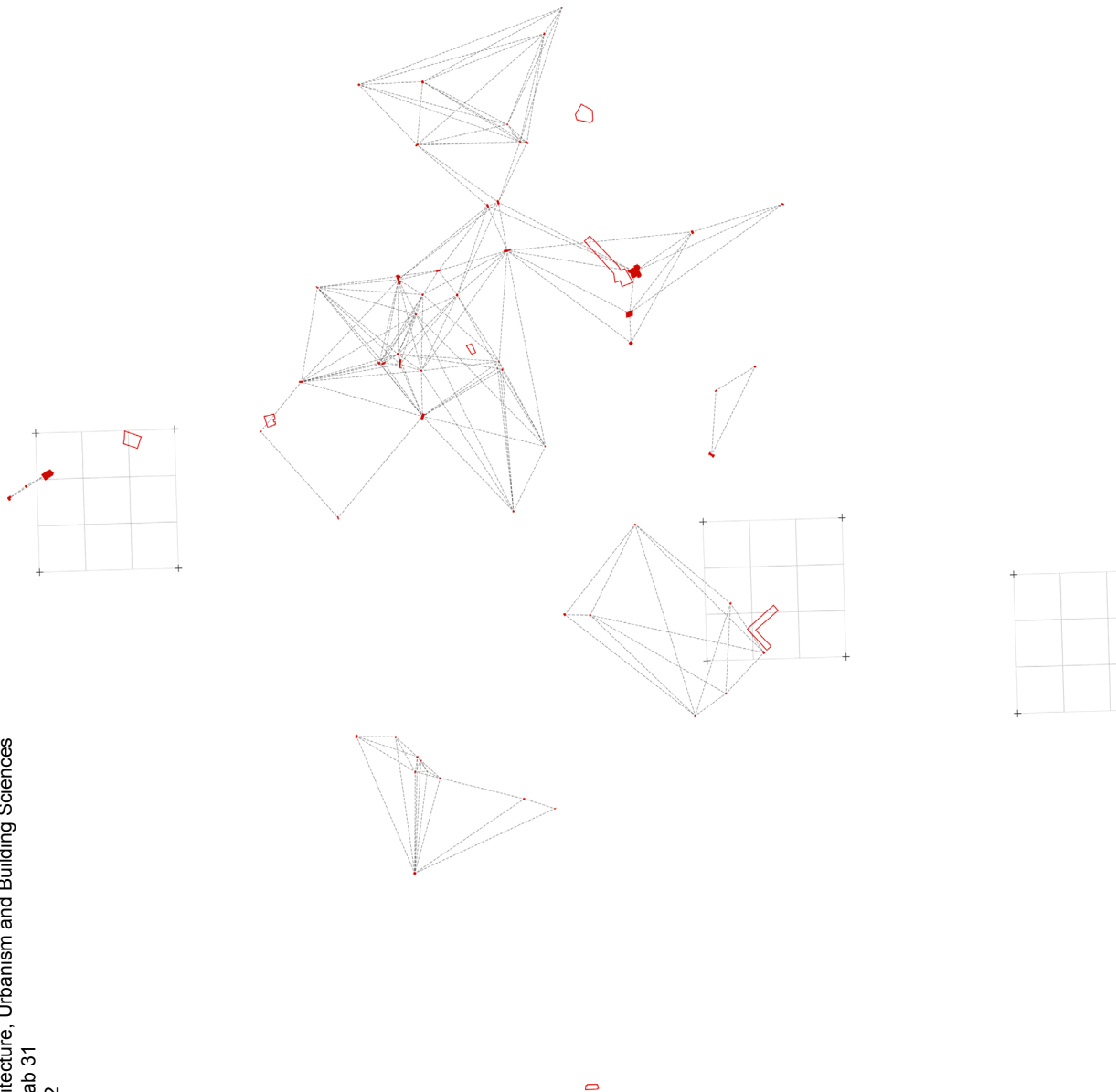


HETERUTOPIA

A DISCONTINUOUS SYSTEM OF ALTERNATIVE
MAKINGS OF SPACE IN THE CONTEMPORARY
HETEROGENEOUS SOCIETY

LORENZO BONDAVALLI



*"[...] THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETY IS CONCEIVABLE ONLY
THROUGH THE REALISATION OF THE URBAN SOCIETY."*

Henri Lefebvre, *Droit a' la Ville*, 1968

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HETEROGENEOUS SOCIETY

LORENZO BONDAVALLI

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“Progress, once the most extreme manifestation of radical optimism and a promise of universally shared and lasting happiness, has moved all the way to the opposite, dystopian and fatalistic pole of anticipation: it now stands for the threat of a relentless and inescapable change that instead of auguring peace and respite portends nothing but continuous crisis and strain and forbids a moment of rest.

Progress has turned into a sort of endless and uninterrupted game of musical chairs in which a moment of inattention results in irreversible defeat and irrevocable exclusion. Instead of great expectations and sweet dreams, 'progress' evokes an insomnia full of nightmares of 'being left behind' – of missing the train, or falling out of the window of a fast accelerating vehicle."

Z. Bauman, *Liquid Times*, 2007.









0

ABSTRACT

The following booklet collects and narrates the story of the project 'Heterutopia. A Discontinuous Moment', developed within the framework of the Explore Lab Studio 2020-22.

Starting from the Lefebvrian notion of *urban society* as a society that can realise itself only when urban occupants collectively use their 'right' to shape it, this research aims at exploring the impact of alternative socio-spatial processes on the contemporary cityscapes. At the same time inspecting the everyday human condition in relation to the evolving built environment.

Where economic competitiveness acted and acts as the prior imperative of policy-making, the struggle to empower its consequent heterogeneities corresponds to a variety of inhabitants dispossessed in their own (everyday) space. This calls for the need to promote the production of new forms of (inclusive) 'agency'. While the current economic drive is affecting the notion of sociality and the ecological dynamics of our cities, the city of Rotterdam prefigures as testbed for a transgressive rebirth. Its patterns of discontinuities stage the return of the Lefebvrian experimental utopia, which could become more concrete by accepting a heterogeneous urban approach that recognises their diverse value.

Hence to undertake a meta-analysis on the concepts behind his reasoning.

It's the search for a *Heterutopia*.

Parallel to and in between the written essay, *precedents* that promoted an alternative ‘understanding’ of architecture, rather than just architectural end-objects and freed from economic and aesthetic pursuit, have been collected and heterogeneously shown.

In order to ground the theoretical discourse, it is believed that the value of implementing architecture as a means of analysis helps in understanding and alternatively picturing the spatial critique developed in this research. Which has been the influence of the societal changes turned around the 1960s? How did architecture and architects respond? If Henri Lefebvre (and others) institutionalized dialectic critique as a tool to orientate the focus and concepts for the urban research of today, then is it possible to re-trace the reactions to these new perspectives through the eyes of the architects? Here intended as just one of the multiple agents that contribute to the diverse Production of Space.

Within the scope of this thesis, the projects have been catalogued under four threads, derived from main concerns at different scales resonated in the Lefebvrian thinking:

Territory,
Social Ecology,
Emplacement,
Everydayness.

Territory

How the politico-spatial understanding of the interplay between land, political forms and community can be an actual practice.

Social Ecology

How the relations between individuals, their collectives and institutions can reproduce a-hierarchically through space.

Emplacement

The process or state of how individuals set themselves specifically in space, therefore making ‘place’.

Everydayness

The practice of re-appropriating the ‘quodiatianity’, colonized by the commodification yet only source of resistance and change.

'OTHERS' INFILL

If the aim of the *Precedents Infill* is to show the socio-historical-political influence on and of architecture through the reaction of selected architects, who promoted a critical spatial understanding and undoubtedly challenged the design output of this research, '*Others' Infill* expands this critique beyond the architects themselves.

The acknowledgement of an architecture (or city, or space) that can't be just defined by architects alone (here intended in its professional nuance) is the evident empowerment of a diversity of agents (citizens, users, contractors, bricklayers, artists, children...) that together enrich the production of space. The underlying challenge of this research lies in questioning: how can this production of space manifests? To whom it belongs? Who has the Right to shape it?

If production is an action, then to act in space can be seen as an agency. And an emancipated 'spatial agency' is the ability of an individual or a group to change the space, independently of the constricting structures of society: the precedents shown counterpose real episodes of *other*, yet less referential and more transgressive, ways to look at a 'diversely produced' architecture.

1

*"IN A WORLD THAT HAS REALLY
BEEN TURNED UPSIDE DOWN,
THE TRUE IS A MOMENT
OF THE FALSE."*

Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle*, 1967.

PROLOGUE

Already in his “*Urban Revolution*” of the 1970, Lefebvre had no doubts: global cityscapes were to become the stage of the *urban society*, a society resulting from a complete process of urbanisation. Its realisation could only happen if urban occupants had the freedom to collectively reshape the urban, the city.¹

The socio-spatial struggles had alarms around the globe already during the ‘68 students² upheavals. Paris, Prague, Berlin, Warsaw, Berkeley, each in their specific contexts, manifested for a different democratic society, ‘by and for’ the people. They expressed awareness against a technocracy that privileged ‘growth’ in all fields, where urban expansion and expulsion affected citizens’ experience. Contextually, in 1967 Henri Lefebvre pronounced the ‘right to the city’, a radical quest for a renewed inclusive, equal and human urban living: a ‘utopia’ that never found tangible realisation.

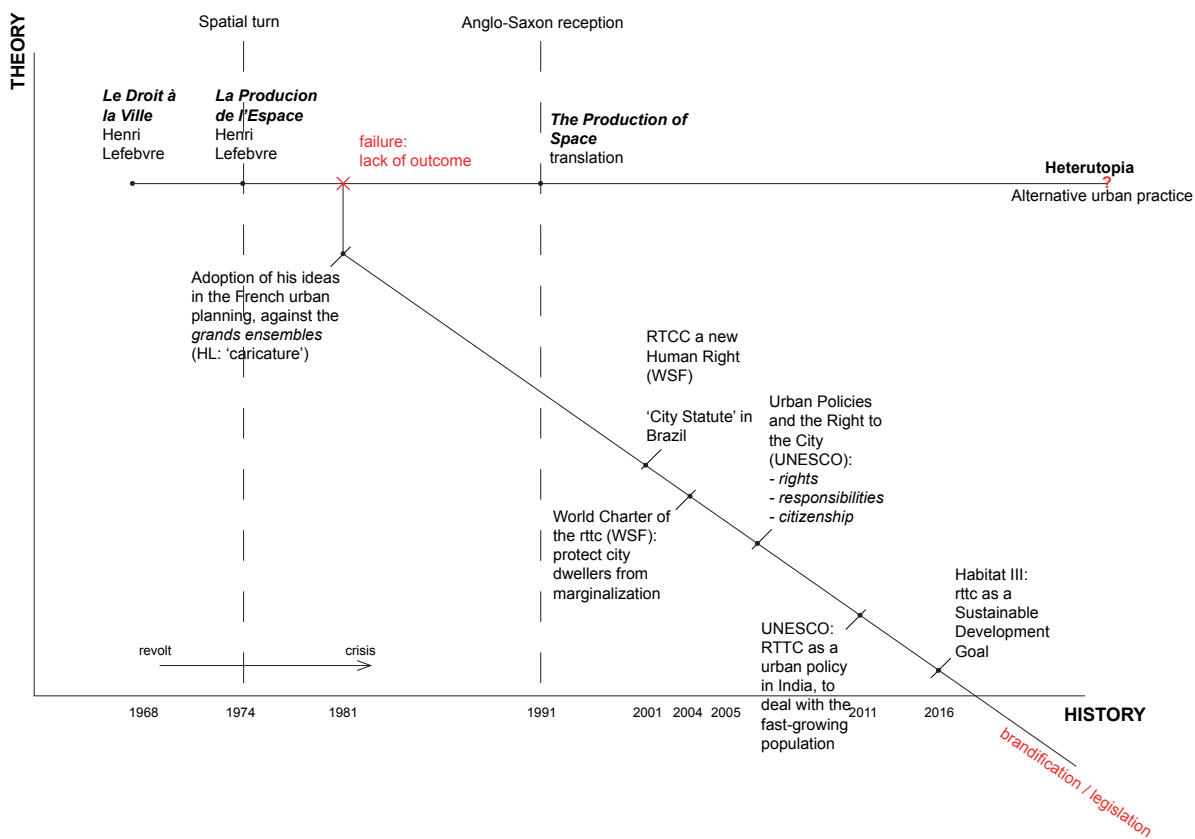
Now, more than 50 years later, new ways of governing, moving and sharing information have changed their context and actors. What in the ‘68 were revolts, now turned into crisis. Lefebvre’s call landed into a milder UN’s 2016 Sustainable Development Goals Agenda, still reflecting a worldwide zeitgeist apparently recurrent. Unprecedented migration flows and city densification issues amplified ‘heterogeneities’ in the city, defined as a variety of inhabitants dispossessed in their own (everyday) space. This recalls the parallel, but diverse, Foucauldian *heterotopias*, defined as excluded spaces of ‘otherness’ that subtly produce/multiply alternative social realms. In urban-architectural field, this translates into the need to redefine a different architectural practice able to promote their re-production as an ecological scenario for better new futures.

[1] H. Lefebvre, “From the City to Urban Society,” in N. Brenner, *Implosions/Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization*, (JOVIS Publishers: 2014), 37-38.

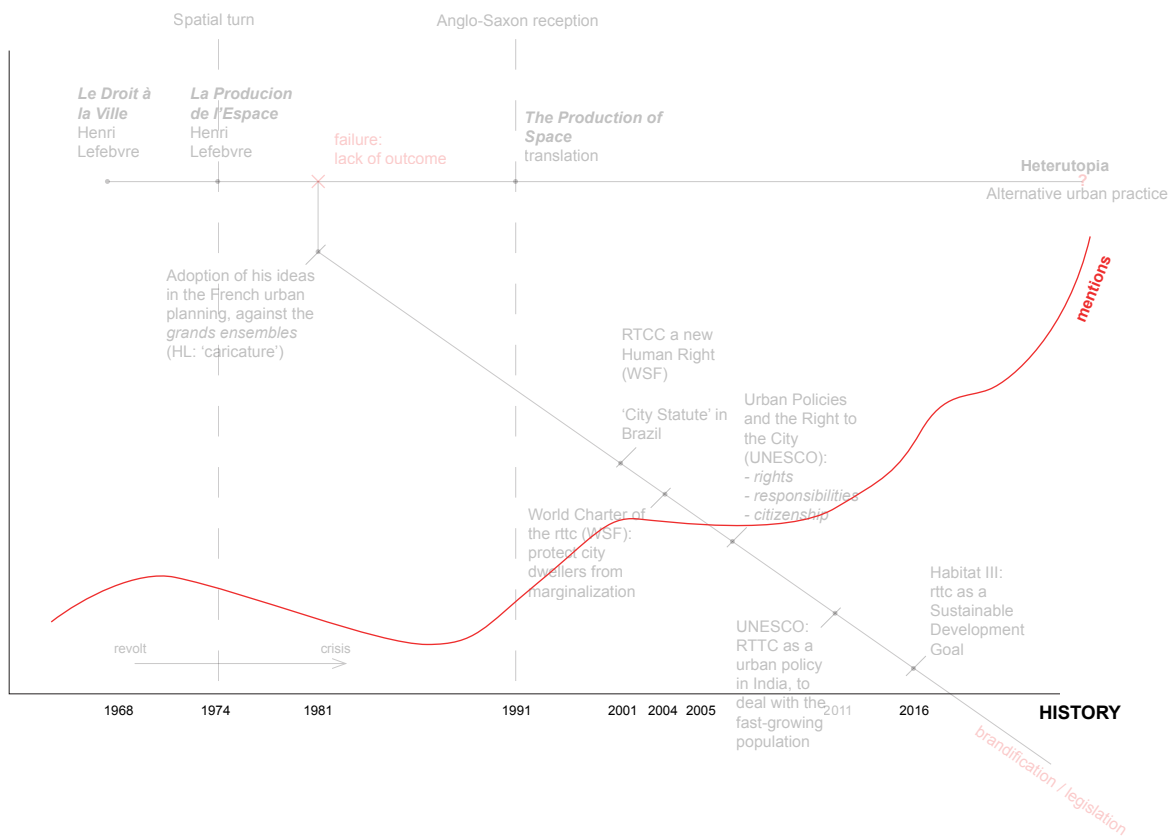
[2] W. D. Halls, *Education, Culture, and Politics in Modern France*, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1976), 190.

Hence this thesis. A research and a design proposal that explores this challenge by questioning:

*HOW AND TO WHAT EXTENT 'THE RIGHT TO THE CITY' CAN BE
GROUNDED INTO A PRODUCTIVE SPATIAL AGENCY, ACTIVATING
A DIVERSE AND DYNAMIC WAY OF LIVING THE 'HETEROGENEOUS
URBAN SCAPE'?*



THEORY



"MODERNITY,
IS THE TRANSIENT, THE FLEETING,
THE CONTINGENT; IT IS THE ONE HALF OF ART,
THE OTHER BEING THE ETERNAL AND
THE IMMUTABLE."

Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life*, 1863.

2

SOCIAL PRODUCTION

With the growing understanding of the urban as a 'a priori' category of space, embedded in increasingly interrelated sociological, philosophical, ecological and political questions, the production of the *urban society* itself could not be understood if not as a trans-historical entity. This history provides a spatial portrait of the city which can only ever reflect the dominant modes of production of any given time: a given society produces its particular space.

Temporal epistemology

Let's rewind. It's the late 1960s.

After a decade of deep recovery from the World War II, where Modernism dominated both practically and ideologically under the Welfare State, new forms of thinking start bubbling. Functionalist planning, expressed as 'technological rationality and political neutrality'³ with origins in the Athens Charter published in 1941, led to a domination of planners over professionals that faced the challenge to accommodate the growth of capital with new urban plans. New post-war spaces of consumption, administrative control of urban spaces and rigid zoning of cities into spaces of work, dwelling, leisure, mobility resulted into unevenly-grown cities with alienated inhabitants from the production of their own space. These pressing conditions started to be under the radar of those sociologists, philosophers and urbanists which promoted the city as the projection of complex societal aspects (generated by history, economics and social divisions)⁴ that needed to be re-addressed.

Urban planning was divided between the technocratic tendency towards liberalisation (in France it's the case of the *grands ensembles*⁵, with its consequent inequalities accepted as an 'economic datum'⁶ from the State) and its critique, operated by revolutionary and radical thinkers⁷, along the tumultuous wave that will fall into the May '68 revolts. *De facto* posing the basis for the transition to post-modern thoughts.

[3] L. Stanek, *Henri Lefebvre on Space: Architecture, Urban Research and the Production of Theory*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011), 22.

[4] Stanek, 25.

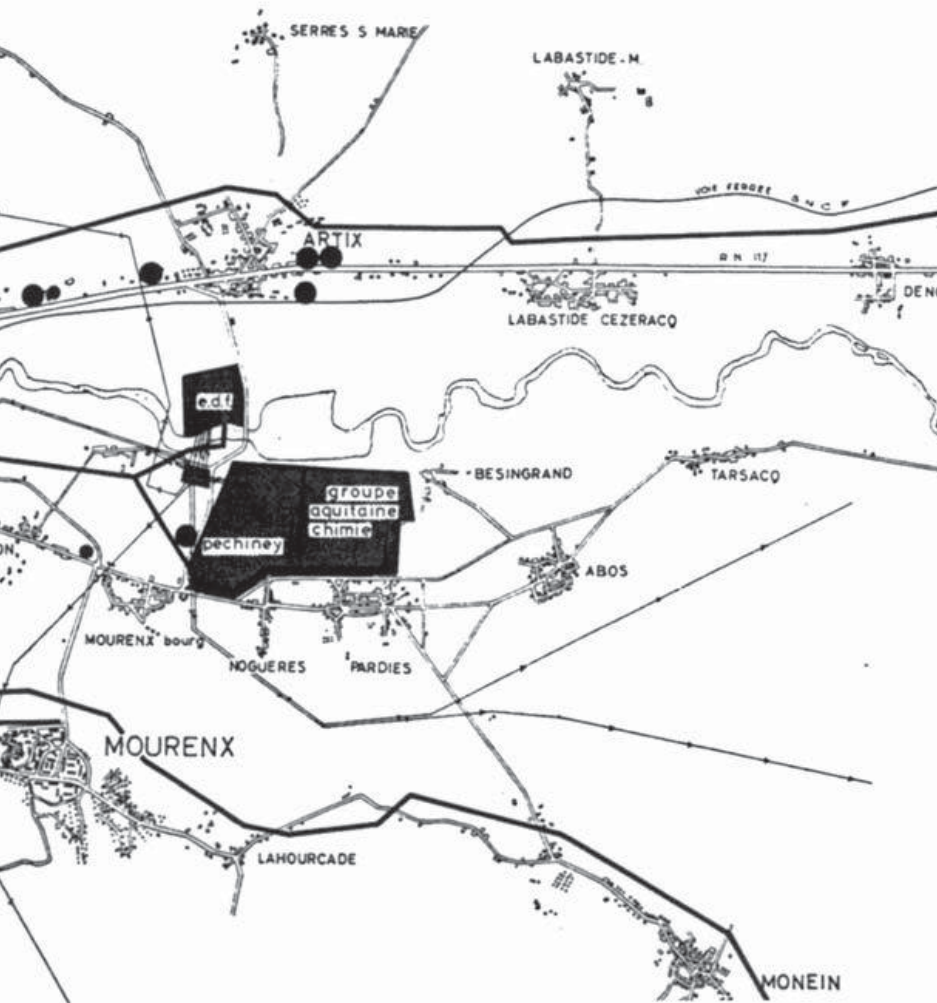
[5] Large-scale high-rise housing projects as utmost attempts of postwar French government policy in the fields of urban planning.

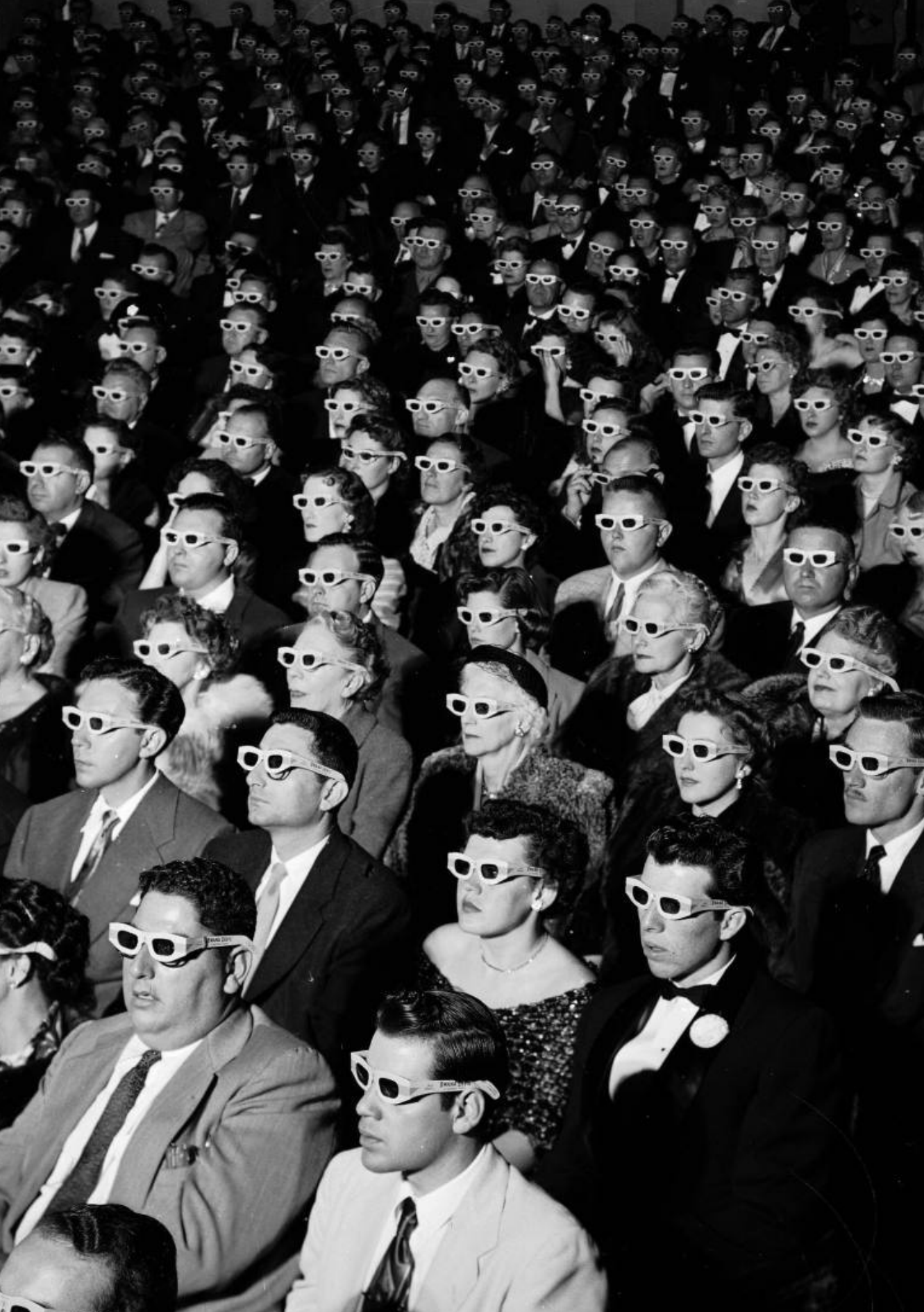
[6] Stanek, 23.

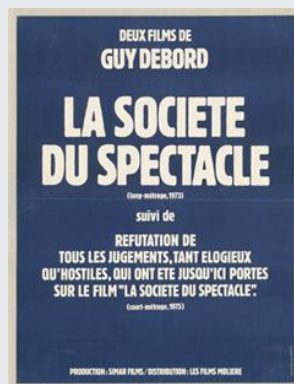
[7] Some like Guy Debord, Henri Lefebvre, Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida were the critical and theoretical reference that questioned, through different emphasis and shades, the system of urbanization and power.



IMPLANTATIONS INDUSTRIELLES DANS LA ZONE DE LACQ







GUY DEBORD

Influencing and being influenced by the sociological critique on urbanism of Henri Lefebvre after the WWII, Guy Debord was able to represent his own thought through avant-garde visual means. With his group *Situationniste International* he attacked the nature of late capitalism's historical decay. The resulting 'spectacle' was a mess of impure social relations conveyed via the imagery of class power.

