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Une flotte de bateaux transporte les passagers et soulage le trafic routier. Pour un architecte de São Paolo, une ville de vingt millions d'habitants, ceci constitue moins une utopie qu'une nécessité impérative. Il tire parti du chenal existant et agrandit le port en le bordant d'un long môle, il double ainsi la longueur de la berge et les places d'arrimage pour les bateaux. La «place d'eau» est bordée sur trois côtés de jardins, de places, de théâtres, de cinémas, d'hôtels, de cafés et de restaurants. Sur le quatrième côté, la baie s'ouvre sur le Rio de la Plata. Une petite île dans la partie ouest de la baie est transformée en théâtre: «La vision de cette île a fait naître en moi l'idée d'un théâtre, d'un espace vénitien complètement artificiel. Si l'on change cette île, si l'on complète les quelques pierres sans véritable forme qui émergent de l'eau, on parvient à renforcer le caractère du territoire. Transformez cette île en théâtre et la surface d'eau devient une place sur laquelle on peut se promener même s'il faut pour cela un bateau. Comme les marchés sur le Jang-tse-Kiang ou la Venise festive où il y a tellement de bateaux que l'on ne sait plus qui est sur l'eau et qui est sur la place».¹

Poser une forme

Cette esquisse de projet surprend par sa simplicité et son efficacité, mais aussi en raison de «l'outil» avec lequel elle opère: la forme. Une forme géométrique se substitue à la configuration aléatoire de la baie. C'est une mesure inhabituelle pour un plan d'urbanisme à cette échelle.

Mendes da Rocha «fait» d'abord la forme. C'est elle qui produit les développements ultérieurs. La forme ne résulte donc pas ici d'une stratégie, mais constitue, pour ainsi dire, la stratégie en elle-même. Les propositions caractéristiques des tendances récentes de l'urbanisme définissent des paramètres générateurs de formes. Mendes da Rocha produit au contraire de la forme. De manière tout aussi nette, sa démarche se distingue du plan directeur classique qui va loin dans la définition morphologique. Nous ne sommes pas en présence non plus de la confrontation entre nature et bâti telle que nous la connaissons du Mouvement moderne et telle que Le Corbusier la propose dans son projet pour Montevideo. Dans son esquisse, les bras d'un système axial défini par d'immenses constructions pénètrent dans la baie. Le projet de Paulo Mendes da Rocha semble en être l'antithèse. Sa proposition ne se concentre précisément pas sur la masse de la ville construite mais sur l'espace vide, sur la surface inconstructible de la baie. Au centre du projet ne se trouve pas un objet mais un espace vide.

Le plan d'eau n'est pas construit à la différence du projet de Kenzo Tange pour la baie de Tokyo où l'analogie avec Venise est en apparence plus grande que dans le projet pour la baie de Montevideo. Mendes da Rocha ne dessine ni bâtiment ni plan de construction, malgré ou précisément à cause de cela, la proposition revêt un caractère éminemment architectonique: son idée centrale est une vision spatiale.

Le continent américain

En transformant l'aspect naturel de la baie et en conférant une géométrie précise au plan d'eau, celui-ci devient une «place». Un seul bâtiment public suffit pour faire de cette surface un espace résolument urbain. Pas seulement l'image du teatrino scientifico de Rossi revient en mémoire, la constellation théâtre – eau – ville rappelle également l'opéra de Sydney: le concept de plate-forme développé par Utzon contient aussi l'idée d'un territoire transformé. Par là, la proposition revêt également un caractère profondément technique car la reconfiguration de la géographie est au fond un acte de civilisation. La technique est pour l'architecte un acte de perception de la nature, une manière de voir qui transforme l'objet. Il est question d'urbanisation de la nature, d'appropriation du territoire par les hommes, de l'urbain en tant que tel. L'aménagement du territoire est une question particulièrement importante sur le continent américain. La découverte d'un continent, la fondation de villes nouvelles comme Brasilia mais aussi la colonisation : «La simple prise de possession porte toujours la marque du rapt, de la destruction. Par opposition, l'architecture devrait s'engager pour le nouveau continent, organiser le territoire, rendre habitable la géographie au-delà du simple bâtiment»² comme le dit Mendes da Rocha. Sous cet angle, l'allusion à Venise paraît sous un autre jour. Comprise ainsi, précisément cette ville est en première ligne une œuvre technique.

