no-stop city as building

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abstract

Archizoom's hypothetical project of 1969–72 is the ultimate interior. Comprised of a floor, ceiling, and grid of columns, *No-Stop City* stretches infinitely in all directions, potentially consuming the whole world in its fluorescently lit belly. The project and its aims are commonly thought of in relation to other radical and speculative projects of the 1960s and 1970s—those of Archigram and Superstudio, for example—and to the sociocultural critique they posed. However, it also belongs within another lineage of architectural discourse, which might be said to run from the polemic image of a co-op interior published by Hannes Meyer in 1926 to the diagrams and sketches of Claude Parent and Paul Virilio arguing for the oblique as a mode of inhabitation for *Architecture Principe* (1966) to the perspective drawing of boxers inside a locker room made by Madelon Vreisendorp for Rem Koolhaas's seminal publication, *Delirious New York* (1978). This second set of unbuilt projects is inseparable from the critique engaged by those of the first group, yet the discourse is differently centred. While all are equally theoretical in nature, the first set ultimately led away from buildings and toward their contents—to furniture and installations—while the second reinforced buildings and their constituent elements as the domains of influence. This essay examines the double life of *No-Stop City* by comparing it to these two sets of projects, each of which raise questions about the notion of building. In place of building-as-form, these readings of Archizoom's unbuilt interior offer building-as-act, as an action tied to unbuilding, rebuilding, and reconceiving of the limits and possibilities of both contemporary life and the discipline of architecture.

keywords

No-Stop City; Archizoom; section; open plan; building

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One of many 'utopian' projects undertaken by groups of young architects in the 1960s and early 1970s, *No-Stop City* was never intended to be built. As the authors explained, 'the utopia we use is solely instrumental: it represents itself, but not as a prefiguration of a different Model of the System [...], but as a critical Hypothesis related to the system itself.'[1] That is, unlike earlier idealist projects that sought to bring about a better society through building or planning, Archizoom Associati endeavoured only to expose existing and emerging urban conditions through their delineation of a hypothetical city. This disclaimer, however, did nothing to prevent the project's dismissal by contemporaneous architects and architectural writers for being insufficiently apolitical.

No-Stop City existed primarily as drawings, images, and texts for architectural journals between 1970 and 1972 and as spin-off projects and accompanying essays for exhibitions between 1972 and 1973.[2] At the same time as it was being written into existence, *No-Stop City* was being written off in the same forums. Architect Massimo Scolari, for example, described the project and its progeny as too embedded in the world of consumerism and thus not invested enough in the incremental advancement of the discipline of architecture in an essay written for the Milan Triennale of 1973.[3] Historian Manfredo Tafuri critiqued the project as inherently capitalist and pointed it out in multiple publications. In the same year as Scolari's text, for example, he assessed that the vehicles of Archizoom's work, designed objects and metropolitan images, were detached from their supposed popular audience. Disseminated through exhibitions and institutions that appealed to a select crowd, they served to reify the existing system rather than participate in any real critique.[4] To this, Tafuri later added that Archizoom gave 'a form of expression to the phenomenon of mass consumption' and that *No-Stop City* was 'transcribed with an irony "that made nobody laugh"' in later books.[5]

On at least one point, Tafuri was decidedly correct. To give expression to an emerging consumer culture was exactly what Archizoom was after. They saw that the advent of electronic media and post-Fordist production made Modernist functional plans, with designated spaces for different activities, living and working and moving, obsolete. Manufacture and trade had become possible anywhere, regardless of planning. Thus, the city, formerly a centre where trade took place, was no longer tantamount to the market. Instead, in Archizoom's words, 'the metropolis ceases to be a "place", to become a "condition"'.[6]

Perhaps, as some have suggested, *No-Stop City* was ahead of its time in foreseeing shifts in the economic and cultural landscape. Current architectural writers Kazys Varnelis and Pier Vittorio Aureli have separately argued that Tafuri, in particular, was blind to the changes to production and consumption then underway.[7] Consequently, the project's merits may not have been visible from the outdated lenses through which it was viewed. Even so, given Archizoom's output, which never evolved beyond images and objects before they disbanded in 1974, we might still ask: Did *No-Stop City* really set the discipline of architecture aside? And did the project leave anything more for architects than designing things to circulate in a consumerist world, as their critics would contend?

no-stop city, photographs

Formed in 1966 as its founding members, Andrea Branzi, Giberto Corretti, Paolo Deganello, and Massimo Morozzi, completed their architectural education at the University of Florence, Archizoom was familiar with Tafuri's writing before they became part of it. After Dario and Lucia Bartolini joined the team, their first text for *No-Stop City* was published in *Casabella* in 1970 under the title 'Ville, Chaîne de Montage du Social: Idéologie et Théorie de la Métropole.'[8] Despite the fact that Tafuri would later admonish the group, their essay picked up on many of the themes laid out in his text for *Contropiano*, 'Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica', from the

previous year.[9] Like Tafuri, Archizoom sought to put forward a critique of Modern architecture relative to capital, albeit in another form: 'To carry forward this endeavor, we have used a classic written language along with a graphic language that is more specific to our discipline.'[10]

To do this, Archizoom drew and produced images for a thought experiment accelerating consumer culture to its logical conclusion. Among these, photographs of models depict spaces containing consumer goods—Ritz crackers, canned cherries, a tent, and a motorcycle, among other things—within sterile, office-like environments composed of round columns, drop ceilings, and carpeted floors. Acting as ideograms, the objects appearing in each image construct the world of their inhabitation. Everything is small, readily available, and easily moveable, suggesting a common and nomadic population. Taken as single-point perspectives and aided by mirrors enclosing the models on three sides, the photographs describe an infinite space without obvious architectural quality [Fig. 01].

Figure 01.
Model photos of No-Stop City and its contents. *Domus* 496, March 1971. Archivio Domus © Editoriale Domus S.p.A.

archigram, supersurface, and building

Archizoom was hardly alone in exploring the failures of Modernism and the dissolution of boundaries inherent in the global economic system emerging at the time. Earlier, in 1961, Archigram, themselves a group of young architects, published the first issue of what would become a ten-issue eponymous magazine (or nine and a half, in their terms). It declared their rejection of Modernism in two pages, and later issues elaborated on what might replace it. In addition to providing a forum for publicising their own unbuilt work, the magazine allowed them to establish a dialogue with other architects, architecture students, and academics in adjacent fields, many of whom were also published on their pages. While the group was founded in the UK, the magazine would be sold across Europe and the US, at stores in London, Paris, New York, Berlin, Florence, Los Angeles, and Stockholm.[11] In it, architecture students in Florence would have read about the virtues of consumer culture and expendability, architecture as a commodity, pop culture and comics, and the metropolis. Across all, the attitude was irreverent and saw the future of architecture as embracing life in its myriad forms, as opposed to dictating it through the abstract moralism associated with Modernism.

