INAUGURAL RICE LECTURE
CORK AND ITS PEOPLE: THE CHALLENGE OF RENEWAL
REGENERATING CITIES
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Introduction

Ian Ritchie Architects have contributed to urban regeneration projects in London, Paris, Madrid and Leipzig. Many of these have become architectural highlights in these cities. However, I do not intend to talk about these projects, which although architectural attractions in themselves, represent only a particular aspect of city renewal. Since 1990, I have spent considerable time on the urban design advisory board of the London Dockland Development Corporation; where I am seen as a complex character - sometimes challenging, on behalf of the community, their regeneration policies, sometimes challenging their aesthetic capacities, their lack of understanding of essential design issues or lack of planning vision. I live, work and contribute to community issues concerned within the area, yet I am also seen as the principal of a firm of architects with an international reputation. Less known however, is the fact that during the 1980's I was on the advisory board of a French Journal, published in Lyon, concerned with the developing influence of non- capital cities on the changing structure of Europe and individual nations. I currently sit on the advisory board of the journal City, formerly known as Regenerating Cities.

I believe it is important that we seek out the essence of the issues which concern all cities, while understanding that individual cities are unique and have particular social, political, economic and physical concerns. We can all look to Paris and Barcelona - quite justifiably to investigate successes rather than failures, but it is an error to look at them in the same way we might window-shop, and it is for this reason that I do not wish to dwell on the contemporary architectures which they display.

Local renewal must take account of global processes of transformation. In fact much of recent city regeneration reflects this. We have to look at cities from afar as well as close.
By identifying some of the issues which make up the picture of a city, they can be recognised also as issues which make up present global concerns.
Economics - work, its creation, distribution and availability.
Demography - the increasing elderly population, the religious and cultural concentrations.
Landscape - the sense place and quality of public and private space.
Heritage - understanding the difference between history - the retention and protection of memory, and culture - the expression of today's creative energy, which will become history.
Education - the need for ongoing education throughout life.
Culture, Leisure, Recreation & Sport.
Sustainability & Ecological concerns.

Searching for New Methodologies

I feel that underlying our difficulties in addressing these concerns is the fact that we still seemed trapped in the way we think about our cities. The list I have just mentioned can be seen as characterising our present way of thinking - which is to separate and simplify in order that we can, or think we can, understand our cities better.

I believe that part of the aims of this conference is find ways to reconnect them, and in the process reconnect people to their city.

Through investigating the edges of these disciplines, and those of the professionals concerned with the realisation of our built environment, really new and relevant ideas should emerge that will release the intellectual and social energies which have been trapped for so long.

This entrapment has not only alienated people from each other, but sustains the present methodologies and priorities in our cities.

Psychological barriers occur only in the minds of men, and like any theory constructed by man these barriers can be deconstructed and replaced. To begin removing the barriers between different disciplines and between professionals requires a way of thinking and attitude which is no longer territorial - and it is based upon trust and respect. This encourages confidence with humility between people. Professionals should be as capable of realising this as anyone else, and in terms of their influence on society and the physical environment should have a moral obligation to do so. I know from my experience working with Peter Rice (who I believe was Ireland's greatest engineer) and Martin Francis (yacht and industrial designer) in our Paris based design engineering firm, and in the way our architecture studio in London functions, that territories do not have boundaries. They are simply different landscapes which require different skills in order to negotiate them well. This is where collaborative effort is so valuable. It allows one to support and be supported at different times while crossing these landscapes.

We have to remember that the city is a repository of memory. Cities take a long time to emerge and are replete with the efforts and acts of its citizens. They grow through acts of will. Isolating citizens from the process of renewal is one of the biggest mistakes society can make.

Today, many people consider that the city is at the heart of an identity crisis. But why should this be so.
City politics & economics are directly linked to the process of social integration or disintegration. Cities are now the centres of the social and cultural overhaul of nations.

European nations are struggling with their identity in the face of an emerging Europe, while cities recognise that by establishing a new level of autonomy and network with other cities they can untie themselves from the capital and even question national structures.

