of them is."*<sup>10</sup>

Morales primarily explores the etymology of the word "terrain" due to the limited connotations of the English word "land". The concept of terrain, in contrast to the concept of land, is more expansive, including more spatial connotations rather than just the idea of a plot ready for exploitation. Vague, on the other hand, confines with an abundance of ideas. From German 'woge' which is related to the movement of seas - concludes "movement, oscillation, instability, and fluctuation." From French, the roots lie in 'vacuus', which yields connotations of vacancy, emptiness, and availability. Another meaning derives from the Latin 'vagus' closely linked to the origins in landscape urbanism, giving "the sense of 'indeterminate, imprecise, blurred, and uncertain."

The author insists that in order to decipher the field one must understand that field as a gestalt of dual indeterminacy.

\*gestalt: an organized whole that is perceived as more than the sum of its part.

I deliberately chose to word gestalt as to point out my agreement with Morales that a terrain has a deeper meaning than just a series of plots ready for construction. However, in order to further understand the terrain it is vital to shift this poetic reading and ponder upon figurative and formative collisions which consist the landscape, thus to implement a thought on how to actually approach it.



---

It is, in my opinion, easy to describe the overwhelmingly vastness of the terrain as uncertain and unknown and to further bring to front that contemporary city planning doesn't do it justice. As Morales inscribes upon the modern common dweller seeking "for forces instead of forms, for the incorporated instead of the distant, for the haptic instead of the optic, the rhizomatic instead of the figurative" and safely assumes that architecture is "forever on the side of forms, of the distant, of the optical and the figurative"<sup>10.1</sup>, I am forced to conclude that such connotations give us no knowledge or a discerning "modus-operandi" but rather express an unmet desire due to the exhaustion of uninspiring city developments and its residual processes. This opens a portal to the realm of heterotopia.

\*heterotopia- a human geography attentive to non-hegemonic conditions.

Morales concludes:

*"Today, intervention in the existing city, in its residual spaces, in its folded interstices can no longer be either comfortable or efficacious in the manner postulated by the modern movement's efficient model of the enlightened tradition. How can architecture act in the **terrain vague** without becoming an aggressive instrument of power and abstract reason? Undoubtedly, through attention to continuity: not the continuity of the planned, efficient, and legitimized city, but of the flows, the energies, the rhythms established by the passing of time and the loss of limits... we should treat the residual city with a contradictory complicity that will not shatter the elements that maintain its continuity in time and space."*<sup>10.2</sup>

Indeed, "How can architecture act in the **terrain vague** without becoming an aggressive instrument of power and abstract reason?"

*How to approach a terrain where all the urban planning rules are obsolete?*

*What is the transcending "modus-operandi" required by architects?*

**Perhaps, this becomes the call of the hour for architects!**

Furthermore, in an attempt to clarify some of the landscape mystic, an exploration of the article "The Form of The Territory", 1981, written by Italian architect Vittorio Gregotti, is in order. This treatise investigates the possibilities of a formal anthropological and geographic analysis of the landscape, discarding pretenses of any theoretical matters. In contrast to "terrain vague", Gregotti explores new formal methodologies in which the geographic dimension can coincide with the structuring of form in architecture. Approaches adoptable in different scales. Gregotti firstly explains how similar geophysical territories can differ due to their anthropogeographical origins and that its history and culture have seized to subjugate, ceaselessly, upon geographical reproduction. Thus emerges the first obstacle or frame to tackle or consider.

On this subject Gregotti suggests:

*"This experience benefits from new points of view and dynamics of observation, from recent means of communication, from original strategies for the realization of collective and individual objectives, and also from a diversity of signifiers, whose image is imbued with the new scientific hypotheses about nature, matter and space and with artistic creation of new and diversified figurative techniques."*<sup>11</sup>

By referring to the historical dimension of architecture, Gregotti brings to light three types of consideration. I shall briefly rephrase:

1. The crises coexist due to two conditions: "**the disappearance of the creative process as a linear process between form and function, analysis and synthesis**" and "**the object of architecture is no longer only identified with building**".
2. The need to codify the architect solely as "a creator of forms" should shift and position him within contexts of disciplines whose objective is to define functions.
3. To firstly identify the landscape as a signifying environment in which we live and to acknowledge that a construction of a landscape is part of the competence specific to the architect.

