DURBAN.

REAL AND DYSTOPIAS

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by **Christiano Lepratti**

DURBAN.

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FOREWORD

Generic Durban

"Geography is destiny "[1]: one of the most famous – and out-dated – adages in the world. Culture, economy and climate have always condemned entire civilisations to disappear and have always determined the organisation of world space.　　　This book comes out of an image. The image produced by overlaying the picture and the history of modern metropolises (the mega-cities, with over ten million inhabitants): Lagos, Rio de Janeiro, Cairo, Jakarta, Karachi and Manila with the London, Berlin or Paris of two centuries ago. The overlaying compresses the distance between two historical moments and makes the two hundred years in between vanish. This image implicitly introduces two opposite interpretations of the relation between these moments. The first one warns against the risk of a repetitive pattern. The second one sees the results of the overlaying as a useful exercise in recollection and critical review.　　　The former opens our eyes to the risks of neglecting "global urbanism and architecture"[2]. This negligence is caused by the overestimation of geography, its marking of the distance between things and reality – obsolete, but hard to erase. The latter transforms the interest in global architecture and urbanism into a memory exercise. It retraces the fundamental steps of modern architecture and urbanism, trying to develop a socially and politically "objective" narrative.　　　Overall, this image means reflecting on the emancipation made possible by the "interrupted" project of modernity, reminding oneself that it is impossible not to think of the progress of humanity as a reference to reason and the value of positive thinking. Humankind all over the world is leaving the country to move to big cities, creating one of the most significant mass migration

phenomena in the history of humanity. Its consequence will be the permanent disappearance of life in the countryside as we know it. It is very likely that this will become the defining aspect of the 21st century – the century that will go down in history as the century of the "Homo Urbanus"[3] and of the beginning of the Anthropocene[4]. This migration will involve a number of people that has no precedent in the history of humanity: about a third of the world population is about to leave their homes and their communities/environments to move to a city in search of a better life.   "The last time humans made such a dramatic migration, in Europe and the New World between the late eighteenth and the early twentieth centuries, the direct effect was a complete reinvention of human thought, governance, technology and welfare. Mass urbanization produced the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution and, with them, the enormous social and political changes of the previous two centuries. Yet this narrative of human change was not to be found in the newspapers of the 1840s or the parliamentary debates of the early 20th century"[5]. The history of migration to the cities and of the growth of urban proletariat in the new and temporary enclaves was unknown to its own protagonists[6]. The catastrophe caused by the bad management of urbanisation processes, the misery in which the urban proletariat lived, the social upheavals and revolutions have (also) been the direct result of the indifference and inadequacy of assessments and measures taken to solve an emergency that lasted for generations[7].   Despite several attempts, decisive measures to integrate life masses of migrants in the city have never been implemented. As a consequence of this,

"enclaves" of newly arrived people, isolated and angry, came into existence, have grown and established themselves in cities, following patterns that continue to repeat themselves. An important part of the history of this time (referring to the Official History) has been written by people who had lost their roots and their rights, and who (without giving up on violence) demanded to have a role in the new urban society.   Drawing from Doug Saunders' stance, and being informed by the author's experiences (particularly the collaboration with UN-Habitat on mass housing competition[8], and the research on Durban commissioned by the International Union of Architects UIA[9]), the main thesis of this books has been built on the existence of a relation between these two historical moments, a relationship between the consequences of the first great urbanisation in the West and the consequences, present and future, of the urbanisation of this century[10]. If it is true that the first great migration towards the cities went hand in hand with the most radical transformations in recent history, it is also true that project disciplines have been reinvented through themes and tasks related to mass urbanisation: for example, the industrialisation of architectural production[11]. These tasks are an integral part of the origin of the architectural avant-garde, and which have accompanied the birth of modern Urbanism, Existenzminimum (as a response to the right to a house)[12], Functionalism (born from necessity), zoning (to get rid of the plague of domestic laboratories, unhealthy and incompatible with decent domestic life), the debate around the forms of urban expansions (from Garden Cities to *Siedlungen*), the hygienist paradigm (it is enough to think about the tens of thousands of victims

of epidemics of those years, caused by hygiene conditions, promiscuity and thus the size and use of spaces) came into being as a way of adapting the city to the consequences of mass urbanisation. The book offers a reflection on the subject. It suggests that it is necessary to tackle it without considering geography, unsuited to the nature of the problem, and hopes for a permanent critical elaboration. This elaboration starts from an operational analysis of relationships, adherences, comparisons, differences and similarities between the drastic transformations of urbanisation in both the past and the present[13]. The aim is to prepare the basis for an investigation into the relationships between the two historical moments of great urbanisations, hinting at connections and divergences. The – complex – aspects are: the production of architectural and urban spaces, the aesthetics, the technology, the relationship of disciplines – project/design – with politics and with society in general. The second part, which forms the core of this book, is made up of seven dystopias of an imaginary Durban[14]. The imaginary stories evoke highlights and shadows of an urban world that wants to exist everywhere and yet is nowhere at all, but that is so self-congruent that it can be real. In stories, this world becomes at the same time a threat, a warning, and a promise for the destiny of the city. The focus of the book is Africa, because it is one of the most interesting workshops for ideas today. The focus on such a far-away location is justified by the particular conditions of the continent. It is scarcely urbanised, and is undergoing a process of urbanisation that has peculiar rhythms and methods, which have the potential to transform the

African reality in a global workshop for new city models. In fact, the African continent has seen its population double in the last 20 years: from 250 million in 1995 to about 500 million in 2015[15], with an annual growth rate of the urban population of 3.44%[16]. Given that African cities are among the poorest in the world, their growth rates signal a major challenge to their resource base, to build and to sustain adequate infrastructure and public services for their growing populations. Some are critical of UN-Habitat's conclusions, as La Cecla is in his latest book on Urbanism: "Reading UN-Habitat's reports on African, Asian or Latin American cities, or general reports on the urban condition, the word that is encountered most frequently is 'prosperity'. Reading the reports in depth, however, shows that this is only an illusion. Nothing proves that the drastic growth of cities actually leads to an improvement of its inhabitant's lives"[17]. However, it is impossible to doubt on the meticulous investigation of the reports UN-Habitat has produced over the last few years. On this topic Mike Davis writes: "Until a short time ago, no reliable data was available. However the Habitat organisation of the UN has undertaken an enormous effort, including new data, censuses and case studies, guaranteeing that the debate on our future cities is founded on a solid basis of highly reliable data. The last UN-Habitat report has a value and a pioneering meaning similar to the great enquiries on poverty in the cities of the 19th century by Friedrich Engels, Henry Mathew, Charles Booth or – turning to the United States – Jakob Riis"[18]. Another specific African feature is that small and medium-sized cities, with fewer than a million inhabitants, represent 62% of the urban population. In the overall

picture, these cities – rather than metropolises – will be growing at the fastest rate. Furthermore, the reflection on the African question gives us the chance of tackling the topics of informality and self-organisation, topics that need to be considered as alternative politics and management tools. The seven imaginary Durban are each an imaginary city, a dystopia with no precise geographic location, which represents one of the aspects that mark most intensely the struggle of African cities: corruption, lack of infrastructure, of public spaces, etc. These imaginary cities are tools to reflect on the condition of architecture and its difficulty with urbanising billions of people. They do so by starting from a sort of condition zero of the city, which goes beyond a specific collocation and time. In this way, the several Durban (and here using the name – borrowed from the South African city – as a wordplay underlines their anonymity, their neutral, a-geographic and generic aspects) become a pretext to imagine cities as negative utopias (dystopias), their opposite, a double of how it should be, like an image whose reflection is somersaulted in a mirror. In the multiple imaginary Durban, structured and presented like paintings in an exhibition, endemic issues of African societies chase each other: poverty, criminality, corruption, the devastating impact with Western modernity, the echo of European colonisation, the consequences of globalisation, the racism – and hypocrisy – of the Global North. Every "painting" establishes a relationship between the subjects and the organisation of space, between feelings and a constructed scenography, between shape and behaviour, explaining the relation between cause and effect in an intentionally academic way. The city with no infrastructure is imagined with no roads, no public spaces, the houses in random locations, scattered across unpaved ground, like boats whose anchorage was destroyed by a flood. The city of fear has no lighting, and the inequality that rages causes violent social conflicts. Criminality finds in darkness an ally to commit crimes, pickpocket, steal and assault.

The city of shelters is a huge field that people just inhabit (it reminds one of *Magnitogorsk),* everyone in their own house, in a condition of permanent emergency, which becomes a sort of existential condition where one can find in an amplified version the fears of contemporary society. The description of the cities is deliberately exaggerated, to strain the imagination as if they were strange parodies, and this emphasises their defects. On the one hand, it photographs a close reality with a disillusioned approach; on the other it opens one's eyes and makes one reflect from a distance on the rights acquired by people in world cities – rights that cannot be taken for granted, that are not guaranteed forever and that need to be protected from risks and threats.

And the threats are numerous both from the outside and the inside: for example, the effects of dependence on neo-liberalism and its false promise that everything will continue to work on its own, even if everyone only thinks of themselves, the effects of territorial deregulation, of infatuations with the latest patterns: the spread city, the city of cars, the vertical city, the fast city, the slow city. Risks and threats like this are a warning not to forget the fragility of balance, especially at a time like this, when the right to a city will have become shared by most inhabitants of the planet in 20 years. And while we know that it is very likely that there is no alternative to migration

to the cities, we can't forget that a right must be gained first and then – also – defended. Similarly the pictures, the negative utopias, become a tool of critical elaboration, which takes into account the importance of this stage of the development of Africa and its difficult condition.

This phase could transform the workshop of its cities into a model laboratory for global urbanisation; thanks to the current understanding of the difficulties architecture has had and will have with urbanising so many people. The challenge is facilitated by experience, which can help avoiding past mistakes, from naive functionalism, to the unhappy fate of the suburbs and the neglect academia has shown them. At the same time, starting off from their condition, which can lead to saying that the African city does not exist, one can deal with new and old paradigms, urban divisions, slow traffic – bicycles and pedestrians – and collective traffic, energy, resource and soil saving, sustainability of materials, of architecture and infrastructure, the right to a home, etc. Without suffering under the weight of a heavy material, physical and constructed heritage (most of Europe's architectural heritage needs extraordinary maintenance, without even mentioning the millions of constructions that should be demolished rather than restored). The lab of African cities becomes the lab of other possible options. "African cities are often analysed from a perspective that sees urbanism and urban living as progressing towards the example set by Western paradigms. But the conditions and circumstances that prevailed in the world's industrialized societies during the 20th century – and which shaped their cities' form and function – are no longer the same in today's world. Global climate and environmental change, as well as increasing awareness

of water, food or energy insecurities, for instance, are now starting to shape our understanding of the dire need for new visions on what good urban management for the 21st century entails"[19]. But we know that the recipes tried so far often haven't been effective, and we can't forget that it could also go wrong. And in that case, there is no chance of an "undo".

1   Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1997).

2   "Global urbanism" is a field of studies, that critically examines how cities of global South have been studied, understood and depicted in global urban research. "Global architecture" refers to the architecture that identifies and studies the areas where a negotiation of the relations between local conditions of life and global struggles of modernisation is needed (Saskia Sassen has coined these terms in her course called *Global Urbanism* at the Columbia University Department of Sociology, which she is teaching since 2010).

3   Thierry Paquot, *Homo Urbanus* (Paris: Editions du Félin, 1990).

4   Paul Crutzen, *Human Impact On Climate Has Made This the "Anthropocene Age"*, «New Perspectives Quarterly» vol. 22, 3 (March 2005).

5   Doug Saunders, *Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History is Reshaping Our World* (Australia: Allen&Unwin, 2010).

6   William H. McNeill, *Human Migration: a Historical review*, in *Human Migration: Pattern and Policies*, ed. by William H. McNeill, Ruth S. Adams (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1978).

7   Apart from the well-known text by Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1892) other relevant writings include Heinrich Heine, *Franzoesische Zustaende,* «Augsburger Allgemeine Zeitung» (Augsburg, 1831-32) and Bettina von Arnim, *Erfahrungen eines Jungen Schweizers im Vogtlande*, in *Dieses Buch gehoert dem Koenig* (Berlin, 1843).

8   *Urban Revitalization of Mass Housing. UN-Habitat International Competition,* August 23, 2013 ‹ http://www.un.org/youthenvoy/ 2013/08/urban-revitalization-of-mass-housing-un-habitat-international-competition/ › [accessed 16 October 2016].

9   *Visit an Exhibition. Exhibitions In The Beer Hall-Rivertown* ‹ http://www.uia2014durban.org/visiting_durban/fringe/ exhibitions.htm › [accessed 16 October 2016].

10 Victorian London has been described as a "demographic colossus" – Cf. Lynda Nead, *Victorian Babylon: People, Streets and Images in Nineteenth Century London* (London and New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) –, where there was an average of 1000 births every 447 deaths – Cf. Else Spiller, *Slums: Erlebnisse in den Schlammvierteln moderner Großstädte* (Wien: Czernin, 2008) –; Paris, which Benjamin called the capital of the 19th century, was half the size – Cf. Walter Benjamin, *Paris, Hauptstadt des XIX Jahrhunderts* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1955).

11 Mies van der Rohe wrote in 1924: "I see in industrialization the central problem of building in our time. If we succeed in carrying out this industrialization, the social, economic, technical, and also artistic problems will be readily solved", Ludwig Mies van der Rohe, *The Industrialization of Building Methods* (1924).

12 One of the criteria of enquiry on the quality of life in Berlin commissioned by the medical insurance ("Ostkrankenkasse") of merchants and chemists, in Berlin in 1902: relationship between illnesses and the number of windows in rooms; number of people who use communal bathrooms; distance on foot between homes and parks, etc.

13 The choice of the topographic collocation of working class slums in London and Berlin at the end of the 19th century was usually based on weather. In fact, it was to avoid the odours from the new neighbourhoods blowing over to the more central, wealthier ones because of the west winds.

14 The city of Durban truly exists in South Africa and has been studied by the author and a UIA research group in 2013. In this book it becomes a pretext to talk about aspects that go beyond its specific reality.

15 *Human Development Report. Sustaining Human Progress: Reducing Vulnerabilities and Building Resilience* (UNDP, 2014).

16 "The urban growth rate of Africa is almost 11 times more rapid than the growth rate in Europe" (0.31%) *Urbanization and Development. Emerging Futures,* World Cities Report 2016.

17 Franco La Cecla, *Contro l'Urbanistica* (Torino: Einaudi, 2015).

18 Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (London and New York: Verso, 2006). Davis refers to: United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), *The Challenge of Slums: Global Report on Human Settlements* (London, UK and Sterling, VA, USA: Earthscan Publications Ltd, 2003).

19 UN-Habitat, *The State of African Cities. Re-imagining sustainable urban transitions* (UN-Habitat Report, 2014).

PART ONE

Notes
on the
Architecture
of a Real City

RIGHT TO THE PLANET

"The crisis of the city is a significant cause of the crisis that the main economies of the planet are experiencing today"[1].	A first measure that needs to be taken to deal with the drastic transformations of the cities of the Global South is the acceptance of self-organisation – the informal – as a possible alternative to the production and organisation of physical, relational and economic space as we know it. Opposing the planning logics of the market, the informal has been able to create forms of socialisation with pre- and in certain ways anti-urban forms of solidarity, moral values and support. The physical characteristics of the space it produces have contributed to this. For example, the proxemic size of the houses and distance between them makes informal settlements resemble big and chaotic villages rather than cities. The forms of socialisation created in these contexts, to be considered positive, need to win the ostracism and prejudices born with the heroic era of the Modern and which continue to exist today, starting from – but not limited to – the geometric ones against "the donkey's path". "The moderns did not understand Sitte's innovative work. Even worse, by killing Sitte with one single formula, Le Corbusier missed an extraordinary chance to keep up to date precisely in the field in which everyone thought they were irreproachable, the scientific one"[2].

