*Ewa Rewers**

Segregation of Alien Bodies:
Order and Exclusion

In this essay, the author explores the relation between fragmentation, segregation and reconstitution of urban order. Although metaphors of cohesiveness are usually applied to the past, and fragmentations to the present, the city of fragmentations coexists recently with another image of the city – a nostalgic city of live body. It will be hard to speak in simple notions of true and false experience here; the difference is in the very idea of Aristotelian "the good life". Dealing with Edward Soja's concept of somatography, the author will argue that in an age of informational technologies, mobility, and consumer culture, such old metaphors like city as a fragmented dead body and city as a live body are more important than ever. Acts of differentiation, separation, and segregations are based both on urban somatophobia and urban somatophilia. The question to be asked here is what is reconstitution of urban order in the first sense, or revitalisation of city space in the second.

1. Fragmentations

Fragmentation, privatisation, individualisation, described as interconnected phenomena typical of the sprawling, amorphous cities at the turn of the twenty-first century, are not concepts which are used in studies on new cities. On the contrary, the broad historical contexts and applications of these notions make us aware of the ambivalent substance hidden in contemporary diagnoses of urban life that rely on them. There is also little doubt that we deal with concepts that have their own axiological value, even if the vectors of values ascribed to them run concurrently in opposite directions. Therefore, the issue lies not in the fact that fragmentation, privatisation or individualisation are negative terms *per se*, but that today we cannot even imagine our life described without using them. Consequently, what contemporary research approaches and meanings attributed to such notions have in common must be even more important, viz. their close dependence on the description of electrosphere[1], mobility of all kinds (not only social) and the consumption culture.

We can illustrate this interdependency using the example of the privatisation stimulus in residential development (beyond its strict economic meaning, related to the fragmentation of urban space and individualisation of urban life), which until quite recently was manifested in Poland mostly in the aspirations to

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* Institute of Cultural Studies, Adam Mickiewicz University.
[1] The term e*lectrosphere* was used by Aaron Betsky to denote digital reality (Betsky 2002, p. 90).

own a house in the suburbs far from the city centre, which was later replaced by gated communities, and finally by penthouses in central city districts and post-industrial lofts. The nostalgia for the lost wholeness, unity, harmony of life, described by researchers of city cultures, directed those who wanted to withdraw from the urban public space to the suburbs and gated communities – private enclaves of security. About a decade later, this yearning was transformed into a 'nostalgia for central city', which initiated a return to the city centre, near the core of public gatherings. Even though each and every of these aspirations epitomises a different vision of a 'good city life' or, as Evan McKenzie would say, a different *privatopia* (McKenzie 1994) – they all rely on the application of the array of new technologies, residents' mobility and consumption fashions prevalent at a given time. Private space, especially home, gradually gained in significance in this process, but it also acquired the attributes of the diminishing public space, which once represented the space for a 'good urban life'. However, the ambition to live in one's own house, to return to oneself, to one's little games, to everyday scenery, to a narcissistic fear of being 'liberated', as described by Jérome Bindé in his *Le pavillon des aliénés ou le fantôme du privé* remained one of the strongest stimuli underpinning the strategies of modern societies, making the processes of alienation and separation, as well as spatial and social fragmentation, even stronger.

Fragmentation of urban space has informed the experience of the modern city for at least 150 years. Described on many occasions as a dynamic structure dependent on the stabilisation of relationships between individual components, the violation of which released fragments and disturbed the functioning of the whole, the modern city would elicit admiration for the effects of modernisation, but also spurred resistance against them. According to Marshall Berman, that was the origin of the emphasis that the twentieth-century urban planners, policy makers and architects placed on systematising, regulating, segregating, "methodical attacks (some of them successful) on the 'mobile chaos' typical of the nineteenth-century city life" (Berman 2006:219). This was because the nineteenth-century fragmentation differed from the twentieth-century one as much as did the capitalist formations of the time. For this reason, we can accept Mark Wigley's suggestion to speak about fragmentations rather than fragmentation. As we make frequent references to Simmel, Benjamin, Frisby in this context, we reinforce the association of the word 'metropolis' with the term 'fragmentation' on the one hand, but on the other, without placing it in a specific, historic context, we are only repeating an abstract formula. Similarly to our predecessors, we do not experience the city as a coherent spatial and meaningful whole, but does such a statement imply that we are bound to experience it as a configuration, an array of fragments?

