Claude Parent: The Epistemological Shift from the Modernism to the Metabolism

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Abstract When the *Cité de l'Architecture et Patrimoine* in Paris organized the exhibition of Claude Parent's works (Parent in J Soc Archit Hist 70:106–1107, 2011), the change of phase in the modernism movement become very clear. In fact, the author's experience in his academic and working career demonstrates the key passages from a mere rigorous execution of the rectangular and functionalist style which characterized the modernistic thought, to an architectural vision orientated to a dizzying and unconventional matrix, preferring the sinuous momentum of elements in space to the right angles. In some ways, the C. Parent's idea of architecture are a tangible example of a successful interpretation of the modernism's methodologic procedures in an organic and changeable way, setting the stage for transforming the principles of the *machine age* into those of the *age of life*. The purpose of this paper is to deal with this shifting point of the modernist school in architecture, starting from the theory and practice of Claude Parent. Firstly, through an in-depth investigation and comparison of Claude Parent's drawings and design projects it is indeed possible to understand the original aspects of modern movement and, in particular, what were the limitations that characterized it, eventually leading to the overcoming of the movement itself. Secondly, the same author's works will be used to understand how his thought can also be interpreted as a point of contact between the modernist movement and the metabolic movement which was established in Japan in the 1960s.

Keywords Modernism · Claude parent · Paul virilio · Futurism · Metabolism

1 Introduction

1.1 From the Fracture to the Movement

Every movement arises from a fracture and every fracture implies an intersection of two different moments.

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When in 1963 Claude Parent and Paul Virilio presented their idea of the oblique function, that moment defined a sort of fracture in the modernist thought. The researches pursued by the two authors, in fact, unhinge the programmed functionality of modernism to trigger a different dynamism in the way of conceiving architecture, promoting a new kind of spatial and social order in the design's foundations of that time. In their research, it appears very clear a shift from the fixed to a fluid form, capable to move in all spatial directions. In this way, their work resembles to the futurism, which tries to define a new language in order to interpret the dynamism of the new technologies and, in general, the dynamism of the reality. These changes have also been researched by the Metabolists, who enlighten the necessity to bound design to the new flows' needs. The new architectural paradigm had, in fact, to accomplish the social needs of the post-modern society, always more complex and difficult to predict [2].

It is exactly between modernism, futurism and Metabolism that the work of Claude Parent finds its place, proposing a narration between the urge to escape from the strict functionalism and the pursuing to promote a dynamic, three-dimensional space's exploration.

This contribution tries to underline why the work of C. Parent and Paul Virilio was so innovative at that time, defining their main ideas and points of investigation. Furthermore, it will relate their research to the western and eastern Modernist Movements in order to understand the historical and ideological connections. Finally, it will point out why C. Parent's work is extremely subversive for that time and which important implications has brought into debated spatial issues nowadays.

2 Claude Parent: Thought and Works

2.1 A Subversive Thought

Claude Parent was always a non-conformist architect, who tried to escape from the Institutions but at the same time always believed in them as an anchor point in its works.

Born in 1923, C. Parent was enrolled in the École des Beaux Art after the war. Although he worked for Le Corbusier at the beginning, he foresaw a different way to conceive modernism out of the strict functionalistic point of view, expressing the way to see the new era in an extremely innovative approach. In the École he had the opportunity to meet different people who inspired him in many ways. In 1949, for example, he met Jonel Schein, architect and urbanist who pursued an idea of the society exceptionally flexible; he designed interchangeable living cells, which would be also one of the topics investigated by the Metabolists. In 1951, the encounter with the sculptor and architecture lover André Bloc lead him closer to a zoophytomorphic idea of architecture, while in 1952 the meeting with the Hungarian artist Nicholas

Schoeffer pushed him to confront himself with the themes of mutability and change, extremely important for his future works [3].

