

The background of the cover is a monochromatic blue aerial map of a city, showing a dense network of streets and building footprints. The map is slightly tilted. At the bottom of the cover, there is a stylized, dark blue silhouette of a pen nib pointing towards the right.

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ARCHITEKTÚRA & URBANIZMUS

ČASOPIS PRE TEÓRIU
ARCHITEKTÚRY A URBANIZMU
JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURAL
AND TOWN-PLANNING THEORY

Ročník Volume LIV
Číslo Number 1 – 2 / 2020

[UN]PLANNED CITY

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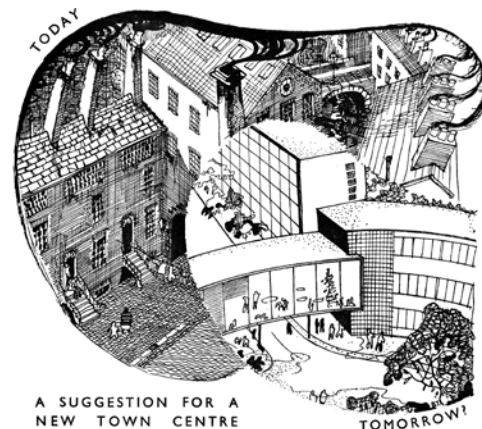
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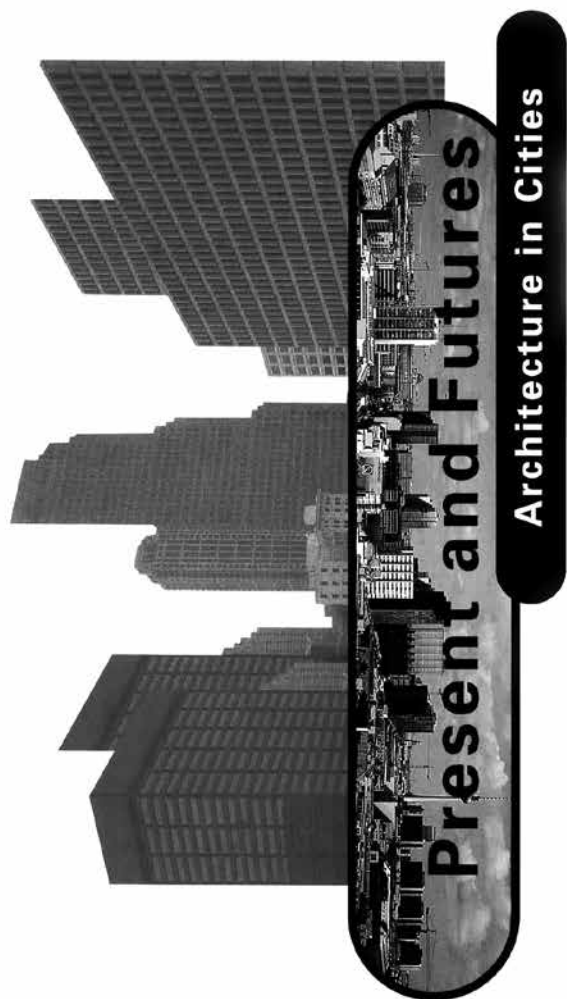
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Source Zdroj: SOLÀ-MORALES, Ignasi and COSTA, Xavier (eds.), 1996. Present and Futures: Architecture in Cities. Barcelona: COAC/CCCB. 306 p.

The legacy – Ignasi Solà-Morales and the contemporary urban debate

Odkaz Ignasiho Solà-Moralesa a súčasná debata o meste

Gonçalo M. Furtado C. L.

Príspevok je teoretickou reflexiou stavu súčasného mesta, ako aj diskusiou o nových možnostiach jeho transformácie. Debata o súčasnom meste je rámcovaná mnohými ideami, pričom medzi dominujúce patrí koncepcia mesta organizovaného ako sieť, s charakteristickou nestálosťou, všadeprítomným dohľadom, mobilitou, digitálnou komunikáciou atď. Táto debata je taktiež formovaná úsilím ochrany architektonického dedičstva, rehabilitácie mestskej štruktúry či paradigmatom kreatívnych miest.

Tieto diskurzy reflektujúce súčasnú mestskú realitu poukazujú, nakoľko bola teoretická práca Ignasiho Solà-Moralesa zo záveru 20. storočia priekopnícka a vizionárska. Inšpiratívny odkaz Solà-Moralesa pozostáva predovšetkým z jeho teoretických kartografií súčasnej situácie metropol a architektúry. Jeho práca je komplexným architektonickým myšlienkovým procesom pozostávajúcim z výberu kategórií, na ktorých zakladá interpretáciu súčasného mesta. Mesta zloženého z nestabilných obrysov, ktoré sú výsledkom kryštalizácie rôznych síl. To všetko formuje komplexný systém, zjednotený úmyslom prostredníctvom demokracie prekonať neskoro-kapitalistický a post-historický svet postmoderny.