From its first themed issue, number three, Archigram explored the contemporary world of expendability and obsolescence [Fig. 02]. While others might find fault with these qualities—decreased quality, increased waste, environmental pollution, and so on—the group insisted on seeing the bright side and offering a positive reading of them. They offered up expanded possibilities for disposable goods, including scaling them up to the size of habitable buildings. By the time the eighth issue was printed in 1968, the call for less permanence had coalesced into a thesis around choice. In it, Archigram

announced their exhibition for the fourteenth Milan Triennale around the theme of 'Greater Number' with text that read:

> Several themes crop up in the exhibition that recurrently interest the Archigram group. These themes are all to do with the personal choice that one can have over one's environment and the ways in which new combinations of parts can catalyse that choice.
>
> The ability of objects and assemblies could metamorphose over a period of time, so that we are no longer stuck with monuments of a forgotten day...the ability to use the world's surface and mobility to achieve personal freedom, the nomadic instinct and the nomadic potential of cars and car-based enclosures...the relinquishing of old hang-ups about determinism and the purity of hierarchies and preferred values....[12]

For Archigram, then, popular consumer culture offered a way to correct against the top-down dictates of Modernist architecture. To enable this, the group proposed flexible frameworks into which inhabitants could insert themselves and their dwellings, such as *Plug-in City* (1964), and dwellings as goods, such as *Living Pod* (1966), all of which existed solely in print and exhibitions.

Under the influence of Archigram, among others, and in the wake of the post-war 'Italian economic miracle'—the period from 1958 to 1963 in which Italy's economy boomed due, in part, to an influx of foreign aid for reconstruction—many young Italian designers of the 1960s turned their attention toward designed objects to both participate in a growing consumer market and to break into the architectural scene. Motivated by the twin fixations of Modernism's failures and a future enabled by choice and consumption, they invented objects that could act as architecture and take it in a new direction. The well-known 1972 exhibition at MoMA

Figure 02.
Page from Archigram 3 highlighting the qualities of 'limited life-span objects.' Page 5 of *Archigram Magazine* No. 3 © Archigram 1964.

in New York, *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, captured the scale and range of this effort, as nearly one hundred designers, most Italian, participated. Divided into two parts, the exhibition included 'objects'—furniture, fixtures, and other household items—and 'environments.' Designed specifically for the show as part of an invited competition, the latter were to create domestic environments for new events and old rituals of urban, family, or private life.[13] Most entries appeared as extensions of the 'objects' portion of the show and included things like furniture sets, designed appliances, mobile living units, or reconfigurable domestic cells.

While all the installations reimagined inhabitation, distinct among them was *Supersurface*, by the group Superstudio. It resisted designed objects as the new locus of domestic life and instead took to heart the idea of a domestic landscape. In their view, designed objects, as opposed to mass-produced or functional ones, connote status and class, things to be abolished. In place of these, their entry consisted of a scaled-down room, or model, circumscribed by mirrored walls, possibly borrowing from Archizoom's earlier photographs for *No-Stop City*. The two groups were friendly, having been classmates in Florence and participated in gallery shows together. On the lower surface of the model, wires emerged from a grid of tiles. On the upper one, 'meteorological events', such as sunrise and the passing of clouds, were projected while a recording explained the setup. Inspired by such mass events as Woodstock in 1969 and the Isle of Wight Festival in 1970, the domestic landscape, they explained, is whatever people make it.[14] Transformed into a strange and endless landscape of artificial ground and natural sky, the miniature room conveyed a place both primal and futuristic. Inhabitants could be nomadic or stationary, alone or with others, with possessions or without. In this utopia, or perhaps dystopia, the only necessity is a technical ground plane to plug into. The rest can be organised spontaneously and freely across it.

The emphasis on personal freedom underwriting projects by both Archigram and Superstudio is easy to read into Archizoom's images for *No-Stop City* by extension. All objects displayed in it are mass-produced, readily available, fast, mobile, and individually sized, and an open and endless space allows for their continual reconfiguration. Less celebratory in tone than Archigram, Archizoom nonetheless shared an understanding of consumerism's connection to individualism. Less oppositional than Superstudio, they saw openness as a requisite for freedom from both Modernism and the imposition of externally determined social values. According to a retrospective account by group member Andrea Branzi, *No-Stop City* endeavoured to set the conditions for 'freeing people from culture' without being 'an opportunity to formulate a different culture.'[15] That is, rather than invent a new shared culture, inhabitants were liberated from any dominant culture entirely, effectively making each person a culture-of-one.[16]

To this end, Archizoom designed marketable goods, such as sofas, chairs, and clothing, to be used toward the formation of these new cultures for exhibitions, including *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, both before and after the *No-Stop City*'s production. Most of their quirky items endeavoured to overturn traditional ways of using such object types. Their 1967 sofa, *Superonda*, for example, made an upright posture challenging to maintain while also encouraging new and more varied ways of sitting or lying down. Similarly, *Dressing Design: Nearest Habitat System* explored the fashion of *No-Stop City* through androgynous and oddly combined clothing: trench coats with leotards, neckties with boas, and the like.

For people like Scolari and Tafuri, these artefacts and the images produced for and around *No-Stop City* and the venues they were shown in are what call into question the project's true purpose. However, when read beside the projects of Archigram and Superstudio, it is evident that *No-Stop City* was more than a collection of things. Along with the projects of Archizoom's contemporaries, it reimagined architecture not as spaces defined by solid boundaries, markers of interior and exterior, but instead as the assembly and reassembly of bodies and things, a constant act of building, whether a space or ourselves, rather than a finished product.

