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part one
-
the story
Let’s imagine there is only one site left in the world.

It is not the only unbuilt space, since it is surrounded by numerous parks and squares, but it is the only unused space on our planet. The other buildings and public spaces around it have such enormous historical and architectural value they can not be touched or modified. The world of architecture is facing the challenge to plan the last site on earth.

The environment is divided. Some specialists rise voices that the last site on earth should be preserved in the current shape and become a monument or an open space. The other side points out that this move would block the opportunity to create the last building in the history of architecture, unless one of the existing buildings burns down or collapses, which is improbable because of the advanced preservation technologies. Group of scientists claims that the site should be left for the development in the future. The search of the correct solution commences.
The story with the last site on earth is still a fiction, yet the similar tendency can be observed in the smaller scale. The increasing densification of the large cities decreases the amount of empty sites in the city centres, where most of the buildings have architectural value and can not be replaced or modified. Further the city expands the quality of the space usually decreases. The city character is also dwindling outwards the city centre. Suburbs around Europe have an analogous character, when the related city centres have a unique nature. The city centre designates the image of the metropolis, defines its character and it is always the most desired area for a new architectural creation.

Nowadays there are still many buildings that can be replaced with the modern, more durable constructions from our era, yet replacement of any building erases a part of the city history. The urban character of the built area has a long life- the medieval shape of some cities can still be seen on the modern maps, yet single demolished buildings live only on the old paintings or photographs. These buildings were designating the mood of the city which died with them.

Currently the buildings from different times exist next to each other, yet it is an endless competition and survival, hunters and preys. The future architects will not have mercy for the majority of the buildings from our era, but it is because they will have no choice in the dense, crowded world in the future. But what if we would give them a choice. What if we could provide them the space to create without erasing our part of the history of architecture? Maybe the architecture of the city could present the history of the metropolis like the rock layers present the geological processes of our planet.
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The buildings that surround us are not adaptive, not open to the future development. They patiently wait to be replaced when they are no longer needed. Some of them are lucky enough to become a monument or an icon, which allows them to exist even after they are no longer useful. We witness the restoration of the old buildings, yet it rarely means integrating the old object with its function to the new form. This happens mostly because the buildings are being designed exclusively for the present times and the designers rarely provide the flexibility of the space to face challenges of the changing environment.

The hermit crabs live in the empty sail shells they find in the sea. The shells are becoming a functional house for a new creature, yet they were never made to serve any purpose other than to host its creator- the snail. The crab can occupy the shell when the snail dies. Giving new life to the building usually means removing the old life from it. Many buildings are covered with the original facade with the whole internal structure replaced. Many buildings have the shape of its ancestors that were standing on the same plot, yet are completely new. Some buildings are renewed and acquire new qualities that may surprise even the original creator, since he never predicted them or defined possible ways of future development of the object.
The perfect solution would be to create the building that would not block the future development of the area, furthermore it would evolve with time to face coming challenges. This could mean a deep underground construction, but the lack of day light would block some possible functions of the structure. The building built above the ground would occupy the plot. What if the planned building has a roof that would become a new site?
We cannot precisely predict construction technologies that will come in the next hundred years. In the same way the architects during the past centuries could not predict the development of the building technologies that took place during the recent years. What would have happened if they knew? Maybe they could leave us the “gates” for a future development of their buildings by creating the vertical spaces inside the building to host the future construction and transportation cores.

1. Example shape of the old building.

2. Example shape of the old building with the spaces left for the future construction and transportation. The empty space dedicated for the core could be used as internal garden or wooden storage attached to the building.

3. Example old building extended in the future. By the slight reduction of the original area the building can be extended by multiple floors.
This would allow us to create new spaces in the city without the dilemma between the destruction or the preservation. The whole new way of extending the city would be born. The extensions could create new forms that correspond with the existing buildings, the shapes which are the variations based on the original forms or they could be a complete new modern structures hovering above the old walls.
Having this abstract theory about the hypothetical vision from the past the corresponding idea concerning the relation between present and the future could be developed. If the similar nests to host the future constructions would be created in the modern buildings, the future technologies may allow to use that space in the much more efficient way. The empty vertical shafts to be transformed into transportation in the future could be used as storage or other rooms not essential for the functioning of the building nowadays. But not only the extension of the building has to be accurate for the future years. Using modern ways of planning the adaptable, flexible interiors of the original part of the structure could create the possibility to transform it to face the challenges of the future.