But the most prolific encounter was with Paul Virilio in 1963, the founder of the Groupe Architecture Principe, which investigates a substantial transformation of the category of space, overturning its normal conception established by the Cartesian axes. In the magazine *Architecture Principe*, C. Parent presented his sketches of Le Turbines, sort of objects with a cinematic thrust capable to embrace all the possible directions except the horizontal one [3]. The search of an object capable to lead the spectator to distorted views has its roots in the documentation by Paul Virilio of the concrete bunkers built by Germans during the second world war [4]. The bunkers' construction totally fascinated both P. Virilio and C. Parent, who perceived a loss of orientation and the disappearance of the normally coordinates reference inside these buildings.

"Everything started with the idea of building things in an unbalanced way, using a sloping floor" [5], affirmed Claude Parent during an interview in his Neuilly office near the center of Paris in 2011. In the same interview, he recalled the experience of seeing the bunkers' structure sunk into the ground only accessible by a sloping system, describing it as a completely outstanding feeling:

"I had been very struck by it. I had experienced a feeling of vertigo (…). Inside, you tumbled through a strange room; the floor was so sloped that you couldn't tell whether what you were standing on was a slanted floor or a former wall" [4].

The first surprising result of the bunkers' study was achieved in Saint Bernadette Church. The project was built between 1963 and 1966, concretizing the Paul Virilio's and Claude Parents' streams of research. Clearly, a reinterpretation of the "archaeological bunkers" of Virilio represents the first project of the group Architecture Principe and a counterpoint with respect to the Church Notre-Dame-du-Haut in Ronchamp (1954) of Le Corbusier [3, 6].

Saint Bernadette Church is a brutalist and subversive building, which defines a profound interconnection between the inner space and the external envelope thanks to the role of the obliquity. Its coverture resembles a lot the roof of the Church built by Le Corbusier, but its geometry is completed bounded to the ground, establishing an opposite approach with respect to the Le Corbusier's thought. In fact, if for the functionalist architect every part is assumed having a particular utility in architecture, C. Parent determines a complete interconnection between them, so that the roof becomes a place to walk on it and the walls are elements of unification as of division [7].

With the Drusch Villa, built in 1963 for the local industrialist 'Gaston Drusch', C. Parent exasperated the idea of multi-functional elements, experimenting a skewed at 45° Bauhause-concrete- cube for the living room area of the house [8]. The Commercial Centre of Ris-Orangis and the GEM of Reims Tinqueux are other two projects that define in a very clear way the predominance of the oblique in the composition's asset. In the last ones, four oblique blocks are assembled transversally and interconnected by a series of oblique elements, which provide always different views in every part of the building as well as the access to different services [3].

Fig. 1 The figure represents a comparison between a German Bunker structure analyzed by P. Virilio in his collection of drawings between 1958 and 1963 [4] (left) and the project of C. Parent and P. Virilio of the Cultural Centre of Charleville, built in 1966 (right). A. Monacelli's drawing

The project of the Cultural Centre of Charleville by Paul Virilio and Claude Parent (Fig. 1) represents a cardinal work for the achievement of urban continuity [9]. In fact, there is a will, extremely readable in section, of emulating the ground's slope. At the same time, an internal fluid transition is achieved through the ramps, in order to bring the different high levels to a uniform environment. The project is very suggestive for the resemblance to the bunkers' envelope analyzed by Paul Virilio through a closed and curved- angles- structures and, at the same time, for the aspiration to the slope's power: the synthesis is a structure capable to be protective but at the same time adapted to reach out the surrounding landscape. The apex of this tendency towards obliquity experienced by the author manifests itself in another commercial center in GEM (1970). It deals with an enormous ramp inserted in the ground that characterizes the whole volume, in which other slopes permit the access to the Grand Magazine.

After 1970, the realization of several projects for the French society of the EDF (Direction de l'Equipment d'Electricitè de France) began to take place. In this context, he experimented four morphological characters of the buildings, named *Stratifications-Temples-Hottes-Orgues/Proues*, of whom the EDF eventually decided to take only two: the *Hottes* and the *Stratifications.* C. Parent started then to experiment other types of geometries that he did not consider in the previous projects: hyperboloids and spherical couples were added in the new architectonic *nuclear language,* which express very good the extreme dynamic approach of the last-years-works of the author. While, at the beginning, the approach of C. Parent to the *architecture nucléaire* founds its reference in the Atlantic bunkers investigated by Paul Virilio, in this following phase, the second reference is clearly connected to the futuristic images of the electric centrals by Sant'Elia. Therefore, these last cycles of projects well define the itinerary of the Parent's thought and the utopian characterization of his works, which will go into a consistent redesign of the landscape built through the utopian drawings exhibited at the Venice Biennale of 1970.

