

PIECEMEAL PLANNING AT WORK



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IRPIN / UKRAINE



50°31'7"N 30°14'23"E

The city of Irpin in the Kyiv Oblast—hit by Russian forces in March 2022—is characterized by a sparsely populated urban fabric made up of large residential complexes built in the Soviet period or in recent years, by commercial and tourist structures, and by an expansive network of single-family homes. The reconstruction of cities damaged by the Russian invasion of Ukraine is an opportunity to completely rethink and redesign urban settlements. Reconstruction can be managed by the presence of architectural devices capable of organizing urban development in space and time, in the case of Irpin a system of porticoes, artifacts that act as a new urban skeleton, a pivotal element for urban development.

The project involves the reconstruction of the city starting from the reshaping of the existing public space—streets, squares—and not from the reconstruction of individual buildings. The porticoes will be arranged in modules on the existing roads, invading the carriageway and significantly modifying its section. Initially the porticoes, arranged on public land, will serve as a roofing system for small temporary volumes intended for emergency

housing, and over time they will become a hooking system for new constructions. The porticoes of Irpin will function as a regulator for urban development: each architectural structure, from homes to large public buildings, will be attached to them and, once the reconstruction is complete, will remain as a structuring part of the urban fabric, thus significantly increasing urban quality.

The new urban structure organized by the porticoes will enable the road section to be reduced from 20 meters to 8 meters, providing for a new road system. The porticoes will also enable the efficient distribution of services such as water and electricity, making the reconstruction process more efficient. The use of light and easily assembled construction elements will be decisive in the entire reconstruction project: beams and pillars can be produced with fiberglass, while infill walls can be made of high-performance insulating blocks, all dry-mounted without the use of cranes.

The general strategy with which the reconstruction of Irpin can be carried out is that of piecemeal planning, expressed by Ernst Gombrich in 1965, borrowed from the principles of “piecemeal engineering” postulated by Karl Popper. This type of intervention is based on the principles with which the preindustrial city was built. The urban quality resulting from the ancient city can only be obtained by approaching urban design as the result of continuous interventions that accumulate over time. The growth of a city can take place in small steps, which Gombrich defines as the “innumerable small and manageable ones,” the articulation of which in time produces “the variety of visual variations” (GOMBRICH 1965) and therefore beauty. Piecemeal planning in Irpin leads to a reconstruction strategy of architectural microinterventions which together and in the short term will trigger urban macrotransformations. Piecemeal planning is a process, not a project, of controlled growth continuously sized to the needs of the community and its urban environment.







