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**War ruins, peace landscapes, metropolitan nomadism.
[“Natura artificialis” and urban mobility | Olympiapark-München]**

Premise

Construction of infrastructural networks and landscape care often play opposite roles in the design of balanced urban spaces: sometimes, however, technology and environment co-exist and get harmonized in the creation of the so-called ‘*Gartenkunst*’ as “*natura artificialis*”.

Many of the public urban parks originate from important infrastructural works put in place for the Modern Olympic Games. From the urban and architectural point of view they represent the final act of an awesome organization and finance effort over many years requiring immense disbursement commitments, never repaid by the event. During the time their weight was used as media platform or technical showcase the Host Country’s industrial lobbies. It is not accidental that during the XX Century, the Games were scenes of resounding and sometimes dramatic events: demonstrations on the streets, protest and stonewalling, terrorist attacks.

As known, the course of Olympic experience over its 120 years, originates from the wills to recover and restore the “golden age” of the western world removing (or subliming) the idea of war. In the motto „*Citius, altius, fortius*“ – conceived by the pedagogist *Père Henry Didon* (1840-1900) for the Youth Gamesⁱ in March 1891 – the progressive pedagogic role determined by the competitive spirit both in physical disciplines and in consciousness (Müller, 2008).

For the “originator” of the modern Olympic Games - *Pierre de Fredy, Barone de Coubertin* (1863-1937) – the sporting competition brings to life effectively the positive and eugenistic vision of that time. The De Coubertin aristocratic competitive spirit diverges from the democratic dimension of physic exercise proposed by *J.F. Paschal Grousset* (1844-1909). Different and conflicting visions – the “outdoor” sport place and the “indoor” place for the gym – have acquired since the beginning the importance of cultural manifesto implying both spaces and infrastructures. The places themselves will assume gradually a strategic role in the “epic narration” (but also pedagogic and ideological) by institutions and governments promoting it.

Case Study.

In summer 1972, in the occasion of the XX Olympic Games, Munich opened the Olympiapark-München, (called “*Olypark*”), synthesis of a multi-year plan of infrastructures for roads, services, residences, sports and leisure time. The vast area – on a surface of 300 hectares – attracts flows of visitors, sports amateurs or common pedestrians who stroll and bike along lawns and paths, or visit the areas on electric trains sightseeing the sweet hilly landscape. *Olympiapark* is more than just that: it represents the physical translation of the ideal conception of civil society in Germany after the Second World War, a kind of “historical picture” of juvenile movements of the Sixties, mainly made up by pacifists and liberals. That *vis civile* is reflected in the sophisticated simplicity of the *Landschaftarchitektur* as well as in the architectural works gathered – bright and inviting – around the artificial lake. Less known to the public is the fact that such an idyllic landscape was modelled on the ground of a huge dumpsite of war debris. Such deep symbolic value – to build a “place of peace and harmony” – is the interpretation key of a successful experiment of progressive planning. Since its very first conception (*Günther Grzimek*, 1968-’72) both the plan and the park have been proof of a choice that can be surely defined as “environmentally sustainable” *ante-litteram*.

“Effects of Good Government”

Four decades after XX Olympic Games closing (Munich, 1972) the challenging work of urban recovery of university dormitories at the border of the ex Olympic Village [*Olympisches Dorf - Studentenviertel Oberwiesenfeld*] popular known as “*Olydorf*” is being accomplished. The buildings made of an *Hochhaus* (high-rise block of flats) and a low density ward [*Bungalows*], are being radically restructured to improve function and performance of flats and common services.

