2 History

History, Stephen said, is a nightmare from which I am trying to awake.

(James Joyce)

History becomes the myth of language.

(Michel de Certeau)

The distinction between past, present and future is only an illusion, however persistent.

(Albert Einstein)

Introduction: history, truth and time

At the outset, I draw the reader's attention to the thirty historical texts that I set out in FOC2: 11, which are a fair representation of the mainstream urban designer's way of 'seeing' history. Each forms part of standard reference material in most university programmes, and they will be used as the focus for an examination and critique of heterologies in urban design. First, however, we must retreat much further back, to the nature of history itself – what is it, how do we interpret it, and how do we write it?

In examining the methods that are used to understand the past, we cannot get past the fundamentals of time, progress and writing. As we shall see, past, present and future are relatively recent concepts, at least in the values attached to them. The same applies to the idea of progress – what is our destination and why? Does the very idea hinder our development in the present? If history is moving forward, where is it going? In the same vein, what is history if in fact it goes nowhere? Can history *come to an end*, as some scholars have suggested? Nor are emergent epistemologies necessarily outcomes of any specific theory or theories. In other words, and depending on the subject matter, it may be possible to demonstrate a theory many different ways, all of which are valid. Epistemology may represent the beginning of the process, with theory as the destination rather than the origin. This is more likely to be true in the social sciences than in the natural sciences, but it is in the latter that urban design is more firmly rooted. If we take the history of urban form as an example, there are few common epistemologies, despite the fact that history is usually conceived chronologically. For most historians, seeking to escape from the concept of time as an absolutely linear process to one of relativity, the former appears to be the most difficult idea to relinquish.

Directly connected to this are the methods historians have used to analyse history in general, the heterologies used in diverse forms of interpretation. Clearly, what constitutes history is intimately bound up with the methods embedded in the analytical process. In many ways, they define what history is. History becomes the subject of epistemology rather than an enduring chronological sequence, and if we examine much recent material on historical research, the idea of theory does not appear to preoccupy most scholars. For example, in a recent text, *What is History Now?*, there is no mention of the word *theory* in the index, and there are no headings in the text (Cannadine 2002). Semiotic preference is given to perspectives, positions, ways of knowing, textual analysis etc., eschewing the term theory on the suspicion that it has been distorted by its relationship to the grand narratives of modernism. In consequence, the overwhelming orientation of current research is towards the methods through which history is revealed – narratives great or small, deconstruction, individual voices, disciplinary focus and other means.

The position that history may be conceived as an abstract idea possessing its own inherent logic and values was abandoned many years ago. Consequently, any commitment to the proposition that history is merely the sum of its own chronological events, driven by accurate records and perfect memory, is virtually extinct. Events did not happen as the logical outcome of some self-perpetuating and enduring truth. Having accepted this idea, it becomes clear that history cannot be understood, in the sense that there is never any single jumbo history waiting to be accommodated by those who attempt to explain or interpret time. Instead, we must ask how the past was experienced by a myriad of actors, interpreters and enforcers, where any absolute concept of *facts* and *truth* must first be abandoned in order for valid interpretations to emerge:

> For these reasons, the past we study as historians is not the past 'as it really was'. Rather it is what it felt like to be in it. The growing bibliography of the history of passions, sentiments, sensibilities, anxieties and the like, is a measurable recognition of this.
>
> (Fernandez-Armesto 2002: 155)

So today, history emerges from a veritable universe of particles, where any objective or verifiable 'truth' lies in whatever connectivity or similarity may be made among or between them.

As an outcome of such relativity, it is transparent that history can only be seen or experienced through a lens of some kind, as it has no absolute existence in geography, time, science or religion. The grand narratives of the past, while they are still plundered for 'facts', are no longer recognised as having any kind of common currency in interpretation. To name but three of the greatest historians, Darwin saw the evolution of the species in terms of his theory of natural selection. While it retains its extraordinary explanatory power for the theory of evolution, it has nothing to say about subjectivity. Marx analysed the production of society in terms of historical materialism. While his major concerns with exploitation, social class, imperialism, ideology and other concepts remain part of the toolkit of many scholars, his ideas did not encompass the realm of human experience upon which historical interpretation now depends so heavily. Freud saw the development of the species in terms of the structure of the human mind and its origins in the psychology of existential experiences and collective consciousness – its symbolic formations, archetypes, psychology and discontents. Nonetheless, the differences between these world-views pale into insignificance when compared with contemporary historical epistemologies encompassing an immense range of structure, function and subjectivity, from individuals and their world-views, to the complexity of a globalising world.

History and progress

Clearly, history and what we call progress are intimately tied together. While modernity was the cultural form of industrialism, postmodernity is the cultural form of post-industrial societies. Second, while these ideas are teleological, implying linear, necessary development to be measured in terms of gross development product (GDP), globalisation also demands that we retrack our ideas of history and progress, which may or may not coincide with certain contemporary visions of where history might lead. For example, Christianity views history as a linear, finite process that begins with a week of creative activity and ends with the second coming (Parousia) sometime in the future. The Enlightenment considered that history was open-ended, but with the logical outcome of a perfect society at some future time. Neither is too different from Marx's vision of a perfect socialist state in communism, but only after the ravages of capitalism had been tamed by popular revolt and a wholesale transformation of the relations of production. Significantly, modernity was the first period to conceive of itself, and therefore of other historical periods, as epochs, in a futile attempt to grapple with destiny. Modernity was both the first, and also the last, epoch.

With the rise of globalisation and postmodernity came a spate of books dealing with our own historical extinction – Gibson-Graham's *The End of Capitalism* (1996), Francis Fukuyama's *The End of History* (2006), Nigel Harris's *The End of the Third World* (1990), Jeremy Rifkind's *The End of Work* (1995) and others. Why was this case? Michel Foucault, who died in 1984, could be described as the first historian of discontinuity. He argued that, as our concept of 'the human' is historically conditioned within various epistemes, or historical discourses, the concept of a finite 'human being' did not exist (Schottler 1989). Neither did any history that presupposed it, which prophetically included all interpretations of history to date. This opened up the idea of *post-history* as the appropriate form of interpretation for a globalised world. Jean Baudrillard contends that the period of post-history we now inhabit is one where image and reality are so intertwined that we live in an age of hyperreality. Globalisation transforms us from being the consumers of media to being their products. 'Real life' therefore disappears, and a simulation ensues, as in the metaverse of Neal Stephenson's novel, *Snow Crash* (1992). Owing to the rate of historical change, Baudrillard argues that history simply vanishes, along with any necessary destiny or outcome, in effect denying history as having any epistemological value whatever as, in the vanishing, nothing is left to understand.

What this generates is one enormous (global) paradox. On the one hand, all national economies and institutions define history/progress as the ever-increasing production of commodities measured by GDP. On planet earth, only Bhutan has, as its stated object, gross national happiness (GNH). On the other hand, some philosophers and historians are telling us that we are not going anywhere. For example, in a challenging book, *Straw Dogs* (2002), John Gray states that 'Humans cannot live without illusion. For men and women of today, an irrational faith in progress may be the only antidote to nihilism. Without hope that the future will be better than the past, they could not go on' (Gray 2002: 29). We could also add that governments are similarly placed: without the concept of GDP, they simply could not govern, because their economic strategy in its entirety is founded in this single principle.

Gray argues that the very idea of progress is dependent on two basic ideas. The first is that Western thought teaches us that we are different from other animals that simply react to the circumstances within which they find themselves. In theory, we are supposed to be able to control our destiny, which of course is not possible, but we believe it anyway. Second, this position is due to what we call our 'consciousness', which allows us to speculate that where we are can be replaced by where we might be, or could be, at some other future time. Whether this has any value or not is debatable. He points to the idea that all interpretations of modernity have proved to be fantasies, and that 'death camps are as modern as laser surgery' (Gray 2002: 173). He claims that there is a direct relationship between death by violence, efficiently administered, and our ideas of progress. While knowledge has advanced, ethics have remained static. He suggests that little is valuable for what it *is* but what it *might become*. As a result, we live our lives as simulacra of some unattainable future state. This hypothetical position also coincides with terminal and enduring happiness once everything has been achieved, and the meaning of our lives has been realised. But, as he suggests, 'Searching for meaning in life may be useful therapy, but it has nothing to do with the life of the spirit. Spiritual life is not a search for meaning but a release from it' (Grey 2002: 197).

