



THE URBAN HISTORY OF CITIES

Athens 7 November, 2018

Antonio R. Rivero

Honorary Vice President of ARES

UIA - Past Vice President R1

Pour revenir aux sources,
on devait aller en sens inverse.

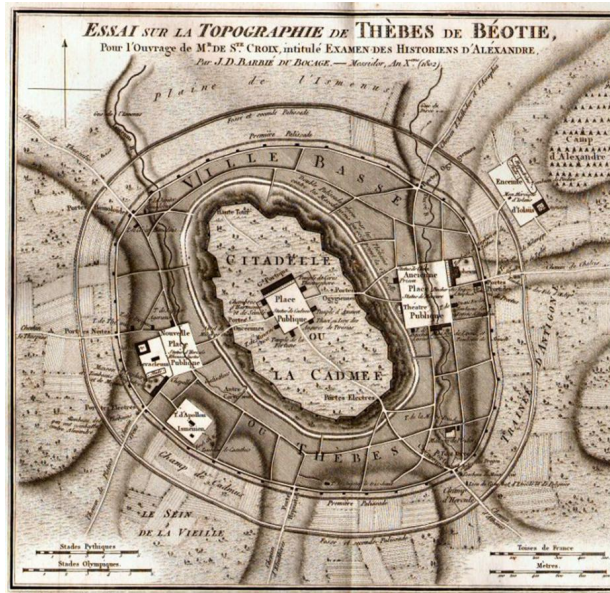
**“To return to the source of things,
one has to travel in the opposite direction.”**

*René Daumal,
Le Mont Analogue*

how to
START MY SHORT LECTURE?

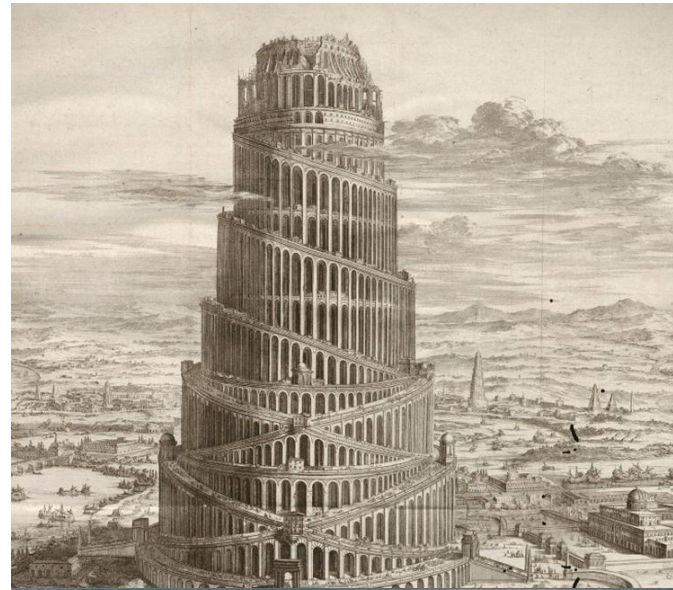
- the Acropolis at Athens and the Capitol in Rome showed forth the imperial majesty of those proud cities for the edification of subjects and allies.
- **Aesthetic merit was considered desirable in public buildings, and, later on, in the palaces of plutocrats and emperors, but was not aimed at in the hovels of peasants or the rickety tenements of the urban proletariat.**
- In the mediaeval world, in spite of a greater complexity in the social structure, the artistic motive in architecture was similarly restricted, indeed even more so, for the castles of the great were designed for military strength, and if they had beauty it was by accident.

“WHO BUILT THEBES OF THE SEVEN GATES?”



*In the books you will find the names of kings.
Did the kings haul up the lumps of rock?*

Babylon many times demolished



who raised it up so many times?