Urban management now has the potential to drive the social, cultural and political domains.
Cities can have a new energy and power base if they harness the resources of their own citizens along with those fruits available through of a more integrated Europe.
More and more people live in cities, yet alienation seems to characterise life within them - whether in shanty towns on the edges of cities such as Mexico, Lima, Nairobi, Bangkok, Delhi; protected suburban ghettoes such as Beverly Hills and parts of Bromley in Surrey; urban no-go areas, or even purposely designed private urban centres, like downtown Houston or even Canary Wharf in London.

At the same time we have seen great cities reinvest in themselves - Barcelona, not only through its Olympic programme of renewal, but more importantly through its network of public squares; Paris through its programme of large perimeter urban parks - La Villette, Parc Citroen, Parc de Bercy etc., and cultural programme such as the Louvre, whilst playing musical chairs with its art collections which began with the Centre Pompidou in the early 70's, and its new library in Ivry.

I recall a wonderful senior French official explain to me that, in the late 50's, General de Gaulle had requested a concise philosophy for Paris. An economist, poet/writer, scientist and geographer were, if I recall correctly, key contributors to a statement, contained on one side of an A4 sheet of paper. The statement began along the lines of "Paris risks falling into the Atlantic Ocean". This phrase crystallised the need for Paris to avoid being marginalised in the new emerging Europe. They had recognised that, what we now know as the "banana belt megalopolis" through Europe, would centralise Europe further east. Strategic industrial, urban,economic and social policies emerged from this philosophy.
But it took thirty years for this major urban renewal to be achieved - and it is still going on.
Notably this philosophy precipitated national as well as Parisien policies.

Physical examples are the supersonic airliner Concorde & Airbus Industrie & Roissy-Charles de Gaulle airport (still expanding), the TGV at the national level to ensure that Paris remained well connected. Within Paris, the RER, the phased growth west-east (La Defense to Bercy), then north-south (La Villette - Porte d'Italie) and the peripheral towns such as Marne La Vallée.

There is another form of alienation, which I would describe as a 'limit of democracy'. The feeling that whatever "I say" will make no difference. This has to be overcome, and new urban regeneration methodologies need to be developed and applied to allow people to feel part of the process of renewal.

I have lived and worked in London's East End through the "economic, urban and social regeneration" of London Docklands. It is very questionable if there has been real economic, urban or social regeneration. In 1960 there were 25,000 London dockers whose wages supported 75,000 people. Since 1981, jobs have largely been transferred from other parts of London & the UK, attracted by rate free zones; the urban environment has changed dramatically as the LDDC has acted largely as a Government "estate agent" - selling land to the highest bidder - without planning or concern for the quality of the commercial architecture, and has alienated the indigenous community in the process. The LDDC has created "island" office areas devoid of any cultural ingredients; and with their private security forces, exclusive shops and services catering exclusively for the affluent few have made them unwelcome to local people. There has been no relevant participation by local people in the evolution of the area.

These self-centred centres through their urban infrastructure, architectural design, and layered security systems, reject, rather than enhance, any natural integration with the surrounding urban and social fabric, and in some cases, such as Canary Wharf, physically injure the surrounding neighbourhood during construction and continue to do so long afterwards. Today, there is a general recognition that autonomous endeavours based only on financial or political power in the built environment, particularly involving large scale projects, do not work well, and that they require wider collaboration and cooperation. More importantly, they need a shared and participatory commitment in order to create successful and sustainable development. Power can then be shared, because the interests of all participants and those most affected is understood in a new context of a mutually acceptable development. This power shift moves towards those who are most affected in both the short and long term. Autonomy, in a democracy cannot exist. All levels of power, invested or imagined, exist within a framework of rights and responsibilities defined as much by others as by those who feel they have the power.

Joan Busquets, former Director of Planning, Barcelona stated:
"The power is in the city council. The energy and initiative is in the local community. And if you put the initiative and power together, you can encourage the developer to make almost whatever you want". Busquets refers to a moral power, derived from the citizens.