Writing history

Up until the beginning of the twentieth century, history tended to be defined as political history, where conquest, wars, states, the actions of dictators, generals and the whole gamut of demagogues dominated historical analysis, combining to create a simulacrum. In other words, the adopted form of interpretation was political, ideological and a twisted version of reality, with the field organised round linear concepts of time. As a reaction to this, Marc Bloch and Lucien Lefebvre founded the *Annales d'Histoire Economique et Sociale* in 1928, with its influence still echoing today. Today, the *Annales* School remains as important to the development of history as the Frankfurt School is to social science or the Bauhaus is for architecture and urban design. The *Annales* School began by rejecting positivism (empiricism) and with it the idea that had guided much prior discourse, namely the search for 'the truth'. As such, the school was radical and had wide-ranging objectives. Its focus was on a more comprehensive view of history. As we shall see below, studying history is largely an atheoretical pursuit, and it is enlightening that the dominant historical institution in the twentieth century is usually described in the context of new methodological approaches, in the absence of any encompassing or substantial theory. Until the Second World War, the *Annales* School was still defined in terms of its resistance to prevailing ideologies. Since then, it has emerged as a school of thought in its own right, whose main figures included Emile Durkheim, Ferdinand Braudel and Roland Barthes. After the student uprising in Paris in 1968, *Annales* once again shifted its focus away from the writing of total histories characterised by Braudel's structuralism and his ideas of *la longue durée*. This also included a rejection of quantitative methods for a more qualitative orientation with human subjectivity, psychology, consciousness and culture, as well as Marxian notions of ideology (Braudel's method is reflected in Giovanni Arrighi's *The Long Twentieth Century*, published in 1994). Nonetheless, with the last phase of the *Annales* School, the method/concept of historiography became the dominant method of the writing of history that remains with us today.

As a discipline, historiography shifts the focus from what is being recorded or interpreted to the method of its accomplishment. More accurately, it suggests that the *emballage* brought by the historian to the process of making history must be considered an integral part of the telling of history. Jordanova defines historiography as 'the writing of history and the study of historical writings: more broadly an awareness of different ways of doing history' (2000: 213). Michel de Certeau, on the other hand, observes that, while discourses speak of history, they too are historically situated. Production takes place in the relation established between the two. As he remarks,

> Discourses are not bodies floating 'within' an all encompassing whole that can simply be called history (or even context). They are historical because they are bound to operations that are defined by functions. Thus we cannot understand what they say independently of the practice from which they result.

Elsewhere, he says that, 'historiography uses death in order to articulate a law of the present' (de Certeau 1988: 20, 101).

Overall, history in general does not embrace theory well, and there are relatively few great theorists of history, in contrast to the multitude of disciplines that form it: 'Although (some) historians work closely with theoretical perspectives, this does not tend to take the form of producing theories of history, at least it has not done so in the twentieth century' (Jordanova 2000: 55). Conversely, we could also say, in a Mcluhanesque manner, that *the message is the method* – that the process of actually writing history, of historiography, displaces the need for theoretical intervention to the extent used in other disciplines. So, in principle, any encompassing theories of history become impossible and, arguably, stand in the way of significant comprehension, particularly given a dimension of 4.6 billion years of human evolution. Since there are always a virtually infinite number of interpretations and a similar variety in subject material, generalisation becomes impossible. Even Darwin's contribution, while enormous, only encompasses biology, creating a free-for-all for a myriad other disciplines to flourish with their own special histories. In accommodating difference, a retreat from structuralist forms of explanation was required, now fully recognised for their limitations and deficiencies.

So the rejection of structuralism and the abandonment of the concept of *la longue durée*, the search for authenticity and linear concepts of time, all opened up the floodgates to an infinite combination of disciplinary bases, ideologies, technologies and epistemologies. Their use in contemporary historical analysis is so vast that it can only be touched upon here. At the same time, recourse to the possibility of greater theoretical intervention emerged with the movement towards cross-disciplinary research. For example, papers delivered at the Institute of Historical Research in London, in 2001, were presented as chapters in *What is History Now?* – an updating of the great English historian E.H. Carr's famous 1961 paper, 'What is history?', delivered at Cambridge University in 1961. These papers were grouped by discipline, for example social history, political history, religious history, cultural history, or by dominant focus – gender history, class history, intellectual history and imperial history (e.g., Thompson 1963, Scott 1999). By definition, this excludes history as a discipline *in itself*, as it has no significant meaning unless it is tied into some other form of interpretation, in other words to derived method. Linked to the absence of significant theory, it then becomes an abstraction, defined only through the relation between writing and discourse, between the process of writing history and its object. Highmore deals with the impenetrable problem of the relation between history and historiography when he says, 'there is no direct contact with the past, of course, only commerce with its traces . . . – historiography (history-writing) – leaving the word "history" to signify the unreachable terrain of the past' (Highmore 2006: 23).

In an attempt to simplify some of these problems related to boundaries, various kinds of history have been identified, as well as a mass of criteria through which the discipline attains specific forms. These have been reduced to six main categories (Jordanova 2000). *Period* deals with notions of causality and time.

Under *Methods*, she uses the examples of oral history and demographic history. *Places* address urban history in the sense of geography and scale – regions, countries etc. *Theories* would encompass concepts such as historical materialism, Darwinism and psychology. *Types of human being* may be classified under gender, race, demographics (children, geriatrics etc.) and *institutions*, where she includes public policy, welfare states etc. This, however, is an extremely rough and ready set of groupings that might be better set out as a matrix, where important relations could be established, for example the relation between theories and methods (if any), the relationship between disciplines such as science and art etc., although she does single out sociology, anthropology, culture, philosophy and literature as important contributors to the overall project of writing history. Michel de Certeau deals with this confusion, not by imposing an arbitrary structure that might be compelling under the circumstances, but by pursuing the idea that some frame of reference is necessary that permits contradictions to remain suspended in their relations without the need being felt to resolve them. He states that, 'The mixed function of historiography can be specified by several features that deal first of all with its status in a typology of discourses, and second, with the organisation of its contents' (de Certeau 1988: 92). Later, he goes on to discuss what he calls 'concepts' or historical categories equivalent to the methods of the natural sciences:

> thus 'the period', 'the century' etc., but also 'the mentality,' the social class,' 'the economic conjuncture,' or 'the family,' 'the city,' 'the region,' 'the people,' 'the nation,' 'the civilisation,' or even 'the war,' 'the heresy,' 'the festival,' 'the plague,' 'the book,' etc., not to speak of notions such as 'the ancien régime,' the 'Enlightenment,' etc. These units often convey stereotypical combinations. A predictable montage offers familiar patterns: the life – the work – the doctrine; or its collective equivalent: economic life – social life – intellectual life. 'Levels' are piled up. Concepts are packaged. Every code has its logic.
>
> (de Certeau 1988: 97)

As if this complexity was insufficient, we also have to deal with the passage of time, at its most basic dealing with synchronic studies in time, and diachronic dealing with studies over time. It remains to be determined how 'thick' a synchronic study can be before it becomes diachronic, and how long a diachronic study may be in terms of periodisation (when something supposedly starts and finishes). For example, Jordanova (2000) spends twenty-five pages of her book discussing time purely in terms of periodisation, probably the most basic and functional method of dealing with the concept – taxonomies, calendars, institutional forms, cultural styles etc., even the potential in the idea of metaphor is reduced to purely functional ends, e.g.

> Another way of delineating periods, by themes, also warrants careful reflection. Examples include 'the age of anxiety'; 'the age of equipoise'; 'the

> golden age'; or 'the aristocratic century'. The underlying principle is by now familiar: it is the desire to lend unity to a period, in this case by a combination of description and metaphor.
>
> (Jordanova 2000: 134)

In contrast, instead of viewing history as discrete temporal collectivities (however these are described), de Certeau's *oeuvre* deploys the method of multiple time frames coexisting in the present, what is now referred to as *polychronic* time (Serres and Latour 1995). This is a much more sophisticated approach to time than the insistence by many historians that time only has one dimension, that of periodisation. Highmore uses modernity and post-colonialism as examples to explain de Certeau's approach to time, where he suggests that modernity is not 'past' or 'incomplete', explaining it as 'the dynamic suturing of the past and present' – the omnipresent nature of the past and the permanent accommodation of the present into history. Thus 'modernity is the name for contemporary life fashioned out of shards that are simultaneously striving for the future and looking back, over their shoulder to the past' (Highmore 2006: 82). De Certeau's approach to time is probably better explained in recourse to other media such as film, for example Alain Resnais's *Last Year at Marienbad* (1961), or in literature, W.G. Sebald's *The Rings of Saturn* (1995). But in order to see how far these ideas are grounded (or otherwise) in the history of urban form, we must now turn to a few exemplary discourses that inform it.

