DEFYING THE AVANT-GARDE LOGIC: ARCHITECTURE, POPULISM, AND MASS CULTURE

SPRING 2011

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'One stout fellow - practical and politically long-committed - became frustrated (after a two-hour slide show on American consumerism) by the Venturis' politically uncommitted position,' wrote Haig Beck in 1976 of a presentation at Peter Cook's ArtNet Rally held in London the previous summer, '[h]e grew so dismayed by their preoccupation with rich men's houses that when question time came round he finally gave vent to his exasperation: "You are," he angrily challenged Denis Scott Brown, "elitist!".'[1]

The accusation of 'elitism' is a typical populist diatribe. Populism posits an elite as its adversary, whether a moneyed elite, an academic elite, or a power elite, and questions its legitimacy, arguing in favour of the elite's antagonist, 'the people', either in the form of 'the low', 'the everyday', 'the ordinary' or other. It reflects the constant deployment of the egalitarian ideal - the very ideal the bourgeoisie originally used to undermine the legitimacy of the elite of feudal society, aristocracy, and to legitimize its own status and position. The fluidity of the populist argument is expressed in the re-alignments and re-identification of different elites as the adversary, and consequently in the creation of very different, even contradictory, adversarial relationships. As Ernesto Laclau recently explained, populism concerns not so much an ideological programme, but, rather, a discursive dynamic consistently upsetting any established hierarchy of cultural values or political priorities.[2]

Within architecture, the institutions of the discipline are among the targets of such arguments, and their antagonists are the forms and types of architecture excluded at a certain moment from these institutions, whether the so-called folkloric, vernacular, or popular architecture, the products of industrialization and commercial building, or other products of consumerism and mass culture. Whereas the attacks against 'high' architecture are often instigated by subjects or groups located outside the discipline in the name of 'the people', vanguard groups within disciplinary boundaries have adopted similar arguments as a means of buttressing their challenge to the dominant architecture of their period.

Applying knowledge from outside the discipline is certainly not a recent phenomenon in architecture, as exemplified by the incorporation of rustic, vernacular elements in the neoclassical architecture of Ledoux, or by the influence of Greek villages and North African casbahs on the twentieth-century modernists. Such borrowings and expansions always include the creation of new hierarchies and interrelations between what was considered as belonging to the architecture discipline itself and its institutions, and what was considered extraneous. Whilst the borrowed elements, such as the vernacular, did modify the discipline and were incorporated into the practitioners' tool kits, disciplinary boundaries and boundaries between 'high' and 'low' architecture were both dislocated and firmly re-established.

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Among the diverse influences from outside the discipline are the 'vernacular', 'popular', 'regional', 'commercial', 'everyday', and 'banal'. This issue of *Footprint*, however, is particularly interested in the specific borrowings from mass culture and consumer society, whether from commercial vernacular architecture, advertisements, or commodities - a focus of interest of many of the 1960s neo-avant-gardes. In order to understand the specificities of architecture's borrowings from mass culture and consumer society, it is useful to contrast them to two major categories of borrowings that preceded these interests, namely traditional architecture and mass production.

Traditional architecture, the product of pre-modern, pre-industrial societies, has been a source of ongoing inspiration to architects practising in a modern, industrial (or post-industrial) society, providing what seems to be a form of stability or grounding in an environment of progressive, linear time and constant change, by turning to the transcendental, cyclical, or stable time of the traditional. Nineteenth-century romantic architecture could turn to the architecture of feudal society as a means of confronting the universality of neoclassicism, in order to devise an alternative to 'compromised' industrial society and its woes, or in order to establish a national identity. Twentieth-century modernists turned to traditional architecture at the peripheries of Europe or beyond - a traditional architecture positioned at a geographical rather than temporal distance.

The fascination of Gropius and Le Corbusier with the American grain silos signalled a disparate form of borrowing: learning from the utilitarian products of industrial society - a very different source of inspiration. The reference served a purpose: strengthening the argument in favour of a functionalist architecture, which is primarily assessed not by its artistic qualities, but by its utilitarian, rationalist value, and consequently de-legitimizing the academic tradition of the Beaux-Arts. It brought about a split between architects who continued to treat architecture as a fine art or craft - Scharoun, Mendelsohn, Loos - and architects who were intent on placing the modern building side by side other utilitarian industrial products - Gropius, Meyer, Hilberseimer, or Stam. In effect, the work of the latter architects tended to completely erase the border between architecture and its outside, merging the building with the industrial mass product.

The demand to integrate architecture into mass production was primarily argued as a necessity to better the lives of many through the mass provision of improved housing, and to assimilate the period's most advanced means of production into architecture. It was developed as part of a tight, consistent, and coherent legitimation of industrial development and progress. The egalitarian argument is embedded in the prominence given to mass housing and inscribed into the theories and procedures developed at the Bauhaus regarding industrialized production.

A more ambiguous example in this context is Le Corbusier: while his admiration for the products of industrial society was expressed in his association of the house with the machine, a utilitarian argument par excellence, his deployment of the car betrays a fascination similar - though at the same time somewhat different in perspective and emphasis - to the post-war generation's idolization of the products of consumer society. The car, a mass product of desire, is present in the photographs he commissioned of the Villa Stein and the Weissenhof House, as well as in the 'Eyes Which Do Not See: Automobiles' chapter of *Vers une architecture*. As a result, the presence of these two differing fascinations - with mass production and consumer society - co-existed not only within the discipline, but also within the work of a single architect.

The antagonism towards high and low, expressed in terms similar to those of contemporary discourse, emerged in the post-war years, in, for example, the discussions of the Independent Group in London, in which Lawrence Alloway and others attempted to undermine the social hierarchy of taste by levelling the field, arguing that the pop culture of those years should be valued as being equal to other cultural products. This new field of fascination and investigation differed from traditional art and architecture or from industrial products. It seemed to hold the promise of social mobility and suggested bypassing the Marxist concept of base and superstructure, while embracing the technologies of freely accessible communication and education for all. Consumption and fashion were considered to be capable of re-defining cultural values as embodied, for instance, in advertising and car design. Following the early example of Le Corbusier, the Smithsons, Reyner Banham, and Richard Hamilton would uphold the Cadillac and the DS as icons of their time and societal aspiration.

The realization that mass culture did not require an aesthetic disposition, that it was immediate, and the fact that it succeeded in gaining a popular following helped to present it as egalitarian and democratic, even though it was a vehicle for commercial interests. Moreover, the emergent youth culture of the 1950s, which would produce British Teddy Boys, Dutch *nozems*, Rockers, Mods, and many more subcultural styles among working-class and lower-middle-class youth, cultivated a distaste for the didactic middlebrow culture, which the newly established welfare state institutions were propagating via their cultural policies and public media. Consequently, the mass culture of the youth appeared to be rebellious and free, a grass-roots phenomenon; its dependence on the market was mostly overlooked or de-emphasized. Mass culture seemed to present the possibility of a genuine and authentic expression, in contrast to the policies of good taste, good living, and good form.

The opposition to disciplinary high architecture on behalf of 'a people's architecture' is also present in the use of the term 'ordinary' in Britain, employed by Raymond Williams and the Smithsons, for instance. 'Ordinary', unlike the term 'everyday', used in France and Germany in relation to the emergence of a revolutionary praxis, has a clear class identity: the 'ordinary' belongs to the common people, in colloquial English, rather than to the posh. In this sense, it has been deployed against an 'elite', against a dominant class, as a means of legitimating the culture of the masses.

The transposition of egalitarianism to art and architecture has produced some contradictions that are specific to these disciplines. Arguably, the most glaring contradiction lies in the position of a professional elite, such as architects or artists, presenting an argument against the elite to which they belong - most visible in the anti-art advocated by the artistic avant-gardes, but also in the rhetoric of architects who wished not only to borrow from architecture's outside influences, but also to level architecture with its antagonist. A similar but less apparent contradiction is the manner in which the specific groups agitating against their disciplinary 'elites' functioned as avant-garde cells, while presenting arguments that de-legitimate such practices: the idea of a vanguard that agitates the masses to follow in rebellion, which claims a special position for the intellectual group that delineates for the masses the route to social betterment, namely, the idea from which the political and artistic avant-garde developed, is in itself an 'elitist' concept that bestows a special role on an enlightened few - and an idea that is anathema to a populism based on 'the people'. Such a situation is visible in the machinations of the Situationist International, with the control of ideological purity and group membership exercised by Guy Debord emulating that of André Breton's command over the Surrealists, despite Debord's agitation against high art and against the artistic avant-gardes.

Two vanguard movements, which exemplify the manner in which egalitarianism could be incorporated into their own structure, were the Amsterdam Provos and Fluxus. The Provos' political, theoretical, and cultural production was based on a cherished form of amateurism. Provoking the police by organizing 'happenings' in the streets of Amsterdam, they developed an inclusive strategy aimed at undermining the exclusivity of the political and cultural institutions in the Netherlands of the 1960s. Just a little earlier, in New York, George Maciunas, founder of Fluxus, railed against high art, and in order to counter the celebrity and star status of artists, suggested that anyone could practice art under the name 'Fluxus' - thus, not only eclipsing individualism, but breaking open the tightly knit vanguard group and allowing populism to affect the structure of the group, rather than only its rhetoric. One of the beneficiaries of the openness of Fluxus was Josef Beuys, who initially appropriated the name 'Fluxus' en route to becoming a star artist in his own right. Beuys, following the theories of Rudolf Steiner, took on the role of educator and preacher, and attempted to replace a 'distracted' participation in a daily life of tedious routines with a higher state of cognition of the richness of everyday life's miniscule actions and moments.

Complicating the contradictions at play is the absence of the represented figure, in whose name revolution was preached and change advocated: the anonymous user, the common man, the faceless crowd. Already in 1959, Aldo van Eyck stated that the new architecture was to be 'By Us' and 'For Us', but half a century later we can only observe how the production conditions of architecture have aggravated the situation, with architectural design being transformed into an endless production of simulacra, the junkspaces and icons of the worldwide matrix that accommodates the spaces of flows. It is perhaps only natural that artists and architects alike once again turn to anthropology and social survey in order to recalibrate their own practices,

to be able to re-engage, if only by starting to understand the new contexts in which one operates.

The cultural critique studied and represented here is part of what has become a substantial tradition. Its weakness is, arguably, that it is not satisfied with the alienation it registers, but that it also persists in looking for new strategies; not so much to aim for unification of what cannot be unified, but rather to re-appropriate what has been taken away. Looking at the current debates in architecture theory circles, ranging from the projective and performative to the new critical and pragmatist, Adorno's coupling of autonomy and engagement, namely the double character of art, remains firmly at the centre of the discourse; it rightfully deserves our constant re-examination. De Certeau's idea of *perruque*, the improper bending of the system to re-appropriate its technologies, never seemed more popular and relevant as these days, as demonstrated by guerrilla gardening or favela 'planning'. And even though the outcome of the street revolutions in North Africa and the Middle East is far from lucid, the Arab spring and the occupation of the Cairo Tahrir Square suggest that the Lefebvrian moment of the festival, rather than merely a utopian idea, is still a real possibility.

This issue of *Footprint* addresses some of these concerns, both directly and indirectly. Whereas the engagement with mass culture can, of course, be backdated to the historic avant-gardes in architecture and their re-conceptualizations of the house and city, from the Futurist manifesto, Constructivists' Agit-prop, and Bauhaus objects, to De Stijl space and Le Corbusier's purism, the focus here is on the post-war years and the negotiation of architecture with an ever more advanced consumer society within the context of welfare state redistributive policies. Industrial, productivist logic is mixed here with the biopolitics of the emerging late-capitalist spectacle, and with the shock and awe brought to us by the expanding mass-media networks.

Two of the articles included in this issue of *Footprint* study Superstudio, the Italian Radical Architecture group. Ross K. Elfline traces in the group's work the contours of the new post-industrial, information-based society that asserted itself in the subsequent decades; Fernando Quesada follows the status of the object in Superstudio's work, suggesting that the Italians offered an alternative to the two prevailing relations of objects to the environment, as outlined by Argan at the time. Nelson Mota studies a very different type of 'third way' architecture in the early work of Álvaro Siza in Malagueira, which was a participatory project with a unique design process and original response to its context. Michael Müller's contribution to this issue, in turn, studies the contradictions in the work of the artistic avant-garde, namely, its own position within its contemporary mode of production and its relation to economy, as the spheres of culture and economy become evermore interrelated and the individual subject transforms into a hybrid entity whose desire for a unified experience can no longer be resolved.

In the review article 'She Said, He Said', Deborah Fausch returns to the debate between Denise Scott Brown and Kenneth Frampton in the pages of *Casabella* in 1971, a debate that raises questions regarding some of the assumptions of the protagonists concerning 'elitism', 'the people', or the role of architecture and culture in society. Isabelle Doucet reviews a book by architecture-activists BAVO, calling for a form of radical pragmatism instead of the polarity of 'opposition' and 'appeasement'; and Maroš Krivý contributes a review of the exhibition Dreamlands at the Centre Pompidou, suggesting that the exhibition's idolization of a utopia of fun was a missed opportunity to discuss more pressing issues.

Many of these contributions highlight the need for an alternative to the options spelled out in the last decades in architecture - not a 'third way' as coined by Giddens and used and abused by Tony Blair, but a 'radical pragmaticism', as Doucet names it. While Müller, in his diagnosis, outlines the aporia of the current condition of artistic and architectural production, and Doucet searches for a theory, others contribute specific precedents of architectural trajectories that were never followed, ranging from Superstudio's work to Siza's Malagueira. Consequently, the discussion of the 1960s avant-garde and mass culture leads to an understanding of the challenges contemporary architecture faces and to an outlining of concrete alternatives from the recent past.

Notes

1. Haig Beck, '"Elitist!"', *Architectural Design*, vol. XLVI 11/1976, p. 662.

2. For more about populism, see Ernesto Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso: 2005).

Avant-Garde, Aestheticization and the Economy

Michael Müller

I.

Culture, as the predominant form of symbolic production in Europe, entered the final stage of mass cultural production in the 1950s. Unlike traditional, bourgeois-affirmative culture produced by a socio-structurally defined elite for precisely the same elite, mass-consumer culture is a form of culture geared to a country's entire population, regardless of class. Today, in an era of globalized media and markets, mass-consumer culture is reaching out to all people in capitalist industrialized nations. This culture is no longer driven by class, as it was in the past. Rather, it is driven by the overall system of capitalist commodity production, something the protagonists of the historical avant-gardes could not have objectively realized.

Moreover, mass culture is not only a media phenomenon, but is created by the overall production and market system of capitalist societies. That said, mass consumption is also imbued with a truly radical egalitarianism that the post-bourgeois societies of the West have taken on from preceding bourgeois societies as a form of political, social, and cultural self-interpretation and self-legitimacy. Mass culture is thus industrially produced, commercially disseminated, and consumptively appropriated as a differentiated and yet homogeneous universe of commodities that is egalitarian precisely in its consumption. It would very much seem that the contradiction accompanying modernity since its inception - namely, the antagonism of culture and modernization that possibly provided the most

important prompt for the avant-gardes, persuading them to generate an urban mass culture as a culture of synchronicity - has finally been resolved in today's mass culture.

Culture and Modernization

Compared with earlier reforms *intrinsic* to the system, carried out in the second half of the nineteenth century in an effort to blunt the ever-sharper contradiction between culture and modernization, we can consider the programmatic demands by groups of artists made during and after the war, whose cultural thrust was in part revolutionary (and whom we shall treat collectively as the 'avant-garde'), to have been an opposition that *exploded* the system.

It is well known that the avant-gardes initially described the contradictions as a chasm between art and life, which they sought to bridge. This diagnosis refers both to the fact that artistic production was distant from life and to the circular-ownership elitism of cultural life itself. The latter excluded the larger public owing to its lack of special aesthetic qualifications, and this exclusion in turn strengthened elitism as a social form and reinforced it, above all, as an aesthetic self-awareness and a special way of life.

Members of the early modernist avant-garde movements were cultural revolutionaries, not only because this was their thrust, but, above all, because they came up against the firm propo-

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FOOTPRINT Defying the Avant-Garde Logic: Architecture, Populism, and Mass Culture, Spring 2011, pp. 7-22.

nents of a traditional understanding of art and culture, an understanding that in Germany was also strongly tainted by nationalism, namely the so-called educated middle class, a stratum that with its ostentatious cultural flair enjoyed strong support in practically all developed European countries. Each and every cultural innovation that sought to promulgate disenchantment and cultural sobriety, to align culture with the living conditions of industrial modernity, had to be pushed through in the face of opposition from these advocates of a traditional culture. Obviously, these attempts always constituted a shock to society as a whole. And the strongest shock was doubtlessly experienced by the social stratum whose status and position in society were defined by the fact that it controlled society's most important cultural resources, which is why Bourdieu speaks of cultural capital. In case of doubt, they were the ones who stood to lose most.

Cultural change does not simply spell the introduction of new forms, e.g. in the case of the avant-gardes it involved abstract painting, collage as a technique, new literary methods, Dada happenings, or the use of glass, steel, and innovations in apartment construction and apartment typologies, but even change in the sense of replacing the dominant proponents of culture. Precisely during its late phase in Europe (when its social base had noticeably eroded), the classically educated middle class continued to lay claim counterfactually not only to its humanist educational thrust but also to the status of a self-transparent subject - as if the critique of a philosophy of the individual, as formulated by Kierkegaard and Nietzsche, had simply not occurred.

Art and Life

Overcoming the divide between art and life beyond the diagnostics aspect of art production always has a programmatic significance, namely to expand the audience and gain, through the artistic material, the aesthetic standards used in people's everyday lives.

Undoubtedly, none of the avant-garde movements could have seriously sought to bring about the oft-cited 'transfer' of art into traditional bourgeois life. There were, after all, reasons for the evolving contradictions between art and life; reasons to be found in the structure of bourgeois society in the first epoch of industrialization. The programme of linking the two spheres assumes not only a change in culture but also a change in society. Several paths could lead to it and I shall examine the three I believe are most important.

The *first* path is the inclusion of everyday life in art. This angle, in particular, led to the destruction of the concept of the artwork and made it reasonable to expect social change in the sense of aestheticization. This is a programmatic approach and, at least in terms of the destructive components, the path taken by Dada, Futurism and The New Objectivity.

The *second* path entails addressing artistic output and its links to a subject capable of change in a political way. This subject can be a social class, ideally thought capable of action (i.e. the proletariat), for which the left wing of Dada, for example, had opted. Or a socially revolutionary party, such as the one the Futurists and also prominent Rationalist architects in Italy were affiliated with. Or it could be the type of political/administrative figures with whom, for example, the Bauhaus around Walter Gropius or 'Das Neue Frankfurt' around Ernst May had cooperated.

The *third* path involves integrating the arts into the social process of reproduction. It is the route taken by architects, designers, graphic designers, and photographers in particular, although here, too, different options are available.

II.

From the viewpoint of design, we can generalize the position of the politically focused avant-garde

of the Weimar Republic and say that it increasingly saw its artistic work as labour aimed at changing social conditions. Thus, the virulent culture at the Bauhaus, given its internationalism, also bore clear traits of a trans-class and essentially market-compliant culture. The roots of the aesthetic of the particular were severed in favour of transforming it into a medium for generalizing standards of living, utility, and residential life. Which is why the products of the Bauhaus, even in their most exclusive guise, still use the language of an industrially manufactured, typified, and standardized culture as *mass culture*.

In the period after World War I, there were two dominant approaches to the transformation of the aesthetic core of bourgeois high culture (i.e. the improvement and also the beautification of life),[1] with the Bauhaus standing for the former. It was the *avant-garde project*: programmatically envisaging the politicization of art, and, vice-versa, imbuing everyday life with culture. The slogan that art and life be united, which stood for this mutual interaction, thus pointed, on the one hand, to a concept of the aesthetic that instilled the project with a strong epistemological, and, in the case of some avant-gardes, an explicitly rationalist thrust. On the other hand, culture was no longer construed as a generative process for trammelling the developed individual, and therefore as something special, but rather as something that was aesthetically mediated and in a non-institutional sense a political level of reflection on life. This was, as it were, a trans-bourgeois attempt to realize the bourgeois promise of cultural equality, one that bourgeois society could never redeem for structural reasons. On the one hand, this project spawned an immense volume of art, which we now paradoxically call classical modernism. On the other hand, its programmatic agenda essentially had no impact. It was conceptually (not yet) possible to the extent that it sought to de-differentiate spheres of society - challenging the key achievement of modernity: the differentia-

tion of spheres of society as autonomous function systems.

The *Fascist culture project*, which shared the critique of the bourgeois culture's elitism and solipsism with the avant-garde, substituted the idea of politicization with the real primacy of politics or, once power had been assumed, with the bureaucratic primacy of politics. Culture became fully integrated into state directives and was produced, distributed, and administered by state licence holders - which were part of the member lists of the *Einzelkammer*, which in turn was part of the *Reichskulturkammer*. It is well known that such a *political culture model* had a strong following in numerous European countries, but it was only fully put into practice in Italy and Germany, albeit in different ways. It was primarily in Germany where the mass-cultural transformations of bourgeois high culture took place. The Nazis, in particular, used the aesthetic centre of high-brow art in order to popularize it. Thereby, the aesthetic lost its critical function and its ability to bestow a certain particularity upon form. It becomes beautification. One can also say: mimesis becomes mimicry. The popularization of aesthetics is above all sustained through specially produced, immediate forms of technical mediatization. With this redefinition of what is aesthetic and its mediatization, the Nazis 'achieved' a mass-cultural modernization that was adapted in the post-Fascist era and, under the new conditions, could undergo further seamless development.

With the fall of its sovereigns, this power-dependent, political model of culture was completely compromised. A political model of culture, i.e. the governance of the social process of culture under the auspices of the state had become unthinkable, at least in Europe. The model did not fail because of the contradictions that de-differentiations supposedly represent in functionally differentiated societies. Rather, it failed like the totalitarian system, which due to the political primacy had bestowed legiti-

macy upon the cultural model; in return, the cultural model gained its legitimacy through the effectiveness of mass-cultural transformation.

Constraints

If I referred above to sociality and non-determination, then I meant the avant-gardes' perspective with its fixation on technology, precisely defining the upheaval in the lifeworld of its day. Only if we construe it as a social process can the development of modernism be perceived as an open and flexible environment that affords artists the opportunity to relate their activity to this development. Only an open process can be nurtured by human action and can consequently also be given a human measure and be brought down to a human level.

From the viewpoint of today's observer, the conditions would, of course, appear to have been quite different. Let us not forget that the social process unfolding in the 1920s was that of a capitalist, industrialized society, essentially Fordist in structure. As such, it was not fully determined, but definitely not open. It bridged two currents: one characterized by the oft-cited rationalism of capitalist modernization, and the other by its counterpart, irrationalism. And, contrary to what the avant-gardes' euphoria over technology would have us believe, the market must have played a not insignificant role in terms of how it was perceived in the lifeworld.

Put differently, the openness of the social process and the related ostensible non-determination of modernization were economically constrained in two ways, firstly by the investment decisions for capital goods, and, secondly, by the rules of market movements.

For the avant-gardes, things appeared open and flexible by virtue of the fact that in the second half of the nineteenth century the consequences of a defined capitalist development, centred in conurbations, coincided with the partial destruction of these two economic currents during and after World War I.

On the part of the artistic avant-gardes, the attendant experience of barbarism linked to modernity decisively reinforced the radical awareness of a modernity that shed all historical references. It was an awareness that once again considered itself to be in the right. Openness became the paradigm for change and experiment, and the will to a permanent intensification in the aesthetic processing of the cultural side of life anticipated a form of modernity that did not factually exist yet in the 1920s.

It would very much seem as if the avant-garde in post-war Germany had initially lost sight of the previously politically grounded programmatic narratives. Moreover, it seemed quite obsolete to insist on the destruction of the affirmative. After all, had it not been the Nazis who had pursued such destruction far more successfully than the avant-gardes before them, albeit with completely opposite goals in mind? For this reason, it seemed so compelling to regard the restoration of the avant-garde via the renewed recourse to the autonomy of art as an expression of an anti-fascist stance. The linkage of emancipation of individual subjectivity and radical social change called for by the avant-gardes now collapses once again. In the years that followed, the conservative cultural position repeatedly turned on attempts to closely link aesthetic innovation with social change. This taming of a recalcitrant art was followed in the early 1970s, after a brief intermezzo at the end of the 1960s, by talk of the failure of the avant-garde, before being subjected to outrageous defamation ten years later (particularly in architecture).

The question of whether today the universalization of the aesthetic has indirectly realized the hopes of the avant-gardes of an aesthetics of and in lived practice, will be the subject of my remarks below.

III.

Aestheticizations - as they have become manifest in medial transformations of architecture and city space - are, in their universal expressions, the dominant tendency of contemporary cultural developments. And it should be pointed out that since the 1970s, the interplay of economy, culture, and aesthetics has not only greatly accelerated, but has also changed considerably in a qualitative sense. Previous delimitations were abandoned, resulting in a delirious extension of the aesthetic in almost all areas of everyday life. It is this obviously *visible*, aesthetically rather incomplete, discursively communicable fact that significantly sustains our impression that the city has changed vis-à-vis previous forms of urban life. And it did so in one decisive aspect: unlike the Fordist city, it is no longer merely an object which we animate with our subjectivities - albeit often against the city's resistance. Instead, nowadays the urban embodies such a degree of substance that it appears to us as being the result of its own creation. Hence, we no longer experience the city as a human product, but as creation and creator in one. Compared to previous states of modernity, the urban is the medium of aestheticization, in which today's city fully represents the visibility of modernity. At the same time, in what is veiled, the city reserves infinite possibilities for the emergence of something that has been hitherto completely unknown - an aspect that we associate with hope, illusions, and a considerable measure of anxiety.[2]

The Economic Model of Culture

Ever since the reconstruction phase of capitalist industrial societies during the post-war era, we have experienced a third cultural model creation process, a process that is becoming increasingly visible. I have coined this 'the economic model of culture'. This process began much earlier in the United States, where the quarrels about definitions have never or hardly ever taken place. While these conditions were only established in Germany after the war, they had already been in place in the USA a long time ago. At first glance, this approach roughly refers to a cultural system that is differentiated by sector. The historical agents of this differentiation were often - yet not exclusively - avant-gardist and rebellious groups, which today are marketed as subcultures. And these sectors are commercialized step by step from the outside to the inside, i.e. from the subcultural fringes to the centre of traditional high culture. I define commercialization here as a supply side of cultural commodities for a diversified, yet potentially unlimited, market of solvent consumers. The economic system and the cultural system, reciprocally interpenetrated. In that sense, this process was more or less congruent with what today is called globalization.

Just like the social model of culture, this model of culture was again an autonomous and self-steering model. However, here, self-control was not the consequence of an autonomous cultural socialization and of an aesthetic education, both of which would eventually culminate in the increasing perfection of a cultural type of habitus. It is the economic model of culture that exerts power over reality via the market. In this way, the cultural process loses its imperative vis-à-vis the political model as well as the forcibly asserted aestheticization of the force itself. But the process does not gain autonomy, or at any rate, only a limited autonomy, which nonetheless permits the subject to comfortably adapt. Because only in liberal theory, markets are autonomous negotiating entities. In practice, these markets increasingly oligopolize through a supply-oriented policy, not least because of the strategic influence that conservative-liberal governments exerted in almost all Western countries during the last decades. And almost nowhere else do markets have a stronger supply side-oriented power position than in the important sectors of the culture economy, where the dynamics of concentration of the large, globally active media and telecommunication groups have taken control of all branches of

material culture-production.

Let's recall Frederic Jameson's hypothesis about postmodernism being the cultural logic of late capitalism.[3] It is not only in conceptual terms that he refers to Ernest Mandel's theory of late capitalism.[4] Like Mandel, he argues that since the early 1960s, i.e. since the heyday of the Fordist-Keynesian regimes of accumulation, cultural production has penetrated the general production of goods. The constraint to differentiate the outer appearance of mass-produced products - Jameson speaks of 'fresh waves of ever more novel-seeming goods'[5] - which in principle are standardized, has led to aesthetic experiments and innovations. In those years, Fritz Haug coined the term 'commodity aesthetics' in describing the same process.[6]

This tendency became more radicalized during the 1970s. It occurred through the emergence of new, flexible methods of production, especially based on newly developed computer-based process control technologies, which permitted limited-lot production, and even the production of prototypes in a mass-scale industrial manner. This is an essential component of what we consider the aestheticization of the everyday. But, of course, this is not all. If aestheticization would be limited to the surfaces of industrially produced commodities, it would stop half-way before reaching our everyday lives. It also has to affect the individual, his or her exterior and interior self, by way of the flexible generation of an image and through a continuous physiognomic and psychic refreshment. But there is more to it. Wolfgang Welsch pointed out that today's processes of aestheticization are not merely surface phenomena of the world of commodities or of human-body design, but that they penetrate into the deep structures of both matter and objects.[7]

Aestheticization is hence a universal and holistic phenomenon that has both a surface dimension *and* a deeper dimension. In this case, aestheticization cannot only refer to the distribution of goods and their consumption, even though these areas lead to comprehensive cultural transformations. Inside an increasingly artificial world, i.e. inside a fabricated and produced world, culture can no longer claim to remain in an autonomous zone for the production, transmission, and acquisition of aesthetic objects. Culture is integrated into the entire world system of production. Culture participates in the production of the world. This must mean, however, that the concept of production exceeds the conventional, purely economic sense of producing. This *can* mean that the limits of the economy in today's society are no longer definable. In any case, one may conclude that production today entails more than fabrication according to purely economic imperatives.

In the economic model of culture - which during the 1960s began to replace older models of culture dating back to the Renaissance, without causing them to disappear entirely - the economy becomes a vehicle, and even an innovator and a producer of cultural developments. What I mean to imply here is that it does not only embrace the often-cited culture industry, but also the entire economy ranging from today's dominant finance industry and the differentiated sectors of the service industry to the extremely heterogeneous segments of commodity production. One can even say that, due to these developments and the cultural shifts, the culture industry loses or, at least, diminishes its formerly autonomous status as a discrete cultural and culture-economic segment. Instead, it penetrates at different points into zones of the general economy. This does not necessarily entail an increasing economic functionalization, although it is a non-negligible factor. The overall production becomes more complex. Because of the ensuing institutionalized obligation to experiment, one can expect growing ambivalences, which continue to characterize the economic production under the imperative to actualize, and which also, at the same time, exceed the conception of production as I explained above.

To begin with, there are two considerations that immediately become apparent. On the one hand, there are the mergers of companies from the fields of media, information technology and telecommunications industries that took place during the first half of the 1990s. These mergers were politically supported and made possible through industrialized countries' politics of deregulation, especially in the last-mentioned sector. As is commonly known, this results in an enormous concentration of cultural distribution industries, which at the same time operate in entirely different sectors of the economy, especially in the infrastructural expansion of communication technology and its commercial utilization. On the other hand, we can discern a decreasing vertical range of manufacturing for the production of cultural commodities among these distribution industries. For the most part, this happens in their different branches: publication industry, film and television industry, as well as the music industry. Increasingly, these industries outsource to independent, predominantly small and mid-size production and service companies.[8] The result is that the large companies' real net gain is often limited to the product's final assembly or its mediatized distribution.

To summarize: through its process of concentration, the culture industry repeats the pattern of vertical disintegration of its productive structures that are typical of the entire economy. Even though the culture industry is increasingly integrating into other economic sectors and expanding into different areas of the general economy, that does not mean that its significance decreases. On the contrary, the enormously increased economic potential of this fully globalized industry shows its increased significance. It only goes through a process of transformation. By penetrating into the pores of the economic body, the culture industry's importance is no longer restricted to a single (economic or cultural) sector, but becomes increasingly universalized.

De-Differentiation

Yet this development of the culture industry is only *one* aspect of the economic model of culture. Inside this model, the economy functions simultaneously as a creator of meaning, a material-objective point of reference, and as vehicle and agent of cultural development. This results in the reciprocal, exclusively internal programming of the intertwined elements of economy and culture, as well as the dynamization of its processes. In addition, the recursive design of programming and processes secures a high degree of adaptability to exterior conditions, e.g. to changes in social structure, fashion, and technologies to transformations of spaces and cities. Yet, even these 'external' conditions are increasingly produced or co-produced by the economy/culture combination. Through the process of interactive learning, both perception and circumvention or assimilation lead to a reprogramming of the relation of interdependence between economy and culture, whose active agents, in the broadest sense, are companies.[9]

Moreover, this means that the two core systems of modern societies are once again in the process of *de*-differentiation. They are no longer separate environments but they grow into 'one single world'. Consequently, the century-old tendency towards an increased autonomization of these (and certainly also other) partial systems of society has been turned into its opposite in a short time-span of twenty to thirty years: instead of differentiation and autonomization we now see de-differentiation and interpenetration.