There has been much talk of enablement, [by "enablers"]. This is to enable the local communities to have more influence on their urban and social environment. What is more to the point is ennoblement of the citizen and the community. Ennoblement shifts the emphasis to respect, a recognition of the shift in power, rather than a rearguard action engineered by more socially responsible activists.

The architecture and urbanism of inner city developments, can only be informed by the quality of the brief, derived from an understanding of the local and city context, and realised by the quality of the client.

I would suggest its success is dependent on the client's moral power, whether the client is a developer, a local authority, a community group or a partnership between any or all three, and the recognition that they are all "clients" in some way.

Lord Scarman observed in his report into the Causes of the 1981 Riots in Brixton -
"Local communities should be more fully involved in the decisions which affect them. A 'top down' approach to regeneration does not seem to have worked. Local communities must be fully and effectively involved in planning, in the provision of local services, and in the managing and financing of specific projects." It is essential that people are encouraged to secure a stake in, feel a pride in, and have a sense of responsibility for their own area."

I have learnt, through experiences in Limehouse and Poplar in East London, that neither a top down, nor a bottom up approach is a satisfactory way of implementing regeneration in the inner city. An alternative - a third way - which recognises a reality in which we are all citizens within a city, [developer, financier, elected councillor, council officer, local resident, business person] and that successful environmental, social, economic development and regeneration is genuinely based on participation and interdependence.

The Essence of a New Methodology
But where do we begin in order to develop new methodologies for renewal of our cities.
There are examples which depend upon the strategic use of the complexity of decision-making processes in order to improve the effectiveness of urban policies. By complexity, I mean the opposite of current methodologies which seek efficiency by reducing what is inherently complex to 'simple policy and policy networks' characterised by an authoritative style and excluding social actors (citizens) from helping to both define the problem and to help find the solution. Confrontation characterises the simple policy approach and often paralyses the process; and participation is reluctantly accepted, offering an arena for political battle rather than one in which to tackle and genuinely help solve problems. Reducing complexity to simplicity, in the belief that it represents the main condition for successful urban progress, is a failed assumption - this policy has brought about a great deal of civic alienation and much of the degradation of the quality of city life we know today.

The third way, which I mentioned as a result of my own experiences, requires a great deal of thinking in each situation. I do not believe that there is a single model for success, but I do think that there are some basic ingredients which inform this new strategy.

Openness - of the process to all genuinely involved and affected by the issue at stake
Equality - through management techniques which allow all participants to collaborate as equals
The Rules - defining the rules of engagement to avoid manipulation of some by others
The Policy - will emerge from a collaborative process of design
The Problem - has to be defined together as the first part of the process
The Solution - will be owned by all participants

Today, in a true democratic sense, town planning has essentially to be planning by people for people to enable them individually and collectively to improve their quality of life.
Too many of those who believe they have that extra knowledge or position of power rarely admit that others can genuinely contribute. As an architect I know it to be very different - poets, artists, clients, tenants, engineers and many others, including other architects, directly concerned by the project have all made invaluable inputs to defining and finding solutions.

What is Progress?
We are all aware of the Brixton, Toxteth &L A riots, the proliferation of video surveillance in city centres, of protected neighbourhoods, of the mushrooming security industry whose personnel, up until now, can only, in the end, call the police. So many of our larger cities have gone wrong and appear to lack direction.

Real progress in urban regeneration involves people feeling part of the process.

But what does progress mean today?
I think this is important and I would like to put forward some thoughts.
Why is progress considered so important?
Is it because individuals can measure their own idea of it - achievement, success?
Is it because companies within which the individual works can also measure it - growth + profit?
Is it because nations can measure it - GNP growth and lower unemployment?
Is progress a measure of the quality of life, or rather a quality of life compared to that in another society or country?
Does our society limit the criteria of progress to scientific knowledge, technological and economic achievements; and individuals to material well-being?
Is the idea of progress "more gain than loss", and is it associated with power?
What happens when there is "more loss than gain" - distress, poverty, unemployment?

