"I never promised you a rosegarden"

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Towards an Informal Urbanism

The conditions presented through the Delta-metropool and the ‘local code’ proposed along are not only of local interest since it is undeniable that many urban environments are undergoing similar transformations as the ones seen here. It is important then, to affirm that an informal urbanism is an efficient tool since it establishes itself as an authority on the built environment that steps away from any political agenda in order to serve the functional requirements that still constitute the fundamental basis of our cities. And more than ever, to reassure that through the uncompromised conclusion of its own rigor a natural, informal and truly democratic aesthetic expression will emerge.

© 2001 - Javier Rojas Rodriguez is a Mexican architect, currently based in Rotterdam

Footnotes

1 Belgian art historian Wouter Vanstiphout points out the importance of the planning arena that occurred during the 1970's as a crucial framework in order to understand the present condition of spatial planning in the Netherlands. Vanstiphout argues that consensus when introduced into urban planning in the seventies, as a result of the post-war reconstruction plans, became a sort of terrorism act, since it dismantled the possibility for any kind of criticism that would lead for more innovative strategies in the reconstruction. As a result of this not only complete villages were planned as if it were small neighborhoods but a great number of organizations emerged out of nowhere as important players in urban planning. This ‘consensus terrorism’ has never been questioned since then and is still present not only in the government but also among private developers and urban planners.

2 An efficient application of discipline means that the uncompromising conclusion of its own logic can help democracy to operate. Here I make a distinction between political instrumentality and the discipline that serves democracy, where the application of discipline is authoritarian by definition.

3 The Deltametropool has been introduced in the Third Policy Document on Architecture for 2001-2004, jointly published by the four most influential ministries in the Netherlands. It refers to the Randstad, a ring of major cities around a green area in the west of the Netherlands.

A new name, a fresh start? A consensus is emerging in the Netherlands that the Randstad should be allowed to develop into a network of cities and towns, set in plenty of green space, working together to ensure good governance and decent planning instead of standing in each other’s way. Together they will form a metropolis, and will construct an environmentally-friendly railway network around the Groene Hart, whose main task will be water catchment, and provision of leisure facilities.

4 Thomas Jefferson recognized that the maintenance of democracy should follow the general recognition that where the liberating rules that civilized us yesterday, will almost inevitably seek to govern us tomorrow.