THE FUTURE

The Eaton Centre

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La ville moderne a été dominée par des modèles utopiques. Eberhard Zeidler propose une approche réaliste aux problèmes urbains d'aujourd'hui et de demain.

Cities—are they going to be the environment of our future or are they a thing of the past, fossils of a society which has vanished? How are we going to live in the future, under water, in space like science fiction? What will the building forms that will house us look like? The predictions are pointing in all directions. Which ones are right? Which ones are the dreams and which ones will be the nightmares? How can we see the future avoiding both utopian hopes and doomsday fears? Can we, in fact, predict the future?

What has been our experience in the past? Even short-term predictions—10, 20, 30 years ahead—have been wrong. *1984* did not arrive, nor did the predictions of the *Brave New World*. Alvin Toffler now predicts a third wave, a future that is not one of centralization but of decentralization. I agree that the future will not be a further projection of our society in a straight line, more of the same but with better technology. Science, with its new technology, will not stabilize our second-wave society but propel it into a different societal form.

But even if we accept some of Toffler's predictions as pointing in the right direction and giving us a glimpse of the future, we should not forget the words of Sir Karl Popper, the eminent philosopher: "No scientific predictor can possibly predict by scientific methods its own future results." In other words, predictions can never be proven in a scientific way beforehand, and may be totally incorrect when tested by the future reality, in the same way as the predictions of *1984* or a *Brave New World* were.

Therefore, predictions, even if propped up by past experience and scientific data, will never by anything more than soothsaying unless of course we believe in the existence of ESP. So predicting is a game, a highly entertaining one, and I do believe a useful one. Life forces us to act, and any of our actions are influenced by what we anticipate will happen in the future.

Our understanding of the future will be very definitely controlled and determined by our understanding of the past. It is in fact how we understand the past and how we interpret past developments that we predict the future. Marshall McLuhan has called this the rear view mirror approach, yet it is the only method that allows us to employ our knowledge and our understanding of the past, to project it into an unknown future.

We say that we can learn from our mistakes, i.e. from history, and yet we know that history has never repeated itself. In spite of this we must look at history to see the future, but we must not expect that history will recycle itself. Forgetting this has often been the mistake made in predictions.

How have we predicted future living forms? In the past, utopian visions have been based on a new social structure of society and the ideal physical form in which such societies should unfold. The Phalanstère by Charles Fourier was such a prediction. This concept was challenged by Le Corbusier who thought that architectural form alone would be capable of changing social form. He pronounced that his Ville Radieuse would prevent future revolutions.

Unfortunately, history has shown us over and over again that these utopian communities, which were to create the ideal society, turned out to be dictatorial and oppressive. This is not only true for small scale utopian experiments like

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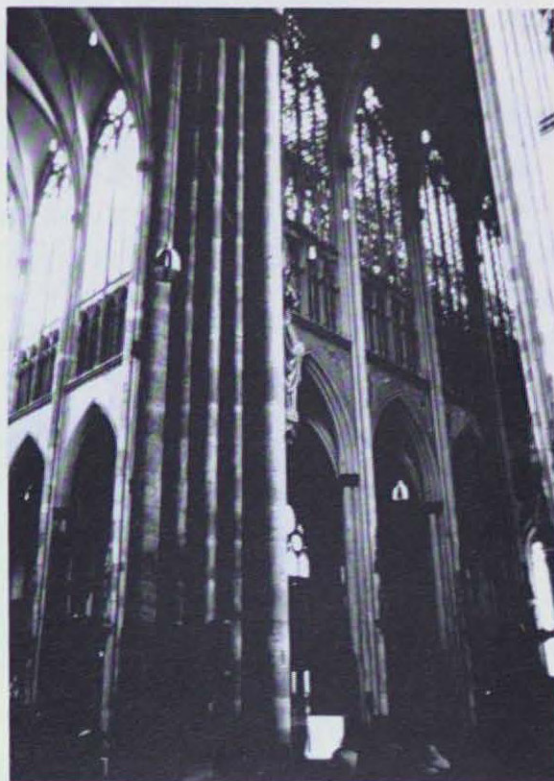
Owens, that collapsed, but also for large scale attempts, such as Marxist Communism and its results in Russia.