Le projet de Paulo Mendes da Rocha acquiert aussi une dimension continentale. Ceci non pas à l'échelle de l'intervention mais de la pensée. Il reconnaît en Montevideo le potentiel d'une ville de port qui dessert tout un continent en développant le transport intérieur sur le système fluvial Tocatin/Uruguay, du bassin de l'Amazone jusqu'au Rio de la Plata. Et il dit à propos du théâtre sur la petite île: «Une mélodie indissociable pourrait, une nuit, entrer dans la ville. Qui sait peut-être l'Amazônica de Villa-Lobos...»³. Dans cette phrase se cache, au-delà d'une allusion poétique, la vision d'un architecte qui assimile le lieu à une partie d'un ensemble plus important. Les Amériques en tant que continent. «As Americas» comme on dit en brésilien.

1 Annette Spiro, Paulo Mendes da Rocha, entretien avec l'architecte, Niggli Verlag, Sulgen 2002

2 Ibid.

3 Texto elaborado para publicação, Paulo Archias Mendes da Rocha, 1999/2000, São Paulo

English

Ariane Wilson (pages 16–17)

The Ville-Port quarter in Saint-Nazaire

From pride to fall, from neglect to rebirth, the port of Saint-Nazaire has followed the classic port pattern. But the factors that determined its history render it exceptional, as do the choices made in its renewal.

Saint-Nazaire was created quite recently, in the mid-19th century, as the sea port of Nantes at the mouth of the Loire estuary. The new town was constructed on a grand east-west axis starting from the dock round which the civic buildings were grouped. It became France's second transatlantic port and an important centre of shipbuilding. The split between town and port was imposed brutally: the invading Germans built a colossal submarine base on the site of the Compagnie Générale Transatlantique, the ship-owning company. Though targeted by the allies, the concrete monster resisted bombing while the town was razed to the ground. Reconstruction turned the town away from its port along a new north-south axis and interposed a buffer zone, soon to become the backyard of both city and port. Shipyards and pollution emitting industries took over the base, which was too expensive to demolish.

Saint-Nazaire later sunk into crisis, as its economy and identity changed. In the 1980s, one priority of urban renewal was to strengthen the town centre (the “Centre-République” project stopped the drain of commercial activity towards the periphery and initiated a coherent design policy for public spaces). Another was to maintain and bolster up the port economy. The original feature of the “Ville-Port” scheme, launched in 1994, was that it restructured the port area without turning it into just one more projection of urban form, a leisure district, a public space or a site for prestigious investments, but made it into a mixture of all these. In his winning plan, Manuel de Solà-Morales dared to confront the opposing scales of infrastructure and of housing with each other, using public space to reconcile them.

The submarine base, the town's “physical and mental trauma”, became the pivot of Saint-Nazaire's economic diversification. Five ideas guided the integration of the base, once it had been acquired by the city. Access: the construction of a ramp extending an existing street to the roof of the base, so creating a vantage point that dominates town and sea – a first symbolic gesture. Second, transparency: the opening of four bays, allowing the city to enter the base and meet the waterfront. Third, including of the vast vol-

ume of the base: Solà-Morales orchestrated a sequence of public spaces ending in a landscaped car park at the foot of the bunker. Paradoxically, the wartime base now recalls pre-war history, as it is largely occupied by a show devoted to the era of ocean liners. Finally, the attraction of activities that tend to settle outside town centres: the multiplex cinema and the supermarket next to the base are "the transplant at the centre of peripheral activities", characteristic of present concerns about density and functional balance in towns. Thus the base turns Saint Nazaire back towards its port, which determines the structure of the city once more, as shown by the apartment blocks literally encased by the ramp. The base is also the springboard for developing and promoting the adjacent port industries. The town enters the port without destroying its character, as this renewal accepts the presence of industry, formal limitations and apparently conflicting elements.

Herzog & de Meuron (pages 35–39)
English Translation: HdeM/Michael Robinson

City and sea engaging with each other

Herzog & de Meuron's proposal for redesigning the Tenerife harbour area – a place of encounter and opening towards the Atlantic

Herzog & de Meuron are proposing a new quay to act as a connection – the Link Quay – and a new sequence of squares for Santa Cruz de Tenerife. Our project is intended as a new urban development vision for the way Santa Cruz is joined up with the Atlantic – and thus the island of Tenerife with the world. Translating this idea into an appropriately concrete plan for the new Link Quay was the greatest challenge we faced, but it was also clear from the outset that this whole project cannot evolve without addressing the technical, functional and economic requirements equally thoroughly.