Postmoderny, ktorá neodmieta intelektuálne dedičstvo modernizmu, ale skôr sa usiluje znovu objaviť protomoderné koncepcie sledujúce demokratizačné myšlienkové prúdy. Vďaka dôslednému presadzovaniu potenciálu disciplíny architektúry a urbanizmu kriticky reaguje na sily, ktoré v súčasnosti ovplyvňujú rozvoj mesta. Ignasi Solà-Morales bol medzi prvými, kto na prelome milénia upozorňoval na potrebu prekonať prístupy súťaživosti metropol, prevládajúce na konci minulého storočia, na mnohých miestach však zaužívané dodnes. Za odkaz Solà-Moralesa tak možno považovať jeho konzistentné spochybňujúce úvahy o urbánnej kultúre, otriasajúce bezpečným spočívaním v hraniciach disciplín a zaužívaných postupov.

Štúdia je rozdelená do dvoch častí. Prvá časť tvorí pripomenutie teoretickej práce Ignasiho Solà-Moralesa, zameranej na niektoré z prístupov, ako porozumieť urbánym situáciám. Druhá časť štúdie sa venuje vybraným aspektom urbánnej kultúry, ktoré sú relevantné aj pre súčasnú debatu o meste.

Introduction

The present paper encompasses theoretical reflections on the urban condition, as well as new possibilities for the transformations of the contemporary city. The work will be structured in two parts. The first part revisits the work of Ignasi Solà-Morales, alluding to some of the ways of perceiving the urban condition that he offered. A second part addresses specific aspects of urban culture in his formulations that are relevant to the contemporary urban debate.

Ignasi Solà-Morales

As indicated in the introduction, this first part draws attention to Ignasi Solà-Morales's work, referring to some keys that he offered towards the perception of the urban condition. In fact, when addressing the subject of urban culture, one cannot overlook the influence that Ignasi Solà-Morales has had. He was, indeed, inspiring, and outlined one of the most notable and insightful theoretical cartographies of the contemporary metropolitan and architectural condition.

Ignasi de Solà-Morales Rubió was a Spanish architect and theorist. Born in Barcelona in 1942, he graduated in architecture in 1966, as well as in Philosophy and Letters in 1968. Between 1970 – 1973 he taught philosophy. In 1973 he presented a 6-volume doctoral thesis in Architecture, supervised by Rafael Moneo (b. 1937), about “Rubio i Bellver y la nova arquitectura de inicios do seculo XX em Catalunha”. During the 1970s, he was the author of books such as “*Rubió i Bellver y la fortuna del Gaudinismo*”.¹ During the 1980s, he wrote among other books “*Eclécticismo y vanguardia*”.² Following those works, we want to highlight the magnificent “*Diferencias: topografía de l'arquitectura*

contemporánea”³ In 1978 he became professor of Theory and History at ETSAB, alongside his pedagogic activities in Barcelona, he also taught at Princeton, Columbia, Turin, Cambridge and Medrísio. In 1986, Ignasi Solà-Morales contributed to the highly influential book edited by Gustavo Gili with the explicit title “Mas alla del posmoderno: critica a la arquitectura reciente”⁴ During his life, Ignasi Solà-Morales published in Spanish magazines, such as *Carrer de la ciutat*, *Quaderns d’Arquitectura i urbanisme*, *Croquis*, *A+U*, *Arquitectura viva* or *Arquitecturas Bis*, as well as in the most prestigious international magazines, such as the French *L’architecture d’aujourd’hui*; the Italian *Domus*, *Lotus*, *Rassegna*, *Casabella* and *Contraspazio*; the American *Perspecta* and *Oppositions*; the English *9H* and *Architectural Design*; the Japanese *A+U* or the Portuguese *Architécti*. Among his achievements in architectural practice, he was the co-author of two projects, both controversial yet rigorous: the reconstruction of the German Pavilion for the international exhibition in Barcelona in 1929 by Mies van der Rohe (with Cristian Ciricini and Fernando Ramos)⁵; as well as the renovation and expansion of Barcelona’s “Gran teatre del Liceu” in the 1990s.⁶

The Any Conferences, UIA 96 and Metropolis

Between 1991 and 2000, Ignasi Solà-Morales founded the Any conferences (with Peter Eisenman, Arata Isozaki, Rem Koolhaas, Philip Johnson, Cynthia Davidson), which constituted a major place in the architectural debate at that time. As summarized on its website: “From 1991 to 2000, the core of the Anyone project was a finite series of ten annual multidisciplinary, cross-cultural conferences on the condition of architecture at the end of the millennium, each held in a different city... Architects, artists, philosophers, historians, and people from many other disciplines met to discuss architecture under themes defined around one of the ten compound any words in the English dictionary. The proceedings were published in books of the same name.”⁷