Karl Popper investigated those seemingly contradictory events, asking the question: why were all these wonderful utopias doomed to failure? In his book *The Open Society and Its Enemies* he comes to the conclusion that any utopian group that thinks it has a blueprint must suppress all those who object to it. Once this path is entered, by its very nature, more and more oppressive measures must be adopted to achieve what was set out. The germ of destruction is therefore in the very concept of any prescriptive utopia.

I cannot help pointing here to an example showing the persistence of the notion that utopia can be created. Paolo Soler's Arcology, particularly in the early models, shows a magnificent space age quality that makes them beautiful sculptures but questionable cities. As a social entity they could only be realized through an excess of dictatorial control, regardless of how benign their leaders are and of how much good is vested in their intentions. In order to achieve their goal such utopias must end up in the suppression of the individual and the destruction of our hope: man as a higher social being.

But let us look at some earlier examples of utopia. Charles Fourier's Phalanstère had in its physical form an uncanny resemblance to Versailles. Was this an accident or was this by design? If we investigate Fourier's utopia further, we will find that not only the physical form but also the social form had a resemblance to the court of Versailles.

The life of the community in the Phalanstère was in fact not that different (if one removes the political connotations) from the life of the court, only that the slice of society was not taken from the top but from the bottom, yet it had been given "royal grace" by such parallels.

The attempt to match utopias with forms of the past changed as time went on. The technical advances of the industrial society showed a never-ending arsenal of technical inventions that seemed to be capable of totally changing man's life.

Some of the buildings that were created seemed to reach beyond their time and showed undreamed of opportunities that seemed to open new horizons, like the Eiffel Tower or Les Halles des Machines in Paris. Utopians now seemed to be obsessed with the desire to project these technological forms into society to bring about its change.

These new utopians believed that the mere existence of new technology would achieve a better society. "A person who daily sets eyes on the splendors of glass cannot do wicked deeds" (Paul Scheerbart).

The drawings of Sant'Elia were extremely compelling in showing the potential that such technology could create. He not only foreshadowed Le Corbusier and Buck Rogers but finally also the Italian Rationalists of today.

We can see now the shift in these utopian predictions. While Phalanstère presented a new society that was housed in the garments of the past, the later utopians like Sant'Elia, Corbusier, etc., projected a futuristic technological world and believed that it would change society by the sheer power of a new formal truth.

But this projected future that was going to be the environment of the 21st Century has very little to do with what will happen to our cities in the future if we look at how these predictions have fared in the past.

