S, M, L, XL

REM Koolhaas

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Koolhaas’ typology starts with existing complexities and lack of control and embraces these as the starting point for each project. He removes himself from traditional typologies and inserts contextualisation and the typology associated with diagrams to start an ideology. Through the use of the diagram he is able to legitimise the typology where no regard is placed on pre-existing precedents.
Two main points which originate from Koolhaas’ S,M,L,XL are the idea of Bigness and the Generic city both of which Koolhaas’ typology addresses. These ideas have the one fundamental problem, that a pre existing idea has been the starting point. Koolhaas through his typology is able to start from a different point and thus result in a radical design as he has not been constrained by former ideas.
BIGNESS in unassociated with context it is even differential at a smaller scale being the removed relationship between the facade and the internal understanding of the building. "bigness has been...a condition almost without thinkers", “No longer part of any urban tissue...at best cope with the context and at worst simply ignore it”. (pg 499) Genericness has no link to context either and this association is not necessarily linked with scale. It is a point to think laterally and not to forget but to put aside what is known and what has been done in the past in regards to thinking of typologies and ways of doing things. This in fact needs to be turned on its head to ultimately understand what is specifically needed for that specific moment and place in time. This specificity is a variation on what has been done before and attempts to establish a precedent of specific specificity.
Koolhaas makes comment that **BIGNESS** would not be so much of an issue if it gave more importance to the context in which it was being built. Koolhaas’s typology highlights this importance as it originates by drawing from the context of the building and the surrounding area but also the culture and country. The typology looks at the problems of the context rather than trying to avoid or pretend that they do not exist. Problems which arise from the context ultimately render a solution through breaking down their separate meanings. Koolhaas draws from congestion of the ‘**BIGNESS**’ and appreciates the **positive** to design programming which intertwines multiple functions.
Koolhaas typology allows the architect to cope with the unknown which allows the mystery’s to become less. His typology is a way of breaking down the individual issues of the mystery to come to a resolve. Koolhaas states that conventions should be questioned and not used as a starting point. Building design should be questioned and not thought of in the same way. All buildings are in different contexts and therefore should react to these no matter their ‘BIGNESS’.
Koolhaas however does not believe that all history or pre-existing ideas should be forgotten as some "architectural devices in their stasis, are almost permanent and thus, although limited always work" such as stairs. He only believes that ideas and approach should be radical so as move beyond the existing typologies and to be able to create a new urbanism.
Koolhaas’ other main point is that of the Generic City. By this term he means sprawl, sameness and repetition. “The Generic City...is nothing but a reflection of present need and present ability. It is the city without history” (pg. 1250). “The Generic City is fractal, an endless repetition of the same simple structural module” (pg. 1251). Koolhaas feels that the skyscraper will be the final definitive typology as it has swallowed everything else. It has the ability to exist anywhere from a ‘rice field or down town – it makes no difference’ (pg. 1253).
The **impact** of technology is limited by the fact that time *influences progression*. There is a mechanical limit associated with it that still requires the **fundamentals** of architecture to be acknowledged and function irregardless of legitimacy and context in the building. They have the ability to be adapted but remain pivotal in shaping forms whichever path is utilised to arrive at the **solution**.
This typology demonstrates that the removing of the layer’s association removes complexities which may not be necessary and errors which may have been a continual resource for comfort and simplicity. Perspectival rigour assures advanced ideologies which could pertain to the creation of different paths of logic and an improved and less reliant resource as a starting point.
So does Koolhaas’ idea on bigness relate to large kit homes? Are they big as money and technology allow for this? Is this a condition without thinkers? Do they form part of the urban tissue or coexist at best? Should there be a new thinking of typologies? Would this resolve the repetition and sameness amongst suburbia? Should there be a new typology that is radical so as to shake off pre conceived ideas of the suburbs?
Koolhaas's typology of diagramming the problems that the context presents and deriving a form has resulted in buildings and urban structures that would not have been thought of without the rejection of preconceived ideas and notions.
References

Ashley Kamin 2011, Week One, urban spatiality, Chicago, viewed 10 September 2011, <http://parsnipdanslaville.files.wordpress.com/2011/01/suburbia1_thumb.jpgv`>