After 1993, Ignasi Solà-Morales also co-directed an academic program in Barcelona called Metropolis, as well as coordinating the international colloquium of the International Union of Architects of 1996. In 2003, his writings on urban questions were compiled under the name “Inscriptions”⁸, including several of the articles referred to below. Ignasi Solà-Morales passed away in Amsterdam in 2001. Inspired by a conversation with Suzanne Strum, I would like to recall the disciplinary environment of the 1990s. At that time, it was clear that architectural theory was unable to present conceptualizations that could deal with the enormous transformations in culture and urban form, nor with the forces that affected the city. In fact, other fields of expertise were increasingly offering the analytical tools – such as sociology (Manuel Castells, Scott Lash, John Urry), geography (Oriol Nel-lo, Edward Soja), economics (Saskia Sassen) or history of art (Jonathan Crary) – and were trying to address the immaterial forces that had been affecting the city, from economics to computing.

In brief, it was Ignasi Solà-Morales who answered the challenge and introduced many of the authors mentioned above into the architectural debate, often for the first time. Since the Metropolis Master Program constituted internationally (alongside the circle created by Rem Koolhaas at Harvard) an environment of transdisciplinary debate, over the years of its existence it benefited many of the authors mentioned above. Throughout the 1990s, along with the aforementioned initiatives, Ignasi Solà-Morales in fact produced a body of writing on contemporary urban culture; conceptual formulations that were sometimes enigmatic, but now emerging directly from the specific field of architecture. Initially, he was inspired by Walter Benjamin’s readings on the urban transformations of the 19th-20th century, later supplementing and confronting it with many of the referred authors but, above all, he followed the post-structuralist thinking of Gilles Deleuze. In those theoretically prolific times, Ignasi Solà-Morales was involved in the Any seminars, where he presented much of his work internationally, while outside Barcelona emerged as a prime example of a post-industrial city changing from the productive sector to the services sector, from centralized forces to decentralization.

“The Cities of the City”

In the 1990s, Barcelona presented a unique urban phenomenon, setting itself forward as the centre of a transdisciplinary debate on the urban project, involving leading actors such as the Solà-Morales brothers or Joan Busquets among other intellectuals. As already mentioned, Ignasi Solà-Morales coordinated the UIA 1996 event, making explicit the theoretical stance expressed in his foreword to “Presents i Futurs: Arquitectura a les Ciutats for the 19th UIA Congress”⁹. Operating as a platform for discussion, this event organized in five distinct categories representing the urban

phenomena emerging in the previous 3 decades, as part of the transformation into diffused and simultaneously connected urban systems. In the introduction, the philosopher Josep Ramoneda delineated the concepts of “Mutations” and “spaces” that formulated a new relationship between space and time; “Containers” and “Terrain vague” identified new spaces created.¹⁰

A couple of years previously, Ignasi Solà-Morales had already launched the Metropolis program and, to a large extent, the thematic contents that made up the course “The cities of the city” conceived as the core of the program, which can be seen as an expression of his theoretical project.¹¹ In a program characterized by a panoramic and transdisciplinary approach, he chose to use the plural term “cities” to name his project/course of studies. On the other hand, the diversity of thematic approaches, all corresponding to the syllabus contents conceived by Ignasi, allows us to recognize most of the interpretative categories that he developed and left us at that time. Namely: *Global/Local, From City Capital to Megalopolis; Flow; Body; Les Immateriaux; Virtual; Public versus Private; Theme Park; Terrain Vague; Landscape*. Sadly, the time and space available to us will not allow a much deserved more in-depth approach to address all the listed categories, but only to provide brief mentions for a few.

Personal Memories

Since 2000, the author of this paper has numbered among the many others who often contributed to the Metropolis program. Meanwhile, writing about Ignasi was a fearsome proposition, and only one article on Ignasi’s work, was published in the Dutch magazine *Footprint*.¹² Yet it would be nonetheless worthwhile to revisit this text to recall some relevant ideas about Ignasi’s work, and his legacy for the perception of the urban condition in contemporary times.

Following the references mentioned above, it is necessary to allude to some keys or categories that Ignasi Solà-Morales offered us for the perception of the urban condition. As one author then summarized: “The theory of urbanism faces the difficult task of the struggle to acknowledge the complexity of the metropolitan form. In this sense, Ignasi Solà-Morales’s legacy arises as a sharp, generous and open perspective. Besides its apparently enigmatic quality, his work has the genuine capacity to describe the cartography of the metropolis and its form in its contemporary complexity... A complex line of thought towards architecture’s birth from the intersection of artistic and philosophical ideas, with the power to causing breaches within the architectural culture. His writings correspond, in a certain way, to a selection of ‘categories’ as the foundations for the provisory interpretations of the contemporary metropolis and its form; in his own words, multiple, non-convergent and of unstable shape, arising from the crystallization of various forces. From all that, the outcome is a complex system united, as far as I’m concerned, by the permanent generosity of proposing a romantic transcendence of the bizarreness of the late-capitalist, post-historical world”¹³