We are now more than seventy years past the predictions of Sant'Elia and they have not been realized in the way they were conceived—neither has la Ville Radieuse become a reality. Where it has been realized in parts, it has helped more to bring on the demise of the second-wave modern architecture, than to project it into the future. For this we must be
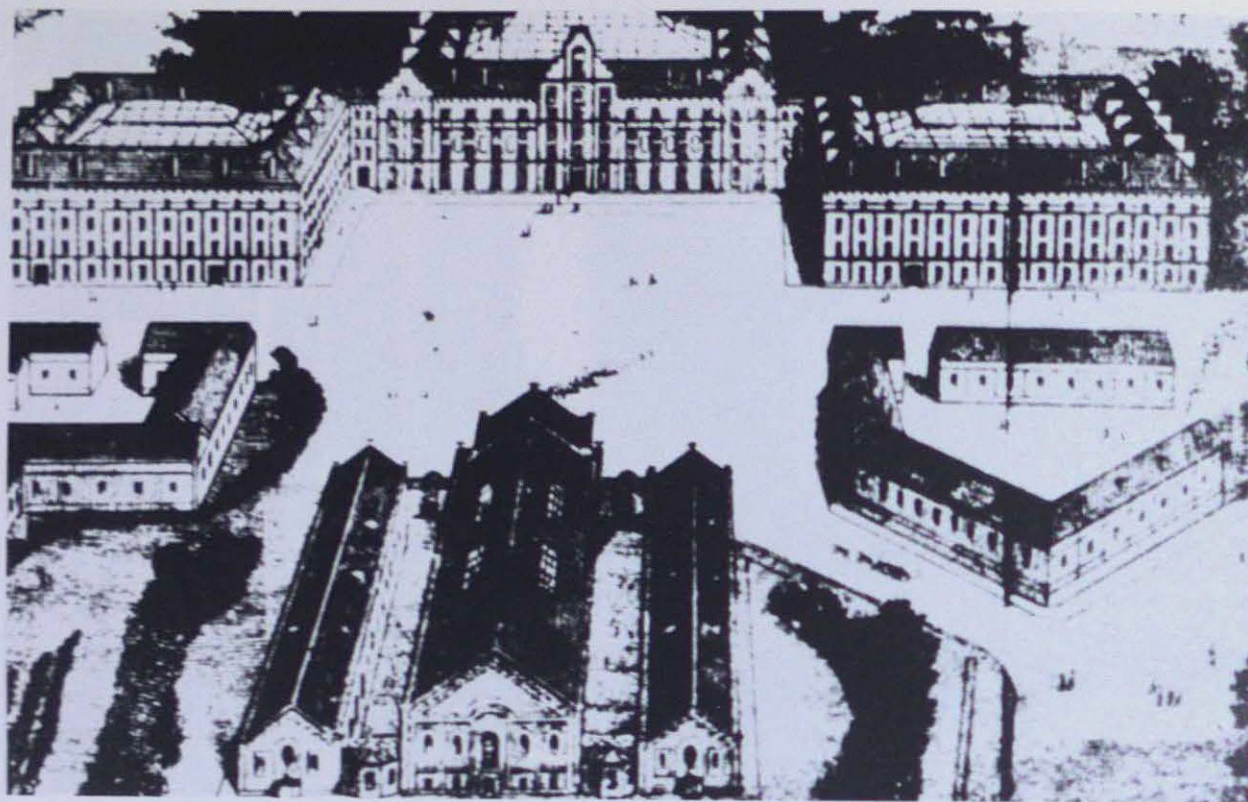
Familistère in Guise by Godin

grateful. Plan Voisin remained a paper prediction and Paris was saved.

It is interesting that space age fiction today is particularly successful when it combines futuristic technology with the emotional mythology of fairy tales. In the film *Star Wars*, technology has become a new cover for the age-old emotional imagery of fairy tales. Luke is given the crucial command: "Let the force be with you", and "force" does not refer to a scientific force but some great undefined spiritual power that superseeds even the most advanced knowledge of this futuristic period.

We obviously cannot accept this command as any realistic prediction of the future, yet we cannot help seeing here a poetic prediction, a warning that somehow technology only touches our lives on the surface but will not change human beings in their basic desire to fulfill their emotional life.

It is the knowledge and understanding of the past and how the future had once been seen that invites us to make the prediction that the future is not always a straight line projection, but will at times make a radical change in imitation of natural evolution, where the genes mutate instead of continuing as they were expected to do.

The great difficulty in all predictions, based on our knowledge and so-called scientific manipulation of them, is that we cannot possibly take into account the complexity of forces that work in such events. One force that is unfortunately often forgotten in our predictions, particularly in Toffler's *Third Wave*, is the nature of man.

Man has changed very little in his emotional reaction to the world since the beginning of our written history. We must understand that man does not function only on the logical level of his neo-cortex. This new part, the thinking brain, resulted in his elevation from an animal past. The other parts of his brain, although they work on a purely emotional level,

have an equal influence on his actions. When Goethe speaks of the two souls that live in his breast, biologically speaking he was quite correct, as long as he would transfer these two forces from his breast to his brain. Without understanding the true nature of our brain we cannot understand why we have behaved as we did in the past and why we will continue to behave this way in the future. Perhaps reading Karl Popper's thoughts, which focus on the human behaviour of society, would change the direction of Alvin Toffler's predictions.