The island of Tenerife is the result and physical expression of volcanic eruptions. Although erosion has flattened many regions of the island, the steep cliffs and the abrupt transition from the precipitous land to the open Atlantic are a physical reality that has always shaped urban development on the edges of the island. Tenerife does not have the extensive flat beaches familiar from other maritime towns.

An enclosing and embracing gesture

The element intended to establish the connection between sea and land will therefore not be built in the form of horizontal layers, but as a series of single gestures comparable with sudden natural events. Our project for the new Link Quay concentrates on the idea of a unique urban development gesture. It is an enclosing and embracing

gesture that will cause the city and the sea to engage with each other: on the one hand the city embraces the sea, and on the other hand the sea reappears in the city from which it had previously been banished for urban development reasons.

Enclosing and embracing means creating a new urban space and not merely an object or surface that is just grafted on to the shoreline. The planned Link Quay is neither an extraordinary object nor an object built off the current sea front, but a new public space where people can meet.

A sequence of public spaces

If you approach the Link Quay from the town, the enclosed Marina will appear as an impressive open space. It will be part of a complete sequence of public spaces, each of them with a particular quality: Plaza Candelaria - Plaza de España - Arena - Marina. The new Arena and the new Marina will shift the centre of gravity of urban and social life in Santa Cruz closer to the Atlantic. The new enclosure is conceived as an artificial landscape that effectively cuts the Marina out of the Atlantic. If you approach by sea, the enclosed Marina will be reminiscent of a piece of magic garden placed in front of the town and the steep mountain slopes – viewers will see it as an oasis in the sea.

The enclosure and the Marina

The new enclosure will be built from the existing dikes, supplemented with platforms, one- or two-storey low-rise buildings and palm trees. It is conceived as an artificial landscape, a place where people can meet, and not so much as a piece of architecture. The low buildings will be incorporated seamlessly into the enclosure – they are a habitable part of it that will be filled with activities, nestling around the Marina like a necklace. Pedestrians will walk on the roofs of these enclosing buildings, enjoying a wonderful view of the sea, the Marina and the urban panorama behind.

The buildings will have courtyards and ramps linking the upper and lower levels. Restaurants, shops, clubs etc. can thus have a common or a separate entrance from the pedestrian level on the roof or from the Marina on the lower level. The Marina itself is designed for 600 motor-boats and sailing yachts. It will have state-of-the-art technical equipment, and there will be clubs and special shops for nautical equipment; there will be separate access for cars from the harbour road.

The enclosure, the low-rise buildings and the landscape design (planted with palm trees) can be realized in phases. This incremental approach makes it possible to develop the construction of the new Marina in accordance with economic and functional needs.

Two inclined pedestrian boulevards and the Arena The new Marina enclosure will be continued on both the south and the north ends by inclined ramps which generously connect the lower pedestrian level of the Arena and the Marina and the upper pedestrian level of Avenida Marítima. These broad ramps will be landscaped and deco-

rated with benches and little commercial kiosks and pavilions, providing a fine view of the whole harbour area. Besides this very attractive function as pedestrian boulevards, they also have a very practical function: they conceal large parking spaces on both the south and the north ends of the Marina.

The Arena is a new plaza which continues the main sequence of open public spaces between Calle del Castillo, Plaza Candelaria, Plaza de España, and opening up to the Marina and the sea. It is a very important location, and to an extent succeeds the historic castle which had both a military and a symbolic value for Santa Cruz. The castle also played a part in defining local urban identity. The new Arena will literally expand this role of local identity, drawing large numbers of people into the daily life of Santa Cruz, especially at carnival time or for the Christmas concert. The Arena is a place where people communicate, the port communicates with the world. The Arena is conceived as a vessel for people. Its round shape emphasizes its general and public function.

Los Llanos development and the stream bed

The Los Llanos industrial site offers an outstanding opportunity for future urban expansion. The first step will be to eliminate any signs of port use from the space between the new Marina and the estuary of the Barranco de Santos. Our proposal for this new piece of land is a phased development of mixed use structures. These new buildings should have different architectural styles and typologies – all based on the idea of free-standing single items or clusters in order to avoid closing the sea front. Different architects of local, national and international stature could and should participate in creating a lively and attractive new quarter for Santa Cruz.

The natural bed of the Barranco de Santos is an interesting space that could make a lasting improvement to the urban quality of the old town grouped around the museum quarter and the Iglesia de la Concepción. The Barranco has water in it for about three days a year, but the bed of the stream is dry and empty for the rest of the year. A new landscape design and illumination plan will transform the Barranco into an attractive green area. This will then also enhance link with the former Los Llanos dock area.

