

Dialogue of epochs in postmodern urban planning concepts of the late XXth and early XXIst centuries

Olena Remizova, Natalya Novak

*Architecture Fundamentals Dept., Kharkiv National University of Civil Engineering and Architecture
e-mail: remizova.e@gmail.com*

*Architecture Fundamentals Dept., Kharkiv National University of Civil Engineering and Architecture
e-mail: nata-nova@mail.ru*

Abstract: The postmodern architecture of the last third of the XX century saw a steady tendency of appealing to classical heritage aimed at combining modern technologies and historical associations with classical architecture.

The work considers postmodern urban planning concepts of the late XX-the beginning of XXI centuries. Methods of interpreting the order system in the architecture of postmodernism are analyzed by comparing such theoretical concepts as R. Bofill's industrial classicism, the new urbanism of L. and R. Krier, the theory of the city by Aldo Rossi. Architects postmodernists searching for sense and architectural language began to address to the historical past, using signs and images of classical architecture. Leaders of postmodern movement, trying to return to architecture the «eternal values» lost by modernism, opened a way for new creative searches and transformation of the order system elements. Its representatives were attracted by the «double code» of the order architecture, which allowed to solve complex town-planning problems.

Postmodernism declared the idea of «architecture parlante». The notion of «postmodern classicism» disguised the compositional search for dialogue with any classical epoch - antiquity, renaissance, baroque, classicism itself. The order language of these epochs, possessing a tremendous potential of utterance, allowed the architect to create all the new meanings and texts. The article discusses the change of semantic meanings occurring in modern urbanism, the interpretation of order compositions, the notion of «order tradition» and the expansion of the semantics of the order system in historical and cultural context. The article shows that the theory of postmodernism actualized the notion of «order tradition» and expanded the semantics of the order system by its application in modern city planning concepts.

Keywords: urbanism of the XX century, architecture of postmodernism, order in architecture, R. Bofill, R. and L. Krier, A. Rossi.

1. Problematisation

The central issues of professional polemics in urban planning in the last third of the XX century are the problems of development and preservation of urban environment.

The concept of perception of the European city as a complete organic structure is the cornerstone of modern urban thinking. Comprehension of evolution of historically shaped cities resulted in understanding contradictions between the aspiration to realize the concept of «the radiant city» of modernism and the desire to keep continuity of traditions and national identity of the specific city, valuable to its inhabitants.

The crisis of urban modernist programs contributed to postmodern ideological searches and the emergence of new urban programs based on the concepts of neohistoricism.

Neohistoricism clearly manifested itself in urban planning as a special way of thinking, aimed at combining historical and contemporary practices of experiencing reality. It is distinguished by complex compositional rethinking of historical prototypes, sending the consumer to reflect on previous eras. People's need to develop the culture and feel connected to their own roots forced architects to look for such a method of design, which would rely not on the abstract entities, but on a true history of culture. Thus, the creative activity of a postmodern architect is based on rethinking of historical heritage and his own experience of living through it, which he does not want to lose. The architect builds dialogical relationship between the modern object and the historical prototype. Thanks to this, the viewer has memories, associations with earlier seen or endured experience of communication with prior cultures or memorable places.

Huge impact on formation of historically oriented modern urban environment was exerted by concepts of the American architects – R. Venturi [1], C. Lynch [3], T. Smith, M. Graves, K. Roche, M. Safdie, M. Goldsmith, etc. also European – A. Rossi [4], R. Bofill [5], R. and L. Krier [6; 7], D. Stirling, M. Garai and J. I. Linazasoro, H. Hollein, P. Portoghesi, V. Glazychev [8] etc. We will consider only some of them.