Does the description of the experience of Kraków as an urban space of exactly this type, as perceived by its residents and English weekend tourists, not call for a new concept that would offer different language, sensitive to post-modern rather than merely modern combination of technological imagination, types of

mobility and mechanisms of the consumption culture? Maybe it is the first, mass media-based technological culture, that pays attention to the new principle of structuring space – again, from urban fragments – which resembles an unpredictable, flexible, elusive work of DJs rather than rigid, technocratic thinking of urban planners. Undeniably, life in the media culture of samples and quotations does affect other types of social practices and shapes new expectations and new goals. More especially so, considering that just like in music, the accessibility of samples from other historical and ethnic cultures which one would want to 'graft' onto one's own culture is constantly increasing, being multiplied in the flows of people, ideas, images, and stimulated by the development of consumerism.

Nevertheless, both the reason and the results of this phenomenon are different than the grounds on which Jane Jacobs' attack on Le Corbusier was based in the 1960s, as it was provoked by the megalomania of urban designers who followed in his footsteps, and was aimed to defend the interests of the local community. This joyful, chaotic, tiresome and uncontrolled production is neither a return to the 'mobile chaos' of the nineteen-century cities because the destabilising stimuli originate outside, in the global linkages that cities are dynamic fragments of. Fragmentation of fragments is even more unsettling today because the innovative power of the postmodernist 'game with vestiges' has been used up in both urban planning and in the architecture of power which sustained the hope that the dispersed fragments could be rearranged to form a meaningful whole (using artistic strategies for example), that urban communities, dispersed, divided and dividing according to ever-changing criteria, would find a new way to a public debate about 'their' city.

This might explain why fragmentations of urban spaces are discussed today mainly as an effect of the destruction of the alleged or existing structures (GUST 2002), autonomous entities, while supplanting traditional, locally differentiated urban values and replacing them by values created by the anonymous, global market. Aaron Betsky is probably right when he writes that "sprawl is a physical manifestation of modernity" (Betsky, Adigard 2000:10). When we talk about the destruction of the whole, we need to specify what 'whole' we are referring to, or rather what perception of the 'whole' we are taking into account. Other social consequences and a different language for their description come to the fore when we think about the city as a functional structure, as a 'machine for living in' or as a live organism, to mention some of the most common associations. Only when set against each of the above, oppositions used to describe the process of destruction of urban spaces such as: chaos/order, sprawl/balanced development; disintegration/consolidation; decentralisation/centralisation; emptiness/density; boredom/euphoria; exclusion/inclusion; withdrawal/involvement; cultural amnesia/creative reference; ephemerality/permanence; stability/dynamics; frustration/sense of pride; alienation/identification and many other pairs, acquire new, specific connotations. Also, criteria which are employed to distinguish between 'Us' and 'Them', referring to places and

people alike, as exemplified by Rosalyn Deutsche's quasi-etymological series of associations (*stranger – danger – angel – messenge*r) to describe Krzysztof Wodiczko's works from the cycle *Xenology* and *AEgis: Equipment for a City of Strangers* (Deutsche 2002), acquire a special significance.

In the chapters below, we will tackle the following questions only: How can fragmentations of urban spaces be described if we depart from the much used metaphor of the city as an organism which is similar to the human body? Then, we would like to discuss two urban planning strategies based on this metaphor and aimed to reassign a social role to selected urban spaces, using the following ideas: 1) 'stitching of urban fragments (wounds)', and 2) 'acupuncture' – which brings the degraded, dispersed fragments back to life, or rather encourages them to transform into a living space.

2. From somatography to 'corporeal *épistémè*'

The notion of somatography is borrowed from Edward Soja, who expounded his concept drawing on the work of philosophers (Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze, Felix Guattari), sociologists (Ian Chambers, Henri Lefebvre), writers (Italo Calvino, Bertold Brecht), quoting excerpts from books, poetic texts and everyday speech (Soja 2000). Interestingly, the author of *Postmetropolis* did not base his choice on model pictures of human body, as was the case with Vitruvius, Alberti, Le Corbusier, Richard Sennett, Andrew Benjamin (2000), and many others. Neither is somatography a history of the city shown from the perspective of human bodily experiences, nor a historical catalogue of sensations (of the body in the city) in the urban space, as proposed by Sennett in his *Flesh and Stone.* Similarly, we could also draw an analogy between human body and the city's 'body', in which social 'bodies' would act as intermediaries. Also, those who would seek sophisticated analyses of urban eroticism or eroticism of urban cultures resembling those offered in Henning Bech's *When Men Meet* (1997), where the city is portrayed as a voluptuous body perceived through the depravity and a taste for luxury of its residents, embellished by architecture abounding in erotic symbols such as outdoor lifts which rhythmically rub against the building's walls (and present in Antonio Sant'Elia's futuristic visions of La Citta Nuova) (Asensio 2003, p.67). Soja is interested in the conceptual matrix that informs the hierarchy of places, which is primarily understood as the distribution of people in the city space as one of the basic social practices, "hierarchical differentiating of flesh that began millennia ago with the division of body and mind and that, like geography, earth writing, orders ambiguous substances of matter as political meanings and territories" (Soja 2000:362).