But lastly, neither Karl Popper nor Alvin Toffler investigate the truly emotional feeling of the human being. These feelings search for emotional fulfillment in life and demand symbols. They long for emotional security. Many of the things that either happened in the past, or that may happen in the future, are controlled by these forces. Technology alone will not change events, but technological change will be changed by emotional reaction.

We cannot deny that the rate of change has been accelerated through science and technology. In the second-wave period, science and technology were considered to be almighty forces of such change. The way in which society and its political structure is capable of adapting to the changes created by technology does not parallel these events. The rate of change which human emotions are capable of accepting is in fact the most confusing issue of our time.

For example, we are quite capable, and perhaps quite happily capable, of accepting the 15th century environment of an English cottage, granted that we might want to add a telephone, change the toilet and perhaps install a home computer; but given the opportunity, we still enjoy charcoaling steaks on an open fire.

We somehow are capable of carrying symbols and objects that have emotional meaning through long periods of

Futurist Design by Sant'Elia

"*Change has to be introduced with the knowledge that technology, no matter how advanced, is nothing more than a servant to the human individual. If this is not the reason for technology, then we must ask ourselves why should we use technology at all.*"

time. Despite the so-called victory of modern architecture, we have carried with us the images of the great temples, like the doric column, for nearly 2,500 years. In fact, we can easily add another 1,000 years to that, if we look at the Temple of Beni Hassan and the predoric columns that seem to have been first created during the late Egyptian period. What makes these columns so powerful that we can still apply their emotional power today?

Such behaviour, however, did not fit into the second-wave modern architecture. It wanted only to deal with technical or functional necessities. Emotional issues were considered of a secondary nature. But it is really the transformation of a technical solution into an emotional one, and its final use beyond its technical and functional necessity that has created the many architectural styles of civilization. Witness the Gothic, witness the Renaissance, their technical origin and their emotional expression, and consider how long their form had an emotional meaning for us long after the expressed form was not following its structural necessity any more.

This is therefore what I want to say: *the past has a future.* The understanding of the past and projecting it into the future may give us a better comprehension of where we are about to go than a linear prediction of technology alone.

Toffler is not the first to predict the decline of the city and the growth of the individual house in the countryside— the electronic cottage—in which the family form of the first wave will be found again with third-wave technology. Third-wave technology seems to make such demise of the city possible.

A half a century ago, Frank Lloyd Wright thought he could predict such demise of the city in his Broadacres scheme. The advent of the automobile seemed to have freed man from the small circumference in which he could live and work. Walking was the determining factor. Even the advent of trains and street cars forced concentration of activities around the railroad stops due to walking distances. The car finally seemed to give the individual the freedom to move to where he wanted to live. His housing as well as his working space could now be dispersed to wherever it seemed to suit him best. Each American could live on his acre of land.

Frank Lloyd Wright was not that wrong in his prediction. In part this did happen. The American suburbs sprang up and the car allowed a proliferation in the landscape of urban sprawl, perhaps best seen in Los Angeles. But the signs now point in a different direction. Even Los Angeles is attempting to condense itself into several cores and enjoy the process of urbanizing itself.

The dream of Broadacres and the suburb was based on the car's ability to move man and make his desire to live in the country come true. What it did not anticipate were the traffic snarls and the reality that most people do not want to live in isolation. The car seemed to work for the nuclear family where only the man was the bread winner and the rest of the family would stay at home. Then a one-car family would do quite nicely. But as the children become teenagers and the wife was not content to sit at home, not only one but four and five cars were necessary to maintain the family mobility and yet the family still remained in isolation. The social breakdown of suburbia has been as severe as the collapse of the American downtown.

