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## »Ground zero« – visions instead of ruins

### 1. World Trade Centre in New York – architecture of excess

Minuro Yamasaki, the court architect of the Saudi royal family, whose main construction firm is – ironically – the family firm Bin Laden, completed the building of the twin towers in the World Trade Centre (WTC) in 1972<sup>1</sup>. With its streamlined composition, symbolism and technology it became a controversial landmark in the New York skyline, a sign in the landscape of Manhattan's financial district and symbol of America's booming economic and political power. Already in 1974 the twin towers lost their primacy of tallest building in the World to the Sears Tower in Chicago, but the WTC was still seen as a technological miracle: when the foundations were dug, the material was used to create a new fill-in, presently known as the Battery Park City. 200.000 tons of steel were built in, 43.600 glass panels with automatic cleaning were fitted, ten main and many more subsidiary TV and FM antennas were erected, 239 elevators and 71 escalators provided. The twins were also seen as the largest refrigerator in the USA, the air-conditioning unit had a cooling capacity of 60.000 tons. Leslie E. Robertson<sup>2</sup> the towers engineer was the first to use prefabricated panel walls and connecting columns for bracing, both enabling an open layout in the interior.

### 2. Resolving the collective trauma

Destruction of the symbol of Western consumerist civilisation was a painful experience not only for the inhabitants of New York. Instability and change, promoted by architects as the essential conditions of modern society and architecture, gained a different significance as basic requirements of urban living.

Destruction of architectural landmarks of course is not a new phenomenon, it was witnessed in all eras and cultures. Throughout history the fundamental movers constantly shift between building and destruction – many cities were renewed after being destroyed. There are many examples – we still remember Sarajevo after the recent war, Ljubljana after the earthquake, and Moscow after Napoleon, Boston and Chicago after the great fires or London after Hitler. Traumatic experiences that are a part of the collective memory are woven into the fabric of European cities. After the two world wars (when conflicts ended) Europe renewed its cities, but USA is actually still in a conflict and is trying to integrate conditions of negative emotions of its people, such as fear, grief or uncertainty, into the built environment.

Historical circumstances in which conflicts have become the condition of urban living have always triggered new definitions of living, even utopian urbanism; today American planners are reconsidering whether the increasingly prevailing trend of »fortified architecture« offers satisfactory (or at

least psychological) security despite increased solidity of buildings. Urbanism was in fact originally a discipline of military specialists (we can recollect Haussmann's renewal of Paris), which raises the question, to what extents can the built environment and urban rehabilitation organise life in a time of chaos.

Now the ruins of the megastructure have been cleared and despite local disputes the authorities in New York are searching for adequate solutions to fill the spatial and emotional void on the site of the former World Trade Centre.

The former mayor of New York Rudolph Giuliani stated that the »Ground Zero« site shouldn't be seen as another commercial opportunity, but as a possibility for creating monumental beauty, the place of collective memory, since appropriate approaches can find places for building economically viable programmes anywhere in the city.

Leon van Schaik, an architectural critic, stressed that monumental urban elements, such as the twin towers, are sublime reminders. The new project should therefore delve into the collective memory and not attempt to reproduce the former one. One of the key issues is addressed to the type of spatial configuration that the architect has to establish in the new mental spatial framework.

Surprisingly many inhabitants of New York are trying to deny the traumatic experience by renewing the WTC towers in their original form. Such response from the lay public reminds us of the conditions in Poland after the Second World War, where they admirably restored urban places according to their state in the 16th century, thus proving that German terror didn't break their cultural identity.

### 3. Visions for developing the Ground Zero site

Today architecture of cities is understood as a process of creating a fluid environment influenced by technology and cultural changes in which the concept of urban living is being redefined. In this spirit and within the framework of the exhibition *Building in the Aftermath: A New World Trade Centre: Design Proposals*<sup>3</sup>, led by Roberta Ivy, the editor of the magazine *Architectural Record*, a conference was organised concerning the rehabilitation of the WTC site and new concepts for reaching urban living for the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

In the panel discussions, organised by the University of Columbia (Columbia GSAPP), the significance of tall buildings in the city was scrutinised, as well as urban implications of the demolition of the WTC towers on infrastructure, ecology and financial consequences. Architects were invited to participate, including Bernard Tschumi, Liz Diller, Saskia Sassen, Robert A. M. Stern and others.

A presentation of architectural visions titled *Re-imagining Ground Zero* was organised in the National Building Museum. It was moved there after a resounding exhibition in the Manhattan Max Protetch Gallery<sup>4</sup>. The exceptional social, political, economic and symbolic moment of the site was brought to the forefront, which architects should utilise in their rapport with the public to prepare proposals for redesigning this very sensitive site in Lower East Manhattan.