Soja emphasised on many occasions that maintaining the body/mind opposition in the context of the systematising practices which are so characteristic of contemporary societies was not his ambition. Nonetheless, somatography does not promise nor introduce anything that, using Judith Butler's intuitive terminology, could be referred to as 'corporeal *épistémè*'. He also refuted the allegation

of cultural constructivism, observing that human bodies – which are objects of somatography's interests – are cultural as well as biological formations and therefore should be treated as a space for mediation, and not for subordination to cultural norms. He dubbed them a *sui generis* social space which can interact in complex and unpredictable ways with other types of social spaces. In this, he followed Lefebvre, for whom reflections relating to the body, attempted by philosophers rather than sociologists, represented a starting point and a desirable direction in the striving to understand how social space is produced (Lefebvre 1991:171–206). However, when somatography describes practices of power/knowledge, and violence/fear, which revolve around binary oppositions underpinning the classification mostly relating to ambiguous, alien and polymorphous bodies which are systematised, evaluated, enumerated, disciplined, used or made productive, it in itself creates historically rational segregation tools which are both political and territorial. It is so because body-writing, which sets out from the concept of the human body as a tangible, physical space, focuses on the space transformed by cultural representations and interpretations spawned by racism, sexism, Orientalism, homophobia, xenophobia, imperialism, colonialism, etc., in an attempt to disclose their assumptions, unveiling its own in the process.

In this approach, nature loses yet again, this time not against culture as much as politics. The body, seen as a cultural text (which assumes the materiality, functionality, sensuality of its objective reference), is reduced to the political body. Articulation of the presence of bodies in space and interactions between them, which is always done in some kind of language and always assumes a certain order in the description even when we would rather avoid it, is a kind of pursuing a spatial policy. However, politicisation of bodies can acquire a special meaning in an urban space, which facilitates exercising control based on division and fusion, fragmentation and integration. Soja wrote: "When borders are crossed, disturbed, contested, and so become a threat to order, hegemonic power acts to reinforce them: the boundaries around territory, nation, ethnicity, race, gender, sex, class, erotic practice, are trotted out and vigorously disciplined." (Soja 2000:367). In such a situation, it is phobias of all kinds, whether conscious or not, that provide the starting point for the fragmentation policies.

However, it is somatophobia that has a key role to play; it can take a number of forms but is the most appealing when: 1) it denotes a morbid fear of admitting that we should become aware that social production of space is underpinned not only by systems of cultural, social and economic but also of biological differences; 2) it is a fear of dismantling the boundaries between bodies belonging to different social, cultural, political or anthropological dichotomies. Among them, in addition to the pairs mentioned above, one will find such oppositions as: profane body/sacred body; public body/private body; our body/their body; tamed body/dangerous body; young body/old body; resting body/working body; healthy body/sick body; dead body/living body. For each of these pairs, we produce special spaces, and the way we systematise them cannot be regarded as

a neutral or universal or one which is not rooted in a specific set of rules. In special conditions, every such set of rules may evolve towards a cultural taboo. Seen from this perspective, somatophilia would at least infer the refutation of both these fears. Then, the long dead metaphor of the city as an organism similar to human body could 'come alive'.

In this organic metaphor, the most important notion is that of 'life'. The recorded histories of many a city are full of cultural taboos as well as diverse profits derived from the fragmentation of the dead 'body', that is mutilation, killing, quartering, transplanting or purloining fragments of the city's dead 'body'. Examples of cannibalistic practices when the city 'devours' the city (and everyone who has seen the Plaza of the Three Cultures in Mexico City has seen a spatial illustration of how a new capital city can be constructed from the fragments of the conquered city) were also present in the post-war history of the reconstruction of Warsaw; in the process, building materials from demolitions in other Polish cities were used. Cannibalistic practices of contemporary cities are also among interesting topics tackled by researchers of contemporary urban cultures, who try to establish relationships between the social spaces of cities and the bodies (also understood as social spaces) of their residents. Using the example of Los Angeles, Mike Davis showed on the one hand how, living in the entrails of the city which is a construct that we ourselves have created, we are 'devoured' by the city (Davis 1994). On the other hand, the Italian architect and theoretician of architecture Paolo Portoghesi claimed that the similarity which justified the organic metaphor should rather serve as an encouragement to write about bilateral cannibalism (Ashcroft et al. 1998:29–31). The desire to consume fragments of the city's sensual body by its inhabitants would direct the vector of cannibalistic practices to an opposite direction.