In what houses of gold-glittering Lima



Lima

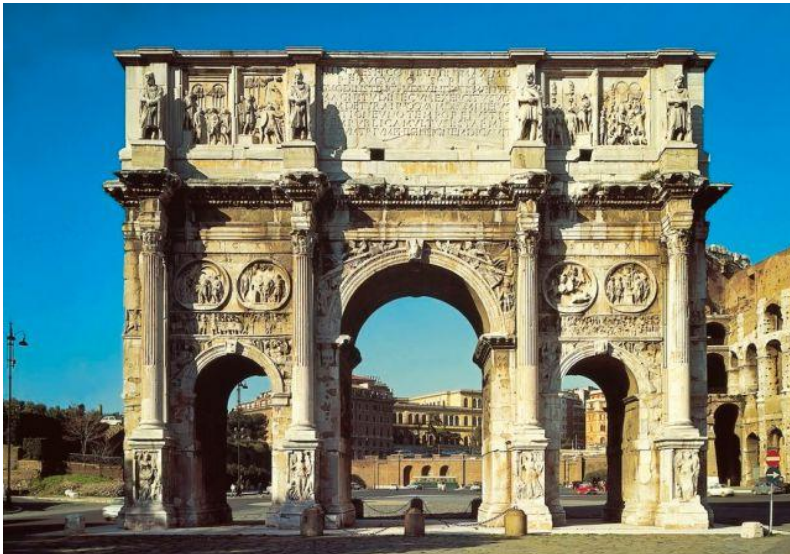
did the builders live?

.... the evening that the Wall of China was finished



Where, did the masons go?

Great Rome is full of triumphal arches...



Who erected them?

THE CITIES MENTIONED BY BRECHT,
LIKE MANY OTHERS,
HAVE NOT DISAPPEARED,
BUT IF, TODAY,
WE COMPARE THEIR LONG HISTORY,
WHICH IS A MIX OF
BEAUTY AND MISERY,
WE MUST CONCLUDE THAT
THEY HAVE BECOME ENORMOUS
AND VARIOUSLY SHATTERED,
IN A VERY SHORT TIME

mine is a brief lecture from the
beginning of urban history,
and not a short narration of
those **magniloquent architectures,**
described in the history books, that
for a long time remained in "**blessed solitude**",
while the rest of the city has expanded
its surroundings, as long as the breaking
of "many" walls has given back
a real long story, full of contradictions
but also made of many beauties

INITIALLY
I WANT TO MENTION,
AS PARADIGMS,
THE URBAN DEGENERATION,
OF **3** HISTORICAL CITIES,
WHICH PARTICULARLY I LOVE,
RICH OF CULTURE
AND
MAGNILOQUENT ARCHITECTURES

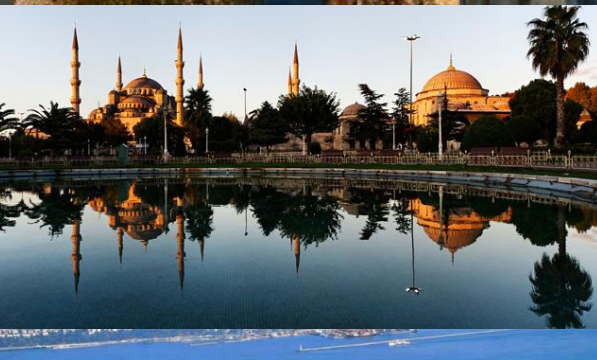
athens



rome



istanbul



THE GRANDILOQUENT PAST !

from those places we dont see where are lodged
the social needs of most of the inhabitants

