

Introduction

The subject of this book is the productive tension between the city and architectural form. It seeks to reevaluate the relationship between these two realms in which architecture's inherent predisposition toward form is often matched only by the city's ability to avoid it. While design is defined by intention and deliberation, the urban environment frequently appears aimless and conflicted, even accidental, fostering a tendency to view urbanization as undermining and negating architecture's effectiveness. This book, however, traces an alternative discourse of architecture's relationship to the city. As the title "The Good Metropolis" suggests, I explore here the fascinations with the modern city expressed by the architectural avant-garde and beyond, revealing how the forces of urbanization often served as a stimulant for architecture's spatial imagination. It considers so far overlooked courses of action within architectural modernism and twentieth-century urban theory that are not predicated on tectonic functionalism, technological inventions or such like but instead on architecture's intimate relationship with the metropolis. I will argue that the city has been a predominant force (even if often unconsciously) within architectural discourse and that recognizing it as such will not only allow us to reconsider historical narratives but will also give us a better understanding of our current fascinations and anxieties in regards to urbanization.

While industrial cities of the nineteenth and twentieth century in Europe and the US were predominantly criticized as discontinuous, chaotic, irregular, and overwhelming—in other words, formless—this book examines positions that aimed to discover architectural intelligences in the city without form. The following chapters, therefore, attempt to open up a territory of connections that challenge the predominant historiography of architecture's position to the city. After all, the urban discourse of the avant-garde has often been viewed in a historical lineage that travels from modernist urbanism to postmodern non-planning—the former critiqued the terrain of the industrial metropolis that was in need of restructuring through architecture and planning, while the latter's acceptance of the existing or admiration of the historical city held modernist planning and architecture responsible for its failures. This historiography, however, cannot account for the continued fascination with urban formlessness throughout modernity, it cannot provide a coherent explanation of the emergence of a metropolitan architecture,