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03- ARCHITECTURE HOUSES, SERVES A FUNCTION AND IS FOR PEOPLE
04- SUMMARY

NORMATIVE POSITION

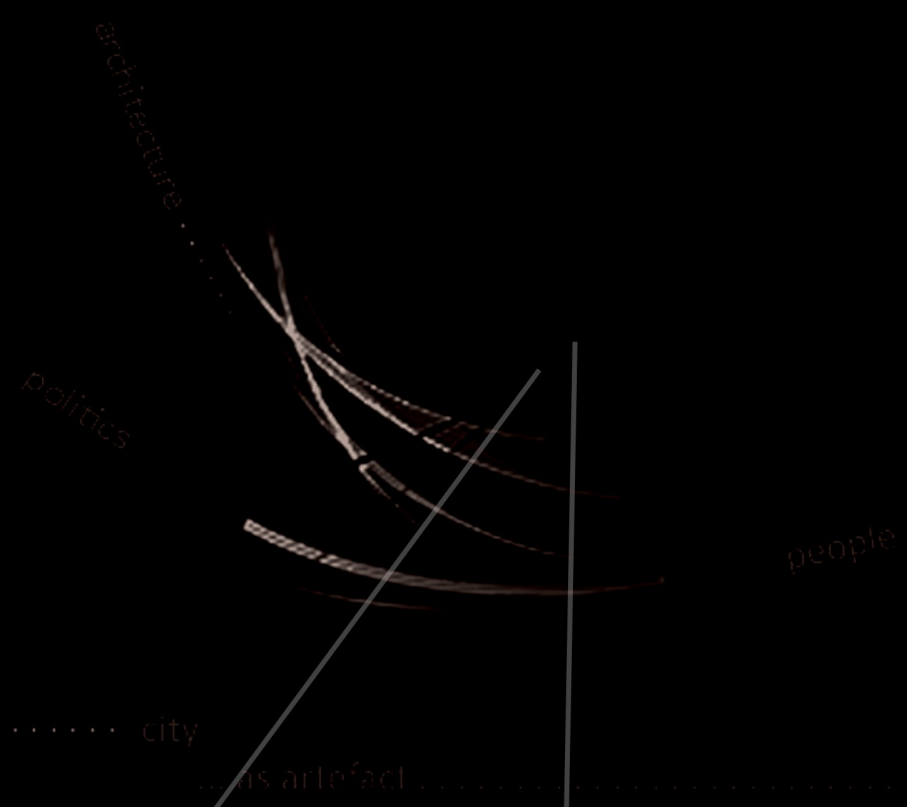


02

We shape our buildings; thereafter they shape us

Winston Churchill

(1944)



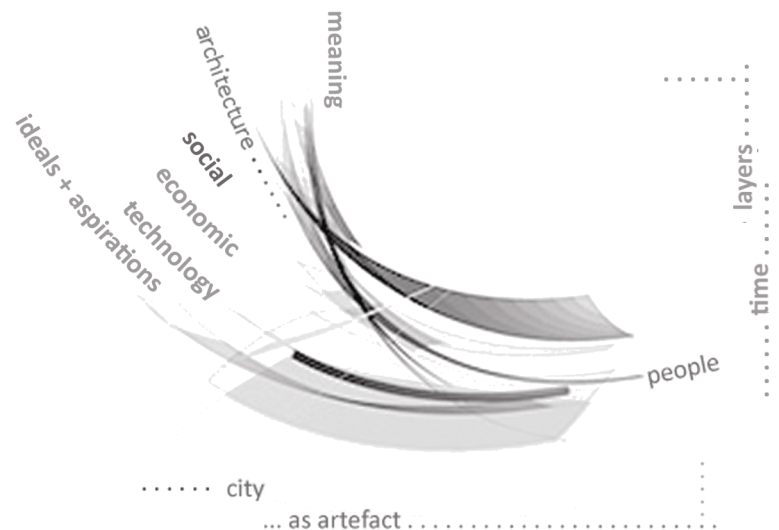
chapter 02

1- NORMATIVE POSITION (1) CITY AS ARTEFACT

According to Aldo Rossi the city must be studied and valued as something that has been constructed over time, with particular reference to artefacts within the city that withstand the passage of time (as cited by O'Regan, 1966: 26). These artefacts form a complex layered system within the city, influencing future development and telling stories of past generations. These layers tell a story of the social systems that were in place, the economic position of the society and technological advancement which is essentially, the ideals and aspirations of the generation at that time (Fleming, 1995: 01). All this combined gives a dynamic meaning to the different layers of fabric that have built the city over time.