And yet, distinct from the work of Archigram and Superstudio, *No-Stop City* can also be understood as an interior in the traditional sense. Even while hypothetically infinite in the horizontal direction, it is bounded below by floor and above by ceiling. The very instruments of the ideology it critiques are fundamental to its articulation. Air

conditioning, elevators, electric lighting: these Modernist technologies for the conditioning of the interior are what enable its otherwise impossible endlessness. So, just as *No-Stop City* was a 'city freed of architecture', as Andrea Branzi claimed, it was simultaneously a city co-equal with the interior.[17] Archizoom's critique of Modernism both called for the end of architecture as building and also reinforced it.

'die neue welt' and interior

The Modernism that Archizoom built upon belonged most squarely to that of architect Hannes Meyer. As part of a book series, *Collana Polis*, his writing was translated into Italian in 1969, alongside that of Ludwig Hilberseimer, who is a better known and undeniable influence on the group.[18] In *Scritti 1921–1942: Architettura O Rivoluzione*, Meyer's essay 'Die Neue Welt' laid out his views on architecture from the vantage point of 1926. Accompanying the essay were many images of recent artwork, industrial design, and built and speculative buildings authored by others. Also included was an image by Hannes Meyer himself.

In this image, Hannes Meyer photographed the corner of a room as though it was a model. The space, an interior, was lit to produce shadows resembling those of an amateurly imaged architectural model and imprecisely covered over with white cloth, exaggerating the scale of the seams between surfaces [Fig. 03]. The reverse operation—photographing an architectural model as though a building—lends an aura of reality to an idea, but Meyer's photograph turns 'reality' into an idea.

Titled, 'Co-op Interieur', the photograph and accompanying essay celebrated the standardisation of both architecture and objects, or Fordist production. Cars, planes, microphones, radios: the objects Meyer extolled allowed people, goods, or information to move easily and quickly across great distances. Derby hats, pre-sized stationery, beef extract: mass-produced goods were impersonal and transcended individual, local, or national

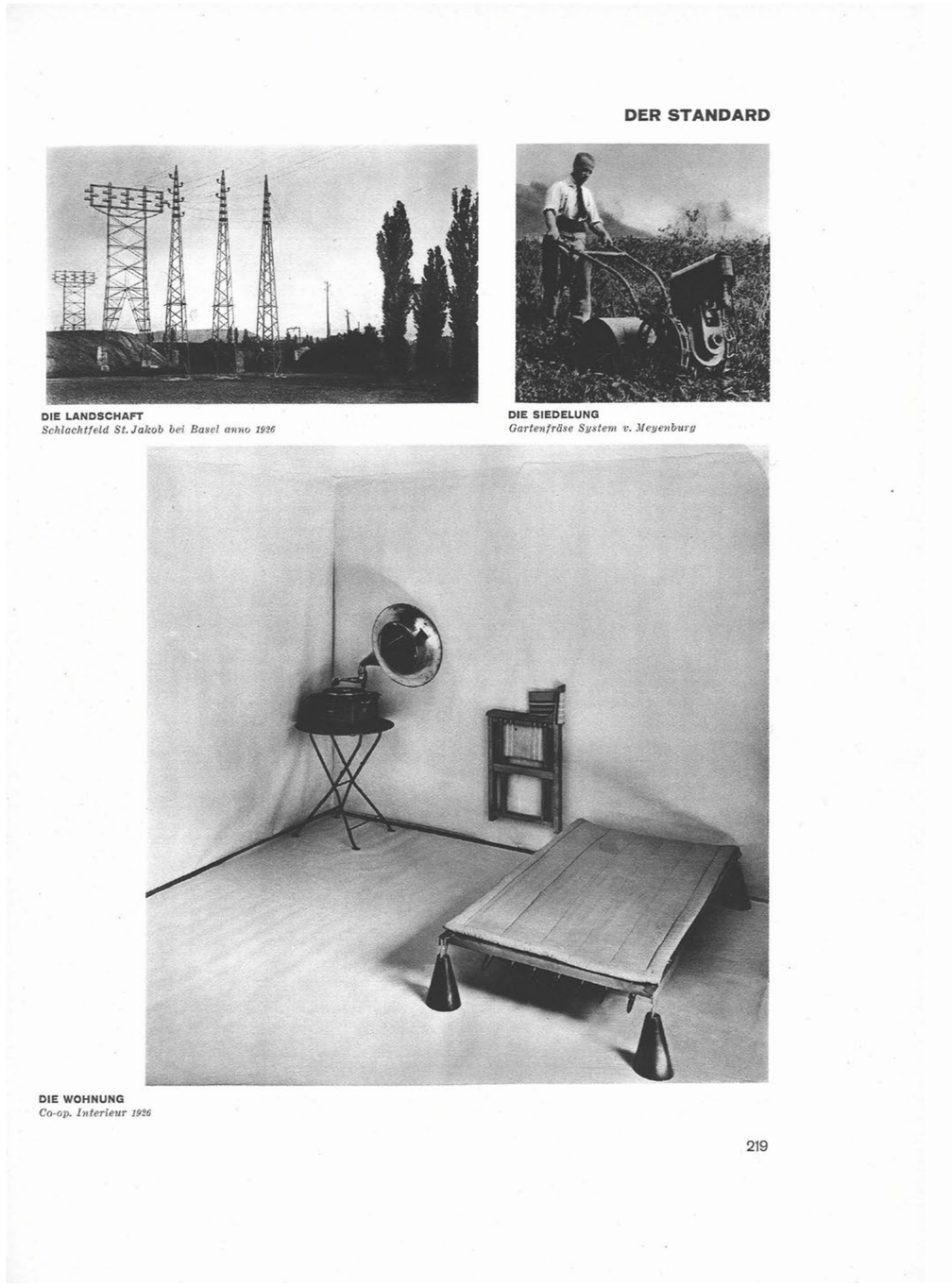

Figure 03.
Page from *Das Werk* magazine with the Co-op Interieur photo. © *Das Werk*, 7 (1926), p. 219.

differences. Important in the wake of World War I and the growing scepticism toward nationalism that followed, the ability to effectively erase distances, cross boundaries, and obscure identity opened the potential for a new, conflict-less society. Through these objects, Meyer claimed, 'We become citizens of the world.'[19]

Meyer's photograph displays a gramophone, a chair, and a cot within an all-white interior. The three objects are manufactured and portable, and together they describe this new, emerging society. The gramophone, for instance, detaches music from place, transporting it from a music hall in a specific location to any home. The chair and cot are both lightweight and easily moved, and thus free to roam, as are the inhabitants. Mass-produced and lacking markers of individuality, the items can belong to anyone and go anywhere.