Before going any further, it should be remembered that in the 1960s, the neorationalist Italian architect Aldo Rossi referred to the “architecture of the city”¹⁴; meanwhile, the idea of the city soon began to face a conceptual crisis requiring new reference points¹⁵, and non-deterministic methodologies distinct from standard post-war methodologies. In the 1980s, the Berlin IBA opted for a “theory of fragments-”. In the transition from the 1980s to the 1990s, Barcelona, where Ignasi Solà-Morales was based, stood out as an urban phenomenon that generated a prolific theoretical debate about the urban project, involving multiple protagonists (from Oriol Bohigas to the Solà-Morales brothers, Joan Busquets and many others. Many authors, such as Nuno Portas in Portugal¹⁶, suggested overcoming the traditional hierarchy between project/plan with a view to consequent interventions guided by strategies endowed with agility. On the one hand, the system of public space networks was often addressed due to its capacity for articulation;¹⁷ on the other hand there was a strategic focus on empty spaces. Joan Busquets¹⁸, for instance, did not fail to identify the quality of these contemporary spaces when aimed at the reconstruction of the city. However, Ignasi Solà-Morales saw them as resistant safeguards, which in their predisposition / expectation welcomed memory and subjective freedom, beyond the mere imitation / reproduction of the productive surroundings. As for other environments in the contemporary city, it required an “other”, liquid architecture, not excluding tensions between space and time.

Memories

At the moment when Ignasi Solà-Morales chose to focus his attention on urban culture, he launched his project by addressing the precedents that had coincided with the previously dominant historical period. He therefore retreated from the modernization endured by the capital cities of the

mid-19th century to focus his interests on the expression of the transformation of urban experience into various representations – by the culture of artistic realism, photographic technique and scientific positivism – of the great “*Grosstadt*”, a city rationalized as a productive centre, which expanded while still maintaining its core. Nonetheless, this great city could only be represented by perspective views and then later, in the inter-war period, by collages of multiple fragments.

Fragments

After the great wars and reconstructions on the European continent, during the 1960s the great urban processes were acknowledged as emerging now in America. However, as I mentioned above, the transition to the 1990s brought in its wake new and different phenomena.¹⁹ These were radical manifestations, which combine the “megalopolis” of Jean Gottmaan of the 1960s²⁰ or the “edge cities” of Joel Garreau of the late 1980s (the victorious suburbs composed of private housing and shopping malls)²¹ with the “informational city” of Manuel Castells and the “global cities” of Saskia Sassen of the 90s, as well as other systems, analysed by Edward Soja in America (2014) and other authors in other continental geographies. New dynamics and forms were expanded through economic globalization and technological possibilities, creating a situation completely unfamiliar to the traditional urban / rural, centrifugal / multi-centripetal, local / global dichotomies. And, moreover, they required altogether new approaches that, in common, would be characterized for not defending exclusivity or exclusion when defining the paradigm of the “diffuse city”.

In Europe, as Oril Nel-lo synthesized, a phased physical-functional integration of the city / countryside continued (after the sprawl and sub-urbanization, peri-urbanization and rur-urbanization), with consequent territorial reorganization in a networked space-time (with transnational flows²²). According to Ignasi Solà-Morales and Fransec Muñoz, the new economic order of globalization and its post-fordist production / consumption models involves a reconfiguration whose expression is both social and spatial-territorial, reshaping historic centres, forming networks of cities with multiple administrative or specialized nodes and allowing new centralities to emerge on a regional and global scale.²³ In this urban fragmentation, which both benefits and dominates the city, we see the emergence of segregation and clustering. In the United States, other authors have faced the conceptual crisis of the contemporary city. I would like to highlight Edward Soja whom I met in person, the author of works such as “Postmodern Geographies” (1989), “Thirdspace” (1996), “Postmetropolis” (2000) and “My LA” (2014). “Postmetropolis”, in particular, as summarized by Westwood and William, encourages us to address an initial pair of geographies (post-fordism and globalization) centred mainly on processes resulting from the reorganization of the modern metropolis; then a second pair of geographies dealing with the spatio-social; and finally, a third geography pair that refers to the consequences of the feedbacks of post-metropolitan urban restructuring²⁴. In short, to new understandings of the city, inevitably expanded, organized globally, often uneven, and increasingly articulated only by networks.