The flight into suburbia initally began as an attack to solve the problem of the city in North America. Often the solutions to cure the problems of the city have been attempts to swing the pendulum from one side to the other. Many of the new solutions were worse than the malady they tried to cure. After these many failures, to suggest again that the future solution must rely on taking man out of the city into a pastoral
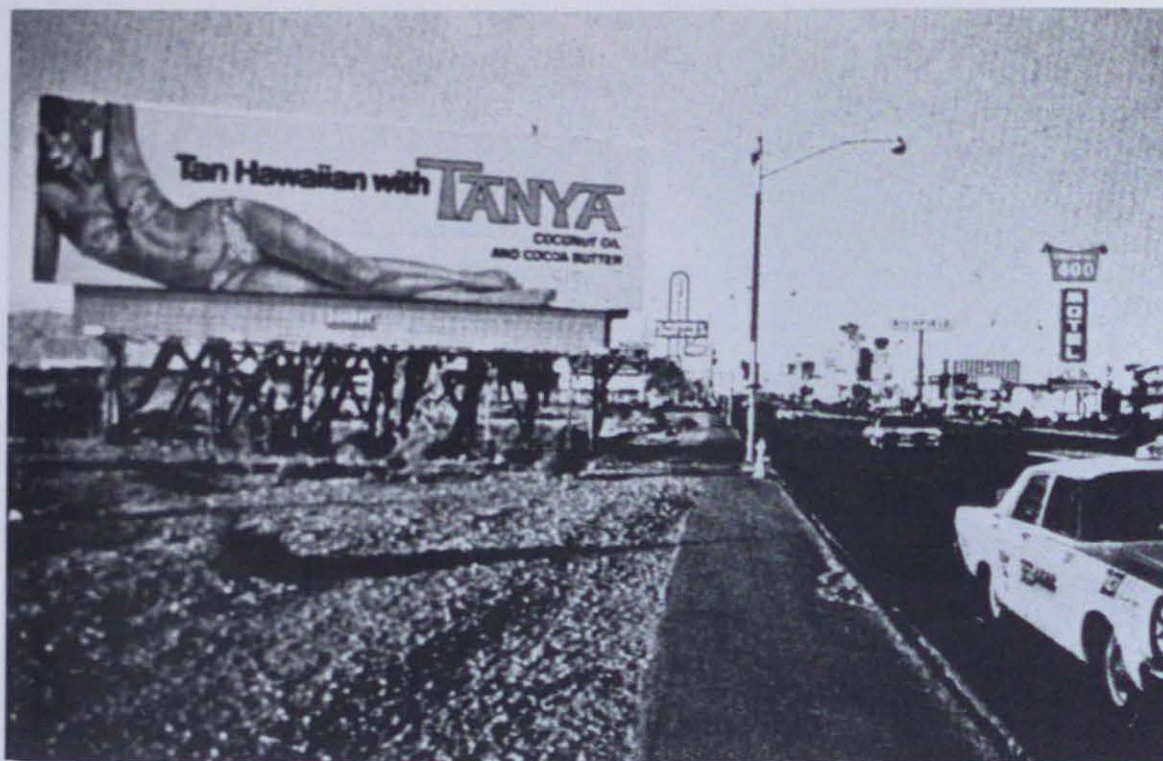
Las Vegas

abode is irresponsible because it may deflect our attention at a critical time from our real problems.

I feel that the city is not about to be abandoned within our lifetime, nor within the lifetime of the next generation. The question is not: do we abandon the city and start pastoral life for the third time, but the question is to try to see how we *can live within the city* and how we can learn from the past.

We must project and apply to the city the relatively rapid changes of new technology which are ever present. However, we must realize that new technology is only one force that influences urban environment. Another force is the form that society assumes at a certain time in history. Society itself is also subject to change, even if such change takes place in longer cycles.

The most important and perhaps, in our time, the most forgotten force that influences the urban environment is the emotional reaction of the individual to this environment, and it is perhaps for this reason that seemingly outdated cities are still livable.

Despite all our anticipations of a different future, regardless of the technical progress and regardless of the social change, cities of quite different nature still exist and serve mankind today in their original form. Just look at 14th century Sienna or 20th century Munich. What makes them work and exciting to be in is the response they give to the emotional needs of the individual, and the urban activities that unfold in their urban spaces.