Somehow, one is able to sense the issue at stake. In one way or another, everybody is conscious of it. This issue is labelled as the commercialization of culture, and is often rejected by cultural critique - whether 'progressive' or conservative - as being detached from culture. Such a reaction, however, misjudges the direction in which the development is leading: it is not the economy that penetrates

into the realm of culture. On the contrary: it is the economy that is charged with culture.

Through the introduction of aesthetics into society's economic system of distribution, the society itself gains an air of luxurious opulence. Society itself is affected by the aesthetic surplus of its circulating commodities. Aesthetics, as a part of the circulating capital, has hence become an entity whose interaction with the world is entirely incorporated by means of the appropriation of this world through acts of gratifying consumption. That way, interaction congeals into a non-cumulative experience. The need to interpret the cultural sphere, which has historically become autonomous, amalgamates with a brimming economy deficient in meaning into a state of reciprocal legitimation. This is achieved through the increasingly rapid incorporation of the cultural sphere into this very economy.

Commercialization

It is true that in the past, commercialization has been a mechanism of transformation for affirmative culture. The same occurs on a mass scale in popular culture. The apparatuses of production want to be fed; the turnover has to meet expectations. There is no doubt that today, culture is subject to the same profit constraints as strawberry yoghurt. Yet, to define culture solely along those lines would only be half the truth. However, one can be clearer: after all, Fordist, standardized mass culture with its huge apparatuses does not simply disappear. Today and in the foreseeable future, it continues to satisfy too many desires; just like the transformation of the culture industry, despite its speed, could not be completed in one go. And possibly this process will never reach a state of completion. Even if this should happen, the capacities of production and distribution have not diminished, but, following capital's principle of accumulation, have multiplied. What is clear is that the development of creative human potential for feeding the capacities has been lagging behind the expansion of these capacities.

As a consequence, the exploitation of what exists for the cultural markets will not decrease but increase. This is because the cultivation of such potential with respect to market considerations is, first of all, too cost-intensive and, secondly, too long term, given the conditions of today's dominant time-preference economy.

Let us state the following: the post-Fordist economy produces its own culture. As a whole, it becomes a cultural economy. At least four interwoven and culminating processes can be distinguished: first, the aforementioned integration of the traditional culture industry's different sectors and their integration into overarching correlations; secondly, the economy's structural mediatization has to be mentioned; the third process is that of the already referred to general aestheticization; and fourthly, social structural changes can be observed that lead back to economic restructuring processes. It is mostly in the high-income segment of the new service elite that the demand for culturally charged commodities and services is co-produced for its own supply. These demands for cultural consumption are highly differentiated, just as this professional category exhibits a high degree of differentiation with respect to their qualifications: among members of the middle classes, this phenomenon continues in the form of a differentiation of expectations.

But what are we dealing with, if not the synchronization of these expectations with supplies? Bourgeois culture was concerned with other things, and we know how limited the success was. This means that the purely economic functionalization of culture might be destined for a post-Fordist economy; but, by no means, does this economy signal the end of its empirical functioning. To return to Jameson's initial statement, it may be well formulated, but the cultural logic of late capitalism has quite a few cracks in its façade.

The fact that standardized culture production, especially its mechanisms of distribution, still projects like a massive block into what is new, only shows that, even in a differentiated demand structure, the homogeneous large-scale aggregates persist. It is also evident that the post-Fordist transformation of the economy (and of the culture industry) itself is neither a condition nor an economic or cultural era but an open process, which also implies a very concrete likelihood of collapse.

It is this fact that simultaneously opens up two empirical windows. On the one hand, the eminent block will still remain with us for a very long time. Even architecturally, it will continue to solidify and to decline qualitatively. The growing impoverishment *inside* society (rather than *of* society) inevitably entails a standardization of consumption and leisure habits at an ever-lower level, which is dependent on the re-financeability of individuals' and families' means of reproduction. On the other hand, one can conclude that culture today is produced in different temporal layers. Hence it exists as a non-contemporaneous functional complex. I am not referring here to historical sedimentations that we find in images of the city and museums but to present realizations. I am not directly thinking of differences in style, i.e. what postmodern historicism is directly concerned with. Neither am I referring to the endless wave of nostalgia, which is produced on very different technical levels and in almost all industries.

When we speak of historical striation in today's culture, we mean something quite similar: the simultaneity - and in this simultaneity, the reciprocal relativization - of cultural products made by industries that are historically constituted in different ways: hence, the simultaneity of a mass cultural block and post-Fordist segmentation. Moreover, we still have to add the handcrafted and manufactured production of the traditional arts.[10] This means that post-Fordist culture, which is primarily differentiated through fashion, embodies a widely appreciated

phenomenon of difference. The culture of the block also holds a position of difference, which is further reinforced through the fact that it acquires an increasingly heterogeneous constitution through the processes prompted by its own economic foundations and structures.

So much for the first aspect of the commercialization of culture, which is the often criticized de-differentiation of the economic and cultural system. It becomes obvious that we are dealing with a terminology that, in view of the conditions of the contemporaneous cultural transformations and its much broader correlations, requires a much more differentiated consideration. This impression is reinforced once one begins to discuss the qualities of the transformed products.

Time-Space Compression

Let us discuss another aspect that advances the process of aestheticization, 'time-space compression', which David Harvey places at the centre of his analysis of present-day society and its culture.[11] This aspect functions as a fundamental transformative mechanism of modern societies, often presented in the form of tables and charts. These space-time relations are symbolized through the inventions of new technologies of transportation and communication: ranging from sailboats, trains and aeroplanes to contemporary digital technologies with their real-time transfers of information and data.[12]

The reasons for a qualitative acceleration, which began in the 1970s, can be found in the collapse of the Fordist model of mass production during a crisis of accumulation that was coupled with symptoms of persistent stagflation. The consequence of such a crisis inevitably resulted in a massive annihilation of capital, visible in the worldwide de-industrialization of formerly flourishing industrial regions and the desertification and impoverishment of cities.

Space-time compression is an increasing acceleration of capital turnover. As we were already able to discern in the 'block' of industrial mass culture, some Fordist industries remain, for example its prototypes, the chemical and automobile industries. However, these have become restructured and adopted many of the instruments of flexibilization.

Considered from at least three points of view, these shifts and changes, illustrating the restructuring of the economy on the basis of flexibilization, have a decisive cultural efficacy. First, the principal motivation for change actually shows its result: the densification of space-time. Its most colourful effects are achieved through the distribution and consumption of commodities and services. This complex of effects is habitually labelled *aestheticization*. Secondly, aestheticization is incorporated into services and products, present in its use and its materiality and through an increasing symbolic grounding not only of its non-material but especially of its material goods. Lash and Urry point out that a paradigmatic shift has been taking place in the post-Fordist era, moving from a material foundation to a cultural foundation.[13] Thirdly, the flexibilization of the economy entails a rather fundamental revolution of the social structure. And this structure determines all cultural practices, differentiations, forms of learning and idiosyncrasies, styles of behaviour or ways of representation, forms of exchange, and distinctive symbolizations.

All these measures, intended to increase the mass production of commodities and services, rely on two basic mechanisms summarized in the idea of aestheticization. On the one hand, they receive an ever stronger symbolic charge. Its symbolic promise, which is integrated into value systems that need to be regenerated continuously, has to exceed the pure promise of a use-value. This is attributable to the fact that symbolic systems of signification can be altered faster through the concentrated deployment of modern media technologies than through the duration of an object's actual use-value - despite the programmed decay and with its ever-decreasing half-lives. What we discard in a 'throw-away society' is therefore not only the packaging turned utilitarian artwork, but also the still usable objects along with the symbolic systems, convictions, and lifestyles through which these objects were meaningful for a brief period of time. Baudrillard points in the right direction when he claims that the Marxist analysis of commodities is obsolete because of contemporary capitalism's primary occupation with the production of signs and sign systems and less with the production of commodity values.[14] In fact, aside from the use- and exchange-value, a growing part of the sign-value is commodified in all goods and services. The aesthetics of light becomes an almost exemplary symbolization of this very immaterial ephemerality with which we consume the incessantly changing symbolic systems.

The other principal mechanism is the differentiation of the product. Though, in order to be able to relate differentiated service identities and product identities to the pluralized or heterogeneous needs of consumer groups - which ensures differentiated consumption - it is necessary to also stabilize these differences symbolically. Product identities are often merely simulated in a symbolic way. Hence, this mechanism contributes to the symbolic change as overall evidence and, thereby, to the aestheticization of the produced and serviced world.

However, these symbols cannot be simply attached to the objects like labels. Even though it happens on a large scale, it does not stand the test of the market. Consequently, the objects, objective symbolism, and lifestyles - which are synchronized in an accelerated, downright fluid process of reproduction - possess such a stability and capacity of interpretation. In the past, one might have called this authenticity. For this reason, a short test can be applied for identification and expulsion purposes that differentiates between what is fake and what is

'true' symbolism, which is typical of such a voting process or socio-cultural space.

This cultural, reinterpreted 'authenticity' - which stands in the context of strongly heterogeneous, individual references, relatively rapidly changing self-constructions, and fluid identities - demonstrated that the symbolic charges apply at a deeper level. They seem to have penetrated into the objects' deep structures, into their matter. In fact, they are the true appearance of things, not merely its put-on appearance. This only works if they are produced with and 'inside' the objects, if they have a true and not only an ascribed value; in other words, if the semiotic process has become the basis not only of consumption but also of the production of consumer goods. And this is increasingly the case.

In summary, one can say that it is certainly a mistake to assume that the economic model of culture is a closed context of determination, exclusively defined in economic terms. This would have further perfected, possibly through differentiation, the ideological context of deception, presupposed by Horkheimer and Adorno,[15] resulting from a Fordist mass culture. Without a doubt, cultural production has increasingly become part of the economic process of reproduction ever since the Fordist phase. In addition, this development has accelerated during the past twenty years. The development can be attributed to the fact that the economy's flexibilization and globalization led to an improved capacity to adapt to market conditions. This has been accomplished through its ability to determine these conditions on a long-term basis by inducing an abrasion of the symbolic in practically all commodity groups. Hence, one can assume that the produced 'objective culture' has reached an extent that is probably larger and more overwhelming than Georg Simmel assumed at the beginning of the previous century.[16]

Indeed, we are dealing with a tendency that is becoming increasingly stronger. But by no means are we confronted with the final state imagined by the older proponents of critical theory. The economic model of culture is, like every past cultural model, a work in progress. The arts, i.e. the realm of traditional high culture, penetrate more and more into economic contexts of exploitation and merge with individual areas of mass culture. Its most advanced representatives, media and computer artists, become pioneers of industrial development, a fact that further underlines the significance of the process of symbolic construction. Nonetheless, it is the 'high cultural' field that time and again produces its own difference. While, overall, one might speak of a strong tendency towards a de-autonomization of art, it is also true that limits of this autonomy are constantly shifting, and not only backwards. In a field that is heterogeneous, complex, and contested by numerous interests, these limits are constructed, demolished, and reconstructed at different sites. The reason for this is that the conditions of autonomy, as well as its potential for posing a threat, have increased compared to the classical period of autonomous art. At the same time, the possibilities of causing an effect have become more ambiguous and more in need of interpretation.

Space-Images

Let us once again return to the question of the space-images and their corresponding models of culture. To begin with, there is the *historic space-image of the city* defined as a centred, social, and architectural *well-ordered entity* that strongly defines its boundary and secludes itself within.

The *classical industrial city*, described by Simmel for its specific, traffic-related culture, offers the impression of a nervous *agitation*, which oscillates spatially around its centre in a centrifugal and centripetal way. This fundamentally expansive movement incessantly shifts the boundaries towards the outside. Through its predominantly

centrifugal *mobility* the *Fordist city* is character-ized from the perspective of an increasingly blurred centre. Here, the boundaries do not simply shift but dissolve in the environs.

The mode of movement of the *post-Fordist* or *postmodern* city is *fluid* - the industrial city no longer knows a stable condition. The boundary is no longer a spatial element of the city because the centre and periphery of its territory form a flowing sequence, both temporally and spatially, a sequence that can change its position. The classical urbanistic and urban-sociological idea of continuity, still tied to the material character of the built environment, loses both evidence and plausibility.

The new mode of movement is re-examined through the fact that the traditional planning author-ity of the industrial city has been transformed by the processes discussed above into a contingency of decisions and events. Urban development becomes more and more dependent on discussions concern-ing the location of delocalized, supra-regional, and increasingly globalized businesses. Moreover, it depends on events that are produced through the fact that poverty and wealth are not only growing enormously inside the boundaries of cities, but also through the fact that they are no longer spatially segregated, in a traditional sense (West End/East End) and organized by specific cultures. Rather, these zones become entwined inside single inner-city areas and become ethnicized through the global migration of the poor - an indirect consequence of the internationalization of the circulation of capital. It is a phenomenon no longer limited to the United States, which will increasingly become a reality in Europe as well. We are dealing here with potential constellations of a conflict with different possibilities of realization, as experiences in the United States have demonstrated, which are subject to a constant imperative of restructuring - either in the form of a consequence (of the events caused by the conflicts) or as a prohibition (in order to prevent the realiza-

tion).[17]

Critical Production of Space and Subjectivity

What is important here is what Georg Simmel under-stands as the opposite of everything discussed above:[18] 'subjective culture' - the social form of many individual subjectivities.[19] It is certainly the case that the already mentioned supply parameters partake in forming individualities by structuring life-worlds through assigning meaning to objects. But neither the lifeworlds nor the individuals become absorbed in economic reproduction.

The opposite is the case. Through the macroeco-nomic lowering of the wage rate and, particularly, of the income of the masses, the practices of the new regime of accumulation lead to a strong polar-izing tendency of the social structures in all Western societies. This has abrogated the semblance of a middle-class levelling, which was a consequence of the Fordist mass culture of the 1960s. With its high-quality and luxury goods, the post-Fordist and increasingly differentiated mass culture targets first and foremost either the nouveau riche or those parts of the population still capable of maintaining a middle-class income. The growing remainder of the population is (still) supplied with low-quality and cheap goods of mass consumption. That way, through a highly scaled range of products and extremely diverse repertoires of symbolizations, an accumulation in different sectors of the economy is (still) possible - and this despite decreasing demand.

Concerning the consequences for the postmod-ern city, this post-Fordist scenario of determination ignores - besides the social form of subjectivities - issues that have to undergo a more detailed anal-ysis, namely: To what extent do local and regional cultures counteract, modify, or, in certain cases, accelerate this scenario? To what extent do such things influence the character of the discussed events? And to what extent do these events influ-ence those decisions, also discussed above, as

adaptive parameters?

In other words, one can assume that the decisive factors of urban developments remain operative, both politically and culturally - notwithstanding the seemingly inexorable growing social importance of the economy to which virtually everything, including the land of the cities, has to be subordinated. Yet, as always, this is also a question concerning the institutions capable of carrying out such an operation. If one excludes them from the analysis, one submits oneself to the idea of the naturalness and, hence, the inevitability of dominant processes. Consequently, one accepts the great narratives about the inherent necessity of economic survival, a narrative that supposedly has rendered obsolete and destroyed the functional potential of all great past narratives that spoke of human happiness and the progressive humanization of the world.

To this end, I will make a few remarks about the processes of the subjective production of space in the sense of a creation of place.

Creation of Place

From our inside perspective, the city generally appears as the utmost point of reference of all social relations. This applies to localized as well as inter- and supra-urban relations. The city becomes an abstract *space* of the concurrence of all events. It is therefore overly complex and, in spite of all the stereotypes about one's own city, it essentially remains unfathomable to most of its inhabitants. As a consequence, many time zones inside the city become emotionally connoted in different degrees, which can lead to an alleged un-inhabitability, an assertion fabricated to a large extent by the media. In a modern society, the media, through their reporting, determine the hierarchy of topics treated. This impacts the emotional classification of urban zones or entire cities.

The immanent places in this abstract space of simultaneous events are, however, non-contemporaneous. The non-contemporaneousness of points of view, from a particular place, subjectively reduces the complexity of urban space through the classification of urban space into a particular order of individual preferences. That way, places are secured for individual habits and integrated into a 'subcultural' system of experiential knowledge. Abstract space consequently has a double structure: both *through* different lifeworlds and for each individual *in* different lifeworlds, which rarely correspond to the entire city's point of reference. Hence, the city has different boundaries for its inhabitants. For them, space has different extensions depending on the spatial order and organization of the places of their everyday lives. And this causes the perception of the city to always contain a temporal structure consisting of the conquest of space and the realization of place.

The *creation of place* thus presumes the interactive relations of each individual. Moreover, it opens individual possibilities of distantiation from distantiations, as, for example, in a *flâneur*-like, urban 'universalism'.

In-Between and Over-and-Beyond

One can characterize space as abstract only in relation to the complexity of events within the urban point of reference. In fact, the biographically constituted interconnection of places defines at least two clearly distinguishable qualities of urban space: an *in-between* and an *over-and-beyond* extending towards the horizon.

The system of place is historically and fundamentally determined for every individual through the functional spatialization of the social division of labour. But, in a post-Fordist economy, more and more people are permanently excluded from this division of labour. They have to make a living despite diminishing transfer payments. In addition,

the spatial effects of a flexible division of labour are experienced by the majority of those who still have employment in the form of pulsating displacements. And finally, for the new middle classes of high-income producers of symbolic commodities, it becomes possible to freely choose places according to lifestyle and milieu considerations. In our cities, all this leads to the beginning of a disintegration of a system of places that was established and evolved during the period of industrialization. Even inside the city, and partly even between cities, this system becomes flexible. Accordingly, the social housing policy and state-side support - which, as important elements of a particular socio-economic regime of regulation, are always in sync with the dominant social imaginary - act almost inevitably as agents of a neoliberal dissolution of places for the working or unemployed underclasses (radical cutbacks for construction of social housing). This is also true for the partial re-localization of particular middle-class groups, especially those with a life orientation revolving around a family (support for private housing). Its effects are known: land-consuming suburbanization, negative energy balance and elevated, traffic-related emissions.

One of the most interesting zones is the *in-between*. Although it is not as well secured as the traditional place, it is the mediating link between this and other places. Almost everything that happens, happens here. Place is the individual and social unit of *reproduction*, and its routine is the basis for its security. By contrast, everything that happens as mediation in the in-between zone takes the form of social and cultural *production* and is therefore, in a sense, also an individual creation of form.

This is probably the reason why Michel de Certeau deals preferably with this type of space.[20] For him, the in-between is not simply the negation of space. Upon close inspection, negation happens only in the over-and-beyond. Rather, de Certeau conceives of the in-between as a construction in motion, where

movement vectors and time are linked. This movement, which is not able to subjectively stabilize the in-between space, but which affects a constant transformation, contains the mediation of places and differences. By contrast, in the above-and-beyond this difference is refuted. Here, movement has to be understood in a double sense: space moves inside a process of transformation, which, in turn, is caused by the movement of human beings in space. Once we leave this self-generated system of places and move inside the field of the above-and-beyond, our ability to constitute place inevitably decreases and becomes almost nil: space expands into the unknown and into the total image of the city as a point of reference for all kinds of events.

Outlook

If local and regional traditions, in which the subjective constitution of space is inscribed, should play a role, they will only have the opportunity to burgeon, I believe, in the *in-between* space. This is also meant in the sense of a conscious processing of social and cultural experiences made therein. For this, we need urban public space: this is inevitable and a worthwhile pursuit.

Architecture will have to bear this in mind and should deal with this idea! However, the question that remains completely open is to what extent and in what way criticism has to be inscribed in architectural praxis.

The strength of a (new) critical architecture, defined as the aesthetic objectification of localization, would consist in actively inscribing itself into the in-between. Architecture should reflect the in-between and even become the place that is brought into a state of oscillation through the cultural dynamics and productivity of the in-between. This is true especially since the built object not merely symbolizes space, but also fills the space between the different places. An architecture could be called critical once it conceives of itself as a production

of space which is co-produced by subjective experiences. This space is contingent and filled with differences that are not only relentlessly processed but also have to be mediated. Keeping this gap - defined as the tension between different but indivisible desires for a place-bound sense of belonging and its incessant transgression - architecturally open, would be the aesthetic actualization/symbolization of the simultaneity of the critical and the projective.

Moreover, the role architectural practice plays in the relentless flow of aestheticization might be indeterminate but by no means indifferent. That makes it hazardous. The last three decades have shown the tremendous force with which architecture can be transformed into a matrix (among others, the *Bilbao effect*).

In conclusion, this brings me back to the definition of subjectivity and present-day culture. The German cultural sociologist, Andreas Reckwitz, has recently shown how the culture of modernity is already a hybrid entity. As a late modern culture, it presents itself as a hybrid combination of two semantics: 'A general aesthetic that considers everything under the aspect of creativity and expressivity, and a general economy that approaches everything under the aspects of optionality and selectability.' In full accordance with our previous thoughts, Reckwitz speaks of a profound cultural transformation of Western subjectivity. The subject: a 'cultural hybrid' and an 'aesthetic-economic double'. That's why the 'role model of this subject culture is no longer the extraverted, objective employee but the successful artist, the artist-entrepreneur'.[21]

Hence, the subject is a hybrid montage. Modern (contemporary) culture is incapable of satisfying the modern subject in its quest for unity. Both are the critical points of reference for every architectural practice. Yet, in order to understand this practically, we need theory and the willingness and capacity to criticize in both architectural and urban discourse.

Notes

1. Involved, alongside the avant-gardes, was the *fascist cultural project* driven by the Nazis. It shared the avant-garde's critique of the elitist, solipsistic nature of bourgeois culture, dropping in the process the notion of politicization in favour of a real primacy of politics, which entailed a very real apparatus of domination after Hitler had seized power. For a detailed discussion on this subject, see Franz Dröge & Michael Müller, *Die Macht der Schönheit. Avantgarde und Faschismus oder die Geburt der Massenkultur* (Hamburg: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1995).

2. See Stephen Read, 'The Urban Image: Becoming Visible', in Deborah Hauptmann (ed.), *The Body in Architecture* (Rotterdam: 010, 2006), p. 52.

3. Frederic Jameson, 'Postmoderne. Zur Logik der Kultur im Spätkapitalismus', in Andreas Huyssen & Klaus R. Scherpe (eds), *Postmoderne. Zeichen eines kulturellen Wandels* (Reinbek: 1994), pp. 45-102.

4. Ernest Mandel, *Der Spätkapitalismus* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1973); translated as *Late Capitalism* (London: Verso, 1978).

5. Frederic Jameson, p. 48.

6. Wolfgang F. Haug, *Kritik der Warenästhetik* (Frankfurt/M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1971); translated as *Critique of Commodity Aesthetics*, trans. by Robert Bock (Cambridge: Polity, 1986).

7. Wolfgang Welsch, *Ästhetisches Denken* (Stuttgart: Reclam, 1990); translated as *Undoing Aesthetics*, trans. by Andrew Inkpin (London: Sage, 1997).

8. Scott Lash & John Urry, *Economies of Signs & Space* (London: Sage, 1994), pp. 111-44.

9. In the mid-1980s, one refers for the first time to the

'lead user' as a strategy of innovative management. Here, the consumers' behaviour is examined by focusing on the advanced use of commodities of particular consumers. See, among others, E. v. Hippel & G. I. Urban, 'Lead user analyses for the development of new industrial products', in *Management Science*, 34, 5/1988, pp. 569-82; C. Herstatt, C. Lüthe & C. Lettl, 'How customers stimulate innovations', in *Harvard Business Manager*, 24, 1/2002, pp. 64-68.

10. Although by now it has attained truly industrial dimensions, one has to take into account that in New York alone there are currently 150,000 artists producing more than 15 million works of art per decade. See B. Taylor, *Modernism, Post-modernism, Realism: a Critical Perspective for Art* (Winchester: Winchester School of Art Press, 1987), p. 77, quoted from David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity* (Oxford/Cambridge: Blackwell, 1989), p. 290.

11. David Harvey, 'Die Postmoderne und die Verdichtung von Raum und Zeit', in A. Kuhlmann (ed.), *Philosophische Ansichten der Kultur der Moderne* (Frankfurt/M.: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1994), pp. 48-78.

12. Ibid., p. 49. Also see David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity*, p. 241.

13. Scott Lash & John Urry, *Economies of Signs & Space*, pp. 111-44.

14. Jean Baudrillard, *L'échange symbolique et la mort* (Paris: 1973); translated as *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. by Iain Grant (London: Sage, 1993).

15. Max Horkheimer & Theodor W. Adorno, *Dialektik der Aufklärung*, (Amsterdam: Querido, 1947); translated as *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (London: Verso, 1974).

16. Georg Simmel, 'Die Großstädte und das Geistesleben', in: G. Simmel, *Brücke und Tor*, (Stuttgart: K.F. Koehler, 1957), pp. 227-42; translated as 'The Metropolis and Mental Life', in T. Alpern, (ed.) *Classical and Contemporary Sociological Theory* (Los Angeles, CA: Pine Forge Press), pp. 265-73.

17. See M. Müller, *Kultur der Stadt. Essays für eine Politik der Architektur* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2010).

18. Ibid., p. 240.

19. See M. Müller & F. Dröge, *Die ausgestellte Stadt. Zur Differenz von Ort und Raum* (Basel; Boston; Berlin: 2005), p. 79.

20. Michel de Certeau, *Die Kunst des Handelns* (Berlin: 1988), p. 218; published in English as *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. by Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

21. Andreas Reckwitz, 'Wir sind immer schon hybrid gewesen', in: *Frankfurter Rundschau, Forum Humanwissenschaften*, 24 April 2007, p. 27.

Biography

Michael Müller is a Professor and Chair for art history and cultural studies at Bremen University. His most important books are: *The Villa as Hegemonic Architecture* (1992, first German edition 1970); *Die Verdrängung des Ornaments* (1977); *Funktionalität und Moderne* (1984); *Architektur und Avantgarde* (1984); *Die Macht der Schönheit* (1995); *Die ausgestellte Stadt. Zur Differenz von Ort und Raum* (2005); *Kultur der Stadt. Essays für eine Politik der Architektur* (2010).

Superstudio 1966-73.
From the World without Objects to the Universal Grid

Fernando Quesada

According to Giulio Carlo Argan, mass production of objects brings about a crucial phenomenon. It separates the object from any contextual consideration, i.e. from its position in space. In other words, mass production cuts off the object from its spatial medium and therefore excludes its relation not only to space and to other objects, but also to the user. Argan gives two examples from the Italian historical avant-garde. The first one is the insertion and assimilation of the object into the dynamic spatial system. The object itself is decomposed in dynamic vectors: futurism. The second is the denial of any a priori spatial system and the complete isolation of the object. The object does not communicate with its surrounding space in any scenographic or sculptural fashion: *pittura metafisica*. Argan finally suggests that, in spite of these two poles, Italian designers produced a third way out. In this third way, it is the very object that defines its context - instead of considering a pre-existing deductive space through which the design object would define its surrounding space[1] - and turns its correct use into a sort of 'ceremony' with purifying powers. This phenomenon explains, according to Argan, the rigid character of Italian design, in which the designer does not play an artistic or technical role with respect to the production market, but rather a linguistic function. This third form of design would generate healing effects: a design of exorcism.

The Superarchitecture exhibition was held in the Italian city of Pistoia from 4 through 17 December 1966, organized by two groups of architects:

Archizoom (Andrea Branzi, Gilberto Corretti, Paolo Deganello, and Massimo Morozzi) and Superstudio (Adolfo Natalini and Cristiano Toraldo di Francia, later joined by Roberto Magris, Gian Piero Frassinelli, Alessandro Magris, and Alessandro Poli).[2] The authors wrote the following polemic manifesto: 'Superarchitecture is the architecture of superproduction, of superconsumption, of superinduction to superconsumption, of the supermarket, of the superman, of the super gasoline.'[3]

This manifesto departs from a provocative borrowing of ideas from Pop Art. It implies that the figurative or formal data of images have a revolutionary potential *per se*. Hidden behind an intention to demythologize, the Pop myth of the image as an almighty tool is paradoxically revealed. Images are assigned a critical role, assumed to induce in the observer-consumer a precise critical response, capable of conveying pedagogy or inducing a state of conscientiousness.

The student occupations at the architecture schools of Milan, Turin, and Rome had taken place three years earlier, in 1963. This was a period of extreme politicization among students and some faculty members, which led to the partial renewal of the teaching staff and to changes in study curricula and workshops.[4] Object design, building and town planning were progressively abandoned in study programmes, and replaced with 'Integrated Town Planning', 'Visual Design', 'Town Planning Theory', or 'Spaces of Implication'.[5] These changes in the

curricula were symptoms of the end of cornucopia, even though the architect was still considered a demiurgic figure, whose mission was to introduce a new social apparatus instead of objects, buildings, or neighbourhoods.

Indeed, as a result of the political radicalization, and in spite of the fact that the role of the architect *as a designer* still prevailed, the awareness of the limits of the architect's performance in the realm of object production increased considerably. This *crisis of the object* led to the immediate supposition that the designer-architect could be responsible for the superconsumption society. In this state of affairs, the new groups of architects involved in the area of design had to pursue different avenues of concrete action: some of them decided to completely abandon practice in order to concentrate exclusively on political action, while others turned to irony and to the sublimation of the current socio-economical conditions, namely the narrowing of the role of the designer within the production of objects.[6]

However, as in Argan's third way, other designers tended to re-examine their role in the *socius*, i.e. reconsidering the production-consumption cycle and the designer's capacity to involve a greater number of actors in the cycle of object production, namely by including the spectator-consumer as an actor in the construction of the meaning of the object. This form of design conception - indebted to Umberto Eco's *opera aperta* - considered object production in negative terms: it was not a matter of designing and producing objects any more, but of designing and producing the environments, behaviours, and affects generated by objects. Indeed, it was rather a matter of designing the relations between objects and users, in an ingenious correspondence between semantic or communicative value, and form or production value. The goal was to re-establish a cultural relationship and not only an economic one between objects and users. This meant the complete elimination of the modern

tradition of the object as a rational extension of the human body, aiming to improve the material conditions of life and the balance between humans and the artificial human environment.

At the School of Architecture in Florence, young students and teachers conscientiously followed a disparate amalgam of influences, both foreign and local. The Viennese Walter Pichler and Hans Hollein reclaimed in their 1962 'Manifesto of Absolute Architecture' a total anti-functionalism along with a recovery of the values of symbolic communication, which they considered obliterated by the modern movement.[7] In Austria, the reference function of the modern movement was thus replaced with a prompt interest in another Austrian, Friedrich Kiesler. Britain's Archigram had a huge influence by introducing a new iconography linked to mass consumerism and technological rhetoric. In Italy, the recovery of the architectural syntax of French revolutionary architecture was charged with political commentary and perpetrated by, among others, the young teacher Aldo Rossi, based on his teaching position in Florence and his editorial activity, together with Ernesto Nathan Rogers.

Pop Art, visual communication and system theories, revolutionary French architecture, or technological iconography, to mention just a few, were the different and irreconcilable points of departure for this generation, which, moreover, matured within a climate of political agitation of utopian tendency and ironic celebration that crossed over into the events of May 68. It is necessary to add to this all the growing American influences that flourished in universities and in the world of plastic arts during the accelerated period of five years (1963-1968): the studies of the city as a figurative or visual system - rather than a utilitarian system - by Kevin Lynch and Gyorgy Kepes; body art and the *happening* as the restoration of corporeal existence against the corporate and disembodied spirit of the American lifestyle; conceptual art and its reduction of the

disciplinary boundaries to a *cul-de-sac*, or land art and the ritualism of natural and artificial archetypes.

The activity of Superstudio encompassed all of these references and encapsulated them in drawings, photo-montages, storyboards, manifestos, pamphlets, furniture, exhibitions, and installations, navigating with surprising ease through an overwhelming diversity of media and formats and with highly affective results of great visual impact. In a clear dystopian fashion, they claimed a new form of material culture in the oxymoron of information society: a techno-utopia emptied of objects.

After the exhibition in Pistoia, which later travelled to Modena in March of the following year, Superstudio launched the manifesto 'Invention Design and Evasion Design'.[8] In this manifesto, they were ironic about the secularization of design objects, and highly critical of the loss of the symbolic, as well as of the shift to mere fast consumption devoid of any communicative value whatsoever beyond its indicative market and status value. Instead, Superstudio advocated the irrational and the poetic as working tools for the designer. This manifesto defines Superstudio's disciplinary terms: counter-design, and their explicit refusal to work within the traditional limits of the discipline. Since, as Filiberto Menna had argued in 1972, a shift from production to consumption had taken place,[9] and the corresponding move from the mass worker to the socialized worker had already happened, Superstudio decided to limit their field of action to the areas of consumption, perception, reception, and subjective construction of meaning. This implied renouncing the production of useful objects, the construction of buildings, or city planning, and entering the precarious grounds of Utopia after cornucopia.[10] Given these conditions, this Utopia could only be considered in negative terms: as dystopia.

