The Project of Autonomy:
Politics and Architecture within and against Capitalism

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In Tronti's view, however, Tafuri's critique of ideology in the context of his analysis of Red Vienna was too mechanical, too anchored in the concept of economic planning as the sole mode of capitalist advancement.[69] According to Tronti, what appeared to Tafuri as a regressive utopia in Vienna was instead a rare ability on the part of the Social Democratic municipality to exploit the dire economic and political conditions of Austria after World War I and thereby to begin to build a socialist city from within but against the forms of the bourgeois city. We should not forget that although the Social Democrats controlled the municipal administration, they constituted the minority opposition party in the National Parliament. This situation made Vienna a "state of exception" in which the municipality was literally advancing urban policies in opposition to the national ones, with all th strategic political symbolism that this situation implied.

The postulation of an archipelago of monumental ar as an alternative to the master planning of the entire thus not simply a matter of clever compromises in achieve the best possible outcome—which for T constitute a manifestation of the autonomy of a very advanced urban design proposal. As total planning of the capitalist city, it inco by means of its very negativity, that is, i dialectical process, its production of and confrontation. In line with the t negative thought, the monument in sum, an expression of the wi with the existing city while a e the expression of the dominant ositions were for Tronti a coherent and with the "objective" conditions of capi e other hand, refused to credit this crucial asp -Marxism as applied to the urban design of socialis a. He took a negative view of the municipality's willingnes to compromise, its apparently backward urban politics, its call for a new workers' monumentality, and its will to action and power within the fragmented context of the metropolis, without recourse to the abstraction of a general plan, of a total programming of the *Groszstadt*.

Yet Red Vienna was a clear manifestation of what the Oper s were searching for beyond the critique of ideology: na utonomy of political action and its primacy with pitalist evolution of society. For the Operaists, olitical meant a careful tuning of Marxist singularity of the places where those an overall plan for the city but rather , in their view, the only concrete means to ve to capitalist planning. If bourgeois power ped by exceptions and singularities rather than grams, these same exceptions and singularities lly become forms representing the autonomous workers. But such an approach required an entirely eading of the city. It required an understanding of as a place of political formation—of contingencies, s, and exceptions—rather than as a place based on tract mechanisms of planning and development. It is within is perspective that Aldo Rossi's conception of an autonomous architecture firmly based on the idea of the singularity of the *locus* rather than on the science of planning came close to the Operaists' conclusions—paradoxically enough, much closer than did Tafuri's critique of ideology.

Rossi: The Concept of the *Locus* as a Political Category of the City

The construction of an alternative to the capitalist city and the proposal of an autonomous architectural culture thus meant, above all, the constitution of a theory of the city. In the 1950s Italian architecture had been mainly a matter of increasing *professionalismo* (literally, professionalism). It was an attempt to link a still artisanal dimension of design and building techniques with the urgent demands of modernization created by the rapid advance of postwar capitalist development. In the 1960s, however, with the reemergence of political struggles and new social conflicts, the necessity appeared in all disciplines, including within the internal discourse of architecture and urbanism, to find a way toward cultural and conceptual renewal. Instead of

simply advancing in tandem with the further modernization of architecture and the city, the need for renewal became visible as a demand for a theoretical refoundation of architecture in relation to the city.

In the 1950s and early 1960s the main protagonists of the intellectual debate in architecture had been Bruno Zevi, an architectural historian, critic, and founder of the Movement for Organic Architecture (APAO); Giulio Carlo Argan, an art historian and author of several important contributions to the theory and historiography of modern architecture; and Ernesto Nathan Rogers, an architect and leader of the BBPR office and director of the prestigious magazine Casabella continuità from 1953 to 1964. Their contributions may be summed up as a critical recuperation and cultural reinvention of the theoretical objectives of the Modern Movement, especially as the latter were represented by three different directions: Frank Lloyd Wright's organic architecture (supported by Zevi), Walter Gropius's pedagogical program at the Bauhaus (supported by Argan), and the ethical legacy of CIAM (supported by Rogers).[70] This recuperation was to some degree intended by all three theorists as a political project, aimed at a new cultural and historical legitimation of the liberal trajectory of the Modern Movement as the only path to a democratic architecture and city.

But it was against the ideological pretensions of this nexus of liberalism, democracy, and modernism that the refoundation of architectural theory would take form in the 1960s in the thinking of the next generation, above all architects like Aldo Rossi and Andrea Branzi, both born in the 1930s and reaching intellectual maturity at this moment. For these new protagonists, the cultural proposals advanced by intellectuals like Zevi, Argan, and Rogers were still bound to a reformist view of the relationship between politics and architectural thought. They aimed at a recovery of the modern city in terms of the negative political, cultural, and formal instrumentalities and ideologies that had been brought into being by capitalist development: respectively, spatial humanism as a way of making the new forms of habitation more acceptable, new technologies as a way of distributing social equality, and coexistence between the old and the new as a way of manifesting an ethical pluralism. What these committed intellectuals did

not, and could not, put into question was their own unwavering trust in the continuing progress of democracy; they were unable to question the structural foundations of this assumption. The basis of the postwar democratic city—both the real one and the one imagined by these "liberal" architectural thinkers—was not simply the political economy of capitalism, however, but also its ideological representations. The latter especially took the form of a rediscovered "humanism," which became the mantra of socially *engagé* intellectuals.

