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### City as an *Educational (Re)source*

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*If the mind is clear,  
a dark city has its blue sky, ..*

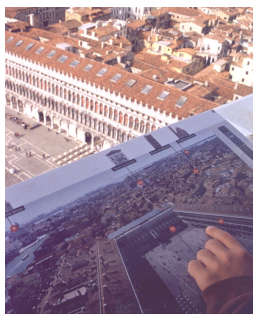
#### Reading the Cities and Architecture

If books (and, now, disks) are repositories of codified knowledge, so is the city. If books are a resource, so are buildings and cities. Yet, unlike reading books, to tap the urban and architectural resource, one needs a different kind of literacy — an '*urban and architectural literacy*'.

Talking about the city is like talking about life. It is (almost) everything and it may be *about* everything under the sun. It touches everybody in it. Most of the human species live in cities, and the lives of those who are not living in one are directly (and, often disproportionately) influenced, dominated, shaped, ... by them.

#### Complex-city

A large number of professions (such as architecture and planning), specialists and government departments, and many citizens have a hand in the city. The fact that they all define and treat the city and its various aspects differently, for example, as an '*architectural*' or '*cultural*' or '*political*' or '*municipal*' or '*economic*' or '*aesthetic*' or '*historical*' or '*touristic*', ... phenomenon, is a reflection on the very complexity of the city.



City can be seen, perceived, dealt with and understood in at least four distinct modes (—not all excluding others):<sup>2</sup>

Experiential / Touristic	Pragmatic / Professional	Aesthetic / Poetic	Analytical / Pedagogic
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Quotidian Personal Mass-collective Naive /Surface No definition Fragmented Impulsive Hedonistic	Goal-directed Selective Relativistic Minimalist knowledge Controlled Institutional Commercial Commissioned	Free-wheeling Impressionistic Emotional Inspirational Uncommitted Representational Individualistic Authorial	Purposeful Critical /Systematic Defined+ open-ended Maximalist knowledge Research-based Shared Committed Accountable
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Every individual or group might relate to the city in one or more of these modes in the context of different roles of their (urban) existence.

### City as 'resource'

Cities consume or transform a great proportion of *resources* produced elsewhere, although they may not always, or necessarily, produce much themselves. What they definitely produce are the control mechanisms, service outlets, re-presentations, packaging, ... of what everyone else is producing. Cities, however, produce, reproduce, distribute, transmit, represent, ... much of what today counts as 'politics', 'knowledge' and 'culture'.

For thousands of years, cities have been centres of culture, politics, art, and much else. In other words, there are big, old and complex cities with a range of well-established institutions, groups, traditions, and the visible and hidden infrastructures of all these: buildings, urban spaces, landmarks, means of communication, places of learning and entertainment, institutions where works of art, literature, science and technology are produced or kept, and the symbols of religious, political or/and economic power — often competing with each other.

### The types of urban knowledge

One would like to think that the *knowledge* of what cities are, what they embody and represent, and what it is that makes their buildings, trees, animals, roads and people so dependent on each other may be common amongst the technical, intellectual and other citizens. But alas, this is not self-evident at all. There are different types of knowledge (and wisdom) with reference to the city and architecture:

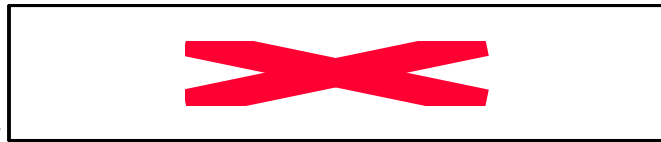
	<b>First Type</b> Banal /Obvious / Factual	<b>Second Type</b> Explicit /Analytical / Empirical	<b>Third Type</b> Implicit /Subtle / Synthetic
<b>The CITY as 'object'</b>	City of buildings /roads	Legible city	'Homely' city
<b>KNOWLEDGE of &amp; RESEARCH on the CITY</b>	Cognition Technical Information	Codification Professional Reproduction	Wisdom Intellectual Research / Understanding
<b>URBAN EDUCATION</b> • in professional education, • in professional practice, • in secondary education • in city living • ...	<b>Home /housing, city, nature and society as discreet phenomena.</b> Contexts treated in isolation in different courses <b>rote learning: clichés, rules, rights, wrongs</b> Type solutions <b>Encyclopedic approach</b> Informative training <b>Courses /homework / examination</b>	<b>Drawing attention to the home, nature and society</b> Contexts providing demonstrative material <b>Teaching by example / demonstration</b> Problem solving <b>'Engineering' approach</b> Didactic education <b>Technical projects / experiments</b>	<b>Teaching to learn from anything, anywhere, anyhow.</b> Everything as the context / as 'home' <b>Learning by living / Research-minded learning</b> Riddles out of solutions <b>Creative approach</b> Integrated education <b>'Educational Projects'</b>