Space – Time Tensions

Going back to the Metropolis, it is interesting to recognize that the increase in speed and flexibility was the factor that best predicted the dilution of the natural-urban, local-global and physical-virtual dualities. First, the industrial era and its typologies (railway stations etc.) gave way to the modern metropolis of the car. Then, the experience of regional displacement was amplified and finally a mass tourism industry arose, in which historic centres have become museums serving the tourist market. To this end, Ignasi elucidated a convergence between the theme of architectural heritage and the “theme-park”, between urban memories and simulations. The spaces for entertainment and consumption, even in a large market, still affects the city’s architectural essence.²⁵

Flow

We must, however, not fail to meet the cultural desire for mobility when it comes to understanding the contemporary city. The modern “Athens Charter” regarded movement as a separate function. In the 1960s, the concept of “Community without propinquity”²⁶ by Melvin Webber (1960) rejected human density as exclusive to urban life. In the 1970s, the new concept of the city-region emerged, a city no longer defined by limits but now by “flux” or flows, to borrow Ignasi’s terminology: a spatiality marked by the cultural desire for mobility that has reached contemporary times.²⁷ In this context, the communication and transport systems (motorways, etc.) started to integrate the

grammar to support urban life. After all, a crisis emerged that undermines stable concepts, both in terms of architecture and planning strategies, since, according to Ignasi Solà-Morales, architecture can no longer be seen in terms of stability, location and place. In fact, it can be understood that many architectures / planning methods appear to be characterized by simultaneously fixed-displaced parameters, aimed at supporting circulation and exchange. Mobility in the city calls for new infrastructures, from highways and subways to high-speed rail networks and airports, as well as intermodal terminals and other architectures characterized by fluid aesthetics.

New systems have also appeared allowing for the representation and capture of the city, such as GPS, WIFI, social networks, etc.

Liquid Spatialities

According to Ignàsi, the new phenomena are only understandable if we reach outside of the conventional ones of stability and permanence. New interpretative categories are required, such as the “flows” that try to deal with new space-time configurations.²⁸ On the other hand, additional definitions and architectures are needed. In fact, many architectural spaces seek to ensure the coexistence of experiences and phenomena / material and immaterial flows, moving away from the definition of architecture conditioned by the Vitruvian idea of “firmitas”, which leads Ignasi to propose the hypothesis of a “liquid architecture”²⁹. This idea is a theoretical conceptualization that matches the contemporary architectural experience, abolishing the primacy attributed to space in the offspring of space-time tension. For Ignàsi Solà-Morales “liquid architecture” would mean: “that space and time are present simultaneously as open categories multiple and not redundant, ... if a will for hierarchy and for imposing order”³⁰ a “liquid architecture” for the control of flows became necessary, following a century fascinated by speed and perceptual destabilization,. In his words: “the architecture that organizes human fluxes in city transport, airports, docklands, and train stations cannot be preoccupied with its appearance To become flux means ... to establish strategies for the distribution of individuals, goods or information”³¹

Subjective Contemplations

However, it should be noted that, in parallel to the categories and definitions mentioned above, Ignasi proposed complementary categories to the understanding of contemporary reality. It would be necessary to highlight the one of “terrain vague”³² first proposed in an essay where Ignasi Solà-Morales starts with etymological explorations and goes on to suggest parallels with representations of antecedents of urban experience through photography, eventually warning us about the quality of some urban residues. For Ignasi Solà-Morales, many of the spatial voids, obsolete or unproductive, that arise in the contemporary metropolis constitute promises for an individual and subjective encounter with memory and freedom, essentially due to their sense of immanent expectation. They must remain “open to the reappropriations of identify and significance of art”, disregarding the mere integration with urban projects designed to connect everything, and the mere imitation of the productive efficiency of the environment. In a world in constant change, Ignasi Solà-Morales call for the preservation of strategic reserves, contemplative and revelatory environments “instead of converting in an aggressive instrument of the abstract powers and reasons”³³

Farewells

After synthesizing some of the aforementioned categories proposed by Ignasi Solà-Morales to make approximations to the architectural and metropolitan condition; I would like to recall how in “Diferencias”, he published his ideas, “as the only possibility of submitting it to the judging of anyone, of a crowd, anywhere”³⁴ It is worth taking the opportunity given to us by this tribute to refer to three significant posthumous events, conceptualized by people who were very close to Ignasi. First, to highlight the editorial organization by Josep Maria Montaner (b. 1954) of ETSAB involving a specific publication dedicated to Ignasi, entitled “Teorias de la Arquitectura: Memorial Ignasi de Solà-Morales”³⁵ It should be noted that the publication includes a set of extremely important contributions, such as “In memoriam ... una reflexion sobre las diferencias” by Kenneth Frampton, or texts by George Teyssot, Peter Eisenman, Rafal Moneo, Antony Vidler, Alan Colquhoun, Beatriz Colomina, Mark Wigley, Maurici Pla, Saskia Sassen, Fransec Munoz, Manuel Delgado, Pere Hereu Payet, Alberto Perez Gomez, Eduard Bru and Oriol Bohigas. Also worth mention is the Portuguese essay by Manuel Mendes entitled: “Mas alla del arte: del nomadismo al erotismo”. Second, the