NOW NOT EVEN
SINGLE EVENTS OF BEAUTIFUL ARCHITECTURE
COULD BE SUFFICIENT
TO LIGHT UP THESE CITIES

athens



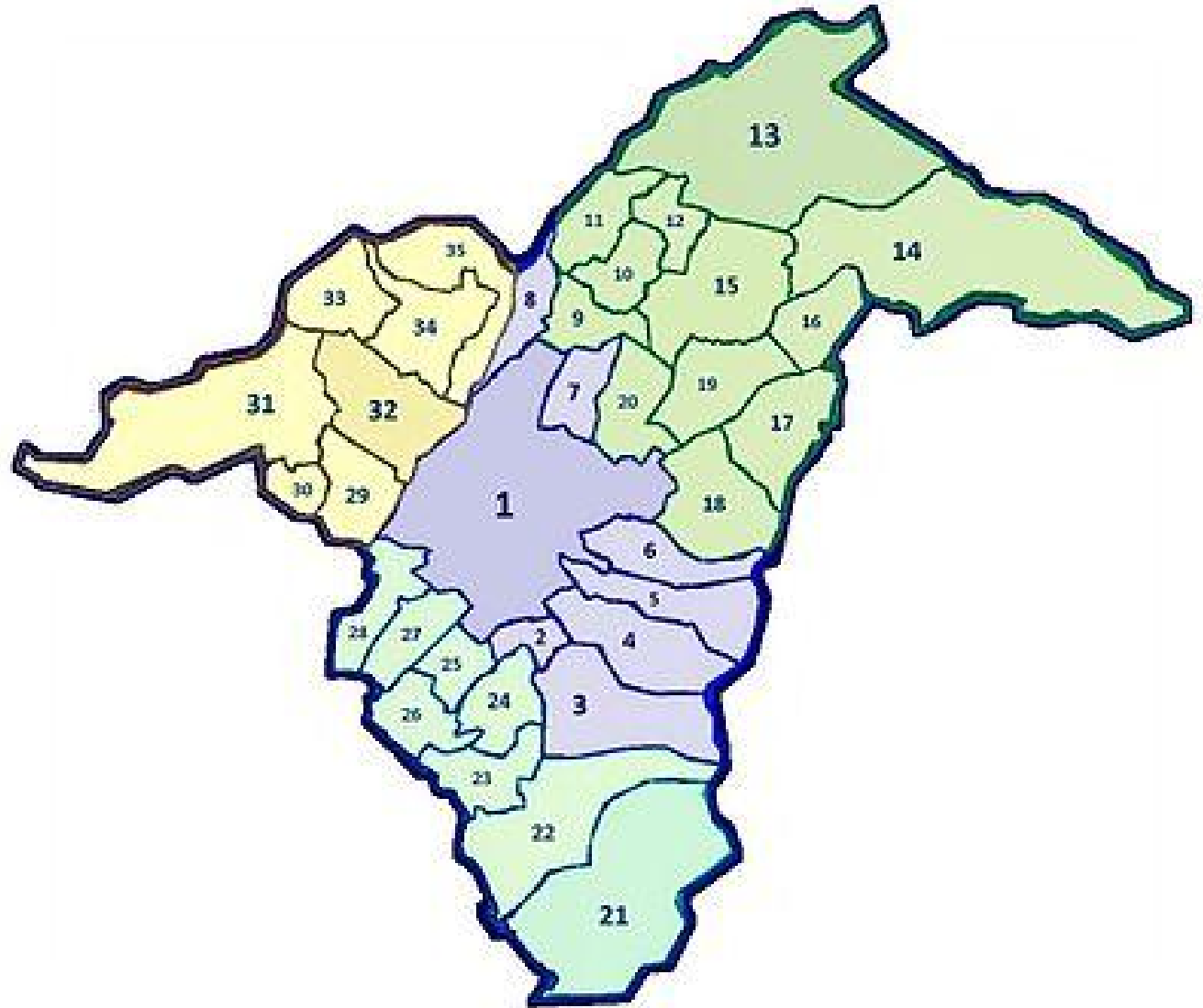
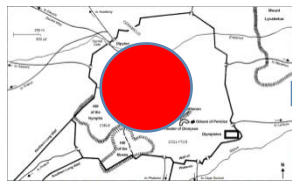
rome



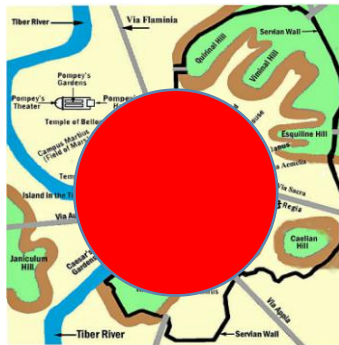
istanbul



ATHENS GROWTH: FROM THE PAST TO THE PRESENT



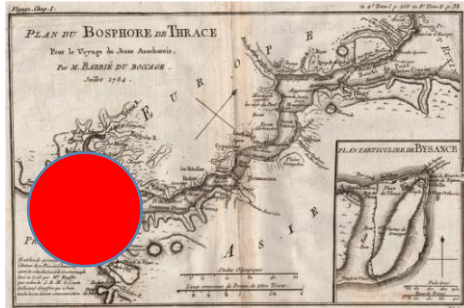
ROME'S GROWTH: FROM THE PAST TO THE PRESENT



Rome - 1st Century BC



ISTANBUL'S GROWTH: FROM THE PAST TO THE PRESENT



OBVIOUSLY,
IN EVERY NEW RICH OR POOR COUNTRY,
SO DEEP CHANGES HAVE BEEN GENERATED
WHICH COULD CAUSE SERIOUS INJURY
TO THE REGENERATION
OF A DIFFERENT URBAN SUSTAINABILITY
FROM EVERY POINT OF VIEW