History and mainstream urban design

In order to situate the above discussion, I will discuss the taxonomy of thirty historical texts (Table 2.1) first mentioned in *The Form of Cities*, focussing on a few key examples. From this list, one thing is immediately apparent, that the majority use the same method of linear, chronological analysis using a similar periodisation (Ancient, Egyptian, Greek, Roman, and Medieval etc.). But even within the majority view there remains a wide range of possibilities for interpretation e.g. one could adopt a materialist or liberal perspective, choose to focus on domestic or institutional arrangements, or investigate the economic or social base of the civilisations studied. But in the spirit of this text, we are not primarily concerned here with *what* any historian is talking about so much as *how* they are talking about it – the heterologies that underwrite the basis of their thought.

So, as a general principle, this chapter does not ask, for example, 'what was Lewis Mumford talking about in *The City in History*?' or 'which periods did he cover?'. Or again, 'how did his method of investigating history contribute to our understanding?'. What we want to reveal are the answers to questions such as, 'how did he conceive of history, and what methods did he use in doing this?'; 'how did his life experience frame his method?'; 'who did he get his ideas from?'; 'to what extent did he consider chronology to be useful, and why did he use this approach?'; 'what were the building blocks of his methodology?'; or, reflecting

Table 2.1 Thirty classic urban design histories

Geddes, P.	(1915)	*Cities in Evolution*
Childe, G.	(1935)	*Man Makes Himself*
Gibberd, F.	(1953)	*Town Design*
Korn, A.	(1953)	*History Builds the Town*
Tunnard, T.G.	(1953)	*The City of Man*
Hilberseimer, L.	(1955)	*The Nature of Cities*
Mumford, L.	(1961)	*The City in History*
Gutkind, E.A.	(1964)	*The International History of City Development*
Sprieregen, P.	(1965)	*Urban Design*
Reps, J.W.	(1965)	*The Making of Urban America*
Bacon, E.	(1967)	*Design of Cities*
Benevolo, L.	(1967)	*The Origins of Modern Town Planning*
Moholy-Nagy, S.	(1968)	*The Matrix of Man*
Rykwert, J.	(1976)	*The Idea of a Town*
Rowe, C. and Koetter, F.	(1978)	*Collage City*
Morris, A.E.G.	(1979)	*The History of Urban Form*
Benevolo, L.	(1980)	*The History of the City*
Boyer, C.	(1983)	*Dreaming the Rational City*
Roseneau, H.	(1983)	*The Ideal City*
Fogelson, R.E.	(1986)	*Planning the Capitalist City*
Hall, P.	(1988)	*Cities of Tomorrow*
Kostoff, S.	(1991)	*The City Shaped*
Kostoff, S.	(1992)	*The City Assembled*
Benevolo, L.	(1993)	*The European City*
Boyer, M.C.	(1994)	*The City of Collective Memory*
Lang, J.	(1994)	*Urban Design: The American Experience*
Hall, P.	(1998)	*Cities in Civilisation*
Eaton, R.	(2001)	*Ideal Cities*
Gosling, D.	(2003)	*The Evolution of American Urban Design*
Robbins, E. and El Khoury, R.	(2004)	*Shaping the City: Studies in Theory, History and Urban Design*

Source: The author

our theme, 'what was he thinking about when he was thinking about Classical Greek urbanisation?'; or ultimately, 'what was it that guided his thinking in the first place?'. By answering such questions, the process of history presented by Mumford and others becomes contextualised by a multitude of factors that qualify what is being presented as a rational exposition of urban development over the last 10,000 years.

We can ground this idea in a single example. Most urban design students should know that, in 480 BC, in Asia Minor (Turkey) Hippodamus created a plan for Miletus that is universally hailed as a masterpiece in urban form, one of the most perfect urban design plans the world has seen. This plan is usually interpreted from purely formal perspectives – it is famous because of its mastery of urban space and form, its geometric and orthogonal perfection, its adaptation to site conditions, the use of the grid as an organising framework and the use of perspective, serial vision and other devices. But few traverse these technologies to appreciate what he was thinking about when he conceived it, e.g. heterologies derived from classical Greek thought such as mathematics (Fibonacci series), medicine (optics) and philosophy (harmony, balance etc.) that informed his art. Had a similar project been required elsewhere, merely copying the form would be superficial and inadequate, probably even disastrous. We would have had to accommodate the same principles used by the designer and apply them to differing geographies and typologies, possibly to different social and economic circumstances. The resultant design solution might look nothing like Miletus, as we have not copied and reapplied the form; we have copied and reapplied its content, but probably with singularly greater effort. In other words, as urban designers we tend to judge and reinvent products, not the patterns of thought used by the designer as the substance of their creative process. Until we can at least tackle some of the issues connected to this problem, we will not know how we know. We will be unable to connect our learning to practice, because we will only be addressing form and style, without understanding the substance of thought itself.

Beginning then with classic urban design histories, most follow a chronological sequence, for example Childe, Gutkind, Sprieregen, Bacon and Morris. The most influential of these was probably Mumford's *The City in History* (1961), his twenty-third book. The few clear exceptions to this rule are those of Moholy-Nagy, Rowe and Koetter, Fogelson, Boyer, and Tafuri. Peter Hall's book, *Cities of Tomorrow*, gives the impression of a different urban history, but its subject matter remains chronologically ordered, despite the fact that he uses chapter headings such as 'Cities of imagination', 'The city of the dreadful night' etc. So, in order to exploit differences, I will briefly discuss Mumford, Moholy-Nagy, Rowe and Koetter, and Tafuri. In addition, Hall's encyclopaedic works, as well as the focus on memory by Boyer are both essential reading. Childe, Fogelson and Tafuri, while producing very different work, use the method of political economy in analysis, and Tafuri will serve as an example of this method. The central limitation of such a process is obvious – that I will not be able to demonstrate how any particular theorist's views have changed over time (e.g. Tafuri, Mumford). Therefore, I will use each discourse as representative of an epistemology rather than a developmental process.

Prototypes

Lewis Mumford: The City in History *(1961)*

To urban designers, Lewis Mumford is probably the most revered of all historians, and his book, *The City in History*, is the most popular, despite the fact that Benevolo's *The Origins of Modern Town Planning* (1967) runs into seven volumes. Because of his primacy in mainstream theory, I will dwell more on Mumford's epistemology than the others, for the simple reason that it is by far the most complex and interesting. The fact that he himself was illegitimate, was raised by his mother, and never knew his father, might suggest why Mumford's zeal for social justice and democracy could have emerged, and these are enduring themes that run throughout his work. Similarly, even in some of his earliest writing, he also expressed his support for women's rights and the promotion of feminism. One can also speculate that the sheer extent of Mumford's interests in social science, politics, geography, regionalism, culture, ecology and architecture was also due to the fact that he never attained an academic degree, an accomplishment that imparts both constraints on, and opportunities in, intellectual life. So, while his importance to the built environment disciplines is undeniable, his focus and adopted methods do not emerge from an academic training in any of these associated disciplines. Instead, Mumford's methodology was profoundly affected by the Scottish philosopher Patrick Geddes, who influenced his aspiration to establish his own intellectual territory – a regional social science he called *sociography*. He politicised this interest by becoming a founding member of the Regional Planning Association of America (RPAA). Although Mumford is best known as a historian of the city, the term 'city' is only included as part of the title in five of his books. So it is clear that his dominant world-view came from a combination of social science and culture on the one hand, and the possibilities of technology as exemplified in his *Art and Technics* (1952) on the other.

Lucarelli notes that, despite Mumford's commitment to technology, his interests were always tempered by human purposes, reflecting Mumford's question, 'What [does it matter] if industrial society is run more efficiently, if it is run in the same blind alley in which humanity finds itself today?'. He goes on to say that, despite Mumford's commitment to politics,

> Mumford's critique is aesthetic and moral, not political. It is important because he keeps his attention on the self, and on the connection between the self and nature. And it helped him to reintroduce his concern with art and literature as necessary to the imaginative perception of life: an understanding needed for the revival of the inner life.
>
> (Lucarelli 1995: 39)

Aesthetic or otherwise, Mumford's writing is littered with political commentary. Although Mumford was not a Marxist, he definitely adopted his own brand of socialism and had many harsh things to say about the capitalist system. For example, his method of implementing his organicist ethic was to revolutionise capitalism. The power of the state was to be harnessed through a state monopoly over the means of production in the sphere of energy. Among other principles, he believed in:

1. the decentralisation of communities, along with the decentralisation of political power;
2. the use of state monopolies to counteract private-sector greed;
3. a rehumanisation of the labour process to combat the alienation of the working class;
4. defining limits to luxury consumption (limiting desire) and concentrating on satisfying basic human needs.

