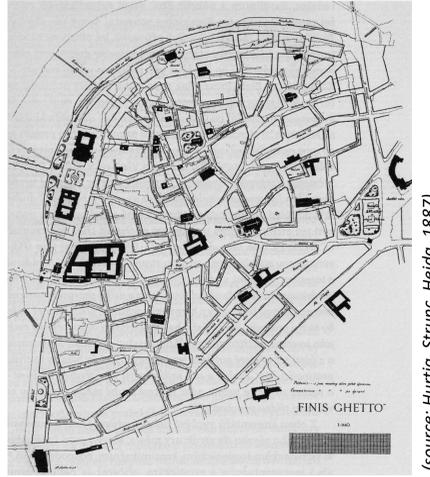


Significance of Rossi's ideas lies in the extent of observed phenomenon; his abstraction allows him to find the "urban" created by singular objects in a close proximity with others through perception of people. This perception generates a very durable imprint in a collective memory

# Aldo Rossi's "Architecture of the City" and its take on Letná development in Prague



(source: Hurtig, Strunc, Hejda, 1887)

For the development plans of Letná was decisive a single street in the new urban plan of the neighbouring district (above). The rest of the new street layout followed the main axes of the former network, only the Pařížská street was completely independent from any existing spaces and landmarks.

This new boulevard presented an extremely strong gesture in the new development, one can immediately find signs of the street becoming a *primary element*.

**Through its undecisive embedding in the existing structure, forces driving the ideas for subsequent adaptations of its surroundings appeared immediately.**



(source: Fortepan / Nagy Gyula)

## urban artifact

a singular element of a city "characterized by its own history". It is not limited to a physical object, but could also mean any historical, structural, geographical, or other element or area of a city.

## primary element

is urban artifacts that influences its surroundings by earning more significance than its function constitutes. It maintains this significance over time, independent from its function, and act as a nuclei of urban processes.

## monument

is for Rossi an extreme form of a primary element by its stability over time, it is a "fix point in urban dynamics, and as such is stronger than economic laws".

The gigantic monument (above) was finished in 1955 but haven't lasted very long. The decision for its complete removal came in the year 1962, few years after Stalin's cult was abandoned

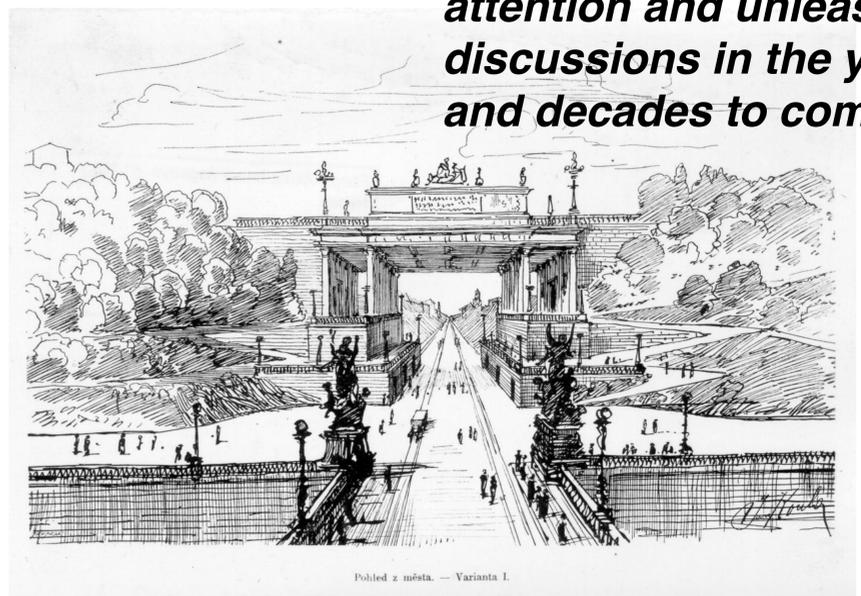
## history becomes memory

By its deconstruction the monument became just an imprint of our perception, a memory, and as such it is evolving, despite its intriguing consistency. The location is going to undergo more significant changes in the future and the collective image of a statue will remain "the sign of a place as expressed in form [of the new development]." And these future artifacts will alter the original memory of Stalin monument into a different one, just as Peter Eisenman observed: "For Rossi, the city is a theatre of human events. This theatre is no longer just a representation; it is a reality. It absorbs events and feelings, and every new event contains within it a memory of the past and a potential memory of the future"

Extremely persistent were the development plans at the other end of Pařížská street. Abrupt ending on the riverbank triggered a search for an adequate extension of the boulevard across the river. A decisive role in this discussion played a project of an artificial ditch through the Letná hill designed by Jan Koula in 1897 (below). A radical proposal extending the boulevard over the

bridge and through an extensive portal framed dig through the Letná hill created a direct connection to northern districts. Despite extreme building costs, that caused the project to be rejected,

**"the idea succeeded in drawing major public attention and unleash discussions in the years and decades to come."**



(source: Koula, 1897)

The evolution of Koula's original *idea* shows how it earned public attention through its monumentality and radicality over several decades, and what is even more extraordinary,

**persisted even beyond its functional justification.**

This leads us to consider it a separate *primary element* in the whole development of Letná, because the idea of the ditch not

only became a "catalyst...that rapidly took on a more significant value", but also "disconnected from its original function". Significant for the study of permanence is the fact, that this *urban artifact* showing such a persistence is an example of a *non-physical* primary element, illustrating the broad scale of their disguise, just as Rossi observed: "Frequently, they are not even physical, constructed, measurable artifacts; for example, sometimes the importance of an event itself 'gives place' to spatial transformation of a site."