

The urban container

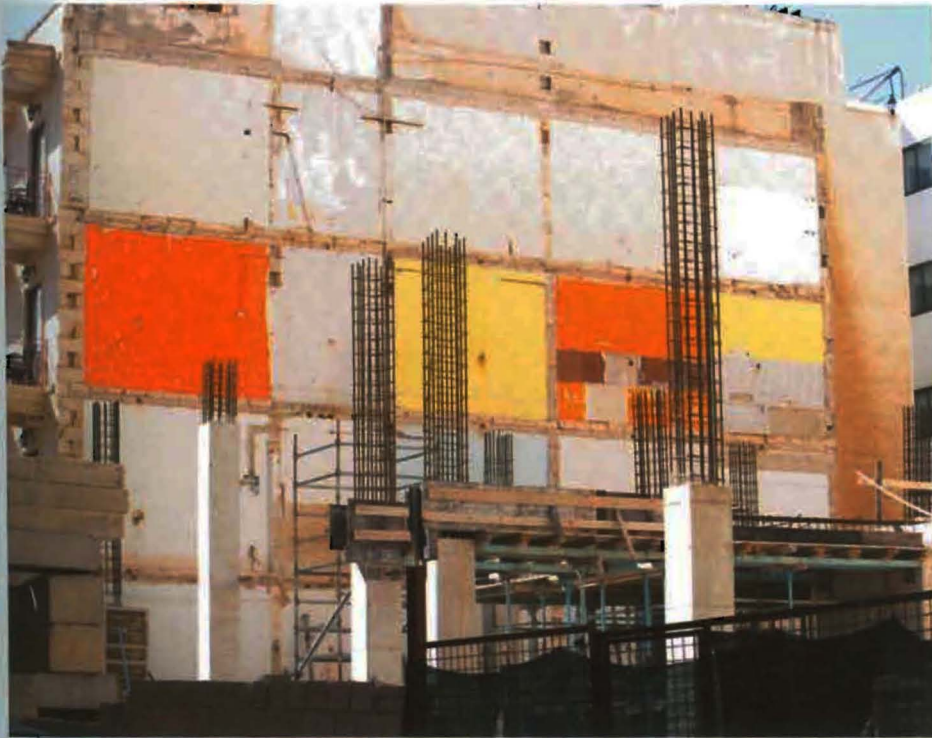
Lino Bianco

A streetscape sliced through a multi-tier rack of rows of masonry boxes, stacked in five layers, the uppermost array, with a box less, referred to as penthouse. A section through the built environment running through cages where the human animal dwells. ... Poultry-like transport cages stacked on top of one another. ... Stacked layers intimately adjacent to one another forming an urban container.

A stack is gone, removed, demolished. Load bearing masonry giving way to structural frame. A natural, industrial mineral replaced by a plantation of reinforced-concrete piers. An artificial material, a composite of two extremes, a marriage of compression to tension. Steel skeletons rising, challenging gravity, unwrapped in concrete, a fluid which renders a muscle to the steel once it hardens.

A static cage with five compartments ... each may be coloured ... built by developers and modified by users where they struggled to live ... built when the legacy of welfare state economy was still unshaken. A cage built to meet the centenarian legislation for air permeability and natural lighting. Neutered, divorced from humanity but embraced by capital, the cage became dated to free market economy. Financial capital matters; human capital is a means to that end. ... House less in more, earn more for less.

In a generation, the stack made way for a new development where users are destined to struggle to exist in less hygienic spaces than mobile poultry transport cages. Urban planning policies are choking humanity. The backyard, prescribed as a sanitary lung, is airspace for sale. Unlike the context which gave rise to the covenant which addresses public health, the current epidemic is not choleric. It is more akin to bubonic ... accounts mistaken for economics, speculation mistaken for development, rape mistaken for intercourse.



Elisa Von Brockdorff
Construction site, 2010

The anatomy of the built-environment: typical building plots ... two urban containers side by side ... each overlooking a public access ... one side touching the other. Stacks, one next to the other, or back to back, separated by a diaphragm - the backyards - their lungs. The nature of this diaphragm became blurred as backyards became quantifiable airspace regulated by the real estate market ... ownership of airspace overriding the indivisible co-ownership of air and light by all the stacks, whether side by side or back to back. Minimizing on superficial airspace of a backyard and/or containing it to an open air space formed by high-rise party walls, render the lung non functional. A lung on its own cannot sustain life... it collapses and consequently the lower layers of the urban container are unfit for human existence as they fail the criteria of poultry transport cages for good air permeability and ventilation.

Environmental health overtaken by the power of capital; mistaking habitable for non-habitable structures. Attempting to curb this trend through liberal economy in the name of social justice may prove effective. After all the end user is a social animal belonging to the human species, a species of no conservation value in urban planning legislation.