Robert Kennedy, in 1967 in a text entitled "The American Environment" said:
"And let us be clear at the outset that we will find neither national purpose nor personal satisfaction in a mere continuation of technical progress, in an endless amassing of worldly goods. We cannot measure national spirit by the Dow-Jones average or national achievement by the gross national product.
For the gross national product includes our pollution and advertising for cigarettes, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors and jails for people who break them. The gross national product includes the destruction of redwoods, and the death of Lake [Erie]. It grows with the production of napalm and missiles and nuclear warheads, and it even includes research on the improved dissemination of bubonic plague. The gross national product swells with equipment for the police to put down riots in our cities; and though it is not diminished by the damage these riots do, still it goes up as slums are rebuilt on their ashes. It includes Whitman's rifle and Speck's knife, and the broadcasting of television programs which glorify violence to sell goods to our children."

The very notion of progress is open ended. This should not concern us, provided that human energy can be directed towards a consensus of what constitutes improvement.
Rousseau wrote that:
"the faculty of self-improvement is one distinction between man and brute", and
"If man as an individual is capable of self-improvement does it follow that as a society the same will be true."

One idea of progress could be the improvement in the behaviour of man. But behaviour is measured differently in different cultures and within apparently single cultures.
Another idea is that man's nature will improve suggesting a future resulting, not from evolution of man as a higher form of animal into an even higher form, but on a progressive development through cultural evolution.
Robert Kennedy indicated real concerns of how progress is measured in and by most western societies. His commentary was on the idea of scientific progress and of political progress.
One feels that the latter has, for the last few centuries, been measured more and more by economic growth, rather than any measurable quality of life - e.g. freedom and justice.

This economic growth has been dependent on the politics of hijacking scientific investigation and the industrial exploitation of science. And industry on the exploitation of individuals within society. The individual economic effort is now so divorced from life that it is not surprising that so many people long for recognition within a group outside of the workplace.

In this century, the idea of modernity attempted to distribute the wealth created by technological innovation and industry within industrialised societies resulting from this economic growth; only the type of government differed from society to society, but in each there was a notion of a better future for man. Without an idea of a future, political activity would have no defined direction or aim. This idea of future gives the modern age a characteristic which is essentially optimistic.

Today, the results of technical innovation and industrial activity on our environmental has become much more tangible to many more people. The belief that we can control this activity is still essentially an optimistic idea; i.e. towards a better future. The controlling aspect concerns the nature of government. Freedom of information and the dissemination of better information of the damage we are doing to the environment would create a wider awareness and knowledge, which could enable more people to act morally and intelligently within a wider context (definition) of society and government.

We are all aware that scientific progress has in the last two centuries become more and more central to society, (commerce in particular) and today, funding for science research programmes is dependent upon the potential of that research to provide opportunities for economic growth through industrial activity. However, we should remember that science's "own" progress is measured by developments in finding "better descriptions" of the world and things in and beyond it.

In the Marquis de Condorcet's "Sketch of a Historical Picture of the Progress of the Human Mind", published in 1793, (at the height of the flowering of European Cities - the one's we all delight in visiting as tourists, even if they are now small cores at the heart of much bigger conurbations) - "What happened to man's moral and ethical development as a measure of progress?"

Did moral or ethical development ever exist within modern society's understanding of the meaning of progress. Were they ever considered "measurable"? Was progress a western notion? If it was, then it has certainly spread around the globe.
Is there any evidence of the idea of progress in existing so-called primitive societies?
Was it the notion that there is a particular type of future - (one before death) which created the idea of progress? Did Copernicus create this "future time before death" when he decentred the earth (and man) in the universe? i.e. man continues, although men die?

The idea of progress is bound up with polarization between optimist and pessimist - those who can embrace the future, and deal with uncertainty, as opposed to those whose insecurity drives them to cling to what they think they know; a comfortable (even, and especially if, illusory) historical image or fantasy. Was it always so? We often have the impression of earlier twentieth century attitudes to progress and the future as being characterized by optimism, and above all, certainty. There is seldom reference to doubt about the essential goodness of the direction in which the developed world was "progressing".

Whether progress is a substitute for religion, and therefore worshipped, or was first worshipped and thence became a religion, does not alter the fact. But it may unlock a philosophical conundrum - the re-evaluation of the idea of progress.