In addition to evoking a particular way of life, the objects tell of the architecture that contains them. It is blank, a backdrop composed only of white surfaces: two walls and a floor. They do not speak of place, but rather serve as a container for the things that go in or on them. The space is utterly without the kind of identity imposed by style; like the objects, it could be anywhere. To be sure, nothing indicating an exterior, such as a door or window, is shown. Equally, it is receptive to any inhabitant, or to many inhabitants over time, as the curation of objects replaces décor and individual taste. For Meyer, then, the objects he selected serve as a fulcrum between the conceptualisation of a mode of living and the concrete form necessary to sustain it.

Yet, despite the reliance on consumer goods to convey his utopian dream, Meyer did not espouse individualism through choice. For him, the erasure of boundaries and identity made possible by mass production and new technology leads instead toward collective association. He says:

> Grock and the three Fratellini weld the masses—irrespective of class and racial differences—into a community with a common fate. Trade union, co-operative, Lt., Inc., cartel, trust, and the League of Nations are the forms in which today's social conglomerations find expression, and the radio and the rotary press are their media of communication. Co-operation rules the world. The community rules the individual.[20]

Thus, the world Meyer imagines is flat, without hierarchy or difference, which enables people previously held apart, whether by distance or division, to finally find commonality, and it is a non-descript architecture that allows this.

no-stop city, plans and sections

No-Stop City is a framework for people and goods (Archigram), a surface for free distribution (Superstudio), and a minimal interior (Meyer). In this mix, Archizoom makes a discovery. Even while describing the apparently contradictory ideas found in these projects, individual choice (capitalism) on one side and collective cooperation (socialism) on the other, the conditions and outcomes are the same.[21] In an essay for *Domus*, Archizoom explains:

> Production and Consumption possess one and the same ideology, which is that of Programming. Both hypothesize a social and physical reality completely continuous and undifferentiated. No autres realities exist. The factory and the supermarket become the specimen models of the future city: optimal urban structures, potentially limitless, where human functions are arranged spontaneously in a free field.[22]

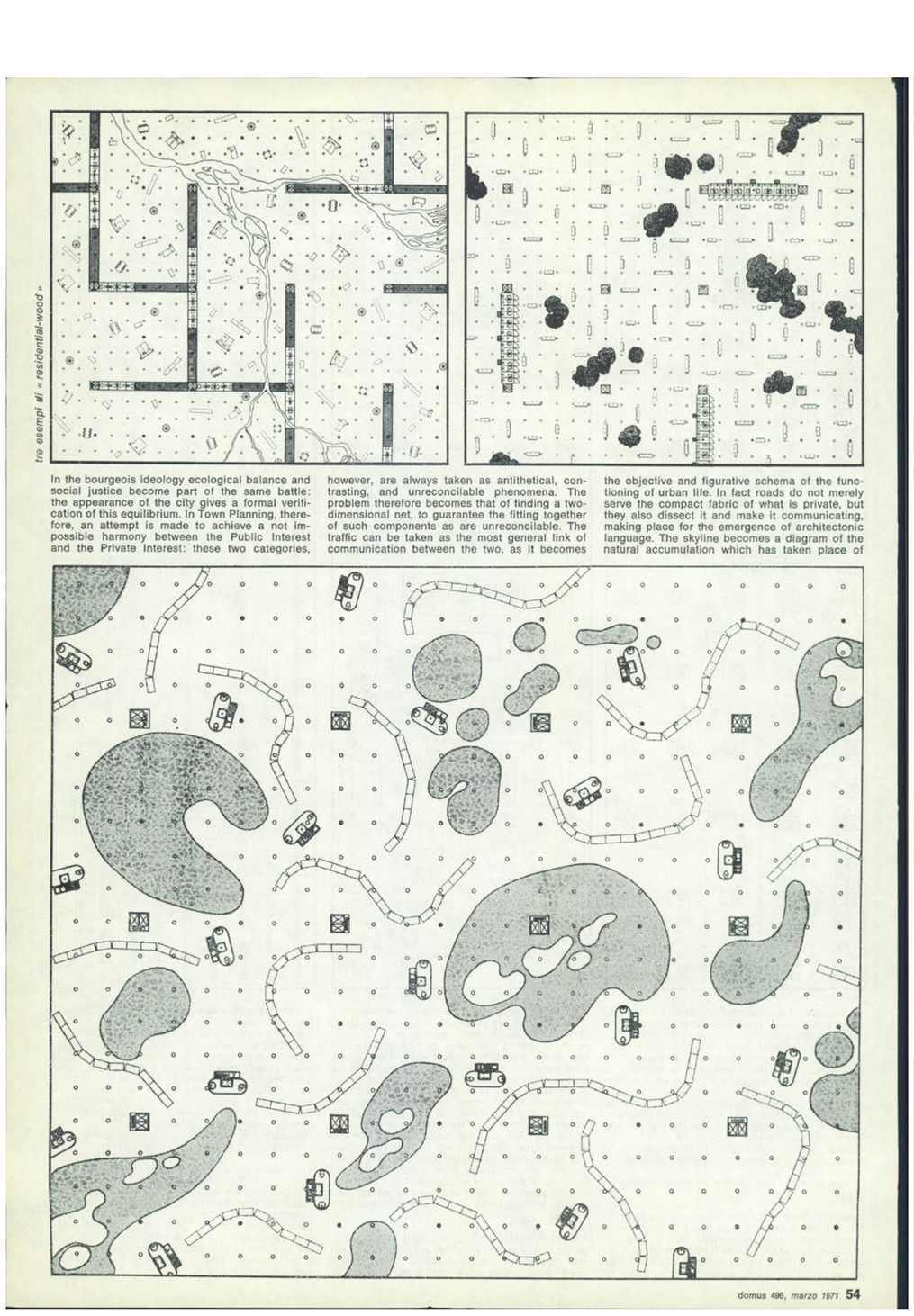

Figure 04.
Three plans for No-Stop City. *Domus,* 496 (March 1971). Archivio Domus – © Editoriale Domus S.p.A.