With the rhetorical abuse and exhaustion of professionalism and humanism in the early 1960s, and in the face of the advancing process of integration of social relations within the context of contemporary capitalist development, there were, in the view of the new generation of intellectuals, two theoretical paths that appeared as potentially valid alternatives in architecture: on the one hand, a political affirmation of the autonomy of architectural *poiesis* in the form of the reinvention of categories such as typology and place (Rossi); and on the other, a critique of the ideology of the capitalist city as this ideology manifested itself in the postwar recuperation of the Modern Movement and a new wave of technological avant-gardism in the 1960s (Tafuri and Branzi). In spite of their sometimes radical differences, these two positions may be said to have converged in the necessity of a theory that consisted not in the autonomy of the discipline, but in the autonomy of a political subject committed to the formulation of a cultural alternative to the bourgeois domination of the capitalist city. Theory was always against ideology, as Tronti affirmed in these years. If ideology coincided with the blind belief in progress, with faith in the evolution of society for the better, theory, as Tronti quoted from Paul Klee, was *sichtbar machen*—making visible, that is, the construction of a clear analytical and political point of view based on the solid ground of concrete conceptual categories.[71] But in making visible what was invisible, theory was also meant to go beyond the critique of ideology, to resolve itself in the project. It was in this sense that in 1966 Rossi, just after completing his book L'architettura della città, declared at a symposium organized by the school of architecture in Venice:

> The creation of a theory is the first objective of an architectural school, prior to all other types of research. A design theory is the most important moment of every form of architecture; thus, in an architectural school, the course in theory should be the driving force in the curriculum. It is remarkable how rarely one encounters theories of architecture or, in other terms, rational explanations of how to make architecture. One stumbles across only a few writings on this matter, by either the most naive or else the most outstanding individuals. Above all, one notices how those who adopt a few principles of a theoretical type become so uncertain about them as to avoid trying to verify them, which is the most important moment of any theory—in other words, to establish a relationship between the theory and making of architecture. In the end, one can only say this: that for some a theory is only a rationalization of a previous action; therefore, it tends to be a norm rather than a theory. At the risk of appearing naive, my proposal is to outline a true and appropriate theory of architecture, in other words, to form a theory of design as an integral part of a theory of architecture.[72]

Having been deeply influenced by the writings of Antonio Gramsci, especially Gramsci's reflections on the role of intellectuals—whom the political philosopher had defined as autonomous yet organically linked to party institutions and thus responsible for the creation of its hegemonic forms of culture—Rossi joined the Italian Communist Party in 1956, at the time of the Twentieth Party Congress in the Soviet Union and the invasion of Hungary, a moment when many leftist intellectuals were instead leaving the party. His intellectual formation between 1954 and 1964 as a politically engaged architecture student and regular contributor to Rogers's magazine Casabella continuità included the writing of a series of articles in which he came to see architecture no longer as a product of masters but as an integral part of the evolution of urban phenomena.[73] Carlo Aymonino, an architect who directed the design department of the IUAV in the 1970s and was close to Rossi, has said that what characterized their generation was primarily the replacement of architectural history interpreted within an art-historical perspective by urban history understood in relation to political development.[74] If this is so, then we may say that Rossi represented a paradigmatic case, and his pioneering essays on Milanese neoclassicism and the architecture of the Enlightenment, his monographic writings on architects like

Loos and Behrens, and his case studies of cities like Berlin, Hamburg, and Vienna aimed to establish a new, autonomous field of research in which architectural form was conceived as the primary means of constituting the politics of the modern city.

Rossi's hypothesis of autonomous architecture involved more than the rejection of the naiveté of functionalism, nor was it just a call for disciplinary specificity. It was rather a search for a rational language: a theory of form liberated from the sequence of formal styles in the service of the dominant bourgeois institutions. His rediscovery of the architecture of rationalism was an attempt to recuperate and reappropriate the legacy of the bourgeois city as the form of the socialist city. In his first important essay, entitled "Il concetto di tradizione nel neoclassicismo milanese" (The concept of tradition in the architecture of Milanese neoclassicism),[75] he analyzed the relationship between the politics of the Napoleonic government of Milan and its specific architectural language. This language had its formal expression in the Jacobin rationalism of Luigi Antolini's design for the Foro Bonaparte. What Rossi saw in this architecture, and in other monumental buildings and urban interventions of Napoleonic Milan, was the will of the bourgeoisie to assert and represent itself as the dominant new class vis-à-vis the old aristocracy. The architecture of the neoclassical city was thus for Rossi primarily a political choice by the Milanese bourgeoisie concerning the new institutions of power, who understood them as means to define and realize its idea of public space. The bourgeois class thus gave expression to its existence and status through its appropriation and reinvention of the classical tradition. In Rossi's view, it was time for the socialist city to likewise construct its own tradition by appropriating and reinventing the legacy of *its* predecessor, namely the city of the bourgeoisie.