compilation of a publication by Xavier Costa and Suzanne Strum – who collaborated with Ignasi on the Metropolis program and who jointly co-directed it – edited by Gustavo Gili in 2004 – 2005. The book, which had the same title as the academic program Metropolis³⁶, has increased relevance because it offers a view of the environment of the program created by Ignasi Solà-Morales and, to a large extent, how such a program was advanced in the 1990s: an innovative approach based on the discipline of architecture addressing the complexity of the urban phenomenon. As explained by his own co-editor: “This publication brings together various materials produced and presented within the framework of the Metropolis program ..., grouped into three chapters: Cities, networks and landscapes ... Since its inception in 1993... Metropolis has investigated the multiple relationships that exist between archaeology, art, territory and city, from the new urban conditions, to the impact of current culture on architecture.... Under the direction of Ignasi Solà-Morales ... Metropolis has directed its efforts to redefine architectural research as an inseparable theme of the contemporary city, with all the socio-economic, cultural and political complexity that this implies. Metropolis has proposed to build new spaces of knowledge that are located between different experiences and research traditions, in order to enrich the debate on the future of the city and architecture at a time of structural changes in our societies.... Ignasi Solà-Morales left us in 2001.... A unique ability to undertake intellectual explorations towards new territories. Metropolis is one of its most fertile creations ...; raising new questions³⁷”. It should also be noted that the publication includes a number of relevant contributions by major figures who have contributed to the program throughout its existence, including texts by Mark Wigley, Joan Ockman, Van Berkel, Peter Eisenman, Eric Miralles Wiel Arets, Inaki Abalos, Juan Herreros, Saskia Sassen, Fransec Munoz, Manuel Delgado or Mirko Zardini. Thirdly, the exhibition organized by Pau and Carmen Rodriguez under the title “Architecture and criticism: Ignasi de Solà-Morales” held between February and May 2019. The exhibition was intended to provide access to Ignasi Solà-Morales’s intellectual life, which developed within the framework of the debate about disciplinary autonomy and, to a large extent, to draw attention to the evolution of initially liberal post-modern approaches toward a more critical and consistent theoretical postmodern thinking. It should also be noted that the exhibition included a set of relevant materials from his personal archive. As mentioned by the co-commissioner himself: “Solà-Morales lived at a time when people were looking to overcome ideological exhaustion and the more simplistic or black-and-white speculations. Today, we can see in his career the application – not without friction – of the transversality between disciplines such as philosophy and artistic languages, semiotics and architecture, as well as a consideration of the urban experience that invites us to draw parallels with the present”³⁸.

Regarding the present, echoes of Lewis Mumford’s words about the city still seem to be heard: “The final goal of the city is to contribute to the conscious participation of men in its cosmic and historical process. Thanks to its durable and complex structure, the city enlarges substantially the capacity of interpreting such processes and taking an active and formative part on them, in such a way that each phase of the drama being played comes to have, in the highest possible level, the illumination of consciousness, the sign of a goal, the colours of love. Such grandeur of all life’s dimensions through spiritual communion, rational communication, technological dominium and above all, dramatic representation, have been in history, the supreme function of the city. And that is the main reason for cities to remain”³⁹.

Aspects of Culture and Contemporary Urban Debate

It is now time – as advanced in the introduction – to summarise some of the briefly noted aspects of urban culture that could be considered relevant – to the contemporary debate. To a large extent, most of these ideas recall Ignasi Solà-Morales diagnosis more than two decades ago.

Focusing on the new forms of the territorial and urban, it is paramount to recognize that in a new reality, arising from the eruption of cultural globalization, economic internationalization and technological progress, as well as with a diversity of urban phenomena, new forms, dynamics and urban-territorial assumptions have been established based on mobility and flow.⁴⁰

In thinking, for instance, about ‘the public space in the contemporary urban condition’, the current consolidation of three phenomena closely linked to the urban experience of the metropolis should be highlighted: spectacle⁴¹, control⁴² and consumption.⁴³ Such divergent phenomena, whose genesis arises within the formation of 19th-century urban culture, have been further expanded during the last decades in association with a desire for leisure and entertainment, the

spectacularization of society and visual culture, fashion and advertising, mass culture and globalization, mobility and information technology. The contemporary metropolis appears to us, therefore, as a structure that is spatial and social in which these phenomena take place; a situation that has a profound impact on the level of spatiality and urban experience. In the metropolis, “non-spaces” – to use the concept of the French anthropologist Marc Augé⁴⁴ – which are unified and without historical reference are outstandingly consumed by the a-ethnic individual under precise and controlled behaviours within the notion of late capitalism.⁴⁵ The metropolitan condition becomes the engine of show, consumption and control. Public space, as we understand it, has often become, the ultimate “other”, the tangibly excluded.