Plaza de España, Santa Cruz de Tenerife

The whole Plaza de España, which is to be redesigned, and the new Plaza de las Islas Canarias will be planned as a coherent public space functioning on two levels placed one above the other: a lower level to accommodate the heavy car traffic, the planned railway and the parking facilities and an upper level linking the pedestrian level of the town with the new Marina and the sea. Nothing new then, just a pattern that has already been used in a lot of places with greater or lesser degrees of success, and also required as a transport measure here, mainly for political reasons.

A crust, more like topography than architecture
And so what is the new, the specific thing that
has been devised for Santa Cruz de Tenerife?
Large parts of the present Plaza de España and
the Muelle de Enlace with the transhipment areas
for the port are made ground, anchored in the
steep cliffs of the Atlantic shoreline with a great
deal of expense, in terms of both materials and
money. Everything that is being built there now is
effectively an additional, crust-like overlay on the
made ground that was largely there already. All
the new building above ground level will look differ-
ent architecturally from the existing town,
which was built on existing, settled ground: it will
look more like landscape and topography, with
the new Plaza de España and the Plaza de las Islas
Canarias thrusting away like a landscape
crust over the streams of transport that have
been placed underground to the new Marina and
the sea. Above ground level, this crust is de-
signed like artificial nature, reminiscent of a lava
flow or a large beach, a new beach for Santa Cruz
with many urban facilities and pleasant features
like cafés, bars, kiosks, shelters, meeting-places,
and also storage facilities for the town's great
festivals.

Eruption and halftone pixels

All these structures are designed as pavilions
parked on the Plaza crust and shaped in a variety
of ways. But they always relate to natural forms,
without imitating them. The relationship is based
on three-dimensional phenomena like eruption or
erosion, which are such a striking feature of the
bizarre formal world of the Canary Islands. One
important design element on the new Plaza crust
are the many round pools in different sizes,
depths and colours. Some of these pools are for
children and adults to play in, or for plant and animal
biotopes. Some of them are linked with the
sea below ground level, so that the rhythm of the
tides can be sensed and seen in the heart of the
town as well.

The built crust is also covered with small
round apertures that create different images be-
cause they are arranged with differing degrees of
density, like the pixels in a halftone image, and
also letting more or less light down into the pavilions
or the covered roads and parking areas.

At night, artificial coloured light comes
through the pixel apertures in the Plaza crust and
draws a picture of this artificial urban landscape
that will look like a photograph as you approach
by plane. On the concrete level of the Plaza de
España and the Plaza de las Islas Canarias this
new, diverse light expresses the new urban life in
Santa Cruz, which can now at last stretch luxuri-
ously out to the sea.

Annette Spiro (pages 40-43)
Translation from German: Michael Robinson

From the Bay to the Urban Space

Paulo Mendes da Rocha's design for Montevideo
Bay

Paulo Mendes da Rocha's idea would turn the re-
lationship in Montevideo between city, port and
water into precisely the opposite of what it now is
and the city would acquire a new centre. The
Brazilian architect designed a surprising urban
restructuring of Montevideo Bay at an interna-
tional architectural seminar in that city: a single,
radical intervention to reset the urban develop-
ment parameters. The design is surprising be-
cause of the unusual resources deployed – a spa-
tial vision, essentially the architect's authentic
tool – and characteristic of Paulo Mendes da
Rocha's architecture.

If you feel hungry in Montevideo you get on the
next bus labelled "Aduana". You will end up at
one of the large charcoal grills in the middle of
the city, by Montevideo harbour. Few cities have
assimilated their harbour like the capital of
Uruguay. It is like part of the city's body

Montevideo grew as a result of massive im-
migration in the second half of the 19th century
and became the country's largest export harbour
for meat, textiles and leather. This and its posi-
tion on the international shipping route to the
River Plate made the port one of the most impor-
tant on the continent. The topography is flat and
the bay is on average only two metres deep,
meaning that the port and the shipping channel
have to be constantly dredged. The little bay
opens on to the enormous bay formed by the
River Plate estuary. In front of it, on a spit of land,
is the rectangular old town and port complex.
The urban expansion in the last century was
along the coast and round the bay. But the newer
districts and urban life are directed more at the
old town than the bay. The problem is obvious:
because you are forced to make your way around
the whole bay, it is degraded to the status of an
obstacle and the point of access to the old town
becomes a bottleneck.

