

LINE BEHIND IT WHICH YOU COULD ONLY GUESS AT IN THIS PARTICULAR SITUATION.

ALEJANDRO ZAERA: Precisely. The fragment is what's produced when an idea collides with the concrete conditions of reality and is smashed. I think it's dangerous to use the fragment as the basis for a project since I believe this can only lead to a picturesque, narrative posture. I feel that the project should always maintain a tension with reality. The fragment should always be the result of this tension.

IÑAKI ÁBALOS: Indeed, the fragment is the strategy of modern thought. Aspirations to master the whole died out a century ago, while the fragment is an opportunity to recompose a virtual, inconclusive order from a narrower angle. This order corresponds to a new cultural situation: the impossibility of achieving absolute mastery over reality.

FEDERICO SORIANO: And thus stories are created that end in themselves but have incomplete beginnings and ends.

RAFAEL TORRELO: They're like units of information: minimal units of information, minimal information packets.

FEDERICO SORIANO: And for this reason I told you earlier that

I DON'T WANT TO RECOMPOSE THESE STORIES, NEITHER THEIR BEGINNING NOR THEIR END, OR REACH THE IMPOSSIBLE GOAL OF CONTROLLING EVERYTHING. MY AIM IS RATHER TO CREATE SOMETHING LIKE SHORT STORIES IN WHICH IT SEEMS AS IF NOTHING HAPPENS BECAUSE THERE'S SOMETHING MISSING AT THE BEGINNING AND AT THE END.

We can't par concrete limits. As soon as we do, everything becomes e totally complete; it can no longer go beyond forward or back.

MANUEL GAUSA: This seems to be a good moment to examine the subject of the city, not as a historical centre but as a new structure that acts as the core for a set of activities. In this sense it might be opportune to relate the subject with that of housing, an area you've all touched upon to a greater or lesser extent in projects and operations which have generally taken place in new, peripheral districts, with all the tensions and conditioning factors this entails.

IÑAKI ÁBALOS: Unfortunately I get the impression that the subject of housing is becoming increasingly less influential when it comes to defining the city landscape. That «great mass» of residential constructions has become merely the neutral background to other operations emerging now; a residue of very old constructional practices.

I BELIEVE THE CITY IS GENERATED THROUGH OTHER CHANNELS AND IT IS THESE OTHER CHANNELS THAT MUST BE ATTENDED AND STUDIED, ESPECIALLY EVERYTHING TO DO WITH INFRASTRUCTURES AND THEIR TER-

MINALS. EVERYTHING TO DO WITH THOROUGHFARES, CHANNELLING, ETC., IS WHAT REALLY DETERMINES THE FORM AND CONTENT OF THE CITY, RATHER THAN THIS NEUTRAL, RESIDENTIAL BACKGROUND.

Alejandro Zaera: The contemporary city is indeed determined more by fundamental general substructures than by housing. Urban growth must be understood more in terms of the network that distributes energy or transport, rather than of the residential public area network or urban equipment that characterised the XIX-Century city; the city has become something else.

JUAN HERREROS: Indeed, the growth of office space in Madrid is much more determining now than the growth of housing twenty or thirty years ago. The city grows on the basis of impulses: infrastructural impulses, new kinds of containers, the explosion of new centres. Housing, on the other hand, has lamentably been reduced to a professional dynamic infinitely slower than that of other kinds of buildings; demands created around any tertiary sector enclave are much greater than those created by housing, most probably due to a social question anchored in customs and with inherited parameters of comfort. While in organised work centres the parameters of comfort have envolved considerably and paradigms such as artificial climates, the need for natural or artificial light, etc., constantly produce new coordinates, housing has become relegated to a very secondary position. I believe housing should become, as it became many years ago, the beneficiary of experiences in other fields in which architectural systems are developed to the full.

FEDERICO SORIANO: Obviously the idea of centre has been lost, and it is this loss that has brought the periphery to the forefront. Nevertheless, it seems that there is still no mechanism to deal with this new dynamic and architects still work with the small square intended to create a little centre, but these are incapable of cementing the city. So how are these new urban voids left?