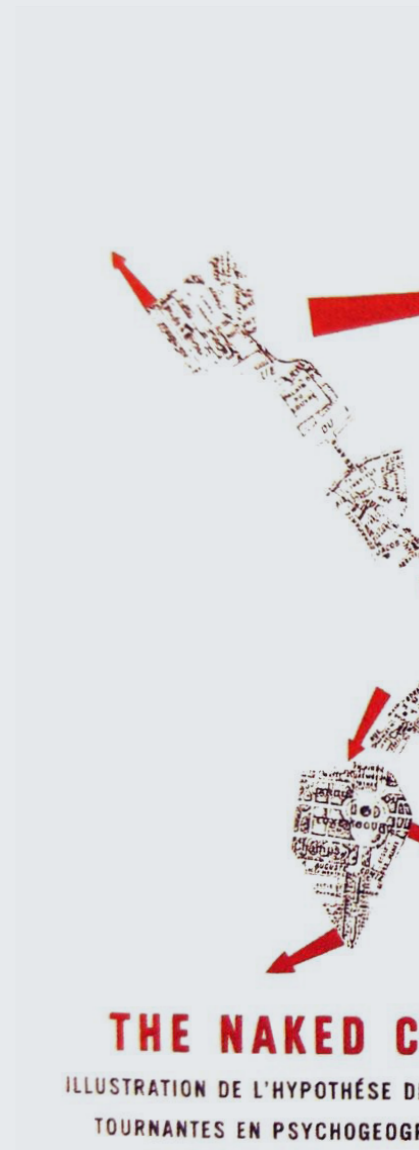
Through psycho-geographical maps that attempted to change the rational understanding of the territory as an instrument to clean more 'negative' areas, Guy Debord's condemnation of the society of spectacle became a shared cause with the anti-institutional and self-management discourse of May 1968, radicalised in the post-'68 era.

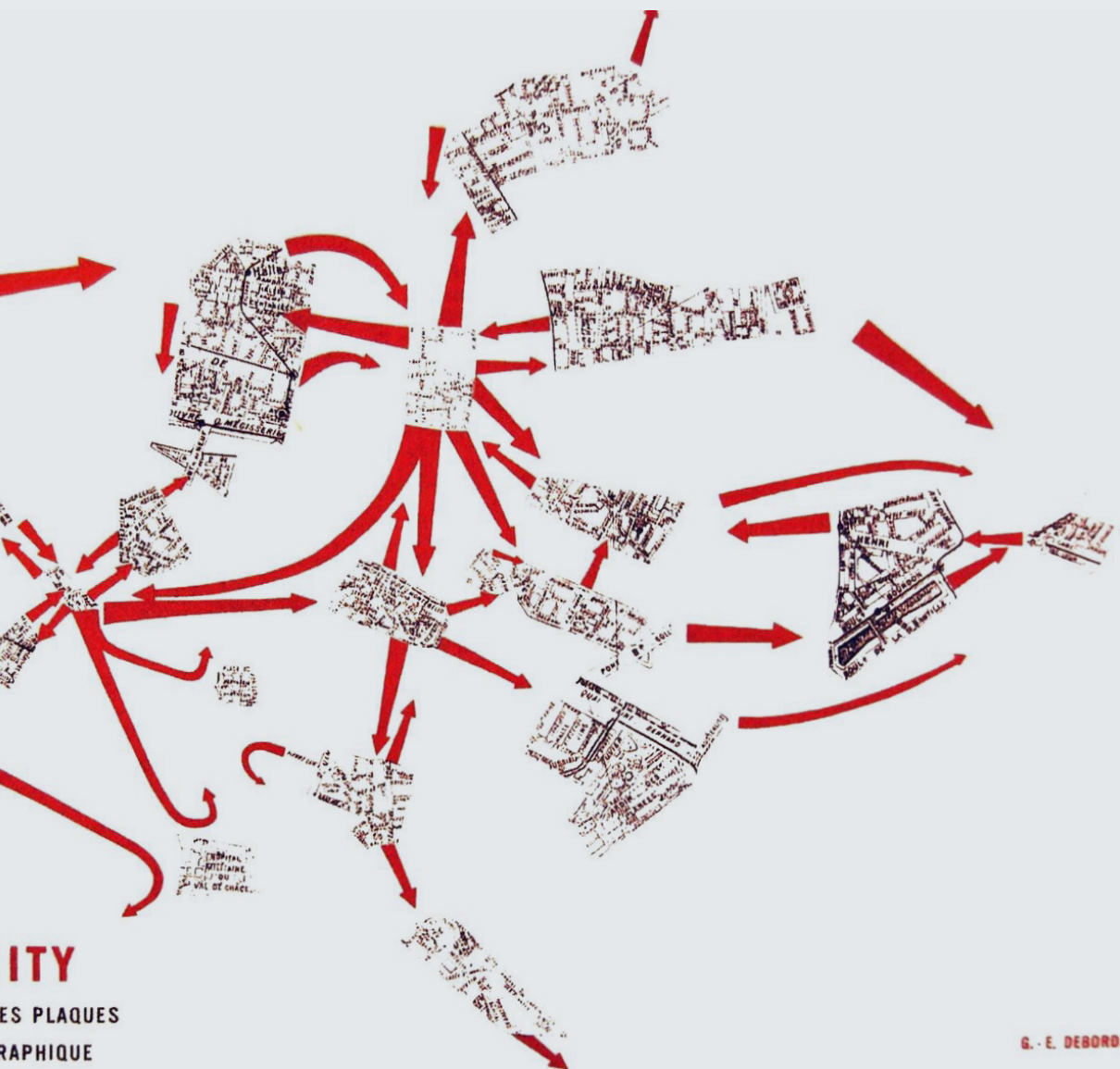
Territory

Social Ecology

Emplacement

Everydayness





[8] The students of Nanterre are the ones who occupied first their university, catalyst of the subsequent revolution.

[9] "It takes as a strategic hypothesis the negation of the everyday, of labour, of the economy of exchange, etc. It also negates the sphere of the state [l'étatique] and the primacy of the political. It takes *jouissance* as its starting point and aims at a concept of new space, one that can be based only on an architectural project." Henri Lefebvre, *Vers une architecture de la jouissance*, (1973), 217.

[10] Surrealism can be seen as reaction to this condition. In Lefebvre's words: "Surrealism was a way of life beyond the everyday."

[11] H. Lefebvre, *Critique de la vie quotidienne* ('47, then '61 and '81).

Among all, Henri Lefebvre, since the '65 professor of Urban Sociology in Nanterre⁸ can be seen as one of the first to address the rising urban questions from a human-geographical perspective. He was the first to frame a socio-political-economic(/Marxian) critique within a spatial perspective: if things want to be changed, it has to happen through a 'project of space'.⁹ Space is to be intended as an abstract category necessary for the re-production of capitalist relations, with the city as the primary site where everyday life and human behaviours are objectified by them. This is the premise of the series of six books in which he formulates the basis of its *urban revolution*, developed from the '68 with the "*Droit à La Ville*" (or nowadays with the predominance of the Anglo-Saxon documentation, "*Right to the City*"), and concluded with *The Production of Space* in 1974.

Social Production was born

Unlike many other thinkers, Henri Lefebvre tried to push his theoretical work into forms of praxis that sought for emancipatory spaces and experimental practices. While having influenced a generation in the 1980's to take up the city as an object of thought and site of resistance, final answers to the ongoing urban questions can't be found in Lefebvre. Rather his dialectical inquiry is the utmost contribution to the scholars that keep inquiring contemporary times. As well as posed challenges that he kept somehow vague (or open): see the notion of the 'city' and the 'urban', of which the attempt to define is still the prerogative of contemporary urban thinkers.

The theories of Henri Lefebvre on space had its roots in his research on the everyday life in France during the *Trente Glorieuses*, when after the World War II the expanding economy and global dimension actively promoted by the State started to affect the individual sphere.¹⁰ Emerging post-war spaces of consumption, the bureaucratic control of urban spaces and the functionalist division of cities into spaces for work, housing, leisure, transportation affected citizens' everyday life.¹¹ A visit to Lacq in the 50s, a rural region in south-western France where he spent his childhood and where big bulldozers were razing the forest to give birth to the new laboratory-town of Moulens, has been the catalyst for his interest in an inclusive urban society:

The relentless process as the urban sprawl and the consumption of historical cities by tourism and economics were evidence yet result of the fragmentation brought by CIAMs.

A theoretical and practical urban crisis. How to change the direction of that failing Modern agenda that led to strict rules, totalizing plans, supposed truths?







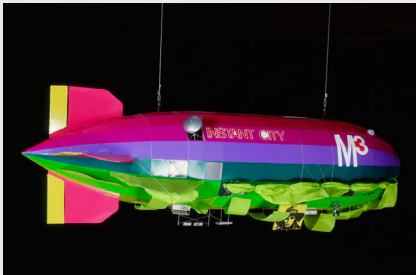
René Magritte, Golconde, 1953
L'Empire des Lumières, 1948-62
Son of Man, 1964
L'Homme au Chapeau Melon, 1964
© Brussels Magritte Foundation

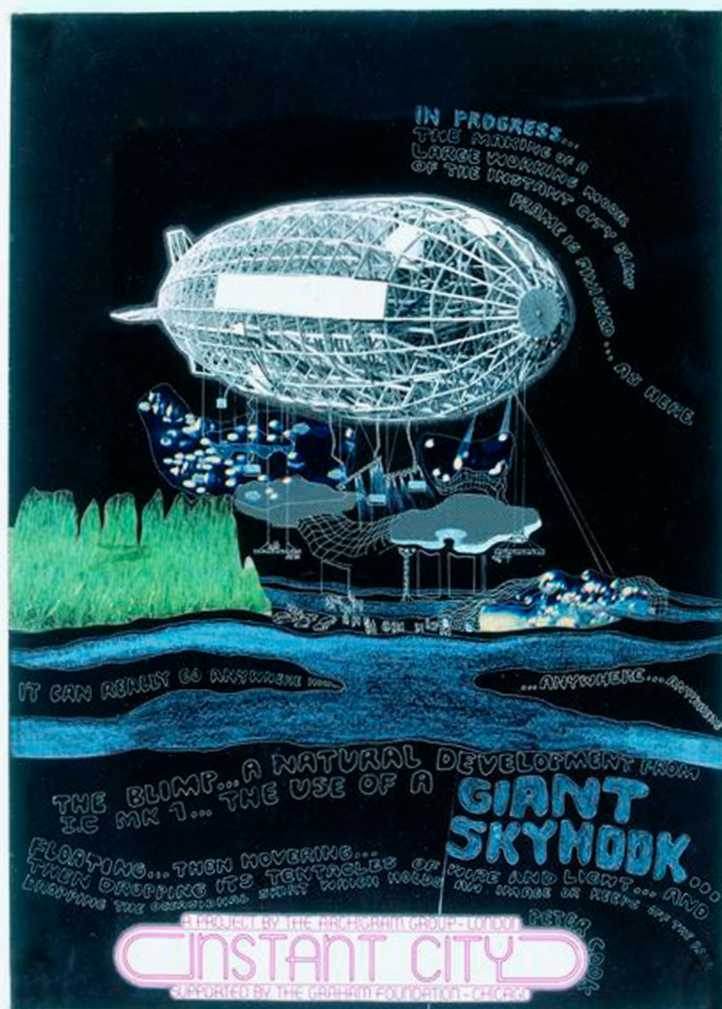


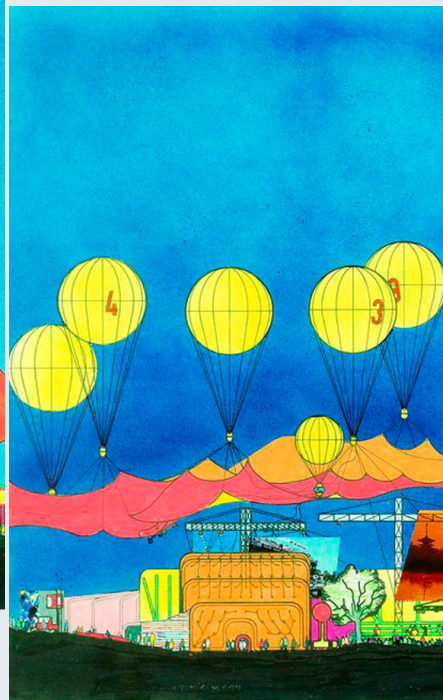
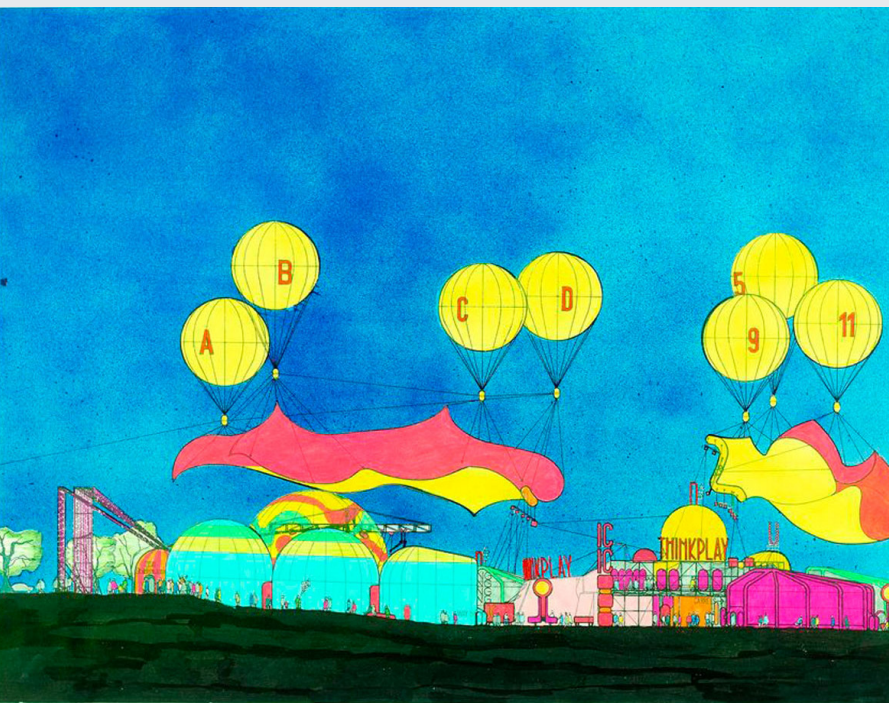
ARCHIGRAM

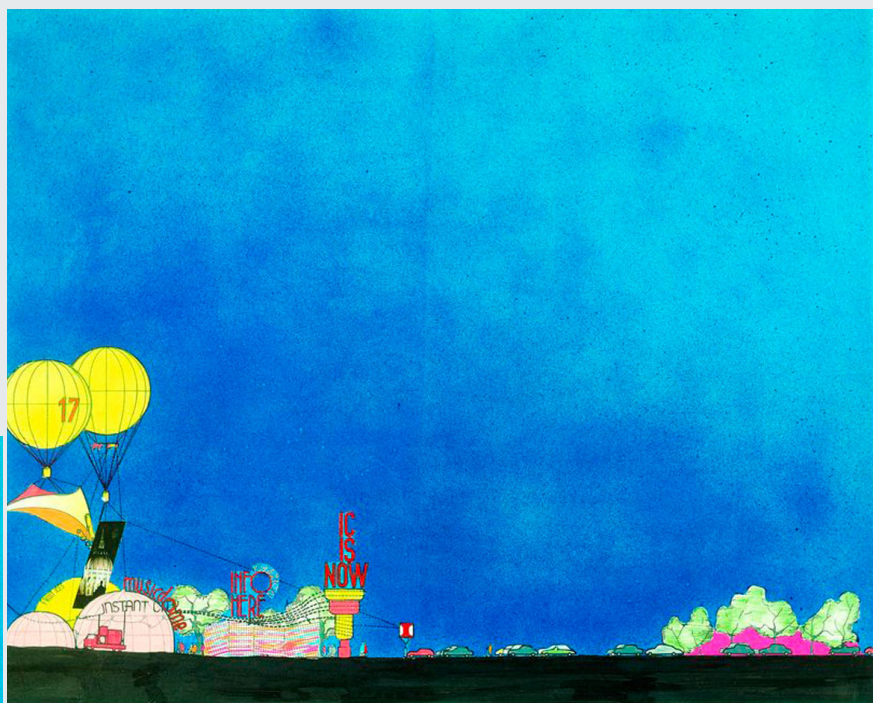
Archigram embodied a vision of architecture freed from its constraints, in a historical transition where the possibilities of technology and the dreamy interminability of resources pushed them to propose alternatives to a Modernism that was becoming a sterile orthodoxy.

Though, the project of *Instant City* implies an utopian architecture that is not a rigid construction per se, rather an instant event that can immediately disappear. It is rather a 'scenario' able to bring together displaced urban fragments, only coming to life if written and re-written by the inhabitants.

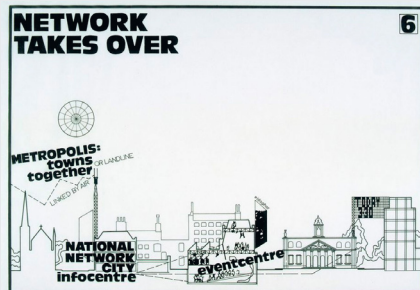
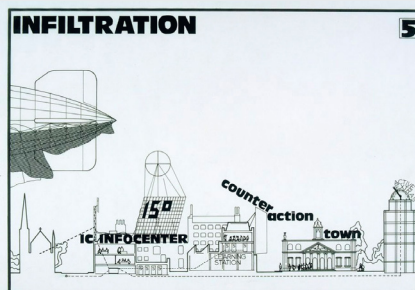
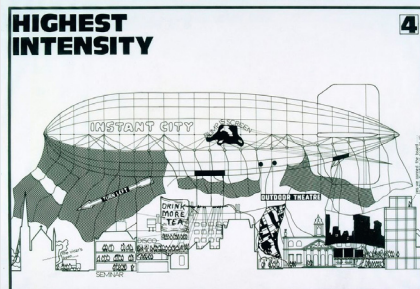
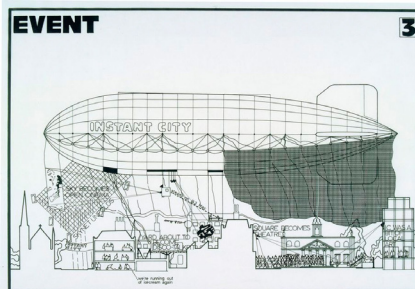
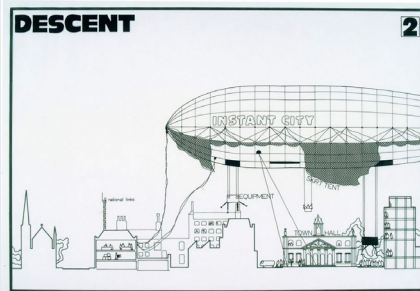
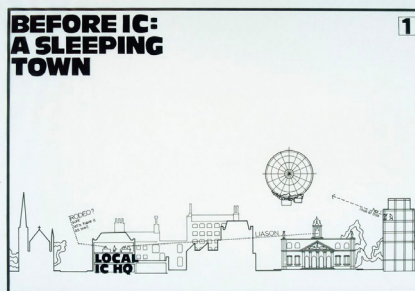


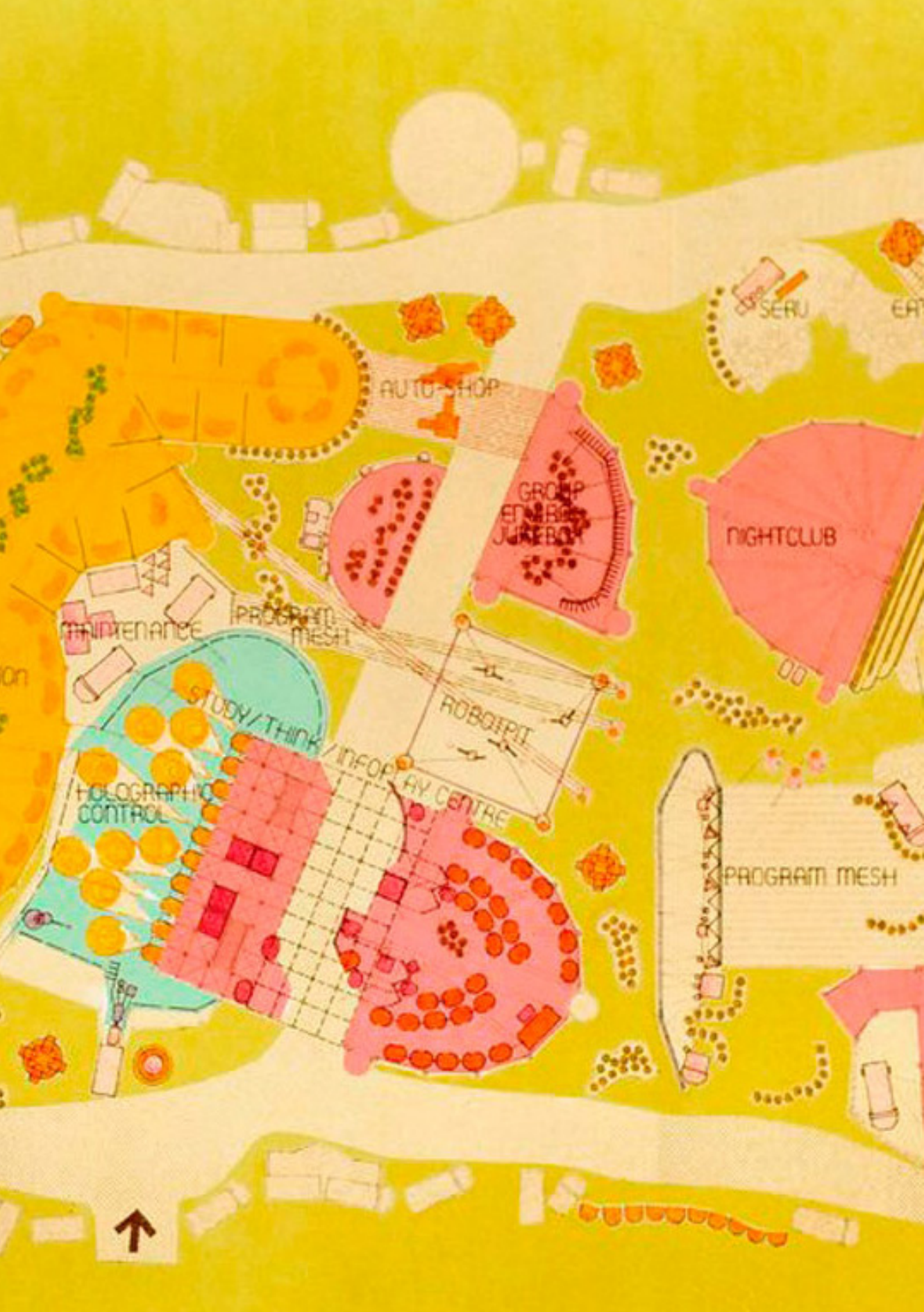






Archigram, *Instant City*, 1966-70
© Archigram Archives





AUTO-SHOP

GROUP
EDITING
JUREBOX

NIGHTCLUB

MAINTENANCE

PROGRAM
MESH

STUDY/THINK

HOLOGRAPHIC
CONTROL

ROBOPT

AY CENTRE

PROGRAM MESH



INSTANT CITY PROMENADE

SHOWSTAGE

HIGH LEVEL SCREEN

ARENA FOR 15,000 PEOPLE

SCREEN

HL SCREEN

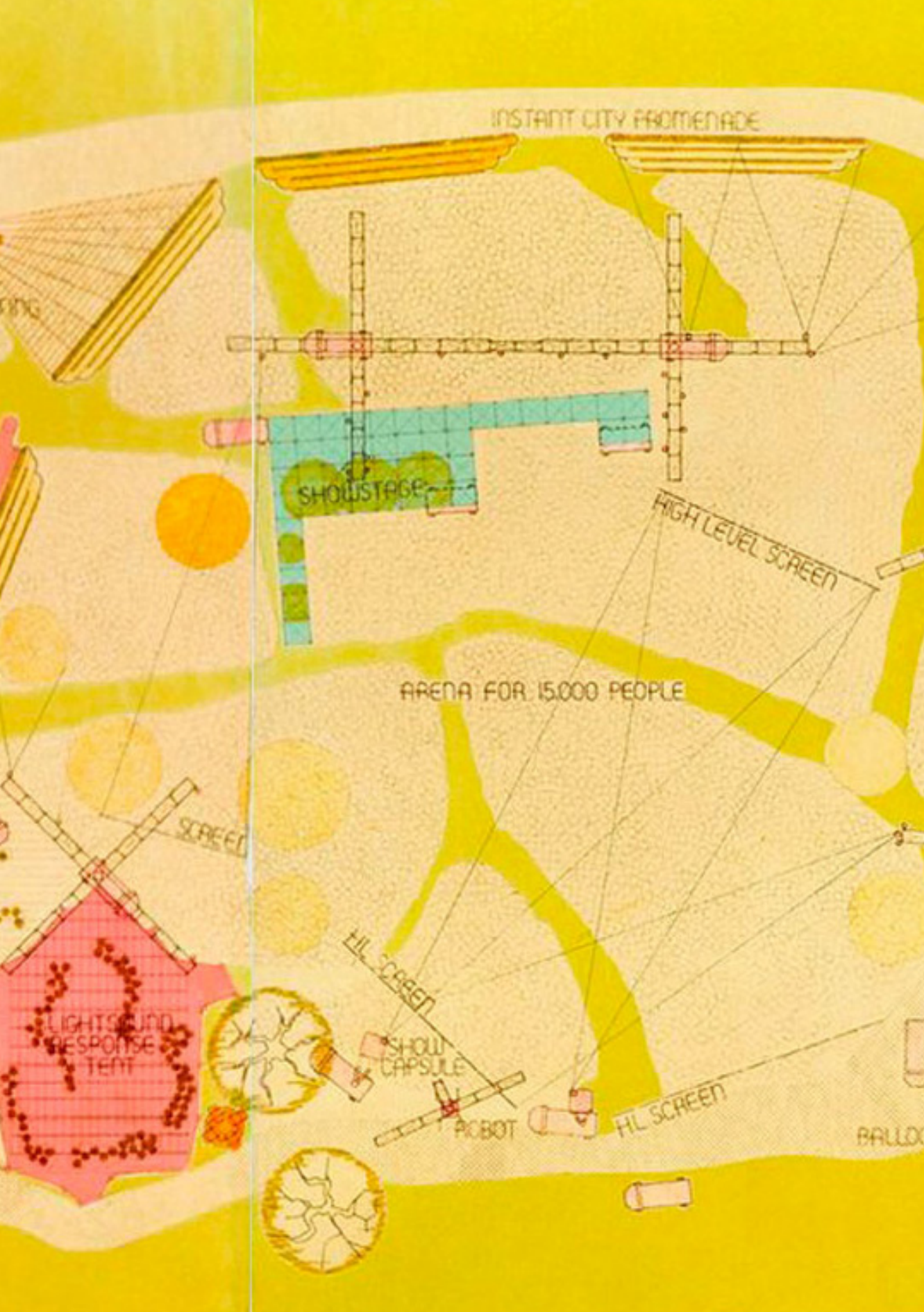
SHOW CAPSULE

ROBOT

HL SCREEN

BALLOON

LIGHTSOUND
RESPONSE
TENT



*"[...] THIS IRRUPTION OF THE URBAN IN A TRADITIONAL RURAL REALITY WAS NOT A LOCAL COINCIDENCE, BUT THAT IT WAS LINKED TO URBANISATION, TO INDUSTRIALISATION, TO WORLDWIDE PHENOMENA."*¹²

[12] H. Lefebvre, "Le temps des méprises", in *L'Homme et la société* (1976) 281-82.

