Colin Rowe and Aldo Rossi. Utopia as Metaphor of a New City Analogous to the Existing One

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Collage City by Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, published by MIT Press in 1978, has been described as one of the four books featured in the debate about the relationship between architecture and the city that characterized post-modern thinking from the early years of the second half of the twentieth century.[1]

Within this intellectual confrontation an important place is occupied by the reflections developed by Manfredo Tafuri in his book *Progetto e Utopia*,[2] published in Italy in 1973 by Laterza. In addressing the significance and role of the architectural project in relation to the city, through a stringent ideological critique of the history of architecture, Tafuri reveals the political function assumed by architecture in the process of assimilation and formalization of ethics and bourgeois morality within the social, economic and cultural system of the capitalist world.[3]

The crisis of ancient values, a consequence of the industrial revolution – whose cause Tafuri identified in the initial "bourgeois anguish" – anticipated by Giovanni Battista Piranesi,[4] Charles Baudelaire[5] and then described by Walter Benjamin,[6] becomes the prerequisite through which,

1 Repeating what was argued by Alberto Ferlenga, "Uno di quattro" ["One of four"], *L'architettura come testo e la figura di Colin Rowe* [*The architecture as text and the figure of Colin Rowe*], ed. Mauro Marzo (Venezia: Marsilio, 2010), 171-179, and Luca Ortelli, "A proposito di Collage City" ["Speaking of Collage City"], *L'architettura come testo e la figura di Colin Rowe*, 181-191 we refer to the texts by Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1984), Robert Venturi, Denise Scott-Brown and Steven Izenour, *Learning from Las Vegas* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1977), Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York: a Retrospective Manifesto of Manhattan* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978).

2 Manfredo Tafuri, *Progetto e Utopia* [*Architecture and Utopia*] (Roma-Bari: Laterza, 1973).

3 In *Progetto e Utopia,* Manfredo Tafuri develops some reflections already formulated in the essay "Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica" ["Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology"], *Contropiano* 1 (1969): 31-79. The critical approach used by the author reflects the particular cultural climate that characterises a part of the intellectual world of those years in Italy, whose debates and reflections – in which Tafuri actively participates – grow and are structured in two magazines in particular: *Contropiano* and *Controspazio*. The first is an editorial project promoted by Antonio Negri, Alberto Asor Rosa, Massimo Cacciari and Mario Tronti. By combining sociology, philosophy and politics, called by the authors 'critique of ideology,' *Contropiano* relates the issues of class relations with the ideal and cultural aspects of mass capitalist society. The second, *Controspazio*, a 'little magazine' produced outside the publishing circuits, was founded in 1969 within the Faculty of Architecture of Rome on the initiative of Paolo Portoghesi. Its intention was to affirm the role of 'politics' as the real purpose of the architectural project and of the city, that is, an instrument through which it is possible to resolve those 'social contradictions' that the workers' and students' movements of 1968 had highlighted. For a deeper analysis, see the essays by Claudio D'Amato Guerrieri "Controspazio come 'piccola rivista'" ["Controspazio as 'little magazine'"], *FAMagazine* 43 (2018): 33-40 and Felice Mometti, "Ideologia come architettura. Manfredo Tafuri e la storia critica" ["Ideology as architecture. Manfredo Tafuri and the critique of history"], *Scienza & politica* 47 (2012): 107-133.

4 Among the various essays written by Manfredo Tafuri on the subject, see in particular "G.B. Piranesi: l'architettura come utopia negativa" ["G.B. Piranesi: the architecture as negative utopia"], *Angelus Novus* 20 (1971): 89-127.

5 Charles Baudelaire, *Scritti sull'arte* [*Essays on Art*] (Turin: Einaudi, 1992-2004).

6 Walter Benjamin, "L'opera d'arte nell'epoca della sua riproducibilità tecnica" ["The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction"], *Walter Benjamin. L'opera d'arte nell'epoca della sua riproducibilità tecnica*

in the Enlightenment, it is possible for unconditional trust in reason to assert itself as the only instrument able to avert and resolve that feeling of disorientation and misunderstanding that the collapse of the ancient pre-industrial order had determined. By completely relying on the logic of rationality, architecture discovers its scientific vocation and its role as social organizer which translates, in modern times, into an ideological choice to make intellectual work coincide with the figures and methods of the industrial production.[7] With the intention of solving the Benjaminian question of the "decline of the *aura*," modern architecture agrees to make its planning work[8] and shapes the reorganization of building production and of the city itself as a productive "political" body.

In the third chapter on *Ideology and utopia,* Tafuri develops some reflections starting from the homonymous book by Karl Mannheim,[9] distinguishing conservative or ideological thought from the progressive or the utopian. While the former, even if it can orient itself towards "objects extraneous to reality that transcend current existence, contributes to consolidation of the present," the latter, "always tends to break ties with the existing order."[10] If ideology describes the relations between certain mental structures and concrete existential situations, specifying the link between the ideological element and the individual's current condition of life, utopia rather claims its "character of experimental anticipation projected into the future."[11] For Tafuri, the critique of ideology and its dialectical relationship with utopia represent the "dynamic factors of development."[12]

Ideology – when overlapping with the meaning of *Weltanschauung*, a way of explaining and understanding the world – describes a system of thought which characterizes a society with respect to a historical epoch or, repurposing Mannheim's arguments, "the structure of the intellectual world of a social group in a given historical situation."[13] Bourgeois ideology, the bearer of a new system of values, expresses itself concretely in the industrial city, and – according to Tafuri – structures it as a "machine that functions for the extraction of social surplus value which reproduces, in its conditioning mechanisms, the reality of the modes of capitalist production."[14] On the one hand, the city becomes a perfectly integrated device within the new production-distribution-consumption cycles, on the other it becomes a political instrument through which to affirm and consolidate the validity of the new values of bourgeois culture and of new forms of industrial production, "teaching not to suffer the Benjaminian *experience of shock*, but to absorb it, introjecting it as an inevitable condition of existence."[15]

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e altri scritti [*Walter Benjamin. The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction and Other Essays*], ed. Schiavoni Giulio (Milan: RCS Libri, 2013).

7 In his book *Teorie e storia dell'architettura* [*Theories and History of the Architecture*] (Bari: Laterza, 1968), Manfredo Tafuri advances some reflections (that continue those of Walter Benjamin's from "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction") about the difference between the "painter-magician" and the "operator-surgeon" to explain and understand the new role of the artist and the different value of art in modern times, referring in particular to the thought of Le Corbusier. According to Tafuri, Le Corbusier does not face the industrialised world and the 'machine' with the attitude of a "painter-magician" still rooted in the principles of *mimesis*, which it is possible to trace back the work of the Renaissance artist and some of the avant-gardes of the 1920s who continued to maintain a natural distance vis-à-vis the 'natural' modern. On the contrary, Le Corbusier's artistic research assumes all the characteristics of the "operator-surgeon" who, deeply penetrating into the fabric of data, is constructively introduced into reality. A rather empirical concern about techniques and functions becoming spiritual highlights the intention to respond to an unavoidable poetic necessity through aesthetic principles. This leads, on the one hand, to the absolute identification between industrial work and artistic work and, on the other, to the unconditional enslavement of Art to the constructive action of the world.