RAFAEL TORRELO: Something I've always wanted to do is drive round Madrid, starting in the centre, and go round and round until I reach the periphery, and without a solution of continuity when the city finishes, at that unknown, imprecise moment when she becomes dissolved, jump to the periphery of Barcelona or any other city. I don't think I'd find any differences; it's the undifferentiated city that Federico was talking about.

In this respect I think we should go back to talking about housing, because its a great debate that we're mistakenly rejecting. If we're not careful, the same thing will happen to us as happened to architects in the XIX century in terms of infrastructure: they ignored the infrastructure and it fell into the hands of engineers.

THE LARGEST AREA WE HAVE IN MADRID IS THE M-30. I DEFEND ARCHITECTS' RECAPTURING THIS URBAN SPACE AND INTERVENING IN IT, BUT WITHOUT LEAVING HOUSING TO ONE SIDE, OTHERWISE IT WILL BECOME FODDER FOR SPECULATORS AND DECORATORS, SOMETHING INSIPID AND ANONYMOUS,

los países mediterráneos son sus ciudades históricas. Pero hoy en día hace falta tener muy poca visión para no aceptar que Las Rozas y todo el crecimiento norte de Madrid es Madrid, aunque sea un término municipal burocráticamente diferente. Se trata de una espacialidad nueva, hecha de tensiones que sustituyen la continuidad de la ciudad tradicional. Operamos en un territorio esponjado, en el que conviven los vacíos, las concentraciones y la dispersión, y no creo que sea muy diferente intervenir en un contexto muy condicionado por la Historia, que en uno condicionado exclusivamente por la topografía, sea ésta natural o artificial.

**RAFAEL TORRELO: Me gustaría tratar la relación entre ingeniería y arquitectura. Es un tema que me interesa, particularmente después de haber trabajado con varios *consultings*. Creo que la profesión del arquitecto se ha alejado demasiado de la gran escala, del mismo modo que la obra civil lo ha hecho de la pequeña escala**

y, éste es un tema verdaderamente importante que debemos reivindicar. Debemos entrar en él como sea.

### **El espacio más significativo de esta ciudad es la M-30.**

Es el espacio del vehículo. El vehículo abre una nueva escala en la ciudad y plantear una ciudad a esa escala es lo primero que debemos asumir. La autopista es un lugar del máximo interés tanto por sus edificios, como por sus nuevas tipologías por hacer. Deberíamos empezar a pensar en intervenir en ellas, y empezar a concienciar a quien competa de la transcendencia de esos espacios.

JUAN HERREROS: Cuando el arquitecto interviene en cualquiera de esos terrenos parece repetirse siempre la misma actitud. El arquitecto plantea, proyecta, desarrolla, y el ingeniero resuelve. Y ese ha sido el error que ha llevado, primero, a que los arquitectos tengan una conciencia peyorativa respecto a los ingenieros por su carácter resolutor y profesionalista, y también a que los ingenieros mantengan una cierta reticencia a la hora de trabajar con los arquitectos porque difícilmente encuentran en ese tipo de colaboraciones el lugar donde desarrollar su especialidad. Sin embargo,

**estamos asistiendo a la desaparición del mito de la oficina de arquitecto, del estudio enorme, con una capacidad de desarrollo autosuficiente, esa especie de industria familiar estratificada capaz de resolver todos los problemas. Todo ello está dando paso a una idea más próxima a la de los *consultings* americanos en los que diez personas, un teléfono, un fax y un listín de números te conectan con el mundo,**

te relacionan con estamentos que incluso hasta ahora estaban un poco denostados,

even though general attitudes towards housing are regressive, although it seems improbable that we will be able to create a new habitable space, and even though dominant social and economic factors prevent us from being open in our plans.