In studying civilisation over historical time, his epistemology was to interweave an archaeology of substance, based on the institutional frameworks of state power, capital, ideology and culture, and then to elaborate on the human condition that emerged for the mass of the people, along with a moral commentary knitting everything together. His socialism was no doubt promoted through friendships with intellectuals of the left such as Patrick Geddes, Thorsten Veblen, Clarence Stein, Frederic Osborne and others. He also expressed singular admiration for Thoreau (an anarchist) and Peter Kropotkin, whom Mumford tactfully describes as 'a geographer' (1961: 514). More significantly, Kropotkin was Bakunin's successor and was noted for framing the theory of anarchistic communism in Russia. Mumford's analysis in many ways conforms to a somewhat unorthodox form of historical materialism, which nonetheless exhibits an incredible command over the machinations of capitalist ideology and urban development. In *The City in History*, Mumford's method of approach was to a degree highly eclectic, in that it did not commence by assuming a frontal attack on capitalism; rather, it tore it up, piranha-like, over the whole book, through thousands of tiny cuts; for example, in regard to Amsterdam in the seventeenth century:

> At this point, commercial success showed itself for what it was and largely still is: civic destitution. From the standpoint of an expanding capitalist economy, indeed capitalism's prospects of profits which rested on continuous turnover, demanded the continued destruction of old urban structures, for the sake of their profitable replacement at even higher rents.
>
> (Mumford 1961: 444)

One may compare this statement, which preceded David Harvey's comments in *The Urbanisation of Capital*, twenty-five years later:

> Capitalist development therefore has to negotiate a knife-edge path between preserving the exchange values of past capital investments in the built environment, and destroying these investments in order to open up fresh room for accumulation.
>
> (Harvey 1985: 25)

To try and reduce Mumford's lifework to a predominant method is a pointless task, and one could even say this about a single work such as *The City in History*.

On the other hand, it is possible to suggest five component parts of his analysis, as well as three mechanisms that he uses to elaborate his ideas. The archaeology from which his epistemology was constructed (but not exclusively so) would include, first, his commitment to organicism, which Lucarelli defines as 'the restoration of nature's influence on culture through architecture, literature and the built environment' (1995: 22); second, a wholistic ecological approach to urban development; third, politics are omnipresent in his analysis and closely related to element four, namely the importance of institutional arrangements as the building blocks for social relations, and within this the dominance of the state and capital. Fifth, over all the odds, the significance of culture as a triumphal expression of the human spirit prevails across all of his work, despite serious resistance by the forces of darkness and despair.

The interaction of these major components is frequently qualified by three mechanisms that Mumford deploys in the manner that an artist uses colour to enhance his composition. First, we have his frequent use of metaphor, often combined with what I have previously called his 'gothic prose', as in his transference of the use of 'citadel' (ancient) into what he calls 'the underground city' (of the Victorians). Indeed, the whole of the following passage is metaphorical:

> The masters of the underground citadel are committed to a 'war' they cannot bring to an end, with weapons whose ultimate effects they cannot control, for purposes that they cannot accomplish. The underground city threatens in consequence to become the ultimate burial crypt of our incinerated civilisation.
>
> (1961: 481)

The second mechanism is the use of biological analogy and anthropomorphism, for example describing Rome as 'Parasitopolis', suffering from 'megalopolitan elephantiasis' (1961: 237). He also has a penchant for the use of biological terms such as predation, symbiosis, embryonic, miscarriage, protozoa etc., all used to describe urban phenomena or states. Similarly, moving from the body to the mind, Mesopotamia had a 'paranoid psychical structure' (1961: 39), and Rome declined in a catastrophic degradation from 'Patholopolis' to 'Psychopatholopolis' (1961: 234). Concepts such as 'sublimation' and 'regression', derived from psychology, are also frequently used as descriptors. Third, and more significantly, he uses the terminology of humanistic socialism as his overarching philosophical and moral compass.

Sibyl Moholy-Nagy: The Matrix of Man *(1968)*

In *The Form of Cities* (FOC2: 30), I briefly outlined Moholy-Nagy's contribution in respect to mainstream theory and said, 'In the spirit of the age, like Mumford, her vision of urban growth is again organic, anthropomorphic and oriented to death and dissolution'. Although it is true that Mumford's writing frequently had an air of eldritch horror about it, it only constituted a small part of his output, whereas the phrase almost encompasses Moholy-Nagy's book *The Matrix of Man* in its entirety.

From the outset, Moholy-Nagy's method of analysis presupposes that the organisation of cities assumes certain archetypal forms based upon 'eternally recurrent constellations of matrix and content' (1968: 18), which she describes as:

Geomorphic	Machu Picchu (Figure 2.1)
Concentric	Vienna (Figure 2.2)
Orthogonal–connective	Teotihuacan (Figure 2.3)
Orthogonal–modular	The Japanese Royal City of Kyoto (Figure 2.4)
Clustered	Canberra, Australia (Figure 2.5)

Therefore, from the start, she is absolutely clear as to what her method will be: 'It is the purpose of this enquiry into urban origins to seek out examples and define these five settlement configurations which occur the world over, and to set spinning a kaleidoscope of their images' (1968: 18). This object is in fact achieved, and the book is replete with interesting figures and drawings. The real question, however, is whether there is anything substantial to learn from doing this over the subsequent three hundred pages. Moholy-Nagy applies her chosen method by assembling a diverse range of images illustrating the various typologies. Although the examples chosen are all fascinating, and the commentary enlightening in many cases, the differences between them in terms of time, location, climate, topography etc. are so enormous that any comparison between settlements becomes pointless. At best, we come out of each chapter knowing that, for example, in Chapter 1, many settlements, primarily ancient, adapted well to natural circumstances, and that many cities are round.

Most of the deficiencies in method result from basic beliefs first stated in the introduction, and four seriously flawed and governing ideas are significant. First, the above quotation assumes the outcome prior to the study even beginning. The geomorphic classification is not the result of a prolonged study, nor is it even a hypothesis to be tested. We are asked to believe that the chosen categories represent proven fact, and to suspend any judgement as to their validity. Second, she states that, 'rightly or wrongly it is assumed that in the building of communities, as in many other human endeavours, the strongest, most convincing solutions were achieved in the beginning' (1968: 18). This idea reflects a widespread flaw in most architectural urbanism, that cities somehow have 'solutions', reflecting an overarching physical determinism and misplaced belief in design. Even accepting the idea is tantamount to saying that the Roman plan for Londinium was superior to anything that came after – and how are we to judge that? But the principle that these solutions were even invented 'in the beginning' is preposterous, as is the proposition that any 'initial idea' was the

