THE ARCHITECTURE OF ALVARO SIZA

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ABSTRACT

The work of the Portuguese architect Alvaro Siza (1933) as it developed during the 1970's is an intriguing and dense expression of several contemporary concerns. The thesis focuses on three of Siza's works, the Antonio Carlos Siza house (1976-78), the projects for Kreuzberg commissioned by the International Building Exhibition of Berlin (1979), and the plan for the Malagueira district at Evora (1977-present). The analysis of these projects and Siza's few writings and statements is undertaken in an effort to tentatively articulate the principles which lie behind the forms of his architecture.

From the analysis of specific works, two themes, thought to be central to Siza's enterprise, are identified and applied to a wider range of works. This inquiry does not provide a comprehensive account of Siza's ongoing research program. It does suggest a way of approaching the work, and provides a means of placing Siza's architecture within the context of Portuguese architectural culture and the current architectural debate.

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1 Alvaro Siza, photos by R. Collovà, 1983.
INTRODUCTION

Alvaro Siza (1933), professor at the school of architecture in Oporto and in private practice since 1965, is the most important Portuguese architect of his generation. Awarded prizes and commissions in international competitions in Berlin, Siza is coming to be recognized in Europe as one of the most significant architects in practice today. While his work has been regularly published in French and Italian journals Siza is relatively unknown in the United States. To our knowledge no extensive analysis or critical inquiry of his work exists.

This essay does not attempt to examine Siza's entire oeuvre. My intention is to develop what appears to be most important to Siza's enterprise and most fruitful to the general enterprise of architecture. In an effort to move beyond an analysis based on stylistic criteria, the present inquiry assumes that Siza's architecture suggests the terms for its interpretation. Stating that his "architecture does not have a pre-established language and does not establish a
language" \textsuperscript{1} Siza categorically rejects the notion that his architecture is governed by a set of pre-established rules. The notion that Siza works without rules implies that his architecture may not be understood by applying pre-established categories. Siza's statement reinforces the notion that in architectural criticism we must look carefully at the work and thought of each architect individually, in an effort to build knowledge rather than new categories which might replace those set up by earlier 20th century critics. This study is primarily concerned with Siza's architecture yet it is also motivated by an interest in understanding the nature of his contribution to the discipline of architecture.

While we may not exhaust the meaning of Siza's work, nor may we reconstruct the mental image of the architect, it is the intention of this study to tentatively establish the guiding ideas which lie behind Siza's works and provide them with a theoretical foundation. Freely borrowing from the ideas developed by Stanford Anderson in his essay "Environment as Artifact" \textsuperscript{2} of 1971, and other writings, the present inquiry seeks to establish the basis of Siza's "architectural research program." While borrowing from the view put forward by Stanford Anderson, in which architectural criticism seeks to formulate both a cognitive and physical model which may be tested against one another and mutually adjusted, this approach is not literally applied but simply serves to give direction to the present
inquiry. This study of Siza's work does not in itself establish a particular methodological program through which the diversity of Siza's enterprise is filtered.

The analysis of three of Siza's projects and his writings, in the first chapters, stand on their own as individual pieces but also serve to establish underlying themes. These themes are further developed, in chapter four, in relation to a wider range of Siza's works. Focusing primarily on his projects, this inquiry does not place Siza in relation to surrounding discourses yet it does form the basis from which we might construct Siza's architectural position. Undoubtedly Siza's research must be placed within Portuguese architectural culture. Such an analysis is briefly engaged in the concluding section and begins to cast a different light on the works we will have considered.
NOTES


The primary documents for the analysis of the work of an architect are the buildings, projects, drawings and models produced. The criticism of other observers may also provide a key to the understanding of works but all too often confuses or mystifies rather than illuminates. Of the limited range of criticism available on the work of Alvaro Siza, the writing of Kenneth Frampton has the advantage of attempting to clearly state a position and, as such, provides a useful sounding board for a discussion of Siza's work. Frampton has not written extensively on Siza's architecture, but it is significant that he finds in these works primary exemplars of what he views as an emergent architectural position. Frampton's basic premises are found in his essay of 1983, "Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance". While Frampton's discourse contains many important issues and ideas, I wish to focus on those aspects that form what I understand to be the core of his position.
My thesis is that Frampton's Critical Regionalism, as currently formulated, contains basic methodological problems that neutralize it as a critical position and render it incapable of explicating Siza's architecture. I contend that Siza is not a regionalist architect. Through an analysis of his work I intend to outline an alternative interpretation.

Critical Regionalism is a construction which seeks to distinguish itself from modern architecture, post-modernism and a reactionary traditionalism. It is not to be confused with the regionalist arguments of a revisionist modern architecture such as Giedion's claim for a "New Regionalism" in the 5th edition of *Space, Time, and Architecture*. Frampton categorically rejects "modern architecture" which he associates with modernization and the destruction of rooted culture. While rejecting any claims to a regionalized International Style, he also seeks to avert the unilateral rejection of technology and a withdrawal into provincialism. This position finds support in a process of mediation implied in the prefix "critical" and expressed in the following statement:

Critical Regionalism is a dialectical expression. It self-consciously seeks to deconstruct universal modernism in terms of values and images which are locally cultivated while at the same time adulterating these autochthonous elements with paradigms drawn from alien sources. 2

The process of admission and exclusion suggested by Frampton relies on what Alan Colquhoun has rightly noted as
"the myth of a local cultural essence within modern societies." This operation requires, firstly, that we are able to differentiate between what is local and what is universal and, secondly, that we measure the assimilation of ideas and paradigms against local values. In this way Frampton demands a set of distinctions which, I believe, will ultimately lead to the moralism of right and wrong on which all regionalist doctrines have been based.

The architectural strategies specific to this position are developed as a means of inscribing architectural forms into the history and culture of a region. To such contextual elements as response to climate, topography, and the use of local materials is added an emphasis on the experiential qualities of building. As these elements and formative devices do not imply the rules which govern their use, in my opinion they do not qualify a work as "regionalist," and are of limited use to our discussion.

For "Critical Regionalism" to serve as a means of identifying an architectural position I interpret that it demands that the relations between architectural forms and elements be primarily rooted in local traditions, while the elements which make up the architecture may or may not be local. In an effort to clarify the correspondence between Siza's architecture and Frampton's "Critical Regionalism" we must not ask if he employs local elements or responds to particular cultural conditions, but rather, how is his architectural position formulated? Is his architecture
1.1 Alvaro Siza, Bank at Oliveira de Azmeis, 1971-74
derived from indigenous sources and ideas? Or conversely, is it derived from universal sources inflected by local conditions? I contend that these two directions do not lead to the same "synthetic contradictions." At this point we might examine two of Siza's projects in an effort to clarify the nature of his sources and the way these are transformed in response to concrete situations.

Pinto e Sotto Maior, Branch Bank (1971-74)

The bank at Oliveira de Azmeis (fig. 1.1), built on the central square of a small town in northern Portugal, is not Siza's first building but is representative of his work. While this construction presents interesting formal qualities, the point I want to make here is that we cannot explain this work by reference to any models operating within either traditional Portuguese architecture or the particular context. The inspiration and formal models for this architecture are clearly derived from very specific modernist sources. While the language employed represents a total break with the surrounding architecture, Siza here proposes another way of conceiving a contextual response. The building responds morphologically to the elements which make up the square. Rather than formal borrowings of the existing architectural vocabulary, the volumes and disposition of elements are initially developed and controlled by regulating lines generated in reference to
physical elements surrounding the building site. These references become internalized and begin to refer to each other. This is a contextualism which makes no distinctions and does not pass judgement on the surrounding environment. Siza's work is autonomous yet involved with its surroundings and expresses a significant discontinuity between past and present.

Antonio Carlos Siza House (1976-78)

The Antonio Carlos Siza House, commissioned by the architect's brother, provides an example in which we might explore Siza's method in more detail. Given the particular circumstances of the house commission, it provided the architect with an opportunity to more fully develop formal intentions and ideas raised in previous works. While perhaps not directly related to concurrent social housing projects, this house is certainly integral to a research program initiated with Siza's first constructions.

The Antonio Carlos Siza house is built on a small irregular lot located in a recently developed area of new houses and apartment blocks at the edge of the town of Santo Tirso in Northern Portugal. It is a subdivision lacking a clear urban structure other than the size and shape of the lot, as the surrounding constructions are highly individualized. Siza has sought to ground the project in the subdivision of the land itself -- being the only urban
1.2 Alvaro Siza, Antonio Carlos Siza house, 1976-78, sketch, section and ground floor plan.
The form of this small single-story house (fig. 1.2) is developed in relation to the geometry of the corner lot as defined by a perimeter wall. The front and sides of the house parallel the boundaries of the lot rather than forming determined angles. The property wall is an element that is not indigenous to this area but is used throughout Portugal in both urban and rural areas. Siza employs the wall repeatedly in his houses of the 1970s as a basic datum or point of departure, and it serves as the principle means by which these constructions relate to the city. While the house does not follow a typological norm or the rules of urban construction, the wall mediates between this monad and an absent urban structure. This strategy makes space for architecture and allows the architect a certain freedom for the formal organization of the house itself.

In the Antonio Carlos Siza house the property wall rises along one side to the height of the flat-roofed building and penetrates through the amorphous body of the house on a diagonal axis, merging with interior and exterior walls. The forms of the house also interact with the bounding surface of the property wall in a conscious counterplay in which the space between the house and the wall is part of the architectural space. Here we find a conventional element -- the wall -- used in an unconventional manner.
1.3 Alvaro Siza, Antonio Carlos Siza house, exterior view and model.
The form of the Siza house develops in a U-shape around a small interior patio. The plan is topologically conceived and controlled by two cross axes formed by the alignment of the two streets which meet at an acute angle and define the corner lot. It is difficult to characterize the form as either additive or subtractive since elements are fused by interpenetration and deformation. The ordering principles operating here are numerous and elements are organized by proximity, interpenetration, succession and division -- it would appear that only a coordinate system is absent. As is evident from the model (fig. 1.3), the whole is volumetrically articulated. There is both a correspondence and disjunction between the spatial organization of the house into roughly four areas and its volumetric development. Articulating these elements, while denying their autonomy as simple additive volumes, furthers the sense of overall fusion.

It would appear that neither the organization of the plan nor the form of the Antonio Carlos Siza house may be directly related to traditional Portuguese domestic architecture. In this and his other houses Siza adopts a configuration with a clear gradation of spaces, which will accommodate the demands of a bourgeois family, but these demands do not in themselves provide the logic for the architecture. In this respect we may speak of this project as operating within the ideology of modernism. Siza does not rely on a fixed type or a finite and stable number of
1.4 Alvaro Siza, Antonio Carlos Siza house, ground floor plan.
forms a-priori. The stress is on the importance of relations rather than the forms themselves.

Regionalist claims, while not finding support in the plan distribution, may be centered on the construction and form of the house. The use of cellular masonry construction, while characteristic of traditional Portuguese architecture, is common throughout Europe and is used here not simply as a local building system but to serve a fundamental understanding of the purpose of the house. Siza's houses are all opened inwards in an effort to secure physical and psychological privacy. The house is understood as a closed interior - a characteristic of Western dwellings since antiquity.

The form of the Siza house, with its emphasis on distortion, topological ordering, and the relative correspondence of space forms and mass forms, could be assumed to be derived from vernacular sources whose additive constructions result in a fusion of elements and the formation of positive exterior spaces. However, this is not a simulation of a process of mutual adjustment over time, and the formal complexity evident here, while it may approach the heterogeneity of such forms, is developed consciously, departing from altogether different sources and intentions. In the Antonio Carlos Siza house we find a dual structure based on the combination of topological relations and the geometrization of axes -- a dual order not found in
1.5 Alvaro Siza, Alves Costa house, 1964, ground floor plan.

1.6 Alvaro Siza, Manuel Magalhaes house, 1967-70, ground floor plan.

1.7 Alvaro Siza, Bires house, 1973-76, ground floor plan.
either vernacular or traditional Portuguese architecture.

The use of dual ordering systems is found in 20th century architecture, as in the work of Le Corbusier where the column grid is combined with the free plan, yet the particular orders developed here are not, to my knowledge, systematically developed in 20th century production. The conscious development of a similar ordering system is most clearly illustrated in the Roman Baroque villas and palaces which Siza has mentioned as a source for this project. This is not to suggest that this is a Roman Baroque construction, but rather that the architect Siza found in the Roman Baroque the combination of two systems which he had previously developed independently.

His earliest works, such as the Alves Costa house of 1964 (fig. 1.5), were largely based on distortions and adjacencies inspired by a close study of Aalto's post-war projects. In a later construction we find Siza employing a simple orthogonal system as in the Manuel Magalhaes house in Oporto of 1967-70 (fig. 1.6). It would appear that Siza had begun to combine these two approaches in the preceding Bires House of 1973-76 (fig. 1.7) and we might suggest that the investigation of Roman Baroque projects, and formal devices developed by architects such as Borromini to overcome the complex asymmetries of small irregular sites, provided a valuable source of method. In works such as Borromini's projects for the Palazzo Carpegna (fig. 1.8) we find the masterful development of a form that combines topological
1.8 Borromini, one of several projects for the Palazzo Carpegna, 1638-40
relations with the geometrization of axes. While there are in the Siza house no apparent typological relations with Roman Baroque palaces, other devices employed here may have been derived from these experiences. The constrained patio, which is visually enlarged by perspectival distortion towards the garden beyond, may draw on such well known precedents as the Palazzo Spada in Rome. In fact we may establish multiple relations with Roman Baroque architecture throughout the house, such as the emphasis on massiveness, tense proportional relations, spatial succession and cross views.

These possible precedents do not in themselves form the basis for the project, as these ordering devices and elements are stripped of their former associations and are used here to serve a particular building task and sensibility. This is perhaps best illustrated by considering the paired columns in the dining room (fig. 1.9). Unexplainable from only a structural point of view, they stand between two volumetric zones articulating the circulation space which surrounds the patio. The simple square columns are oriented on different axes. The top of one column is twisted relative to itself, forming a capital. While we might find precedents in the optical devices of the Baroque which sought to engage the viewer and suggest movement, exemplified in the alternating rails at S. Giovanni in Laterrano attributed to Borromini (fig. 1.10),
1.9 Alvaro Siza, Antonio Carlos Siza house, interior views.

1.10 Borromini, rails at S. Giovanni in Laterano, Rome.
the distortions of the columns here appear not simply to emphasize movement along the corridor, but both defy the static nature of architecture and suggest a simultaneity foreign to the Baroque period and traditional architecture. By pairing columns in this way from a static viewpoint, we may simultaneously perceive oblique and frontal views of the same element. This is a distortion closer to Picasso's twisted bodies and post-cubist experiments, such as the line drawing "La Ronde" of 1953 (fig. 1.11) in which the left dancers are stacked three deep showing front, side, and back in succession and the right figure incorporates all phases into one.

This notion of simultaneity is in fact furthered through the superposition and transparency in the cross-views which cut transversely through the constructed area. These cross-views associate rooms not normally seen together, and allow an observer to see right through several interior and exterior spaces while maintaining a sense of
1.12 Alvaro Siza, Antonio Carlos Siza house, ground floor plan.

1.13 Picasso, studies for "L'Aubade", 1942.
enclosure. Here the use of regulating lines (fig. 1.12) serves to define visual axes which distort every object within their path and construct alignments relating elements by inflection. In a strategy that both suggests and subverts dominance, these sight lines depart from or converge on a single vanishing point fixed on the center of the dining room window.

When the various alignments evident in the plan are considered in conjunction with the patio, which also establishes convergences along a central axis, and the inflexible trail marked by the diagonal cross wall, we may begin to establish a network of multiple vanishing points and spatial directives. This complex construction goes beyond the perspectival distortions of the Roman Baroque examples and the circumscribed experiments in simultaneous vision of Picasso's pre-1940 works. While the means employed are different, the relational structures developed in the Siza house would appear to lie closer to Picasso's later works which, as Leo Steinberg has convincingly argued, include a systematic exploration of the spatial environment (fig. 1.13, 1.14). The "contractile, expansive, collapsible space" of these works is not unlike the spatial matrix of Siza's construction in which multiple viewpoints and perspectives are combined with a multiplicity of forms.

