

## **GROSSFORM AND THE IDEA OF THE EUROPEAN CITY A TYPOLOGICAL RESEARCH**

**EVA SOLLGRUBER**

In the year 1995 Rem Koolhaas put forward the theory of Bigness which was highly influenced by his cooperation with the German architect Oswald Mathias Ungers on the project "The City within the City: Berlin as a Green Archipelago" published 1977 and its underlying concept of Grossform formulated by Ungers in the 1960ies. Despite fundamental differences of their theories both architects tried to understand the phenomenon of the big scale architectural project and its impact on the idea of the city. The questions posed with these theories seem to be relevant nowadays more than ever: on the one hand we are faced with the problem of a seemingly endless growth of our cities and a crisis in urban planning – a different view on the concept of the city is desperately needed. On the other hand big scale architectural projects dominate

the public debate on architecture. Other than in Asia or America, in Europe scepticism towards big scale projects prevails. Architects themselves don't know what to do with these "big" projects; how to talk about them, evaluate them and use their architectural and urbanistic potentials for their designs resulting often in the denouncement of big forms. But this condemnation is not based on a thoroughly analysis of the architectural projects and their underlying concepts but simply on misconceptions and biases.

This research project aims at revisiting big scale projects from the past with the objective of understanding the architectural culture of this type of building and assess its potential for the future development of the European city. The focus lies on public buildings of the 1960ies and -70ies that were at the heart

of new city developments in Europe. Despite changed political and socio-economical circumstances important lessons can be drawn from this era for a possible future scenario of our cities.

The investigation will be conducted by means of architectural analysis i.e. research on design. Buildings will be analysed and categorized establishing a typological taxonomy for the purpose of drawing conclusions on phenomena of the current professional practice and thereby enhancing the body of knowledge of architecture.(1)

(1)cf. Atalay Franck, O.: Criteria for 'Doctorateness' in the Creative Fields: A Focus on Swiss Architecture. ARENA Journal of Architectural Research. 2016; 1(1): 3 DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.5334/ajar.11>.