[13] He could see it first person during his trips to the major metropolis as New York, Los Angeles, Teheran, Tokyo and Montreal in the late 1950s.

[14] H. Lefebvre, "Dissolving City, Planetary Metamorphosis", transl. N. Brenner, in *Society and Space*, vol. 32, No. 2, (2014), 203-205.

[15] Society here is intended as a group of individuals in persistent social interaction within the same spatial territory.

[16] D. Harvey, *Rebel Cities: from the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution*, (London: Verso, 2012), 4.

[17] In 1943, the Right to the City had been mentioned as a human right by Jean Giraudeau.

[18] H. Lefebvre, "Right to the City", in *Writings on Cities*, Trans. E. Kofman, E. Lebas, (Blackwell Publishing, 1996), 158.

[19] M. Purcell, "Excavating Lefebvre: The right to the city and its urban politics of the inhabitant", in *GeoJournal*, no. 58 (2002), 99-108.

[20] One of the three elements of the spatial triad introduced by Lefebvre with *perceived* space as the objective/concrete one and *conceived* space as the mental construction derived from it. *Lived* space as the combination of them, the actual experience in the built environment.

The relentless process as the urban sprawl and the consumption of historical cities by tourism and economics¹³, were evidence yet result of the fragmentation brought by CIAMs. A theoretical and practical urban crisis. How to change the direction of that failing Modern agenda that led to strict rules, totalizing plans, supposed truths? In the early 60s, he had the chance to engage and expand his vision with the reactionary protagonists of the time. Close to the Situationists, which harshly accused advanced capitalism to have created societal dysfunctions through the objectification of social relations, Lefebvre reckoned the *urban space* as the very new productive form of modern society. If on one side it is a record of human experience which corresponded once to a natural space of co-living, on the other it became the manifestation of contemporary forms of capitalism that co-opted them around the interests of a dominant capitalist class and its modes of production.¹⁴

Lefebvre became firmly convinced that if space shapes society, then society should shape its spaces. And since space is produced, citizens of every society¹⁵ should have the right to shape it through recoding its spaces. Space not just as a physical entity, but a social 'construct' that affects both practice and perception, realm of an authentic urban existence.¹⁶

This is how in 1967 Henri Lefebvre phrased the 'right to the city'¹⁷: a call "for a transformed and renewed access to the urban everyday life"¹⁸, as to its spontaneous moments, unplanned encounters and possibilities for inclusion. It was not an invite to reform, but to a radical reorganization of social, political and economic relations.¹⁹ In his view, democracy could not have been achieved through state decisions, rather with their redistribution among all the contributors to the production of urban space. This is why ultimately in *La Production de l'Espace* in 1974, Lefebvre attempted an ontological definition of space, dividing it in three different dimensions: *perceived*, *conceived*, *lived*.²⁰ Specifically, introducing the *lived space* as the experiential space which becomes the container of social relations, producing urban space was not to be seen only as planning the objective/material aspects of the city (*perceived*) and previewing the plausible users' reactions (*conceived*), rather re-producing all the aspects

of urban life (*lived*). The utopian dimension of the *production of space* literally involved all the bodies of the lived experience to claim their space and produce it according to their needs. This appropriation is sought to destroy the exchange value interests of capitalist firms²¹, while prioritizing the 'use value' as new paradigm of concern.

[21] Purcell, 103.

Lefebvre previewed that within the process of urbanisation, space could not be intended as unified, both intensively and extensively. Urbanisation was not just the extension of the city, but a complex socioeconomic game of discontinuities, exchanges, placements and exclusions.

*"ARE NEW FORMS ARISING IN THE ENTIRE WORLD AND IMPOSING THEM UPON THE CITY? OR, ON THE CONTRARY, IS AN URBAN MODEL GRADUALLY EXPANDING TO THE WORLDWIDE SCALE? A THIRD HYPOTHESIS SUGGESTS THAT WE ARE CURRENTLY IN A TRANSITORY PERIOD OF MUTATIONS IN WHICH THE URBAN AND THE GLOBAL CROSSCUT AND RECIPROCALLY DISRUPT EACH OTHER."*²²

[22] Lefebvre, 2014, 104.

This new process called for an analysis of the present situation through constant movement between theory and application. To close that gap, architecture prefigured as a productive medium of analysis. Pivotal was his exchange with Constant in Strasbourg.²³ Their common line was to realise that being part of the society only meant being included in its fictional 'spectacle'²⁴, if you were not in it, you were out. Promoting the city as a projection of the social relationships on the ground, then all the aspects which make the city, therefore society – ways of living, history, economic organization, technical and social divisions – needed to be part of a renewed urban vision.

[23] Where he could supervise Constant's ongoing research famously called *New Babylon*.

[24] See Guy Debord, *La Société du Spectacle*, 1967.

Modern architecture started to be reviewed²⁵, with Lefebvre not just attacking how it was on the edge of being an instrument of control, or its harsh functional generic aesthetics. Instead, he posed post-war functionalist planning as consequence of the Fordist blueprint, both social and technological. As a response to this functionalism and standardization, Architecture began to dream new *open structures*, allowing freedom, openness and change. As well as becoming the vehicle for politico-cultural critique. From the *technological utopias* of Yona Friedmann and Constant to the *anti-urbanism* of fermenting radical groups as Superstudio or Archizoom, the production of space assumed a territorial and ecological dimension. Under a process of planetary urbanisation, it became more and more obvious that the production of that Territory could not be divid-

[25] See for example Pessac neighborhood (1926) or *Unité d'Habitation* in Marseille (1952).

LA CITÉ FRUGÈS

In 1927 Henry Frugès commissioned Le Corbusier to build a garden city at Pessac (Bordeaux), challenging him to use it as a laboratory where to put his theories into practice. The project was meant to offer to ordinary workers houses that were standardized, clean, light and healthy. Budget issues prevented it to be realised as expected.

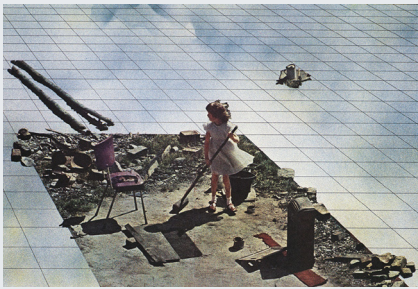
Nevertheless, over time residents started to alter many of the houses, removing or reducing windows, enclosing roof terraces or adding external volumes and garages. Multiple architectural critics viewed the project as a failure. Not for Philippe Boudon or Ada Louise Huxtable, that during their visits in the 1970s they 'saw the future'. The heterogeneity of styles and scales of the different houses avoided a monotony that might have been the only outcome of a modular construction.

When Le Corbusier realised the changes that owners made, disenchanted he had to admit: "It is life that is right and the architect who is wrong."



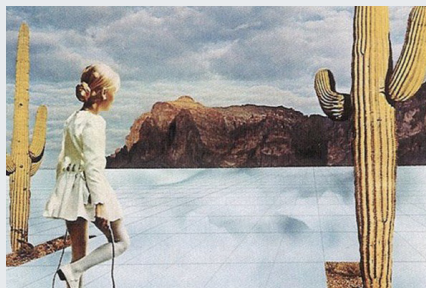
SUPERSTUDIO

Superstudio used architecture as a 'means', a critical and rhetorical one: being highly disillusioned with a vision that was promoting full scale homogenization, standardization and mass-consumption, they focused on the production of *critical utopias*, as a denial of values of the present. The role of the architect had to be re-founded.



Opposing the idea that human beings must be the only creators of their own choices, finally nomadic, they free themselves from induced needs and behaviours to inhabit every space on the Earth's 'supersurface'. The design output did not aim to be objects or goods pre-established in their formal and aesthetic aspects. It just needed to be a potential device that could catalyse "a life anymore based upon labour, but on not alienated human relations: an alternative model of life on Earth."





Heterutopia: a *Discontinuous Moment*

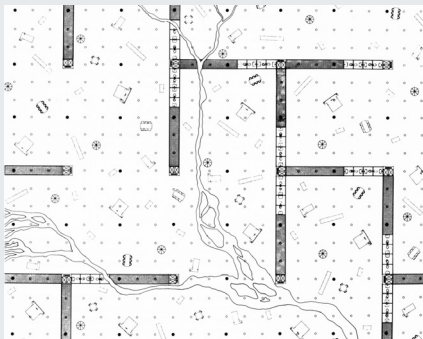




ARCHIZOOM

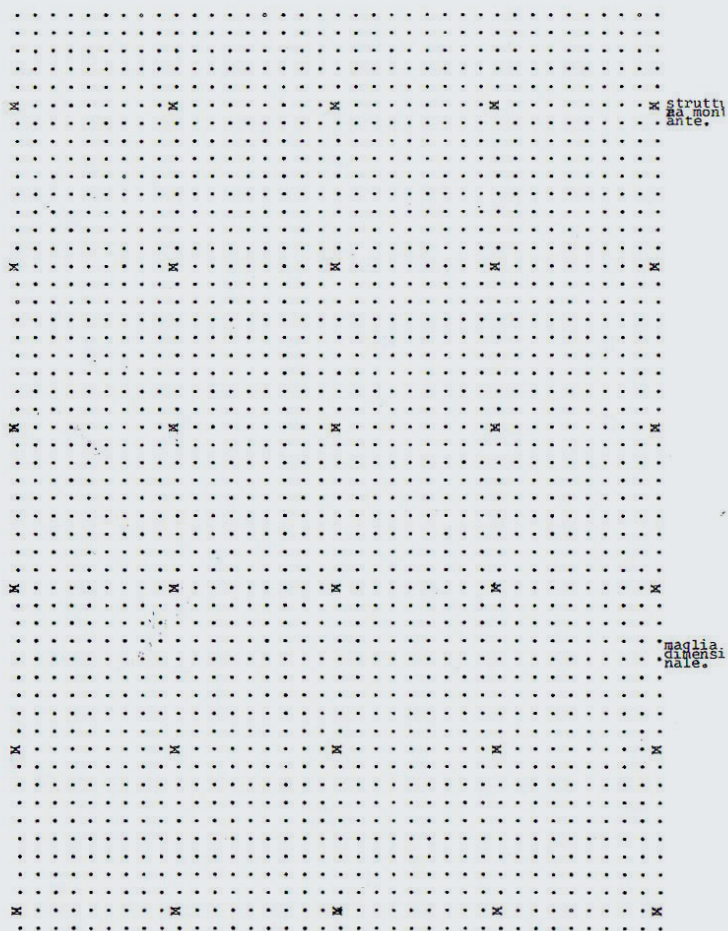
Out of the same radical circles in Italy in the 1960s, Archizoom envisioned a praxis of architecture as an expanded field, beyond the act of simply making buildings. Whereas from Superstudio it was a matter of using the tools of architecture as a critique. Oppositely, for Archizoom, architecture was an extensive research project.

As *No-Stop City* developed, through a visual representation that drastically minimized any mannerism towards a digital and non-figurative language, it gained ground as an endlessly repeated territory of gigantic structures, models of the supermarket or the factory. These were to be intended as the structures of programming, the natural consequence of emerging social organizations and the rising primacy of networks over built forms.



ARCHIZOOM ASSOCIATI
 DIAGRAMMA ABITATIVO
 OMOGENEO

IPOTESI DI LINGUAGGIO
 ARCHITETTONICO NON FIGURATIVO







[26] It's something that Lefebvre found out since the 14th century: scrolling through the use agreements of geographically-influent pieces of land by specific communities in the Pyrenees for their transhumance and management of commons, everything was revolving around their aimed geographical recognition.

[27] Prisons, mental hospitals, cemeteries, retirement homes are all examples of deviant realities within the urban that Foucault introduces.

[28] Whereas until the 19th century planners tried to combine the two, in the 20th century a fracture occurred. The role of the built form obscured the lived experience in it. To expand, see Richard Sennett, *Building & Dwelling: ethics for the City*, (Penguin Books, 2019).

[29] Georges Pompidou and Valéry Giscard, presidents of France that ran respectively from '68-'74 and '74-'81, promoted a 'new quality of urban everyday life', condemning the segregation of the grands ensembles and rediscovering the centrality of streets and squares.

[30] Stanek, 77.

ed from the one of its Society²⁶: the recognition of an individual or/and its community is at constant stake between territory and the social relations in it. In 1967 Michel Foucault diagnosed the modern crisis assigning a name for spaces of crisis in the city assigned to social groups who didn't fit that order: these were *Heterotopias*, 'other spaces'²⁷. He promoted them as realities that stick out from the 'normal' urban, creating deviating proximities within the city.

This is why the understanding of the right to the city, nominally *ville*, the built form, must expand to its counterpart right to the *cit  *, the lived/perceived environment of human relations²⁸, where physical borders are overwritten by perceivable boundaries of the diverse contemporary urban society. The setback of the lefebvrian *right to the city* is that it allowed power structures to adopt his terms and misuse the concept of 'centrality' of the *ville*, in the name of overdetermined renewal projects in the built city-center.²⁹ Foucault immediately realised that the notion of centrality would return productive when intended not as one center, but as one of multiple points of social intensity. The failure of the Modern vision, applied by (liberal) administrative and economic powers, lied in the attempt to optimize those different points treating them as datum through maximizing the positive and minimizing the negative (what Foucault would define the 'deviant'). They tried to formulate unique optimized norms, under the myth of a traditional city or community. The objection or the possibility of 'deviancy' was reduced, in administrative terms, as a statistical error or marginal anomaly³⁰, instead of being promoted as something of value.

The fact that 'droit    la ville' allowed power structures to operationalize the concept of 'centrality' led Lefebvre's theories to appear superseded in the welfarist France, with Urban Research more specifically focused on citizens, users or inhabitants and their narratives, rather than their general relation with space. But what Lefebvre opened up, and that's his legacy, is the *spatialization* of the multiple struggles around that centrality, even if the struggles keep transforming across history. The risk of centrality to become an instrument in the practices of the production of space, does not erase the struggles themselves! The Anglo-Saxon world understood it, inserting in the condition of post-modernity a renewed interest in *difference* and space. The Lefebvrian concerns about a city that was coming out of the Modern agenda as a neutral and homogeneous medium with its own genealogy have become impossible to ignore amongst an ever-expanding interest in urban space and its worldwide entanglements with neoliberal politico-economic forms. With the urban be-

This is why the understanding of the right to the city, nominally *ville*, the built form, must expand to its counterpart *right to the cité*, the lived/perceived environment of human relations where physical borders are overwritten by perceivable boundaries of the diverse contemporary urban society.



AMSTERDAM

LOOSDUIN

LOOSDUIN

GEMEENTE

GEMEENTE

WATERING

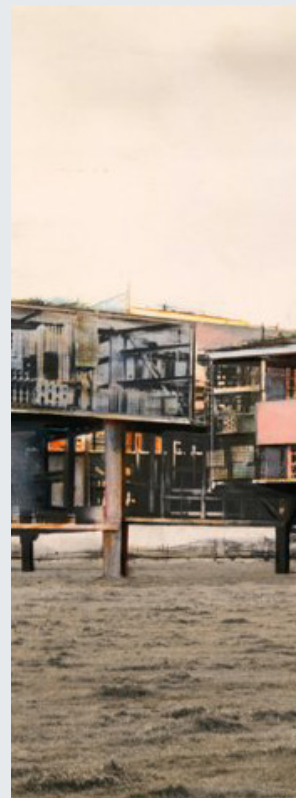


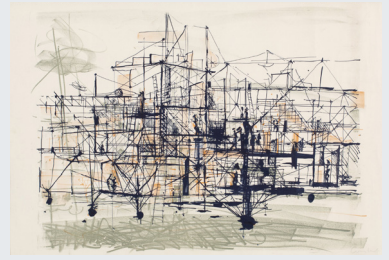
CONSTANT NIEUWENHUYS

The legacy of Constant lies in his exploration of a 'unitary urbanism' that not only searched for the atmospheric social interactions of the Situationist project, but on the empirical production of the city as built space.

In *New Babylon*, social space is social spatiality: the abstract (yet Lefebvrian) aspects of it needed to find a concrete expression. Only in a utilitarian society concrete space could act as an anti-social entity. But *New Babylon* attempted to produce a social construction of space where every aspect of the city could be controlled and shaped by the users within the given infrastructure.

Today, with the acknowledgement of the un-buildability of the technological utopias, Francesco Careri of the group Stalker/Osservatorio Nomade has suggested to see *New Babylon* as an already existing entity out of the voids and fissures of the contemporary consumerist city.





Heterutopia: a *Discontinuous Moment*



[31] Claimed pioneers were E. Soja, *Postmodern Geographies*, 1989; D. Harvey, *The Condition of Post-modernity*, 1990.

[32] Also, thanks to a Marxist review which considered Lefebvre's interest in urban space a deviation from fundamental class issues. See A. Merrifield, "Henri Lefebvre: A Socialist in Space", in *Thinking Space*, Ed. Mike Crang and Nigel Thrift, (London: Routledge, 2000), 167-83.

[33] T. Unwin, "A waste of space? Towards a critique of the social production of space...", in *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 25, no. 1 (2000), 11-29.

[34] In social studies, it comes from the *structuralist* belief that all elements of human culture can only be understood in relation/opposition to one another. In contrast to this, its critique argues that this binary distinction legitimizes power structures to favour a majority on top of the other.

[35] E. Soja, "Spatial Justice and the Right to the City: Interview with Edward Soja", in *Justice spatiale – Spatial justice*, Université Paris Ouest Nanterre La Défense, 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.jssj.org/article/la-justice-spatiale-et-le-droit-a-la-ville-un-entretien-avec-edward-soja/>.

[36] Their definition has been unfolded at page 52.

[37] *Firstspace* is the physical built environment, produced by planning laws, political decisions and urban change over time. *Secondspace* is the conceptual one: how that space is conceived in the imaginary of the people who inhabit it. *Thirdspace* is their combination: it is 'real and imagined', the way that people actually live in and experience that urban space. In E. Soja, *Thirdspace: journeys to Los Angeles and other real and imagined places*, (Blackwell: Oxford, 1996).

coming a spatial entity destined to expand, connect and homogenize, he attempted to institutionalize a dialectic critique able to orientate the focus and concepts for the urban research of today: everydayness, difference, scale, emplacement, territoriality, social ecology and utopian lyricism are all equally crucial in the search for an emancipating social power that can promote new forms of human experience.

The condition of post-Modernity

As departure from Modernism, with knowledge and values becoming socially-contingent and more fluid, the Anglo-Saxon world revamped the interest in space as new form of (social) production, therefore in Henri Lefebvre.³¹ His conception of space as 'socially constructed' that had troubles in being accepted in France³², found its fertile ground in the Anglo-Saxon school which critically revised it. Pivotal was the translation of *La Production de l'Espace* in English in 1991. The spatial dialectic inherited from the book served as a base for a process of reincorporation of space into social theory, parallel to a critique of Modernity that tried to understand the fragmented world of differences in a transition to recognize an emerging 'postmodern condition'.³³ Not because Lefebvre provided answers, but because his sensitivity towards the concepts of difference, the rejection of binary logics³⁴ and the attention to the systems of scale and territoriality proved crucial to understand the contemporary condition.

Beyond the right to the city, with Lefebvre opening up the limitless dimensions of the social spatiality, Edward Soja made explicit the resurgence of the interest in space occurred around the above-mentioned 1991, spreading its awareness to the inter-related concepts of justice, democracy, citizenship or community struggles. To do so, he built back on the radical turn posed by both Lefebvre and Michel Foucault, which he considers the advocates of one of the most important moments in the development of western thought in the 20th century (1968-1974)³⁵, and for the first time inspected together: to break with old ways of thinking about space as either a material form or a mental representation, a more critically sharp and useful spatial perspective must be found. Foucault called it *heterotopology*, for Lefebvre it revolved around the *lived space*.³⁶ Thus Soja, under the post-modern reassertion, updated Lefebvre's spatial triad in Firstspace, Secondspace and Thirdspace³⁷, with the latter

intuitively proposed as a juxtaposition of the *lived space* to the Foucauldian *heterotopia*: it is a space unexplored or unconscious, but real-and-imagined at the same time. At times exclusive and deviant, it contains the collection of lives and experiences of the inhabitants of the diverse urban space. But interestingly it is presented not just as a space, but a real critical practice: Soja invokes 'Thirling' as a practice of 'Othering', or the search of an expanding knowledge able to include always 'an-Other', thus activating the re-negotiation of diverse boundaries and cultural identities. It affirms a spatialized ontology to strengthen the influence of space into critical social theory³⁸, when historicity was still the dominant means of analysis.

"THIRLING PRODUCES A CUMULATIVE TRIALECTICS THAT IS RADICALLY OPEN TO ADDITIONAL OTHERNESS. A CRITIQUE NOT MEANT TO STOP AT THREE, BUT TO BUILD FURTHER, TO MOVE ON, TO CONTINUOUSLY EXPAND."³⁹

Thirdspace allowed Soja to revamp the challenge on how new alternatives and ways of thinking could be made explicit by a renewed *spatial perspective*: a critical spatial consciousness to stimulate new strategies for political organizations and activists to work towards greater social justice, enabling nets of coalitions that could influence the contemporary world. Politically, he tried to make explicit the underlying Lefebvrian political project of a "different society, a different mode of production, where social practice would be governed by different spatial actions" embryonically mentioned in *The Production of Space*.⁴⁰ More than a project, should be seen as an urgent search for a practical solution to the problems associated with economic and political restructuring in the modernization of urban life. This is why, in Soja's view, the idea of space as 'socially produced' remained too vague, therefore unproductive. He sharpened the Lefebvrian definition expanding space as "produced through human activity and the reproduction of social relations."⁴¹ This conferred to the *production of space* a socio-ecological⁴² potential that has become central in contemporary strategies and visions: understanding the functioning of the urban society only as a diversified environment able to constantly create and modify new spatial relations, the focus must be on their 're-production' as an action able to become tangible and to offer a chance of resistance within the urban framework.

[38] A. Merrifield, "The Extraordinary Voyages of Ed Soja: Inside the Trialectics of Spatiality", in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers*, vol. 89, no. 2 (Jun 1999), 345-348.

[39] Soja, 1996, 61.

[40] H. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*. Trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, (Malden: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1991), 419.

[41] N. Smith, "Antinomies of space and nature in Henri Lefebvre's 'The production of space'", in *Philosophy and geography II: the production of public space*, ed. A. Light, J.M. Smith, (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1997), 49-70.

[42] Intended as the study of the relationships between humans and their physical environment.

PARC DE LA VILLETTE

OMA

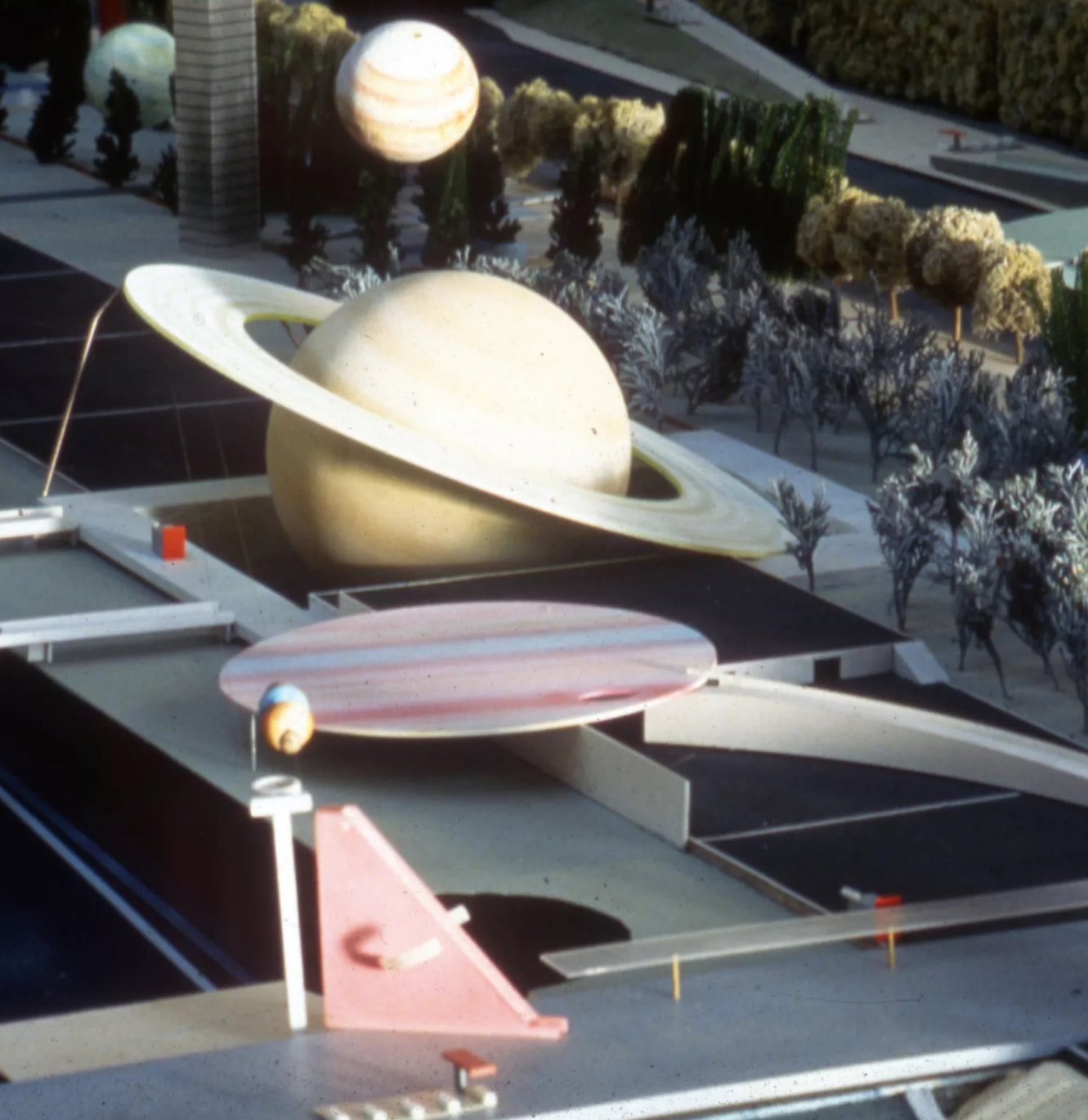
With *La Villette* becoming urban from sub-urban, being a commercial intersection on the outskirts of the city of Paris, it became a canonical test-ground to answer problems related to urban scale and culture. The brief of the competition that in 1982 opened up requested a concept that could promote social interaction, pleasure in the everyday life and experimentation in living culture.