In this construction we may also speak of certain affinities to cubism evident in earlier projects by Siza, such as the stairway in the Art Gallery in Oporto of 1973.
1.15 Alvaro Siza, Art Gallery, Oporto, 1973 (now destroyed), interior view of stairway and plan of lower level.
(fig. 1.15) where the stairway is fractured and the pieces scattered. In the Siza house we find cubist experiments suggested on several levels. The architectural elements may be superficially related to cubist pictures which after 1910-11 were often made up of intersecting straight lines and arcs and employed geometries as a means of regulating the composition. More importantly these experiments are suggested in the fragmentary nature of the form itself and the erosion and dispersal at the back of the house where the curved wall ends abruptly; the cross wall disintegrates and elements merge and intermingle. In the Siza house we find that while the form as a whole retains its fragmentary nature, it does not dissolve into random disconnectedness, revealing instead a fascination with modes of connection which both separate and unite.

The idea of a "unity of the discontinuous," evident in the relations among elements in the Siza house, is a development which Tafuri has convincingly argued as being inherent to the collage or montage. Tafuri points out in relation to the fragments inserted into a "Merz" or in an "a-logical" painting by Malevich that, "the monads compelled to clash with one another in a collage have in common a field, a limit, which is the same as that of the canvas or the sheet of paper." 7 In the Antonio Carlos Siza house we might suggest that the field is defined by the bounding surface of the property wall. While Siza suggests an
1.16 El Lissitzky
"De deux carres", 1920.

1.17 Alvaro Siza
Antonio Carlos Siza house, 1976-78,
ground floor plan
inherent confinement within the perimeter wall, we may also observe a tendency to extend outwards beyond these limits. This is evident within the interior spaces of the house, but also in the relations with the exterior, as in the curved wall of the bedroom wing that continues tangentially rather than returning on itself. The cross wall, following the alignment of one of the streets which define the lot, manifests this tendency at another level by linking the house to its surroundings. The diagonality of this wall, and the rectangular service element that lies along it, recall Suprematist compositions (fig. 1.16) in which simple geometric elements are placed on diagonal axes so as to appear to be moving beyond the limits of the canvas. Here the service element which penetrates to the outside does imply movement along an axis but more importantly, the continuity of the wall serves to bind the two wings of the house together and to establish contact between the building, the landscape and the surrounding urban structure.

While perhaps related to Suprematist compositions, the use of guiding walls to tie elements together, and to the landscape, is also a device characteristic of Frank Lloyd Wright's Prairie Houses and Mies Van Der Rohe's early work such as the Brick Villa of 1923 (fig. 1.18). More significant architectural sources for this work are suggested by the whole/part relations and spatial distortions in which we may find affinities to much of Alvar Aalto's later works (fig. 1.19) in which the articulation of
1.18 Mies Van Der Rohe, project for a brick villa, 1923.

1.19 Alvar Aalto
Plan of the architects' studio 1953-56.
the whole into various other wholes allows each area of a building to be invested with its proper character. The use of ceilings as a space-forming element is also a device found in both Siza's house and Aalto's work. We may not establish a correspondence between the elements employed by Siza in this house to specific works of Aalto, but we do find evidence of Siza's close study of Aalto's work and method. This significant influence and understanding is evident in Siza's first works as well as in the bank building discussed at the beginning of this chapter.

Siza's compositional strategy, which seeks to form a distinction between public and private as two fundamentally dissimilar spatial and social areas, demonstrates a concern for urban principles and individual needs but also a correspondence with the work and writings of Adolf Loos. Loos' statement, "every wall has two faces, one private, one public", is here subjected to a radical interpretation that focuses on the interaction of these two realms as well as their differentiation. Siza, like Loos, demonstrates an interest in the difference between inside and outside by recognizing the social and cultural dimension of the wall.

While employing traditional elements, it is apparent that this project is largely motivated by modernist concerns, yet is is not an orthodox modern building. The rationale for the ordering principles, and the world view from which they draw is not uncovered by attribution
hunting. It demands a deeper inquiry into Siza’s work as a whole. If Siza’s work appears distant from the dogma of modern architecture, post-modernism, and a reactionary traditionalism, I would suggest that this is not achieved by appeals to local cultural values and building traditions. Siza’s architectural position appears to seek an inclusive method and view which find support in an alternative interpretation of modernism -- a position and architectural system in which traditional and modernist categories can enter into interaction.

By isolating aspects of his work, such as the fact that the major part of his production is found within a circumscribed area within one of the most provincial countries of Europe, or the notion that he seeks to ground his work in the socio-physical matrix of a place, Frampton applies a methodology which does not get behind appearances and received opinions. All architecture must be in some relation to the pre-existing environment and while Siza seeks to adopt this condition positively, it is a method which here serves to set the limits for each project. The pre-existing situation provides the frame within which a research program and architectural system, not derived from the place, may unfold.

This is not to suggest that Siza is unconcerned with the rich building tradition of his own and other cultures. Perhaps his view is best expressed in his own words:
The traditional heritage can be applied to concrete problems. Whatever is valid, useful, should be used. It represents information, very useful knowledge, but nothing more.

Frampton is able to consider Siza as a Critical Regionalist only by using a method which allows him to classify works by isolating elements. However, by any definition it is clear that Siza's architectural position is not based on regional limitations.
NOTES


4. Siza has said of this project: "It has some relations with Baroque architecture, but this is not important."


8. The regular form of this service element may be understood as a particular inversion of Le Corbusier's characteristic separation of utilitarian installations from habitable spaces by means of a radical formal distinction. A characteristic observed by Kurt Forster in his essay "Antiquity and Modernity in the La Roche-Jeanneret Houses of 1923."

9. Unlike Aalto's works Siza does not employ poche in plan or section and does not modify the structure of the building at will to achieve picturesque compositional effects. In his effort to integrate space and structure Siza recalls Khan's famous dictum but also his architecture.

ALVARO SIZA'S STATEMENTS
ON ARCHITECTURE

Maintaining a silence that contrasts with the flow of disembodied thoughts and theoretical machinations of recent times Alvaro Siza has avoided writing about his work and about architecture. Siza's few statements are largely prompted by interviews or are found in the judicious commentary attending the publication of his work. While these few written and verbal statements cannot be analyzed as the substance of a coherent doctrine, we might look to them for an indication of how Siza defines the focus of his interests.

With respect to his relative silence Siza stated in 1977 that:

My professional experience is not sufficiently rich and global to allow me to theorize what I do ... I have the desire and pre-occupation to build. Writing texts has little relation with my work.

Behind such a pragmatic statement may lie a modest practitioner but also a calculated stance. Siza's lack of comment is not necessarily a disdain for theory or for
language, and the apparent lack of an explicit belief system does not mean that Siza works without theory. However, by denying us a substantial co-eval verbal plane to which his architecture might be reduced, Siza forces us to refer to the work itself.

In contradistinction to such contemporary architects as Aldo Rossi for whom, as Micha Bandini has observed, there is a necessity of an explicit and authoritative theoretical framework preceding architecture, Siza's theory is not explicit. The distinction between these two attitudes has been simplistically interpreted as providing grounds for considering Rossi as a "rationalist" and Siza as an "empiricist" who starts from experience and builds on it without ever looking back. Rather than think in terms of such vague pre-established categories we must seek, however tentatively, to establish through the work itself and those statements available to us the architect's cognitive models and belief system.

Susan Sontag has observed that: "Silence provides time for the continuing or exploring of thought ... silence keeps things 'open'." Whatever the motivations, Siza does not restrict himself in advance and the result of this relative silence is that it allows speech to attain its maximum integrity. This much is evident from Siza's few statements such as the following piece, his most extensive published text to date, written in May 1979, as an introduction to a retrospective exhibition of the architect's work held at

Most of my works were never fulfilled. Some of the things I did were only carried out in part, others were profoundly changed or destroyed. That's only to be expected. An architectonic proposition whose aim is to go deep into the existing transformation trends, into the clashes and strains that make up reality; a proposition that intends to be more than a passive materialization, refuses to reduce that same reality, by analysing each of its aspects one by one, that proposition can't find support in a fixed image, can't follow a linear evolution. Nevertheless, that proposition can't be ambiguous, nor restrain itself to a disciplinary discourse, however sure it seems to be. Each design must catch, with the utmost rigour, a precise moment of flittering image in all its shades. The better you can recognize that flittering quality of reality, the clearer your design will be. It is the more vulnerable as it is true. That may be the reason why only marginal works (a quiet dwelling, a holiday-house miles away) have been kept as they were originally designed. This is the outcome of participation in a process of cultural transformation of construction-destruction. But something remains. Pieces are kept here and there, inside ourselves, perhaps gathered by someone, leaving marks on space and people, melting into a process of total transformation...5

In this lyrical and paradoxical statement Siza suggests an essential condition of uncertainty yet he insists on the necessity of formulating rigorous propositions. Given the presence of such seemingly incompatible ideas we might infer that it is the thought process underlying this uncertainty that forms the principle focus of Siza's work. In this passage the only thing we find him opposing positively are universal rules and ideas, yet he does explicitly state a set of themes. These themes appear to derive from an understanding of architecture as a transformational process
operating within an evanescent reality.

In order to gain a more accessible account of a theoretical framework which could inform Siza's practice I have collected the following series of statements from published interviews:

Architecture is increasingly a problem of use and reference to models ... Architects invent nothing. They work continuously with models which they transform in response to the problems they encounter. 6

References are the instruments which an architect possesses -- they are his patrimony of knowledge, of information. They are all the experience possible to know and that one can use. It is not a critical position -- it is the wisest use possible in a given context. 7

My architecture does not have a pre-established language and does not establish a language. It is a response to a concrete problem, a situation in transformation to which I participate ... We have passed the stage in architecture where we thought that unity in a language resolved everything. A pre-established language, pure, beautiful, etc. does not interest me. 8

If from one project to another there is a change of architecture, it is not due to a change in form but due to a change in a way of life. 9

All that exists is important and one cannot exclude anything from this reality ... Each place is different and complex. That is why I cannot apply a pre-established language and why for the moment it is difficult for me to theorize what I do. 10

By explicitly stating that architects work with pre-existing models and "invent nothing," we are confronted with a suggestion of finite invention. This proposition openly questions modern orthodoxy and the certainty of its myth of progress. In these passages Siza insists that the selection
and transformation of these pre-existing models is governed by the "situation," characterized as both "a way of life" and a "place." In his terms the "situation" is in flux and each place is "different and complex", a condition which denies the possibility of a closed and unitary language based on absolute standards and rules.

While we are not given any clear indication of how the architect describes or defines the characteristics of the "situation," there appears to be no illusion as to the possibility of understanding or mastering the complexity of the world. This interpretation is supported by the notion that the architect must seek a comprehensive account of each situation -- "all that exists is important" -- from which no view can be omitted. The breaking down of distinctions implied by this outlook would appear to lie closer to an understanding of 20th century art than to codified architectural theory.

Siza appears in his statements to adopt a position that precludes the certainty of elementary truths which may be uncovered and found essential and valid in all cases. In his rejection of a unitary language, a fixed methodology and no simple rules to follow, Siza would appear to force a continual reconsideration of architecture. While the architect Siza may not be looking for a general rule or engaged in a quest for the truth, it is not clear from his statements that he subscribes to a fully relativist
position. His insistence on referring to the "situation" may constitute a general rule that allows for a pluralism of sources and methodologies yet may narrow the field by rejecting the opposite approach of starting from pre-existing models and forms irrespective of the "situation." Furthermore, while Siza does not specify whether or not the models he employs are limited to architecture or include references to nature, painting, language, and the like, there may exist rules governing the nature of referent models and the process by which these are transformed.

Siza's few statements presented here are not comprehensive, yet they do suggest an initial interpretation of his theoretical position. At the most general level Siza is particularly insistent on the idea of architecture as a transformational process. Furthermore, Siza's rejection of the notion of an architectural language, which necessitates a coherent theory of architecture, and his insistence on breaking down distinctions which might sanction specific hierarchies of interest and meaning all point to an uncertain reality. Two ideas or themes also recur throughout Siza's discourse, that his architecture refers to a socio-physical "situation" and that architecture is supported by the re-use of "models".

Siza's repeated references to the socio-physical "situation" in which architecture exists and his apparent rejection of an architectural language both characterize and distinguish his statements from surrounding discourses. His
insistence on the relation of form and use is in opposition to dominant ideologies both "modernist" and "post-modernist" which, in relation to what is perceived as the overburdening of architecture and the failure of the utopianism implicit in the modern movement, refuse to acknowledge the relations of use in architecture. These architects and theorists, as a means of neutralizing functionalism, view programmatic considerations as extrinsic to architecture. From this perspective we might ask if Siza's apparent rejection of a unitary language is simply a more expedient means of achieving the harmonious reconciliation of form and function proposed by the Modern Movement. Is his emphasis on the "situation" a removal from uncertainty and the indication of an underlying functionalist ethic, one which proposes an organic and mechanistic adaptation to site and program? Siza, in his statements, does not preclude a sustained and systematic examination of the inter-relationship between architecture and society, but it is not clear how this relation is understood. What is clear is that in his insistence on the socio-physical context as a basis for architecture Siza implicitly rejects the notion of an autonomous architecture -- of an architecture which only refers to itself.

An initial interpretation of Siza's theoretical position suggests the basic idea of a transformational process which operates in a pre-existing "situation" and on
"models" derived at least in part from the context and from the history of architecture. However, this understanding is not in itself sufficient to explicate Siza's position as these ideas appeal to and are directed by a wider system of thought or world view. I have suggested that this view may be generally described as one that recognizes a fundamental condition of uncertainty which predicates that architecture cannot be based on a set of immutable rules or a fixed authoritative framework.

While not following these apparent intentions and beliefs too closely, the analysis of Siza's architecture may serve to clarify the nature of his research program and to tentatively establish relations between his thought and work. Through an inquiry into Siza's projects and buildings and the way his architecture changes under varying social and material conditions, we may begin to establish guiding ideas and verify whether Siza is simply using an empirical method or if there is a form of objective guidance operating across his work as a whole.
NOTES


3. This process is suggested and developed by Stanford Anderson in his essay "Environment as Artifact" of 19 and other writings. Anderson here suggests a process which seeks to establish the cognitive and physical models which form what may be considered the basis of an "architectural research program." In this view, architectural criticism seeks to formulate both a cognitive and physical model which may be tested against one another and mutually adjusted.


8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.
Berlin, Kreuzberg, air view, circa 1920
Having made an initial interpretation of Siza's theoretical position, we can now attempt a further reading of his work. Siza's proposals for the Kreuzberg district of Berlin, commissioned in 1979 by the International Building Exhibition of Berlin (IBA) present a particularly dense and intriguing set of issues and ideas. The proposals for the restructuring of three urban blocks provide a physical model through which we may explore some of the questions and test many of the assumptions made in preceding sections. While such an analysis is necessarily limited in scope as we have only drawings to work from, Siza's drawings are not simply two-dimensional illustrations but working drawings out of which we may tentatively construct the architect's intentions.

Berlin: The City of Many Facets

The IBA, within whose program Siza's projects are located, approaches the reconstruction of the city on a
3.1 Kreuzberg, Berlin, apartment building (19th century).

3.2 Kreuzberg, Berlin
Corner building
Kottbusserstrasse
block by block basis. It is a program whose objectives have developed in the wake of previous urban renewal efforts which have met with strong opposition from local residents. In Kreuzberg the authorities established a program which in the words of one official sought to: "work with and not against the urban form,"¹ in an effort to demonstrate that "urban quality is the outcome of an integration with an existing urban fabric."² This is a program which reflects the contradictions of a system which has removed itself from the possibility of a global restructuring of the urban environment, resigning itself to dealing with only sub-systems and fragments of the city. It is also a program that is based on a critique of post-war reconstruction projects and implicitly suggests the renewal of a pre-existing order in which it places positive value. This orientation is reflected in the majority of projects commissioned by the IBA in which we find the replication of former structures, and in particular the consolidation of the conventional perimeter block. Siza's proposals have met with substantial resistance from various sectors. By rejecting both a sham reconstruction and an autonomous self-sufficiency, his projects pursue the contradictions present in the IBA's reconstruction program and the city of Berlin.