Dystopia does not aim at finalization as a model or as a didactic realization in a social laboratory,

nor does it aim at the negation of history and the complete refoundation of the environment. Rather, Superstudio proved to be sceptical when they presented their own town-planning projects regarding the foundation of ideal cities as 'admonitory tales'.[11]

Their plan for a total environment without architecture, a world without objects, without labour, without architects, and without merchandise was initiated with the Superarchitecture exhibition of 1966, an ironic celebration of cornucopia, and closed with the extended project of five films, Life, Education, Ceremony, Love, Death in 1972-73.[12] In the meantime, a number of monumental and galactic projects were published, along with some concrete realizations: furniture series, installations, and 'micro-environments'.

After the 1967 manifesto, Superstudio published 'Projects and Thoughts: Journey into the Realm of Reason' in 1969,[13] showing their figurative and symbolic repertory and two motifs that reappeared obsessively in their later work. First, the concept of suspended time, and second the call for subjective and individual reason. The temporal dimension (suspended time) implies an ideal and impossible future, which paradoxically alludes to a similarly idealized remote past, recovered in a journey through a drive-in museum of architecture reduced to archetypal forms: pyramids, prisms, cubes, and cones. This formal basis clearly advocates the absolute recovery of the symbolism of elementary forms and their historical meaning, as well as the visual and communicative potential of the archetype. This strategy shows certain resonances with land art, which were to be accentuated at a later stage of their work. The social and ethical dimension (subjective reason) appears in the allusion to the powers of reason. However, it is not about civic or political reason, but an apocryphal allusion to the powers of individual, subjective, or even mystical reason: 'The architecture of reason elevates itself

as a product of human history, placing itself as a testimony of creative capacity and representing a period and a society.'[14] It is therefore the impossible historical subjective reason of a-historical suspended time. In this journey through the regions of reason, we see petrified clouds and rainbows, affective attractions between two cubes, cubes in volumetric decomposition - not due to the analysis or desire to understand their structure, but as the liberation of the forces which keep them together - and an infinite road lined with archetypal shapes on the flat landscape. It is an allegory of the 'rediscovery of a mysteriously missing architecture'.

The first urban metaphor appeared in 1969 in a cinematographic work-in-progress called The Continuous Monument.[15] With The Continuous Monument the architect becomes, through 'the absolute reduction of the object, an image-maker'.[16] The monument is an act of total geographic order, a terrestrial parallel and a crystalline grid that circulates the entire globe. It should give shelter to the whole earthly population. This 'moderate Utopia' is a dystopian heir of the human desire to build and of the great human works of antiquity, such as the Great Wall of China, the dolmens, the pyramids, the aqueducts, the great religious monuments such as the Kaaba, or modern constructions such as motorways, great cities and urban sprawl. The rest of the environment, built before this foundational act of mystical and regressive order, would remain as a material base reabsorbed by nature as a landscape. For the authors, the monument is the definitive expression of human reason - the constructional reason and the symbolic reason - the 'recovery' of communicative architectural values, the loss of which produced a state of irony and disdain. It is a clear sign of the *sprezzatura* of the Machiavellian prince: irony as one of the main historical negative categories in bourgeois thinking. It is a demonstration of 'the human capacity to act according to reason', an exorcism of the diseases that affect the object and, by extension, the whole man-built environment.

The Continuous Monument presents a major ambiguity: Is it an exacerbated paroxysm of Le Corbusier's project for Algiers and other exemplary modern paradigms? Is it a mere criticism of the implicit totalitarian aspect of Utopia and of grand gestures? What is the relation of this project with the multiple examples of utopian architecture of the remote or immediate modern past?

In The Continuous Monument, we can identify all the strategies used by Superstudio in their oeuvre: the recovery of the symbolic, monumentality, and gigantism as operative tools, the use of elementary, universally recognized shapes and masses, the permanence of the given as an almost post-nuclear backdrop in which they refuse to interfere, and finally the flight to Utopia, a particular Utopia as a squared mesh or grid suspended in time without history and alien to the idea of becoming.

The Graz architectural biennial, Architecture and Freedom, was staged in October and November 1969 at the Künstlerhaus. Superstudio presented The Continuous Monument and built a small prismatic pavilion (the *Grazerzimmer*, i.e. the Graz Room) [Fig. 1 and 2] covered with plastic laminated 5x5cm tiles. A surface, inclined at 12 degrees from the pavement, was covered with 'extremely fresh, green coconut' and located in the far extreme of the room where the projects of the participating architects were exhibited. The Graz Room consisted of this raised prism above the inclined surface, open on two sides, with the inclined surface as a bridge, and leaving the inside of the chamber as a cavity covered with the same laminated sheets, a space designed for meditation on measure.

With this installation, Superstudio opened a process of intellectualization of the all-encompassing use of the grid, which they began to use systematically, as much in geographical projects
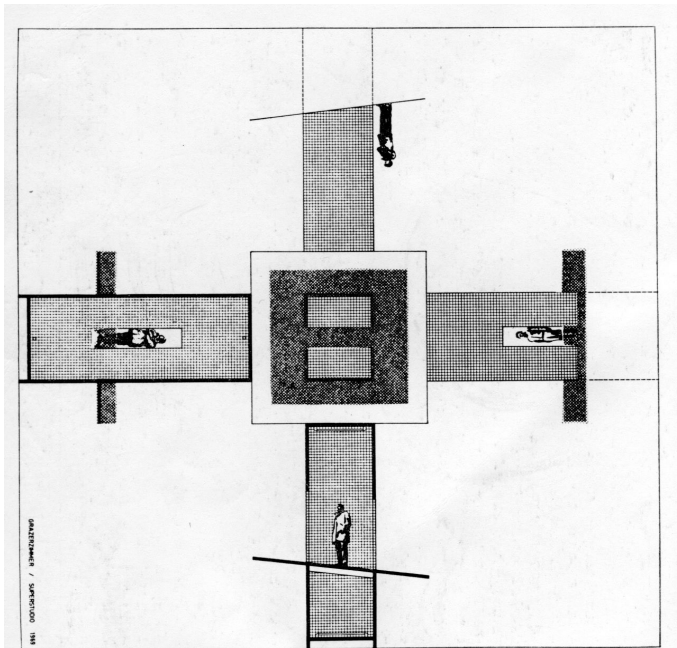
Fig. 1

Fig. 2

Fig. 1: Grazerzimmer, the empty space by Superstudio. Photograph by Herbert Missoni, published by his permission.
Fig. 2: Grazerzimmer, drawing by Superstudio. Courtesy of Gian Piero Frassinelli.

such as The Continuous Monument as in objects of domestic use, furniture series, or lamps. For them, 'The Continuous Monument is the culmination of a series of coherent project operations which we carry forward, from design to town-planning, as a demonstration of a theory stated a priori: that of the single gesture design. A transportable design that remains identical to itself, changing its scale or semantic area without trauma or inconvenience'.[17]

The increased use of the of the scale of the projects, allows Superstudio to define their evolution in narrative terms, from an initial position in which the architects are active actors in production, to a dilettante and intellectualized position, in which the architects are forced to reinvent their role as artists in order to regain part of the market closed to young architects by the building industry, productive agents, and politicians. It is not by chance that the political explosion and the birth of the Italian neo-avant-garde movement coincide, between 1965 and 1969, with an important recession in the building industry, both in the public and private sectors. However, as Manfredo Tafuri stated, the crisis of the object during the 1960s was not a completely new phenomenon. For Tafuri, there is a sense of continuity in the architects' work between the early post-war period and the 1960s in Italy: architects as mere designers of good taste.

Tafuri's critical assessment of these groups is altogether devastating: 'This sense of loss, this forced withdrawal of the object into itself, was the result of the fragmentation of building trade and the consequent autonomy of its several sectors, which influenced and was reflected in the cruel elegance of avant-garde Italian design before the (Second World) war.'[18] For Tafuri, this represents the mere projection of a situation of panic and anxiety that would eventually result in their reinsertion into the market, namely in an uncritical alignment with the starting conditions against which they protested: '[...] in a capitalistic system there is no split between

production, distribution and consumption. All the intellectual anti-consumption utopias that seek to redress the ethical "distortions" of the technological world by modifying the system of production or the channels of distribution only reveal the complete inadequacy of their theories, in the face of the actual structure of the capitalist economic cycle.'[19]

During 1969 and 1970, Superstudio developed the so-called Histograms of Architecture - a series of drawings and furniture (the series Misura and Quaderna, to be precise) - by strictly using the squared grid in a variety of scales, from the simplest object of furniture, such as the table, to urban landscapes.[20] Thus, in parallel to the first urban metaphors, Superstudio proposed these reductive diagrams, illustrating a working principle: the reduction of labour to a single gesture. The authors define this series as 'the architect's tomb', since the goal is to eliminate, in the practical process from the diagram to the actual realization, any problem of space or aesthetic sensibility. Superstudio stated: 'At that time it was obvious that to continue designing furniture, objects and similar household decorations was no solution to the problems of living, nor to those of life; even less was it serving to save the soul.'[21] This mimesis between the artists' behaviour and their activity presupposes the identification of the art market with the commercial environment of architecture and design, which would drive Superstudio to redirect their renouncement activity to the strict limits of the production of images.

IN, a journal linked to the Italian neo-avant-garde groups, devoted its second issue to the 'Destruction of the Object', with articles by the protagonists of counter-design. All contributions pointed to the explicit declaration of the impotence of designers and architects, as much in opposing the development of late capitalism as in foreseeing its results, thus renouncing any positive utopia understood as future planning, and advocating global intellectualization as the only route to salvation: the elimination

of objects, productive activity, and labour. Superstudio in particular called again for the re-sacralization of the object, the recovery of values such as the myth and the magic, in the belief that such recovery would lead to the purification of the relations between production and use.[22] Purification, exorcism, and re-establishment of the aura are the impossible missions they embrace, to be carried out by means of discursive images and narration. The object of the cure was in the end nothing else than the city as the final destination within the negative path of environmental clearing.

The project of the Twelve Ideal Cities (for Christmas) was an exercise on the 'premonitions of the mystical rebirth of urbanism',[23] a sour reflection on utopian thought from the Enlightenment to the techno-scientific fantasies of the society of cornucopia in the 1960s. Each of the twelve cities referred, more or less explicitly, to a well-known model of city organization: 'Conical Terraced City' refers to the city of corporate work and office buildings, where the goal of its inhabitants is to reach the highest level; 'Temporal Cochlea-City' refers to the proposals of town planning in clusters, with the corridors serving as places of social interaction; 'Ville-Machine Habitée' refers to the techno-monumental cities and their emancipating vision of technology; 'Barnum City' refers to the city museum of mass tourism and the media: Disneyland and Las Vegas, but also Venice or Paris; 'Spaceship' refers to the spatial city separated from geography; '2000 Ton City' refers to the residential city of super blocks, superimposed on an immaculate countryside; 'New York of Brains' refers to the university or cultural city; 'City of Hemispheres' refers to the city camouflaged by landscape and the new countercultural archetypes; 'City of Order' refers to the city planned by lazy politicians; 'Continuous Production Conveyor Belt City' refers to the city of accelerated property speculation; 'City of Splendid Houses' refers to suburbia and sign architecture; 'City of the Book' refers to the city of Enlightenment with a

clear distinction between the zones of light, ethics, and obedience on the one hand, and the zones of shadows, absence of morals, and disobedience on the other.

It is a collection of exquisitely drawn architectural aberrations, which allows a glimpse into a criticism of utopian thought in modernity by means of the super-elaboration of the premises, and an exploration of the grotesque. With the second publication of the project, a thirteenth city without name or image was added, which could only be understood by means of literary resources, going back to a pre-modern utopia exclusively defined in narrative terms.

There is, on a figurative and formal level, a constant element among the twelve ideal cities: the use of the square or rectangular grid in cells, sarcophagi, urns, or living units. The grid points to the association between geometry of compartmentalization and the ideas of confinement, enclosure, or isolation. Likewise, in the explanatory texts, each city is equipped with a power centre, designed in a twofold way. It is either an inaccessible physical space in the city centre or an apex - if cities have a closed and recognizable form; or an invisible and immaterial centre - in cases in which cities do not have an enclosed form - that can be portrayed as a network of control and distribution of knowledge and information, in either intellectual or sensorial form. In short, these cities are illustrations of the Foucauldian progressive shift from the disciplinary society to the society of control, showing their overlapping areas.

For Tafuri, the grid of the American corporate curtain wall after WWII, including the Twin Towers and the a-semantic silence of the Seagram building, led to the complete globalization of an inescapable world order. In his critique, the formal order of the curtain wall is comparable to a faithful reflection of power and capital in the new order of the flow of

information regardless of its content, namely architecture as a mere package of information. This architectural formalization of the flow in the grid would then be capable of reintegrating the contradictions of capital in a Foucauldian *dispositif* of total rationalization.[24]

From the odd combination of the exercises with the grid as a tool of liberation for the designer from the agents of production (the histograms), and the grid as a repressive device (the ideal cities), arises the 'supersurface' in the cinematographic series Life, Education, Ceremony, Love, Death.

The members of Superstudio proceeded in their usual fashion: departing from the analysis of a given situation and the affirmation of an ironically lived situation of deep crisis, they carried out an exercise of mystification and sublimation. The 'supersurface' is an invisible grid; an energetic mesh that performs similarly to The Continuous Monument. Yet it was even more radicalized, divested of any figurative or referential components, including depth, physical entity, or any kind of materiality. The 'supersurface' is an infrastructural system of zero density, a sublimation of counter-design put forward in the histograms that defines a global territory without objects or hierarchies. The cinematographic project depicted the metaphoric description of the 'supersurface' performance and the events happening on it.

Life, Education, Ceremony, Love, Death is a story in instalments, namely the story of the recovery of the symbolism of everyday life in architecture; a swan song captured in fine storyboards and drawings with an impressive visual impact. Tafuri called this project 'nostalgia of the future'.[25] In an earlier project, Interplanetary Architecture, Superstudio had put forward the hypothesis of the liberation of human beings from the repressive rational system that the ideal cities had wilfully illustrated. It was presented as 'the increasing awareness of the frustration of

terrestrial architecture and the last possibility of labour in an area delivered from the rational logic of architecture as production of goods'.[26] It is a cinematographic project in six phases: 1. The formation of the earth and the moon; 2. The arrival of the human being on the moon; 3. The first exchanges and a channel of physical communication between the moon and the earth; 4. The capture of meteorites; 5. The habitation system; 6. The extension of territory, including other interconnected planets. The soundtrack consisted of Pygmy hunting songs and Buddhist funeral rituals. Once more, the escape to the future was accompanied by deep temporal regression.

One month after the publication of Interplanetary Architecture, the huge exhibition 'Italy: The New Domestic Landscape' was inaugurated in May 1972 at the MoMA in New York, curated by Emilio Ambasz. It was a gigantic promotional campaign financed almost exclusively with Italian capital.[27] The aim was twofold: first, the conquest of a wide market for the objects of design and counter-design by Italian young architects and, second, the direct confrontation and clash between Italian Radical Architecture and its American counterpart.[28] To be sure, 1972 was the year of the publication of *Five Architects* and *Learning from Las Vegas*. For many, the exhibition meant the death of *Architettura radicale*, a withdrawal to marginal forms of power.

The exhibition was organized in two large sections: objects and environments. The object section was divided into three categories. The first one consisted of objects selected for their formal and technical characteristics (conformist design); it showcased technically refined everyday objects whose conventional use was not questioned, such as tables, chairs, typewriters, and other household goods. The second category of objects displayed were selected for their socio-cultural implications (reformist design) and included totem objects in the sense given by Ettore Sottsass Jr., that is, symbolic

and sign objects whose function is more linguistic than ergonomic.[29] As for the third category, it contained objects selected for their flexible ways of use and assembly (contestatory design), such as modular components. The environment section was divided into the groups: design, design as commentary, and counter-design. The object section was presented as an installation at the MoMA garden, with 40 crates designed by Emilio Ambasz and Thomas Czarnowsky. The crates were transportation boxes when positioned horizontally, and exhibition towers in a vertical position. For Natalini, this installation was itself a parody of a parody: a parody of Superstudio's City of Splendid Houses, itself a parody of Manhattan.[30]

In the object section, Superstudio presented the Passiflora floor lamp, a luminous, crafted cloud made of white plastic, and, in the environment section, their cinematographic project Life on the Supersurface - exhibited in an installation named Microevent/Microenvironment: a small turret built of polarized glass slightly raised off the floor, producing the illusion of infinite space inside a small cube with a 'supersurface' in a plastic grid, populated by technological devices as life supports and abstract-vegetal creatures.

The cinematographic project was presented as an animated storyboard with exemplary images on a TV monitor inside the small cube. The film described the formation of the 'supersurface' and the birth of various forms of life, always nomadic.[31] It proposed the anthropological re-establishment of architecture according to the five 'fundamental acts' that are at the basis of their ambitious cinematographic project of five stories. The 'supersurface' is, for the authors, an intellectual model, and a counter-model of the economic and physical reality which the contemporary project No-Stop City, by Archizoom, described with exquisite precision: an infinite city extension that mimicked the propositions of the late capitalist economy and translated

them, in stylized form, into an urban plan.[32] The 'supersurface' can be considered as its magic antidote, as a vaccine that takes the same physical form, the same market infrastructure, yet emptied of poison. The authors indicate a series of hypotheses for the inoculation of this therapeutic vaccine, which acquire a greater credibility in the drawings, despite remaining at a purely discursive level. The hypotheses assume the complete elimination of alienation as the starting point, so much so that the first hypothesis states: 'the mind and the body as the only tools'; the second: 'the control of the environment by way of energies'.

Little then - outside of polarized discursive assumptions - seems to differentiate the 'supersurface' from the No-Stop City: the first assumes that everybody is an artist, whilst the second assumes that everybody is a worker. The only 'object' in both dystopian visions is the universal grid as immaterial and technological life support. 'Life' on the 'supersurface' does not propose a definitive setting for the future, but an exercise in momentary liberation, an ephemeral act of freedom; and therein lies its value and its enormous and paradoxical limitation: everydayness appears only in the interstices of the grid lines. However, the indifference of the architectural support - the grid - in both projects, is exactly what enables the dissolution of any hierarchy, including the dissolution of the power of capital, namely by rejecting both labour and objects. The rejection of labour takes place in the disappearance of the grid's productive forces.

Beyond the ideological project, the drawings possess a great degree of efficacy and visual impact, and show the possibility of testing alternative uses of the artificial environment, the possibility to formulate and represent the poetic dimension of the most insignificant everyday acts; to award meaning to the most apparently trivial human actions, and the possibility of spontaneity and individual agency within primary structures of monumental character,

which are profoundly repressive and regressive. In the world evoked by the 'supersurface', location and movement are submitted to the geometrical control of the two-dimensional grid, which is the only architectural, information, and power structure. Still, the fundamental act of place appropriation is possible: the happy island, the distant mountain, the encampment, and the invisible dome are examples of artificial paradises which, in spite of their lack of resonance in architectural practice, show an undeniable value as exercises of cultural compensation.

Argan's first and second 'ways' of Italian design - the design object absorbed by the futuristic system and the solipsistic and *resistant* metaphysical object - produced then and now an obvious *cul-de-sac*. The third way of Italian design, as defined by Argan, responds, on the one hand, to the strict *morale* of the hypercritical Tafuri, while, on the other hand, it suggests a possible overcoming of Tafuri's criticism, since it convincingly contextualizes Superstudio's oeuvre in broader terms: 'Since, in the long run, mass production must be considered an information system, research no longer concentrates on the object itself, but rather in [*sic*] its role as a kind of sign.'[33] This implies that the goal of design is not the object, but the link connecting someone with the environment. In this framework, the architect unavoidably becomes the designer of the consumer's behaviour through mass-produced object design and correct ceremonial use. Superstudio's production of images aimed, by contrast, at a world without design objects, intended to increase the consumers' ability to *design* their own behaviours in an anti-ceremonial relationship with the environment through their resilient and transparent supersurface.

Acknowledgement

Notes
1. Giulio Carlo Argan, 'Ideological development in the thought and imagery of Italian design', in *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, ed. by Emilio Ambasz (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1972), pp. 360-61.

2. Recent publications and critical studies on Superstudio include: Peter Lang and William Menking, *Superstudio: Life Without Objects* (Turin/Milan: Skira, 2003), Frédéric Migayrou (ed.), *Architecture 'radicale'*, exh. cat., Institut d'Art Contemporain - IAC Villeurbanne, 12 January - 27 May, 2001, and Hilde Heynen, 'The Antinomies of Utopia. Superstudio in Context', invited lecture for an international symposium on Superstudio, organized by the Zeeuws Museum, Middelburg (Netherlands), 18 September 2004. In Valentijn, B. (ed.) *Superstudio - The Middelburg Lectures*. (Middelburg, 2005), pp. 61-74.

3. Manifesto of the Second Exhibition of 'Superarchitettura', Modena 1967.

4. See *Casabella-continuità*, 287 (May 1964), in which the student protests, the students' demands, and the partially introduced reforms are meticulously documented.

5. Paola Navone and Bruno Orlandoni, *Architettura 'radicale'*, prologue by Andrea Branzi (Milan: Documenti di Casabella, 1975), p. 20.

6. Filiberto Menna, 'A Design for New Behaviours', in Emilio Ambasz (ed.) *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1972), p. 405.

7. Ulrich Conrads, *Manifesti e programmi per l'architettura del XX secolo* (Florence: Vallecchi, 1970).

8. 'Design d'invenzione, Design d'evasione', Domus, 465, (June 1969). English version in Joan Ockman *Architecture Culture 1943-1968. A Documentary Anthology* (New York: Columbia Books of Architecture/Rizzoli, 1993), pp. 437-41.

9. *Marcatrè*, 26/29, (December 1966), and *Ulm* 19/20 (August 1967), pp. 35-37.

10. The first issue of the monographic magazine *IN* (January-February 1971), had Utopia as a theme. Contributions by Archizoom, Superstudio, 9999, Ugo La Pietra, Sottsass Jr., Buti, Preti, Galli, Sani, and Raggi

(Italy), Archigram, Street Farmer, Sowden (United Kingdom), Burns and Ant Farm (USA), Abraham, Hollein, Peintner, Franck, Salz der Erde, Coop Himmelblau, and Haus-Rucker-Co (Austria), emphasized the international character of the movement.

11. 'Twelve Cautionary Tales for Christmas', first published in English in *Architectural Design*, 12 (December 1971).

12. 'Life' was published in Casabella, 367 (July 1972). It was a reworking of the material presented at the MoMA exhibition on Italian design in May 1972; 'Education' was published in two parts, the first in *Casabella*, 368-369 (August-September 1972); the second in *Casabella*, 372 (December 1972); 'Ceremony' was published in *Casabella*, 374 (February 1973); 'Love' was published in *Casabella*, 377 (May 1973); 'Death' was published in *Casabella*, 380-381 (August-September 1973).

13. 'Progetti e Pensieri: un viaggio nelle regioni della ragione', *Domus*, 479 (October 1969).

14. Ibid.

15. 'Discorsi per Immagini', *Domus*, 481 (December 1969). See also the catalogue of the biennial 'Trigon 1969', *Architektonisches Modell einer totalen Urbanisation*, Graz, 1969. And 'Il monumento continuo, storyboard per un film', in *Casabella*, 358 (November 1971).

16. Paola Navone and Bruno Orlandoni, *Architettura 'radicale'*, p. 37.

17. 'Lettera da Graz', in *Domus*, 481 (December 1969).

18. Manfredo Tafuri, 'Design and Technological Utopia', in *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, p. 388.

19. Ibid., p. 397.

20. 'Dai cataloghi del Superstudio', in *Domus*, 497 (April 1971).

21. 'Dal catalogo degli Istogrammi, la serie Misura', *Domus*, 517 (December 1972).

22. 'Argomenti per immagini', *IN*, 2 (March-June 1971).

23. *Architectural Design*, 12 (December1971), and *Casabella*, 361 (January 1972). Although both publications have been consulted, the names of the cities were taken from the English edition. The thirteenth city only appears in the Italian edition.

24. Manfredo Tafuri and Francesco Dal Co, *Architettura contemporanea*, pp. 395-97, with concrete references to Superstudio, such as: 'liberation of irony', 'deserts inhabited by metaphysical objects', and 'exercises on self-propaganda'.

25. Ibid.

26. 'Architettura interplanetaria', *Casabella*, 364 (April 1972).

27. The exhibition ran from 26 May to 11 September 1972. It was financed by the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ICE (Institute of Foreign Trade), the ENI Group, Abet Print, Alitalia, Anonima Castelli, Fiat, and Olivetti, among others. The catalogue was printed in Italy, distributed internationally, produced by the Centro Di in Florence, and completely manufactured in Italy.

28. Felicity Scott, *Architecture or Techno-Utopia. Politics after Modernism* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2007). Scott traces the relation between Italian Radical Architecture, American counter-cultural architectural practices, and the postmodern academic debate.

29. Ettore Sottsass Jr.: 'Mobili 1965', *Domus*, 433 (December 1965). Sottsass was certainly the first Italian architect to introduce Pop iconography to furniture design. In this article he mentions that his intention was to transpose the decorated surface to the surface of the furniture, in an attempt to project the idea of dressing onto the design object. In 1966 he created a series of furniture which was clearly totemic: prisms covered with laminated surfaces in brilliant colours that were hung in the centre of the room without any predetermined use. See Tommaso Trini, 'Ettore Sottsass Jr. Catalogo mobili 1966', *Domus*, 449 (April 1967).

30. Adolfo Natalini, 'Italy: The New Domestic Landscape', in *Architectural Design*, 42 (August 1972), pp. 469-73.

31. See *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, pp. 240-51.

32. Archizoom had previously published 'Città, catena di montaggio del sociale: Ideologia e teoria della metropoli' *Casabella*, 350-51 (July-August 1970). No-Stop City was published in *Domus*, 496 (March 1971). See also, Michael Hays (ed.) *Architecture Theory since 1968* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1998), and Pier Vittorio Aurelli, *The Project of Autonomy. Politics and Architecture Within and Against Capitalism* (New York: The Buell Center and Princeton Architectural Press,

2008).

33. Giulio Carlo Argan, 'Ideological development in the thought and imagery of Italian design', in *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*, p. 367.

Biography

Fernando Quesada, architect ETSAM Madrid 1995, post-graduate studies at Columbia University 1998-2000, PhD in Architecture 2002. He is the author of *La Caja Mágica, Cuerpo y Escena* (*The Magic Box, Body and Scene*, Barcelona 2004), and was director of the journal *O-Monografias* between 2000 and 2010. He has been teaching architectural design at Alcala School of Architecture, Madrid, since 2001.

Between Populism and Dogma: Álvaro Siza's Third Way

Nelson Mota

In the heyday of the debate on postmodernity, Kenneth Frampton presented critical regionalism as an alternative approach to the modernist dogma and what he considered to be 'the demagogic populism of post-modern architecture'.[1] This proposal seemed to open a third way to escape the convergence towards each one of these allegedly opposed poles. However, this critical approach is built on a fundamental paradox. It is formulated from a central position, i.e., the developed and industrialized world, yet it is concerned with peripheral phenomena and regional architectural approaches with an anti-centrist sentiment.

Nevertheless, under the epithet of critical regionalism, some marginal architectural practices were inscribed into the historiography of architecture and became instrumental in presenting an alternative, both to the modernist dogma and to postmodernist populist use of the vernacular to 'give people what they want'. In the early 1980s, concepts of modernism and avant-garde were reconceptualized within the discourse on postmodernism. In this context, to what extent did critical regionalism and its affiliated concept of *arrière-garde* contribute to a novel approach in the dialectics between modernity and tradition, between universal civilization and local cultures? Did it instrumentalize peripheral architectural practices to define its position in the modernism versus postmodernism debate? Or did it contribute to challenging the modernist dogma by bringing together alternative off-centre modernist architectural approaches?

The architecture of Álvaro Siza is one of those marginal practices frequently used to illustrate that alternative position. Siza began his career in the late 1950s working in the office of Fernando Távora, who was a member of CIAM's younger post-war generation. First influenced by the epistemological shift proposed by this generation and then following his own personal approach, Siza sought an alternative path for the polarization of the architectural discourse, focusing his attention on the relation to the context. However, to what extent can Siza's architectural approach be assessed as regionalist? Is it simply the result of historical continuity? Does it engage in modernism's mission to promote art's autonomy? Or, conversely, does it attempt to follow the historical avant-garde's goal to narrow the gap between art and everyday life?

To answer some of these questions, I will reflect on critical regionalism and its critique to explore the possibility of its role as a mediator between dogmatic applications of the modern canon and populism. Critical regionalism will be discussed within the broader frame of the redefinition of hegemonic relationships, especially postcolonial critique and the relation centre-periphery.

Using Siza's project for the Malagueira neighbourhood in Évora (Portugal), I will argue that the architect's approach created a third way between populism and avant-garde, using the architectural project as support to deliver a product that results both from an ambivalent relationship with the context

FOOTPRINT Defying the Avant-Garde Logic: Architecture, Populism, and Mass Culture, Spring 2011, pp. 35-58.

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and the creative conflict between the architect and the future residents, through user participation in the design process.

Critical regionalism: looking for mediation between universal and local

In his seminal essay published in 1961 in the French journal *Esprit*, Paul Ricoeur posits the paradox: 'how to become modern and to return to sources?'[2] Ricoeur's paradox brings to the fore the challenges to cultural identity in a globalized world. He states that

We can easily imagine a time close at hand when any fairly well-to-do person will be able to leave his country indefinitely in order to taste his own national death in an interminable, aimless voyage. At this extreme point, the triumph of the consumer culture, universally identical and wholly anonymous, would represent the lowest degree of creative culture.[3]

However, Ricoeur rejects resistance to progress as an excuse to preserve a 'rooted' culture. He challenges both nostalgic and progressive approaches, claiming that 'the problem is not simply to repeat the past, but rather to take root in it in order to cease-lessly invent'.[4]

For some decades following Ricoeur's essay, the debate around universal civilization and popular culture emerged as a central topic in the architectural debate. In the mid-1970s, Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre argued that during the 1950s and 1960s 'the role of the architect was symbolically reduced […] to a "minimum structure" while that of the user was to increase proportionally'. This was the background against which 'a compromise between the idea of the universally applicable set of architectural norms and of the idea of user sovereignty proved impossible for these two tendencies were irreducible contradictions'.[5] The authors contested that

The rationale of the populist movement can be put succinctly. Given that all evidence denied the existence of a single universally good and desirable formula in architecture, and, given the fact that the Welfare State architecture, both as a theory and practice forced individuals to live in an environment alien to them, then it must be replaced by an alternative way of thinking and doing architecture. In it's [sic] ultimate conclusions populism saw design as a direct outcome of the needs of the user, or as directly accountable to them only.[6]

The emergence of what Tzonis and Lefaivre named the populist movement was mainly fostered by a critique on functionalist theories and the normative approach of welfare state policies.