Plan drawings of *No-Stop City* depict a literally flat plane upon which various elements are strewn in relatively equal measure—'a bath every 100 metres, or a computer every 40 metres' [Fig. 04].[23] Neatly divided into five categories—structure, ascension, services, containers, and green—the bare necessities are each distributed according to their own logic. Columns exist on square grids, for example, while toilets or containers often follow looser, yet still equidistant, patterns. In some drawings, furniture is also shown. Across the many plans created between 1969 and 1972, which range from abstract representations using typewritten characters to proper architectural delineations, all share a quality of evenness. There are no walls, no centres or nodes, no direction, and no hierarchy. Across these open plans, imaginary inhabitants are unrestricted and free to move anywhere. They are nomads within a 'residential parking lot.'[24]

Parallel to exploring the possibilities and shortcomings of a consumer culture centred on portable and impermanent goods and the space they imply, *No-Stop City* demonstrates the limits of the open plan as an idealised architectural construct. Commonly associated with office towers, open plans lack internal division and thereby allow for mobility, temporal change, and functional overlap or drift. Extending this device past the boundary of a single building, Archizoom explored these qualities as totalities.

While freeing both architect and inhabitant from the constraints of closure, the world envisioned by Archizoom was, paradoxically, inescapable. Running off each edge of paper onto which it was drawn and stretching past any vantage point, *No-Stop City* is endless. An infinite and totalising system, it contains all oppositions, such as public and private, nature and technology, and quality and quantity, simultaneously. However, where Modernism sought to balance between opposites by means of functional planning, according to Archizoom, all distinctions collapse here: private is public, technology is nature, and quantity is quality. Everything exists everywhere and simultaneously, so there are no boundaries between one thing and another.

Without boundaries, there are also no images of the city, as there had previously been. Borrowing the idea of the urban image from Tafuri, Archizoom identifies the image of a city, its skyline, say, as a signifier of its operation under Fordism.[25] Through it, urbanism is understood as accumulation. When the distance between the metropolis and its hinterland is erased, as in *No-Stop City*, and the two become the same thing, the image of each disappears to the other. The only possible escape from this homogeneous, imageless landscape is the elevators, which are drawn into every plan along a grid coincident with that of the columns.

While numerous plans were drawn for *No-Stop City*, each showing a different possibility for what might happen in its stripped-down space, only one section was ever created. Originally produced for a version of the project entered in an architectural

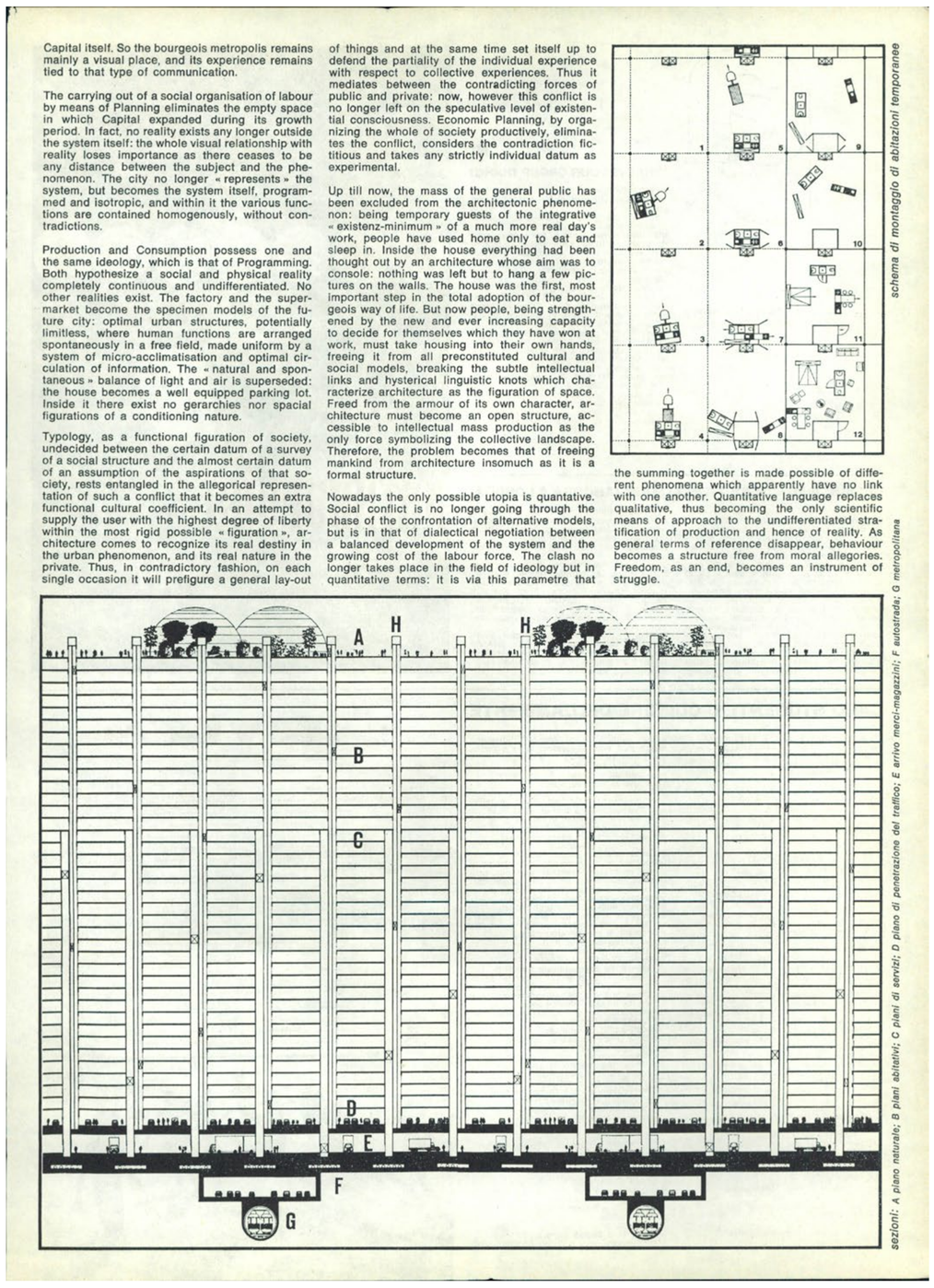

Figure 05.
The single section for No-Stop City. *Domus,* 496 (March 1971). Archivio Domus – © Editoriale Domus S.p.A.

competition in Florence in 1970 and titled 'I Progetti si Firmano', the section, like the plans, ran off the right and left sides of the page containing it.[26] It was not, however, endless in the vertical direction. Rather, repeated standard floors were sandwiched between lower circulatory levels containing parking and public transportation and an upper green roof with trees, and all are connected by elevators leading from one level to another [Fig. 05].