8 Tafuri, *Progetto e utopia*, 15.

9 Karl Mannheim, *Ideologia e utopia* [*Ideology and Utopia*] (Bologna: Mulino, 1957).

10 Tafuri, *Progetto e utopia*, 51.

11 Ibid., 53.

12 Ibid., 52

13 Mannheim, *Ideologia e utopia*, 68.

14 Ibid., 76

15 Ibid., 80.

In modernity, the political task of architecture is necessarily ideological, insofar as it is an intellectual and concrete action that allows, in the city, the formal correspondences between the systems of thought that make up the bourgeois *Weltanschauung* and the social and cultural structures of the new industrialized world. The crisis of modern architecture – and above all of its function with respect to the city project – is to be attributed to the crisis of its ideological dimension. Its political role, namely an instrument able to give a coherent and organic form to the new economic and technological reality of machinist civilization, is exhausted when, according to Tafuri, with the crisis of 1929, political institutions undertake those ideological tasks of organization and social, economic and cultural planning previously performed by the intellectual world: the international reorganization of capital, the affirmation of systems of anti-cyclical planning, the realization of the first five-year Soviet plan.[16]

Compared with contemporary architecture and its role in the transformation of the city, architectural ideology – a form of thought able to formalize itself as political action in the social and cultural reality of a specific historical condition – constitutes, according to Tafuri, the necessary instrument through which two things become possible: firstly, to avoid attitudes of "self-satisfaction" that lead to a "radical and politically agnostic formalism, the most distanced – by free and conscious choice – from the same reality that allows architecture to exist;"[17] secondly, to lead the city project back into the current debate on the possible tangents and inevitable contradictions between the technical-intellectual work of organization of collective life and the objective material circumstances within which that work must be placed.

While the reflections developed by Tafuri in *Project and Utopia* focus mainly on the role of ideology and its criticism of the necessary political reasons of the project, the first two chapters of *Collage City* ("Utopia: Decline and Fall?" and "After the Millennium") are entirely dedicated to Utopia. A theme that Rowe had already addressed in "The Architecture of Utopia,"[18] written during his four

16 Ibid., 124.

17 Ibid., 146.

18 Colin Rowe, *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1987).

Fig. 1: Colin Rowe, "The Architecture of Utopia," in The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1987)



years of teaching at Cambridge University in England and published for the first time by Granta Books in 1959. In *Collage City* – and, although not explicitly, also in the first part of the essay "The Architecture of Utopia" – Rowe and Koetter indicate a distinction between *classical utopia*, associated with the Renaissance concept of the Ideal City, and *activist utopia*, whose reasons and foundations are brought back to the great scientific revolutions of the Enlightenment and French Positivism.

The first utopia makes reference to the sixteenth century, taking its inspiration from the rational morality and the highest ideas of social justice and remains a totally abstract entity, a transcendent image to be contemplated, with exclusively didactic purposes that appropriately excludes its empirical manifestation in the urban project. The second one, from post-Enlightenment, in its awareness of the possibility to control nature through the use of reason and science, abandons its hypothetical condition and develops into a political perspective in order to eventually become a concrete project for the future. Rowe and Koetter also place German historicism in the first category, one where the empirical illuminist scientific development is replaced by absolute idealism and historical evolutionism. Romantic contemplation and the evocative power of the sublime replace rational organization and logical transformation of the natural world.

In modern times, the *Zeitgeist* as progressive revealing of the absolute in history manifests itself in the work of man and in his actions. "Architecture is the will of an epoch translated into space,"[19] declared Mies van der Rohe. Le Corbusier echoed him by saying that: "the task of architecture is to get in tune with the trends of its era; works should express the spirit of the time."[20] After having de-spiritualized Hegel's historical idealism – depriving it of its ideal character – history can reveal itself in reality "as anything equipped with dimension, weight, color, texture."[21]

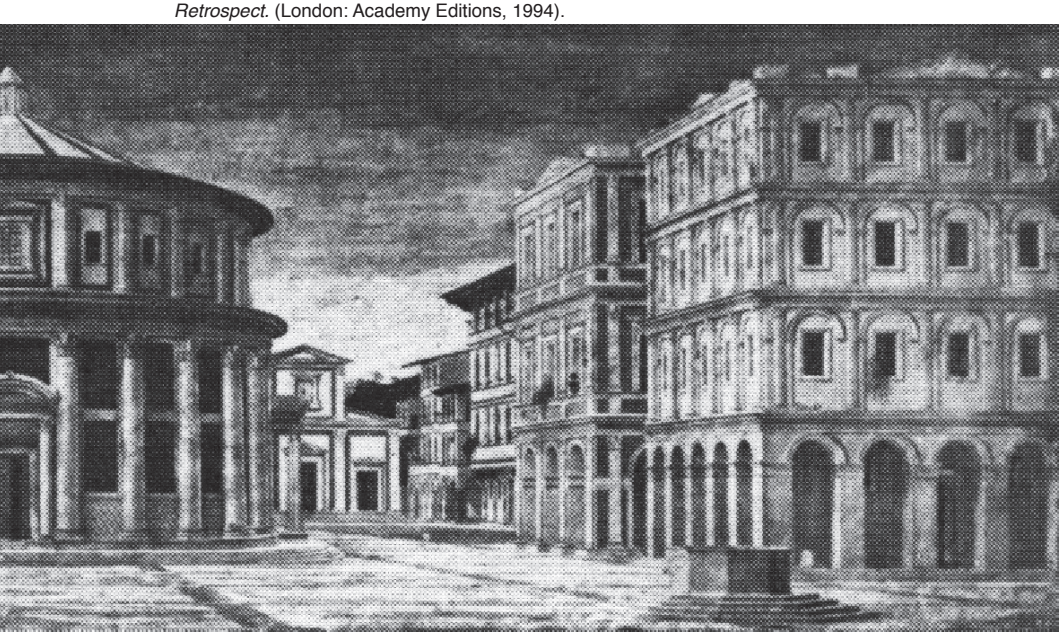
In the twentieth century, the will to give form to the spirit of time invests utopia with a mainly eschatological character.[22] As Bernardo Secchi says, "utopia always lies in a crisis point and in the

19 Philip Johnson, *Mies van der Rohe* (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1947), 183.

20 Le Corbusier, *La Ville radieuse* [*The Radiant City*] (Boulogne-sur-Seine: Éditions de l'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui, 1928), 28.

21 Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1979), 48.

22 This theme, although just mentioned in *Collage City*, becomes central in the critique of the Modern Movement contained in Colin Rowe's book *The Architecture of Good Intentions. Towards a Possible Retrospect.* (London: Academy Editions, 1994).



transition point between a historical period and the next one."[23] The *Zeitgeist* of the early decades of the twentieth century was characterized by a feeling of poverty in the present to be understood as the emptying of experience and the lack of authenticity of human existence in the modern industrial society.[24] Architecture had to "save society." A universal architectural language and a total project would transform the city from Thomas More's idea of the "society of the righteous"[25] into a shape and a real space of a new human existence. To acquire the status of an icon of change towards a better future society, modern architecture had to be authentic, that is, to strip itself of habits, conventions, traditions, in essence to become devoid of memory and tradition.