In 1981, some years after publishing the essay 'In the Name of the People', Tzonis and Lefaivre coined the term 'critical regionalism' with an essay about the work of Greek architects Dimitris and Susana Antonakakis.[7] In this essay, they divide regionalism into three phases. The first is linked with the rise of nationalism, anti-absolutism, and liberalism and is characterized by promoting ideals such as uniqueness, particularity, and distinctiveness. The second phase, which they call historicist regionalism, emerges at the end of the eighteenth century and is based on the high regard for the local remains of medieval structures and on the disdain for neoclassical uniformity. Finally, they present critical regionalism as an approach still deriving from 'ideals of the singular and the local, of liberty and anti-authoritarianism', but they argue that now its opponents are 'the despotic aspects of the Welfare State and the custodial effects of modernism' instead of absolutist regimes or academicism.[8] Critical regionalism reacts against 'the idea of abstract universal norms as a result of the re-emergence of the importance of the State and the faith attached to industrialization which a highly normative architecture had seemed to express'.[9] Therefore, according to Tzonis and Lefaivre, both the populist movement

Fig. 1: Plan for the expansion of Évora's western area - DGSU (1975). The Malagueira sector occupies the central part, with the L and U shape proposed buildings. Image courtesy of Álvaro Siza, Arquitecto, Lda.

and critical regionalism shared the criticism of the architectural consequences of the welfare state's normative aspects. Thus, stressing the differences between critical and populist approaches became a crucial issue to Tzonis and Lefaivre. They claim that in Greece, 'there was always the danger of abandoning the more difficult critical approach for a sentimental utopianism, making architecture an easy escape to the rural Arcadia, poor but honest'.[10]

Two years after Tzonis and Lefaivre's essay, Kenneth Frampton recuperates the term critical regionalism and discusses it in the framework of Paul Ricoeur's dialectics between rooted culture and universal civilization. Frampton uses a long quotation from Ricoeur's essay as the epigraph to his influential 1983 article 'Prospects for a Critical Regionalism'. He highlights Ricoeur's claim that 'a hybrid "world culture" will only come into being through a cross-fertilization between rooted *culture*, on the one hand, and universal *civilization* on the other'.[11]

Ricoeur's polarity 'culture versus civilization' was instrumental in framing Frampton's use of the term critical regionalism, describing an architectural approach with a 'strong desire for realising an identity'.[12] Frampton's use of this polarity was, however, dissociated from the political circumstances that influenced Ricoeur's essay. According to Mark Crinson, 'Ricoeur had considered the phenomenon of universalisation, its benefits and problems, as part of the colonial world and the relationship of anti-colonial liberation movements to these matters'. Crinson argues that 'the central problems of Ricoeur's essay […] were flattened out [by Frampton] and cut free from their contemporary geopolitics'.[13]

In fact, in his article, Frampton was mainly concerned with the populist contingencies of the emergence of postmodernism. Hence, he already anticipated a possible misinterpretation of his own

regionalism with other approaches based on nostalgic representations of the past. Frampton elucidates that

It is necessary to distinguish at the outset between critical regionalism and the simplistic evocation of a sentimental or ironic vernacular. I am referring, of course, to that nostalgia for the vernacular which is currently being conceived as an overdue return to the ethos of a popular culture; for unless such a distinction is made one will end by confusing the resistant capacity of Regionalism with the demagogic tendencies of Populism.[14]

In the same year, when Frampton publishes the aforementioned article, he also contributes a chapter to the book edited by Hal Foster titled *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*.[15] The title of Frampton's essay, 'Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance', shows his persistence in developing the term 'critical regionalism'.

In his synthesis of 'The Rise and Fall of the Avant-Garde', Frampton highlights the evolution of art towards becoming a commodity, losing its autonomy. He proceeds by elucidating postmodernist architecture's support of either pure technique or pure scenography. In the third point, 'Critical regionalism and world culture', Frampton struggles to posit critical regionalism in such a way as to avoid its association with conservative policies, such as populism or sentimental regionalism. Moreover, the avant-garde is also dismissed because 'its initial utopian promise has been overrun by the internal rationality of instrumental reason'.[16] Therefore, Frampton proposes a new approach: an *arrière-garde* position. He claims that

Architecture can only be sustained today as a critical practice if it assumes an arrière-garde position, that is to say, one which distances itself equally from the Enlightenment myth of progress and from
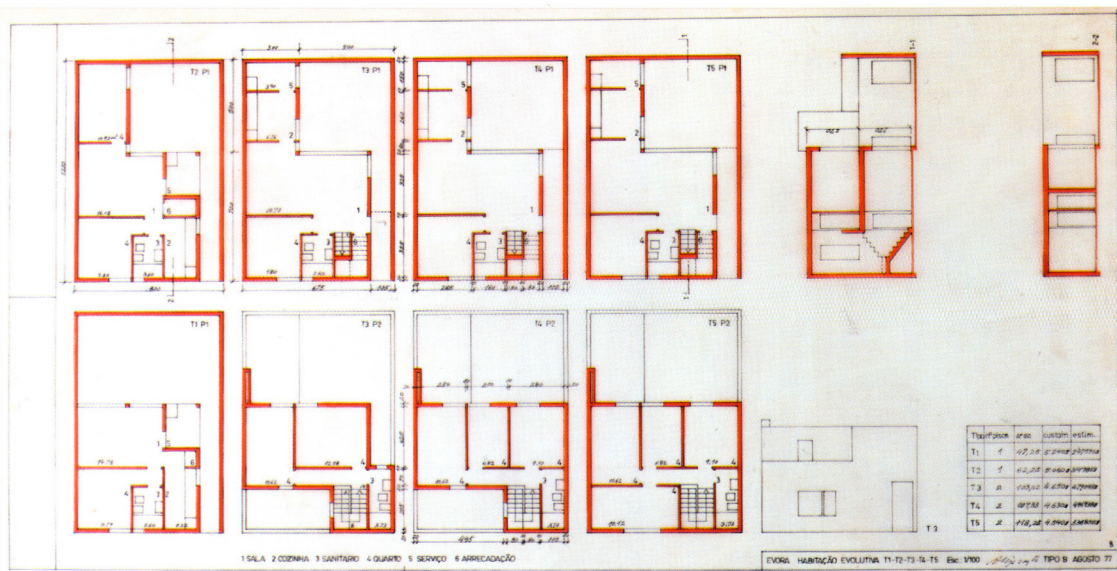
Fig. 2: Evolutive housing types (First version, August 1977) - Type A (front yard; above); Type B (backyard; below).
Image courtesy of Álvaro Siza, Arquitecto, Lda.

a reactionary, unrealistic impulse to return to the architectonic forms of the preindustrial past.[17]

What defines the resistant characteristic of this architecture is its strategy of mediating the world culture with the peculiarities of a particular place, taking into account such things as topography, context, climate, light, and tectonic form. Frampton argues that this approach stands in contradistinction to the populists' demagogic use of communicative and instrumental signs as primary vehicles.

The bulk of references presented by Frampton concern peripheral practices, overlooking other contributions emanating from more central geographies where that commitment to place was also an issue. In fact, Frampton's formulation of critical regionalism as an alternative to postmodernism, according to Dirk van den Heuvel, may be considered a late fruit of the English discourse on New Brutalism, neo-Palladianism, and the Picturesque, in which the Smithsons, Colin Rowe, Nikolaus Pevsner, and Reyner Banham were main protagonists.[18] However, Frampton presented neither the Smithsons in particular nor Team 10 as reference groups for a critical regionalist architectural approach. In order to better understand critical regionalism's immanent tension between the centre and the periphery, a closer look at both the context and regionalism debates will be presented and discussed in the next section.

Context thinking and the tension between centre and periphery

The context debate has occupied a central position in the post-war architectural discourse, especially at the CIAM congresses and Team 10 meetings, as part of the critique of modernist practice. In the 1950s, Ernesto Rogers used the expression *preesistenze ambientale* to criticize the first generation of modern architects' 'tendency to treat every scheme as a unique abstract problem, their indifference to location, and their desire to make of every work a

prodigy'. According to Adrian Forty, Rogers argued in favour of 'architecture as a dialogue with the surroundings, both in the immediate physical, but also as a historical continuum'.[19] In the 1960s, the Italian word *ambiente* was translated into English as 'context' despite having different meanings in the original Italian. Context and contextualism would eventually become key concepts in the works of authors such as Christopher Alexander, Colin Rowe, and Kenneth Frampton.

The idea of context has had multiple interpretations. According to Dirk van den Heuvel,

In the 1950s, the idea of context was connected to the biological idea of 'environment', to an idea of 'ecological urbanism', and of course, to the concept of 'habitat', which scourged the CIAM debates and ultimately led to its demise. By the 1970s, however, context had come to mean historical context in the first place, while being refashioned as typo-morphological orthodoxy.[20]

However, 'in the case of the Smithsons, and Team 10 in general, the value attached to specificity-to-place and context-building leads to quite the opposite of a historically grounded, typo-morphological orthodoxy'.[21] Since the beginning of the New Brutalism debate, 'to the Smithsons, "context thinking" was part and parcel of an architecture which was the "result of a way of life", a "rough poetry" dragged out of "the confused and powerful forces which are at work"'[22]. Therefore, 'the "newness" of the "machine-served society" - the technology and market-driven consumer society, the allegedly resulting loss of sense of place and community - was a central and constitutive part of the problem of a context-responsive architecture'.[23]

Hence, one can observe in the Smithsons' discourse a phenomenological approach to the idea of context, where the everyday assumed a central position. However, although sharing
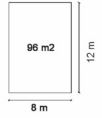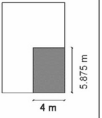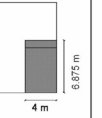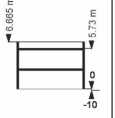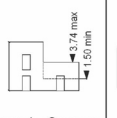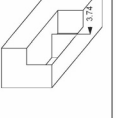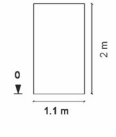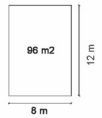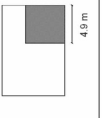
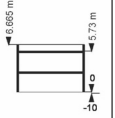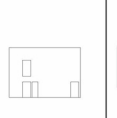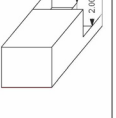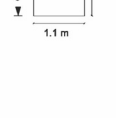| Housetype	Lot area and dimensions	Alignments and mandatory free-space 1st floor	Alignments and mandatory free-space 2nd floor	Maximum number of floors	Street elevation: maximum surface area, number of openings, and wall height	Maximum volume	Openings: maximum dimension (only second floor's street elevation)	Recommenda-tions
Frontyard	96 m2, 12 m, 8 m	4 m, 5.875 m, 5.73 m	4 m, 6.875 m	0 = floor 1 level, 6.665 m, 5.73 m, 0, -10	3.74 max, 1.50 min, floor 1 - 2 open, floor 2 - 1 open	3.74	0 = floor level, 1.1 m, 2 m	Check the Town Hall's project-types Enclosing walls and chimneys should be studied in collaboration with the Town Hall The yard should be gardened or covered by an ivy lattice
Backyard	96 m2, 12 m, 8 m	4.7 m, 4.9 m	4.9 m	0 = floor 1 level, 6.665 m, 5.73 m, 0, -10	floor 1 - 3 open, floor 2 - 1 open	3.74, 2.00	0, 1.1 m, 2.00	
Specifications	a) One or two-storey houses b) Annexes, store-rooms, and garages are not allowed c) Respect for the National and the Municipal building regulations d) First and second floor levels should be requested in the Town Hall e) Use a Town Hall's expandable project-type or a project that respects these regulations (subject to approval by town hall) f) Individual or collective garages available, according to Town Hall plan and regulations g) Use service gallery and its walls h) External whitewashed walls, terraces, wooden or colored aluminum mullions are mandatory i) Overhangs or cantilevered volumes are not allowed j) Number and dimensions of openings are constrained. Mortar frames with a maximum overhang of 1 cm and 20 cm wide, painted in the traditional colors (gray, yellow, green, blue, and rose) are allowed							

Fig. 3: Malagueira's building regulations for the two initially proposed housing types: front yard and backyard. Image courtesy of José Pinto Duarte.

common ground with the Smithsons' approach, Frampton disregarded it, whereas a more ethnographic approach would have seemed preferable for assessing the work of Álvaro Siza.

In contrast to the omission of Team 10 members, Álvaro Siza was a regular presence in - sometimes even the flagship of - Frampton's writings about critical regionalism. However, Siza's affiliation with this architectural approach is challenged by Peter Testa who claims that

For 'Critical Regionalism' to serve as a means of identifying an architectural position I interpret that it demands that the relations between architectural forms and elements be primarily rooted in local traditions, while the elements which make up the architecture may or may not be local.[24]

Therefore, Testa posits the question: Is Siza's architecture 'derived from indigenous sources and ideas? Or conversely, is it derived from universal sources inflected by local conditions?'[25] The tension between universal civilization and rooted culture emerges again as the framework for Testa's criticism on Frampton's position. He argues that 'Frampton's Critical Regionalism, as currently formulated, contains basic methodological problems that neutralize it as a critical position and render it incapable of explicating Siza's architecture. I contend that Siza is not a regionalist architect'.[26] Testa calls this architectural approach a 'non-imitative contextualism'.[27] He claims that 'for Siza the site is an artifact which lies beyond design, as a socio-physical and historical matrix made up of superimpositions, transformations, conflicting demands and interpretations'.[28]

Testa stresses the difficulties of using an umbrella definition, such as critical regionalism, to qualify such a hybrid approach where both the values of the universal civilization and rooted culture are present at the same time. 'Siza's contextualism involves the

construction of relational structures, which include systematic transgressions, and his works do not simply develop by replication or analogy to the setting. [...] This architecture is both autonomous and involved with its surroundings.'[29]

Testa's critique raises some issues regarding the framework of the concept of critical regionalism. Moreover, Frampton's omission of his fellow Brits, the Smithsons, from his critical regionalism argument is, thus, most remarkable since both parties shared a similar concern with a phenomenological commitment to place. Nevertheless, one could argue that the Smithsons' agenda was dealing with the problems of universal civilization and the machine-served society from inside, from the centre, while Frampton was more concerned with anti-centrist sentiments, such as Siza's, which were located in peripheral positions.

This issue is stressed by Keith Eggener, who draws attention to a paradoxical aspect of the critical regionalist approach.[30] He claims that 'its proponents opposed the domination of hegemonic power and reactionary populism, rampant globalization and superficial nationalism'.[31] However, he also stresses that 'identifying an architecture that purportedly reflects and serves its locality, buttressed by a framework of liberative, empowering rhetoric, critical regionalism is itself a construct most often imposed from outside, from positions of authority'.[32] Jorge Figueira also highlights this position. He argues that 'Frampton seeks to place at the centre of the postmodernism debate a place of an *ethnographic* taste, where a "resistant" architecture rooted in and respectful of the topography can flourish, in a domain where the "tactile" rules over the "visual"'.[33] Borrowing from urban historian Jane M. Jacobs' critique of postcolonial discourse, Eggener argues that 'in stressing place, identity, and resistance over all other architectural and extra-architectural considerations, critical regionalist rhetoric exemplifies the "revisionary form of
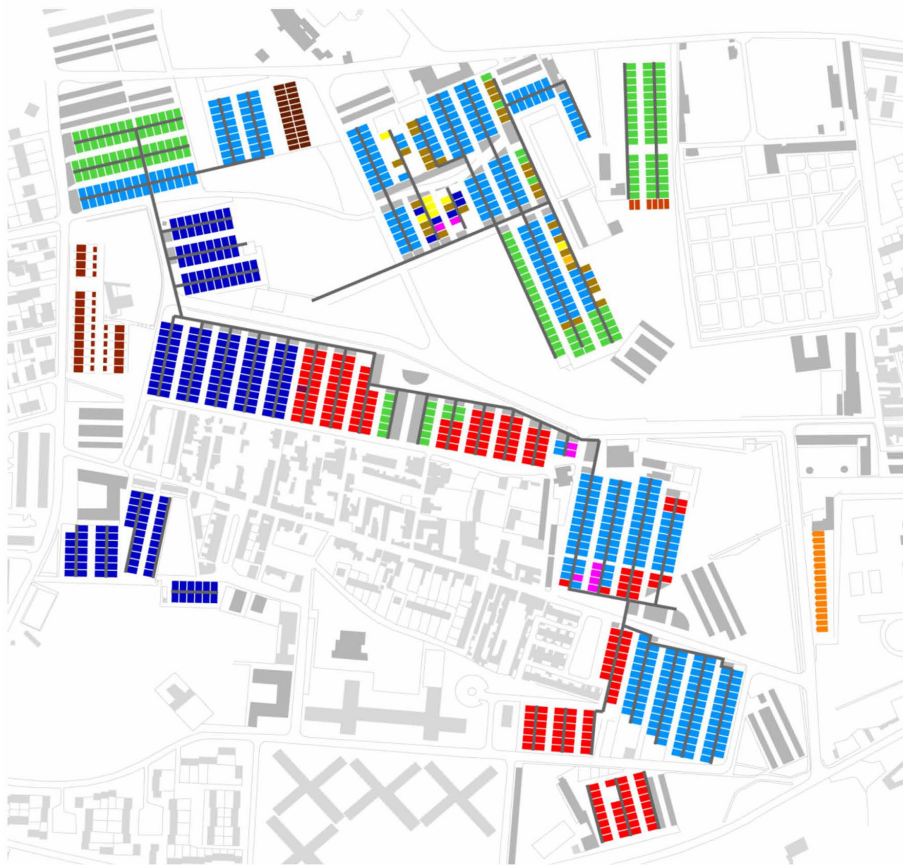
Fig. 4: Breakdown of Malagueira's housing tissue into types developed over the period of 1977/1995. Image courtesy of José Pinto Duarte.

imperialist nostalgia"'. Moreover, he states that 'like postcolonialist discourse in general, critical regionalist writing regularly engages in monumental binary oppositions: East/West, traditional/modern, natural/cultural, core/periphery, self/other, space/place'.[34]

Following Eggener's suggestion of critical regionalism as a postcolonialist concept, I would argue that the resistant capacity of regionalism, evoked by Frampton to defend against the demagogic tendencies of populism, can also be brought in relation with Homi Bhabha's idea of cultural hybridization. According to Bhabha,

Produced through the strategy of disavowal, the reference *of discrimination is always to a process of splitting as the condition of subjection: a discrimination between the mother culture and its bastards, the self and its doubles, where the trace of what is disavowed is not repressed but repeated as something* different - *a mutation, a hybrid.*[35]

However, from the perspective of the status quo, represented for Bhabha by the colonizers, hybridity challenges the classical roles that result from the exercise of authority; it creates a menace to the identification of clear forms of relation between the colonizer and the colonized subjects. He argues that

The paranoid threat from the hybrid is finally uncontainable because it breaks down the symmetry and duality of self/other, inside/outside. In the productivity of power, the boundaries of authority - its reality effects - are always besieged by 'the other scene' of fixations and phantoms.[36]

I would suggest that a condition of thirdness emerges from this challenge to the previously accepted symmetries and dualities. Something that Bhabha describes as 'an "interstitial" agency that refuses the binary representation of social antagonism. Hybrid agencies find their voice in dialectic

that does not seek cultural supremacy or sovereignty'.[37]

Frampton's claim of critical regionalism as an architecture of resistance 'introduces a critical "other-than" choice that speaks and critiques through its otherness'.[38] Likewise, he recuperates Abraham Moles' concept of interstices of freedom to declare that the flourishing of critical regionalism 'within the cultural fissures that articulate in unexpected ways the continents of Europe and America […] is proof that the model of the hegemonic center surrounded by dependent satellites is an inadequate and demagogic description of our cultural potential'.[39]

Keith Eggener argues that critical regionalist writing regularly engages in monumental binary oppositions. However, I contend that stressing polarity is a strategy to enhance a condition of thirdness as a conciliatory outcome between, for example, dogmatic and populist practices and discourses.

Thus, in order to illustrate the extent to which the term 'critical regionalism' stands, or not, for a valid concept to frame Álvaro Siza's architectural approach, I will present and discuss his project for the Malagueira neighbourhood as an example in which the instrumental use of a condition of thirdness emerges as a strategy to resist populism, but also to challenge pre-established canons.

The Malagueira neighbourhood project will be discussed with the focus on two main issues: the definition of the masterplan's strategy (architecture for the people) and contributions to the project brought on by the development of a participatory process (architecture with the people).[40]

An ambivalent approach: exploring conflicts, resisting populism
On 25 April 1974, a bloodless revolution ended forty-eight years of dictatorship in Portugal. On 15 May,

Fig. 5

Fig. 6

Fig. 5: Malagueira neighbourhood - aerial view. Source: As Cidades de Álvaro Siza, Carlos Castanheira and Chiara Porcu (eds). (Porto: Figueirinhas, 2001), p. 49. Image copyright José Manuel Rodrigues / Álvaro Siza, Arquitecto, Lda.
Fig. 6: A street façade in Malagueira neighbourhood. Image: Nelson Mota.

Nuno Portas, an influential contributor to both the national and international promotion of Siza's works, was appointed Secretary of State of Housing and Urban Planning, and one of his first decisions was the creation of a nationwide programme to solve the housing shortage. The SAAL process was created in July 1974, and, due to political problems, ended in October 1976.[41] One of SAAL's main characteristics was its use of a participatory methodology to include future users in the design process.

Álvaro Siza was one of the architects engaged in this endeavour. Siza's projects for the SAAL process in the city of Porto earned him a leading role in the architectural milieu as a successful architect for social housing. This resulted in the city council of Évora inviting him in 1977 to develop a project for a district called Quinta da Malagueira (the Malagueira estate).

Siza started his professional career working with Fernando Távora in the late 1950s. In this period, an intense debate about architecture and national identity fostered a young generation of architects to develop a survey on Portuguese regional architecture. One of the goals of the survey was to assess the extent to which the regime's claim of a national architectural language could be found at the site.[42] Távora, who was one of the central figures in this survey, argued that 'with the survey on Portuguese Regional Architecture, a third way or a new modernity was being launched.'[43]

This debate would be reflected in Álvaro Siza's early works. During the next decade, however, Siza began developing his own architectural approach. In fact, Jorge Figueira argues that in the late 1960s 'Siza realizes that both "tradition" and "modern" are no longer stable values that allow the formulation of a synthesis'. Therefore, he developed the ability to 'insinuate the desire in what is real, and to build simultaneously in autonomy and in relation to the site'.[44] This singular path would gain Siza both national and international recognition in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In fact, Évora's mayor, Abílio Fernandes, reported in 1979 that 'the importance of the [Malagueira] operation required that few risks were taken […]. At that time, [Álvaro] Siza Vieira was the only choice who, because of his *curriculum*, and national and international reputation, would bring about consensus among the municipality executive board'.[45] This statement, published just two years after the project's commission, illustrates the manner in which Siza's architectural approach became politically instrumental as far as being considered consensual.

The Malagueira neighbourhood was part of a larger plan approved in 1975 for the western part of Évora's outskirts. The area of the neighbourhood was 27 hectares (approx. 67 acres), and it was decided to build 1,200 housing units there [fig. 1]. Siza developed the preliminary plan from May to August 1977, and it was approved by the city council in November 1977. Subsequently, the plan was discussed with both the municipality's technicians and politicians, and the members of local housing cooperatives, who represented the future users. The plan established that the housing units should be distributed through different intermediation processes and promotion methods: public, private, and cooperative.

Siza's projects for the initial social housing units consisted of a reduced palette of housing types - only two - with an evolutive scheme to increase the number of rooms according to the family's growth [fig. 2]. Each housing type was built on a parcel of 8x12 m, which became the basic modular unit for the general plan. Siza defined a set of simple building regulations to govern the initial design and the growth of the housing units in the neighbourhood [fig. 3]. The longitudinal arrangement of units in two rows, laid out back-to-back against a common infra-

Fig. 7: Study for the plan's 'grid' relating with the existing infrastructure of the clandestine neighbourhood of S. Maria. Image courtesy of Álvaro Siza, Arquitecto, Lda.

structural wall, form the typical block.[46] The sectors are defined by the arrangement of blocks according to a grid, whose direction varies according to the site's specificities. Over the years, while the plan was being developed, other variations of the two initial housing types were designed, though the basic module of 8x12 m was retained [fig. 4]. The overall scheme results in an immense white sheet spread over the landscape, as Siza likes to call it [fig. 5].

This straightforward strategy was combined with the maintenance of some pre-existent features, thus creating diversity throughout the entire plan's area. Moreover, the articulation of each housing unit or sector together with the topography also give the arrangement of the basic units a variegated appearance. Thus, even though only two basic housing types were used, the multiplicity of different arrangements, their response to the topographical conditions, and the diversity contribute to delivering a result resembling the region's vernacular references [fig. 6]. With this strategy, the sense of identity and diversity found in the existing spontaneous settlements in the vicinity could also be accomplished using the architectural project as a tool to translate the informal features into the plan.

Relating this strategy to the 'crisis in high modernism that came about in the era of decolonisation', Marion von Osten argues that there was a younger generation of European architects, while referring to concepts and working methods as developed by the Smithsons and Team 10,

Who became interested in the everyday, the popular and the discovery of the ordinary. This shift was celebrated by 'as found' aesthetics, which encouraged a new relationship to the constructed environment as it is used and visually perceived by photographs and anthropological studies.[47]

Likewise, Siza's strongest built references for the design strategy were the clandestine neighbourhoods in this specific part of Évora's outskirts, which he terms 'pre-existing sectors' [fig. 7]. Siza enhances the naturalness of these settlements, which he considers as 'apparently spontaneous although in actuality resulting from secular tendencies of transformations and adaptation to the environment'.[48] Siza does not suggest clearing these existing clandestine and sub-standard settlements. Instead, he proposes to integrate them in the plan together with the new constructions.

In order to justify his attention to the spontaneous settlements, Siza argues that the architect's approach can benefit from the maturity of those constructions to deliver a so-called natural architecture. He states that 'only after a lot of experience and a lot of knowledge one achieves that naturalness present in the architecture without architects'. He assumes, thus, that he has 'the obsession to be able to, one day, accomplish that naturalness'.[49]

Siza also comments that in Malagueira 'property limits, little paths, trees, some rocks, were useful as references to our intervention'.[50] The importance given to the site's pre-existing features highlights an approach where the architect rejects the idea of the *tabula rasa* as a methodological principle. In fact, in one of the first sketches for the plan, Siza represents features found on the site (such as abandoned windmills, existing pedestrian paths, illegal settlements) and he adds to the sketch: 'incluir tudo' (include everything) [fig. 8].

This relation with the site's pre-existing features, with the development of an 'as found' approach, is frequently highlighted in the assessment of Siza's works. Frampton goes back to the S. Victor neighbourhood (1975-1977) - a SAAL process project - to identify this approach. He claims that in this project, Siza 'insists on the vital co-existence of the new with the ruined, thereby denying the modernist tradition
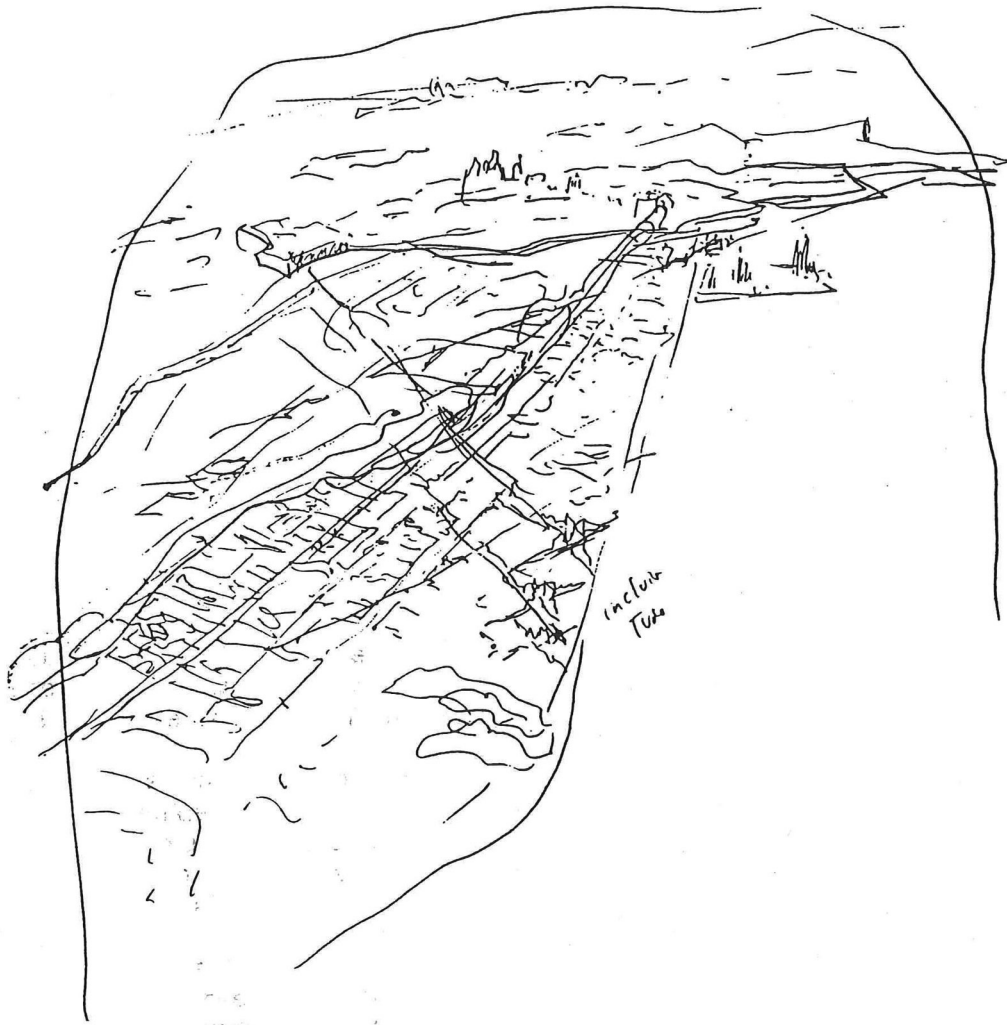
Fig. 8: Sketch made by Siza in the study flight over the Malagueira area. Image courtesy of Álvaro Siza, Arquitecto, Lda.

of the *tabula rasa*, without abandoning the utopian (normative) implications of the rational form'.[51] The idea of co-existence in Siza's approach to the site buttresses this tendency to negotiate modernity (which Frampton calls 'rational form') with the ordinary (the remnants on site).

Peter Testa has also identified this process in Siza's housing project developed in the early 1980s for Berlin's IBA housing programme. 'Siza proposes a dialectical approach which relies on a creative dialogue with the context "as found" rather than universal solutions or subjective inventions.'[52] Testa stresses the value attributed by Siza to what is supposedly unimportant. In fact, this 'archaeology of the ordinary' was present in Siza's work even before he designed social housing projects. In 1972, Siza already highlighted his transition from a selective towards a so-called realistic approach in relation to this context. He claims that

In my initial work, I began by studying the site in order to classify: this is OK, I can use this, this is terrible, etc. But now I take everything into consideration since what interests me is reality. There is no classifying architecture as 'good' or 'bad'.[53]

As in S. Victor or Berlin, the layout for the Malagueira neighbourhood presents strong dependencies on both pre-existing features and the topography. However, the outcome of the project was not only attributable to this archaeology of the ordinary, but also to a complex negotiation process with the different actors involved.

On the one hand, the harmonization of Siza's project with the region's characteristics was praised. In fact, just two years after the beginning of the process, Évora's mayor reacted with satisfaction to the initial outcomes of Siza's project, specially highlighting its 'affordability' and 'compatibility' with the region's vernacular architecture. He claimed that

The author's merit results from being able to introduce in his study and acknowledgement of Alentejo's architecture an inexpensive solution that could be affordable for the most needy members of the population, after the integration of a popular contribution, which he was able to promote and render compatible.[54]

On the other hand, although praised by the local authorities, the development of the Malagueira plan struggled with several difficulties related to central administration. Siza challenged the standard social housing strategy sponsored by the central government - multi-storey housing blocks - opting for a so-called more natural solution. In his proposal, as stated above, Siza clearly preferred using the urban fabric of the illegal and spontaneous neighbourhoods built on the site as his reference, rather than the typical official multi-family social housing buildings built on the southern part of the site [fig. 9] or the rural or bourgeois single-family houses.

This option, together with other unorthodox approaches, created some tensions between the architect and other participants in the process. Siza claims that

I have no knowledge of a project more discussed, step-by-step, more patiently revised and re-revised. At least 450 families, in several meetings, have seen it, listened to its explanation by words, models, sketches, drawings, photomontages; they delivered criticism, proposed changes, approved. Municipality technicians and representatives of the population gave their opinion; technicians from my office, from the engineers' office, from several services, have developed and reviewed it; when necessary, they have suggested changes, analysed the economical and technical viability, and coordinated efforts. Many people have officially approved the project. Others, and sometimes the same, have surreptitiously contested it.[55]

Fig. 9: Siza's houses in Malagueira in the forefront with FFH's housing blocks in the background. Image: Nelson Mota.

This statement reveals Siza's anxieties about dealing with the participatory process and with the bureaucratic apparatus that he faced during the initial phase of the project. However, despite all the struggles and set-backs encountered in the course of the project, Siza managed to deliver the negotiated outcome without shying away from his responsibilities as a technician. Referring to Siza's SAAL experience with user participation in the design process, Frampton argues that 'it was this intense and difficult experience which has led him, in retrospect, to caution against the simplistic populism of "giving the people what they want"'.[56] Both in the SAAL process and in Malagueira, the architect, other technicians, and the dwellers did not go through this participatory process without conflicts.