“OTHERWHERE” IN THE WORLD,
WITHOUT DISTINCTIONS
OF STORIES AND GEOGRAPHY,
THE CONTINUOUS URBAN DECADENCE
HAS DEFINITELY TRANSFORMED
ANY SMALL OR LARGE CITY,
IN A STRESSED **SUBURBCITY**
NO MATTER IF, AT BEGINNING,
WAS BEAUTIFUL OR UGLY

ON THIS WAY WE CAN'T QUALIFY ANY MORE
"CITY" WHAT IS «DEGENERATED» AS



SUBURBCITY

*OUR CITY IS WITHOUT
CENTER OR ESSENCE,
ITS SUBURBS ARE INTRUSIVE
AND SO UNCERTAIN,
THAT THE OLD CITY
ALONG WITH THAT
OF THE LAST CENTURY
IS BECOMING ALL SUBURBS!*

IN MEMORY OF PENTHESILEA
by ITALO CALVINO

“OTHERWHERE'S *SUBURBCITY*”

IS BROKEN

TODAY, MORE THAN THE PAST,

BECAUSE IS FRAYED

INTO MULTIPLES AND DISPERSED SETTLEMENTS

DUE TO:

- ✓ **THE FRAGMENTATION PRODUCED
BY ENDLESS URBAN DEVELOPMENT**
- ✓ **THE CURSED AND MONOFUNCTIONAL ZONING**
- ✓ **THE LACK OF CONTROL AND MAINTENANCE
OF PUBLIC SPACES AND INFRASTRUCTURES**

THIS WAY ***“URBAN LIFE”*** IS
SICK, SAD, UGLY, UNSAFE
EVERYWHERE,
WITH FEW VARIABLES,
THE RESULT
IS ALMOST ALWAYS
**“HOMOGENEITY AT THE
DOWN”**

THE **SUBURBCITY**
MANY TIMES
IS THE RESULT OF **TANGLES**,
IN WHICH SOME **POLITICS**,
OFTEN **COLLUDED**,
HAVE ALLOWED **BENEFITS**
TO **LAND OWNERSHIP**,
TO **AGGRESSIVE BUILDERS**
AND NOW, MORE THAN EVER,
TO GLOBAL **TRADE COMPANIES**
THAT **THEY DON'T CARE**
ABOUT **CITY'S EXISTENCE AT ALL**

KUALA LUMPUR



SHANGHAI



TWIN PARTS: ETHICS AND AESTHETICS!



SAO PAULO & KINSHASA



**SKYSCRAPERS & FAVELAS
SIDE BY SIDE**

URBAN MOBILITY



BETWEEN NEEDS AND CONFLICTS

UNSUSTAINABLE AND IRRESPONSABLE
MOBILITY SCENE IS THE SCENARIO OF
SUBURBCITY



“We come here every morning to work,” someone answers, while others say, “We come back here at night to sleep.”

TODAY, MORE THAN IN THE PAST,
THE URBAN SPRAWL AND CONSEQUENTLY
ITS NECESSARY MOBILITY SYSTEM REPRESENT
THE MAJORITY OF:

- SOIL CONSUMPTION
- WASTE OF ENERGY AND NON-RENEWABLE
RESOURCES

THAT IN THE SETS OF THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT
THEY HAVE CONTRIBUTED
TO THE UNSUSTAINABLE URBAN EXPLOSION

“SUBURBCITY” is growing continuously
but always detached from the rest
of the “pre-existing” (even close) old or new city.

- modern schools and new hospitals are confined in occasional urban vacuums while existing other public buildings have become obsolete, even hazardous, therefore unsuitable
- the old urban markets, were replaced by frantic shopping centers, outside old and new walls of city, acclaimed only by fools and idiots that still have not understand that the “malls” were already exceeded by

alibaba, amazon, ebay and so on

THE FIRST SAD RESULT HAS BEEN
THE **“DESERTIFICATION AND/OR TOURISTIFICATION”**
OF THE HISTORICAL CENTER



WHOSE
COMMERCIAL DESERTIFICATION
HAVE CONTRIBUTED
THE SHOPPING MALLS



THAT WILL BE SOON OVERCOME BY **E-COMMERCE**



AMAZON / E-MARCO POLO / ALIBABA / EBAY



THE CRISIS OF THE SUBURCITY
is therefore **WORLDWIDE**

.... because
consist primarily of a tendency
towards
the homogenization of lifestyles
and an engineering and colonization
of daily life.