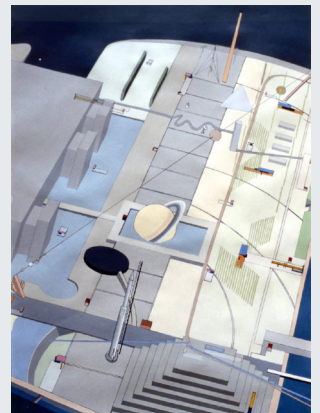
OMA built on the idea of a urban-social condenser: “A machine to generate and intensify desirable forms of human intercourse.”

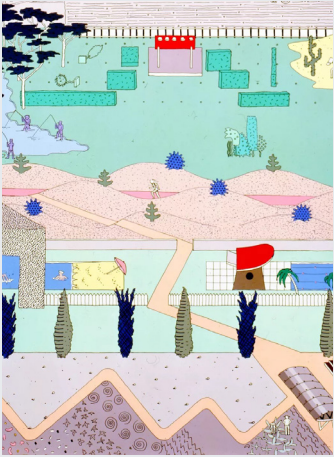
The proposal did not aim to create a definitive park, but rather a ‘method’ that combined “programmatically instability with architectural specificity”, a condition from where a park would not have been designed, but generated.

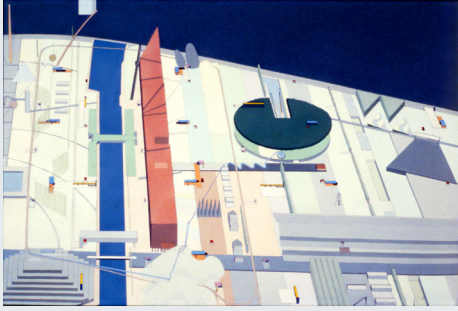
The park superimposed an idea of dense urbanism without architecture on the artifice of the available landscape. The proposal promoted a design solution that challenged how can flexible open spaces can become the output of a design project: can the idea of social condenser be embedded in a systematic logic?





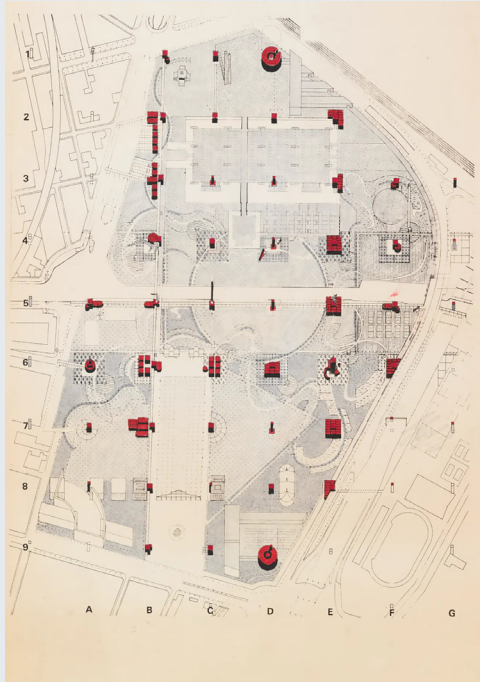






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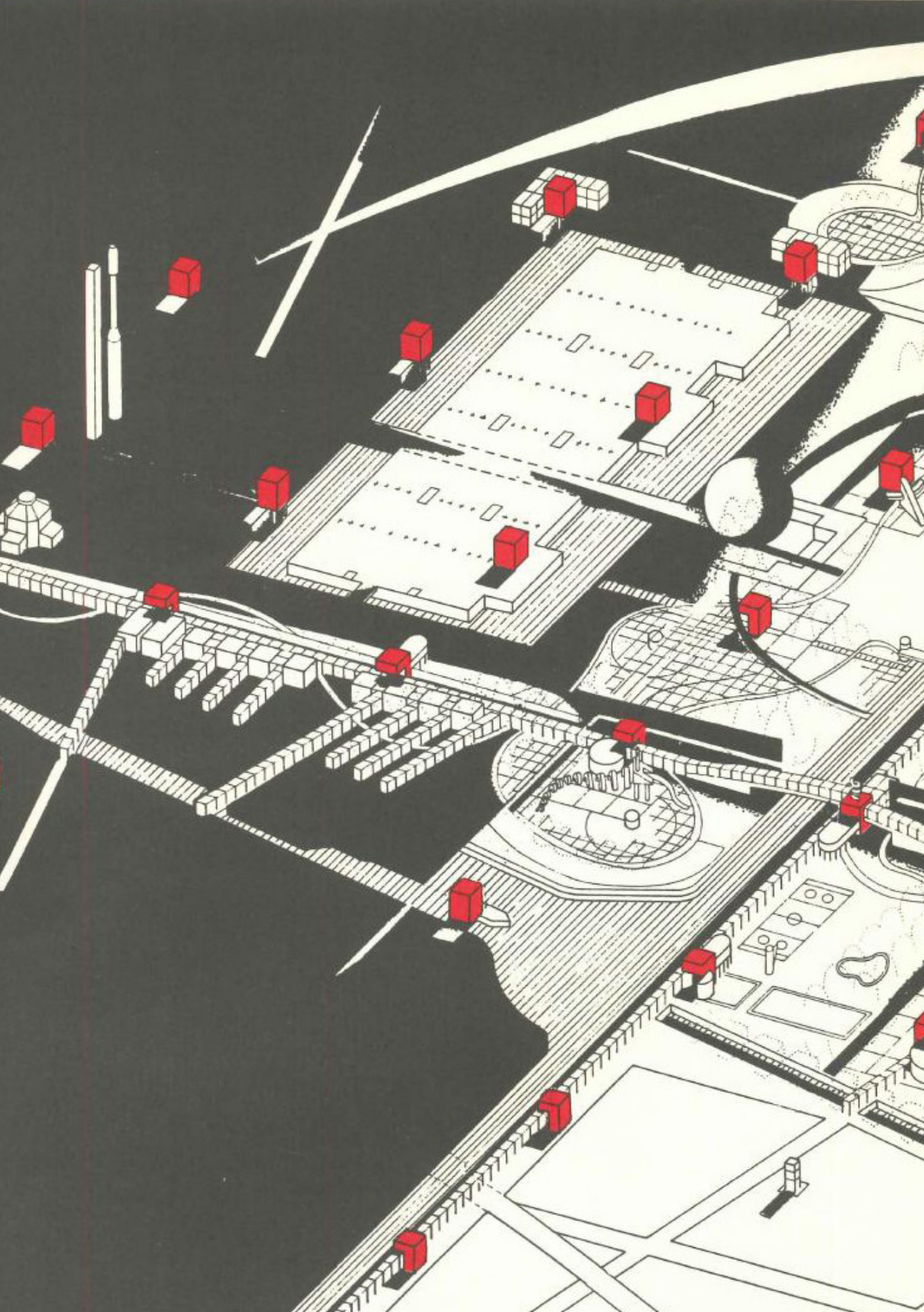
Bernard Tschumi

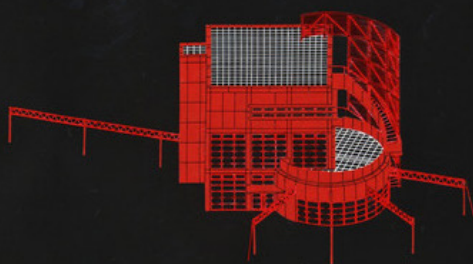
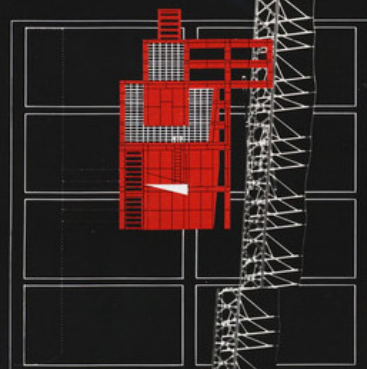


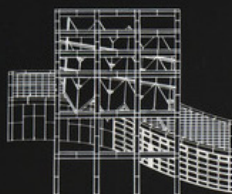
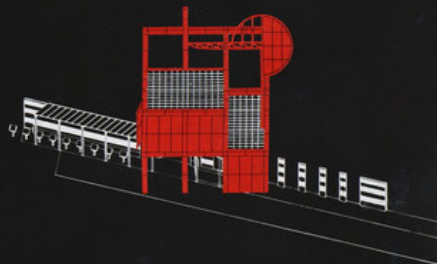
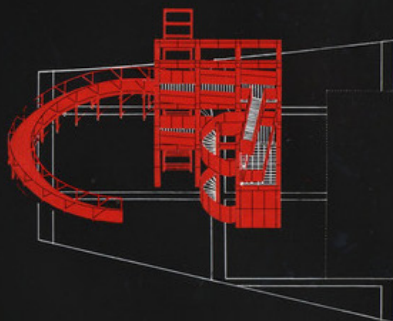
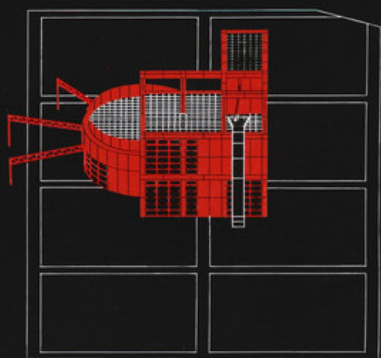
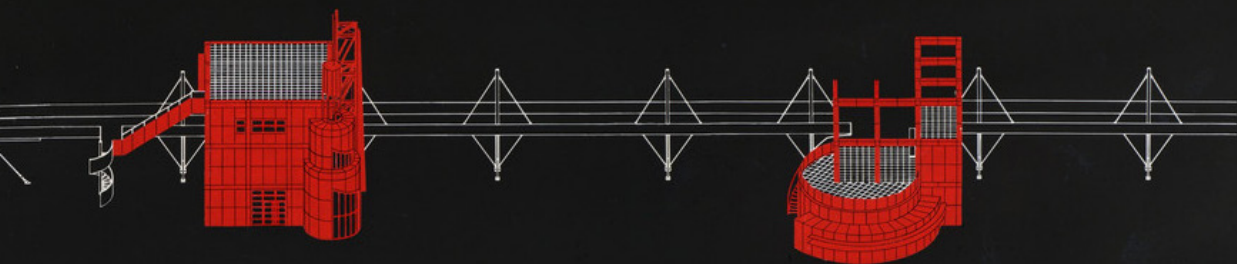
Bernard Tschumi's proposal revealed to be the winning one. A regular pattern of repetitive marks on a grid defined a field of potentially infinite points of intensity: an incomplete project that refused any type of centre or hierarchy.

Tschumi tried to embody an un-contextual, yet discontinuous view of architecture. Upon the sociological critique of Lefebvre, Foucault, Derrida, the project samples the world of difference and the disjunction between use, form and social values, proposing an exploding pattern of different situations and elements. The social organization of space was at the core of his theoretical concerns. Introducing the dialectic relationship between the event and the program, Tschumi implied that meaning is dependent on social conditions, therefore that meaning is relative and dynamic.

The resulting condition is not to be seen as negative, rather it is a new 21st century condition that has to be embraced, fully distant from the previous Modernism.





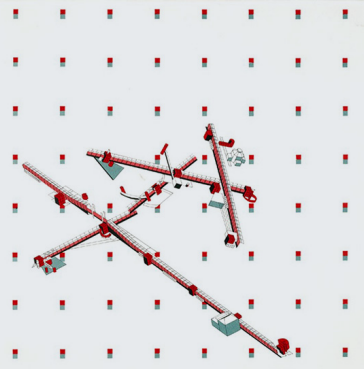


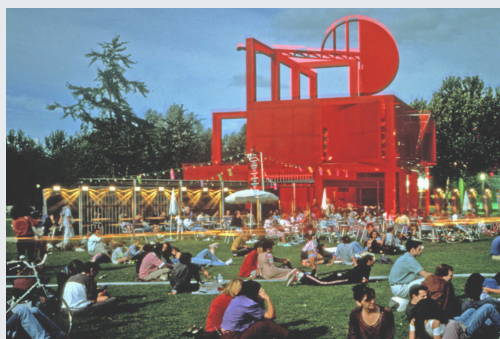
— Territory

— Social Ecology

— **Emplacement**

— Everydayness





The existence of different urban practices, heterotopies as Lefebvre idealizes them in *The Urban Revolution*, become a gem, as they may act as spaces of possibility where something 'diverse' is foundational for revolutionary trajectories. A revolution that does not come out of an isotopic rational order perpetuated by the capitalist state whatsoever, but rather from spontaneous feelings, actions and networks in the search of new meanings in the everyday life.

In 2012, David Harvey, in the midst of a global crisis that led multiple groups to come together and invade the streets in order to fight for more rights⁴³, (re)defined the *right to the city* as a “desperate demand to create a more diverse, meaningful, playful urban life, open to the unplanned.”⁴⁴ The struggles on space around the world on who has the right to shape the daily urban life have arisen out of the streets, exactly as where Lefebvre’s ideas came from, without manifesting under his name. But the fact that it’s all going back to Lefebvre, testifies how his dialectical method of constant inquiry and openness could perfectly frame the ongoing crisis. The main difference is the scale of the process of Urbanisation. And Lefebvre could only preview it. Whereas cities have become agglomerations, expanded and almost unbounded, with infinite flows of people, newcomers, mostly temporary, how to precisely define ‘city’? In Harvey’s epistemology then the Lefebvrian *right to the city* and its *production* seems superseded. The *right to the city* becomes empty.⁴⁵ It is no longer. Especially when the actual existing one, as it is constituted, in most cases stays too confined in the hands of a small political elite in power to decide and shape the city after their desire.⁴⁶

But there’s hope. It could survive if rephrased as ‘right to urban life’. This means that the contemporary goal must not be to imagine a new fictitious city, revolutionary from the globalizing capital process of urban growth and all its socio-political annexes. This would be an umpteenth Modern attempt and failure, or the pursuit of a ‘chimera’.⁴⁷ Instead, as Lefebvre and the Situationists reminded, the multiple urban practices should themselves overflow with alternative possibilities. The existence of different urban practices, *heterotopies* as Lefebvre idealizes them in *The Urban Revolution*⁴⁸, become a gem, as they may act as spaces of possibility where something ‘diverse’ is foundational for revolutionary trajectories. A revolution that does not come out of an *isotopic* rational order perpetuated by the capitalist state whatsoever, but rather from spontaneous feelings, actions and networks in the search of new meanings in the everyday life. If the city is the ultimate expression of human co-habitation, then the question of which city to build needs to be intertwined with which social relations, which ecologies, which values to aim for.

With David Harvey and Edward Soja, the critical yet sometimes vague project of Henri Lefebvre assumes a precise politicized dimension, especially in the terrain of geographical research. From Los Angeles to Amsterdam as testbeds in Soja’s retheorizations of spatiality, to Harvey’s

[43] See Reclaim the streets (UK), Zapatistas (Mexico), Piqueteros/Fabrics Recuperadas (Argentina), Sem-teto (Brazil), Abahlali Basem-tondolo (South Africa).

[44] Harvey, 2012, Preface.

[45] Harvey, 2012, Preface.

[46] Harvey, 2012, 24.

[47] Harvey, 2012, Preface.

[48] H. Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, trans. N. Smith, R. Bonomo, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 129.

[49] Harvey, 2012, 78.

collection of capitalism-threatened multicultural districts as Christiania in Copenhagen, St. Pauli of Hamburg or Williamsburg in New York City⁴⁹ and uncountable much more, the visible and perceptible dimensions of the fluctuant Lefebvrian social space start to become conspicuous. Building and expanding on the highly theoretical concept of 'space as a socially constructed product', that only in 1991 manifested clearly to the Anglo-Saxon scholars, they could start a transition from an urban of pre-conceived Modern universality towards the evidence of its more contemporary fragmentation.

The postmodern review sharply explored the worlds of differences in space and time, which is characteristic of postmodernism itself: they went in search of *different* ways of thinking about space and time, and this is where Lefebvre and at times Foucault's work gains huge relevance. The Urban is finally understood as heterogeneous, a complex system of a diversified social production. Diverse groups, practices, neighbourhoods, thresholds, have to become evident and non-negligible. Universal and unique solutions or norms would never properly entangle or solve any proper and authentic spatial, therefore social, formation. Now *heterotopias* can and must be allocated! Rather this acknowledgment formulates the next up to date challenge: HOW a project of space can become embedded within this *heterogeneity*?

Trivialisation and corruption

In recent years, the expression of *right to the city* undoubtedly became 'trivialized'. Four decades later than its pronunciation, the *urban globalization* has been reached not in the way theorists hoped. A multitude of spatial and socio-economic barriers enhanced socio-spatial inequalities that occur at all levels of society. From the access to collective resources, the presence of legal and social entitlements, to the perception of quality and happiness. The lack of these common assets deprives the population of chances for casual encounters, civic participation, and interpersonal interactions that are frequent in central neighbourhoods. These, projected into urban spatial forms, have become 'fortified fragments'⁵⁰ within the city, more and more homogeneous and reluctant of otherness. As it led various social movements to grow while fighting against the exclusion and the making of a city, the Anglo-Saxon review of Lefebvre (mostly inspired by Harvey and Soja⁵¹) proved crucial in spreading what would become the slogan of action of those same movements/NGOs/

[50] Harvey, 2012, 15.

[51] Connecting politics to the economy of restructuring and urban governance.

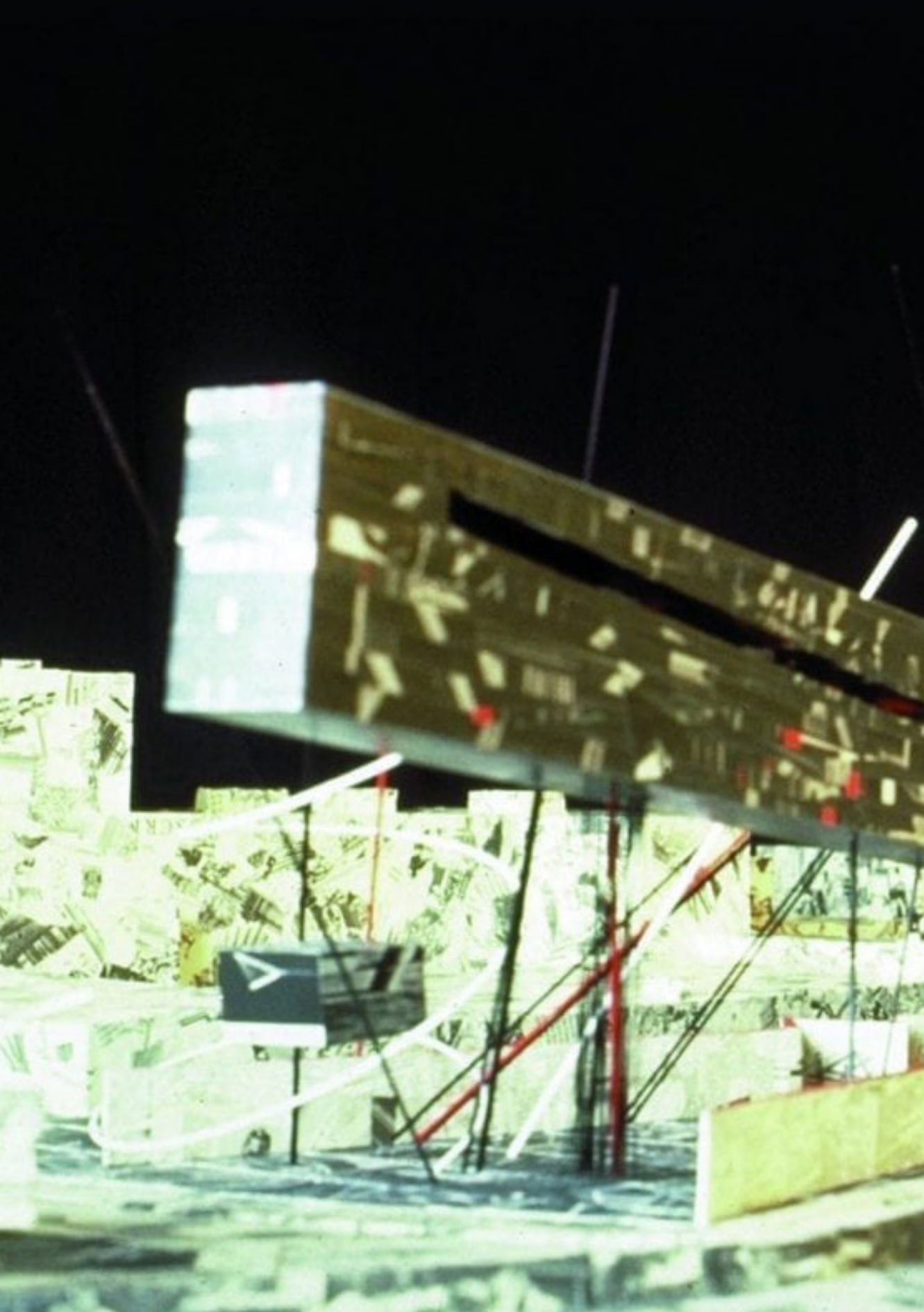
governances. From 2001 with the meeting of the World Social Forum, *right to the city* became a demand for a world of solidarity and improved living conditions, but without engaging too much with its possibility of development and execution. In Brazil it became a Statute and it appeared in the European Charter of Human Rights in the City, culminating with its inclusion in the 2016 UN Habitat III New Urban Agenda⁵² for an ideal scenario based on human and affordable housing, good infrastructure, participation, environmental protection and social justice. What Marcelo Lopes Souza called *politics of turf*⁵³, a superficial politics opposed to gentrification which end to obscure all the attempts of those groups and organizations to build networks and find new sustainable means of production.

[52] See Habitat III by UN-Habitat, 2016.

[53] M. Lopes de Souza, "Which Right to Which City?", in *Interface* 2(1), 2010: 315–33.

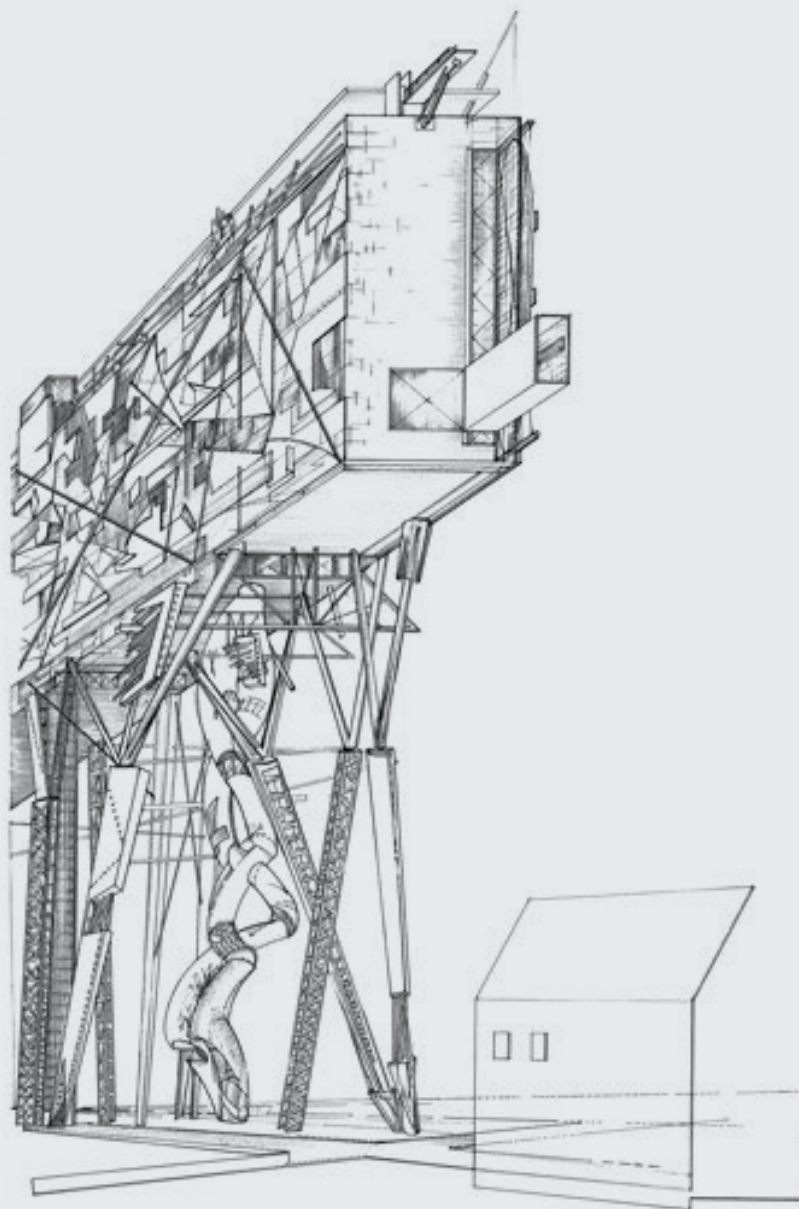
But with no willingness to doubt the good-purpose of those organizations, *right to the city* just aimed to be a powerful political concept, more than a practical one. Almost an invite to radical autogestion, as well as the right to participate to a very different life in a very different society, subversive, revolutionary. Not a demand, but a harsh critique against a (modern) way of making space that loses control to the economic interests that dominate society itself. The advent of this economy⁵⁴ imposes a reproduction of production' relations which necessarily pass by the spaces of everyday life. And to a new spatial restructuring corresponds a growth in new needs and consumption generated by territorial, social and economic inequalities. This is why an analysis of the urban which combines philosophy, architecture, sociology and geography could justify that this knowledge can become a praxis, not just an ideology.

