

Critical review e

[History](#)



May 6, Rooftop Gardening in China: Urbanism's Megalomania and Program In " ' Life in the Metropolis' or ' The Culture of Congestion,'" Rem Koolhaas describes the Manhattan metropolis as a form of Urbanism, which has its own laws and methods that threaten its existence (319). He argues that Manhattan represents a " unique culture of congestion" because it supports congestion through specific manifestations of social discourses (320).

Bernard Tschumi would have criticized the Manhattan metropolis for its reduction of architecture into a " knowledge of form," which he argued in his essay, " Spaces and Events." McDonough and partners' conceptual project of rooftop gardening in China (2005) demonstrates how congestion entails the need for new buildings that cater to sustainable communities. See Figure 1. The project fits Manhattan urbanism because of its megalomania, but it also challenges the latter because it seeks to address and reduce the culture of congestion through a program that tackles spaces and actions.

The project illustrates megalomania because of its localization of a " world totally fabricated by man" (Koolhaus, 325). Rooftop gardening is a localization of agriculturalism, through the conversion of a dimension of urban space to a local rural one. Though the project aims to improve the building's sustainability, it remains as an evidence of the negative effects of the culture of congestion: an Urbanism that has created the loss of spaces dedicated to agricultural industries. The project is a garden, but it also depicts Urbanism through its features of human-made fabrication and integration into a congested culture.

The same project, nevertheless, addresses and diminishes the culture of congestion through a program that tackles spaces and actions. It represents the programmatic function of architecture that Tschumi believes is its

essential role. He argues that architecture must create places that “confront spaces and actions” (Tschumi 141). The project deals with urbanism through promoting an ecosystem in the megalomania, which combines social engagement (through its walkways) and sustainability. It confronts congestion through expressing its desire for ecological balance.

The conceptual project of rooftop gardening in China reveals that Urbanism is experiencing a rupture, as it scrambles to invite back Nature into its form and function. It remains a megalomania that exhibits human-made fabrications of living systems, though it also confronts the culture of congestion by attempting to provide more agricultural spaces that attend to long-run community needs.

Figure 1: McDonough and Partners’ Conceptual Project of Rooftop Gardening in China

Works Cited

Koolhaas, Rem. “‘Life in the Metropolis’ or ‘The Culture of Congestion.’”

Architectural Design (Aug. 1977): 319-325. Print.

Tschumi, Bernard. “Spaces and Events.” 139-151. Print.