As in our analysis we should be somewhat guided by Siza's intentions, it is useful to consider the few remarks made by the architect in an effort to qualify his work in Berlin. Siza's proposals find support in an analysis of the
3.3 Berlin apartment house, 1849, ground floor plan.
structure of Kreuzberg, but also develop in response to a more global understanding of the historically determined condition of Berlin. Of Berlin Siza has observed that:

Berlin is a limited city. It was destroyed by the war, as so many other cities, but was not systematically reconstructed. The separation, the wall, made an urban reconstruction plan impossible. It is the non-realization of this plan that is largely responsible for the fragmentation (of the city).

In Berlin there was neither systematic destruction nor systematic reconstruction. The duality old city/new city does not exist in Berlin. Here we are obliged to slip our projects between new fragments and old fragments which never complement each other, which may never be reduced to a unity, but which exist as parallel realities.

In keeping with these observations Siza summarized the intentions of his proposals for Kreuzberg in the following manner:

In Berlin they wanted to recuperate a block of Kreuzberg to house the inhabitants. It was necessary to take into account the layout, analyze the reasons for the fragmentation of this sector. I sought to assemble these fragments without hiding their reality, and to bring them closer to other fragments. It was necessary to use a system here... I chose that of the 19th century.

The 19th century system to which Siza refers is that set of conventions that established a common set of references for the speculative developers who built Kreuzberg. It is a system by which the large blocks of this area were subdivided into fairly regular lots on which were constructed a common residential building type of 5 to 6 stories, forming a continuous built perimeter with commercial establishments incorporated into the ground floor.
3.4 Alvaro Siza, Kreuzberg, 1979, projects for two contiguous blocks, typical floor plans and elevations.
along major thoroughfares (fig. 3.1, 3.2).\(^5\) Extensions often carried out over time, perpendicular to the street, have formed the typical L-shaped buildings and interior courtyards of this area (fig. 3.3).

Siza's proposals, as a whole, form a system which is derived in part from the typological and morphological characteristics of the 19th century system. In some cases modifying the existing typology only slightly, Siza's buildings (fig. 3.4) are all made up of simple volumes, with street level porticos and in most cases a tripartite division of the facade. Conventional elements are found in the use of openings as a primary expressive device, and in some cases the plan layout, with its U-shaped stairs accessing two units per floor, closely parallels that of the buildings of Kreuzberg. Siza also adopts the pattern of corner buildings which are developed as special urban events.

Siza adopts many of the 19th century conventions, yet we may also detect subtle transcriptions and significant departures. He does not employ a neo-classical architectural vocabulary and the formative devices and typological elements found in Kreuzberg are abstracted. While we find many transformations in the planning of the buildings; as for example the elimination of the typical half-story ground floor and half basement which is replaced by ground-floor porticos, or in the floor plans; which
3.5 Alvaro Siza, Frankelufer block, airview, site plan, elevations.
combine closed and open room arrangements, the most significant departure is found on the level of the relation of the building to the block and the reinterpretation of the spatial structure of the block itself.

Two Worlds.

In the block of Frankelufer (fig. 3.5) we may identify the basic elements of Siza's strategy. In this large block marked by a fairly continuous perimeter, Siza's interventions involve the addition of new structures and the partial structuring of public space within the interior of the block. Grouping together the four buildings proposed for this block, we find that each structure refers not only to its particular situation but that a line of reference exists from one to another -- each one in some way implies the other. The plan in which the outlines of former structures, the alignments of property lines, walls and fences are superimposed with existing constructions, forms a network of references and alignments which suggest themselves as a referent framework or matrix within which Siza locates his constructions. From the site plan we may see how by the arrangement of isolated buildings Siza discretely introduces a geometrical order which begins to structure the interior of the block while simultaneously relating these interior spaces to the street space and the city. In the block of Frankelufer, as in the three other
3.6 Alvaro Siza,
project for building b, Frankelufer block,
blocks, Siza juxtaposes two conflicting urban orders, that of the city as a continuous fabric and that of a heterogenous collection of object buildings.

The large L-shaped building (fig. 3.6) focuses many of the issues involved in Siza's project for Kreuzberg. We may read this structure either as a reversal of the typical Kreuzberg configuration, now facing into the block and set askew to the street, or as a fragment of a former courtyard structure. Siza's construction is detached from, yet congruent with the existing street front building. The proposed building responds to its double orientation by providing through access on the street side and a portico traverses the building in an interplay between front and back. The rear facade presents another front onto the interior of the block where the regular facade is excavated to from a shallow parabolic niche. The classical hemicyclical niche is employed here to center the new construction within the heterogenous order of the block's interior.

In this construction the relation between a public front and a private back may appear to be negated, yet on closer examination, it is apparent that the street side remains the dominant front of this and all of Siza's proposals. However, the interplay between front and back, street and block acknowledges the fact that inner block constructions exist today as fragments cut off from a continuous system of enclosed courtyards. Within large
3.7 Alvaro Siza, Frankelufer block, site plan.

3.8 Alvaro Siza, building b, Frankelufer block, plan of typical floor, street facade and block facade.
blocks such as that of Frankelufier this condition demands a reinterpretation of a once coherent system. In response, Siza develops this construction in such a way as to open itself to a dual reading without remaining ambiguous. This operation may be illustrated by considering the floorplans (fig. 3.8). The wing perpendicular to the existing street front building with its rooms facing into the "courtyard," corner "Berliner Zimmer" and blind party wall allowing for later contiguous development, is conventional. The adjacent wing may however be read both ways. The street side is dominant in terms of the location of public rooms, yet the living space may be oriented either towards the street side or toward the block side. This possibility for interpretation is most apparent in the end unit where living and dining spaces run through the building.

In Siza's building for Frankelufur a conventional form is transformed through a shift in the relations of building to block -- a shift which consciously detaches this form from the domain of tradition. In this simple and carefully calculated mediating gesture, Siza inserts one world into another, establishing a dialogue which resonates throughout this work.

The interventions Siza proposed for this block do not create a new condition but simply interpret a latent possibility which already existed within the urban structure of Berlin. The devastation of the war wrenched open the
3.9 Berlin, Kreuzberg, air view, circa 1920.
block structure. The resulting fragmentation has combined with post-war speculation, changes in the urban economy, and population structure to transform both the use and the meaning of the interior spaces of the city. The resulting quality of transparency is now typical of Berlin streets where today structures situated within the block have a changed status and participate in the street life. In these spaces we find the pre-war (fig. 3.9) use of gardens, outbuildings, workshops and tenements, combined with a new tendency to construct within the largest blocks. In proposing to build residential structures in the block of Frankelufer, both on the perimeter and within the block, Siza is not inventing a new pattern of occupation but consolidating and giving form to a pre-existing order and an emergent informal one. What is exceptional in Siza's proposals is the fact that he maintains voids in the perimeter and appears to raise the everyday life world of the interior of the block to the status of the city. In so doing Siza questions our notions of propriety inherited from the 19th century and the articulations between society and the space it inhabits. This is not effectuated by imposing an abstract order on the existing situation but by acknowledging an objective reality which Siza seeks to adopt positively. In the block of Frankelufer Siza does not simply disregard 19th century urban conventions but insists on the co-presence of another less defined and informal set of relations. In this process we might suggest that Siza is
3.10 Karl Friedrich Schinkel, bourgeois house type, (1825),
interior perspective, ground floor plan and upper floor plan.
seeking to rebuild the 19th century system of Kreuzberg by bringing older conventions into alignment with changed social and material conditions.

The implications of this operation are complex and highly charged as a social stigma is attached to the interior of the blocks of Kreuzberg. The street side has traditionally been assumed as privileged domain while the back and interior courtyards and spaces were associated with tenements, servants' quarters, workshops and small industrial enterprises. The implications of building residential structures within the blocks of Kreuzberg today are nuanced and beyond the scope of this discussion, yet we should not overlook the social and ideological underpinnings of the 19th century urban structure of this city. The "Bürgerhäuser" (bourgeois house type) designed around 1825 by Schinkel (fig. 3.10) provides a simple illustration of some of the social biases associated with this system. Schinkel's house type follows a basic pattern common to the urban houses in wealthier districts which, in contrast to the Berlin apartment houses, did not provide through access to the yard or interior of the block. Schinkel's design is insular and disallows the then prevalent use of the site for production facilities. In the plan we also find both the kitchen and servant quarters at the extremity of the building. Such social distinctions are programmatic in almost every aspect of the spatial organization, interior
3.11 Alvaro Siza,
project for a residential building on Kottbusserstrasse, 1979,
ground floor plan, street elevation and sketches.
layout and vertical distribution in the buildings of the
district. In adopting and transgressing the "19th century
system" Siza is not simply engaging in formal manipulations
but in the structuring and restructuring of social space.
These forms are not adopted without consideration of their
former use and meaning.

Interlocking Conventions.

Where analysis of the block of Frankelufer allows us to
establish the major characteristics of Siza's proposals at
the urban level, the small residential building on
Kottbusserstrasse (fig. 3.11) suggests the manner in which
these intentions are synthesized into an architectural form.
Along the street front of Kottbusserstrasse a highly
irregular void has developed, exposing the backs and sides
of existing buildings to the street. In this case Siza
suggests the continuity of the street wall by inserting a
planar facade more or less in the center of the open lot.
The body of the building, however, develops by interaction
with the adjacent buildings, assuming their alignments.
Siza's building appears to be constructed and deconstructed
through a dialogue which sustains itself on the tension
which exists between the interior and exterior of the block
and between the individual building and the city. In the
proposal for Kottbusserstrasse, as in all of Siza's
interventions in Kreuzberg, complementary and conflicting
3.12 Alvaro Siza, project for Kottbusserstrasse, 1979, situation plan, ground floor plan and upper floor plan.
aspects of urban space, building and dwelling are set in motion. From this perspective, the formal articulation of each building reflects a search for a figure capable of holding these conflicting worlds together.

While these opposing readings of the city make up the space of Kreuzberg today, we might also understand them in terms of pre-modern and modern categories and conventions of urban building and architecture. This interpretation is suggested by the articulation of the building on Kottbusserstrasse. In this construction, the excavation of the facade implies the co-presence of front, back, and side, but may also be understood in terms of frontality associated with the classical tradition and oblique multifaceted forms, a formal characteristic of modernity. This cleft which breaks the regular windows, and the overlapping and extended cubic volume of the first floor introduces the three-dimensional nature of modern architecture within the planar street wall. This interaction is furthered by considering the opposition between the implied continuity of the street wall and the volumetric development of the building as a free-standing object (fig. 3.12). On several levels, Siza converts supposedly incompatible phenomena into co-existences in a tense relation which appears to value and establish differences rather than the fusion of opposites.

Siza's construction appears to merge with its setting yet proposes that we view these same surroundings in a new way. The grey, blind, walls of adjoining structures are
veiled and partially exposed – extending our sensibilities and inducing us to become more acutely aware of our surroundings. Without any nostalgia for the past this work points to the aesthetic richness already present in the environment which here becomes, and to a certain extent determines, the architectural experience. In this small example we may begin to understand Siza's projects for Kreuzberg in terms of modernist and pre-modern conventions and world views which are critically examined and interlocked. This interpretation leads us beyond the simple opposition of two urban realms in which this operation finds its rationale. It may illuminate both the manner in which Siza rationalizes formal decisions involved in this work, and the underlying modernity of his architectural research program.

In an effort to gauge Siza's departure from both the 19th century architecture of Kreuzberg and an orthodox modern architecture it is useful to contrast Siza's proposals for Kreuzberg with Van Doesburg's seminal statement concerning the formal assertions of the "new architecture." In 1924, in De Stijl, Van Doesburg wrote:

The new architecture is formless ... it does not recognize fundamental and unchanging patterns, it shuns symmetry and the frontal approach developing its many sided plastic nature in space ... and it does not distinguish a front from a rear, right or left, and if possible even up or down. 8

In the building on Kotbusserstrasse as in all his proposals for Kreuzberg, Siza draws distinctions between
front, back, and side, as well as up and down, yet we find simultaneously the presence of architecture's "many sided plastic nature in space." While it is not possible at this juncture to begin to unravel the meaning Van Doesburg imputes to the idea that "the new architecture is formless," I believe that we may take his other statements at face value. In his works for Kreuzberg it is not clear that Siza recognizes what Van Doesburg terms as "fundamental and unchanging patterns." While it may be argued that Siza understands the structure of Kreuzberg as a conventional system rather than as a set of immutable rules, it must also be recognized that these conventions refer to fundamental patterns which underlie the city as an urban construct, forming a set of relations whose formal antecedents reach back beyond the 19th century, structuring the space of the city in terms of blocks, streets, and squares. By reinforcing the block structure where it is weakest, particularly at the corners, which define urban squares, and by suggesting a relative continuity of the street wall, Siza acknowledges this fundamental pattern of city building. However, within Siza's heterodox approach these fundamental patterns do not appear as fixed and unchanging. The proposals for Kreuzberg address both the need for historical continuity and change.

In Siza's hybrid constructions in which we find modern and pre-modern categories confronting each other, it is not
3.13 Adolf Loos, photo montage, Allgemeine Verkehrs Bank (project), 1904.

surprising that we may establish parallels with Loos' architecture and urban buildings for Vienna. The correspondence between Siza's proposals for Kreuzberg and Loos' work, such as the proposal for the Allgemeinen Verkehrs-Bank of 1904 (fig. 3.13) or the well-known Michaelerhaus of 1909-11 (fig. 3.14) are not superficial. Despite the apparently dissonant architectural vocabulary the Michaelerhaus is grounded in the transformation of known types and conventions. It is a construction which develops multiple relations with all the elements in its setting and which is inflected towards the square on which it is situated. Both Siza and Loos are concerned with establishing a relational structure for architecture, and we may find in Loos a precursor for an operation which seeks to recover the thread of historical continuity while acknowledging changing cultural and material conditions. Both architects are consciously constructing new world views out of old ones; however, the worlds to which they refer are different and this difference is found in Siza's approach to urban space and the forms of his architecture. Loos' project for the Schwarzwaldschule of 1911-12 (fig. 3.15) provides a limited but nevertheless revealing comparison. In contradistinction to Siza's proposal for Kottbusserstrasse (fig. 3.16), the easily comprehensible form of Loos' project appears more clearly as a mutation of classicism. While we find a striking similarity in the elimination of figurative elements and the combination of rectangular,
3.15 Adolf Loos, Schwarzwaldschule I (project), 1911-12.

3.16 Alvaro Siza, residential building for Kottbusserstrasse (project), 1979.
square, and horizontal openings or in the use of three-dimensional projections beyond a planar facade, the incomplete form of Siza's project represents a far more complex condition. The interplay between a static; symmetrical and frontal architecture, and a dynamic; asymmetrical and oblique formal expression, is carried much further in Siza's project which is not only radically asymmetrical, but also fragmented. Unlike Loos' project this construction cannot be understood all at once and it is not immediately evident how it has been derived. While Siza does not fully remove a conventional identity from this form, it suggests an unstable and fluctuating relationship with its surroundings and tradition that disallows a single interpretation. Despite striking similarities, Siza is not indiscriminantly copying Loos but rather responding to a historical context in Kreuzberg which is not dissimilar from the constraints which Loos sought to detach himself from.

While it might appear that Siza and Loos are here mirroring each other in forward and backward projections, significant differences exist both on the level of their approach to a pre-existing urban structure and the manner in which their architecture develops spatially and plastically. Where the corner building on Frankelufer (fig. 3.17) in its superposition of cubic forms may appear Loosian, the dynamic and plastic forms of the corner buildings for Kohlfurter (fig. 3.17) recall Scharoun and Mendelsohn, and would appear
the anathema of Loos. The expressive flair of these constructions and the differentiation of forms throughout Siza's proposals for Kreuzberg suggest a strategy of "particularized composition" which is the hallmark of an Expressionist architecture. It is true that Siza treats each site differently, but Siza's proposals are not simply a collection of individual gestures or a strategy of "particularized composition" in which the unique incident or unrepeatable site condition is emphasized over any notion of continuity. In the proposals for Kreuzberg the "incidents" only acquire meaning within a larger framework to which they consciously refer. By the adoption of a basic theme found in the repetition of simple volumes and a limited set of elements which are inflected in response to their particular circumstances, Siza's proposals harbour a degree of rationalization which is antithetical to the subjectivism and stylistic inventions of an Expressionist architecture. The expressionist projects of, for example, Häring or Poelzig lack the dialectical relation with a pre-existing urban context and the consideration of conventional forms and relations evident in Siza's work.