2. Content of the study

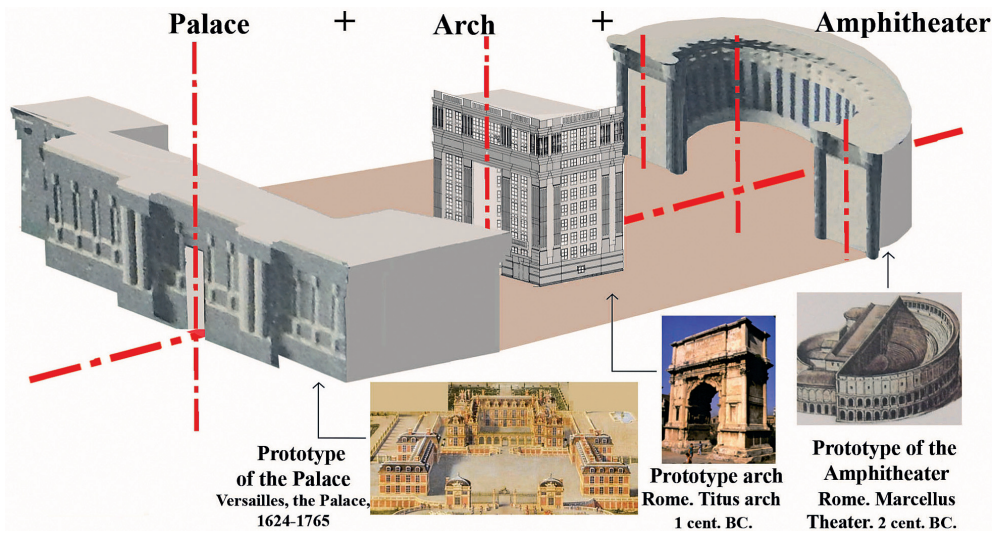
In their works, masters of postmodernism are polemic about the use and the development of **the classical order system** of different periods in their own modern practice.

The analysis of town-planning approaches of the last third of the XX century allows to distinguish original views of such architects as Ricardo Bofill, Rob and Leon Krier, Aldo Rossi, who are in polemics with orthodox modernism and enter into a dialogue with past eras.

For example, the Catalan architect R. Bofill states: «The principles of classical architecture ... never prevented true creators from expressing their individuality. Reckoning myself to them, I open polemic today. To be a classicist after modernism – it means inevitably to be a reactionary... Being inspired by the classics does not mean technological archaism, but, on the contrary, the novelty and connection of content and form, work on the architectural language and the search for conditions that give it the greatest strength» [5, p. 75].

In the urban ensembles of R. Bofill and his group Taller de Arquitectura, the order language is interpreted in the system of industrial housing construction. «If I'm risking today, it's only because I believe that I managed to develop my own system, tightly tied to memory and to history, which allows me to apply some of the modern achievements» [5, p. 99]. In the 80's and 90's, he developed the construction of the central area of Montpellier city, the master plan for the reconstruction of the Valencia city (the 1989 project, partially implemented), the reconstruction project of the southern part of Stockholm (1984–1989) and created projects of large-scale ensembles, including large residential complexes in Paris, Marne-la-Vallée, Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines and others.

In these projects of town-planning ensembles, he interprets Renaissance ideas of an ideal city and a classic regular garden, which are reflected in the diverse landscape solutions of open spaces, green amphitheatres and exploited roofs. Continuing the classic tradition of creating open urban ensembles, Bofill emphasizes the continuity of traditions and points to the possibility of further development of this language.



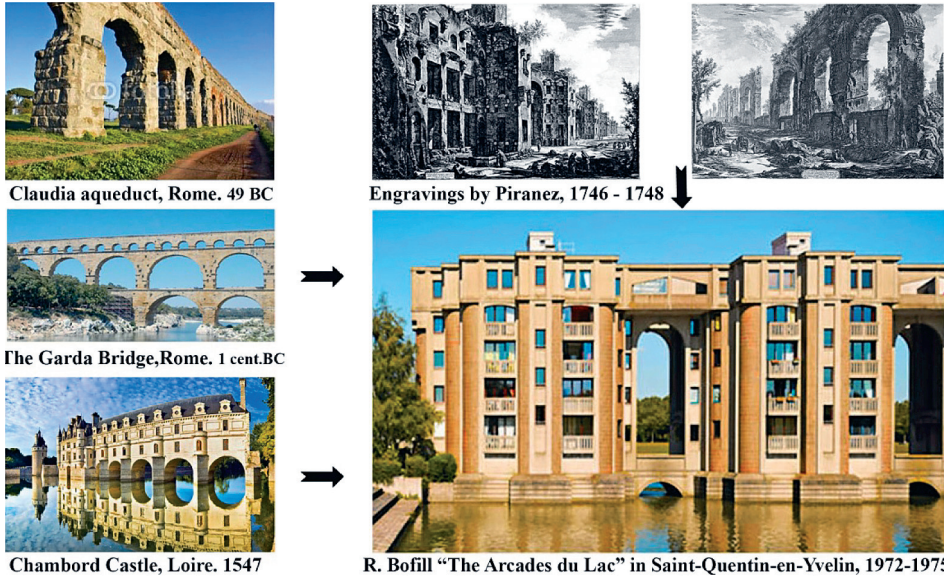
Pic. 1. Morphological analysis of the Abraxas complex. The author's scheme

