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Multi-scale reading of a city's resilience

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Introduction

In this fifth book of the OMB series, we aim to address the argument 'city and its image' a highly-debated topic that remains a relevant argument in several Eastern European cities. Our example is the new Kosova capital—Prishtina—which presents the opportunity for a paradigmatic case study. A new cycle of 33 PhD students has focused on developing research strategies around the concept of 'Images of a city to be rediscovered'. We are aware that this is an over discussed topic, but this collection of issues seeks to avoid being considered a banalisation of research that was developed during the 1960s (LYNCH, 1960). Rather, it seeks to represent an additional piece of a mosaic that investigates the cities of the new generation.

The book is structured into five main chapters. The first is the introduction, which offers an overall exposition about the main purpose of this fifth OMB book, including a focus on the research background that was previously addressed by POLIS University and the Observatory of the Mediterranean Basin. The second chapter—'Interdisciplinary exchanges'—collects a series of multidisciplinary thoughts that reflect on certain workshop issues,

as elaborated by professionals and academics. Therefore, the meaning of a 'city's image' is explored through the lenses of history, sociology and architecture to stimulate a deeper critical discussion between the PhD students and a group of professors and architects. The third chapter, which is the heart of the book, explores the workshop's process through four main fields of investigation, which were selected by the PhD students, including infrastructure, unused spaces, culture parches and significant environmental issues. Four work groups (one for each field) were created to address these topics. In addition, at the conclusion of one year of work, each PhD student wrote an investigative scientific paper on an area of his/her own research interest in connection with the workshop objectives. The fourth chapter—'Prishtina City Lab'—attempts to reassume the work that was elaborated during one year of studio courses concerning possible architecture and urban crises in the city's urban patterns. The goal was to develop a synergetic platform between the Studio in Architecture and Theory course and the Urban Planning and Thesis Lab, which were developed during the academic year