The tendency to use the criterion of material gain to evaluate progress is only symptomatic of the debasement of ethical values in general. Language has, in this context, been hijacked for political and economic ends. Progress is a loaded word.

Progress, Technology and the City
Today, most countries place an emphasis on education and training a highly skilled workforce to exploit technological developments. Is this workforce becoming, or, is it already seen as the natural resource (or capital?) to sustain progress (cf. colonial slave labour), replacing our more recent perception of fossil fuels, mineral and organic wealth?

The rate of technological progress towards the (apparent) mastery of nature bears no relation to the rate at which human social evolution can keep pace with the consequences. Our mental structures were honed over millions of years of living in small tribal groups, and we bring the same structures to bear on an existence that has changed materially, however we measure it, by several orders of magnitude. We are all riding the same planetary roller coaster. Some of us are trying to hold on and keep an eye on where we are going, but constantly face the prospect of losing our grip. We are not sure who is at the controls; and when we think we do know, there seems to be disagreement between the navigator, the pilot, and the rest of the crew. The passengers don't know who to ask about the destination, and feel they would not be listened to if they did.

Much of this anxiety is due to the reality that technological developments underlie and affect all factors of city life. The change in the rate of change of technological development is such as to destabilise not only citizens, but governments. All citizens are now part of the global production line, made possible by technology - global telecommunications and computers which record and manage complex transactions. The global barons, who are concentrated, for the moment, in the financial capitals of the world and who master an ever increasing percentage of manufacturing all over the world, are no longer concerned with local workforces or where or how people live. More and more jobs in the evolving markets, particularly financial, are either at the top or the bottom - there are fewer and fewer middle income jobs.
This may, in part, explain why these cities, which house the global barons controlling distant businesses, are increasingly recognised by the polarisation of rich and poor, and the increase in non-urban spaces in them.

Economics & Sustainability
We can consider the tripod of the world's financial system as the markets in London, New York and Tokyo. Not only are these cities some of the most profligate in their use of resources, but these financial structures are based upon investing huge sums of money into emerging markets, (London-UK some £ 107 billion over the last few years) funding in the process the cutting down of forests and the mining of huge tracts of land. These emerging markets benefit but not in a way that is sustainable. Many of the nightmares that investors (names) in Lloyds of London have had, originate from the environmental consequences of these investments - toxic waste, asbestos, nuclear waste disposals. The risks were not understood. Today it underwrites risks that will only become evident in ten to fifteen years. This makes sustainable development directly relevant to the financial markets and economic strategy, and should make short-termism and anathema to investors and economists.

London as a city was also constructed on a tripod - manufacturing, services and finance. It has managed to cut one of its legs extremely short - manufacturing - which now accounts for less than 13% of the city's income. Couple this with investors demanding 5 year high-rate returns of industry and we have a spiral which cannot entertain the idea of constructing a sustainable city within a sustainable economy. The economic model needs rethinking.

I am no economist, and perhaps it is utopian to consider a sustainable economic model beginning with the idea of the individual city, relying less on consuming and resourcing products from distant places, but to create wealth in our own back yard. This will inevitably make all individuals within a city society conscious of his or her own actions - the results will be apparent.

Environmental Aesthetics and Architecture as symbol of renewal
Underlying architecture and the physical environment of our cities is the question of quality. Performance, economy and aesthetics constitute the ingredients of quality, of which we can all probably agree on what performs well and what is economic (at least in the short term).
But can we agree on aesthetics?

We are now at the beginning of another aesthetic paradigm. Under the generic name of "postmodern" we have witnessed the first visual manoeuvres which have indicated our teleconnected societies' capacity to visualise this paradigm - through its designers.
A pluralist arena within which "art is art is art" - where anything goes if the artist says it is art; and of Post-Modern, neo-constructivist, de-constructivist, neo-modern, neo-neo classical... architectures compete for the attention of multi-national clients and their advertising agencies.
These veneers conceal the real paradigm - the nature of "progress" today. As I have indicated, it no longer has a clear meaning or definition, which can be recognised by the majority.
The only certainty about certainty is uncertainty. Science in the service of commerce is still the predominant power, expressed through technological change, whose rate of change is increasing. But technology (applied science) is increasingly being questioned (pollution etc), and yet technology has been and still is for many people symbols of progress - Pylons yesterday, satellites and Internet today.