Borrowing the classic principles of compositional organization of spaces, to solve new modern town planning tasks in the conditions of industrialization, master refers to the order system as well. Historical references and quotations can be traced both in the general composition, and in separate details. The residential complex «Les Espaces d'Abraxas» in Marne-la-Vallée is a large housing estate that combined three structures: «Palacio», «Theater» and «Arch». The prototype was the classical typology such as the amphitheater, the triumphal arch and the palace. Residential sections outline the semicircular area associated with the traditional scheme of the ancient theater (pic. 1).

In the article «Architecture as a theater or the theater «of classical» architecture by Ricardo Bofill», dedicated to the residential complex of Abraxas, the author writes: «We undertake to assert that if Palladio first created the illusion of the city on stage, and Ledoux achieved unity of the stage space with the auditorium, Bofill created a precedent for the theatricalization of life itself» [9, p. 56]. Using the dialogue between a real city and its stage interpretation, the architect organizes the life of people, just as the director organizes the actors' play on the stage. People in the courtyard turn out to be actors, while the residents of the house watching them from the windows, appear to be spectators. Thus, «postmodernism, in its aspiration to develop its artistic language, refers to the idea of a dialogue with the historical past, which was born long before it, and uses for this purpose means of directing and dramatic art» [9, p. 61]. This is R. Bofill's favorite device: a semicircular building imitating a colonnade forms an area that is interpreted as a green amphitheater and public space. It varies in such projects as the Baroque Ladders in Paris, The Belvedere St. Christophe in Sergy-Pontoise, the «Golden Square» in Montpellier, the amphitheater in Calpe, the Port-Imperial in New Jersey, and others.

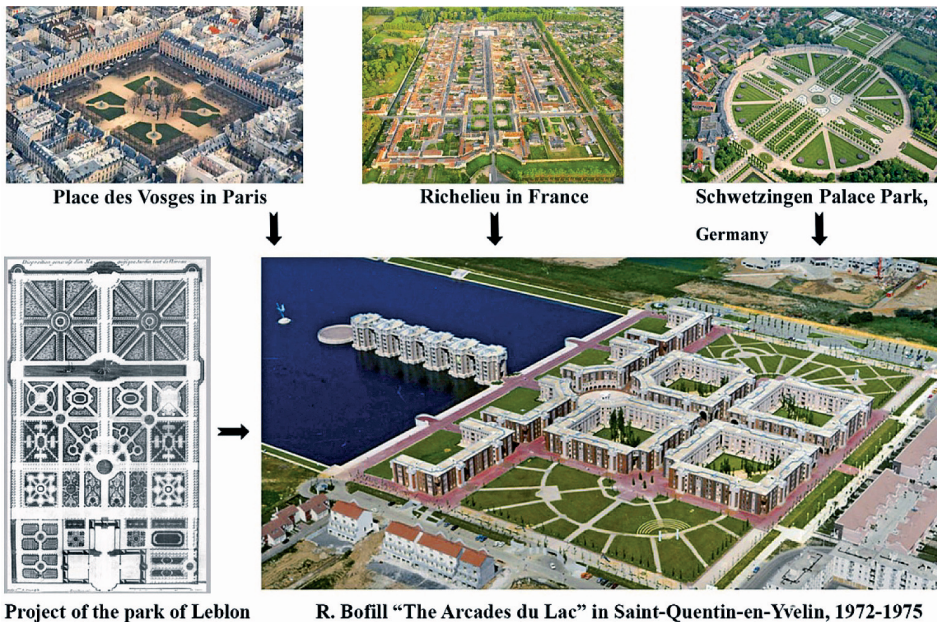
In the project «The Belvedere St. Christophe» in Sergy-Pontoise, (France, 1986), one can trace reminiscences for the projects of John Wood Jr. – The Royal Crescent and John Wood Senior – The Circus in Bath, England.