Gregotti stresses on the fact that the abundance and potentials of constructing a landscape are not exclusively bounded to the physical realm of the procedures but it is the most revealing one. It enables recognizing the universe as a quality of matter and allows modulation if the landscape is perceived as an **ensemble**. As Hashim Sarkis writes in his text "Geo-Architecture: A prehistory for an emerging aesthetic", 2014 -"*Gregotti applies a duality of typo-morphologies, the field and the ensemble, to organize and relate across scales from the architectural to the territorial.*"<sup>12</sup> Importantly, the defining of a field can be detected when "*the sign made by man or nature determine a formal ensemble that can be demarcated*" according to Gregotti. He also adds that a field can be a constituted element of a chain or a macrostructure that cohabits a series of fields. However, what I find interesting here is the mention of the word sign in relation to a particular field or group of fields, but before pondering the meaning of these signs, here are the four steps by which Gregotti addresses the problem of terminology and of a formal description of a "in situ" territory:<sup>13</sup>

1. by reading and classifying formal typologies and anthropogeographical structures;
2. by implementing a cartography of the formal values of the territory from the point of view of the geographical subsoil and the intervention;
3. by reading and representing signs of formal transformations generated by the introduction of planning structures; and
4. by establishing a defining criteria for the repertory of forms."

\*note: this understanding relates the geographic through the phenomena of phylogeny and semiology.

Now, essentially, the terrain has been demarcated into several fields, each unique and itself limited. However, this limitation should transcend the factual and geomorphological boundaries if we are to discover concepts and operations unknown. If, for a moment, these geophysical dimensions shift to spheres of meanings of signs there flickers a possibility for new curious findings. Intrinsically, man would primarily denote these fields by evoking an inventory of already known, learned or obvious signs, which are in close relation to cultural and historical influences.

For example, a plot of land with fertile soil exploited for growths of vegetables would instantly be acknowledged as agrarian, an unspoiled form of nature which is recognizable in itself. This recognition is beneficial in the first steps of demarcating the terrain into fields. However, it limits the field to a primordial function and gives no further new opportunities. What if one changes the understanding of this well established sign into something else. What if the agricultural field is no longer seen primarily for its land-productive feature but rather, for example, as a belt of transmission or a field connector. Could then this, perhaps, help us escape such well learned notions and open opportunities for writing new inventories of meanings? Could this then inspire new concepts of approaching the terrain? On this subject Gregotti says:

*"The reversibility of this relation implies the identification of landscape as an autonomous form that can be remodeled with appropriate symbols that have yet to be deciphered. However, we can derive one important fact from this point of view: the possibility of an approach that, by changing the signs of the elements, aspires to an overall figurative conception that differs from the nature by which is surrounded. However we can also conceive the landscape as a continuous or even natural graph and refer to it as a background against which the intervention clearly stands out."*<sup>14</sup>

Also mentioned in the text are these "*natural totemic elements*" or elements of the landscape which emanate such exceptional nature which ought to be recognized as pivotal references. The volcanic atoll, the acropolis or the center of a radial plan onto which the *raison d'état* has distributed its signs but the modern culture may possibly bring to light new elements which will serve as formal structuring references. As Gregotti suggests:

*"For example, the analysis of contemporary mythologies and their relation to semantic form of values could perhaps bring to light an already existing vast space of images, in which a formal structuring of the environment could be inscribed."*<sup>15</sup>

As a conclusion, Gregotti leaves a set of evasive theories that should constrain or in a justifiable way decrease the ambiguity of the terrain and not just emphasize its ever-mysterious uncertainty.



Lastly, I would like to address the landscape form a functional perspective relating intrinsic programmatic concepts. In such manners, landscape starts to act the ideology of urbanism. If we agree with Stan Allan's "landscape is not only a formal model of urbanism today, but perhaps more importantly, a model for process" than we also agree that its programmatic features ought to represent such processing nature. According to Charles Waldheim, "the earliest project to unveil this potential for landscape to operate as a model for urban processes were proposed by European architects/urbanists interested in program and event as surrogates for contemporary urbanism"<sup>16</sup> as written in his monography "Landscape as Urbanism" 2016. Waldheim points out two projects to demonstrate landscape as "analogous to programmatic change": the first and second prize entries of 1982 competition for Parc de la Villette in Paris. A new "urban park for the 21st century" spread over a 125-acre site, once the site of the city's largest slaughterhouse. Out of 470 submitted entries only these two projects suggested a paradigm shift in the reconception of contemporary urbanism. Landscape was perceived as a form capable of dealing with complex intersections between public life and public events, urban infrastructure and also flexible enough to plot future unprecedented city scenarios. It did not focus of reproducing familiar public park typologies or typical city regeneration strategies. The first project is by Bernard Tschumi and the latter by Rem Koolhaas and OMA (The office of Metropolitan Architecture). Even though both entries are equally valuable, and offer principles which allow future change and modification, I shall focus on the second.