It was in the context of his effort to define the civic realism of a socialist architecture that Rossi revisited the history of European bourgeois rationalism from the eighteenth to the twentieth century—from Boullée to Loos. This project reached its theoretical culmination in 1973 with Rossi's organization and curatorship of the Fifteenth Triennale in Milan, which Rossi devoted to a survey on "rationalist" architecture in the twentieth 24, 25

century, both before and after World War II.[76] In contrast to the general design exuberance of the 1960s, Rossi reappropriated the tradition of rationalism not in the fashion of the Modern Movement, as a normative and functional language, but rather as an affirmation of a potentially autonomous architecture opposed to the hybrid and technologically heteronomous forms being churned out by neocapitalist urbanism at this time. In commenting on his choice of references and examples for the Triennale, Rossi wrote: "[W]e have here incorporated some texts by and references to Ludwig Hilberseimer, Adolf Behne, and Hans Schmidt because they have a particular meaning within the legacy of the Modern Movement. These texts are valid because they have confronted the contradictions of bourgeois architecture from a socialist perspective."[77]

For Rossi it was important to continue the modern tradition of Hilberseimer, Behne, and Schmidt not as a generic and open-ended movement, but as a political and cultural project, a *tendenza*[78]—a recognizable architectural development aiming to establish an alternative to the capitalist city. Within this framework, what was needed, according to Rossi, was not a change of architectural style or urban form, but the elaboration of a new theoretical point of view on the city and architecture. Its aim should be the primacy of political choices over technocratic ones. In this sense, Rossi's elaboration of an autonomous architecture coincided with his proposal of a theory of the city capable of challenging what he saw in the early 1960s as capitalism's new form of urban project: its totalistic planning of the city, with its concomitant celebration of technology. For Rossi, the premise of a contemporary theory of the city should be the city as a site of political choices—as a concrete geography of places irreducible to the totality and continuity of urbanization.

A fundamental testing ground for Rossi's theoretical challenge to late-capitalist urbanity was his first teaching experience as a tutor in the advanced course of urbanism organized by the Olivetti Foundation in Arezzo in 1963. Conceived as a specialized program for postgraduate students, the Arezzo advanced course was conducted by important figures within the Italian urban debate such as Ludovico Quaroni and Giancarlo de Carlo. Among the younger tutors, besides Rossi himself, it

included the participation of Paolo Ceccarelli—an urbanist and the translator of Kevin Lynch's The Image of the City—and Tafuri, at that time a militant young historian and architect involved in a newly established collaborative of architects and planners called AUA (Architetti Urbanisti Associati), which was inspired by the professional *modus operandi* of American practices like Gropius's TAC and Skidmore, Owings & Merrill. The theme of the advanced course was the updating of the discipline in the face of the changes that had occurred within Italian cities and their surrounding territory under the pressure of the economic boom of the 1950s and early 1960s and the accompanying massive immigration from the poor south to the industrialized north. This disciplinary updating, underwritten by the Olivetti Foundation, was carried out in the context of a newly formed Center-Left national coalition strongly focused on economic programming, urban planning, and other new urban initiatives.[79]

Within this perspective in which urbanism was understood to be the horizon where all the design disciplines converged, the two goals of the Arezzo course were, first, an elaboration and discussion of new techniques inspired by the tradition of town planning and, second, the conceptualization of a "new urban dimension" beyond the traditional form and confines of the historical city. Just one year before, in 1962, Tafuri and Giorgio Piccinato, in an important essay published in Casabella continuità, had proposed the concept of the "city-territory" as an innovative framework within which to study the recent transformations of the urban landscape.[80] The main emphasis of their contribution, in both their essay and the course, was the paradigm of the territory as an open form created by the complex new network of transportation and other economic flows. According to Tafuri and Piccinato, the primary consequence of the new modes of industrial production was the increasing integration of the city and countryside into a single entity, creating a new territorial scale and role.

Tafuri's and Piccinato's position in the Arezzo course therefore emerged within the institutional Left's consciousness of the increasing importance of new planning devices, understood as rigorously "scientific" methods for integrating economic programming and territorial planning. Indeed, one

of the political objectives of this Center-Left coalition, and especially of the Socialist Party, was the rationalization of the means of capitalist production and distribution in the interests of attaining a more balanced social system. This balanced capitalism received a precise and categorical formal definition: that of the "city-territory."[81] Viewed within the political framework of the increasing expansion of capitalism to the entire social spectrum, this category of the city-territory—presented by many leftist planners and architects (including Tafuri and Piccinato) as the ultimate destiny of urban evolution—was not politically neutral. Underlying it was an affirmation of the mutated modes of production created by the transition from a purely competitive to a more organized—oligarchic or monopolistic—form of capitalism. This new capitalism imposed the need for greater logistical coordination among cities, centers of industrial production, and the urban territory lying between them.

Rossi's polemical stance against the category of the city-territory in both the Arezzo course and L'architettura della città became the basis of his proposal for an alternative urban theory founded on the idea of the *locus*. Interpreted in the cultural and political context in which he was writing, the *locus* must be understood as a concept aimed directly at countering the processes of capitalist integration. But before further analyzing Rossi's position, let us see how the radical Left reacted to theoretical proposals such as the city-territory as presented in the Arezzo course. A very interesting reaction was that of Claudio Greppi and Alberto Pedrolli in an article entitled "Produzione e programmazione territoriale" (Production and territorial planning), published in the third issue of Quaderni rossi.[82] Militants of Operaism and students at the school of architecture in Florence, Greppi and Pedrolli emphasized how the new concept of the city-territory represented a qualitative leap in capitalism's strategic process of appropriation of the city. According to the authors, the capitalist instrumentalization of urban design had had the effect during the first half of the twentieth century of fragmenting and dispersing the labor force throughout the territory, favoring regressive forms like the Garden City and the rural neighborhood. After World War II, the typical examples of Italian social housing included the many

complexes built under the auspices of INA-Casa, an institution established by the Christian Democrats to shelter "those who work."[83] The plans of INA-Casa and other housing organizations were likewise fragmentary and incremental, and they continued to be based on the notion of the self-sufficient, decentralized neighborhood unit. With the advent of neocapitalism, however, according to Greppi and Pedrolli, the need to better integrate the workers—who were being transformed from a simple industrial force into a social one—with the forces of production caused the strategies of fragmentation to be supplanted by those of territorial coordination. In this sense, as Greppi and Pedrolli wrote, "the obsolete concept of the self-sufficient satellite city still reacting to a static relationship between city and countryside is replaced by the city-territory, understood as a structure that organizes the totality of the urban territory in order to make it more productive."[84]