The equation "solidary = anti-modern" can be translated into the equation "village = anti-city", which is often used to argue against a "return" to the past. This is a position that manifests itself through a binary way of thinking, typical of the Modern, which has the habit of structuring debate around two inevitably opposite poles.

The projected growth of the world's urban population between 2014 and 2050. India is projected to add 404 million urban dwellers, China 292 million and Nigeria 212 million. Close to half of the world's urban dwellers reside in relatively small settlements of less than 500,000 inhabitants, while only around one in eight live in the 28 mega-cities with more than 10 million inhabitants. Tokyo is the world's largest city with an agglomeration of 38 million inhabitants, followed by Delhi with 25 million, Shanghai with 23 million, and Mexico City, Mumbai and São Paulo, each with around 21 million inhabitants. By 2030, the world is projected to have 41 mega-cities with more than 10 million inhabitants. Tokyo is projected to remain the world's largest city in 2030 with 37 million inhabitants, followed closely by Delhi where the population is projected to rise swiftly to 36 million. Several decades ago most of the world's largest urban agglomerations were found in the more developed regions, but today's large cities are concentrated in the global South. The fastest-growing urban agglomerations are medium-sized cities and cities with less than 1 million inhabitants located in Asia and Africa. Some cities have experienced population decline in recent years. Most of these are located in the low-fertility countries of Asia and Europe where the overall population is stagnant or declining. Economic contraction and natural disasters have contributed to population losses in some cities as well. As the world continues to urbanize, sustainable development challenges will be increasingly concentrated in cities, particularly in the lower-middle-income countries where the pace of urbanization is fastest. Integrated policies to improve the lives of both urban and rural dwellers are needed.

Continuing population growth and urbanization are projected to add 2.5 billion people to the world's urban population by 2050, with nearly 90 per cent of the increase concentrated in Asia and Africa. Just three countries – India, China and Nigeria – together are expected to account for 37 per cent of the projected growth of the world's urban population between 2014 and 2050. India is projected to add 404 million urban dwellers, China 292 million and Nigeria 212 million"[1].

The exponential population growth of cities is having an impact on an overall balance redefining world-space and introducing the record of the metropolis model as the favoured scenario, as opposed to sprawl. Urbanisation will put under further pressure world ecology, which is already stressed by the predatory nature of capitalism[2]. The world's cities occupy just 3% of the Earth's land, but account for 60-80% of energy consumption and 75% of carbon emissions. Rapid urbanization is exerting pressure on fresh water supplies, sewage, the living environment, and public health. The consequences it will have in terms of social and climatic balance – mostly unpredictable – will interest the whole planet.   So, the first observation is that we must prepare ourselves for the worst. To prepare ourselves, we need to think of answers to some of the questions about the future cohabitation of urban conglomerates of unprecedented size, and in a context that is even more critical because of global pollution and its consequences.

Cities make the countryside "functional" to their survival, enslaving it as producers of provisions, and thus transforming their well-established agricultural structures. Considered the speed – and voracity – of the process of urbanisation, the existence of traditional agriculture is put at risk.   When do city and countryside stop

functioning as such, upsetting the balance that regulates their coexistence?   The process of exchange of materials and energy between cities and their suburbs impact on the natural environment much more deeply and crucially than rural settlements. The balance will shift from this point of view as well, because the consumption of someone in the city – the drinkable water required and in general the behaviour – is much higher than that of someone in the countryside. In these conditions, when there already is a huge and growing shortage issue, how will we be able to supply sufficient energy and water to millions of people living in the same place? The consumption of energy and resources, the production of waste and the inability to create a sustainable metabolism contribute to climate change decisively, and similarly – and differently – metropolises will be the most affected by climate change.

How can we prevent the cities from becoming monsters oppressed by their own waste? How can we solve the problem of traffic in cities with tens of millions of inhabitants who share the aspiration of private mobility?

How can we create spaces that allow a respectable life together and a good quality of life? The development of balances and their ability to find a middle ground between individual and common needs will be crucial to the supplying of cities. The model of increasing individual isolation, of complete furnishing and equipping of homes is in conflict with the social, ecological and economical limits of cohabitation. How can we create spaces where peaceful coexistence is guaranteed, as well as create a model where the relations between the individual and the community are redesigned?   As well as these questions related to future predictions, questions on method arise.

Is the historical comparison between the urbanisation of Europe during the industrial revolution and of most of the cities of the Global South truly valid? Why is it useful to analyse the fate of urbanism in the Global South to talk about cities?   Is there a meaning outside of a missionary spirit, of wanting to solve an emergency (and of a certain hypocrisy) in dealing with such a distant reality, both economically and geographically?   THE ROLE OF THE PROJECT   At this stage, having identified the problem, we need to take a step back, start from a reflection on disciplinary tools, the areas of interest and the epistemological/theoretical basis. In essence, a reflection on method will allow us to deal with one of the most delicate historical crossroads in the relation between the discipline and reality, between the architectural, the urban and the social projects. It is a question that tries to give an answer, however incomplete, on the absence of a debate on these themes, and the delay in the accumulation of experience, analysis and critical evaluation. To tackle these issues on this scale we need to understand how architecture is perceived today and its relationship with transformations, with what is "new". This cannot be completely resolved in a book, however we can attempt to explain why the debate of the past few years has ignored the problems of peripheries and sprawl, focusing instead on equally noble themes, which however are circumscribed and reassuring – for example, the monument, public spaces, the space of historic cities, etc.   Architecture on an urban scale, after a phase of critical revision of what is modern, has experienced – particularly in Italy – a long period in which it has tried to become immune to the social transformations happening. The disciplinary approach of the

late 60s, which has been crucial and still impacts our times, was dominated for years by people who not only did not bring architecture into society, but even pushed in the opposite direction, causing a gradual and unstoppable moving away.

Other representatives of the debate, progressive personalities with a strong desire for emancipation, have deliberately withdrawn themselves from the discourse on new phenomena, such as metropolitan areas, urban sprawl, etc. Instead, they declared these were issues not worthy of consideration, or – more radically – denounced them as "new capitalist forms of Architecture", thus refusing their mandate to give "body, shape and structure to the space of human activities" and "identifying modernity with capitalist rationalisation"[3]. In this way, they open the road to post-modern neo-conservatism. The reasons, in Italy, have to do with the reaction of the people who dominated the debate for nearly half of the century, with the attempts of the Left of those years (1963: centre-left coalition, with a particularly active part played by the Italian Socialist Party) to "scientifically" adapt the forms of organisation of space to economic politics, through the rationalisation and planning of the distribution of capitalist means of production. This attempt is defined precisely and is categorised in the Metropolitan Area[4]. This brief digression helps to explain the reasons why Italian debate around architecture has been "de-politicised"[5] and why its main representatives – from Aldo Rossi to Archizoom, even though they take opposite stances – have denied the turbulent political phase of the 60s and 70s, forgetting their past very quickly and looking for a sort of normalisation in post-modernism. An effort to revise the immunisation strategy of the masters of the modern movement – even

falsifying reality – is only recent work. The attempt to revive interest in the "dissident" project of Modernity, intended as "Historical Project"[6] is also recent. An interesting interpretation of the relationship between local and global suggests the international collective of the Bauhaus project. In a context coming from decades of neo-liberalism and gradual globalisation of the discourse around projects, with a growing intersection of social, political and project dynamics, the collective introduces the idea of "Right to the Planet"[7], which represents a good synthesis of these new matters[8]. The values of Universalism have led, in the modern architectural and urban field, to the concept of "Right to Housing", which should've been guaranteed by flats designed for the Existenzminimum: Starting from a critique of post-WWII mass housing moved by Henry Lefebvre in the late 60s introduced the "Right to the City", which has amplified the perception of bare necessities and of the idea of social and cultural participation of citizens to city life. Today, a third right has become necessary: the "Right to the Planet". In the era of great migrations, of globalisation, and of climate change caused by human activities, a core idea on a global scale has become necessary. Thus the right to the planet becomes – without rhetoric – a duty. This sense of duty comes out of the understanding that individual behaviour has never stopped having the power to make a change, an interpretation of a project as a tool for daily change. Even though, paradoxically, design, which is now experiencing historical success by claiming superiority to "bildende Kunst", has become everything and the negation of everything, and its innovative power seems to be exhausted, with designers having become "vanishing mediators"[9]. A metaphor of

the link between our specific behaviour and its ability to change and interact with the whole is similar to the effect described as the – only apparently poetic – "butterfly effect"[10]. This means that infinitesimal variations (the behaviour of individuals) of the initial balance cause big and growing variations of future behaviour of complex systems (the planet).   The accumulation of negative social energies and the risks of insurrection related to growing inequality must not be underestimated. These are increasingly perceived through the growth of a new kind of urban, poor and precarious proletariat, who doesn't have access to health care, education, a decent home or a serene environment. A worker on whose activity in the industrial era society depends, who is exploited in ways similar to a new kind of "esclavage moderne". Cities, except for a few rare exceptions, have always been the places to request justice and social progress.   So can we say that we are faced with a new urban issue? To prove the urgency and benefit of intervening – if the moral appeal that highlights the link between individual fate and collective future is not enough – we can try and deal with the issue analysing the implications and consequences that the phenomenon could have in Europe. If we accept that no problem can be thought of as local[11], it is clear that the consequences of the rapid transformation of cities of the South will inevitably affect the entire planet.   The hologram principle can be found in both the biological and the sociologic world. The idea of the hologram is a step forward both from Holism, with its inability to see the parts, and from Reductionism, which fails to see the whole. "World-systems"[12] and their components can be compared to the gene pool of an organism and its cells,

with the presence of the former in each of the latter. Similarly, the situation in cities, first of all in cities of the Global South, intertwines local and global factors that cannot be explained if not in relation to each other. On one side, the export of capital to countries with low salaries, the exploitation of raw materials, extractive agriculture and land grabbing. On the other, the export of products, monopolies and the link between export politics and development aid, the distribution of labour and its conditions, immigration, shrinking of cities, pollution and environmental damage. All these are caused by the global economy and cannot be solved on a local scale. In this sense, the impact that cities, their emissions, their production of waste, their social balance will have on the global equilibrium will be perceived everywhere. One of the most clear consequences is the transformation of migration from the countryside to the cities, driven by the search for better living conditions, into a global migration, which makes traditional models, with their national borders and limits of territorial administration, seem "superfluous and historically obsolete", and justifies the statement that "fate will be decided in the cities"[13].

1   United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, *World Urbanization Prospects: The 2014 Revision, Highlights* (New York: United Nations, 2014).

2   Noam Chomsky, *Understanding power: The Indispensable Chomsky*, ed. by Peter R. Mitchell and John Schoeffel (New York: The New Press, 2002).

3   Jürgen Habermas, *Die Moderne, ein unvollendetes Projekt*, in *Kleine politische Schriften (I-IV)* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1981), our translation.

4   This category was first introduced in the urbanist debate during an important conference in January 1962, called

The new dimension of the city and directed by Giancarlo de Carlo and the Istituto Lombardo per gli Studi Economici e Sociali.

5   Pier Vittorio Aureli, *Aldo Rossi und das Projekt der Autonomie*, «ARCH+» n. 222 (March 2016).

6   Jürgen Habermas, *Die Moderne, ein unvollendetes Projekt*, op. cit.

7   Sabine Kraft, Anna Aichinger, Zhen Zhang, *The transformative Power of cities*, «ARCH+» n. 223 (May 2016).

8   2019 is the centenary of the foundation of the Bauhaus. For this occasion, an international and inter-disciplinary group of experts has started the *Bauhaus Project*, which aims, over the next 3 years, to create a critical inventory of the ideas generated by the Bauhaus in the past century. This is to make the topic and ideal meaning of the Bauhaus known and accessible, positively bringing it back, well placed in the present. Over the next few years, until 2019, the *Bauhaus Project* will raise a question every year, for the debate, inviting everyone to take part in a communal and experimental research project, to renew art, design and architecture in relation to contemporary society. The focus will be on the School's original idea of breaking disciplinary boundaries and the fragmented quality of Modernity, and of changing society and daily life with *gestaltung*.

9   Slavoj Zizek, *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (London: Verso, 2007).

10 Edward Lorenz coined the name "butterfly effect": the movement of air caused by the random flapping of a butterfly's wings, in a given moment, can be one of the causes of the production of a tropical cyclone a week later thousands of miles away.

11 A principle well explained by Morin's hologram, which shows every part is everywhere and the whole is in every part. Cf. Edgar Morin, *La Nature de la nature* (Paris: Seuil, 1981).

12 Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World System II: Mercantilism and the Consolidation of the European World-Economy 1600-1750* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).

13 Sabine Kraft, Anna Aichinger, Zhen Zhang, *The transformative Power of cities*, op. cit.

EXODUS

The exodus of rural communities towards the cities has taken on biblical dimensions. The next decades will bring profound consequences and changes to the numbers and the spatial distribution of the global population. The language of numbers is probably the most incisive language to explain this: "Globally, more people live in urban areas than in rural areas, with 54 per cent of the world's population residing in urban areas in 2014. In 1950, 30 per cent of the world's population was urban, and by 2050, 66 per cent of the world's population is projected to be urban. Today, the most urbanized regions include Northern America (82 per cent living in urban areas in 2014), Latin America and the Caribbean (80 per cent), and Europe (73 per cent). In contrast, Africa and Asia remain mostly rural, with 40 and 48 per cent of their respective populations living in urban areas. All regions are expected to urbanize further over the coming decades. Africa and Asia are urbanizing faster than the other regions and are projected to become 56 and 64 per cent urban, respectively, by 2050. The rural population of the world has grown slowly since 1950 and is expected to reach its peak in a few years. The global rural population is now close to 3.4 billion and is expected to decline to 3.2 billion by 2050. Africa and Asia are home to nearly 90 per cent of the world's rural population. India has the largest rural population (857 million), followed by China (635 million). The urban population of the world has grown rapidly since 1950, from 746 million to 3.9 billion in 2014. Asia, despite its lower level of urbanization, is home to 53 per cent of the world's urban population, followed by Europe (14 per cent) and Latin America and the Caribbean (13 per cent).

This binary way of thinking has deeply and fundamentally influenced the debate held during the birth of European capitalism, between 1870 and 1930. "An interpretation of the world with the aid of two (and only ever two) opposed categories has deep roots in Western thought. And not only Western"[3]. Technique / Culture, Craftsmanship / Industry, to cite a few examples. This form of binary thinking is still visible in the Innovation / Obscurantism dichotomy, where the meaning given to the word Innovation is instrumental to the language of the Market, an alibi to justify overproduction. The "conservative and obscurantist" stance has been represented more or less consciously in the recent past, with different premises and points of view, by various figures. For example, Rudofsky, who took a sort of Rousseauvian stance, paying attention to material and natural production in architecture[4] and Harvey, who justifies his opinion articulating it in a harsh critique of capitalist urbanism: "Since their foundation, cities have sprouted through the geographical and social concentration of a surplus of products (and capital). They share the formulation of rights which, at first glance, seem like a sacrifice of the steps forward of modernity[5]. And Harvey himself, and before him Lefebvre[6], propose a radical rethinking of the right and needs of inhabitants of the city, beyond conditionings which are taming the collective imagination and levelling it out to a stereotypical "reassuring revolution". Bianchetti describes these rights well in his comment on Harvey's book: "The right to move slowly, to nearby agriculture, to artisanal and associative activities. The right to healthy ecology, to maintain our surroundings picturesque, to an idea of village deeply rooted in contemporary cities; the right to

privacy, to the absence of intrusions, to be left alone. And the opposite, the right to share, to the ways of overcoming loneliness caused by individualism, so that we can go back to celebrating being together in small groups everywhere. Individual rights, which are often contradictory, are negotiated with difficulty in today's cities"[7]. To support the logic of self-organised spaces means two things: first, to indicate a radically different model to "reassuring revolutions"; then, to give up on "correction" from above, which is usually left to institutions and limited to few quick actions: roads, drainage systems, electricity. Architects are left with the task of making urban spaces more open, permeable and accessible. The most complex aspect is the latter, which can be measured by what is possibly one of the most important contributions of architects in the Western tradition. It is a tradition that has long imagined the city as a space of social and cultural integration. To celebrate informal self-organisation means both to declare the impossibility of a general and planned control of changes, and to accept to be moving in a "terra incognita", even running the risk of seeming anti-modern. But it is a choice that could be dangerous for other unexpected reasons too, for example the "excess of democracy". To claim that the absence of control and direction is positive could be an error in judgement. A serious warning against this possibility is given by the Italian debate started in the mid-90s regarding urban sprawl, which was celebrated as an expression of democratic spontaneity applied to urban planning: "These territories have been observed as a break with the past and the dissolution of the city. However, according to the interpretation of some Italian

geographers and economists between the 60s and 90s, they can also be seen as a phenomenon that has reduced contrasts, made an area more cohesive, by introducing new forms of production and habitat which are more scattered, specific, individual"[8].   Furthermore: "The historic city, with its walls, symbolic places of civic and religious power, does not exist anymore: there is an urban sprawl, born from an intertwining and mutual influence of space and society, of the territory and human behaviour, new urban and metropolitan lifestyle"[9]. The urban sprawl is a self-organised city. It can be and it is criticised – rightly – like all settlement models of the sprawl (not only does UN-Habitat stand against it, but there is ecological criticism of the city of cars and of the consumption of land). The urban sprawl can be interpreted as a spatial translation of a neo-liberal idea of the city: it is private, highly expensive for the community, who have to provide services for it, starting with the streets, "grown inharmoniously, without any regulatory criteria"[10].