These types of knowledge may (or may not!) be possessed by all 'specialists' or by all citizens. It is their particular combination of effects on specific situations that influence the ways in which city and architecture are lived in, experienced and appropriated by different citizens. Cities do not speak, they have to be understood by first questioning, and being curious about, them.



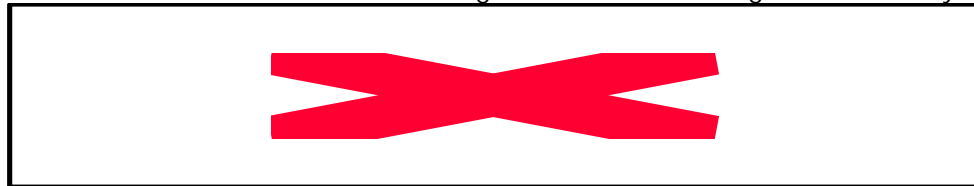
### Built(-in) Memory

The urban memory is as complicated as human memory. Every building, every stone, every tree and, of course, every citizen, carries with it rich stores of memory. These memories sometimes overlap or co-exist on different layers, or may be results of one another. An example:



Close awareness of living so close to so many others and of being part of an incredibly complex 'machinery' seems to be rare both among the 'ordinary citizens' and among those whose task it should be to *know* better.

Architects, planners, engineers and accountants have historically been assigned the task of managing parts or aspects of urban life through their designs, plans and calculations. That they may not be the ones in full control might be seen as much a blessing as an excuse. Yet, cities can and must be treated at the right level of detail, analysis, planning and life-content. As Pascal said, 'a town or a countryside at a distance is a town, a countryside; but as one approaches, those are houses, trees, tiles, leaves, grasses, ants, ants' legs, ... to infinity.'<sup>6</sup>



### Variety in /of cities

The sheer variety *of* cities and the variety *in* cities make them at once *unique* to value, *ordinary* to experience, *difficult* to know, to learn and to teach, and *impossible* to truly design and plan. Obviously, this is an 'academic' and not a 'professional' way of seeing the World. It does not see everything as a problem to be solved, project to be finished, or a potential commission to be won. Looking at the way they put their hands or pens into them, it seems as if it may not be so for millions of people who live *in* cities and numerous others who make their living *on* cities: architects, planners, builders, engineers, businessmen, ...

### Urban education

Whilst the education — the urban education, of these people is itself an art and a science, ignoring it altogether, or reducing it to mere professional '*training*', would be at cities' and citizens' peril. Serving the narrowly defined interests of the professions and their clients, these

branches of education betray both the complexity of cities and urban society, and their own declared ideals.

The multi-cultural, multi-disciplinary, multi-variant, multi-valent, multi-dimensional, multi-semantic, multi-media, ... nature of cities require what I would venture to call a *multi-undersanding*. This should indeed be the minimum requirement for qualifying as 'citizens', let alone as 'city experts'.

Cities are no more an engineering problem than health is a merely chemical problem. The understanding of the *whole* of the urban phenomena in all their contradictory complexity even when we might be dealing with only *parts* of it is an ability that the specialised professions seldom possess, or have the training for. Yet, fragmented knowledge about such phenomena and partial interventions on them have limits that should not absolve us from the wider consequences of their use.

As a minimum condition of getting out of these dilemmas, the education not only of 'urban professionals', but of all the other citizens must make them aware of (a) their bodies, (b) their society, and (c) their physical surroundings, before they are made into architects, engineers, shop keepers, lawyers or butchers. Urban education should neither be confined to technical / professional training or be reduced to fun walks. Often, children might have a sharper and more innocent perception of how a city should be like than that of their parents.<sup>8</sup>

#### **A common 'project': architects as citizens / citizens as architects**

If cities are *shared by all*, so should the broad awareness and knowledge of them be. By treating architects and planners as *citizens* and the citizens as (— albeit amateur) architects and planners, their respective 'education' can become a *common* project far beyond the professionalism that the training of professionals implies. Education seen in this way attains a degree of nobility that increases its effectivity the more it is shared. The theories and the methods can therefore become at once special, specialised *and* widely sharable.

