

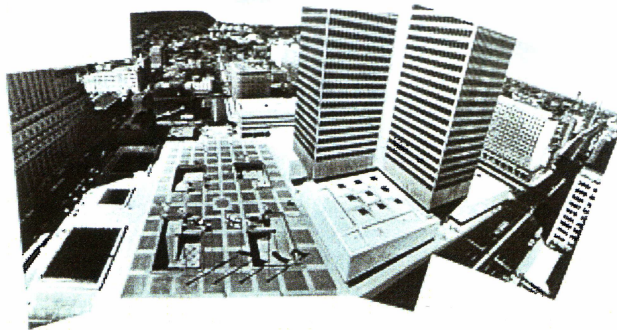


## Learning from Montreal?

by  
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## DESIGNING 21<sup>st</sup> CENTURY CITIES IN CANADA

An Urban Design Lab University of Calgary Publication



## **Learning from Montreal?**

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### **The architecture and urban design project viewed as a catalyst of identity. Analysis of recent contributions to Montrealness (1992-2002).**

#### Abstract

*How and toward what is the "Montrealness" of the built environment in Montreal evolving? How does the built landscape's personality evolve as fact (observed trends) and idea (formulated trends), as seen in recent projects? Between urbanism (typomorphological) and the new modernism (adapting new technologies so they are appropriate to the enduring nature and spirit of a place, the genius loci), designers are creating a renewed Montrealness. With respect to the idea of the specific character (in terms of materials, construction systems, forms, styles, scale, density, networks) that should properly be imposed on Montreal's built environment to maintain and support its unique identity, that idea is created by its interpreters: designers (through their projects), and then observers (through the critical reception of the projects). The idea emerges from recycling, from one project to another, those characteristics that typify it. Despite and beyond a certain codified tradition of Montrealness, we have recently witnessed the emergence of projects that seem to break with the established imagery of identity. Is this a paradigm shift or the slow effacement of a Montreal personality recorded in the strata of earlier urban experiments that make up the cityscape? By identifying the emerging trends among designers who care about making their work compatible with the continuity of Montreal's imagery of identity—which gives physical reality to the personality of Montreal through the built environment—but who also demonstrate the innovation and creativity characteristic of the neo-modernists, our research has revealed the emergence of a new hybrid paradigm, "critical contextuality."*

To discuss the question of learning from Montreal, I will share some findings based on my doctoral research. My work is involved with the idea of “The Montrealness of Montreal”; more precisely, I examine the process by which recent urban and architectural projects in Montreal contribute to creating the image of a city as its urban identity, i.e. the specific perceived personality of a built landscape. Montrealness has been a focus of interest since architect and urban artist Melvin Charney coined the expression in the late 1970s. Our position is that Montrealness, being this particular personality of the city’s built urban form, is constituted as a result of representations and discourses, such as recognition by critics, which are attributed to architectural and urban features, and thus would originate during the genesis of projects, in the design choices made with respect to figures and strategies. Hence, our methodology is based on an analysis of projects' "genetic" documents such as drawings, models and other material used during the creative process, which communicate architectural concepts and intentions while confronting their Montrealness with the critical discourse surrounding the projects.

But this approach, while contributing to investigating of the role of representations in the production of space, is primarily concerned with the continuity of urban form—in space as well as in time—within the perspective of change. In other words, we are looking into the process of updating the idea of Montrealness.

The renewal of urban identity is particularly crucial in the context of globalization, which creates tensions between the local and the global (Castells, 1997), namely in the form of economic and cultural rivalry between cities. Indeed, research shows (Dear, 2001) that a strong self-image may be a factor in positioning cities in the global context. From this standpoint, how (by what mechanisms and tools during the design process) may urban projects contribute to asserting, intensifying or updating such identity?