As Waldheim explains in his monography "Landscape as Urbanism" in the chapter "Claiming landscape as urbanism:

*"The unbuilt scheme explored the juxtaposition of unplanned conceit of parallel strips of landscape, now something of a canonical cliché, radically juxtaposed irreconcilable contents, invoking the sectional juxtaposition of various programs on adjacent floors of Manhattan skyscrapers as described in Koolhaas's Delirious New York. As conceived by Koolhaas/OMA, the infrastructure of the park would be strategically organized to support an undetermined and unknowable range of future uses over time."*<sup>17</sup>

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REM KOOLHAAS, DELIRIOUS NEW YORK, 1978 ->

As Koolhaas wrote in his project text:

*"It is safe to predict that during the life of the park, the program will undergo constant change and adjustment. The more the parks work together, the more it will be in perpetual state of revision.... The underlying principle of programmatic indeterminacy as a basis of the formal concept allows any shift, modification, replacement, or substitution to occur without damaging the initial hypothesis."*<sup>18</sup>

On a broader, territorial scale, the modern city encounters problems with urban sprawls on daily basis. This expansive phenomena engulfs the territories beyond the metropolis with great agility. Thus, its presence becomes a problem to tackle and concern as it occupies the terrain vague in boorish and predictable patterns. It spreads unconcernedly. An intertextuality between the aforementioned references and Steven Holl's pamphlet "Edge of the City", 1991, could be intriguing. In the mere desperation to address these urban sprawls across multiple cities in the United States, Holl suggests operations at the periphery of the city. He channels thoughts with clear tactility, regional recognition and purposeful approach instrumentality: formal and programmatic.

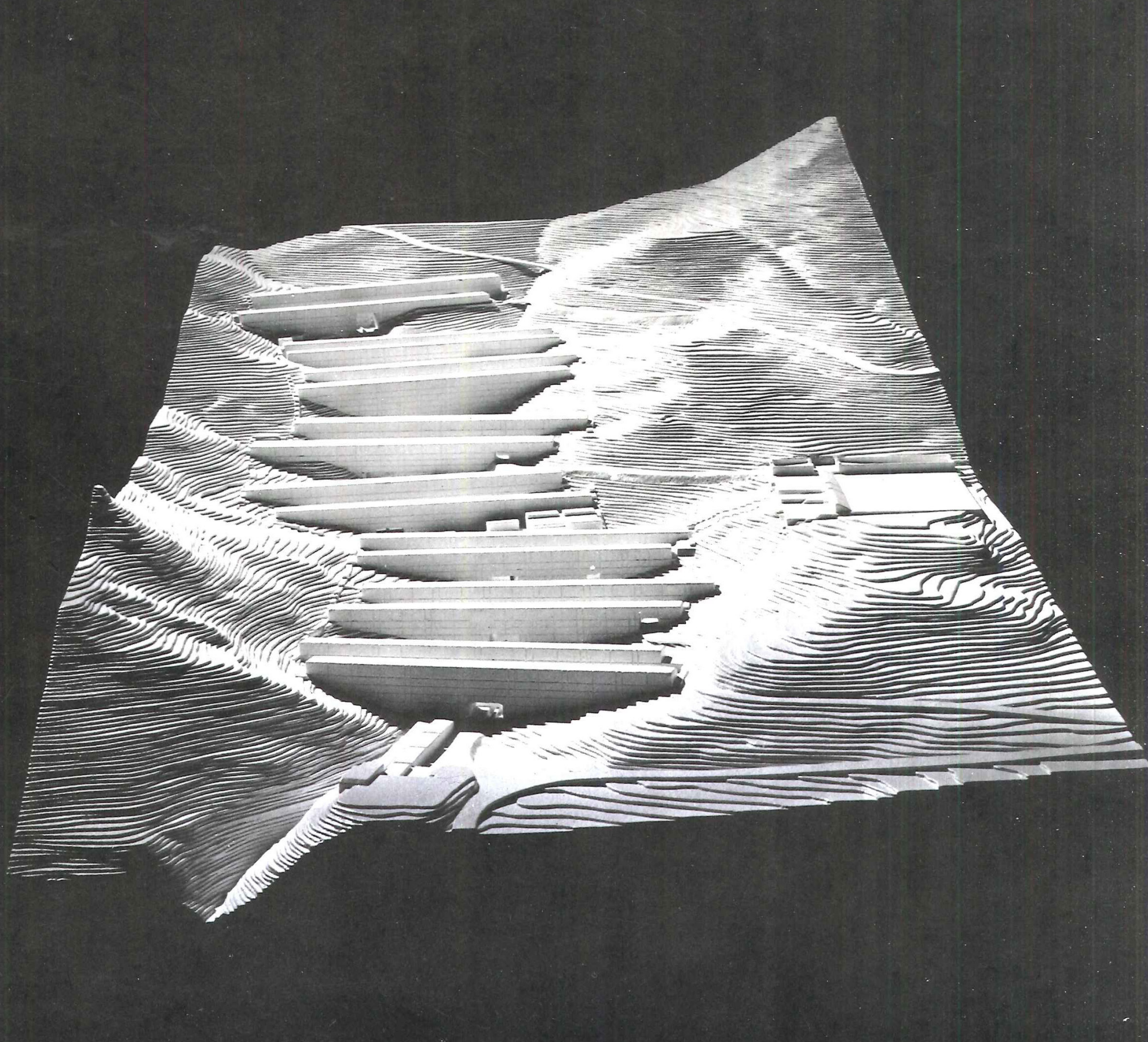
*"The extended boundary of the contemporary city calls for synthesis of new spatial compositions. An intensified urban realm could be a coherent mediator between the extremes of the metropolis and the agrarian plain. In each proposal, living, working, recreational, and cultural facilities are juxtaposed in new pedestrian sectors that might act as social condensers for new communities."*<sup>19</sup>