[54] Some call it Neo-Capitalism. As according to WorldAtlas is an economic ideology which tries to avoid State collapse applying various measures to protect the country's social well-being.





CITY EDGE
Daniel Libeskind





City Edge was the Daniel Libeskind's proposal for Potsdamer Platz in 1991. Whereas the other architects were searching for a blueprint to unify and re-establish a primary identity, he challenged the jury with an almost sensitive utopian idea of diversity.

The territorial artefact crossed the limits of a neighbourhood specific element, yet becoming a mega-structure inglobating different realities. In his view, the proposal had to guarantee that the city would not have been erased or falsified by new ideas. The forces of history of Potsdamer Platz were so strong that it could have become a new centre: a social space that could fulfil high-density requirements, while acting as a canvas to be written by its inhabitants.



Problem statement

[55] Kristin Ross in *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies* (1995) explains how theories don't just come and go, but they are intrinsic to a specific historical moment.

56 Unwin, 2000, 24.

The surge of these theories is a non-negligible symptom of an historical/social crisis.⁵⁵ The concern of Lefebvrian thinkers is to get the academy to think about space in unprecedented ways. Nevertheless, it leaves unclear how these thinking could actually transform society and achieve the radical goal to shape a new world.⁵⁶ This challenge lies in the belief that designers, geographers, social theorists can improve society in practical terms. But treating space as an 'end-product' goes to obscure the meaning of all the processes of the everyday human life which stay behind.

Then, assuming that architects can still play a role within the societies to produce space, where and how space should/could actually be transformed? To find an answer, architectural design must explore within the following subsequent questions:

1. TO WHAT EXTENT CAN ARCHITECTURE / URBAN PLANNING FACILITATE THE PROCESS OF SOCIAL RE-PRODUCTION?

2. WHICH ARCHITECTURAL 'AGENCY', WITHIN THESE LIMITATIONS, CAN SUBVERT THE TECHNO-SPHERE, THUS ENHANCING AN EVERYDAY RESISTANCE AS WITHIN AND BEYOND ITS LOGICS OF PRODUCTION?

3. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE ARCHITECTURAL PROJECT AND THE AGENCY OF THE DESIGNER?

To find an answer, architectural design must explore within the following subsequent questions:

1. To what extent can architecture facilitate the process of social re-production?
2. Which architectural 'agency', within these limitations, can subvert the techno-sphere, thus enhancing an everyday resistance as within and beyond its logics of production?
3. What does this mean for the architectural project and the agency of the designer?

"A REVALUATION OF ALL VALUES, THIS QUESTION
MARK SO BLACK, SO IMMENSE, THAT IT CASTS
A SHADOW OVER THE ONE WHO SETS IT DOWN
- SUCH A DESTINY OF A TASK FORCES YOU TO
RUN OUT INTO THE SUNSHINE EVERY INSTANT
AND SHAKE OFF A HEAVY, ALL-TOO-HEAVY
SERIOUSNESS."

Friedrich Nietzsche, *Twilight of the Idols*, 1895.

3

THE RISE OF THE 'SOCIAL-S'

Production or Re-Production?

After the economic downfall of the 2008/09, the concept of *social production*⁵⁷ proliferated more and more, becoming crucial in the understanding of the urban condition. It became recognized as a form of 'im-material' production which gets produced out of the networks of people, in contrast to top-down⁵⁸ or capitalist forms of production (commodities, labour, investments...). The chance for a change lies outside these fixed rigid structures⁵⁹: the acknowledgment of a needed distance from them and its modes of production/exchange towards more possible projects of something 'deviant', whether it's common-making or other kinds of public space or new flexible socio-cultural networks, rehabilitates the 'social'. Lefebvre reminds that an architecture focused on the production of images, intended as end-products of an industrial and economic machine, just contributes to emphasize the *exchange value* of space, at the loss of its *use value*, which is the one that counts in reproducing social capital as the force able to re-codify space itself. Projects cannot just be dropped from the top and let go, but they are produced and reproduced through human/social interaction, the same way they are shaped by the contractors, inhabitants or users in their interplay.

Whereas the urban has inevitably become a political battleground, with parts of every city struggling around its welfare, health, housing, environment, political austerity, global wage system and huge migration flows⁶⁰, the concept of *social production* might face a shift. It is indeed stagnant on the idea that something needs to be produced anew, with the risk of reifying the process of it. With the built environment becoming a scape dependent on competitiveness and speculation on erecting offices, housing blocks or shopping malls, which privatize the urban space and therefore limit its potential, Doina Petrescu and Kim Trogal⁶¹ suggest *social re-production* as the contemporary term that frame how lives can sustain themselves under this crisis. Re-production calls for new organiza-

[57] Engels first refers to the term as a form of production that is 'only workable by a collectivity of men' (Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, 1892: 308).

[58] As in contrast to a 'bottom-up' approach, which promotes the importance to empower the citizens and start any action depending on their desires and needs.

[59] T. Schneider, in "Notes on Social Production: a Brief Commentary", in *The Social (Re)Production of Architecture: Politics, Values and Actions in Contemporary Practice*, ed. D. Petrescu, K. Trogal, (London: Routledge, 2017), 24.

[60] Petrescu, Trogal, 1. For Chantal Mouffe it is a "battleground where different hegemonic projects are confronted, without any possibility of final reconciliation" in "Some Reflections on an Agonistic Approach to the Public," in *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy*, ed. Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2005), 805.

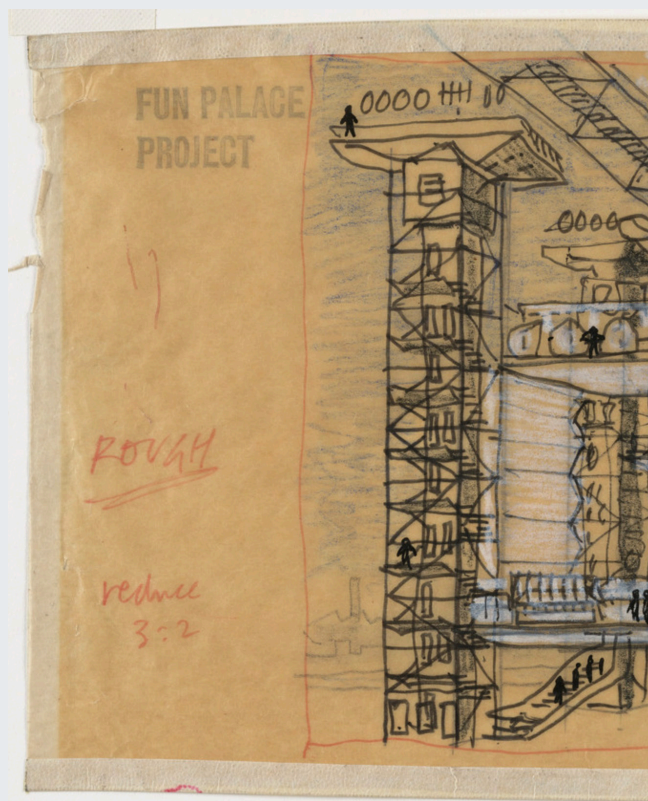
[61] Doina Petrescu is lecturer in Architecture and Design Activism at the University of Sheffield on issues of gender, technology, (geo)politics and poetics of space. Kim is a Reader in Social and Political Design, based at the Canterbury School of Architecture, UCA.

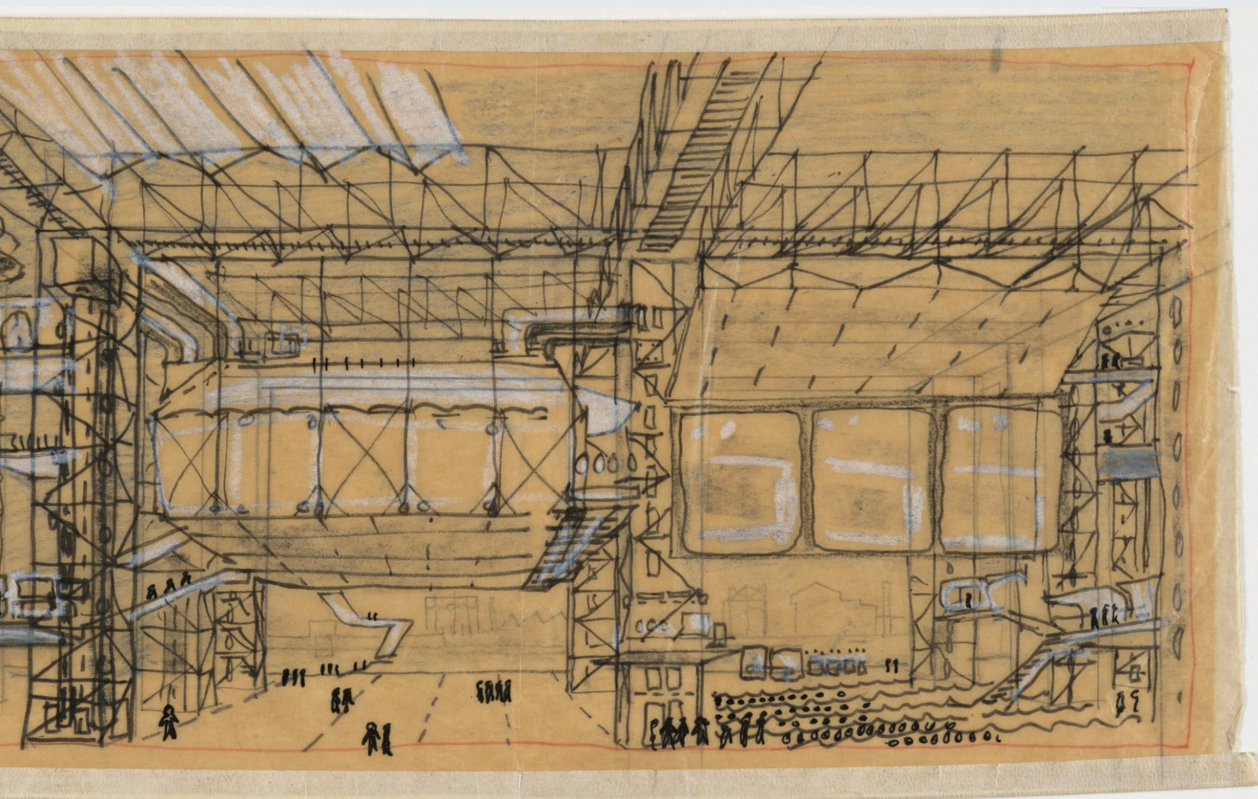
CEDRIC PRICE

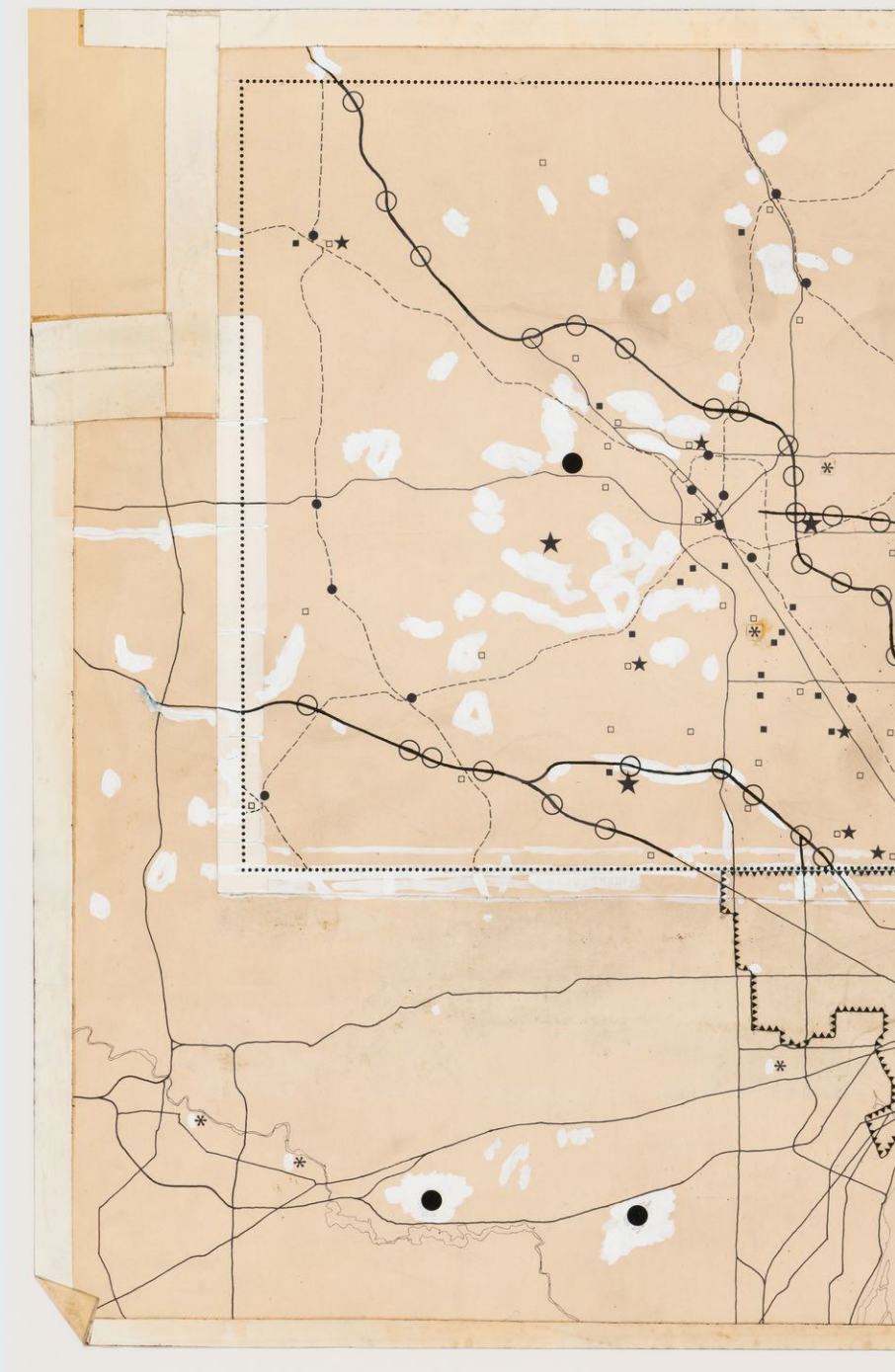
Cedric Price questioned architecture's identification with building alone, interpreted as a means through which institutions could consolidate their power. Instead, he strived for a process-based approach where architecture was a series of adaptable, multi-scalar and evanescent interventions. The scope was to reach maximum social impact with minimal architectural means.

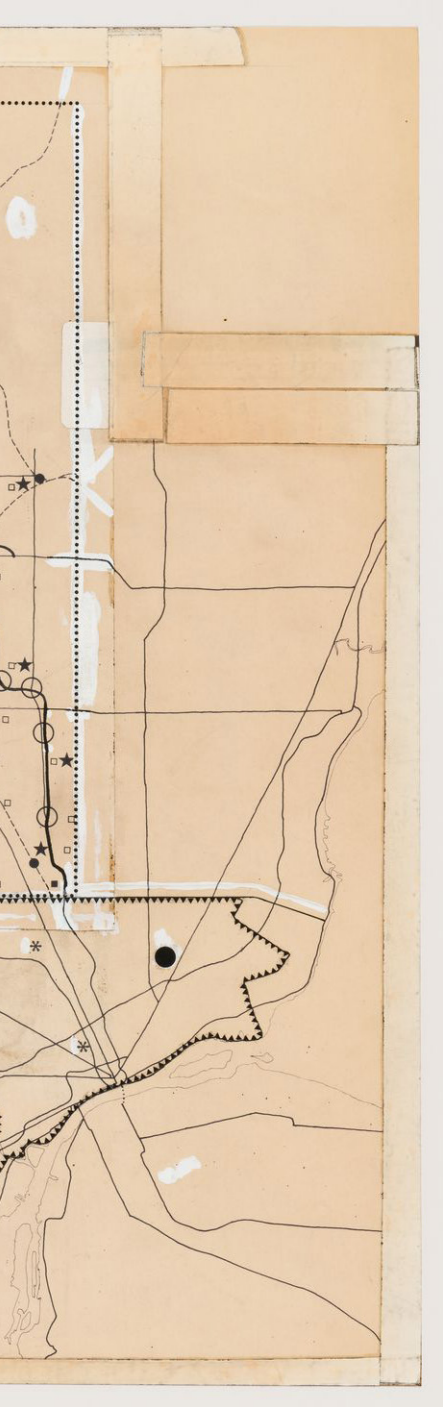
Magnets, Detroit Think Grid and Potteries Thinkbelt served as seminal projects that could produce a new social and urban existence, operating by appropriating the spaces of the city with no exchange value, and re-inhabiting them with renewed 'use value'. Ecologically, it promoted the right of institutions, organizations, and groups of individuals to find agency in shaping the city, through the active engagement and empowerment of everyone.

Distancing himself from architecture to the point of being considered almost an 'anti-architect', his projects were utmost vital experiments: open to revision, failure and contamination. In any way he prefigured himself to fix the situation, but nonetheless he lived to propose alternative, plausible, and desirable futures.

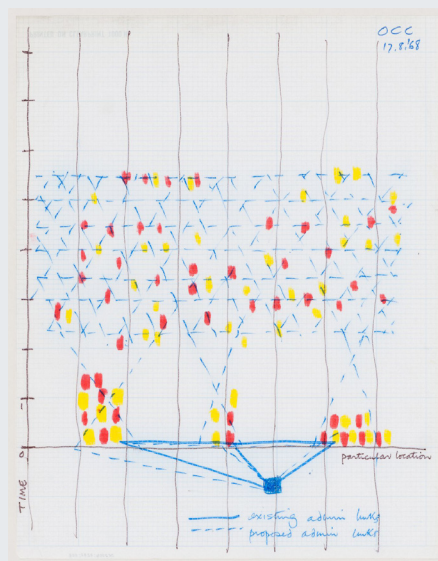
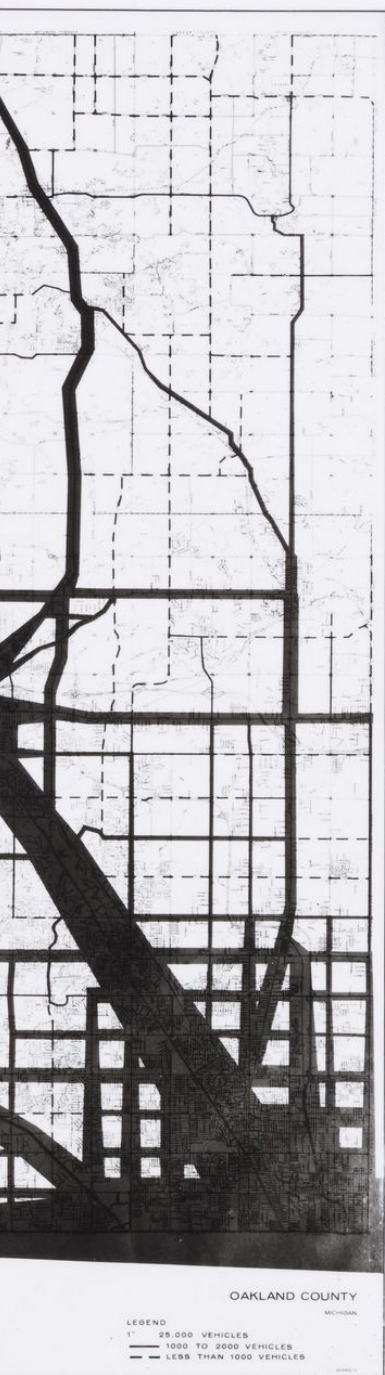


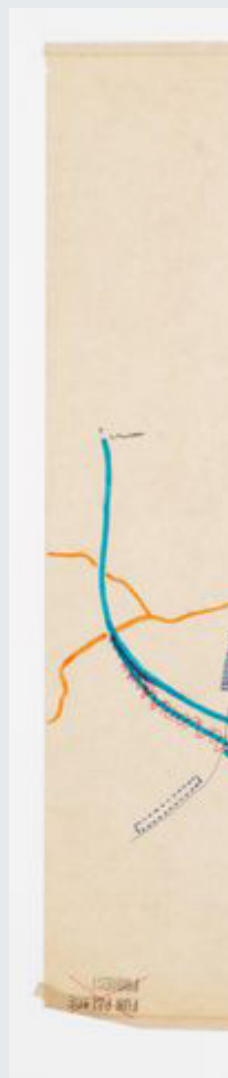
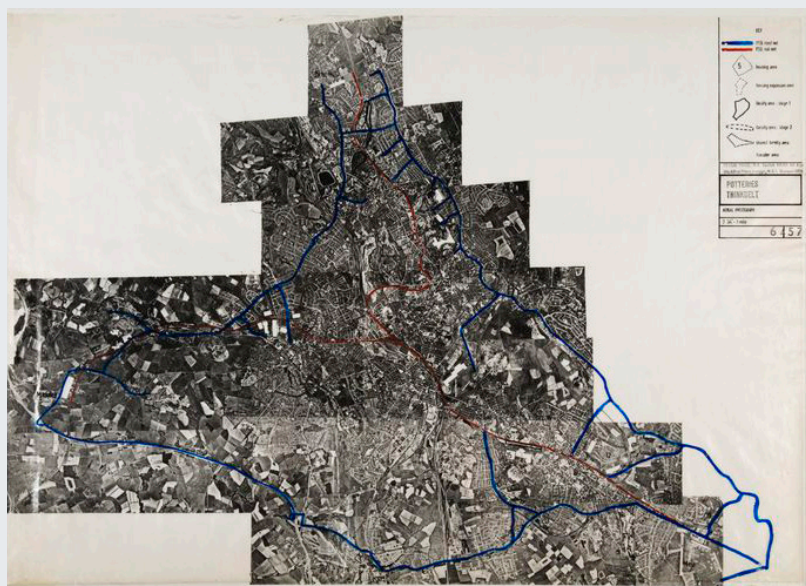