### **A model or a personality?**

There is an ambiguity indeed in the "learning from" question, particularly when discussing the built form of one city, in this case Montreal, with actors concerned with cities elsewhere. By "learning from," do we mean studying a model to serve as an example for planning elsewhere, or

are we interested in "learning from" as a design method for planning and building the urban landscape of that particular city? Trevor Boddy has recently made this crucial distinction, even though his focus was not on design methods but on discourse (writings) about Vancouver.

Speaking of Vancouverism (Boddy, 2004), he rightly distinguishes between Vancouverism as a kind of "New Urbanism" prototype for planning new high-density residential neighbourhoods (in this case tall, skinny high-rise towers set on townhouse podiums) as opposed to Vancouverism meant as an intimate Vancouver sense of place. In other words, he contrasts the Vancouver *model* with what one might call the Vancouver *style* (let us rather use the word *personality*).

In Trevor Boddy's (2003) words:

"Vancouverism is evolving a second and more interesting sense, that of the latent [urban] character. [...] Call it the theory, or the legacy, or the *idea* of Vancouver, but increasingly our writers are producing books that capture this precious moment of self-knowledge, as this good-looking adolescent of a city enters a more complicated young adulthood."

However, Canadian cities, young and old, are the subject of this process of self-knowledge not only for the sake of historical insight. Our focus is that the very *idea* or *image* of the personality of a place which is being asserted by such investigations or discourse is a potent ingredient in the design of the urban landscape when it is taken into account in design methods. As a result, a unique urban identity is conferred upon that landscape. Certainly, this identity is continuously subject to change. We propose to show that such change, such an *updating process*, is brought forth through a few seminal projects combined with the recognition—or critical reception—that surrounds them. Urban identity is thus the result of a negotiation between the *material landscape* and the *ideational landscape* of its representations and the discourses created around it.

In my doctoral research, I am looking particularly into the urban and architectural design methodologies that recycle this precious stuff of which the identity of a place is made. In their projects, how do urban designers and architects promote and/or update the special quality attributed to a particular city?

To tackle this subject, two questions are raised with respect to the case of Montreal. How did the particular personality of Montreal's built landscape which we call Montrealness become codified and established as an ideational landscape? What is the mechanism that enables some projects to contribute to the evolution of the "Montrealness of Montreal," and in what way does this occur? Two concepts will be explored in order to get to the heart of the matter:

1- the process of codification of the idea or image of Montreal's built form—this involves observers (critics, theorists and artists who consecrate images of a city in their productions and writings);

2- the concept of recycling and/or updating this idea or image in projects—this involves urban designers and architects.

### **The Montrealness of Montreal**

With respect to the codification of the special quality attributed to a city, Montreal has an interesting and rich history which we will not go into in detail; however, let us briefly mention its milestones.

The first coherent manifesto that involved Montreal's specificity was published in 1971 by Melvin Charney, artist and architect, then a professor at the School of Architecture of the University of Montreal. This neo-rationalist manifesto explores a populist approach to urban form: a sort of argument for "Learning from Montreal," published a year before Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown's landmark "Learning from Las Vegas" (published in 1972). Charney's approach is resolutely urban vernacular (according to him, authentic modern architecture typical of Québec is to be found in the streets), and populist (this architecture has evolved, as he says, independently from official and academic architecture). He maintains that beyond its monuments, the architecture that is characteristic of a city is revealed in the street and in the buildings that constitute it: the street provides the built landscape with its overall cohesiveness. Charney uses this fertile ground as the basis for asserting the necessity, or as he puts it, the quote-unquote "project," of affirming the Québécois identity and *renewing* it through the original works of architects. New buildings are to be linked to the urban fabric and are to respect the autonomy, so to speak, of a character specific to Montreal. In 1980, Charney coined the expression "the Montrealness of Montreal" to express this specific character of the urban landscape.

In 1978, Charney founded the Urban Architecture Unit at the University of Montreal's School of Architecture. The Unit would give rise to a project approach which became known as the School of Montreal (Martin, 1995:10).