*"The edge of the city is a philosophical region, where city and natural landscape overlap, existing without choice or expectation. This zone calls for vision and projections to delineate the boundary between the urban and the rural. Visions of the city's future can be plotted on this partially spoiled land, liberating the remaining natural landscape, protecting the habitat of hundreds of species of animals and plants that are threatened with extinction."*<sup>19.1</sup>

*"What remains of the wilderness can be preserved: defoliated territory can be restored. In the middle zone between the landscape and the city, there is a hope for a new synthesis of urban life and urban form."*









## THE MEGAFORM (ANTHROPOGEOGRAPHIES)

central stations, railway stations, airports, harbors

**research topic:** *the relationship between the periphery and the terminus city via anchor points of centralized infrastructures*

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*"Is the contemporary city like the contemporary airport? All the same? Is it possible to theorize this convergence? And if so, to what ultimate configuration is it aspiring? Convergence is only possible at the price of shedding identity. That is usually seen as a loss. But at the scale to which it occurs, it must mean something. What are the disadvantages of identity, and conversely, what are the advantages of blankness? What is seemingly accidental -and usually regretted- homogenization were intentional process, a conscious movement away from difference towards similarity? What if we are witnessing a global liberation movement: "down with character!": What is left after identity is striped? The generic?"<sup>20</sup>- Rem Koolhaas, *Generic city* 1995*

Yet again, the beginning of this chapter is with a depiction of the engulfing generic city driven by the capital. But in this part, the potential of dehomogenization is looked with the opportunity of introducing nodes of infrastructural collision, or centralized infrastructure condition throughout the regional metropolis. The sprawl can remain monofunctional but its edges and potential focus points must differ from this aspiration. Importantly, these hotspots can manifest themselves in various forms, from airports to central stations both leisure and infrastructural in scale. They have the capacity to bring public elements to the landscape, directly teleported from the big city. This is different than the transportation infrastructure because the nature of it is less self-sufficient and more into connecting and creating new relationships, whereas the airport or the railway station propose situations as dense as the city, in terms of programs and features. These centralized infrastructures may be looked at as anchor points, always in a pair or more. They stabilize the rather emancipated fields of urban sprawls by become gravitating points. But they themselves are limited in this concern. They may create quasi-relationships with the landscape with the desire to blend with the superficial layer of the territory.

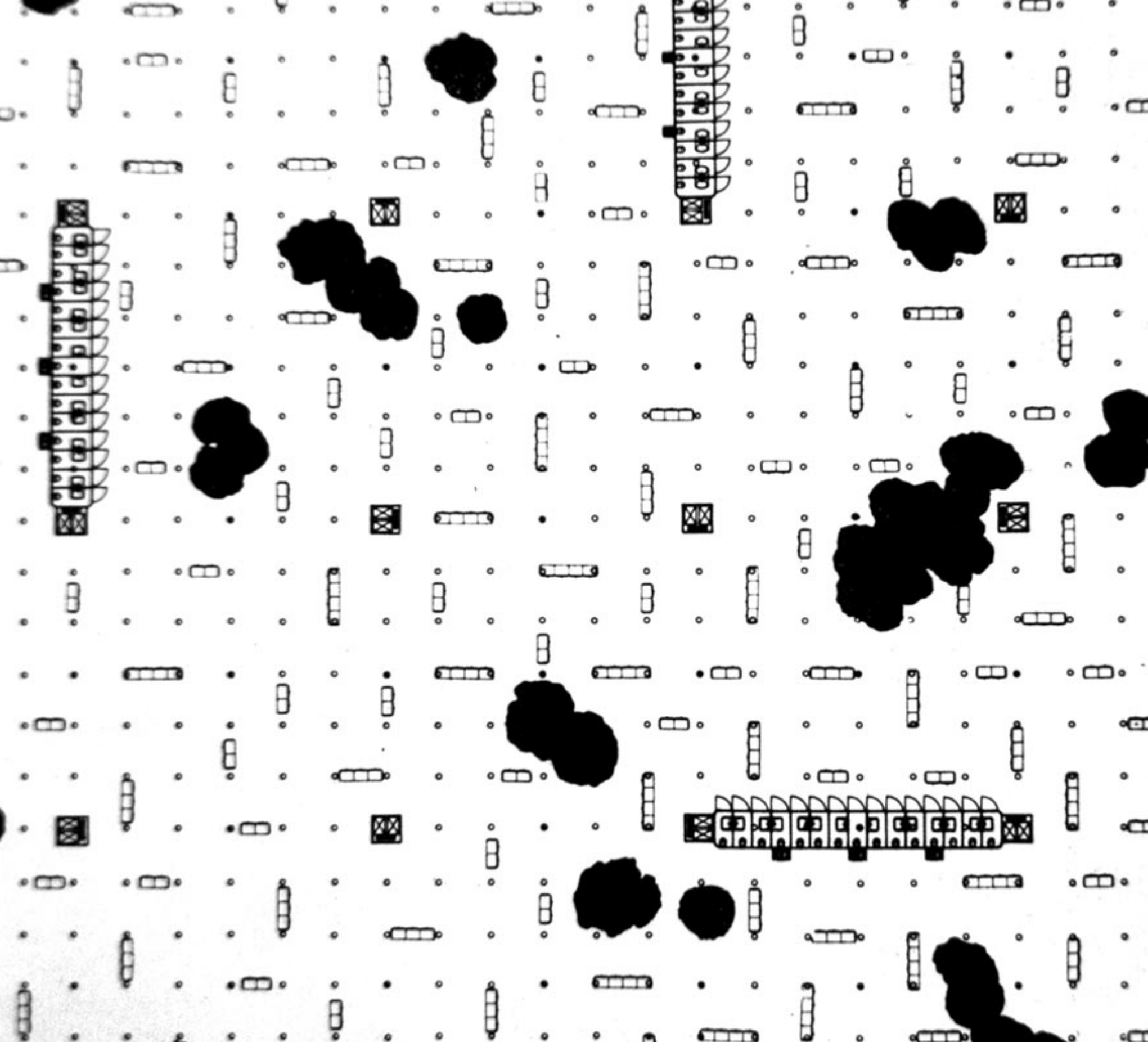
In times where the suburbs are galloping across the fields beyond the cityscape it is crucial to try and reinvent the meaning of centralized infrastructures, a mega form and its insertions. They ought to become part of the bigger picture rather than a monograph story. They are self-sufficient and can exist regardless to their surrounding but the real question asks whether they can be transformed into more than that. Intrinsically, the relationship between two anchor points defines the character of the new urban zone, thus it is important to stress that by creating alliance between two or more points there opens up an opportunity to create an image of the landscape.