2.2 The Slope: Between Fracture and Continuity

Actually, the use of the "obliquity" itself has an evident connection with the futurism. In fact, the same C. Parent admitted that the use of slopes is not always justified, but

acquires mostly the role to reawaken the action, the movement and the attention of the human beings, which is basically the main aim of his works. In fact, fighting the laziness through the physical and mental engagement is a very futuristic parameter, that spurs the people on to conceive the world in an active way and to let them be participative in an urban pacific revolution [10].

All these experimentations found a theoretical assessment in the manifesto "Vivre à l'Oblique" (living on the slope), that he wrote together with Paul Virilio [10]. The pamphlets report the many uses, both from the geographical and social point of view, that the slope can stimulate: the idea of the obliquity defines not only a way to conceive the space, but determines a totalitarian revolution of the territory and interprets the fluxes of the urban dimension (Fig. 2).

As C. Parent has confessed to B. Zevi [3] that his pamphlets didn't aim to be a utopian work but a work of ideas, ideas that can generate other possibilities to read the city. Regarding to that, the understanding of the point of view of his pamphlets' collaborator, Paul Virilio (1932–2018), urban planner and essayist also appears to be very important. In fact, in parallel, P. Virilio was always very interested in the changes of the modern and contemporary urban realities, trying to identify the key passages that had transformed the yesterday to the nowadays cities' dimension [11]. In the analysis of the post-Modern city, Paul Virilio defines the urban condition as a discontinue reality, in which interruption, unemployment and casual labors establish the rules. The only continuity that could be found is represented by the communication and telecommunication technologies, which anyway do not contribute to maintain the assets of the urban unity, deprived of its boundaries. In his words,

"As a unity of place without any unity of time, the City has disappeared into the heterogeneity of that regime comprised of the temporality of advanced technologies. The urban figure is no longer designated by a dividing line that separates here from there. Instead, it has become a computerized timetable" [12].

The concept of the city's limits has also inspired the obliquity's imaginary of C. Parent, whose philosophical attempt defines the will to go beyond a categorized

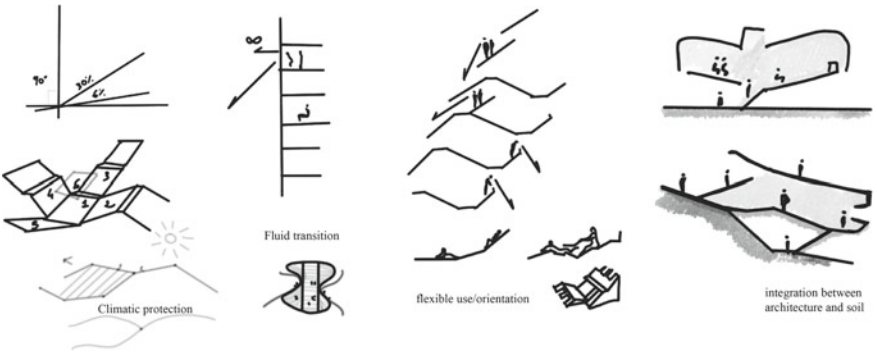

Fig. 2 Representation of the different pros of the slope structure (re-interpretation of the sketches of *vivre 'à l'oblique'* [10], A. Monacelli's drawing

system that has led to the urban segregation and territorial disconnection. The obliquity represents the opportunity to overcome the functionalist division in a physical way instead of a virtual one. In particular, representing the continuity of the slope, C. Parent is manifesting the idea to overcome the prefixed way of living a city, suggesting that the 'scandalous' dimension of the architecture is capable to make territories alive again.