Of course, this posture, a sort of "urbanism of the street," was at that time, in the 1970's, in line with post-modern ideologies devoted to reintroducing the semantic value of the built environment into design methods. In Quebec, project methods were marked by a typomorphological contextualism that took into account the urban dimension of the architectural intervention. Themes such as "continuity," "insertion" and "integration" were typical of the era. For proponents of this approach, urban identity was a matter of *reprise* or emulation of the characteristics of earlier eras, or of the "existing." Urban continuity consisted in "fitting in" and in preserving the traces of existing structures, whether manifest or hidden (evolving around the idea of a palimpsest). From the 1980s onward, Montreal's projects were praised and rewarded precisely for their integration into the existing context. Vaguely based on Charney's paradigm and that of supporters of historical conservation, critics used Montrealness as a generic attribute without further exploring its figures. Meanwhile, a rather restricted idea of Montrealness became codified and is now pervasive in Montreal's municipal bylaws, perhaps owing to former Urban Architecture Unit graduates hired by the city throughout the years. The intention to recycle the existing characteristics captured in charts and laid down in regulations is being strongly implemented.

Today, in spite of the regulatory framework, is this codification being transgressed in some recent projects that are successfully updating the very concept of Montreal's ideational landscape?

Our studies have revealed that in recycling such a codified identity, architects and urban designers have stood up to the contemporary challenge and have come up with a new blend of modern and post-modern attitudes. Before I point out some brief examples of this in Montreal, let me discuss a couple of precedents from elsewhere.

An inspirational example is Christian de Portzamparc's redevelopment of the Parisian Left Bank neighbourhood around the new *Très Grande Bibliothèque*. In the late 1990s, he devised an interesting urban regulation tool he calls *l'ilot ouvert* (the open urban block). Based on his hybrid

urban model, suitable for what he calls the Third Age of Cities, he makes reference to the 20th century heritage that includes both progressist and cultural approaches to city form.

He rejects both the classical concept of contiguous buildings that shape the streetscape and the total independence of buildings from the street. His model for recycling the idea of the typical Parisian urban fabric is in fact a hybrid that lies somewhere between, on one hand, Le Corbusier's ideal of fresh air and natural light for most individual dwellings on one hand, and on the other hand, the 19th century's idealized integrity of the street as a living urban civic space. In other words, he refers to the two paradigms that either coexist or oppose one other everywhere today: the "culturalist" paradigm in which the city is understood as an urban fabric—referring to the classical culture of the "active void" between buildings—and the modern "progressist" paradigm in which the city can be considered the sum of buildings as autonomous isolated objects.

We can also consider another "learning from" manifesto that might be useful to revisit today. Rem Koolhaas' *Delirious New York*<sup>1</sup>—a sort of "Learning from New York" published in 1978, seven years after Charney's "Learning" and six years after Venturi and Scott-Brown's—is concerned with the volumetric space of the urban streetscape combined with modernist free-standing high-rise buildings. In the image "The City of the Captive Globe", Rem Koolhaas and Zoe Zenghelis imagine the possibility of creating a continuous space of streets shaped by an alignment of urban blocs punctuated by a collection of "metropolitan" buildings' free-reference shapes. In contrast to what Trevor Boddy describes as Vancouverism as a model, Koolhaas's study is not an example of how to build elsewhere. Instead, it inspires as a method of investigation through tools proper to architects and urban designers: the project as both instrumental know-how and knowledge or in other words, as both task-oriented thinking and critical thinking.

Throughout my research, I have been fascinated by examples of projects everywhere that recycle the existing characteristics of urban landscape (an attitude based on typomorphology) while hybridizing with a neo-modernist freedom of invention within the contemporary paradigm. These projects may subsequently be recognized by critics and observers of urban architecture for their contribution to a city's specific character, thus changing the expected image codified in the ideational landscape while embracing the ideal of urban continuity in time and in space. And in

doing so, these projects do in fact succeed in reinventing and updating the urban identity of a particular city. Their impact on this shifting identity is achieved through a serial effect, as other designers and architects become aware of the revised ideational characteristics and use them. In this manner, a process that can thus be called "learning from Montreal" takes place.