An artefact can be defined as *something made or given shape by man, such as a tool or a work of art, esp. an object of archaeological interest* (Collins, 1992: 68). The definition can be used to understand the city and architecture as something that has been *given shape by man* (Sudjic, 2006:02), it may be considered as a *work of art* and is of *archaeological interest* because it is a storyteller of past generations (Sudjic, 2006:02). Significant buildings have the most distinctive and enduring marks of civilization and also embodies an enormous amount of invested energy.

For Heidegger buildings represents human existence and the activities of people of the time which configured the way in which people dwelt (as cited by Sharr, 2007: 10). Once the structure is built, the inhabitants would dwell within and around the structure and thus the inhabitants' lives are then shaped by the very structures that surround them. The traces of our shadows, the outline of the horizon and the built fabric act as reminders of our presence. To Heidegger, when we notice these traces, that is when we notice our being, and it is these moments that allow humans to locate themselves in a time span much longer than their own lives (as cited by Sharr, 2007: 07).



Illus. 2.1. Graphic representation of layers of the city.

Illus. 2.2. Graphic representation of layers of the city.

Rossi highlighted that both architecture and politics should be understood as sciences but their creative moments are based on decisions (as cited by O'Regan, 1966: 16). For appropriate decisions to be made there needs to be an understanding and respect for the rich layering of the urban fabric and an understanding of what the present time represents and requires.

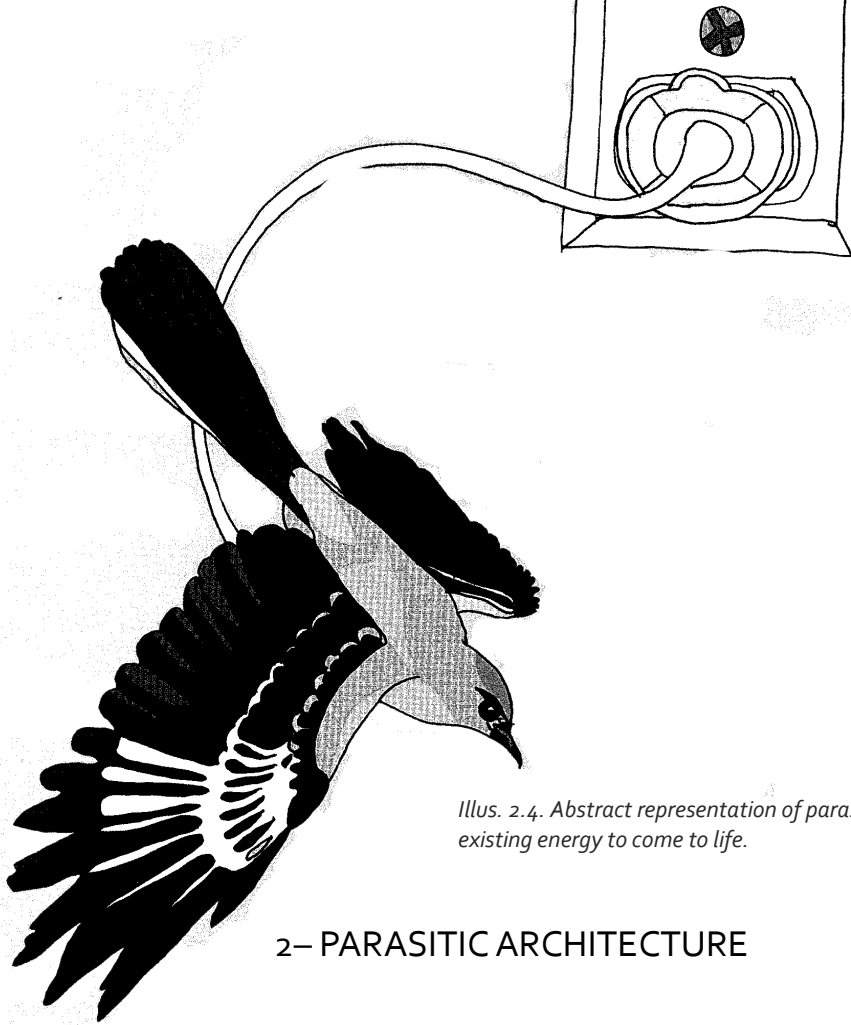
The importance of defining the city as an artefact is firstly through becoming aware of the different layers the city represents and the innate influence these layers have on the users' lives, the designer is then in a position to understand the current era and what it should represent. Secondly, through being aware of the context and how it acts as an informing agent, it is possible for the designer to respond sensitively. Thirdly, it broadens the understanding that context is not the only important factor; the influencing agents include social, economic and technical systems that are already in place.