The buildings are part of a residential complex built to welcome during Olympic competitions in 1972 international delegations of athletes. The overall architectonic quality – and the building issue of the Munich Olympic ward – deserves some illustration notes as to prove that the current “urban re-generation and environmental recovery” policies are part of administrative “good practices” already started in the middle of the Sixties. Good country and estate governance practice was carried out over half a century of social work, conveyed and enhanced in the decades after by a politic-entrepreneurship class careful on welfare in its broader sense. As per the case study criticism is unanimous in asserting that the winning formula of the happy Munich experience is due first of all to “declining to be monumental”. It is not a case that the choice to adopt a “wise interplay with landscape elements” has “bestowed to the sport park grace and urbanity. It’s about an “ [...] *incredibly lucky case, able to allow to make real a daring idea without encountering during the*

5-year's project and building obstacles placed by political calculations, cross-vetoes, finance limitations or technical bonds", (Bode 1996).

Landscape creation.

The Oberwiesenfeld district [lit. "high lawns field"] raises in the north-western part of the Bavarian capital, not very far from the urban centre, tangent to the well known "*Quartier Latin*" in Schwabing-West. The area already occupied in 1785 by barracks and military exercises was accommodated in 1909 to a flying field for airships. Later on (1925-29) it was restructured in the first urban civil airport. From 1923 the large area became renowned because of gatherings and demonstrations organized by the emerging National Socialism Party. It is thus not accidental that in the middle Thirties, Oberwiesenfeld was included in a broader infrastructural strategy planning to locate cumbersome urban facilities (as abattoir with wholesale market, freight terminal next to the cogeneration power plant). Stated aim was to modernize and transform Munich in the symbol for German efficiency and legendary Bavarian liveliness: "*Hauptstadt der Bewegung*" (Capital of Party) i.e. the Third Reich's cradle and "moral capital".

Its destiny after 1945 utterly changed. At military aviation field border – active until 1968 – *Oberwiesenfeld* felt in a desolate deterioration condition, occupied by gasometers and barracks. Between 1947 and 1955 the greatest part of building debris dumpsites was created, covering at the end an area of four hectares. To the artificial hill created by 10.85 millions of cubic meters of ruins a decade later the excavation soil of the subway, the "Georg Brauchle-Ring" ring road system, was added.

Environment and urban recovery project

Similar to many German and European cases in the Post-War period, the official German candidacy to the Olympic Games was the opportunity to get started on a fundamental part of the urban planning. Beside this in the new artificial landscape brought about by wartime disasters, interventions became an opportunity to begin with radical environment redevelopment, re-modelling and recovery based on the experience of Cologne in the early Fifties. Other outstanding infrastructure works involved the area with the crossing from the *Mittlerer Ring*, the state-owned road, making up the end of the Munich ring road system (1950-1972) and the connection to subway U3 (*Moosach-Fürstenried*). In this ambitious plan, *Olympiapark* and *Olympischesdorf* got off to be among the most valuable areas of Munich growth thanks also to strong investments started by the University Organization started already in the early Sixties. The *Olympiapark München GmbH* holding – the building company and managing institution of the Village – was and is still a public corporation fully held by Munich Municipality. The intervention aimed to create a residential and service district to accommodate about 12,000 inhabitants – as response to the never-ending demand of Social Housing intended for young couples and university students.

A project with high media effect.

The valuable initiative cost at that time over two billions and a half DM. An immense sum even for the flourishing Federal Republic in that period, coming out of the Post-War crisis thanks to an extraordinary economic situation (*Wirtschaftswunder*) and to the management of enlightened political establishment at local and national level. After Mexico City Olympic Games in 1968, the summer Games came back to Europe. For FRG this was the opportunity to cancel the gloomy memory of Berlin Olympic Games in 1936, dominated by the swastika.

The leitmotif accompanying the Munich Olympic district planning was inspired by the idea of a regained harmony and joie de vivre as intended in the western world. Optimism and enthusiasm at that time driven by the idealistic charge after the Protests of 1968 and combined with the impressive technical-financial German ability were able to carry out the work just within five years, exciting admiration of the Olympic Committee and international public. Nevertheless the XX Olympic Summer Games closed dramatically, making the Athletes Village the scene for one of the darkest and bloodiest deeds of international terrorism (Reeve 2001).

Concept and Planning Principles.

1967-'72 | Projects for Olympic District and for a new democratic society.