Consequently, there is an urgent need to reflect upon the structuring and support for the production of urban space. On the operativeness of architecture in contemporary urban-territorial reality, it should be said that the recent territorial dynamics and the existence of urban forms of various natures (between the existing and emerging cities) justify and require different approaches (methodological – in the creation / extension, readaptation / restructuring and so forth – and instrumental). Doing so will eventually allow us to reflect upon appropriate intervention modalities, with a priority for the public domain (structuring the shape of the city) and the conventions of territorial relationship (based on mobility and flows) arising from the new space-territorial relationship. The contemporary urban reality encompasses methodological and instrumental changes, reinforcing the potential protagonism of the network of urban and collective space.⁴⁶ These are in parallel with the networks, centralities and new types of public space, as well as the potential of inactive-inert spaces.

In the same manner, it is important not to miss the transition from architectural conservation to urban rehabilitation; the justification for Rosa Macedo et al to write an article entitled “Evolution of paradigms in the 20th century and the necessary overcoming of existing dilemmas”. It is thus our duty to reinforce our purpose of: “addressing this significant physical creation [the city] ... in view of the need for rehabilitation that nowadays cities demand. In contemporary times, cities demonstrate a great formal heterogeneity and mixture of temporalities. We often discern the presence of nuclei with specific characteristics essential to value and, simultaneously, able to adapt to contemporary performances, to contexts different from those that lay at the base of its origin. Of specific importance are the areas designated as Historical Centres, clusters formed in other times (medieval, Renaissance or Baroque), which survive in cities, often isolated from the new urban organism that extends to the peripheries. It is interesting to highlight [the existence of] a sequence of different moments and attitudes regarding the endeavoured intervention and historic centres. Apprehensions about intervention in these areas have, to a great extent, emerged in the 20th century. Given the timeliness of the question of rehabilitation, and after more than a century of debate, it seems that the initial dilemma persists, and will persist for some time to come. If for some this implies the desecration of historic centres, for others the panorama of architectural conservation has expanded without reversion to that of urban rehabilitation”.⁴⁷

And equally: about expanded networks, flows and interactions: City survival and global ethos?

We are forced to recognize that nowadays architecture deals with multiple expanded flows and interacts with infrastructural systems, and that electronic networks can help us to ensure the survival of the metropolis. Undeniably, in the context of the city and contemporary culture, it turns out to be relevant to observe the interference that this context of expanded flows and interactions brings to cities, as well as the role they will assume. It could be said that, progressively, the physical city advances in the establishment of intimate relationships with its physical and digital networks, forming a meta-territory of human interaction and activity that creates an object of architectural and urban interest.⁴⁸

In this respect, we need to identify in urban culture the acceleration from mechanical speed to virtual mobility.⁴⁹ In fact, the understanding of the contemporary urban condition and the emergence of the city cannot ignore the identification of the existence of an exponential increase in speed and the interwoven existence of a cultural desire for mobility. One of the phenomena that can help us comprehend the post-industrial reality in which we live (and the specific role of the digital) is precisely the phenomenon of acceleration that accompanies the transition from the mechanistic model to the digital model: reinforcing speed as well as mobility.

It should also be remembered that the transition to the information society, though starting occurred in the 1980s, began as a process in the post-war period, linked to the technological

progress of information technology and telecommunications and to a cultural desire for global immediacy – the “global city” articulated by the socioeconomist Saskia Sassen⁵⁰ but predicted by the media theorist Marshall McLuhan in the late 1960s.⁵¹ To this end, it should be noted that informatics and computational technology developed during the 1950s, the spread of personal computers occurred between the 1970s and 1990s; and the development of telecommunications and computer networks continued throughout the 1990s – conforming a structure that enables global human performance. During the last decade, computing has become omnipresent and there has been a spread of tele-activities and the so-called “digital life”.⁵² The current planetary network operates as a kind of nervous system that supplies the information society

Some brief considerations about planning and urban planning in relation to the information society should thus be considered justifiable. Regarding the digital city space, it should be acknowledged that the new information technologies have a profound impact on contemporary society, creating a social model centred on the convergence of information technology and telecommunications, indeed the very goal that the European Community seeks to implement. These new technologies must be understood as more than simple techniques but rather as true cultural elements that invade the daily lives of a significant portion of the globalized population, promoting new socio-cultural forms independently of the space-time distance. Such a context has a profound impact on the shape and life of cities, fully demanding a deeper recognition of the existence of ongoing experiences of digital cities and pilot projects.

More recently, it has also become strategically important to think about the creative city in countries such as Portugal, critically responding to the post-industrial paradigm proposed by authors such as Laudry⁵³ and Richard Florida.⁵⁴

In the words of Sandra Alves, we are urged to understand the “creative city and the association of the phenomenon of creativity with the city..., proceeding to an approach of definitions and theories based on the theme of the creative city (creativity, creative industries and creative city) And, based on the most emblematic analysis and readings on the theme..., to advance with the possible challenges of the creative city in terms of political guidelines and urban practices (innovation environments, hard and soft infrastructures, management and sustainability, and so forth⁵⁵).