2.3 The Obliquity Meets Futurism

According to C. Parent, the different historical periods can be classified in three main époques, based on their predominant spatial representations: the horizontal represents the agricultural period; the vertical the industrial age; the oblique the modernity. From his point of view, the industrial era ended with the launch of rockets as well as the moon landing, events that *per sé* express the intention to 'escape' from the horizontal plane which embodies the reference plane, the consolidated knowledge [13].

This is the reason why the dreamlike landscapes in his drawings represent a disruptive way to intend not only the space but also the perception of time: a continuous inclined walkable system, a flow that can go beyond every confinement.

In the same way, in his manifesto he expresses the will to go beyond the wall, both in the vertical and the horizontal senses. In fact, the oblique does no necessary create a unique way from point A to point B, but allows the many directions to be combined together and to be seen as a complex route from many points of view, difficult to be perceived as the mere sum of single elements.

The concept of the point of view has always been investigated along the years of theory and practises in architecture. While in the Renaissance this concept was accurately calculated and defined in a clear structure designed through the vanishing points, as an opposite, in the idea of Claude Parent, the point of view's concept tries to "climb over" this structure: his drawings and his projects needs to be seen from many sights in order to be captured as a whole. For these extremely futuristic approaches, it is not a case that Claude Parent has been taken as a reference from the most far-sighted contemporary authors such as Rem Koolhaas and Zaha Hadid; the latter, in particular, talking about him, asserted that.

"Claude Parent was one of architecture's most radical and audacious visionaries, audacious enough to question the horizontal plane as architecture's natural plane of inscription and to propose the tilted plane as an engine of invention and surprisingly fertile basis of an alternative architectural scenario" [13].

The idea of movement at the same time connects itself with the modernity's concept of speed. In fact, Claude Parent can be seen as a connection key between the modernity and the postmodernity spheres: at the same time, he emphasises the futuristic component of the movement but embracing it with other ways of representation. Moreover, his approach can be seen as 'revolutionary', as it disrupts the fixed forms of horizontal and vertical structures through the outbreak of the oblique. The sloping space can be seen as an alive object: it can create diving, descending,

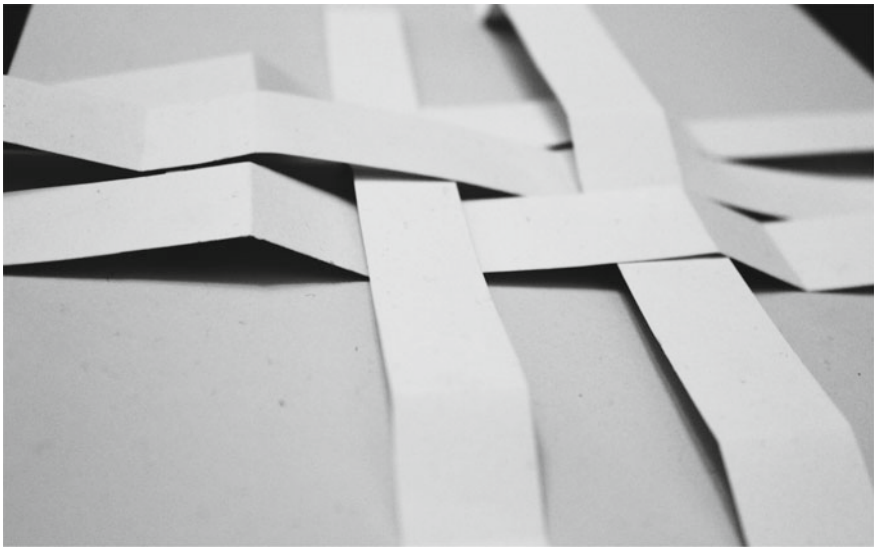

Fig. 3 The author's personal reinterpretation of the *oblique* concept of C. Parent, expressed by a paper model

ascending, pinched or wide-spread spaces to imagine and create a new structure with no obstacles (Fig. 3).

