

TEXT / GROUND COMPARISON OF HOUSING FOR AUTOMOBILES

MASHA HUPALO

The plan is always an intention, a desire to be something else. Urban planning documents predict future activity distributions and physical forms according to fundamental assumptions and aspirations based on an idea of the unitary city. From the beginning of the last century seeing the city as a single entity to manage and control was closely related to the ideals of regulated transport, water, energy, and communication networks symbolising universal rationality. According to Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin, integrated networked infrastructure became a key element in two further developments: the idea of the comprehensive urban plan and an influential range of utopian schemes (2001). In this way, planning inevitably becomes a process of loading the future and converting it into a maze of promises and aspirations.

Generally speaking, design as a di-

scipline finds its basis in changing present conditions to preferred and more desirable ones. The easiest way to communicate an alternative vision is through the narrative of the legislation that shape urban futures and hide professional values from explicit view. What is put into the spotlight instead is the system of measurable parameters. Inevitably the "past" textual futures emerge as a unique repository of values. They reveal and conceal, just like any other conversation partner. Therefore, a meaningful conversation with the field is both physical and textual, since the field itself can be reduced neither to the collection of prescribed and accidental artefacts nor to the visionary plans. Such sort of fieldwork aims to distil a meaning out of seemingly abstract and predictive numbers and text on paper and compare these prescriptions to a present situation on the ground.

The current investigation consists of the study of twelve parking sites in Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Copenhagen and Moscow, planning documents that condition them and a comparison of their underpinning values to a current situation on the ground. Be it one of the surface parking lots in Downtown Fashion District in Los Angeles or a free-standing mundane garage box in Ørestad - both are the spatial results of several legislative narratives. The narratives that turn individuals from variables in formulas of the planning legislation to active negotiators in the process of speculation that brings virtue to standards and guidelines.