Through what might be considered as a *Geistesgeschichte* of Utopia, Rowe and Koetter identify a subtle and unprecedented distinction between "utopia as an 'implicit' object of contemplation and utopia as an 'explicit' instrument of social change."[26] From the theoretical positions developed by the two authors there is no condemnation of the utopian vision *tout court*, but rather a sharp reflection on the role and value that utopia has assumed within the urban project along the history of the relationship between architecture and city. In *Collage City* the word *fantasy* seems to mean a possible, ideal vision the project refers to, while *reality* becomes that set of concrete instances and material characteristics related to the history, tradition and memory of the existing city. The two authors highlight that there is a critical point when the project of the city leans unevenly towards one of the two extremes. The dominance of fantasy produces totalitarian and authoritarian *prophetic utopias* where the pre-figuration becomes a political imposition and "an abstract, would-be scientific idealism […] can scarcely deal with specifics,"[27] while the prevalence of the 'realistic' component does not allow any pre-vision of change and "a concrete would-be empiricism […] is radically disinclined to cope with generalities."[28]

To avoid the prevalence of the *processes of anticipation* on those of *retrospection* (or vice versa), the city must at the same time act as a *theatre of memory* and a *theatre of prophecy*: "We may receive strength from the novelty of prophetic declamation; but the degree of this potency must be strictly related to the known, perhaps mundane and, necessarily, memory-laden context from which it emerges."[29]

The complementarity of *prophecy* and *memory* in the project of the city is only possible through the synchronicity of two fundamental concepts: *utopia* and *tradition*. To explain their meaning, the two authors present again in the fifth chapter ("Collage City and the Reconquest of Time") some of the theoretical positions of Karl R. Popper,[30] the apostle of scientific rigor, a fierce critic of utopia and historicism, and a theorist of the rational approach to tradition.

Rowe and Koetter support Popper's critique of every utopian all-encompassing and authoritarian vision,[31] however, they disagree with the philosopher's lack of distinction between "utopia as a metaphor and utopia as a prescription,"[32] i.e., not to have considered the "great body of manifestations which the myth of the absolutely good society has engendered."[33]

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23 Bernardo Secchi, "Collage City," in *L'architettura come testo e la figura di Colin Rowe*, 147-153.

24 At the centre of the interests of the scholars of that time there was the transformation of the *Kultur* into *Zivilisation*. I refer in particular to the texts by Oswald Spengler, *The Decline of the West* (New York: Vintage, 2006) and Walter Benjamin, "Esperienza e Povertà" ["Experience and Poverty"], *Metaphorein* III (1978): 12-16, where spiritual poverty was considered as the price to pay in exchange for a progressive advancement of the technique and economy.

25 Thomas More, *Utopia*, 1516.

26 Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 88.

27 Ibid., 98.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 49.

30 Rowe and Koetter refer to two writings by Karl R. Popper in particular, "Utopia and Violence," *The Hibbert Journal* 46 (1947): 109-116 and "Towards a Rational Theory of Tradition," *The Rationalist Annual* (1949): 36-55.

31 For further information, see Popper, "Utopia and Violence".

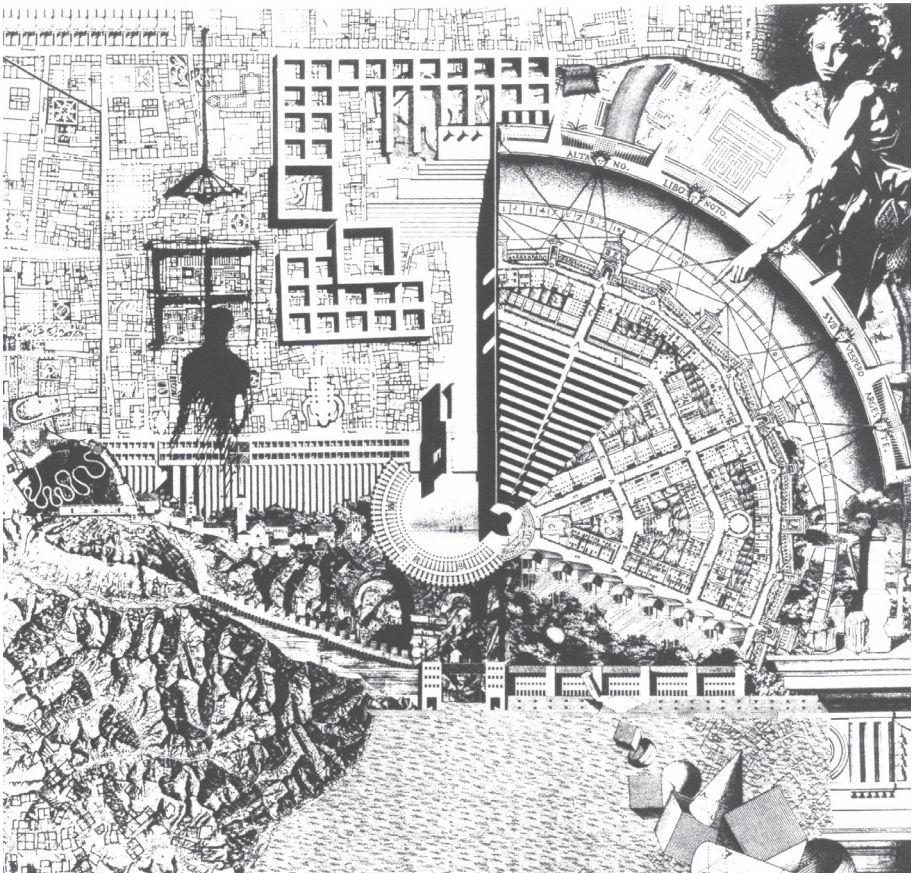
32 Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 123.

33 Ibid., 125.



Fig. 2: Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, Collage City (Milan: Saggiatore, 1981)

Fig. 3: Aldo Rossi, “La città analoga: Tavola,” Lotus International 13 (1976)



For the authors of *Collage City*, utopia – an essential instrument of the urban project through which a possible equitable society may be conceptualized and represented[34] – must assume an eminently poetic character by removing any empirical and literal political and ideological purpose, in such a way that it becomes pure and transcendent, a "perceived conceptual necessity,"[35] a metaphor of a possible city. "Utopia as a social metaphor, rather than a probable social recipe,"[36] and collage as a compositional technique guarantee the continuous intersection between a necessary, ideal and fantastic pre-figuration and an empirical operation that acquires the materials of the project from the context of history and existing traditions.