While Siza's architecture is not a manifestation of a subjective expressionism, we may find in the work of Scharoun a set of experiences which are incorporated in some measure into the proposals for Kreuzberg. This relation is not, however, sustained at the urban level. Scharoun's urban projects, such as Siemmensstadt of 1930, where he was
the only architect to produce three different blocks, treated in different ways and juxtaposed to produce a differentiation of spaces, are not analogous to Siza's multiform responses to Kreuzberg. Scharoun's willful heterogeneity fails to create a recognizable urban situation and bears little in common with Siza's urban archeology. The parallel is found in the ability to form exterior space through the juxtaposition of forms rather than simply through the unifying compositions of 19th century urbanism. Siza's proposals are clearly centered from the outset on an interaction with a specific socio-physical context but also on the phenomenological experience of the viewer. This is an approach which relies on direct observation rather than only on prescribed conventions. I would suggest that it is in this emphasis on the perceptual basis of architecture that the experiences of an architect like Scharoun are most apparent in Siza's work.

In examining Siza's proposals for Kreuzberg as a whole it is evident that while on one level they form a logically consistent system, they are also radically subjective on another. This is apparent in relatively insignificant examples where Siza's inflective tactics do not always appear to find logical support, but also on a more fundamental level. A contradictory and conflictual condition emerges from Siza's insistence on accepting both the 19th century urban system of Kreuzberg and the
disaggregated and heterogeneous order of post-war Berlin as the basis for his project. By pursuing the contradictions inherent in this condition Siza introduces a degree of relativism into the process of urban construction which was foreign to the 19th century. Within Siza's proposals only the corner buildings of the perimeter block form an unchanging pattern. We are not provided with an absolute measure of the degree and location of openings into the block nor are we sure where to locate structures and the configuration they must assume. In contrast to the 19th century system which ensured a relatively uniform standard in the public domain of the street and provided rules requiring only a limited degree of interpretation, Siza only provides principles and no clear set of rules. Siza's proposed interventions do develop a clear set of elements and do find support in the pre-existing and existing spatial and social configurations, yet these must all be interpreted by the architect. This process is most evident within the block where former conventions pertaining to the street space did not prevail and which presents a heterogeneous order that varies substantially from block to block. It would appear that in Siza's terms the emergent nature of this inner block language does not allow for a simple and definitive solution. In this way Siza's proposals for spatial organization remain suggestively schematic and open to further development.

Clearly such a dialectical approach to urban construction is distant from the unifying and absolutist order underlying modern urbanism associated with CIAM theories of the city. Siza's approach also appeals to a different understanding of architecture and contemporary urban problems than the so-called "contextual" proposals of the 1970s as put forward by architects like Rob Krier. We might contrast this project to Rob Krier's proposals for the reconstruction of Stuttgart (fig. 3.18) of the early 1970s, which proposes the image of the integral city accomplished by piecing together fragments of the city and by subordinating each element to the overall structure. An examination of this project and much of the so-called contextual architecture reveals a striking absence of contradiction and conflict which characterizes the true ground condition of any site in the city today. In contrast to such schemes Siza appears to assume existing forms and the objective reality of the site as the point of departure for new proposals (fig. 3.19). In Berlin Siza proposes a dialectical approach which relies on a creative dialogue with the context "as found" rather than universal solutions or subjective inventions.

While rejecting a spurious unity Siza does not appear simply to accept the fragmentary state of the city as a permanent or even desirable condition. In order to qualify Siza's point of view it is appropriate to reconsider his statements cited at the outset of this discussion. In
remarking that in Berlin: "We are obliged to slip our projects between new fragments and old fragments which never complement each other, which may never be reduced to a unity, but which exist as parallel realities," Siza acknowledges the contemporaneous and disjunctive nature of the city of Berlin. Yet he also states that: "I sought to assemble these fragments without hiding their reality, and to bring them closer to other fragments." This statement qualifies the previous one and reflects a basic contradiction found in the intention of bringing fragments closer together without denying the separateness which characterizes their fragmentation. This enigma may be somewhat clarified by considering yet another statement made a few years earlier, in 1977, which refers to the same issue. At that time Siza stated:

It is an essential problem to be capable of tying together dissimilar things, as the city today is in reality made up of very diverse fragments. In a city the problem is to form a whole with ruins, buildings of different periods, fragments ... The city is not necessarily continuous, but much more complex. Searching to make of its pieces a whole is necessary to develop our methodology ...

The tension between the idea of "searching to make of its pieces a whole" and that the city "may never be reduced to a unity" condenses Siza's understanding of the city as an artifact formed by superpositions and transformations through a conflictual process of construction and destruction. This understanding underlies the proposals for Kreuzberg but also provides the artistic impulse found in
Siza's work. In this view architecture is about both differences and continuities which are developed through an open formal system which is capable of engendering multiple relations.

Where the material for the architecture Siza proposes is in part suggested by all that exists and once existed in Kreuzberg and Berlin, the manipulation of this material is not wholly conditioned by this situation. In directing his departure from former conventions and the existing situation Siza does not appear to appeal to a set of fixed rules or to a natural order. Siza's departures from the conventions of the 19th century are not simply whimsical but are directed by counterposing these conventions to transformed social and material conditions. In seeking to rationalize the formal decisions involved in this project Siza establishes a "meta-game," that develops its own immanent logic, constructed in response to a philosophy of intervention and derived from a global analysis of Berlin, as well as the architects' belief system. While set within this matrix of facts and ideas, the architectural choices are also directed by a set of principles and aesthetic norms which are the result of historical and cultural accumulation and not simply the inventions of the architect. The "meta-game" Siza develops mirrors the conflictual and plural aspects of reality but also allows us to begin to comprehend the nature of the conventions by which we structure our environment. From
this perspective Siza's projects for Kreuzberg represent an epistemic inquiry which goes beyond the functional and the aesthetic level reaching underlying themes which not only inform us about the nature of architecture but of ourselves.
NOTES


2. Ibid.


4. Ibid.

5. A more detailed description and documentation of the urban system of Kreuzberg is found in Giest, Das Berliner Mietshaus.

6. In the Berlin apartment houses the "Berliner Zimmer," located in the corner formed by the street front and rear wings, generally served as a dining-room.

7. Siza was also commissioned to develop proposals for a smaller and less fragmented block in another part of Kreuzberg where he proposed the insertion of a primary school and workshops in the interior of the block. In this case residential structures were limited to perimeter sites.

8. Theo Van Doesburg, "De architectur als synthese der nieuwe beelding," De Stijl, No. 6-7, 1924.


10. Ibid.

4.1 Alvaro Siza, Sketches, Malagueira district at Evora.
Few places would appear further from the fragmented and discontinuous condition of Berlin today than the walled town of Evora in the Portuguese Alentejo, where Alvaro Siza has been engaged in elaborating and implementing a major urban expansion plan since 1977. In contrast to the piecemeal approach adopted by the IBA in Berlin, which represents a new or renewed contingency in the reuse of existing environments, the project for the Malagueira district of Evora lies much closer to the design intentions of modern town planning and architecture predicated on growth and expansion. Siza's work at Evora is informed by earlier social housing projects realized at Caxinas (1970) and the SAAL projects for Oporto, at Bouça (1973-77) and São Victor (1974-77), yet it may also be reasonably compared to the pre-war housing projects that launched the Modern Movement and to post-war reconstruction plans which initiated the creation of new towns. The program for the new district, which includes plans for 1200 dwellings to be constructed
4.2 Werkbund colony of Neübuhl, Zürich 1929-1932.
outside the boundaries of the existing historic center, is not dissimilar to that of the German Siedlungen. At Evora Siza draws on these precedents, but in a process initiated in his earlier works, he critically reexamines the modernist housing experiments. Here Siza extends the notion of the "minimal dwelling" to include a wider range of considerations by addressing the specific nature of the site, local cultural and historical conditions, and issues relative to urban construction and the history of architecture.

In this effort to situate his work within a wider cultural, historical, and environmental locus, Siza faces a set of seemingly intractable problems and contradictions. The scale of construction at Evora represents a substantial addition to the existing town and poses a new set of problems which may not be adequately met by reference to local precedents. Moreover, the contemporary productive situation restricts the appropriateness of models derived from towns built by accretion and a process of reconstruction over time, or from vernacular sources based in traditional building practices and life-styles. While the imperatives operating at Evora would appear to restrict a direct continuity with traditional practices, we have become increasingly aware of the fact that the instantaneous character of new urban districts, has generally resulted in a lack of urbanity as a communal or historical reality cannot be manufactured. These are among the contradictions
4.3 Alvaro Siza, Malagueira district, site plan.
which both Siza's project and an analysis of his work at Evora must address.

Elements of the Plan.

The Malagueira District is the site of a former agricultural estate, within walking distance from the historic center. The plan for the district includes 1200 dwellings and a range of public and commercial services. Bounded by a residential development of single-family houses, a clandestine settlement of rural migrants, and a public housing project of seven-story cruxiform blocks, the new district represents a major addition to, and extension of, the walled town.

The plan (fig. 4.3) proposed by Siza is developed along a major east-west axis which serves to structure the new district and tie it to both the historic center and the informal settlement along the edge of the site. The dominant east-west axis continues the main street of the old town, running from the main square out through the town walls, and forms the primary commercial street of the new development. Along this route is to run an elevated duct carrying water, gas, electrical and telephone lines serving the new district. The duct at street level forms porticos and arcades along the major thoroughfares and establishes a framework to which the various elements of the plan are related.
4.4 Plans, sections and elevations of house type A with patio to the street and house type B with patio at the back of the lot.
The basic unit of the plan is formed by parcels of 8 x 12 meters laid out back to back against a continuous service wall. A six-meter-wide road runs parallel to this basic unit forming an orthogonal grid of rectangular blocks. These blocks are aggregated to form sectors of various sizes. The grid is not continuous over the whole site but broken down into a number of pieces creating distinct zones counterposed to one another. The form and scale of these sectors depend upon the topography, the archeological remains found in the site, the intersections of the road network and the overall size of the operation.

We find a close correspondence between the house type and the structure of the district. The low-rise housing consists of a courtyard type in two basic configurations (fig. 4.4), Type A with a court fronting the street, and type B with the court to the rear of the lot. Eight variants of each type are proposed from a single-floor one-bedroom unit to a two-floor five-bedroom dwelling.

In the northern sector of the site we may identify the basic elements of the plan and their relations. The contour map (fig. 4.5) demonstrates the manner in which the grid of parallel rectangular blocks is laid over the undulating terrain inflecting the continuous rows of dwellings as they deform themselves to follow the slope of the land (fig. 4.5). Open to the landscape on the northern edge, the southern perimeter is bounded by a continuous arcade formed by the elevated service duct (fig. 4.5). A major commercial
4.5 Malagueira district, northern sector.
4.6 Northern sector commercial street
street cuts through the center of this area following a curving path along the contours of the site breaking down the continuity of the grid and forming lots of diverse sizes and irregular geometries. In the model constructed of this street we may see how Siza establishes a clear hierarchy between the dwellings and this two-tiered commercial street (fig. 4.6).

The plan for the Malagueira district is characterized by a dual order which is not that of the 19th century city in which public institutions are subsumed within the order of the grid of street blocks. In Siza's plan the larger non-typical public buildings are located outside the orthogonal system. A hierarchy is established in which small commercial buildings are located at the ends of the blocks of dwellings while the larger structures such as schools and major non-residential buildings are distributed over the territory and generally set in opposition to the landscape and orthogonal grid. In Siza's plan an unstable condition emerges from within the order of the plan itself. Not only is the grid fragmented, juxtaposed and inflected by the irregular road network, but the architect introduces a counterform in a public building type which has no pre-determined rules governing their location or form.

The spatial matrix formed by the repetitive dwelling units, the blocks and infrastructural system, ties the various elements of the plan together into a simple and
4.7 Evora, view of the city, 14th century.

4.8 Evora, plan of the walled town, 1980.
comprehensible design. Yet the interaction of the various elements of the plan form a dialectic of urban devices which allow for reciprocal and fluctuating relationships.

Siza has metaphorically described the process at Evora in the following terms:

The white sheet of continuous, simple, pure fabric placed on the undulating surface is beginning to show its hidden accidents. It is filling with wrinkles. It is agitated. It is broken and creases emerge. It is again becoming transparent ...

Siza seems to suggest that the rational proposal embodied in the plan obscures by its own purity and self-reference. Yet, that rational proposal can become transparent and closer to reality as it is invested with specificity. Siza's statement also appears to imply a certain autonomy to his initial proposal, allowing the architect to explore a contemporaneous reality in which all the experience accumulated in the site and the history of architecture and of the city is equally present and available. The process at Evora begins with "the first glance", yet it is based on the ability to see connections, similarities, analogies, and conflicts where they are not immediately evident.

Building beyond the Walls

Seeking to explain Siza's plan in terms of the context we find, beyond the structural link established by the major east-west axis of the district, multiple relations between
4.9 Evora, views of the historic center.
Siza's project and the historic city (fig. 4.7, 4.8). A correspondence exists between the elements of Siza's plan and urban/architectural elements in Evora (fig. 4.9) such as the continuous fabric of dwellings fronting directly onto narrow streets, whose uniformity is broken by their conformity to the sloping ground; the fragmentary pattern of long rectangular blocks, evident in some of the residential areas of the town; the porticos, that line the main commercial street and square; or the 16th century aquaduct, that connects the town to the surrounding landscape. Yet despite such parallels the plan for the new district represents a radically different architectural vocabulary and urban structure.

Evora, an administrative center in an agricultural region, is a town whose foundation dates from the second century. Situated at the crossroads of ancient commercial routes, its form attests to a long and rich cultural history that includes Roman and Moorish occupations and the presence of the royal court of the first Portuguese dynasties. In this town which has remained largely intact within a second perimeter wall, constructed in the 14th century with stones of earlier Roman walls, we find an amalgamation of all the architectural styles of Portugal, inflected by and combined with a vital local building tradition. Evora represents a composite and stratified order which can be neither replicated nor stripped down to reveal an original order. It is a town that defies extension as a walled town forms a
4.10 Plan of Pompeii, original center and the extra-urban streets.

4.11 Plan of Carthage (Davies).
self-contained organism and construction beyond the towns' walls is by definition disjunctive. In an effort to establish a continuity with the historic center and an ordering framework for growth, it would appear that Siza has sought to transcribe conventional elements and relations rather than attempt to replicate the composite form of the town. This interpretation is supported by the fact that the correspondences we might establish between Siza's project and Evora are found on the level of typological schemes and not in the replication of a particular architectural vocabulary or set of forms. An analysis of this set of correspondences reveals that the elements and relations to which Siza refers are not indigenous to Evora or the Alentejo region but are in fact fundamental patterns which underlie the western city. In the project for the Malagueira district, conceived as both an addition to and extension of the existing urban nucleus, we may observe that Evora serves not so much as a model but as a set of enduring and transposable relations. In adopting these conventional patterns Siza's scheme not only refers to Evora and local building traditions but by extension incorporates a long history of urban architecture that extends back to the classical urban structures of antiquity.

To my knowledge, Siza has not mentioned these antecedents, yet examining the plan for the Malaqueira district we find substantial evidence to suggest that it
4.12 Camp of Marcellus near Numantia (Schulters).

4.13 An area of Pomeii, north of the main forum.
demonstrates a structure somewhat analogous to the planned
towns of antiquity. While it is not possible to establish a
direct correspondence with a specific model or town, the
structuring devices, elements, and relations operating in
Siza's scheme exhibit a certain parallelism with those towns
which Castagnoli has termed as of or influenced by the
"Hippodamean Type." This type refers to a plan form
characterized by a rectangular grid and found in cities such
as Agrigento, Solutrin, and Pompeii (fig. 4.10). In these
towns, as in the Roman encampment (fig. 4.12), the blocks
whose long dimension is at right angles to the major roads
are subdivided by secondary streets (per strigas), as in
Siza's plan.