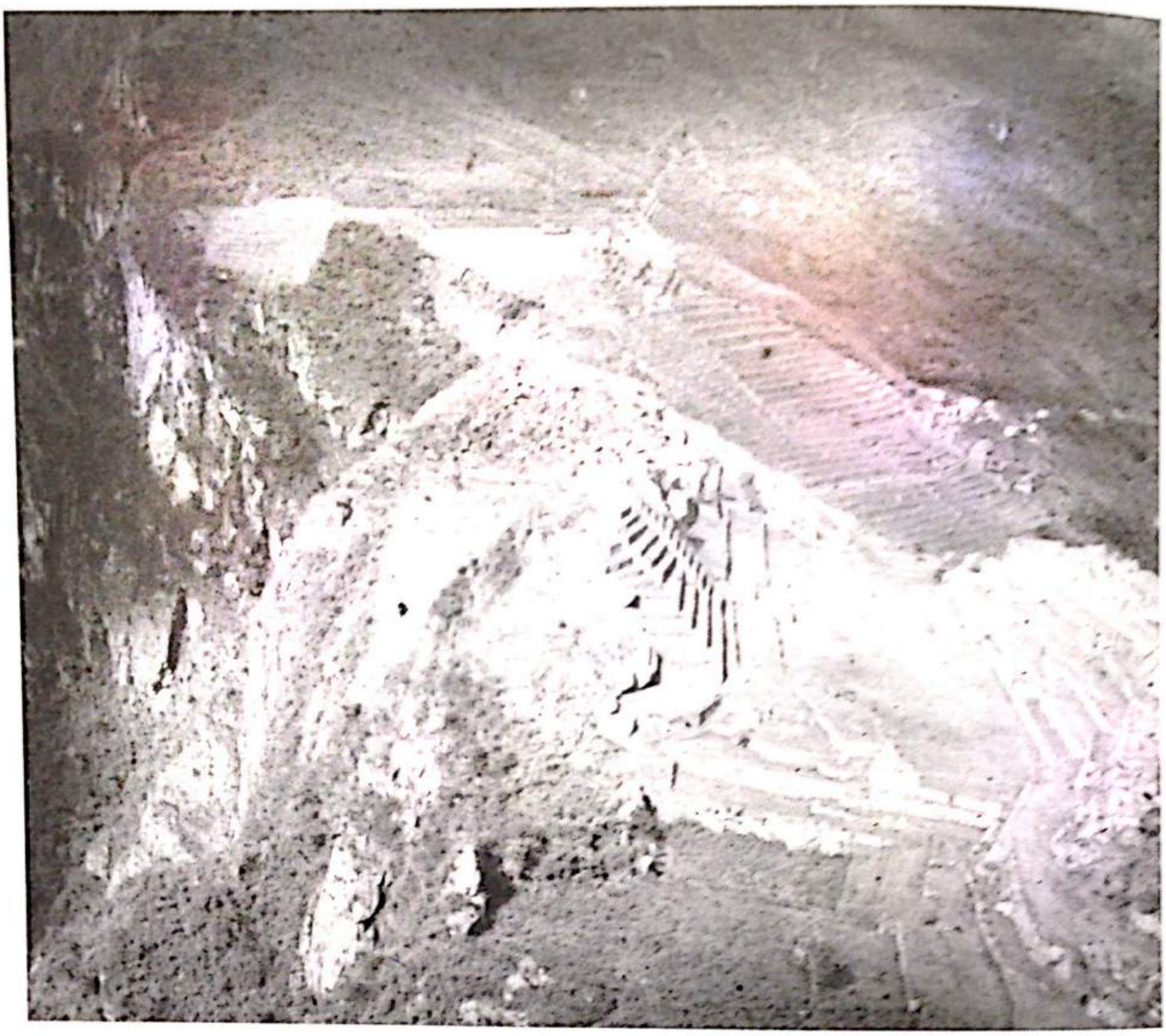


Figure 2.1 Example of a geomorphic settlement: Machu Picchu
Source: The author

best. Most cities, like the rest of life, evolved gradually on the basis of trial and error, and what we have today, in every case, is the *best* solution to the problem, for the simple reason that speculation on other solutions, while entertaining, constitutes misguided Utopianism/essentialism and simply avoids the elementary facts of urban development.

The third example guiding a typological approach to urban 'solutions' is also connected to the belief that, 'The current "urban crisis" and its pessimistic, self-destructive diagnosis, differs from previous environmental revolutions in its contextual misdirection. We have developed a stupendous ability for incongruous comparisons' (1968: 12). Leaving aside the fact that this comparison is somewhat incongruous itself, and that the so-called 'urban crisis' has been a permanent feature of urban development within capitalism, the idea that cities are contextually directed is also absurd. It assumes that contextualism might have been more appropriate, ignoring both the reality of urban growth as well as the impossibility of retrospective choice. Fourth, probably the most contested statement in the entire book is that 'the history of urban origins is the history of design imagination'. Although it is possible to misinterpret this statement, as the use of 'design imagination' is a contestable concept, Moholy-Nagy leaves us in no doubt that she is referring to architects when she quotes Marx's statement about bees, hives, imagination and architects. Leaving aside issues previously raised as to what constitutes *urban*, *design*, *history* etc., surely no one could possibly believe that we have the architectural profession to thank (or to curse) for the origins of cities?

Finally, and in conclusion, Moholy-Nagy offers a series of options under each heading without any commentary as to why they are there. These include such examples as the Pedregulho linear housing by Alfonso Reidy on the outskirts of Rio, 'which was abandoned before it was occupied', pyramid housing clusters for Siberia (never built), Luis Baragan's sculpture outside Mexico City, and the subterranean master plan for underground shopping in Montreal. We are left to make of these what we will.

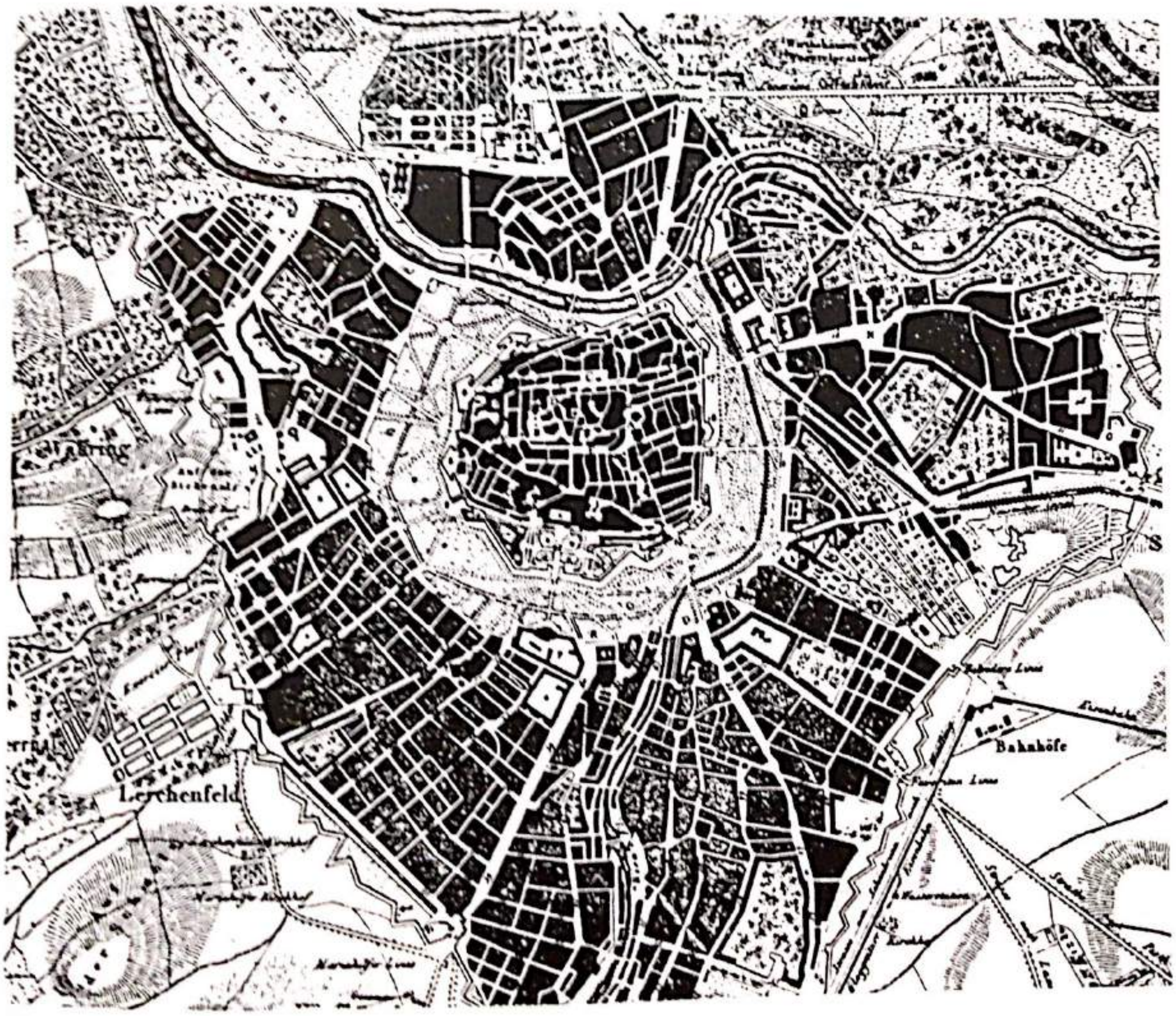


Figure 2.2 Example of concentric planning: Vienna, 1860

Source: S. Moholy-Nagy, *The Matrix of Man*. London: Pall Mall, 1968, p. 79, Fig. 79