At the end of the book the authors of *Collage City* insert four paintings that represent "analogous composite cities."[37] Among these the view of Venice by Canaletto inevitably refers to the panel of *The analogous city,* a collective work created by Aldo Rossi, Eraldo Consolascio, Bruno Reichlin, and Fabio Reinhart for the 1976 Venice Biennale,[38] but above all it refers to a research developed by Aldo Rossi about the possible theoretical implications and design applications of the *analogy*. Unlike *Collage City*, the analogous city theory[39] is not structured as an editorial project, even if this intention is explicit in Rossi's notes.[40] Although Rossi claims that the analogous city panel

34 Bernardo Secchi, *Prima lezione di urbanistica* [*First Lection of Urbanism*], (Bari: Laterza, 2007), 62.

35 Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 125.

36 Colin Rowe, *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa and Other Essays* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1987), 204.

37 Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 272.

38 The panel of the "Analogous City" has been presented in many critical essays on the work of Aldo Rossi. A selection that does not want to be exhaustive includes: Francesco dal Co, "Criticism and Design," *Oppositions* 13 (1978): 1-16; Jean Dethier and Alain Guiheux, *La ville: art et architecture en Europe, 1870-1993* [*The City: Art and Architecture in Europe, 1870-1993*] (Paris: Editions du Centre Georges Pompidou, 1994); Bruno Fortier, *L'amour des villes* [*Love of Cities*] (Liège: Mardaga + Institut Français d'Architecture, 1994), Jacques Gubler, *Aldo Rossi: Autobiographies partagées, Cahiers de théorie 1* [*Aldo Rossi: Shared Autobiographies, Notebooks of theory 1*] (Lausanne: Presses Polytechniques et universitaires romandes, 2000); Aldo Rossi, "La Città analoga: Tavola" ["The Analogous City: Panel"], *Lotus International* 13 (1976): 5-9; Aldo Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1981); Françoise Brun, *Formes urbaines* [*Urban Forms*] (Paris: L'Equerre, 1981); Aldo Rossi, *Aldo Rossi: opere recenti* [*Aldo Rossi: Recent Works*] (Modena: Panini, 1983); Aldo Rossi, *Aldo Rossi: Théâtre, Ville, Architecture* [*Aldo Rossi: Theater, City, Architecture*] (Nantes: Pays de la Loire-Recherches et Créations, 1985); Aldo Rossi, Peter Arnell, and Ted Bickford, *Aldo Rossi, buildings and projects 1959-1983* (New York: Rizzoli, 1985); Aldo Rossi, Micha Bandini, and David Dunster, *Aldo Rossi* (London: Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1983); Aldo Rossi and Alberto Ferlenga, *Aldo Rossi: architetture 1988-1992* [*Aldo Rossi: Architectures 1988-1992*] (Milan: Electa, 1992); Aldo Rossi and Alberto Ferlenga, *Aldo Rossi, Tutte le opere* [*Aldo Rossi, All Works*] (Milan: Electa, 1999); Aldo Rossi and Francesco Moschini, *Aldo Rossi, progetti e disegni 1962-1979* [*Aldo Rossi, Projects and drawings 1962-1979*] (New York: Rizzoli, 1979); Aldo Rossi and John O'Regan, *Aldo Rossi selected writing and projects* (London: Architectural Design, 1983); Matteo Agnoletto, "Osservazioni sulla città analoga" ["Observations on the analogous city"], in *La lezione di Aldo Rossi* [*The Lesson of Aldo Rossi*], ed. A. Trentin (Bologna: Bononia University Press., 2008), 52-59; Cameron McEwan, "Che fine ha fatto la città analoga? Il significato dell'immagine in Aldo Rossi e Valerio Olgiati" ["What Happened to the Analogous City? The meaning of the image in Aldo Rossi and Valerio Olgiati"], in *Aldo Rossi, la storia di un libro. L'architettura della città, dal 1966 ad oggi* [*Aldo Rossi, the History of a Book. The Architecture of the City, since 1966*], ed. F. De Maio et al. (Padova: Poligrafo, 2014), 265-283; Dario Rodighiero, *The analogous city. The Map* (Lausanne: Editions Archizoom, 2015).

39 The main essays in which Rossi describes some possible contents of a analogous city theory are: Aldo Rossi, "La arquitectura análoga" ["The Analogous Architecture"], *Construcciòn de la ciudad 2C* (1975): 8-11; Aldo Rossi, "An Analogical Architecture" ["An Analogous Architecture"], *A+U (Architecture and Urbanism)* 65 (1976): 74-76; Rossi, "La città analoga: Tavola"; Aldo Rossi, "My Designs and Analogous Architecture", in *Aldo Rossi in America: 1976-1979*, ed. P. Eisenman (IUAS New York: MIT Press, 1979), 16-19. A typescript in Italian with the title *L'architettura analoga,* [*The Analogous Architecture*] is preserved in the *gta archive* of the ETH Zurich.

40 In 1973, simultaneously with the translations of the text *l'Architettura della città* [*The Architecture of the City*], a text by Aldo Rossi, entitled *The analogous city*, appears in the colophon of Franco Angeli editions, indicated as "forthcoming" in the series directed by Massimo Scolari. Traces and reflections on the theme of the analogous city are contained in the *Quaderni azzurri* [*Blue Notebooks*] no. 2, 14, 18 - Francesco Dal Co, *Aldo Rossi Quaderni azzurri* [*Aldo Rossi Blue Notebooks*] (Milan: Electa 1999) - as literal fragments, some of which merge into the book by Aldo Rossi, *A Scientific Autobiography* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1981).

"is not the explanation of the analogous city because we do not believe that explanations exist,"[41] the qualities and the theoretical scope of this work are of the utmost importance in order to understand the role and value of the analogy for the city project.

The iconographic apparatus consists of predetermined figures that express the geographical and historical dimension of a personal and collective memory. The composition proceeds by addition and overlap, specifying a formal machine that operates through the combinatorial manipulation of real and imaginary figures.

Images of a tradition circumscribed to a territory describe, through analogical references, places of "pure architectural references."[42] The quotation becomes a figurative instrument and the analogy a semantic reference through which the image makes the relationship between historical memory and reality of the present possible. At the same time, it allows the imagination to be born from the concrete. Imagination and reality become both tools and references of the project. Fantasy and freedom embody the moment of the autobiographical invention that relates to the concrete of historical reality because, says Rossi: "There is no invention that is not seen from the side of reason, or at least, from the side of the dialectics of the concrete."[43]

Referring to the correspondence between Freud and Jung[44] about the difference between logical thinking and analogical thinking, Rossi writes: "In this definition I think I can find a different sense of history too; no longer seen as a quotation, but as a series of things, of objects of affection, of which design and memory serve."[45] In the project of the city, *history* becomes *memory* that manifests itself in the material structures of the existing city and constitutes the figurative and semantic material that allows "objects of affection" to be used, not as a literary quotation, but as formal references of experience.

The analogous city is the *locus* of memory that expresses the value and meaning of life and experience. Social behaviors assume a ritual, poetic and lyrical character in the wake of that philosophy of experience theorized by Dilthey, Bergson, Proust, Freud and Valéry, which Walter Benjamin also uses to explore and describe the work of Baudelaire,[46] to which Rossi makes explicit reference in *The Architecture of the City*[47] and in the *Introduction to Boullée*,[48] underlining, in this last essay, the importance of the *correspondences* compared to the meaning of "exalted rationalism."[49]

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41 Rossi, "La Città analoga: Tavola," 6.