1   Bernardo Secchi, *La città dei ricchi e la città dei poveri* (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 2013), our translation.

2   André Corboz, *Ordine sparso: saggi sull'arte, il metodo, la città e il territorio* (Milano: Franco Angeli, 1998).

3   Tomás Maldonado, *Introduzione*, in *Tecnica e cultura. Il dibattito tedesco fra Bismarck e Weimar*, ed. by Tomás Maldonado (Milano: Feltrinelli, 1991), our translation.

4   Bernard Rudofsky, *Architecture Without Architects: A Short Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1964); more recently, see also Serge Latouche, *Petit traité de la décroissance sereine*, (Paris: Mille et Une Nuits, 2007).

5   David Harvey, *The right to the city*, «New Left Review» n. 53 (September-October 2008).

6   Henri Lefebvre, *Le Droit à la ville* (Paris: Éditions Anthropos, 1968).

7   Cristina Bianchetti, *David Harvey. Il capitalismo contro il diritto alla città*, in *L'indice dei libri dell'anno 2012*, ed. by Andrea Pagliardi (Lodi: Mursia, 2013).

8   Paola Viganò, *I territori dell'urbanistica. Il progetto come produttore di conoscenza* (Roma: Officina Edizioni, 2010), our translation.

9   Stefano Boeri, Arturo Lanzani, Edoardo Marini, *Il territorio che cambia. Ambienti, paesaggi e immagini della regione milanese* (Milano: Abitare Segesta, 1996), our translation.

10 *Sprawl* in *Lessico del XXI secolo,* Treccani Enciclopedia online, 2013 ‹ http://www.treccani.it/enciclopedia/sprawl_(Lessico-del-XXI-Secolo)/ › [accessed 16 October 2016].

GEOGRAPHY

In comparison to a past of bloody wars and conflicts, over the past two decades the situation in Africa has experienced some significant improvements[1]. However while conflicts between countries have decreased, insecurity and violence have increased in the cities, where social inequality and economic disparity are becoming deeper and deeper. Africa is a "virgin" continent in terms of urbanisation; cities still don't have a consolidated structure, and so far still have – except for a few cases – a short history. At the same time, Africa isn't one of the continents, like Asia and India, which will become one of the most densely populated. Instead, because of its still unstable urban condition, it will experience some of the most significant phenomena of urban expansion.   There are the conditions for African cities to transform into laboratories for different types of cities. However, the path to different models to the known ones is long, and full of hidden dangers. International capital (such as Chinese) has realised there is an opportunity to invest, and this will make the process even harder. "From all these trends it is increasingly clear that it would be imprudent for Africa to continue applying urban developmental concepts that neither serve its interests nor that can be sustained in economic, social, political and environmental terms. Therefore, we argue for a radical re-imagination of African approaches to urbanism, both to strengthen the positive impacts of Africa's current multiple transitions and to improve urban living and working conditions"[2].   AFRICA AND ARCHITECTURE   A fairly successful refrain used to inaugurate most architecture conferences on sustainability and responsibility is the one about how architects are responsible for about 1% of

everything that is built in the world[3]. Architects from the Global South[4] believe that if one cares for the planet, the issue architects need to deal with is not only the reduction of emissions, because there are other numbers that require our attention. If we consider the 1%, and then consider within that percentage the "sustainable" projects which actually invest in energy efficiency, in the use of recyclable material and sustainable energy, we can easily conclude, even though approximately, that the contribution of architects to the fate of the planet is completely irrelevant. This evaluation is helpful to critically consider the rhetoric of green economy[5] and its promises. In his talk *Architecture for the People by the People* Alastair Parvin suggests: "What if, instead of architects creating buildings for those who can afford to commission them, regular citizens could design and build their own houses? The concept is at the heart of WikiHouse, an open source construction kit that means just about anyone can build a house, anywhere"[6]. The road that leads to the self made starts from the promising combination of advanced technology with "open source" and "sharing", two rather ancient concepts now become a growing trend[7]. In fact the combination of the Internet and of 3D printers, with pre-modern forms of organisation of production and exchange, offers a promising scenario. If one considers, for example, that a young architect in England is expected to earn £24,000, becoming part of the richest 1.95% of the world, a question arises: who will they build for, considering that the remaining 98% of the world population cannot afford to pay them? Over the past century the model of 1% building on behalf of the remaining – working – 99% worked because of the radical

social transformations, and the mobilisation of intellectual resources and market forces of entire nations that is unprecedented throughout history. Over the past century, architects have given a hand in solving the problem of the urbanisation of millions of people, have materially contributed to the construction of the social state in Western society, have been at the centre of socialist experiences, and have not been completely innocent in the affirmation of the speculative model which brought the global system to the financial crisis. This is the past. We now need to rethink the relation between architect and society. Can new technologies, which allow anyone to control production systems, be opportunities to solve the problem of housing? The numbers are alarming: by 2030, 5 billion people will be living in cities; 2 billion will be living below the poverty threshold and without a decent house. This would mean that for the next 15 years we would need to build a house for a million new inhabitants every week, with a budget of € 8,500 per family[8]. In the pre-industrial era, building was a community rite, a moment of socialising, where workforces collaborated without the need of an architect's overview. What we now call "construction" was a serious alternative to the idea of architecture that deals with exceptions (monuments) and with the "urban facts", the idea that: "Only a very small part of architecture belongs to art: the tomb and the monument"[9]. Architecture which, since the post-war period, has occupied all fields of construction, creating a serious problem of numbers and ratio[10].

1   In the past decade there have been 16 grave conflicts, currently there are 9. In 2010, in Africa there were 20 dictatorships, 21 democracies, and 9 countries are now going through the transition to democracy. Cf. *Atlas of globalisation* (Paris: Le monde diplomatique, 2010).

2   Anna Peterson, Charles J. Kibert, Leslie Thiele, Martha Monroe, *The Ethics of Sustainability*, in *Reshaping the Built Environment,* ed. by Charles J. Kibert (Washington D.C.: Island Press, 2010).

3   Surprisingly enough, in the conference "Maximize the Impact", held in Stuttgart in 2012, Rahul Mehrotra mentioned this number (in his talk it was 2%). On this occasion, architects from all over the world, commercially successful and not, met to talk about maximising their efforts to tackle climate change.

4   Particularly to mention is Alfredo Brillenbourg, who also attended the conference.

5   "There is a focus on Green economy to re-launch a new phase of capitalist accumulation. It is a form of capitalism that will try to overcome, by absorbing it, the dialectic between growth and decrease, limit and development". Aldo Bonomi, *Biopolitiche e antropologia della crisi,* «tysm», August 5, 2009 ‹ http://tysm.org/biopolitiche-e-antropoligia-della-crisi/ › [accessed 16 October 2016].

6   Alastair Parvin, *Architecture for the People by the People,* TED talk, February 2013 ‹ https://www.ted.com/talks/alastair_parvin_architecture_for_the_people_by_the_people › [accessed 15 October 2016].

7   "In the past, methods of planning and building homes and cities have often been collaborative, with ideas developed up from below, rather than imposed from above". Carlo Ratti, *Architettura Open Source. Verso una progettazione aperta* (Torino: Einaudi, 2014).

8   This estimate was made by Alejandro Aravena in his talk *My architectural philosophy? Bring the community into the process,* TED talk, October 2014 ‹ https://www.ted.com/talks/alejandro_aravena_my_architectural_philosophy_bring_the_community_into_the_process?language=en › [accessed 17 October 2016].

9   Adolf Loos, *Ornament and Crime*, trans. by Michael Mitchell (Oxford: Ariadne Press, 1998).

10   In Italy there are 2 architects for every 2000 inhabitants. Cf. *Lo stato della professione dell'Architetto in Italia: i temi, la crisi, la riconfigurazione*, report by Cresme Ricerche for Consiglio Nazionale degli Architetti, Pianificatori, Paesaggisti e Conservatori (2011).

AESTHETICS OF POVERTY

Many writers and observers of the main European capitals at the end of the 19th century dealt with the "social issue". They considered the quality of life of the working class, recently urbanised, the size of the problem and its threats, from hygiene, the epidemics caused by the promiscuity in which people lived, to the social tensions caused by the exasperation due to the quality of life. Thus, the fact that the "social issue" became a subject of research and denouncement of the horrors of early industrial capitalism is not surprising.   Progressive intellectuals of the times, young and old, undertook this task: when Engels wrote about the conditions of the working class he was 24. His father sent him to Great Britain, so he could prepare himself for life as a businessman. The outcome was unexpected. It was less expected that the "social issue" would become the inspiration for new artistic forms, which have influenced the arts, from writing to painting, to our days. In literature, there is a journey that starts with Balzac and Zola, passes through Verga and arrives at Pasolini. In painting the origin is even more remote: starting from Donatello's *Crucified Peasant*[1], to Masaccio's fishermen, to Caravaggio's "prostitute" Virgin[2].   These are precedents where the protagonist of the narrative (before the 18th century, it was usually a religious one) is mankind, burdened by hardship, placed in a non-idealised world. But the "social issue" will have to wait until the mid-19th century to become consistently part of artistic expression. This can be seen in the way Zola adopts the attitude of a researcher to document his novels[3], in Engels' "direct observations and authentic sources", according to which realism is "not only accuracy in detail, but also a faithful

reproduction of typical characters in typical circumstances"[4].

     As often happens in crucial turning points in history, at the time separating the ideal from the real was impossible. The attention paid by the 20th century Avant-Garde to the artistic expression and communication codes of other cultures (far away and genuine, true because contrasted with reality) cannot be explained without taking into consideration the First World War and its cultural and economical consequences in Europe. The crisis of Western values, accused of having caused one of the worst catastrophes of mankind's history, led to a crisis of communication codes.   The attention paid by Joseph Itten to Japan and Gauguin's interest in "primitivism"[5] even before the war are to be interpreted as anti-naturalistic and anti-classical gestures. The interest to the Rousseau "Le Douanier" of the naive, the tendency to re-consider all anti-classical forms of art (from Egyptian, Byzantine, Late Antique and Medieval art to pre-Renaissance painters such as Giotto and Masaccio) leads us to think of indigenous artistic manifestations as languages of truth, to juxtapose the superstructures and meta-languages of bourgeois artistic expression.   The production of simple and useful objects, the use of natural building materials introduce the idea that only what is useful and true can be beautiful, and thus that it is an autonomous value, which cannot exist without an ethical justification.

     There is a growing awareness of the several aspects that contribute to defining the Zeitgeist (the dominant cultural trend) of the beginning of the second millennium and that help decipher it, if it is true that it is manifesting itself in an articulate way, with permanent characteristics, such as the correspondence between the unstoppable

processes of urbanisation and digitalisation in all vital functions and fields.   While urbanisation transforms all material structures (the visible), digitalisation creates an immaterial meta-structure, "a world in addition to the world", which has an effect that remains mostly invisible.

     An abnormal growth of data and information archives make it paradoxically more and more complex to define an overall image of society, whether it is regulated by written rules, documents, official norms or not. There is a continuous flux of data that is often generated automatically: statistics, personal data, photos etc. In this way, the distinction between physical and immaterial world becomes more and more defined.   This gradual distinction creates diachronic scenarios, which are reminiscent of the contrast between the monolith and the Australopithecine in *2001: A Space Odyssey* by Stanley Kubrick[6]. In this way forms of social, economic, productive organisation, with their legacy of objects, manifest themselves in material space building a sort of parallel world, which is sometimes diametrically opposed to the invisible one of digital technologies and has a strong physical presence in the city. Something similar happens with the behavioural habits which are changing built space and which are increasingly often suggested by necessity, generated by and for daily life. Examples are the necessity and awareness of the importance of saving resources, soil, physical space, energy, of not wasting, of recycling, and so on. This behaviour is influenced by a general moralisation of customs, and when it is shaped, it manifests itself in the form of a sort of essential neo-functionalism.   NEUE SACHLICHKEIT

     The comparison between the need to have an impact on the current social transformations through the

Project and the same need felt at the beginning of the 20th century in Germany suggest another critical tool in the reading of the parallelism between the two historical moments. The thesis is that the present situation, extensively described previously, is similar to the past one, and that they make the gestaltung necessary once again (the "project" in the modern sense given by Habermas[7] as a tool of political and social change). The Neue Sachlichkeit, which opened the way for German rationalism in the early 20th century, transformed artistic forms and their role, deriving from necessity, its value in use and technique[8]. The interest in formal simplification manifested in the German debate can be traced back to the establishment of the Werkbund in 1907[9]. It was a response to the broadening of the public for a moral style and definition of quality. It was research into a new aesthetic of industrial products, which was related to the desire to keep production costs low, to transform their use into an affordable daily life experience. Its consequences were formal simplification, adaptation to the methods of industrial production and the sacrifice of ornament (no matter how much the desire to adapt to new technologies fought the results of traditional artisanal production)[10]. The cultural tendency that permeates our times sees a contamination between the fine arts and applied arts, industry and craftsmanship, market economy and collaborative economies. It is marked by the moralisation of consumerism (with more and more people becoming able to consume). The combination of these elements creates a sort of austerity, even linguistically, in forms and materials.

1   According to Vasari's *Lives* (Giorgio Vasari, *Lives of the most excellent Painters, Sculptors and Architects*, 1550), this was the comment made by Brunelleschi on his friend's work.

2   *Death of the Virgin Mary*, 1605, which was refused by the Carmelite order, who had commissioned the work, because Caravaggio had used as model a prostitute who had drowned in the Tiber.

3   Brian Nelson, *Emile Zola* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

4   Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, op. cit. More examples are: Heinrich Heine's chronicles – Heinrich Heine, *Französische Zustände* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe, 1833); Bettina von Arnim's work – Bettina von Arnim, *Erfahrungen eines Jungen Schweizers im Vogtlande*, in *Dieses Buch gehoert dem Koenig* (Berlin, 1843); Dickens' and Henry Murger's novels – Henri Murger, *Scènes de la vie de bohème* (Paris, 1851); but also paintings by Edouard Manet, *Nana* (1877), picture that probably represents a high class prostitute and her client; by Edgar Degas, *La Blanchiseuse* (1869); by Vincent Van Gogh, *De Aardappeleters* (1885).

5   "The term primitivism is used to describe the Western response to tribal cultures as revealed in the work and thought of modern artists. The beginnings of primitivism can be traced to Paul Gauguin. It was he who just before the turn of the century began melding the perceptual realism of Impressionism with flat decorative effects and stylized forms found in many non-Western arts, including sculptures from Cambodia, Java and Polynesia". *Primitivism in 20th century Art. Affinity of the Tribal and the Modern*, ed. by William Rubin, published in conjunction with the exhibition (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1984).

