



What is the city but the people?

– William Shakespeare, *Coriolanus* (3.1.197)

Space is the material wherein discourses about knowledge and power are transformed into actual relations of power. In different historical conditions, such techniques may come more or less in architecture's purview.

– K. Michael Hays

## RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Due to a confluence of geopolitical shifts, including dissolving empires and two World Wars, the number of newly-formed or independent countries ballooned during the 20th Century. These nations were intent upon projecting their identities to the world through many different strategies, and the architecture of their newly-chosen capital city was a principal way to do this.

These government buildings and civic spaces were constructed at the intersection of national, architectural, and personal identity, embodying all the concomitant complexity involved in such a pursuit. The choice of site, adjacent to another municipality or tabula rasa, was symbolic in itself, and demonstrated a specific posture towards the past, present, and future. Whether appropriated or new construction, these structures took a range of attitudes towards their position in history, as a continuation of a lineage or part of the avant garde.

These buildings shaped both the local context and the nation's image, representing the population and their collective aspirations, or the architect's interpretation of these ideals. Political relationships were embedded in their typologies, style, ornamentation, and even construction methods. These choices were vital in the regional aesthetic narrative, and as part of an increasingly global discourse. What we may observe is not necessarily a local architecture, but a constructed national style formulated from elements potentially divorced of their context and sources.

This research will focus on buildings which are emblematic of a communal identity. It is an expansion of analysis initiated during my master's thesis, when I studied a site bordering Wallace K. Harrison's Empire State Plaza in Albany, New York. That complex underlined the political clout of Nelson Rockefeller and presented the city as a nexus of power. The Rotch Travelling Scholarship would provide the opportunity to further examine the capacity for architecture to project a political and cultural stance.

Investigation before travel will be made into the historical inception of each capital on the itinerary. Local research will target specific buildings and attempt to understand whether they exemplify, contradict, influence or derive from their national aspirations. Where a structure has been converted from a previous role, study will focus on what has been appropriated or changed to represent the new order. On-site observation will provide the flexibility to spontaneously identify other architectural examples that may illustrate these objectives.

Each case study will be properly documented through graphical analysis. Diagrams and mappings will record how each element of study is in dialogue with the created national distinctiveness of the urban environment. Drawings will identify the influences behind each project, as well as how it may have created social, spatial, or architectural consequences apparent today. The goal is a manuscript which further synthesizes the knowledge gained into tactics that have been applied in the creation of successful civic constructions or spaces .

Questions of nationhood are not fixed, requiring a delicate balance of both lineage and inception. This project takes the optimistic hypothesis that architecture can actively shape our surroundings, and, thereby, ourselves.

# POLIS CITY & CITIZEN

## PROPOSED ITINERARY

The cities to be visited are grouped into three categories reflecting their civic architecture's relationship to past and future.

Travel will begin in the Fall of 2015.



1. BERLIN, Germany



2. EUR, Italy



3. NEW DELHI, India



4. CHANDIGARH, India



5. BEIJING, China



6. BRASILIA, Brazil

## HISTORI-CITY

Reclaiming an ancient capital is a powerful means for staking an historical lineage. The buildings selected have been appropriated and modified to serve a new government, infusing them with further layers of meaning.

**5. BEIJING, China** - 6 Weeks - In 1949 the People's Republic of China was founded in Beijing, and the city's image served as a backdrop to the new regime. The ancient Imperial Palace, already transformed into a public museum, fronted Tiananmen Square, and was the epicenter of further urbanization patterns. It was also the nexus of confrontation, both between ideologies, and between architectural styles.

Forbidden City / Tiananmen - An imperial complex and civic space, it was appropriated and expanded by the Communist party.

Great Hall of the People - The political center of Beijing was built in the Sino-Soviet style as one of the "Ten Great Buildings" of 1959.

Zhongnanhai - The former imperial palace was converted into the Communist party headquarters.

**1. BERLIN, Germany** - 4W - The Capital of Prussia, the German Empire, the Weimar Republic, the Third Reich, East Germany, and currently of unified Germany. Buildings by one regime were subsequently used by many, often renovated, and changed their meaning over time. Extensive bombing during WWII and the Wall altered the character of neighborhoods. The city is self-conscious in its expression of the palimpsest of history.

Bundestag - Erected during the Empire, it was the symbolic site of reunification, and now houses parliament and is a tourist attraction.

Neue Wache - Schinkel's guard house has served as a memorial for a series of different causes.

Olympic stadium - The Nazis built the stadium for the 1936 Olympics, but it has been in use ever since.

# POLIS CITY & CITIZEN

## PROPOSED ITINERARY

### PROXIMITY

New cities built adjacent to existing infrastructure, they engaged with historical architectural styles. There is a clear relationship with the existing neighboring city, but also an idealistic view of new potentials.

**2. EUR, Italy** - 4W - Designed in anticipation of the 1942 World's Fair to represent the success of Fascism, it combined Roman city planning, classical proportions, and rationalism to create a unique architectural language. Buildings were later completed for the 1960 Olympic games. Built at the periphery of Rome, it has gradually been incorporated into the city and subsequent development has had to grapple with its origin.

Palazzo della Civiltà Italiana - Designed as a direct reference to the Colosseum, it is in a streamlined classical language.

Museo della Civiltà Romana - This rationalist museum celebrates the city of Rome to the north.

Palazzo dello Sport - Nervi's stadium hosted basketball tournaments during the Olympics.

**3. NEW DELHI, India** - 5W - Chosen in 1911 to be the new capital of India under British rule, Edwin Lutyens and Herbert Baker employed the ideals of the City Beautiful movement. A series of interconnected nodes triangulated the urban fabric and linked important monuments. Public spaces were built on a grand scale.

Rashtrapati Bhavan - Lutyen's presidential residence employed Mughal and Neoclassical styles with British symbolism.

Secretariat Building - A clear mix of Western classical proportions and Mughal ornamentation represented both ruler and ruled.

Lutyens Bungalow Zone - A very low density residential area mostly for civil servants, which today exemplifies class divisions.

### RADIANT CITY

Expressing the vigor of a new nation, these cities organized spaces for living, working, industry, and circulation, along with large open spaces. They also sought a formal and functional clarity by setting out protocols for developing localized blocks into neighborhoods.

**4. CHANDIGARH, Haryana & Punjab, India** - 5W - Planned by Albert Mayer and later Le Corbusier following the doctrines of CIAM, it was divided into zones of activity for different modes of transportation. Architectural guidelines for the sectors of housing and quotidian civic life were developed to create an aesthetic and functional continuity.

Capitol Complex - The Secretariat, museum, and Palaces of Assembly and Justice were icons of the new capital.

College of Architecture - Le Corbusier helped found the school, and the building demonstrates ideals he hoped to foster.

A Typical Sector - A framework was outlined for the typical residential building, with room for variation by the individual.

**6. BRASILIA, Brazil** - 5W - The urban strategy of Lúcio Costa including the Monumental Axis and Esplanade of the Ministries, and Oscar Niemeyer's numerous buildings in the new Brazilian Modernist style created an image of progress for a young country. Superquadras introduced a new type of mixed-use block with public amenities and housing above, which over time have become more individualized.

Square of the Three Powers - The National Congress, Supreme Court and Presidential Palace are in dialogue here.

A Typical Superquadra - The neighborhood building block was originally strictly planned, but many have developed individuality and densified.

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