42 Rossi, *L'architettura analoga*, 1.

43 Rossi, "La Città analoga: Tavola," 5-6.

44 For a critical point of view about the relationship between Rossi and Freud refer to the essays by Peter Eisenman, "The House of the Dead as the City of Survival," in *Aldo Rossi in America: 1976-1979,* ed. P. Eisenman (IAUS New York: MIT Press, 1979), 4-15; Peter Eisenman, "The Houses of Memory: The Texts of Analogy," in *The Architecture of the City, A. Rossi* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1982), 2-11; Jean La Marche, *The Familiar and the Unifamiliar in the Twentieth-Century Architecture* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2003); Mary Louise Lobsinger, "The Obscure Object of the Desire: Autobiography and Repetition in the Work of Aldo Rossi," *Grey Room* 8 (2002): 38-61; Sébastien Marot, *Sub-urbanism and the Art of Memory* (London: Architectural Association, 2003); Vincent Scully, "Postscript: Ideology in Form," in *A Scientific Autobiography*, ed. A. Rossi (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 1981), 111-116; Cary Siress, "City of Id: Modernism Couched," *TransScape* 11 (2010): 146-153; Colin St. John Wilson, "Sacred Game", in *Architectural Reflections: Studies in the Philosophy and Practice of Architecture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000): 190-197; K. Michael Hays, *Architecture's Desire: Reading the Late Avant-Garde* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2010); Vincent Scully, "Frank Lloyd Wright and the Stuff of Dreams," *Perspecta* 16 (1980): 8-31; McEwan, "Che fine ha fatto la città analoga?", 265-283.

45 Rossi, *L'architettura analoga,* 2.

46 I refer in particular to the essay by Walter Benjamin, "On Some Motifs in Baudelaire," in *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, ed. Hannah Arendt (New York: Schocken Books, 1968), 155-200.

47 Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*.

48 Aldo Rossi, "Introduzione a Boullée" ["Introduction to Boullée"], in *Aldo Rossi. Scritti scelti sull'architettura e la città 1956-1972* [*Aldo Rossi. Selected writings on the architecture and the city 1956-1972*] (Milan: CLUP, 1975).

49 Among the various essays on the subject, particularly illuminating is the one by Antonio Monestiroli, "Il razionalismo esaltato di Aldo Rossi" ["The exalted rationalism of Aldo Rossi"], in *Aldo Rossi, la storia di un*

Benjamin argues that "the *correspondences* set a concept of experience that considers cultural elements in themselves,"[50] linking, in this way, the concrete and real, everyday life with the recording of some ritual experiences that belong to a dreamlike dimension because of their nature.

Specific representations of experience settle in the *mémoire involontaire*, gathering around a sensitive object, like the *aura* of that object, which corresponds exactly to the experience that is deposited as an exercise in an object of use. A type of memory that is not stratified in the conscience, but in the unconscious dimension of the historical experience and that, being indescribable through the logical thought, can express itself through the analogical thought.

Aristotle assigns to analogy, as a metaphor, its own ontological status inasmuch as he claims: "knowing how to find beautiful metaphors means to perceive or think the similarity of things between them, the similar concept (τό ὅμοιον θεωρείν)."[51] Umberto Eco, questioning what the metaphor should teach us, says the answer is in the "resemblance" and in the "related concept," that can be described as "the subtle network of proportions between cultural units,"[52] which in other words can be translated as that set of cultural references through which we give an object a particular meaning rather than another through a mental process of analogical similarity.

Regarding the concept of identity between analysis and project, or better, the concept of the project as a form of knowledge – according to Rossi, an indispensable theoretical pre-condition of any process of transformation of the city and the territory – the analogy allows to express the value of that cultural and poetic dimension of the experience that resides in the historical memory of *Urbanitas*. Atmospheres, moods, emotions, sensations and memories belong to the sphere of the intelligible, to an irrational dimension that transcends the empirical reality of the material. But "the door to the invisible must be visible"[53] and one must "consider the irrational in the only way possible: through the use of reason."[54] Then the dream space of experience, if not described, can at least be expressed through a 'figurative and silent' language made up of analogical images where the *meaning* replaces *signification*.

Aldo Rossi writes:

> Now, the answer contained in the theme of the analogous city, in a broader way, of course, than can be expressed in the panel, concerns the relation between reality and imagination.[55]

The common intentions of this declaration are evident compared to what has been claimed by the authors of *Collage City* on the relationship between *reality* and *fantasy*. And if, in trying to solve this relationship, the book by Rowe and Koetter does not address the question of the meaning of forms, instead, the analogous city of Rossi allows to connote that structure of semantic references through which we can understand and describe those expressive values connected to the material structure of the existing context.

The merit of *Collage City* is perhaps to highlight with extreme clarity the criticality of theoretical positions biased either in favor of ideological-political visions, inevitably totalizing and authoritarian, or in favor of a disillusioned empiricism, deficient compared to a necessary internal pre-vision of the project. On the one hand, an excess of fantasy and imagination, on the other, an abuse of reality and materialism. Foreshadowing the synchronicity of the two instances as a possible solution, i.e., a scenario of collision scenario, between the "civilized thought" and

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libro. L'architettura della città, dal 1966 ad oggi [*Aldo Rossi, the story of a book. L'architettura della città, from 1966 to today*], 55-62.

50 Walter Benjamin, *Angelus Novus* (Turin: Einaudi, 1962), 117.

51 The translation is taken from the text by Umberto Eco, *Semiotica e filosofia del linguaggio* [*Semiotics and philosophy of the language*] (Turin: Einaudi 1984), 163-164.

52 Eco, *Semiotica e filosofia del linguaggio*, 164.

53 René Daumal, *Le Mont Analogue* [*The Analogous Mountain*] (Paris: Editions de la République des Lettres, 2013).

54 Rossi, *L'architettura analoga,* 4.

55 Rossi, "La Città analoga: Tavola," 5.

the "wild thought", the intellectual and the *bricoleur*,[56] the scientist and the poet, "utopia as a metaphor" becomes a poetic image of the new city and the *collage* guarantees the relationship between project and historical tradition through the use and assembly of pre-existing forms.

However, the technique of *collage*, as described by the two authors, establishes a relationship between the new city and the existing one that becomes explicit exclusively on the level of the formal structures and not that of its contents. A critical attitude – analogous to the one advanced in the essay *The Mathematics of the Ideal Villa* (1987) – that, following Wölfflin's theoretical positions, recurs to forms which, although organic to the society in which they were originally manifested, can be understood, described and used independently of this relationship, and can therefore be read as "internal" initiatives in the dynamics of artistic forms.

In 1978, Aldo Rossi and Colin Rowe were invited to participate, along with other European and American architects, in the project "Roma interrotta," [57] organized by Incontri Internazionali d'Arte. The program envisaged the design of twelve projects for the city of Rome to be developed within the twelve sectors of the plan of Rome drawn by Gian Battista Nolli in 1748. The twelve projects were exhibited in the homonymous exhibition set up in the then disused Trajan's Market.