The idea behind this is not to try and give a clear identity of the generic zone, but by doing so, a trap is imposed which may disables flexibility for future adaptations to different conditions and circumstances. As Koolhaas puts it, "*The stronger the identity the more it imprisons, the more it resists expansion, interpretation, renewal and contradiction. Identity becomes like a lighthouse - fixed, overdetermined: it can change its position or the pattern it emits only at the cost of destabilizing navigation.*"<sup>21</sup> In other words, a lack of identity means more opportunity. At this point it becomes exciting to realize that these elements which constitute the fundamental functioning of the regional metropolis are highly characterized by flow, movement and exchange of forces, stresses and energies. The nature of these elements is ephemeral and almost never singular, and with that it can easily escape the notion of a lighthouse. It is also important to note that identity seeks to centralize and expand, and therefore one must carefully determine to which extent should these hotspots extend. As Koolhaas says, "*identity insists on an essence, a point. Its tragedy is given in simple geometric terms. As the sphere of influences expand, the area characterized by the center becomes bigger and bigger, hopelessly diluting both the strength and the authority of the core.*"<sup>22</sup>

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< -VITTORIO GREGOTTI, CEFALÙ SOCIAL HOUSING, 1976





*"The dystopia of the megalopolis is already an irreversible historical fact: it has long since installed a new way of life, not to say a new nature" - Kenneth Frampton, Towards an Urban Landscape, 1999*





## MEGAFORM AS URBAN LANDSCAPE

### an intervention

**research topic:** *the relationship between the periphery and the terminus city via anchor points of centralized infrastructures*

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*"The space-endless megalopolis, as a sub-urbanized form of limitless land settlement has long since been a universal reality in the late modern world, certainly since the end of the Second World War. In this regard I recall Françoise Choay's critical observation of the late 60's to the effect that were it not for the graphic signs that are of necessity incorporated into the freeway system, one would not be able to negotiate it at all. In other words it was not only the placelessness of the megalopolis but also its tendency to be devoid of any significant landmarks, that made it so unlike the traditional city or the metropolis in its prime. This is perhaps the most fundamental difference between the metropolitan city of the 19th century and the urbanized region of the 20th. It is this last, late modern condition that informs the French geographer Jean Gottmann's revealing study of the North American continent, published in 1962 under the title Megalopolis." <sup>20</sup>- Kenneth Frampton, *Megaform as Urban Landscape*, 2009*