6   "In the 'Dawn of Man' sequence, we witness the coupling of progress and destruction, as the first use of a tool by the primitive australopithecine hominid is to kill an opponent of a rival band and take possession of the water hole. Before this evolutionary leap, however, the black, rectangular monolith makes its first appearance, and this is the precise moment when the moon and sun are in orbital conjunction. Thus, a theme of murder runs through simultaneously with that of progress: Thousands of years of human history are then elided by the cut from the hone to the spacecraft, an example of Bazinian associative montage that serves as an effective, if simplistic, method of bypassing history". Robert Kolker, *Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey. New Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

7   Jürgen Habermas, *Die Moderne, ein unvollendetes Projekt*, op. cit.

8   Peter Behrens, Über die Beziehungen der künstler*ischen und technischen Probleme* (Berlin: Mittler, 1917).

9   Lucius Burckhardt, *The Werkbund* (Westport: Hyperion Press, 1987).

10 Adolf Behne, *Der moderne Zweckbau* (Berlin: Drei Masken Verlag, 1926).

INFORMAL

The functioning of a city, as we know it in the West, is based on a clear distinction between the duties of the council authorities and the duties of the individual citizen. The normality of daily life is guaranteed by a few things that we take for granted: provision of running water and electricity by the council or its representative, the regulation of shared life through rules and bureaucracy, guaranteed and overseen by the city administration.

The question is: How can life run smoothly in the urban sprawl on the outskirts of megacities if they are not controlled or planned, if there is no public administration to guarantee running water and electricity, collection of waste, construction of drainage systems? If every day life procedures, even just moving, become complicated because of the lack of roads, public transport and infrastructures? If there is no social net to support people in case of illness or unemployment, if in a situation of need one can only rely on people in the same condition of serious precariousness? In a context like this, self-organisation and self-assistance are crucial to survival. Informal settlements and slums (self-organised space) are generally associated with extreme poverty and a degraded environment. These are prejudices that make it impossible for the positive – and perfectible – aspects of shared life to emerge and become suggestions. At the same time, because no distinctions are made in the world of self-organised cities, the same prejudices suggest that the poor, the oppressed and the exploited can only ever have this lifestyle, which is considered a sort of punishment and sentence.   Reality is much more complex and varied, the same way self-organised cities

are, for topographic reasons and for reasons linked to the conditions in which these settlements were born: they can be compact or spread, in a recently or historically urbanised area, on private or public ground. Depending on these conditions, extremely different social spaces can come into being, creating a very wide range of solutions.

In the meantime, the fact that "informal" includes highly vulnerable lifestyles in complex systems – and, let's not forget, at serious risk – is clear. How can cities with such a different set of regulations to the one we know have developed – as if in a parallel universe? How have they been able to provide not only running water and electricity, but also an organisation system for cleaning and maintenance, without the interference of planners and architects? What is the potential and what are the limits of city sprawls? How far can self-provision and self-organisation go as serious alternatives to the reality we know? Like "slum", "informal" seems a magic word that encompasses and clarifies everything. But now, having considered the predictions and the new wave of organisation coming, an investigation into this self-organised world is much needed and cannot be delayed. We need to understand whether we should, and if so how, intervene, what tools we should use, and most importantly, what we should use as a reference point, even from a disciplinary point of view. A city with no architects is very appealing, but it cannot go further than it already has. And we should also question our – regressive? – idea of neighbourhood, village, and community – whether we should consider it a transitory condition or a unique aspect that needs to be protected. This is a brief Manifesto on the Informal, which tries to focus on

some key concepts and to take a stand regarding others: 1) The urban heritage of the 21st century will be traced back to self-organised settlements scattered around the world; 2) The structure of these settlements defines the condition of the inhabitants of the world as the result of a historical process. It is the result of urbanisation under neo-liberal economic conditions. The cultural value of sprawls derives from this, and not from their ability to be "arrival cities", to teach "smart informality" or to create the "urban common"; 3) We need to react critically to the mantra of informality as the expression of a functionalist and technocratic point of view imposed from above in response to the political, philosophical and architectural question of humankind's ways of dwelling; 4) Miles away from the production of cultural values, academics, like preachers, praise and would like to reproduce the informal. They refuse to understand that it is one of the effects of the predatory culture of the global north. The Global South continues to be a hunting reserve for the North's economic and scientific interests; 5) The distinction that Western culture makes between formal and informal is out-dated, in the current era of translocality and simultaneity. To define other ways of life as informal is to discredit them with a patronising attitude; 6) Unauthorised settlements of the 21st century are not a "deviation". They are signs of the incivility of the economic and social systems, responsible for the destruction of economic and social resources. Soon, more than 1.5 billion people will live in these conditions. It is time to guarantee a place in the history of civilisation to them; 7) Forms of organisation and production beyond or underneath the usual ones bring new and absolute

values in the contemporary context, and not only retrospectively; 8) In the context of global challenges, of energy and food crises, of inequality in the distribution of resources and of climate change that lie ahead, unauthorised settlements define a development opposite to private residential areas and gated communities. This is a parallel trend developing all over the world, without producing social values or a socially peaceful way of life; 9) For these reasons, in the neo-liberal era sprawls are the most promising settlements, the ones that bring more hope. Thus, the first step to take is to acknowledge their legitimacy, to authorise them and to consider them as a plausible alternative to cities as we know them[1].

1   Elisa Bertuzzo, *Guenter Nest, Manifesto of the 21st century's own settlement form*, «ARCH+» n. 223 (May 2016).

METHOD

AGAINST THE URBAN SPRAWL The rhetoric of new urbanism sees a "world urban"[1] as a solution to the current situation, which is increasingly at risk. Cities are the safest solutions to population growth and to internal and external migration, and are the only alternative to sprawl and its possible consequences on the balance of the ecosystem.

The risk of an infrastructure with no solution of continuity wrapping the whole world seems a terrifying option that needs to be avoided. This is because of the ideal of indiscriminate colonisation of land that dominated the past century. The final scenario it envisioned was a peaceful world-city which responded to an unstoppable population growth, and where epidemics no longer occurred.

In this model, the ideal space per capita was no longer at the Existenzminimum. Instead, it favoured (bourgeois) Wasp models of a middle class which only briefly existed during the thirties, but which has long lived in the minds of citizens of the world as an unattainable utopia. The theory of the world-city, of the complete urbanisation of society[2] is based on the idea that contemporary society deems the distinction "city" and "countryside" obsolete, and that only the category of the complete urbanisation of society could provide useful tools to analyse and understand the contemporary condition. This theory presumed an epistemological revolution of great importance. Lefebvre's theory implies a radical break from the Western ideal of the city, based on physical artefacts and material reality – a clear and identifiable unit that justified models of specific social behaviour[3]. From an environmental point of view, the world-city, a completely man-made vital space, dominated by

individualistic lifestyles, would seal the earth, it wouldn't allow water to filter it and make it fertile, it would close all empty spaces in between, eliminating biodiversity – or relegating it to reserves – and topography. It would resurrect the concept of undifferentiated colonization, from the American grid[4] to tabula rasa urbanism to international style architecture. It would maintain the importance of private mobility, of the car, with or without a driver, with or without CO_2 emissions, to buy bread, go to the post office, go shopping, take the children to school, go to work, to the theatre, to the library, the bar, etc. But most importantly, it would encourage the (in some ways) deterministic tradition that suggested systematic planning models during the past century. This tradition sees the urban territory as the result of the growth of organisms able to adapt and to grow in relation to the technical development of infrastructure[5]. The concept of polar cities, on the other hand, supports an opposite scenario, which renounces (demonises) the cult of mobility and of material networks that remind us more of a metastasis than of harmonic germination. At the same time, it does not give up on interconnection on a global scale, linking it to specific places with clearly defined social, cultural, physical and functional characteristics. Nodes[6] where connectivity doesn't replace geography[7].   The global perspective[8] explains the promise of new urbanism, and why, by giving itself to the control of cities, the world has a better chance of saving itself from climate change and from the threats of an increasingly unequal society. From the point of view of the organisation of space, the idea of a city-area is juxtaposed with an urban space made up

of significant and material parts, arranged in sequence and, most importantly, limited in their possibility of development. These are not city-states, but cities that replace the State with a new physical organisation, which focuses on proximity and distance. It does so in a dialectic of opposites which re-appropriates the idea of the city as a physical and materially determined space, by introducing dichotomies such as, density vs. dispersion, borders vs. sprawl, planet vs. nation.   MOBILITY/DENSITY   The idea that derives from this in the practical production of space, and physical transformation, is that of forced densification, which also has several consequences of its own: for example, the overcoming of private mobility in favour of public mobility, verticality of architecture, gardens, woods, traffic. It reintroduces the concept of limit and distinction between urban and rural, in contradiction with all trends that suggest a hybrid of the two.   In this context, opposing categories go back to being far away/close, known/unknown, urban/rural, built/not built, artificial/natural, increase/decrease, etc. We go from the academic and scientific era of neologisms to a return of words with a single meaning, easily comparable to their synonyms and opposites.   At the same time, groups of people (that so far have been unknown) in socially and materially limited spaces become a challenge as far as stability goes. The predictions on this matter still need to be proved to validate these people's intrinsic and future fragility. It is intrinsic because the problems of the urban divide, of social differences in the various parts and suburbs of the city, of the organisation of enclaves have never been solved, and are put at an even greater risk

not only by climate change, but also by economic crises, migration and social tensions.   The risk of causing explosions of violence becomes clear once one accepts that the urbanisation and migration happening on a global scale are a geographical step up of what happened in Europe over the last centuries and which subverted the history of the global North.   RESILIENCE   The growing interest in the concept of resilience most likely comes from this reflection. It is an indication and a warning of the risks that current and future immense conglomerates are under. Social resilience is a tool to avoid the "banlieu" effect, and to solve through participation the crisis of representative democracy and of the authority of the institutions that represent it. Environmental resilience is a tool to deal with the effects climate change can produce[9].

According to Schneider[10] Africa is the continent, which is the most vulnerable to climate change.   The reason for this is that the economy still largely depends on agriculture, which suffers because of droughts and water shortage.   The analysis of this scenario needs to take into account the African continent. Here, an endemic lack of infrastructure is combined with one of the most significant predictions of population growth (in particular the east coast of sub-Saharan Africa, where numbers are predicted to double).

1   "The World Urban Campaign is UN-Habitat's partners' platform preparing for the Habitat III conference. The Campaign acts as a global advocacy and partnership platform to promote dialogue, sharing, and learning about improving our urban future" (UN-Habitat Report 2014).

2   Henri Lefebvre, *Le Droit à la ville*, op. cit.

3   Ibidem.

4   Richard Sennet, *The Conscience of the Eye* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1992).

5   It is based on the theories and works of Patrick Geddes (1915), Gaston Bardet (1945), Lewis Mumford (1961), and Victor Gruen (1965).

6   Manuel Castells, *The Rise of The Network Society: The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*. (Hoboken, New Jersey: John Wiley & Sons, 2000).

7   Parag Khanna, *How megacities are changing the map of the world*, Ted talk (February 2016) < https://www.ted.com/talks/parag_khanna_how_megacities_are_changing_the_map_of_the_world > [accessed 15 October 2016].

8   Viewing and studying the entire world as interconnected and seeking to understand an individual's, a society's, or a culture's place in it. Edgard Morin, *L'An I de l'ère écologique: la Terre dépend de l'homme qui dépend de la Terre* (Paris: Éditions Tallandier, 2007).

9   On this matter read also Joseph Stieglitz, *The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers Our Future* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2012) and Nicholas Stern, *Why Are We Waiting? The Logic, Urgency, and Promise of Tackling Climate Change* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015).

10 Stephen H. Schneider, Serguei Semenov, Anand Patwardhan, Ian Burton, Chris H.D. Magadza, Michael Oppenheimer, A. Barrie Pittock, Atiq Rahman, Joel B. Smith, Avelino Suarez and Farhana Yamin, *Assessing key vulnerabilities and the risk from climate change*, in *Climate Change 2007: Impacts, Adaptation and Vulnerability. Contribution of Working Group II to the Fourth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, ed. by Martin Parry, Osvaldo Canziani, Jean Palutikof, Paul van der Linden and Clair Hanson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).

TIME

In order to understand the reach of what is happening in the cities it is needed to embed what is being experienced today in its historical context. Connecting to the inital thesis of the book it becomes clear how these phenomenons have to be located within the aspirations of emancipation immanent in the project of modernity. The same aspirations that have characterised the disciplines and the consequent role of their project from the 20th century refoundation. Only by acknowledging the continuity with the disrupted project of modernity and thinking of sustainability and responsibility in architecture as a second degree of Rationalism can one be equipped to confront todays issues. To grasp the meaning of this mass migration to the cities and its implications it is necessary to look two centuries back at what has happened in Europe. The most significant urbanisation phenomenon that we've known in the past goes back to the two European industrial revolutions. Then the cities placed under "stress" by uncontrollable urbanisation were London, Paris, Barcelona and Berlin, the economic and industrial centres of Europe. People were massing at the city gates, living in slums under unacceptable hygienic conditions, without drains and without running water, in promiscuity, in dark cramped environments, working and living in the same spaces.

Modern urban design comes to life here, out of the need to find solutions to a socially explosive situation, and the lines of research come into existence that characterise it and characterise the debate for the entire first part of the 19th century: the Existenzminimum that tries to set standards in the face of unacceptable conditions of — promiscuity; the hygienism that tries to remedy the

unhealthy conditions of the slums but also of the working buildings; from Berlin (with its Mietskasernen) to Paris, the zoning that wants to separate work from dwelling, especially when the work pollutes the environments and threatens life within the RDI mapping for which the UK capital becomes one of the first experimentation fields[1].

The locating of the informal settlements in 18th century London was due to the path of the southwest winds, which avoided the unbearable stink produced by excrement and rotting waste arriving in the city. The problem of housing and all the political implications that derive from it contributed to feeding the subversive force of the urbanised proletariat and in some cases is behind the most violent revolts in modern history from the French revolution on[2]. The risk of an explosion of social protests that might permanently overthrow the established order is a spectre that tours the planet – despite the reassuring rhetoric of the new urbanism and the market's major efforts to transform it into a productive opportunity.

Capitalism tries to tame the transformation by repeating the mantra that everyone can make it, paying a social ransom and leading a richly satisfying life (economically). It's a mantra that still maintains its calming persuasive ability, but for how long? "In any case, capitalism has no future and has nothing to do with the future. It's a definition of what's happening today, and in particular of what happened in the past. I believe that in the entire world every human being is trying to find an alternative to capitalism. Capitalism will never be overthrown; there aren't the conditions because of its ability to adapt. Capitalism will be sampled, so to speak, from the alternatives that appear in all the parts of the world.