Siza claims that 'participation procedures are above all critical processes for the transformation of thought, not only of the inhabitants' idea of themselves, but also of the concepts of the architect'.[57] Commenting on his experience with user participation in the SAAL process, Siza states that

Their attitude was sometimes authoritarian, they denied all awareness of the architect's problems, they imposed their way of seeing and conceiving things. The dialogue was very contentious. In front of such a situation, the architect can assume two attitudes. He can acquiesce in order to avoid tension. This stance is, however, purely demagogic and, in this case, the intervention of the architect is in vain. On the contrary, he can confront the conflicts; […]. Consequently, to enter the real process of participation meant to accept the conflicts and not to hide or avoid them, but on the contrary to elaborate them. These exchanges then become very rich, although hard and often difficult.[58]

Using the critical assessment of hegemonic relationship models as a framework, I would argue that Siza's experience with user participation in the design process resonates with Homi Bhabha's concept of ambivalence in the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized: the will of the colonizer to see himself repeated in the colonized, and the need to repudiate that image. Felipe Hernández claims that for Bhabha,

Ambivalence shows that the colonisers are also internally in conflict between their wish to repeat themselves in the colonised [...] *and the anxiety of their disappearance as a result of the repetition, because if the Other turns into the same, difference is eliminated, as are the grounds to claim superiority over it.*[59]

Therefore, one could suggest that Bhabha's concept of ambivalence becomes instrumental in assessing architectural practices where the relation between the architect and 'the Other' (the future user in the case of social housing projects) is a central issue. In fact, commenting on some contemporary architectural approaches, José António Bandeirinha claims that

Today, it is not so much the forms of social organisation or the practices related to them that exemplarily inspire erudite otherness, [but] *rather the morphological dynamic itself - the design of the homes, the neighbourhoods, and their reciprocal mediations, the transformative pressure of time, etc. - which brings very strong motivation to architectural practice.*[60]

Bandeirinha denounces an architectural practice where the context becomes a model instead of an object of transformation, overlooking the role of the architectural project as a mediator. He claims that this resonates with the concept of *mimicry* - borrowed by Bhabha from Lacan - 'a strategy which aims towards the appropriation of the other, granting it simultaneously the illusion of some power, through a false homogenisation'.[61] Bandeirinha argues that some of the SAAL projects were praised

in some critical assessments because of 'their ability to mingle with a formal or material expression which was very closely linked to that of the living and urban spaces, "popular spaces", in the end resorting to a *mimicry* effect, *avant la lettre*'. In contrast, he presents Siza's projects in the SAAL process as 'one of the most lucid interpretations of the contours of participation, as a methodological component of the project'.[62] Concerning his methodological approach, Siza claims that

To work as an architect requires great confidence and capacity of affirmation, and, at the same time, a certain distancement [sic]. *This is Brecht's attitude with regard to theatre: distancement does not mean that one does not assume the role, it means that one becomes conscious of acting out that role.*[63]

Referring to Siza's affiliation with Brecht's notion of *Verfremdung*, Bandeirinha claims that, for Siza, 'the commitment with the residents would not imply a direct adoption of their aspirations, but rather the rigorous and permanent consciousness of having their interest made manifest through *representation*, which in this case was Architecture'.[64] Thus, the notion of *Verfremdung* becomes instrumental in supporting a position of resistance to a populist approach where the aspirations of the users would unconditionally define the architect's performance. With the architectural project as mediator, the architect uses it as a tool for the translation of the users' aspirations. In Siza's Malagueira plan, as in Brecht's plays, 'the actor speaks this [both highly polished and plain] language as if he were reciting someone else's words: as if he stood beside the other, distancing himself, and never embodying the other'.[65]

Thirdness and reciprocity: beyond a critical approach

Siza's affiliation with Brecht's notion of *Verfremdung* displaces the architect's action to, on the one hand, an intermediary position, a place of conflicts and tensions, but, on the other hand, also to a place where he has to negotiate consensus. In this process, as in the relation of the colonizer with the colonized, an area emerges that stands between cultures, which Homi Bhabha termed the Third Space. According to Felipe Hernández, Bhabha interprets 'the Third Space as a liminal site between contending and contradictory positions. Not a space of resolution, but one of continuous negotiation'.[66]

This liminal site also resonates with what Tom Avermaete called an epistemological shift in which 'emerges a new viewpoint which conceives the built environment as result, frame and substance of socio-spatial practices'.[67] Avermaete argues that this epistemological shift 'is the result of a reciprocal and multifaceted relationship between different actors, performing on different continents and interacting with the materiality of architecture and urbanism'. As a consequence of the international architectural debate, the author claims that 'from the 1950s onwards architects started to speak "in the name of the people" and criticised modern architecture for its paternalistic, bureaucratic and anti-democratic character'.[68]

Where does critical regionalism stand with regard to its epistemological approach? On the one hand, I contend that reciprocity and interaction are central concepts for the definition of critical regionalism as a process - not a result - where the mitigation of polarities (such as universal civilization and rooted culture) becomes its fundamental goal. On the other hand, the centre-periphery model is still present. The prefix 'critical' is essential to frame this discussion. In fact, Dirk van den Heuvel considers critical regionalism

One of the most improbable propositions in the context debate: that it would be possible to be both contextual and critical. Criticality, or critique is a key modern concept, and presumes an outsider position by definition, or at least an outsider's look.[69]

This reinforces the idea of critical regionalism as a look from the centre towards the periphery. Regionalism is then assessed from a central position that evaluates the criticalness of the peripheral approach. The prefix 'critical', however, assumes a moral tone: what is critical is good whether the uncritical is bad or, rather, popular. Critical regionalism's epistemological approach can also be framed with its emergence in the context of the early 1980s debate on the relationship between the concepts of avant-garde and modernity. In 1981, Jürgen Habermas claimed that the project of modernity has not yet been fulfilled, arguing that 'the modern, avant-garde spirit […] disposes over those pasts which have been available by the objectifying scholarship of historicism, but it opposes at the same time a neutralized history, which is locked up in the museum of historicism'.[70] In the same issue of the journal *New German Critique* in which Habermas's essay was published, Peter Bürger replies, arguing that using modernity and avant-garde as synonyms 'veils the historical achievements of the avant-garde movements. […] Their radical demand to reintegrate art into everyday life is rejected as a false sublation'.[71]

Yet in the same issue, Andreas Huyssen supports Bürger's critique about the interchangeable use of the terms avant-garde and modernism. He claims that

Modernists such as T.S. Eliot and Ortega y Gasset emphasized time and again that it was their mission to salvage the purity of high art from the encroachments of urbanization, massification, technological modernization, in short, of modern mass culture. The avant-garde of the first three decades of this century, however, attempted to subvert art's autonomy, its artificial separation from life, and its institutionalization as 'high-art' which was perceived to feed right into the legitimation needs of the 19th-century forms of bourgeois society.[72]

The interchangeable use of the concepts of modernity and avant-garde was, however, not limited to Habermas. For example, Hilde Heynen argues that in the Frankfurt School's critical theory the concept of avant-garde was tied to the experience of fissure that is typical of modernity, and that both had embedded a logic of negation, of a break with tradition, a critical position.[73] Heynen contends that, for example, 'in Adorno's view it is only by preserving its autonomy that art can remain critical'.[74]

This debate creates an important framework for assessing Siza's architectural approach in the late 1970s with the Malagueira project. The historiography of Portuguese architecture reluctantly assumed an avant-garde approach as its fundamental constituency. Instead of a rupture with the past or with tradition, its ability to build consensus and continuities was repeatedly highlighted. According to Alexandre Alves Costa, 'the sense of continuity in Portuguese architecture lies, above all, in handling language diversity in the temporary and local character of consensus, rather than in the sole purpose of a national identity'.[75] Portuguese architecture is characterized more by a heterodox approach than an orthodox application of the dogma.

Likewise, Jorge Figueira also agrees that Portuguese architecture did not engage in a full experience of modernity. He argues that the most acclaimed architectural approach in the historiography of twentieth-century Portuguese architecture was its engagement in the revision of the modern movement's principles. He claims that

The 'third way', which found expression in a few exceptional works and followed international 'revision of modernism' premises - i.e., the integration of 'tradition' and 'modernity' - resolved the dilemma that persisted throughout the 20th century and was of central importance to Portuguese architectural culture.[76]

However, Figueira argues that those exceptional works[77] - built during the 1950s and 1960s - 'are terminal rather than founding works, i.e. they neither explain nor apply to what followed them'.[78] He claims that 'the work of Álvaro Siza in the 60s and 70s created a *suspension* in time that emerged as a kind of re-foundation of modernism. It was this sort of *seduction* […] that attracted the attention of the international critics'.[79]

Following Bürger's and Huyssen's definitions of modernism as a mission to salvage the purity of high art and the historical avant-garde as an effort to reintegrate art with everyday life, I would contend that Siza's Malagueira project operates within a blurred boundary of those two concepts. On the one hand, Siza reclaims the use of the architectural project as support for his approach, and, on the other hand, his project results in a 'contamination' by the specificities of the context. Therefore, rather than a re-foundation of modernism, I would suggest that Siza's Malagueira project reveals a re-foundation of the avant-garde, where the gap between high culture and the everyday is shortened through the use of a mediation strategy supported by the architectural project.

In the context of this re-foundation of the avant-garde, charged with its univocal perspective, critical regionalism becomes a reductive means of assessing a complex architectural approach such as Siza's. What emerges from the Malagueira project is Siza's hybridity, his position in the Third Space, as suggested by Bhabha. Therefore, I argue that Siza's Malagueira neighbourhood represents an architectural approach that challenges dogmatic preconceptions and resists populism; it undermines any clear hierarchy between centre and periphery, self and other. The creative force that Siza finds in these blurred hierarchies and reciprocities challenges established definitions of modernism, postmodernism, avant-garde, autonomy, participation, or populism.

It entails an embedded condition of thirdness that results from a process of negotiation, in which the architectural project occupies a pivotal position as an instrument of mediation between those opposing poles, rather than a tool to claim architecture's autonomy. After struggling to solve the inevitable conflicts that emerge from this negotiation, the success of this venture depends on a third way that finds its path between dogmatic and demagogical practices and delivers a conciliatory outcome, a negotiated avant-garde.

Notes

1. Kenneth Frampton, 'Prospects for a Critical Regionalism', *Perspecta*, vol. 20 (1983), pp. 147-62.
2. Paul Ricoeur, 'Universal Civilization and National Cultures' in *History and Truth*, trans. by Charles A. Kelbey (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1965), p. 277. This essay was first published in French in 1961 in the journal *Esprit*.
3. Ibid., p. 278.
4. Ibid., p. 282.
5. Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, 'In the Name of the People: The Populist Movement in Architecture', *Forum*, 25:3 (February 1976), p. 8. This essay was first published in German in 1975 in the journal *Bauwelt*.
6. Ibid., p. 26.
7. Alexander Tzonis and Liane Lefaivre, 'The Grid and the Pathway. An Introduction to the Work of Dimitris and Susana Antonakakis. With Prolegomena to a History of the Culture of Modern Greek Architecture', *Architecture*

in Greece, 15, 1981, pp. 164-178.

8. Ibid., p. 172.

9. Ibid., p. 174.

10. Ibid., p. 176.

11. Kenneth Frampton, 'Prospects for a Critical Regionalism', p. 148; original emphasis. For a critique of the relation between critical regionalism and the polarity of 'civilization versus culture', see also Alan Colquhoun, 'The Concept of Regionalism' in *Postcolonial Spaces*, ed. by Gülsüm Baydar Nalbantoğlu and Chong Thai Wong (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1997), pp. 13-23.

12. Kenneth Frampton, 'Prospects for a Critical Regionalism', p. 148.

13. Mark Crinson, 'Singapore's Moment: Critical Regionalism, Its Colonial Roots and Profound Aftermath', *The Journal of Architecture*, 13:5 (2008), p. 587.

14. Kenneth Frampton, 'Prospects for a Critical Regionalism', p. 149.

15. Kenneth Frampton, 'Towards a Critical Regionalism: Six Points for an Architecture of Resistance', in *The Anti-Aesthetic. Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. by Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983), pp. 16-30.

16. Kenneth Frampton, 'Towards a Critical Regionalism', p. 20.

17. Ibid.

18. cf. Dirk van den Heuvel, 'Another Sensibility - The Discovery of Context', OASE 76 (2009), pp. 21-46, esp. p. 43.

19. Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2000), p. 132.

20. Dirk van den Heuvel, p. 23.

21. Ibid., p. 24.

22. Ibid., p. 35.

23. Ibid., p. 41.

24. Peter Testa, *The Architecture of Álvaro Siza* (Porto: Edições da FAUP, 1988), p. 11. This study was originally published in 1984 by the MIT, Department of Architecture, Program in History, Theory and Criticism; as 'Thresholds working paper 4'.

25. Ibid., p. 11.

26. Ibid., p. 10.

27. Ibid., p. 130.

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., p. 132.

30. Keith Eggener, 'Placing Resistance: A Critique of Critical Regionalism', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 55:4 (May 2002), pp. 228-37.

31. Ibid., p. 230.

32. Ibid., p. 228.

33. Jorge Figueira, 'Filling the Void: Post-Modernism and Portuguese Architecture, 1960s-1980s', *Murphy*, 1 (March 2006), pp. 180-200; original emphasis.

34. Keith Eggener, p. 234.

35. Homi K. Bhabha, 'Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817', *Critical Inquiry*, 12:1 (Autumn 1985), pp. 153; original emphasis.

36. Homi K. Bhabha, 'Signs Taken for Wonders: Questions of Ambivalence and Authority Under a Tree Outside Delhi, May 1817', p. 158.

37. Homi K. Bhabha, 'Cultures in Between', *Artforum*, 32:1 (September 1993), p. 212. cf. with Edward Soja's idea of thirding-as-othering; see Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace. Journey to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 60-70.

38. cf. Edward Soja, p. 61

39. Kenneth Frampton, 'Prospects for a Critical Regionalism', p. 149.

40. cf. Michael Shamiyeh, 'Foreword', in *What People Want. Populism in Architecture and Design*, ed. by Michael Shamiyeh and DOM Research Laboratory (Basel: Birkhäuser, 2005), pp. 25-26.

41. For an insightful approach to the SAAL process, see: José António Bandeirinha, *O Processo SAAL e a Arquitectura no 25 de Abril de 1974* (Coimbra: Coimbra University Press, 2007).

42. cf. Sindicato Nacional dos Arquitectos, *Arquitectura Popular em Portugal* (Lisbon: SNA, 1961). For a comprehensive reading of the architectural discourse and practice in Portugal in the 1940s and 1950s, see José António Bandeirinha, *Quinas Vivas. Memória Descritiva de alguns episódios significativos do conflito entre fazer moderno e fazer nacional na Arquitectura portuguesa dos anos 40* (Porto: FAUP Publicações, 1996) and Ana Tostões, *Os Verdes Anos*

na Arquitectura Portuguesa nos anos 50 (Porto: FAUP Publicações, 1997).

43. Fernando Távora, 'Prefácio', in Irene Ribeiro, *Raul Lino, Pensador Nacionalista da Arquitectura* (Porto: FAUP Publicações, 1994), p. 5.

44. Jorge Figueira, 'Um Mundo Coral. A Arquitectura de Álvaro Siza', in *O Arquitecto Azul* (Coimbra: Coimbra University Press, 2010), pp. 71-72; trans. by the author.

45. Abílio Fernandes 'O Presidente da C. M. Évora fala sobre o projecto', *Arquitectura*, 132 (1979), p. 36; all the references to the journal *Arquitectura* were translated from the Portuguese by the author.

46. For an extensive study of Malagueira housing types using shape grammar methodologies, see José Pinto Duarte, *Personalizar a Habitação em Série: Uma gramática discursiva para as casas da Malagueira do Siza* (Lisbon: Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation / FCT-MCTES, 2007).

47. Marion von Osten, 'In Colonial Modern Worlds', in *Colonial Modern. Aesthetics of the Past - Rebellions for the Future*, ed. by Tom Avermaete, Serhat Karakayali, and Marion von Osten (London: Black Dog Publishing, 2010), p. 24. For an insightful approach to Team 10's members and activities, see *Team 10, 1953-1981. In Search of a Utopia of the Present*, ed. by Max Risselada and Dirk van den Heuvel (Rotterdam: NAi publishers, 2005).

48. Álvaro Siza, 'Plano de pormenor de uma area de 27ha integrada no Plano de Expansão Oeste de Évora', *Arquitectura*, 132 (1979), p. 38.

49. Interview of Álvaro Siza by Enrico Molteni (Oporto, 28 April 1996), in Enrico Molteni, *Álvaro Siza. Barrio de la Malagueira, Évora* (Barcelona: Edicions UPC, 1997), p. 47; all the citations from this book were translated from the Spanish by the author.

50. Interview of Álvaro Siza by Marc Emery, *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui*, 211 (1980). In Enrico Molteni, *Álvaro Siza*, p. 111.

51. Kenneth Frampton, 'Poesis and Transformation: the Architecture of Álvaro Siza', in *Álvaro Siza. Poetic Profession*, ed. by Pierluigi Nicolin (Milano: Electa, 1986), p. 14.

52. Peter Testa, p. 75.

53. Álvaro Siza, Controspazio, 9 (1972); quoted in Bernard Huet, '"Álvaro Siza, architetto 1954-79", Padiglione d'Arte Contemporanea di Milano, 1979', in *Álvaro Siza*, ed. by Pierluigi Nicolin, p. 179.

54. Abílio Fernandes, p. 36.

55. Álvaro Siza, 'Notas sobre o trabalho em Évora', *Arquitectura*, 132 (1979), p. 38.

56. Kenneth Frampton, 'Poesis and Transformation', p. 12.

57. Interview of Álvaro Siza by France Vanlaethem, 'Pour une architecture epurée et rigoreuse', *ARQ Architecture / Quebec*, 14 (August 1983). Quoted in Frampton, 'Poesis and Transformation, p. 12.

58. Ibid., p. 13.

59. Felipe Hernández, *Bhabha for Architects* (London and New York: Routledge, 2010), p. 41.

60. José António Bandeirinha, '"Verfremdung" vs. "Mimicry". The SAAL and some of its reflections in the current day', in *Let's talk about Houses: Between North and South*, ed. by Delfim Sardo (Lisbon: Athena, 2010), p. 72.

61. Ibid., p. 73.

62. Ibid., p. 75.

63. Interview of Álvaro Siza by Alejandro Zaera Polo, 'Getting Through Turbulence. An Interview with Álvaro Siza', *El Croquis*, 68/69 (1994), p. 11.

64. José António Bandeirinha, p. 75; original emphasis.

65. Ernst Bloch, '"Entfremdung, Verfremdung": Alienation, Estrangement', *The Drama Review: TDR*, 15:1 (Autumn 1970), p. 124.

66. Felipe Hernández, p. 95.

67. Tom Avermaete, 'Nomadic Experts and Travelling Perspectives: Colonial Modernity and the Epistemological Shift in Modern Architecture Culture', in *Colonial Modern*. ed. by Tom Avermaete, Serhat Karakayali and Marion von Osten, p. 141.

68. Tom Avermaete, p. 146.

69. Dirk van den Heuvel, p. 46.

70. Jürgen Habermas, 'Modernity versus Postmodernity', *New German Critique*, 22, (Winter, 1981), p. 5.

71. Peter Bürger, 'The Significance of the Avant-Garde for Contemporary Aesthetics: A Reply to Jürgen Habermas', *New German Critique*, 22, (Winter, 1981), p. 21.

72. Andreas Huyssen, 'The Search for Tradition: Avant-

Garde and Postmodernism in the 1970s', *New German Critique*, 22, (Winter, 1981), p. 27.

73. Hilde Heynen, *Architecture and Modernity. A Critique*. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1999), pp. 26-27.

74. Hilde Heynen, p. 192.

75. Alexandre Alves Costa, *Álvaro Siza. Architectures 1980-1990* (Lisbon: Imprensa Nacional-Casa da Moeda / Centre de Création Industrielle Centre Georges Pompidou, 1990), p. 12; trans. by the author.

76. Jorge Figueira, 'Filling the Void', p. 180.

77. Jorge Figueira refers to Fernando Távora's Santa Maria da Feira market (1953-59) and the church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus (1962-75) designed by Nuno Teotónio Pereira, Nuno Portas, and Pedro Vieira de Almeida.

78. Jorge Figueira, 'Filling the Void', p. 180.

79. Ibid., p. 181; original emphasis.

Biography

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Discotheques, Magazines and Plexiglas:
Superstudio and the Architecture of Mass Culture

Ross K. Elfline

If design is merely an inducement to consume, then we must reject design; if architecture is merely the codifying of the bourgeois models of owner- ship and society, then we must reject architecture; if architecture and town planning [are] *merely the formalization of present unjust social divisions, then we must reject town planning and its cities … until all design activities are aimed towards meeting primary needs. Until then, design must disappear. We can live without architecture.*[1]

With these words, spoken in 1971 at the Architec- tural Association in London, Adolfo Natalini, founding member of the Italian Radical Architecture collec- tive Superstudio, spelled out, in the boldest terms possible, the group's withdrawal from architecture as it had previously been practiced. As a discipline that actively supported and even perpetuated exist- ing social and economic divisions, design became an activity to be resisted. And yet, as an apparent paradox (and in a career riddled with paradoxes and contradictions), Superstudio retained the title 'architects'. Over the 14 years of their career, from 1966 through 1980, the collective of six architects proceeded to turn out a dizzying array of images and objects - from furniture to glossy magazine illustrations; from polemical essays to multimedia museum installations - all of which reflected criti- cally on the discipline of design and its founding principles. All the while, they obstinately refused to produce a single building.

It would be easy to read this introductory jeremiad as an orthodox statement of avant-garde refusal, in line with myriad other anti-art pronouncements of a previous era. However, far more important are the terms set down by Natalini to articulate Super- studio's withdrawal: by failing to meet humankind's 'primary needs', architecture had become increas- ingly removed from the core concerns of humanity. For architecture to once again obtain an operative and critical agency, then, it must respond to a set of basic concerns. Architecture's battleground, therefore, must - once again - be the viscera of the everyday, the ebb and flow and minutiae of our daily lives.

At this point, however, one must proceed with caution. The phrases 'primary needs' and 'viscera of the everyday' may all too quickly conjure up images of an atavistic return to nature, and while an anti- avant-garde and regressive rejection of advanced technologies may apply to some of Superstudio's work - particularly their later works - it cannot adequately account for the group's early embrace of the systems and apparatuses of advanced capital- ism.[2] As was so often the case with members of the artistic and architectural pre-war avant-gardes and post-war neo-avant-gardes, 'the everyday' meant engaging head-on with the mediums and modes of popular or mass culture. Indeed, as architectural historian Beatriz Colomina has previously noted, 'Modern architecture becomes "modern" not simply by using glass, steel, or reinforced concrete, as is usually understood, but precisely by engaging with

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the new mechanical equipment of the mass media: photography, film, advertising, publicity, publications, and so on.'[3] Superstudio's work of the late 1960s through the 1970s represents a paradigmatic example of a late-modern attempt to engage with the forms and logic of mass media technologies.

To better understand Superstudio's often-contradictory work, and to gain a clearer insight into late modern Radical Architecture in general, it is important to investigate the group's career-long fixation with the architecture of the everyday, while paying special attention to their often agonistic relationship to popular cultural and mass media forms, a relationship that entailed, at times, a tentative embrace of popular culture, at others, a more analytical uncertainty towards its critical value. Ultimately, Superstudio's provocative use of popular culture forms was meant to challenge a conservative and hidebound institution owing to their arguably more 'open' or democratic nature.[4] However, the group's evasive attitude towards mass culture also points to an important problem: the escalating difficulty in finding spaces for individual action within a late capitalist system that co-opts any available space of autonomy. In charting Superstudio's shifting attitudes towards their so-called 'primary needs', one notes three distinct moments from their career that are illustrative of their different approaches: their initial attempts to develop an architecture of atmosphere, their subsequent investigations into paper architecture, and, finally, the group's ultimate endeavours to theorize the living of our daily lives as architectural acts. Of signal importance early in their career are Superstudio's investigations into the architectural implications of atmosphere.

Towards an architecture of atmosphere

The statement of abstention quoted at the outset was one of several in which Superstudio vocally withdrew from the act of building, and it is important, before proceeding further, to contextualize this statement. To be a progressive architect in

Italy in the post-war years was to be one of thousands in a profession where there were very limited options.[5] On the one hand, one could cater to Italy's growing cultural and economic elite, made possible by the so-called 'economic miracle' of the post-war years. To do so would have meant being complicit with an advanced capitalist system that left vast segments of the Italian population in abject poverty during and after the country's immense economic resurgence. On the other hand, an up-and-coming architect who wanted to effect change on behalf of Italy's working classes could fight for one of a small handful of commissions for public housing projects, real estate schemes that often opened up urban areas to further development by Italy's predatory housing speculators, thus playing into the same capitalist system they sought to reject.[6] Superstudio's solution, therefore, was a third avenue: complete abstention. As Natalini stated in the same 1971 lecture quoted above: '[One] type of action is that of refusing all participation, staying isolated and apart, while continuing to produce ideas and objects so intentionally different that they are unusable by the system without becoming involved in fierce self-criticism.' Natalini continued, by stating that, 'For us, architecture is always opposed to building.'[7]

Superstudio's stubborn abstention from the practice of building finds a close parallel in Italian political theory in the mid-1960s, particularly in the writings of the autonomist Marxist agitator Mario Tronti, whose so-called 'Strategy of Refusal' had a profound influence upon Italian artists and architects at the time.[8] In his signature work, the 1966 book *Workers and Capital*, Tronti countered orthodox Marxist positions that lionized the proletariat's productive force.[9] The problem with stressing the dynamic and virile capacity of Italy's workers, Tronti claimed, is that capitalist forces can all too easily reorganize the means of production around these very characteristics. The innovative industriousness of the labouring class may once again find itself corralled, harnessed, and contained by capital.

Importantly, for this generation of Italian architects and artists, Tronti and the autonomists averred that the workers' response should be not just nonparticipation and absenteeism but also outright sabotage within the factory. In short, one of Tronti's solutions called for Italy's workers to remain within the factory while performing insurrectionist actions, and this position finds a parallel in Superstudio's choice to remain virally within the discipline of architecture, producing 'self-critical' objects and images.

This social and economic climate sets the stage for the appearance of Superstudio's early furniture designs. While it is tempting to see these objects as either yet more in a long line of architect-designed interior goods that bank on the brand name of a prominent architect, or a desperate attempt on the part of a new generation of out-of-work architects to go on designing something, *anything*, these are hasty conclusions that should be avoided. As the previous statements indicate, these 'intentionally different' objects were meant to *replace* building as an architectural concern - they *are* architecture and are positioned in opposition to building as agitational elements within the domestic sphere. In an important early essay, published in 1967, the group articulated the problem they saw with urban living at the time. The group's members declared, 'Apart from those fortunate mortals who can afford to build their own "house" (ideally in their own image and likeness), and those lucky enough to find one in which it is possible to live even without putting paintings up on the walls, those who live in "residential blocks" usually live in a room, a cubic box without memories, with vague indications of top and bottom, entrance and exit, a Euclidean parallelepiped painted white or distempered in bright colours, washable or no, but always without surprises or without hope.'[9] With this essay, and this statement in particular, Superstudio shifts the attention away from the tectonics of the building itself in order to consider what everyday life is like when lived inside that container. The picture that is painted is a dim

one, to be sure: the rigid geometry of the housing block itself is carried over to the character of the interior, now seen as a mere 'cubic box'. The drabness of the interior infects the lives of the inhabitants who yearn to find some sort of grounding in a space 'without memories' and 'without surprises or without hope'. In short, Superstudio makes a claim here for the atmosphere of the domestic environment as an architectural concern. The appointments of the building's interior are not extrinsic to architecture but rather of primary importance to the discipline, especially when one accounts for the profound effects that such environments have on their users' bodies and psyches.

To counter and disrupt the dispirited spaces of Italy's nascent modernist apartment blocks the group so despised, Superstudio and their Florentine Radical Architecture cohorts sought inspiration from a seemingly unlikely source: the new chain of Piper Clubs that popped up in Italy's urban centres starting in the mid-1960s. As Andrea Branzi, founding member of the Florentine group Archizoom, described the new nightclubs, 'The spatial model of the Pipers consisted in a sort of immersion in a continuous flow of images, stroboscopic lights and very loud stereophonic music; the goal was total estrangement of the subject, who gradually lost control of his inhibitions in dance, moving towards a sort of psychomotor liberation. This did not mean for us a passive surrender to the consumption of aural and visual stimuli, but a liberation of the full creative potential of the individual. In this sense the political significance of the Pipers is evident as well.'[10]

Thus, in the Piper Clubs, a distinctly low culture establishment where one could indulge in one's love of popular music and consumerist excess, Italy's Radical Architects discovered spaces in which an individual could realize just the sort of bodily and psychological liberation that they deemed impossible within Italy's new, anonymous residential blocks. Note, especially, that Branzi is careful to

say that the club-goer does not submit passively to his environment. Rather, as an active participant in the construction of the situation within the club, he is freed to reach a state of radical emancipation. A state of play reigned in such spaces, and through playing, the individual's creative actions escaped the bounds of productive capital.[11] Importantly, for the Radical Architects, this newly liberatory architecture was realized not through novel formal mutations of the building shell - after all, the Piper Clubs were themselves large, empty black boxes - but rather through the addition of pulsing music and, significantly for Superstudio, light: acid-bright, strobing, vertiginous light.

Thus, it is not surprising that, when Superstudio turned towards the production of 'intentionally different' objects, their early research focused on pursuing the architectural implications of lighting fixtures. Lamps, such as the *Passiflora* and the *Gherpe* [fig. 1] fixtures, introduced to the market in 1966 and 1969, respectively, were fabricated in pale yellow plastic or a sharply glowing puce Plexiglas. Tables made of translucent Plexiglas, such as the 1969 *Falling Star* table, shocked the design community with their kitschy or gaudy colours. The addition of such objects to a room did not alter the physical parameters of the room itself, but did lend a different ambience to an existing living space previously lacking in character. When illuminated, the Plexiglas fixtures would stain a given room with its deeply saturated tone, temporarily transforming the space by casting an acidic light against the walls.

In addition to the stylistic mutations of the interior space, in keeping with an age of planned obsolescence, the plastic objects bespoke impermanence: an owner could abandon the object after a period of time only to replace it with another that better suits his immediate stylistic whims. In short, Superstudio indulged in the baser aspects of consumer culture by adopting what architectural historian and theorist Reyner Banham identified as a 'throw-away

aesthetic', a term the author deployed to counter the assumed timelessness of International Style modernism.[12] Similarly, Superstudio likewise articulated a desire to rethink the modernist ideal of timeless beauty. In a 1971 essay entitled 'Destruction, Metamorphosis and Reconstruction of the Object', the group proclaimed that, while the desire to create durable objects remains strong, it should not be the designer's ultimate goal. They described the sorts of consumer goods they strove to produce as, 'Objects perhaps created for eternity from marble and mirrors, or for the present from paper of flowers - objects made to die at their appointed hours, and which have this sense of death amongst their characteristics.'[13] Despite the morbid tone of this passage, the group tacitly advocates both the temporary delights that consumer goods provide and the rapid turnover of commodities as one product swiftly gives way to next year's model.

Superstudio's initial fascination with the everyday, then, was established through a sustained engagement with the sites, objects, and economic logic of popular culture and its mass-produced forms. Mass culture and shopping were, in Superstudio's mind, synonymous with the liberation of the individual. Market power led, seemingly inevitably, to personal agency. Just as Branzi's club-goer was an active participant in the construction of the events within the Piper Club, so too were Superstudio's design consumers vigorous agents in their power to alter their surroundings through the purchases they made. Herein lies the 'political significance' of the popular culture to which Branzi alluded and to which Superstudio uncritically subscribed early on. We see here the seeds for Superstudio's sustained engagement with an architecture produced by the users themselves. In the ensuing years, however, the group came to reassess this position, which essentially pitted the market for design goods (which, debatably, the individual middle-class consumer could control) against the real-estate market (where the average citizen is perceived as relatively power-

Fig. 1: Superstudio (A. Natalini, C. Toraldo di Francia, R. Magris, G. P. Frassinelli, A. Magris, A. Poli), Lamp, *Gherpe*, 1968, © Gian Piero Frassinelli. Photo: CNAC/MNAM/Dist. Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY.

less), though as they shifted their focus Superstudio remained tethered to capitalist sites of production and distribution.

Paper architecture and the aesthetics of circulation

Beginning in 1969 and continuing through 1974, Superstudio turned its attention to a series of conceptual 'paper architecture' proposals published in numerous international magazines and journals. Such works, in which hypothetical buildings and urban design schemes appear solely as illustrations on the printed page, never to be realized in solid form, have long been an outlet for architectural dreamers who wish to foresee a hopeful future world that may come to pass once technological advances catch up to the designer's vision.[14] Superstudio, though, as noted at the outset, was far less sanguine about the discipline of architecture and its utopian possibilities, and as such the group argued for this shift towards a more immaterial medium on more self-critical terms. Importantly, the new mode of expression was accompanied by a self-reflexive re-examination of their previous attitude towards mass culture. In a 1971 article, they stated, 'It became very clear that to continue drawing furniture, objects and other similar household decorations was not the solution to the problems of living in houses and neither was it the solution to the problems of life itself. … It also became clear that no beautification or cosmetics were sufficient to remedy the ravages of time, the errors of man and the bestialities of architecture.'[15] Their ultimate solution was to 'becom[e] ever more detached from these design activities' by pursuing a number of utterly unfeasible, and, in some cases, completely dysfunctional, activities. Once again, then, a further rejection of and withdrawal from architecture as it had previously been practiced became necessary.