More than a set of concrete proposals for the future of the existing city, the organizers' intention was to retrospectively prefigure a Rome that could have been, through suggestions in the form of images, which recounted the many reflections and the different intellectual positions of architectural thought in the years of post-modernity around the theme of the relationship between and history and the architecture of the city. "No urban planning proposal," writes Giulio Carlo Argan, "but a series of gymnastic exercises on the parallel bars of Memory."[58]

According to some critics,[59] total indifference to the contingencies of reality, absence of operational implications and a general program capable of avoiding excessive fragmentation of interventions have produced a general fracture between reality and project, highlighting, on one hand, the desire to affirm an absolute and dangerous autonomy of architectural language,[60] and on the other, the idea that history could take the consistency of a "dreamlike reality" with which the project is allowed to establish a "playful relationship"[61] of total freedom.

56 Rowe and Koetter in the fourth chapter of *Collage City* ("Collision City and the Politics of Bricolage") use the concept of *bricolage* introduced by Claude Lévi-Strauss in *La Pensée Sauvage* [*The Wild Thought*] (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1962) to indicate the characteristic operative tool of 'wild thought'. Still referring to what was argued by the structural anthropologist, the two authors argue that *collage* becomes "the transposition of *bricolage* into the realms of contemplation" (Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La Pensée Sauvage* [*The Savage Mind*] (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1962). It should be noted that Aldo Rossi also proposes some of Lévi-Strauss' reflections (Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes tropiques* [*Tristes Tropiques*] (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1955) in *The Architecture of the City*, underlining how the French theorist introduces the first thoughts about the city seen as a work of art, i.e., as a moment of synthesis "between natural and artificial elements; it is an object of nature and a subject of culture" (Aldo Rossi, *The Architecture of the City*). While Rowe and Koetter recover the eminently operative characteristics of some anthropological reflections by Lévi-Strauss, Aldo Rossi seems interested in that part of investigations that studies the 'irrational' and 'mysterious' qualities of urban space, aware of the fact that for Lévi-Strauss the mythical thought does not surpass rational activity "it operates whenever the mind asks itself what signification is" (Claude Lévi-Strauss, *La potière jalouse* [*The Jealous Potter*] (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1988), 13.

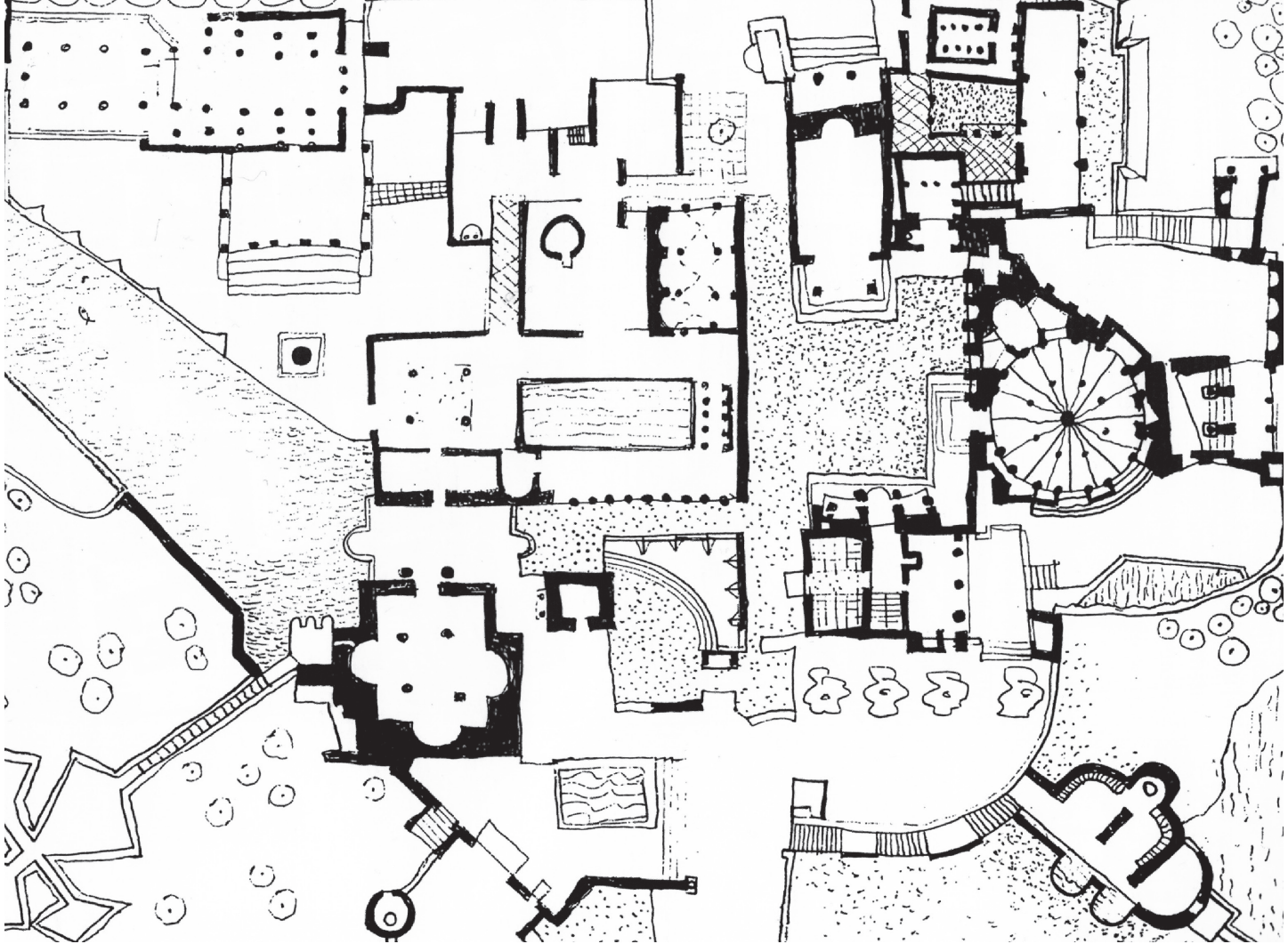
57 A bibliography on the subject is composed of the essays by Piero Sartogo (ed.), *Roma interrupted: twelve interventions on the Nolli's plan of Rome* (Monza: Johan and Levy, 2014); Jennifer Franchina (ed.), Roma *interrotta* [*Rome Interrupted*] (Rome: International Meetings of Art / Officina Edizioni, 1979); Léa-Catherine Szacka, "Roma interrupted: Postmodern Rome as the source of Fragmented Narratives," *Rome, Postmodern Narrative of a Cityscape*, ed. Dom Holdaway and Filippo Trentin (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2013), 155-209 ; Michael Graves (guest ed.), "Roma interrotta" ["Rome Interrupted"], *Architectural Design* 49, 3-4, Profile 20 (1979); Antoine Grumbach, "Roma interrotta," *La ville, art et architecture en Europe 1870-1993* [*The City, Art and Architecture in Europe 1870-1993*] (Paris: Centre Pompidou 1994), 445; Francesco Dal Co, "Review Rome in Trajan's Market," *Oppositions* 12 (1978): 112-113.