And this is because of the simple fact that our planet isn't enough for capitalism"[3]. The prospect of around 2 billion inhabitants of the planet living in slums, favelas and shantytowns in 2030[4] certainly paints a gloomy picture. As Davis writes, comparing the situation to the one Engels describes in *The Condition of the Working Class in England Based on Direct Observations and Authentic Sources* (1844) and to a book on the metropolis like *Nairobi, River Road* by Meja Mwangi (1974) one can detect the extreme, tragic and essential continuity[5]. "In one of these courts" – Engels writes about Manchester – "there stands directly at the entrance, at the end of the covered passage, a privy without a door, so dirty that the inhabitants can pass into and out of the court only by passing through foul pools of stagnant urine and excrement"[6]. In 1974 Mwangi writes something similar about Nairobi: "The paths that cross the damp field were covered with human excrement [...] The cold, damp wind, which blew everywhere, brought not only the stink of shit and urine but also some rumbling, a sign of misery, fear and resignation"[7]. Davis writes: "The current mega-cities – Nairobi, Lagos, Bombay, Dhaka… – are mountains of stinking excrement that would have disgusted the impassive Queen Victoria, but not Rudyard Kipling, an authentic expert on India, where he lived for around seven years"[8]. ENGELS Among the most interesting writings on the condition of the working class in the mid-19th century those of Engels stand out. In *The Condition of the Working Class in England* published in 1844, Friedrich Engels, who had been sent to observe the situation with his own eyes (not by a newspaper nor by a humanitarian association, but by his father who wanted to turn him into a well-to-do businessman), describes

life in the main cities of the United Kingdom, including Manchester, Leeds, Birmingham and Edinburgh, and the tale is shocking: up to 20 inhabitants in two-roomed apartments; ground floors perpetually flooded by the overflowing rivers that carried detritus and faeces; dampness; lack of daylight; uncovered roads; non-existent drains; water wells along the roads and in the courts that were used as open-air latrines[9].   These are the conditions that caused the fearful cholera epidemics, whose echo reached the houses of the wealthier and which brought insecurity and worry.   ZOLA   The French writer arrived in Paris from the provinces in 1858 at the age of 18. Until 1864 he lived in poverty in the Latin district on the left bank of the canal near the "barriers", the customs house built on the edge of the city. Puccini had made Paris famous through the success earned from the novel *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* by Henry Murger[10].   Like his older colleague Jules Vallès, Zola determinedly undertook the dismantlement of the romantic myth of the Parisian attic. The attics of his youth were dominated by hunger and cold; Mimi – the central character in the novel of Murger – was in reality a prostitute.   The young Zola, like many of his colleagues, initially wrote under the influence of Victor Hugo, whose *Les Misérables* had been published in 1862[11]. Shortly after though, attention shifted to the brothers Goncourt who, in the preface to *Germinie Lacerteux*[12], wrote about the right of the less wealthy classes to appear as subjects of literature.   Their novel was in substance more a study of hysteria than the realistic analysis of the working class environment. But the subject itself was highly contemporary: Parisian workers had

used a certain lightening of the pressure and control exerted by the imperial regime and had started to organise themselves since 1861. In 1865 the first international union of workers opened its first office in the capital. Strikes and demonstrations became ever more frequent despite the brutal repression until 1870. Many authors (like Jules Simone or Denis Poulot) tackled the "social question" in their work.   From 1868 – three years before the drama of the Parisian Commune in which Zola did not intend to take part – he began the 20-volume series *Les Rougoun-Macquart*, which includes *Germinal*[13].

1   *Poverty Map of London 1898-99* (Charles Booth Online Archive) < http://booth.lse.ac.uk/cgi-bin/do.pl?sub=view_booth_and_barth &args=533239,177489,5,small,3 > [accessed 17 October 2016].

2   Doug Saunders, *Arrival City: How the Largest Migration in History is Reshaping Our World* (Australia: Allen&Unwin, 2010).

3   Bruno Latour, *On some of the affects of capitalism,* lecture given at the Danish Royal Academy of Science on Wednesday the 26th of February 2014.

4   UN-Habitat Report 2013.

5   Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums*, op. cit.

6   Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, op. cit.

7   Meja Mwangi, *Going down River Road* (London: Heinemann Educational Books, 1976).

8   Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums*, op. cit.

9   Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, op. cit.

10 Henri Murger, *Scènes de la vie de Bohème* (Paris, 1851).

11 Victor Hugo, *Les Misérables* (Paris, 1862).

12 Edmond de Goncourt and Jules de Goncourt, *Germinie Lacerteux* (Paris, 1865).

13 Emile Zola, *Germinal* (Paris, 1885).

PART TWO

DURBAN DYSTOPIAS. The Architecture of the Imaginary City

Durban. Real and Dystopias

CITY OF GEOMETRIC SHAPES

Seen from the sky the city seems like Marrakesh rug market observed from the terrace of Jamaa el Fna.   It's a vast expanse of geometrical patterns spread out over the countryside plane and drawn by the arrangement of the architectures of not only the houses but also of the offices, churches, mosques, synagogues, tool stores, schools.   The arrangement of the houses alters from district to district and so it alters the behaviour of the people who live there, in the densest patterns, who meet up and organise common events whenever they're needed for whatever reasons.   Today they're grilling meat with all the family so the women are doing little jobs while the little children play together watched over by the younger women who always set themselves out at the edges of the group.   In this district all the houses are the same and are the same distance from each other; each has a bit of inside garden, used mostly as an open-air storage room. The inhabitants greet one another without becoming friends.   Nearby is the area of people without families, who've just arrived from the countryside as trailblazers and are waiting to get a job and be able to bring over to join them the rest of their family who are waiting in the village. They don't have their own homes and many of them sleep at the mattress maker's, who rents out his workspace quite cheaply.   At night the mattress maker's open house is always full of sleepers, sprawled out all over the place like corpses wrapped in shrouds.   "The fixed eye of the moon was burning high up in the sky. The darkness cheated the temperatures, which remained unbearable. A sick heat emanated from the moon and spread through the air. Like a straight strip
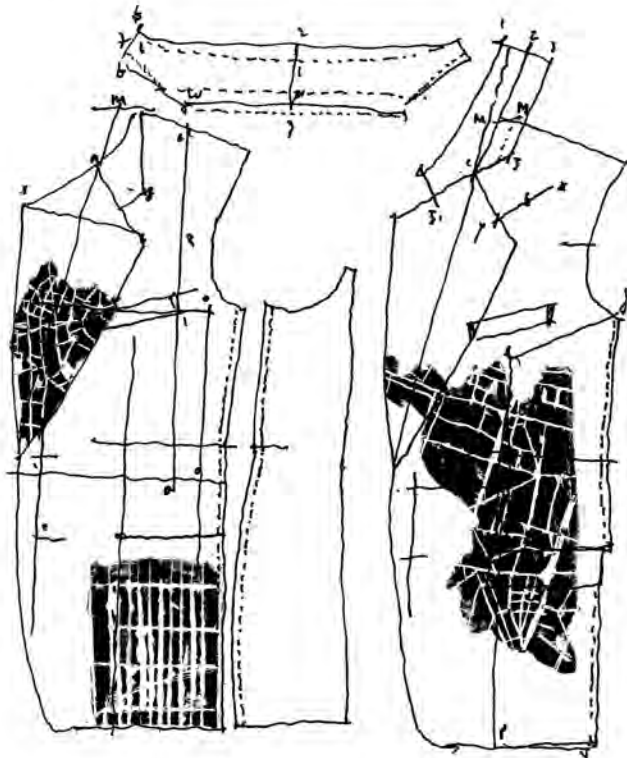
of shining steel, the road ran towards the city of dreadful night"[1].   When he had a job, B. used to work mainly at night. All that he had left from his room in his previous house was a portable radio and a suitcase full of knock-knacks. The landlord had kept all the rest as payment for two months' missed rent. B. felt sick every time he thought about it. He'd gone hungry after he lost his job; he'd got drunk all night and hid every time the landlord turned up to collect rent.   He was one who'd managed to bring his family with him. His youngest child, just born, doubled up in a coughing fit. He was coughing and wheezing so much that his little chest seemed about to explode. B. grimaced: when the child wasn't suffering from a cough he always had a different illness like diarrhoea or high temperature. Always some bug or another. B. heard the cough literally as if it came from his ears. He felt as if he had to cough himself.   Since he couldn't sleep any more he decided to get up. He got a big bit of soap and went out into the courtyard. Most of the neighbours were still asleep. The courtyard was cold and empty; the joint shower was dark and cold and stank as always. Pieces of broken soap, stones, scraps of paper towels, cigarette ends and other filth covered the floor. Slimy, green mould was climbing up the walls from the sides of the floor.   It was a day that was starting off as miserably as all those that had gone before it.   B. works on the Indians' building site. He lost a very well paid job in the army because of a lieutenant who wanted it for his son-in-law.   From that day on B. has eaten dirt.

1   Rudyard Kipling, *The City of Dreadful Night*, «Civil and Military Gazette», September 10, 1885.
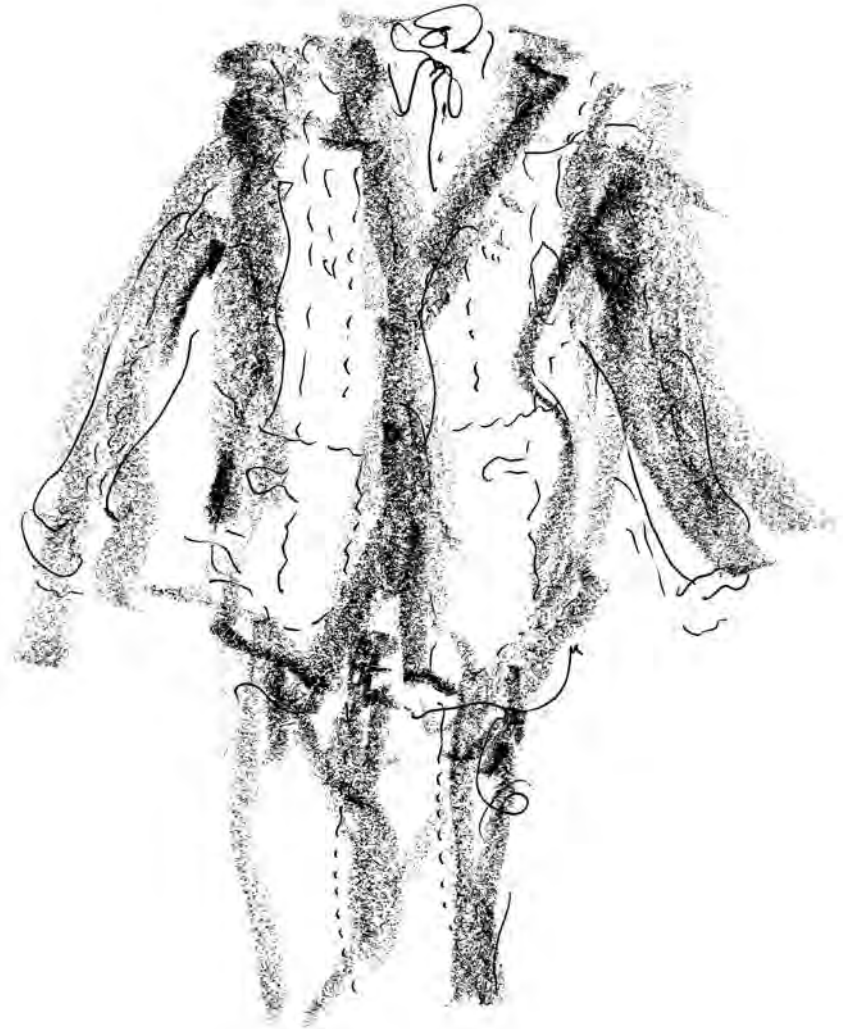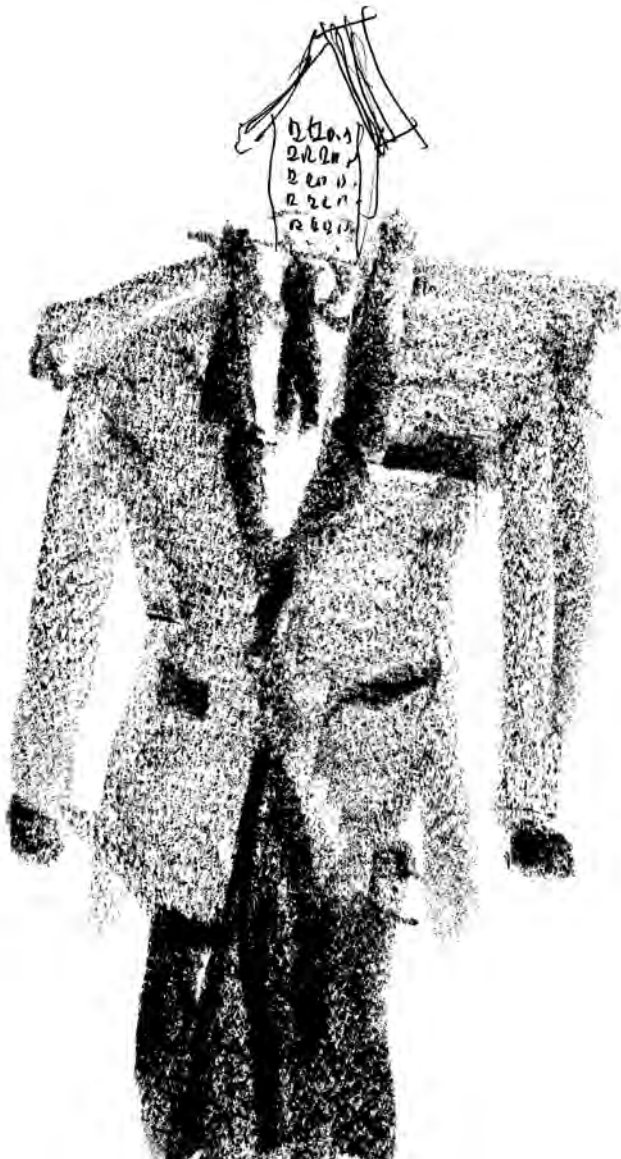
CITY WITHOUT A SKELETON

It's a city that shifts in its form and colours. There aren't any key points and the routes people take design the roads. They choose the shortest and plot them out. The road that leads to the station is an uncovered road without any pavements and you walk on red earth. You cross the road there without paying attention to the rare cars.

The city doesn't have a central square for people to meet. The inhabitants arrange to meet in the bus stations that most use in the morning to go to look for work elsewhere, offering themselves for a day's work: hours waiting at the side of the main road, sweating in the scorching glare. The three-wheel vans – mostly the Piaggio Ape – and the trucks converted into taxis just cost small change. They stop where they find space in the crowd of waiting commuters who don't have the security of a job. At night the early risers gather on the benches. Some sleep, some – a few – read. Someone guards the material bags he has around him – sticking out there are chicken claws, work tools, celery stalks, giraffes made from glass beads. The tourists are an attraction – they take it in turns to talk to them, to offer them something. It's a way of feeling in touch with the world, with what is separate from the family, from the daily search for a job, from the (non-existent) social life. The same principle holds for the airports and shopping malls, forcing them into tortuous routes to increase the possibility of a sale. The stalls are arranged in a disordered order; they sell everything – potatoes, celery, shiny stones, combs, and coloured beads. The road for the buses is one of the most important in the country since it connects the

capital with the port, one of the most important on the continent. At night it's always closed for the works that have been going on for years and whose purpose nobody precisely knows.　　　　The trucks that come from the port park one behind the other on the widest lane of the road and make an enormous, unmoving line. The drivers sleep a long time – until the sun is already high.　　　　The road is uncovered and the public buses that can't have a break overtake on the right and the left looking for the route through with the fewest accidents. Along the road there are the shacks of the building site workers spread along the route, groupings of very few houses around some open spaces where clothes flap and chickens run around. Nearby there's a type of cemetery for buses – falling apart and full of rust, or lying on one side, or burnt out as witness to the drivers' impatience and their few hours of rest on night drives.　　　　At six in the morning the jerry cans are empty: there isn't any water for getting breakfast ready. The men order hot tea at the dive on the corner (one of the few in the city). The water is short during the summer months especially – there isn't even any to wash the dishes. That's why plates, pans, cutlery, bowls, cups are piled up in front of the door to the house attracting swarms of wasps.

　　　　The question of when there'll be water, and how much, conditions the women's day from doing the dishes to watering the vegetable patch, from the shower to the babies' baths. The always-long wait for the water supply is an impatient and apathetic one. Neighbours visit each other or chat in the space between the houses. They talk about babies, about births and deaths, about food price rises and about relatives left behind in the village.