Cannibalism thus understood is naturally only one of the practices accompanying the fragmentation of the dead 'body' of the city. Another practice is separation, preservation, worshipping (by conservators, politicians, etc.) of urban 'relics'. One of the reasons for the rise of cities was to provide a favourable environment for religious relics kept in churches or monasteries. Over time, however, these decrepit, abandoned fragments of cities stripped of their original functions and therefore dead, such as the Acropolis or the Colosseum, were transformed into local 'relics', destinations of tourist 'pilgrimages'. There is a separate practice associated with this cult of fragments, which could be dubbed a market for fragments. On the other hand, it is initiated by appeals from the city authorities, e.g. Athens, to leave in the Acropolis all stones, parts of buildings and other remains which are collected by tourists as souvenirs of their stay in Greece. On the other hand, the history of the tearing down and selling fragments of the Berlin Wall, was rather puzzling as the exercise followed the rules governing popular culture. Fragmentation, segregation, privatisation of the city's dead 'body' whether it is Ours or Theirs, stirs up many emotions and is not easily separated from practices bearing the same name yet used vis-à-vis the 'live' body of the city. However, while the former are mostly ruled by fash-

ions, nostalgia or historical policy, the latter are informed by a need for order, the concept of common/individual good and urban policy.

Fragmentation of the city's live 'body' is frequently done for the sake of order which, though not always welcome, is never neutral because it is based on explicit (or implicit) ideological assumptions. The need for spatial order goes side by side with a sense of social order. Both these needs, which have been described and re-described by urban planners and sociologists alike, underpins the reproduction of social control which employs exclusion as a sanction for a breach of the accepted principles. Systematising, as an urban practice, is a policy based on reason which generates and hierarchises differences, and on domination which allows first to spread such differences in space and then to exercise control to ensure that the imposed boundaries are observed. It has be to be borne in mind that order and exclusion are not axiologically marked in contemporary culture. Even restoring order in what is primordially human: separation of the mind from the body, the soul from the mind, the body from the flesh, the thinking body (mind – *noesis*) from the sensual body (*aesthesis*) becomes a political action in such circumstances, which points to relevant normative systems. It is even more so because systematising bodies: gathering them in one place (agora/ghetto/supermarket), placing them at one level (different storeys in buildings, above the ground/under the ground), determining sequence (according to height, time of arrival, age), etc., is subject to normative resolutions of the city authorities and their policies, but with ramifications going beyond such policies.

If given broader tasks than Soja assigned to it, somatography should first of all help to identify distinct differences which could be used to determine basic social and spatial relationships. Given the diversity and complexity of urban systematising practices, ranging from concentration to isolation of urban fragments, we should have tools to help us distinguish between the dead and the live 'body' of the city. Only then should we deal with what first comes to mind in commonplace thinking: identifying order with cleanliness. The need for cleanliness is one of the more extensively described forms of somatophobia. Uncleanliness, disorder, ambiguity, diversity, chaos, anarchy, revolution – they all well fit into the organic metaphor of the city. In recalling it, we could refer to traditional descriptions of the body: its naturalness, immorality, animality, peculiarity, otherness. The triumph of order over disorder, cleanliness over uncleanliness, is in consequence the triumph of the urban *ratio* over the urban body – the triumph of somatophobia. The simplest manifestation of this *ratio* was separation: establishing the spatial distance separating the sick from the healthy; the young from the old; the dead from the living; women from men; residents from immigrants. It is also a history of unusual architectural and urban planning forms: artificial isles, moats, canals, walls, towers, keeps, watchtowers, etc.