Greppi and Pedrolli accused the "young leftist theorists" of urbanism of taking for granted the category of the city-territory as a neutral and progressive representation of the human habitat. "Behind the definition of the city-territory," Greppi and Pedrolli stated, "there is only the attempt to integrate the labor force more within the development of capitalism, this time not through repression but through democratic institutions and even through the battles of the Left for greater social justice."[85] As such, the only alternative to the idea of the city-territory, in their view, was not its socialist reappropriation, but rather an autonomous appropriation of the city as it was. This autonomous appropriation was identified by the authors not as a new urban planning project but as the taking over of already established working-class typologies. The fortress-type buildings constructed by the Social Democratic municipality of Red Vienna as a counter to the unlimited extension of the city, discussed above, would be one example of this approach. Typologies were concrete urban signs, according to Greppi and Pedrolli, the representation of a concrete and precise political choice in opposition to presumed "scientific" planning. Against the social integration of the capitalist city, democratically absorbed by the developing forces of production, Greppi and Pedrolli proposed a city of parts identified with a geography of working-class

resistance to such integration. Their proposal was very similar to both Operaism's political critique and to Rossi's architectural critique of the urban category of the city-territory.

During the seminar Rossi strongly opposed the use of categories from the contemporary planning discourse that he saw as products of a blind and positivistic faith in urban development. Against the mystification of the city-territory—which was put forward in Arezzo by Tafuri and endorsed by Quaroni and de Carlo—Rossi insisted on the concreteness of the urban artifact, of the architecture of the city, as the most relevant and precise instrument of urban analysis and design. Instead of looking to the city as an undefined, neutral ground shaped only by the categories imposed by the accelerating forces of urbanization, Rossi proposed to see the city as a place formed by politics. From this standpoint, only an analysis of architecture could reveal the city's immanent separateness, that is, its constitution of parts not reducible to the common denominator of technological development.

The two conceptual categories of such an analysis were typology, understood as knowledge concerning the constitution and evolution of urban forms; and the individuality of the urban artifact, understood as the concreteness of architecture in its actual material manifestation. If typology for Rossi was the "science" through which it was possible to assess the nature and evolution of the city according to an analysis irreducible to any monolithic idea of urban development, the individuality of the urban artifact was the moment of decision in which typological principles were applied to the real city. The field in which typology met the individuality of the urban artifact was neither urban planning, with its abstract, diagrammatic representations, nor "townscape," with its iconic representations of urban scenes, but rather urban geography, with its concept of the *locus*. By *locus* Rossi meant the geographic singularity of architecture's constitution, understood not just as empirical evidence but as a universal structural condition.

Greppi has recently recalled that a major appeal of Rossi's position for the radical Left was his strong interest, unusual among architects at the time, in urban geography as a critical framework opposed to townscape.[86] During these years Rossi

was intensely studying the major authors of the French urban geography school, including Marcel Poëte, Maurice Halbwachs, Jean Tricart, Georges Chabot, and Max Sorre. These scholars were interested in reading urban space both as a field of fragmenting forces and as a whole whose evolution still had a discernible structure. With his reference to the studies of Sorre, Rossi construed the idea of *locus* as a manifestation of singular points within the overall framework of the city. As he writes in a crucial passage of L'architettura della città, "[A] geographer like Sorre could suggest the possibility of a theory of spatial division and, based on this, postulate the existence of 'singular points.' The *locus*, so conceived, emphasizes the conditions and qualities within undifferentiated space which are necessary for understanding an urban artifact."[87] In this sense, it is possible to say that for Rossi the *locus* constituted the very limit of any intervention or interpretation of the city.

In his opposition to planning and his defense of the idea of the *locus*, Rossi thus implicitly opposed the techno-capitalist conception of urbanization latent in planning practice. The city was a plurality of parts that did not add up to any totality, especially one imposed by the capitalist forces of integration. In this sense, it was possible to interpret the category of place as a *political* category, which, by virtue of the separateness that it evoked, *de facto* opposed the broad-scale subjugation of the territory to the totalizing forces of capitalist development. The embrace of the *locus* and of other concepts similarly characterized by their singular nature—for example, monumentality and collective memory, so pervasive throughout L'architettura della città—thus should be understood not as an effort to recuperate a traditional view of the city, but instead to establish a new political reading. By proposing a lucid theory that rendered the city immune to the anxiety of capitalist change and innovation, Rossi seemed to be suggesting that there was a possibility of looking at the city as an arena of decisive and singular events whose defined forms could pose a challenge to the urban phenomena and flux surrounding them.