Often they remain in silence.   All the units and the clusters of houses share the same infrastructure, the same kitchens, the same sinks, and the same central water tap.   When the water supplies finally arrive the people in charge, four young men, connect the water hose abandoned in the grass – the central water tap – to another, very long, hosepipe. And the water starts to flow.   The women neatly fill their jerry cans one after the other, no one taking more than their daily ration. The operation lasts no more than 15 minutes. They don't have the right to more than this. The housework can now begin, boiling the water to disinfect it before anything else so that it can be drunk without any risks.   In the meantime the water supply people, just like the ones for the maintenance, are seen around more and more rarely with their trucks and their hosepipes. Why? Because the city – just like the neighbouring settlements that share the illegal status – is now connected to the official distribution network. The inhabitants and their leaders, who have fought doggedly for years for the right to water, consider it a great success that the government chiefs have included in their mandate water distribution as something separate from profit and strategy.   Now the citizens – the same ones who are smiling happily at the thought of the attempts to bribe them or threaten them to give up their struggle – would like electricity, like water, to be distributed in the city through official contracts. Their success depends on the interaction they have with the offices, just as on the inhabitants' ability to free themselves from the current suppliers. They know it will be a long and tiring journey.   Differently to water, electricity is distributed in the city by a public/

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private partnership that is very hard to get away from. Its clandestine distribution is regulated by not very transparent methods that the citizens employed in it have kept hold of. The control of electricity in the city is particularly profitable.   The network set up without controls in the meantime serves all the apartments. On the ceiling of each home there's at least a light and a fan. Each inhabitant pays according to their real consumption but rental for infrastructure and maintenance is added to this cost and it's fixed arbitrarily and much to the supplier's advantage.   The second group of clients are the food shop traders – a flourishing occupation in the city. Also doing well are hairdressers, workshops that recover and recycle scrap iron, and shops for mobile phones and electronic components.   The many electricity sellers guarantee an almost continuous supply through generators that they themselves have installed in the city, where otherwise blackouts are the norm day and night. The conditions guaranteed by the private sellers are a privilege otherwise enjoyed only by government buildings, by the military zones and by the export processing zones. But we're not talking about the miracle of the informal.   The other side of the coin is the families who find themselves during the blackouts in houses of scorching metal sheets, heads bowed over switched off sewing machines, tools of a trade that pays even less because of long periods of inactivity.

There are some plans in the city for expansion and consolidation and even for infrastructure projects. One example is the landing berths for boats, which are needed by both the fishermen and the inhabitants who go by boat to the shopping area and to the houses of rich

City Without a Skeleton

people where they work in service, earning a day's wage.

Every year the winds, hurricanes and rains damage them and force the people to repair them for as long as they resist all the floods that regularly cover the city. The same thing is true for the public baths, taps and water fountains which, when they're not financed and maintained by NGOs, are looked after by family groups who deal with maintenance together.   Local committees of citizens administer all the infrastructure and operations that they require. The nature of these committees varies according to the type of requirements and operations they're called on to do.   There are also committees that deal with day-to-day tasks, from the organisation of groups of street cleaners to vehicle maintenance to collecting money for work of collective interest.

A third category of committee is the savings groups. These deal with providing financial guarantees and allowing access to banks for the inhabitants who don't have enough money to open a savings account or for the people who – because of debts to creditors, often NGOs – have to go into hiding or who more simply are just not registered with the police.   The accounts are opened with collective savings and are planned to protect collective interests. They are registered under the name of a partner who can show an address in the city that is registered with the police. To avoid the named owner running away with the lot, the savings committees rely on a general social rule that has always been to work in the city. It is based on the self-regulation of the communities and on the social control they exercise on themselves. The partners all come from the same region (and the same tribe).   The question of costs and the supply

conditions for water, electricity, gas and food is the most delicate one in the city. The costs increase in line with the local market conditions; there are no tariffs or forms of control. All the schemes that guarantee a sort of primary support in the city cannot but be held in high consideration in the light of the unreliability of the government schemes.   Despite all that, in the end this is all about emergency solutions that are segmented and under-financed. This means that up to 10 housewives might have to share a kitchen and so in the morning depressing queues form in front of the shared bathrooms. It means that the gas and electricity pipes, which are improvised and then set up by novices, often explode and cause fires.   The sewers run in the open alongside the houses, emptying out in the first well of fresh water they find and where the city's waste is also dumped in general, transforming it into a dirty, foul-smelling catastrophe. It's an unhealthy well where algae and harmful plants reproduce, and bacteria that cause typhus epidemics and malarial fevers.
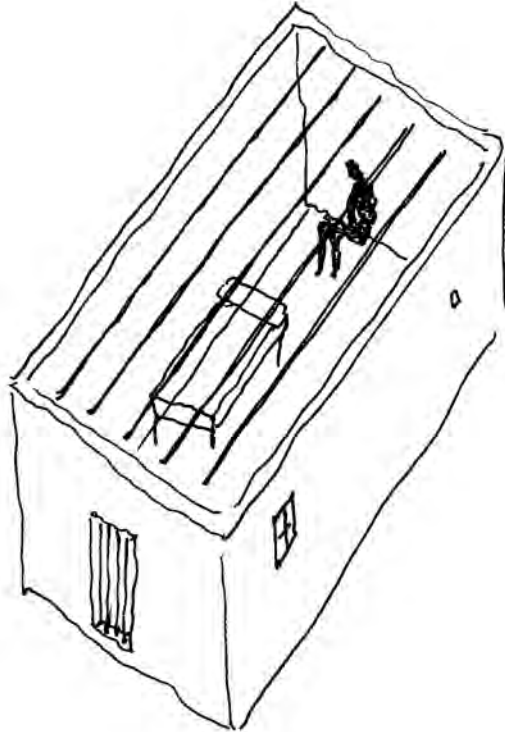
Durban. Real and Dystopias

CITY OF SHELTERS

It's a city that from far off resembles a port where cargo ships stop waiting to be loaded. The cranes and the colours of the containers are missing. There's the sea but the people who live there don't spill out onto the beaches swim or sunbathe in the tropical sun that burns distracted tourists' skin.   The beaches are deserted, abandoned to the seagulls that flock there, arranging themselves as if they were in flight in unmoving formations, all with their beaks and gaze turned in the same direction.   The city is all at the same height – the height of the houses spread out at almost regular distances and separated by sand. Seen from on high it reminds you of a "castrum", a city of soldiers to protect themselves and their families from themselves and from outside dangers; everyone fears them but no one knows precisely what they are.   The shelter houses are of three different types.   The first type is made from what might be works of art, but which aren't. Built with found materials and seen with the sophisticated eye of someone who knows about these things they are reminiscent of Gehry's early works in Santa Monica, knots of sheet metal, grids of chicken wire, irregular geometries. It's not "arte povera" but the aesthetics of deprivation and misery.   It's built with everything that you can find ("objet trouvé"), inventing reuses ("ready made"). But the people who build them are not artists, and the houses are not works of art but run down lodgings that are inhospitable and dark.   The sheet metal heats up under the sun's rays and you can fry an egg on the roof. You sleep on mattresses laid out on the uncovered ground. The wind makes the metal play music, the water

drums above percussively. Everything vibrates and heats up and makes you sweat even at night and keeps you awake.   The houses of raw earth are made as immediately as you can imagine for a building material, like a sand castle built on the beach. You sit down, dig with your hands and you shape and give a form to what you gather; you compress and beat it into layers within wooden pre-forms.   If the city is built in damp climates, the walls rest on a foundation of stones or bricks found and bound together with mortar. There's no need to get in outside builders – the construction is simple and the houses breathe.   They're all on one floor because it's too difficult to make them on two – too much material, too much uncertainty. They create a visual and material unity with the land they rest on, like extrusions or somersaults of the countryside plain, like a crack or the clay surface split by the sun. It's as if they had been grown through spontaneous germination, all one with the land.   If you observe the city from far off it resembles a mineral like Yazd, the city of wind towers in the Persian desert.   All the houses look similar and yet they're all different. There are few windows to not let the heat get in. Outside the towers stand out like the flags of a clay army. Inside the courtyards face the rooms, the gardens and the water that bring cool and wash the air from the sand that comes from the desert.

          The third type is made with bricks of coral. They come from the reef; they're easy to break and to shape either with industrial saws or with chisels depending on economic means. The reef is disappearing – the shellfish and the fish are escaping – and it is being recreated on dry land that is geometric and smells of the sea, populated

Durban. Real and Dystopias
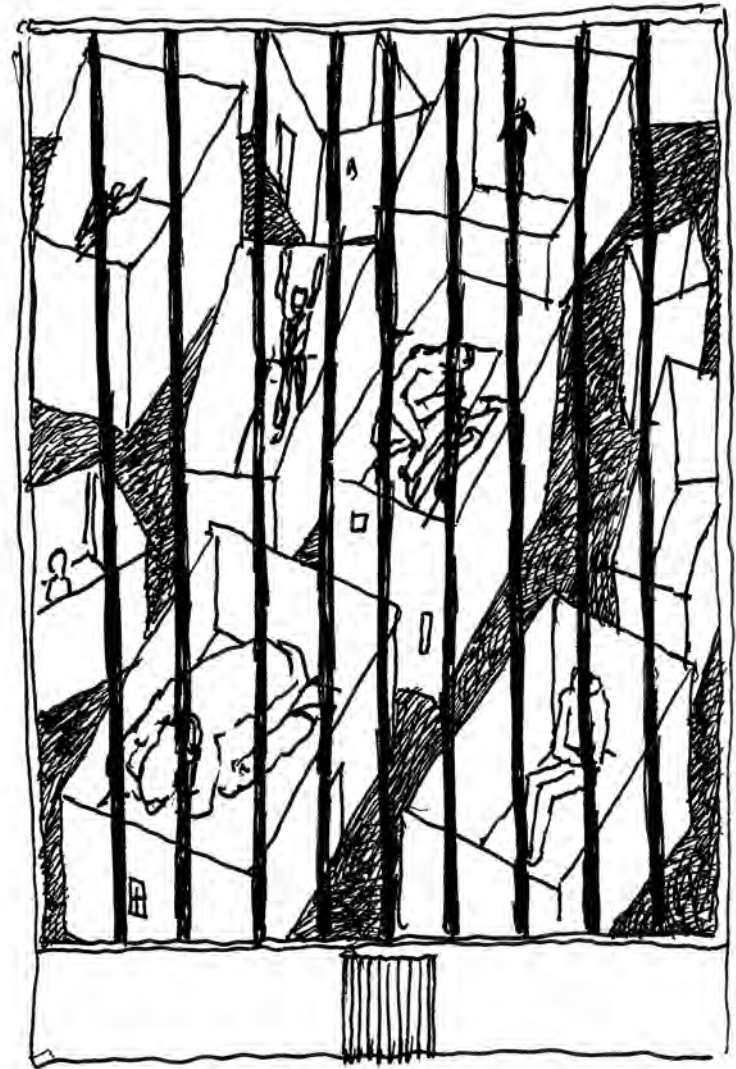
by people who are happy with it, pleased with that strong house that would resist the wolf's strongest blowing. The surfaces are sharp like a honed seashell; straw-coloured; rugged like a cliff.
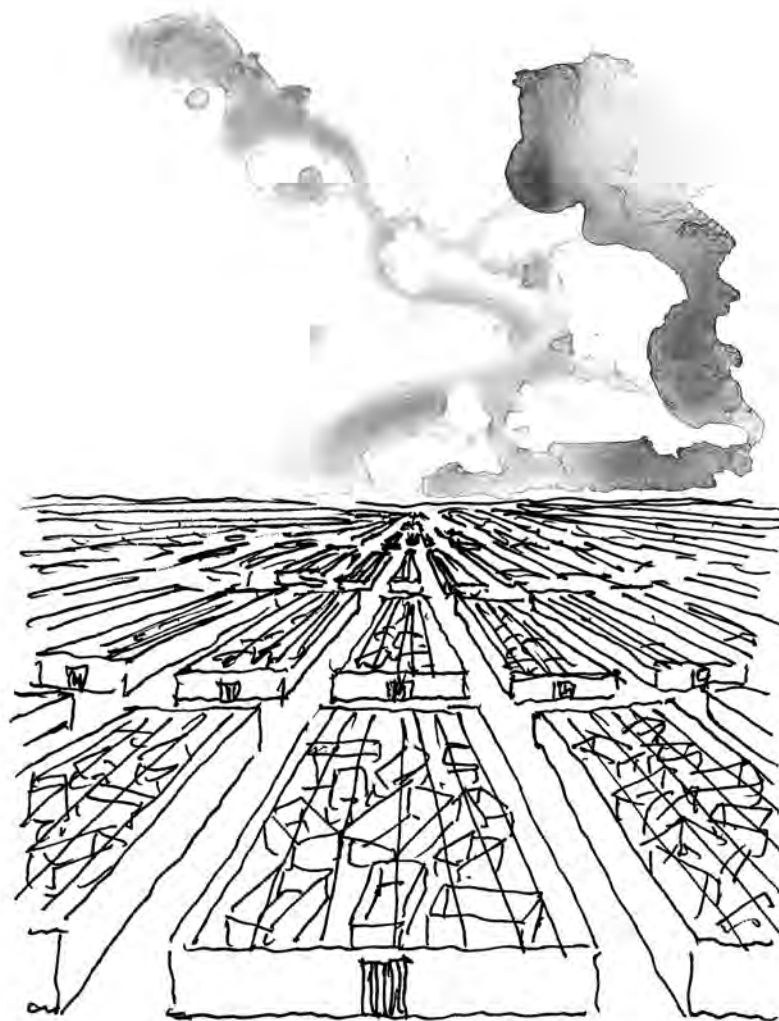
UNAUTHORISED CITY

The city expands wherever there's available space, like in a vast campsite. The limits are the natural ones – a river, a lake, a hill, the terracing, the built-up area, a road – but beyond that it starts up again, without letting itself be scared and as if nothing had happened, even without the presence of a bridge or a road.   The city is close to the industrial plant, one of the few important things. Roses are gathered here and all the inhabitants work here growing roses in a field that disappears from sight. Once the roses are grown they fly off to be distributed over the entire world.   The greenhouses are everywhere and with them the scent and the colours but behind the roses the lake is drying up because of all the pesticides that the cultivation is spilling in to it. The red of the roses seems pumped up by the lake, which is slowly bleeding to death.   In the city the scorching heat of the sheet metal roofs cooks the scent of the flowers and covers everything with a sweet, caramelised layer.

In the morning the farm workers wake up and walk in single file in the dark. The only thing to be seen in the dark-filled procession are their hands, tattooed by the red of the flowers. They work all day and come back like the farmers of Alentejo, when the sun has already set, with a sickly sweet smell in their nostrils, thorn scratches and bad backs.   They walk alongside the glass houses that are uniformly set out, with transparent walls and roofs lit up all night, as big as Crystal Palace – cathedrals of glass and metal. Inside the flowers are arranged in ordered rows and in different colours. It isn't hot because the water is sprayed and you can breathe. In the farm workers houses there isn't any running water,

but in the glass houses there is, and lots of it. Without being seen the women go in front of the sprinklers to refresh themselves and get clean. They shift the spray towards the men, who always stay half-hidden in the second row, fearful, as though they were ashamed to gather roses.   The rose palaces are the flip side of the farm workers' houses. They are glass palaces, full of scent and coolness, illuminated by all the lights stolen from the village sleeping next to them in the most absolute darkness.   The city exists because of the industrial plant; the production gives work to most of its inhabitants and the main difference to a mining town is that here you don't dig coal but gather roses. Just like the mining towns is the precariousness of the city's life tied to the survival of the ecosystem that guarantees the exploitation of the raw material.   Just as coal will sooner or later run out, in the same way the death of the lake, suffocated by pesticides, will sign the city's death warrant. The luckier ones will be moved to the new site that will rise up next to the place chosen for the new cultivations. The less lucky ones will remain in the city without the houses of light to illuminate the black night.   It's a city of miners, of farm workers, of factory and building site workers. They're like the road workers who are building on foreign capital almost everywhere. Or like the railway workers, heirs of the colonial powers with platforms on reduced differential.