Fragmentation of the urban 'body' is also done for the sake of the common good, based on the idea of universal reason (in the meaning it has in anthropology and Kant's ethics, for example) and the concept of good life, which Aristotle

thus defined in his *Politics:* "We must therefore first come to some agreement as to what is the most desirable life for all men, or nearly all, and then decide whether it is one and the same life that is most desirable for them both as individuals and in the mass, or different ones. (...) Certainly nobody will dispute one division: that there are three ingredients which must all be present to make us blessed – our bodily existence, our intellectual and moral qualities, and all that is external" (Aristotle 1983:391). We can say therefore that a good life, as opposed to an injured life, is a concept derived from philosophy of politics. Nowadays, however, the emphasis mostly falls on reaching a consensus, on the idea of coming to an agreement about different concepts of a good life in the city. Again, Aristotle should be regarded as the precursor of such an approach, due to his attack on Hippodamus of Miletus in *Politics* for what Jacobs blamed Le Corbusier of, that is the conviction that an urban order may be the work of one person, instead of letting the citizens resolve conflicts themselves as through this experience they can learn how to live together. In this context, it is worth recalling that the most patient advocate of social consensus, Jürgen Habermas, claimed that: "If some paradigm or an image of the world is worth as much as the next one; if various discourses in various ways encode everything, both true or false, good or evil, we must close this normative dimension which is indispensable if we are to identify the features of a failed life, life devoid of human dignity, or experience them as a sacrifice" (Habermas 2004:91). Trust in the citizens who would be able to resolve conflicts in their shared debate, thereby avoiding the disintegration of the urban space as a result of many paradigms or concepts of good life clashing with each other, proves to be limited. Chantal Desol links this crisis of trust with the weakness of individuals who do not have any firm views or are willing to replace the views they may have by the opinions held by the majority. In effect, this "objectivity of good has been replaced by the range of the consensus" (Delsol 2003:95). This, however, cannot balance the centrifugal forces working to rip apart the city's live 'body'.
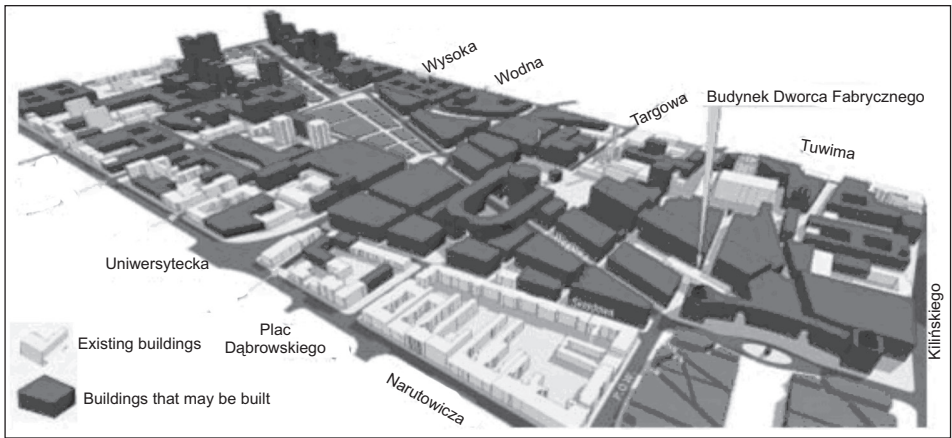
3. When we segregate bodies reality disappears

Segregation, unlike separation, which materialises as a result of producing spatial distance, means first of all generation of social distance (exclusion, abandonment, rejection, cordoning off, closure, isolation) connected with exercising control over the difference. On the one hand, segregation is considered as a condition of a good life. On the other hand, however, it proves to be the main reason for an injured life. We should bear in mind its ambivalent (aporetic?) relationship with a good life. Segregating the city's body as an incarnation of the political order shows that when we segregate bodies, the other will frequently change into the alien, and the captivation of the alien will consolidate the compulsory community. In addition, segregation strengthens the longing for ritual cleanliness – when we segregate bodies, alien bodies will turn into unclean, corrupt, amorphous ones. Underpinning power, segregation sanctions the cyni-