In text published in *Casabella* the same year, the group explains that the section is the 'stratification of homogeneous "free plans"' served by a regular grid of 'communications' (elevators, mechanical systems, and so on).[27] The separation between standard floors and green roof is justified as a move that eliminates the 'image' between the two. One is only ever in a single environment, and it is never visible from another. Therefore, as for the city, each level lacks an image.

delirious new york, *architecture principe*, and building

Overlooked by most, the section drawn by Archizoom was eventually picked up by Rem Koolhaas, although it's unclear whether the connection was direct. Numerous essays by him, such as 'Bigness', 'Generic City', and 'Typical Plan', mediate on the substance of *No-Stop City*, even when not explicitly stated. In 'Bigness', for example, Koolhaas describes 'bigness' as an outcome of Modernism's obsession with technology and employment of systems such as air conditioning, elevators, and artificial lighting. With these things, buildings were freed to become so large, nearly infinite, that their connection to the exterior could be lost. In 'Typical Plan', he describes the qualityless open plans of American skyscrapers, even illustrating the essay with a *No-Stop City* plan. Before these, though, Koolhaas examined the Manhattan skyscraper through its section.

In his 1978 book, *Delirious New York*, Koolhaas, like Archizoom before him, returns to ideas contained in Tafuri's essay, 'Per una critica dell'ideologia architettonica', to retrospectively unravel the urban condition of New York. Where Tafuri writes:

> Using a regular grid of arteries as the simple, flexible support for an urban structure whose perpetual changeability is to be safeguarded, allowed the Americans to achieve a goal that the Europeans had been unable to realize. In the United States, absolute freedom is granted to the single architectural fragment, which is situated in a context that is not formally conditioned by it.[28]

Koolhaas contends:

> The Grid is, above all, a conceptual speculation. [...] The Grid makes the history of architecture and all previous lessons of urbanism irrelevant. It forces Manhattan's builders to develop a new system of formal values, to invent strategies for the distinction of one block from another.[29]

That is, by introducing a homogeneous system of separation—the grid—to order the urban landscape, each building within it is freed to be singular. When applying this observation to a skyscraper, a building type made of repetitively stacked open plans, Koolhaas sees the same thing in a new direction. Just as the streets of Manhattan separate unique entities, the floors of a skyscraper separate different environments or programmes. The absolute separation of one typical floor from the next sets the conditions for differences to emerge between them. An office may occupy one floor and a day-care centre the next, for example, because each floor is independent of the rest.

As if to recall earlier discussions about objects and consumer culture, Koolhaas's observation about the reversibility of plan and section at the level of organisation is illustrated by a drawing of naked boxers eating oysters in a locker room on the nth floor of the Downtown Athletic Club in New York [Fig. 06]. The odd assortment of things in it demonstrates the range of possible differences that arise through this diagram, differences that are accumulated as objects (oysters and boxing

gloves) or their removal (clothing), as occupants move through the building. In this way, one may design oneself as one moves between floors and acquire accessories, much as one might with the mismatched clothing Archizoom proposed for *No-Stop City* as an expression of one's autonomy within it. Even as the section is apparently 'closed', in contrast to its corresponding open plans, it does not operate as did the functional plan or planning, which served to create equilibrium between oppositional pairs: public and private, living and working, and so on. Instead, it elicits only arbitrary differences.