**IÑAKI ÁBALOS:** I believe the only thing we architects can do in these circumstances is sweep the house, eliminate, remove, clean up housing and make it thoroughly available. The only two XX-century alternatives I know (genuinely new proposals) are Le Corbusier's famous modulus and the loft, which is so successful in American cities and which, when all's said and done, is a recycled industrial type. I believe we must work in this direction: leave spaces with large planes in contact with the exterior, with equipment as peripheral as possible so that it doesn't interfere, and little else. I think it's more important to analyse how the demand is moving towards more extreme types rather than the typical ones we've inherited from the Central European modern movement. I believe that, on the one hand, the demand for suburbs (that denigrating experiment with lozenge-type housing) has its roots deep in the needs of the modern man; on the other, people who live in cities have to end increasingly towards stratified types, mixed typologies in which housing uses are mixed with others, sections of city in which the housing layout isn't determining. Therefore we must move towards construction in stratified heights and towards the suburbs, understood in the English or American, and not in the Spanish, sense.

These two types are probably the most intense. They belong to much more advanced societies in which many more people work at home. But this could happen here tomorrow or the day after, so we'd better start thinking about it now.

**JUAN HERREROS:** There's still a task waiting to be carried out, namely what Iñaki and I call «the housing we've yet to have», which consists in sitting down and deciding what the housing is that's still unavailable, still not on offer. In Madrid today, nobody can enjoy a house or flat in which it is possible to lead a lifestyle or develop a family structure which are different from those established by regulations. Homes need isolated areas for reflection or study, less definition of uses, more adaptability in time to changes. For this reason, the sooner you sweep out a house the more living spaces can be modified, an area where we architects can intervene very little once our task has been completed. This is where we can learn from office buildings.

**MANUEL GAUSA:** After a period of a certain obsession with small dimensions, it seems that architects are finally beginning to accept new work scales: the possibility of working on the terrain, contact with other disciplines such as engineering and the design of infrastructures are fields that some of you have touched upon: Iñaki and Juan's purifiers or, more tangentially, Rafael's bus depots illustrate this preoccupation. How do you tackle this new relationship with large scales?

**IÑAKI ÁBALOS:** The territorial scale is part of the architect's domain. The colonisation of the land has always been part of his task. One of the fields in which Juan and I have worked is thoroughfare networks. I insist that the thoroughfare issue is an architectural question, a construction problem which is no longer just the department of the ingenious figure of the traffic expert. Recently

Juan and I have had to work in boundary situations, at what are understood as the gates of the city. And the characteristic problem you find here is one of assimilating very different geometries: high-velocity geometry without crossroads or junctions, which is lineal and flowing, which takes the curvature of fast-moving traffic, and that of the more or less isotopic layout that characterises the urban fabric. For us the problem has been fundamentally one of understanding this situation and tackling it with architectural instruments, understanding the thoroughfare layout as an urban experience. This fusion of geometries, of different kinds of traffic, has to be carried out in a much less random, less banal, way. In the case of Santander particularly, or in Puerta de Hierro, in a project we did for Agroman, the fundamental problem was this: the attempt to understand the new possibility that exists between typology and thoroughfare, that considerable amount of architecture which today can be understood as a protruberance, as the terminal of an infrastructure in which the limits between what's specifically infrastructure and what's building gradually become blurred. Car parks, commercial centres, purifying plants, typologies that are terminal fields of new layouts.

**ALEJANDRO ZAERA:** Earlier we were saying precisely that the contemporary city, the metropolis, is characterised fundamentally by the systems of transport or distribution of energy that allow it to «function». This is something that has a lot to do with the usual way of acting on a territory. Has the city become a new territory to be «colonised» rather than «urbanised»? What are the limits, or differences, between city and territory and how are they produced? Or could it be that these frontiers have faded away and the relationship is one of continuity, of connection?