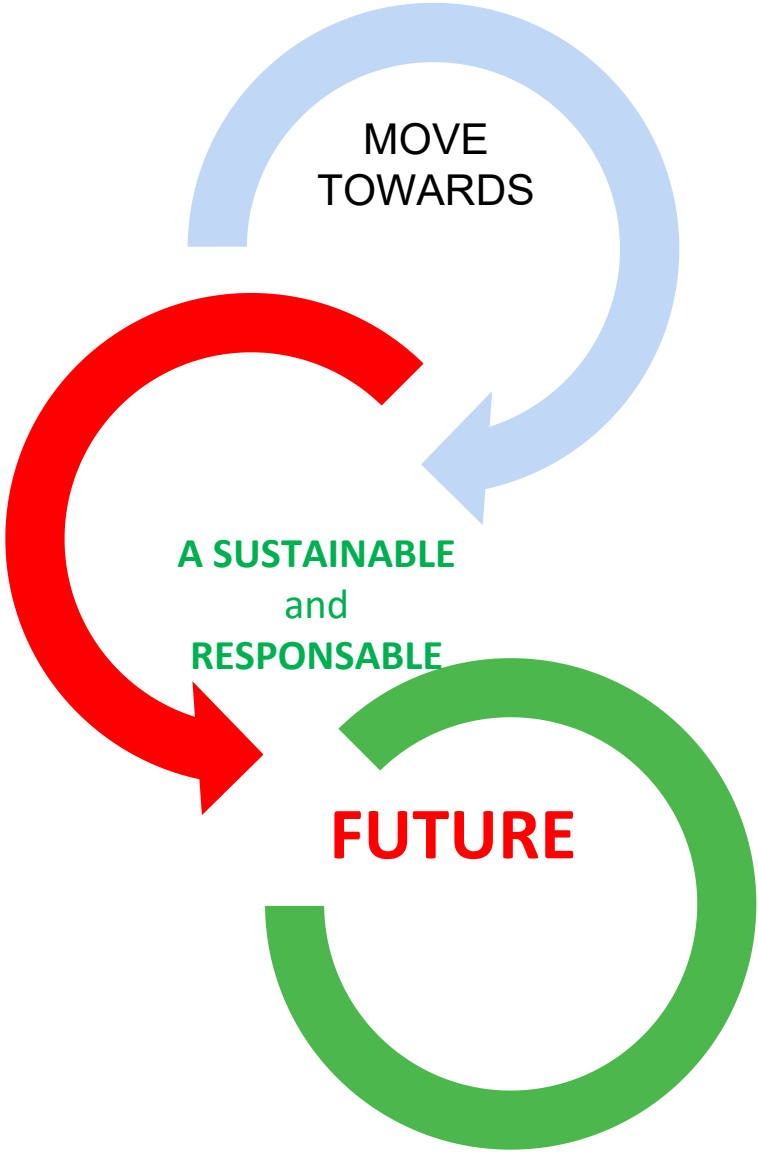
(The right to the city - *Henri Levebvre*)

However

we cannot remain motionless but,
as active and involved citizens,
we must truly promote
an inversion of urban development:

- to **sew** existing fractures,
- to **stop desertification** of the old city,

I mean,
reconnecting the city,
as if were really one,
the historical part and
the immense one urban dispersion



WHERE
THE **QUALITY** OF SOCIAL LIFE
WILL BE
A NON-NEGOTIABLE COMPONENT
ALTHOUGH THE QUALITY,
“SIMPLY DECLARED BY LAWS”,
IS NOT ENOUGH

FROM OUR SIDE, AS ARCHITECTS,
WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO IMPROVE
OUR PROJECTS, ENCOURAGED
BY THE ATTITUDE OF TAKING
THE FINAL DECISIONS ALL TOGETHER,
CITIZENS AND INHABITANTS,
IN RELATION WITH EVERY HISTORICAL PERIOD
AND TO THE EXCLUSIVE
ENVIRONMENTAL FEATURES OF ANY
“OTHERWHERE”, BECAUSE

THE QUALITY OF THE NEW "STRATEGIES"
IS CRUCIAL IN EVERY PHASE
OF URBAN GOVERNANCE, I MEAN,
IT IS ESSENTIAL TO REFER TO
THE ORGANIC REUNIFICATION BETWEEN
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
OF "OTHERWHERE"
AND THE METABOLIC SOCIETY
THAT LIVES IN IT AT SAME TIME