58 Giulio Carlo Argan, in Jennifer Franchina (ed.), *Roma interrotta*, 12.

59 Particular reference is made to the essay by Francesco Dal Co, "Review Rome in Trajan's Market."

60 For deeper analysis of this type of argument, see in particular Tafuri, *Progetto e utopia.*

61 From Dal Co, "Review Rome in Trajan's Market," 110.



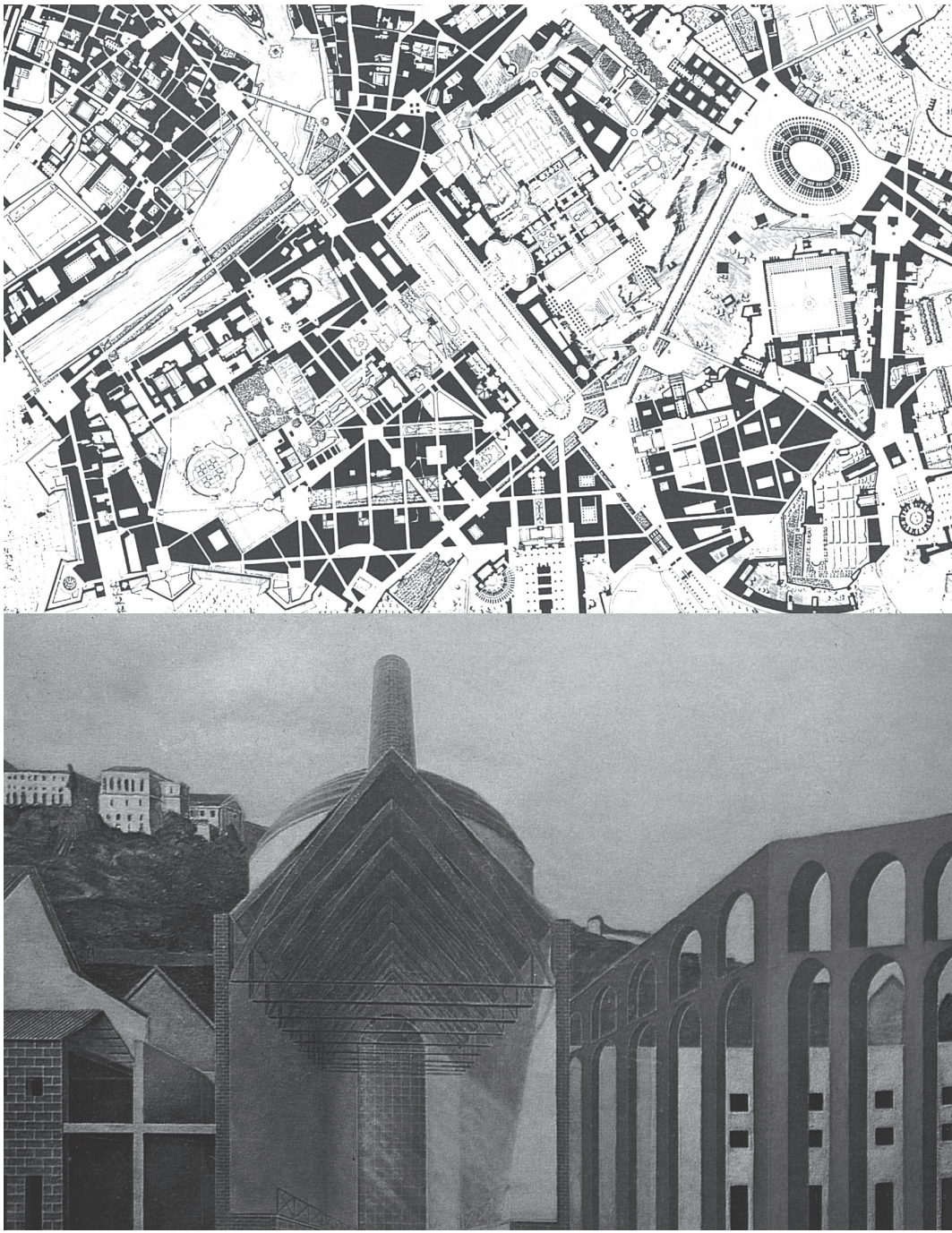


Fig. 4: Bernardo Secchi, “Collage City,” in *L’architettura come testo e la figura di Colin Rowe*, ed. M. Marzo (Venice: Marsilio, 2010)
Fig. 5, 6: Jennifer Franchina, ed., *Roma interrotta* (Rome: Incontri Internazionali d’Arte / Officina edizioni, 1979)

It cannot be ignored, however, that in the opinion of other intellectuals,[62] if the purpose of such an initiative was to develop an intellectual exercise "to make hopeful and positive suggestions about the nature of urban development" and "to comment on and hypothesize about the social structures and institutions of contemporary and earlier culture,"[63] the unavailability of a predefined general coordination program made it possible to reduce the "limits" and "inhibitions" of the proposals to a minimum. Moreover, the voluntary absence of relations among the different projects was based on intellectual assumptions designed to "encourage the view that the cities are capable of sustaining and even supporting fragmentary intervention and that such intervention can provide architectural clarification."[64]

For the eighth sector, the project designed by Colin Rowe, Peter Carl, Judith di Maio and Steven Peterson completes the Nolli plan through a rigorous archaeological approach that formalizes and partly reinterprets the Napoleonic Rome described by Jesuit Father Vincent Mulcahy and by Giuseppe Valadier.

The catalogue of the exhibition[65] recounts about the exegesis of the historical sources and of an already known general critique of the modern city: the radical rejection of an all-encompassing idea and instead using a deductive approach that would proceed through *collage* of heterogeneous fragments in the wake of a much-needed integration of the project in the existing historical context. Additionally Steven Peterson's essay, *Urban Design Tactic*[66] (1979) – published a year later in the monograph dedicated to the exhibition in the *Architectural Design* magazine – illustrates in more detail the procedures and operating methodologies of the project discourse, summarizing and structuring strategies and content.

The three questions proposed by Peterson in the opening of his essay, namely, what is "the essential, prerequisite medium of urbanism itself," what are the "constituent urban elements" of the city of Rome and "the formal strategies and tactics available to provide coherence and relationships among these elements," inevitably refer to the theoretical issues and reflections described by Rowe and Koetter in the third chapter of *Collage City, Crisis of the Object: Predicament of Texture.*

The *Gestalt* inversion of the relationship between *figure* and *ground*, that Nolli unconsciously suggests when drawing for the first time the interior spaces of public buildings (unlike other planimetric representations of the city produced in the Middle Ages), allows giving formal value to the void space circumscribed by the built environment.

Rowe and Koetter place the model of the "modern traditional city" – conceived as a constellation of isolated and raised objects inside a natural *continuum*, which radically changes the concept of street and public space – in opposition with the model of the traditional city. Its form, assimilated to a *texture*, specifies a sequence of spatial situations external and internal to buildings where the different relations between space and the architectures that circumscribe it define the different 'conditions of experience' of the city and the activities that take place within it.