The obliquity creates a movement that is, in the end, not only a physical effort but also an ideological propulsion, capable to trigger action and involvement in the spectator. It is futuristic in the sense that develops a sort of energy and resolution of the statics –ousting the comfort in favour to the discomfort. In fact, it is actually the last one that raises questions about our conditions and let us moving forward.

2.4 The Oblique Anticipates Metabolism

From the topographical point of view, the obliquity tries to achieve the full respect of the natural site, relating to it with the lowest impactful way, as much as possible. This happens because the oblique signs do not create extra layers or juxtapose themselves with an extra shape, but they simply underline the level curves of the terrain and bound with them. In addition, obliquity allows traffic to be integrated into the dwelling and no longer to dissociate it, as traffic becomes an integral part of the inhabited structure [14].

Finally, the oblique structure, the slope, can create a continuous channel of fluxes that intersect each other's, interpenetrate themselves up and down with a continuous overflowing of paths.

As his daughter Chloè explained, *living oblique* is.

"among the most intelligent ways of inhabiting space, since it is one of the most dynamic, mobile, evolving and also renewable feature" [2].

This last point is very important in order to understand the connection with the Metabolism movement, which is a modern architectural movement originated in Japan, mostly influential in 1960s–but already present in the late 1950s. Considering the original meaning of metabolism, the word describes the process of *maintaining the living cells* and Metabolism in architecture actually analyses the city as a living being [15]. In fact, in the post word war reconstruction of Japan, the architects depict cities as ever-changing elements and imagine them as capable to host many infrastructures as possible in order to accommodate always more people inside, satisfying the housing's demand of that time [16]. For these reasons, the Metabolists identified in the post-war structures the potential to be thought as somehow temporary, and thence to be replaced after a certain lifespan, while maintaining the invariable aspect of being built around a *spine-like infrastructure* [17].

Consequentially, the Metabolism Movement defined itself within two different types of design processes: the accumulation of cellular spaces, at the same time replicable and possible to be adjusted in every kind of environment, and the creation of infrastructure wires, which at the same time can connect the cell and the paths.

These two points underline how the Metabolists strove for mediating between the individual space -that still has the residues of the modern heritage about a sort of functionalism in the cellular organisation- and the big urbanistic scale, which embraces large technical infrastructures [18]. From the middle of the 1960s, the initial architectural discourse of Metabolists shifted to a more conscious aesthetic, that enables also many contacts and debates within the western architects and thinkers.

It was not a case that in 1960, one year after the dissolution of the CIAM organisation, a group of young Japanese architects (Fumihiko Maki, Masato Otaka, Kiyonari Kikutake and Kisho Kurokawa) declared the first Metabolism Manifesto. In their Manifesto, it is explained that they regard the human society as a "*vital process, a continuous development from atom to nebula"* [15].

In *Project Japan: Metabolism Talks* Rem Koohlas and Hans Ulrich Obrist [19] talk about Metabolism as a movement that can offer a significant alternative example for the debate of the time about the future of the post-war cities, seeing it also a response against the market guilty of the progressive dissolution of the local cultures and collegial connections. Bust most of all, this movement has to be understood as a response of the time's needs.

In fact, after the 1950, Tokyo faced a rapidly and dynamical population growth (from 1955 to 1964 it raised from 13. 28 to 18.86 million inhabitants) [19], when only a tiny plot of the urban area could be used for agricultural and building scopes, architects needed to discuss spatial planning issues in a culture where urban organisation in the westerner sense was barely still unknown. Discussing about architecture meant doing architecture in the most efficient way, but always keeping in mind the rapid population growth that the city had to host. That is why the theoretical designs of Metabolists tried to unify the different people's needs into a big urban structure which could collect the human individual spaces, the "cells", in a long-term- service structure. This large scale structure was meant to optimize and distribute all sorts of

flows in a three-dimensional skeleton which branches out into fast (vehicle's streets) and slow (pedestrian streets) flows, reorganizing them in a way that the relationship between society and individual could be maintained. This principle is extremely recognisable in the Most Famous Metabolist project, as the proposal for Tokyo Bay by Kenzo Tange. Tange's organisation consisted of a linear-spline made by layered systems of intersecting infrastructures at different scales. This first level of distribution represents the superstructure, a sort of '0 level' that enables people to reach their individual places in platforms connected to this spline [18].