J.K. Galbraith traces the development of cities through four categories. He talks about the Royal Household, the Merchant City, the Industrial City and the Camp—meaning the modern Metropolis. Yet all of these cities still exist in parts and adjacent to each other, and people still live in them today. Venice is as exciting a city to live in as you could find today, its form has perhaps better adjusted to the life of today

than many others. And if I might be so bold as to say—given the opportunity, I might prefer to live in Venice rather than Detroit.

Yes, of course, cities have to give us the economic means to live in them, but that is only part of what we look for in a city. The other part we look for is the life and the quality of life that the city gives us. It is this search for quality in urban life that has in the last years very much enhanced our North American cities and given them a new lease on life. The most successful examples of these renewed cities have been those that have understood how to attack their problems in a two-pronged manner. On one side, they introduced urban activities— the response to the needs of the individual, and on the other side, they created an emotional space that could shelter these activities. Of course, we are a long way from saying that this is the only solution to our problems, or that in fact we know how to manipulate these forces to bring about the greening of the American city.

What then are the issues that we should consider as essential for the city of the future?

1. **Start from where you are.**
Do not let dreams of utopia mislead you into wholesale destruction.

2. **Cities are here to stay.**
Restore them, and improve what is here.

3. **Do not fall victim to false promises of technology.**
But understand how technology can be used for the betterment of humanity.

4. **Reconsider the economic need of the Regional City.**
Do not let wrong taxation and false economic values destroy its life.

Sienna

5. Realize the need of social activities in the city.
Search for the quality of life, accept the fusion of many functions as a necessity of life in the city.

6. Create visual spaces that make the city comfortable to be in.

1. Start from where you are.

We cannot start the world anew, we cannot change our society wholesale, we cannot insist on changing everything before we change anything—we must start from where we are because any change will create some unintended consequences that may be worse than what was supposed to be cured through the initial change. It is like our tampering with the ecology of nature, where we now realize that often small interventions may have drastic if not fatal consequences. The same is true in attempted changes to society or to the environment it lives in.

From the acceptance that the city cannot be abandoned and totally changed, but must be renewed, will come a different set of rules for our future action. The North American city is the result of a long history and many forces that have worked on its formation over centuries. We also must realize that we have only a limited knowledge about the nature of the forces that act on a city. In the past, it has always been only in retrospect, by omitting them, that we have discovered their existence. Modern city planning provides us with uncountable examples of such omissions. Our rejection of the street as urban space is just one of the many.

Not only do utopias by their very nature lean to dictatorial oppression, they also do not allow for any adjustment to the side effects that are in the nature of change. Through their demand to create new societies, they encourage wholesale change that does not permit the gradual evolution which permits readjustment and improvement based on the existing reality.

Do not believe in utopias that claim to be a prescriptive solution. They defy human nature, because they demand the total submission of the individual to a "goal".
Follow Karl Popper's words:
1. Minimize avoidable suffering.

Do not build utopias but remove social evils. We do not know what makes people happy but we know ways of lessening their unhappiness.
2. Maximize the freedom of the individuals to live as they wish.
But that does not mean that utopias do not have a poetic power in our dreams.

We must use, with imagination and feeling, the unending feedback process in which the bold propounding of new ideas is invariably attended by their subjection to rigorous error elimination in the light of experience and piecemeal social engineering.

2. Cities are here to stay.

The solution to our future life in the city will never lie in any broad sweeping change of either our lifestyle nor of the city as a physical form itself, but in an evolution of both. And it is only if we begin to understand that our future lies in the city that we will improve the city as a place to live. We can no longer escape the city of the future, regardless of what technology will bring us. This is true at least for our generation and the next generation. I refuse to work only for yet-to-come future generations because we have seen what that has done to the Soviet Union.