THUS THE QUALITY OF ARCHITECTURE

- IMPROVES THE IMAGE OF LIFE AND THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CITIZENS AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL LANDSCAPE, BOTH URBAN AND RURAL,
- CONTRIBUTES, EFFECTIVELY, TO THE SOCIAL COHESION,
- CREATES VARIOUS TYPES OF WORKS,
- PROMOTES CULTURAL TOURISM AND LEISURE,

ON THIS WAY,
THE EXTENDED SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

WE NEED VIRTUOUS ACTIONS THAT ARE THE
ETHICAL ROUTES TO IMPROVE THE FRAMEWORK
OF URBAN LIFE

- TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT
- TO CHANGE POSITIVELY THE RELATIONSHIP
BETWEEN DIFFERENT PARTS OF THE
SUBURBCITY
- TO REGENERATE A NEW POLYCENTRIC CITY,
REALLY METABOLIC, ALL OVER ITS FUTURE
- TO RECONNECT THE HISTORICAL AND THE
CULTURAL HERITAGE, ALSO THE PAST ONE
THAT REMEMBER US DRAMATIC STORIES

WE MUST ACT NOW TO
FERTILIZE THE CITY FOR A NEW LIFE,
AVOIDING TO CONFINE
SMART AND SUSTAINABLE
AMONG THE ABUSED SLOGANS,
THEN REGENERATE ITS SPATIALITY
WITHOUT FEAR,
RATHER THAN SEWED UP
THROUGH SPORADIC REUNIFICATIONS,
GOING, ON THIS WAY, EVEN OVER
THE ACTIONS OF FERTILE REDEVELOPMENT

THIS WAY THE PRINCIPLE
OF URBAN “PALINGENESIS”
WILL HAVE TO START
FROM THE **SPATIALIZATION OF THE OBJECTIVES**
AND THE RESULT MUST LEAD
TO A **VARIETY OF DENSIFICATION,**
I MEAN TO A
NEW “**POLYCENTRIC CITY**”
MADE OF “**URBAN VILLAGES**” BASED ON:

- **FUNCTIONAL MIXING**
 - **VITALITY**
- **DENSITY / INTENSITY**
- **IDENTITY/ MEMORY**

WE MUST ACT NOW
FOR
THE POSITIVE HYBRIDIZATION
OF URBAN FUNCTIONS,
THAT SHOULD BE EXPANDED
WITHOUT
WASTE AND OVERUSE OF THE LAND,
BUT ONLY
THE MINIMUM REQUIRED
FOR THE QUALITY
OF THE CHANGING NEEDS
OF THE GLOCAL SOCIETY,
THAT CONSTANTLY WILL BECOME
“OTHER”, THEN UNIQUE

WE SHOULD OPERATE ALL TOGETHER
TO CLAIM **THE RIGH TH TO OUR CITY**

AS EDUCATIONAL

THAT PROMOTES PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION,
WHICH RECOGNIZES
THE CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES,
THAT, AT THE SAME TIME,
COULD BE ABLE TO GENERATE

A CONSTANT DIALOGUE

BETWEEN THE PARTIES THAT MAKE UP
THE PHYSICAL AND SOCIAL SPACES

WE SHOULD BE AWARE
THAT IN THE FUTURE OUR CITIES
WILL CONTINUE TO ADAPT
THEIR OWN METABOLISM,
WHILE
THE “URBAN-ARCHITECTURAL” MATTERS
WILL BE INTIMALLY CONNECTED TO THE
SOCIAL AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENTS
OF EVERY “OTHERWHERE'S” TIME

THUS
THE CONTINUOUSLY REGENERATED CITY,
TO WHICH, UNTIL NOW,
HAS BEEN DENIED
THE RIGHT TO THE FERTILITY,
WILL BE SOCIALLY
HEALTHIER, USEFUL AND GOOD,
THEREFORE BEAUTIFUL
FINALLY HAPPY!



*Two days ago I went to Eleusis
hoping to know much more
about the misteries.
I couldn't met the hierophant.
I would have liked to ask
if and how the desperation of Demeter
(the Earth Godness)
should reach the final victory over
the unbearable arrogance of
Hades (God of Underworld)
who has abducted Kore
(daugther of green growing) .
I will confess that I will be willing to do
anything to help Demeter in the
triumph of maternal love.*



**therefore
the colored flowers
will cover every lawn
and
the trees will grow tall
in the sky,
so the earth and the city
will be
more fertile
and beautiful**

THANKS FOR YOUR ATTENTION

ANTONIO R. RIVERSO

international academy of architecture professor

UIA past vice president