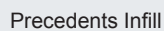










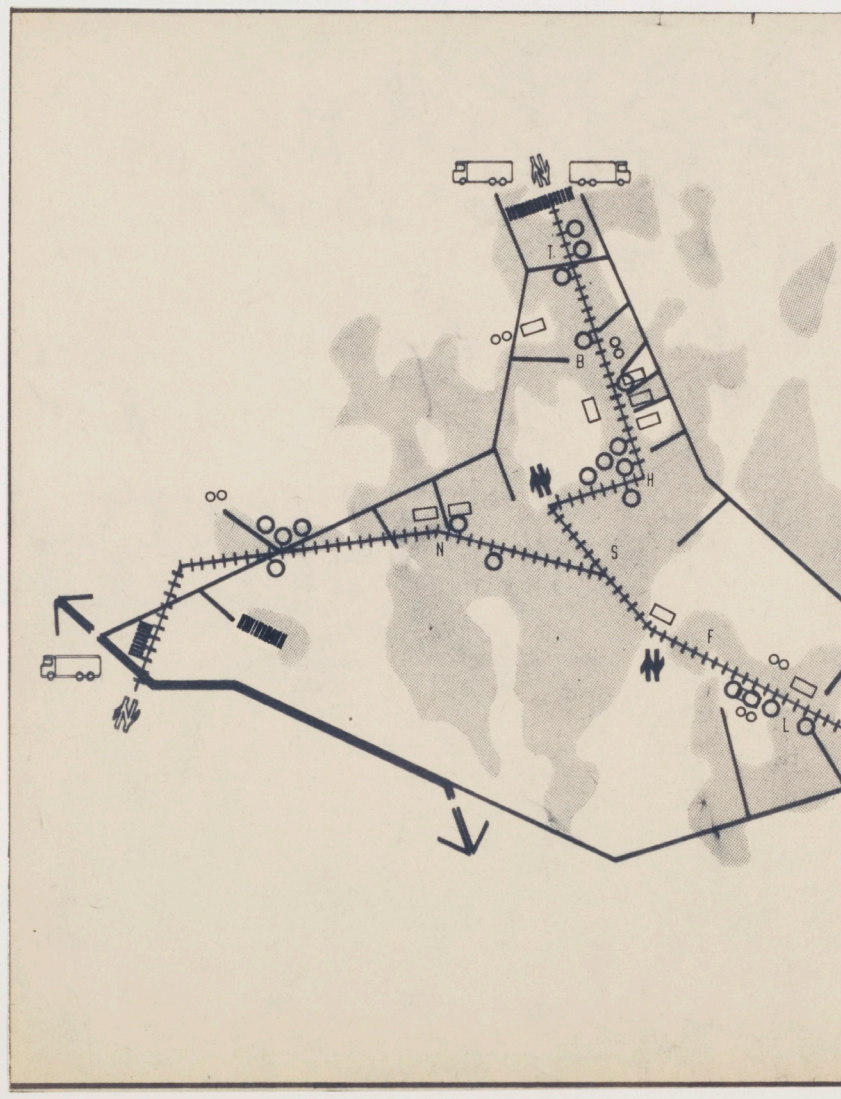


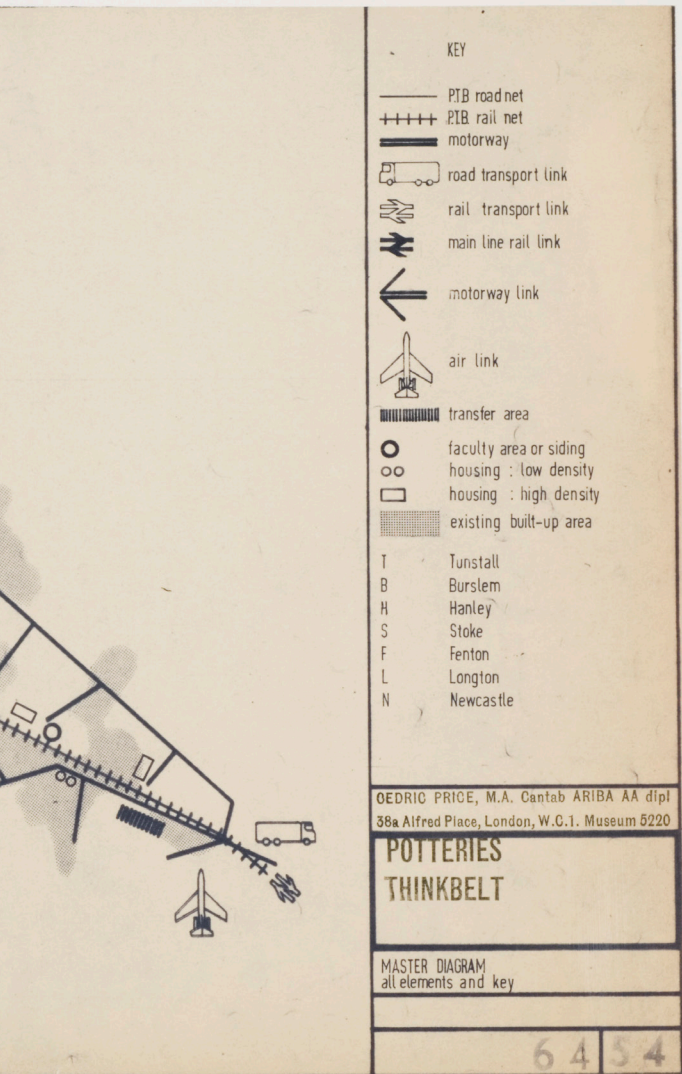
— Territory

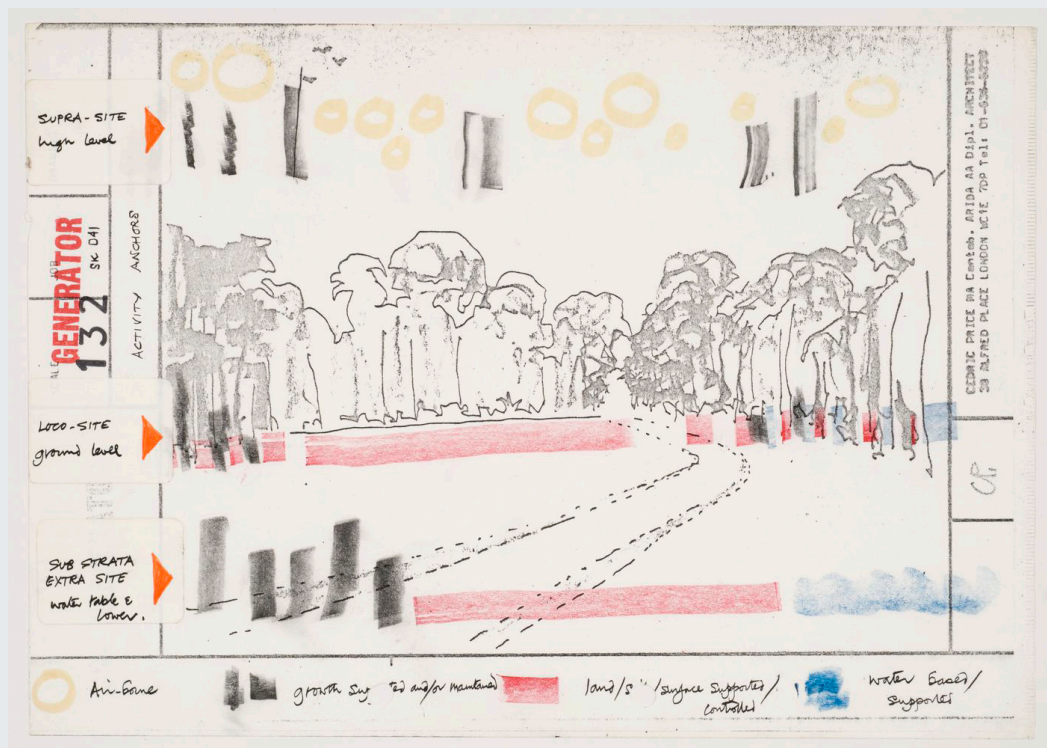
— Social Ecology

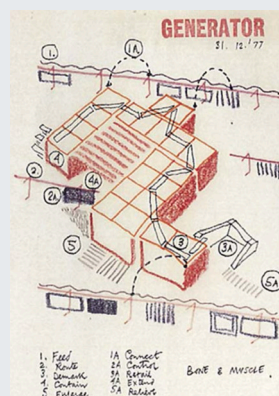
— Emplacement

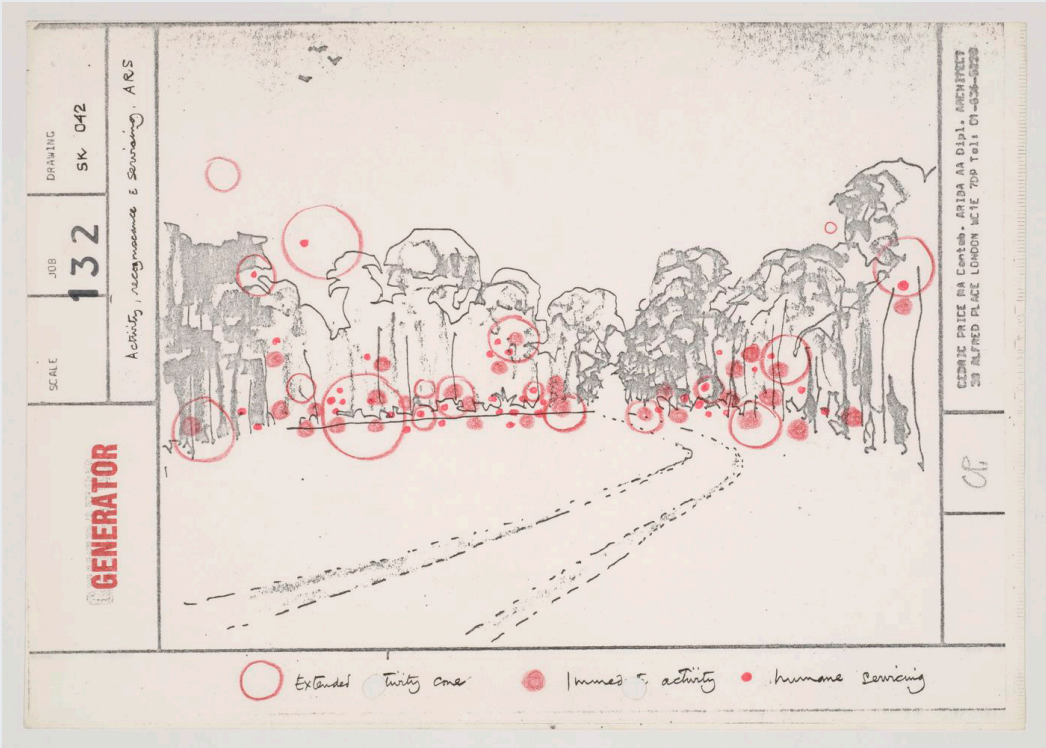
— Everydayness

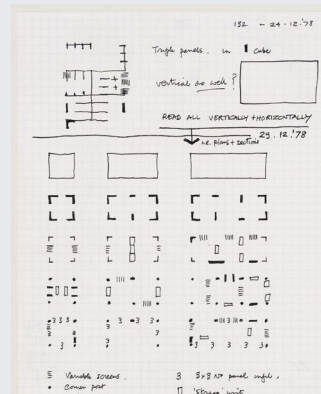
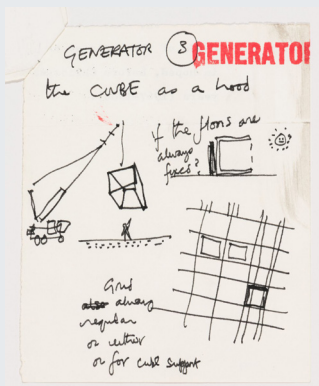


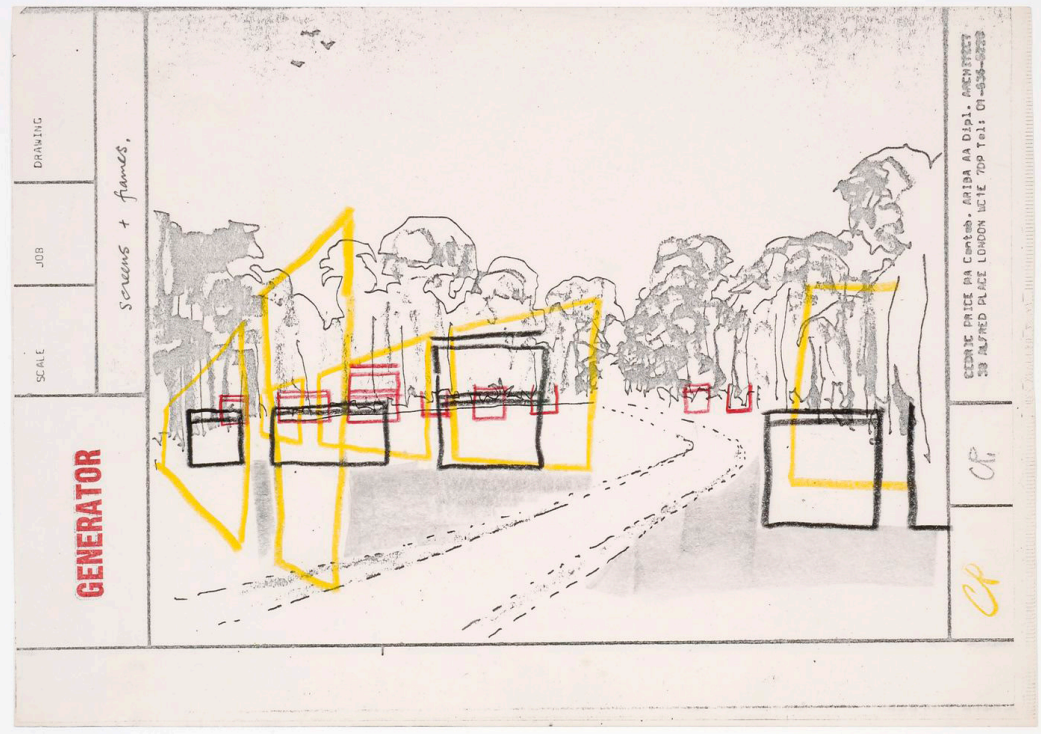








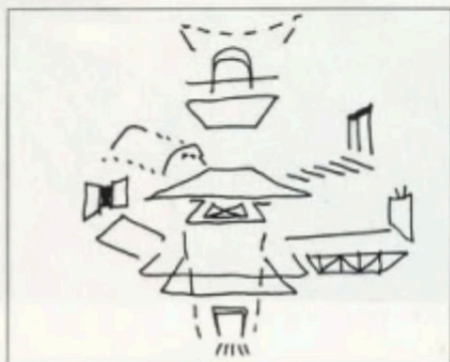




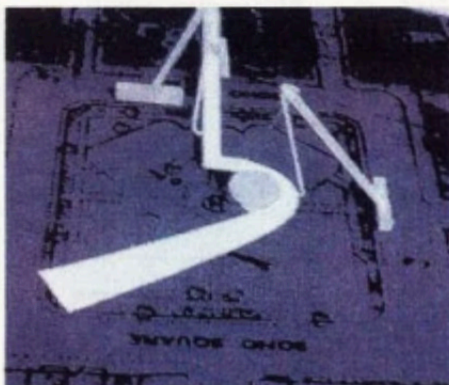




Stairways



Promenade



Pier



size comparison



TEATRO OLIMPICO

COVENT GARDEN NEAL STREET
Old city commercial and industrial streets.

NEW ACCESS WITH PROTECTED OBSERVATION
DECKWAY IS PROVIDED TO EXISTING SHOPS,
GALLERIES AND RESTAURANTS



BOEING 747

SOHO SQUARE
Old city square with existing garden.

LARGE SEASONAL PUBLIC SCULPTURE ACHIEVING
NEW LINKS, VIEWPOINTS AND SANCTUARY IS
POSITIONED TO SPAN THE GARDEN



BRIGHTON PALACE PIER

BURGESS PARK
New city park – incomplete
Lake and adjacent roads

A COMMUNITY PARKLAND PIER PRO
SHELTER, LEARNING AND SANCTU

Transporter



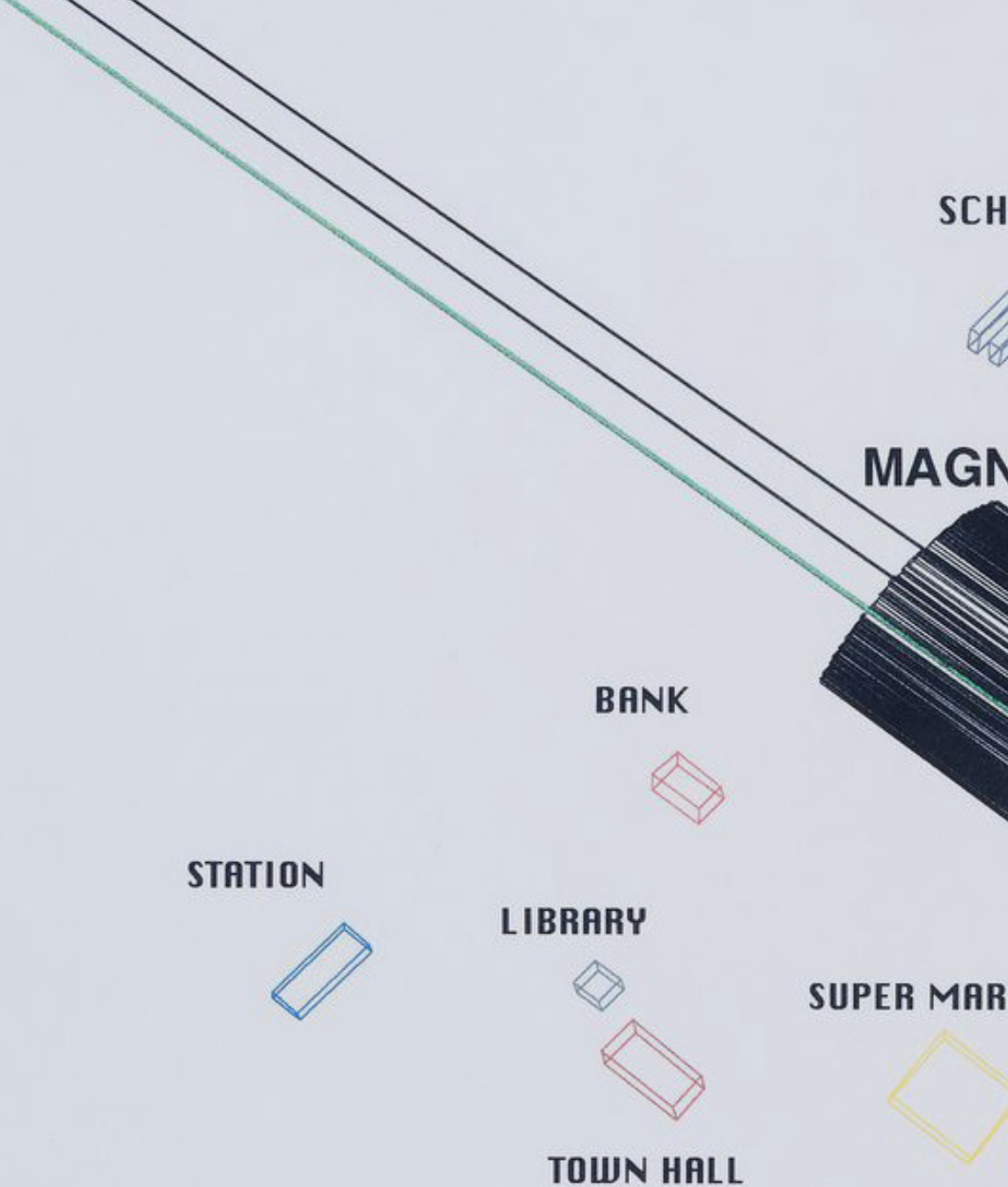
HINDENBERG

MILTON KEYNES

New city centre.

A THREE-DECK AERIAL WORK CORRIDOR
SUPPLEMENTING AND OVERLOADING THE
EXISTING GRID, USAGES AND VIEWS

5 September 1996



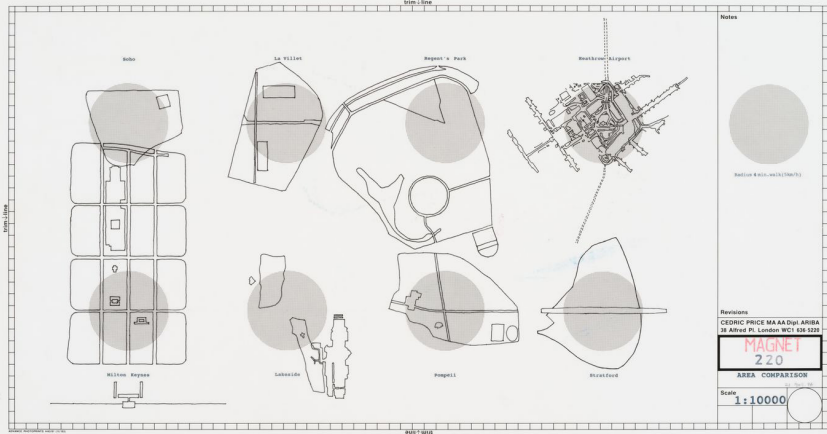
OOOL

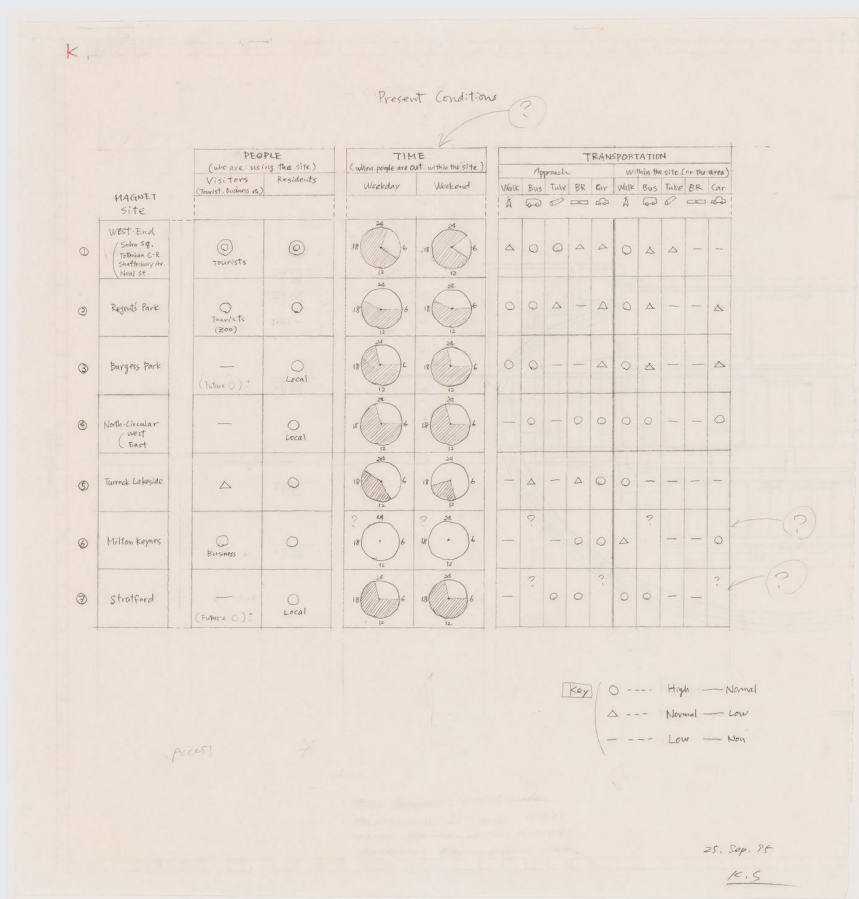
HOSPITAL

IET

PARK

KET



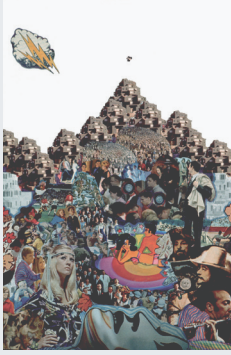


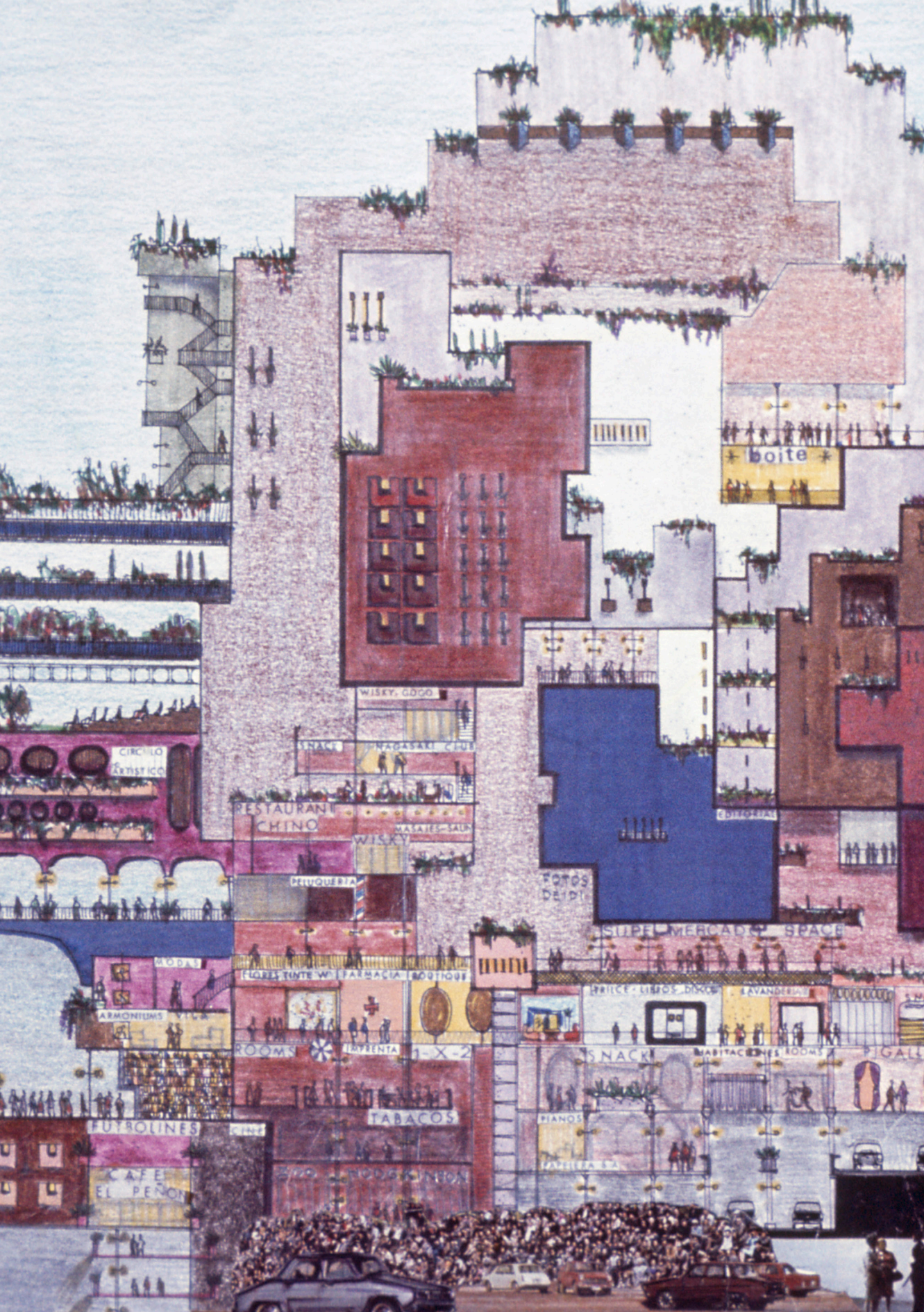
CITY IN SPACE

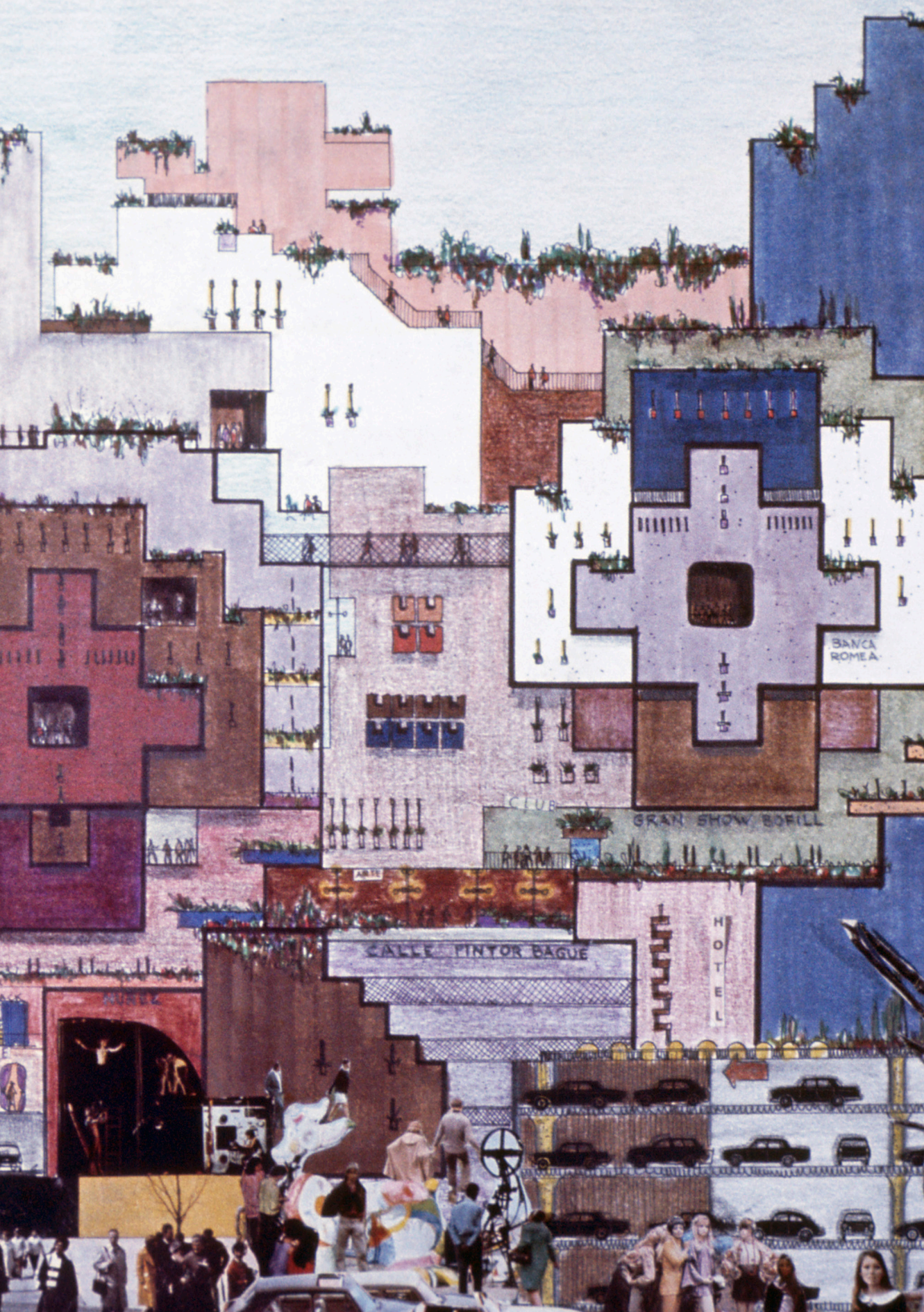
Ricardo Bofill

With the 1968 as the moment in which the concepts of centrality, dwelling, difference, and scale challenged the advent of a different society, *City in Space* was loved by Lefebvre, as he saw in it the potential genesis of a space of social production of the contemporary city.