The custodians, collectors and gallery operators at the Max Protetch Gallery saw the tragic circumstance as an opportunity to rehabilitate central New York and to erect a monumental architectural masterpiece. Fifty-eight projects show different approaches – from supplementing the twin towers with mixed (land) use, to monumental solutions, all of which are simultaneously responses to events from September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 and a cross-section of the state of contemporary architectural reflection. Aaron Betsky and the magazines *Architectural Record* and *Architecture* jointly prepared the exhibition.

Architectural celebrities, as well as new names from the architectural scene, were invited to the competition for the new WTC, amongst other solutions were presented by Winka Dubbeldam, Greg Lynn, NOX, Hans Hollein, Coop Himmelblau, Steven Holl, Zaha Hadid, Tom Kovac (the only invited Australian and Slovenian architect), Frei Otto and Kas Oosterhuis.

How did architects respond to this schizophrenic situation, where they hesitated between shock and opportunity for new creativity? Their presentations differed both in approach and visual manifestation; amongst the exhibits were drawings, photographs, models, CAD models and interactive products. The presented proposals for rehabilitating Lower East Manhattan redefine the site by emphasising office space and housing functions, transport and establishment of a landmark in the urban tissue. The emotionally difficult site was exceptionally well addressed by interactive and dynamic proposals by Dutch architects: Studio NOX offered a new type of urbanism instead of new skyscrapers with elevators, Oosterhuis offered a cyclical reconfiguration of the buildings content and character, while Winka Dubbeldam presented a flexible urban quarter adapted to migration patterns and social variables.

Although the exhibition was widely acclaimed as a success, for some it was a disappointment: exhibitionism by authors was mentioned, as well as lack of sensitivity for the urban environment and needs of the local population. Some critics even stated that it was a missed opportunity because architects misused the exhibition for their own promotion.

The architectural critic Deyan Sudjic correctly judged that the future of the site wouldn't be created by invited architects, but above all by planners, insurance agents and local politicians.

#### 4. How to continue?

On the Ground Zero site itself the top priority are clearing and repairing the transport systems and road network. The first joint step is the so-called »transit« construction, which will provide housing and retail functions, while the Lower Manhattan Development Corporation (LMDC) has proposed the following development:

- Memorial building with a museum
- Reconstruction of roads eliminated 35 years ago
- Digging in part of the West Side highway
- Beginning of construction of the new building in 2004

These are complex questions of rehabilitation that also provide solutions to physical problems caused by the former WTC buildings. Transport and infrastructure are most impor-

tant, which will condition all future building. Amongst other, the site should become accessible for pedestrians.

A survey was conducted to research public opinion, which was complemented by many proposals submitted by the lay public as well. Results of the survey<sup>5</sup> showed that the local population complained about the bureaucratisation of the rehabilitation while most wanted the twin towers reconstructed or an even more monumental building constructed. The local authority set the deadline for six different proposals on July 1<sup>st</sup>, while the final decision will be prepared by December 1<sup>st</sup> by the architectural office Beyer Blinder Belle Architects & Planners LLP.

The first architectural intervention was the erection of the viewing platform, designed by Liz Diller, who has already stated here doubts whether the site was justified; viewing the Ground zero site has become a massive event.

Amongst the proposals supplementary buildings were most common, as well as reconstruction of the twin towers – the former symbol *par excellence* and landmark in the New York skyline, but also development in the human scale (such as the Rockefeller Centre for example).

Development in the wounded urban tissue will supersede the symbolic significance of Lower Manhattan; probably it will also mark the beginning of a new architectural trend. Planners are aware of the need for creating more people friendly environments, less obsessed with form, which could attract potential residents and investors, thus increasing the economic success of the centre.

The Congress for the new urbanism supports compact solutions integrating pedestrians and merging the monument into the urban tissue; medium sized memorial buildings with a network of retail outlets should create a meditative atmosphere and bring vitality to the streets. An open plaza, positioned on the former footprint of the towers, should replace the square, defined by edges. Jonathan Rose (*Jonathan Rose & Associates*), a member of this institution, reflected with some nostalgia about repairing the »missed opportunity« from the sixties: When Minoru Yamasaki designed the buildings, he envisioned them as an object – two modernist sculptures rising from the level of the plaza. Rose with his neotraditionalist proposal tries to advocate the desire of people to establish sense of place and to deny the importance of modernist approaches in designing public urban spaces in cities.

Many architects and planners from New York (especially in debates at the *Harvard Graduate School of Design* and *MIT- Department of Urban Studies and Planning*) warned that when endangered, the inhabitants of large cities prefer to escape to so called suburban savannas, leading to processes of dispersal; under such circumstances creating a new landmark in the urban tissue is less appropriate. New York is already experiencing the process; it's centre is being vacated and the psychologically and physically less exposed suburban areas are being populated. The question nevertheless remains, whether the trend will only temporarily affect urban transport, way of life and increased security or leave permanent consequences on urban form.