How and to what extent technology is perceived through design depends upon the position from which progress is perceived - individual, local, national or global progress. Those designers who adopt "technics" as a style are liable to be pursuing an ephemeral goal - it will pass as fashion.
So, can the science (or technology) be a dispassionate basis for design?

But it may be an ideal worth striving for, with an objective sensitivity to the process.
Either the notion of progress is replaced by something else, or it must be redefined.
A notion of progress not measured solely in terms of GNP and the still limited framework of economic theory and appraisal, but in the wider more holistic sense of mankind's welfare and behaviour on this planet.

This redefinition is at present focussed on redeeming the ill man has and is doing to the Earth, and society's new "goals" being achieved at democratically and justly should be the broad framework within which design takes place.

What constitutes the grammar of aesthetics today?
It is composed not only of the visual, but also of the political, economic, and moral language. It needs to be made evident and show intelligence with humanity. Goethe described good architecture as frozen music, but in reality it is also frozen politics, economics and power.
Part of the changing vision of our culture is how we spend our resources.
We must distinguish the syntax of fashion from more enduring fundamentals of this grammar.

Vulgarity (excess) costs a lot but looks cheap.
There is the case of: Not In My Back Yard (NIMBY syndrome); and
Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything (BANANA syndrome).
Out of sight, out of mind.
[i.e. It doesn't matter how beautiful it is we don't want it" - beyond aesthetic recovery!]

Much of most city environments and artefacts within them can be described as visually poor, and this makes it important to ask ourselves: what does aesthetic poverty communicate to the general public?

I suggest that it is something which lacks morality - it hurts the viewer's sensibilities and in so doing can becomes a symbol of harm. It has the effect a bit like Chinese drip water torture to slowly wear you down. There is a general lowering of aspiration and expectation that creates a climate of acceptance, or, more dangerous, of ignoring. Acceptance and ignoring translate through the social, cultural, psychological and physical environments. A numbing.

But does every society have common measures of aesthetic poverty and /or aesthetic values? I doubt it. And even more important is evidence that these values shift within societies as societies evolve. (cf the Eiffel Tower: 1889 and now as a Parisian symbol and its protection against terrorist attack, or indeed electricity pylons - a key symbol of the march of pre-war progress, and now).

For many of the major architectural projects with which we have been involved we have had to address the grammar of aesthetics in a context where we have been agents of ministries who have not fully engaged citizens in the process from the beginning.
Often the public's preconception is a politico-economic imposition or 'necessity' despite any manner of public consultation.
Many architectural masterpieces have been realised, as renovations, recycled buildings, extensions or whole new ones. Often cultural, these have been imagined as the Kings, Queens and sometimes Aces in each city's hand as these cities vie with each other across the western world for attention. They have become barometers of a city's, and in some cases of a country's cultural virility.

Merdith Tax wrote:
"In most cultures prior to that of industrial capitalism, artists have had a well-defined and clearly understood relation to some part of their society, some group of consumers. In a primitive tribe or collective, art is the expression of the whole tribe - later, some people may be specially good at it, or hereditarily trained to it, and take on the production of artefacts as their work, but they work surrounded by the community, and work for the community's immediate and obvious benefit. In other periods of history, the artist has produced for a court, for a personal patron, for a religious sect, or for a political party. It is only with the dominance of the capitalist system that the artist has been put in the position of producing for a market, for strangers far away, whose life styles and beliefs and needs are completely unknown to him, and who will either buy his works or ignore them for reasons that are equally inscrutable and out of his control."

Today, people have enough freedom which allows them to express their own interpretation of design, and as such there will be both consensus and contradiction in any proposal. This is natural and should be accepted as part of the complexity policy I outlined earlier.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to put forward the following thoughts, which I wrote with respect to cultural architecture, conservation and intervention, but which I feel are also pertinent to city renewal.