Together with *New Babylon*, Bofill's project became primary reference in Lefebvre's search for a spatial unity that could interrelate the macro- and the micro- scale. Both tried to mediate dwelling and public spaces, facilitating unplanned encounters. Bofill didn't believe in the practice of urbanism to address this kind of societal issues, therefore he pushed for a project that blended the distinction between architecture and urbanism, without losing the possibility of articulating their scalar differences. The result is a project of a continuous urban tissue that allows infinite mixing of activities, uses, social groups and practices.







BANCA ROMEA

CLUB

GRAN SHOW BOFILL

HOTEL

CALLE PINTOR BAGUE

MUSEO

Just stopping at what is participatory or 'socially engaged' scenarios doesn't seem enough if not questioned and interrelated with more radical forms of actions, context, placemaking.

Both material (housing, public space, services) and psychological (inclusion, equality, imagination) rights come into play to lead towards an urban emancipation: a *right to 21st century architecture* emerges in its ecological and imaginative aspects, mirrored by users, citizens, creatives, designers, everyone.

tional forms, new values, new actions which are struggled and realized at multiple scales and in which space and architecture are active participants. In some ways, this transition is may be happening already through community-led agriculture, aquaculture, as well as practices based on re-use, lending and sharing.

This conversion historicizes itself distant from the architectural drive that happened under the Welfare state. Where does architecture stand right now? As everything evolves, its systems, means and 'vocabulary of practice'⁶² must be revised. And this is where the socio-ecological hint of Soja manifests. Beyond the logics of production/consumption in an overproduced and overexploited built environment, the effects of it on the urban lives opens a new dimension to be concerned with: namely the *social ecology* of how individuals are able to interrelate to each other, their collectives and institutions in the surrounding environment. The concept was introduced by Murray Bookchin⁶³ in a critique to how human-made hierarchical structures are the cause of the dysfunctions in human society.⁶⁴ If society would be understood as an ecosystem where all the parts are equally important, then all its aspect would lead to a more equal and cooperative environment where hierarchies don't decide winners and losers. Socially, it's the reconstruction of new spatial relations, the urban resilience which introduce a new very important reality: what 'social(s)' can be reproduced by architecture?

Recalling *the right to the city* as the right to shape society through its space, then co-production and participation pops out as primary key words. But just stopping at what is participatory or 'socially engaged'⁶⁵ scenarios doesn't seem enough if not questioned and interrelated with more radical forms of actions, context, placemaking.

Both material (housing, public space, services) and psychological (inclusion, equality, imagination) rights come into play to lead towards an urban emancipation: a right to 21th century 'architecture'⁶⁶ emerges in its ecological and imaginative aspects, mirrored by users, citizens, creatives, designers, everyone. Harvey introduces that this idea of big *urban common* has an intrinsic global dimension that has to be affirmed collectively. And architecture can be the binding of it. When freed from the chains of form, style and structure, architecture can create a dialogue between practitioners and citizens while stressing the collaborative and processual⁶⁷ features of the making of common space.

[62] Petrescu, Trogal, 2017, 2.

[63] Murray Bookchin (1921-2006) was an American social theorist, firm anti-capitalist and promoter of social decentralization along ecological and democratic lines. Social movements from the 1960s, as the anti-globalization movement, Occupy Wall Street, and even the direct democratic and feminist confederalism of Rojava.

[64] M. Bookchin, "What is social ecology?", in *From Social Ecology and Communalism*, M. Bookchin, E. Eglad, (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2006), 19-53.

[65] Petrescu, Trogal, 2017, 3

[66] Petrescu, Trogal, 2017, 3.

[67] Petrescu, Trogal, 2017, 4.

HERMAN HERTZBERGER

Herman Hertzberger believed that the architect's role had to avoid the design of a complete solution, rather that of a spatial framework that could allow users to intervene in it. In the Netherlands of the 1960s, building on the Participation movement that pushed architecture to become an inclusive and participatory process and the subsequent example of John Habraken and his "structure and infill" theory, Herman Hertzberger was one of the first architects who produced architectural solutions devoted to user participation.

Even if the structuralist matrix led to rigid and un-aesthetic artefacts, he had a precise sensitivity to orchestrate the dynamics of diverse human relations that could happen in space. The needs of a diverse range of users, from children to elderly to workers, were put perfectly 'in place' in their everyday condition.





Herman Hertzberger, *Lessons for Students in Architecture*, 1974-91
© Herman Hertzberger



Heterutopia: a *Discontinuous Moment*





Herman Hertzberger, *Lessons for Students in Architecture*, 1974-91
© Herman Hertzberger

Heterutopia: a *Discontinuous Moment*

LUCIEN KROLL



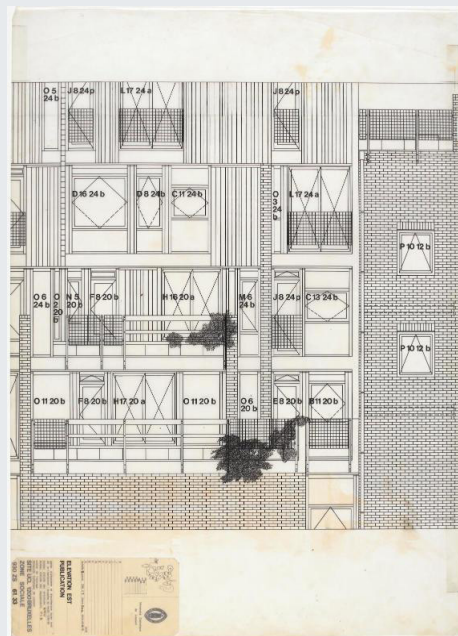


Since the early 1960s, Lucien Kroll advocated for a simultaneous decolonization of the architectural profession defined by authoritarian criteria (pointing at CIAM-led motivations) and a revamped connection with the ‘vulgarity’ of everyday life.

In his most iconic experiment of *La Mémé*, Kroll tried to go beyond the limitations of conventional sequence of construction (standardized, fixed, optimized) and second, to seek a technique of production that could promote appropriation by the users, as well as encouraging personal choice. The ‘success’ of the internal social logics of this building proved him as the architect that could ground the closest some of Lefebvre’s perspectives.

Kroll’s architecture served as a eminently political act: the architect can be the catalyst of a dynamic social process, during which inhabitants can share their knowledge for the translation of interpersonal relationships into a project of space.





Lucien Kroll, *La Mémé*, 1970-76
© Lucien Kroll

PARK FICTION

In 1994, a speculation on the diverse St. Pauli district almost led to build upscale buildings, completely dissonant to the identity of the place. That's when the story of Park Fiction begins. Locals, artists, squatters and families came together with the intent to create a self-determined green communal space out of that vacant land.

This activist project had the intent to embrace urban space as a primary tool to shape society and question its social structures. Many people and many ideas were required to enrich a creative process that suddenly became a game! Although the project took almost a decade before it could be completed, the effort and unity of all the people gravitating around Park Fiction gave life to a resistant network so strong that could change the senate's plans for the land.



...die Wünsche werden die Wohnung verlassen und auf die Strasse gehen...

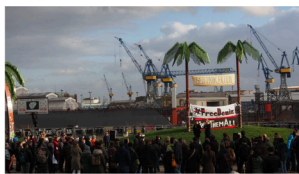
Suche Menü



FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE REACHES PARK FICTION

The #FridaysForFuture finally reached Park Fiction. Thousand's of pupils flooded the park with slogans like „Holland shall not drown“, „Like the Sea we Rise“, „Climate doesn't wait for...“

22. März 2019



DENİZ'E ÖZGÜRLÜK! FREIHEIT FÜR DENİZ -UND ALLE ZUR ZEIT IN DER TÜRKIE INHAFTIERTEN KOLLEGINNEN UND KOLLEGEN.

50 days in jail - freedenizl

7. April 2017



PARK FICTION IN TOKYO 3331 ARTS CHIYODA

An abridged Park Fiction installation at 3331 Arts Chiyoda in the exhibition „Socially Engaged Art“ is accompanied by a series of talks at the venue, at Mori Museum...



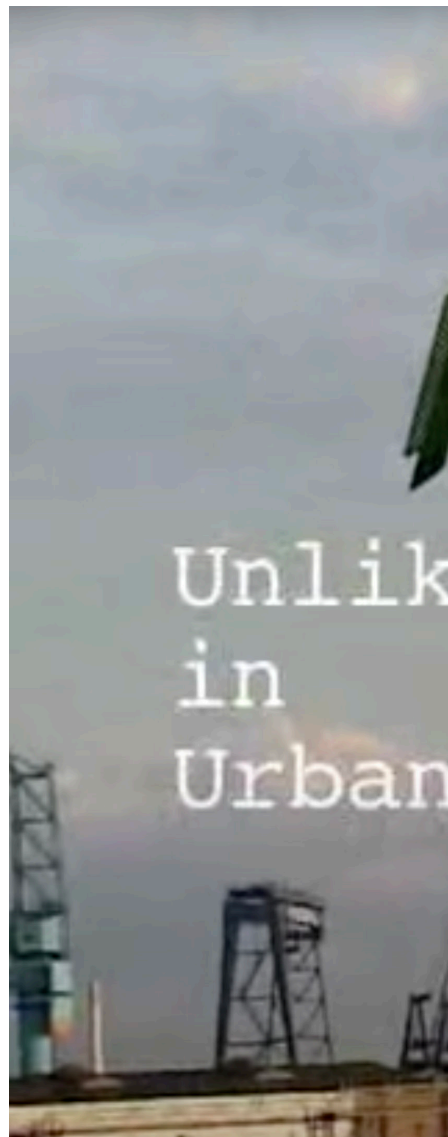
YOU WON'T GET OUR RUIN! DEMO FOR GOLDEN POODLE CLUB (AND PARK FICTION)

YOU WON'T GET OUR RUIN! Solidarity with Golden Pudel Club and Park Fiction In the night from Saturday to Sunday the Golden Pudel

'Others' Infill

141







[68] As Cedric Price always said "Buildings must be judged for what they do, not what they are".

[69] Lefebvre, 1991, 123–124.

Architecture is called to detach itself from the production of objects, instead being valued when 'in use'⁶⁸: the hope lies in those projects which aim to be not only socially produced, which may seem vague, but facilitators of proliferating social relationships which keep self-existing and self-multiplying in autonomy, even when the 'event' and the architect are gone. Understanding them socially can be a different tool of analysis that's not thoroughly techno-scientific, but rather it is able to undermine systemic exclusion, putting in discussion existing practice and if possible, propose alternatives. This is not a functional solution to be evaluated on its technical efficiency or degree of innovation, but rather a critical instrument to unfold the possibilities of the current and future practices. If Lefebvre was correct saying that "spatial design is one aspect of the productive forces of society"⁶⁹, how spatial design can become productive needs to be inserted into a collective scale research.

Towards a Heterotopia

Where can this new *other* architecture take place?

Historically, the transition from what became a mass society in the 60s, due to large-scale political and economic organizations that homogenized of people's daily life, to the more flexible post-Fordist socio-economics later in the century, where production became diversified as those systems of scale were replaced with specialised and fragmented organizations/economies⁷⁰, introduced the ideologies of pluralism and difference in the urban algorithm. With Michel Foucault manifesting in 1967 the modern crisis through an ontological overview of its *heterotopias* as realities that stick out from the 'normal' urban, he tried to demonstrate how an urban planning built on invisible thresholds of power is a cause for social segregation. Fixed spaces became inhabited by fixed (classifiable) types⁷¹. It's here that spatial and social found a first convergence. Nevertheless, heterotopia as Foucault firstly introduced is not fully productive for the scope of this project. His understanding of the systems of power interrelated with the systems of the city dissipated in a diagnosis that didn't promote any creative/normative hope for possible forms of liberation.⁷²

Instead, the condition of the contemporary urbanization, fully different in scale and heterogeneity than the more homogeneous modernity, got fragmented among patterns of change, lifestyles, cultural and human identities which go in and out from the capitalist machine. This process/

[70] K. Krishan, *From Post-Industrial to Post-Modern Society: New Theories of the Contemporary World*, (Blackwell Publishing, 1995), 51.

[71] M. Cenzatti, "Heterotopias of Difference", in *Heterotopia and the City: Public Space in a Post-civil Society*, ed M. Dehaene, L. De Cauter, (Oxford, MA: Blackwell, 2008), 79.

[72] Peter Johnson, "Unravelling Foucault's 'different spaces'", in *History Of The Human Sciences*, 2006: Vol. 19 No. 4, 75-90.

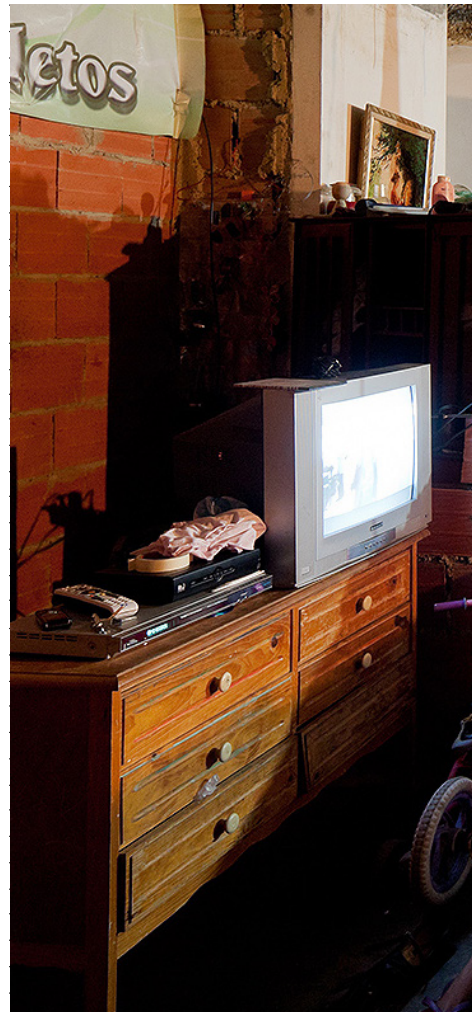
Instead, the condition of the contemporary urbanization, fully different in scale and heterogeneity than the more homogeneous modernity, got fragmented among patterns of change, lifestyles, cultural and human identities which go in and out from the capitalist machine.

This process/failure creates realms where proximal incompatible spaces exist, but makes them oscillate between seclusion and recognition.

TORRE DAVID

The collapse of Venezuelan economy in 1994 led to the abandonment of a skyscraper under construction in Caracas. This gave the chance to more and more families to occupy the 'ruin' and transform it into their improvised home. With expertise or rudimental techniques, progressively the spaces inside the tower have turned into apartments, collective facilities and shops. This made the tower an unprecedented and incredibly tall episode of extra-legal and informal community.

Where some could just see it as a failed development project, to others can seem a seminal laboratory: it shows an alternative example of how a community can form and adapt itself out of an informal condition. Working closely to them, the office Urban Think Thank underlined how the future of urban development can lie in a collaboration among architects, private enterprises and the global population of slum-dwellers, opening doors for innovation and radical experimentation.

















NOTRE
VOLONTÉ
PLUS FOR
QUE TOU
VOS ARM

ROUTE
DANGER



NOTRE-DAME-DES-LANDES 'ZONE À DEFENDRE

ZAD Notre-Dame-des-Landes is one of the most well known examples of 'zone to defend'. It is an agricultural terrain of more than 1,650ha which became famous around the late 2000s when the French state planned to build an airport in it.

Farmers, environmentalists, residents, activists harshly opposed to this plan, becoming strenuous squatters of the area setting up networked autonomous and self-sufficient structures as houses, bakeries, breweries, husbandries and also a pirate radio station. When the state started an eviction battle sending up to a thousand of police officers, they clashed against a bloody resistance of more than 20,000 protesters, barricades of tractors and sabotage.

In 2018 Emmanuel Macron announced the shelving of the plans for the airport.

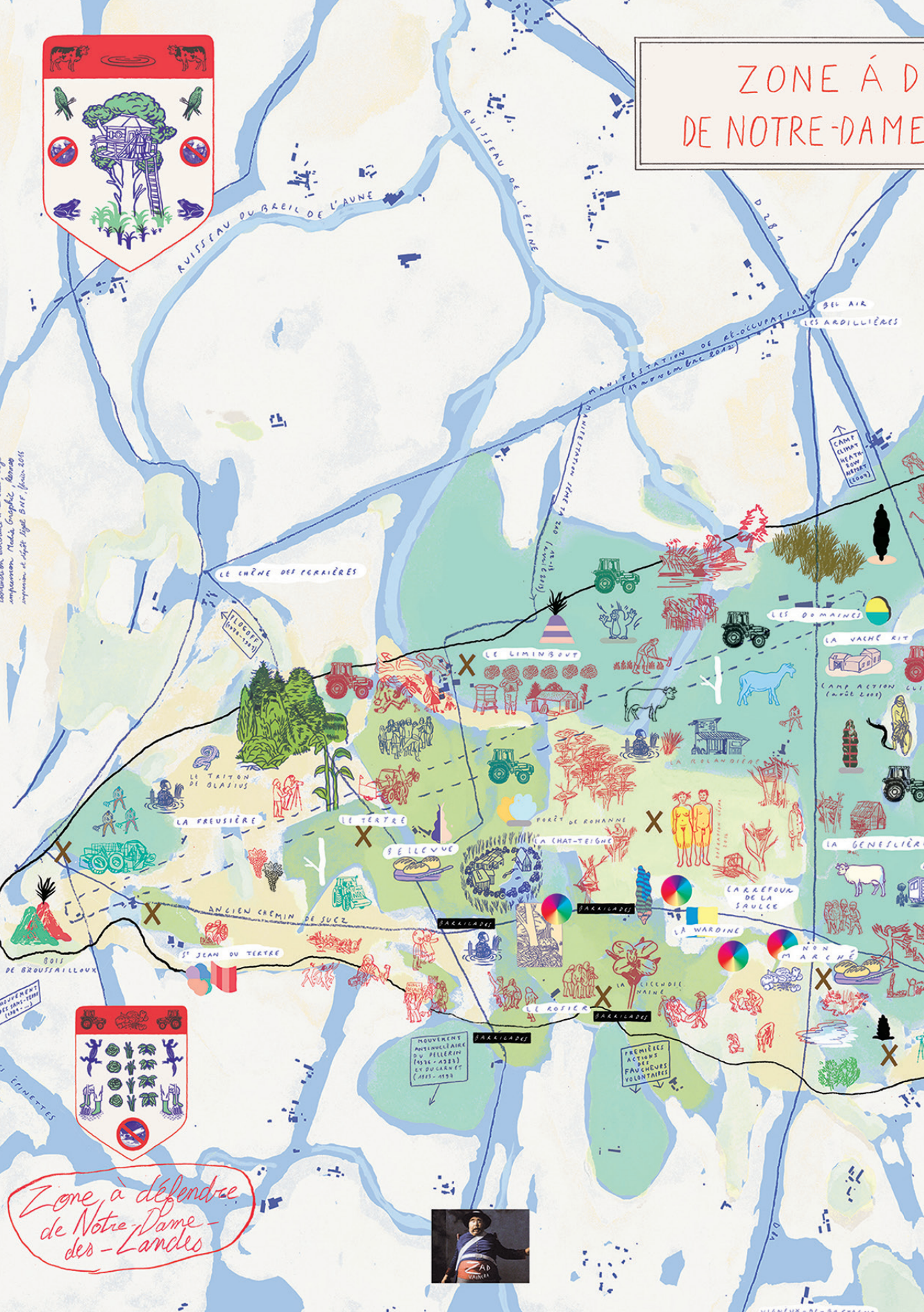






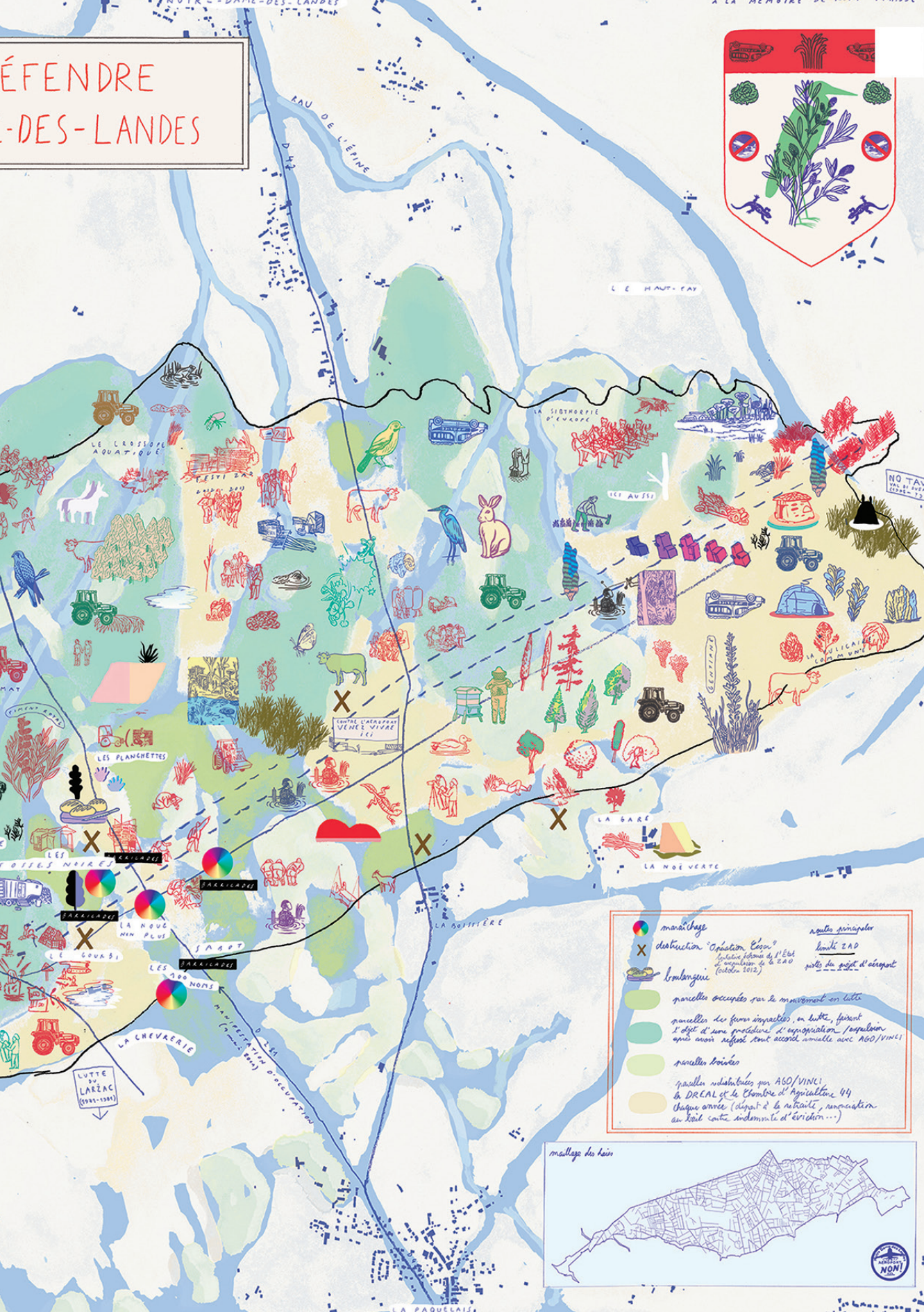


impression de dépôt légal B.N.F., février 2016



Zone à défendre
de Notre-Dame-
des-Landes





maillage des heins



failure creates realms where proximal incompatible spaces exist, but makes them oscillate between seclusion and recognition. On the urban form these spaces may seem equivocal and ambiguous, as they act as local manifestation of global market and cultural change. Sharon Zukin⁷³ defined this condition as *liminality*.

*"LIMINALITY CAPTURES THE SIMULTANEOUS ADVANCE AND DECLINE OF ECONOMIC FORMS, OR THE SENSE THAT AS THE GROUND SHIFTS UNDER OUR FEET, TALLER BUILDINGS CONTINUE TO RISE."*⁷⁴

This becomes THE urban condition, from spaces of crisis to spaces of difference. And that's how Lefebvre⁷⁵ intended as productive the idea of *heterotopias*: ephemeral spaces of difference in the hope of a social recodification that doesn't treat space as static or passive⁷⁶, rather as participative in the social action itself. These spaces would gain new life when re-codified by active social behaviours⁷⁷, showing not only how something different is possible, but foundational to generate emancipatory trajectories.