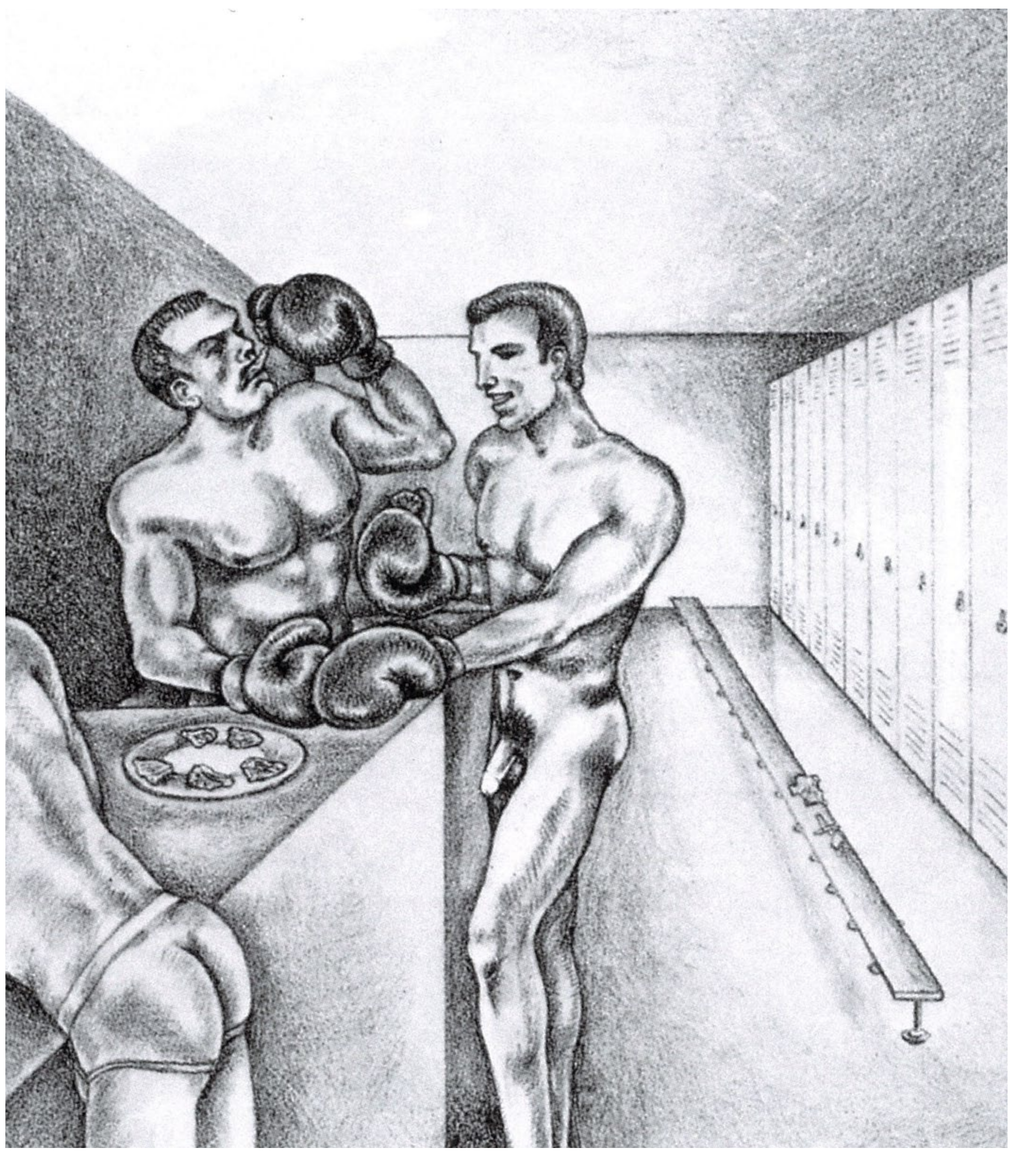

Figure 06.
Eating oysters, naked, with boxing gloves. Madelon Vriesendorp, 1978. © Madelon Vriesendorp.

Here, Koolhaas' exploration points to a fundamental contradiction in Archizoom's project, made apparent through the section of the Downtown Athletic Club. The *No-Stop City* section, it turns out, is an exacerbator of differences made possible through a multiplicity of detached interiors, while the plan is a totalising system of openness and evenness in which all oppositions cancel out. Archizoom's own vacillation on the matter magnifies the issue. In one publication, *Casabella*, the section is justified as a means for subverting image via separation. In another text, Archizoom explains that traffic 'would no longer divide the city into sections but would be arranged in an autonomous, optimal fashion, uniformly distributed throughout the land' and nature would remain separated from the interiors, so that 'no longer would the individual have his contacts with nature contaminated by architectural elements that tend to attribute to it some cultural significance.'[30] And yet, plans published in *Domus* include green elements—a river, rocky outcrops, groves of trees—as part of the interior landscape, alongside columns and toilets and kitchenettes, even as the section was printed alongside them.

In their effort to describe the inevitable endpoint of Modern architecture, Archizoom stumbled into a problem. The logic of the technical infrastructure (artificial lighting, air conditioning, elevators, and so on) underwriting *No-Stop City* implies not only outward expansion to infinity, but also upward expansion. However, this upward expansion challenges the very premise on which the project is based—the frictionless, ubiquitous space of the then-contemporary metropolis. For the Downtown Athletic club, the divide between homogeneous plan and heterogeneous section is not a problem—it is a found condition on Manhattan circa 1931 within a finite, if big, building. But for *No-Stop City*, because it wasn't built, and because it couldn't be built, and because it was nonetheless a building, it poses a question for others.

One possible answer to that question was developed roughly contemporaneously to the delineation of *No-Stop City*. Architect Claude Parent and theorist Paul Virilio explored a parallel set of concerns to those of Archizoom and endeavoured to solve Modernism's shortcomings. Their diagnosis: in the move from the universal, which can be understood as ideally accommodating anyone, to the standard, as applauded by Hannes Meyer, architecture had become purely organisation and people, mere quantities. The solution: life lived on a slope.

Together, Parent and Virilio developed a theory of the oblique through a short-lived, nine-issue pamphlet called *Architecture Principe*, published in 1966. Parent then prototyped oblique living for the *Venice Architecture Biennale* of 1970, although it had already previously been deployed at a small scale in a limited number of buildings. By tilting a floor at some angle between zero and forty-five degrees, Parent and Virilio argued, choice and participation are recovered. Inhabitants must choose, up or down, and exert varying amounts of energy in either direction.

There were many iterations of this idea, some built, such as the interior of Parent's apartment in Neuilly (c.1973) and the Church of Sainte-Bernadette du Banlay (1963), and many not. All relied upon one or more slopes to create a continuous, if enclosed, environment. The diagonal rectified the opposition between wall and floor; it was both at once. One could walk, sit, or stand easily in the same place. Parent and Virilio referred to this as 'habitable circulation.'[31] The diagonal also resolved the difference between city and nature, just as Archizoom sought to do by either removing their images or drawing them into the same space. Virilio explained:

> After the HORIZONTAL order of the rural habitat in the agricultural area, and the VERTICAL order of the urban habitat in the industrial area, the next logical (or, rather, topological) step was for us the OBLIQUE order of the post-industrial era.[32]

While not one-to-one with *No-Stop City*—Parent and Virilio's project insisted on finitude and enclosure for practical and conceptual purposes—the oblique offers a possible solution to Archizoom's sectional problem. Just as importantly, however, it underscores the architectural nature of their project. Within the discipline, and particularly within Modernism, plan and what can be seen in it—walls and thresholds, or borders and openings—have traditionally been considered as the fundamental elements involved in its modulation or lack of modulation of the social and political lives it contains. The plan is the generator, after all. This is the entire reason for doing away with walls in *No-Stop City*, a move that also seemed to erase building altogether. What is invisible in *No-Stop City's* plans but becomes evident through its section, and what the oblique underscores, is that the floor is equally essential as a conceptual and technical apparatus when considering the intersections between life and building.

Later, perhaps with this in mind, Koolhaas and his architecture firm, the Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA) 'corrected' Archizoom's section. Their design for the unbuilt Jussieu Library (1992), for example, treats flat floors like paper and bends or slices them to create sloping and ramping floors, much as Parent and Virilio had advocated. There is no break between floors; each becomes the next. When a single section is drawn through a gross circulatory path, it appears as one long, continuous, sloping line ascending the equivalent of roughly twelve floors—a diagonal open plan.