At the same time, it was possible to use this theory to analyze these singular events in terms of their deeper structural consequences, in terms of their profound role in the collective

experience of the city. To look at the city as a manifestation of a collective urban memory was to go beyond what was empirically visible and perceive the dialectical conflict between constituent and constituted forces. In this sense, demolitions, reconstructions, and disruptions became events through which the actual history of the city could be traced. According to Rossi, these phenomena were what really constituted urban development. In this context, the aim of an autonomous theory of the city was to assess the real dynamic of discontinuous events, beyond their iconic visibility, beyond the superficial image of the city. Thus Rossi titled his book L'architettura della città. Both inspired by and critical of Kevin Lynch's book The Image of the City, published six years earlier,[88] Rossi proposed *architecture* instead of *image* as a way to go beyond a thin perceptual-psychological reading of the city. While taking empirical evidence—the individuality of the urban fact—as his point of departure, Rossi insisted that the architectural study of the city should emphasize both the geographic continuities that functioned as structuring elements within the city and the historical discontinuities that characterized the city's evolution. Within such a study, the *locus,* understood as a universal condition of singularity, functioned as the conceptual framework.

Rossi first articulated his conception of the *locus,* which, as we have just suggested, became one of the bases of his rejection of the category of the city-territory and of the uncritical affiliation of the urban structure with the forces of capitalist production, in a text cowritten with some colleagues at the school in Venice and presented in 1965 at the nineteenth congress of the Istituto Nazionale Urbanistica (INU).[89] It may be read as one of the Venice Group's most important early collective efforts. It was Rossi's insistence on the anti-technocratic categories of place, typology, and urban artifact that would later constitute the Scuola di Venezia's main methodological axis. Among the specific polemical targets of the group led by Rossi were such *au courant* concepts as the "open project" and the "network" as well as the preoccupation among urbanists and architects with informational technologies and cybernetics. Against the uncritical use of these concepts, the Venice group wrote,

> It is difficult, if not impossible, to define the formal and spatial terms of urban transformation within the presumed global vision of planning because planning often presumes a demiurgic design of the entire territory.... From the point of view of the design of the city it is difficult to understand the exact meaning of expressions such as "open project." These expressions are similar to such very fashionable aesthetic categories as "open form," and they are mystifications in view of the fact that any design intervention addresses a problem by means of a form. It is only the possibility of a closed, defined form that permits other forms to emerge.[90]

Against the presumed open-ended form of city-territory planning, then, Rossi's group opposed an urban space of finite, juxtaposed parts. The limitation implied by the circumscribed form of the urban artifact was seen as the foundation of the architecture of the city. Within this theoretical position, the architectural project was understood as autonomous vis-à-vis the city, yet not detached from it; on the contrary, the singular intervention had a clearly articulated relationship to the overall social and political context. This mode of thinking was counterposed by Rossi and his colleagues to the so-called organic tradition of planning, represented by the work and theories of figures like Patrick Geddes, Gaston Bardet, Lewis Mumford, and Victor Gruen. Within this tradition, the urban territory was regarded as constituted by the organic growth of flexible organisms evolving in relation to the technological development of the infrastructure. The determinism implied in this model made it a natural representation of bourgeois class values and ideology. What Rossi and his colleagues polemically attacked was the acceptance of such politically ambiguous notions as mobility and network as the fundamental diagram of the city, and at the same time the appropriation of such socially regressive models as the neighborhood, the village, and the community as idealized and falsified representations of the city. In this sense, the group wrote, "The present historical condition of the decadence of the bourgeois pattern of settlement, its emergence out of the obscurity of premodern civilization with its rural, picturesque imagery into a generic economic dynamism, appears to constitute the very form of the urban project and its current paralysis."[91]

The most symptomatic evidence of this paralysis was the

megastructure, widely embraced at this date as a new scale of urban intervention. In the view of Rossi and his colleagues, the exemplary case was Kenzo Tange's project for Tokyo Bay. Based strictly on traffic patterns of distribution and access and completely isolated in Tokyo Bay, the city designed by Tange and his collaborators in 1960 was an immense plug-in diagram of urban capsules structured by functional and technical relationships. In this technologically advanced mode of designing the city, the Venice Group saw the emergence of a politically regressive model: "it still uses the old theme of functionalism while exaggerating [the new] technologies as its urban *raison d'être;* it does not propose any real alternative to the current way of living in the capitalist city."[92]

For Rossi and his colleagues, therefore, the city's technological advancement coincided with its political decadence. In this sense, there was more than an incidental analogy between Rossi's idea of autonomy and the Autonomist positions of Panzieri and Tronti. All were attempts to demystify capitalist development by opposing to the continuity of economic development the separateness of both society and the city. These formulations challenged the primacy of economic determinants over political action. To the tendentious abstractions of economic programming and capitalist planning, Rossi, like Panzieri and Tronti, counterposed a reality based on the tension between antagonists. For the Operaists, this conflict played out in the political and institutional forms that the working class evolved out of its own experience; for Rossi and his colleagues, it played out in the form of the individuality of the urban artifact, the singularity of the *locus,* and the idea of the city of separate parts.