Meanwhile, rather than merely identifying these seminal projects, my research is concerned with the mechanisms intrinsic to the design methods used and the transformation of the ideational characteristics (in our case, features of Montrealness) that speak of a specific urban identity of built form (the Montrealness of Montreal).

### **"Learning from" as a design method**

We have observed that this hybrid attitude—which appears to be developing concurrently with other attitudes in architecture, some of which are much less concerned with physical context or local identity—seems to have appeared simultaneously in many places (Paris, Singapore, Vancouver, Montreal).

I am tempted to call this observed trend a "critical contextualism" which is specifically concerned with the urban landscape, in contrast to Kenneth Frampton's well-known critical regionalism, which seems to rely rather on examples from regional architecture or isolated urban buildings.

In Montreal, I have documented examples of such hybrid updating of Montrealness. They show how the already codified Montrealness is recycled in new and unexpected ways. This would be the second concept mentioned earlier: the updating process as we were able to observe it in the "genetic" material (drawings, models, notes) of "delinquent" projects: delinquent vis-à-vis the expected, codified image of the city's built form at a particular time. In this case, "learning from" becomes truly a design method, an emerging paradigm among design postures that refer to the physical context of projects to be built.

Let us briefly examine a few examples of the features of Montrealness which were produced to implement this new paradigm. One such feature would be a type of urban contingency new to Montreal. In some seminal projects that have recently shaped the new face of the *Quartier international de Montréal*—namely Daoust Lestage's much praised *Centre CDP Capital*<sup>2</sup>, set in

the newly revitalized urban project *Le Quartier international de Montréal*, also designed by the team, and the new addition to the *Palais des congrès de Montréal*, designed by a consortium lead by Saia Barbarese Topuzanov<sup>3</sup>—we can observe the emergence of a particular blending of the modernist model of layered segregation which gave birth to Montreal's underground city as it developed from the Place Ville-Marie project in the 1960s (fig. 1) with the traditional model of horizontal organic contingency of public and semi-public pedestrian space which is characteristic of the historical urban fabric typical of Montreal up to the mid-20th century. In line with the modernist ideal (fig. 2) , as Vanlaethem puts it (Vanlaethem, 2004), of verticality (the tower, as a built object, surrounded by open space) and three-dimensional urban space (a base of infrastructures performing at the level of the urban block and the region, including its depressed and elevated highways and the underground networks of its indoor city) which prevailed during Montreal's Urban Renewal episode, the neighbourhood of the future *Quartier international* was thoroughly devastated, mainly by the construction of the Ville-Marie Expressway (fig. 3). As Daoust Lestage set out to mend and reconstruct the public realm in this very central part of the city, they acknowledged both these contradictory traditions in their hybrid proposal, which combines the modernist ideal of multilayered verticality with the typomorphological ideal of spatial continuity of the public realm indoors and in, under and above ground level, in order to provide the city with alternative pedestrian itineraries that are intertwined with the fabric of streets and sidewalks linked to the underground city (fig.4). A similar interest in urban connectivity seems to be occurring in some recent projects elsewhere, such as the Singapore "landscapers."

The indoor city, a distinctive feature of Montreal, is complemented by underground passages or alternative paths that pass through buildings, sometimes at ground-floor level (*Palais des congrès*), sometimes across buildings suspended, as veritable bridges, above former streets that have been reconfigured (a linear hall, the "*Parquet*", runs through the Centre CDP Capital from east to west, forming a sort of hyphen connecting two urban squares, fig. 5).