Subsequently, the next step leads to the “contextualization of the Portuguese situation in light of such concepts and principles, proceeding from internationally successful reference cases and some national cases that have recently begun to arise”.⁵⁶ Yet at the same time, it is necessary to emphasize the “importance of the role of the discipline of architecture in the creative city.... The discipline of architecture must continue to assume a central role in the analysis of the synergies of each city and in the development of cultural solutions, which provide rich and diversified experiences”.⁵⁷

Notwithstanding the radical transformations endured by the city, it would be appropriate to end by reiterating the relevance of developments in rehabilitation in countries such as Portugal, referring to the many challenges addressed since the 1970s. Indeed, it is paramount to reflect on this issue, upon the enormous contemporary relevance, while making reference – as mentioned in an article by Rosa Macedo, to “some challenges and the evolution of paradigms, through the analysis of a careful sequence of papers and interventions, which form the basis for a reflection on contemporary intervention.... National cases that correspond to different moments and circumstances, but that have in common the rehabilitation of spaces in the city including the historic centre. On the other hand, an analysis focusing on the discussion of challenges and intervention paradigms, expressed in a sequence of essays published in the magazines of the current time, etc., towards a contemporary era, at a time when possibilities, positions and interventionist principles multiply and accumulate... it stands out to say that, in contemporaneity, one must not forget that a global and uncertain condition comes forward increasingly, requiring a permanent rethinking of the mechanisms, interventional models dynamic strategies, policies and decree-laws determined for the cities of the country. In this regard, it would also be important to widen the reflection’s scope to the entire national territory, analysing the potential or relationship between cities or different directions, beyond a desertion to the mere logic of the present urban competition. The necessary strengthening of our urbanity and future global quality of life will depend on our capacity, as architects and citizens, to perceive time as a vector of every proposal and allow the continuation of this debate throughout the century that now begins. In saying so, it is certain that what has been happening in the last decades will be crucial to the future reality”.⁵⁸

Concluding Note

As we saw, the debate on the contemporary urban condition is today unquestionably composed of multiple thoughts, namely the organization of the city as a network, its characteristic impermanence, the ubiquity of vision, mobility and digital communications, and so forth. The debate is also composed of other developments, focusing on preservation of heritage or the paradigm of creative cities. Nevertheless, those discourses from the end of the 20th century that seek to address the directions in which the urban realities and urgences have been shifting, now recall to a large extent Ignasi Solà-Morales's pioneering prognostics.

In fact, the work of Ignasi Solà-Morales constitutes an inspiring legacy, as he outlined one of the most notable and insightful theoretical cartographies of contemporary metropolitan and architectural condition. A complex architectural thought process, consisting in the selection of categories allowing only for a provisional interpretation of the contemporary city. And this city, in his own words, is itself thoroughly decentralized and composed of unstable outlines resulting from the crystallization of different forces. Together, these various factors converge into a complex system, united by the permanent generosity of the intention of overcoming, through democratic means, the strangeness of the late-capitalist and post-historic world, with an attention to post-modernity.⁵⁹

Yet if this idea is post-modern, it nonetheless forms a post-modernity that does not obscure the resistant modernist intellectual heritage but instead seeks to rediscover proto-modernist interests to match the democratization of linear consciousness. And in his coherent pursuit of a disciplinary capacity reactive to the forces currently affecting the development of the city, Ignasi Solà-Morales was also the first to alert us – in the transition from the 20th to the 21st century – of the need to overcome the approaches prevalent up to the last century's end, and still commonplace even now in many places. His views, undoubtedly, favoured an unstable reflection that shakes off the security of contentment. This was his legacy and what we should pursue today.

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JOURNAL OF ARCHITECTURAL
AND TOWN-PLANNING THEORY

Ročník Volume LIV
Číslo Number 1 – 2 / 2020

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IČO 166944
www.architektura-urbanizmus.sk
e-mail: architektura-urbanizmus@savba.sk

REGISTROVANÉ V INDEXED AND ABSTRACTED IN
Thomson Reuters Arts and Humanities Citation Index,
Current Contents – Arts & Humanities, SCOPUS,
RIBA journal index, CEOL, EBSCO

VYDÁVA PUBLISHED BY
© Historický ústav SAV, Bratislava, jún 2019
TLAČ PRINTED BY
VEDA, vydavateľstvo SAV
Centrum spoločných činností SAV, Bratislava

ROZŠIRUJE DISTRIBUTED BY
o.z. reflektor
Šancová 17, 811 05 Bratislava
Mediaprint-Kapa Pressegrasso, a.s.
Stará Vajnorská 9, 831 04 Bratislava

VYCHÁDZA POLROČNE PUBLISHED SEMIANNUALLY
EV 3179/09, ISSN 0044 8680

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GRAFICKÁ ÚPRAVA LAYOUT
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