Durban. Real and Dystopias

CITY OF CORRUPTION AND FEAR

If you get there at night you can barely find your way around because the houses and streets are not lit up. A few generators bought with the money collected by a group of families give out a dim, sallow light. You go to bed early and get up early in the morning when there's light that marks the rhythms alternating from day to night.

Seen from above the city appears to be asleep all the time – you hear voices, sometimes a cry, but not loud enough to wake you up. With the fall of the evening shadows no one goes out their house, not even to go to the next-door neighbour. The fear is of what is hiding in the dark. The house windows have curtains to protect them from stares in but not from the sun that gets through the gaps and tears. In the city resignation reigns; everything that's missing is not due and not requested; silence substitutes speech and dark replaces light. The life of the community and its protection are in the hands of the tribes. There are gifts and tributes to their chiefs, and power, advantages and earnings to their court. The tribes prosper due to their collaboration with public officials, state institutions and politicians, and most of all due to people's consent. The latter is guaranteed by the backwardness of city life, organised in family, feudal type structures. Families replace the institutions by providing an economic protection system and mutual support between their members. The family, with its system of family relations, its traditions, its social role, and especially with its internal bond of solidarity between its members, dominates over the rights of the individual and over the interests of the community. There is a feudal hierarchy of roles according to acquired

privileges and the exercise of control from on high over the workforce and all its activities in the city.   Social support for the tribes is maintained, and intensifies, due to political support. Politicians protect the tribes that finance them. At the elections politicians promise houses, infrastructure, water and energy.   In certain cases brotherhoods, mutual support societies, circles, and a complex structure of parishes, all collaborating with the existing system of corruption, replace the role of the family in the city. Little of these organisational structures are seen reflected in the organisation of the city's spaces.

          The city is organised into districts by invisible borders, each a sector under the influence of a family, a tribe or a power group. The wishes of the people are frustrated by the silence of the government for whom it is of little importance that the city resolves its endemic problems.   To build a house you need to apply for the permit with an upfront payment but the house remains unauthorised and can be knocked down at any moment. Once the house is built it isn't connected to the infrastructure or services because there aren't any. Rivulets of faeces run along the streets and rubbish piles up everywhere. The money that should be spent to build the water supply system and the drains end up in the hands of the tribes who use it differently.   The tribes replace the institutions for the people who need to resolve their problems and who are kept in a state of insecurity and fear. The city is the physical expression of unease, of the lack of work, the lack of access to basic services, and of many shortages. The city is the spatial expression of economic, ethnic, physical and spatial exclusion and of the total disinterest in politics. Up to 75% of the city's inhabitants

or under 25 years of age and they have little or no say in the decisions that affect their means of support. The government cannot manage to protect the most vulnerable sections of society. In order to reduce crime and violence between and towards the poor of the city it has set up 3 departments: Management of the Poor, Management of the Dark and Management of the Water. But among the people resignation is the dominant feeling, with less than 25% of criminal events in shantytowns being reported; and when it isn't the criminals to scare the people there are natural catastrophes to deal with it.

There's an enormous gap in understanding that must be overcome in order to better inform politics and to conquer the resignation of those who don't report crimes because they know they won't get justice. You would imagine that non-hierarchical social relations should match the uniformity of the organisation of the space. But that's not how it is.   On one side the city's inhabitants live in insecure conditions where their tolerance of the ecological and hygienic conditions is strongly put to the test. They all escaped from their villages because of poverty, the loss of the land they were cultivating, or to flee natural catastrophes, flooding, drought... despite which they're not all the same. Origins, nationality and religion are often reasons for hard conflict.

On the other side of the city live the families who almost control every aspect of the people's lives. They are different actors, with separate roles who protect their interests and advantages with different means, legitimate and not.   K. lives with his family in a sheet metal house made up of a single room where they eat, cook and sleep. The bathroom – as in all the houses in the city –

doesn't exist. K. came back in a very bad way from a bloody war, with two fingers less on his right hand and a glass eye. He's been ill in bed for 15 weeks.　　　He's had nine sons and his wife suffers from epilepsy. She usually makes under a dollar a day by cleaning houses in the other cities. At the moment she isn't finding any work. K. receives aid from the Management of the Poor worth about 10 dollars a month, which at the moment end up straight in the hands of the landlord.　　　A support group for the sick that is tolerated by the tribes because a member of one of the most important families runs it obtains a soup for him and his wife, which is their only meal of the day. The landlord wants to throw him out because he owes three months' rent; in short, on April 1 they'll take him to the Charité. It's the only hospital in the district and they'll throw his wife out of the room, which will be locked up with the little that remains inside which is all of K.'s material property.

　　　W. has grey hair that seems like ash on top of his almost unwrinkled skin. He's still in good health and he maintains a certain cheerfulness. His wife seems much younger. The clothes that she wears show a certain care for herself that contrasts with the misery of the room but not with the attention it's maintained with. Everything is tidy. The earth floor has just been brushed, the sheets on the double bed next to the kitchen are white and seem to shine with light compared to the soot that colours everything around them grey: the plastic plates; the kitchen rags; the straw chairs.　　　W. was very young when he arrived in the city. He spent a long time in hospital because of a foot disease. He still hadn't recovered when his wife fell ill and had to stay in bed for ten weeks. The hospital was full and W. got permission to take his

wife there thanks to the intervention of G., who controls bed access for two districts in the city.　　　W. didn't have the money to take his wife to hospital by ambulance. He'd sent his request to the department for the poor but he didn't get an answer. G. again lent him 10 dollars that W. is still now striving to pay back and for which he's had to do certain jobs, which if he'd told his wife about she would certainly not have been very happy.　　　Z. lives with his family in a single room and works as a mattress maker, mainly repairing those of the poor that are placed directly onto the earth floor, which is the most common flooring in the houses. The mattresses need a new filling all the time. The space is so cramped that to move around you have to walk on top of them as if they were rugs. The children use them too, sleeping on the piles heaped up at the sides of the room. To get up they use little rung ladders. Z. earns little more than 2 dollars a day which is scarcely enough for their basic needs but they risk the whole family being dragged into despair if there are out of the ordinary expenses, like his wife's illness which forced her to stay in hospital a long time.　　　So as not to give up work in her absence Z. had to leave his youngest son in the care of another family, which cost them around 30 dollars. Since he would never be able to repay all that money with his efforts he asked for the intervention of the Management of the Poor, from whom he got a once and for all amount of 25 dollars. After 4 weeks his wife returned home from hospital.　　　Z. worked night and day without managing to pay the rent regularly and was thrown out of the house. At that point he decided to move with his wife and children to his parents' house (50 dollars would probably have solved all of his problems for good at that time). But in his parents'
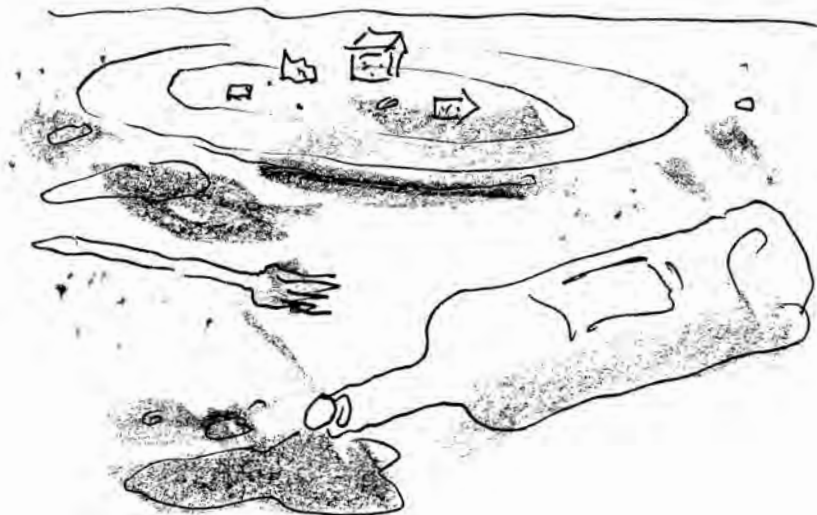
house he couldn't find clients and he got poorer and poorer day by day.   Now he doesn't have the money to buy buttons and filling so he can only do sewing jobs. He can't earn more than 80 cents a day. After his parents death his wife fell ill with gout and can't work. What makes them suffer economically above all is the rent. The threat of being thrown out of their house torments him.

For things to eat he alternates bread and black coffee, herrings and flour soup. His wife suffers from having lost her milk for the youngest child and being forced to buy bad, expensive beverages. Mother's milk is a precious item among the mothers in the city.   The functionary from the Management of the Poor visited them to check on his conditions and his family's. As a result they were promised 10 dollars but only a few cents have been paid. Two days later when W. went to the department and asked for the rest of the money in person they sent him away in a very unpleasant way.

CITY OF RESEARCH

The city still exists despite all the problems it's had. From the big ones, like the recent bulldozer action in which thousands of inhabitants (4,000) lost their houses because the government had ordered a road-widening programme. To the small ones, like the loss of a defective gas duct that caused a fire destroying 26 apartments.   In recent years the city has gone through a phase of democratic crisis, a temporary government, two national elections and an administrative reform, not to say anything about the pressures on the property market particularly affecting the most central area.   And so, even today, in the clear light of day, the city's still there with its tin-roof houses, its mosques, its trees and its palms. And with its inhabitants, the seasonal workers and the migrants from the countryside who started building the first temporary housing 30 years ago. Their children have grown up here, their relatives found shelter and new neighbours have arrived.   Today more than 200,000 people live in the city. It's because of their commitment, their enthusiasm, that the city works so well that it's been defined a luxury slum. Despite which, under the law, they are unauthorised occupants and can be thrown out at any moment whatsoever.   That's what makes the cynicism so obvious of someone who talks about luxury, just as it makes the blindness equally clear of government machinery that confuses its tasks with the duties of the inhabitants or with those of the NGOs.

            And despite that the inhabitants firmly believe in the destiny of their city, they actively contribute to its development and fight for its recognition. This enthusiasm of the inhabitants is what makes their will a staple in

the battle for the right to the city for the whole world.

The people gather in the squares, unsatisfied; like paparazzi, academics collect information, impressions, they take photos, they want to know the degree of dissatisfaction, why the people are unhappy and what they want. The inhabitants release interviews, have themselves photographed in their living rooms. They show their bedrooms, the children's rooms, and some even show their bathrooms. They have themselves filmed and they tell how they managed to find a house.

They talk about rights to the city more than the right to live somewhere, creating a slogan that has gone viral from northern Europe to North America and now in the Global South. In Latin America, in Africa, beyond plans and politics, the residents are making available their practices for working and creating their own spaces – practices which, when and if they manage to be institutionalised and stabilised, could be transformed into formal institutional agreements.

Durban. Real and Dystopias
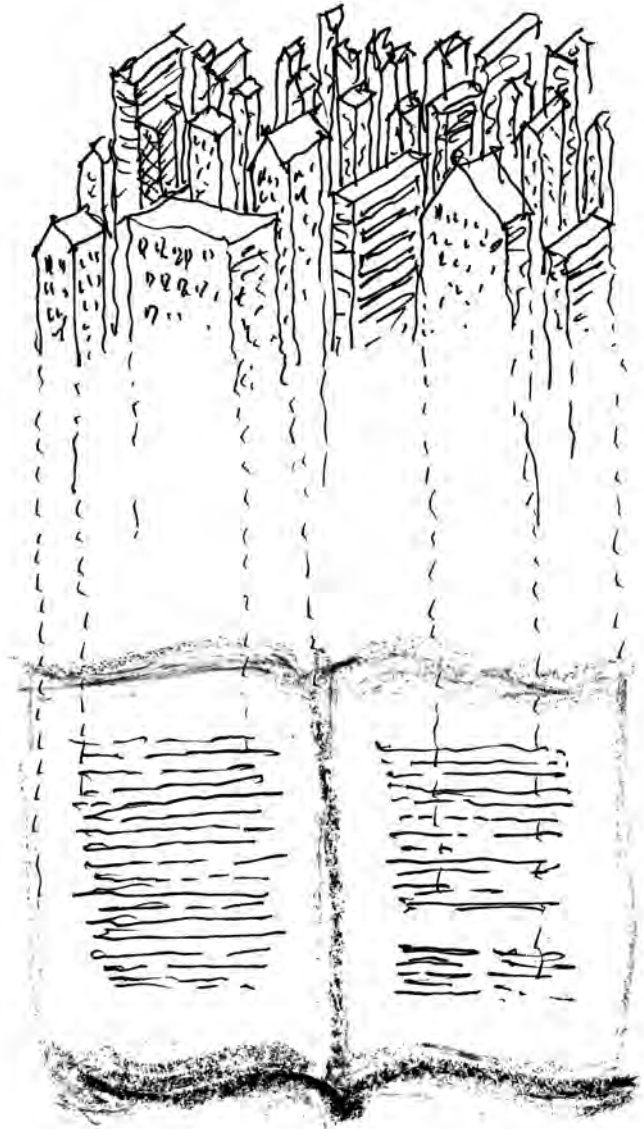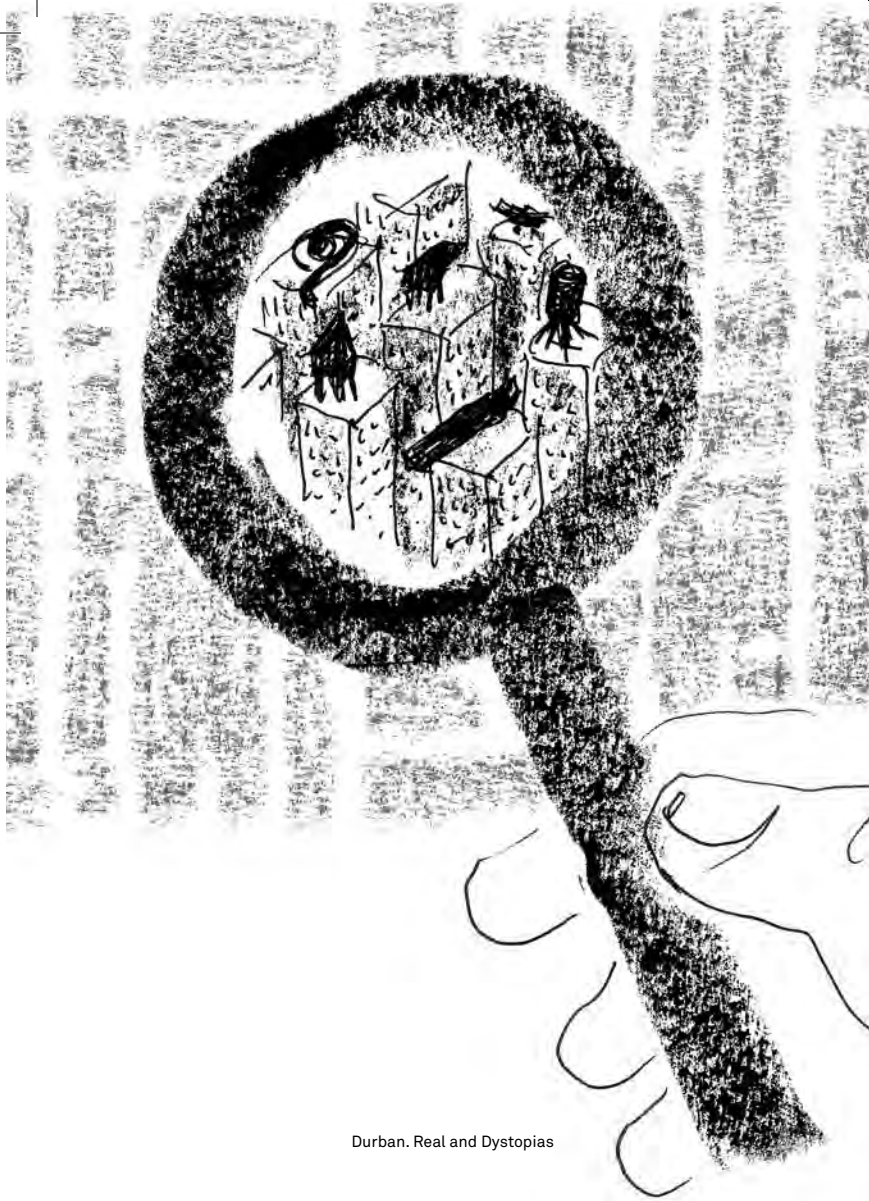
Durban. Real and Dystopias