This variety of pedestrian itineraries creates the sort of relationship between outdoor public space and indoor public (or semi-public) space so essential to the typomorphological approach from which the paradigm inspired by Melvin Charney has emerged. One of the founding images of this approach, Gianbattista Nolli's 1748 plan of Rome, an analytic horizontal view of the solids and voids of the city, which was rediscovered and adopted by the neo-rationalist proponents of

typomorphology<sup>4</sup>, exemplifies the typomorphological ideal of organic horizontal contingency. The *poché* of the historical development of the urban fabric became an essential tool to these design methods.

Another feature of Montrealness is the reference to the emblematic Montreal greystone in the use of contemporary materials and technologies in curtain walls. In contrast to the glass façades of the 1960s, which were widely criticized for their lack of integration into the existing traditional urban landscape, some designers and architects are reinventing contemporary tectonics to provide continuity with Montreal's typical stone façades (fig. 6) in terms of a greystone-like stereotomic quality of shadows, textures and thickness. These recent projects demonstrate a rich plasticity of surface, a tectonic quality that distinguishes them from the first generation of glass curtain walls. An inspirational example is again Daoust Lestage's *Centre CDP Capital*. According to the designers, and as is apparent in the design drawings, the concern with using an innovative construction system—a double glass wall that was developed specifically for this project and provides exceptional thermal performance—and adapting it to the idea of the Montrealness of stone walls can be considered an example of an investment in identity through invention. Montreal greystone, which is both a material and an imagery of identity, can be said to be "translated" into a contemporary expression.

According to Éric Gauthier, one of the architects of the project, the intention was to use this articulated curtain wall to make reference to the details of a stone wall by creating a kind of effect of thickness (fig. 7). The changing lines of shadows reveal projections and hollows, the play of thicknesses within the double glass wall, of transparency and of relief. An effect of grain, of texture and grey colour is thus achieved, enhanced by the use of strips of greystone cladding. All of these tectonic impressions refer back to the craft of the stonecutter.

So after its frequent use in the 1960s and 1970s, the all-glass curtain wall is back to Montreal. Will a second generation be more concerned with preserving the memory of a built environment consisting predominantly of masonry? And will this concern be expressed as a contemporary translation of a generic Montreal characteristic rather than as an imitation, as is the case with artificial stone clad façades?

Our research has yielded these and other examples of such contemporary transfer of ideational characteristics that are a translation rather than an imitation of Montreal's existing

cityscape. Here, the mechanism involves an abstracted *idea* of Montrealness rather than any specific architectural vocabulary of forms and ways to build. A common aspect of this emerging paradigm is the hybridization or cross-fertilization between the modern and classical paradigms. While keeping with the modern heritage that shaped Montreal's identity as a modern metropolis decades ago, architects and designers are drawing on references within the evolving universal culture and simultaneously making a clear reference to the city's classical or traditional heritage.

A fascinating example of this hybridization is found in another aspect of Daoust Gauthier's *Centre CDP Capital* project. We are thinking of the evolution of the crowning of a building. Since the completion of this project, many recent projects mark a return to the classical idea of tripartite composition: base, body, crowning (fig. 8). While this feature is part of the recent universal architectural culture, it resonates with the continuity of Montreal's character: most historical buildings surrounding the new projects in the *Quartier international de Montréal* do in fact follow this principle (fig. 9). However, a closer look reveals that the roof-level strategies of these new projects have more in common with the idea of the fifth façade, or "living on the roof": one of the most striking images of the new and the modern which was so important to the Modern Movement from the outset<sup>5</sup>. In contrast, consider an example of a recycling of architectural features which lacks the updating that would ideally take place: a project from the 1990s which merely imitates Victorian roof shapes to top a contemporary high-rise hotel on the edge of Old Montreal (fig. 10).