The composition of the «The Arcades du Lac» in Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines» (1972–1975) demonstrates interpretations of the academic architecture of French classicism. The composition of the «Arcades du Lac» reminds the ancient Roman aqueducts (pic. 2).



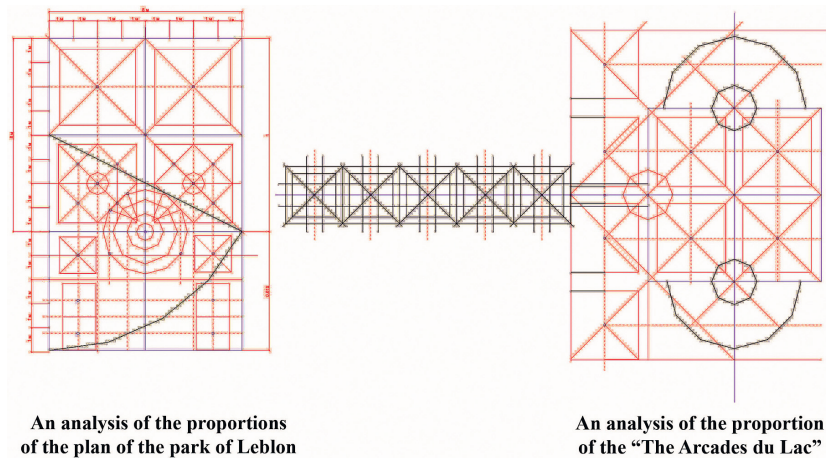
Pic. 2. Analysis of prototypes of the «The Arcades du Lac» in Saint-Quentin-en-Yvelines. The author's scheme

The architecture of postmodernism actualized the notion of sign and its meaning, semantics and syntax, the adoption of multiple coding, the citation of historical samples. History emerged as a catalog and a dictionary for searching historical associations, citations and references in the process of creating new architectural objects.

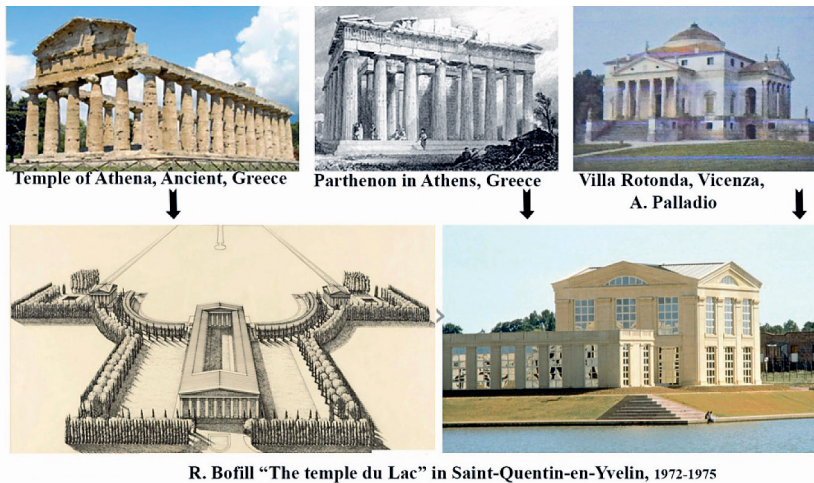


Pic. 3. Analysis of the prototypes of the planning structure «Arcades du Lac». The author's scheme

Bofill uses the compositional logic of **dialogue with classicism** when he analyzes the structure of French regular parks. He develops the composite skeleton of the general plan by analogy with such ensembles as Versailles or Vaux-le-Vicente, where the stage space is notable for its visual appeal and representativeness (pic. 3, 4). During the Classicism era, French monarchs, repeating experience of Roman emperors, create suburban ideal garden cities. Such an ideal model was Versailles, which formed a new urban planning concept and «it is the Versailles principle of the planning scheme subordinating its original landscape that is attempted to transfer to the city» [10, p. 211].