CITY FROM THE SKY

There are so many problems. The city lacks everything, from food to electricity and the people stopped asking a long time ago. They're tired of someone deciding for them where they have to live and what work they have to do, which school they have to send their children, which nurseries. Because, as well as that, there aren't really any nurseries and schools here in the city and those that there are all very far away – you need to go on foot and walk a long way but going with the children takes away too much time from work.   In return for all their efforts to adapt they get nothing back. A delegation of architects, historians, ethnographers, human geographers have been trying to meet them for a few days but the aircraft that fly over the city can't find runways suitable for landing.   The houses form an impenetrable expanse with no space between. The people meet every evening like conspirators in a bar improvised in sheet metal and discuss how to organise their assault on the "Bastille". The evening's topic of discussion is if, and how much violence, should be allowed to be used. The only decorations on the walls are the portraits of Guy Debords, Henry Lefebvres and Michel Focaults.   The "Bastille" is a supermarket on the edge of the city where it finishes and the other city begins, the one "designed from the plane". In the "Bastille" all the supermarket's food past its sell-by date is loaded into the courtyard where, at any time of day, the people go to get even their weekly provisions. They open the big bins or take things straight from the shelves, stored as if they were on sale.   You can find everything you need to eat well: corn, seeds (to eat, and to plant), every type of vegetable, big colourful fruit, sausages,
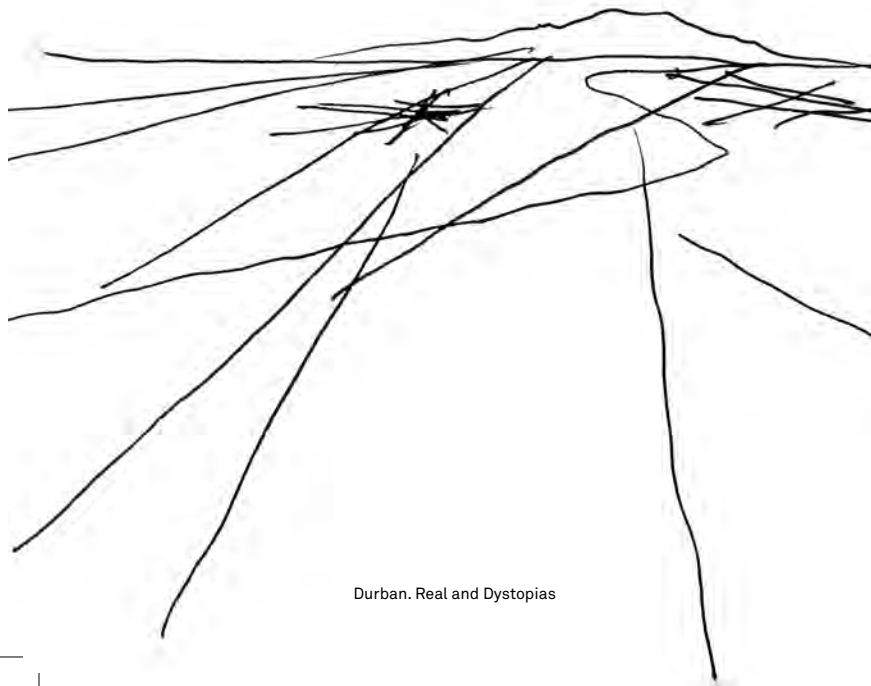
chicken breasts. There's everything that can't be sold because it's past its sell-by date but it's still edible and in some cases it's very good.   The "Bastille" stands on an isolated piece of open land surrounded by road junctions that divide the two cities, the one planned from the ground and the one planned from the plane, the city of "God's eye view".   In the city planned from the plane the food and water are delivered by drones that leave from a Norman Foster designed station. The city planned from the plane follows a Le Corbusier proposal from an intuition he had during a flight over San Paolo in Brazil in 1930. In the background there is the world crisis, in front on an agile two-seater is the poet in love with (engine) flight, Antoine de Saint Exùpery.   The perception of urban topography from up high (in the clouds) fed Le Corbusier's passion for rational design, with its straight, sharp angles – shapes that in his vision of the capitalist city would have made it even quicker and more efficient. But in the end that modern city bowed down to the sinuousness of the topography and it lost its formal rigour, making way for the complex and the shimmering. Le Corbusier himself converted to organic urban design as he explains in his book *Aircraft*[1].   The city at the side, the city planned from the ground doesn't come out of a design as much as from spontaneous germination. Whatever direction you choose to look at it, it looks like a mass of houses that cover the ground and unify its topography. It's the mystery of a city without architects and it's a mystery that should be investigated.   It has to be done with tools that permit us to rethink the physical limits of contemporary architecture, shifting the emphasis from the importance of the form (and the image-making aspects of architecture)
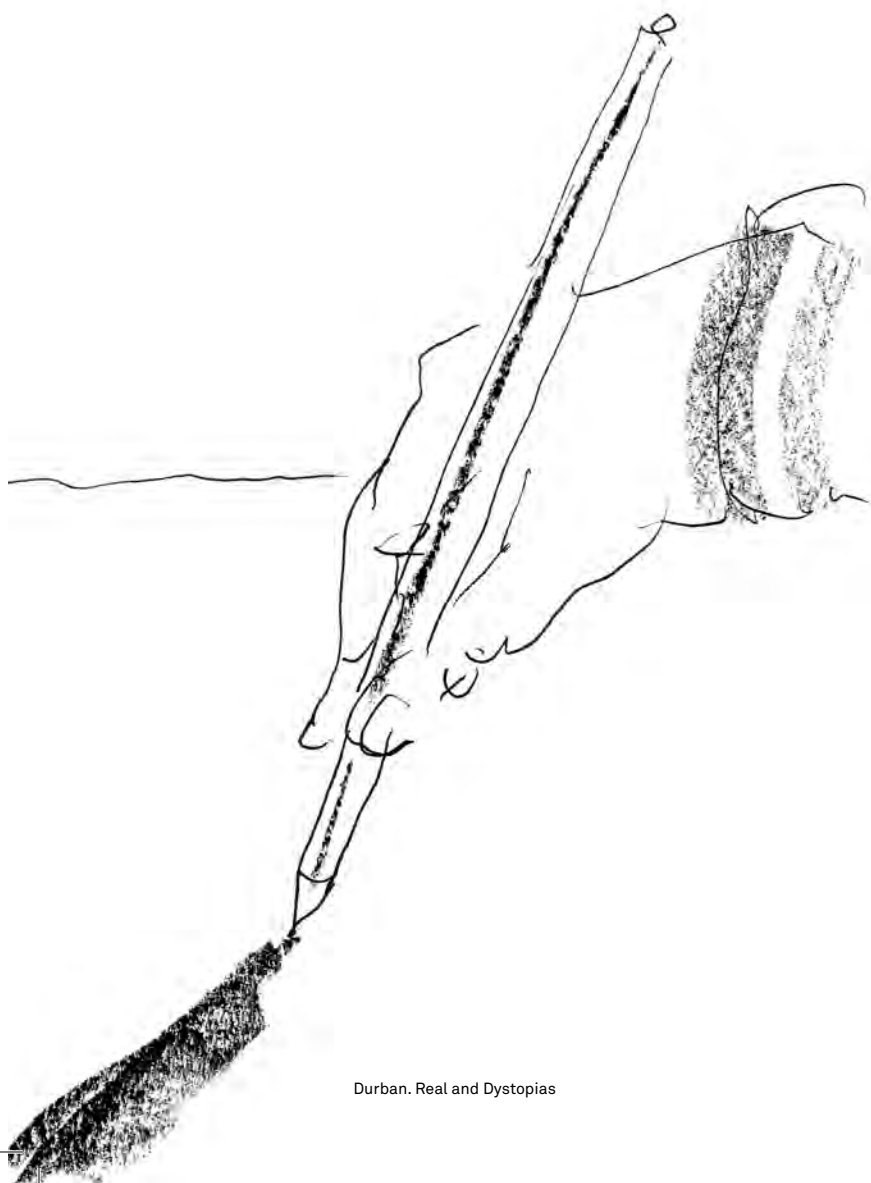
Durban. Real and Dystopias

to architecture oriented towards social purposes. The figure of the architect is called upon to stand in comparison with the new movements that lay claim to the right to the city and the bottom-up networks that act in its planning. These are movements that have brought fresh air into government and change management, also stimulating reflections on the role of the architect.

In order to understand how to work in this context the architect has to understand what the relationship is between the process and the form and what to do within the cities that are being born and transformed without the contribution of traditional planning. The architect has to consider the people as co-creators of projects and absorb understanding from them by observing their day-to-day practices since these developments are challenging our professional understanding of how to build and plan cities, their buildings, their districts and their places.

1   Le Corbusier, *Aircraft. The New Vision* (London, New York: The Studio, 1935).

Durban. Real and Dystopias

SEVEN
D-URBAN
DYSTOPIAS
—
M A P
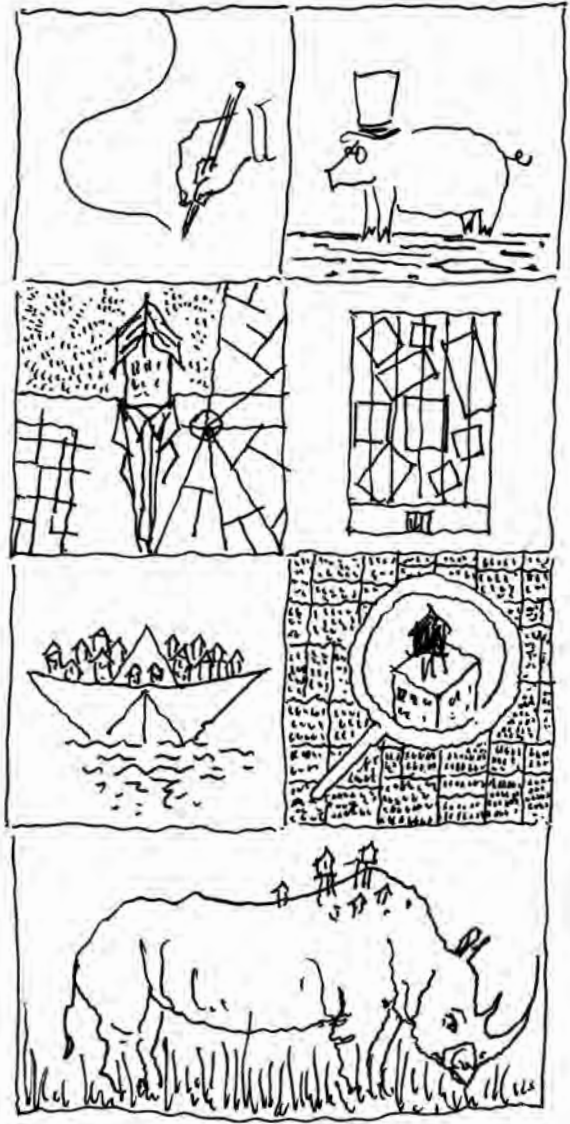
AFTERWORD.

My Durban

Nina Saunders[1]

Durban languishes like a 70s diva with multiple personas awaiting the evening's pleasure. Nestled between estuary and harbour, she is a port city; inviting decadence and offering promise. She carries an air of by-gone opulence; mascara liquid in the heat, her lipstick kissed off by the sun. She is fragile city, frayed at the centre like an aged prima donna. Time has traced many laps through the circuitry of her veins and the scars of past betrayals are etched into the fabric of her making. Apartheid mars the connection between her limbs. She is brash city a tourist mecca. In the summertime all arteries lead to her beachfront heart where thronging revellers converge for rebirth in her oceanic waters at each New Year. She is rejected city – corporate commerce fled her and settled beyond her reaches in coveted cane fields to her north near Mhlanga as her gates opened to the previously excluded people from her hinterland. She is threshold city – exactly to those previously so violently excluded. She provides a foothold for enterprise within the public street-side spaces. She provides space for connection and interaction at the exchanges in Warwick under the guardianship of the vast mural of Nomkhubulwane – goddess of rain, nature and fertility. She is refuge city – to the Zanzibari community, rescued in ships from the slave trade off the eastern coast of Africa and guided to safety in her harbour by the British colonisers in the 1870s. These refugees established their community on the Bluff headland that slice of silent waiting, still against the throb of city life. She is opportunity city – historically for the flotilla of indentured labourers from India who travelled the ocean to work the sugarcane fields; today for those who flow through her arteries in search of daily

sustenance. She is make-shift city – quiet restless sleepers secret themselves beneath folds of cardboard in the sanctuary offered by her bridges. They weigh their "blankets" to sell in the morning and start afresh their hunt for bedding in the bounty of refuse. She is spiritual city – with water baptisms at dawn in shallow waves overlooked by the barbell-wielding fitness fanatics and conversational walkers who all claim temporal territory along the prized beach promenade between Suncoast Casino and the contested turf of Vetches Pier. She is city of the night – rumbling buses come to town long before dawn, filled with silent moneyed travellers. They come to the night markets at Mansel Road to fill their hawker bags and buy blue recycled drums for water storage – all for resale in distant towns that they will return to in time for the next day's trade. She is magnetic city – to the swelling flux of 400,000 commuters who move through the Berea Station daily, to the 450,000 revellers coming to her shores in the summer times and to the 350,0000 Shembe followers converging on Ebuthleni for the July festivals. She is appropriation city – taking things and making them her own. The city abounds with 'buildings in the Art Deco style but on her shores the style transmuted after the inclusion of heraldic emblems representing the flora and fauna found here. Even the rigour of Modernism gave way to a modernism coined "sub-tropical" with the architecture of Crofton and Benjamin. Her sinuousness infects even the concrete of her buildings. She is time-share city – spaces are shared between commerce and devotion. 10,000 devotees of Badsha Peer have exclusive use of the Brooke Street Market Shelter for one week of the year to venerate their saint

his life and miracles. The rest of the year the Market accommodates the traders of Warwick. The soaring open-air structure of the Market Shelter was paid for by a partnership between the Badsha Peer Mazaar Society and the city. She is birthing city – a place of creation and incubation. In the folds of the Inanda Valley three significant movements fought their way through political darkness to bring more "light". Here Gandhi formulated his philosophy of Satyagrah at Bhambayi; here the visionary prophet Isaiah Shembe divined the Shembe religion, meshing the Nazarene faith with the tenants of Zulu spiritual practice; and here John Langalibalele Dube, the founding president of the Afrincan National Congress (ANC) resided. Here also Nelson Mandela came to Dube's graveside after voting in the country's first free election stating: "I have come to report, Mr President, that South Africa is now free". 20 years after the birth of her democracy it's time for the second act. A rejuvenating energy takes succour from her being and is growing new life from her maternal folds. She is home – to a myriad of cultures all cupped in her hands and whispered to longingly at dusk as the Muezzin calls drift over the townships, whisper through middleclass suburbs… and gush out over the cobalt sea.

1   Nina Saunders is a practicing architect. She has been employed at the eThekweni Municipality where she leads the urban department for 10 years where she has engaged in the democratisation of the built fabric of the city and in catalytic inner-city rejuvenation projects. Nina is active within the architectural fraternity in South Africa, serving amongst others on the organising committee for the 2014 UIA international congress in Durban. She qualified with a degree Bachelor of Architecture from the University of KwaZulu Natal in 1994.

Carte blanche
White is the color of possibility.
White paper expects lands from the imaginary,
raises the issue of the witness.
Who bears witness to what, and why?
The when and the how are not so relevant:
this is about the author, his work, his audience,
our carte blanche.
Moreover Oscar Wilde said:
"My wallpaper and I are fighting a duel to the death.
One or the other of us has to go".

Titles in the series