Superstudio's position in the early 1970s also sets them apart in an important way from others within the architectural neo-avant-garde of the time. For instance, the British group Archigram advocated an architecture of impermanence and expendability, a wildly consumerist stance that Superstudio, by this point, had come to reject. More importantly, though, Superstudio and Archigram are all too often grouped together due to their decisions to embrace utopian urban projections. The signature difference, as we shall see, is that, while Archigram steadfastly adhered to architecture's potential to reform and rebuild society through advanced technological apparatuses, Superstudio rejected such optimism on grounds that it represented a top-down, technocratic view of design and the authoritarian role of the designer as master planner. Indeed, this distinguishes Superstudio, and Radical Architecture in general, from much of the post-war vanguard that saw the megastructure as an urban planning panacea.[16] From Yona Friedman to the Japanese Metabolists, one group after another saw in the megastructure the ability to provide an 'open' framework for planning that still dictates the broader means by which its residents respond to and inhabit the landscape.[17] Importantly, Superstudio chooses the megastructure as a target for their most trenchant criticism.

Superstudio's primary means of critical demonstration became the photo collage through which they illustrated imaginary urban dystopias in which a given aspect of International Style modernism or modern consumer culture was taken to its absurd, albeit logical, conclusion. The result was a series of horrific urban design prophecies that brought into high relief the technocratic aims of architecture as an institution. Certainly the most famous of these, and the one that has become emblematic of the Radical Architecture movement in general, is the group's 1969 work The Continuous Monument. First published in the Italian architecture journal *Domus*, the project was later fleshed out in the pages of *Casabella*, the British journal *Architectural Design*, and, finally, *Japan Interior Design*.[18] The Continuous Monument, as the title implies, was an illustrated

Fig. 2

Fig. 3

Fig. 2: Superstudio (A. Natalini, C. Toraldo di Francia, R. Magris, G. P. Frassinelli, A. Magris, A. Poli), *Motorway*, 1969, © Gian Piero Frassinelli. Photo: CNAC/MNAM/Dist. Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY.

Fig. 3: Superstudio (A. Natalini, C. Toraldo di Francia, R. Magris, G. P. Frassinelli, A. Magris, A. Poli), *Monumento Continuo* (*The Continuous Monument*), ca. 1969, © Gian Piero Frassinelli. Photo: CNAC/MNAM/Dist. Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY.

proposition for a single cubic structure that resembles a high-modernist steel-and-glass high-rise set on its side and extended laterally around the earth. In one photomontage after another, the cold monolith, clad in a blank, isotropic grid, is witnessed snaking its way across the landscape, appearing at once in Rome, at another time in India, and later in both the desert of the American west and across the island of Manhattan [figs. 2-4]. Its reach is global, its domination of the landscape total.

The silent uniformity of the building that resolutely takes over every bit of available land - from abandoned deserts to tourist sites to metropolises - parodies the pervasiveness of the Modern Movement: it is the word 'international' in the International Style to which the group was calling attention. When considering the repetitive sameness of nearly mass-produced steel-and-glass boxes popping up in urban centres from Brasilia to Tel Aviv to London to Tokyo, architects and critics alike worried over the loss of local customs in the face of such imposing Western culture, and Superstudio's work must be considered an important addition to this ongoing conversation.[19] With The Continuous Monument, Superstudio imagined an ironic 'final solution' to the problem of human habitation: all other buildings would cease to exist with this singular architectural act in which both the building (and the activities that it ostensibly accommodated) achieved a level of stultifying monotony that was rendered horrific. Here, modernist efficiency has led, seemingly inevitably, to its final, pure ideal, and individual variation falls away entirely. In describing this project, Adolfo Natalini explained, 'Superstudio's Continuous Monument … used negative utopia with critical intent. Metaphor, *demonstratio per absurdum*, and other rhetorical expedients were all employed to broaden the discussion about architecture. Superstudio's involvement was manifestly didactic: to analyze and annihilate the discipline of architecture by using "popular" means of illustration and consumer literature.' And, referring

to those who failed to see the irony of the work, he noted, 'Naturally there were those who could not see beyond the metaphors and treated everything as yet another utopian proposition … Too bad for them.'[20] Thus, modernism's resolute search for perfection and purity was parodied in a hyperbolic display of pure monumentality, suggesting the gruesome future if Modern Movement tenets were followed through absolutely, logically, and rigorously.

It is important to look more closely at Natalini's statement, though, specifically at how it is that The Continuous Monument's 'annihilation' of architecture would be accomplished through the use of '"popular" means of illustration and consumer literature'. What often goes unmentioned in the critical response to this important project is the fact that it incorporated mass-reproduced illustrations within the individual photomontages, while the resulting series of images was itself mass-reproduced and widely distributed through the pages of different international architecture magazines. The Continuous Monument, then, was shot through with the logic of mechanical reproduction and mass distribution. As architectural critic and historian Sander Woertman has argued, this was an essential component of Superstudio's programme at the time: 'The media … were illustrative of a changing society whose problems the radical avant-garde were addressing. Printed media was the way the emerging consumer society expressed its desires; ads, news, and entertainment were communicated through a multitude of magazines and newspapers.'[21] What needs to be accounted for, then, are the implications for the field of architecture when mass-produced and -distributed means are deployed *as architecture*, rather than merely serving as instruments through which one might reproduce images of existing architectural works.

Considering the formal logic of both the figures represented in and the mediums used to create and distribute The Continuous Monument leads to some

important conclusions. First, on the level of content, the sampled images often depict channels of movement. The Continuous Monument, as it wends its way across the depicted landscapes, often mimics and mirrors a variety of byways, from ancient aqueducts to modern highways, revealing how the monolith itself is peripatetic: this is a monument on the move. In one particular image [see fig. 2], first appearing in the original 1969 *Domus* article and reproduced in each subsequent version, the building is seen from an aerial perspective as it follows the curve of an Italian highway, passes by a small rural village and continues on into the hilly distance. The accompanying text cryptically announces, 'The *autostrada* (motorway) is the yardstick of the dimension: the first continuous monument.'[22] Thus, one of the primary inspirations for Superstudio's unorthodox and mammoth architectural work is, arguably, not an architectural object at all, but rather an infrastructural passageway that serves to link remote locations. It is not a site, therefore, but a conduit connecting other sites.

Second, the source imagery is often taken from postcards or travel brochures, once again suggesting a subject in perpetual motion. Scanning the work's various images in its 1971 *Casabella* iteration, a viewer would feel a thrilling rush at being whisked away to European capitals, exotic Asian waterways, the observation decks of New York skyscrapers or the ancient pilgrimage sites of the Near East. If one used the structure as a thoroughfare for such a journey, it would be possible to travel from the Palazzo Pitti in Superstudio's home city of Florence to the group's imagined 'New New York' where the city's skyscrapers were to have been abandoned and preserved as important historical artefacts. All these images are culled from flyers designed to instil in viewers an intense desire to travel far and wide. Perhaps most obviously, though, the postcard itself is designed for travel, for circulation around the world via the postal service. The very nature of this small, but rigid, piece of card stock is that it does

not stay put in one location. While it is designed to represent some 'original' locale, as a photographic image, its logic is peripatetic, like the tourist who mails it. As such, Superstudio deploys the postcard and, by extension, the international architecture journal to replace the place-bound, fetishized, and auratic architectural work with a fugitive and degradable object that exists only in multiple.

Finally, the resulting images are ultimately reproduced and mailed to an international audience of design and architecture enthusiasts who are knit together into a diffuse global communications network. The production of all these reams of paper and the profusion of all these images argue for an alternative mode of 'architecture', defined not by its solidity but by its ability to communicate. Superstudio, in addition to other architects, critics and urban theorists in the 1960s and 70s, had begun to look beyond both the building and the city as the primary epiphenomena of a global culture defined by the connections to be made across cultures and continents instead of the unique qualities specific to a given locus. In short, the flow of information cannot be contained within the confines of a building's four walls, and the exchange of ideas no longer takes place in the public forum; instead it is the television, the telephone, the telex machine and, of course, the magazine that bring together individuals. The attempt amongst architects from the 1960s to today to keep pace with this amplified information flow has led architectural historian Mark Wigley to term their obsession a 'network fever'. 'Whereas buildings house function,' Wigley states, 'networks are pure function, function without shell. If modern architects are serious in their commitment to function, they will have to reduce their fixation on shells and become responsible for networks.'[23] According to Wigley, magazines and journals exemplify this 'network fever': '[…] All magazines are prosthetic extensions of their readers, far-reaching eyes monitoring a distant world for a particular community', and thus serve to knit together a given community within a

particular social network.[24] The medium through which Superstudio had chosen to communicate their network, therefore, was itself networked, linking together architects and designers in Europe, America, Japan, and elsewhere, thus paralleling the global reach of The Continuous Monument itself while critiquing architecture's continued dependence on the building as its ultimate mode of expression.

Thus, just as The Continuous Monument appears to critique the global marketing of high modernism, it, too, is beholden to the very logic of advanced capitalism that both enables and requires the international circulation of goods, images, and information. Superstudio used the magazine's placelessness (due to circulation) and lack of originality (due to serial repetition and mass production) to counter the place-bound identity and solidity of traditional building, thus discouraging the fetishization of the building-as-luxury good that had come to dominate the architectural culture of the late modern era. All the while, however, thanks to their slick advertisements and carefully styled images of *au courant* interiors, the glossy architecture rags they employed played (and continue to play) a central role in furthering that very fetishization. Thus, in a Deleuzian fashion, Superstudio used the very same tools of capital flow - in this case the globally circulating magazine - to critique the logic of a commodified high modernism from within, creating an architecture of information and communication to counter the design world's continued fascination with the consumer object.[25] By the mid-1970s, Superstudio's antagonism towards the corruptness of consumer culture reached its apex as they made the extreme pronouncement that they would reject all objects entirely in favour of a fully ephemeral architecture. However, in keeping with the contradictions inherent in this form of avant-garde refusal, their position still found them bound inextricably to the systems of late capitalist consumer culture and mass distribution.

The fundamental acts of architecture

Superstudio's career could be written as a gradual process of dematerialization in which the collective first considered the ways in which domestic objects can be used towards architectural ends before examining the critical potential of paper architecture.[26] In the final stage of this narrative, Superstudio ended its career with a phase of 'pure research' in which the group members argued for an architectural practice that would not be mediated by buildings or objects of any kind: the actions and rituals of daily life would be all the 'architecture' society would need.[27] In short, if, according to the Radical Architects, architecture should be a means by which the individual comes to realize his or her 'full creative potential', then this can be achieved not through the mediation of buildings or objects, but through a more direct engagement with the everyday itself, and no building or lamp or magazine article could usefully assist in this goal.

This reading of the arc of Superstudio's career privileges the group's own statements of abstention, refusal, and silence, and overlooks the palpable material vicissitudes of the group's speculative enterprises. For while buildings and objects may disappear from the group's oeuvre, their critiques remain mediated, and one must first attend to the material logic of these forms of mediation, forms that are borrowed from the channels of information flow and mass media culture. Of particular importance from the latter stage of Superstudio's career is a series of poetic works from 1972-73 entitled 'Five Fundamental Acts'. Originally intended as a series of five films, only two would eventually be produced. As with their previous endeavours, however, all five of the 'Fundamental Acts' were published in the pages of *Casabella*, complete with elaborate photomontages and cryptic texts. In the introductory statement to the series, the group asserted that, 'Architecture never touches the great themes, the fundamental themes of our lives. Architecture remains at the edge of our life,

Fig. 4

Fig. 5

Fig. 4: Superstudio (A. Natalini, C. Toraldo di Francia, R. Magris, G. P. Frassinelli, A. Magris, A. Poli), *The Continuous Monument, In the Swamp*, ca. 1969, © Gian Piero Frassinelli. Photo: CNAC/MNAM/Dist. Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY.

Fig. 5: Superstudio (A. Natalini, C. Toraldo di Francia, R. Magris, G. P. Frassinelli, A. Magris, A. Poli), From *Life–Supersurface* (Fruits & Wine), 1971, © Gian Piero Frassinelli. Photo: CNAC/MNAM/Dist. Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY.

and intervenes only at a certain point in the process, usually when behaviour has already been codified.' Due to architecture's perceived impotence and irrelevance, Superstudio proposes to consider the very foundational constructs of everyday life, as doing so, 'becomes an act of coherence'.[28] These 'five fundamental acts of architecture' are 'Life', 'Education', 'Ceremony', 'Love', and 'Death'.

Perhaps the best-known example of Superstudio's architecture of everyday life is found in the first instalment, devoted to the subject of 'Life'. Their design, presented both through the *Casabella* photomontages and in a short film entitled 'Supersurface: An Alternative Model for Life on Earth', proposed a networked grid of electrical wires that would have covered every habitable surface of the planet.[29] As this idea assumes that all buildings would be demolished (either as part of the scheme or by some unnamed apocalypse - the cause is left unclear), the world's inhabitants would be rendered nomads, stopping wherever they chose along their meandering route to plug into the grid [fig. 5]. This networked grid would provide the new migratory citizens with all their basic needs for survival, including sustenance and, if necessary, shelter from the elements - invisible domes would emerge from the web and enclose the wanderer in the event of inclement weather. While remaining tethered to the grid, users may travel the world according to their whims, yielding global citizens who are activated and empowered to make of their lives what they choose. As to the new sense of freedom that the web provides, the narrator of the short film extols the virtues of 'A new mankind freed from induced needs … A new society based no longer on work, nor on power, nor on violence, but on unalienated human relationships'.[30] With greed, want, and status anxiety removed from the social milieu, thanks to the eradication of all consumer objects, individuals would be able to devote more time to interpersonal relationships, to their physical environment, and to their own bodies. With *Supersurface*, then,

architecture's functions as we know them would be absorbed into the network, buried below the surface of the landscape; what would remain visible are the daily rituals that make up the flow of everyday life. Or, as Superstudio claimed in the final statement of their 'Five Fundamental Acts': 'Our only architecture will be our lives.'[31]

As a further illustration of Superstudio's attempt to deploy network aesthetics so as to render the everyday events of one's life architectural acts, take the group's proposal from the second of their 'Fundamental Acts': Education. One component of their re-envisioned educational system is what they termed 'a project for the universal system of information exchange'. Under this scheme, education would become radically decentralized as students learn not in classrooms, but rather at any point where they have access to a computer [fig. 6]. In short, what Superstudio proposes is a system remarkably like the World Wide Web. The full explanation reads as follows:

Imagine five continental complexes each composed of a central computer, a feedback computer, relative auxiliary memory-banks and a concentrator. These complexes collect all possible information. They are connected together by a sixth complex, situated on the moon, equipped with receiving and transmitting apparatus. Four orbiting relay stations cover the whole earth with their areas of transmission. In this way, every point on the earth's surface is connected up to the network of computers. By means of a miniaturized terminal, each single individual can connect to the network described above, and thus obtain all the world's information. The hypothesized 'machine' receives all inquiries and sends answers. If the answer does not satisfy the inquirer, he can refuse it, the machine from thenceforth will bear his refusal (and the proposed alternative) in mind, and will transmit it together with the information supplied by others. In this way, the machine supplies data for decision-making without influencing the decisions
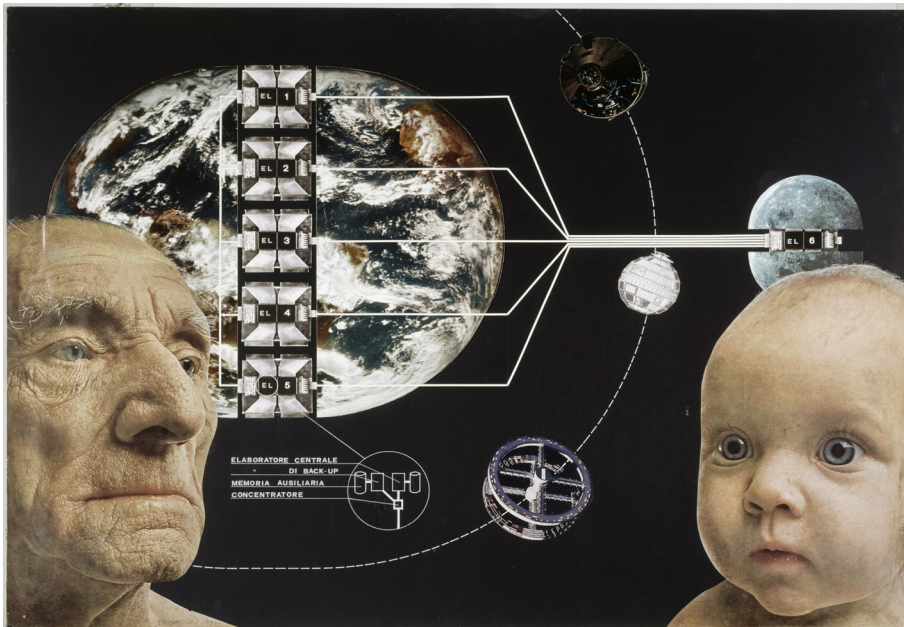
Fig. 6: Superstudio (A. Natalini, C. Toraldo di Francia, R. Magris, G. P. Frassinelli, A. Magris, A. Poli), *Fundamental Actions, 'Life, Education, Ceremony, Love, Death'*, 1971, © Gian Piero Frassinelli. Photo: CNAC/MNAM/Dist. Réunion des Musées Nationaux / Art Resource, NY.

themselves: everyone is connected to everyone else in a form of expanded democracy in which education as a continuous process is consistent with life itself.[32]

Thus, individuals would no longer learn from a central authority figure (teachers would cease to exist) as information would flow to and from every single person connected to the network. Furthermore, everyone would have access to the network, making it a truly 'democratic' tool.

What is most remarkable about the system is the recursive feedback loop that it uses. Instead of individual users logging into the system and receiving the answers to their queries as ultimate truth, they also have the option to 'refuse' the information received and to send it back to the central computer, where it would be collected along with other users who have similarly 'refused' what had been dispensed to them. Therefore, what Superstudio envisioned was not just a networked web of information, but rather a prototype for what is today called 'Web 2.0', in which communities of users control the content of the information that the web distributes.[33] The most notorious examples of these are Wikipedia and other so-called 'wiki' applications, where users are able not only to look up pseudo-encyclopaedic entries but also to add to or correct them as they see fit. No central authority or fact-checker presides over a given entry to check it for accuracy; it is assumed that users will do this themselves over time. No definitive, iron-clad 'truth' results from this process, though a sort of truth-by-committee does develop as users reach a provisional consensus regarding the merits of a certain argument or explanation. The ability to talk back to the source of information is present in Superstudio's plan as well. For them, the primary result is that the machine does not influence the decision-making process, as it exists purely as a conduit for information. All told, this is consistent with their broader aim of creating an architecture

driven by the people themselves, and indeed the global information network they envision is 'continuous with life itself', a life led continually educating oneself.

As supposedly invisible, ephemeral, and transparent as this architecture may seem, it is important to note that it is dependent upon an immense technical infrastructure. Once again, Superstudio's liberatory architecture can only be made available by advanced technologies not yet available, though based on the systems of distribution and information dissemination spawned by market capitalism in the new information economy. Indeed, one of the defining aspects of the post-war economy was its own 'dematerialization', as industrial society saw its dominance give way to the growing service economy and, eventually, the information and experience economies. Undergirding and facilitating this colossal economic rupture was a vast and ever-expanding network of communications systems that greased the wheels of information flow. Thus, as much as Superstudio and their group of Radical Architecture cohorts claimed to distance themselves from what consumer culture had wrought by advocating a world free of objects, buildings, and mountains of stuff, it is undeniable that their solutions derived from the logic and systems of late capitalism.

Towards a conclusion
In the final analysis, then, while Superstudio's output over the years varied widely in format and medium, like so many of their peers in Europe and America they were led in their research towards critical speculations that would lead to a more liberatory sense of the everyday, even as the sites of 'the everyday' shifted from the pulsing music and lights of the dancehall to the glossy pages of the magazine, and finally to life's daily routines. Ultimately, this attention to the quotidian was meant to overturn what was seen as the technocratic and elitist tendencies intrinsic to the discipline of architecture by offering

an architecture for the masses and, ultimately, by the masses, whether they buy their way to a new domestic landscape or create their own as they take to the information highway. For Superstudio, it was the radical openness of everyday life itself - the fact that each of us makes of life's events what we will - that rendered it the definitive architectural act, an architecture without building, given over to the messy vicissitudes of our own actions. However, while the group of six Radical Architects could remove building from their definition of architecture in favour of a series of more 'open', democratic, and even populist mediums, they could not, in the end, disengage from the ideology and logic of late capitalism, as they so desired. The result was a complex and contradictory architectural practice that remains as frustratingly ambiguous as other avant-gardist attempts to engage with popular culture while endeavouring to maintain a critical distance from it. The ultimate question remains: how can architecture cultivate a sense of individual agency within a tightly controlled network of commodities, magazine images, and information, not to mention within the resulting society of power, authority, and control they both spawn and sustain?

Notes

1. Superstudio, 'Inventory, Catalogue, Systems of Flux … a Statement', in *Superstudio: Life Without Objects*, ed. by Peter Lang and William Menking (Milan: Skira, 2003), p. 166.

2. These later projects are beyond the scope of this study. For examples, see Superstudio's involvement with the design collective Global Tools, as well as their 1978 Project Zeno.

3. Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1994), p. 73.

4. Here, I am using the term 'open' in line with Umberto Eco's theorization of the 'open work'. See his important *The Open Work*, trans. by Anna Cancogni (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

5. For a more detailed account of post-war architecture and urban design in Italy, see the excellent *Italian Cityscapes: Culture and Urban Change in Contemporary Italy*, ed. by Robert Lumley and John Foot (Exeter: Exeter University Press, 2004).

6. For more on this, see Manfredo Tafuri, *History of Italian Architecture, 1944-1985*, trans. by Jessica Levine (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989), p. 16.

7. Superstudio, 'Inventory, Catalogue, Systems of Flux… a Statement', in *Superstudio: Life Without Objects*, p. 166.

8. See Mario Tronti, 'The Strategy of Refusal', in *Semiotext(e)* vol. 3, no. 3 (1980): 28-35.

9. Mario Tronti, *Operai e Capitale* (Torino: G. Einaudi, 1966). For more on the broader impact of Tronti and the autonomists on Italian architectural culture, see Pier Vittori Aurelli, *The Project of Autonomy: Politics and Architecture Within and Against Capitalism* (New York: The Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture and Princeton Architectural Press, 2008).

10. Superstudio, 'Design d'invenzione e design d'evasione: Superstudio', in Domus 475 (June 1969), p. 28. Republished as 'Evasion Design and Invention Design', in *Superstudio: Life Without Objects*, p. 117.

11. Andrea Branzi, *The Hot House: Italian New Wave Design* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1984), p. 54.

12. On the critical possibilities of 'play', the Radical Architects were inspired by the writings of Herbert Marcuse. See especially his *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry Into Freud* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955).

13. See, for instance, Banham's statement that, 'It is clearly absurd to demand that objects designed for a short useful life should exhibit qualities signifying eternal validity - such qualities as "divine" proportion, "pure" form or harmony of colors.' In 'A Throw-Away Aesthetic', in *Reyner Banham: Design By Choice, Ideas in Architecture*, ed. by Penny Sparke (New York: Rizzoli, 1981), pp. 90-91.

14. Superstudio, 'Destruction, Metamorphosis and Reconstruction of the Object', in *Superstudio: Life Without Objects*, p. 121.

15. See Joseph Abram, et al. *Nouvelles de Nulle Part:*

Utopies Urbaines, 1789-2000 (Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux and Valence: Musée de Valence, 2001); Stephen Coates and Alex Stetter, eds. *Impossible Worlds* (Basel and Boston: Birkhäuser, 2001); Terrence Riley, et al. *Changing the Avant-Garde: Visionary Architectural Drawings from the Howard Gilman Collection* (New York: Museum of Modern Art and D.A.P./Distributed Art Publishers, 2002).

16. Superstudio, 'Histograms', in *Superstudio: Life Without Objects*, p. 114.

17. For more on utopian architectural plans in Europe, Japan and the United States in the 1950s and 1960s, see Dominique Rouillard, *Superarchitecture: le Future de l'Architecture, 1950-1970* (Paris: de la Villette, 2004).

18. The signature early text on the megastructure is Reyner Banham, *Megastructure: Urban Futures of the Recent Past* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976). For a more recent reassessment of the importance of the megastructure, see *Megastructure Reloaded: Visionary Architecture and Urban Design of the Sixties Reflected by Contemporary Artists*, ed. by Sabrina van der Ley & Markus Richter (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz Verlag, 2008).

19. See Superstudio, 'Discorsi per Immagini/Speaking Through Images', in *Domus* 481 (December 1969), pp. 44-45; Superstudio, 'Deserti Naturali e Artificiali', in *Casabella* 358 (October 1971), pp. 18-22.

20. For a particularly telling chapter in this story, see Annabel Jane Wharton's *Building the Cold War: Hilton International Hotels and Modern Architecture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001).

21. Adolfo Natalini, 'How Great Architecture Still Was in 1966 … (Superstudio and Radical Architecture Ten Years On)', in *Exit Utopia: Architectural Provocations, 1956-76*, ed. by Martin van Schaik and Otakar Mácel (Munich: Prestel, 2005), p. 186.

22. Sander Woertman, 'The Distant Winking of a Star, or The Horror of the Real', in *Exit Utopia: Architectural Provocations, 1956-76*, p. 148.

23. See Superstudio, 'The Continuous Monument', in *Exit Utopia: Architectural Provocations*, 1956-76, p. 139.

24. Mark Wigley, 'Network Fever', in *Grey Room* 4 (Summer 2001), p. 88.

25. Ibid., p. 93.

26. On Deleuze's concept of critique from within a system, see his and Félix Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. by Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), especially chapter 12, '1227: Treatise on Nomadology - The War Machine', pp. 351-423. This concept has usefully been extended by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in *Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), to which I am greatly indebted.

27. I am using the word 'dematerialization' in order to parallel art critic and historian Lucy Lippard's notion of the 'dematerialization of the art object' that she uses to describe the aims of conceptual art. While it is outside the purview of this current study, a reading of Superstudio's work through the lens of post-war conceptual practices would be quite profitable. See Lucy Lippard, *Six Years: The Dematerialization of the Art Object from 1966 to 1972* (New York: Praeger, 1973).

28. Indeed, this is the narrative that prevails to this day. See, for instance, Peter Lang and William Menking (eds.) *Superstudio: Life Without Objects* (Milan: Skira, 2003).

29. Superstudio, 'The Five Fundamental Acts: Life', in *Casabella* 367 (July 1972), p. 26. Reprinted as 'Life, Education, Ceremony, Love, Death: Five Stories by Superstudio', in *Exit Utopia: Architectural Provocations, 1956-1976*, p. 192.

30. An alternative version of this work was also included in the landmark Museum of Modern Art exhibition *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape*. For more on the exhibition and Superstudio's contribution, see *Italy: The New Domestic Landscape: Achievements and Problems in Italian Design*, ed. by Emilio Ambasz (New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1972).

31. Superstudio, *Supersurface: An Alternate Model for Life on the Earth*, directed by Superstudio (1972; Florence: Marchi).

32. Superstudio, 'Vita, Educazione, Ceremonia, Amore, Morte: Cinque Storie del Superstudio, 6.' *Casabella* 380-81 (August-September 1973), pp. 43-52.

33. Superstudio, 'Vita, Educazione, Ceremonia, Amore,

Morte: Cinque Storie del Superstudio, 3.' *Casabella*
372 (December 1972), pp. 27-31. Reprinted as 'Life,
Education, Ceremony, Love, Death: Five Stories by
Superstudio', in *Exit Utopia: Architectural Provoca-
tions, 1956-1976*, pp. 204-05.

34. For an interesting discussion on new technologies and
their interactive potentials, see Lev Manovich, 'Variabil-
ity', in *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA:
The MIT Press, 2001), pp. 36-45.

Biography

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Review article
She Said, He Said:
Denise Scott Brown and Kenneth Frampton on Popular Taste
Deborah Fausch

The definition of art, and through it the art of living, is an object of struggle among the classes.
Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*[1]

Deeply embedded in the discussions of post-war Western architecture were the intertwined issues of popular culture, popular taste, and the relationship of both of these to architecture. From Bernard Rudofsky's *Architecture without Architects*, which claimed that the folk structures of Greek island and Chinese underground villages had much to teach modern architects about how to make liveable environments, to the Smithsons's 'streets-in-the-air', which proposed working-class London as the paradigm for neighbourhood 'patterns of association', to Archigram's Plug-In City, which created an open framework into which consumers could insert the latest products of consumer society, many architects and theorists took as the object of their research and practice some version of 'the people' and popular culture. Complicating this impulse was its relationship to modernism's fascination with vernacular building forms, as well as to history as a source for architectural meaning. This repair to various kinds of vernacular or popular culture to revitalize architecture had its critics, but discussion among the various points of view took place with some frequency.

A basic disagreement about the nature of popular or consumer culture stood behind one such important debate in the December 1971 issue of

Casabella, devoted to a discussion of the American city on the part of the Institute for Architecture and Urban Studies. Denise Scott Brown's 'Learning from Pop', a defence of her investigation, with Robert Venturi, of the cultural landscapes of Las Vegas and Levittown, was challenged in Kenneth Frampton's 'America 1960-1970 Notes on Urban Images and Theory'. Scott Brown's 'Pop Off: Reply to Kenneth Frampton' rebutted some of Frampton's criticisms. This serial spat revealed differing attitudes towards the identity of 'the people' and popular culture, disclosing opposing anthropologies derived from conflicting theories of society. Whereas Scott Brown drew her ideas from the empirical researches of post-war American sociology and communications theory, Frampton was steeped in European and American left social theory. Their discussion took place against a background of debate between these two groups, whose activities and areas of study overlapped in the period immediately following World War Two. Deeper than their divergent political positions, however, was an underlying aesthetic and philosophical dispute regarding the nature and role of popular taste.

In the opening sentences of 'Learning from Pop', Scott Brown declares the contemporary cultural environment fertile ground for architectural exploration: 'Las Vegas, Los Angeles, Levittown, the swinging singles on the Westheimer Strip, golf resorts, boating communities, Co-op City, the residential backgrounds to soap operas, TV commercials and mass mag ads, billboards, and Route 66 are

sources for a changing architectural sensibility.' Defining 'the people' in terms of a 'pluralism of need' that can best be understood by examining the existing urban environment, she asks:

If high-style architects are not producing what people want or need, who is, and what can we learn from them? […] *Sensitivity to needs is a first reason for going to the existing city. Once there, the first lesson for architects is the pluralism of need. No builder-developer in his right mind would announce: I am building for Man. He is building for a market, for a group of people defined by income range, age, family composition, and life style. Levittowns, Leisureworlds, Georgian-styled town houses grow from someone's estimation of the needs of the groups who will be their markets. The city can be seen as the built artifacts of a set of subcultures. At the moment, those subcultures which willingly resort to architects are few.*[2]

Polemically declaring that the market is an expression of a set of 'subcultures', diverse groups of persons with relatively uniform sets of behaviours, values, attitudes, and preferences, all coexisting together in a society, Scott Brown acknowledges that choice is constrained by economics, but points out that advertisements and media representations are 'at least another bias' to counter the high-art sensibilities and training of architects. She also claims that the largely symbolic additions made to homes by their owners can be seen as a source of information about these values, attitudes, and preferences.