This feature of modernity has slowly made its way in Montreal's urban landscape since the 1970s, when the initial attempts to domesticate rooftops appeared in the form of *ad hoc* sun decks and eventually more formal rooftop additions and penthouses, which later developed into genuine crowning elements that involved the entire volumetric composition of the building. The whole concept of the fifth façade points to other future developments such as the increased popularity of the idea of "green roofs" and the "Urban Agriculture" movements.

We hope that we have shown how our research reveals design methods that recycle and/or update the idea of Montrealness. In this sense, "learning from Montreal" is part of a design process that draws upon the talent and imagination of architects and designers who virtually create the sense of place in their projects by contributing to the identity of the place called Montreal. Heirs of post-World War II project methodologies that recycle the semantic value of

the built environment in new buildings and urban improvement schemes and take into account the context in which they will be set, these projects contribute to the urban identity of the built environment through the recognition of the imagery of identity which they convey. While identity does rely on a good measure of continuity in time and in space, nevertheless these architects do not adhere to merely retrospective attitudes. In the theory that underlies their projects, will there be a meeting of the minds to overcome the apparently irreconcilable opposition between supporters of the recent enthusiasm for the neo-modern option, indifferent as it often is to context, and supporters of the realism of practices that look to the conservationist option to provide a sense of perennity and urban continuity?

Thierry Paquot (2005)—a scholar with the *Institut d'urbanisme de Paris*, a prolific scientific writer and the editor of the magazine *Urbanisme*—reminds us that in this age of globalization of urbanism, it is more than ever important to investigate the links between professional practice (architecture, urban design, urban planning) and the culture, identity and history of a place and its inhabitants. In an era of reconfiguration of identities, it seems to us that in updating codified identities, the contemporary challenge is to produce a new amalgam of the modern and the post-modern heritage.

Alena Prochazka

## Illustrations



Fig.1 The modernist model of layered segregation which gave birth to Montreal's underground city as it developed from the Place Ville-Marie project (architects I.M. Pei and Ass., with Affleck, Desbarats, Dimakopoulos, Lebensold, arch., 1958–65). Place Ville Marie, was developed as an entire city block by Canadian National Railway Company Real Estate. It confirmed the importance of Montréal's below-ground pedestrian walkway system, which had its origins in CN's Central Station. (Source: Pei Cobb Freed & Partners Architects Web site [<http://www.pcf-p.com/a/p/5503/s.html>] consulted on March 4, 2005)



Fig.2 The modernist ideal of verticality (the tower, as a built object, surrounded by open space) and three-dimensional urban space (a base of infrastructures performing at the level of the urban block and the region, including its depressed and elevated highways and the underground networks as illustrated in Ludwig Hilberseimer's 1924 watercolour *Cité verticale: vue en perspective, rue nord-sud* from the collection of The Art Institute of Chicago, a gift of George E. Danforth (Source: Ruth Eaton, 2001©:177)



Fig.3 During Montreal's Urban Renewal episode, the neighbourhood of the future *Quartier international de Montréal* was thoroughly devastated, mainly by the construction of the Ville-Marie Expressway from 1966 on. The Ville-Marie Expressway was part of the site for the *Centre CDP Capital* project. Daoust Lestage's building would eventually span the depressed expressway. (Source: Daoust Lestage, architecture et design urbain archives)