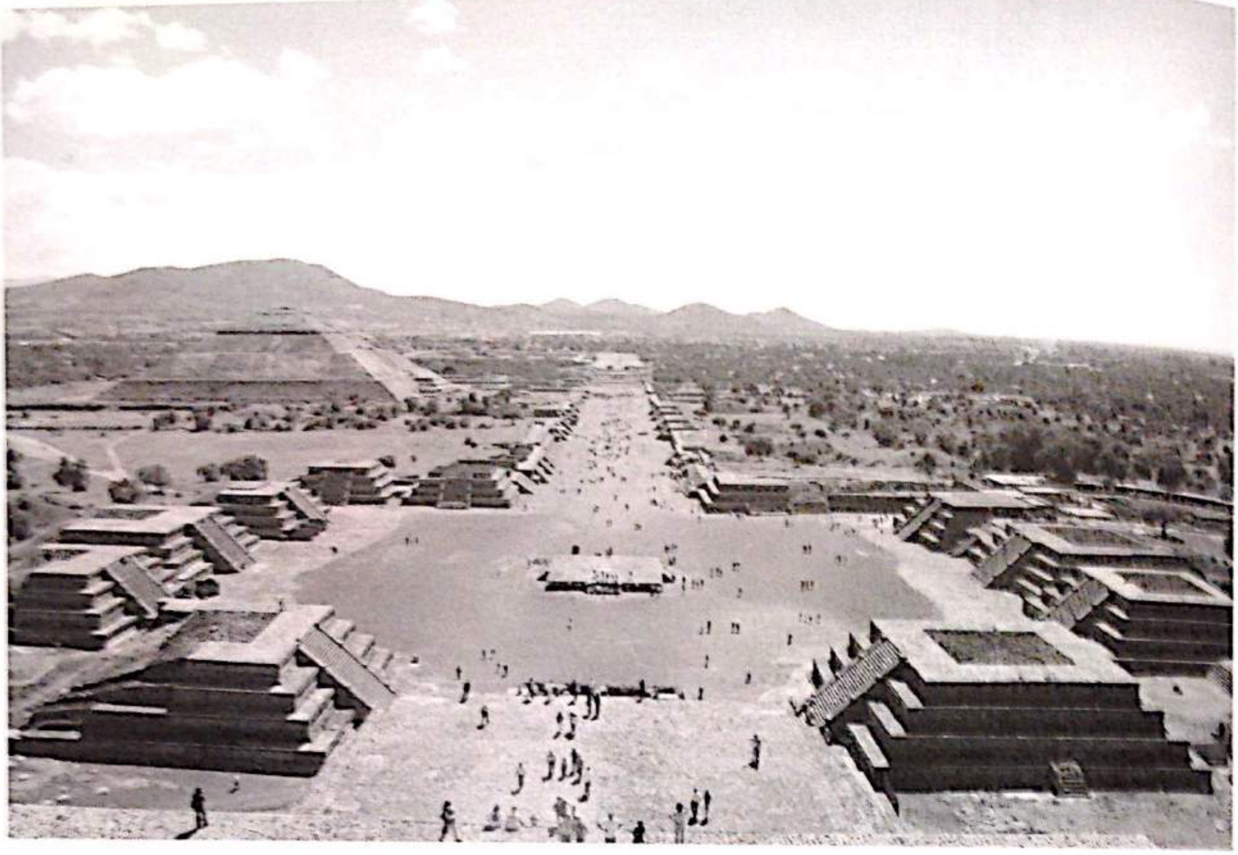


Figure 2.3 Example of orthogonal–connective settlement: Teotihuacan
Source: © Markussevcik/Dreamstime.com

Rowe and Koetter: Collage City *(1978)*

> For all the avant-garde movements – and not only in the field of painting – the law of assemblage was fundamental. And since the assembled objects belonged to the real world, the picture became a neutral field on which to project *the experience of the shock* suffered in the city. The problem now was that of teaching that one is not to 'suffer' that shock, but to absorb it as an inevitable condition of existence.
>
> (Manfredo Tafuri 1980: 179)

Paradoxically, the short quotation given above from Manfredo Tafuri summarises perfectly the approach of Rowe and Koetter's *Collage City*, a work that has had cult status within the architectural community since it was first published in 1978, although the authors' mention that the book was actually written in 1973.We are left to guess why it remained unpublished for the next five years. *Collage City* is notable in that it differs radically from most other architectural histories, and it is possible that I am doing it a disservice by including it as a text whose prime focus is an exposition of urban history. On the other hand, our interest is in method, and the book definitely provides a foil to the others under discussion, offering as it does a sustained critique of the

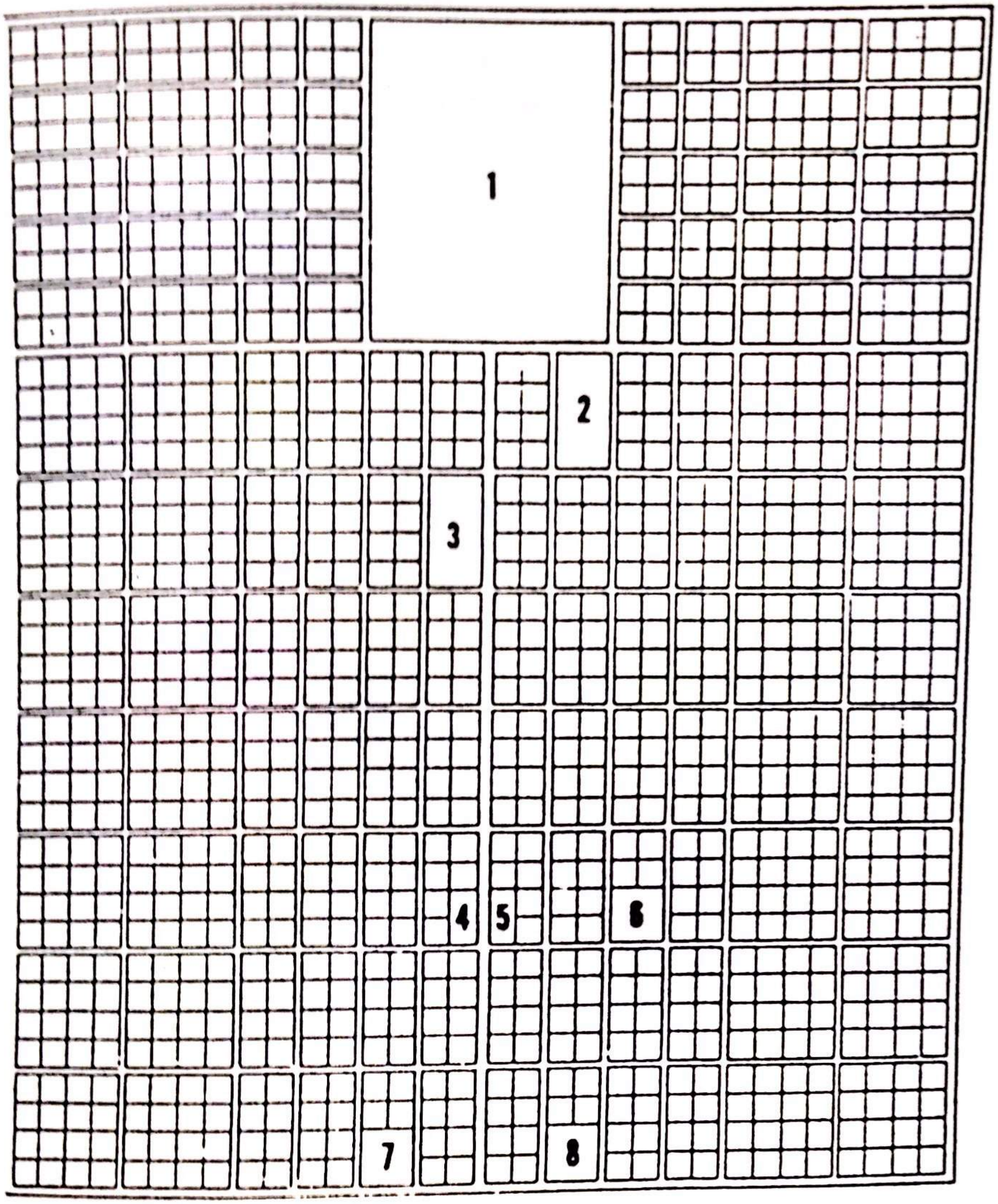
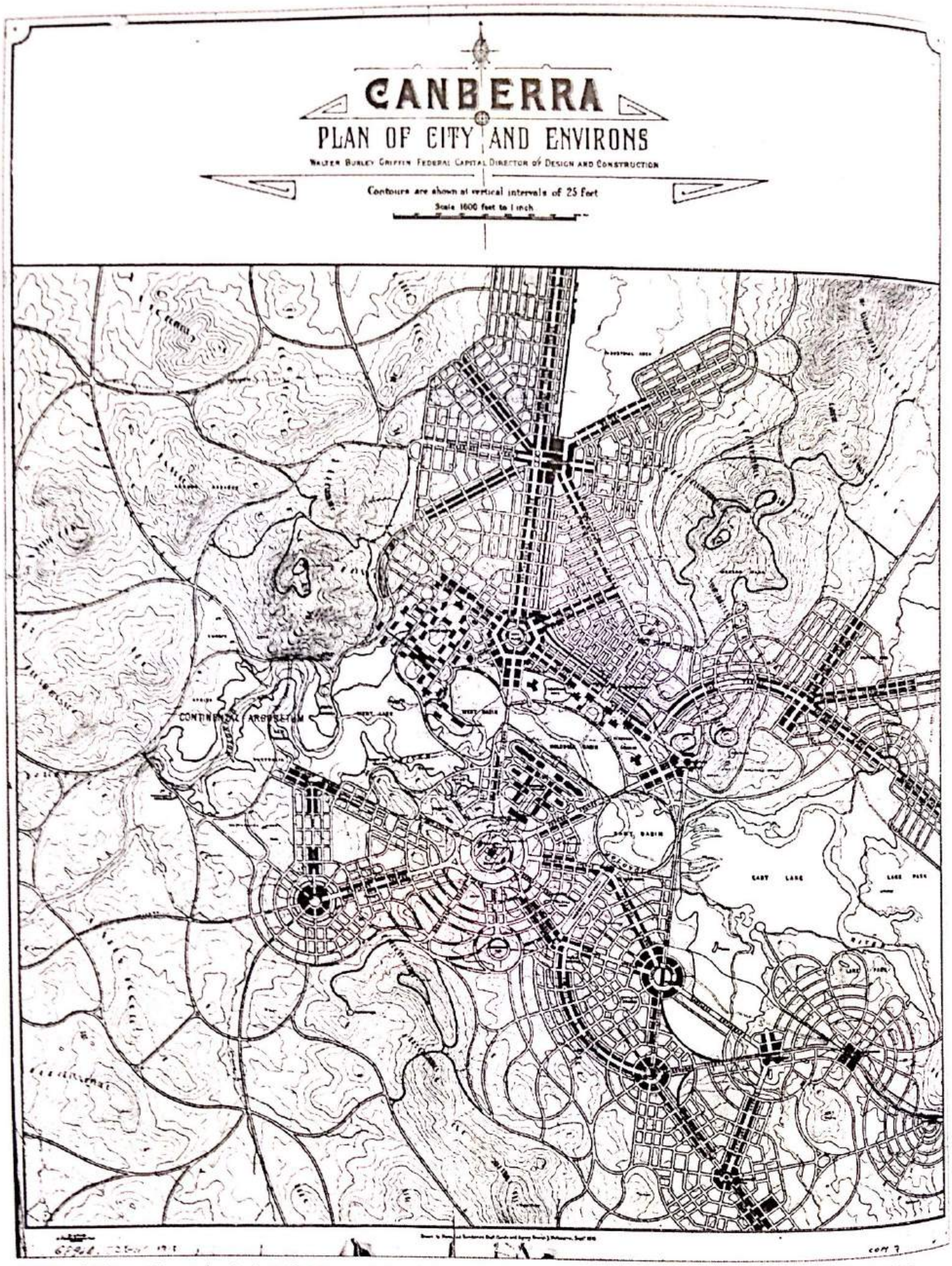