#### **Creative living and designing**

Nurturing and bringing out creativity in students, professionals and citizens may require some conscious initiatives and special methods that need developing. The ideas, theories and methods implied in this paper are evidences of hope in this direction. There is ample evidence in the author's experience in education to suggest that once distanced from the technicism of professionalist training and from pseudo-artistic individualism inherent in much of architectural and design education, students can begin to do justice, through their future professions, both to their unique individuality, their own strengths and weaknesses *and* to the society and the humanity at large.

#### **Planning good cities; *not* bombing them!**

This paper is presented at a Congress that is taking place at a time when cities in First, Second (?) or Third world have become a problem (and problematic) as never before; when cities and their citizens are being neglected, exploited, mismanaged, and, worse, destroyed in natural (and man-made) disasters such as earthquakes<sup>9</sup> or, simply, bombed, under dubious pretexts and under the very eyes of the world. Professionals tend to ignore all these unless they create potential 're-building' commissions for them. Yet, it is also a period when the theoretical discourse on cities has never been more buoyant and, with all these happening around them, architectural and urban education seemed to be showing no more concern about these developments than it did before.<sup>10</sup>

With an awareness of these, the brief ideas put forward here and the wider *educational* project implied were inspired more by the combination of these observations than by any single theoretical discourse or professional ideology. This is partly because of the author's own theoretical position that embodies a number of contemporary strands, but also because of his experience that both citizens, professionals and students of architecture and planning are more likely to respond to challenges to their intellectual capacity when confronting the contradictions in cities, buildings and nature than when confined to orthodox doctrines, regulatory frameworks or given literary texts which they might not always read sufficiently closely to get any great benefit from.

### Learning from the cities for the future

Architectural and urban educations have for so long been concentrated on the design and production of better, bigger and shinier objects — often neglecting the need for the society to develop better life objectives for itself.

Starting from the observations such as those above, it is possible to develop and practice a range of perspectives on

- *cities-as-complex-objects* and
- *cities-as-learning-objects*,
- ...

therefore foregrounding education and *conscientization* of *designers-as-citizens* as well as *citizens-as-designers*.

Rather than claiming to 'solve' undefined or ill-defined urban and architectural problems, such an approach aims to problematise given solutions. *Urban education* — whether in schools of architecture, schools of planning, secondary schools, or, indeed, in the street, thus becomes not a means to uncritical technicist ends, but a socially, morally, politically and technologically responsible *end-in-itself*. Accompanied by an ecological, political and cultural awareness, city can be seen as an educational resource for a wiser, saner, freer, safer, more civilized, more peaceful, more *livable* and more *urban(e)* life.

### (Re)sources

1. 'Pointing out the City: the picture and/or the real Venice.
2. cf. Teymur, N, 'Modes of understanding the 'urban'', in *City as Education*, London, Question Press, 1996, pp.20-22; and in Eldridge, K L(ed), *The Urban Scene and the History of the Future*, New York, ACSA/EAAE, 1995, pp.277-78.
3. Memecan, S, cartoon, *J of Faculty of Architecture*, METU, 1980, (6):2, p.199.
4. A street in London, year 2002.
5. 'Sous les pavés la plage': Paris '68 slogan
6. Pascal
7. 'Hierarchy of Form: town', Mânty, J., *On the Principles of Architecture*, Datutop 7, (1985) 1999, Tampere, p.35.
8. For the children's extraordinary outlook on the city, see, Teymur, N, 'Kindliche Stadtvisionen' / 'The city in children's mind-scape', *Topos: European Journal of Landscape*, No.4, August 1993, pp.115-124,
9. For earthquakes as a test of professional integrity and its possible educational potential, see Teymur, N (ed), *Learning from Disasters*, Ankara, MfY, 1999.
10. For the role of professionals in Third World context, see the author's 'Third World Urban Development' in Knox, PL& Ozolins, P(eds), *Design Professionals and the Built Environment*, New York /London, Wiley, 2000, pp.141-149.