Going back to C. Parent, his slow represents a new way to interpret the relation between man and environment, which is indeed the same focus also kept by the Metabolists. In this relation, the community's space is so integrated with the human scale that it is very difficult to distinguish the individual sphere from the environmental one- and this can be considered a step forward compared to the metabolism thought, where the *cells* were anyway very distinguishable from the infrastructures (Fig. 3).

2.5 The Oblique Conveys in Infrastructures

The main idea of an infrastructure that can serve at the same time traffic congestions as well as dwelling's distribution was already present in the work of Le Corbusier for the plan Obus of Algier. Le Corbusier's first version of his plan for the North African city of Algiers, developed between 1930 and 1933, represented the culmination of his 1920s work on urban design, and especially of his concept of the *Ville radieuse.* Even in its several later incarnations, the plan was also a loud demonstration of the disruptive effects of his architecture, which tended to obliterate the past in order to build a better future. Well aware of this quality, the architect called his plan the "Obus" or "shrapnel" plan. It featured a business centre on the docks, where the pre-existing buildings were to be torn down; a residential neighbourhood on the difficult, hilly site of the Fort l'Empereur; and a giant motorway, the land below it to be filled by homes for 180,000 people. The plan was as magniloquent as it was visionary, as is evident in the right half of the drawing, where Le Corbusier's blue pencil highlights the new buildings [20].

The connection between dwellings and flows through a linear path is actually something that distinguish both of the east and west post-modern Movements: a continuous spline is an extremely efficient way to connect many points at the same time, letting them be reachable by every citizen. In particular, the concept of functionalism is retaken from the Metabolists in the way they conceived the cells as living rooms, replaceable and with a determined structural corps, which were conceived as little machines for humans. In fact, both of the Movements' declinations, Modernism and Metabolism, have their roots in a period when technology and the role of the machine started to have an enormous impact on the people's life [21].

In addition to this, Metabolists had anyway to face the problem of massive building construction due to the population increase; from one side, in order to reconstruct

the cities, the Modernism tried to apply the Criteria for Mass Housing of 1959, particularly conceived for the familiar residences; on the other side, the Metabolists had to overcome the lack, i.e. in Tokyo, Osaka and other Japanese big cities, of both houses and infrastructures. As a consequence, at that time all the major Japanese building firms were showing interest in mass production of houses as well as in the their expansion in western cities. This led many architects from the Metabolism Movement as Kisho Kurokawa to design in 1961 and 1962 prefabricated houses that will have eventually assumed the name of capsules [22].

Modern for Metabolism and Modernism means technologic advanced, progressive. But there is actually a huge difference between them: the metabolic movement had seen somehow also the failure of technology and its disruptive implications in the second World War, as well as the dissolution of the Team 10 during the CIAM of the 1959. In this view, they had seen that the functionalistic aspect of architecture has not the right to be used in every context, but has to take care of, observe and integrated the value of the surrounding environments, considered in terms of territorial-physical features and in their social aspects. As a matter of fact, Metabolists were much more bounded to the ground—whereas in the modernists project of the Smithson or Le Corbusier, for instance, the purity of the geometrical and orthogonal volumes had almost no contact with the terrain (*plain libre*) and their design principles, at least at the first phase of the Movement, were meant to be applicable everywhere.

The Metabolists concerning about the populations' needs (for example, in the way they distinguished vehicular and pedestrian fluxes and retake vernacular elements for the buildings) not only as static needs but as needs in transformation, that change with the time and have to be readapted in a transformation, better said metabolic, vision. The fixed principles of the house's machine could not fit into this concept, and this passage is very important to understand why their theories and implications were extraordinary foresight for that time. In his book Metabolism in Architecture [18], Kisho Kurokawa underlines the importance of "the development of infrastructures in the cities" which clarify "the relation between changeable and unchangeable elements in city's space". This idea implies the consideration of the extreme important role of the goods, people and information mobility and implicitly highlights the importance of the cities' flows. Anyway, comparing the sketches between K. Tange and C. Parent regarding the infrastructural role, it is very clear that the latter focuses more on the path between the elements rather than on the aggregation between elements themselves: C. Parent's concept in this framework appears to be capable of creating a more organic reality, which somehow seems to preempt and anticipate the parametric experiments that we can find today in technologically advanced computer programs (Fig. 4).