Dises ist lange her / ora questo è perduto

730 ART

Illus. 2.3. *Dises ist lange her (Now this is lost)*



Illus. 2.4. Abstract representation of parasitic architecture that uses existing energy to come to life.

2– PARASITIC ARCHITECTURE

When the term parasitic is used, it is often associated with a biological term. The Collins Concise English Dictionary (1992:969) defines a parasite as *an animal or plant that lives in or on another (the host) from which it obtains nourishment*. A parasite lives off the host to the detriment of the host. It has an extensive knowledge of the host in order not to kill it in the process. Designers use the biological term to define architecture that seeks space inside, between or around existing structures where it can opportunistically use the structure, waste or embodied energy (see illus. 2.5.) (Porter: 2005,107).

There are three types of parasites that can be distinguished in biological terms:

- 1- A parasite that understands its host in order to extract the requirements needed for its survival, but not to the extent of killing the host. The parasite is usually the only benefiting agent at the detriment of the host.
- 2- A system where the host neither benefits nor is harmed (see illus. 2.6.).
- 3- A system which is mutually beneficial for both the host and parasite. (Streng, 2007:13-15).

Taylor defines parasitic architecture as *an adaptable, transient and exploitive form of architecture that forces relationships with host buildings in order to complete themselves. Parasites cannot sustain their own existence without siphoning energy from the surplus supply demonstrated in host buildings* (2006). The idea is to enrich the existing building and not detract from it.

Erskine is known for the design of housing districts with dwellings, and stated that for the district to be a complete organism it should have schools, shops, work places, community centres and open spaces in order to make it a *living area* (Collymore, 1982:21). It is possible that parasitic architecture can contribute positively to the living area.

Parasitic architecture is relevant within an urban fabric because it has the ability to peel back and reveal a deeper opportunistic layer within the artefact context. This deeper layer understands the function of a building and the elements that bring it to life. These elements, which have an embodied energy, may include the structure, services such as water and electricity, and lost or potential places such as roofs, dead and unused facades or empty shells. The parasite does not need to be an intrusive element (*see illus. 2.7.*), which it is often associated with, but, through lateral thinking, can introduce a reactionary element within the urban fabric, which contributes to the sustenance of the system at large.



Illus. 2.5. Homeless inflatable shelter utilising an exterior outtake vent, by Rakowitz, Boston.

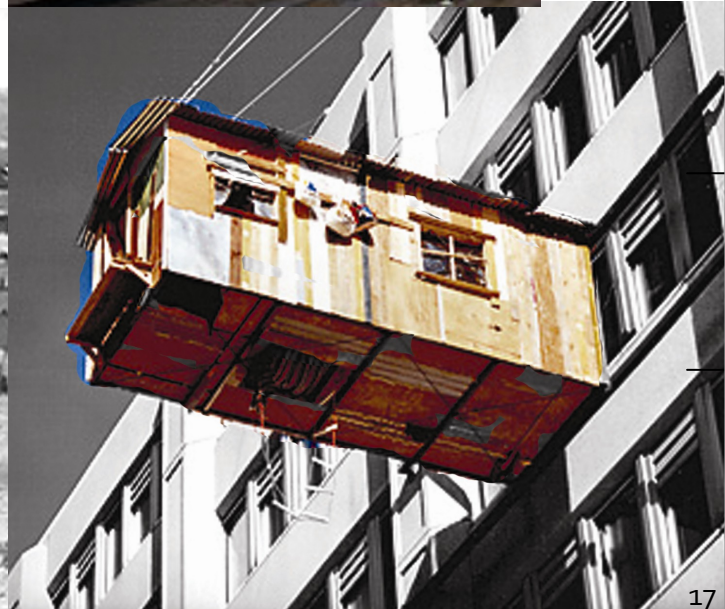
Illus. 2.6. Graphic indicating a bird in a tree-hole



Illus. 2.7. Parasite dwelling attached to the Las Palmas Building's lift shaft, identified as architect Stuhmachers left-over space, Rotterdam harbour.



Illus. 2.8. Graphic indicating a parasite shack attached to a RDP house



Illus. 2.9. Parasite at Espoc centre, near Helsinki, 1997.