cal accommodation of yet another imposed order, and thereby loss of faith in the idea of community and the good life that Aristotle had dreamed of for the citizens of the *polis*. Today, segregation primarily relates to municipal exclusion policies, to new strategies of spatialisation of domination, which render slogans advertising cities, such as for example: "Poznań – tu warto żyć" [Poznań – a city worth living in] meaningless as they try to sell an entity that, as we all know, does not exist.
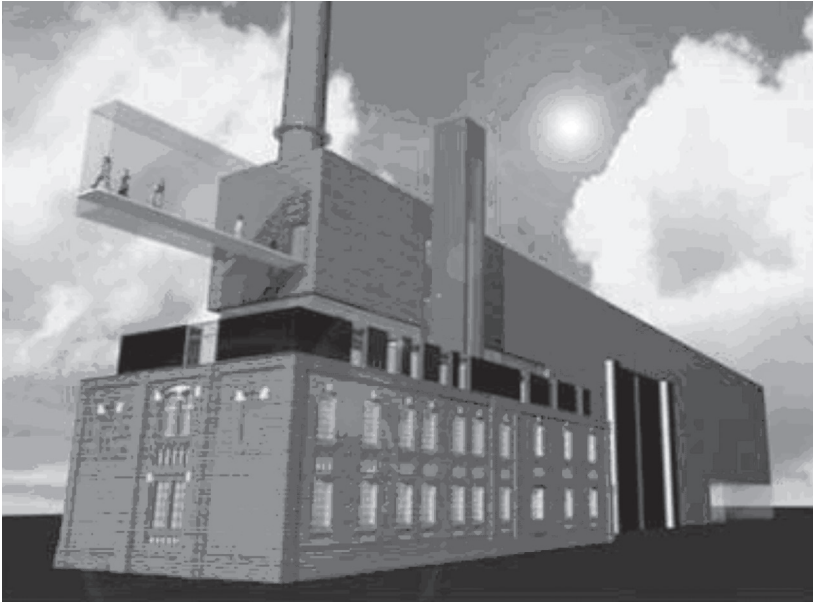

Photograph 1. Fragment of the city centre in Łódź

Attempts to restore connections between isolated city fragments are a completely different story; however, they rarely set out to combine spatial order with social order. Their task is to (re)introduce the sick or the sterile back into life, in the hope that this will lead to the emergence of a new segregation principle, better adapted to the mechanisms of the prevalent consumption culture. This principle obliterates the dichotomy between Us and Them, and at the same time camouflages the political exclusion mechanisms. Integration of the city around the created spaces is frequently described using the organic metaphor, referred to above. Also, it is so probably because it evokes good associations, cultivated by anthropocentrism, which encourage acceptance for even most radical projects.

Photograph 2. Planned city centre of Łódź, with Rynek Kobro (Kobro Plaza), designed by Rob Krier

Both Rob Krier's strategy of 'new traditionalism', employed during the revitalisation of an old fragment of the Łódź city centre, as well as the development of the rundown and abandoned fragment of Barcelona, completed by Jacques Herzog and Pierre de Meuron as part of the modernisation trend, rely on the concept of the city as a live organism. It could seem therefore that the basic difference between these two strategies lies in the location of the city fragment that is to undergo therapy: Krier deals with a strand of fragments in the city centre, while the Swiss architects focus on a distant periphery. Nonetheless, one could say that here we deal with two completely dissimilar perceptions of urban segregation policies and two utopian (albeit to varying degrees) concepts to halt this process. Krier mainly relies on the community of residents, and looks at the injured life in its daily, private, familiar practices from inside. However, he places David Lynch's 'glass tower', Kobro Plaza and the Special Culture Zone in the centrepiece of his work, although they have little in common with such practices, as they seem to shape the city's consumption and art marketplace rather than a modern agora.

Photograph 3. Planned redevelopment of EC-1 thermal power station

The strategy of New Urbanism, with a significant contribution from Leon and Rob Krier, and using the motto: *form follows fear,* focuses on 'stitching the wounds', 'darning' the city's flesh, and therefore is conservative, cautious, nostalgic and serves the sacred rather than profane 'body' of the city.

Conversely, a modernisation strategy identifies dead fragments of the city, no man's *terrain vague*, and attempts to fill them with festive, public, international life in the hope that they will transmit such energy to the local residents. A good life cannot be ordained, designed, compartmentalised or sewn together from newly segregated fragments. On the other hand, revitalisation of no man's land promotes the development of a collective social capital, which needs innovation and not conservation. 'Acupuncture', piercing the points of the weakening linkages, is Herzog's answer to the disintegration and fragmentation of city spaces. By enlivening interactions, introduction of new functions and confrontation of different points of view, we produce both town planning and social effects. Production of changes, compulsion to innovate, new simplicity, extraordinary materials make *form follow function/fiction,* and the city fragments fall into a narrative from which their native residents do not have to be excluded.

Photograph 4. Barcelona, areas around Forum 2004 after revitalisation (photo by E. Rewers)

Photograph 5. Barcelona Forum 2004 (Jacques Herzog & Pierre de Meuron). Photo by E. Rewers

We can ask therefore to what extent both strategies: of a new traditionalism and a new simplicity address the questions: Does reality vanish when we segregate urban bodies? And do residents vanish when we sew these bodies together?

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