Pic. 4. Comparative analysis of the proportions of “the Arcades du Lac” plan and of the Leblon park plan. The author’s scheme

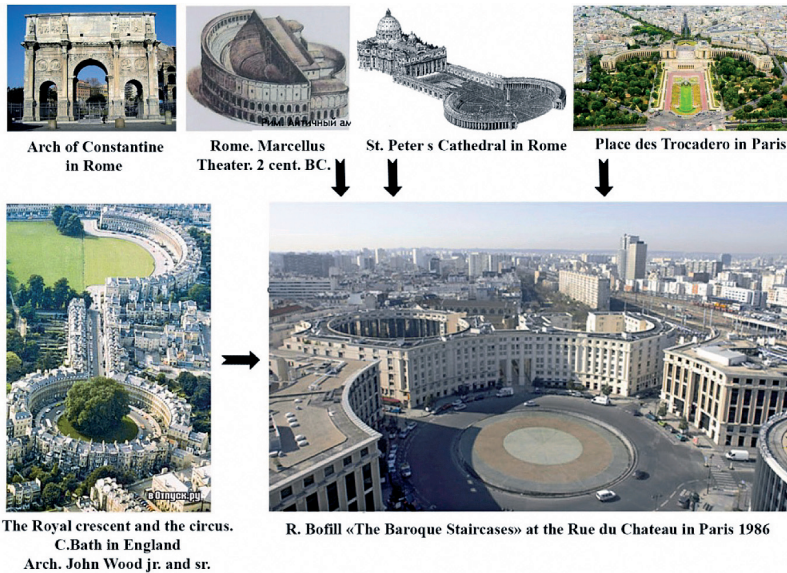


Pic. 5. Analysis of the prototypes of “the Temple du Lac”. The author’s scheme

The architect seems to say that the arsenal of such classical means of composition as symmetry, proportions and ornamentation is not outdated and can be developed (pic. 5). R. Bofill offers his interpretation of this style for modern social economic housing: «I wanted ... to

introduce the archetype of the temple into a “social” dwelling, to convert the welfare and solemnity of believers to the benefit of those who were rejected by our society» [5].

In «The Baroque Staircases» at the Rue du Chateau in Paris (1986), the master creates a composition from the intricately interconnected areas referring the viewer to the images of the ancient agora and forum, the Renaissance ideal city and the expressively dynamic Baroque square (pic. 6).



Pic. 6. Analysis of the «Baroque staircases» prototypes in Rue du Chateau in Paris. The author's scheme

In the project «Antigone» in Montpellier (1979–1984) a huge urban scale transforms the residential complex into a house-city, where a gigantic space is dissected by streets flowing into the square. Looking-forward straight streets, determined by the order regularities and the rhythm of different-scale columns, echo with the Renaissance city veduta and the Uffizzi street in Florence.

In these searches, Ricardo Bofill felt the possible path of further development of **the architecture language of postmodernism**. «He saw the metaphorical community of the ideas of Palladio and Piranesi, Boullée and Ledoux, the Russian avant-garde and the Stalin Empire style. The giant scale of the futuristic concept of French classicists and Russian avant-garde found their embodiment in the ensembles of modern residential complexes at the new aesthetic and compositional level» [9, p. 61]. To overcome the everyday life of residential areas and achieve grandeur R. Bofill uses expressive means of the order system; however, despite the similarity of artistic images, **the semantics of the order** is modified. In classicism, the order acted as a normative architectural and artistic system, in Bofill's works it is a living developing architectural language intended for creating a variety of architectonic compositions.