The architectonic ensemble appearing today as harmonious is actually the outcome of concerted work of different technical teams coordinated by G. Behnisch and E. Heinle. Behnisch's plan was based on the common proposal winning the competition in 1967 together with Fritz Isler (1926-2009), Swiss structural engineer. Probably thanks to intervention of the historian J. Joedicke (1925), Frei Otto (1925) and Jörg Schlaich (1934) took over in 1968 to revolutionize the conceiving of large roofing choosing the structural "immateriality". The "planners vision" was daring both as concept as well as on formal level and was accompanied by scathing disputes and by doubts on the technical feasibility of system and components. The heated debate caused the involvement of the greatest architects and technologists at that time, first of all Egon Eiermann and Fritz Leonhardt, openly rallying to the defence of the project. In Behnisch's idea plan and architecture gave breathe life to an innovative functional and settlement experimentation stirring still today

because of quality and originality, anticipating state-of-the-art technological solutions. Even if partially realized, Behnisch's plan gave a determining boost even during definition of the residential district. It is important to notice how the "*mixité sociale*" principle behind the current experiences of urban regeneration was the leading element qualifying the intervention. From the iconic point of view the plan synthesizes also the key principles of contemporary architectonic culture. The evocative organic forms of Olympiapark (the Olympic park strictly speaking) are balanced by *poetic objectivity* of the *Ulmer Schule* (Bonsiepe 2003) and by the solid Bavarian pragmatism (Nerdinger 1996).

Despite the short time available to develop the project, Dr. Günther Behnisch could manage its assignment with expertness and accuracy having the possibility to count on a large and well integrated team of professionals and young specialists. Diversity and numerosness of the group and of the other teams was compensated by cultural homogeneity of the planners coming all from the most important bureaus of the Federal Republic. All architects and engineers studied at the esteemed University of Stuttgart, as students or assistants of Paul Bonatz, Rolf Gutbrod, Fritz Leonhardt. Many among them were already or would become professors at major federal technical universities [*TH-Stuttgart, TU-Darmstadt, TUM-München*] thus demonstrating the very tight link that in Germany has always existed between professional, academic and industrial spheres.

Recovery of Oberwiesenfeld

Already since the early Sixties the decision to recover Oberwiesenfeld with substantial reorganization works was already taken. In 1965 the very high Telecommunication tower (*Olympiaturm*, S. Rosenthal, 1965-'68) was erected. This, together with the 'tent' of F. Otto, became the lucky brand of XX Olympic Games.

Elevated at world fame the sport facilities are characterized by the 'tent' in acrylic transparent material suspended on 24 pylons manufactured by Krupp steel mills. This structure improved the conceptions of brilliant Frei Otto worked out in the early Fifties and experimented on large scale in the German Pavilion at Montreal. It is interesting to substantiate how the technological solution actually made topical an antique architectonic "topos": the idea of classical Stadium recovered already in the first modern Olympic Games (1896) reintroduced by the *Panathenaic Stadium* (1870) of Ernst Ziller (1837-1923). A natural arena created by ground height differences where architecture seems rather only as a "concept strengthening".

The sport district is definitely an example of "landscape construction" among the most successful. The recovery of a deep compromised site was achieved tanks to the magisterial arrangement of *Landschaftarchitekt* (landscape architect) Günter Grzimek (1915-1996), already active in *HfG-Ulm* and Kassel. Re-modelling debris heaps and digging a lake integrated in the architectures of G. Behnisch, Grzimek intended to realize a genuine "democracy park": not "*a promenade path for privileged persons, but a space for wellness of all citizens made of sport, leisure time and outdoor life*" (Grzimek|Rainer 1983).

For Grzimek the green areas were conceived as multifunctional multi performance spaces able to fulfil the most wishes of the users. His researches on participation in planning make him one of the pioneers of the democracy and peace current of German land-use planning; in particular he was interpreter of the socializing and pedagogic role of playgrounds and of the development of leisure facilities.