In the porticoes and shops lining the main street of
the Malagueira district we find a transformation of the main
street of Evora, but also the basic pattern of the portico
in front of a row of "tabernae," which according to several
writers lay at the origin of the Roman "insulae." In Siza's
planned development of the ends of blocks as varied sites
accommodating higher plastic forms, and the use of porticoes
to protect pedestrians from the intense Alentejo sun, we
find a compelling parallel in Axel Boëthius' observation
that:

The rows of tabernae acted as a most outstanding
embellishment of utilitarian houses...there
occur arcaded or colonnaded porticoes in front of
the rows of tabernae and these porticoes were an
especially important part of the communal comfort
as is testified by many ancient authors. 4
4.14 Alentejo region, Portugal, street.

4.15 Alvaro Siza, Malagueira district, residential street.
This arrangement, still common throughout the Mediterranean basin, forms the basic type of insula architecture. The universal nature of this configuration is demonstrated by its consistent use throughout the Roman dominion. While we may establish certain parallels with the scheme of the Hippodamean plan and the basic sequence of dwelling, taberna, portico and insula, it may be useful to consider other elements of Siza's plan in relation to antique precedents.

The courtyard house type adopted by Siza, while occasionally found in rural Alentejo towns is not a prevalent regional building type but is of course found in many Greco-Roman towns. Unlike Roman examples, Siza's dwellings do not miniaturize the order of the town, and we may not establish typological relations with the atrium house. As Kurt Forster notes, in the Roman atrium house "the unfolding of the plan recapitulated inside the house the entire range of public spaces - squares, passages, colonnades and shut-off habitations - outside it." Siza's dwellings are of a less compound form, yet they do exhibit a configuration similar to more modest antique dwellings. A clear correspondence to regional towns (fig. 4.14), but also the streets of such towns as Ostia and Pompeii, does exist in the aggregation of back-to-back houses forming a continuous street wall (fig. 4.15) punctured by minimal openings.
4.16 Alvaro Siza, Malagueira district, sketch design for the covered square.
In the sketch design for a central market square (fig. 4.16) in the form of a monumental hemicyclical shell, located at a major intersection along the east-west axis, we also find refractions of antique precedents. Here the closed form of the dome is opened in an exchange with the landscape. The barrel vault which leads from the surrounded and contained square behind the market, opens out onto an expanded horizon marked by the dominance of the historic center, while in reverse the experience is one of closing and entry. Francesco Venezia⁶ has suggested that the incomplete form of this proposed square recalls the empty cylindrical drums of abandoned windmills which assume the high points around the site, but it also draws indirectly from any number of public urban spaces. The form and location of Siza's covered square may be related to Roman constructive forms and such antique precedents as the market, forum and theatre. Yet these parallels appear distant as it may also draw on any number of urban public spaces form squares which open to the landscape and water courses to Islamic constructions which provide shaded enclosures. The form of Siza's square, while compounded from both practical and

In the effort to relate the district to wider environmental conditions and the conformity of the layout to the landforms, we find antecedents in local towns and villages (fig. 4.17) but also in antique towns where the site often determined the outline. Of the Hellenized Italic
4.17 Alentejo, village, main street.

4.18 Alvaro Siza, Malagueira district, end of a block in the northern sector.
town, Axel Boëthius has written:

The planners of, for example, 4th century Halicarnassus and Pergamon, accommodated the towns to what the nature of the place suggested. They monumentalized the landscape in agreement with its natural lines, relief and character. 7

From these experiences Boethius derives the notion of "construire le paysage" — a sensibility that also describes Siza's approach to the Alentejo landscape. There is an arcadian quality about this scheme that maintains intact the landscape of rock outcroppings, olive trees, grasslands, and streams. In Siza's plan where the main streets open out to the landscape of a former agricultural estate, where the countryside penetrates deep into the settlement, and where closed blocks confront a pristine landscape (fig. 4.18), we are reminded of the fact that Evora is a town in which the traces of archaic traditions are firmly inscribed into its vast latifundian zone. Yet substantial differences exist between archaic beliefs and Siza's view of man and the natural world embodied in the plan for this new district. Siza adopts every trace of former occupation and every accident in the terrain in a conscious process of transformation — intensifying the natural setting and transforming an open field into a cultural landscape. In Siza's plan we find both views of nature co-existing — man as part of nature and man as separate from the natural world.

We may correlate elements and relations operating in Siza's plan to the insula, portico, and tabernae, but we may
4.19 Malagueira district, service wall under construction.

4.20 Alvaro Siza, Malagueira district, sketch of a portion of the district.
also find within the planning process at the Malagueira district other parallels to both Evora and the planned towns of antiquity. At the Malagueira district the conditions of implementation called for a plan to coordinate the activities of various organizations and builders operating over time at various scales, from the individual owner/builder to the scale of several hundred dwellings. The concern for continuity and regularity within a piecemeal process, evident in Siza's plan, is very old. As Castagnoli notes, in considering new urban developments Plato suggested that "the houses are to be alike and even proposes that all foundations be laid at the time the city is founded." This is a consideration which we find evidence of in the regular layout and repetition of a single building type, but also in the service walls erected prior to the construction of dwellings. These walls (fig. 4.19, 4.20) represent a rational solution to the problem of infrastructure, but also form the initial act of foundation. Standing in monumental opposition to the landscape, the walls claim space for architecture and tie the future dwellings to the underlying geological strata. We may establish a typological parallel with the Renaissance aqueduct of Evora, designed by Francisco de Arruda, which links the town to the surrounding landscape but also has served as a support for the construction of dwellings. In Siza's scheme the fundamental purpose of the aqueduct is maintained and its latent potential is emphasized as he uses these walls to channel growth and
unify the form of the district.

In seeking to relate this new district to what the site and the city of Evora suggested, Siza has adopted elements and relations associated with classic urban structures, yet it is also evident that Siza did not intend to construct a Roman or Greek town. Just as the form of Evora has not been transposed outside its walls, the Hellenized Italic town may not be discovered within the structure of the Malagueira district. Referring to the enduring and transposable nature of these classic urban structures, Melvin Charney has noted that,

From the Roman Insula, to the strip house of medieval towns, to the tenements of the late 19th century industrial cities ... this fundamental way of building sustained an architecture of dwellings which in turn, structured the streets, the carrefours, and hence the squares, ordering the public existence of people. 9

Siza's reuse of older conventions and themes manifest in the introduction of the basic sequence of the street, block, square, and quarter, is not a neo-classical restitution nor is it an appeal to an archetype or origin of architecture. As Charney suggests, the reference to classic urban structures is not necessarily to a model but to fundamental themes underlying the city as an urban construct -- themes which have been continuously adapted in response to changing social and material conditions.

This evident parallel demonstrates that it is not possible to ascribe the form of this new district simply to
4.21 Site plan

4.22 Evora: informal settlement adjacent to the Malagueira district.
local precedents and Siza's work at Evora is not a form of localism or regionalism. The evident correspondence between Siza's project and those elements and relations surveyed in Evora and surrounding towns with more universal urban conventions demonstrates what Alan Colquhoun rightly points out as, "the extent to which all cultures even the most indigenous have been based on the ideas and principles of other 'preexistent' cultures."\textsuperscript{10}

While Siza's proposals encompass multiple relations with the city of Evora and by extension incorporate a long history of city building, it is equally apparent that a dialogue is established between the new district and the adjacent clandestine but now authorized settlement. This relation is established through the continuity of scale and orientation, the north-south axis which links the market square, and the concentration of services in the southern half of the site. Within the seemingly disordered layout of this area (fig. 4.21) a basic pattern emerges that is derived in part from traditional building types and settlement patterns. In this recent urbanization we find two predominant building types (fig. 4.22). The first is found in the repetition of single houses sharing common walls and fronting onto narrow streets with small enclosed yards to the back and the second in a linear form which develops perpendicularly to the street forming a patio in which small one-story houses front each other. The scale of the new development with its 8 x 12 meter lots, and narrow
4.23 Alvaro Siza, Malagueira district, house type A, plan and section.
residential streets closely parallels this area. This modest clandestine settlement presents a physical analogue but more importantly represents a way of life and the re-enactment of the form of the town without an institutional framework.

Beyond morphological similarities we may also establish a typological relation with a small atypical courtyard house which takes up a corner lot on the edge of the site (fig. 4.22). Surrounded by a continuous wall, this L-shaped single-story house is somewhat similar in size and configuration to the houses Siza proposes. Moreover, the reversal of the courtyard in type B to the back of the lot may be related to the dominant house type found in this area which fronts directly on the street. While we might find in these simple houses the origins of Siza's project, they are basic types which are not limited to the Alentejo region. Siza's development and interpretation of these basic types also reveals other influences and intentions.

The low-rise configuration and courtyard house type is a rational response to several factors, ranging from comfort to the maintenance of the historic town as the most prominent element in the landscape and symbolic center of a growing city. This house form also corresponds to Siza's understanding of the dwelling as a closed interior, and the articulation of the plans of these small houses to form positive exterior space, and the placement and dimensioning
4.24 Alvaro Siza, Malagueira district,
completed dwellings and preliminary sketches
of openings to visually enlarge small spaces, recalls other Siza houses. In these plans (fig. 4.23) Siza explores various connective possibilities by combining closed rooms with the open plan. Limited means are employed to form spaces of varying scales and relations.

As Francesco Venezia1 has observed, at Evora the house form does not appear to have been arrived at simply by addition to an original nucleus but may be understood as a subtractive process in which the final form is found in the smallest house with its projecting stair (fig. 4.24). This subtractive process is evident in Siza's sketches (fig. 4.24) where we find the building considered as a solid but also that the whole block appears simultaneously as a continuous mass and as the addition of singular elements. The various stages of construction of these dwellings is not understood as an ad-hoc arrangement. Each stage is carefully calculated to produce a rich and powerful visual acoustic to the streets. In these simple forms, as in earlier works such as the Bires house or the projects for Kreuzberg, we again discover a pre-occupation with establishing continuities and discontinuities at various levels which mutually reinforce each other. The stark simplicity of walls without cornices, and carefully proportioned and juxtaposed masses and niche-like openings, also recall the austere forms of Oud (fig. 4.25) and Loos.

The elemental quality of Siza's forms and the underlying rationality of the plan of the district

4.26 Álvaro Siza, housing at Bouça, Oporto, 1973-77, sketch.
demonstrate a strong affinity with the housing schemes which established modern architecture in the early decades of the 20th century. Siza's interest in the housing experiments of the 1920's had already been established in his earlier social housing projects for Oporto at Bouça (1973-77) (fig. 4.26) and S. Victor (1974-77). These pre-war experiences do not provide Siza with a specific physical model but they do, as Martin Steinmann notes, contain in their forms "a certain manner in which to state the problem of housing."12 Both the plan for Evora and these earlier experiences originate in the demands of an economic and productive nexus that manifests itself in repetiveness, compactness, the use of an "optimized" dwelling type, and the most economical means of construction available. At Evora we also find, in the concern for structuring the environment and providing housing and services within an egalitarian framework, a parallel to such earlier examples as the municipality of Frankfort's ambitious plans to house the working class in the new Siedlungen. Clearly a parallel set of circumstances and intentions exist, yet we also find in Siza's work a careful and systematic restatement of the "problem of housing."

The project for the Malagueira district is not simply a reinterpretation of rationalist codes and formulas, yet it is apparent that the work at Evora finds support in the experiences of architects such as Oud and Taut who sought to
4.27 "Existenzminimum" model plan discussed at C.I.A.M., 1929.

4.28 Alexander Klein, distributive studies, 1928.

4.29 Walter Gropius, Dammerstock district, Kalsruhe, 1928.
deal with fundamental problems of lasting significance. The housing experiments of modern architecture in housing in the early decades of the 20th century defies unequivocal categorization and we cannot simply understand these diverse experiences as a single-minded effort to form what Gropius termed "a unitary view of the world." Undoubtedly a deterministic and techno-centric view underlies the efforts of CIAM to universalize planning, Ernst May's Existenzminimum model plan (fig. 4.27), Alexander Klein's ergonomic studies (fig. 4.28), and the housing schemes of architects like Gropius (fig. 4.29) and Hilbersheimer, yet such a general characterization tends to overlook the many efforts undertaken during this period which were often at odds with one another. Siza's work conditions how we might understand these earlier experiences and it may be more useful to assume Siza's intentions and method as a particular vantage point from which to survey the past.

On the most general level, by positing a process of accumulation and transformation of previous experiences and by giving expression in the plan to several dimensions, including the locale and its traditions, Siza's work breaks away from CIAM's efforts to tie architecture directly to the dictates of production. The scheme for Evora is grounded in typological, morphological and other norms developed out of a definite socio-cultural use. In seeking to give architecture a basis in daily life Siza does not incorporate Le Corbusier's "Esprit Nouveau" and its implication of a
search for a new architecture in response to a "new way of life." At Evora the articulations between the project and social life are found by reference to concrete phenomena and conventional structures rather than to abstract concepts of "form" and "order" or an appeal to a "new man." The project is not a blue-print for a "new way of life" nor is it a direct representation of an existing way of life, yet this new district appears today, as did the German Siedlungen in the 1920's, to offer an authentic alternative to current models. The Malagueira district is neither the same density nor structure as the historic center or local settlements; it is more integrated and complex than the isolated tower blocks adjacent to the site, and less privatized and more structured than the chaotic development of single-family houses nearby. Moreover, the architectural, technical, and typological assumptions contained in the plan are capable of generalization and further development. Siza's project forms both a specific response to a particular situation and a suggestive model for peripheral development in Evora.

Siza's concern for relational structures and everyday requirements as a basis for his proposals is not altogether foreign to 20th century production. From this perspective we might consider Oud's effort to combine the open formal system of De Stijl with "life as it is normally lived," Bruno Taut's de-emphasis of technological imperatives in favor of social demands, or Loos' unrealized housing
4.30 J.J.P. Oud, Kiefhoek district, 1925.

4.31 Alvar Aalto, Satellite town outside Pavia 1966, site plan.
projects for Vienna developed out of detailed consideration of the life-style and values of future inhabitants. However, from our vantage point we find in these earlier efforts a range of unresolved problems and contradictions.

Oud's Kiefhoek district (1925) (fig. 4.30) is by no means simply a productivist reflex yet it does not form recognizable public spaces, nor effectively establish connections to the surrounding urban structure. We might also consider Alvar Aalto's various efforts to reconcile industrial production with cultural demands. While successfully relating his housing projects to an environmental context (fig. 4.31) Aalto was unable to integrate these same works within a wider historical and cultural locus. Among these various precedents the thought and work of Tessenow may provide a useful reference in the present discussion.

In contrast to the imitative replications of the Heimatschutz movement, Tessenow's work was not simply based on received forms and in his architecture we find a parallel to Siza's concern for maintaining a connection with the past while remaining open to change. Like Tessenow's works, such as his well-known terrace houses at Hellerau (fig. 4.32) Siza's forms (fig. 4.33) are imposing by "virtue of their very simplicity" and in both cases we find housing directed towards the elementary forms of an "anonymous architecture" within a self-conscious process that cannot be reduced to a spontaneous response to needs. Moreover, Siza's use of old
4.32 Heinrich Tessenow, Terrace houses at Hellerau.

4.33 Álvaro Siza, Malagueira district, elevations of houses.
and new technologies and materials parallels Tessenow's stress on craftsmanship and reliance on tested methods of building while not rejecting new construction techniques. Despite what might appear to be a sympathetic correspondence to Tessenow's work, on closer examination, we find significant differences which are more revealing than any possible continuities. Siza's plan appears from our analysis to draw from classic urban structures, yet in his architecture we do not find manifest the classicizing tendency underlying Tessenow's architecture. Siza works with an open formal system altogether foreign to Tessenow. It is significant that we do not find in the scheme for Evora the provincialism which led Tessenow to raise the provincial town to the level of a paradigm, reflected in the anti-urban bias of his book on the house, Wohnhausbau of 1909. In marked contrast to Tessenow's "Kleinstadt" the Malagueira district is fundamentally urban in both its organization and intent. However, Tessenow's rejection of techno-centric attitudes introduces a theme which we might expand upon.