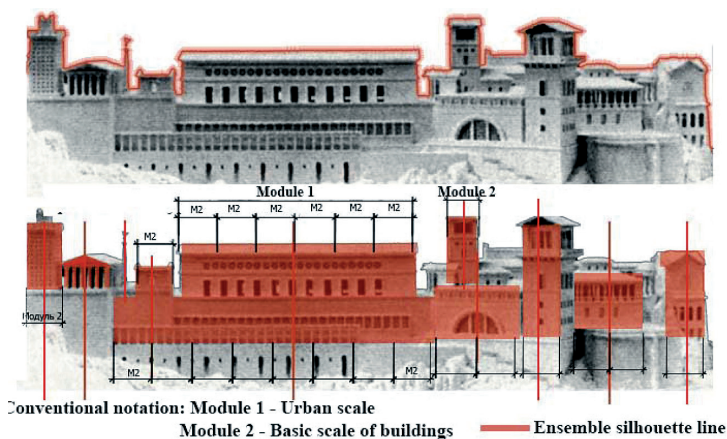
Leon Krier, the founder of the “new urbanism” movement, in 1978 published the Charter for the Reconstruction of European Cities, which radically changed the principles of the city's development in the period of postmodernism. He notes a number of problems of the modern historical city – irrational zoning, invasion of industrial images, and the loss of cultural and historical connection with the past. All these reasons lead to disruption of life processes.

Reflecting in his projects the theory of Camillo Sitte, Leon Krier preserves the structure of historical development and connects it with the new environment through a complex system of public spaces and buffer zones [6]. This can be traced in the project of reconstruction of the Luxembourg region of Echternach (1970), the general plan of the British city of Poundbury in the suburbs of Dorchester. The volume-spatial solution of Poundbury is associated both with the city-gardens of Henry Tessenov and with the historical centers of European cities. Addressing to historical images, L. Krier declares **the revival of classical tradition**. In the Poundbury project, he creates a stylized decoration of a traditional European city. Applying the typology of the pre-industrial city community at the end of the XXth century, the architect thereby affirms certain cultural state and model of social development.

The idea of «city in the city» affirmed the value of each fragment of urban fabric with all its constituent functions, morphology, traces of historical heritage and memory. Thus, the principle of free planning was contrasted with the classical quarter structure and its eclectic authenticity.

The language of architecture of brothers L. and R. Krier is at the same time simple and ambiguous, since it appeals to recognizable prototypes and to the complexity of modern life. This can be traced in a number of their projects for Luxembourg, Berlin IBA-87 and Vienna, in which the idea of «city in the city» was realized, based on **the reminiscences** of traditional classical German ensemble.

The reconstruction project of the ensemble of the ancient Roman villa in Laurentium (L. Krier, Pliny's Villa la Laurentine, Laurentum, 1982) combines classical images with elements of Mediterranean architecture. A complex three-dimensional solution consists of galleries, transitions, stylized narrow ornate streets and creates an image of the naturally formed complex structure of the ensemble. Using classical typology, L. Krier distinguishes a gallery, a building with a six-columned portico, imitating the antique temple as the main dominants of the ensemble. Continuing postmodern theme of playing with scales and contrasts, L. Krier in his project uses a variety of modular arrays. The analysis shows a number of different-scale elements ranged towards the increase: a small module of window openings perforations, the medium module is intercolumnar, a large module sets large scale to the main structures and volumes (pic. 7).



Pic. 7. Analysis of multi-scale modular systems in Villa la Laurentine, L. Krier, 1982. The author's scheme, based on a photo – http://www.archiwebture.citedelarchitecture.fr/fonds/FRAPN02_LAURE#selection/-28.05.2018; 12:10

In his project for Rotterdam, R. Krier uses images of the “cathedral for living” and “urban crown” [7, p. 93], giving to the modern city a baroque-romantic view (pic. 8).



Pic. 8. Rotterdam. Urban district Lloydpier. R. Krier, 2001. [7, p. 93]

The pluralism of European thinking actualizes attention to **the historical memory and collective memory of the city**, of which Aldo Rossi spoke. In the book, «L'Architettura Della Citta» the author claimed that all the cities remember their past, which is expressed through monuments of architecture. His ideological program is based on the concepts of «urban artifact» or «primary element» [4]. Investigating the past, he isolates the fundamental units – «timeless units» – as fundamentals of European city morphology, which make up the memory of cities in the form of architectural monuments.