Fully exemplary of Rossi's position was the manifesto-project that he presented together with Luca Meda and Gianugo Polesello at the competition for the new *centro direzionale* (administrative center) of Turin in 1962. The competition was a characteristic effort by Italian industrial cities like Turin and Milan to modernize by taking into account the increasing importance of the white-collar and service sector. The competition was held at the same time as the protest of Piazza Statuto, discussed earlier, and it thus took place amid a social and political transformation of the city's work force. It

was the intention of the organizers that the *centro direzionale* become the symbol of a new condition of work completely emancipated from the traditional places of production. Moreover, the competition, which saw massive participation by the most representative architecture offices in Italy, was interpreted by many as a paradigmatic test case for the themes of the new urban dimension and the city-territory. The challenge for many participants seems to have been to find an adequate architectural language to express phenomena that went well beyond architecture, including developments in planning, communications, information exchange, and the use of new technologies, taken together as signifying a radical renewal of the relationship between labor and the city. It is therefore not surprising that many of the entries—including the one submitted by the studio AUA, led by Tafuri and Piccinato—translated the theme of the new urban dimension, with all its cultural and technological values, into megastructural, organicist, and open-work forms.

Against this scenario, Rossi, Meda, and Polesello presented the austere and closed forms of a monumental square building with an internal court. It dialectically counterposed itself as an alter ego to Alessandro Antonelli's Mole, the colossal synagogue in the center of Turin built in the second half of the nineteenth century. Although both structures presented themselves as monumental exceptions within the city, the square form of the Mole Antonelliana and the court building of Rossi, Meda, and Polesello were actually nothing but extrusions of the chessboard grid that constitutes the Roman plan of Turin. But while Antonelli's Mole relates directly to this grid, the Rossi project, located (by the competition) on a site on the periphery of the city, was an analogous reconstruction—in other words, the grid reinterpreted as a typological theme. It was thus not the rehabilitation of a norm, but an analogical use of the norm as a form of exception. Contrary to the other projects presented in the competition, virtually all inspired by the technological novelties of Turin's modernizing infrastructure, it staged a critical and dialectical confrontation with the existing city. Refusing to be an infrastructural scheme, it projected instead a precisely defined *locus*, which, by virtue of its form and location, sharply

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contrasted and conflicted with the other parts of the city. The city's development was thus represented not as a totalizing
28 image but as a clear form that both constituted and limited the advancing urban development. It was for this reason that the project was immediately rejected by the jury as "reactionary architecture" and labeled "a Stalinist court for mass execution."[93] Its hard-core character, which proposed to offer a civic reference within the city that exposed the new geography of Turin's labor force, was condemned by those who represented the dominant class interests. They preferred to conceal their power behind the rhetoric of a *centro direzionale* that purported to be an efficient, futuristic Eden of labor.

For Rossi, on the other hand, the project in its austere civic character was not so much intended as an architecture of resistance as one of power, which nonetheless, by adopting this position, left open space for its counterparts in the city. The idea of the city of conflicting parts was thus indirectly but implicitly expressed in the project. Architecture for Rossi could not fail to be an expression of the power of the dominant class, but in making decisions for the city, the dominant class could not do other than position itself with respect to the forces antagonistic
29 to it. Rossi's project proposed to be a new civic monument, one that by virtue of its strong critical presence immediately referred to its adversary. Yet while the dominant class sought to evade political responsibility for its role within the development of the capitalist city, Rossi sought to reveal this role, making explicit that all buildings in the city were inevitably representations of power: "There are no buildings of opposition," Rossi wrote, "because the architecture *that is going to be realized* is always an expression of the dominant class."[94] Consequently, it was necessary for the project to exhibit through its own formal devices an argument with respect to power. Only on the basis of such a clear formal proposal was political choice possible, that is, for the community "to decide collectively in favor of one kind of city and to reject another one."[95]

This was the framework within which originated the austere and simple formal language that was to characterize the
30 rationalist project of Rossi in the years ahead. Instead of using novel styles and images that could be consumed along with the

new technologies, Rossi opted for a rigid grammar of forms. These forms did not aspire to be anything else but themselves. They thus shifted attention to the *locus* as a symbolic and geographic singularity, a state of exception within the city, posing a challenge to the open-ended space of the capitalist city-territory. Analogous to Tronti's autonomy of the political, which was an inquiry directed not at the autonomy of one part of society with respect to another but at the autonomy of power itself, Rossi's autonomy of architecture was above all about the establishment of urban concepts that posited the supremacy of politics over the city's accelerating economic development.

Archizoom: The Autonomy of Theory versus the Ideology of the Metropolis

In 1965 the same Operaist militant Claudio Greppi who had been one of the authors of a critique of the city-territory in Quaderni rossi two years earlier presented a provocational diploma project 35, 36 at the school of architecture in Florence. It consisted of an urban design for the Piana di Firenze, a vast region between the cities of Florence and Prato, which at that time was emerging as the most important industrial textile region in Italy. In Greppi's project the Piana di Firenze was envisioned as a gigantic factory.[96] He conceived it as an urban application of Tronti's theory of society as a factory, which, as we have seen, extended the idea of production beyond the factory to social relations.