What would be the target of this chapter is the fact that by solely playing with horizontality, that is to say, horizontal configuration, it is likely to end up in the different variations of the placelessness. The repetition of the metropolis, the megalopolis, can be compared with the vastness of an open landscape, a territory that without the emergence of a natural landmark such as a mountain, hill, or a lake, it would be difficult to orientate or to create a mental map, per say. Yet the scale of geography denies human grasping. It goes to show that the same logic can be applied to the freeway; a motorway system that without the existence of graphic signs or usage-manuals, one would not be able to negotiate it at all. To corroborate this notion for the need of graphic signs and landmark, one could say that there is no such thing as the renaissance city. As written in the book "The Renaissance City" by Giulio Carlo Argan, explains the renaissance city is in fact the medieval city but

just upgraded with several renaissance interventions - megaforms. This again can be noticed in the 16th century plan for Rome; The Urban plan of Sixtus V.c1588, where the city strategy was to position interventions such as the obelisk, in order to create a coherent whole due to the fact that Rome was losing its population. Thus the obelisk represents this type of megaform-intervention that does not exclusively point to a megastructure building but rather a well-chosen operation in order to bring about the necessary change to counter the placelessness of the metropolis or the landscape. Respectfully, the following text represents the 10 key-points of a megaform as urban landscape, in accordance with Kenneth Frampton's writing - "Megaform as Urban Landscape", 2009

.....

1) Since 1960, when the French geographer Jean Gottman first coined the term Megalopolis, automotive regional urbanization has become the universal land settlement pattern of late capitalism. Stimulated by the mass ownership of automobile megalopolis are coming into being all over the world today, accommodating populations of around 20 million apiece in the developing world to some 5 million in a number of major North American conurbations. With regard to this last, figure 1 may note that some 3 million acres of agricultural land are lost each year in the US through suburbanization, with little or no provision for public transport. The net effect is the proliferation of the "non-place, urban realm" as celebrated by Melvin Webber in his book *Explorations in Urban Structures*, of 1964. One might note in passing that as a corollary to this "motopian" dispersal, the world now consumes in six weeks the amount of gasoline that it burnt in a single year in the 1950's.

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The Urban plan of Sixtus V.c1588



2) Under these circumstances, the stratagem of the time honored master plan as an instrument of urban design would seem to be untenable ....While master plans are surely still viable with regard to infrastructural organization and investment, in terms of auto routes, rail networks, sewage lines and the distribution of water, energy and information, they have precious little purchase today on the organization and consolidation of urban form.

3) The de facto emergence of megalopolitan patterns of land settlement present us with two alternative strategies as far as future urban development is concerned: a) the current "ad-hoc" proliferation of ill-related, relatively isolated, free-standing objects, which invariably go to make up the 'non-place' agglomeration of the contemporary urban environment; or b) the place-creating counterthesis of the megaform, integrated into a site as a discontinuous exception to the otherwise undifferentiated urban cacophony

4) A megaform may come into being at quite different scales and thereby assume a distinctly different place-creating potential depending, not only on the scale but also on the programmatic complexity of the form in each case. Thus, a megaform may vary from being an organic residential continuity, as in the case of Alvar Aalto's Baker Dorm on the edge of the MIT campus in Cambridge, Massachusetts, to the relatively extensive, self-continued, civic complex of Arthus Erickson's Robson Square, in Vancouver.

5) A seminal attribute of the megaform is its quintessential horizontality, which is integrated as much as possible with the site on which it sits. At times this topographic character may be so dominant as to become a virtual landscape in itself as in the case of the Iqualada Cemetery, built near Barcelona to the designs of Enric Miralles and Carme Pinos in 1992. or the Olympic Sculpture Park, Seattle (2006) as designed by Michael Manfredi and Marion Weiss.

6) By definition a megaform is restricted in its extent. It may thus be realized by the society, in a limited time period, as a one-off urban intervention capable of affording a programmatically different experience within the seemingly infinite, space-endlessness of

the contemporary megalopolis. It may thus be used to mediate the condition long ago satirized by Gertrude Stein with her ironic aphorism that "there is no more there, there".

7) As with the nineteenth century arcade, the megaform has the capacity of providing a public domain in what is otherwise a totally privatized, processal, and largely placeless environment. One may note in this regard how a megaform may possess a catalytic potential in that as in the case of the large shopping mall running down the length of the building Illa Block, built in Barcelona, 1992.

8) Within the space-endlessness of the megalopolis, a megaform may also serve as a kind of a landmark feature, like a geological outcrop, as in the case of Hans Poelzig's House of Friendship, projected for Istanbul in 1917.

9) It would seem that certain contemporary building programs readily lend themselves to being accommodated as megaforms. I have in mind such types as universities, air terminals, railway stations, shopping centers, cemeteries, hospitals, sports facilities and convention centers, etc.

10) While megaforms would appear to be most readily applicable to the megalopolitan domains, they may also be integrated into traditional urban fabric as in the case of, say, Rockefeller Center in New York. Clearly mass housing may also be handled as a megaform as per Le Corbusier's canonical Plan Obus, Algiers, 1930, although there are other examples where mass housing has been realized in the form of large scale perimeter blocks.