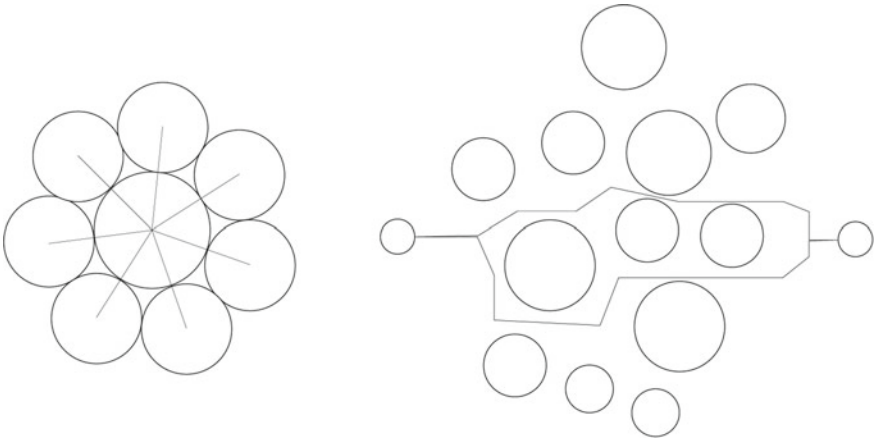

Fig. 4 On the left side, the author's personal reinterpretation of the connection among the living cells of the Metabolism; on the right, the reinterpretation of the C. Parent's sketch about routes (and the way the interconnection can be achieved)

3 Conclusion

3.1 Claude Parent's Work Between Modernism, Futurism and Metabolism

Parent's works have been proven to be innovative at the time of their conception and have undoubtedly influenced many aspects of the following and contemporary architecture. His research works, with his almost "science fiction-like" tendency, could be seen as the meeting point between the modernism and the metabolistic approach. These works can be indeed divided in many phases, yet the first phase is undoubtedly the one bounded to the modernism, especially during his collaboration with Le Corbusier; but with the "Vivre à l'Oblique" (living on the slope) he defined a completely new way to conceive space, through an elaborated and outstanding way to see architecture. In common with the Metabolists, he foresaw the importance of taking into consideration the flow in architecture; this is also the reason why Rem Koolhaas took his architecture as an inspiration, comparing his slope concept with the work of Tim Nugent (the pioneer of the wheelchair ramps). Moreover, Koolhaas saw in Parent the will to introduce the concepts of difficulty, imbalance and criticality in architecture. In fact, C. Parent was actually influenced by the 68' revolutionary spirit of the time (in contrast with the period of the post-war French economic boom known as *les trente gloriouses*) [23]. As a revolutionary architect, he was trying to introduce variations in an already conformed and wealthy bourgeois society, not far away from the one present in Japan at the time of the Metabolists. With the slope, he tried to decompose the normal way of reaching a point, defining new rules of conceiving paths, giving importance to the routes rather than to the mere functional

objects to be reached by them. As he asserted during an interview in 2010, he doesn't "claim to have invented the slope in nature, nor even the ramp (Le Corbusier used them). He just recommends the 'living on inclined planes'. Thence, we recall his intent to avoid a utopian manifesto, yet he rather seems to launch an open call to collect different and pioneer ideas that could have been the pulse for a new way of conceiving architecture [24]. His geniality does not lay in the introduction of the obliquity in itself, but mostly in the way to see obliquity as an occasion to create a new space: a space that can be excavated and at the same time walked, and observed, and reflected; a space which, within its movement, would be capable of generating a dynamic structure with non-stop mechanisms.