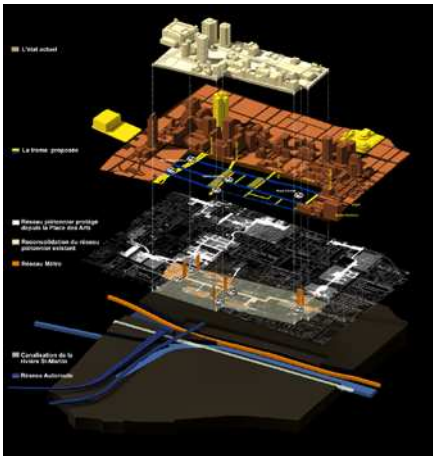


Fig.4 Inspired by the idea of the palimpsest, Daoust Lestage's urban improvement project for the *Quartier international de Montréal* set out to mend and reconstruct the public realm in this very central part of the city by combining the modernist ideal of multilayered verticality with the typomorphological ideal of spatial continuity of the public realm indoors and in, under and above ground level, in order to provide the city with alternative pedestrian itineraries that are intertwined with the fabric of streets and sidewalks linked to the underground city. Illustrated here in a drawing titled *Les éléments de la composition urbaine: interventions souterraines* (Source: *Le projet du quartier international de Montréal, Volet aménagement, Esquisse préliminaire*, June 1999, Gauthier Daoust Lestage Inc. – Provencher Roy & Ass. Architecture et design urbain. Illustration by N.O.M.A.D.E.)



Fig.5 A linear hall, the "Parquet," runs through the *Centre CDP Capital* from east to west, forming a sort of hyphen connecting two urban squares. Drawing by N.O.M.A.D.E. (Source: Daoust Lestage, architecture et design urbain archives)



Fig.6 Montreal's typical greystone façades feature a stereotomic quality of shadows, textures and thickness. (Source: photo Alena Prochazka)



Fig.7 Daoust Lestage's *Centre CDP Capital* features an articulated curtain wall that makes reference to the details of stone walls by creating a kind of effect of thickness. (Source: Daoust Lestage, architecture et design urbain archives)



Fig.8 Daoust Gauthier's Centre *CDP Capital*

project is an example of the evolution of the crowning of Montreal's most recent buildings. Since the completion of this project, most landmark buildings have followed this trend. While this feature is part of the recent universal architectural culture, it resonates with the continuity of Montreal's character.



Fig.9 The 1912 Unity Building designed by David Jerome Spence for the

Unity Building Company is neighbouring the Daoust Lestage's project in the *Quartier international de Montréal*. (Source : Ville de Montréal Heritage Web site

[<http://patrimoine.ville.montreal.qc.ca/prix/speciaux03.htm#wawanessa>] consulted on March 15 2006)



Fig.10 *Centre de commerce mondial de Montréal*

designed in 1991 by Provencher Roy architectes (Source: Daoust Lestage, architecture et design urbain archives)

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## NOTES

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<sup>1</sup> This work (Koolhaas, 1990) presents Koolhaas's theory that "Manhattan has generated its own metropolitan Urbanism—a *Culture of Congestion...*" and suggests the hypothesis that "the metropolis needs/deserves its own specialized architecture, one that can vindicate the original promise of the metropolitan condition and develop the fresh traditions of the Culture of Congestion further..." p. 242.

<sup>2</sup> Designed by the Consortium Gauthier, Daoust Lestage inc. / Faucher Aubertin Brodeur Gauthier / Lemay et associés.

<sup>3</sup> Designed by the Consortium TDS inc.: Les architectes Tétréault Parent Languedoc et assoc., Saia Barbarese Topouzanov Architectes, Les architectes Dupuis, Dubuc et associés (*Ædifica*) and Hal Ingberg Architect as independent consultant.

<sup>4</sup> Inspired by the work of the Italian neo-rationalists and taken up again by Castex and Panerai (the French School) as well as by the School of Montreal, urban typomorphology as a design approach has remained active under the auspices of the group around the magazine *Urban Morphology*, along with other European partners, Michael Conzen and Anne Vernez-Moudon.

<sup>5</sup> The idea of the fifth façade or "living on the roof" was suggested to le Corbusier by the FIAT racetrack in Torino as he published it, speaking of his fascination with industrial architecture, in his *Vers une architecture* (Paris: Arthaud , 1977). In fact, Le Corbusier's 1930 terrace apartment on the roof of an apartment building in Paris, commissioned by a wealthy client named Charles de Beistegui is one of the very first Modern Movement projects featuring living on the roof. In this, Le Corbusier was took also inspiration from Mediterranean vernacular architecture.