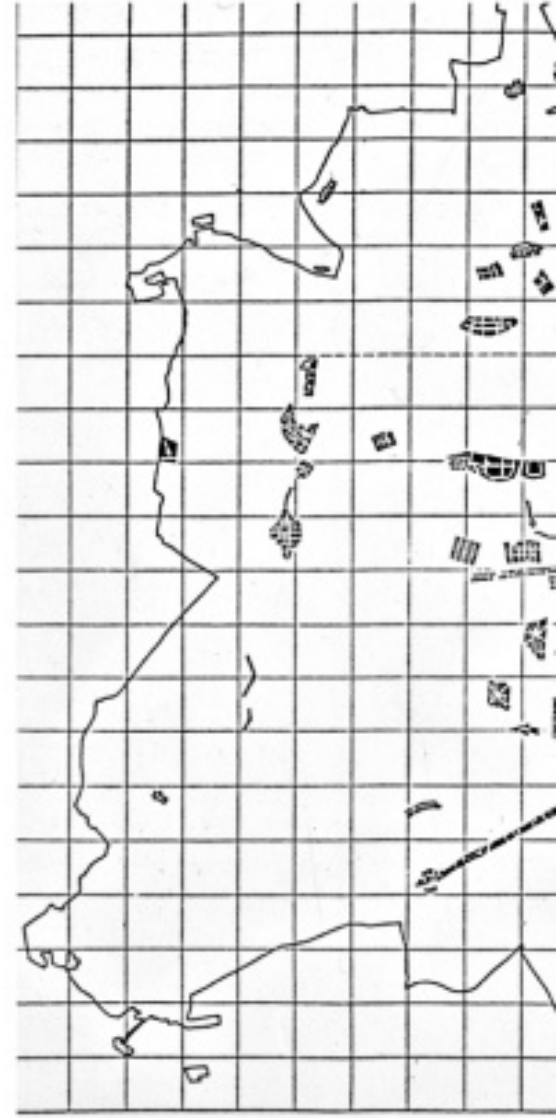
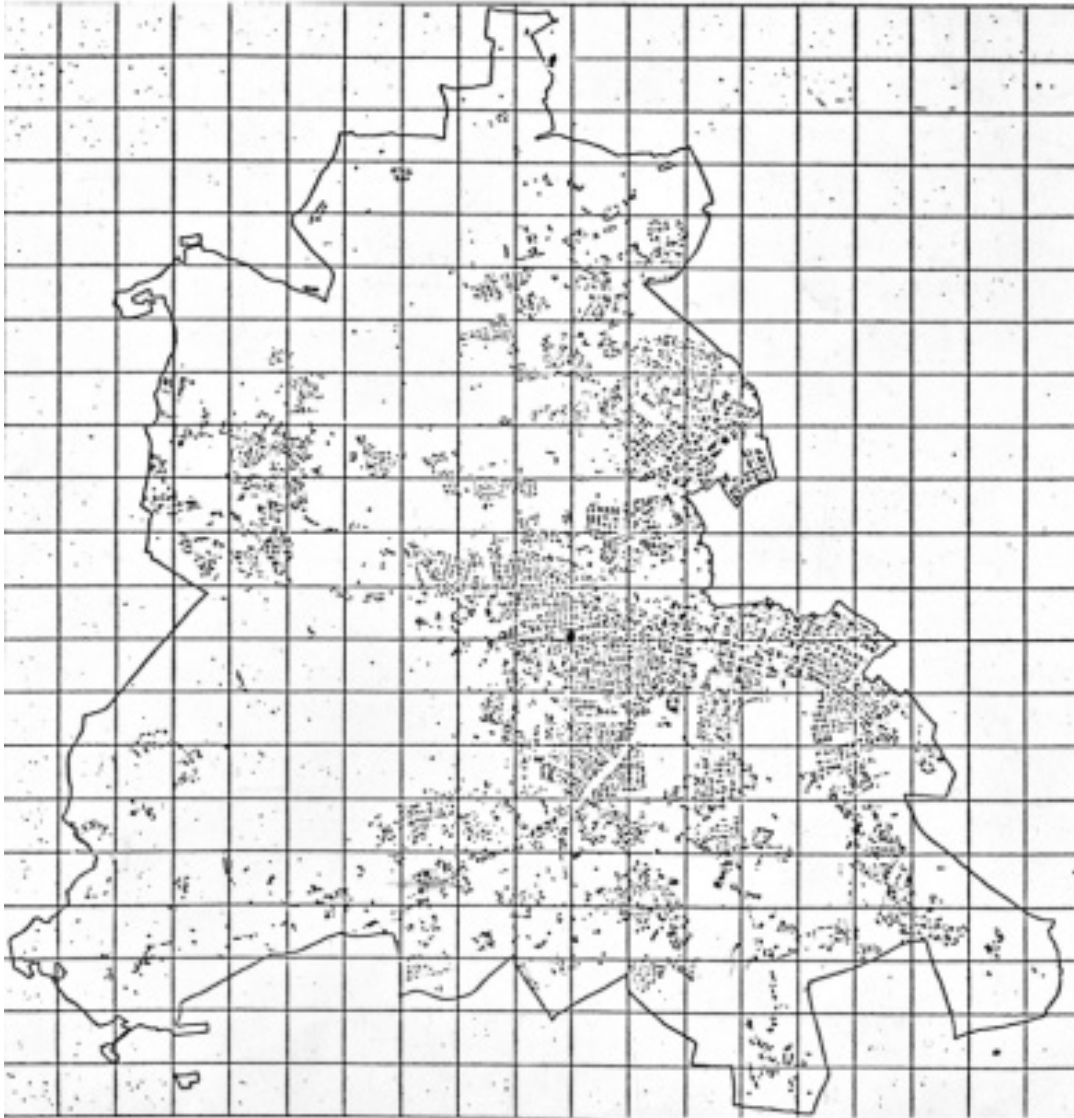
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ARTHUS ERICKSON'S ROBSON SQUARE, VANCOUVER, CANADA 1983 ->