To be a good architect you have to love people, because architecture is an applied art and deals with the frameworks of people's lives

Ralph Erskine

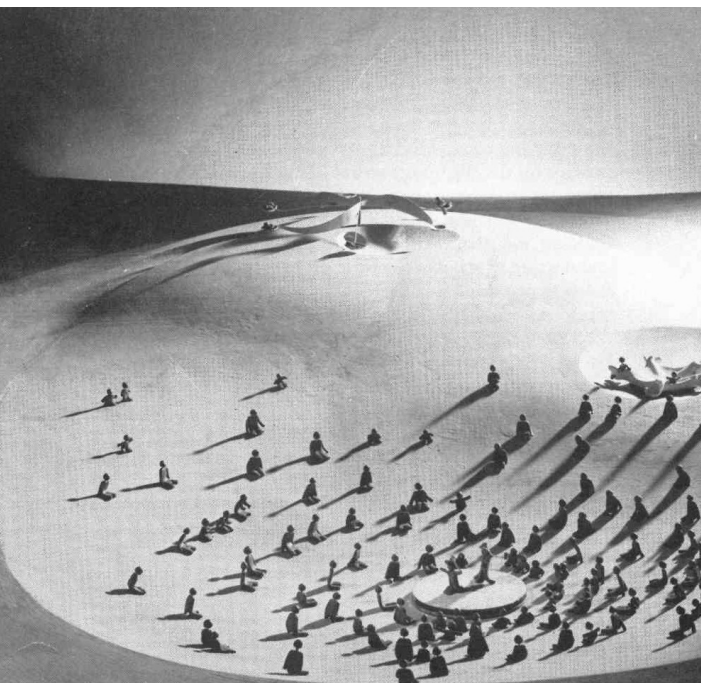
(as cited by Gehl, 2010: 229)

3- NORMATIVE POSITION (2)

Architecture houses, serves a function and is for **people**

The author's normative position on architecture is that it houses, serves a function and is for people. This dissertation puts specific emphasis on architecture being for people, with an aim to indicate a direction for civic architecture. The current era is one of democracy, which, as Abraham Lincoln defined in his Gettysburg Address, is *a government of the people by the people and for the people* (Lincoln, 1863:2). Civic architecture no longer needs to represent a symbol of power, unlike the monumental buildings demonstrate the power and influence of the owners. Rather it represents a shift towards a people-driven architecture, thus stimulating a people centric society. The aforementioned argument is illustrated below:

Sculptor Ergon Moller-Neilson and Ralph Erksine in 1953 submitted an entry for *The Unknown Political Prisoner*. The intention of the competition was to pay tribute to individuals who, in diverse political situations in many countries, offered their vision in liberty and gave their lives to the cause of human freedom. The statement they submitted with their entry ran as follows: *A past age and another belief raised its own monument, distant, inaccessible, seen from below.*



Illus. 2.10. Erskine & Neilson's model for *The Unknown Political Prisoner*



Illus. 2.11. Butler's model for *The Unknown Political Prisoner*

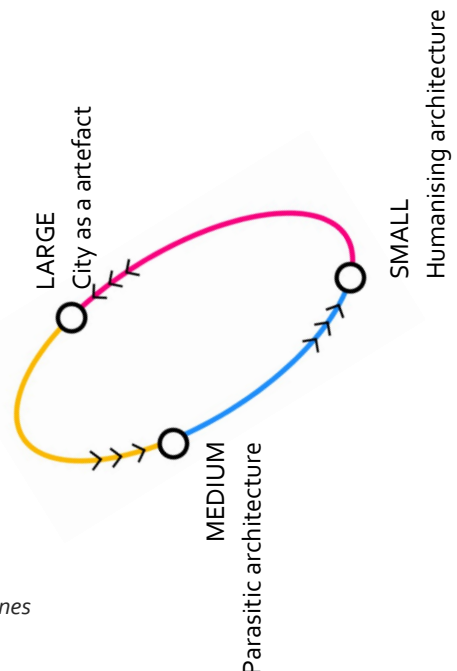
That is the age and belief that created the prisoner. Our conviction is that each such monument creates a new dogma, a new prisoner – a prisoner of thought, of faith in authority, of oppression. Our wish is to create a new monument for belief in humanity, to remember the past by looking to the future as also the prisoner believed and looked forward, to build with the futures own material, the children of humanity, it's recurrent hope who form the integral part of the sculpture in which they learn the power of freedom, not the destructiveness of hate (Collymore, 1982:12).

Moller-Neilsen's and Erskine's entry was a bowl-shaped arena intended as a stage for many human activities; skiing, skating, swinging and dancing. It can also be used as a political meeting place and a stage for theatre productions, similar to ancient Greek arenas. Therefore it was not only a place for children's games but also for adult activities. The sculptural piece was intended to be visited and used by people, not visited at a distance and viewed with awe. This entry represents Erskine's attitudes, which disdain self-importance and monuments (and indeed monumental buildings demonstrating the power and influence of their owners) and show a love of humanity, which is not sentimental but sensitive. The competition was won by Reg Butler with a giant open steel framework incorporating the figure of the prisoner raised on high.