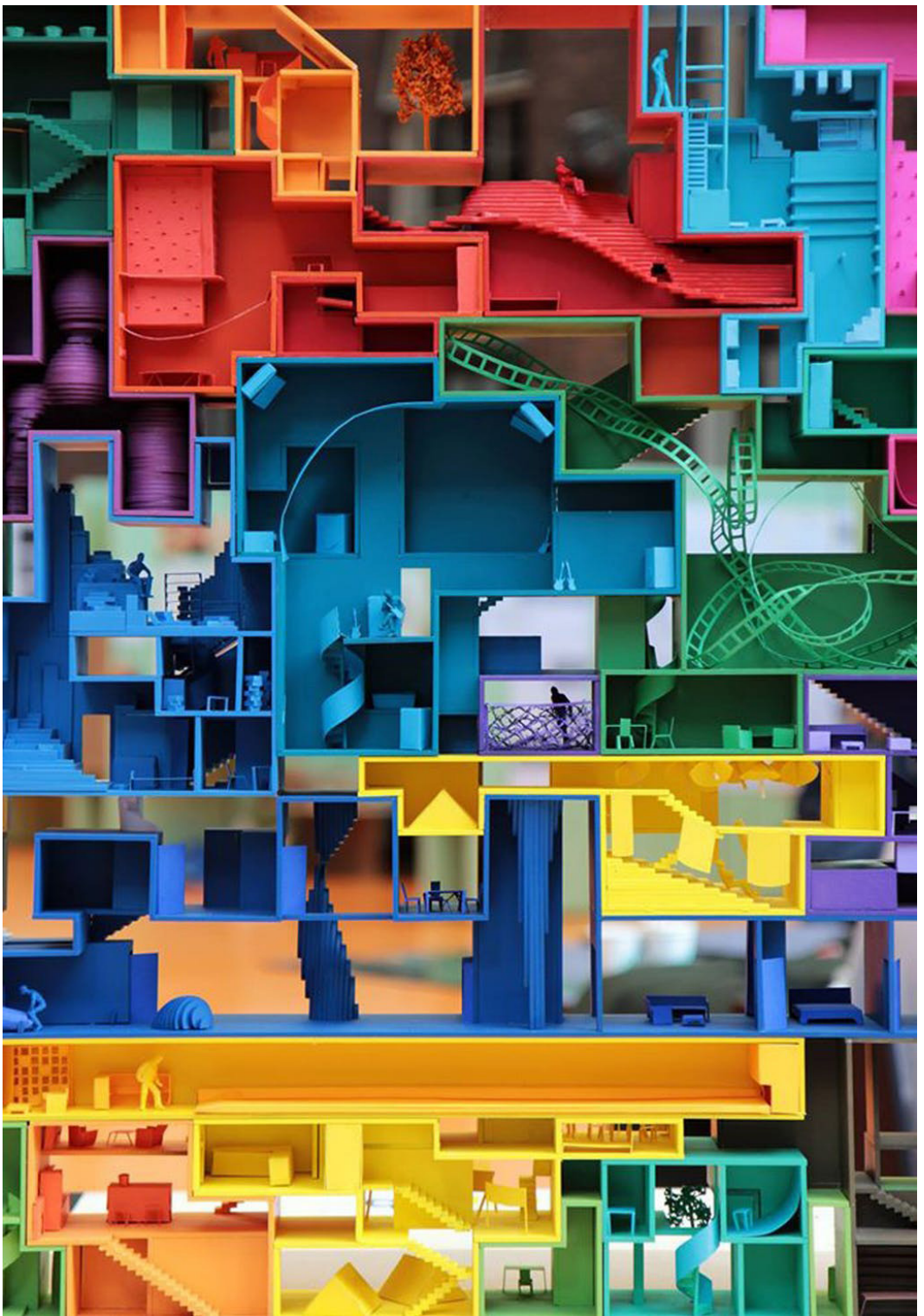


Fig1 / The Why Factory (T?F) TU Delft is a global think tank founded by Winy Maas MVRDV office. source: <https://thewhyfactory.com/news/from-wego-to-barba/>

2017/18 at POLIS University. The city of Prishtina was studied and designed from different perspectives, giving priority to all areas with discontinuity of both their functions and their urban structure. The last chapter not only draws conclusions but suggests new trajectories for future research activities.

Building construction in the city during the last twenty years has created

a multidimensional relationship between the city and the architectural scales. Using the multi-scale concept in Prishtina allows for the discovery of a new sustainable design approach concerning the relationship between architecture and urbanism. It is exactly within this frame of investigation that the city of Prishtina releases the best urban tools, which have remained hidden. The instruments that we

are looking through are wrapped in a controversial past that is full of uncertainty and urban discontinuity (PRUTHI, et al., 2013).

By observing these city patterns for the first time, one can learn how to read Prishtina through a non-linear approach. Such an approach can allow for a double interpretation: 1) underlining the possibility of incorporating architecture's meaning within urbanism and 2) using a multi-scale approach to establish new and important relationships between the different scales of architecture that aim to build a sustainable environment. The estrangement that is generated by each building has diversified the social experience. However, the discontinuity of the city's character offers us a relevant opportunity to find resilience through a heterogeneous patchwork. A contemporary theory of the city's image is portrayed as a sort of 'recombinant urbanism'. This is an added value that, for some architects, can be considered a design tool rather than a simple speculative vehicle. For David Grahame Shane, many cities today lack a clear overall urban structure. One of the main characteristics of contemporary urban patterns is the capacity to generate architectural autonomies through operative urban tools, such as the case in which he mentioned 'the enclave, the armature and the Heterotopia' (SHANE, 2005). Shane, through Kevin Lynch's theories, tried to investigate the possibility of figuring out a new image of future cities as the result of the three abovementioned urban devices. Simple recurrent structures or organisational patterns, such as the one defined by Lynch (LYNCH, 1981), can amplify the sense of the city image. Therefore, one of the main objectives of this fifth publication is to collect urban exception from the existing patterns that, from the past until today, have created a concept of an interrupted object, which was meant as its original function, as well

as from the relationship with the city scale. An urban exception is definable as a persistent object that acts within the city's patterns as recognisable and autonomous architecture. In many examples, important city landmarks, such as the case of administrative buildings, religious buildings, sports arenas, cultural buildings and ex-socialist buildings, have persisted in Prishtina as multi-scale objects that react from a small to a very large scale of intervention.

However, we must explore the ways in which multi-scaled architecture can be considered resilient. Cities like Prishtina continually change their shape in the manner of a sort of self-efficient organism; they try to produce an antibody every time they differ in compliance with the different types of urban demands. The work that was elaborated through the workshop experience and the subsequent scientific papers investigated the existing conditions within the city settlement in which urban reality can be considered self-efficient objects within the visual and functional meanings. Therefore, the best choice of models of cities to use as background experience was not immediately visible; rather it was discerned through shifting our investigation into different organised patterns.

Given the possibility to investigate a new approach in the rediscovery of a new image for the city of Prishtina, the effect of a single architecture or urban settlement must be explored as a mechanical component that behaves like a flexible tool. The selection of Urban Exceptions within existing city patterns releases an effect of multi-scale complicity; each urban element—independently of its own morphology—creates a contagious influential area that is reacting within the main shape of the city. All the objects and city parts that were analysed by the PhD students must be read under this frame; the intention as well as the responsibility of this scientific work is

to develop a multidisciplinary approach that reintroduces the relevance of architectural scale as an essential component of managing the city and its image.

Within this frame of the discussion, the city as a self-efficient organism is no longer a predefined element that is designed and manipulated by a small group of politicians and specialists; rather, it mirrors the evolution of a society. The city is an abstract representation of contemporary crises as well as patterns of operative urban instruments that are waiting to be rediscovered.

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