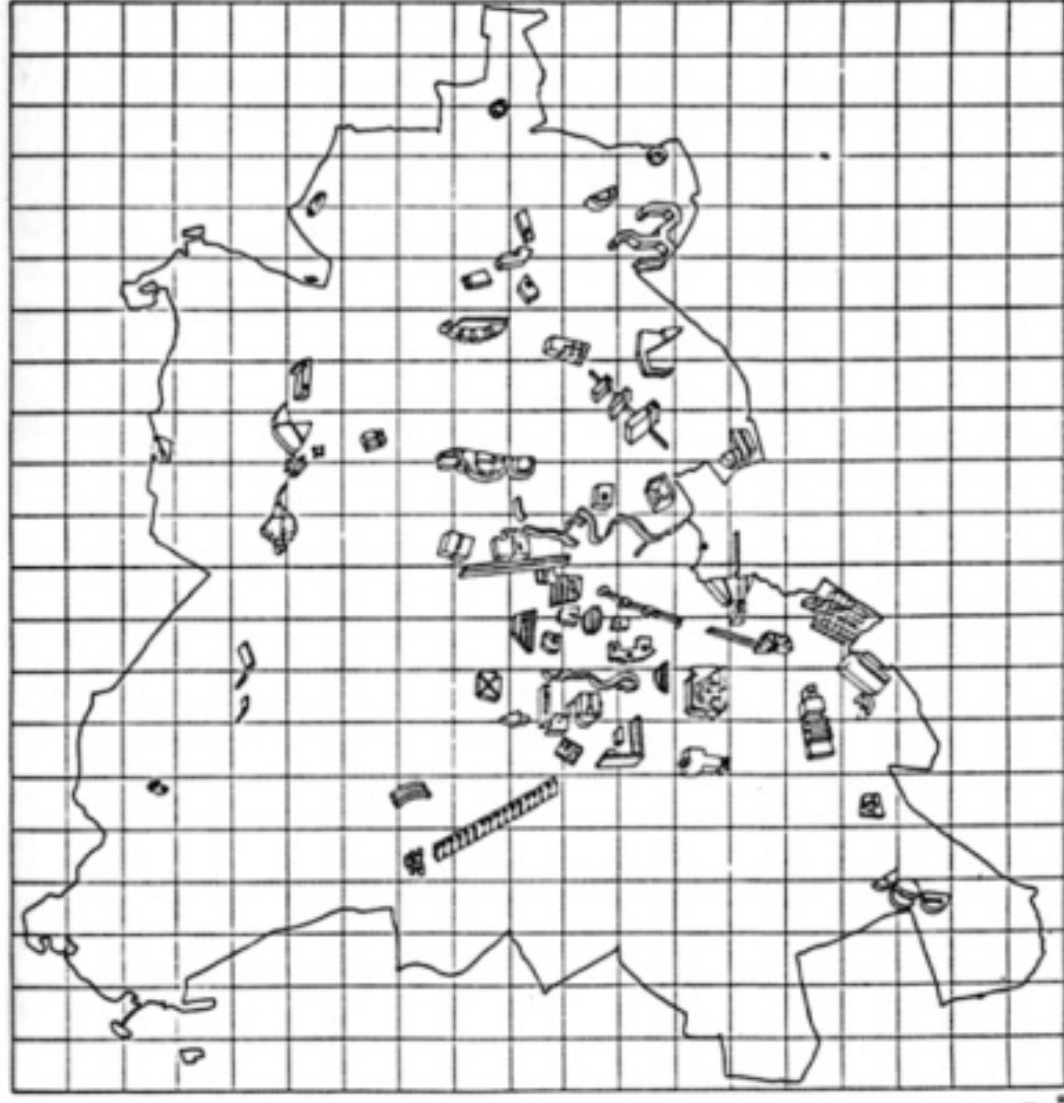








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