The solution lies in the stock-taking of what the city is today. The understanding of the human life that it can support and the careful adaptation of the existing environment to the

> *"Technology alone will not change events, but technological change will be changed by emotional reaction."*

needs of our generation, not twisted by short-term goals, be they short-term financial gains to the detriment of the true economy of the city, or the misunderstanding of traffic in the city and the distortion that this has brought to city planning.

It is essential to accept that we will have to live in the cities that we have. Only the desire to create a better environment in them will lead us to a road that will finally achieve this.

We must avoid wholesale change in the city and the destruction that goes with it. That does not mean that the city we live in does not need constant care, restoration, building and attention to new activites. These have to be introduced with the knowledge that technology, no matter how advanced, is nothing more than a servant to the human individual. If this is not the reason for technology, then we must ask ourselves why should we use technology at all.

3. Do not fall victim to false promises of technology.

We have to understand that each new technology brings with it unwarranted hopes which are projected into the future in a way in which they cannot be ultimately accepted by the human being. It is only after several attempts to adjust them, that any new technology finds its place in which it can truly serve mankind. The car, the television, and perhaps now the computer, are elements that have undergone such changes in their use.

It is only now that some of us, and that is by far not every city planner, realize that we cannot build a city to suit the car and, that as a matter of fact, to do so is not necessary at all. If we would adjust the city to the car, then we would perhaps find, that we have eliminated the need for the city. Just compare Detroit and Manhattan. One city can be easily traversed by car, but there is no need to stop, and the other is full of vitality, but don't attempt to enter it by car and hope to move faster than a pedestrian.

Film, and later TV, predicted the destruction of live theatre. But the opposite has happened. Live theatre today, in a changed version, is stronger than it ever was. Of course, only in the city. Similarly, audio-visual technology predicted the demise of the old-fashioned library with students who sit at home at their TV or computer screen and select information from the greatest libraries of the world. But what has happened? In 1968 we designed, adjacent to the book library at McMaster, an audio-visual library with audio-visual learning carrels. Today, despite an excellently equipped audio-visual library, the traditional one is always filled with students, while the audio-visual one is seldom used.

Both examples do not deny that film, TV and computers have not changed our life, and in many perhaps enhanced it, but they have not started a new totally different life for us.

Perhaps I am becoming old and the enthusiasm for panaceas has left me. If I look over the architectural magazines and their writings that I have followed over the last thirty years, it somehow strikes me that most of the issues being pursued were one-day highs, that died perhaps even within the same year, and did not contribute to the true solution of our environment. There was a time in the sixties when all schools had to be on one level or had to have bi-lateral lighting. Now we laugh at bi-lateral lighting, but have we truly advanced further? This past misunderstanding destroyed the school in the urban context by looking at one issue only, without investigating the total complexity of life in the urban environment.

The suburban shopping centres and their moats of parking lots that separate them from the community, and the transplanted urban shopping centre into the downtown that only opens to the inside are other examples.

Yet such issues can be resolved—witness the Eaton Cen-

tre and its face on Yonge Street.

4. Reconsider the Economic Need of the Regional City.

I predict that the city as we know it will still be here in the year 2080, in the same way as Paris, Florence and London are here today in a similar form as they were there in 1880.

We must accept changes in our cities to remain livable in the future. Today, far more than in the past, cities are the key to our economy, more so than the nation state. Today, it is the city more so than the state that gives its citizens the things they require for their daily life.

When I talk of cities I don't understand them in the limited sense of the "New Town" but as city regions like New York or the Toronto region. Despite our communication and transportation technology, despite what the computer has brought us and is about to bring us, these new technologies do not spell the end of the city, nor do they demand the total suppression of the environment or the landscape. Quite to the contrary, they encourage and allow a great concentration of people into a city region, because man needs the social contact that only the city can offer him in the diversity that he demands.

Cities are not man's anathema but his hope.