4– CONCLUSION

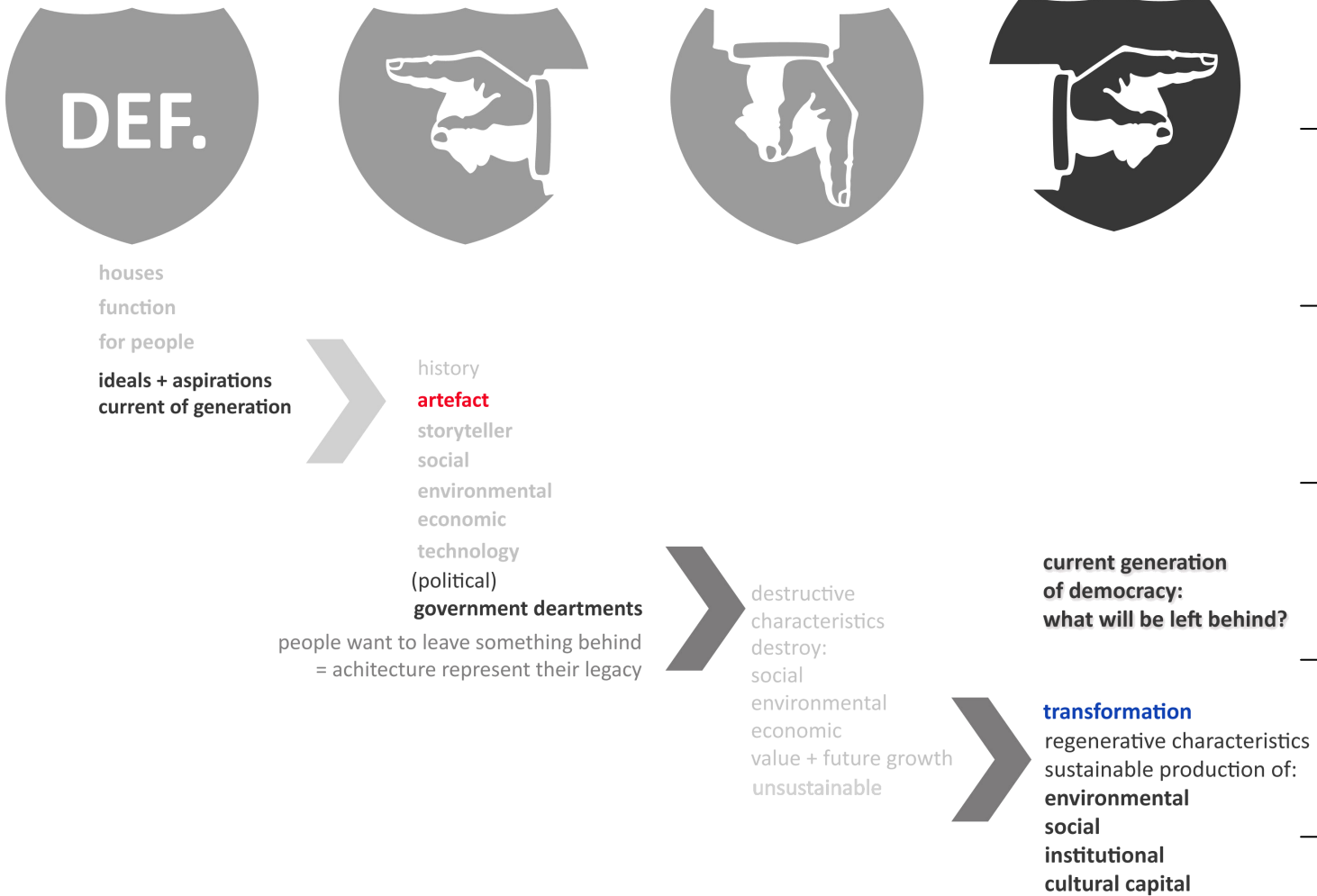
The guidelines established from the normative positions are to create a connection between:

- City as an artefact with a significant past, present and future (**LARGE**)
- Identify and develop the existing energy on the site through parasitic architecture (**MEDIUM**)
- Bring the material world in harmony with human life therefore humanising architecture (**SMALL**)



Illus. 2.12. Connection of established guidelines

5- SUMMARY



Illus. 2.13. Summary