Do We Really Need (New) Buildings in Our Cities?

Europe currently has a very low demographic growth rate, but nevertheless there is still a tendency towards the exponential development of urban expansion based on American models that imply urbanization of low density with little or nothing in common with the heritage and historical experience of European cities. This phenomenon arises primarily from the abandonment of city centres and creation of many new urban sub-centers, leading to the unnecessary doubling of the service industry, as well as the infrastructure. The consequences also include the scoring and neglecting of the immense constructed and consolidated heritage in city centres in order to live 'as in a movie', in a duplex with a garden and a pool. European cities have a construction heritage that needs to be used and evaluated appropriately.

1. Film: The Swimmer (1968), Directed by Norman Jewison
2. Film: The Swimmer (1968), Directed by Norman Jewison
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The original...
A building was designed in 1962 by Raymond López, but it was unfortunately redesigned in the nineties, which lead to the given layout and conditions. This redesign, developed by Tecteam, managed to improve the thermal insulation of the building, but significantly reduced the windows, daylight and the Paris vistas, thus damaging one of the most attractive dimensions of the apartments. The Lacton & Vassal and Drouot proposal included additions to the fifty-metre-high tower with sixteen floors and 96 apartments over the original 8,900 square metres to the present 12,450 square metres, using pre-fabricated modular elements, almost 4 metres wide, located around the building’s perimeter. These modular elements were balconies and glassed galleries of winter gardens, which extended the useful space in the housing zones and improved energy consumption by reducing it by 50%. One of the problems of the former re-design was solved by opening large windows allowing more daylight into the apartments. The pre-fabricated elements are closed on the interior side by sliding panels of transparent glass and on the exterior side by curved polycarbonate with a transparent effect. This construction system generates a glashouse effect and may be manipulated by blinds or thermal curtains to regulate illumination, sunlight and ventilation of the interior.
Kvadratičnih metara, što predstavlja važno poboljšanje u odnosu na prethodnu situaciju. 1. Što se tiče zajedničkih zena, općenito je poboljšana cjelokupna dostupnost zgrade time što je renoviran ulazni hol te je njegova razina izjednačena s osmom eksterijerom. Osim toga, nov hol omogućuje pristup novome vrstu smeštajnom-u stražnjem dijelu zgrade. Također su dodane dvije zgrade za zajedničke aktivnosti u bočnim dijelovima prizemlja i ugrađena džep za lažni pristup stanovima. 2. Ovaj projekt nesumnjivo predstavlja radikalna zaokret u pogledu intervencije u građevinsku baštinu grada te je primjer ražboritosti u situaciji u kojoj je arhitektura arhitekta-izvedba, koji bantaju uključujući velikim budžetima kako bi stvorili vizualno brončano građevine, postala zastajela.

These extensions also added extra 22 to 60 square metres to apartments, which was a significant improve in relation to the previous situation. 1. Regarding the community zones, the entire accessibility of the building was generally improved by the renovation of the entrance hall which was levelled with the surrounding area. Otherwise, the new hall granted access to the new garden to the rear of the building. Halls for common activities were also added to the side portions of the ground floor, as well as elevators for easier access to the apartments. 2. This project was doubtlessly a radical turn in the sense of interventions in the construction heritage of cities, as an example of reasonable solutions for the situations when the architecture of the architect stars, dealing exclusively with large budgets in order to create visually ironical buildings, is becoming obsolete.