We must look at work again and define it not in the limited sense of the second-wave society, where it became a separable time slot that was set up for production, in contrast to the other time slots that might be used for consumption, recreation, etc. Work was part of man's life in the first wave, but it was differently conceived in the second wave. Work will also be there when the third-wave comes, but it will be seen differently, perhaps more akin to Goethe's interpretation in Faust II where it is part of creation and becomes finally the meaning of life. In this sense work is not something we want to avoid, or cannot avoid, like work addicts, but work is an activity in which we will find our fulfillment. This, of course, needs the complexity of fulfillment that can only be found in the complexity of the new city, in the same way that 9 to 5 doesn't matter for an artist for whom time has little meaning. The same is true for all other creative endeavors, be they philosophy, computers, acoustics, architecture, etc. The meaning and gratification we will find in life are in great part based on the act of creation. It is the metropolitan region that allows us to find such work, at least for most of us. Yes, real estate costs may be cheaper outside the city. Yes, corresponding rents may be cheaper outside the city. But ultimately, it may not be cheaper in human terms to abandon the city.

The American Revolution was fought on the basis of no taxation without representation—the idea that those who pay the money should have the right to determine how it is being spent. Today if you look you will find that the plight of the city is not better than the plight of the poor colonials who were taxed by an English overlord who spent their money, not where the colonials needed it, but where the overlord felt it suited him best. Our political system pulls the money out of the city, which is the major tax contributor, but does not put it back into the city where it is needed, but distributes it in the way the political powers want to suit their goals. Canada's political power system, which reaches back into an agricultural past, renders the city financially powerless to do the things that its citizens require most urgently. The city is only capable of responding to the financial needs of individual sectors as dictated by its political overlords. So it may be capable of building highways or better schools, or hospitals, depending on the provincial or federal political situation, but it cannot control the total expenditures and direct them to where, as a city, they are more urgently needed.

5. Realize the need of Social Activities in the City

The city blossoms by many-fold activities happening side by side, within each other, above and below each other, by the excitement of creation that it can offer to man. This ever renewing cycle of life is the city of the future, the city that we can gain through better understanding of man's needs with the assistance of new technology, not through the segregated moloch of the second-wave industrial city zoned into monotonous uniformity. It is the unfolding of the individual and his needs that must be found in the city. Only in the city is the place where he can discover this complexity.

The individual has a dichotomy within himself. He not only wants to be at times alone, the dweller in the pastoral abode, but he also longs for social contact. The social contact of the family, not the limited nuclear family but "Family" in a wider sense. The community is also part of a city, but not in a limiting sense of restriction as it is often achieved in the so-called "New Town", but in the delight of living in a great city, of meeting kindred spirits. Jane Jacobs once said: "Whoever speaks of loneliness in a big city has never lived in a small village."

6. Create visual spaces that make the city comfortable to live in.

One of the most striking examples that demonstrates what will happen if visual space lacks is the Place de la Défense in Paris. It was planned according to the best planning principles of our time; it even includes Jane Jacob's demand for mixed-use. It included not only offices, but also houses, restaurants, retail, subway station, convention centre, recreation. It has urban density and it is only a stone's throw from the Champs   Elysées—and yet, something is missing. You will not find the same people crowding the Place de la Défense that you will find in the Champs   Elysées, a hundred year old street, lacking the trimmings of modern technology yet still deeply loved.

What is missing from the Place de la Défence is Visual Urban Space that encourages activities. This elusive quality that makes people want to be there has been forgotten. Here is instead an architectural landscape of super sculptures, perhaps much admired in their day by modern architects, but not a space for people to be. This has been the failure of modern city planning, it forgot the urban space that we today have rediscovered and loved in such diverse places as Venice, Rothenburg, Paris, in fact in all pre-modern cities. The limited understanding of functions in modern city planning made us forget the necessity of visual urban sapces.

Where lies the answer? I think it lies in the full life that a city can give us.

But a city can only give us such full life if it not only responds to the functional and technical needs of human beings but also to their *emotional needs.*

Luckily for us, these emotional needs are deeply anchored within our human nature and we *do know* what they are, and we *do know* how we will respond to them. We also do know our ultimate satisfaction in finding them I hope we can approach our cities and with them our lives with an understanding of the future that lies in the past.

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