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## Notes

- 1 The architects of the WTC site 1, 2, 4, 5 and 6: Minoru Yamasaki & Associates; Emery Roth & Sons, P.C.
- 2 Leslie E. Robertson Associates, RLLP (LERA)
- 3 A New World Trade Centre: Design Proposals, opening 6.4.2002 in the National Building Museum
- 4 A new »World Trade Centre«, New York, opening 17.1.2002 in the Max Protetch Gallery
- 5 Rayman, G. and Bowles, P.: Public Airs Ideas At WTC, survey 24.5.2002

## Illustrations

**Figure 1:** World Trade Centre Plaza before September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001

**Figure 2:** The World Trade Centre Plaza amidst clearing

**Figure 3:** Proposal for the new WTC: Asymptote (Hani Rashid); Max Protetch Gallery, 2002

**Figure 4:** Proposal for the new WTC: NOX; Max Protetch Gallery, 2002

**Figure 5:** Proposal for the new WTC: Tom Kovac; Max Protetch Gallery, 2002

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Matej NIKŠIČ

## The new tram in Ljubljana – excuse me, does it go to Maribor?

### 1. Introduction

The title of the article attempts to present the conceptual framework of the proposed future organisation of public transport in Ljubljana, which is based on integration of different transport modes and connections to the wider region. Changes during voyages to distant sites will be necessary even in the new system, they will however be much simpler and faster at so called transfer points. Right at the start I have to point out the real possibility for (re)designing the capital city's image, enabled by construction of the new tram system in Ljubljana (NTSL).

With increasing vehicular traffic ideas about the NTSL are again becoming a sensible solution, which should relieve the city of flows of metal canisters and exhaust fumes, reconstitute its status of a pleasant living environment and preserve its competitive advantages even in the future. Very few people remember the trams first voyage along Ljubljana's streets from 1901, but it still remains imbedded in the memory of many citizens: the last tram travelled through the city in 1958 before being replaced by the trolley-bus. Why and how this happened can be found in historical sources, we are more interested in future developments and chances.

I will first speculate on targets of present trends. Take a seat and listen carefully: data are frightening! Materialisation of the expected 60 percent increase in vehicular traffic by motorcars and 173 percent increase of freight traffic imply extensive widening of road profiles and 160 percent increase of fuel consumption with corresponding increase in exhausts. With extended voyage times, traffic jams, unbearable air quality and subjecting expansive areas of public space for traffic needs will decisively affect the quality of life and diminish possibilities for economic development thus inherently redirect functions elsewhere. »Ljubljana is sick« the refrain from a song by the punk band Pankrti from the eighties could be seen as the most dire possibility.

Such pessimistic development of events however isn't the only possible one. The public accepted with sympathy ideas about organising new public transport by transferring people from individual motorcars to public transport were. Popularisation of the new transport mode in the city and region amongst users is of key importance for solving the anticipated issues. The project was initiated as a joint venture between the Municipality of Ljubljana and the Slovenian Railways, which is, in view of the project's complexity, the basic condition for its success. Non-participation by neighbouring municipalities and the State is hopefully, only a feature of the early stages of the project.

Popularisation of the existing public transport system under present conditions surely will not suffice. To expect more users of public transport modes under present conditions when city buses together with motorcars are at a standstill in traffic jams, whereby the voyage speed is constantly decreasing, is an illusion. Solutions offering modernised transport systems integrated into the wider hinterland appear very logical. Let's take a look at systems, which are suitable and/or possible.

### 2. Proposals

#### *Optimisation of the present system and possible upgrading with the tram system*

The development of new systems demands immense investment into infrastructure, therefore when searching for a solution the main question is, whether renewal and upgrading the existing bus and railway traffic systems to meet increasing demands wouldn't be a more rationally and economically justifiable solution. Serious thoughts have to be put into the issue even because of the gradual shift to any new system. We can assume that the present organisation of public transport in Ljubljana is common knowledge. The weaknesses of its organisation are several: traffic carried by buses and the railway are poorly connected, regional and suburban trains don't have a synchronised schedule, urban buses share roads with other traffic and very seldom have a dedicated lane, uniform or common tickets for different public transport modes don't exist. Lack of coordination between providers of services is more than evident.

Research showed that in view of the settlement pattern and density improvements are possible mainly by increasing the number of stops along the existing railway tracks, improving access to them on the local level (e.g. with feeder buses to distant areas with important functions and significant settlement density), diminishing time needed for voyages, technical adaptations to tracks and signalisation, improving the