This approach can be seen in such projects as the project of a residential complex Gallaratese (Milan, 1970–1979). Rossi's historicism in this project expresses the image of the traditional Milan apartment profitable building.

The concept of the San Cataldo memorial complex in Modena demonstrates its provisions on «architectural universals», and represents the reminiscences of the traditional Italian cemetery and a parallel with the projects of C.N. Ledoux and E.L. Boullée.

At reconstruction of the opera theater by Carlo Felice, Rossi demonstrated postmodern technique of blending historical appearance of the original project of 1826 by Carlo Barboron with refined modern order decisions.

In the project La Nuova Piazza in Perugia (1982) it is easy to read such traditional for the Italians signs of the temple as a portal and colonnade, but A. Rossi exaggerates them and combines with the elementary forms of modernism (pic. 9). Thus, he aroused the personal memories of each passer-by and created the situation of the dialogue of the present with the historical past.



Pic. 9. La Nuova Piazza in Perugia. A. Rossi, 1982. <http://www.arhinovosti.ru/2016/10/04/filosofiya-v-arkhitekture-aldo-rossi/> – 25.05.2018; 15:20

His ideas were supported by representatives of the Italian group La Tendenza – G. Grassi and V. Gregotti. Interpretation of the ideas of «primary elements» is reflected in the following works: the architect G. Grassi in the project of student dormitories in Chieti (1976–1989), architect V. Gregotti – in organizing the megastructure – the university complex in Palermo (Sicily, 1960–1985).

A. Rossi's conceptual program La Tendenza influenced the creation of the Spanish architectural school, which leaders are M. Garai and J. I. Linazasoro. Linazasoro makes a start from the ideas of the garden city realized in Hellerou's project. The ideas of a retrospective, a return to «primordial validity» was reflected in the project of the Ikastola school in the Basque Autonomous Community and in a residential building in Mendigora.

These examples show that the appeal to the historically folded fabric of urban space, the polemic about the semantic tasks of architecture and town planning in the works of postmodernist architects leads to the revival of the order language and to its various interpretations.

3. Conclusions

In different historical periods, the appeal to classical traditions provided an impetus to the development, to the solution of architectural problems and to the creation of new harmonious town-planning complexes and ensembles. In the same way, postmodern architects have proved the viability of this method, enriching modern urban projects with historical associations, complicated forms of dialogue with the environment. With their works, they opened a new period in the development of order logic and composition in the framework of the postmodern movement.

The most important achievement of the postmodern architecture that has influenced on the formation and development of urbanism is the contextuality of the city, namely, a design method that suggests compliance of a new object to the existing context; the revival of disappeared or destroyed fragments of urban fabric; the revival of the ensemble; creation of town-planning dominants and nodes, which form the visual framework of the city and serve as reference points in space; the desire to make the urban environment commensurate, clear and interesting for people.

References

- [1] Venturi R. *Complexity and contradictions in architecture*. New York, 1966.
- [2] Jenks Ch. *The language of post-modern architecture*. Revised enlarged edition, 1977.
- [3] Lynch K. *The image of the city*. Cambridge, 1960.
- [4] Альдо Росси. Архитектура города (*Aldo Rossi. L'Architettura Della Citta*) – М.: Strelka Press, 2015.
- [5] Бофилль Рикардо. Пространства для жизни (*Ricardo Bofill. Espasesces D'Une Vie*). – М.: Стройиздат, 1993.
- [6] Krier L., Thadani D. *The architecture of community*. Washington: Island Press, 2009.
- [7] Krier R. *A romantic rationalist. Architect and urban planner*. Ursula Kleefisch-Jobst, Ingeborg Flagge (Hrsg. Eds.), Springer Wien NewYork, 228 p.
- [8] Глазычев В. Л. Социально-экологическая интерпретация городской среды. М.: Наука, 1984.
- [9] Ремизова Е. Архитектура как театр или театр “классической архитектуры” Рикардо Бофилла // Ватерпас, 2000, № 26–27, с. 54–61.
- [10] Глазычев В. Урбанистика. М.: Европа, 2008.

