

EUROPARK
Antwerp 2021

Intro

The peripheries of European cities raise the question of the design of the *spaces of the city* and of a *city of spaces*: It should be noted that with regard to the interior city, we have a traditional theoretical discourse and a differentiated typology of spaces that have produced an encyclopedic collection of references for urban design. The same cannot be claimed for the exterior city in this way, since it was not and is still not conceived in terms of differentiated spaces, but rather as a continuous space. Such a relational conception of space, however, increasingly turns attention to the form, the morphology of building structures, to a city of objects. If we wanted to overcome this traditional conception of space, then we would also have to imagine, describe and define the external city as a *city of spaces*. The dedicated appearance of spaces in places is also the task of urban planning! Only that in this case we do not only deal with architectural spaces, i.e. with interior spaces, but at the same time with other spaces, with exterior spaces to be differentiated, but in any case not with "the" space. The exterior city should no longer be understood as a diffuse continuum, but should be presented as a structured context of exterior situations, places, and fields that can be experienced, which take into account different characters and atmospheres in the complementary field of tension between city and landscape. In this way, the urban landscape can become *city-nature*, city and landscape, urban architectures of house and yard, settlement and neighborhood, and urban cultural landscapes of allotments, parks and cemeteries, forests, pastures and meadows. A systematic typology of the city's exterior spaces could thus also promote a synchronous understanding of space for the city's interior and exterior spaces.

Idea of the city

The Europark social housing estate was designed in the early 1970s by architects Aelbrecht, Brunswijck, Moureau, and Wathelet according to the modernist concept of free-standing high-rise buildings in a park landscape. A total of 18 high-rise slices ranging from 14 to 26 stories were built over a 13-year period. Prototypically, the Europark in Antwerp stands for the conceptualized idea of the outdoor city: the so-called open city. The current criticism of the settlement concepts of post-war modernism is multi-layered, but three questions of different scale can be named in a highly simplified way: The question of the dwelling, the question of the house, and the question of the settlement or neighborhood, the latter ultimately being the one that is most decisively able to provide information about our contemporary conception of the city. Therefore, we can only talk about the apartment and the house when our changed conception of the settlement or the neighborhood, that is, of the city, is clearly and distinctly before our eyes. In the following, therefore, in the subject of the Europark, three proposals will give information on various possible conceptions of the city:

I. Exterior city

The design of the existing settlement points to a relational understanding of space, i.e. it is a matter of setting the positional relationships of the objects to each other, a compositional order of solitaires. The "in-between" is conceived as a continuous field - here as a park - and remains spatially undifferentiated. Proposal I. maintains the relational composition and counters the horizontality with the insertion of vertical elements. The towers gather at the new large plaza, the additional density reinforces the urban character, new outdoor spatial situations are created, but the open character of the development remains.

II. Interior city

Proposal II leads to a reinterpretation of the spatial concept. By introducing the urban typologies of block and courtyard, the existing solitaires of the panes are tied back into the

interior spatiality of streets, squares and courtyards. The relational conception of space is replaced by an absolute one. Sequences of spaces differentiate the spheres of public and private dedication. Perception, scale and orientation are established: Inner and outer differentiation of the perceivable interior spaces of the neighborhood.

III. Interior and exterior spatial city: *The city of spaces.*

Proposal III presents a combination of I and II. Blocks and courtyards are complemented by towers growing out of them. Manifold exterior and interior spatial situations are created: A city of spaces, a juxtaposition of open fields - like that of the large plaza - and of spatially defined streets and squares amidst the blocks and the courtyards, and of flowing and dammed urban cultural landscapes: a spatial intensification of the urban atmosphere of the neighborhood.

The three proposed transformations I - III are based on the fundamental concept of polycentric city. City is only still conceivable as a city of mixture. Therefore, the proposals counter the mono-typological and mono-functional character of the existing settlement with a typomorphological enrichment: blocks, courtyards and towers. In this way, new house typologies are made possible, which - also in connection with the existing buildings to be modified - enable and establish new forms of living in the neighborhood.