By re-proposing a term used in the nineteenth-century Beaux-Arts education in Paris,[67] Rowe and Koetter suggest that the built environment of the traditional urban fabric takes the role of *poché*. If in the 19th century the *poché* would define the limits between different parts of the structure, now it would delimit the urban space, that would become habitable when it internally houses a public or semi-public room belonging to the building. According to Rowe and Koetter, the usefulness of the *poché* "comes with its ability, as a solid, to engage or be engaged by adjacent voids, to act as both figure and ground as necessity or circumstance might require."[68]

62 I refer to the critical reading by Alan Chimacoff, "Roma Interrotta Reviewed," in Graves, "Roma interrotta."

63 Ibid., 7.

64 Ibid., 8.

65 Colin Rowe, in Franchina, *Roma interrotta*, 136-150.

66 Steven Peterson, "Urban Design Tactic," in Michael Graves, "Roma interrotta."

67 For a deeper analysis see Jacques Lucan, *Composition non-composition* (Lausanne: Presses polytechniques et universitaires romandes 2009).

68 Rowe, *Collage City*, 79.

Furthermore, they argue that in a city described as a sequence of rooms, similar to a set of *promenades urbaines*, some architectures – such as the Palais Royal in Paris and the Quirinale in Rome – can take on the role of an "instrument of field recognition, an identifiable stabilizer and a means of collective orientation."[69]

Urban *poché* operations aimed to complete the Nolli plan follow a three-fold strategy: the "Strategy of Fragments," which reconfigures "the Aventine as an ideal city," "the Palatine as a megastructure," "the Celio as a hilltown of rationalized space linked to a central piazza at St. Stefano Rotondo" and "The University Area as a Rockefeller Center;" the "Strategy of Lines," which redefines visual and conceptual relations between the main monuments of the city internal and external to the assigned sector; finally, the "Tactics of Connection" which, specifying and completing the interpenetration of "fields," the "Continuity of texture," the "Public Landscape," the "Italian Garden," and the "French Garden," qualify the connections and transitions among the different parts of the project.

The prefigured interventions mainly – or almost exclusively – concern the urban voids which thus seem to have been entrusted with the role of sole instrument for qualifying the form of the city. Although recognition is given in some drawings published in the essay by Steven Peterson to a timid attempt to reflect on the architectural form of buildings-*poché* that delimit the voids, the form of the facades seems to be a question that takes a back seat with respect to their planimetric configuration. More generally, there is no reflection in the project on the figurative character of the city's architecture, that is on the role of the architectural form within a possible discourse concerning the representative and expressive function of the character and identity of urban spaces.

For Rowe and Koetter, the *texture*, "the basic matrix material city,"[70] the combination of the different models of streets, piazzas and the different densities of the built environment, constitutes the instrument through which to achieve a "morphological stipulation" between the model of the Acropolis and the model of the Forum – of which Palazzo Farnese represents the most eloquent paradigm – that is, a desired "alerted equilibrium" where *object* and space can coexist in an "equality of sustained debate."[71]

Elements of coordination and synthesis among instances "of the overtly planned and the genuinely unplanned, of the set-piece and the accident, of the public and the private,"[72] in *Collage City* the texture seems to represent the *alter ego* of what has been the prevailing urban planning tool of American cities since the mid-eighteenth century: the *grid*. Sharing the conviction that the quality of space is independent of the architectural correspondence of the single forms of buildings – implicit in the absolute freedom granted to the single architectural fragment – in both the texture and the grid investigations on the figurative and expressive dimension of the form of the cities seem to be entrusted to a subsequent architecture project that is non-organic to urban planning processes. As Manfredo Tafuri had already partly pointed out, an attitude of total indifference towards the semantic roles that architectural figurativeness undoubtedly assumes in the city project can only lead to an inevitable split between urban planning and architecture, producing by extension a silent as much as uncontrollable heterogeneity of expressive forms and the formal conditions of urban space.[73]

69 Ibid., 83.

70 Peterson, "Urban Design Tactic," 77.

71 Rowe and Koetter, *Collage City*, 83.

72 Ibid.

73 In *Progetto e Utopia*, Manfredo Tafuri describes the 'grid' as the expression of the typical pattern of American capitalist politics on the formal plan of urbanism, reported in a note to support the assumption, an excerpt from the Declaration of Independence: "... a master plan must give the maximum guarantee of elasticity and must present a minimum resistance to the productive initiative." Moreover, continues Tafuri, "The incredible expressive richness, which, especially from the second half of the 19th century onwards, is deposited in the meshes of American cities," is to be attributed to a planning tool that "grants maximum articulation to the secondary elements that configure it, keeping rigid the laws that govern it as a whole." Tafuri, *Progetto e utopia*, 39-40.

The project by Aldo Rossi, Max Bosshard, Gianni Braghieri, Arduino Cantafora and Paul Katzberger for "Roma interrota" is located in the area of the ancient Baths of Caracalla. Here, the relationship between the new and the ancient is solved through a prevalent compositional procedure of *ordinatio* and *dispositio* of objects in the given space. Aldo Rossi writes: "The history of the Baths continues beyond Rome."[74] The Baths, a place of healing and well-being, are not just a space or a form, but also and above all a meaning, a concept, an idea, the image of a *Volksgeist* which lies beyond the phenomenon and which is used to communicate and guarantee its existence. The elements of the project – the fountain, the tea house with walk and trampoline, the locker rooms, the water house, and the existing aqueduct – belong to a personal and collective poetic repertoire which, extracted from the chronology or original conditions, are manipulated and relocated in space with the intention of clarifying their meaning and character.

The project, an "alternative to the real," an image of a possible future for the city and the territory, uses history and translates it into "things, objects, memories that seek to express a dimension of the environment and of memory."[75] In the city, the architectural object assumes a prevalent role in the process of semantic qualification that transforms spaces into places. Conceived as a large architectural artefact, a construction of architecture in historical time, the city becomes an analogical discourse made up of images, a sequence of multiple allusions and heterogeneous annotations that make the meanings, recollections and memories implicit in its explicit forms.

Manfredo Tafuri argued that the analogous city is not attributable to Foucault's family of heterotopias[76] because it does not specify a political position.[77] We can only agree with this critical reading that highlights, with compelling lucidity, how the analogous city is not another alternative place that denounces the shortcomings and defects of the world, but constitutes itself as an image of that set of cultural and poetic values referring to the context of experience, of a life lived in the city which, stratified in memory, gives meaning to places and forms of reality.

If ideology is implicit in the form as utopia is in the image, by freeing utopia from any ideological-political implication the analogous city becomes a poetic image of traditions, customs and desires of a society. And if the meaning of history resides in memory, then the analogous city represents the answer to the construction of the new city: a city analogous to the existing one, a moment of synthesis between the demands of utopia and those of reality.

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74 Aldo Rossi, in Franchina, *Roma interrotta*, 136-150, 186.

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76 Michel Foucault, *Utopie Eterotopie* [*Utopias Eterotopias*] (Napoli: Edizioni Cronopio 2016).

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