A major distinction between Siza's work at Evora and the housing projects of the Modern Movement is found in his apparent rejection of technology as a positive value in and of itself. Siza adopts simple technologies and there is in his work no effort to employ industrialized materials or building systems exclusively. At Evora a rationalized
industrial process is not proposed, yet we do find a concerted effort to rationalize the construction process. Siza's use of artisanal methods of building does not appear to be an exaltation of agrarian values but rather a rational response to a productive situation in a relatively unindustrialized region. Beyond such pragmatic considerations it is also apparent that the simple building methods employed also belie an effort to mediate technology. This attitude is apparent in many of the choices made by the architect, ranging from the use of a massive masonry system to an approach to the landscape that rules out the use of heavy machinery and inflexible construction systems. Perhaps Siza's attitude is best illustrated in provisions for the automobile as these decisions are made independently of the productive situation. The six-meter-wide streets do not allow for on-street parking which is provided in garages located in separate structures adjacent to each residential sector. These garages, to be provided with chimneys, reinterpret the rural tradition of out buildings used to keep animals and for cooking. In this small example we find the most ubiquitous symbol of modern technology and mobility confronting archaic traditions in an uneasy relationship. The effort to mediate between the demands of the current productive situation and the demands of a particular site, cultural milieu, and traditional urban forms underlies many of the decisions made at Evora. Here it is not a question of rejecting advanced means but, following a logic that
closely resembles Tessenow's and Loos' convictions, of carefully weighing new technologies against traditional alternatives.

We may find support for Siza's approach in a reevaluation of pre-war experiences which lay outside the mainstream, but also in post-war developments that represent a fundamental questioning of the modern project of CIAM, such as Team Ten's critique of CIAM charters and post-war urban reconstruction projects. In the writings of Team Ten members we find enunciated some of the principles associated with Siza's work at Evora. As Jencks notes,

The history of CIAM to Team Ten from 1953 to 1963 is basically the history of an attempt to reestablish the basis for urban identity. Team Ten's call was for a memorable image, which reverberates with overtones of historical place without quite admitting them. 16

The revisionism of Van Eyck, Hertzberger and Ungers, as well as parallel efforts by Italian architects such as Rogers and Quaroni proposed the reassessment of the historical city as a basis for new proposals leading to the development of a methodological and theoretical basis found in the research of Aldo Rossi and others. However, few major urban housing projects have been realized along these lines in the ensuing period.

James Sterling's Southgate housing project for Runcorn New Town (fig. 4.34), indirectly influenced by this wider discourse, may serve as an example of this renewed interest in history and of some of the contradictions and pitfalls of
4.34 James Sterling, Southgate housing, Runcorn
New Town, 1968-74
an effort to integrate historical precedent in the foundation of new settlements. While lacking any apparent relation with the preexisting nucleus of Halton Village, the original town of Runcorn, or nearby Liverpool and Manchester, Sterling accompanied the plans for his Southgate housing scheme with spatial diagrams of the 18th century squares of Bath and London.\(^{17}\) At Runcorn, Sterling's effort to integrate such historical precedents is contradicted by a master plan based on the demands of the automobile and a rigid functional segregation. Sterling's references are restricted to a narrow range of models which have no apparent relation to the locale and are contradicted by the rigid grid pattern and commitment to mass production and systematized construction. In contrast Siza's scheme for Evora, realized under albeit different circumstances, is not a "superficial evocation of past eras" and the rationalization of the plan and the technologies employed are not external to but rather coincide with referent models derived from history as well as the place itself.

We cannot understand Siza's work as a form of regionalism or localism yet two other readings are suggested by our analysis of the work at Evora. On one hand we might consider the project for the Malagueira district as a transmutation or "modernization" of a classical urban model. Conversely, we may find at Evora the rational modern project opened to a wider set of contradictory experiences which
impose a rethinking of basic principles. I would like to argue that Siza's work does not conform to Vasari's aphorism, "Modernamento Antiquo - Antiquo Modernamento". Such an interpretation assumes that Siza attributes absolute value to antique models. In rejecting the "myth of progress" of the Modern Movement Siza does not replace it with either "the myth of a local cultural essence", or a neo-classical belief that the values of architecture are found in fixed laws exemplified in Greco-Roman models. Siza's reference to classic urban structures is not to a model but to a set of enduring and transposable relations which allow us to recognize the town as an urban construct and to establish basic principles capable of enduring in the present. The validity of these precedents is not measured by their origin but rather their continuing significance in the present. We might go further to suggest that Siza's work represents an effort to look beyond tradition and classicism to the generative forces of architectural and urban phenomena. In this sense Siza's project defies reduction to any one of its multiple sources. It is not simply a product which may be analytically divided into the parts from which it is assembled. Each of these experiences informs and directs the other within an unstable compound that denies final authority to any particular model.
NOTES

Chapter 4


2. Ibid.


8. Cited in, Fernando Castagnoli, Orthogonal Town Planning in Antiquity.


12. Martin Steinmann, "Reality as History -- Notes for a Discussion of Realism in Architecture,"


14. Jules Posner notes that "Tessenow's 'Kleinstadt' is neither village nor countryside and his mythical small house can only be realized in anti-urban conditions, sited on open land and extended by a garden in an effort to maintain the variety of the provincial against the uniformity of the city."

15. Siza notes that in Portugal 90% of construction enterprises are made up of less than six employees.

In the first chapter, I sought to establish a basic distinction between an approach to architecture which is derived from indigenous sources and one which is oriented by universal sources inflected by local circumstances. I have argued that Siza's work, while responding to particular settings is not fully motivated by them. This stance suggests a dialectical operation underlying the forms of this architecture and which is sustained in the analysis of the projects which we have examined: the Bank at Olivera das Azmies, the Antonio Carlos Siza House, and the proposals for Kreuzberg and Evora.

An architecture which seeks to establish multiple relations with its socio-physical and historical context necessarily involves the reinterpretation of physical models and conventions. In Siza's work we find that referant models and experiences are found within specific settings but are by no means limited to a particular place or time. The concern for pre-existences has led Siza to consider the
history of the site, but also the history of architecture. Each project not only establishes itself within an objective reality but also within the discipline of architecture.

Siza, in his statements, emphasizes those aspects of his research program which develop out of an understanding of architecture as a transformational process of pre-existing contexts and models. From the general notion of pre-existences we may extract two related themes, the first being the associations and disassociations between Siza's works and particular settings and the second is found in the relation between architecture and history. A discussion of Siza's works in terms of these two themes may not grasp the essence of his architecture nor fully describe his research program, yet they do provide a logical starting point and a way of approaching his work.

5.1 A NON-IMITATIVE CONTEXTUALISM

All of Alvaro Siza's projects are based on a critical knowledge of their settings and we find in his work a sustained and systematic effort to link architectural design to spatial, cultural and historical contexts. The terms "site," "context," and "situation" are often associated with his work. Each term implies more than a finite or quantifiable thing, inferring a set of (potentially unlimited) circumstances. These terms appear to coincide with Siza's statements from which we may establish that he
views the site as a dynamic reality, existing under the action of diverse and conflicting forces over time. We might go further to suggest that for Siza the site is an artifact which lies beyond design, as a socio-physical and historical matrix made up of superpositions, transformations, conflicting demands and interpretations.

This understanding of site was not a primary consideration in his earliest works and appears to have evolved, in part, out of his first contact with an urban project. The commission for a small group of houses at Caxinas in 1970 represented a new collective dimension in his work, demanding the development of methodological principles. At Caxinas we may detect a move away from considering the site simply in topographic and experiential terms, towards a more inclusive culturally based understanding. This increasing scope of concerns is summarized in Siza's statement of 1977:

In my first works I began by looking at the site, then making classifications ... today I take everything into account as what interests me is reality. 1

Given such statements and the hybridization evident in Siza's work, we might question how the architect finds sound reasons for excluding anything from a project. It is evident from Siza's production that we cannot simply understand his research program as "realist" or "neo-realism" for Siza does not aim to eliminate the artifice from architecture. The conformity to a given context or
5.1 Alvaro Siza, Belice, Sicily, 1980.
sketches of the earthquake.
"life-likeness" are not assumed as values in themselves. Nor is Siza's architecture simply an assemblage of fragments derived from the context and history. When Siza claims to "take everything into account," it does not mean that he also seeks literally to put everything into a project. His work necessarily involves a critical knowledge of the context or situation in which he is working. Siza's note that, "the architect is like a detective ... a lover of puzzles" suggests a search for clues which may reveal the essential formal structure and an understanding of the forces active within the setting, as a basis for a philosophy of intervention.

Tracing the myriad of associations between any Siza work and its context would be a hopeless task and it is more useful to try to establish the basic principles which may govern this process. At the most general level we may think of the "situation" as providing the material for the architectural project, but Siza's works also develop their own formative rules and are inflected through the encounter with the setting. This is an interactive process which at times blurs distinctions between inflections and borrowings but never is it a question of "mere imitation." Siza's contextualism involves the construction of relational structures, which include systematic transgressions, and his works do not simply develop by replication or analogy to the setting. These works assume a certain formal autonomy
involving differentiation and juxtaposition, but lack the purity and self absorption we have come to expect from modern architecture. This architecture is both autonomous and involved with its surroundings.

Siza’s emphasis on the context in which architecture exists is not simply an appeal to tradition, order, or meaning. In the works we have discussed, both the reinterpretation and transgressions of formal regulations present in the setting are related to changing social and material conditions. We may find various motivations, precedents, and influences for this approach. Clearly it is a response to an understanding of architecture as a cultural activity, a collective support, and as an urban fact, but we may also relate this focus to an effort to differentiate forms. In Siza’s work we find that the setting provides a means of differentiating and particularizing forms within an approach which seeks to establish a rigorous and non-superfluous architecture. In this view the differentiation of forms results from an interaction with the setting rather than simply through arbitrary or a-priori formal manipulations. Yet this is not a process by which the architect develops an autonomous proposition which is subsequently deformed by all that surrounds it. We must recognize that there is a dialectical and non-linear process consciously underlying Siza’s work. While acknowledging that the architect brings to each project a set of principles and experiences, Siza strives toward a condition
5.2 Alvar Aalto, schematic analysis of the Helsinki skyline with the Enzo Gutzeit Headquarters on the right.

5.3 Alvaro Siza, Bank at Oliveira de Azmeis, 1971-74.
in which his architecture may exist only through the encounter with a specific situation.

With these observations and assertions in mind we might return to Siza's work. The Bank at Oliveira de Azmeis of 1971-74 (fig. 5.3) provides a clear example of what we might understand as a morphological strategy and the manner in which a form may harmonize with its surroundings yet break in dissonance. In Siza's bank building, briefly discussed in Chapter One, the architectural language is foreign while the form develops in response to all that surrounds it. In the manner of a Rauschenberg print the form simply records all that is "out there," by breaking down a privileged viewpoint or hierarchical ordering of experience, yet it is also a formal assertion. This approach also bears comparison with Aalto's urban buildings for Helsinki and his ability to relate disparate buildings. Aalto's Enzo Gutziet Headquarters of 1959 may serve as an example of his effort to relate a contemporary architecture with a pre-existing setting. The intentions behind Aalto's schematic analysis of the Helsinki skyline (fig. 5.2) in which Classical, Byzantine and Modern forms are aligned within an elementary matrix is not altogether dissimilar to the alignments and multiple regulating lines Siza generates from all the elements surrounding his small bank building. Siza's approach is perhaps more inclusive and three-dimensional, yet in making the comparison we should also consider the
excavation and fragmentation of the rear of Aalto's building which may be understood, in some measure, as inflecting towards the Byzantine cathedral behind it. Despite apparently similar intentions, Aalto's allusions to the iconographic vocabulary of the Neoclassical context do no find a parallel in the abstract formal language of Siza's Bank. While a comparative discussion of Aalto's and Siza's respective efforts to establish correspondences with pre-existing settings would be fruitful, at this point I would simply suggest that Aalto is unquestionably a precursor for Siza's contextual architecture.

The morphological strategy observed in the bank has also been related, in Chapter One, to Siza's residential projects where the alignments of boundaries and elements in the setting serve as datums. This strategy is also evident in all of Siza's other works including the proposal for Kottbusserstrasse where the form is controlled by the superposition of the alignments of the street and adjacent structures. These works also introduce other relational strategies which are not apparent in the bank from the early 1970s, including typological schemes and conventional elements derived in part from the setting. However, these projects do confirm that in Siza's work iconography is not employed as a privileged means of establishing contextual relations.

The sketch design for the Cave di Cusa in Sicily, carried out in 1980, illustrates another dimension of Siza's
5.4 Alvaro Siza, Cave di Cusa, Sicily, 1980, site plan, photos and sketch of the Archaeological Park.
response to the site. In this case Siza's proposals merge with the place and rely only upon a rearrangement of pre-existing elements. In these proposals to establish the means of access to an archeological site, the analysis of the place becomes in effect the project. In presenting this proposal Siza notes that,

The Rocche di Cusa are ancient quarries of calcareous tufa, where materials were extracted for construction of the town of Selinunte and its temples. After the conquest of Carthage in 409 BC the quarries were disused; it is still possible to see the incisions made in the rock, during extraction of the stones for the pillars, or a capital roughly hewn out.

The subject of the project was access to the quarry area, a sort of 'gateway to the past.' But at Cusa it is hard to distinguish between past and present: the situation is so fleeting that work in the quarries might have been broken off yesterday and this makes any chronological concern insignificant.

Everything here remains discrete, humdrum, and the suspension, the cut in time, has seemingly fixed certain allusions, almost certain rules for the place, which ends up perhaps having absolutely nothing in common with the Greek temples. The Cave di Cusa are the condensation of transformation and continuity: the pieces of semi-finished limestone are parts of a building, it is true, but also the geography of that landscape. These pieces of architecture keep their roots in the ground, they are still rocks.

Siza appears to add nothing to the site, preferring to focus attention on what exists. The project (fig. 5.4) forms a series of thresholds and the principle architectural means is found in movement as an organizing principle. The architect establishes a path into a contemporaneous reality, structuring movement to, through and from existing elements.
5.5 Alvaro Siza, housing at Sao Victor, Oporto, 1974-77.
in a cultural landscape which is left untouched. This proposal reflects a particular sensibility but may also serve to underline the idea that Siza's transformations of existing settings are oriented by a reading of the tension between existing conditions and the demands placed on the environment. At Cusa there is no apparent conflict, there are no needs, the site simply exists.

The various attitudes and approaches to the context found in Siza's works are synthesized in the proposals for Kreuzberg, Evora and Oporto. The earliest integration of these attitudes may be found in the social housing project for S. Victor in Oporto of 1977. At S. Victor (fig. 5.5) a multiform strategy is developed which includes the construction of new housing, infill and recuperation. In the proposal for new housing the rational and repetitive order of low-cost housing is superimposed on the traces of former occupation inscribed in the site. Siza's new construction is laid into its site, resting on the platforms of former constructions and mediated by their ruined walls. The spatial organization responds to the morphological structure of the area while introducing a continuous building type, drawn from the housing experiments of the German Siedlungen, which associates with the piecemeal row housing of the district. In this operation and the reconstruction of a group of abandoned and partially ruined houses we may find a clear example of the multiple
5.6 Alvaro Siza, Sao Victor, Oporto 1974-77, project for the recuperation of existing housing.
perspectives involved in Siza's approach to pre-existing situations. The small houses (fig. 5.6) are completed in a disjunctive yet sympathetic manner, leaving fragments of the stone base and architraves "as found". The architect reappropriates these structures for a new use while preserving the traces which testify to their former lives. Inside, the minimal spaces of these sheds are reorganized to provide improved use of space and to meet new standards and expectations. At S. Victor we find a strong pragmatism in the reuse of all that exists but also evidence of an attitude which holds respect for the existing situation as an inalienable social product.