Figure 2.4 Example of orthogonal–modular planning: the Royal City of Kyoto, AD 792
Source: S. Moholy-Nagy, *The Matrix of Man*. London: Pall Mall, 1968, p. 162

modern movement in architecture in the twentieth century, with other significant historical referents. *Collage City* adopts the idea of Utopia as its guiding theme, and the reason that I include the above quotation from Tafuri is that I feel that it encapsulates the intentions of Rowe and Koetter better than the authors themselves have been able to accomplish. As method, they state their intention to produce:


CANBERRA
PLAN OF CITY AND ENVIRONS
Walter Burley Griffin Federal Capital Director of Design and Construction
Contours are shown at vertical intervals of 25 feet
Scale 1600 feet to 1 inch
CONTINENTAL ARBORETUM
WEST LAKE
WEST BASIN
EAST BASIN
EAST LAKE
LAKE PARK

1918 Plan (of City and Environs) — the last official general plan of the city signed by Griffin as Federal Capital Director of Design and Construction

Figure 2.5 Example of clustered planning: the original 1918 plan of Canberra, Australia

Source: National Library of Australia

> A proposal for constructive dis-illusion, it is simultaneously an appeal for order and disorder, for the simple and the complex, for the joint existence of permanence and random happening, of the private and the public, of innovation and tradition, of both the retrospective and prophetic gesture.
>
> (Rowe and Koetter 1978: 8)

Collage City is a demanding text, made even more difficult by the authors' use of *collage* as method, a French word that has two levels of meaning. First, at its simplest, it means 'collection', but more often a contrived collection of unrelated things. Second, the word denotes a technique used in modernist painting, e.g. Dada, Surrealism, Cubism, where various different materials are placed together on a canvas and organised to become a single work of art. Associated with this is the term *bricolage*, coming from the French verb *bricoler* (do it yourself), which is often used to describe a design approach relying on trial and error rather than a science-based methodology. Hence, the method used by Rowe and Koetter is to use a multiplicity of images to convey complexity and difference in meanings that may be associated with the concept of Utopia, in this case the Utopia (more accurately *dystopia*) of modern architecture and urbanism. In my own rereading of the book, I felt that the concept of collage dominated unreasonably. Not only do the graphic images make a *mélange* of history, the text does as well. In the spirit of collage, meanings are produced as much by the reader's own associations as they are by the erudition of the text. Frequently, the only guide we have is in the necessary semantic and syntactical structures of the English language. Ideas litter every page, and, although many are challenging and inspirational, in the spirit of collage, there is virtually no structure for the reader to grasp. Indeed, it might have been better to number each paragraph, as Debord did in *The Society of the Spectacle* (1983), or to have adopted Baudrillard's method in his *Cool Memories* series, where Volume 3 is entitled *Fragments* (Baudrillard 1990, 1996, 1997). In all three volumes, Baudrillard's ideas are set out randomly in paragraphs for readers to absorb however they wish. Using this device, Rowe and Koetter could then have remained true to the original idea.

So, the method is collage, the subject matter is history, and the content is the modern movement. Tafuri's comment on absorbing the shock of the city rather than suffering it does not sit comfortably with the authors, and there are signs of considerable angst within the text:

> the city of modern architecture . . . has remained either a project or an abortion: and more and more, there no longer appears to be any convincing reason that things will ever be different . . . [and] . . . both as a psychological and physical model has been rendered tragically ridiculous
>
> (Rowe and Koetter 1978: 3, 4)

Overall, the method of the text parallels the somewhat random nature of the design process, which all architects recognise as a fundamental part of their creativity. Such randomness characterises the difference between architecture and engineering. Problems occur, however, when the same method is applied to writing without some transformation of the subconscious nature of the design process to the text. Collage even deploys itself at the level of individual sentences, and one struggles to make sense out of, for example,

> The Parousia of modern architecture. A bundle of eschatological fantasies about imminent and apocalyptic catastrophe combined with others about instant millennium. Crisis: the threat of damnation, the hope of salvation. Irresistible change which still requires human cooperation. The new architecture and urbanism as emblems of the New Jerusalem. The corruptions of high culture. The bonfire of the vanities.
>
> (Rowe and Koetter 1978: 32)

Like in any creative work, Rowe and Koetter take singular licence with all of the rules, and it remains up to the reader to decide whether or not there is something more to be communicated through the chance processes of collage or the more logical histories of other writers. Even in the final section 'Excursus', in the place of what might normally be called 'conclusion', the authors state, 'We append an abridged list of stimulants, a-temporal and necessarily trans-cultural, as possible *objets trouvés* in the urbanistic collage' (1978: 151), which is as inconclusive and puzzling as the prior conclusion to *The Matrix of Man*. What follows is a random selection of images that are even more disconnected than the collage of the text, grouped into memorable streets, stabilisers, potentially interminable set pieces, splendid public terraces, ambiguous composite buildings, nostalgia-producing instruments and concluding with the garden. Although the images are fascinating, they are also incoherent and fail to inform us of anything significant about urban design. Clearly, mainstream history required at least some clarification of its charter, and this was to come in the political economy of Manfredo Tafuri, a few years later.

Manfredo Tafuri: Architecture and Utopia *(1976)*

> The fate of capitalist society is not at all extraneous to architectural design. The ideology of design is just as essential to the integration of modern capitalism in all the structures and suprastructures of human existence, as is the illusion of being able to oppose that design with instruments of a different type of designing, or of a radical 'antidesign'.
>
> (Tafuri 1976: 179)

> First among the intellectual illusions to be done away with is that which, by means of the image alone, tries to anticipate the conditions of an architecture 'for a liberated society.' Who proposes such a slogan avoids asking himself if, its obvious utopianism aside, this object is perusable without a

> revolution of architectural language, method, and structure which goes far beyond simple subjective will or the simple updating of syntax.
>
> (Tafuri 1976: 179–80)

Written as an enlarged version of a paper titled '*Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica*', Manfredo Tafuri's *Architecture and Utopia* (1976) is one of the most penetrating summaries of architecture and urban design written in the twentieth century. It is both polemical and, to a degree, messianic in tone and was met with significant violence and resistance when it was first published, as it denoted the end of architecture as it was then known. The book is also one of the most challenging to comprehend, despite the fact that, at one level, its message is brutally simple – architects as urban designers are themselves functionally integrated into the ideological structure of capitalist enterprise whose outcomes they wish to alter. As such, all of their utopian propositions have been largely rejected or adapted to other purposes.