His awareness of the planning role of users urged him for instance to plan avenues, to follow the paths creating spontaneously and consolidating the green surfaces, instead of imposing his will as an architect. This open attitude allowed also avoiding costly planning errors.

It is thus not a straining to read in the project an urban archetype, inheritance of a never ever dead aspiration to Mediterranean Classicism. A spirit widely documented in Munich architecture tradition and re-invented by L. v. Klenze and F. v. Gärtner as the most "southern" and "Italian" town among the trans-Alpine towns.

1967-'72 | The Olympic Village, a laboratory of land-use planning.

The Olympic residential district – erected above the Mittlerer Ring – was entrusted in 1968 directly to a local Munich group, ranking the third place in the competition. The team coordinator was Prof. Erwin Heinle (1917-2002), together with Robert Wischer, Gordon Ludwig | Gerd Wiegand (1922-1994) | Werner Zuleger association joined them. The planning was carried out in an extraordinary brief period – only five months work – thanks to the contribution of 22 architects of Heinle bureau, who applied innovative procedures and were able to elaborate no less than 57 plans, articulated in five executing stages.

Olympiapark today – Mobility structures

"Olypark" is today among the urban places with the highest urban dynamism: the works of the "historical" district have been completed with other installations of high architectural level and value which have increased service quality and attractiveness both at urban and territorial level. In particular, the Landmark of *BMW-Museum* | *BMW-Welt* and *München Olympia-Einkaufszentrum (OEZ)* – built at the intersection of the U3|U1 subway lines- attract huge flows of visitors and tourists. The subway station itself – recently re-styled – is a sort of super-place stolen to the metropolitan anonymity by means of colours and pictures. In fact, it is here, and in the three other subway stations, where most of the district life takes place, a district which is

“nomadic” and at high-density of youngsters and students. The re-styling of the stations involved designers and artists who totally changed the original image. (Hackelsberger, 1997).

In 2007 the new station, called *Olympia-Einkaufszentrum* (OEZ), connected to the new *Oberwiesenfeld* station (originally called *Olympiapark-Nord*) was opened.

The subway station "*Olympia Einkaufszentrum*" project was entrusted to the historic office *Walther und Bea Betz* [Betz Architekten]. The work inaugurated in 2004 is an attempt to “disburden” from the soil *pondus* of the compulsory hypogean architecture and to facilitate travellers’ orientation by means of materials, colour-light and strong space characterization. *“The ceilings are exposed concrete painted blue, the walls are clad with stainless steel elements, the floors and exits are made of granite. For orientation of the passengers, the U1 has vertical folds, and the U3 has a pyramid shaped pattern on the wall. The drawings show the U1 station, a 8 meter high and almost 100 meter long. Lighting strips on the ceiling in changing colours are reflected in vertical mirrors, generating a feeling of the infinite. The vertical folded stainless steel surfaces in between act like screens.”*ⁱⁱ

On the southern platform wall the artist Rudolf Herz (1954) traced an anamorphic black and white labyrinth. The northern wall is faced with warm orange coloured clinker ledges which recalls – as the sight concrete ceiling - the architecture and the colours of the pre-existing stations designed for 1972 Olympic Games. At middle level basement of the subway the ironic installation of Berlin sculptor Olaf Metzger (1952)- "*Erst rechts, dann links, dann immer geradeaus*" ("*First to the right, than to the left and after always straight forward*") – evokes with the long safety barrier at the ceiling the chaotic car traffic occurring on the surface.

Conclusions

‘Olypark’ – with its urban “archipelago”- can be considered as a key example of that willingness to harmonize environmental recovery, social mainstreaming and mobility: today the implementation of policies of Social Housing and the availability of integrated services are able to offer suggestions, inputs, models for the recovery of the European global city.

ⁱ This sport competitions took place at the Dominican College “Albertus-Magnus” of Arcueil near Paris.

ⁱⁱ From the website Betz Architekten Muenchen: <http://www.betz-architekten.de/html/projects/index.html>

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