The process of capitalist integration had engendered the disappearance of the proletariat as a group clustered around the productive centers and had had the effect of proletarianizing the entirety of society. This transformation had affected all aspects of life, including the human habitat and, according to Greppi, radically changed the geography of work in the city. The idea of the urban center as a place of financial accumulation and the periphery as a place of production was increasingly superseded by a model in which production and accumulation coincided within an ever expanding, ever more isotropic plan. This isotropic plan was imagined by Greppi as finally liberated from bourgeois ideological representations of the city in their

29. Ibid., p. 195.
30. Theodor W. Adorno, Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life, trans. E. F. N. Jephcott (London: Verso, 1978), p. 15.
31. Panzieri, "Relazione sul neocapitalismo," p. 212 (my italics).
32. Raniero Panzieri, "Plusvalore e pianificazione: Appunti di lettura del capitale," in Quaderni rossi 4 (1963), pp. 257–77.
33. Ibid., p. 263.
34. Raniero Panzieri, "Sul controllo operaio," in La ripresa del Marxismo-Leninismo in Italia, p. 107.
35. "Il piano del capitale" was originally published in Quaderni rossi 2 (1963), pp. 44–73. Reprinted in Mario Tronti, Operai e capitale (Turin: Einaudi, 1966), pp. 60–85.
36. Ibid., p. 66.
37. "Lenin in Inghilterra" was originally published in Classe operaia 1 (1964), pp. 1, 18–20; reprinted in Operai e capitale, pp. 89–95.
38. Ibid., p. 89.
39. Mario Tronti, "La fabbrica e la società," originally published in Quaderni rossi 2 (1962), pp. 1–31; reprinted in Operai e capitale, pp. 39–59.
40. Ibid., p. 39.
41. Ibid.
42. Ibid.
43. Ibid., p. 51.
44. Ibid., p. 53.
45. Ibid., p. 47.
46. Ibid.
47. Mario Tronti, "Forza-lavoro classe operaia," in Operai e capitale, p. 128. Tronti's italics.
48. Ibid., p. 127.
49. Ibid., p. 128.
50. Ibid., p. 245.
51. Ibid., p. 242.
52. Ibid., p. 262.
53. Mario Tronti, Sull'autonomia del politico (Milan: Feltrinelli, 1977), p. 16. The seminar was held in December 1972.
54. Tronti, La politica al tramonto (Turin: Einaudi, 1998), p. 159.
55. Tronti, Sull'autonomia del politico, p. 9. Tronti's italics.
56. Tronti, Operai e capitale, p. 269.
57. Mario Tronti, "Il partito come problema," in *Contropiano* 2 (1968), pp. 299–301.
58. Antonio Negri, "Operai senza alleati," in Classe operaia 3 (1964), pp. 1 and 18.
59. Tronti, Operai e capitale, pp. 96–102.
60. Interview with Mario Tronti, August 2000, in Borio et al., Gli operaisti, p. 300. Tronti emphasizes that he decided to close down Classe operaia after only two years because he realized that the militants in the group were acting as marginal "extremists" rather than rooting their radicalism within the more difficult but necessary ground of the institutionally established political organizations.
61. Massimo Cacciari, "Sulla genesi del pensiero negativo," in Contropiano 1 (1969), pp. 131–201.
62. Ibid., p. 136.
63. Ibid., p. 183.
64. Mario Tronti, "Estremisti e riformisti," in Contropiano 1 (1968), p. 20.
65. Manfredo Tafuri, "Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica," in Contropiano 1 (1969), pp. 31–79; translated by Stephen Sartorelli as "Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology," in K. Michael Hays, ed., Architecture Theory since 1968 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998), pp. 6–35.
66. Ibid., Contropiano 1, p. 39.
67. Manfredo Tafuri, "Austromarxismo e città: 'Das rote Wien,'" in Contropiano 2 (1971), pp. 257–312.
68. Ibid., p. 263.
69. As stated in a telephone conversation with the author, September 2007.
70. The most important written contributions to the Italian theoretical debate on architecture and the city before the 1960s are the following: Bruno Zevi, Saper vedere l'architettura: Saggio sull'interpretazione spaziale dell'architettura (Turin: Einaudi, 1948); Giulio Carlo Argan, Walter Gropius e la Bauhaus (Turin: Einaudi, 1951); and Ernesto Nathan Rogers, Esperienza dell'architettura (Turin: Einaudi, 1958).
71. Tronti, Operai e capitale, p. 303: "*Sichtbar machen* means to make visible: to say clearly so as to be understood, even at the risk of not interpreting very well things that are intrinsically obscure."
72. Published as "Architettura per i musei," in Guido Canella et al., Teoria della progettazione architettonica (Bari: Edizioni Dedalo, 1968), p. 123.
73. On the political formation of Aldo Rossi and his relationship with Communist culture, see Pier Vittorio Aureli, "The Difficult Whole: Typology and Singularity of the Urban Event in Aldo Rossi's Early Work, 1954–1963," in Log 9 (2007), pp. 20–41.
74. Carlo Aymonino, Il significato della città (Padua: Marsilio, 2000), p. 4.
75. Aldo Rossi, "Il concetto di tradizione nel neoclassicismo milanese," Società 3 (1956). Reprinted in Rossi, Scritti scelti sull'architettura e la città (Milan: Città Studi Edizioni, 1975), pp. 1–24.
76. See Ezio Bonfanti et al., Architettura razionale (Milan: Franco Angeli, 1973).
77. Aldo Rossi, Introduction, in Bonfanti et al., Architettura razionale, p. 16.
78. *Tendenza* is a Gramscian term. It refers to the potential of a cultural movement to express the hegemonic line of the dominant class.
79. Bruno Gabrielli, "Una esperienza con Aldo Rossi," in Salvatore Farinato, ed., Per Aldo Rossi (Venice: Marsilio, 1997), p. 34.
80. Giorgio Piccinato, Vieri Quilici, Manfredo Tafuri, "La città-territorio verso una nuova dimensione," Casabella continuità 270 (1963), pp. 16–25.
81. The category of the city-territory was initially "institutionalized" within the Italian urban debate at an important conference organized by Giancarlo de Carlo and the Istituto Lombardo per gli Studi Economici e Sociali (ILSES) in the town of Stresa on Lake Maggiore in January 1962 under the title of "The New Dimension of the City." Many protagonists of the Arezzo workshop (which took place the following year) participated, including Rossi. Indeed, the Arezzo workshop was conceived as a follow-up to the conference in Stresa. See Giancarlo de Carlo et al., La nuova dimensione della città: La città-ragione (Milan: ILSES, 1962).