Siza's more recent works, including the projects for Kreuzberg and Evora, are evidence of a sophisticated inquiry into the potential associations and disassociations between the architectural object and its setting. These projects deal with both the immediate context and the more general context of the city through transformations of types but also by means of complex spatial and inflectional strategies. In these composite yet elemental constructions the space-time-body experience of earlier works is extended to include mental and cultural constructs. At Evora, Berlin, Salemi, or Oporto, Siza increasingly addresses the temporal as well as the physical and cultural context of his works. In each case we find that every intervention exists physically within a pre-determined context that is different in formal terms but also has its own dimension in time.
While acknowledging differences, Siza is not satisfied simply to place separate bodies side by side. His works are not self-contained autonomous objects which seek to close out time and human experience. Siza stresses the disjunctive and discontinuous nature of time while simultaneously establishing a web of filiations that fuse old and new into a new non-unitary whole. Through the interaction of his architecture with the city and the environment, Siza's works question the conception of buildings as finite and complete objects. This architecture does not conform to the organic model of growth with its assumptions of harmony, unity, and closure. In all of these constructions, from the Antonio Carlos Siza house to the urban plan for Evora, we detect an unsuppressed dichotomy between the urban response and the objective quality of building.

Works such as Siza's proposals for Kreuzberg are among the few cases in architectural production in which the term "context" or "contextualism" may be correctly applied.4 The city built by construction and destruction over time denies the sense of closure and completion implied by this literary term, yet it introduces the concept of time and the question of meaning. As Ellen Frank observes, "The building of connection is also the building of meaning."5 Siza's works gain their meaning not solely by reference to architecture or to themselves but in a specific place and time.
Moreover, Siza's effort to uncover and support the traces time and memory leave on objects and places introduces an existential and metaphysical dimension to this architecture. Like the simple sheds at S. Victor, Siza's works are layered in composition and do not ignore the accumulated meaning and knowledge which grows over time within a culture. In these works 'cultural memory" is not supported solely by iconographic borrowings but rather through a concern for the relation between architecture and social life.

Siza's "contextualism" is not only understood in terms of that which precedes the architect's intervention as he is also "sensitive to the moment that follows." For Siza the site is not a tabula rasa; even the vacant lot or open landscape is perceived as being already full of traces, memory, possibilities, and constraints. The site may not be indiscriminately modified but it is also not enshrined in a finite situation free from decay and decomposition. Siza works the site by adding another layer to what already exists in an operation in which "the new results from the old but the old also changes in the light of the new." Obeying the laws of conservation of energy Siza works toward change without loss. This attitude is reflected in all the architect's work from the Quinta da Conceicao (1958-65) where an existing irrigation tank is reappropriated for a public swimming pool to Berlin (1980) where Siza proposes to build a corner building over a row of existing shops (fig. 5.7).
It is apparent from an analysis of Siza's works that this process of accommodating current demands with tradition and within existing settings is not achieved without conflict. In all these projects Siza pursues an inquiry into an objective reality. He proceeds by collecting and reproducing the contradictions present in the setting without a single or logical resolution. In Oporto, Berlin, and Evora, Siza is not attempting to normalize urban districts and it would appear that his attitude lies close to Wittgenstein's conviction that "what is ragged must remain ragged" -- architecture alone may not transform social relations or overcome contradictions which lie on another level. While denying a masking operation or a logical resolution to the dilemma posed by the contradictions of modern society, Siza maintains a commitment to cultural and formal innovation. His urban architecture describes a position that lies outside the coordinates of either the timeless permanence of formalism or the utopianism of the Modern Movement. This experimental attitude, which is not separated from the demands of use and custom, is categorically different from the willful formal, technical, and social experiementalism of the Modern Movement or the absolute resignation of "late" and "post" modernists. Siza's works are not so much aimed at transforming society as an effort to reorganize sensibilities, and to construct culture, through a
willingness to confront what exists and to identify with its history. His operations on the material of the site serve as a means of discovering qualities which are already there and form suggestions for viewing the entire context in a new way. Through this process of discovery Siza's works attain a suggestive depth that at times verges on provocation. In response to the controversy surrounding his proposals for Kreuzberg, which were interpreted by the authorities and some sectors of the population as an assault on established norms and values, Siza remarked that,

> It is not my intention to provoke ... I seek to include from the first sketches the invisible threads of all the problems and all the conflicts that I discover. The more I try to provide a complete response to these problems the more provocative the project becomes. Perhaps this is because the majority of habitual responses are removed from reality or because the effort to uncover relations between things is not always carried out. 8

While rejecting a spurious unity or the illusion of "an imaginary resolution of real contradictions," the architect seeks to make places for human beings to dwell within an increasingly fragmented and chaotic world.

From this limited analysis we find that Siza's attention to pre-existences has attained an almost archeological dimension in which the site is understood as a contemporaneous reality. His work is not simply an operation of laying bare these stratifications or of collaging remnants together, but of acknowledging them and, with their support, building up new associations and
relations. Siza's attention to the site goes beyond general notions of morphology and typology to reach a tactile understanding of those things which make up a particular place.

5.2 HISTORICITY AND INVENTION

Alvaro Siza has remarked that, "Architects invent nothing. They work continuously with models which they transform in response to the problems they encounter." This observation suggests the understanding of his work as the modification and rearrangement of existing material rather than the invention of forms. However, Siza's statement must be qualified as it remains open to a wide range of divergent interpretations. His work reveals a process of reappropriation of architecture and its history, yet Siza is not sanctioning the imitation of dead styles or casual borrowings of historical forms and schemes.

In the most general terms we may establish that Siza's architectural sources are not limited to erudite exemplars but also include "simple" architecture and buildings. Nor are these sources limited to a particular period as we may find both modern and antique precedents for a single work or element. Moreover, Siza's references are not limited to architecture, for we may establish in any number of his works relations to compositional devices in painting and other art forms. In fact the only apparent limitation to
what Siza might incorporate into a work may be found in the absence of literary analogies or in the use of language and technology as metaphors for architecture.

Siza notes that in his work: "There exist relations (with other works) which are not formal but rather between modes of thought." This notion finds support in an analysis of his architecture in which we may establish that it is not the reappropriation of forms which is important but rather the generating ideas which lie behind the forms, which if valid to the task, provide support for new proposals. For example, we find that in the social housing projects in Oporto, Siza re-examines the work of Oud and Taut; in the transformed 19th century context of Berlin, Siza considers the work of the Berlin architects and Loos; when confronted with the project for an office building on an open site, he finds support in the works of Wright. These modernist sources are combined with other sources of diverse origin as in Evora which may be understood in relation to the historic center and local building traditions but also both the planned towns of antiquity and the rationalist Siedlungen. In each case we find that by returning to the impulse which generated these forms in the first place, Siza mounts a process in which each particular manifestation either implies or informs the other.

In discussing Siza's "contextualism" we noted that he establishes multiple relations between the project and a specific context, but we also found that this relational
5.8 Alvaro Siza, projects for Kreuzberg, 1979.
structure is extended to link his work to a wider locus found in history and the construction of cultural structures in general. In this process the forms and conventions uncovered in the locale or derived from local building traditions are deconstructed and related to a wider set of generalizable and transposable experiences. Parallel to this "typological" strategy we also find the superposition of references and the incorporation of elements and formal devices derived from historical examples and the architect's experience. While developed out of an understanding of the enduring and transposable nature of typological schemes, Siza's works are not "types" abstracted from a particular context, but actual buildings.

Siza is not concerned with representing only the consistency and logic of a chosen formal organization yet he also seeks to avoid the purely subjective or individualistic gesture. He does not apply typological schemes mechanistically. The works we have discussed generally appear to avoid the formalism of many recent urban proposals that are uninflected by their particular situation and which tend to reduce complex human purposes to a common denominator found in the "type". Yet we find in his work such as the proposals for Kreuzberg (fir. 5.8) or Evora an effort to overcome the subjectivism exemplified by works such as BBPR's Torre Velasca of 1957. In Rogers' building, images from the urban setting and the past are integrated
into a form that is incapable of further development or
generalization that could transform the urban context in
which it stands.

Siza's heterodox approach is eclectic in that he
borrows from various sources and formal systems for a work.
However, in Siza's architecture we do not find a
metalinguistic operation or the co-existence of "styles"
characteristic of 19th and 20th century eclecticism. These
works do not involve the illusionistic use of historically
determined schemes. The reuse of forms invokes neither an
authoritative paradigm nor an emblem of a specific set of
ideas. It would appear that the diversity of Siza's sources
is more important than their specific identity, for he is
not concerned with commenting on the sources or codes
themselves which he does not read in isolation as stylistic
fragments, signs or analogies. It is not important that the
form of Siza's proposed square at Evora may have been
informed by antique precedents or that the Antonio Carlos
Siza house may draw on Roman Baroque architecture. It may
be of some interest to know this, but these works do not
gain their significance primarily by reference to other
works -- they are not images of something else.

Siza may not be primarily interested in the "symbolic
dimension"10 or associationalism, yet he is clearly not
engaged in an effort to reduce architecture to pure form.
In these works we find both a reduction of referential
content and a condensation of multiple sources and
5.9 Diogo de Torralva, Porta de Moura fountain at Evora (1556).

5.10 Alvaro Siza, Malagueira district, sketch design for a fountain.
influences. These are not void forms and while generally devoid of conventional motifs they are resonant with their context, use, and history. In the reuse of older forms Siza challenges functionalist postulates, yet he does not appear to re-use forms and devices regardless of their original purpose and role as mediators between man and his world. This does not imply a binding condition or an effort to reconstruct meanings but rather that in their reuse they must be re-won through a process which recognizes their fundamental purpose and location within cultural systems. The nature of this correspondence takes on various forms depending on the context of the work, the building task, and the set of referent models.

A simple example of the transformational process underlying Siza's works is found in the fountain proposed for the Malagueira district at Evora. Siza's project openly reinterprets the 16th century fountain, designed by the Portuguese architect Diogo de Torralva, that sits in the main square of the old city of Evora and originally served as the 'foro citadano.' The 16th century fountain (fig. 5.10) follows an established scheme in which, as Jean Paul Rayon notes, the marble sphere represents the world which dispenses its wealth of water over an ordered domain; in the form of a square stone basin, and subsequently over everything, represented by the rectangular basin in which it sits. In Siza's fountain (fig. 5.10) the allegory is
transformed as the water arrives from the landscape by means of an open channel, crosses a rectangular basin, descends into a stepped square container with an open side where the water is collected in a negative hemisphere excavated from a solid block of stone. Finally the water is contained in a larger square basin. Siza's "poetic reinvention" (Vico) draws not only from Torralva's example but also from the traditional irrigation systems of stone channels and irrigation tanks found in agricultural estates, such as the Quinta da Malagueira which is the site of the new residential district. Siza combines these two traditions, the agricultural and man's effort to symbolize his world in objects, to form an amalgam that is both sensual and cerebral. Clearly this transformation is also an invention and Siza is not concerned solely with the formal or functional potential of an autonomous object. Siza's careful measurements of Torralva's fountain include its figurative dimensions which serve to gauge his departure from tradition. The 16th century fountain of Evora appears to provide the impetus for the elaboration of a form adapted to a new context.

We noted at the outset of this discussion that Siza's references are not limited to a particular period and we may find in his unpremiated entry to the DOM competition (1980) a project which clearly incorporates both modern and antique precedents. This project (fig. 5.11, 5.12) in its apparent transposition of Frank Lloyd Wright's Guggenheim Museum
5.11 Alvaro Siza, DOM headquarters (project), 1980, sketch and massing model
would appear to represent a departure from the other works we have discussed and for this reason it may be useful to examine briefly. Siza's project for a new administrative and symbolic center to a German lock manufacturer's industrial complex is clearly related to the work of Frank Lloyd Wright. Approximately the same size and form as the main body of the Guggenheim museum (fig. 5.13) it depends on a more complex spatial organization that includes 5,000 square meters of office space. While the arrangement of elements is altered, the basic scheme of Wright's building is present in the cylindrical form and ramped circulation around a central light well.

The correspondence with Wright's building suggests itself yet we must also recognize the rationale behind the use of this particular form in this case. Confronted with an undifferentiated site in an area whose building traditions do not include precedents for private commercial buildings of this scale, Siza chooses not to refer to an imaginary industrial vernacular or to technological metaphors of the production process. Siza, working from both the particular situation and the problem of the modern office building, here turns to the tradition of architecture itself.

The program, addressing an open suburban site adjacent to a sprawling complex of industrial buildings, called for the development of a physical and operational center.
5.12 Alvaro Siza, DOM headquarters (project), 1980, sketch of interior, plan and section

5.13 F.L. Wright, Guggenheim Museum, 1943-59, plan and section.
Siza's response of a centralized closed form, which is also a tower, accomplishes these demands directly, without subterfuge. The siting of the building back from the main road with a small entry pavilion joined by a single row of trees and an open space, which slopes upwards toward the 30-meter-high tower, establishes a locus for the new construction. The centralized form and enclosed space forms a definite and characteristic place within this complex.

The spatial organization of Siza's project provides an innovative response to the demands of the modern office. By employing a vertical form, the typical horizontal expanse of the undifferentiated "office landscape" is subverted while the use of the Guggenheim's basic scheme, in which the visitor is exposed to a continuous open space, achieves the relatedness of the open plan. Stepped platforms, which may be subdivided by the insertion of glazed partitions, provide for the subdivision of space in correspondence with the spatial and structural articulation of the building. The circulation system with ramps on both the interior and exterior boundaries of the office spaces, combined with an elevator and stair, provide alternate routes through the building and articulate a complex "promenade architecturale." This circulation system and the distribution of daylight throughout the building tends to break down the implicit hierarchy of the office block by providing alternate routes and a relatively equal spatial quality to all areas of the building. Moreover, the
5.14 F.L. Wright, Larkin Building, 1904, plan and interior perspective.
development and contraposition of elements creates a highly experiential environment in which the play with gravity, expressed in the sloping ground floor and counterbalanced forces of the masses, expresses the material qualities of the tower as a form. Employing simple means Siza activates a synaesthetic experience rarely encountered in constructions of this size or use. Clearly his selection and development of this form is supported by the particular problem situation and a vision of architecture which cannot be simply ascribed to a direct transposition of a form relying only on a change of use or scale.

While we find a typological relation with Wright's Guggenheim we may also establish correspondences with other works of Wright and Siza. The Larkin Building of 1904 (fig. 5.14) and the Johnson Wax Laboratory Tower of 1933 (fig. 5.15) anticipate both Wright's Guggenheim museum and Siza's proposed office building. The closed form and skylit atrium of Wright's Larkin Building establishes a spatial solution which prefigures Siza's proposal, but also represents a fundamental solution to the modern office building. The correspondence with the Johnson Wax Building is not simply found in a superficial similarity of shapes, but in the use of a tower to form a focal point within a strikingly similar context.

The round form and isotropic mass of Siza's building suggests other precedents. Stripping away the organic
5.15 F.L. Wright, Johnson Wax Laboratory Tower, (1933).

metaphors of Wright's Guggenheim, Siza adopts a form whose antecedents reach back beyond the specific instance of Wright's work to the basic compact and centric container (fig. 5.16). However, in Siza's development of this monumental form the inherent centricity of the round building is significantly offset. Siza introduces an instability by the lean of the tower against the sloping ground and the central void inclined through the building in the opposite lean of the tower.

The DOM project and the market square of Evora in their reuse and transformation of simple geometric forms and schemes cannot be readily assimilated with the thought process underlying the major part of Siza's production. Siza's transformations detach these forms from a state of stasis, as the cupola at Evora is incomplete and the DOM is rendered visually unstable; yet no matter how fragmented these works suggest a-temporal archetypal forms. Approaching these forms with new concerns and a particular vision of architecture, Siza goes beyond iconographic conventions and simple replications; yet they are inextricably tied to readily recognizable "type forms." Here we might draw a distinction between these two works, as the covered market at Evora suggests a fundamental correspondence and reinterpretation of urban communal spaces while the modern office building denies such correspondences. The DOM project raises more directly and ambiguously than any of Siza's other works, the disjunctions
between form, use, and meaning resulting from the reappropriation of preestablished forms. Involved in the unending search for an appropriate form for the modern office building and an ambiguous institutional structure, this work distinguishes itself not only by virtue of its program but more significantly in its methodological propositions. In projects such as the Antonio Carlos Siza house or the proposals for Kreuzberg, it is not immediately understandable how the form has been developed. Such works do not appear to refer to an archetype or to some original condition. These works are formed out of a dialectic with use, purpose, and cultural image which does not remove a conventional identity yet disallows a single interpretation.

