

Another city for another life

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The crisis in urbanism is worsening. The construction of neighborhoods, ancient and modern, is in obvious disagreement with established forms of behavior and even more so with the new forms of life that we are seeking. The result is a dismal and sterile ambiance in our surroundings.

In the older neighborhoods, the streets have degenerated into freeways, leisure activities are commercialized and denatured by tourism. Social relations become impossible there. The newly-constructed neighborhoods have but two motifs, which dominate everything: driving by car and comfort at home. They are the abject expression of bourgeois well-being, and all ludic preoccupations are absent from them.

Faced with the necessity of building whole towns quickly, cemeteries of reinforced concrete - in which great masses of the population are condemned to die of boredom -- are being constructed. So what use are the extraordinary technical inventions the world now has at its disposal, if the conditions are lacking to profit from them, if they add nothing to leisure, if imagination is wanting?

We crave adventure. Not finding it on earth, some men have gone to seek it on the moon. We prefer to wager on a change on earth. We propose creating situations, new situations, here. We count on infringing the laws that hinder the development of effective activities in life and in culture. We are at the dawn of a new era and are already attempting to sketch out the image of a happier life, of unitary urbanism (the urbanism intended to bring pleasure).

Our domain, then, is the urban nexus, the natural expression of collective creativity, capable of subsuming the creative energies that are liberated with the decline of the culture based on individualism. We are of the opinion that the traditional arts will not be able to play a role in the creation of the new ambiance in which we want to live.

We are in the process of inventing new techniques; we are examining the possibilities existing cities offer; we are making models and plans for future cities. We are conscious of the need to avail ourselves of all new inventions, and we know that the future constructions we envisage will need to be extremely supple in order to respond to a dynamic conception of life, which means creating our own surroundings in direct relation to incessantly changing ways of behavior.

Our conception of urbanism is therefore social. We are opposed to all the conceptions of a *ville verte*, a "green town" where well-spaced and isolated skyscrapers must necessarily reduce the direct relations and common action of men. Conurbation is indispensable for the direct relation of surroundings and behavior to be produced. Those who think that the rapidity of our movements and the possibilities of telecommunications are going to erode the shared life of the conurbations are ignorant of the real needs of man. To the idea of the *ville verte*, which most modern architects have adopted, we oppose the image of the covered town, in which the plan of roads and separate buildings has given way to a continuous spatial construction, disengaged from the ground, and included in which will be groups of dwellings as well as public spaces (permitting changes in use according to the needs of the moment). Since all traffic, in the functional sense of the term, will pass below or on the terraces above, the street is done away with. The large number of different traversable spaces of which the town is composed form a complex and enormous space space [in its place]. Far from a return to nature, to the idea of living in a park as individual aristocrats once did, we see in such immense constructions the possibility of overcoming nature and of submitting the climate, light and sounds in these different spaces to our control.

Do we intend this to be a new functionalism, which will give greater prominence the idealized utilitarian life? It should not be forgotten that, once the functions are established, play will succeed them. For a long time now, architecture has been a playing with space and ambiance. The *ville verte* lacks ambiances. We, on the contrary, want to make more conscious use of ambiances; and so they correspond to all our needs.

The future cities we envisage will offer an original variety of sensations in this domain, and unforeseen games will become possible through the inventive use of material conditions, like the conditioning of air, sound and light. Urbanists are already studying the possibility of harmonizing the cacophony that reigns in contemporary cities. It will not take long to encounter there a new domain for creation, just as in many other problems that will present themselves. The space voyages that are being announced could influence this development, since the bases that will be established on other planets will immediately pose the problem of sheltered cities, and will perhaps provide the pattern for our study of a future urbanism.

Above all, however, the reduction in the work necessary for production, through extended automation, will create a need for leisure, a diversity of behavior and a change in the nature of the latter, which will of necessity lead to a new conception of the collective habitat with a maximum of space space, contrary to the conception of a *ville verte* where social space is reduced to a minimum. The city of the future must be conceived as a continuous construction on pillars, or, rather, as an extended system of different structures from which are suspended premises for housing, amusement, etc., and premises destined for

production and distribution, leaving the ground free for the circulation of traffic and for public messages. The use of ultra-light and insulating materials, which are being experimented with today, will permit the construction to be light and its supports well-spaced. In this way, one will be able to create a town on many levels: lower level, ground level, different floors, terraces, of a size that can vary between an actual neighborhood and a metropolis. It should be noted that in such a city the built surface will be 100% of that available and the free surface will be 200% (*parterre* and terraces), while in traditional towns the figures are some 80% and 20%, respectively; and that in the *ville verte* this relation can even be reversed [20% and 80%, respectively]. The terraces form an open-air terrain that extends over the whole surface of the city, and which can be sports fields, airplane and helicopter landing-strips, and for the maintenance of vegetation. They will be accessible everywhere by stair and elevator. The different floors will be divided into neighboring and communicating spaces, artificially conditioned, which will offer the possibility of create an infinite variety of ambiances, facilitating the derive of the inhabitants and their frequent chance encounters. The ambiances will be regularly and consciously changed, with the aid of every technical means, by teams of specialized creators who, hence, will be professional situationists.

An in-depth study of the means of creating ambiances, and the latter's psychological influence, is one of the tasks we are currently undertaking. Studies concerning the technical realization of the load-bearing structures and their aesthetic is the specific task of plastic artists and engineers. The contribution of the latter is an urgent necessity for making progress in the preparatory work we are undertaking.

If the project we have just traced out in bold strokes risks being taken for a fantastic dream, we insist on the fact that it is feasible from the technical point of view and that it is desirable from the human point of view. The increasing dissatisfaction that dominates the whole of humanity will arrive at a point at which we will all be forced to execute projects whose means we possess, and which will contribute to the realization of a richer and more fulfilled life.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCE

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