This is what I call *Heterutopia*: not heterotopia nor utopia, but the real evidence of the fragmentation of the *social production of space*, which promote hope and discovery for alternative, inclusive, adaptable, as well as trans-gressive human/urban practices able to subvert the exclusionary logics of the techno-sphere. And its acknowledgment can help to facilitate the production of *Heterutopias* as testing ground for confrontation, negotiation and inclusion among different publics. They are shaped and reshaped by a compound web of social exchange, where the borders become boundaries under negotiations and specific contexts.

[73] Sharon Zukin is emerita professor of Sociology at Brooklyn College and at CUNY. Specialized in modern urban life, she criticizes how powerful interests shape the spaces we inhabit.

[74] S. Zukin, *Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 5.

[75] Who inversely from Foucault thinks that social praxis can alter spatial segregation.

[76] Cenzatti, 2008, 83.

[77] "(Social) space is a (social) product". Lefebvre, 1991, 26.

Manifesto for a 21st century Architecture

This blurred condition with no overall control of the different *heterutopias* must be seen as positive, or reversed negative: these spaces become part of a bigger dynamic network which connect them in the processes of their production, their usage and their connection to society. The architecture that blossom is not made by architects: its production belongs to a wide group of actors⁷⁸ with various expertise. It is a shared agency which keeps mutating over time: architectural creation becomes a continuous cycle which binds all the people involved in it within an evolving sequence. These contemporary paradigms bring Lefebvre to a step further: all the makers of space are inevitably intertwined in social, global, ecological networks⁷⁹ and at the same time they are exposed to their contradicting forces. When the architect recognizes his role of facilitator in it, he/she finally breaks the boundaries of the profession of ‘making buildings’ to claim a spatial domain which was before left to others, therefore stealing ground from capitalist production. This *spatial agency*, as phrased by Nishat Awan, Tatjana Schneider and Jeremy Till, is a new form of architecture: it is a negotiation of actual conditions in the cities in order to recodify them through a specific collaborative process. It empowers ‘the others’, enabling potential/imaginary ways unprecedented to them in the recodification of the Lefebvrian social space. Architecture mutates “from matter of fact to matter of concern”⁸⁰, diving into existing networks to produce results more meaningful than its objects.

Relationships here take main character roles, against a formal-functionalism which is still the paradigm of architectural concern. To contest the relation of power with individuals of limited power, the only solution is to build a joint network of mutual interests able to break down barriers: complementary fields of activity, ecology, agriculture, economy, living, culture⁸¹ must merge together creating heterogeneous loops that promote ways of living. Actively involving citizens in it develops networks that interrelate different scales. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari called it *Rhizome*⁸², a way of taking action within the multiplicity and fluidity of the contemporary society. It subverts the logics of power and spatial

[78] N. Awan, T. Schneider, J. Till, *Spatial Agency: Other Ways of Doing Architecture*, (London: Routledge 2011), 28.

[79] Awan, Schneider, Till, 2011, 30.

[80] B. Latour, “Why has critique run out of steam? From matters of fact to matters of concern”, in *Critical Inquiry*, vol. 30 (2004), 225–248.

[81] D. Petrescu, C. Petcou, “Making Rhizome, or Architecture after Deleuze and Guattari”, in *Deleuze and Architecture*, ed. H. Frichot, S. Loo, (Edinburgh University Press, 2013), 263.

[82] G. Deleuze, F. Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*. Transl. Brian Massumi, (London: Bloomsbury, 1987).

ELEMENTAL

The architectural practice Elemental grew out of the concern to address the crisis of social housing in Chile, evolving then into a partnership between the Catholic University and an energy company.

The project of *Quinta Moroy* re-housed 100 squatters on the same plot of land, but within the standard government subsidy. With the budget covering only for the land, infrastructure and construction, only half of the houses with their essentials could have been built: Elemental decided to activate the crafty skills and tradition of the residents that would have allowed them to complete the second half, given a well design framework as support.

With the awareness of economical and social availability, Elemental acted as spatial agents investing a tight housing subsidy into the design of a tool to address a wide housing crisis.









The architect becomes the constructor of conditions for the rhizome to proliferate, identifying particular realities that can be merged into new inclusive networks. They could promote democratic (in his authentic etymological essence 'strength to people') opportunities, therefore rights to live and inhabit the spaces of the city.

Would this transform the architect as one of the initiators of an alternative common *spatial democracy*?

hierarchies, as *heterogeneity* becomes foundational in associating diverse entities as organizations of power, arts, sciences and social struggles. The creation of this chain resembles a tuber which agglomerate different acts, gestures, perceptions within the same scope⁸³: it grows progressively triggering opportunities generated by connected productive contexts.

In it, architecture becomes a 'sensitive social machine'⁸⁴ that reproduces space according to different norms, values and needs, rebinding those fragments of urban space that escaped from the generalised urban planning control. The architect becomes the constructor of conditions for the rhizome to proliferate, identifying particular realities that can be merged into new inclusive networks. They could promote democratic (in his authentic etymological essence 'strength to people') opportunities, therefore *rights* to live and inhabit the spaces of the city. Would this transform the architect as one of the initiators of an alternative common *spatial democracy*?

This practice works within and beyond the logics of temporality and value of neo-liberal making: against the material aspect of profit, it forms the conditions for an emancipatory change in the making of space, resulting in an increased sense of place identity. It is a space in constant evolution through openness, indeterminacy and transformability in time.⁸⁵ The reasoning that sheds light on this project of space assumes an 'ab-ductive' dimension: unlike deductive reasoning⁸⁶, from a major certain premise (as the failure of modern urban system) it advances through various hypotheses to reach a plausible conclusion, without positively verify it.⁸⁷ Thus, the uncertainty on the outcome of these spaces is not erased, nor demonized: participation is the instrument which sharpens the chances of it. 'To be there' physically becomes the necessary and irreplaceable condition that inserts in the equation the *sociability time*, intended as minimum time required to create social productive and projective bonds. They grow from the local level of the everyday life and extend to the more territorial features of economy and culture: individuals merge in an urban metabolism which subvert the local shortcomings of placemaking and at the same time gains resiliency through gestures, lifestyles, skills and creativity of the individual-human sphere. Socio-ecological lines⁸⁸ appear on the map and become architecture at the extremes, through the desires, needs, tools of citizens. An 'urban *heterogenesis*'⁸⁹ of multiple spaces, actions, people, events and temporalities which manifest for an architecture of diversity, or *transgression*.

[83] "Any point of a rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be". Deleuze, Guattari, 1987, 7.

[84] Petrescu, Petcou, 2013, 264.

[85] Lefebvre, 1991.

[86] Which contrarily aims to find a logical solution, from a series of clear premises.

[87] D. Walton, "Abductive, presumptive and plausible arguments", in *Informal Logic*, (2001), Vol 21 No. 2, 141–169.

[88] Petrescu, Petcou, 2013, 270.

[89] Deleuze, Guattari, 1987, 7.

OFFICINE REGGIANE

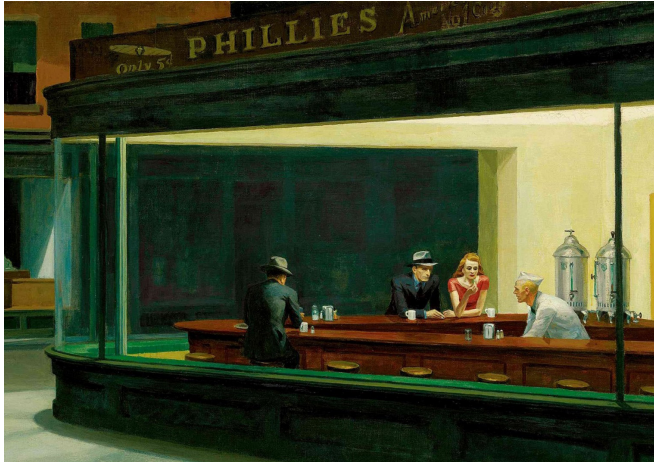
What was one of the main factories in Italy during the WWII, namely Officine Reggiane in Reggio Emilia (author's hometown), which produced railways, trains and fighter planes for the army and employed more than 10,000 local citizens, went slowly in decay and abandonment.

More than twenty industrial sheds over time became a perfect shelter for homeless people and squatters, who illegally appropriated the spaces with whatever type of material and technique: what Yona Friedman would call 'architecture of survival'. Slowly the area became a city within a city, where people of different countries and cultures organised themselves both socially and spatially, through rules and territorial limits.

Again, to the eyes of many, this situation was unconceivable, yet dangerous, and plans to redevelop the district started in 2015, with a progressive accompanied eviction of the 80 residents. Though, the ability and resilience of the desperate people to set up spaces according to informal rules proves once more how the emplacement and the everydayness are not always a direct result of pre-designed or pre-conceived architectural knowledge. Gentrification that comes as 'salvation' of a negative condition, just jumps over the political struggle generated by the existence of that reality. A Lefebvrian/Foucauldian struggle that would otherwise contain the potential to question exactly those existing societal structures.









RAUMLABOR

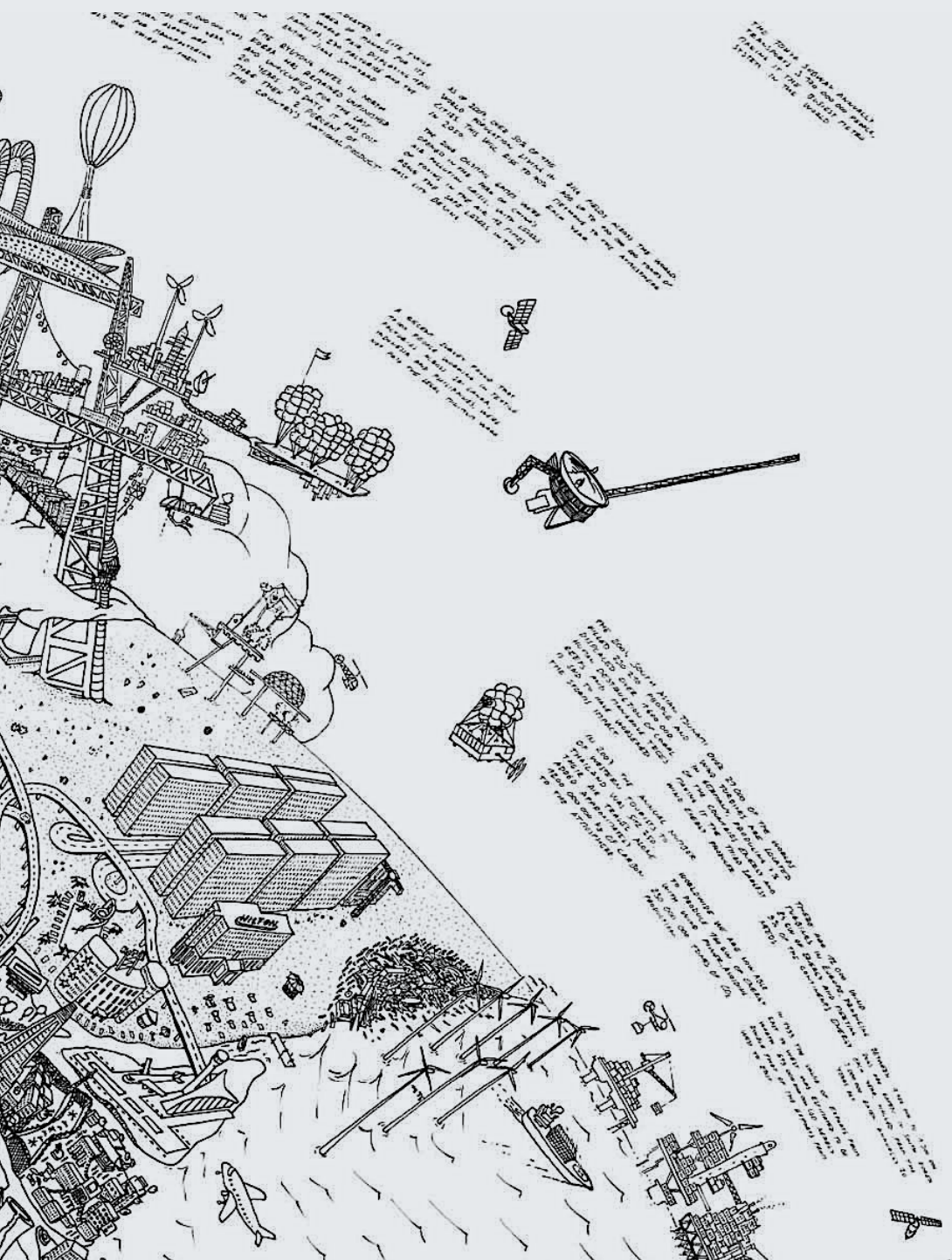
Raumlabor is a collective based in Berlin that decided to intervene in the unrestrained development of the city resulting from the fall of the Wall. Despite placing themselves within the utopian tradition of the radicals of the 1960s (Haus-Rucker, Yona Friedman or Buckminster Fuller), they have manifested the interest in finding means and techniques to act in the contemporary world, under the slogan “Bye bye Utopia”.

Their approach, mostly playful, is a critique to the dominant mode of (architectural) production, designing more temporary objects that catalyze the urban landscape employing recycled materials, as well as engaging with collaborative planning processes. It’s an attempt to address communication and negotiation in space, acknowledging that architecture is first a social phenomenon.









[90] From Charles Baudelaire to Dadaism, Surrealism and Situationism, they were revolutionary, yet reversal and resistant artistic forces that actively promoted *alternative* ways to see the world.

[91] Nicola Emery is a Swiss philosopher teaching at the Academy of Architecture of Mendrisio, with the focus on the difficult 'status' of Architecture in the 21st century and its potential salvation through practices of re-cycle and recovery. See N. Emery, *Distruzione e Progetto. L'Architettura Promessa*, (Milano: Marinotti 2011), 283.

[92] Kurt Schwitters promoted the *Merz* philosophy as a planning tended in all areas, from poetry to music to architecture, aimed at the discovery of an original way of doing on how to re-elaborate, reform and thus how to inhabit, live. The Merz experience applied to the urban scale, entailing subtraction of entire neighbourhoods to the fate of their deletion or speculative closure, can lead to a critical experience, therefore action, (which Walter Benjamin considers already a revolutionary practice). See N. Emery, 2011, 291.

[93] Deleuze, Guattari, 1987, 7.

To *transgress* the processes of continuous consumption, that keep working under the mask of the techno-positivity, a revolution in the city could start when exactly those marginal spaces seen as negative reverse to a new re-productive, creative and active force.⁹⁰ "From destruction to the salvation of the heterogeneous *abandoned*" as Nicola Emery⁹¹ poetically phrase. To decline the agency of architecture as a recodifying tool rather than functional (speculate-transform-destroy), and thus subtracting the project and the concept of architecture itself from its economic imperative, today it could reveal a way to make the world more suited to the *common self*. The negative reverses to positive in the urban paradigms of 21st century architectural practice.⁹² A process of 'striation of the smooth'⁹³ that bounces between informality and its restructuring within the rigid framework of the city. Architecture can be the rejective machine of the notion of centrality, enabling networks that connect heterogeneous elements spread across the different parts of the city. Built objects or unbuilt practices can blossom here and there when the lives, skills, experiences of among others the inhabitants, researchers, bricklayers, politicians, designers come together with a common goal. This rhizomatic machine keeps on exploring its boundaries not searching for new sites, but an alternative model to recodify the existing liminal ones: in this only way a new democratic, yet socio-ecological order can be (re)established, based on the commitment and inclusion of each participant.

To Kafka the promise of
salvation:

“Only in the city is there
something to see,
as everything that passed in
front of the window
was or could have been a
cemetery,
nothing but things that grow
on corpses,
while the city clearly
distinguishes itself with a
living force...”

F. Kafka, *Letters*, 1902-24.

"AS THE HIPPIE-GIRLS TOLD ME, THERE'S LOTS OF
PICTURE-BOOKS ABOUT LA ALREADY.
MUCH OF THIS LITERATURE IS DIM, ACADEMIC,
OVERSPECIALIZED, AND (MERCIFULLY)
INACCESSIBLE TO THE GENERAL READER. ON
THE OTHER HAND, SOME OF WHAT IS RELATIVELY
INACCESSIBLE AND SPECIALIZED IS EXTREMELY
REWARDING AND EVEN INTERESTING,
AND WORTH FIGHTING TO GET."

Reyner Banham, *The Architecture of Four Ecologies*, 1971.

4

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*"YOU KNOW, IT IS LIFE THAT IS RIGHT
AND THE ARCHITECT WHO IS WRONG."*

Le Corbusier, *Lived-In Architecture: Pessac Revisited*, 1969.

P.S.

REFLECTION

The relationship between research and design

Research and design are often conceptualized as one the consequence of the other, where a carried-out collection, interpretation and analysis of data should somehow logically tackle established research questions, providing 'answers' to be transformed into an exhausting and thorough design proposal. Though, the learning process of this project proved impossible to establish such a clear distinction.

A great review of literature was not at all enough to bring forth possible outcomes, rather putting myself in front of its failure: if not tested and interrelated within the systems and sub-systems which shape the surrounding environment, it just builds up on meta-prerogatives that fuel the auto-referentiality of the 'theorist'. But the case of Rotterdam, a 'tabula rasa' that in time became re-composed as a system of multiple patches, prefigured as a perfect testbed to investigate the theories lying behind the socio-spatial critique developed at the end of the Sixties, through unfolding the relationships, hierarchies and differences that compose the socio-ecological urban organism. As well as directly living and analysing the complexities of a contemporary city, in this case Rotterdam, just led to acknowledge how that system work, which are its fragments and which are its shortcomings, without the goal of highlighting 'positivistic' and optimal solutions.

The dialectic relationship between research and design gets ultimately blurred in a game of 'regression-progression' that never really exhausts itself. Rather, research and design have been explored as a single interchangeable tool that could lead to a re-conceptualization of space, outlining alternative practices to explore. Therefore, for the scope of this thesis, the learning process aimed at spatially investigate a (urban) question, rather than providing an answer to it.

With this vision, different sites and conditions in Rotterdam have been included in a 'matrix' that could generate a radical understanding of the

socio-spatial logics of the city, ultimately pinpointing at possible testbeds on which positioning a designed processual artefact.

The relationship between your graduation topic, the studio topic, your master track (A,U,BT,LA,MBE), and your master programme (MSc AUBS).

The graduation topic, as the investigation of alternative ways of 'making space' in the contemporary society, could find free testing ground offered by the Explore Lab studio. It offered me the chance to be more fluid among interests and means of inquiries. Honour and burden I may say. As it started from the Lefebvrian notion of space 'as a social product', then it questioned: how can a social product become space, as expressed through architectural means?

This question, I may define it sociological, is not often the starting point of a more structured Studio (among those offered by the different chairs), therefore it left to myself a big gap to bridge in order to be able to promote any possible required graduation empirical project.

Considering my research a Social project, I pushed for an alternative re-understanding of architecture not as a straight-forward generator of unique and specialized products, that produce and reproduce its self-referential tradition. Rather just the tool I could use as an architect to understand, problematise and enable different processes.

It was not easy as I had to comply with a quite specific, structured and clear Master Scientific program, that puts the student in front of the necessity to position the research quite 'scientifically', where question must lead to (proven) answers. I must say that this collision ultimately proved operational for the completion of my proposal: the pressure to come up with a project exhaustive in all his aspects avoided my own (theoretical) implosion. I could ultimately find a middle ground from exact and inexact, designed and unfinished, technical and non-rational which I consider fundamental in acknowledging the complexity of my work. While not providing 'scientific' answers, still promotes an empirical, 'probably' buildable, logics.

Elaboration on research method and approach chosen by the student in relation to the graduation studio methodical line of inquiry, reflecting thereby upon the scientific relevance of the work.

Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault, from similar concerns, posed two opposite methodological challenges: while the latter categorized spatial failures (types: prisons, hospitals...) as a cause of a structural social failure, the former promoted spatial failure as a consequence of a social failure, therefore invoking the need to redefine a (social) 'praxis' in order to re-establish a spatial order. This evoked praxeology as an operational method that would not have just exhausted itself in a typological diagnosis, which we could argue to have been the Foucauldian shortcoming. Following the praxeological line of inquiry, which could be considered fairly scientific, the theoretical block (reasoning, analysis, 'proofs') could result in a possible practical action.

A deep review of literature, from the seeds of the 'spatial turn' to the contemporary era, highlighted the long trajectory of thought, its architectural reactions and its contemporizing. While to bridge the search to a possible urban approach, the analysis of different site conditions and related in/excluded groups, have been complemented/confronted with qualitative on-site investigation in the city of Rotterdam, searching for invisible thresholds, conflicts and groups' relations-in-space.

Nevertheless, I've found myself obliged to slightly twist the direction of this scientific search: the reasoning that sheds light on this project of space had to assume an 'ab-ductive' dimension. Unlike deductive reasoning, which contrarily pushes for a logical solution from a series of clear premises, from a major certain premise (as the failure of modern urban system) abduction could support me in developing various hypotheses to reach a plausible conclusion, but without the need to positively verify it. Thus, the unavoidable uncertainty on the outcome of the project have not been erased, nor demonized, rather fully embraced, becoming a fundamental pivot: social participation is the instrument which sharpens the chances of it.

Elaboration on the relationship between the graduation project and the wider social, professional and scientific framework, touching upon the transferability of the project results.

The wider socio-historical-political influence of these concerns on and of architecture have been at first collected and critically analysed through the reaction of selected architects, who promoted a critical spatial understanding and undoubtedly challenged the design output of this research.

But this graduation project tried to expand that referentiality in the search of a process that could go beyond the architects themselves. Architecture started to be decomposed in all its vectors and elements that in turn lead to a de-standardization/de-commodification of the artefact itself. The acknowledgement of an architecture (or city, or space) that can't be just defined by architects alone (here intended in its professional nuance) is the evident empowerment of a diversity of agents (citizens, users, contractors, bricklayers, artists, children...) that together enrich the production of space. The underlying challenge of this research lies in questioning: how can this production of space manifest? To whom it belongs? Who has the Right to shape it?

If production is an action, then to act in space can be seen as an agency. And an emancipated 'spatial agency' is the ability of an individual or a group to change the space, independently of the constricting structures of society. Foremost, the method behind the ways this 'action' or agency manifest, both processual and/or tectonic, can become a lesson learned that can be applied and transferred in every urban condition, beyond the geography of Rotterdam itself. It can be a rhizomatic, systemic, and even parasitic framework that doesn't need to be explicitly visible, rather assuming a topological or relational dimension able to 'dismantle' scalarity, borders, barriers.

This project doesn't aim at just theorizing or politicizing a specific condition, rather tries to represent and formulate the process of unpredictable making of space through the use of known means. The focus then shifts towards enabling the influence of occupants themselves. Materially, it sometimes takes the shape of examples that never appeared (and in modern time rejected) in the dogmas of the discipline of architecture, intended as pure tool 'uber alles'. They are rather promoted as an alternative 'practice', a possible representation of the lefebvrian 'lived space'.

The result at times embraces dirtiness, counter-aesthetics, 'wrongness': could it be accepted as an urban contemporary practice?

Discuss the ethical issues and dilemmas you may have encountered in doing the research, elaborating the design and potential applications of the results in practice.

The starting point of the research was the recovery of an ethical social concern, which Lefebvre expressed as the Right to the City. Though, during the graduation process much of the hope that such a slogan carried and still carries has been lost. Whereas cities have become agglomerations, expanded and almost unbounded, with infinite flows of people, newcomers, mostly temporary, how to precisely define 'city'? Then the right to the city seems superseded. Especially when the actual existing one, as it is constituted, in most cases stays too confined in the hands of a small political elite in power to decide and shape the city after their desire. Masked behind the promotion of a 'politics of turf' (Marcelo Lopes Sousa calls it) that renders the discipline of architecture only an instrument that produces (unfortunately) only few repetitive social housing blocks.

I then questioned myself: how and where can we act? How to give shape to it? Maybe right to the city can survive if intended as a right to 'Urbanity': not anymore just an inclusion of specific targets of people within geographical borders or services, rather the right to be part of the urban processes that everyday shape the world right now. Therefore, Urbanity as a framework that orchestrates changes, differences, avoid types: heterotopias, after being politicized, can then finally be allocated by urban research, becoming testbeds for an architectural agency that blossoms with activators directed to users willing to be part of it. The contemporary city cannot be read anymore as a repetitive, physical continuum: it is rather an accumulation of points of intensity. Different patches, fragments require a different understanding of the 'urbanity'. Then it can translate and result into different constructs, of which logics are systemic.

These concerns exposed myself in front of the dilemma of what can be my role in all of this, not being concerned with the production of 'buildings' that the discipline is still too stuck into. I tried to do a step back, and focus on the method that could lead to it. The architect as a figure that delivers the project and keeps its intellectual property needs to be a thing of the past. Building cannot be understood as a commodity done once: it is a common ground. It's alive, it's a process, that happens as

much in other sites, with other actors, etc. Transformation, agency, process: the designer must fade and co-create into different phases, appearing and disappearing.

In this optic, which acknowledges and rejects the myth of the architect single hero, I have to be open and prone to failure.

Fragility and contamination are another perspective that such a project of space must account for: participants can transgress initial boundaries, as well as contributing, as well as ruining or not participating at all. It just changes the (a priori) unpredictable result. This makes the structure itself fragile: it can work only in synergy with the occupants. Only if intended as a shared platform.

Put in the context of Rotterdam, this direction may be even seen as 'transgressive'. But it is a condition that we should be ready to embrace: the moment generated by unpredicted behaviours can be the channel to promote an alternative project of architecture.

Finally, the student has to look ahead and describe how the final part of the graduation period will be filled in.

In conclusion, the final phase of the graduation period will focus on reflecting and expanding the framework tested on one site condition, to another of different scale, materiality, ecological sphere. The approach learned from the prototype will inform and produce different scenarios at a (landscape) scale which goes even more beyond the control of the architect, as it involves nature and a wider range of actors. The basis posed will be deepened in order to end up with a project that strongly stress its systemic, relational and rhizomatic ambitions.

Moreover, the whole set of work, drawings, concerns and findings will be collected and transformed into a booklet, which will be paired with the existing to date, finally presenting the overall 'oeuvre' of the graduation project.