Of course, the solution is imperfect. It is finite, an enclosed building, and doesn't address transit or green. But the exact solution is not the point. Nor is the building, built or unbuilt, the important outcome. Rather, what matters is the formulation of a problem through the attempt to describe and discover an impossible to build building and the recognition of that problem later on. When conceived this way, *No-Stop City* sets the conditions for another kind of endless building—what Massimo Scolari might have considered the incremental advancement of the discipline. For him, this advancement is a collective project that entails adding to an ever-accumulating mountain of architectural history through the revision of what has come before. It is decisively not about contemporary conditions or cultural debates, but is instead focused entirely on a kind of call and response between one architect and others. While Scolari was prone to seeing Archizoom as part of an avant garde that had abandoned building and discipline, the situation of their *No-Stop City* project relative to works by earlier and later architects, such

as Hannes Meyer, Claude Parent and Paul Virilio, and Rem Koolhaas and his firm, OMA, shows that it in fact operated at both levels, as an exploration of the found, non-architectural world and as an imperfect, but perfectable, architectural statement made manifest primarily through unbuilt buildings.[33]

conclusion

Contrary to what Archizoom's critics would contend, *No-Stop City* abandoned neither the disciplinary basis of architecture nor the field's concern with building in favour of objects and exhibitions. Rather, it used objects and occupied exhibitions to question building. It did this alongside projects by other groups of young architects in the 1960s and 1970s by turning from building-as-form to building-as-act. In place of drawings for the construction of buildings, Archizoom and others produced drawings and photographs to convey the building, unbuilding, and rebuilding of new modes of life, and mobile or disposable objects were the materials enabling this shift.

No-Stop City also did this within the context of a broader range of projects spanning the twentieth century. Among these, the objects of Archizoom's discourse take on a different meaning. Rather than stand alone, they provide evidence of the kind of architecture containing them, just as Hannes Meyer's objects did decades earlier. *No-Stop City* is an open plan, a space without walls or formal articulation, taken so far that its corresponding section loses sense. In this very fundamental articulation of an architectural problem, however absurd, Archizoom engages with the disciplinary, or interior, dimension of the field, even while using it to describe exterior, or social and cultural, concerns.

That all this played out in architectural journals and exhibitions read or visited by architects, critics, and enthusiasts should be no surprise, however *No-Stop City* is understood. In the end, it was not a sofa or printed image Archizoom was selling in these venues, but instead a way to think about—to build, unbuild, and rebuild—architecture itself.

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notes

1 Archizoom Associati, 'City, Assembly Line of Social Issues: Ideology and Theory of the Metropolis', in *No-Stop City*, ed. by Andrea Branzi (HYX, 2006), pp. 156–74 (p. 157).

2 For an accounting of the project's timeline, see Pablo Martinez Capdevila, 'The Interior City. Infinity and Concavity in the No-Stop City (1970–1971)', *Cuadernos de Proyectos Arquitectónicos*, 4 (2013), pp. 130–32 (p. 130).

3 Massimo Scolari, 'The New Architecture and the Avant-Garde', in *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, ed. by K. Michael Hays (MIT Press, 1998), pp. 126–45 (p. 129).

4 Manfredo Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia: Design and Capitalist Development*, trans. by Barbara Luigia La Penta (MIT Press, 1973), pp. 141–42.

5 Manfredo Tafuri, *The Sphere and the Labyrinth*, trans. by Pellegrino d' Acierno and Robert Connolly (MIT Press, 1987), p. 285; Manfredo Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture*, 1944–1985, trans. by Jessica Levine (MIT Press, 1989), p. 99; For more on architectural debate and criticism in Italy at the time, see Pablo Martinez Capdevila, 'An Italian Querelle: Radical vs. Tendenza', *Log*, 40 (2017), pp. 67–81.

6 Archizoom Associati, 'Residential Car Park: Universal Climatic System', in *No-Stop City*, ed. by Andrea Branzi (HYX, 2006), pp. 176–79 (p. 177).

7 Kazys Varnelis, 'Programming After Program: Archizoom's No-Stop City', *PRAXIS: Journal of Writing + Building*, 8 (2006), pp. 82–91 (pp. 84–85); Pier Vittorio Aureli, *The Project of Autonomy* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2008), p. 78.

8 Archizoom Associati, 'City, Assembly Line of Social Issues', pp. 156–74.

9 Manfredo Tafuri, 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', in *Architecture Theory Since 1968*, ed. by K. Michael Hays (MIT Press, 1998), pp. 6–35.

10 Archizoom Associati, 'City, Assembly Line of Social Issues', pp. 156–57.

11 Archigram, *Archigram*, 8 (1968).

12 Archigram, *Archigram*, 8 (1968).

13 Emilio Ambasz, *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, ed. by Emilio Ambasz (Museum of Modern Art, 1972), pp. 139–44.

14 Superstudio, 'Superstudio', in *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, ed. by Emilio Ambasz (Museum of Modern Art, 1972), p. 244.

15 Andrea Branzi, 'Postface', in *No-Stop City*, ed. by Andrea Branzi (HYX, 2006), pp. 139–55 (pp. 147–48).

16 Archizoom, 'Archizoom', in *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, ed. by Emilio Ambasz (Museum of Modern Art, 1972), pp. 232–39 (p. 234).

17 Branzi, 'Postface', p.152.

18 Branzi, 'Postface', p.149.

19 Hannes Meyer, 'The New World', in *The Weimar Republic Sourcebook*, ed. by Anton Kaes, Martin Jay and Edward Dimendberg (University of California Press, 1994), pp. 445–48 (p. 446).

20 Meyer, 'The New World', p. 446.

21 A similar point is made in Capdevila, 'An Italian Querelle', pp. 130–32.

22 Archizoom Associati, 'Residential Car Park', p. 178.

23 Varnelis, 'Programming After Program', p. 89.

24 One of Archizoom's *No-Stop City* texts, published in *Domus* in 1971, was titled 'No-Stop City: Parkings Résidentiels, Système Climatique Universel.'

25 Tafuri, *Architecture and Utopia*.

26 For more about Archizoom's entry for the competition, see Francesco Marullo, 'Climatic Universal System', *Journal of Architectural Education,* 73.2 (2019), pp. 168–77.

27 Archizoom Associati, 'City, Assembly Line of Social Issues', p. 173.

28 Tafuri, 'Toward a Critique of Architectural Ideology', p. 13.

29 Rem Koolhaas, *Delirious New York* (Monacelli Press, 1994), p. 20.

30 Archizoom, *Italy*, pp. 238–39.

31 Claude Parent, *Architecture Principe 3*, reprinted in *The Function of the Oblique*, ed. by Pamela Johnston (AA Documents, 1996), pp. 67–68.

32 Paul Virilio, 'Architecture Principe', in *The Function of the Oblique*, ed. by Pamela Johnston (AA Documents, 1996), pp. 11–13 (p. 12).

33 For Scolari's point of view, see Scolari, 'The New Architecture and the Avant-Garde', pp. 126–45.