The bay as a new centre

Against this background, Paulo Mendes da Rocha
designed the project for Montevideo Bay with a
group of students as the guest of an architectural
seminar in 1998. He found the solution in the
problem posed by the starting position; the pre-
sumed obstacle becomes the central linking ele-
ment for the city. The proposed measures are
simple and effective. Paulo Mendes da Rocha
changes the shape of the shoreline. Three
straight fronts change the circular bay into a
square full of water. A fleet of boats carries pas-
sengers across the bay, thus relieving road traf-
fic. For an architect from the city of São Paulo,
which has twenty million inhabitants, this is less a
Utopia than a compelling necessity. He extends
the port by using the existing channel, bordering
it with a long pier and thus doubling both the
shoreline and the number of berths for boats.
Three sides of the "water square" are lines with
gardens, squares, theatres, cinemas, hotels,
cafés and restaurants. On the fourth side the bay
opens up to the River Plate. A little island in the
western part of the bay is transformed into a the-
atre: "I thought of a theatre as soon as I saw this
island, a Venetian space, entirely artificial. If you
change this island, if you complete a few stones
sticking up out of the water without any real
shape of their own then you are strengthening
the territory. If you transform this island into a
theatre the whole stretch of water becomes a
square you can walk on, even if you need a boat
to do it. Like the markets on the Yangtze Kiang or
like festive Venice, where there are so many
boats that you don't really know who's on the wa-
ter and who's in the square."

Form as a resource

The surprising thing about this project sketch is
not just how simple and effective it is, but also
the "tool" it operates with: form. The random
shape of the bay is replaced by a geometrical fig-
ure, an amazing thing to do for urban planning on
this scale.

Mendes da Rocha "makes" the form first.
Nothing else can happen without it. So here form
is not the result of a strategy, but to the extent
the strategy itself. Thus the approach differs from
other recent urban development tendencies in
that he does not create form-generating parame-
ters, but form itself. But his method is just as
clearly different from the classic master-plan with
its extensive morphological statements. It is also
not confrontation between nature and what is
built, of the kind we know from Modernism and
as proposed by Le Corbusier in his design for
Montevideo – in his sketch the arms of a system
of co-ordinates thrust out into the bay in the form
of gigantic structures. Paulo Mendes da Rocha's
design seems like a counter-thesis to this. His
proposal definitely does not concentrate on the
mass of the built city, but on the empty space, on
the bay area that cannot be built on. At the cen-
tre is a space and not an object.

Water is not built upon, unlike Kenzo Tange's project for Tokyo Bay, for example, which is superficially closer to the analogy with Venice than the Montevideo Bay design. Mendes da Rocha does not design any buildings or a development plan; nevertheless, or precisely for this reason, the suggestion is eminently architectural in character, as the central idea is a spatial vision.

A question of the American continent
As the natural shape of the bay is transformed into the precise geometry of the area of water, this becomes a "square". One single public building turns the empty space into an urban space once and for all. We are not just reminded of Rossi's Teatrino scientifico, the combination of theatre/water/city also calls the Sydney Opera House to mind, and Utzon's platform concept also contains the idea of changed territory. This also means that the proposal is profoundly tech-

nical in character, as the reconfiguration of geography is essentially an act of civilization. In the architect's perception, technology is an act of perceiving nature, a way of looking at things that changes the object. It is about laying nature open to cultivation, about man acquiring the territory, quite simply about urban quality. The new design for the territory is above all a question of the American continent. Discovering a continent, founding new cities like Brasilia, but also about colonization: "Simply taking possession always carries the signs of theft and destruction. In contrast with this, architecture ought to commit itself on this new continent to structuring the territory, making the geography habitable over and above the individual building,"² says Mendes da Rocha. The allusion to Venice seems a little different in this light. Seen in this way, precisely that city is in the first place a work of technology.

Paulo Mendes da Rocha's design also acquires a continental dimension not in the scale of the intervention, but in the scale of thought. He sees in Montevideo the potential of a port opening up an entire continent, extending inland navigation on the Tocantin/Uruguay river system from the Amazon Basin to the River Plate. And saying about the theatre on the little island: "An indescribable melody could float through into the city one night. Who knows, perhaps Villa-Lobos's Amazônica..."³, he claims to more than a poetic allusion: it is the insight of an architect who sees the place as part of a greater whole. The Americas as one continent. "As Americas", as the Brazilians say.

1 Annette Spiro, Paulo Mendes da Rocha, interview with the architect, Niggli Verlag, Sulgen 2002

2 Ibid.

3 Texto elaborado para publicação, Paulo Archias Mendes da Rocha, 1999/2000, São Paulo

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