  This reference to the market exercises Frampton, who takes issue with both Scott Brown's definition of 'the people' and the character of their desires. In his wide-ranging discussion of her intellectual and artistic sources in planning, pop art, and architecture, he demands:

Do designers really need elaborate sociological ratification […] *to tell them that what the people want is what they already have? No doubt Levittown could be brought to yield an equally affirmative consensus in regard to current American repressive policies, both domestic and foreign. Should designers like politicians wait upon the dictates of a silent majority, and if so, how are they to interpret them? Is it really the task of under-employed design talent to suggest to the constrained masses of Levittown - or elsewhere - that they might prefer the extravagant confines of the West Coast nouveau-riche;* […] *In this respect there is now surely little left of our much vaunted pluralism that has not already been overlaid with the engineered fantasies of mass taste* […]

[Venturi Scott Brown's] *overt use of outsized Pop imagery that may be read by the initiated as some comic cutout reference to a piece of out-dated American folklore* [testifies] *to a 'popular' wit that is ultimately conservative.* […] *Venturi's* [sic] *work adopts a marginally tolerant attitude towards those values which are already desecrating large tracts of our physical environment. It flirts with an industrially brutalized folk culture in order to engender* […] *the 'dumb and the ordinary'. The ordinary, of course, constitutes the basis of any true vernacular and from this suburbia cannot be excepted. However,* […] *to canonize, from a quasi-townscape standpoint, the mid-cult kitsch of Las Vegas as a general model of urbanity is hardly a progressive level of response. Despite the declared value free demonstration of method involved, the implicit divorce between form and content is culturally invalid.*[3]

Scott Brown retorts:

Why must architects continue to believe that when 'the masses' are 'educated' they'll want what the architects want? Why do we turn to exotic folk cultures, as interpreted by other architects […] *rather than learning directly from the cultures around us?* […] *Advice to socially concerned architects: keep*

your ire for social evil, not the 'degradation' of taste of the 'masses', and your energy for the difficult task of finding ways to put your skills where your heart is.[4]

The shifts in the terminology Scott Brown and Frampton use for 'the people' and 'popular culture' are indicative of the intensity of their effort to make sense of novel circumstances. Although both authors make reference to 'the people' as the contemporary subject of architecture, they mean rather different things by the term. For the most part, they agree that 'the folk', a group defined by its opposition to the elite, unified by a culture and a history and tied to a locale, is at least endangered if not extinct. They diverge, however, on the homogeneity of the American populace. Although Scott Brown refers to 'the public' and 'the majority of the population', she dislikes universalizing words such as 'Man' and 'mass', insisting that 'the people' are plural, and that the only real way to find out what they want is to ask them. Frampton, on the other hand, sees these universals as characteristic of post-war American society; his favoured terms are 'the silent majority' and 'the constrained masses', expressions indicative of mind-deadening limitation and apathy.

Both authors also agree that 'folk art', autochthonous cultural products created by an organic group of persons, is no longer a useful concept, and both employ 'vernacular' and 'popular' as less nostalgic formulations for the cultural products of an industrialized age. Scott Brown's terms for the urban environment include the 'existing city' and the 'built artifacts of a set of subcultures'. She also refers to '"popular" culture', 'pop culture', the 'popular environment', and the '"popular" landscape', thus calling out popular taste as a vital force still operative within the dynamics of consumer capitalism. Scott Brown conceptualizes this vitality in terms of an active consumption composed of several activities: choosing among alternatives in the market place,

customizing those choices through often cosmetic but highly symbolic and communicative alterations, and reading the landscape in this symbolic fashion. Scott Brown reaffirms the connection between form, what she calls forces (social institutions), and function, programme, or content, through these symbolic means.

Frampton takes issue with Scott Brown's use of the term 'pop', pointing out that pop art is not the same as 'consumer folk culture as now industrially mass-produced and marketed', and that Las Vegas, although meeting Richard Hamilton's 1957 criteria for pop - 'popular, transient, expendable, low cost, mass-produced, young, witty, sexy, gimmicky, glamorous and big business' - is not, in fact, an example of pop art. He sees Scott Brown as confusing the 'mass administration of the visual forms of American culture' with a truly popular culture. Frampton acknowledges that the contemporary American urban environment, 'however industrialized,' is in some sense still a vernacular. But he considers the only alternative available to the people to be 'engineered fantasies of mass taste' since 'establishment hypocrisy, in the form of economic sanction amid affluence, has neatly disposed of any hope that advocacy planning would be able to meet the real needs of the American poor on the basis of participatory consensus'. This leaves only 'the alienated environment' of 'decultured forms', a 'repressed consensus' of 'mid-cult kitsch'.

The two writers also disagree about the architect's proper response to this new urban environment. Sharply critical of much of the urban theory of the period, Frampton aims to propose an alternative to almost all of the methods he discusses. Torn between a jaundiced view of mass culture and a desire to create urban places that will elevate and uplift the masses who inhabit the spaces of this mass culture, he sees the people both as the folk and as 'the mass', and the products they consume, rather than create, both as 'industrially brutalized

folk culture' and as the lineaments of a 'true vernacular'.

Frampton is concerned about the connection of form to content, something that he says Venturi Scott Brown's 'townscape' perspective fails to do. After first damning Kevin Lynch's 1960 study of Boston in *Image of the City* as 'picturesque pluralism' designed to disguise the dismantling of that city's fabric, Frampton declares that Venturi and Scott Brown are using similar townscape principles to extol Las Vegas as a vernacular environment when it is in fact designed not by 'the people' but by 'the "holding interests"'.[5] He poses three possible approaches to urban design - first, the townscape approach, in which form is considered picturesquely, apart from social content; second, the semiotic position, in which form and content are related; and third, the 'motopia' of planner Melvin Webber in which 'space and form […] tend to be voided of all cultural significance'.[6] The urbanism of Team 10 member Shadrach Woods is a fourth possibility in which physical form deliberately exerts a 'critical influence' on 'life style and culture'. For Frampton, the first and third are completely inappropriate: one is mere picturesqueness without even the implied quaintness of the fifties original, and the other glorifies an auto-city that is without question negative, with particularly destructive effects on the poor. The second option, Frampton intimates, is Venturi and Scott Brown's approach in their 1969 design of a New York subway stop, but he disagrees with their conclusion that low, enclosed, air-conditioned spaces are appropriate public gathering places. The last option is not developed further.

Scott Brown is less systematic in her assessment of the options available to architects. She argues that modernism has done violence to the urban environment by imposing sanitized environments on people who do not want them, thereby destroying vital and valid - if to architects' eyes unlovely - neighbourhoods. Instead, the appropriate attitude of the architect towards the building forms produced by consumer culture is to respect them and study them. Modernism's reform of the popular 'for its own good' is patronizing and, in any case, ineffective: 'There is a social need for architectural high art to learn from and relate to folk and pop traditions if it is to serve its real clients and do no further harm in the city.' Architects should look at existing environments, and also at the backdrops to TV commercials and magazine ads, to find out what 'the people' might want if they had the money and choices available to them. Scott Brown's main point, however, is that architects and other members of high culture have equated immorality and bad taste. Rather than educating the taste of the people, she believes the goal of architects should be to 'produce buildings and environments that others [besides architects] will need and like. […] Try to help people live in houses and cities the way they want to live. Try to do what will satisfy you and them'.[7]

Frampton criticizes Scott Brown's belief that architecture can be regenerated by 'greater conformity to the sacrosanct "populist" goals of our affluent society'. He points out that Venturi and Scott Brown's attitude towards the popular is not as detached and ironic as that of the pop artists, whose deadpan stance he sees as critical. He fears that their supposedly value-free observation and description actually equals acceptance, that architects will be 'transfixed before the success of Western Neo-Capitalism; inhibited by a mass consensus, […] entranced by the so-called democratization of consumption and by the inevitability of […] the "instant Utopia" of Los Angeles.' He agrees that studying Las Vegas might yield 'useful operational and aesthetic data, in respect of kino-graphic communication vis-à-vis visibility, reaction time, etc.' But he worries that analysis of the products of mass culture will result in their proliferation: '[L]ike Trajan's Column, the Stardust Sign is imperially destined to be codified and then disseminated throughout the world.'

Frampton ends by asking:

*Is it that the inevitability of kitsch is only to be tran-
scended through such a perverse exultation of our
industrial capacity to induce and satisfy mass taste
in the endless promotion and repetition of kitsch? or
is it that the present triumph of kitsch is testament
in itself, without the illuminations of Pop Art, that our
urban society is organized towards self defeating
ends, on a sociopolitical basis that is totally invalid?*[8]

The disagreement between Frampton and Scott
Brown, then, comes down to three issues. The
first two, concerning the nature of 'the people'
and the character of popular culture, are interwo-
ven: are 'the people' an alienated, 'administered'
mass, unable to express their own proper desires
because so-called popular culture is manufactured
and distributed from above, or are they groups of
agents with more-or-less articulated goals, navigat-
ing a system that responds, albeit imperfectly, to
their desires? The third issue, the role of architects
in relation to popular culture - whether to analyse
and incorporate, or attempt to remedy and restore,
the built environment - stems from the assessment
of the first two. And underlying this last issue is the
question, not explicitly raised by Frampton and Scott
Brown, of taste: whether popular taste in industrial-
ized society is a debased devolution from that of
the educated and cultured classes, or whether it
embodies its own intrinsic principles.

Hilar Stadler and Martino Stierli's recent exhibi-
tion of photographs from Venturi Scott Brown's
Las Vegas studio gives a fresh sense of that city's
exuberant exploration of new media and new social
behaviours during the post-war period.[9] However,
a fresh understanding of the culture debates of
those years is difficult, overlaid as it is by our own
use of similar concepts for different circumstances.
Thus, to understand the dispute between Frampton
and Scott Brown, it is helpful to return to its intel-
lectual background. Their stand-off in the realm of

architecture is built upon the complex discussion
of popular or mass culture that took place in the
post-war United States. On the one hand, it was
studied by an emerging discipline of communica-
tions research, represented by journals such as
Public Opinion Quarterly, *Quarterly of Film*, *Radio
and Television*, and the *International Journal of
Opinion and Attitude Research*. The subject was
also treated in sociology textbooks and in compila-
tions such as the 1957 volume *Mass Culture: The
Popular Arts in America*, edited by Bernard Rosen-
berg and David Manning White. On the other hand,
it was theorized by various left social theorists and
critics, including a group of American left intellectu-
als clustered around *The Partisan Review* and other
little magazines published in the forties and fifties,
and the Critical Theorists, a group of German intel-
lectuals whose theories of mass society and state
capitalism applied Marxian political and economic
theory to cultural phenomena. These points of view
were debated in conferences such as 'Culture for
the Millions: Mass Media in Modern Society', held
by *Daedalus* in 1959, and 'Our Country and Our
Culture', hosted by *Partisan Review* in 1952. The
discussion also entered the popular vocabulary
through such volumes as William H. Whyte's 1956
Organization Man, Vance Packard's 1957 *The
Hidden Persuaders*, C. Wright Mills's 1951 *White
Collar* and 1956 *The Power Elite*, and David Ries-
man's 1954 *Individualism Reconsidered* and 1950
The Lonely Crowd, the latter written in collaboration
with Reuel Denny and Nathan Glazer. This post-war
discussion formed the background for the debates
on the role of popular culture and popular taste in
architecture during the 1960s and 1970s.

Although his writings contain many specific
evocations of the ideas of the German political
philosopher Hannah Arendt, in this essay Framp-
ton's conceptualization of the people and popular
culture takes inspiration from a variety of sources
on popular culture. Frampton's fluid and declama-
tory rhetorical style weaves into the strand of its

argument multiple conceptual frameworks that are not explicitly elaborated, as his reference to 'midcult kitsch' shows. A compound of two related ideas, the first term is taken from journalist and cultural critic Dwight Macdonald's 1960 essay, 'Masscult and Midcult', published in *Partisan Review*, while the second is derived from a long-ranging discourse, starting from the mid-nineteenth century, on the cheap reproduction of art objects for the mass market, the most well-known formulation of which is Clement Greenberg's seminal 1939 *Partisan Review* article 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch'.[10]

Frampton defines Las Vegas as mind-deadening kitsch: 'Consciousness is the last quality to be designed for in Las Vegas, while surveyance [*sic*], of course, is to be consistently maintained. […] Las Vegas is the "manipulative" city of kitsch.' He quotes Hermann Broch, who defines kitsch as a perversion of the values and goals of romantic individualism into mass-produced sentimentality exploitable for profit. According to Gillo Dorfles, from whose popular 1969 collection *Kitsch: The World of Bad Taste* the Broch essay is taken, the development of kitsch coincides with the development of machine production and reproduction of works of art:[11]

[T]*he easy (if not inferior) reproduction and the quick distribution of art (or pseudo-art) objects has made it possible for one of the factors we are interested in to come to the surface,* […] *cultural industrialization; the fact, that is, that even culture - both in its creation and in its consumption - is affected by some of the methods which now influence the whole, or almost the whole of our production and organizational system.*[12]

Rehearsing Theodor Adorno's more extensive arguments on the topic of music, Dorfles emphasizes the issue of taste and the contrast between mass and high cultural approaches to the experience of art:

[N]*othing could be further away from a piece of 'consumer music,' enjoyed and adored by the masses, than a piece of the new modern music, enjoyed and enjoyable for only a few initiated individuals.* […] *Some people believe that in a modern environment the very concept of taste no longer performs any function at all, given the modern 'pluralistic' kind of musical culture which is therefore divided into various classes.* […] [T]*he field in which music will be a greater help - a greater comfort - in our search for kitsch elements is in the attitudes of the user rather than that of the composers,* […] *the attitude of the individual when confronted with artistic and natural phenomena, which are observed from that particular point of view which immediately transforms them into something inferior, false, sentimental and no longer genuine.*[13]

In 'Kitsch and Architecture', Vittorio Gregotti elaborates on this dichotomy between the critical nature of serious art and the acceptance of the status quo by mass art. He notes that kitsch fails in 'the use of the critical faculty to ensure the integrity of the finished project', so that 'that negative aspect of thought which is present in every valid project which sets out to dissociate itself from what already exists or has been used before, and aspires to fresh levels of perception' is lost.[14]

Echoing the Critical Theorists' studies of the authoritarian personality type as dominant in late capitalist society, Dorfles makes the connection between kitsch and a kind of personality he calls, following Broch and Ludwig Giesz, the 'kitsch-man'. Here, Dorfles generalizes from an attitude towards art to a character type:

Quite different is the case of the kitsch-man and of that sector of the public whose attitude towards works of art is […] *usually a matter of deliberate obtuseness which concerns modern art alone, or possibly 'difficult' art of the past i.e. the most serious type of work; it is a problem of individuals*

*who believe that art should only produce pleas-
ant, sugary feelings; or even that art should form
a kind of 'condiment', a kind of 'background music',
a decoration, a status symbol even, as a way of
shining in one's social circle; in no case should it be
a serious matter, a tiring exercise, an involved and
critical activity.*[15]

In 'Phenomenology of Kitsch', Giesz, on whom both
Broch and Dorfles rely, goes further, connecting the
cultural object, the producers of the object, and the
consumers of the object under a single principle
structuring and controlling a unified system:

*Kitsch and mass psychology have the same struc-
ture. Today's producers of kitsch are not naïve
thinkers but astute mass psychologists, that is,
persons who undoubtedly possess a conscious-
ness of kitsch, who even go so far as to investigate
systematically the techniques to produce the specific
lived experiences of kitsch.*[16]

In support of his thesis, Dorfles cites Rosenberg and
White's collection on mass culture, which includes
essays by Theodor Adorno and another Critical
Theorist, Leo Lowenthal, as well as by Riesman
and his student Herbert Gans.[17] Adorno's essay, in
particular, discusses the conformity induced by the
consumption of mass media:

[T]*oday's frame of mind transforms the traditional
values into the norms of an increasingly hierarchi-
cal and authoritarian social structure.* […] [T]*he
'message' of adjustment and unreflecting obedience
seems to be dominant and allpervasive today.* […]
The ideals of conformity and conventionalism […]
*have been translated into rather clear-cut prescrip-
tions of what to do and what not to do. The outcome
of conflicts is pre-established, and all conflicts are
mere sham. Society is always the winner, and the
individual is only a puppet manipulated through
social rules.* […] *The stories teach their readers
that one has to be 'realistic,' that one has to give*

*up romantic ideas, that one has to adjust oneself at
any price, and that nothing more can be expected of
any individual. The perennial middle-class conflict
between individuality and society has been reduced
to a dim memory, and the message is invariably that
of identification with the status quo.*[18]

Despite his pessimism about the kitsch qualities of
the contemporary urban environment, Frampton's
direct citations of the Critical Theorists are from
Walter Benjamin's 'The Work of Art in the Age of
Mechanical Reproduction', a more positive view of
the possibilities for media that proposes a revolu-
tionary potential for film and photography, and from
Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*, a book
whose powerful influence on the culture of the
sixties raised hope for a newly integrated 'eros', or
pleasure principle, to revolutionize capitalist society.

Marcuse shares the other Critical Theorists' posi-
tion that the personality of the individual has been
altered by the social and political matrix of capital-
ism, and that the arts, which ought to hold out a
promesse de bonheur, have instead been co-opted
by the administrative forces of capitalism to function
as part of a total system of alienation in both work
and 'leisure'. Frampton invokes Marcuse's concept
of the 'performance principle', capitalism's under-
lying logic of growth and expansion according to
which 'society is stratified according to the competi-
tive economic performances of its members'. Based
on instrumental rationality, rather than the higher
faculty of reason, the performance principle leads to
the repression of society's members:

*The argument that makes liberation conditional
upon an ever higher standard of living all too easily
serves to justify the perpetuation of repression. The
definition of the standard of living in terms of auto-
mobiles, television sets, airplanes, and tractors is
that of the performance principle itself.*[19]

Frampton's allusion to a 'repressed consensus' also finds its source in Marcuse's extensive discussion of capitalist society's alienation and repression of its members:

At the present stage, the personality tends toward a standardized reaction pattern established by the hierarchy of power and functions and by its technical, intellectual, and cultural apparatus. […] to be sure, personality has not disappeared: it continues to flower and is even fostered and educated - but in such a way that the expressions of personality fit and sustain perfectly the socially desired pattern of behavior and thought. They thus tend to cancel individuality. This process, which has been completed in the 'mass culture' of late industrial civilization, vitiates the concept of interpersonal relations.[20]

The idea of instrumental rationality underlies Frampton's negative assessment of Edward Ruscha's, and, by extension, Venturi Scott Brown's, deadpan, value-free method of analysing Las Vegas.

[I]*s not the objectivity of an Eduard* [sic] *Ruscha say, very comparable to the objectivity of a 'value free' scientist? The essence of Ruscha's photo folders is surely that of the alienated environment augmented by subsequent alienation through dead pan photographic record. Although the vernacular is by common definition, however industrialized, the art of the people, a sophisticated Pop record of its meaningless yet varied vacuity* […] *displays little warmth for the life styles that these deculturated forms no doubt serve to support.*[21]

Despite Marcuse's pessimistic analysis of capitalist culture, however, *Eros and Civilization* points to the hope that individuals and society can evolve beyond the performance principle toward freedom and happiness - a hope represented, in the present situation, by art. In architecture and urbanism, Frampton sees this hope in terms of the reunification of form and content, so that the physical environment might represent values and experiences capable of redeeming the degradation of both popular identity and popular culture.

In contrast to Frampton's eclectic references, Scott Brown's argument grows fairly directly out of the work of the American sociologists and communications researchers, particularly that of Herbert Gans. In the mid-sixties, Gans engaged in 'participant observation' of Levittown (living in a house bought for him by the Ford Foundation) and documented his findings in the book *The Levittowners*.[22] His theories about the role of the media in American society are contained in his 1966 article 'Popular Culture in America: Social Problem in a Mass Society or Social Asset in a Pluralist Society?' - later expanded into *Popular Culture and High Culture*.[23] These texts show that, more or less simultaneously with the left critique of mass society and culture, American sociology and communications research were also developing a theory of the character and functioning of modern American society, and the nature of the individual within that society.

This American view developed from studies of the behaviour of individuals in relation to the new mass media of radio, film, and later, television. These studies found that 'opinion leaders', influential individuals who acted as mediators between the mass media and 'individuals in the mass', sifted and filtered the available media material, passing judgement on how these were to be interpreted, and communicating these judgements to the groups of which they were a part.[24] A study of the 1940 presidential election campaigns, for example, found that, despite intensive attempts by the media to influence voting, small groups such as families, work cohorts, clubs, and church societies intervened between the mass media and individual choice. Individuals tended to vote in families, persons who were uncertain followed those who had made up their minds early, and those who changed their minds did so on the basis of personal contacts, not on the

basis of information gained from the mass media.[25] Another study described a large-scale attempt to influence the people of Cincinnati in favour of the United Nations with what would now be called a 'media blitz', reaching them through schools, PTAs, churches, women's clubs, radio, films, and newspapers. Teachers were given special training, students were inundated with information in classes as well as given leaflets to take home, a city-wide church organization held a World Community Day in which 14,000 children participated, church women and women's clubs were trained and lectured, one radio station (among many others participating) broadcast 150 spots a week about the UN. Films were shown, speeches were given in clubs, posters were mounted, UN slogans were printed on matchbooks and blotters. The results were disappointing for advocates of the theory of the administered nature of mass society: no change in public opinion was found, at least in the short term, in the before-and-after study done by the National Opinion Research Council.[26]

In this line of investigation, David Riesman's 1950 article 'Listening to Popular Music' constitutes a direct challenge to European and American left intellectuals' pessimistic views of the effects of the media on individuals and popular culture. Written in answer to Adorno's analyses of jazz, the article provides empirical data regarding the effects of popular music on individuals and groups. After discussing the contributions of the 'gifted Europeans, horrified by the alleged vulgarization of taste brought about by industrialization', Riesman states that what actually matters in the study of popular culture is not its level of bad taste, but 'who says what to whom with what effect' - that is, how information is communicated from one person to another.[27]

After conducting relatively unstructured interviews with fifteen teenagers of the white middle-class South Side of Chicago to test Adorno's hypotheses concerning the atomization of experiences in modern industrial society, as well as several others of his own, Riesman finds that the teens' perceptions of the mass media are framed by their peer groups. Group pressure to conform compels them to have recourse to the media to learn what the group expects; they also identify with the group by using music as a common focus for attention and talk.[28] At the end of the study, Riesman makes several remarks indicating that he is closer theoretically to Adorno than might be suspected from his exposition. Like Adorno, he sees the individual's relationship to popular culture as arising out of his or her character structure:

[O]*ne cannot hope to understand the influence of any one medium, say music, without an understanding of the total character structure of the person. In turn, an understanding of his musical tastes, and his use of them for purposes of social conformity, advance, or rebellion, provides revealing clues to his character, to be confirmed and modified by a knowledge of his behavior and outlook in many other spheres of life.*[29]

But whereas Adorno and the Critical Theorists lament the loss of the autonomous individual subject, Riesman finds that, within the structure of the group, the individual still possesses some power of choice and action.

A student of Riesman's, Gans sets the problem of popular culture in the form of a response to the left critique of mass culture. He makes it clear from the outset that he believes strongly that 'the people' possess freedom of choice:

This chapter is about the criteria of choice, primarily in the conduct of life outside the workplace. Advocates of high culture believe that people ought to spend their free hours in self-realization and self-expression through the pursuit of the fine arts. They reject people's preferences for mass culture - mass-produced art, entertainment, and related consumer

goods - because they believe this preference to harm both the society as a whole and people as individuals. For this reason, mass culture is thought of as a social problem. This chapter will consider the critics' argument. I should warn the reader that I do not approach my task from a disinterested or neutral perspective. Although many intellectuals and critics view mass culture as a social problem that requires urgent public action, I believe that mass culture is, rather, another manifestation of pluralism and democracy in American society.[30]

Gans derives the idea of mass culture from its European, and specifically German, origins in *Kultur*, 'the art, music, literature, and other symbolic products that were and are preferred by the well-educated elite of that society but also […] the styles of thought and feelings of those who choose these products - those who are "cultured"'. The mass 'is or was the nonaristocratic, uneducated portion of European society, especially the people who today might be described as lower-middle class, working class, and lower class'. Calling the term 'mass culture' pejorative, he proposes to substitute for it the term 'popular culture'.

The article examines the evidence for contemporary critiques of mass or popular culture, finding that most studies contradict the claims of 'administered control' made by the left critics. Gans's most important point is that there are actually a number of different popular cultures, or 'taste cultures' in the United States. He describes six of these taste cultures: creator high culture, consumer high culture, upper-middle culture, lower-middle culture, lower culture, and lower-lower culture. Each has its own art, music, literature, magazines, films, TV programmes, furnishings, architecture, foods, and cars, each has its own institutions for meeting its own aesthetic needs, and each has its own distinct 'taste public'. Individuals can choose products from more than one taste culture and can be mobile with respect to the taste public they inhabit, taste cultures

can and do borrow from other taste cultures, and some products are shared by all taste cultures. However, the various publics act like interest groups that compete with each other for the creation of the products they prefer.

Teasing apart the differing attitudes of these taste cultures provides an alternative explanation for what the left cultural theorists see as the death of autonomous art. Creator high culture, the province of the serious artist, the scholar, and the critic, exemplified by original art distributed in galleries, books published by subsidized presses, the 'little magazines', off-Broadway theatre, European and underground cinema, public radio and television stations, judges works of art on the basis of standards such as the relationship between method and content, the subtlety of content, depiction of mood and feeling, and the expression of the personal values of the creator. It is appreciated by a small taste public that values exclusiveness. Consumer high culture makes use of the same kinds of cultural products as creator high culture, but selection is based on consumption rather than production - for instance, the status and fashionableness of the products. It thus gives higher status to performance than does creator high culture. Upper-middle culture is the taste culture of professionals, executives, managers, well-educated but not trained as creators or intellectuals. Critical analysis and participation in the milieu of the creators are not desired. Substance is valued more highly than method. Since this public values being cultured, it uses some high-culture products, although most of its products are created by members of its own public. Lower-middle culture, created for lower-status professions and other white-collar jobs, is traditional, rejecting the sophistication of upper-middle culture, emphasizing content and subordinating form to it. Cultural products uphold lower-middle-class values, resolving conflicts with these values within the art form. Dominant by reason of numbers, the lower-middle taste public is the major audience for the mass media, but

it pays little attention to critics, relying instead, as the communications theorists found, on the judgements of family and friends. Thus the various taste cultures have differing and incompatible standards of excellence, as well as differing and incompatible preferences for cultural products.

In the line of the American empirical examination of the effects of the media on individuals, Gans thus concludes that 'the people', rather than being reducible to 'kitsch-men', are plural. Being plural, they are to at least some degree independent of the capitalist market system in their judgements of taste, making use of cultural products in relationship to values specific to class position and rejecting those that do not conform to those values. While seeing the acquisition of high art and high culture as a progressive goal, he emphasizes the essential pluralism and self-referentiality of 'culture' in contrast to traditional hierarchies of taste.

The idea of distinct, equally valid taste cultures and taste publics is basic to Scott Brown's conception of 'the people' and popular culture - which are, for her, Gans's 'lower-middle' taste public and taste culture. This intellectual background predisposes her to see Frampton's kitsch as 'agonized beauty'; learning from Las Vegas is also, despite the architect's position as a member of the creator high taste culture, learning to 'love what you hate'. Within this framework, the architectural task becomes, not renewing a degraded social system by improving its physical and cultural environment, but sensitizing a basically functional system to its members' needs and desired ends. In this pursuit, rationality is not an enemy but a friend, and the relationship of form to content will take care of itself.

Frampton's and Scott Brown's in-print debate thus represents one endpoint of a long discussion as to the identity of 'the people' and the status of popular culture in American society. While Gans's categories of taste subcultures and taste publics

serve in part to explain why the two seem to be arguing at cross-purposes, the more difficult problem to resolve is the one of values raised by Frampton. He criticizes Venturi and Scott Brown both for their lack of a value stance and for having, or at any rate advocating, bad taste. In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, Pierre Bourdieu's delineation of a class-based structure of taste preferences in the French society of the 1970s - a situation remarkably similar to that described by Gans in the American society of the 1960s - Bourdieu comments:

Everything takes places as if the 'popular aesthetic' were based on the affirmation of continuity between art and life, which implies the subordination of form to function, or, one might say, on a refusal of the refusal which is the starting point of the high aesthetic, i.e., the clear-cut separation of ordinary dispositions from the specifically aesthetic disposition. The hostility of the working class and of the middle-class fractions least rich in cultural capital towards every kind of formal experimentation […] *springs not just from lack of familiarity but from a deep-rooted demand for participation, which formal experiment systematically disappoints.*[31]

Bourdieu's formulation recasts the argument about taste into one about values - high culture 'disinterest' and detachment versus popular participation. Although their assessment of the people, popular culture, and popular taste dramatically differs, both Frampton and Scott Brown subscribe to this value of reuniting 'the people' with their own culture. In different ways, both would agree with Marcuse's assessment of the relationship of the aesthetic and the political: 'Schiller states that, in order to solve the political problem, "one must pass through the aesthetic, since it is beauty that leads to freedom." The play impulse is the vehicle of this liberation.'[32] Whether in 'the people's' play within the forms given to them by mass culture, making their own meaning from manufactured aesthetics, or in the creation of

new 'spaces of appearance', both authors hold out hope for an amelioration of the conditions of late capitalism. In this, they differ from most architects today.

Notes

1. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), p. 48.

2. Denise Scott Brown, 'Learning from Pop', *Casabella* 35, nos. 359-60 (December 1971), p. 15.

3. Kenneth Frampton, 'America 1960-1970: Notes on Urban Images and Theory', *Casabella* 35, nos. 359-60 (December 1971), pp. 31-33.

4. Denise Scott Brown, 'Pop Off: Reply to Kenneth Frampton', *Casabella* 35, nos. 359-60 (December 1971), pp. 41-45.

5. 'Townscape' refers to Gordon Cullen's popular book by the same name, which codified the principles of the experience of English villages and other traditional urban environments.

6. In fact, the term 'motopia' was coined by Cullen.

7. Interestingly, both Frampton and Scott Brown themselves participated in planning efforts to help impoverished clients. Frampton's Marcus Garvey Housing Project in Brownsville, Brooklyn, represented in 1973 an early American example of low-rise, high-density public housing. Its careful attention to opportunities for neighbourliness and oversight of public space provided in the front stoops, decks, and patios could not succeed, however, in reducing the barrenness of the environment or the destructive social atmosphere that dominated the surrounding area. Scott Brown's South Street Philadelphia project of 1968 had better short-term success in stopping the city of Philadelphia from covering over a lower-class commercial street with a freeway. Her small-scale alterations and careful cultivation of local initiative were exemplary for their involvement of users in the design process. Yet in the long term, this success was mitigated by the inevitable take-over of an 'interesting' neighbourhood by middle-class commerce.

8. Kenneth Frampton, 'America 1960-1970', p. 36.

9. Hilar Stadler and Martino Stierli (eds) *Las Vegas Studio: Images from the Archives of Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown* (Zurich: Speidegger and Spiess, 2008).

10. Dwight Macdonald, 'Masscult and Midcult I', *Partisan Review* 27, no. 2 (Spring 1960) and 'Masscult and Midcult II', *Partisan Review* 27, no. 4 (Fall 1960); Clement Greenberg, 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', *Partisan Review* 6, no. 5 (1939). Macdonald asserts that 'highbrow culture', like authentic lowbrow culture, is almost nonexistent in a market economy; instead, mass culture, or 'masscult', replaces it with manufactured imitations aimed to 'please the crowd by any means'. 'Midcult' is even worse; it 'pretends to respect the standards of high culture while in fact it waters them down and vulgarizes them' into products designed to pacify and induce conformance. Under these conditions, 'a pluralistic culture cannot exist', and the consumers of this homogenous culture also become homogenized. Macdonald had not only read the Critical Theorists, but had corresponded with Adorno and tried to publish their work, which they refused. His essays echo the ideas of authoritarian conformance, state capitalism, and the commoditization of high-cultural objects developed by the Frankfurt School. Thomas Wheatland, *The Frankfurt School in Exile* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2009), 174-86, 372 n. 101.

11. Hermann Broch, 'Notes on the Problem of Kitsch', in Gillo Dorfles (ed.) *Kitsch: The World of Bad Taste*, (London: Studio Vista, 1969), p. 35. The volume also includes Clement Greenberg's 'Avant-Garde and Kitsch', Vittorio Gregotti's 'Kitsch and Architecture', Ludwig Giesz's 'Phenomenology of Kitsch' and his 'Kitsch-Man as Tourist', as well as Dorfles's own essay 'Kitsch'.

12. Gillo Dorfles, 'Kitsch', p. 29.

13. Gillo Dorfles, 'Kitsch', pp. 26-29.

14. Vittorio Gregotti, 'Kitsch and Architecture', p. 260.

15. Gillo Dorfles, 'Kitsch', pp. 15-16.

16. Ludwig Giesz, 'Phenomenology of Kitsch'.

17. Leo Lowenthal, 'Historical Perspectives of Popular Culture', T. W. Adorno, 'Television and the Patterns of Mass Culture', David Riesman, 'Listening to Popular Music', and Herbert Gans, 'The Creator-Audience Relationship in the Mass Media: An Analysis of Movie Making', in *Mass Culture: The Popular Arts in America*, Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White (eds) (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1957).

18. T. W. Adorno, 'How to Look at Television', *The Quarterly of Film Radio and Television*, vol. 8, no. 3 (Spring, 1954): pp. 219, 221; republished as 'Television and the Patterns of Mass Culture' in *Mass Culture*.

19. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955), pp. 152-53, quoted in Frampton, 'The City of Dialectic', *Architectural Design* 10 (1969), p. 541.

20. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p. 253.