82. Claudio Greppi and Alberto Pedrolli, "Produzione e programmazione territoriale," in Quaderni rossi 3 (1963), pp. 94–101.
83. "Casa a chi lavora" (housing for those who work) was the main slogan of housing programs such as INA-Casa.
84. Greppi and Pedrolli, "Produzione e programmazione territoriale," p. 95.
85. Ibid., p. 95.
86. Greppi made the following observation in an interview with the author in October 2007: "At the time of the publication of his [early] writings and his major book L'architettura della città, Rossi was not yet known for his projects, but more for an idiosyncratic reading of the city based on urban geography. The latter was irreducible to the blind technocratic approaches that were fashionable at that time—those of the city-territory and townscape, on the one hand, and the megastructure on the other."
87. Aldo Rossi, The Architecture of the City, trans. Diane Ghirardo and Joan Ockman (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1982), p. 103.
88. Rossi's idea to title his book L'architettura della città, which summarizes the thrust of his theoretical investigations at the end of the 1950s and especially in the early 1960s, was inspired by Ceccarelli. According to Ceccarelli, Rossi's initial idea was to publish the lectures on typology he had given as Aymonino's assistant in the course "Caratteri distributivi degli edifici" (Organizational characteristics of buildings) under the title "La città come fondamento per lo studio degli edifici" (The city as a foundation for the study of buildings), which was also the title of one of the lectures. In 1963–64 Ceccarelli had translated into Italian Kevin's Lynch book The Image of the City while he was studying at MIT and in close contact with Lynch, and he had it printed by Marsilio, the small publishing house he had cofounded two years earlier. Ceccarelli reported his discovery of Lynch to Rossi and proposed to his friend that he write a book for Marsilio with the same ambitious scope. It is worthwhile to recall the story of Marsilio since it represents an interesting convergence of urban culture and Operaism. Marsilio (the name refers to an important fourteenth-century Paduan philosopher and jurist who was a harsh critic of the temporal power of the Catholic Church) was established in 1961 by a small group of young Paduan intellectuals that included, besides Ceccarelli, Antonio Negri. These intellectuals were involved at the time in the Catholic movement *Intesa*, a section of the Federazione Universitaria Cattolici Italiani (FUCI); at the same time they were influenced by Panzieri's critique of neocapitalism (Panzieri would subsequently co-opt Negri into the group around Quaderni rossi). Marsilio's aim was to address Italy's industrial transformations and provide innovative theoretical frameworks for its critical interpretation. Both Lynch's Image of the City and Rossi's L'architettura della città fell within this editorial line. But if the publication of Lynch's book coincided with the optimism of the early 1960s, Rossi's book was colored by the beginning of the economic and political crisis that began in Italy between 1964 and 1965. It is interesting to note that Ceccarelli also proposed to publish the book by Rossi because he felt that Rossi's "multidisciplinary" approach would not be able to find a proper editorial home among the more traditional and more specialized publishers. Interview with Paolo Ceccarelli by the author, October 2007.
89. Aldo Rossi, Gianugo Polesello, Emilio Mattioni, and Luciano Semerani, "Città e territorio negli aspetti funzionali e figurativi della pianificazione continua," in Atti del X convegno dell'Istituto Nazionale di Urbanistica (Trieste: INU, 1965), pp. 286–300.
90. Ibid., p. 290.
91. Ibid., p. 292.
92. Ibid.
93. Gianugo Polesello, "*Ab initio, indagatio initiorum:* Ricordi e confessioni," in Pisana Posocco, Gemma Radicchio, and Gundula Rakowitz, eds., Care architetture (Turin: Umberto Allemandi, 2002), p. 16.
94. Rossi, The Architecture of the City, p. 116 (my italics).
95. Ibid.
96. Claudio Greppi has recalled that the project was born out the growing interest of the Florentine students of architecture in Panzieri and Tronti's Autonomist Marxism. The Florentine section of Classe operaia was the largest among the different regional groups in Italy, and it was made up mostly of architecture students. According to Greppi: "The school of architecture was, at that time, the ideal place to develop a broader critique of the capitalist city that would involve and combine politics and a vision of the city and its project. Against the imperative of reforming and rationalizing the city, we started to think that the time had come simply to critique the existing one. My diploma project was strongly inspired by the large-scale designs of the mid-1960s, but instead of presenting some colorful utopian vision of the future city, I was critically exaggerating the mechanism of the existing one. We thought that the architect was not at all suited for agit-prop, that the best he could do was side with capitalist power and work on 'wrong projects.' Our adhesion to Operaism was the rejection of any populist and activist stance that would eventually result in designing social housing projects, or *case del popolo*. Against these temptations Tronti clearly warned us: for the working class it is more useful to be a great reactionary than some petit-bourgeois revolutionary." Interview with the author, September 2007.
97. This hypothesis is bolstered by the fact that Greppi was in close contact with members of Archizoom such as Corretti and Morozzi, who,