Tafuri pursues this idea from Laugier and the Enlightenment through the utopian socialism of the nineteenth century, to the visionary plans of Le Corbusier and the problems of urban agglomeration of the late twentieth century. But Tafuri's method, while chronological, is tied not to the development of urban forms but the ideas that modified and changed them. His method follows this progression by integrating shifts in urban form with the ideological development of capitalist enterprise as a whole. He states at the outset:

> In order to discuss these principles however, it is necessary to enter into the field of political theory as this has been developed in the most advanced studies of Marxist thought from 1960 to the present. Ideological criticism cannot be separated from this context, it is an integral part of it, and all the more so when it is conscious of its own limits and sphere of action.
>
> (Tafuri 1976: xi)

Tafuri adopts several major trajectories that weave together into a richly textured methodology. First, his fundamental ideas are with a progressive Marxist analysis based in political economy, utopianism and ideology. He begins with the Enlightenment and Laugier's urban design ideas contained in his *Observations sur L'Architecture* (1985 (orig. 1763)) and progresses from that point. His overarching theme is that of Utopia. Utopianism is not merely taken as a practical objective of production, as it was for Howard, Owen, Stein and others, but as a major philosophical and intellectual challenge that stands between capitalist development and something more humane. Being integrated into this process, he is convinced that as a consequence of the architect's ideological role, the tasks of architecture are primarily not concerned with form as much as with the political process: 'what is of interest here is the precise identification of those tasks which capitalist development has taken away from architecture' (and it is also interesting to note that, around the same time, Manuel Castells was referring to a similar process in urban planning, in *The City and* *the Grassroots*). As such, Tafuri sees these tasks as supra-structural, as opposed to super-structural, although it seems that both would in fact be correct. Tafuri is therefore focussed on an analysis of the architect as ideologist, heavily involved in forming the very structures from which they seek liberation.

In addition to Marxism and utopianism, a second theme that informs Tafuri's method involves concepts developed from social science, including, but not limited to, Max Weber, George Simmel, Peter Marcuse, Karl Mannheim, Walter Benjamin and others, and theories of economics – Marx, Keynes, Pareto and Schumpeter – and phrases such as '[architecture] being directly related to the reality of production' (p. 48) are commonplace. He also deploys the basic terminology of a fundamentalist political economy throughout the book as part of his basic analytical vocabulary – production, consumption, exchange, ideology, alienation, working class, bourgeois thought etc. Third, his recourse to art in parallel with architecture as a method of understanding the inherent contradictions of capitalism is ubiquitous. Much of the modern movement in art is mined in order to illuminate critical thinking of the period – the creation and destruction of values, the opening up of new forms of resistance or oppression, the generation of political manifestos, or the possibility of liberation from exploitive labour and alienation etc. For example, he describes the specific goal of futurism and Dada as 'a desacralisation of values', using Walter Benjamin's description of these movements in art with a wonderful but appalling pun, 'the end of an aura' (p. 56). Despite this use of art as enlightenment, he is also conscious of the inevitability of art as an outcome of industrial production.

The history of the future

The history of the future has always been a dominating obsession with urbanists, and an extended coverage of Utopias is outlined in *The Form of Cities* (FOC2: 32–7). Overall, utopianists should heed the statement that 'you should never choose the ideal city or the ideal environment or the ideal woman since, if things fail the responsibility will be hellish' (Baudrillard 1997: 32). But the concern with a realistic future history (rather than an imagined one) probably started with Lewis Mumford's two books: first, *The Story of Utopias* (1962 (orig. 1922)), and second, *Utopia, the City and the Machine* (1965). This has continued right up to the present day with books such as Downey and McGuigan's *Technocities* (1999) and Ruchelman's *Cities in the Third Wave* (2000). The last two are wholly concerned with the impact of modern technologies on a burgeoning placelessness and loss of identity in American cities and the role of architects in shaping the cultural landscape. A dominant issue in futurology is the impact of telecommunications on urban restructuring. Core cities may be threatened with extinction due to emergent new geographies generated by the very formlessness of digital and fibre-optic technologies, among many other impacts. Technological urbanism, however, is a conservative growth strategy preferring to go back to scientific rationalism rather than making more humane and risky choices. Kevin

Robbins echoes this sentiment when he states, 'The notion of a virtual community . . . is about escape from the real world of difference and disorder into a mythic realm of stability and order' (Downey and McGuigan 2000: 47).

An overarching commitment to technology, devoid of social content, with a blind acceptance of 'progress' driving development, is very likely to lead us into a world of two architectures, one of profusion and one of despair, as the economic differences of the 'Society of the spectacle' become magnified in a neocorporate global world of increasing competition and inequality. As image, we can speculate that the experience may not be far from what Umberto Eco calls 'the New Middle Ages' (Eco 1986). This could easily be accomplished through the erosion of medieval and modernist concepts of the city by destroying historically defined signifiers, reducing densities and eliminating central business districts, as the space of flows ultimately dominates. The new power structures of globalisation will be multivalent and hidden, notable by their very absence. Power will not be exerted crudely through the architectural expression of state or corporate power, but through the nature of the commodity itself, which stands for the material expression of specific social relations. Empire will project no visible symbols of the new political order, and will more likely make its presence felt within neo-Benthamite structures of surveillance and control (Hardt and Negri 2000, 2005).

Ownership of the image is likely to dominate consumption processes, as urban design becomes the agent of environmental theming in a world of commodity fetishism. Cities that attempt to project a unique image and opportunities, either real or symbolic, are likely to do so on the basis of their capacity to commodify history, simulate authenticity, provide sites for spectacles or conserve exotic natural settings. Reconstructed centres for spectacle and commodity fetishism, now forming a central objective in urban growth strategies, are already part of (urban) status anxiety in most major metropolitan centres (De Botton 2004). The Olympic site in Sydney, for example, has now been adapted to accommodate Formula One racing cars. Airports are already morphing into what might be termed *themeports* – destinations rather than points of transfer, where all the benefits of local culture can be artificially reproduced without traversing immigration. For those who do not wish to travel for 'original' experiences, the post-tourist simulacrum will negate travel and provide a satisfying surrogate as simulation transcends reality. Why should one go anywhere? Paraphrasing the character the Duc Des Essentes in Huysman's novel *A Rebours* (1833), Alain de Botton suggests that 'the imagination could provide a more than adequate substitute for the vulgar reality of actual experience' (De Botton 2002: 27). In a very real sense, we do not need to look to the future – it is already here.

Conclusion

The overarching feeling in contemporary historical analysis in general appears to be that theory is more of a hindrance than a help. As we can see from the above examples, there is no standard method of denoting urban history. Although there may be no overarching theory of history, frequently forgotten is that the objects of historical analysis (science, economy, culture etc.) all possess significant theory of their own, so that the dearth of theory is not a mandate to forget about it. On the contrary, it reinforces the idea that the connection between historical analysis and the adopted theoretical structures of the environmental disciplines becomes crucial. Overall, urban design histories reflect the denial of any significant theory and, with few exceptions such as Tafuri, remain fascinating in their mutual isolation. This, however, does not support a denial of responsibility on the part of designers and theorists to challenge this state and to move knowledge forward in new ways. An overarching theme exemplified by Rowe and Koetter, as well as Tafuri, is the ideological position of the architect/urban designer since the birth of modernism. We are all involved in the production of the very ideological system that we wish to change. Seeking a way out is like trying to follow the contours of a Möbius strip to some final destination. Tafuri's answer is to imbue a precise and incisive way of *seeing* the Möbius strip for what it is, the overall trajectory of capitalist development and the place of the designer within it. He offers us one of the few significant heterological approaches to urban design in the twentieth century, a meta-method that can be reapplied to other situations, unfortunately extended in an almost unreadable English translation of his *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*. In contrast, the more mainstream design approaches, although interesting, offer neither great insight nor any method beyond the superficial, furthering the need to shift our emphasis from historical method *in* urban design to a heterology *of* urban design that Tafuri clearly demonstrates.