1. Understanding the importance of the heritage of the city and country.

2. Responding to our own wider culture, our own time and technology.

3. Being conscious of the solid tradition we are building on, but avoiding nostalgic indulgence.

4. Establishing unambiguously the central rôle of the individual cultural building or pubic space.

5. Identifying clearly whether what is required is a new building, an extension, a renovation or a transformation.

6. Understanding what is and what will be permanent, and what is temporary.

7. Avoiding improvisation by training managers, professionals and citizens in the art of collaboration and how to obtain excellent advice.

8. Clarifying the roles of each interventionist in the process, whether it is new building or renovation and ensuring that all unjustified prejudice, be it psychological or professional, is removed such that all understand that it is our collective cultural heritage, past and future, which is at stake. The future is what we are investing now and is based on today.

9. Being sure that both short and long term objectives are realistic and achievable.

10. Being sure to finish what is started by being prudent about programming, but never forgetting that it is the future we are building.

11. If in doubt, don't! "noble sacrifice being the art of leaving things as they are" Gombrich.

12. Cultural centres must re-examine their future rôle in society in the face of the emerging global information highways and multi-media data bases.

Today, mankind needs intellectual force and responsibility that reaches beyond optimism. By that I mean - frees itself from any kind of post-modern apocalyptic pessimism.

More people today accept that their own lives and society is full of contradictions, that science does not offer solutions or indeed explain everything. In western society, there is a sense that the private life of the individual is now far more important than their public responsibility which is a reversal of general attitudes held only a few decades ago. Individuals seek other individuals with whom they have some empathy. In a wider context, political pluralism, for example in Italy, appears to express this basic change in society. Both at the individual level and the management level of society, diversity will inevitably increase. We still consider our society democratic, but our political structures have yet to adapt to this fundamental shift in individuality, indeed no democracy has yet to embraced men and women as genuine equals. Architecture now has to address these issues and in particular, through challenging an urbanism of fear begin to describe spaces which have a meaning in the sense of linking private and public domains, in ways not solely dictated by divisive economic preconceptions and consumerism.

"Our minds, which even now are only just awakening after years of materialism, are infected with the despair of unbelief, of lack of purpose and ideal. The nightmare of materialism, which has turned the life of the universe into an evil, useless game, is not yet past; it holds the awakening soul still in its grip. Only a feeble light glimmers like a tiny star in a vast gulf of darkness". [Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art, 1911]

"In the present society the quantative and qualitative criteria for judging design can be summed up as: does it attract the consumer... Designers have always had more noble standards of appreciating their creations, but in practise the question of functionalility, as in doing the job set out for it, of originality of design, of cultural sensitivity or of environmental impact are in this society predicated on the ultimate determining factors - does it in a direct or indirect manner generate financial wealth and or serve to perpetuate the political and economic status quo?" [Pippo Lioni, Up Against A Well Designed Wall, Paris 1993]

Exchange through discussion and openness of information is essential for understanding, and when this engages cultural exchange a major prerequisite for creativity is in place. This in turn makes creativity more accessible and maybe more democratic in a less competitive environment.

Competition has been and remains the conceptual trigger of our present economy and society. We do not believe that this is inevitable as is often argued. Collaboration, cooperation and indeed altruism is as common a natural inheritance as 'survival of the fittest'. This is a clue to redefining economic ethics, where the economy is seen not only to serve people in a material sense but to place it in a wider, more holistic context, where non-material issues are as important as material ones.

Real progress for mankind, a real future for the earth and design are becoming really the same. The cultural richness of human mankind lies in its metaphorical intelligence, source of anthropological energy and inspiration. The democratic value of progress can only have a long-term life when it grafts itself onto the strong metaphorical stem of the human spirit.

Is not the art of living the ultimate art?

I hope that my talk has been able to cast some half-light on distant horizons as well as seek to identify intelligent strategies to this difficult, but significant aspect of contemporary life - "city renewal".

"Progress is nothing but the victory of laughter over dogma" [Benjamin De Casseres]
Thank you.

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