However, it is also remarkable that in the development of its 'slope processes' he uses anyway the modernist mechanisms of a replicable structure; but since this structure has a different nature when compared to the one of the vertical and horizontal planes, the Parent's outcomes result in a singular, touching an almost organic nature of architecture with futuristic implications. Like the Metabolists, Claude Parent reinterpreted the buildings as they were living structures, always interconnected as an organism but always potentially reinterpreted in a transformation process. In an interview with Purple Magazine, he expanded on his ideas about fluid space:

"My drawings are not only about fluidity in architecture; they are also about migration—a future civilization of migration based on permanent traveling all over the world, people circulating on massive roads that transform into cities and buildings where people can come and go. I believe that we should no longer build walled cities, closed up on themselves by their own territorial boundaries, protected by insurmountable defences. Let's unfurl onto the Earth passages that billow like continuous ribbons" [8].

Differently from the Modernism, he saw in the terrain a potential: his architecture tries always to be bound to the ground, rather than distance itself from it. That is the reason why his way to make architecture could be also defined 'ecologic': the slope is the most natural feature that we can encounter in the terrain and the most optimized way to second it is creating an oblique sign, as also his daughter Chloé explained in the *Architectural's Revew* interview [2].

In his architecture we can also find an intent of destabilization and disorientation, that is actually not that far from the disillusion of functionality that Le Corbusier has experienced after the second world war's disasters that led him to a break with the purist-machinist vision, further elaborated by Parent with the artist Ozenfant [20]. Claude Parent has embodied this sense of confusion throughout misguiding drawing gestures, with a sort of profound criticism towards modernity itself, limited by horizontal and vertical lines, by the geometrical and orthogonal volumes and the predominant beliefs in the functionalist aspects of architecture.

Finally, Claude Parent can be considered a visionary man of our times. His works expresses a sense of the material vanishing of the usual figural shapes by interconnecting forms in a metaphor of the contemporary networks which are always more labile, yet nonetheless, increasingly interconnected. However, his futuristic approach to drawings also expresses the chaotic reality and the will to remain attached to the ground, embodying the dichotomy that all of us are living nowadays. In fact,

although we are always more captured by a virtual world, i.e. the *screens* underlined from Virilio, we cannot forget the fact that we have to remain anchored to the reality, cooping and living with it [25].

This idea is clearly expressed in the installation by C. Parent of the French Pavilion for the Venice Biennale of Art in 1970. In this occasion, he achieved to create an artificial landscape, made up by intersecting floors capable of suggesting a scattering impression of the built environment. His figure was retaken also by Rem Koolhaas in the Venice Architectural Biennale of 2014, where he put C. Parent and Tim Nugent (the master of accessible ramps) in dialogue with each other's in the same room [26]. Through this juxtaposition, R. Koolhaas actually wanted to underline the two contraposed tendencies of the seventies: from the Parent's side the aim to discomfort, from Nugent's side the one of the comfort. Both of them are actually representative of the ambiguous post-modern reality, which from one side tries to rewrite the cities' geometry but from the other side has to accomplish the users' needs, always more demanding and complex due to the technologic and scientific progress.

In this society progression, the slope paradoxically constitutes a fracture in its continuity: released from the modernist expectations of a rules-defined- society, of a city made up by modular blocks disconnected from each other's', establishes a new horizon which tries to avoid physical and consequentially social boundaries. In this way, it is nevertheless capable to reconnect the users' actions and to arise their creative capacity to interpret and change a world where otherwise everything seems to be a-priori programmed (Fig. 5).

Perhaps, in a more poetical and philosophical view, the idea of the slope can be seen as the architectural representation of the concept of the Kantian limit: the knowledge

Fig. 5 Re-elaboration of one of the slope's sketches by Claude Parent from his pamphlet *vivre' à l'oblique'* [10]. In the reinterpretation, the slopes are imagined with overtures and landscape features, as they were part of cities' tracks

of the presence of a boundary but the tendency, through its upward momentum, to have the possibility to go beyond it.

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