**IÑAKI ÁBALOS:** The city's exploding, but great panegyrics aren't necessary either. Joan Busquets put this very well in a recent lecture: the cultural heritage of Mediterranean countries is their historical cities. But today you have to be practically blind not to see that Las Rozas and the whole of the northern growth of Madrid is Madrid, although from the bureaucratic point of view it's a different municipality. This is a new concept of space, composed of tensions that replace the continuity of the traditional city. We operate in a sponged territory, in which voids, concentration and scattering live side-by-side, and I don't think there's a big difference between intervening in a context highly conditioned by History, and in a context conditioned exclusively by the topography, whether this is natural or artificial.

**RAFAEL TORRELO:** I'D LIKE TO TOUCH A LITTLE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENGINEERING AND ARCHITECTURE. IT'S A SUBJECT THAT PARTICULARLY INTERESTS ME AFTER HAVING WORKED FOR SEVERAL CONSULTING FIRMS. I BELIEVE THE PROFESSION OF THE ARCHITECT HAS BECOME TREMENDOUSLY ISOLATED FROM THE LARGE SCALE, IN THE SAME WAY THAT CIVIL WORKS ARE NOW ISOLATED FROM THE SMALL SCALE, and this is something really important that has to be remedied, one way or another.

como las empresas... Nosotros, con Rafael, hemos hecho muchas cosas de este tipo. Una estructura con un grado de especialización posible gracias a que otras tienen las especializaciones que antes no teníamos porque se despreciaban.

ALEJANDRO ZAERA: Y en esa especialización, ¿cuáles serían los campos en los que debería formarse el arquitecto? ¿Cómo se definirían los nuevos valores disciplinares de la profesión?

JUAN HERREROS: Bueno, más que una especialización, lo que habría que hacer es incidir en la formación de los arquitectos, en esa trilogía ciudad— proyecto— construcción, entendida como algo que pertenece a un sistema de coordenadas total.

Tradicionalmente la arquitectura se ha ocupado de hacer la ciudad. Hemos perdido esta posibilidad al haber cambiado la realidad, pero no por ello se puede decir que hayamos perdido nuestra capacidad de trabajar en esta «otra» ciudad,

MANUEL GAUSA: De hecho, todos estos temas están bordeando el concepto de la técnica. Parece que en algunos de vosotros existe, todavía, esa confianza en la capacidad inventiva del arquitecto, en esa necesidad de promover la aplicación de nuevas tecnologías en la construcción...

RAFAEL TORRELO: En este mundo de la construcción en cuanto uno se sale del 40 × 40, todo el mundo se lleva las manos a la cabeza. El ladrillo me parece un material estupendo, pero a partir de un determinado volumen de obra, debería estar proscrito, absolutamente proscrito. ¿Por qué?. Pues, porque lo que parece completamente inaceptable es que cueste más prefabricar un panel que hacer un muro de ladrillo; y, sin embargo, sigue siendo más barato el ladrillo. En Europa, en Estados Unidos, incluso en la URSS, eso no es así. Es social y económicamente más ventajosa la idea de prefabricación.

MATEO CORRALES: Sí, luego eso degenera en una especie de prefabricación artesanal mal construida. Cualquier sistema constructivo es bueno en principio. Más dudosos me parecen ciertos criterios de utilización y adecuación de estos sistemas sobre todo cuando sirven para proclamar banderas tecnológicas como argumentación de las soluciones o como reto de un progreso mal entendido. La tecnología también ha existido siempre y cuando se abusa de ella, se suele agotar en sí misma.

RAFAEL TORRELO: Lo quieras o no, si miras, por ejemplo, el mundo de la prefabricación pesada en España, resulta que durante mucho tiempo sólo ha habido tres empresas que se han atrevido a seguir adelante, porque las demás no pudieron superar la crisis económica. Estamos absolutamente atrasados: algún día, espero que podamos llegar a donde han llegado en otros países.

Evidentemente, para intervenir en un proceso así se debe conocer y también dialogar, plantear problemas y resolverlos, a partir de un contacto próximo con la industria. Lo que ocurre es que yo no sé si la industria está interesada en ello o si le preocupan otras cosas.

**IÑAKI ÁBALOS: Cada vez más, el producto industrial es un producto flexible, que se adapta a situaciones cambiantes, y que no requiere**