21. Kenneth Frampton, 'America 1960-1970', p. 36.

22. Herbert J. Gans, *The Levittowners: Ways of Life and Politics in a New Suburban Community* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1967).

23. Herbert J. Gans, *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste* (New York: Basic Books, 1974); Herbert J. Gans, 'Popular Culture in America: Social Problem in a Mass Society or Social Asset in a Pluralist Society?', in *Social Problems: A Modern Approach*, Howard S. Becker, ed. (New York: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1966).

24. Robert Merton, 'Patterns of Influence: A Study of Interpersonal Influence and of Communications Behavior in a Social Community', in *Communications Research, 1948-1949*, ed. by Paul Lazarsfeld and Frank Stanton.

25. Paul Felix Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet, *The People's Choice: How the Voter Makes Up His Mind in a Presidential Campaign* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1948).

26. Shirley A. Star and Helen MacGill Hughes, 'Report on an Educational Campaign: The Cincinnati Plan for the United Nations', *American Journal of Sociology* 55, no. 4 (1950). An analysis by Herbert Hyman and Paul B. Sheatsley in 1947, 'Some Reasons Why Information Campaigns Fail', in *Public Opinion Quarterly*, showed that 'self-selection' had occurred - the campaign had reached persons already convinced of the value of the UN, but had not reached those who were not previously convinced or were uninterested. Cited in Leon Bramson, *The Political Context of Sociology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961), pp. 110-11.

27. Harold Lasswell, cited in David Riesman, 'Listening to Popular Music', American Quarterly 2 (1950): 408. Lasswell's articles included 'Collective Autism as a Consequence of Culture Contact', Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung IV, no. 2 (1935), and 'Radio as an Instrument of Reducing Personal Insecurity', *Studies in Philosophy and Social Sciences* IX, no. 1 (1941).

28. Riesman notes that music can also be used by minority listening groups to express alienation or rebellion against the culture. However, much of the new content of popular music is taken from just these minority forms, undergoing significant changes in the process. And even the protest of listening to a minority music might merely mean that one identifies with another peer group whose approval one must meet.

29. David Riesman, 'Radio Music', p. 416.

30. Herbert J. Gans, 'Popular Culture', pp. 549-50.

31. Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 32.

32. Herbert Marcuse, *Eros and Civilization*, p. 187.

Biography

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Review Article
If We Are, Indeed, All 'Embedded', Then What to Do Next?
A Review of BAVO's *Too Active to Act.*
Isabelle Doucet

I have chosen to start this review of BAVO's *Too Active to Act, Cultureel Activisme na het Einde van de Geschiedenis* (Valiz, 2010), with the book's conclusion, titled: 'Embedded or not? That is explicitly not the question!'[1] Indeed, recent debates, also in architecture, have proposed a focus on practice as a locus for critical action, and thus propose a form of social engagement that is situated and embedded in the real. Such embedded action is then seen as more hands-on than theories and ideologies merely reflecting on the real, from a (safe) distance. In addition, it is seen as more efficient in its transformative power than the avant-garde techniques of negation and subversion. In other words, to be embedded or not is, indeed, no longer the question as there seems to be a consensus on the importance of critical action through practice and through a direct engagement with the real. However, as numerous debates show, there remains vigorous disagreement on how then to process, shape, evaluate, and safeguard such (critical) engagement through practice.[2] Moreover, much of that discussion still unfolds around rather artificial fault lines, such as between a critical theory and projective practice.[3]

Too Active to Act offers an uncompromising, polemic critique of the current status of socially engaged cultural practice, with a specific focus on the Netherlands. But it also promises to offer alternative proposals for more politicized cultural strategies,[4] which it delivers, albeit without further elaboration. It is tempting to condemn such an unkept promise for it leaves unaddressed the

question of whether it is not crucial to work out the subtleties and detailed workings of such alternatives precisely in a practice-based context. Should a convincing, realistic alternative not sprout from a careful empirical analysis of the very details of what composes and moulds a *critique-from-within*? Does it suffice to simply showcase presumably well-proven, 'forgotten' avant-garde techniques such as over-identification or sabotage? But the question that should perhaps occupy us more is whether BAVO's attempt to give a different account of the Dutch cultural activist landscape is not the achievement in itself.

Too Active to Act starts from two observations. Firstly, from the observation that, despite the proclamation of a demise in the belief in a perfect, or at least better, society by 'the end of history' (following Fukuyama), recent cultural production and activism in the Netherlands has demonstrated that there is, in fact, an abundance of socially engaged cultural production. Secondly, it starts from the observation that such production has become highly problematic in terms of the genuineness and radicalism of its critical project.

The first part of the book offers an analysis of this problematic state of the cultural landscape by unravelling its main deficit, namely the process of depoliticization of cultural activism. In a whirlwind kind of way, this first part runs through the several aspects that occur in this depoliticization process. It refers, for example, to the typically

modest approach of such practices. Indeed, as I have also observed in contexts other than the Dutch, such practices are wary of imposing themselves too much and have given up the belief that a radically different society that overthrows the existing one can actually be enforced. BAVO argues that cultural practice has not just become more modest in its impact and approach, but also - and this is, of course, one of BAVO's major concerns - 'smoother' in its disturbances. Such 'smoothness' becomes perhaps most obscene when applied to the integration of 'the other' or 'the marginal' in cultural practice; and BAVO refers to this problem on several occasions throughout the book. Indeed, it has meanwhile become obvious how cultural, artistic, or social practices lend themselves quite handily to enhancing 'the other' and 'the margin' as a productive force and/or location for action. And this, of course, is part of a larger phenomenon, particularly in urban regeneration contexts, where the margins are transformed into new centres, as a key component of a global urban money-making machine. In that sense, I agree with BAVO in that a perspective from the margins becomes problematic when it adopts a pragmatic approach that ultimately suits the market economy it opposes. One of neo-liberalism's remarkable achievements is its capacity to draw even the most marginal of the margins, 'the other', and the subjugated, into the very centre of its operations.[5] In addition, the meanwhile well-studied side-effects of (neo-liberal) urban renaissance - such as gentrification, social displacement, privatization and homogenization of the public domain - are then dealt with through so-called glocal measures and compensations (community services, participation, planning 'for the people') that often prove either highly inefficient or are waved away by the hopeful expectation that good planning can keep such effects to a minimum. Such situations are then often perceived as 'hegemonic' in the sense that there is presumably no longer an outside from which one can look onto, and radically oppose, the centre. Also the practices, as described by BAVO,

seem to operate (at least to a certain extent) *within* the established order, while claiming to intervene critically in the presumable margins of that order. In line with BAVO, I am wary of the rather perverse situation wherein activists think (or hope) they are empowering the margin, while in fact all they (can) do is to appease, make more bearable, and, thus, accept, the side-effects of the established order.

However, as an alternative to both such an uncritical (or naïve) embracing of the margin and a sheer fatalism that nothing can be done anyway, I suggest revising the meaning of being 'marginal' *within* the system, namely those instances where the established status quo is challenged from within. Such an approach, I believe, can be found in Isabelle Stengers' attention to the 'interstice' and in Donna Haraway's subjugated viewpoints.

With 'interstice', Stengers refers to an attempt to grasp what is lurking in the interstices, or the 'cracks' in the existing situation; what, precisely, 'escapes description' because we simply do not (yet) have the words that allow us to describe what has not yet been stabilized.[6] It is not about acting from the margins, as the cultural producers do, but it is about allowing events to emerge from those interstices. And because an event is, in Stengers' definition, 'something [we] can hope for but cannot master or decide',[7] interstices allow transformation (through the articulation of an event), albeit without guaranteeing it. Thus, whereas the cultural producers, as described by BAVO, still seem to hold on to mechanisms of control and orchestration in order to guarantee impact, it is precisely by letting go of control that change can occur. Likewise, Donna Haraway has warned us that subjugated viewpoints (bottom-up, everyday based, marginal) are not unproblematic because no matter how weak, oppressed, or underground, the 'standpoints of the subjugated are not "innocent" positions' and because it is not clear at all *how* to see from below.[8] Whereas Stengers refuses to *fix* the interstice (and

surely not *outside* the centre), Haraway proposes a commitment to 'mobile positioning' combined with 'passionate detachment' (rather than distance or complacent critique).[9] The question for Haraway is *how* to see from below, and thus actually put positioning, location, and perspective at stake. For Stengers and Haraway, it is a matter not so much of better, ideal, fixed solutions, but of aiming at 'better accounts of the world'.[10] I believe that, by letting go of the margin as the already established and recognized 'other', and by avoiding an overly enthusiastic embracing of those established margins, one could allow that which is the 'other', not yet defined or describable, to emerge, to take shape. An openly admitted positioning 'from within' (from the interstice or subjugated viewpoints) as such allows for different accounts, for different takes on the situation. If we know that, in fact, *any* project or intervention is transformative by nature, but that this does not necessarily imply also a *critical* transformation, then the challenge is no longer to find and empower margins, but to develop ways to become attentive to events that emerge from the cracks, and to develop modes to define whether or not such events transform, question, and challenge the established status quo.

One could argue that, to a certain extent, *Too Active to Act* aims to do precisely that: give a different account of the Dutch cultural landscape, not as much by unmasking some hidden powers and corruptions, but by exposing the various components of the process of depoliticization that are arguably part of it. In a rather erratic, fragmented yet invigorating manner, and by means of numerous examples, it brings key elements to the fore that I read in terms of: more realism; (radical) pragmatism; a bottom-up, action-driven, 'work-floor' approach; an aversion to theory; a flight from responsibility; and the fact that all those devices used by cultural activism are as much enhanced by the political as by the economic establishment.

The second part of the book, as polemical and fragmented as the first, aims to discuss the possibilities of alternative forms of critique, referring to examples such as the technique of over-identification rather than subversion.[11] Towards the end of the book, BAVO expresses loudly and clearly its dissatisfaction with cultural production: because so-called radical pragmatism is not as radical as we think it is, which has to do, I would argue, with the fact that such practices struggle to balance a critical distance with an efficiency that seemingly requires a degree of compliancy with their struggle to avoid compromising their radicalism while being immersed in the real. Only in the conclusion of the book do we get a glimpse of BAVO's suggestion for a 'way out', but this 'alternative' project remains rather vague. Solutions remain limited to the introduction of two examples of the method of over-identification. A first case in point is Michael Moore's documentary style as an example of 'progressive cultural terror'.[12] This refers to the activist not being afraid to take a standpoint that is 'inhuman' and to use unorthodox means and strategies - such as overtly defending or over-identifying with the ideas of the enemy - as a means of exposing the enemy's difficulties to adhere to his own ideals once confronted with the consequences in practice.[13] A second example of over-identification is *Bitte liebt Oesterreich*, a Big Brother show by theatre maker Christoph Schlingensief, in which asylum seekers are literally voted away - a project as a reaction against Haider's election in 2000. BAVO sees the possibility of a 'different standpoint'[14] in terms of using one's creative expertise to push the project of the enemy through even harder and more consequently than he himself is prepared to do.[15]

If BAVO's proposal for an alternative remains rather vague, I would prefer to read this not as a shortcoming in its own right. Giving a different account is, as the pragmatists have shown, a contribution in itself. Instead I would like to read it as an unkept promise, but also as a possibility (for me,

and for other readers too, I imagine) to envisage a further agenda setting. One of the burning questions remaining, in my opinion, is not so much what practice should do (in order to guarantee criticality, for example), but what the role and contribution of theory can be in the 'anti-theory setting' described by BAVO. Here, I think Irit Rogoff's view on the task of theory is useful, namely 'to introduce questions and uncertainties […] where formerly there was some seeming consensus about what one did and how one went about it'.[16] For Rogoff, the question is no longer about 'to be embedded or not', because 'involved' we are indeed, and because this counts as much for practice as for theoretical production. For Rogoff, the question of 'What is an artist?' (or: practitioner, cultural activist) cannot be seen disconnected from 'What is a theorist?' In such an utterly transdisciplinary mode - in the sense of a blending of theory and practice,[17] theory is defined as a 'theoretical unravelling' or 'being undone'.[18] For Rogoff, criticality is to replace critique because the latter was still attempting 'from the outside' to expose the 'hidden' power structures, oppressions, etcetera. Criticality, by contrast, places a stronger emphasis on the present, the situation, or situatedness. It is about articulation and actualization of potential rather than revealing faults. Which, of course, resonates with Stengers' reading of the interstice. I would argue that the practice Rogoff proposes in a context such as the one described by BAVO is one of 'embodied criticality', namely:

[C]*riticality is in itself a mode of embodiment, a state from which one cannot exit or gain a critical distance but which rather marries our knowledge and our experience in ways that are not complimentary. Unlike 'wisdom' in which we supposedly learn from our experience, criticality is a state of profound frustration in which the knowledge and insights we have amassed does very little to alleviate the conditions we live through.*[19]

BAVO's *Too Active to Act* may well be an unfinished project, proposing an as yet unconvincing alternative. However, blaming it for the lack of a clear alternative project would perhaps be too harsh and misplaced a criticism. As Rorty has argued, 'In particular people on the left keep hoping for a philosophical view which cannot be used by the political right, one which will lend itself only to good causes.'[20] The pragmatist tradition is not so much about developing a blueprint for the future - hoping that the future will then conform to that plan,[21] - but about allowing the future to astonish and exhilarate us.[22] So, through provocation, BAVO attempts to 'replace an unsatisfactory present with a more satisfactory future'.[23] It is as such that BAVO's unravelling of the current cultural scene allows us to make the crucial step from certainty and fixation to hope.

Notes

1. BAVO (Matthias Pauwels and Gideon Boie), *Too Active to Act. Cultureel Activisme na het Einde van de Geschiedenis*, (Valiz, 2010). Chapter title translated from Dutch: *Ingebed zijn of Niet? Dat is uitdrukkelijk niet de vraag!*

2. For example, in Human Geography, the debates between Nigel Thrift/Ash Amin and critical geographers, such as David Harvey and Neil Smith.

3. For a critical view on that debate, see for example Hilde Heynen, 'A Critical Position for Architecture?' in: *Critical Architecture*, ed. by Jane Rendell, Jonathan Hill, Murray Fraser, and Mark Dorrian (London, New York: Routledge, 2007), pp. 48-56.

4. BAVO, 'Inleiding: hoe zou het nu zijn met de culturele avant-garde in Nederland?' in *Too Active to Act*, pp. 7-11, esp. p. 11.

5. See, for example, Erik Swyngedouw, Frank Moulaert, et al. *The Globalized City - Economic Restructuring and Social Polarization in European Cities* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore (eds.), *Spaces of Neoliberalism* (Blackwell, 2002); and Neil Brenner, *New State Spaces. Urban Governance and the Rescaling of Statehood* (Oxford

University Press, 2004).

6. Isabelle Stengers, 'A "Cosmo-Politics" - Risk, Hope, Change. A conversation with Isabelle Stengers', in: Mary Zournazi, *Hope: New Philosophies for Change* (Australia: Pluto Press, 2002), pp. 244-72, esp. p. 245.

7. Ibid., p. 248.

8. Donna Haraway, 'Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', in: *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women. The Reinvention of Nature*, (London: Free Association Books, 1991), pp. 183-201, esp. p. 191.

9. Ibid., p. 192.

10. Ibid., pp. 196, 198.

11. BAVO discusses punk band Laibach's 1983 interview at the Yugoslavian State Television, entirely based on citations of communist ideology; and a Swedish artist collective [Aldis Ellertsdoettir, John Huntington, Mikael Näsström, and Fanny Carinasdotter], who, in 2005, presented a planning proposal for the city of Umeå that was far more extreme than the developers' plan they criticized - since, for example, it suggested an even vaster demolition scheme. BAVO, *Too Active to Act*, pp. 108-13.

12. Ibid., p. 152

13. Ibid., pp. 152-53.

14. Ibid., p. 155.

15. Ibid., p. 158.

16. Irit Rogoff, 'What is a Theorist?' No pages, online source: http://www.kein.org/node/62 [last accessed on 1 April 2011], originally published as 'What is a Theorist' in *Was ist ein Künstler*, ed. Katharyna Sykora (Berlin: Wilhelm Fink Verlag, 2003).

17. Isabelle Doucet, Nel Janssens (eds.) *Transdisciplinary Knowledge Production in Architecture and Urbanism. Towards Hybrid Modes of Inquiry*. Urban and Landscape Perspective Series (Springer Verlag, 2011).

18. Irit Rogoff, 'What is a theorist?' No pages.

19. Irit Rogoff, '"Smuggling" - An Embodied Criticality', p. 1, taken from eipcp.net/dlfiles/rogoff-smuggling [last accessed 1 April 2011].

20. Richard Rorty, 'Truth with Correspondence to Reality', in: *Philosophy and Social Hope*, originally published in German, 1994, in Richard Rorty, *Hoffnung Statt Erkenntnis* (Vienna: Passagen Verlag, 1994), pp. 23-46, esp. p. 23.

21. Ibid., p. 28.

22. Ibid., p. 28.

23. Ibid., p. 32.

Biography

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Review article
Curating the Urban Utopia of Fun
Maroš Krivý

The Dreamlands exhibition, staged by curators Quentin Bajac and Didier Ottinger at Centre Pompidou, Paris, during the summer of 2010, explores what could be described as an urban utopia of fun - a fully urbanized society, in which the activity of fun has a key role in the system of production and the spatial organization of cities. This version of utopia juxtaposes two forms in which it was historically formulated. The difference between classical and activist utopia, outlined by Judith Shklar,[1] can also be described as a difference between an imaginary ideal and a real model. Urban utopia of fun blends the two:

- From the classical utopia, it takes the initial form of an island: compare Coney Island and More's New Island Utopia.
- From the activist utopia, it takes the form of a political mechanism based on functionality and rationality: Walt Disney Worlds are as rationally structured and governed as Fourier's *Phalanstère*.

The utopia of fun, as presented in the exhibition, is an imaginary ideal that aspires to become a real model. Taking its title from the Dreamland amusement park, built in 1904 on Coney Island, 'the show considers the question of how World's Fairs [...] and theme parks have influenced ideas and notions of the city'.[2]

In *Delirious New York*, which is itself presented as an exhibit, Rem Koolhaas discusses the funda-mental influence of Coney Island on the urbanism of Manhattan. In a sense, then, the objective of Dreamlands is to generalize this thesis. The subtitle of the exhibition ('from amusement parks to cities of tomorrow') suggests that the late nineteenth century's dream of enjoyment, localized in space (amusement park) and limited in duration (world's fairs), extended spatially and temporally to cover city as such. But what does the exhibition make of the not-that-new description of 'cities of tomorrow' as an offshoot of amusement parks and world's fairs?

Let me first sketch a field of positions into which the exhibited works can be distributed. The nature of their relation with the utopia of fun serves as a guideline here. I will then consider how these different positions, their mutual relationships, and contradictions are (not) brought out in the exhibition concept. Finally, the form of translating *Learning from Las Vegas* from book to exhibition will be interpreted as exemplary of a formal self-referentiality in the staging of the exhibition as a whole.

Conceived Space and Governmentality
In the first place, there are works that elaborate what we could describe as a Lefebvrian conceived space - sketching, thinking, and laying out the utopia of fun. Whether the underlying motivations are base or sublime, planned or 'non-planned' - in the exhibition, both Walt Disney's dream of what he called *EPCOT* (Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow) and Cedric Price's Fun Palace are

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presented - enjoyment is objectified as a supreme function of architecture: 'We have entered now into an age of leisure [...] with the equipment to enjoy it.'[3]

One of the most conspicuous aspects of the development of the utopia of fun - entirely missing in the exhibition, unfortunately - is the ambiguous relation between the 'classic' architectural avant-garde and post-war neo-avant-garde. This ambiguity is based on a tension between planning and spontaneity, between the respective roles of planning professionals and ordinary people in shaping urban space. The omission of this question is surprising in light of today's omnipresence of participatory projects.

Fun urbanism is necessarily based, to a certain degree, on 'non-plan' and on popular enjoyment. In the concept of non-plan, which was introduced in 1969 by Price, Banham et al.,[4] the dominant role of central planning in urban development is taken as the target of criticism. Non-plan advocated popular participation in shaping urban environment. However, it did not take long to realize - and in this, the story is quite similar to that of *Learning from Las Vegas*, published only a few years later - that non-plan is really a plan at a qualitatively new level.

There are two arguments for this. Firstly, planning restrictions at the urban level are parallel to an increased planning complexity at the socio-economic level, the process that Foucault described as governmentality of population.[5] Secondly, non-plan eventually boosts the integration of architectural design and speculative development: 'After the first Thatcher administration was elected in 1979, enterprise zones were introduced as a non-plan experiment. Without enterprise zones, we would have no MetroCentre Gateshead and no Canary Wharf. These are design icons, accurately symbolic of social change.'[6]

Post-war avant-garde is explicitly formulated against the modernist pathos of rationality and planning. Instead of heroic asceticism and engineering logic, we have an unrestrained *joie de vivre* and an individual human being with his or her emotions. Static concrete slabs were replaced by liberated capsules, and *objet*-types gave way to flow patterns. However, rather than being 'against', the logic developed by the post-war avant-garde should be interpreted as a further integration of planning and socio-economic life. It is the sphere of consumption - the sphere that is in the urban plans and discourse of Le Corbusier always somehow underrated at the expense of heroic production and distribution - that is now deeply integrated into the architectural organization of social life.

There is an uncanny resemblance between Price's 'tree-top rides through the (New) Forest'[7] of the immense oil refinery in Fawley and contemporary industrial heritage parks where 'former factory buildings have been converted to accommodate cultural and corporate functions',[8] and, to describe one example, where 'an old gasholder has become the biggest artificial diving centre in Europe; alpine climbing gardens have been created in the former ore storage bunkers, and an extinct blast furnace has been developed into a panoramic tower'.[9]

The questions formulated by the post-war avant-garde are questions of tastes, preferences, and lifestyles. They are questions of leisure, culture (in its contemporary sense), enjoyment, and general well-being. As such, they are closely related to the population's conduct. The obvious paradox is that being the target of discourses, projects, statistics, and evaluations, the sphere of subjectivity and intimacy itself becomes an object of public planning and decision-making. We can thus say: it is in the utopia of the post-war avant-garde that the regime of governmentality achieves its architectural expression.

Fig. 1: View of the exhibition Dreamlands: des parcs d'attraction aux cités du futur, at the Centre Pompidou Paris, 14 April - 19 July 2010. Photograph courtesy of Centre Georges Pompidou/MNAM/Bibliotheque Kandinsky/G. Meguerditchian.

No need to say that *EPCOT* voices all this explicitly: 'EPCOT [...] will be like the city of tomorrow ought to be. It will be a city that caters to the people as a service function. It will be a planned, controlled community, a showcase for American industry and research, schools, cultural and educational opportunities. In EPCOT there will be [...] no slum areas because we will not let them develop [...] There will be no retirees. Everyone must be employed.'[10]

Artistic Critique?

Dreamlands thus present works that 'critically' reflect on these conceived spaces. They can be divided into two opposed stances. These works attempt to either present a 'large picture' of the utopia of fun or reveal its artificiality. These, mostly photographic, works either 'take a distance' or 'step closer'; they either work out a feeling of sublime or revel in denouncing everyday kitsch. The problem is that the objective to understand and criticize is ultimately thwarted by a fascination with the studied object.

On one side, Andreas Gursky's or Thomas Weinberger's images of Dubai cannot hide their fascination with the monumentality of speculative development - despite the pronounced desire to understand: 'My preference for clear structures is the result of my desire [...] to keep track of things and maintain my grip on the world.'[11] These images show heroic constructions and developments, not unlike modernist pathos of engineers, flavoured with postmodern ornamentation and glitter.

On the other side, Martin Parr or Reiner Riedler repeatedly disclose what everyone knows in any case. They show non-sense at the core of utopia and they depict its dissolution into absurd banalities of everyday life. However, the position of this contemporary photographic dada vis-à-vis the ubiquity of an urban utopia of fun is similar to the relation between dada and the modernist ideology of the plan, described by Tafuri: 'Dada, through absurdity,

demonstrated the necessity of the plan without ever naming it.'[12]

With no lesser force than Cedric Price or Walt Disney, however, this catalogue of absurdities demonstrates that 'we have entered into an age of leisure' [see note 5]. But an equal - and just as powerful - assertion is made by Gursky's images that simply give visual pathos and godlike perspective to operations of real estate speculation. And not only that: the photograph of World Islands in Dubai, for example, approximates the real shape of the world more closely than the real World Islands. It perfectly conforms to the fact that 'these are design icons, accurately symbolic of social change' [see note 7].

De-Monumentalization

As opposed to the fascination-denunciation continuum that characterizes all three positions mentioned above ('conceived space' and two versions of 'artistic critique'), the fourth one, the 'squaring of the triangle', employs a method of analysing the everyday materiality that underlies the construction of the utopia of fun. Instead of its projection, reproduction, or denunciation, these works seem to offer few altered constructions - no new, well-planned, and sketched-out utopias, but shifts within the existing one. Thus Joachim Mogarra's works, for example, represent iconic architectural objects literally in the form of little constructions made of potatoes, cardboard, and other ordinary materials. The operation here can be described as a 'de-monumentalization' of 'design icons'.

A legitimate question in this respect is: what are the real, social, and material effects of such works? Rather than being involved in the field of architectural production, they seem to deal with its aesthetics. As such, however, they always-already deal with the question of what constitutes a 'real effect': whether an aesthetic solution is inferior to an architectural solution, or whether social reality is

Fig. 2: View of the exhibition Dreamlands. Photograph courtesy of Centre Georges Pompidou/MNAM/Bibliotheque Kandinsky/G. Meguerditchian.

primary and aesthetic sensations are secondary.

Curating

It would have been worthwhile if the exhibition had offered more opportunities for pondering such kinds of questions on the background of history of architectural avant-garde and its implication in the construction of the utopia of fun.

The major problem with the exhibition is, precisely, its curatorial inability to map the contra-dictory positions embodied in the individual works of art and architecture (or, for that sake, to show that these positions are not really important in light of something more fundamental shared by all). It is the problem of mutual relations, communications, and effects between products of artistic and archi-tectural creation, and of relations, communications, and effects between these creations and social space.

Isolated from the question of the institutional forms of production, exhibition, and collective reception of artworks, the ornamental rhetoric of their explanations - which has meanwhile devel-oped into a literary genre of its own - only testifies to the inability of the artworks themselves to do what they announce.

The visitor is struck by a Warhol-like strategy of Dreamlands that mimics the form of an analysed object. The exhibition is staged as a theme park. The experience is divided into a limited number of disparate 'themes'; the latter are then assigned to specific rooms. The exhibition subsequently reads like an 'objective' list of important works that have touched upon the question of leisure and space. The Borges-like categories - 'Definitely Dubai', 'Pierre Huyghe', 'Copy/Paste' or 'Staging the World' - according to which the exhibition has been divided, attest to the lack in terms of the analysis of relation-ships among the selected works.

The spectator's movement through Dreamlands starts as a tunnel ride in the amusement park, where staged scenes are illuminated by spotlights or simply projected onto walls. In the latter part of the exhibition, the visitor progressively emerges from this darkness. Does this suggest a metaphor for enlightenment that the curators might have wished to stage for spectators?

Learning from Las Vegas

The border between the dark and light part of the exhibition is, interestingly enough, located in the room dedicated to *Learning from Las Vegas*. Does this book represent that singular moment when the enigmatic utopia of fun fully blends with the banal, everyday reality, as if inverting the Borges' story of a 'Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire'?[13]

However, there is another parallel between the book itself and the staging of the exhibition that is more interesting in this context. Venturi, Scott-Brown & Izenour subjected modernist practice to criticism mostly in *symbolic* terms (a 'duck'), while advocating a different version of symbolic expres-sion (a 'decorated shed'). The shift thus occurs from one version of 'speaking architecture' to another - whereas the notion of 'duck' goes back to the proto-modern *architecture parlante*, where 'Ledoux [...] endeavoured to give the structure itself such a form that it would, of itself, tell its story',[14] in the post-modern version, the adjective *parlante* would rather denote a double liberation of 'form from content' and of 'façade from form', all the way down to the current experiments with the production of atmos-pheres and envelopes.

So the exhibition did for Venturi, Scott-Brown & Izenour's book what *Learning from Las Vegas* did for architecture - considering it at the level of its symbolic performance. When curators write that '*Learning from Las Vegas* overturned the accepted hierarchies, making commercial architecture and

leisure the key to thinking the urban in the age of the automobile',[15] the book becomes a victim of its own message - interpreting architecture as something to be read from a speeding automobile. Curators interpreted *Learning from Las Vegas* in precisely such a distracted way and 'stripped' [*sic*] the book of the distinction it makes between form and content of the message: 'If the commercial persuasions that flash on the strip are materialistic manipulation and vapid subcommunication, which cleverly appeal to our deeper drives but send them only superficial messages, it does not follow that we architects who learn from their techniques must reproduce the content or the superficiality of their messages.'[16]

Facing the difficult task of exhibiting a book, the curators decided to present it as a diaporama - a rotating sequence of images taken from the publication. Possibly inspired by signs that 'flash on the strip', the result is really that of a 'vapid subcommunication' and of 'reproduced superficiality of their messages' or, rather, of a message superficially reproduced. However naïve Venturi & Scott-Brown's statement appears today, there is still a difference between the two possibilities: that Venturi & Scott-Brown are *conscious* advocates of commercial architecture and that Venturi & Scott-Brown advocated commercial architecture in spite of their intentions. The way Dreamlands translates *Learning from Las Vegas* into a diaporama is precisely the way of ignoring this and numerous other differences.

Sequence of Images
Eventually, the whole Dreamlands exhibition can be perceived as a diaporama exploded into three-dimensional space, where every image is followed by another and another.

Whereas Eisenstein's theory of montage drew on the potential to generate meaning by introducing discontinuity, ambiguity, and contradictions within a sequence of images (and, consequently, within indi-vidual images themselves), diaporama, an 'artistic' variation of a PowerPoint slideshow, is defined by a smooth and well-functioning formal continuity of isolated images. It is a variation on the Coney Island tunnel ride. However, as an exhibition form it lacks the strong curatorial position to generate a network of relationships among images: 'It is no coincidence that the word "curator" is etymologically related to "cure": to curate is to cure. Curating cures the powerlessness of the image, its inability to show itself by itself.' [17]

The role of a curator, then, would be to make images work - together or apart - and not only represent. It would be to 'cure' them of a mere representation (of a style or approach of a particular period, of itself as an artistic masterpiece) by generating new conceptual patterns - one has been suggested above - according to which the images are organized.

The results of Dreamland's curating are ultimately visible in another room named 'Las Vegas', where Martin Parr's, Thomas Struth's and Peter Malinowski's photographs 'of Las Vegas' are presented next to each other. But, precisely, there is no other criterion for exhibiting the three photographs next to each other, except the fact that they are 'of Las Vegas'. Such a constellation of images does not create aesthetic work, but rather reproduces our already saturated notions 'of Las Vegas' and of the utopia of fun.

Notes

1. Judith Shklar, 'The Political Theory of Utopia: From Melancholy to Nostalgia', *Daedalus*, 94, no. 2 (1965), pp. 367-81. See also discussion in Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1978), p. 13.

2. Quentin Bajac, 'DREAMLANDS at the Pompidou' [interview with Quentin Bajac], Aesthetica, 21 May 2010, http://aestheticamagazine.blogspot.com/2010/05/dreamlands-at-pompidou.html [accessed 20 April 2011].

3. Cedric Price in 1963, quot. in Julie Houis and Irène Tsuji, *Dreamlands: Des parcs d'attraction aux cités du futur* [exhibition catalogue] (Paris, Centre Pompidou, 2010), p. 17.

4. Reyner Banham, Paul Barker, Peter Hall & Cedric Price, 'Non-Plan: An Experiment in Freedom', *New Society*, vol. 13, no. 338, 20 March 1969, pp. 435-43.

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Biography

Maroš Krivý is currently finishing his PhD in Urban Studies at the University of Helsinki. In the thesis he discusses the political economy of transforming obsolete industrial space, focusing on the ambiguous role that art and the idea of 'culture' play in this transformation. He has been lecturing in urban studies and architecture theory at the University of Helsinki and the Estonian Academy of Arts in Tallinn. Among his recent publications are 'Speculative Redevelopment and Conservation: The Signifying Role of Architecture' (City journal, 2011) and 'Industrial Architecture and Negativity: the Aesthetics of Architecture in the Works of Gordon Matta-Clark, Robert Smithson and Bernd and Hilla Becher' (Journal of Architecture, 2010). He presented his work at numerous conferences, most recently at the 8th AHRA Symposium at AA in London and at the Incidental Urbanism conference in Tallinn. Maroš also practices visual art. Recently, he had a solo exhibition New Coat of Paint at the Month of Photography 2011 in Krakow, Poland. He is the winner of sittcomm.award (2011).

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ISSN: 1875-1504