The project for the DOM headquarters proposes what would appear as a divergent approach; however, it like all of Siza's works is composed of multiple events and perspectives. Siza's more recent architecture presents an image of contemporaneity that appears to break down the discontinuous nature of time. Yet we find that while incorporating experience accumulated in the past, works such as the Antonio Carlos Siza house and the projects for Kreuzberg and Evora assertively secure their own dimension in time. Denying a false congruence between past and present in these works, Siza actively acknowledges conflicts between the legacy of the past and the values of the present. This attitude is clearly manifested in Berlin but
also underlies the scheme for Evora. The plan for the Malagueira district might be understood as a "rooted" strategy in its consideration of the locale and its traditions; yet it also represents a significant discontinuity with local models, classical urban forms, and the modern tradition. In Berlin, Evora and other works, tradition is not viewed in a linear or overly optimistic fashion as Siza assimilates various possibilities without demanding belief in one and repudiation of the other.

The conflict between past and present is also manifest in the compromise between the techniques of modern building and architectural forms derived from past traditions. Siza's architecture is essentially crafted and the pragmatic demands of modern building are generally de-emphasized. His works demonstrate a marked preference for massive systems which incorporate elements that are simultaneously bounding and supporting -- these works appear to be built rather than assembled. This is a distinction which may be interpreted as a return to a pre-modern or pre-industrial architecture for his works imply a basic non-interchangeability of elements demanded by industrialization and a rationalized building industry. Questioning the alignment of architecture with industrial processes, these works do not test the limits of building technology; but they also do not imply a flight from the relations of production or a Luddite anti-industrialism. Siza employs old and new technologies and it is particularly evident in his housing projects for
5.17 Alvaro Siza, corner building, Berlin, Kreuzberg, 1980-84.
Oporto and Evora that he does not reject rationalized processes of construction.

In discussing the work at Evora it was observed that, while Siza maintains an uneasy relation between the various models from which his architecture is compounded, the building systems employed do not fundamentally contradict these precedents. In this and other works we find that Siza's composite works draw on different architectural traditions yet he does not employ historically determined schemes or motifs arbitrarily. In his works, material and device are related, but as in the example of the inner block construction for Kreuzberg where a regular facade is excavated by employing the classical device of the niche, we may also establish a fundamental sameness of purpose. In this example the niche serves to establish Siza's construction within the heterogeneous order of the block, in much the same way as Baroque architects inflected the facades of churches to establish a break in the street. In this and other works, Siza appears to recognize Loos's sophisticated analysis of the impossibility of reviving the figures and motifs of past architectures. In the context of this discussion we might also consider Siza's recently completed corner building in Berlin where the architect picks up the cornice line of an adjacent building (fig. 5.17). Significantly, here this detail establishes a figurative edge which serves to emphasize the undulating,
plastic form of the building as it detaches itself from its 19th century context. Lacking in applied historicist motifs it is the whole mass of the building that engages the viewer rather than particular details.

Siza is deeply involved with the material qualities and the craft of building and his apparent effort to align means with ends is not to be confused with the "structural moralism" of the Modern Movement or the revival of older material systems which are no longer practicable. In his works Siza appears to acknowledge the location of forms not only within cultural but also material systems and in so doing returns to the contradictions and conflicts which revealed themselves in architecture as a result of the industrialization of building.

An analysis of Siza's architecture suggests that he maintains a relatively consistent set of principles regarding the reappropriation of architecture and its history. Like Loos, Siza appears determined neither to revive old forms nor to invent new ones, and his works appear to acknowledge a relative availability of forms. The works we have discussed describe a complex position which acknowledges that architecture is based on regrouping given elements and schemes while maintaining that architectural forms are related to cultural and material systems. While historicist in his recognition that values change over time, Siza does not appear to ascribe to a developmental idea of history or to a historical determinism. Involved in a
search for basic principles and the accumulation of experience, Siza appears to secure an autonomy for architecture as a discipline, yet he simultaneously acknowledges that his works participate in the creation of the present cultural moment. Viewing the past as irretrievable as a whole and that the future remains uncertain, Siza's works paradoxically suggest the possibility of a creative historical continuity. In this view history is made up of continuities and ruptures of diverse sorts denying the possibility of reconstructed meanings but also the certainty of definitive ruptures with past traditions. This precarious position is constructed to maintain an integrity to his works, yet it presents a set of seemingly intractable problems and contradictions. It would appear that for Siza the history of architecture forms an inseparable part of architecture itself and is essential to its further development -- it provides both the material for architecture and the background against which he measures his work.
NOTES


4. The OED defines context as -- "Parts that precede or follow a passage and fix its meaning."


9. Ibid.

10. Ibid.


12. As Rudolf Arnheim notes, "When one looks over the city of Rome from the hills of the Janiculum, one sees the various circular monuments -- the Pantheon, the Castel Saint' Angelo, the Collosseum -- detach themselves from the fabric of the streets as self-contained units. They mark the high spots of their setting but refuse to conform to it." Siza's building not only recalls these circular monuments but also clearly suggests the metaphor of the common cylinder lock.
CONCLUSIONS
ALVARO SIZA'S IMPOSSIBILISM

In the preceding essays we have sought to articulate those principles that lie behind the forms of Siza's works and which provide them with a theoretical foundation. We established two related themes that appear central to Siza's enterprise. The first is found in an effort to relate architecture to social, material, and historical contexts, and the second is found in an understanding of architecture as a transformational process operating on existing and pre-existing architectural systems and conventions. These themes do not exhaust the meaning of Siza's work, nor do they encompass the scope of his concerns. In an effort to establish a wider frame of reference it was suggested that Siza consciously situates his works within an objective reality and the discipline of architecture. This concept describes a complex position by which Siza seeks to secure a relative autonomy for architecture as a discipline, allowing for the accumulation of knowledge that is tested by its usefulness in the present and in response to changing social
and material conditions. This general understanding of Siza's position is suggested and sustained by an analysis of his works.

Siza's work forms part of a wider critical movement which, from various perspectives, has attempted to re-evaluate architecture. While such an analysis lies beyond the scope of the present inquiry, in order to cast our assertions in a different light we might begin to place Siza's research program within Portuguese architectural culture. Without "any illusion" of providing a comprehensive account of the various contacts, influences and debates which formed the points from which Siza began to formulate his position, we might tentatively establish what appear to have been the key issues particular to the Oporto architects in the 1950's and 60's - Siza's student years and first years of practice.

Any discussion of Portuguese architecture must inevitably recognize a basic paradox developing out of the isolation and marginalization of the country and its architects relative to the centers of European culture. While isolated, since its earliest times, Portuguese cultural life has been shaped by a diversity of influences and exchanges. This paradoxical condition, while not specific to the 20th century, is particularly evident in the uneven development of modern architecture in Portugal.

Receiving news of the events and various architectural movements often second and third hand, architects in
Portugal during the 1920's and through the post-war years developed their own highly eclectic and generally superficial "modernisms." As Siza himself notes, "purism among us was rarely pure - we had a bit of everything for each and every occasion."¹ Portuguese architecture in the 20th century may be described as oscillating between various positions in a search for an illusory internationalist architectural culture, whose driving forces were all but non-existent within Portuguese society, and a search for roots within a strong vernacular tradition. Unable to dig down to discover an a-temporal essence within traditional architecture and equally unable to re-enact architectural movements identified with radical social transformations and industrialization, Portuguese architecture through most of the century manifested eclectic and provincialist tendencies. This apparent impasse, exacerbated by the isolationism and provincialism imposed by the fascist regime which dominated Portuguese social life for most of the century, failed to produce a significant architectural culture.

It is within this general problematic that we may begin to understand the importance of the work undertaken in the 1950's by Fernando Tavorra and a small group of Oporto architects centered around the school of architecture in this northern industrial city. Tavorra, Siza's teacher and first employer, addressed the two poles of a perennial debate with a rare intelligence and from a new perspective.
Following a path not unlike that pursued twenty years earlier by Aalto in Finland, Tavorra sought to relate ongoing developments in Europe to the objective conditions of Portuguese society. It is significant that this is a period, the 1950's, of growing disbelief in the modern project and of a questioning of its unitary nature. An invited participant at the CIAM/Team Ten meetings at Otterlo in 1959, whose participants included Ernesto N. Rogers, Aldo Van Eyck and Louis Khan, Tavorra was engaged in, and exposed to, the process of questioning and revision of what was now seen as the positivist mythology of the Modern Movement. By the late 1950's appeals to a "modern architecture" could no longer provide a simple unitary world view and a bulwark against individualism and eclecticism. Internationalist and progressivist notions, which once provided a simplistic argument against the pursuit of a regionalist or "national" architecture, no longer remained unchallenged. These are among the conditions which led Tavorra to assume a complex and nuanced position.

It is also significant that the late 1950's was a period in which Tavorra was a principal investigator in an ambitious study of traditional architecture in Portugal. Siza describes the intentions of this inquiry in the following terms,

It was an effort to understand the relations between a way of life and architecture, not as a source for proposals of spatial organization but in order to understand the concrete problems of society. 2
Examining Tavorra's works from this period it appears that he was engaged in an effort to reconcile tradition and modernity. The architecture of Alvar Aalto formed a privileged reference for Tavorra and the Oporto architects as they pursued his particularized mode of composition in the small projects to which they were relegated. Concentrating on the relation of building to landscape, the use of inflected geometries, and the combination of new and old technologies and materials, Tavorra's works demonstrate a synthetic and harmonizing power. Tavorra's enterprise, however, is distinct from the synthesis proposed in the 1940's and 1950's by the so-called Italian neo-realist architects. His works do not seek a direct translation of a form of life into built form, nor do they reflect repetitive and retrospective tendencies leading to a literal re-use of traditional forms and figurative elements.

While Siza's earliest works appear to pursue Tavorra's synthetic approach, we cannot establish a direct line of continuity and, in fact, already by the early 1960's we find Siza breaking away from the almost picturesque formal vocabulary of his earliest works. This rupture is readily apparent in Siza's austere Manuel Magalhaes house in Oporto of 1967-70. In this and subsequent works we find no echoes of traditional architecture, spatial organization, or materials. This work in particular is acknowledged by Siza as a transition towards a systematic process of revision and
criticism as Siza gradually began to formulate his position.

From this perspective the bank at Oliveira das Azmeis (1971-74) assumes a particular importance. This work and Siza's other projects of the late 60's and early 70's appear to return to the rationalist architecture of the 1920's and 30's, yet they are not simply a recitation of something which has already been said. Approaching the modern tradition with a different set of issues, Siza initiates a new discussion which is both broadened and deepened. Highly consistent in its reduced referential content, its minimalism is evidence of a reflection upon the basic resources of architecture. Yet Siza's bank is also hybrid in the way in which it interacts with its surroundings. Questioning the counterfeit synthesis of earlier works, the bank building announces a significant discontinuity between past and present. Formalist in its self absorption, this work simultaneously questions the grounds for certainty in the conception of buildings as finite, isolated objects. The problematic explored by Tavorra is now extended in Siza's works of the early 1970's to become a basic research into the nature of architecture itself.

While addressing issues central to Portuguese architecture and architecture in general, the bank at Oliveira das Azmeis remains largely on the level of a disciplinary discourse and does not capture the breadth and scope of Siza's emergent position. Commenting on this work
in 1977 Siza qualifies it as "architecture for the museum." His use of the word museum may refer, as Aldo Rossi's text of the same title, to the discipline of architecture, but it also alludes to another set of issues with which Siza is concerned. The word museum has certain connotations as Adorno suggest in the following passage.

The German word museal [museumlike] has unpleasant overtones. It describes objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying. They owe their preservation more to historical respect than to the needs of the present. Museum and mausoleum are connected by more than phonetic association. Museums are the family sepulchres of works of art. 3

In qualifying this work as "architecture for the museum" Siza acknowledges the necessary yet tenuous nature of the connections between his work and social life. However, Siza's reservations are not to be confused with the socially committed stance within orthodox modernism, for Siza's view of the relation between architecture and society is located within a different set of coordinates. This qualification and Siza's building itself engages the basic idea identified at the outset of this discussion, namely that Siza attributes a relative autonomy to architecture allowing for a non-deterministic view of the multiple relations between society and the spaces it shapes and inhabits.

The urban/housing projects for Oporto, at Bouça (1973-77) and S. Victor (1974-77), provide an expanded field of activity for Siza and allow us to begin to formulate the
themes which he choses to address in his work. Siza's multiform response to the urban context at S. Victor introduces a new set of considerations pertaining to the relation of architecture to the city and the notion that architecture is based on the transformation of pre-existing models formed by earlier works and architectural traditions.

The work in Oporto begins to qualify the idea of the city that is at issue in Siza's work. While his interventions appear to be grounded in a critique of the modern consumenist city, Siza does not appeal to a particular urban model. Finding support in the collective character of certain aspects of the traditional city, we find in his urban projects for Oporto, and later at Evora and Berlin, a tension between the order of the traditional European city and an effort to uncover and support new possibilities for social organization.

To work in a particular spatial context involves a temporal dimension. Siza's works which seek to establish multiple relations with their context necessarily involve the reinterpretation of conventions and models operative in the setting but also lead to an effort to reappropriate architecture and its history. By the mid 1970's in works such as the Antonio Carlos Siza house (1974-77) we find Siza's references expanded beyond the modernist sources of earlier works to encompass the whole history of architecture. Siza's use of historical material in this and
other works we have examined is not undertaken in a search for styles or a language but represents a means of establishing a wider reference. More concerned with the historicity of his own works than his multiple sources, Siza's attitude may be summarized by the notion that "the whole history of a subject (architecture) is utilized in an attempt to improve its most recent and advanced stage." 4

All these perspectives are meshed into each of Siza's more recent works including those discussed at some length in the preceding essays, the Antonio Carlos Siza house, the proposals for Kreuzberg, and the plan for Evora.

The most intriguing work to date is probably found in Siza's proposals for Kreuzberg of 1979, as they represent a condensation of the issues and ideas involved in his research. Siza's interventions within three contiguous urban blocks form an elaborate construct within which to refer to and reflect on architecture — its relations to the city, to the past and the present, and between architectural space and social life. Pursuing Loos's disjunctive cultural strategy Siza does not cover up the contradictions and conflicts between diverse architectural traditions, and between an environment formed in the past and the values of the present. By exposing the conventional nature of the structure of urban districts, Siza removes any nostalgia for the past and any belief in a utopian architectural future. Siza's works for Kreuzberg are tangible and immediate yet acknowledge and assimilate the experience accumulated over
time within the structures and spaces of this city and within the larger history of architecture and urban construction. The transformations of the urban space of Kreuzberg are no longer those of the avant garde, nor are they based on a particular model or a-historical conception of a closed and finite body of architectural knowledge. Like Duchamp, Siza does not indulge in melancholy but suggests that we in fact determine the conventions by which we order the environment and, moreover, that these are subject to transformation and open to new possibilities and renewal. This work and all of Siza's works directly engage the notion that architecture must be continuously challenged and renewed.

Departing from a peripheral and marginal position Siza's work in Berlin, a major center from which modern architecture developed, attains an anticipatory character. Today, Siza's observations on Aalto may be equally applied to his own work, for as he noted in 1978:

Aalto's work which allowed one to speak so little of method proves to be particularly exemplary in its methodological propositions. 5

It is precisely the methodological implications of Siza's research program that are of an importance which extends beyond the particular circumstances and experience of his individual works. By refusing to absolutize his principles, and systematically avoiding simple moral solutions to architectural problems, Siza's research program
does not escape the uncertainty inherent in the present historical contingency. Siza's work represents a highly sophisticated and rigorous epistemological inquiry. We might suggest that for Siza architecture is a form of knowledge, and like all knowledge it is not a static network of eternal universal truths but a social process. Siza's work and thought provide no solutions, yet he raises in an exemplary manner the essential questions which confront architecture in the late 20th century.
NOTES

1. From an untitled statement by a group of seven Oporto architects, which included Alvaro Siza, submitted in lieu of examples of their work to the exhibition, "Depois do Modernismo" (After Modernism) held in Lisbon in January, 1983. This dissenting statement provides an oriented reading of the history of modern architecture in Portugal during the 20th century.


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